



'My dignity is my identity': Ahmad, Loay, and colleagues at Central Youth Summer Camp © 2018 UNRWA Photo by Loay Fawadleh

monthly updates on gender issues in unrwa and the region

update of the month | april 2019 | issue no. 102

In April, UNRWA convened staff working on gender equality and gender-based violence in Amman. The three-day workshop aimed to discuss lessons learned and methods to further integrate gender-based violence interventions into UNRWA programmes, as well as to define strategic priorities to enhance gender equality, and build capacities in gender analysis.

stories from unrwa

Jointly working towards eliminating GBV: Male support in psychosocial supervision

'We are gifts to people as we are always there to listen, support and empower,' explains Ahmad when talking about his and his colleagues' role. Ahmad and Loay are two of nine psychosocial supervisors under the Community Mental Health Programme in the West Bank. As such, they play a crucial role in supporting and encouraging staff to address gender issues, specifically on sensitive challenges such as gender-based violence.

In general, psychosocial supervisors support psychosocial counselors in their daily work with individual cases or counselling groups. Through actively listening to the challenges they face and collaboratively finding solutions that are satisfactory to all parties in a win-win approach, they aim to ensure better continuity of work and high levels of professionalism. With psychosocial counsellors constantly facing obstacles and challenges, particularly when dealing with sensitive and high-risk cases, psychosocial supervisors play a crucial role in providing a supportive work environment. One strand of work pertains to developing the counselors' intervention skills, integrating a survivor-centered approach as per the UNRWA framework on response to GBV, as well as techniques on how to deal with difficulties, pressure, emergencies, and crisis. At the same time, emphasis is put on enhancing counselors' self-awareness and self-care strategies to protect their psychosocial well-being and avoid burn out.

Psychosocial supervisors organize development sessions to reduce anxiety and tension, for example through relaxation exercises, self-awareness and expressive therapy tools such as painting, drama and expressive art.

The Community Mental Health Programme comprises of nine Psychosocial Supervisors in the three departments (health, education and RSS). Five of the nine member team identify as male, including Ahmad and Loay. While gender issues are often associated with women, combating gender-based violence and gender stereotypes pertains to everyone and requires efforts and support by men. Male support is highly valuable to counter staff and community resistance to gender-related work.

Strategic development of gender-related work in UNRWA

As the multi-year project on gender-based violence comes to an end in May, relevant UNRWA staff convened in Amman for a workshop to reflect on its results, lessons learned and future programming. Reflecting the cross-cutting nature of gender-related work, coordinators and focal points from all five fields of UNRWA operation, as well as from headquarters contributed perspectives from the different programmes. As such, the three-day workshop aimed to further ensure that a gender lens is integrated across UNRWA interventions, particularly with regard to sustaining existing mechanisms to address gender-based violence, but also further enhancing implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy 2016-2021.



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inspiring story

#MeTooGaza

Following the global #MeToo movement launched in 2017 to shed light on widespread sexual harassment worldwide, activists launched a social media campaign on Twitter to expand the movement to Gaza. The initiative under the hashtag [#MeTooGaza](#) aims to encourage everyone in the Palestine coastal strip to share their experiences with sexual harassment and thus confront silence around this taboo topic. The initiators also established a space on the website [Saraha](#) that allows subscribers to anonymously and safely share their stories of sexual abuse.

events of interest

Tunis Forum on gender equality

From 24 to 26 April, champions of gender equality from all corners of the world gathered in Tunis to take stock of progress made on women's rights. The Governments of Sweden and Tunisia in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UN Women hosted the Forum that is the first of many global meetings to come leading up to the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 20th anniversary of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325. Bringing together approximately 500 activists and representatives from government, civil society, private sector, academia, and international organizations, the forum discussed women's leadership in local governance, the women, peace and security agenda, and the linkages between innovation, technology and gender equality, with a focus on youth participation. In addition, the Forum was an opportunity to mobilize to make international commitments a lived reality and advocate for actions to accelerate progress and protect the hard-won gains of women's rights. Read more [here](#).

regional news

Lebanon: The Lebanese actress, director, and screenwriter, Nadine Labaki, is the first female Arab director who has ever been nominated for an Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film. Her movie "Capernaum" that tells the story of Zain El Hajj, a 12-year-old living in the slums of Beirut, was nominated in the 2019 Oscars and has won the Jury Prize at Cannes.

Saudi Arabia: The Saudi Arabian Dr. Fatmah Baothman has become the first woman in the Middle East to hold a PhD in Modern Artificial Intelligence. Her dissertation is entitled "Phonology-Based Automatic Speech Recognition for Arabic". Dr. Baothman is currently an Assistance Professor of Artificial Intelligence (AI) at King Abdulaziz University (KAU) in Jeddah.

reports & resources

Advancing gender equality in UNRWA and its programmes

UNRWA just published its **annual report on the implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy 2016-2021 (GES)**. The report highlights the Agency's ongoing efforts in employing a 'dual-track' approach focusing on organizational and programme changes, two levels which are mutually reinforcing and contribute to achieving more inclusive and equitable services for Palestine refugees. Since its adoption and mid-way into its lifetime, the UNRWA Gender Equality Strategy 2016-2021 has already enabled the Agency to make important strides in advancing a more just and gender-sensitive work environment as well as service delivery. Find out more [here](#) about the diverse measures taken, such as including men in pre-conception care and family planning

or introducing a Gender Marker to track resource allocation that contributes to gender equality. Building on yearlong investments, the priority area of addressing gender-based violence through targeted intervention has seen major strides in 2018. As the multi-sectoral project comes to an end in 2019, its mechanisms are being further mainstreamed into the programmes.

Gender, Nationality Laws and Statelessness

UNHCR recently published its new background note on the interplay of gender, nationality laws and statelessness. It particularly highlights inequalities in transferring nationality from mothers to their children - with restrictions in this matter pertaining to twelve states in the Middle East and North Africa. Read more [here](#).

facts of the month

27,702

individuals display increased knowledge on gender-based violence after participating in UNRWA awareness raising activities.

80%

of staff targeted by UNRWA capacity-building activities demonstrate application of knowledge and skills and improved attitudes on GBV prevention.



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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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