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monthly updates on gender issues in unrwa and the region

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update of the month

The Gender Section participated in the Annual Dialogue meeting between SIDA and UNRWA that was held remotely on the 16 of September. The meeting included discussion on UNRWA gender mainstreaming efforts, including in emergencies and during the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

stories from unrwa

Success stories from UNRWA West Bank Field Office: Providing psychological support to vulnerable groups during COVID-19

The Family and Child Programme in RSSP West Bank Field Office continued the provision of support to GBV survivors during the pandemic. They used newly established phone hotlines and WhatsApp messages to provide case management services. This is one of their success story narrated by a UNRWA case manager.

She had simple dreams and aspirations. She did not know where life was taking her and where she would eventually be. This is what the woman expressed to me over the phone on our first call almost two months ago. "S" was in her forties. She lived with her husband and five children in one of the refugee camps. She was referred to the UNRWA RSS Family and Child Protection Programme as she suffered from severe physical abuse as well as psychological trauma resulting from a murder attempt.

One day, "S"'s husband tried to kill her using a knife. She ran out of her home and took her children with her to her brother-in-law's home, where they stayed until the next morning. She went to the UNRWA clinic inside the camp, where the psychosocial counselor transferred her to the RSS Family and Child Protection Programme. From here started our story with "S".

"S"'s file was transferred to the Ministry of Social Development, which in turn asked her to file a complaint with the Family Protection Unit. Transferring her file did not negate our responsibility to continue providing her support and help find the best solution for her and her family. The Ministry of Social Development had, at the time, referred her husband to a mental health professional. It also contacted the Head of the Organization, where she worked, to accommodate her new situation. "S" responded positively to this intervention.

After almost one month under medication, her husband's mental state and well-being stabilized when. He also signed a pledge with the Family Protection Unit not to hurt his wife and children. "S" agreed to live with her husband again.

Now, "S"'s well-being and her family's condition have improved. She even told me during our last call: "Do not worry. I am in a better psychological and social situation". I wished "S" and other women and girls that are facing violence and abuse in these difficult times, peace and tranquility.



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inspiring story

To help the Arab region, put it in the hands of women: The Arab region ranks lowest in the world in terms of gender equality, especially in terms of employment and political representation. According to Lina AbiRafteh, Executive Director of the Arab Institute for Women (AIW), "Empowering women is not just a human rights principle, but a precondition to sustainable development and the strongest vehicle for peace, prosperity and progress." The AIW is a pioneer institute that operates at the junction of academia and activism and aims at amplifying women's voices in the Arab region. In light of the fact that gender inequality remains a considerable obstacle to progress in the Arab region, the AIW seeks rights advocates who are willing to offer an endowment and build a philanthropic legacy for all women and girls in the region. An endowment of US\$7 million will entitle the benefactor to naming rights. This endowment will enable the AIW to further Arab women's rights through scholarships, trainings, and advocacy. For more, click [here](#).

events of interest

ILO Participatory Gender-Audit Facilitator Certification: The International Training Center of ILO offers this online certification in Arabic, which will take place **from 19 October to 11 December 2020**. This course is open to individuals trained by the ITCILO and ILO, government officials, UN and civil-society staff as well as gender experts and candidates working on gender mainstreaming. By giving tools to uncover discrimination at work, analyze accountability, evaluate and monitor systems and instruments, this online certification will enable the participants to promote gender equality in the work place. For more information, click [here](#).

regional news

Lebanon

A standard unified contract that seeks to uphold the rights of migrant aid workers was issued in Lebanon by the Caretaker Labor Minister Lamia Yammine. Activist groups warned, however, that strict enforcement, including labour inspections and complaint procedures, would be necessary to dismantle the kafala system, which enables violations of international standards (i.e. excluding workers from the Lebanon's labor laws). More [here](#).

West Bank

The Shashat Woman Cinema, which is a capacity-building non-governmental organization that supports Palestinian female filmmakers, produced seven films about the everyday life of young women filmmakers during the COVID-19 quarantine. Filmed with mobile phones and titled 'Covid 20', the films were recorded by seven Palestinian women who reside in Gaza, West Bank, Turkey and the USA. More [here](#).

reports & resources

From Insight to Action — Gender equality in the wake of COVID-19; not specific to the Middle East Region

UN Women published a report on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women and girls throughout the world. Focusing on extreme poverty, employment, health, unpaid care and gender-based violence, this report highlights the need to include gendered indicators in research in order to take into account the biases they may cause. It argues that without a global response that encompasses gender issues, there is a great risk of backsliding in spite of the achievements that have been made. More [here](#).

Statement on the 25 Anniversary of the Beijing Conference

The 4th September 2020 marks the 25 years of the Fourth World Conference on Women that was held in Beijing, China. The deliberations of the Conference led to the framing of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which gave the blueprint for the furtherance of women's and girls' rights and was adopted by 189 UN Member States. The COVID-19 pandemic, however, threatens to reverse many of the achievements made in the last 25 years to empower women and girls and advance gender equality. On this anniversary, promises made to women and girls in 1995 were reiterated to continue working towards systemic change for women. More [here](#).

facts of the month

The pandemic will push **47 million more women and girls** below the poverty line.

The poverty rate for women will increase by **9.1%** because of the pandemic and its fallout.



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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 5.6 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 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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