



Tansiq

COORDINATION

For Ending Gender Based Violence In Lebanon

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ADDRESSING SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE RELATED TO THE SYRIAN CRISIS

During conflicts, women and children are often victims of unspeakable violence and abuse. The conflict in Syria is no exception. Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) has been used as a tool of war and as a means of torture. Thousands of women, children, as well as men, have been subjected to sexual abuse, many of which are now living among us as refugees.

Displacement and flight increase the risk of violence and abuse. Separation from traditional social networks such as family, neighbours and friends, limited access to information about available services and support in a new country, as well as the struggle that families endure to make a decent living are elements that make people more vulnerable and, as a consequence, increase the level of domestic violence.

When refugees from Syria began to enter Lebanon in greater numbers, the European Union immediately recognised the need to provide humanitarian assistance to refugees. We also increased our support to Lebanese institutions and communities to help them deal with the consequences of the crisis. Lebanese schools have been supported in their effort to enrol additional children, while communities have been assisted in reinforcing their physical and social service infrastructure. In collaboration with UNICEF, we strengthened Lebanese SGBV protection mechanisms.

In our response to sexual violence, we target the entire cycle of care from prevention to provision of care and reintegration of victims. The support builds on the structures already in place in Lebanon such as the Social Development Centres

(SDC) of the Ministry of Social Affairs, SGBV specialised staff in public hospitals, and the dynamic and committed civil society organisations in Lebanon that work on SGBV.

We focused on SGBV awareness-raising and on providing information about the assistance available in Lebanon. This has been achieved through focus group discussions, media campaigns and the distribution of thousands of so-called 'dignity kits' that contain information about rights and the services available in the country.

Equally, capacity building to tackle SGBV has been offered to numerous case managers in SDCs and NGOs as well as to medical staff at public hospitals in cooperation with the Ministry of Public Health. Several new positions for social workers, psychologists, forensic doctors and legal counsel are being financed with European Union funding, as is the establishment of new Family Care Units in SDCs across the country.

Furthermore, the EU has funded the creation of the first mid-way house in Lebanon where women can find shelter together with their children. Unfortunately, there is a huge need for shelters, and the aforementioned mid-way house has been full or close to full since it first opened its doors. Around 200 women including refugees and domestic workers have already benefitted from the centre, which is run by an exceptional team of Lebanese professionals. More than half of the beneficiaries are Lebanese citizens.

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We are aware of the importance of providing support with immediate protection and care. SGBV survivors often find themselves without their initial social network and are compelled to become breadwinners and provide for themselves and their children. For that reason, the EU has funded activities to assist 434 SGBV survivors access light vocational training that can help them earn a living.

While we are satisfied with the support we have provided so far, we also recognise the need for more

assistance to combat SGBV and support its victims and here UNFPA has an important mandate. In addition to the funding provided by the EU in the context of the crisis, our normal bilateral programme will continue, including our work with the National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW) to promote the rights of women and protect all against SGBV.

Ambassador Angelina Eichhorst,
Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Lebanon

UNFPA TAKES THE EXTRA MILE IN SUPPORTING GBV SURVIVORS

Too often, conflict and humanitarian crisis exacerbate existing gender inequalities, one of the root causes of gender based violence (GBV). The risk of GBV is therefore higher within conflict and humanitarian contexts, which is often characterized with instability, violence, poverty, unemployment and mutating social values. It is well known that there is more GBV perpetrated against women and girls than against men and boys, and in both cases the reporting of GBV is very low.

With the influx of Syrian refugees fleeing conflict to settle across Lebanon and with the escalation of violence against women perpetrated in these areas, the need to decentralize and multiply GBV services was voiced out. As such in early 2014, UNFPA responded to this need through supporting the Listening and Counseling Center (LCC) in Al-Marj, Bekaa run by KAFA (Enough) Violence and Exploitation and offering services catering to the needs of hundreds of survivors, from both host and refugee communities, and their children.

A wide range of GBV related activities have therefore been implemented by the LCC between January and June 2014, including direct services, such as social counseling, psychological assistance, legal consultations, court representation and referral to shelter and health services; other activities included the making and piloting of a CD and manual on "Communication with Violence Survivors: Improving Health Care Response" achieved through developing the capacities of 125 health care providers. In addition, awareness raising sessions were organized on GBV issues, such as early marriage, as well as reproductive health issues, with focus on family planning, safe motherhood, pap smears etc.

UNFPA's support to the LCC went beyond the traditional frame of women-friendly services. The LCC offered its visitors art and drama therapy courses targeting women and young girls while organizing animation sessions for children who accompanied their mothers. This had

allowed beneficiaries to show a high level of involvement and enjoyment during the drama and art courses, as well as a significant level of motivation and reflection toward their personal and group improvisations. One woman said that her participation in the drama workshop contributed to break the state of silence she continuously lived in. After the art and dance therapy courses, a group of women expressed contently: "we are moving parts of our bodies that we never thought existed or could be moved!"

UNFPA's support to the Al-Marj LCC expanded to cover the LCC in Beirut – also managed by KAFA – in order to handle the increased number of beneficiaries; as a result 270 women were provided with social and legal support between January and June 2014. The LCC of Beirut also conducted support group sessions, given by a psycho-therapist and tackling different topics of relevance to GBV such as anger management, relaxation, emotional intelligence, the power of saying No, self-management, educational difficulties and solutions, memory definition and exercises, meditation definition and practice, status and roles of women, marriage and sexual health etc. The sessions were followed by a plastic art workshop which helped women to reflect on the trauma they were subject to, through expressive arts such as painting, meditation, breathing and body control.

Lastly, and under the reporting period, UNFPA expanded its collaboration with KAFA to support capacity development activities targeting 51 Internal Security Officers affiliated to 3 police stations located in the Bekaa and surrounding the newly established LCC in Al-Marj. The officers were trained on violence against women issues, and how to communicate with the survivors. The 3 police stations (Zahle, M'aalaka and Chtoura) were furnished and supplied with necessary office and medical equipment, to ensure that survivors are received and treated with privacy and dignity.

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PUBLIC SCHOOL COUNSELORS TRAINED ON GBV

Schools can provide an enabling environment where young women and men develop positive attitudes towards relationships in order to prevent gender based violence (GBV). With the aim of engaging educators in preventing GBV, the National Young Women Christian Association of Lebanon (YWCA) organized a 2 days workshop for a core group of 15 school counselors from the public sector.

The workshop focused on creating a safe space where students may explore how GBV affects them, also to improve their understanding of GBV and its causes thus enabling them to understand their own rights and duties to respect others. The workshop was developed and delivered by Mrs. Rita Merhej, clinical psychologist. Practical exercises constituted the main component of the workshop, as the trained school counselors will be repeating these exercises. It is expected that students will be empowered to become agents of change in their own communities. The activities evolved around gender norms, GBV at school and GBV in romantic relationships. This workshop is part of the YWCA "Communities Free of Violence" project through which more than 2,150 youth were trained and sensitized on gender roles and the socio-economic factors that perpetuate GBV.

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IWSAW ADVOCATING AGAINST EARLY MARRIAGE IN LEBANON AND PRO-GENDER RIGHTS IN THE ARAB WORLD

On the occasion of the International Women's Day, the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World (IWSAW) at the Lebanese American University (LAU) launched the national campaign to "Protect Under-age Girls from Early Marriage", in collaboration with the National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW) and under the patronage of First Lady Mrs Wafaa Suleiman.

The launching event, organized on March 4 at the Irwin Auditorium at LAU, gathered a number of ministers, parliamentarians, ambassadors, international and national organizations as well as activists to support the campaign which comes at a time where the phenomenon of early marriage, eloping and abducting are on the rise.

The ceremony embraced short talks by different speakers and a short documentary initiated by IWSAW and NCLW in addition to the distribution of a preliminary legal study.

Another activity organized by IWSAW, between June 23 and 25, was an international conference focusing on "Arab Countries in Transition: Gender Rights and Constitutional Reforms". The conference, organized under the patronage of the Minister of Education and Higher Education, Mr Elias Bou Saab, hosted two guest speakers Dr. Suad Joseph, distinguished professor of anthropology and women and gender studies at the University of California and Dr. Hoda Elsadda, professor of English and comparative literature, faculty of arts, Cairo University and head of the freedoms and rights committee in the constituent assembly in Egypt.

Prominent academics, researchers, and activists from the Arab World (Syria, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, and Iraq) as well as from the United States of America, Denmark, and Japan attended the conference.

The topics discussed included women's political participation during and after the Arab uprisings, women's equality in the new Egyptian constitution, gender and the Arab revolutions, sexual violence in Egypt, Islamic law, and the legal reforms impacting women in the Middle East and North Africa. Two documentary films were also screened that highlighted the struggle for democracy and gender rights.

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ACTIVITIES FOR PRACTICAL AND LEGAL SOLUTIONS TO DOMESTIC ABUSE AND MARRIAGE OF MINOR GIRLS

Following the recent increase in violations and recurrent acts of violence that threaten the lives and security of women and young girls, the Lebanese Women Democratic Gathering (RDFL) held a series of activities covering the reality of battered women and the topic of marriage of minor girls from an advocacy perspective to put forth practical solutions.

RDFL had therefore participated in the protests organized by the National Coalition for Legislating the Protection of Women from Family Violence and issued condemnation and denunciation statements about the phenomenon of "killing women".

RDFL had also continued - through a program for Syrian women refugees, and in partnership with "Salma and Aisha" networks - receiving Syrian and Palestinian women in the Bekaa region and providing psychological therapy and support to six cases, including to a Palestinian child from Syria. Furthermore, a study on "Gender Based Violence against refugees" was prepared in cooperation with the Association Najdeh and the Lebanese Council to Resist Violence Against Women (LECORVAW).

Furthermore, and on the issue of "the marriage of minor girls and its impact on society" a roundtable was organized during the month of May at the Beirut Bar Association, in cooperation with Kvinna till Kvinna, during which testimonies were made by women who have endured early marriage. Moreover, the meeting resulted in recommendations, mainly about the importance of registering marriage contracts, punishing violations, raising the issue of compulsory and free education to protect minor girls from the possibility of early marriage, launching a campaign for the issuance of a law that determines and unifies age at marriage, putting in place a comprehensive strategy with all stakeholders for mainstreaming human rights, establishing a hotline for receiving complaints at the Ministry of Social Affairs, activating the role of the judiciary system in intervening to protect at risk minor girls and launching awareness raising campaigns about the risks of early marriage.

Lastly, and during the month of June, RDFL held a lecture at the Jdeideh Municipality on "Domestic Violence and Violence against Women", during which the coordinator of the project to combat violence against women at RDFL explained the phenomenon of violence, its prevalence in our society and its deep roots in our culture, shedding the light on the role played by women organizations in lobbying for clear and comprehensive policies to end this growing phenomenon.

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VIOLENCE IS NOT A GAME

In an effort to address gender based violence (GBV) and raise awareness, ABAAD-Resource Center for Gender Equality (ABAAD) had launched in May 2014 the "Violence is Not a Game" project where 40 adolescent Syrian girls portrayed different types of violence and discrimination in society by crafting puppets from scratch. The activity was carried out in partnership with the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in Lebanon through a participatory training process moderated by specialists.

Based on issues highlighted by the girls, namely forced and early marriage, GBV, coexistence between Lebanese and Syrians and sexual harassment, ABAAD produced puppetry kits comprising of seven characters and accompanying guidebooks with stories to be used for community awareness raising theater targeting young Syrian and Lebanese girls.

Due to ABAAD's innovative projects, i.e. the above-mentioned project, and the organization's established credibility in the region, the Womanity Foundation named ABAAD (Lebanon) and Promundo (Brazil/USA) the first ever winners of its global award for creative techniques and strategies to ending violence against women (EVAW). ABAAD will be the scale-up partner which will adapt a programme on engaging youth in EVAW to the Lebanese context and potentially to the Middle East and North Africa region.

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LAUNCHING A CAMPAIGN AGAINST SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Under the slogan of “put your hand in my hand and not on it, you and I can stop harassment”, Najdeh Association had launched in Beirut a campaign against sexual harassment towards the end of 2013. The campaign was followed in 2014 with a series of relevant activities such as 5 roundtables during March with participants from 210 civil society organizations working in both Lebanese and Palestinian communities, throughout 5 camps namely in Beirut, Tyr, Baalbek, Tripoli and Sidon.

During the roundtables, a documentary on sexual harassment was projected along testimonies from victims of harassment. It also contained interviews with psychologists and social workers on the repercussions and symptoms of harassment, as well as intervention and treatment mechanisms.

Dr. Aziza el-Khalidi reviewed the main findings and recommendations of the sexual harassment field study carried out in Burj el Barajneh camp whereby the interactive discussion between the participants led to stressing on the importance of concerted efforts to combat violence against women, and particularly sexual harassment.

The “put your hand in my hand and not on it, you and I can stop harassment” campaign will take place throughout the course of the year and will be characterized by a wide range of awareness raising activities on sexual harassment and its psychological and social effects on individuals and the society.

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RATIFICATION OF THE LAW “TO PROTECT WOMEN AND ALL FAMILY MEMBERS FROM FAMILY VIOLENCE”: IMPLEMENTATION REMAINS INSTRUMENTAL

After years of struggle for the adoption of a law that protects women from family violence, the Lebanese parliament ratified, on April 1, the bill No 293/2014 entitled “law to protect women and all family members from family violence”. However, the law failed to include the amendments put forth by the National Coalition for Legislating the Protection of Women from Family Violence.

The law was ratified following a series of campaigns and movements, with the most prominent one characterized by a demonstration held on the International Women’s Day, March 8, with the slogan of “If the act of legislation means we must take to the streets... we will” organized by KAFA (Enough) Violence & Exploitation, for the ratification of the law without any of the distortions introduced by the parliamentary subcommittee – that reviewed the draft law for about a year and a half – and for ensuring justice for women victims of family violence.

Following the publication of the law in the Official Gazette on May 7, KAFA initiated the process to identify the gaps in the legal text based on real cases, as well as taking benefit from the articles that took effect, by submitting protection requests to judges of summary proceedings, for the profit of family violence survivors. It is worth noting that to this date several model decisions have been issued in the governorates of Beirut and Mount Lebanon.

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THE RIGHT OF MARGINALIZED WOMEN AND VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TO EMPOWERMENT AND SOCIAL REINTEGRATION

Women prisons in Lebanon hold many women detainees and prisoners who are victims of violence in general and domestic violence in particular and who have spent their childhood living in poverty, subjugation, exploitation and torture. Most of them ended up in prisons after years of being abused by their husbands in particular, which led them to commit a misdemeanor or a felony. These women are facing extremely difficult conditions in prison and they are in dire need of assistance and a chance for rehabilitation and social reintegration once again.

In this regard, and between January and June, Dar Al Amal association provided basic assistance to all women prisoners, without any discrimination, in all three women prisons in Baabda, Tripoli and Zahle. Dar Al Amal has also supplied the prison facilities with equipment, maintenance, food, cleaning supplies and other essential needs.

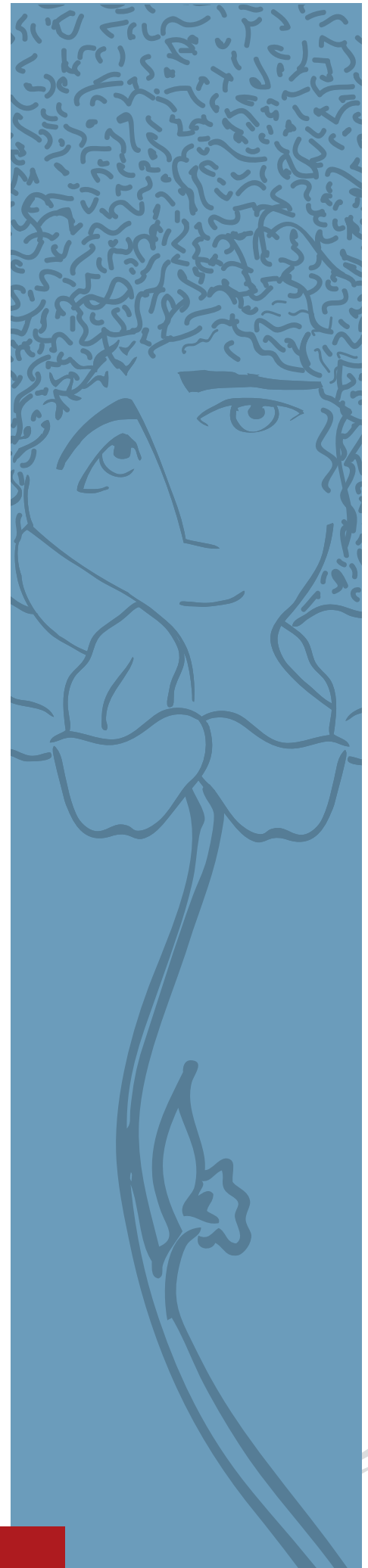
More so, and in the framework of the social rehabilitation and reintegration project for women prisoners implemented by Dar Al Amal, around 600 women inmates benefited from social, psychological, legal and medical services, in addition to various awareness-raising workshops, and vocational training sessions aimed at empowering them and enhancing their capacities through gaining related skills.

Through the aforementioned programs, Dar Al Amal accompanied women after their release from prison and provided them with the necessary support, as needed. The association is also seeking to sensitize society into assisting battered women, including women prisoners, through a wide range of activities.

Mindful of the fact that life does not end behind bars, Dar Al Amal had also organized, in cooperation with the Jane Nassar Institute, a hairdressing session for 22 women prisoners at the Baabda women prison. At the end of the session, certificates were distributed to the participants during a ceremony held under the patronage of the Director General of the Internal Security Forces. The trainees were therefore provided with the opportunity to work and be economically independent – one of the main triggers of domestic abuse.

In addition to sessions organized periodically, Dar Al Amal is also providing women prisoners with assistance inside and outside of prisons, particularly women who are heads of households or are in serious disagreements with their families, in order to allow them living in dignity.

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INTER-AGENCY COORDINATION SCALED UP INTERVENTIONS FOR ADDRESSING SGBV AMONG SYRIAN REFUGEES

With the Syrian crisis entering its third year, the national interagency gender based violence task force (GBVTF) pursued its work effectively growing the base of members, through 2014, to encompass more than 30 operational local and international non-governmental organizations under the leadership of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and in partnership with the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) and its Social Development Centers (SDCs).

In view of improving and enhancing GBV response, prevention and coordination, GBV Working Groups (GBVWG) have also been created at field locations and are now operational in Zahle, Tripoli, Akkar, Mount Lebanon, and Tyr. Furthermore, the GBVTF supported the creation and operationalization of the referral pathway in those areas covering main hubs of GBV operations across the country as well as identified case management agencies crucial to responding to the needs of GBV survivors.

Through those coordination structures in place, the GBV response has been scaled up considerably. For instance, during the reporting period, and within the prevention and response programme and interventions on sexual and gender based violence (SGBV), around 70 safe spaces were established. These spaces are located either in a community center, a women friendly space, within an SDC or created through mobile activities. The goal behind these facilities and related activities is to give survivors of SGBV - as well as women and girls at risk - the possibility of safely disclosing violence and accessing case management, medical and legal services as well as individual and group emotional support.

Between January and June, it is estimated that collectively 89,000 community members, frontline workers, authorities, others have benefited from awareness raising activities aiming at increasing the understanding of SGBV and its impact on individuals, families and communities as well as informing them about available services.

Another front of achievement for the GBVTF is the intense joint effort aiming at enhancing the medical response to survivors of sexual violence through participatory assessments to medical facilities in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Health as well as training medical staff on the clinical management of rape as well as making available the rape treatment kit to various service delivery points.

More work is yet to be carried out to make SGBV services available, accessible and known to the communities to encourage more reporting and help-seeking attitude for survivors. Currently, a 2 year plan including a strong resilience component is being discussed and developed by the members of the GBVTF in order to ensure proper, timely and relevant response to the ever increasing needs in the country resulting from the Syrian Crisis.

It is equally worth noting that all activities and services target women, girls, men and boys whether they are Syrian refugees, Lebanese beneficiaries, and/or Palestinian refugees (from Syria as well as refugees in Lebanon).

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WELL-BEING OF SYRIAN REFUGEE FAMILIES AND THE LEBANESE HOSTING COMMUNITIES: AN INTEGRATED INTERVENTION

Following the conclusion of a project supported by UNFPA and in partnership with the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA), the research team of the Institute for Development, Research, Advocacy and Applied Care (IDRAAC) conducted a qualitative and quantitative analysis of data generated by a post-intervention survey administered to the participants in the gender based violence (GBV) program. The said project, implemented between March 2013 and March 2014, aimed at enhancing the well-being of Syrian refugee families as well as Lebanese families in hosting communities with main emphasis on preventing GBV, improving mental health, and strengthening coping mechanisms. A total of 532 Syrian refugee women across five geographical locations answered questions in relation to their perception and beliefs of GBV practices in their respective communities and their exposure to domestic violence. Other questions were associated to the awareness program itself such as its impact on participants' beliefs, skills and attitudes.

The analysis of the results revealed that two thirds believed that GBV was not acceptable to them noting that poverty, culture and traditions as well as the situation itself (being a refugee, war time) being the most identified causes for its occurrence. Another 49% reported having been exposed to some degree of GBV with their husbands being the most likely perpetrators (63%).

On the other hand, 80% felt that attending the focus groups had increased their understanding of the GBV problem and 74% said that their beliefs and attitudes had changed accordingly and the way they deal with it.

Finally, 99% would advocate for a focus group type of intervention emphasizing the value and importance of education and acquiring new skills as well as male involvement in future programs to facilitate and consolidate the process of change.

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