

This newsletter is an update on gender issues in UNRWA and the region. It is issued on a monthly basis for the gender network, the gender taskforce, and our external partners, with the aim of sharing information, tools, reports, and news on gender.

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A video conference (VC) meeting for the Gender Taskforce was held on the 29th of August and brought together staff from all fields to discuss lessons learned from the implementation of the 2012-2013 Gender Action Plans (GAPs) in the last semester (January—June 2013). UNRWA's Gender Taskforce reports biannually on the implementation of the GAPs to ensure that UNRWA's Gender Mainstreaming Strategy and its goals of fully integrating gender equality in its programs are met. The VC will feed UNRWA agency wide report on gender and is based on reports submitted by the fields and programs for the period from January—June 2013.

Attitudes Change at Gender Based Violence Awareness Sessions

The UNRWA Gaza Gender Initiative works on both protection from and prevention of Gender Based Violence (GBV). **GBV Awareness-Raising in the Community (GBV-AR)** is a project targeting community members, women, men and youth, through training and discussion groups on concepts relating to gender, human rights and violence.

In 2013, 24 community based organisations around Gaza Strip have been implementing GBV-AR sessions to ensure access to the most marginalised areas. The project reached 782 participants of which 294 were women, 235 men and 253 youth. The GBV-AR sessions provided participants with information on gender equality, types of GBV and their effects, anger management, problem solving, women's rights and the UNRWA GBV referral system.

This year the GBV-AR sessions opened with the UNRWA's Lebanon Field Office's film, *Ana Ahlam*, which addresses GBV, and particularly domestic violence within Palestinian camps.

The film got participants to speak in a new open way about domestic violence in their communities.

Pre- and post-questionnaires were used to measure the changes in attitudes towards GBV.

The results of the questionnaires show that youth seem most susceptible to new ways of thinking in relation to GBV, but attitudes were changed also among adult participants. Prior to the start of the sessions only 30 per cent of participants thought that men should be part of the solution when tackling GBV, while after the training finished, 80 per cent of men and women felt this was true and even up to 97 per cent of the youth.

Majority of the male and female participants were in agreement that instability and the economic situation were the main factors in causing vio-



Regarding early marriage, only a third of the male and female participants understood this as a form of GBV in the pre-questionnaire, while in the post-questionnaire the number was 88 per cent. Before the start of the training, only 21 per cent of youth and 29 per cent of women and men said they had heard of UNRWA GBV referral system, reaching 100 per cent after the training.



Male participant, 44 years old

When I was first invited to attend a session, I came for a coupon that was said to be distributed. I stayed for the first session and wondered why I was there and what they are talking about, but things changed when I became part of the dialogue.

The next day, I was battling whether to go to the session or stay at work. Finally, I decided to go. A lot of real stories were told and every time I felt ashamed of myself because I beat my wife and children. After that session, I went home and I found that my wife had not prepared lunch. I was really mad but I remembered what the facilitator had said. I counted to ten and I relaxed myself.

I then attended the third session where we talked about CEDAW. I wrote all its articles on a paper so I wouldn't forget and asked my son to search the internet about it. I wanted to show my wife that I am a good husband who understands this agreement.

On the fourth day of the sessions, I talked with the trainer about CEDAW. She was really happy with me and asked the audience to clap for me. At that moment, I really wished I could have completed my university studies because I felt different from inside. I hope you can do more of these sessions so all men can learn like me.

GBV-RA sessions will continue next year with the support from Norway as well as two additional donors.

For more information, kindly contact Merit Hietanen at m.hietanen@unrwa.org

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Events of Interest:

- Deadline 30th September—Beirut Abaad, a Lebanese NGO, launched a call for stories titled "Men in My Life" about women who have faced a difficult situation of discrimination, inequality or abuse. If interested in submitting a story for publishing, visit: <http://on.fb.me/1cc36Gg>
- 12-13th September—New York, the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) organizes the 7th meeting of the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics (IAEG-GS). The meeting will review global work on gender statistics and discuss the Minimum Set of Gender Indicators. <http://bit.ly/1amZrft>
- 26th July- 13 October—Manchester, an exhibition featuring a series of photographs of Arab women athletes from 20 different countries. <http://bit.ly/13kkSqp>
- 27th August-February 2014— Boston, an exhibition, under the titled "She Who Tells a Story" introduces the work of twelve women photographers from Iran and the Arab world. The pictures explore themes of gender stereotypes. <http://nytl.ms/1459TMz>

Reports and Resources:

- The First Session of the Regional Conference on Population and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean concluded a wide-ranging agreement on priority actions on several issues. These include access to sexual and reproductive health, gender equality, young persons' rights and the integration of population into development. <http://bit.ly/14QgQ3p>
- A new report titled "Shifting Sands" from the International Aid Agency, Oxfam and a Lebanese NGO ABAAD studies the different pressures facing women refugees from Syria living in Lebanon and finds that the roles of both women and men refugees have changed. <http://bit.ly/139RKQo>
- The new Gender Equality Action Plan for 2014-2021 outlines the strategic vision for gender mainstreaming and gender-specific programming across UNESCO's programmes and activities. <http://bit.ly/1dmhw9Q>
- The report from Regional Meeting on Gender and Climate Change spearheaded by the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) analyzes issues of the links between climate impacts and the exacerbation of gender inequalities due to environmental degradation. <http://bit.ly/152IXyj>
- A report by Al Masah Capital Group discussed the changing role played by women in the business sector in the MENA region. <http://bit.ly/14LBZM6>
- The Bahrain Centre for Human Rights (CCHR) submitted a report focused on the situation of women migrant domestic workers in Bahrain to the Committee on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women. <http://bit.ly/1dHn6IG>
- UN Women's Annual Report for 2012-2013 documents their work on fostering women's empowerment and gender equality around the world. <http://bit.ly/19ipHQp>

Regional News

OPT

The NGO, *Forum to Combat Violence against Women in the Palestinian territories*, reported that 19 women have been killed in honour killings in the Palestinian territories until the beginning of September — compared to 12 women murdered in the whole of 2012 . <http://bit.ly/15cVv9h>

In an interview with Mohammed Assaf, the winner of Arab Idol 2013, he announces his plans to use his music as a way of bringing attention to women's issues such as women's right to inheritance and right to work. Article in Arabic. <http://bit.ly/12MO1Z0>

Jordan

In the recent municipality elections in Jordan, women won 345 seats out of a total of 961 seats. 282 candidates won there seats through the 25% gender quota for municipalities. Article in Arabic: <http://bit.ly/15XO7hN>

Lebanon

Matar, a non governmental organization, leads a project to empower Syrian refugee widows through embroidery. <http://bit.ly/16rsky5>

Egypt

Mervat al-Tellawy, head of the National Council for Women (NCW), announced the formation of a watchdog committee to monitor women's rights during the transitional period. <http://bit.ly/12Lnb5M>

Syria

The Syrian refugee women and girls are vulnerable to forced and early marriage when they arrive in Lebanon or in Jordan. Many Syrian families remain determined to protect their daughters from violence and exploitative marriages. <http://bit.ly/17xu2M8>

Gulf

Saudi Arabia has adopted a law that criminalizes domestic violence, targeting women and children. The law titled "Protection from Abuse" is aimed at protecting people from "all forms of abuse" and offering them shelter as well as "social, psychological, and medical aid," according to its new text. <http://aje.me/19RhAdY>

In trying to fight women unemployment, thousands of Saudi women are using social media, especially Twitter, to reach officials and get their voices heard. <http://bit.ly/19sDJiw>