



# TanSeeq

COORDINATION

**For Ending Gender Based Violence In Lebanon**

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## OUT OF CRISIS AND CONFLICT, A LASTING LEGACY FOR WOMEN

As I write this, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Lebanon has registered 1,169,639 Syrian refugees, most of whom arrived over the past 18 months. This number represents over a million individual tragedies.

One of them is Lina. Before the current conflict engulfed her country, Lina's life in Syria seemed safe and secure. Her family was together, living in a real home, surrounded and supported by many friends and relatives. Then that life was suddenly shattered by war.

When her husband was arrested her life began to fall apart. With no news of his whereabouts, let alone his well-being, Lina decided to flee to Lebanon with her three children.

In Lebanon, Lina and her children found safety. But little else remains of the comfortable and seemingly secure life they once took for granted. Today, they live in a tent in a small, makeshift settlement alongside more than 150 other Syrian refugees. Conditions are harsh. Winter winds sweep through the settlement with biting cold. Snow covers the ground and temperatures drop. A few days later, everything thaws and the settlement turns into a muddy mess of tiny rivulets and stagnant puddles. In summer, the earth is parched, the arid winds leaving skin caked with a dry, fine dust. The heat is stifling. Sanitation is rudimentary, with families sharing portable toilets. Water is always in short supply.

Children are largely idle. Some attend to household chores and sometimes find work in the surrounding fields for wages

far below what they need to survive. Without humanitarian assistance, families like Lina's would perish. But even with such help, so many needs remain unmet. Lina's children, like hundreds of thousands of other refugee children in Lebanon, do not go to school. There are either too few places, or the schools are too far away.

Lina longs for her husband and is fearful of his fate. She is also consumed by anxiety for her children. Meeting their basic physical needs is a challenge; providing emotional support and maintaining some kind of hope in the face of an uncertain future sometimes seems impossible.

But there is another constant source of insecurity that haunts Lina and many other women like her. Without an adult male family member, Lina sometimes has to fend off unwelcome advances from men trying to exploit her vulnerability. Many women tell us these situations can be threatening and terrifying, accompanied by physical abuse to compel compliance.

Exploitation and abuse occur in all countries, but refugee women and children face additional risks because they are separated from their communities and familiar support structures. Their uncertain legal status and limited ability to move elsewhere compounds their reluctance to seek help from the authorities. In Lebanon, the lack of legal and institutional channels for protecting women and responding to sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) further complicates the problem.

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Over the years, humanitarian partners have expanded efforts to prevent and respond to sexual and gender based violence. From the moment refugees are registered, measures are in place to identify those who may be at risk or who have survived violence, enabling them to get immediate help. The provision of assistance and aid items to meet basic family needs is a priority for the most vulnerable refugees, and it can help prevent sexual exploitation or abuse by others. Community centres across the country provide safe places for women and children (Syrian and Lebanese) to congregate, to discuss problems and to receive specialised legal, medical and psychosocial help. Every day, more than 130 women across the country visit such centres to take advantage of the vital support and services they offer.

Education programmes to prevent sexual assault and domestic violence are being rolled out in communities across the country. Work is ongoing with the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA) to support the social services

system in providing help to survivors of violence, their children and ultimately to mitigate the consequences on individuals, families and communities. In this way, we all seek to strengthen institutional capacity to prevent and respond to SGBV and expand the reach and sustainability of our collective efforts.

It is easy to get discouraged when the violence that compelled so many like Lina and her children to flee continues to rage inside Syria. But the Syria of tomorrow depends on the strength and resilience of the refugees of today. That's why our efforts to prevent abuse, to heal its wounds and to rebuild shattered lives are important today and tomorrow. If in doing so we can also help build better support systems in Lebanon to prevent and respond to SGBV, it will be another positive, lasting legacy that can be of benefit long after this crisis has ended.

**Ninette Kelley,**

UNHCR Representative in Lebanon

## UNFPA LEADS THE ROLL OUT OF THE REGIONAL STRATEGY PLAN ON PREVENTION AND RESPONSE TO GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) is one of UN's lead agencies working to further gender equality and women's empowerment, and to address gender based violence (GBV).

In November 2013, UNFPA Arab States Regional Office (ASRO), mobilized a wide spectrum of partners and major stakeholders, including government representatives and experts, for the launching of its "Regional Strategy on Prevention and Response to Gender Based Violence" during a forum organized in Rabat, Morocco. The regional strategy was developed in a fully participatory approach benefitting from main sources, references and data originating from the various countries in the region and reflecting the realities, achievements, gaps and challenges. The key outcome of the forum emphasized the need to adopt the GBV strategy across the region. Afterwards, countries identified those outputs from the strategy that are mostly relevant to their respective contexts and priorities and elaborated certain interventions through close consultation and coordination with GBV stakeholders and partners.

Based on the above, and as in many countries in the region, UNFPA in Lebanon contributed to the rolling out of the regional strategy by identifying those GBV priorities that would require intensified and coordinated efforts and taking into consideration the humanitarian context. As such, the final GBV roll out plan constitutes the overall framework which guides UNFPA Lebanon's work in the prevention and response to GBV and which was successfully implemented in 2014 in consultation and partnership with key stakeholders. 2015 will certainly build on the achievements and lessons learned from the previous year by addressing key gaps and concerns.

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## A USEFUL HANDBOOK FOR WOMEN MIGRANT DOMESTIC WORKERS IN LEBANON

In addition to occupational risks, women migrant domestic workers in Lebanon (WMDWs) are vulnerable to labour exploitation as the withholding of identity papers can see them in forced labour situations. They are also vulnerable to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) problems, including sexually transmitted infections (STIs), unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions, as well as all kinds of violence and exploitation.

In 2009, the International Labour Organization (ILO) launched an information guide for WMDWs under the patronage of the Ministry of Labour (MOL). The purpose of the guide was to clarify the rights and obligations of workers and employers in light of the Lebanese laws and regulations that govern the entry, stay, and exit of domestic workers in Lebanon. Missing from the guide was a discussion of the occupational safety and SRH issues of workers.

Based on the above, ILO's European Union funded action programme for protecting the rights of WMDWs in Lebanon, partnered with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to develop a handbook on promoting SRH issues as well as addressing and preventing gender based violence (GBV) for WMDWs in Lebanon.

GBV is a human rights issue and a public health concern and it is not normal for any woman to suffer from any kind of violence or abuse caused by a friend, a relative, an employer, a stranger or any known man or woman, whether in public or in private.

Migrant domestic workers, who are predominately female, are especially vulnerable to violence as they are sometimes subjected to several forms of mistreatment, which in some cases have led to severe health consequences and death. They often live in private homes and hence are isolated from their own families and support as well as protection systems.

In addition to the wealth of information on reproductive health issues and aspects, this handbook sheds light on the different forms of violence and abuse against women, the consequences with particular focus on the health implications and linkages with SRH issues, the methods to seek help and useful contact details.

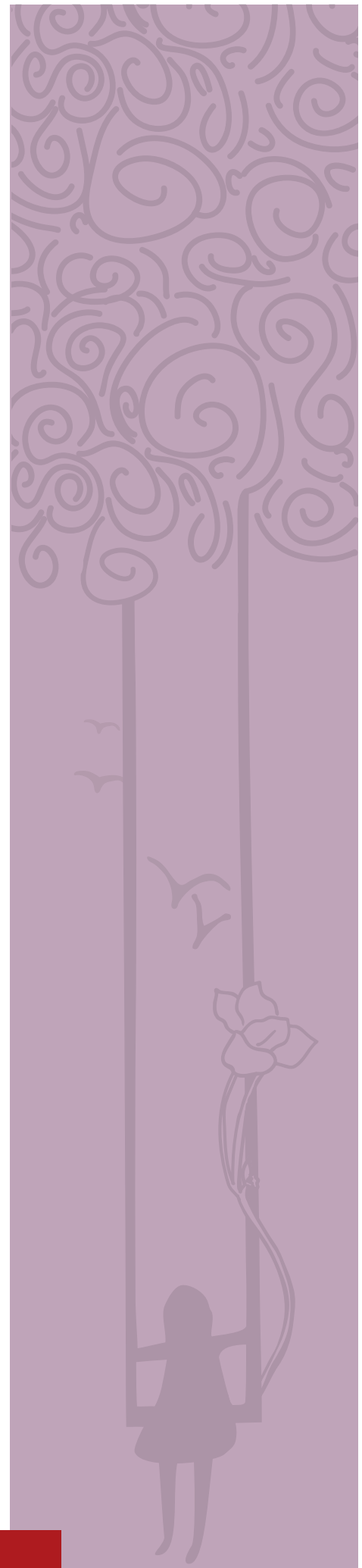
The handbook will be disseminated to WMDWs directly or through trade unions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and private recruitment agencies to raise the awareness of workers to SRH risks pre-departure and on arrival to Lebanon. It is expected that the SRH priorities and GBV information highlighted in the manual will inform future prevention, safety, protection and health legislation for domestic workers in Lebanon.

The handbook, which is available in English and Arabic, is both friendly and informative. It includes a set of messages coupled with relevant and culturally sensitive illustrations.

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## FIGHTING GBV STARTS BY EXPOSING IT FROM A YOUTH LENS

With the widespread media reports and various filed complaints pertaining to cases of gender based violence (GBV) and related crimes throughout 2014 magnified by the presence of the Syrian refugees, the United Nations Population Fund in Lebanon (UNFPA) and in line with its mandate to address this phenomenon, embarked in expanding its response to GBV by involving non-traditional agents of change who can influence and shape social values and culture.

As such and in the frame of the 16 days of activism against gender violence, the Visual and Performing Arts Association (VAPA) and the Y-PEER network through the support of UNFPA launched the second edition of the 72 hours film challenge, inviting young Lebanese – current and future – filmmakers as well as amateurs to produce short 5 minutes movies in only 3 days under the theme “Responding and Preventing GBV”.

150 young girls and boys aged 18 to 29, gathered within 20 teams to respond to UNFPA's call and produce their entry movies hoping for the chance to be evaluated by a professional jury composed of renowned professor Emil Chahine, famous actress Takla Chamoun, well-known director Amin Durra and young director Lucien Bourjeily (VAPA).

Out of the 20 teams, 5 were nominated by the jury for receiving awards, based on a set of criteria namely creativity, actorat, coverage of the topic and audio-visual techniques. The young nominees were quite excited to showcase their final work reflecting their understanding of GBV and revealing its various manifestations on people's lives.

“Despite the time challenge, the film crew took the subject very seriously and everyone provided comments on the smallest details from the storyboard, to the scenario and direction tasks” said Karl Haddad, director of the first winning movie “In the Shadow” after the award ceremony event.

The event attended by Ross Mountain, UN Resident Coordinator/UNFPA Representative in Lebanon, government representatives, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), academic and UN staff as well as participating film crews, applauded the mindfulness and innovation of young people to the subject of GBV. Indeed, having attended an orientation session by UNFPA on the notion, definition, and consequences of GBV prior to shooting their respective movies, the candidates felt more conscious about the detrimental implications of GBV and were determined to “be the voice of the survivors” as uttered by the second winners Mohamed Dayekh and Maysoon Hussein for their film “Happy New Year”.

In fact, the selection jury expressed its confusion during this round for picking only 3 top winners, among which is the movie “Solitaire” of Joe Hage, winner of the third prize. Reason for that is the fact that almost all entries displayed creativity with use of different techniques to exhibit various forms of GBV, from domestic violence, to sexual harassment, to verbal violence, or even parent to child abuse, making this year's edition of the 72 hours film challenge a “powerful awareness campaign” as per VAPA director Lucien Bourjeily.

The top 3 winners received valuable prizes (Canon DSLR Cameras) as well as media exposure.

UNFPA will be promoting the use of the winning movies in various platforms and settings – including screening at different local film festivals – to reach wider audiences, while keeping awareness on GBV among the main characteristics of its youth programmes.

## LAUNCHING A CAMPAIGN AGAINST SEXUAL HARASSMENT

In the frame of the 16 days of activism against gender violence, Najdeh association organized between November 25 and December 10 several activities with a unified message: "working together to raise awareness against sexual harassment". The activities included a human chain in the following camps: Bourj el-Shemali, Ain el-Hilweh, Bourj el-Barajneh, Shatila, Al-Jalil, Nahr al-Bared and Baddawi, consisting of 298 participants, including 98 young men.

Activities also included 2 presentations of an interactive theater play on sexual harassment entitled "The Story of Rima" in Shatila and Bourj el-Shemali camps, with the attendance of 135 people, including 24 young men. Discussions between young men and women were also organized.

The campaign concluded with a gathering at the Palestinian cultural center of Al-Bass camp, Tyre, in the presence of representatives of Lebanese and Palestinian parties, representatives of international, Lebanese and Palestinian associations and organizations, and a crowd of people. The event included several activities including a film about sexual harassment, an interactive theater show, and a Palestinian folkloric dance performed by the children of the As-Salam Club. The event also included recreational and educational activities to raise awareness on sexual harassment.

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## "SCHEHERAZADE'S DIARY": SHEDDING LIGHT ON VIOLENCE AND OPPRESSION LIVED BY WOMEN BEHIND BARS

The Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World (IWSAW) at the Lebanese American University (LAU) and the alumni relations office in collaboration with the alumni association – BCW chapter – hosted a public screening of the award winning film by Zeina Daccache "Scheherazade's Diary", on December 9 at LAU's Beirut campus.

Filmed throughout a 10 month drama therapy and theatre project set up in 2012 at the Baabda prison by Zeina Daccache, the gripping and tragicomic documentary features women inmates who challenge the society that oppresses women. The film journeys into the quotidian of prison life and follows the storytellers – who are murderers of husbands, adulterers and drug felons – as they rehearse for the show, and while they share testimonials of domestic violence, forlorn romance and deprivation of motherhood. Through their artistic journey, the women inmates hold up a mirror against Lebanese society, implicating its role in nurturing oppression, discrimination and violence which often lead to crime.

The event was attended by activists, members of various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Lebanon, as well as LAU alumni. A lively discussion followed the screening facilitated by Ms. Lama Daccache from Catharsis as well as a former inmate, who featured in the film.

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## SEXUAL AND GENDER BASED VIOLENCE AND WOMEN'S IMAGE IN MEDIA AND ADS

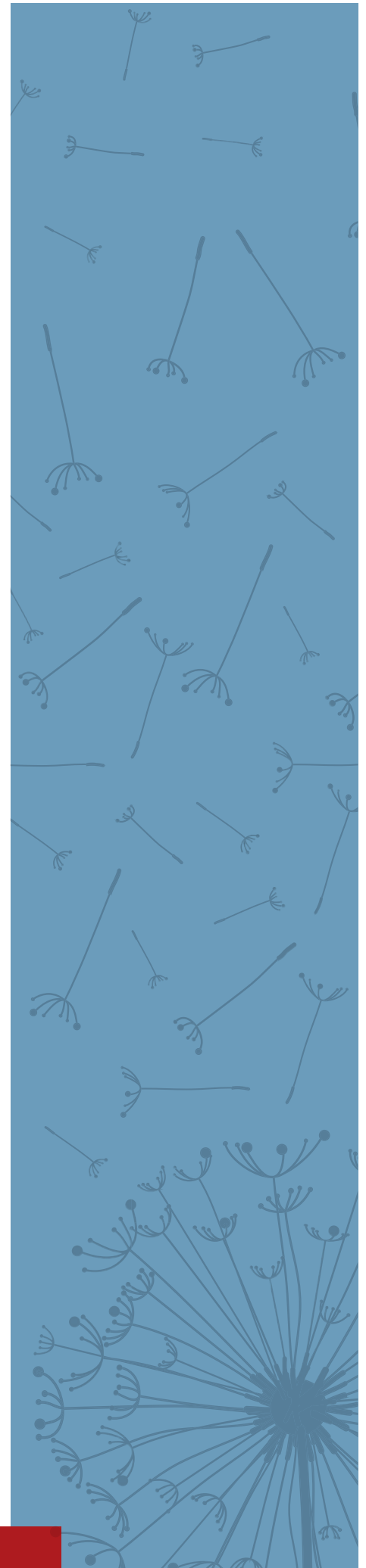
The Lebanese Women Democratic Gathering (RDFL) has been actively preparing for the 16 days of activism against gender violence, particularly through monitoring the phenomenon of sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) that has increased exponentially, with reference to the number of women who were killed by their husbands or their family members in recent years. This phenomenon is still widespread in our society due to existing inequality and discrimination against women and girls.

In the frame of this campaign, RDFL launched 2 films: the first entitled "Ala Aynak Ya Tejir", or "Bluntly and Vulgarly", sheds light on the reality of SGBV and harassment and aims to create a change in the culture of the society that promotes commodification of the female body legitimizing degrading practices towards women and girls. The film was projected at the UNESCO palace on December 5, as well as in 6 universities across Lebanon. The film captured the attention of young people and sparked debate about the phenomenon of harassment. A number of young women spoke up about their own experiences with harassment, and some young men expressed their own opinion about the issue too. All viewers have agreed that this reality cannot be tolerated and can be changed through education, as the problem affects all groups and ages. Everyone also agreed on the need to join forces to devise solutions and bring about change, and on the importance of speaking openly about harassment and not to remain silent, which gives the aggressor the margin to continue with the abuse and exploitation.

The second film is a documentary about the image of women as advertised in media and ads and is entitled "Image Upon Request" in collaboration with Fe-Male organization. The film was also presented at the UNESCO Palace on December 8 and highlighted the stereotypes attributed to women, produced and marketed by the media and ads companies. More so, the coordinator of the programme to resist violence against women (VAW) at RDFL participated in talk shows on 3 TV channels and introduced the 16 days of activism against gender violence, stressing that the campaign represents an annual opportunity to raise the voices against all abusive practices affecting women and to emphasize women's civic will for change which should pave the way for courageous, effective and sustainable actions in the framework of combating VAW.

It is worth mentioning that RDFL has also organized a 4 day bazar in its Mount Lebanon branch. The proceeds were dedicated to provide to a number of abused and underprivileged women. Further psychological and legal support was carried out in the 6 listening centers managed by RDFL across Lebanon with a focus on helping and supporting Syrian refugee women, especially in Ksarnaba, Bekaa.

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## ZALFA LEADS KAFA'S AWARENESS CAMPAIGN ON LAW NO. 293 TO PROTECT WOMEN AND OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS FROM FAMILY VIOLENCE

Following the adoption of law no. 293 on the protection of women and other family members from family violence in April 2014, KAFA (Enough) Violence & Exploitation set off to implement the law to provide legal protection for women victims of family violence on one hand, and to identify gaps and adopted mechanisms on the other hand, to be able to collect the necessary information about using the law, and to share them with women.

In parallel to these efforts which resulted in more than 30 protection orders, requested or monitored by KAFA, several meetings were held with women benefitting from the services of the organization's listening and counseling centers (LCC) to gather their questions about law no. 293. These questions contributed then to the creation of the fictional character of Zalfa, a survivor of violence who resorted to the law.

KAFA chose Zalfa to lead its awareness campaign during the 16 days of activism against gender violence, to reach through the simplified language of that character the largest possible number of women, and specifically those who are in urgent need of information regarding their protection from violence. In this frame, KAFA has also created a special interactive website ([www.kafa.org.lb/zalfa](http://www.kafa.org.lb/zalfa)), in addition to Zalfa's manuals and brochures, and 15 televised short messages about the content of the law presented during the Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation International (LBCI)' evening news.

This campaign is supported by the UN Resident Coordinator's Office (UNRCO), the United Nations Population Fund in Lebanon (UNFPA), in partnership with the United Nations Communication Group (UNCG), the Norwegian Embassy, Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) office in Lebanon, Save the Children organization and Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation.

It is worth noting that in addition to the awareness campaign, UNFPA continued during the reporting period its support to KAFA's LCC in Beirut, as well as in Bekaa. A wide range of gender based violence (GBV) related activities were therefore implemented and included: a) the provision of direct services to 700 women survivors of violence including social counseling, psychological assistance, legal consultations, court representation, referral to shelters and health services; b) the translation into Arabic and printing of the manual entitled "Communication with Violence Survivors: Improving Health Care Response", aimed at developing the capacities of 60 health care providers on communication and the provision of health care for survivors of violence; c) organizing awareness raising sessions on GBV issues, such as early marriage, as well as reproductive health issues, with focus on family planning, safe motherhood, pap smears, etc., targeting 300 women survivors of violence; d) offering art and drama therapy sessions targeting women and young girls benefitting from the services of the LCC, while organizing animation sessions for children who accompanied their mothers.

UNFPA has also expanded its support to KAFA to revise and amend the Internal Security Forces (ISF) training curriculum to be in line with law no. 293 on the protection of women and other family members from family violence, as well as publishing manuals to raise awareness among lawyers and social workers on the new law.

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## SHADOWS OF ALLEYS: AN EXHIBITION BY PALESTINIAN REFUGEE YOUTH ADDRESSING GENDER BASED VIOLENCE IN LEBANON

To mark the International Youth Day (IYD), The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and ABAAD-Resource Centre for Gender Equality (ABAAD) launched a photo exhibition entitled "Shadows of Alleys" in Beirut. The exhibition is a result of an initiative aimed at exploring social issues through discussions about gender relations and gender equality with Palestinian youth living in refugee camps throughout Lebanon. The exhibition used photography as a mean to tell 3 fictional stories about individuals, both males and females, experiencing different forms of gender based violence (GBV) and discrimination. The exhibition uniquely accounted for young refugees' own perceptions about how GBV is affecting individuals and Palestinian refugee communities in Lebanon.

The booklets are currently available for download at [www.abaadmena.org](http://www.abaadmena.org).

UNRWA's protection unit works to prevent GBV through community outreach and awareness raising activities in partnership with Palestinian grassroots organizations.

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## THROUGH VIOLENCE... NOBODY COMES OUT AHEAD

On the occasion of the 16 days of activism to End Gender Based Violence, ABAAD-Resource Center for Gender Equality (ABAAD) led between November 25 and December 10, a nation-wide campaign under the slogan "Through Violence... Nobody Comes Out Ahead". The campaign featured former Lebanese president, Mr. Michel Suleiman, who addressed male audience to refrain from using violence against women under the pretext of bearing "responsibility".

Designed to elicit a proactive response from the State and the general public, the campaign focused on the State's accountability to end gender based violence (GBV). The aim of the campaign was to foster the Lebanese political will through highlighting State's exercise of due diligence. The State in Lebanon is accountable and responsible to defend women's rights at the legislative level, among others, and to continue until these rights translate into reality. The campaign held an eye-opening message about the realities of GBV in Lebanon, bringing to light the need to take official measures to end this phenomenon.

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## LECORVAW USES THEATER TO RESIST VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

To mark the 16 days of activism against gender violence and in collaboration with the Tripoli Bar Association, the Lebanese Council to Resist Violence against Women (LECORVAW) organized a consultation meeting with the lawyers about article 522 from the Lebanese penal code, which stipulates that charges are dropped against a rapist if he married the victim.

LECORVAW has also partnered with the Centre for Civic Engagement and Community Service at the American University of Beirut (AUB), to implement an interactive theater play entitled "LARA" on the subject of domestic violence. Selected AUB students received an awareness session on violence against women and then were requested to create a story from their experiences. Following several training sessions on the theatrical skills, they presented the play to their peers.

LECORVAW also launched a women safe space, in partnership with Heartland Alliance. The space provides holistic services focusing on psychosocial support, violence prevention, livelihoods strengthening and social cohesion to diverse vulnerable populations affected by the Syrian crisis, including women and girls, survivors of sexual and gender based violence, torture and trauma, as well as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersexed (LGBTI).

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## PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM EARLY MARRIAGES THROUGH LEGISLATION

The National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW) has elaborated in September a draft bill in the context of the national campaign to protect children from early marriages in Lebanon and which was accepted by the parliament committee of human rights. This was part of the campaign launched on March 8, 2014 marking the International Women's Day.

The draft bill requires an obligatory pre-authorization by the juvenile court judge before contracting the marriage of a minor.

This draft law is a first step towards protecting children in Lebanon when forced into or endangered to early marriages. Knowing that in the Lebanese legislative status quo, religious tribunals are capacitated to handle all issues relating to the personal status of the 18 State recognized confessional groups.

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## INTERAGENCY COORDINATION FOR ADDRESSING SGBV IN THE HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

The Sexual and Gender Based Violence Task Force (SGBVTF) aims at supporting a comprehensive and coordinated approach to SGBV, including prevention, care and support, and efforts to hold perpetrators accountable. The SGBV TF – chaired by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and co-chaired by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) – also aims at enhancing predictable and effective prevention and response and contributes to a shared vision and integrated strategies among humanitarian stakeholders to better address SGBV through a survivor centered and rights based approach.

Since 2013, the SGBV TF in Lebanon has supported the roll-out of the gender based violence information management system (GBVIMS) to effectively and safely collect, analyze and share data reported by survivors. By the end of 2014, 6 organizations contributed to data sharing and analysis. Sharing of data and information collected through the GBVIMS is regulated by an information sharing protocol signed by data gathering organizations, UNHCR, UNICEF and UNFPA.

By November 2014, the assessment of the SGBV referral pathway, developed by the SGBV TF members and disseminated by the implementing partners, was finalized. The referral pathway consists of a set of guidelines and regulations for the correct referral to different types of services for SGBV survivors meant to increase awareness and use of SGBV related services. During the presentation of the assessment findings, a number of actions and suggestions were raised by the participants that will be further addressed in early 2015, such as the development of call centres that need to be staffed 24/7 to receive calls from women as well as ensuring the accountability of providers and hotline services through periodical checkups. The SGBV TF will then, among others, work on the standardization of guidelines for referrals to be used by frontline workers on the one hand and on training material for the dissemination of the referral pathway for community and frontline workers on the other.

The SGBV TF managed to finalize the SGBV case management minimum standards aiming at defining minimum standards and providing basic guidance to organizations providing case management services to survivors of SGBV. The standards – endorsed by all the participants of the SGBV TF – are intended to be used as a comprehensive guideline or training on how to provide case management. Content is based on acknowledged best practices and international guidelines, as well as on current practices of case management organizations in Lebanon based on the results of the survey launched in June 2014. The standards draw on already established standards and checklists developed by the national technical task force to end violence against women (VAW).

By the end of 2014, the inter-agency standard operating procedures (SOPs) for SGBV prevention and response in Lebanon were finalized. The SOPs describe guiding principles, procedures, roles, and responsibilities for each actor involved in the prevention of and response to SGBV in Lebanon. They are developed to guide the members of the SGBV TF providing such services on the implementation of the prevention and response interventions to support individual SGBV survivors and communities within the framework of the "Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP)". The SOPs provide basic information on what services are available and how they are delivered, including coordination for better quality and holistic care to SGBV survivors. The inter-agency SOPs are currently being revised by the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOISA) in order to ensure full harmonization with national policies.

In addition to the above and as a result of the coordinated efforts deployed by the SGBV TF to prevent and respond to SGBV, the following achievements were registered in 2014: over 200,000 community members have been reached with information sessions on what is SGBV, how to prevent it, where to find help, and how to access services available for survivors. Furthermore, 70 safe areas/facilities were established. Available services range from medical to emotional support, individual counseling, legal services, life skills and other socio economic activities. Women and girls have the possibility to access information about services, network with their peers and increase their knowledge on topics such as sexual and reproductive health, child care, and human rights. In 2014, it was estimated that on a daily basis, 130 women and girls have accessed these centers, and approximately 40 per cent of them are below 18 years old. More so, some 88,000 persons at risk as well as survivors of SGBV had access to medical, emotional support, legal and other protection services.



## MARRIAGE IS NOT A GAME

According to the global statistics of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), over 700 million women alive today were married before they have turned 18. While the exact number of child brides in Lebanon remains unknown, the phenomenon is a rising trend exacerbated by the Syrian crisis.

Early marriage violates the rights of children, especially young girls, depriving them from continuing their education and putting their health, wellbeing and protection at risk; it also causes dire long-term impacts.

Therefore and to meet the growing need for awareness raising, UNICEF and ABAAD-Resource Center for Gender Equality (ABAAD), in the frame of a European Union funded project, launched a 3 minutes video animation entitled "Marriage is Not a Game".

The key messages were produced in a participatory approach with girls, boys, women, men, and community leaders and were extensively tested to ensure that the video reflects the real context and mirrors reality.

The animation film will be used in social development and primary health care centers, informal tented settlements, among other gateways, to reach the widest audience possible.

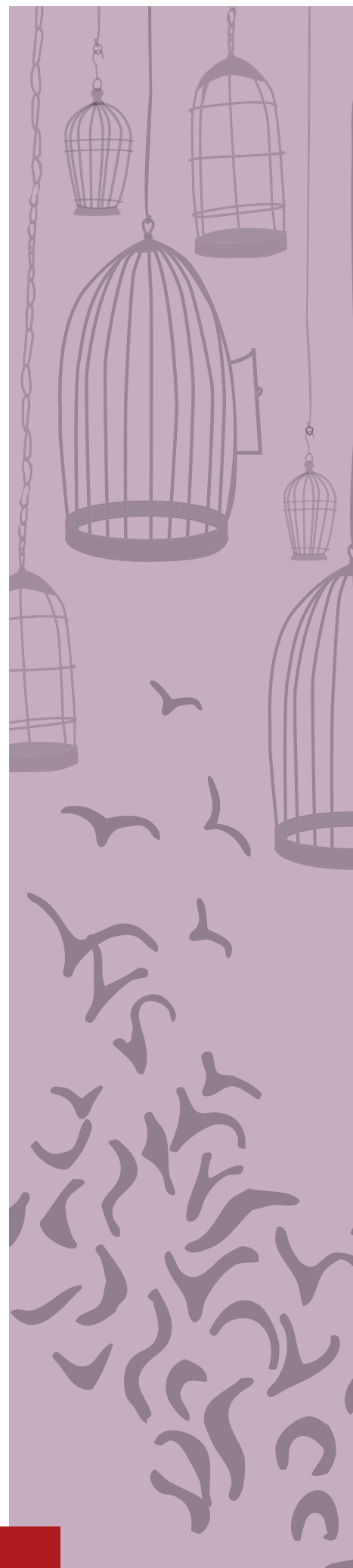
The link to the video on YouTube can be found at:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bwqIV-9a6OU>

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## "A MESSAGE FROM OUR GIRLS..."

Supported by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Heartland Alliance International (HAI) commemorated the 16 days of activism against gender violence, with its local partners AKKAROUNA and the Women Charity League through a 4 day theater workshop, December 5 to 8. This activity was addressed to young girls from the host and refugee communities in Akkar, aged 15 to 18 years old, and is part of the UNFPA funded project "Our Safety, Our Priority: a Safe Space Model for Prevention and Sustainability of Protection of Women and Girls in North Lebanon." Through the use of "theater for awareness" methodology, important key messages relating to gender based violence (GBV), protection, and early marriage were relayed to the 20 young girls – 11 Lebanese and 9 Syrians – who participated in the workshop which was facilitated by specialists in theater and drama expression as well as a trained social worker. Through the acquisition of basic theater skills, with a focus on body language and expression, and information on GBV, the participants scripted scenes showing the various sub-types of GBV – with an emphasis on early marriage.

On the last day of the activity, the young girls presented 4 scenes in front of 280 community members including mothers and fathers, and friends. At the end of the show, the stage was set for discussions between the young actresses and the audience regarding the topics presented. White ribbons and coffee cups with key messages were distributed to all attendants at the end of the event, signaling their engagement towards ending violence against women.

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