

# Briefing Paper

## Syrian Refugees with restricted movements living outside camps in Jordan (December 2013)



### Scope

This briefing was prepared by the SGBV Sub-Working Group to identify a common position and recommend key approaches to address issues of restricted movement and limited access to services for Syrian women and girls. This paper is neither an assessment nor a comprehensive research and does not provide exhaustive information or a conclusive analysis on the issue. The analysis below is based on existing information from assessments, interviews with key SGBV SWG members and a limited number of focus groups with Syrian refugees in Zarqa. While isolation is an issue in camp settings as well, this paper focuses on Syrian refugees living in urban and rural areas.

### Limited movements and isolation

According to assessments and anecdotal information reported by Syrian refugees, women, boys, and girls spend significant amounts or even all of their time inside their homes due to several factors, listed below. In general, refugees reported being unable to engage in activity outside of the home due to the high costs associated to it. Lacks of social opportunities, as well as increasing feelings of depression, negativity, anxiety and distress are mentioned as reasons to stay at home.

#### Women and girls

- ❖ Restricted movements have been reported for women recently widowed, women and girls living in more conservative areas and communities, women and girls fearing harassment. Refugees living in makeshift settlements<sup>1</sup> or in villages far from urban areas have more restricted movements and in particular, based on existing information, for women and girls it is more difficult to leave home<sup>2</sup>.
- ❖ Women cited fear, protection concerns, or “not being allowed” as reasons for restricting movement outside the house. ‘Women reported feeling stigmatised by rumours about Syrian women being involved in prostitution or irregular sexual relations’<sup>3</sup>. Media reports on early marriage and sexual exploitation of Syrian women have had negative consequences on perceptions. As a result, male relatives and women and girls themselves limit their movements to prevent harassment and to avoid being perceived negatively.

<sup>1</sup> Some refugees, especially those working in the informal sectors and involved in seasonal activities, live in tents outside of urban areas in non-formal camps composed of a few households

<sup>2</sup> Many (41%) women and girls never or rarely leave their shelter, while 29% of boys and 15% of men never or rarely leave their shelter. While all spoke of concerns about exposure to unwanted attention (females) or physical violence (males), the mobility of women and girls was further restricted by not being allowed to leave unaccompanied by a male member of the family. Inter-Agency Assessment of *Gender-based Violence and Child Protection among urban Syrian refugees in Jordan, with a focus on Early Marriage*, UN Women 2013

<sup>3</sup> CARE, *Syrian refugees in Urban Jordan*, April 2013

- ❖ Although female single headed household might have more opportunities to get out of their homes to access distributions and other basic services, they are also the ones more exposed to sexual exploitation, including by local charities during distributions<sup>4</sup>, because of the perceptions of unaccompanied women. In addition as CBOs are ‘prioritizing young women, as a result many males are now refusing to let females go to CBOs unaccompanied’<sup>5</sup>.
- ❖ The need to have an income to pay for rent and other expenses is the main concern of refugees. As men fear of being arrested if engaged in an economic activity, women are reportedly increasingly providing an income for their families working for example as housemaids and hairdressers. This has reportedly marked a consistent change from women’s daily activities back in Syria, allowing them to leave their homes every day here in Jordan. Men in a focus group confirmed that they have no problem to allow their wives and daughters to work outside of home as they are the only family member working. Perceptions and patterns of movement are different in different parts of Jordan and this need to be further explored by the S/GBV SWG.

### **Boys and men**

- ❖ According to an assessment conducted among refugees living in host communities<sup>6</sup>, boys are likelier to leave the house every day than both women and girls. However, 29% of boys reported isolation in their homes. It is thought that this is in part due to concern about physical violence from host community and/or other refugees. Men also face challenges in leaving home, because of fear of being arrested and not having identity documents. Men reported fearing tensions with the local community and harassment when they leave home and fear of being arrested by authorities for engaging in altercation or working in the informal labour market.
- ❖ Men reported that they fear that women and girls could be sexually assaulted, so they try to restrict their movements. Even at home, women and girls are not left alone but with other male relatives.

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<sup>4</sup> Care Assessment, idem.

<sup>5</sup> Care Assessment, idem.

<sup>6</sup> Interagency Assessment, *Gender-based Violence and Child Protection among Syrian refugees in Jordan*, 2013

## The main consequences of limited movement and Selective access to services

- ❖ Assessments have consistently highlighted that school drop out by Syrian children, especially girls, is related to perceptions of risks travelling to school and conflicts in schools<sup>7</sup> but also due to the additional costs of education.
- ❖ Restricted movements do not seem to affect access to all services indiscriminately. Instead, limited movements seem to be 'selective' with only certain sectors 'affected'. For example, girls do not go to school but attend activities at women's centres. The decision motivating selective access to services seems to be based on distance of services and economic value. For example, if distance to school is often used as a reason for children not attending education courses, distance of health services was indeed mentioned as a barrier but not an absolute reason preventing full access to this service.
- ❖ In addition, access to services seems to have recently improved, thanks to outreach strategies, increased information and confidence building activities conducted by humanitarian organisations. Newly arrived refugees have more limited access to services because they do not have information, do not have yet developed community links and don't know/trust the organisations, but this improves over time.
- ❖ Access to S/GBV services is still very limited due to several factors, including limited information with regard to S/GBV services and concern about male staff of doctors in hospitals and clinics.
- ❖ Men find it more difficult to access assistance and psychosocial activities because of cultural norms related to masculinity and perceptions around their role.
- ❖ While refugees who reach service centres report the value in access, service providers need to be mindful that there are significant barriers for women, girls, boys and men in leaving their homes. Models for service delivery should incorporate strategies that enable women, girls, boys and men to access services and resources taking into account the restrictions.

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<sup>7</sup>In Irbid, women described putting girls on busses to school as a safety worry. In Zarqa, a number of parents raised concerns about gangs with knives controlling schools and they did not want to send their teenage boys to school. In Mafraq, classes had been offered specifically for Syrian students in the evening but some parents felt uncomfortable letting their children out after dark. There are substantially less girls enrolled than boys in Ghor, mainly because of the fear of daughters walking to school, even if girls are in large groups'. UNICEF, *Syrian refugee children in Jordan, Assessments desk review on the situation of Syrian refugee children living in Jordan*, 2013

## Approaches and recommendations

Approaches for organizations/agencies		
Approach	Description	Recommendations
<b>Community Centres and Women's centres/safe spaces</b>	It is acknowledged both by service providers and refugees that community centres/women centres provide a safe space where they feel comfortable to spend time, socialise, conduct several activities, receive information and participate in awareness sessions and seek assistance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase women's centres/community centres, community activities</li> <li>• Ensure that centres have children's spaces to allow mothers to attend activities</li> </ul>
<b>Home visits</b>	<p>Home-to-home visits are used by several organisations with different objectives, including confidence building, providing information on existing services, assess vulnerabilities and provide referrals to specialised services.</p> <p><b>Issues</b> The main issue related to home visits is confidentiality as often the whole family is at home and women and girls are not able to disclose several problems.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure careful selection and training of staff/volunteers and constant monitoring of outreach activities</li> </ul>
<b>Community mobilisers/Peer-to-peer</b>	Peer-to-peer is used by many organisations, often using 'snowball' techniques to inform and involve refugees on existing activities in the community. 'Information stewards' reach out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure careful selection and training of volunteers and constant monitoring of outreach activities</li> <li>• Use mobile theatre and other art-based outreach activities to reach communities and share</li> </ul>

	<p>to at least one relative and friend and pass-on information.</p> <p><b>Issues</b> It has been remarked that community mobilisers should be well trained and reach out to known members of community to avoid tensions. Another issue is that this approach can strengthen social control.</p>	<p>information</p>
<p><b>Confidence Building</b> <b>Go-and –see visits</b></p>	<p>Community events like weekend social activities, theatre, music, and sensitisation sessions are organised to allow refugees to get in touch with services and information. Some S/GBV SWG members use go-and-see visits to other services to allow refugees to become familiar with spaces, providers and services offered. Others support protection groups/community CP committees to elaborate with communities possible community-based protection measures. Community leaders are involved to mobilise people to participate in activities and know and trust basic services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the number of specialised services to ensure that refugees do not have to travel a long distance</li> <li>• Increase Mobile outreach specialised services</li> <li>• Ensure schools are safer and parents are involved in school activities’ planning and management</li> <li>• Ensure that school shifts are not organised after dark and change/adapt school hours to increase access</li> </ul>
<p><b>Technology/Mobile Phones</b></p>	<p>One partner is distributing SIM cards to facilitate contacts between family members and women and girls who leave home to go to school or to other services.</p> <p><b>Issues</b> It is often difficult to monitor the impact of SIM</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distribute SIM cards</li> </ul>

	cards on protection/perception of risk and in some cases distribution of mobile phones can create additional protection risks	
<b>Technology/Learning tablets</b>	<p>In order to ensure that girls who cannot leave home have access to basic education, one GBV SWG member is considering to distribute tablets with pre-recorded education applications</p> <p><b>Issues</b> The costs involved in implementing this approach is high</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design and distribute alternative education materials to be accessed by girls and boys not having access to school</li> </ul>
<b>Community escorts</b>	One members organised an outreach program involving health workers to pick up at home and accompany women and girls to health services to make them feel safer and reassure male relatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the organisation of ‘escorts’ by parents to accompany children to school on a rotating basis</li> <li>• Facilitate the organisation of groups of women to travel together to services</li> </ul>
<b>Assistance to Address Logistical Barriers</b>	Some GBV SWG members provide incentives to facilitate access to services. This includes free transport, cash-for-transport, cash for families including children attending school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure support is provided for transport to access services</li> </ul>
<b>Hotline</b>	<p>Members established hotlines to ensure that women and girls can reach centres to report issues and if they cannot leave home can receive distance-counselling.</p> <p><b>Issues</b> Concerns were raised about capacity and availability of services to be able to respond to emergencies reported to hotlines</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that hotlines are established when a strong referral system is in place in the outreach area</li> <li>• Increase the number of Help Desks</li> </ul>

<p><b>Engagement of CBOs</b></p>	<p>Several members are supporting local community based organisations, mostly non-religious.</p> <p><b>Issues</b>  Refugees reported issues related to transparency and sexual exploitation during distributions  Religious organisations and mosques are generally not supported</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build capacities of community based organisations to provide accountable, neutral, impartial, non-discriminatory assistance</li> <li>• Involve religious charities in trainings on PSEA and support them to develop Codes of Conduct</li> <li>• Establish community based safe and confidential PSEA reporting mechanisms</li> </ul>
<p><b>Home-based activities</b></p>	<p>As part of its regular program with Jordanian women and girls, an NGO conducts life-skills and livelihood trainings either at home, where a few women and girls gather, or in other spaces chosen by them, including mosques and community leader’s homes. This allows home-bound women and girls to start IGAs activities at home where they sell their products.</p> <p><b>Issues</b>  It might be difficult to apply the same intervention model to the refugee community given the restrictions on livelihood activities.</p> <p>Marketing restrictions need to be addressed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore possibilities to organise activities at home</li> <li>• Explore possibilities to economically empower women and girls who cannot leave their homes</li> </ul>
<p><b>Engaging Men and boys</b></p>	<p>Members are working with men and boys on GBV prevention but not specifically addressing issues related to restricted movements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organise vocational trainings for men as a way to provide psychosocial support and share positive messages</li> <li>• Organise sport and coffee sessions with men and address their perceptions on security + cost/benefits of sending children to school</li> <li>• Provide free internet rowing cafes to reach out to boys and men and share key messages</li> </ul>

<b>Recommendations for GBV sub-WG</b>		
<b>Advocacy with other sectors</b>	The GBV SWG has identified several activities/approaches that can be addressed through a multisectoral approach.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Based on the recommendations above, sectors like education, health, food and NFI could be involved in discussions to strengthen access to services for refugees with restricted movements</li> <li>• Present the main recommendations of this paper to the Inter-sectoral Working Group</li> <li>• Include issue of home-bound girls and women in multi-sectoral assessments</li> </ul>
<b>Information Strategy</b>	In general information on GBV services is still very limited	<p>Develop an interagency information strategy including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use Registration Points strategically to provide information about services, including through distributing WELCOME CARDS with telephone numbers and addresses of GBV services</li> <li>• Use targeted distributions to encourage women and girls to leave home and see and learn about women's spaces and other services</li> <li>• Develop culturally appropriate information materials using different communication techniques and spaces, including: posters, what's up</li> <li>• Disseminate information through health workers, health centres, bus stations, food distribution points, schools, etc</li> <li>• Use vouchers (food and other services) to provide information and facilitate referrals</li> </ul>
	Although GBV media guidelines have been	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a media strategy to propose a positive</li> </ul>

<b>Media</b>	developed and advocacy materials are being drafted, GBV actors do not yet have a media strategy to ensure that the 'negative' perceptions generated by media coverage are addressed proactively	image of Syrian women based on messages focused on resilience <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continue to advocate for more support to prevent and address GBV using shared messages</li></ul>
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