



Press Release: UN supports the rehabilitation of women's shelters in the West Bank and Gaza

Date: Wednesday, 18 November 2020 - Ramallah

As part of the Government of Canada funded HAYA Joint Programme, UN Women and UNOPS, in close cooperation with national partners, supported the rehabilitation of four shelters delivering services for women and girls who are at risk or survivors of violence. These shelters are located in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, including the Mehwar Centre for the Protection and Empowerment of Women and Families in Bethlehem, Al Bayt Al Aman in Nablus, Bait Al Tawarea in Jericho, and the Hayat Centre in Gaza.

Following rehabilitation, the shelters are now equipped with child-friendly spaces; are more inclusive, gender-sensitive and environmentally friendly; and offer a higher level of quality services to address the needs of women and girls.

According to a [UN Women study](#), support for shelters is especially needed during the COVID-19 crisis. With the pandemic and subsequent rapid increase in cases of violence, shelters and support centres worldwide are closing or struggling to take on new cases, provide support for existing cases, and maintain necessary operating standards.

"Protecting women and girls from violence, and supporting services to survivors, is a global priority for the Government of Canada", says Ms. Robin Wettlaufer, the Representative of Canada in Ramallah. "These shelters will provide critical services, at a time when we have seen an increase in gender-based violence due to challenges posed by COVID-19."

"Crisis and emergencies, including pandemics, help us better identify issues and take targeted steps to improve women's access to justice, protection, and security services," says Mr. Tokumitsu Kobayashi, UNOPS Director in Palestine. "In this context, UNOPS support to UN Women aiming to rehabilitate and refurbish these shelters reflects our commitment to creating a gender-responsive physical structure. A structure that empowers women, girls, or disadvantaged groups by responding to their diverse needs in society."

As a result of this support and rehabilitation work, almost 250 women annually have been provided with safety, food, hygiene, health care, and education in the four shelters, in addition to about 600 women who receive annual psychosocial and legal support in Gaza. The shelters are now better equipped to continue providing quality services to survivors of violence and help their reintegration to society.

"We are grateful for the rehabilitation and refurbishment work done by UNOPS and UN Women," says Ikhlas Swefan, Al Bayt Al Amen Nablus Shelter Manager. "The improvements have not only changed the employees' working environment for the better but also positively impacted the morale of the women we host. This work also took women and girls' diverse needs into consideration, helping them feel safe and empowered in a space that is more inclusive, and has been equipped with renewable energy technology."



Shelters and other essential services are on the frontline of response to ending violence against women and girls during COVID-19 as they continue their duty of care for survivors of violence. Through the HAYA Joint Programme and its partners, technical and financial support to these shelters will continue for the next two years.

“Violence against women is one of the most widespread human rights violations, even before COVID-19,” explains Ms. Maryse Guimond, UN Women Special Representative in Palestine. “From the onset of the pandemic, this violence has escalated around the world. Shelters, helplines and crisis centres, as well as civil society and women’s rights organizations are needed more than ever. By working together and prioritizing essential services for survivors, Palestinian women and girls can access to the protection and support needed during these challenging times.”

In Palestine, one in three women (29 per cent) has experienced one form of violence by their husbands. 44 per cent of girls aged 12 to 17 years old have been subjected to physical violence, according to the [Preliminary Results of the Violence Survey in the Palestinian Society 2019](#). Since the outbreak of COVID-19, this has intensified, further increasing the need to end violence against women and girls in Palestine and worldwide.

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About the HAYA Joint Programme

The HAYA Joint Programme seeks to eliminate violence against women in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. HAYA is funded by the Government of Canada and jointly implemented by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN–Habitat), and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), in partnership with the Ministry of Women’s Affairs and the Ministry of Social Development as well as other ministries and civil society organizations.