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## monthly updates on gender issues in unrwa and the region

## update of the month

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UNRWA joined the 16 Days Activism Campaign to eliminate gender-based violence. Happening from 25 November to 10 December, this year's theme is "Orange the World: Generation Equality Stands Against All Forms of GBV." A number of events are organized across all five fields of UNRWA operations as part of the campaign.

## stories from unrwa

### Gender Forum on Women Economic Empowerment in UNRWA HQ Amman

On October 9<sup>th</sup>, UNRWA held its third Gender Forum on Women Economic Empowerment that was attended by UNRWA Officer-In-Charge, Christian Saunders, who discussed with participants and panelists the meaning of women economic empowerment, the challenges faced by women and the limitations to their participation in the labour market as well as the vulnerabilities of Palestine refugees women.

The forum was facilitated by UNRWA, with UN-Women in Jordan presenting the initial results of a Meta-Analysis on Women Economic Empowerment (WEE). UNRWA also presented an overview of the microfinance programme in Jordan and how it aims to support women access to microcredits, while the UNRWA Gender Mainstreaming Officer in Jordan Field Office, presented the initial results of a Gender Vulnerability Assessment in the camps.

The participants heard from UN-Women the main challenges faced by women when it comes to their participation in the labour force in Jordan: harmful social norms, biased laws and regulations, unpaid care work and responsibilities related to assigned gender roles, sexual harassment and fear of sexual harassment, lack of access to transportation and wage gap.

The examined reports and studies agree that women in public policies are not a priority and stress the lack of real political will and commitment to increase women's participation in the labor force. Many of the studies advocate for more solid policy changes, such as developing a nation-wide system to monitor and evaluate the progress in WEE and also engaging men and boys in supporting the policy change.

UNRWA Microfinance Chief in Jordan stressed that microfinance promotes women economic empowerment by cultivating inclusion, self-reliance, and independence. Over the last decade, UNRWA has made large strides in building financial products that will support women. However most beneficiaries create home-based businesses, which are seen to be more adaptive to their context. The UNRWA Gender Vulnerability Assessment which looked at Palestine Refugees women and their vulnerabilities, presented ideas to shift the focus from humanitarian relief aid to long-term empowerment, advocating for equipping women with new vocational training that will allow access to better paid jobs.

The participants insisted on the cultural barriers that are impeding women economic empowerment, highlighting the importance of family care and primacy of the reproductive role for women and therefore the need for a wide range of support to facilitate their access to work and support the balance



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## inspiring story

### Palestinian Artist & Cook Mirna Bamieh

Mirna, an artist/film-maker, funded Palestine Hosting Society, a live art project that investigates food practices in Palestine. Over dinner tables, the project brings back the forgotten traditional dishes to life by using the recipes safeguarded in the memories of the elders. Through the project, she aims to preserve the rich culinary history and traditions of the Palestine and give people a sense of belonging as they eat around the table. On the 14th of October, Mirna was invited to the Palestinian Museum's Inaugural Gala, where she presented a proverbial guided menu. More [here](#).

## events of interest

**International Conference on Future of Women** The 3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference on Future of Women 2020 will be held from 13<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> February 2020 in Bangalore, India. Internationally renowned speakers, academicians, researchers, women activists, policymakers and delegates from worldwide will participate in the conference to discuss women issues and empower women in a global context by offering inspiration, motivation and networking. The theme for the Future of Women 2020 is "The Next Generation of Women: Equal Rights, Equal Opportunities, and Equal Participation." The conference aims to discuss the appropriate measures to ensure the full development and advancement of women and to safeguard their civil, legal and human rights. The registration is open to the public until 10 December, with financial scholarships available for delegates and students. For presenters, the full paper submission is due 6 March 2020. More [here](#).

## regional news

**Egypt:** Within the framework World Science Day for Peace and Development (WSDPD) and the EU Gender Champion Initiative, the EU Delegation to Egypt, in collaboration with the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, organized a workshop entitled "Women Empowerment through and for Science". The event brought together scientists, policy makers, academics, innovators, diplomats, women organizations and gender experts. More [here](#).

**Middle East:** In a first for the region, the Cairo International Film Festival has signed the 5050x2020 gender parity charter, under which the festival commits to compile statistics on the gender of the filmmakers and key crew and to work towards parity on their executive board. Women in the Arab world have worked behind the camera long before the charter. From post-revolutionary settings to personal struggles, they have told stories from the region that would have otherwise remained unheard. More [here](#).

## reports & resources

**Morocco:** A government-sponsored survey shows that domestic violence is a big concern and the majority of survivors do not report it. In practical terms, 93.4 per cent of sexual violence survivors have not reported their plight to authorities, according to the study. The root cause is the country's deep-seated patriarchy and the societal preference to be silent regarding such family issues. Awareness campaign on legal instruments are highly needed to inform and educate women about their rights. More [here](#).

**World:** According to the McKinsey Global Institute, advancing gender equality could enable millions of women to work and become financially independent, adding US\$12 trillion to the global economy by 2025. Less than 49 per cent of working-age women have jobs. Just six countries - Belgium, Denmark, France, Latvia, Luxembourg, and Sweden - give men and women equal rights at work, according to the World Bank. Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Afghanistan, are ranked as the lowest on the gender equality index. More [here](#).

## facts of the month

17%

of Iranian girls are married before the age of 18. 30 per cent increase over the last three years.

132 million

girls, globally, are out of school due to conflicts, natural disasters, and increasing displacement.



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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 5.5 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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