

Prevention and Response to Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV)

March 2019

Background

As a result of displacement, refugees experience a heightened risk of sexual and gender based violence [SGBV] with women and girls disproportionately affected. As the length of the stay in the country of asylum increases, the socio-economic situation of refugees deteriorates. As the Syria situation is entering its 9th year, refugees' savings has become scarce and economic opportunities remain limited. This also affects in particular the 90,000 non-Syrian refugees who are not allowed to work in Jordan. Overall, some 85% of refugees in Jordan live below the poverty line of 3 USD per day.

In this context, the risk of harmful coping mechanisms such as survival sex and child marriage increase. Frustrations of male refugees who are unable to cover the basic needs of their families and the lack of privacy in often overcrowded shelters contribute to increasing risks of intimate partner violence. In this situation women and girls are particularly vulnerable and are often among the most difficult to reach. UNHCR Jordan is working with its partners to mitigate risks of SGBV while providing timely assistance to survivors.

Key Facts

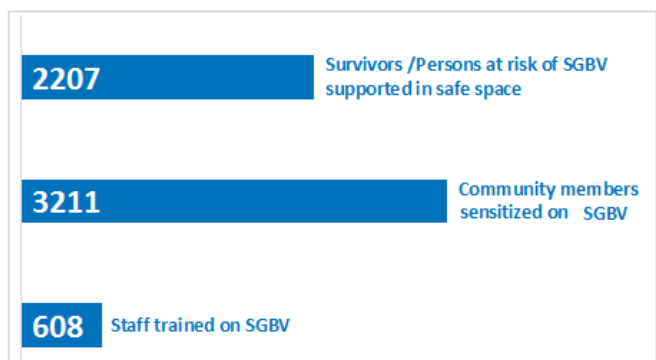
SGBV is one of the most widespread human rights violation and a major public health problem. It is estimated that 1 out of 3 women worldwide have experienced SGBV. Due to fear of stigma and retaliation by perpetrators, SGBV is generally under-reported. Thanks to accounts shared by survivors supported by UNHCR and in consultation with refugee communities, the following issues have been identified:

- The overwhelming majority of survivors of SGBV are women and girls.
- Emotional and physical abuses by intimate partners is the main concern shared by survivors who approach UNHCR and partners for help.
- Child marriage is a major risk for girls between 15 and 17 years old.
- Sexual harassment in public spaces is perceived by communities as being one of the major risks for refugee women and girls in Jordan.
- Sexual violence is severely under-reported due to heightened stigma and risk of honor killing for survivors.
- Adult male survivors are particularly at risk of sexual violence in detention before displacement.

Main Activities

- **Strategy:** In 2019, UNHCR Jordan aims at strengthening its provision of holistic SGBV prevention and response services by supporting local NGO's and national partners such as Family Protection Department, the Ministry of Social Development. UNHCR's efforts to prevent SGBV include expanding women empowerment programs but also enhancing the leading role of refugees in outreach and awareness activities.

- Coordination:** UNHCR co-chairs the national SGBV sector working group as well as field coordination structures, which contributes to efforts to strengthen the overall SGBV response in Jordan through the dissemination of good practices and global standards. UNHCR also co-chairs the national Gender based violence Information Management System (GBV IMS) Task force and gathers data on SGBV throughout the country as part of its provision of psycho-social support to survivors. The Task Force analyzes the data collected and provides recommendation in order to improve services.
- Programming:** Since the beginning of the Syrian crisis, UNHCR through its offices in Amman, Irbid, Mafrqa, Azraq and Zaatari refugee camp, has been directly providing psycho-social support and emergency cash assistance to SGBV survivors. This has been complemented through partnerships with local NGOs who provide specialized support to survivors in safe spaces in Amman, Kerak, Maan, Jerash, Mafrqa and Zaatari camp. Survivors are referred to health, legal, safe shelter options and other services. In collaboration with partners, UNHCR also implements prevention activities such as women empowerment workshops, self-defense classes led by refugee women and various awareness activities within communities. The data on the right show cumulative achievements throughout 2018.
- Refugees' voices:** A divorced Syrian woman explained the following after attending women empowerment activities run by UNHCR's partners: *"Before attending the workshop, life was very difficult, I recently divorced and had to care for my children. The activities helped me regain my self-confidence and I was able to find a job, I feel very proud now"*. Refugee self-defense trainees have indicated feeling more self-confident: *"the class helps us transform our negative feelings into positive ones, we feel stronger and safer"*.



Gaps

Although SGBV prevention and response services are available in Jordan, gaps remain in remote geographical locations and limited funding resources hamper access to services for the most vulnerable groups. The following areas should be prioritized:

- Holistic SGBV prevention and response programming for non-Syrians
- Projects combining SGBV case management and tailored cash assistance to survivors
- Prevention activities promoting gender equality through social change
- Women empowerment activities (including tailored economic empowerment activities and support to establish refugee women led community based organizations), empowerment activities for adolescent girls.

UNHCR Contact:

- Douglas Di Salvo, Senior Protection officer, disalvo@unhcr.org
- Emilie Page, Protection officer (SGBV), page@unhcr.org