



An UNRWA staff member conducts verification for emergency cash assistance in Beddawi camp © 2020 UNRWA photo by Maysoun Mustafa

monthly updates on gender issues in unrwa and the region

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update of the month

UNRWA joined the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence. Running from 25 November to 10 December, this year's theme is "Safety is Everyone's Right: Safety at Home, Safety at Work, Safety on the Streets, Safety Online and Safe Reporting". As part of the campaign, a number of activities are organized across all five fields of UNRWA operations, which will be covered in the December edition.

stories from unrwa

Success stories from UNRWA Syria Field Office: From Child Bride to Professional Hairdresser

Ayat Khaldoun Ahmad, a 19 year-old Palestine refugee living in Syria, came to one of UNRWA Community Based Organizations (CBOs) for the first time in 2018. At the time, she was 18 years old and wanted a divorce. When we first met Ayat, she appeared very vulnerable. You could tell from her behaviour that she was insecure and very shy.

Ayat was only 17 when she got married. Like millions of girls around the world, Ayat has suffered the negative consequences of child marriage. She experienced domestic violence, both physical and moral. In addition to being beaten and humiliated, she was forbidden from pursuing her education and leaving the house. She felt very isolated and powerless. Her husband used to tell her that she was not a wife, but a mere servant. She would find excuses for her husband's behaviour and blame herself for not being able to satisfy his needs. She suffered in silence for a while.

One day, he beat her so hard that her family brought her to Huseinieh CBO. There, she explained that she wanted a divorce. CBO assisted Ayat in three parallel manners. CBO supported her in filing for divorce with the court. She also received individual psychological support and participated in support groups at CBO. Through a vocational training in Hairdressing and Beauty, she became a professional hairdresser.

Today, Ayat works as a professional hairdresser from her house, allowing her to be financially independent. She continues to take part in activities at CBO. For example, she has been participating in raising awareness sessions as well as group discussions with the families of persons with disability to discuss their needs. Ayat also intends on pursuing her dream of obtaining a Bachelor degree.

Ayat has become a new woman, independent and full of confidence. "I am strong and I do not need anyone's help anymore. I will no longer let anyone erase my presence," said Ayat in her last interview with one of UNRWA caseworkers.

UNRWA supports CBOs to provide the most vulnerable Palestine refugees, including survivors of gender-based violence, with a wide range of social services. They offer, among other things, legal counselling and psychosocial services, both individual and group sessions. CBOs also organize raising awareness sessions, for example on the negative consequences of child marriages, and workshops on gender-based violence, besides empowering women through vocational trainings.

november celebrations

20 November: World Children's Day

25 November: International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

29 November: International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People



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inspiring story

The third US-elect Muslim woman: Iman Jodeh, a Muslim, Palestinian-American and first-generation American woman was elected on 4 November 2020 in the United States of America, becoming a part of the Colorado House of Representatives. The Democratic candidate was running against the Republican Robert Andrews. She is the first Muslim state legislator in state history, as one of her supporters wrote on social media. Rashida Tlaib, a Muslim and Palestinian-American woman was also reelected in Michigan, and Ilhan Omar, a Muslim woman, regained her congresswoman position in Minnesota. More [here](#).

events of interest

Tackling two pandemics through World Bank Operations: On the occasion of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, the World Bank Group organizes a webinar addressing gender-based violence and COVID-19, which will take place on 8 December 2020. Register [here](#).

Gender equality in the context of COVID-19: Organized by the UN Alliance of Civilization (UNAOC), the Office on Genocide Prevention and Responsibility to Protect (OSAPG) and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) as part of a series of 6 sessions on implementing the Global Pledge for Action by Religious Leaders and Faith-Based Organizations to Address the COVID-19 Pandemic, the webinar will take place on 7 December. The webinar will highlight good practices and lessons learned. More [here](#).

Free Webinar on Understanding Gender: Gender Spectrum offers a free webinar on Understanding Gender on 8 December. The aim is to gain a better and deeper understanding of gender challenges. It is free and accessible to all! More [here](#).

regional news

Gaza

The 50 per cent unemployment rate in Gaza before the pandemic did not stop the Palestinian mother-of-five Nayla Abu Jubbah to start her own taxi service for women this month. Although men and women have the same rights to drive a vehicle, it is the first time that a woman drives a taxi car, and customers are enjoying her service. More [here](#).

Saudi Arabia

Khaled Al-Yahya, secretary-general of the Council of Saudi Chambers, declared the economic empower-

ment of Saudi women to be a top priority of Vision 2030. More [here](#).

Pakistan

Women journalists have released a statement highlighting the cyber-violence they face. This tremendously affects their mental health but also the quality of the information they deliver as 8 out of 10 women say they have self-censored in fear of online violence. This is also a threat to the freedom of the press, a right that is constitutionally protected in the country. More [here](#).

reports & resources

Operationalizing intersectionality in the Arab region: Challenges and ways forward

Published by the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, this report analyses gender in the Arab region through an intersectional point of view, presenting a multidimensional approach to gather and understand the causes of inequalities and to better address them. With the concept of intersectionality, this study aims at giving solutions that include different levels of divisions that exist, seeking development for the society as a whole. More [here](#).

Policy Brief employing a gendered approach to transitional justice in the Arab region: Potential role of national women's machineries

This report of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia focuses on transitional justice, describing how such a concept could help reconstructing a country in a post-conflict period. The study advocates for women's involvement and gendered concerns, explaining that they should be taken into account for this process to be gender responsive. More [here](#).

facts of the month

In the Arab region, COVID-19 is expected to result in the loss of 700,000 jobs held by women.

60 per cent of workers in the informal economy are women.



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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 5.7 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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