

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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The Gender Unit has collated data on activities across UNRWA's fields of operation, to contribute to the Secretary General's (SG) report on Women, Peace and Security and to the SG's report on Women in Development. These reports highlight the results of UNRWA's strategies for mainstreaming gender equity throughout the agency, as well as implemented targeted activities such as responding to gender-based violence. Also, UNRWA has joined the recently established Regional Thematic Group on Gender, which seeks to bring together UN Agencies of the Arab States and North Africa Region, to support the regional Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment agenda and coordinate activities at the regional level.

Lebanon field office creates spaces to discuss new challenges

UNRWA has hosted discussion groups so Palestine refugees can voice their concerns. As camp conditions worsen in Lebanon, the lives of Palestine refugees from Syria (PRS) and their Palestine refugee host communities are becoming increasingly difficult.

UNRWA, together with Abaad, has responded by launching a series of discussion groups in the Palestinian camps of Tyre, South Lebanon. The aim of the discussion groups: to help build understanding and awareness around collective and individual challenges faced by PRS and the Palestine refugee population of Lebanon.

The discussion groups, which reached out to over 350 Palestine refugees, gave participants an opportunity to address the many challenges they now face due to the humanitarian crisis in Syria.



Palestine refugee host communities in Lebanon described feeling overwhelmed and vulnerable in a situation in which resources are stretched and tensions are rising.

PRS participants, meanwhile, spoke of helplessness and a sense of humiliation, feeling dependent on UNRWA's assistance and on the generosity of the host community to meet essential and basic needs.

"Even if they will pay me one dollar a day, I will work to try to feed my family without humiliation and without begging for a piece of bread. Excuse us brothers, we know we are a burden but my family is hungry and I am sure you will do the same in my place..." said one Palestine refugee who has fled Syria with his three young daughters.

Key concerns include the loss of privacy

In the open and participatory discussions, organised in Tyre by UNRWA and Abaad, refugees highlighted the increasing pressure on living conditions for all people in the country's refugee camps as the population swells. There are now more than 50,000 PRS in Lebanon.

Many participants, in particular women, discussed the struggle for coping mechanisms in response to the stresses on families. Stresses include the loss of private space and increased tension. Women participants expressed a sense of insecurity and frustration at the critical lack of privacy. They reported often having to sleep wearing a hijab because men, including strangers, would be sleeping in the same rooms as them.



One Palestine refugee from Syria said, *"even if I want to cry alone without people around me to tell me to stop crying, I can not find a space to do it... I tried one time to lock myself in the toilets just to have few seconds of peace where I can cry and grieve my losses... but 30 people are using this same toilet so you can imagine, it is impossible."*

This crisis has a hugely negative impact on the psychosocial well-being of individuals, families and wider the community in the Palestine refugee camps and gatherings. Facilitating discussion groups highlighted how trauma, stress and isolation exacerbate strained family relations. One knock-on effect is the increased risk of domestic and gender-based violence (GBV).

The discussions broke down barriers and the sense isolation, and shared mutual understanding and concerns. Participants saw this as one step towards addressing the challenges before them: using dialogue to help rebuild crisis-affected social support structures.

Other UNRWA initiatives responding to the heightened stresses faced by the Palestine refugee community in Lebanon include the roll-out of systematic detection and referral of GBV survivors. The GBV referral system in Lebanon is being implemented based on a pilot model developed in the Tyre region in 2012.

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Events of Interest:

- Call for consultants: In order to connect UN Women with a diverse range of knowledgeable and experienced gender experts and trainers around the world who possess expertise in the areas of work covered by UN Women's mandate, UN Women is seeking applicants for its global roster of experts and trainers. For more details: <http://bit.ly/19l0ZPV>
- Jordan Better Workplace is seeking participants for a workshop on "Employment Contracts and the Labour Environment" on 15 June 2013. Participants should be professionals, entrepreneurs, or recent graduates who are interested in labour rights. Deadline for applications: 12 June. For full details, see: <http://bit.ly/13VJMa2>
- The international journal Gender and Development is inviting submission of abstracts by 7 June for its March 2014 issue focussing on Education & Learning <http://bit.ly/19j3GBr>

Reports and Resources:

- A new academic study has been published analyzing PCBS data on violence against single, never-married women in OPT <http://1.usa.gov/17elkH8>
- A feature article in Jadaliyya looks at the shape of women's rights under the new Egyptian constitution <http://bit.ly/1a7lltI>
- The Konrad Adenauer Stiftung has published a report of its recent workshop on "Challenges Facing Iraqi Women in Obtaining Legal Rights" <http://bit.ly/16Zlrfq>
- A presentation (in French) on Gender Markers from the CERF training in Dakar (May 2013) is available online: <http://bit.ly/151F0e9> alongside numerous other "How To" resources on Gender Markers (in English) <http://bit.ly/11u6sCg>
- The report of the Special Rapporteur on VAW to the HRC can be found here: <http://bit.ly/18gYZXy>
- A strategy toolkit for working with men to combat VAW has been produced in Kenya <http://bit.ly/171GQPp>
- A World Bank development report titled "Opening Doors: Gender Equality and Development in the Middle East and North Africa" can be found here: <http://bit.ly/143131d>
- The Woodrow Wilson Center has made a video of its discussion "Challenges to Women's Security in the MENA Region" available online. <http://bit.ly/Zq2yu0>
- The think-tank Chatham House has published the transcript of a Question & Answer session it hosted, titled: "Women and Power in the Middle East – Grassroots Initiatives and Everyday Challenges" <http://bit.ly/1513Hav>
- Irin News network has published analysis noting that there are no specific SGBV services in Turkish camps for Syrian refugees <http://bit.ly/146AUQV>
- The New York-based Population Council has published a policy brief on Adolescent Girls and Migration in the Developing World. <http://bit.ly/11u6sCg>

Regional News

OPT

World Bank Managing Director visited OPT, and emphasised importance of gender and inclusive development <http://bit.ly/100Okuw>

Jordan

Government of Jordan says it is determined to tackle the issue of gender disparity in the labour market <http://bit.ly/10L8kRf>

Egypt

Women's rights group Fouada Watch has launched a new campaign to stop violence against female students <http://bit.ly/14Oq7Lw>

Lebanon

Zeinab Merhi looks at the issue of polygamy in Lebanon <http://bit.ly/1atsjcz>

Saudi Arabia

Raha Moharrak, who recently became the first Saudi woman to climb Everest has said she would be happy to see views change on Saudi women. <http://bit.ly/10xiZnd>

Iran

A constitutional body in Iran has ruled that women cannot run in presidential elections scheduled for 14 June <http://bbc.in/12yNmsF>

Regional

MENA Activists Take Lessons from Tunisia on securing women's rights after regime change <http://bit.ly/Zq5vuE>

ActAlliance hosted a regional meeting on Women, Peace and Security, bringing together representatives of peace organisations from Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Syria, Palestine, Sweden, Tunisia and Yemen. <http://bit.ly/11mf73l>

Global

Campaigner against female genital mutilation (FGM), Bogaletch Gebre, has been named winner of the African Development Prize <http://bit.ly/12bDtVq>

Numerous protection and campaign organisations have signed up to an open letter to Facebook calling for an end to the glorification of violence against girls and women on the site <http://huff.to/17Yp1RP>