



UNRWA celebrates World Teacher's Day. © 2018 UNRWA Photo by Taghrid Mohammed

monthly updates on gender issues in UNRWA and the region

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UNRWA observed the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence (GBV) from 25 November to 10 December, 2018. The Commissioner General issued a [message](#) reaffirming the Agency's commitment to eradicating gender-based violence. Hundreds of activities were held across all fields in observance of the campaign.

stories from UNRWA

Communities as agents of change in combating GBV in refugee camps in Lebanon

In order to maximize its impact, and to assure the participation and engagement of the community, UNRWA often works with partner organizations. In Lebanon, UNRWA has supported its partner ABAAD in facilitating structured psychosocial community-based support groups which gathered more than **300 Palestinian women and men** between 2016 and 2018. These groups aim to equip refugees with the necessary strategies to address major issues affecting their communities, such as marginalization, discrimination, violence and gender-based violence (GBV).

In Bourj El Barajné, individual psychosocial sessions conducted by social workers focused entirely on supporting vulnerable boys and girls (aged 8 to 16 years-old), who face severe distress stemming from the harsh conditions in which they live. Through these consultations, the implicated youth have been able to come forward with their experiences and develop coping mechanisms.



Building on the success of these initiatives, **ABAAD has kicked off the next project phase** with the support of UNRWA. The new phase expands to Nahr el Bared and aims to consolidate the existing groups and equip Palestinian refugees with the skills required to initiate and lead independent social activities in their own communities.

Therefore, an opinion poll was conducted in Beddaoui to highlight how the population of the camp perceives "small independent social initiatives". This was used to draft a brief manual on the topic and host a gathering that allows the group to introduce itself to the community and present the concept of "voluntary action" in the camp along with future projects that they plan to hold as an independent group. The partnership brings community members together to participate in initiatives and social activities for the strengthening of community-based mechanisms on protection from GBV.

Previous joint activities of UNRWA and ABAAD have included the publication of the "[Shadows of Alleys](#)" booklets that enclose personal stories on the sufferings caused by community-imposed norms, traditions and social exclusion. The booklets also include a collection of **180 photos captured by young Palestinian girls and boys** in Burj Chemali Camp, South Lebanon.

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Inauguration of UNRWA HQ's Lactation/Breastfeeding Space

The Lactation/Breastfeeding Space initiative is part of the Agency's Human Resources Action Plan for Gender Parity, which was launched in January 2017. HQ's Nursing Room was inaugurated by the Deputy Commissioner General on 11 November 2018. More specifically, it comes under the requirement to create an enabling environment for women. The room provides female staff members with a private, comfortable and clean environment for milk lactation. It aims to assist working mothers to pump milk and retain milk bottles in a cool and clean place until the end of their working day. Cultivating a work culture where all people can work irrespective of their race, age, gender, disability or any other status and be respected and enjoy equal opportunities is of fundamental importance to UNRWA's credibility, legitimacy and ability to operate efficiently and effectively.

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united nations relief and works agency
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inspiring story

First two Muslim women elected to US congress

A major historic breakthrough was made during the American mid-term elections when the first two Muslim women were elected to serve in congressional office. Rashida Tlaib, and Ilhan Omar are of Palestinian, and Somali origin, respectively. Tlaib has been an outspoken critic of Trump, and Omar, who first came to the United States as a refugee, is the first Somali-American woman to be elected US congress. Omar will soon take office in the Minnesota district in which she ran, while Tlaib will assume her new role in Michigan. Between 2009-2014, Tlaib served in the Michigan House of Representatives, where she helped to secure millions of dollars for free health clinics, and she also acted as a successful fundraiser for a free meal campaign for seniors, and disadvantaged school children. [Read more.](#)

events of interest

The global human rights education and training center (HREA) gender equality training programme to continue into 2019.

Registration is now open for 2019 courses in the gender equality training programme. HREA will continue to offer online learning options on gender equality for both humanitarian and development practitioners. The topics to be covered include: Gender Responsive Budgeting, Gender-based Violence, Women Peace and Security, Gender Mainstreaming, and Gender and Transitional Justice, among others.

Over the past 20 years HREA has reached more than 21,500 educators, human rights defenders and humanitarian workers in 135 countries. HREA is an international non-governmental and non-profit organization that supports human rights education; the training of human rights defenders and professional groups; and the development of educational materials and programming. HREA has also integrated its courses to be stand-alone certificates, or also diplomas, and is currently offering a Gender in Development and Humanitarian Assistance Diploma. [Read more.](#)

Regional News

More females leading startups in the Arab world than in Silicon valley

In many parts of the Arab world, the tech industry is still fairly new, and so there is not the legacy, or the baggage associated with the tech industry being a male-dominated field in many areas. Women in the Arab world are more represented in STEM fields than in other regions, and at all levels of education, women in the Arab world frequently outperform their male counterparts. The industry presents a field for female entrepreneurs where they can work in a profitable sector, with enormous potential for growth. Despite women's high educational achievement in the region, this has not always resulted in career success, and many countries in the region have very low representation of women in the labour force. Firms that are lead, or co-founded by females are often more likely to hire female employees, offering important opportunities for skilled women. This trend of women founding startups in the Arab world

presents an important opportunity for women's career growth in the Arab world, and shows a positive regional trend. [Read more.](#)

#ShameonWho

ABAAD is an NGO that comprises of a dynamic pool of resources, human rights activists, lawyers, experts in their fields, social workers, and researchers that are all dedicated towards achieving gender equality and women's empowerment in the MENA region (UNRWA has partnered with ABAAD for its activities in Lebanon). Recently, ABAAD has launched a campaign that aims to remove the stigma that plagues women and girls who experience sexual violence. A [video](#) released by ABAAD, has been disseminated to shed light on the issue, as the campaign continues its efforts to stop victim-shaming. [Read more.](#)

Reports & Resources

Addressing sexual violence in humanitarian organizations; recommendations, and best practices

In recognition and observance of the global 16 days of activism against gender based violence campaign, and its current theme on addressing violence in the workplace, it is important to recognize efforts that are ongoing in the aid sector in its entirety, as well as those that have paved the way for progress that is ongoing in the field. In the humanitarian sector, the global #MeToo, and #TimesUp campaigns, have inspired the emergence of the #AidToo campaign in the humanitarian and development fields. The (now folded) NGO *Report the Abuse*, is the only organization that has existed specifically to address the issue of sexual violence among humanitarian workers. The founder, Megan Nobert, herself a survivor of sexual violence at the hands of a colleague in South Sudan, has worked with several experts in order to develop resources to make workplaces in the aid sector more enabling, and safe for all. A key resource, with procedures and best practices, on addressing sexual violence in humanitarian settings released by this NGO

can be found here, for members of the aid community who are interested in improving the environment for women in aid. [Read more.](#)

InterAction: Course materials for preventing sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA)

Sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) of beneficiaries by aid workers is a serious concern for the international humanitarian and development community, and represents one of the most serious failures in protection and the duty of humanitarians to beneficiaries. It also undermines the work of all humanitarian workers. All humanitarian workers, in any organization have a duty to do their utmost to prevent SEA, and to report it wherever it occurs. Several organizations have developed resources to assist in this effort. Over the course of three years, through a project funded by the U.S. Department of State Bureau for Population, Refugees, and Migration, InterAction developed several tools and resources to provide training, as well as policy frameworks for humanitarians in strengthening their institutional capacity to mitigate the risk of SEA. [Read more.](#)

Facts of the Month

75 per cent

of women in the developing world work in the informal economy, without legal social protection [Read more.](#)

7.9 million

work days are missed each year in the United States, the equivalent of 32,000 jobs because of domestic violence [Read more.](#)



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UNRWA is a United Nations agency established by the General Assembly in 1949 and mandated to provide assistance and protection to some 5.4 million registered Palestine refugees. Its mission is to help Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank and the Gaza Strip achieve their full human development potential, pending a just and lasting solution to their plight. UNRWA services encompass education, health care, relief and social services, camp infrastructure and improvement, protection and microfinance.

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