



unrwa gender equality strategy
2016-2021
annual implementation report
january-december 2018

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About UNRWA

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, and microfinance.

Cover photo: Distribution of food assistance and NFI (non-food items) at al-Thyabiyeh, Rif Damascus, Syria. © 2018 UNRWA
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chapter one: background

In 2018, UNRWA continued the implementation of its Gender Equality Strategy (GES) 2016-2021 which is grounded in the Agency's Gender Equality Policy (2007), builds on the first Gender Mainstreaming Strategy 2008-2015 and is aligned with, and contributes to, the goals of the UNRWA Medium Term Strategy (MTS) 2016-2021 given the cross-cutting nature of gender. The GES employs 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. To achieve changes in organizational practices and programme implementation, the GES Theory of Change sets forth the following four Drivers of Change:

- i) A strengthened **gender architecture** to ensure that gender structures and coordinating mechanisms are geared towards providing technical inputs and facilitating implementation of identified actions for gender mainstreaming;
- ii) Appropriate allocation and monitoring of financial resources for gender mainstreaming that are tracked through a **Gender Marker** to ensure gender accountability;
- iii) **Leadership**, including the commitment and support of senior leadership and management and programme and administrative staff in managerial roles, to bring about changes to the Agency's organizational culture and operations; and
- iv) **Gender accountability**, to be monitored through a framework for different levels of gender mainstreaming actions.

To operationalize the GES and measure the results of the Agency's gender mainstreaming efforts, time-bound Gender Action Plans are implemented by each field office. Three years on from the adoption of the GES at the mid-point of the Strategy's implementation, this report presents the results from 2018 as well the mid-term assessment of the work that has taken place through the different UNRWA programmes, departments and field offices to bring about a more gender inclusive organizational culture, as well as more inclusive service delivery, with due consideration to the rights, needs, and experiences of Palestine refugee women, men, girls and boys.

While on-going progress and achievements have been made, the overall circumstances of the financial crisis experienced by UNRWA in 2018 also impacted the implementation of processes that had been initiated and delayed some planned initiatives, amongst others linked to the six-month internal deployment of the Head of Gender Section to the Agency's #DignityIsPriceless fundraising campaign.

chapter two: actions undertaken in support of the drivers of change

2.1. gender architecture

The main coordination mechanism for gender mainstreaming in UNRWA continues to be the **Gender Task Force** which consists of seventy Gender Focal Points from the various programmes and field offices. Ordinarily the Gender Focal Points would convene regularly at the field level and Agency-wide to coordinate gender mainstreaming activities and build capacities. However, reduced staff capacity of the UNRWA Gender Task Force limited the room for manoeuvre to further enhance gender mainstreaming, amongst other through limitations to convene the annual Gender Task Force in Amman, which did not take place as during previous years.

2.2. gender marker

The GES has included the establishment of a **Gender Marker**, as part of its four Drivers of Change, which is a tool to track and monitor resources for gender mainstreaming, and is a requirement under the UN System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP). In 2017, a methodology was developed to analyse the UNRWA Programme Budget and the results of the first-ever conducted Gender Marker analysis that were finalised in early 2018 showed that 64.4 per cent of the Programme Budget is contributing significantly to gender mainstreaming (gender marker score = 2a). The education programme contributed a large proportion to the achieved percentage given the size of the programme that was scored as being gender sensitive. In 2018, application of the Gender Marker was expanded to projects with the scoring of the Gender Marker included in the new project outline promulgated by the Department of Planning. An introductory training on how to apply the Gender Marker has been developed and will be rolled-out for relevant staff in 2019. After the roll-out of the training, all UNRWA projects will have to score at least 1 on the Gender Marker to be approved i.e. they need to have the potential to contribute to gender equality.

2.3. leadership

In 2018, an important leadership initiative led by Department of Human Resources saw the [UNRWA Commissioner-General joining the International Gender Champions](#). This initiative is a leadership network bringing together more than 200 decision-makers who are the heads of International Organizations, Permanent Missions, and Civil Society Organizations and who are determined to make gender equality a working reality in their spheres of influence. They have signed the Panel Parity Pledge to no longer sit on single-sex panels and make two individualized commitments. Accordingly, UNRWA Commissioner-General, Pierre Krähenbühl, has committed to : 1) 'Conversations with Women in Conflict Zones' – a process to further inform UNRWA management regarding the barriers faced by female national staff in an effort to promote dialogue and foster cultural change in the organization; and 2) 'School Parliaments' - gender equality can only be achieved by entrusting the next generation of children and youth and so UNRWA will further expand its 'School Parliament Initiative' to equip girls and boys to partner together in becoming agents of change in championing gender equality to their peers and cohorts.

2.4. accountability

In an effort to further enhance accountability on gender in the Agency, UNRWA has continued its endeavours to mainstream gender in its audit function. In particular, the Assurance and Advisory Services Division has considered specific gender-related risks (and response thereto) within their work-plan. Where applicable, audit assignments have included **gender audit** procedures, such as for example the audit of recruitment in Jordan field office, where the practice was assessed against relevant policy (as contained in the UNRWA Human Resources Action Plan on Gender Parity – see below) and the audit did not note any instances of non-compliance.

In 2018, UNRWA reported to and received feed-back from UN Women on the Agency's implementation of the above-mentioned **United Nations System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP)**, a five-year accountability framework agreed upon in 2012 with all UN entities which is designed to measure, monitor and drive progress towards a common set of standards for the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women within the UN system. UNRWA met or exceeded 80 per cent of all performance requirements in 2017, which constitutes an increase of 20 per cent to the 2012 reporting cycle. Pending the next assessment of the Agency, it remains to be seen to what extent increased requirements under the new UN SWAP 2.0 indicators which were launched in 2018 will influence the results for 2018.

In November 2018, the UNRWA Advisory Commission passed a recommendation which called on the Agency to take further strides to implement the GES and work towards gender equality particularly in its workforce and leadership. Moreover, it encouraged the Agency to further build internal capacity to respond to, mitigate, and prevent gender-based violence and continue its efforts and its reporting in this regard.

chapter three: progress in 2018 on the implementation of the ges 2016-2021

This section is structured to follow the Gender Equality Strategy's 'Theory of Change', highlighting activities undertaken at organizational and programme levels. The main source of information, for which examples are provided below, are inputs provided by field offices who have reported against their Gender Action Plans, which has been cross-referenced with information provided by HQ programme departments. The results below reflect the work of the different programmes, which together constitute the implementation of the GES given the cross-cutting nature of gender.

3.1. gender mainstreaming in organizational practice: unrwa organizational culture & management are more gender-sensitive when representing both staff and community (outcome 1)

At the organizational level, gender mainstreaming is aimed at developing a gender-sensitive organizational culture and management practices by focusing on inclusive staff development, staff's gender awareness and capacity development, staff safety and security, monitoring and knowledge, internal communications and participation of staff and inclusive outreach and participation of community members.

3.1.1 inclusive staff development and increased sense of ownership on gender mainstreaming among senior and middle management staff

In December 2017, UNRWA adopted a Human Resources Action Plan on Gender Parity in line with the United Nations Secretary-General's System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity issued in September 2017. The Action Plan is designed to support the Agency in achieving and maintaining gender parity at all levels through the following two-pronged approach:

(i) a series of special measures with regard to recruitment procedures that are being utilised to ensure that more female candidates are considered for and appointed to senior positions; and (ii) the creation of an enabling environment and organizational culture that are more conducive to the career advancement of female staff.

Although the UN System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity relates only to international staff, UNRWA is also seeking to achieve gender parity within the ranks of senior area staff. While the Agency's overall workforce reflects gender parity (51 per cent female and 49 per cent male among all area and international staff), when examining the gender breakdown against senior and leadership positions (P-5 and above for international staff; grade 16 and above for area staff) at the end of 2018, these figures stood at 27 per cent female and 73 per cent male for area staff, and 44 per cent female and 56 per cent male for international staff. With regard to the gender breakdown for international staff, in 2018, 44 per cent of senior international vacancies (P-5 and above) were filled by female candidates. For international staff, a considerable challenge rests in the limited female applicant pool that presents itself for some senior-level positions. To address this obstacle, UNRWA continues to utilise Senior Female Talent Pools which aim to ensure a pipeline of qualified female professionals for senior level positions.

For its area staff, women who return to work after childbirth are an important asset as they understand UNRWA priorities better than a new employee, fit well in the organisational culture and have an already developed skillset specific to the job they are performing. By managing maternity well, the Agency can encourage women to return to work after childbirth and help to close the leaks in the female talent pipeline. To this end, in 2018 a new policy was developed for implementation in 2019 that will see new mothers returning to work after maternity leave being able to work 80 per cent with full pay. In addition, the Agency further developed an inclusive and supportive work environment for new mothers through the establishment of a nursing room in the Agency Headquarters in Amman, an initiative that will be extended across all fields of operation. The breastfeeding room was inaugurated by the Deputy Commissioner-General UNRWA on 11 November 2018 and provides female staff members with a private, comfortable and clean environment for milk lactation.

| Indicator | Baseline 2018 (%) | Target 2018 (%) | Actual 2018 (%) | Target 2021 (%) |
|--|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Percentage of senior positions held by women (area staff) | 26 | 32 | 27 | 50 |
| Percentage of senior positions held by women (international staff) | 45 | 46 | 44 | 50 |

In **Gaza**, as a supplement to the Agency-wide 'Leadership Across Borders Training Programme', the Gaza Field Office (GFO) Human Resources Career Development Office implemented a follow-up component focused on enhancing female staff's management and leadership skills to increase their chances of being recruited for senior management positions or temporarily acting in such positions. Even though the financial crisis led to the freezing of many recruitment processes which limited the opportunities to hire or promote female staff, 76 female staff were assigned to higher positions on an acting basis, 12 out of these for senior positions. Steps were also taken to give assignments to existing female staff in order to increase their capacity and prepare them for future recruitment processes for higher positions. In line with this, the Education programme identified a roster of potential female staff that could fill the job of Area Education Officers. Further steps were taken to ensure knowledge, awareness, and ownership of the 'UNRWA Human Resources Action Plan on Gender Parity' which was presented to eighteen senior managers in GFO. Aiming to increase staff ownership, last year's 'Be Bold for Change' gender promotion initiative of the relief and social services programme (RSSP), that promoted gender sensitivity in the workplace and in the community, came to an end in 2018 with the identification of seventeen gender ambassadors that received letters of appreciation.

In **Jordan**, the Gender Task Force was made aware of the requirements for gender parity and suggestions to balance the gender ratio of the members of the Gender Task Force were implemented. While the ratio was one male to eight females in August, in December the ratio stood at three males to nine females. Likewise, the Terms of Reference of the GBV Network are under review to increase gender-balance in leadership roles. Whenever possible, if the GBV lead focal point is female, then her back-up should be male and vice versa.

3.1.2. staff capacity and awareness of gender related issues

Building staff capacity and awareness on gender and GBV is crucial to ensuring more equitable and inclusive services for Palestine refugees. This section highlights some examples of capacity-building and awareness-raising undertaken in 2018. Despite the impact of the funding crisis, in total, 2,555 staff received some form of training on Gender or GBV during 2018. In general, the trainings focused on general awareness and knowledge about gender and specific programmatic gender-related initiatives as well GBV.

In **Gaza**, introductory training sessions on gender mainstreaming were delivered to sixty senior officers who are part of the five Area Management Teams within the five governorates of Gaza, while twenty-nine female education staff, targeted by the 'Together towards Leadership' initiative, attended an orientation session on the GES. In **Jordan**, several trainings on gender equality and gender mainstreaming were delivered to all departments, targeting around ninety-four staff, including senior managers. In **Lebanon**, as steps towards implementing recommendations of the gender audit, a gender mainstreaming work plan was developed and seventy-five senior staff from RSS received training on gender mainstreaming. In **Syria** and the **West Bank**, training on gender was coupled with the training on addressing gender-based violence.

With regard to programme-related capacity building initiatives, the bulk of the trainings in all UNRWA fields of operations focused on GBV with 2,419 staff receiving training in 2018 as part of the roll-out of the GBV capacity building plans that were developed as part of the Building Safety project and are tailored to the specific needs of each field (see below).

In addition, building on the policies, strategies and programmes of the Education Reform and the Medium Term Strategy (MTS), UNRWA teachers were supported towards promoting gender equality in every aspect of school life. In this regard a **Gender Guide for Teachers** was rolled out to all field offices during the scholastic year 2017/2018 through two-day training workshops, targeting a total of 156 Strategic Support Unit (SSU) Staff of Education Specialists. The Gender Guide for Teachers also specifically addresses protection risks, including of GBV in UNRWA schools. UNRWA also continuously reviewed host country textbooks against the UNRWA Curriculum Framework in order to ensure that gender is appropriately addressed with gender being one of the three key review criteria for the curriculum.

In **Gaza**, the Health programme trained 212 staff on early detection of breast cancer, on pre-conception care and on gender-based violence. In **Jordan**, the Health Programme conducted eight workshops for 277 staff on gender, GBV, and mental health issues. Likewise, in **Lebanon**, 202 health staff received training on GBV Standard Operation Procedures (SOP) in order to enhance their capacities in case identification and referral. In **Syria**, the Education Programme continued to assess and address gender-related risks in and around schools in coordination with UNICEF and developed gender-related materials that enriched the curriculum. In the **West Bank**, the Education Programme rolled out the Gender Guide for Teachers in the classroom to 1,702 teachers in all ninety-six schools between September and November 2018.

In line with the Agency-wide zero tolerance policy on **Sexual Exploitation and Abuse** (SEA) and the Commissioner-General's priorities, a training package on Prevention and Response to Sexual Misconduct was developed during the second half of 2018 in close coordination with HQ Ethics Office and Protection Division. The training package addressed SEA as well as Sexual Harassment in the workplace and UNRWA started to roll-out the training in all its fields of operations. In Jordan, the package was piloted by training 26 GBV and SEA focal points, and then rolled-out to cover 1,123 frontline staff (385 male, 738 female). Other field offices followed, with 2,377 participants of the training completed until today in Lebanon, Syria, West Bank and Headquarters in Amman, and further training sessions to follow in Gaza.

The monthly [Gender Bulletin](#) drafted by the Gender Section at HQ with inputs from field offices continues to highlight UNRWA gender interventions and share news and tools on gender and women's empowerment across the region and beyond, both among staff and external partners.

3.1.3 monitoring and evaluation

The monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the GES continues to occur through the Common Monitoring Matrix of the MTS and quarterly reporting against gender-sensitive indicators and disaggregated data in the Results Based Monitoring system. In addition and in order to measure the impact of the GBV programme, UNRWA developed a comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation Framework based on previous reporting mechanisms and integrating components on long-term impact measurement as well as project-related indicators for the 'Building Safety: Mainstreaming GBV Interventions into Emergency Preparedness, Prevention and Response'. A tool was developed for data collection including a questionnaire used in all five fields of operation to assess knowledge gains and changes in attitudes of participants of GBV related activities.

3.2. gender mainstreaming in programmes: unrwa programmes and service delivery are tailored to the needs and rights of women, men, girls and boys

The goal of gender mainstreaming at the programme level is – consistent with specific programme approaches – to strengthen the gender focus of service delivery to Palestine refugees by taking into account the particular vulnerabilities and differing needs, interests, capacities and coping strategies of women, men, girls and boys. In the context of the Gender Task Force, a number of gender mainstreaming priorities have been agreed Agency-wide, and the key results for these during the reporting period have been as follows:

3.2.1. addressing gender-based violence

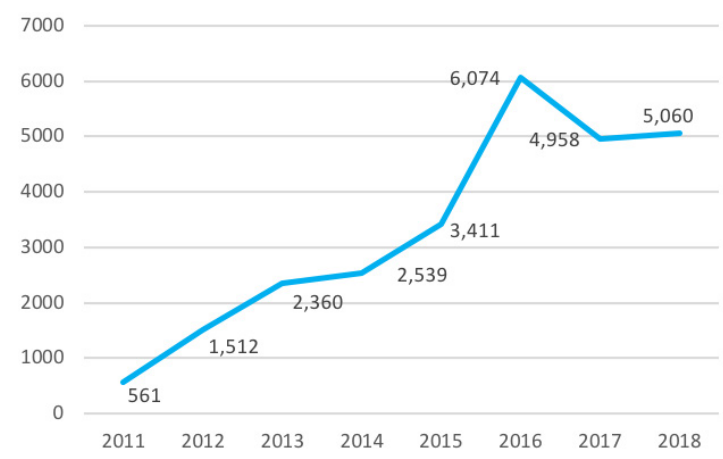
During 2018 UNRWA accelerated the implementation of the '**Building Safety: Mainstreaming GBV Interventions into Emergency Preparedness, Prevention and Response**' project that is scheduled to be completed in May 2019. Progress on the implementation of the project included i) the roll-out of GBV Prevention Roadmaps and capacity-building plans in all five fields of operation; ii) the finalisation and roll-out of a training package on understanding GBV - particularly in emergencies; iii) the development and piloting of an e-Learning course on GBV in Emergencies that will be rolled-out agency-wide to all 30,000 staff in the coming years (initial target of 3,000 staff to be reached by December 2020).

One strand of the project aims to enhance the institutional and accountability structures for GBV response, mitigation and prevention. To this end, six initiatives to operationalize guidelines and approaches and 19 initiatives that establish mechanisms to integrate GBV prevention that apply protocols and standards have been undertaken. Furthermore, the project aims to strengthen staff capacities through capacity-building initiatives across UNRWA fields of operation, which – along with other factors - has already led to increasing numbers of GBV survivors identified (see below). At the same time, the project has reached out effectively to the communities through the development and implementation of 89 community protection plans and 250 self-protection activities. These combined interventions have resulted in 27,702 individuals displaying an increase in knowledge about GBV prevention, while 80 per cent of staff who have taken part in capacity-building activities related to gender or GBV has demonstrated application of knowledge and skills and improved attitudes on GBV prevention.

In 2018, an estimated 5,060 Palestine refugee survivors of GBV, out of which 122 were persons with disabilities, were identified by UNRWA programmes across all five fields of operation. Of all individuals identified, 2,595 were women, 250 men, 1,724 girls, and 491 boys. The Agency provided assistance to an estimated 4,978 of those GBV survivors identified. Of those assisted, 51.6 per cent (2,570) were women, 34.2 per cent (1,703) were girls, 9.4 per cent (468) were boys, and 4.8 per cent (237) were men. As the graph shows, the long-term trend clearly indicates an increase in identification which may be related to better staff understanding of, and capacity to, address GBV. For example in Jordan in 2018 there was a 707 per cent increase in the number of GBV cases managed by the GBV network (45 cases in 2017 and 318 cases in 2018). In the course of 2018, particularly UNRWA health and education programmes incrementally identified more cases, possibly indicating their enhanced capabilities. With 98.4 per cent of survivors identified being referred in 2018 compared to 89.2 per cent in 2016 across the Agency, this also implies better coverage in the access to services. Through the direct provision of Agency services and/or referrals to external service providers, GBV survivors were provided with assistance that included medical, legal and/or psychosocial counselling and other services.

The aforementioned activities contributed to the Agency's continued commitment to address GBV as a member of the ['Call to Action on Protection from GBV in Emergencies'](#), a collective effort by donors, UN agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other stakeholders to strengthen the GBV response in situations of humanitarian crisis.

number of gbv survivors identified 2011-2018



Achieving its targets for 2018 under the Call to Action, UNRWA ensured that: all field offices are actively involved in the different humanitarian clusters and working groups related to gender and GBV; the Gender Marker was established for all its emergency projects; the GBV Prevention Framework was rolled-out in all five fields of operations; and the GBV in Emergencies e-Learning course was piloted.

From 25 November until 10 December, [UNRWA joined the 16 Days of Activism Campaign to eliminate gender-based violence](#) under the year's slogan: Orange the World, #HearMeToo and used the impetus it created to accelerate the implementation of its overarching GBV Prevention Framework. The Agency theme chosen was 'Building staff capacity: shifting attitudes and practices to eradicate GBV' aimed at strengthening staff capacity to improve the response to GBV and address the issue of SEA as well as sexual harassment within the workplace. 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. Demonstrating the senior leadership of the Agency's efforts to create an overall supportive environment to address gender equality and GBV, the 16 Days campaign was launched 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 16 Days Campaign was also the first occasion for UNRWA to screen [TV spots](#) that were developed as part of the Building Safety project with a focus on GBV, early marriage and gender roles.

The below provides an overview of field-based activities carried out during the 16 Days Campaign:

- In **Jordan**, the Agency launched the e-learning course to strengthen staff capacity to understand and respond to GBV and mitigate its occurring risks in an emergency setting. GBV focal points served as role models in completing the course, which initiated a series of more than 200 trainings and awareness-raising sessions aimed at increasing the capacity of the 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 SEA.

- In **Gaza**, the activities were dedicated to building staff knowledge on concepts of GBV as well as its prevention and mitigation, reaching 237 staff and volunteers of the Women Programme Centers. GFO not only emphasized staff capacities, but also implemented awareness-raising sessions targeting the communities. 955 children, parents and community members benefited from the awareness-raising sessions about ending child marriage, child rights, sexual harassment, and protection techniques.

- In **Lebanon**, the campaign dovetailed into the ongoing work of national and international NGOs with support from UN agencies to raise people's awareness on the consequences and implications of child marriage which is prevalent in all communities in Lebanon. Making 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, a multi-stakeholder initiative launched a campaign under the general theme "it is too early for her". Community-based activities also formed a major part with the then independent Palestinian women and girl community-based committees leading theatrical plays and documentary screenings in a number of camps, reaching 3,140 community members. The committees also filmed an awareness video featuring the Director of UNRWA Operations in Lebanon who shared the key reasons for eradicating child marriage.

- In **Syria**, community committee initiatives lit 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 protecting inhabitants, particularly women, girls and children, from sexual abuse and harassment. As this had been identified as priority by the communities during previous UNRWA activities in the camps, the residents welcomed the initiative and contributed actively to the process.

Women and girls in particular expressed their happiness and relief as this illumination allows for a stronger sense of security. In total, 800 residents benefited from this initiative.

- In **West Bank**, the campaign featured creative activities such as storytelling and theatre to raise awareness on the root causes of, and responses to, GBV that involved a total of 568 Palestine refugees. The Child and Family Protection Programme (CFPP) 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. In addition, the CFPP, in collaboration with the Naám Theatre, organised shows that focused on child marriage, domestic violence and women's rights and reached 764 participants from different age groups and successfully initiated a dialogue on the individual and collective actions to safeguard society against this cycle of abuse and ways to promote healthier practices against harmful social norms.

The above are examples of the hundreds of awareness-raising activities organized throughout the year in all five fields of operation to engage Palestine refugee communities in the prevention of GBV. In total, UNRWA reached out to 26,202 community members (women, men, boys, and girls) and the tools used to monitor the impact of these activities showed that 87 per cent of the participants felt comfortable and positive in promoting prevention of gender-based violence in their communities.

3.2.2. including men in pre-conception care (pcc) and family planning and other gender related health needs

UNRWA is committed to improve gender-sensitive health services, responding to varying needs of women, men, boys and girls. As part of its efforts to enhance coverage and quality of maternal and child health services, a priority intervention for the Agency is **to include men in pre-conception care (PCC) and family planning**. In **Syria**, the UNRWA Health Programme continued working on men's involvement with 1,135 couples engaged in pre-conception care and 1,024 in family planning. This was complemented by in-job awareness sessions during supervision visits to encourage staff to highlight the importance of including men to their clients. In **Gaza**, 24 mixed family planning awareness sessions were conducted for 500 couples. In **Jordan**, the RSS and health programmes, in collaboration with the Women Programme Centres, enhanced understanding of 455 Palestine refugees (380 females and 75 males) on reproductive health, family planning and better parenting by conducting workshops.

For the first time, husbands attended preconception care and family planning activities.

Other reproductive health related initiatives:

In **Gaza**, 98.2 per cent of pregnant women attended at least four pre-conception care sessions, which is understood to contribute to the low number of maternal deaths in 2018. In addition, 82 breast cancer awareness sessions were carried out in the health centres, attended by 1,640 persons (1,240 female and 400 male) with the aim of delivering breast cancer awareness sessions to men to create a sense of commitment towards their wives in order to support them psychologically. Likewise, in collaboration with the Women Programme Centres, 749 female camp residents in **Jordan** enhanced their understanding of reproductive health and other health issues such as breast cancer, blood pressure, diabetes, nutrition, as well as better parenting. Breast feeding rooms were created in eight out of twenty-six health centres enabling the mothers to nourish their babies comfortably. In **Gaza**, the health programme has created breastfeeding rooms since 2012 with 70 per cent of the health centres now having a breastfeeding room. In the Gaza Field Office, an initiative was also started in 2018 to identify and equip a breastfeeding/nursing room for the staff in the compound.

Several initiatives in the **West Bank** were organized to bring together women's groups to empower women and improve their awareness on health related issues. One strand – with a total of five groups with 53 participants – was dedicated to newly-married women and aims to enhance couple's communication, the wives' self-awareness, as well as awareness on sexual and reproductive health and rights, while another one is specifically tailored to pregnant women's needs. The Sexual Education Groups take a similar approach with emphasis on sexual development, birth control and sexually transmitted diseases. In 2018, the Child and Family Protection Programme held twenty-seven sessions for three groups with forty women in a joint effort between the health counsellors and staff, specifically midwives who played the leading role in the implementation of the group activities. In **Lebanon**, 1,730 (1,525 female and 205 male) Palestine refugees (including 382 PRS) participated in GBV sensitization activities about child marriage and other topics in partnership with women's committees and women's programme associations.

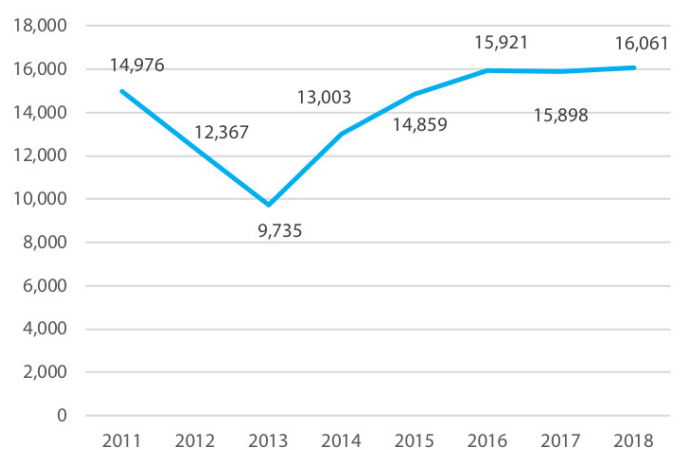
3.2.3. economic empowerment and leadership

UNRWA has worked to address the widespread gender disparity in employment and economic activities among Palestine refugees in striving to **provide economic opportunities to women**. In particular, during 2018, 16,061 women accessed loans through the Agency's microfinance programme in four areas of operations (Gaza, West Bank, Jordan, and Syria) which represented 82 per cent of the 2018 target number. The amount and percentage of loans provided to women has increased significantly over the years (see graph), with a five-fold multiplication in lending to women between 2007 and 2011 (3,055 loans to women in 2007) and a further increase of 7.3 per cent since then which can be attributed to the programme's strategy with an outreach approach specifically tailored to women.

The field distribution of microfinance loans to women was as follows:

- In **Gaza**, 41 per cent of all loans were disbursed to women (1,100 loans, representing 46 per cent of the 2018 target)
- In the **West Bank**, women received 40 per cent of all loans (4,247 loans, representing 85 per cent of the 2018 target)
- In **Jordan**, 48 per cent of loans benefitted women (6,728 loans, representing 79 per cent of the 2018 target)
- In **Syria**, despite the prevailing crises, the programme succeeded to disburse 36 per cent of loans to women (3,986 loans, representing 110 per cent of the 2018 target)

number of women accessing microcredit 2011-2018



In addition to microfinance loans, many initiatives across the five fields of operation were undertaken aimed at providing vocational trainings to women in order to enhance their opportunities for employment and participation as well as enhance their basic life skills. For example:

In **Gaza**, a series of trainings for professional and personal development targeted young female graduates. In 480 training days of 3 hours each, the 173 participants learned about: 1) leadership and management skills, including decision-making, conflict resolution, communication, and project cycle management; 2) advanced IT skills, 3) professional English language; 4) GBV and respective rights and mechanisms. In addition, direct work placements were granted to 160 female graduates.

In 2018, 692 women graduated from vocational trainings in **Syria**, compared to 568 women in 2017.

In **Jordan**, 1,651 students (676 female, 975 male) were enrolled in Vocational Training Centres (VTC), including 9 Palestine refugees from Syria (PRS), while 633 female and 724 male students graduated from VTCs, including 8 female and 9 male PRS. 185 students (143 female and 42 male) were enrolled in the teacher training programme and 149 females and 34 males obtained teacher qualifications from the Faculty of Education Science and Arts (FESA). The average employment rate of graduates is above 90 per cent with an average female employment rate of 87 per cent for VTC graduates and 92 per cent for FESA graduates. In addition to this formal education and training, 616 youths (155 males and 461 females) benefitted from trainings aimed at improving livelihood capabilities. Through collaboration with organisations such as Japan International Cooperation Agency and the Enhanced Productivity Centers Programme (IRADA) by the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, specialised training was conducted by the WPCs on microenterprise development, hydroponic cultivation, as well as cooking and food procession which reached 364 women and sixteen men.

In the **West Bank**, strong emphasis was similarly put on vocational training for young women to increase their chances of successful economic participation and the RSS Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP) continued to prioritize females and economically marginalized people in its economic services and livelihood interventions. To that end, 624 young women were provided with different vocational training courses during the school year 2017/2018 and 260 women received counseling and business coaching aiming to equip them with creative thinking and an entrepreneurial mindset.

In addition, 220 women had the chance to participate in professional trainings in business development, including financial and debt management, feasibility studies, marketing, as well as gender and entrepreneurship. Another forty women received vocational training that ranged from hair-dressing, sewing and embroidery to photography, electronics and office management. Another noteworthy initiative was implemented by UNDP Deprived Families Economic Empowerment Programme (DEEP) in coordination with RSS in which the Jenin Women's center received funds to offer twelve female youth in Jenin refugee camp a one-year apprenticeship program, integrating the participants into the vocational sewing workshop thus providing them with long term employment.

In terms of infrastructure improvement, GBV and sexual harassment concerns faced by girls and parents were mitigated at five schools in **Jordan** by replacing external latrine blocks with internal latrine for boys and girls inside the school building. Apart from that, gender-specific needs are being addressed in camp shelter rehabilitation projects ensuring provision of separate toilets and bedrooms for girls and boys above the age of 18. Four shelters, one in Talbieh and three in Husn camp, were provided with separate toilet and bedroom improving the living conditions as well as privacy of the households. Furthermore, the Emergency Response Programme in Jordan ensured equal access to cash assistance to Palestine Refugees from Syria regardless of their gender to support them in meeting life-saving needs as well as in coping with the crisis. Considering that 31 per cent of recorded PRS households in Jordan are female-headed, equitable access to cash assistance is crucial as it triggers a positive transformation in gender relationships. During the fourth quarter of 2018, Jordan field office provided unconditional cash assistance to 4,087 PRS families (16,602 individuals, 52 per cent female beneficiaries), including 1,336 female-headed households. The programme also ensured due representation of female PRS in the bi-annual Post Distribution Monitoring exercise conducted to assess their satisfaction about the efficiency in the distribution method, communication and sufficiency of the cash entitlements with regard to their actual needs. Also, 66 female-headed and 181 male-headed households benefitted from the Emergency Cash Assistance component, which is a response to urgent lifesaving needs.

In **Lebanon**, 62 youth (34 girls, 28 boys), who are members of the three youth committees established in partnership with Women Programme Associations in Rashidieh, El Buss and Ein El Hilweh camps, participated in two training sessions covering six modules about the following topics: 1) team building and group dynamics, 2) interactive conflict transformation, 3) group facilitation methods,

4) introjection and cycle of experience, 5) UNRWA services, and 6) job related skills.

3.2.4. addressing school drop-out

The UNRWA Education programme, which in the current 2018-19 scholastic year operates 708 elementary and preparatory schools in its five areas of operation (including 8 secondary schools in Lebanon), provides free basic education for 532,857 Palestine refugee children. For the scholastic year 2018/2019, girls represent about 49.8 per cent of all enrolled students in UNRWA schools (**Gaza**: 48.4 per cent; **Jordan**: 48.5 per cent; **Syria**: 49.2 per cent; **West Bank**: 59.7 per cent; **Lebanon**: 52.7 per cent).

Addressing school drop-out has been a priority of the Education Reform through its strategic and operational approach and remains so under the Education MTS Strategic Outcome with continued embedding of its principles and practices; this includes the identification of students at risk of dropping out and working to prevent them from doing so. In 2012, a comprehensive study¹ was undertaken by UNRWA and two international institutes that reflected the complexity of reasons for school drop-out, ranging from academic performance, to social and economic status of the students' families. Department of Education has led a systemic education programme approach to strengthen the whole system from classroom practices to policy frameworks to help counter these factors. The Inclusive Education approach helps to ensure that all Palestine refugee children, regardless of gender, abilities, disabilities, socio-economic status, health, and psychosocial needs have equal opportunity for learning in UNRWA schools. In this regard UNRWA has worked on building the capacity of its education staff on the approach by providing key tools to teachers and strengthening the system to support Inclusive Education. Monitoring issues related to the gendered-dimension of drop-out is also a focus of the GES. In this sense the Agency's education services and gender inclusion are mutually reinforcing and gender approaches help achieve overall education outcomes. A number of initiatives included in the Gender Action Plans of field offices have targeted gendered issues, such as child marriage and child labour that are linked to school drop-out.

These efforts have resulted in relatively low drop-out rates in UNRWA schools and there has been a continuous decrease in the cumulative drop-out rates² in UNRWA schools in recent years, for both, elementary and preparatory levels as well as for both among male and female. In general, across all the fields of operation, boys are usually more likely than girls to drop out of school. While in 2016, the cumulative drop-out rate amounted to 1.25 for elementary school and

2.84 for preparatory school, by 2018, the cumulative rates have decreased to 0.78 and 2.34 respectively.

With regard to elementary schools, a key factor in the reductions in 2017/18 cumulative dropout rates are that repetition rates fell across all fields of Agency operation (the 2012 UNRWA study found that a child who repeats is ten times more likely to dropout). Performance in all the Fields was generally improved – with the exception of Jordan who witnessed a reduction in the cumulative drop-out rate for females, but an increase for males (generally attributable to financial hardship).

With regards to the preparatory schools, the 2017/18 Agency-wide cumulative drop-out rates, overall and gender-disaggregated, has improved since 2016/17 and is ahead of the target. At the Field level, there were improvements in Gaza and Lebanon in relation to both male and female drop-out rates and in the West Bank, amongst males. In Syria, there was a slight increase in the male cumulative drop-out rate (although still ahead of target), but there was a larger increase in the drop-out rates amongst females. In Jordan, there was a very slight increase in the female drop-out rate (although still ahead of target), and a much larger increase amongst males. In all Fields, repetition rates have fallen amongst both male and female students since 2016/17, and this is assumed to have contributed to the overall reduction in cumulative dropout rates.

In **Gaza**, assessments showed that child labour is disproportionately affecting boys around UNRWA distribution centres and is closely linked to school drop-out. As a result a project on child labour was initiated in 2017 and completed in 2018 to provide individual case support and assessment to 130 children who had dropped out of schools. Project activities included psychological, social, and educational aspects, such as remedial classes, vocational training and income support. In addition, 135 UNRWA students aged 16 and above with low educational achievements had the opportunity to join short-term vocational courses. Fifty-five male students attended training in carpenter, smothery, and construction, and 80 female students learned on web design, photography, food processing, and child care. Apart from that, GFO addressed child marriage – representing a major cause for girls' school drop-out – in 500 awareness sessions implemented in UNRWA schools, involving 10,000 parents of adolescents and 24,120 grade eight and nine students, as well as 2,200 teachers and 1,650 mothers in the schools, to increase their awareness of the negative health impact of child marriage.

In **Lebanon**, awareness-raising sessions were conducted in 65 schools to enhance students' and parents' understanding of child marriage and its interconnectedness with education and health issues. In **Jordan**, individual counselling, group counselling, and awareness-raising sessions were held on various issues related to drop-out, child marriage, child labour, corporal punishment, and GBV. Furthermore, gender and reproductive health education, which are integrated into the grade 9 and 10 curricula, were delivered as part of biology and health education subjects.

3.2.5. promoting women's rights

Across the Agency, UNRWA continued to address the rights and needs of Palestine refugee women, girls, boys and men in various advocacy activities and reporting including as part of the [Report of the Secretary-General to the Committee on the Status of Women \(CSW\) on the Situation of and Assistance to Palestinian Women](#). UNRWA also made confidential submissions to international human rights mechanisms, including the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in its review of Palestine under the CEDAW Convention as well as GBV and gender dimensions of other human rights concerns under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and other human rights treaties and Human Rights Council special procedures. This work, led by the Department of Legal Affairs and based on field-priority protection issues, also addressed the Agency's contribution to the rights and needs of Palestine refugee women and girls through Agency programming in UNRWA host states. Further gender analysis of programme delivery and priority protection issues is important to facilitate further advocacy on the basis of international human rights standards and obligations.

¹ [UNRWA School Dropout: An Agency-Wide Study \(2013\)](#).

² The cumulative drop-out rate represents the proportion of cohort of pupils enrolled in the first grade of the cycle who drop-out before reaching the last grade of the cycle.

chapter four: conclusion

Since its adoption and mid-way into its lifetime, the UNRWA Gender Equality Strategy 2016-21 has already enabled the Agency to make important strides in advancing a more just and gender-sensitive work environment as well as service delivery. Many initiatives have contributed to an organisational culture that is increasingly conducive to the needs of all employees regardless of their gender with the Human Resources Action Plan on Gender Parity representing an important milestone in 2018. A myriad of trainings on concepts of gender, GBV and other related issues covered in the GES have been delivered to staff at all levels across the Agency and there have been many programmatic innovations to ensure gender-sensitive delivery of services. Promoting and enhancing gender equality is a long-term endeavour requiring behavioural change and addressing cultural barriers and therefore results can only be expected progressively.

However, more needs to be done to promote gender equality in UNRWA services and organizational culture. Several challenges affected the implementation of the GES and slowed the impetus generated previously, not least the financial crisis that impacted the Agency in 2018. Most crucially, the Gender Section at HQ was affected with the loss/redeployment of staff and the reduction in staff involved in gender-related interventions was observed in some places across the Agency. These challenges delayed the implementation of the drivers of change of the gender equality strategy.

Given these constraints the principal focus during 2018 has been on the implementation of the GBV Building Safety project and preparing the ground for the development of a transition plan in 2019 to ensure its further mainstreaming in UNRWA programmes. Efforts on no-cost related processes within the GES drivers of change continued in 2018 and will be accelerated in 2019. Going forward, the focus will be to further conceptualise and develop measures to enhance gender equality in the Agency and to determine the concrete next steps to be taken to continue successfully implementing the GES.



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