



UNRWA joins the 16 Days of Activism Campaign © 2018 UNRWA

monthly updates on gender issues from unrwa and the region

update of the month

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Closing the year, the UNRWA Gender Section activities of 2018 culminated in the **16 Days of Activism Campaign Against Gender-Based Violence**. On the occasion of this global campaign and as part of its wider Gender-Based Violence Prevention Framework, **UNRWA implemented a myriad of activities all across its five areas of operation**. This Gender Bulletin will present some of the outstanding events that took place between 25 November, International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, and 10 December, Human Rights Day, and set the stage for 2019.

stories from unrwa

#HearMeToo at UNRWA: Building staff capacity and engaging communities

UNRWA joined the global campaign and the momentum it creates to accelerate its ongoing efforts to prevent, mitigate and respond to gender-based violence in the organization and its programmes. Being uniquely positioned with the majority of its staff being part of the very communities UNRWA works with, the Agency is following a two-folded strategy of building staff capacities while concomitantly engaging communities. Under this year's theme of the campaign, *'Building staff capacity: shifting attitudes and practices to eradicate GBV'*, **UNRWA increased its efforts within the Agency itself to strengthen staff capacity to improve its response to GBV and address the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse as well as sexual harassment within the workplace to reinforce the policy of zero tolerance.**

In addition, **UNRWA organized hundreds of community-based awareness-raising activities** including theater sessions, focus group discussions, trainings, and structured advocacy events across all five fields of operation.

Initiated in 1991 by the Women's Global Leadership Institute, the 16 Days of Activism take place **under the leadership of the United Nations Secretary-General's UNiTE to End Violence against Women Campaign** and use the color orange as a global unifying theme. In line with this and building on the recent drive for change through various initiatives, such as the #MeToo movement, the theme of 2018 was:

Orange the World, #HearMeToo.



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16 Days of Activism Campaign in UNRWA's five fields of operation

High level commitment to addressing gender-based violence throughout the organization

Exemplifying the Agency's efforts to create an overall supportive environment to address gender equality and gender-based violence, the 16 Days campaign at UNRWA was kicked off with a [video statement](#) by Commissioner-General Pierre Krähenbühl. He reaffirmed the Agency's commitment to strengthening its capacity to address GBV by putting survivors first and integrating new and innovative approaches as well as building the understanding and capacity of staff regarding GBV, including in relation to sexual misconduct. The Commissioner General reaffirmed the importance of setting an example and upholding the highest humanitarian principles. Therefore, he called on all 30,000 UNRWA staff to complete the internal e-learning course on Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies.

Jordan taking the lead in completing UNRWA's newly launched e-Learning course on GBV in Emergencies

As part of its wider GBV program, the Agency has used the occasion of the 16 Days of Activism to launch this e-learning course to strengthen staff capacity to understand and respond to GBV and mitigate its occurring risks in an emergency setting. In Jordan, the **lead focal points for gender-based violence served as role models** in that they took the lead in obtaining the certificates, which initiated a series of more than 200 trainings and awareness-raising sessions aimed at increasing the capacity of over 100 focal points, frontline staff from the education and health programmes, and beneficiaries. Training sessions focused on a range of related issues, including psychological first aid and the survivor-centered approach, as well as GBV services and reporting mechanisms, particularly for sexual exploitation and abuse.



Providing safe passageways through illumination of camps in Syria

In Syria, as part of the ongoing UNRWA programme and on the occasion of the 16 days campaign, **community committee initiatives lighted up dark and narrow alleys in the camps of Jaramana, Alhousynia, Danoun and Qaber Essit** (rural Damascus). One hundred volunteers participated in the activity that aimed at providing safer passage and thereby protect inhabitants, particularly women, girls and children, from abuse and sexual harassment. Electric infrastructure (wires, batteries, LEDs etc.) was installed and one of the houses in the neighborhood was equipped to serve as maintenance and operations station. As this had been identified as priority by the communities during previous UNRWA activities in the camps, the residents of the camps welcomed the initiative and contributed actively to the process providing drinks and assisting the volunteers in any way they could. Particularly women and girls expressed their happiness and relief as this illumination allows for a stronger sense of security. The corridors that have been illuminated now serve as passage also for neighboring areas, which allows 800 residents to benefit from this initiative.



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Traditional storytelling and theatre as a means to address GBV in the West Bank

In West Bank, among other events, this year's campaign agenda featured **creative activities such as storytelling and theatre to raise awareness on root causes of and responses to gender-based violence**. The Child and Family Protection Programme (CFFP) and the Woman and Youth Programme jointly implemented a set of 'storytelling' activities in 12 locations that reached an approximate total of 450 participants from all ages. The **Palestinian Hikaye is a narrative expression practiced by women that consists of fictitious tales, which have evolved over the centuries** and tackle current concerns related to the Palestinian society and family issues, particularly portraying social issues that directly pertain to women's lives and highlighting a female perspective and critique of society. This year, the show featured the 'Mermaid' story with messages on various types of gender-based violence and collective responses. The discussion that succeeded the show served to engage the mixed audience on the root-causes of GBV and ways to combat and eventually eradicate it, including debates on how to socialise children into a community free of GBV. Apart from the Hikaye activities, the CFPP in collaboration with Naám Theatre organised theatre shows that



focused on Child Marriage, Domestic Violence and Women's Rights. The show, titled 'Bridegroom in a Backpack', was implemented in each of the three areas of operation and reached 764 participants from different age groups. The show initiated a dialogue between the participants who were very active in discussing the individual and collective actions to safeguard society against this cycle of abuse and ways to promote healthier practices against harmful social norms.

Women and Girl Committees leading the way as part of multi-stakeholder efforts to raise awareness on child marriage in Lebanon

In Lebanon, the 16 Days Campaign dovetailed into the ongoing work of national and international NGOs with support from UN agencies to **raise people's awareness on consequences and implications of child marriage, considered a form of gender-based violence and prevalent in all communities in Lebanon** (Lebanese, Syrian and Palestine Refugees from Lebanon as well as Syria). Aimed to make use of the current momentum in the country regarding legislative action set forth in Parliament to set the minimum age of marriage to 18 for all religious courts, UNRWA Lebanon and several other stakeholders, such as UN institutions, NGOs and the National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW), launched a **campaign under the general theme "بكير عليها"** ("it is too early for her"). It comprised 26 key messages on issues related to child marriage communicated through tweets, infographics and billboards. As in the other fields of operation, community activities formed a major part of the campaign. Amongst others, the 10 independent Palestinian women and girl community-based committees led awareness sessions, theatrical plays, and documentary screenings in a number of camps, reaching 3,140 community members. These aimed at tackling the harmful traditional practice with endorsed messages highlighting the health, social and educational consequences of child marriage. The women and girl committees also filmed an awareness campaign video that was shared through all social media groups and platforms and featured the Director of UNRWA Operation in Lebanon, Claudio Cordone, sharing the key reasons for eradicating child marriage.

21 maternal deaths recorded in Lebanon in 2017

6 out of 21 were adolescents below 20 years of age.



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Theatre to raise awareness on gender-based violence among communities and staff in Gaza



Likewise, the activities in Gaza were dedicated at building staff knowledge on concepts of gender-based violence as well as its prevention and mitigation, reaching 237 staff and volunteers of the Women Programme Centers (WPC). However, **in line with the agency-wide strategy, Gaza not only emphasized staff capacities, but also implemented awareness-raising sessions targeting the communities.** Like 955 other children, parents and community members, 15-year-old Jawaher Al Jreawi benefited from the awareness-raising sessions about ending child marriage, childhood rights, sexual harassment, and protection techniques that were implemented by the UNRWA relief and social services programmes in cooperation with the seven WPCs, the Community-Based Rehabilitation Centres and the Rehabilitation Centres for Visually Impaired. "This session enhanced my belief that I have the right to education and now I have the capacity to convince my family of the negative effects of early marriage" she happily states after participating in one of the theatre activities.

unrwa's broader framework to prevent, mitigate and respond to GBV

Outlook 2019: Lessons learned to enhance future efforts to address GBV across the Agency

The diverse activities of the 16 days campaign are an expression of **the encompassing framework UNRWA has adopted in the past years to prevent, mitigate and respond to gender-based violence.** In 2016, a baseline was established to elaborate and implement a solid strategy as part of the multi-year project *"Building Safety: Mainstreaming GBV Interventions into Emergency Preparedness, Prevention and Response"* that is coming to an end in 2019 with an endline study. Since its inception phase in 2016, UNRWA has successfully introduced a wide ranging GBV Prevention Framework that complements UNRWA's overall framework to promote gender equality, inscribed in the Gender Equality Policy and the respective Strategy. Employing more than 30,000 staff that are themselves Palestine refugees and are involved in their communities in various capacities, **UNRWA is uniquely positioned within the Palestine refugees' communities.** Thus, as integral part of its Theory of Change and as highlighted above, UNRWA's strategy rests on an inward looking approach, focusing on building capacity of its staff as primary sphere of influence, while concomitantly engaging their communities. 2018 has seen several initiatives, such as the roll-out of broad capacity-building plans on previously identified priority competencies, including the launch of an e-learning course on GBV in Emergencies to be taken by all staff, which will be complemented by on-the-job coachings in the first months of 2019. Overall, the Framework aims to **shift from establishing a common knowledge base to actually changing attitudes and practices as well as establishing a supporting environment across the Agency.** To ensure informed advancement, it is coupled with a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework that will enable the Agency to gather evidence that will track results, measure change, and reflect on successes and failures to build knowledge and contribute to institutional learning.



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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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