



A social worker delivering medicine to the elderly in Gaza. © 2020 UNRWA photo

UNRWA will join the United Nations system and will celebrate International Women's Day under the theme "Women in Leadership: Achieving an Equal Future in a COVID-19 World." Activities will be organized in UNRWA fields of operations to mark the day and highlight the work undertaken by Palestine refugees women in the response to the pandemic.

stories from unrwa

For the past year, UNRWA has had to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic. Female staff was essential to UNRWA's ability to respond rapidly to the COVID-19 crisis and adapt its services to meet the needs of Palestine refugees. In addition to emphasizing the centrality of women leadership, the pandemic has also highlighted the disproportionate burdens that female workers carry. Here are the stories of two UNRWA female staff working at the frontline of the COVID-19 crisis in Gaza.

Sabreen Abu Hassun, an Area Social Work Supervisor working over the hotlines

The UNRWA Relief and Social Services Programme (RSSP) in Gaza has been providing psycho-social support (PSS) to Palestine refugees over the hotlines. Area Social Work Supervisors (ASWSs) and social workers provide services five days a week from 7:30 am to 3 pm. "We are very responsive and tend to respond to critical cases within a 24-hour time frame. We conduct interviews and home visits if need be, taking account of safety measures" said Sabreen Abu Hassun, an ASWS of Rafah and West Office. "Working over the hotlines is a challenge," added Sabreen. However, through active listening skills and empathy, social workers manage to build trust relationships and provide adequate assistance to Palestine refugees.

In addition to the increased number of calls asking for PSS interventions, many social workers work from home. Remote working can be challenging for everyone, but especially for women. With closed schools and day-care, women have their

whole family at home, including elders and children, to care for. Finding a work-life balance is more difficult, which can have a significant impact on women's psychological wellbeing.

Amal Abu Abdu, a social worker distributing medicine to the elderly

On 5 October 2020, RSSP completed the provision of psychological first aid (PFA) along with the distribution of medicine to 12,169 patients with non-communicable diseases, in collaboration with the Health Programme. Amal Abu Abdu is one of the 40 social workers who, in collaboration with health workers, visited the elderly at their home to provide them with their medicine and PFA, taking into consideration health safety measures. She also gave the patients the opportunity to express their feelings and concerns over phone calls, besides educating them on the COVID-19 virus and its transmission.

Despite precautionary measures, social workers who conduct home visits are at risk of bringing the COVID-19 virus home to their loved ones. As the primary caregivers in the home, it is particularly difficult for women to isolate themselves if infected with COVID-19.

february celebrations

February 9 : Safer Internet Day

February 12 : International Day against the Use of Child Soldiers (Red Hand Day)

inspiring story

Helping survivors of violence seek justice through forensic science in the West Bank

The only forensic science laboratory in the West Bank is using modern technology and science to examine evidence collected from crime scenes or the bodies of violence survivors. This evidence is then used in court as evidence to hold perpetrators of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) accountable in the West Bank. Rawan Tomalieh, who works in the laboratory, says that it is playing a crucial role in achieving justice for survivors of violence. Read more about this [here](#).

events of interest

25 March 2021, It's Time to End Violence Against Women in Politics, virtual

Arezo Najibzadeh, the founder of Platform, a civic leadership platform for Black, Indigenous, and racialized young women and gender-diverse youth, presents this webinar. She will touch upon subjects such as gender-based and sexual violence against women in politics in order to identify ways to challenge this structural issue. There are no pre-requisites for participants. To learn more, click [here](#).

regional news

MENA

Currently, women are significantly under-represented in the export sector in the Middle East and North Africa. However, evidence suggests that enhancing women's participation in the export sector could be beneficial to the MENA region's competitiveness and economic growth. It would also support the achievement of gender equality, one of the key SDGs. Find out more [here](#).

Palestine

UN Women and the UN World Food Programme have signed an agreement to jointly support Palestine in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. The two Agencies will provide Cash-Based Transfers and Multi-Purpose Cash assistance, which will give women (and men) the freedom to use assistance towards different pressing needs, including rent, food, education and health. More information available [here](#).

reports & resources

'Leading the Way': Women driving peace and security in Afghanistan, the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Yemen

This briefing paper looks at the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda by women's organisations in Afghanistan, the occupied Palestinian territory, and Yemen. It explores the challenges they face in doing so, specifically how the full potential of this agenda could be reached, with National Action Plans and international actors' support, among others. To find out more, click [here](#).

Why Muslim Family Law Reform? Why Not?

Produced by Musawah with the support of UN Women within the framework of 'Men and Women for Gender Equality', this policy brief highlights ten arguments to support the family law reform in Muslim contexts. This report makes the case for these reforms, based on the arguments scholarship and activism in the Muslim world have developed. To find out more, click [here](#).

facts of the month

The COVID-19 pandemic is likely to cause a 1/3 reduction in progress towards ending gender-based violence by 2030.

Of the 417 policy measures related to the COVID-19 response that were enacted by national governments in 42 conflict-affected countries, 49 per cent are gender-sensitive.



united nations relief and works agency
for palestine refugees in the near east

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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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