



# unrwa gender equality strategy 2016-2021

annual implementation report  
january-december 2019



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The development of the UNRWA Gender Equality Strategy 2016-2021 Annual Implementation Report January-December 2019 by the Gender Section, Protection Division, HQ.

## **About UNRWA**

UNRWA is a United Nations agency established by the General Assembly in 1949, mandated to provide assistance and protection to a population of over 5.6 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 solution to their plight. The Agency's services encompass education, health care, relief and social services, camp infrastructure and improvement, microfinance and emergency assistance. UNRWA is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions.

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**Cover photo:** Palestine refugee women participate in an activity about protection, child detention and the use of live fire in the UNRWA Arroub Community Centre, West Bank. © 2019 UNRWA photo by Marwan Baghdadi.

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# chapter one: background

UNRWA Gender Equality Strategy (GES) 2016-2021 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 innovatively 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.

This report presents the results from 2019 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 strategic and specific needs, and experiences of Palestine refugee women, men, girls and boys.

In 2019 the implementation of the GES continued to be decelerated by the financial crisis with stretched human resources affecting the gender focal points system and limited funding to activities aiming to remediate to identified gender gaps. The efforts during the year focused on mainstreaming gender in existing processes, reinforcing accountability through gender sensitive auditing processes and the use of the gender marker in projects. The Human Resources Department refreshed the Gender Parity Action Plan and the Relief and Social Services Programme published an account of the resilience of Palestine Refugees women in Gaza. With the end of funding to the project related to addressing Gender Based Violence (GBV), a transition plan was developed to further mainstream GBV in UNRWA main programmes, but its implementation is delayed again for lack of resources. The MOPAN<sup>1</sup> 2017-2018 assessment of UNRWA finalized in June 2019 included gender in the identified four areas for improvement; recommending strengthening the gender architecture and preventing gender from being projectized and siloed.



*A play about gender equality in the Palestinian society at Kalandia Training Centre, West Bank. © 2019 UNRWA Photo by Marwan Baghdadi*

# 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. In 2019 a reduced annual Gender Task Force was convened in Amman for the second time since the Agency's adoption of the Gender Equality Strategy (2016-2021) to discuss progress on the Strategy's implementation and prioritize areas in each field office's action plan. The meeting included capacity building activities on gender analysis and assessment of gendered vulnerabilities.

In terms of structure, the five fields of operations still have limited capacity to coordinate and provide support to the implementation of the field gender action plan. Only Gaza field Office has a dedicated gender mainstreaming officer and in Jordan Field Office the secondment of a gender mainstreaming officer by the Norwegian Refugee Council has accelerated gender mainstreaming efforts.

## 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).

UNRWA marked its programme budget in 2018 and the marking showed that more than 58 per cent of the budget contributes to gender mainstreaming. In 2019 and after introducing a gender marker for projects, the Gender Section developed a training aimed at building staff capacity to use the Gender Marker. The training was carried out in March for 15 staff from the Lebanon Field Office. The establishment by UNRWA of the Projects Review Committee with participation of the Head of the Gender Section in 2019 accelerated the use of the Gender Marker as projects that were not marked, and not meeting the minimum score required were not approved.

## 2.3. Leadership

UNRWA senior managers continued to support internally and externally the promotion of gender equality and its importance for the Agency's work. On International Women's Day (IWD) 2019 UNRWA senior managers sent messages to staff at both the Agency wide level and at the field-offices voicing the importance of gender equality, stressing the need for gender parity and a more inclusive culture.

UNRWA Acting Commissioner General participated regularly in the Gender Forum, established in 2019, and called internal and external participants to contribute to UNRWA efforts for gender mainstreaming, women and girls' empowerment, and stressed the importance of involving men and boys in support of gender equality.

Among other initiatives in support of gender equality UNRWA Department of Human Resources launched a new initiative aimed at supporting female staff in the workplace. The pilot project launched on March 8, 2019 allowed the gradual return and reintegration of women at the workplace following the end of their maternity leave. For the first six months, post-maternity leave, female staff members will have the opportunity to work on an 80 per cent basis (i.e. 4 days a week instead of 5), while being paid on a 100 per cent basis. The initiative is part of the Agency's continuous efforts in working towards gender parity and an improved working environment for all its staff both men and women.

## 2.4. Accountability

To further enhance accountability on gender in the Agency, UNRWA has continued its endeavours to mainstream gender in its audit and evaluation functions. 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 mandatory training, where the practice was assessed against relevant policy and the audit recommended the development and roll out of a mandatory training on gender to all staff.

The UNRWA Evaluation Division is also closely working with the Gender Section on ensuring the United Nations Evaluation Group Guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations are considered during all phases of any evaluation. In 2020 the Evaluation and Gender teams will work to reinforce the knowledge and applicability of the guidance for decentralised evaluations.

# chapter three: progress 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 crosscutting nature of gender.

## **3.1. Gender mainstreaming in organizational practice: UNRWA organizational culture and 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 gender parity**

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 about 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.

While the Agency's overall workforce reflects gender parity (54 per cent female and 46 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) efforts need to be sustained to achieve gender parity. At the end of 2019 women represented 36% of the P-5 and above level and 30% of the 16 and above level. UNRWA registered a slight improvement comparatively to the 2018 with respectively a

5 and 2 per cent increases but the Agency was still short of its targets. This is due to the freeze in recruitment in 2018 that delayed the effective implementation of the special measures. The latter were reactivated in 2019, and gender parity scorecards are being sent to heads of fields, departments and divisions reminding them of the target for their structure and specifying the special measures that will be in place in 2020.

As part of its commitment to a more inclusive organizational culture and the provision of an enabling environment UNRWA continued its focus on supporting women returning to work after childbirth. UNRWA established a gradual return for mothers after childbirth as mentioned above and following the establishment of a nursing room in the Agency Headquarters in Amman in 2018 the same spaces have been opened in Gaza, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria field offices.

UNRWA field offices worked also specifically on improving women access to senior position for the decentralised recruitment process. In Jordan, the human resources team ensured that all senior vacancies have a minimum of 20% qualified female applicants before the vacancy is closed. In Lebanon the special measures were effectively implemented and led to successfully reaching the gender parity targets. In Gaza, as a supplement to the Agency-wide 'Leadership Across Borders Training Programme', UNRWA 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 assigned to temporarily acting positions.

Efforts to further women participation within staff representative bodies UNRWA continued to provide support and capacity to female staff. In March 2019, an Agency wide workshop organized in Amman brought together 130 interested female staff with current unions' leaders and UNRWA senior managers to discuss quotas for female staff. It was followed by workshops and meetings in GFO and JFO to discuss women aspirations to have a more prominent role in staff representations and the challenges they face.

### **3.1.2. Staff capacity and awareness of gender related issues**

During 2019 and due to lack of funding there were less opportunities to build staff capacity on gender and gender-based violence (GBV). Most of the trainings that took were related to addressing gender-based violence (GBV) as the Agency continued the roll out of the capacity building products developed under the "Building Safety" project. During the 2019 Gender Taskforce meeting, a specific training



a specific training on gender analysis was delivered to the 30 gender focal points that attended the meeting. A training on the use of the Gender Marker for projects was developed and 15 staff were trained in Lebanon Field Office. Following the audit recommendation to establish a mandatory gender awareness training to all staff, an e-learning was drafted and will go on UNRWA Moodle platform early 2020.

As part of its efforts of supporting awareness and fostering knowledge about gender and initiatives in the region UNRWA continued the publishing of its monthly Gender Bulletin and launched in 2019 a Gender Forum that is organized every quarter. The 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. The Gender Forum is a two hours discussion bringing partners, experts, and UNRWA staff for exchanges on specific gender related issues to foster a culture of knowledge in UNRWA.

### 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: unrw programmes and service delivery are tailored to the needs and rights of women, men, girls and boys (Outcome 2)

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

By the end of 2019, UNRWA closed all activities of the "Building Safety: Mainstreaming GBV Interventions into Emergency Preparedness, Prevention and Response" and finalized drafting the GBV transition plan that aims to mainstream further GBV

interventions within UNRWA core programmes and define the next stage of GBV work in the Agency. UNRWA also organized as per previous years activities under the 16 days campaign of activism to end gender-based violence.

The development of the GBV transition plan included a large consultation process that was kicked off during the April 2019 GBV workshop and involved coordinators, focal points and senior managers. The plan finalized by mid-September 2019 outlined the next stage of GBV investment by the Agency that builds on previous institutional developments and achievements and clarified roles and responsibilities with respect to GBV response, mitigation and prevention amongst programmes and in field offices in view of the end of project funds. The implementation of the transition plan will start in 2020.

Closing all activities of the "Building Safety: Mainstreaming GBV Interventions into Emergency Preparedness, Prevention and Response": During the timeframe of the project UNRWA focused on capacity building targeting staff and community members looking in depth to changing attitudes of staff and engaging community members in GBV protection activities.

i. In 2019 UNRWA dedicated crucial efforts to standardising and institutionalising GBV related interventions in interplay with evidence from recently developed monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. As part of the 2018 field-specific capacity-building plans, the Training Manual on Understanding GBV has been used to train 600 staff in all fields of operations of which an average of 85 per cent demonstrated increased capability to address GBV. The e-learning course on GBV risk mitigation in emergencies has been launched in November 2018. It has subsequently been piloted in all five fields of operation and so far, 454 staff have completed the e-Learning course. While continuing to work on increasing knowledge on GBV for all staff, UNRWA put emphasis on respective changes in attitudes and practices, building on the already achieved positive changes in knowledge of many employees. To achieve this UNRWA focused on three core competencies (the survivor-centred approach; communication and counselling; and supervision skills) related to four categories of staff addressing GBV (case identifiers, case managers, case supervisors, and GBV coordinators) and rolled out 199 on-the-job coaching sessions to staff in all fields of operations.

ii. In line with the UNRWA GBV preventions Theory of Change when it comes to addressing gender-based violence, the bulk of the work targets UNRWA staff– who are to a large extent themselves part of the very Palestine refugee communities UNRWA works with and as such are understood as main agents for change in the Agency's sphere of influence. To support this process, UNRWA at the same time engages communities in a structured and participatory way. In 2019 UNRWA extended the work with communities to strengthen local community-based protection mechanisms including facilitating community awareness and identification of harmful behaviours and GBV risks, as well as activities including prevention awareness messaging and GBV risk mitigation. Specifically, Jordan and



West Bank have developed a participatory protection assessment aimed at establishing community self-protection mechanisms, which were piloted early 2019. In Jordan the GBV Focal Points facilitated activities with UNRWA students, parents and teachers and produced a participatory Protection Risk Analysis. The key output of the three first exercises of the methodology allowed the definition of a Protection Risk Chart with a focus on GBV. Based on the risks identified, the community then mapped the assets available and devised a Protection Roadmap to tackle a maximum of three of the risks identified through an array of interventions such as trainings, information sessions, awareness raising, partnership building, etc. These interventions relied on existing resources within the community favouring networking and meaningful participation of the different stakeholders. Building on the experiences of the pilot in JFO, the Child and Family Protection Programme (CFPP) in the West Bank modified the outlined methodology to accommodate its own specific context and to add further GBV and SEA related components. As such, the methodology in West Bank was built on a multi-sectoral approach that involved all three core programmes (Health, Education, and RSS). It focused on identifying local community safety mechanisms for students (8th and 9th grade) and parents in order to subsequently strengthen self-protection reflexes and link them to GBV, while involving Child and Family Protection Committees in view of their important role in preventing and reducing GBV incidents in emergencies. Therefore, a set of activities was identified on a broad range of related topics, such as gender roles, sexual and gender-based violence, sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and respective implications in emergencies and was implemented through the community protection plans.

iii. Finalization of the GBV end line Study: Among the major undertakings of the “Building Safety” project has been the systematization of the UNRWA GBV prevention interventions. UNRWA, with the support of an external consulting firm, established a baseline to its GBV prevention activities in 2016, developed a GBV Prevention Framework and road maps for implementation in the field offices and measured the change achieved three years after the implementation of the activities through a GBV End line study conducted in early 2019. The report of the end line study was finalized in June 2019 and showed the below key findings:

- Overall, UNRWA has taken some important steps to mainstream GBV prevention across its work on gender-based violence;
- Staff awareness, knowledge and understanding regarding GBV prevention have been improved to some extent and to varying degrees but a response focus still dominates and cultural factors remain barriers for some staff;
- The mainstreaming approach has enhanced the sustainability of the prevention element of the project;
- While perception among staff of leadership engagement has improved, there remain important gaps in terms of leadership;

- There is a clear recognition from UNRWA and its partners of the Agency’s comparative advantage in GBV prevention;
- The evidence shows that while prevalence remains high there have been some shifts in knowledge and attitudes at community level regarding GBV awareness;
- UNRWA investment in developing a GBV learning culture has paid dividends but systems for monitoring results need strengthening and resources allocated are still seen as inadequate.

From 25 November until 10 December, UNRWA joined the 16 Days of Activism Campaign to eliminate gender-based violence under the theme: “Orange the World: Generation Equality Stands Against All Forms of GBV”. UNRWA organized and conducted around 120 activities across all five field of operations, with a special emphasis on the systemic use of the TV mini-series “The Shop of Engineer Lina’s Father.” In Gaza, GBV survivors organized a food bazaar, and students at Rimal preparatory school created a hand-printing mural to raise awareness about GBV. The West Bank Field Office coordinated a youth initiative activity that conveyed messages about GBV prevention through a play created and acted by youth. In Lebanon, the school counsellors implemented various activities including marches identifying “safe havens” in the community. Closing the campaign, the Gender Section in HQ Amman and the Gender team in Jordan Field Office organized the Fourth Gender Forum on “Generation Equality Stands Against Gender-Based Violence and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.”

### **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 Gaza, 44 specific outreach activities were conducted targeting more than 800 men aiming at increasing awareness raising on pre-conception care and family planning.

UNRWA is also introducing raising awareness activities related to sexual and reproductive health with 46 health staff receiving training on sexual and reproductive health and cascading it to 1,085 health care providers in Gaza. In Jordan awareness raising sessions were organized for 23,028 students (9,897 girls) on sexual and reproductive health. Under its raising awareness activities, the Child and Family Protection Programme in the West Bank conducted 136 group counselling sessions addressing positive discipline and sexual education among other subjects.

### 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 2019, 16,052 women accessed loans through the Agency's Microfinance programme in four areas of operations (Gaza, West Bank, Jordan, and Syria) which represented 83 per cent of the 2019 target number.

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

- In Gaza, 42 per cent of all loans were disbursed to women.
- In the West Bank, women received 42 per cent of all loans.
- In Jordan, 53 per cent of loans benefitted women.
- In Syria, despite the prevailing crises, the programme succeeded to disburse 40 per cent of loans to women.

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. In Gaza, the Relief and Social Services Programmes provided 21 women survivors of GBV with cash support and protection cash assistance for income generation activities. In Lebanon, the Youth Unit runs two projects to increase employability of youth. Both, the Innovation Program (GIL), established in 2017 with the aim to improve the employability of PRL<sup>2</sup> and PRS<sup>3</sup> youth, as well as the Cash-for-work Project for Youth Employment apply a quota of minimum 50 per cent female participation. Particularly the digital skills component of the GIL program has a higher rate of female participation.

In the West Bank, the Poverty Alleviation Program (PAP) continued to direct its services towards women. 315 women including 20 GBV survivors received business development services that included vocational coaching, guidance, and business counselling and 8 women received grants to develop small enterprises to establish and develop sustained source of income.

### 3.2.4. Addressing school drop-out

The UNRWA Education programme, which in the current 2019-20 scholastic year operates 709 schools in its five areas of operation, provides free basic education for 533,342 Palestine refugee children. For the scholastic year 2019/2020, girls represent about 49.8 per cent of all enrolled students in UNRWA schools (Gaza: 48.3 per cent; Jordan: 48.7 per cent; Syria: 49.2 per cent; West Bank: 59.9 per cent; Lebanon: 52.1 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 study 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, and ongoing tracking of gender-disaggregated data at both Agency and Field levels ensures gender-related disparities are highlighted and addressed. This is further supported through the strengthening of the School Quality Assurance system, which ensures data on dropout as well as related issues such as grade repetition and academic achievement for male and female students are reviewed and responded to at the school level.

These mutually-reinforcing approaches at multiple levels have continued to yield substantial progress in reducing male and female dropout rates Agency-wide. At the elementary level, the Agency's cumulative dropout rates have decreased substantially for both male and female students in each of the past three years (from 2016/2017 to 2018/2019). In the most recent reporting cycle, this positive trend was driven by steep reductions in dropout in Lebanon and Jordan. In Lebanon, this result was attributed to an emphasis on psychosocial well-being through UNRWA school counsellors, improved support for at-risk students, and use of the Inclusive Education (IE) Toolkit. Jordan, the decreased dropout was attributed to reduced grade repetition, which is known to increase the risk of dropout, as well as JFO efforts to provide targeted support for students at risk of dropout. However, it is worth noting that despite decreases male students continue to have higher dropout levels than their female counterparts, and the progress seen at the aggregate Agency level was not consistent for every Field. Fields are therefore continuing to monitor and respond to their distinct challenges. For example, in Gaza, an increase in male elementary dropout was attributed to deteriorating economic conditions and overall well-being for students, their families and communities; these issues will be further investigated and addressed in 2020.



Illustration 6. Working the welfare system  
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dropout increased in 2018/2019, with a substantial increase in dropout for male preparatory students in the West Bank, Syria and Gaza. These increases were attributed to a range of economic challenges in each field which drove more male preparatory students to leave school to work. In addition to the holistic Education Programme approach—including Inclusive Education and ongoing monitoring of gender-disaggregated data at the Agency, Field, and school level—Fields will follow-up and identify the best means to address these recent trends given their respective resources and socioeconomic contexts.

		2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019
Cumulative dropout rate - elementary	Aggregate	1.17	0.78	0.64
	Male	1.51	1.02	0.85
	Female	0.82	0.55	0.43
Cumulative dropout rate - preparatory	Aggregate	2.87	2.34	2.15
	Male	3.63	2.82	3.07
	Female	2.11	1.87	1.22

### 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 during International Women's Day. In 2019 the Jordan and the West Bank Field Management Team opened events in all areas stressing the importance of gender equality in UNRWA services delivery. Other activities organised by health and relief and social services teams in all fields were undertaken with partner organisations and aimed at making women and girls role in the community visible, including through storytelling and theatre.

### 3.2.6 Mainstreaming gender into Relief and Social Services (RSS) Department

#### Social work reform:

As part of the planned reform process in the RSS Programme, a long-recommended professionalization of its social workforce has been identified as a priority in 2017 and 2018. A key component of the reform is the development of a social work training programme for all RSS social workers and their supervisors that standardizes and strengthens their knowledge and skills in professional social work and case work interventions with the integration of a social protection lens. Adopting a family-based approach is a critical component of the social work reform that focuses on protecting children and women from abuse, neglect and exploitation and thus requires working with the entire family setting to ensure sustainable and effective interventions. This holistic approach will in particular help support to build a focused, effective and consistent approach to addressing GBV. The social worker training package integrates and adapts the gender and GBV products developed under the Building Safety project, but spans in total over five months of training. A key component of the RSS social work reform is establishing a sustainable and accountable new staffing structure which institutionalizes the social work approach while at the same time guaranteeing an adequate technical supervision structure focusing on guidance, coaching and technical support to social workers.

The social work training was completed in Lebanon and Gaza fields in February 2020. Preparations are underway to roll-out the social work training in Syria and the West Bank in 2020 and in Jordan early 2021.

#### How does she cope? Women pushed to new limits in the Gaza Strip:

UNRWA Relief and Social Services Programme published in September 2019 a study on women's experience in light of the current crisis in the Gaza Strip. Over a hundred women, from different areas and across the social spectrum, were consulted and participated in discussion forums, interviews and home visits with the aim of understanding better the impact of crises specifically on women and girls and specifically assess the impact of protracted emergency conditions in Gaza on social relations and intra household power dynamics and gender roles. The study documents through oral narratives the very specific context for women in Gaza today. Increasingly, women in the Gaza strip support their families while men are absent or jobless. Many live with extended families and struggle to make an income because of economic limits but also due to rigid ideas about what is appropriate for women. Community assistance is stretched too thin, and a high level of education rarely translates into valued employment. Yet with mouths to feed and often debts to pay, women find ways to cope. The study has documented the levels of resilience expressed by women and girls in Gaza while at the same time portraying the exceptional circumstances they are being faced with as women to making ends meet in a society dominated by patriarchal power relations and precise social expectations about women's lives that have lost their meaningfulness in the context of deteriorating economic and human security conditions. The results of this study are to serve as a reference material for working with women in the Gaza Strip understanding better aspirations and limitations affecting their lives.



## chapter four: conclusion

The implementation of UNRWA Gender Equality Strategy 2016-21 (GES) has been further slowed in 2019 with the end of various projects that provided capacity for gender mainstreaming. Despite the limited capacity in fields and programmes, Gender Focal Points were able to undertake initiatives that contributed to the results of 2019. Most of the implemented initiatives relied on existing resources or worked on mainstreaming gender in existing processes. These initiatives however fall short of the ambitious outcomes of the GES and resources are needed for a meaningful change for Palestine refugees women, men, boys, and girls. Particularly t-

he efforts to build capacity to address GBV undertaken in previous years will be lost if there is no continuation. UNRWA developed through its interventions to address GBV innovative approach to prevention, that included the promotion of gender equality, with monitoring mechanisms that showed promising initial results. The end of the funding to the GBV programme puts an end to these systematised efforts while we know that promoting and enhancing gender equality is a long-term endeavour requiring behavioural change and addressing cultural barriers and therefore results can only be expected on a long-term progressive curve.



UNRWA students at Rimal Preparatory Girls' School "A" participate in 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign. © 2019 UNRWA Photo by Ibrahim Abu Usheiba

# footnotes

1 Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network

2 Palestine refugees in Lebanon

3 Palestine refugees from Syria



unrwa  
الأونروا

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for palestinian refugees in the near east

وكالة الأمم المتحدة لإغاثة وتشغيل  
اللاجئين الفلسطينيين في الشرق الأدنى