

# COVID-19 vaccination and implications for gender-based violence (GBV) prevention and response.

## GBV WG-Jordan.

### Background:

Since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak, WHO has worked with partners on public health measures to eliminate the spread of the virus and stressed on the urgency of building a healthier, safer and fairer world. Later in 2020, vaccine development has been expedited via unprecedented collaboration in the multinational pharmaceutical industry and between governments<sup>1</sup>. By the beginning of 2021, countries around the world began deploying COVID-19 vaccine to fight the global pandemic. On 13 January 2021, Jordan began its vaccination campaign, with healthcare workers and the elderly prioritized for the first shots<sup>2</sup>. The Ministry of Health has launched an online platform (<https://vaccine.jo/cvms/>) to organize the registration process for those who are interested in receiving the vaccine



Syrian refugee has her temperature taken before receiving COVID-19 vaccine

and announced the availability of the vaccines in over 29 vaccine centers nationwide<sup>3</sup>. On the other hand, the Ministry of Health in collaboration with UN agencies and other governmental entities has launched a national awareness campaign “Elak w Feed” on social media, radio and other channels aiming at disseminating information about COVID-19 safety measures and vaccine as well as raising awareness on the importance of breaking the chain of contamination for the virus to stop spreading.

As of 23 May 2021, 385,142 people were fully vaccinated in Jordan which represents only 3.6% of Jordan’s population. Vaccination is not limited to Jordanians, all individuals on Jordanian soil are eligible to receive it, and it is free-of-charge. Refugees from all nationalities are also encouraged to register for the vaccination especially elderlies and those who suffer from chronic illness. Persons with disabilities are also prioritized through the government's joint efforts to reach out to individuals with limited mobility and ensure no one is left behind.

<sup>1</sup> Evolution of the COVID-19 vaccine development landscape <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41573-020-00151-8>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/latest-on-coronavirus-outbreak/jordan-begins-covid-19-vaccine-rollout/2108497>

<sup>3</sup> For more information about vaccination centers in Jordan <https://bit.ly/2XAQyiu>

In late March 2021, statistics showed that 45% of Jordan population registered to receive COVID-19 vaccine were females <sup>4</sup>. However, there is no published data that reflects the number of females who received the vaccine since the start of vaccination campaign. Availability of such age and sex disaggregated data remains however paramount to understand the current situation, challenges and gaps faced by the different groups.

In addition to the considerations that should be taken into account for people with limited mobility such as persons with disabilities and elderlies, considerations related to cultural barriers and unequal power dynamics that may hamper women and other marginalized groups from accessing vaccination centers should be looked into. A large number of women lack decision-making power over their own bodies and health, hindering their ability to choose whether to get the COVID-19 vaccine or not. In another scenario women may not be able to access vaccination centers due to distance lack of safe transportation and childcare arrangements especially in the case of female headed households. This may increase family tensions and risks of exposure to IPV, denial of resources and other forms of GBV.

## Gender barriers:

In many settings, women face limited mobility to reach health facilities or vaccination sites, restricted decision-making power in their health seeking as well as limited access to and control over resources needed for advancing their health, including information about vaccines and vaccine safety. Women and gender-diverse groups are also often at risk of experiencing sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence when seeking health services, including vaccination<sup>5</sup>.

In Jordan, women and girls are not an exception. In fact, women may experience similar challenges to access vaccination centers due to gender inequality, patriarchal system and harmful traditional practices. In 2020, 8.6% of reported incidents were “Denial of resources” women and girls are increasingly reporting incidents of denial of resources, opportunity and services mainly perpetrated by their husbands and male relatives<sup>6</sup>.



Refugees wait in the waiting area of Zatari vaccination centre before receiving their COVID-19 vaccine

<sup>4</sup> Alghad electronic newspaper <https://alghad.com/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B5%D8%AD%D8%A9-%D8%A3%D9%83%D8%AB%D8%B1-%D9%85%D9%86-27-%D8%A3%D9%84%D9%81-%D8%B4%D8%AE%D8%B5-%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%AA%D9%84%D9%82%D9%88%D9%86-%D9%84%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%AD-%D9%83%D9%88/>

<sup>5</sup> Addressing gender barriers in COVID-19 vaccine rollout [Expanding reach: Addressing gender barriers in COVID-19 vaccine rollout \(who.int\)](https://www.who.int/news-room/feature-stories/addressing-gender-barriers-in-covid-19-vaccine-rollout)

<sup>6</sup> Jordan GBV IMS Task Force Annual Report 2020 <https://reliefweb.int/report/jordan/jordan-gbv-ims-task-force-annual-report-2020>

Lack of gender representation within the health service providers and tailored messages focusing on women and other marginalized groups needs may lead to inequitable access to health care. Besides, women have less digital literacy and access to mobile phones and internet and therefore less access to social media and information about how to register for vaccination and the campaign messages.

Accordingly, the GBV SWG in Jordan developed this guidance note aiming at ensuring equitable and safe access to COVID-19 vaccination for everyone with a specific focus on women and other marginalized groups.

## **Recommendations:**

The following list of recommendations apply to the on-going Covid-19 vaccine roll out in Jordan which started officially the 13th of January 2021. As COVID-19 vaccine seems to be the only sustainable and long term measure to ease the severe limits of movement and health precautionary measures (such as social distancing, wearing masks) the recommendations below are covering the dissemination of key messages on GBV/PSEA services provision in vaccination sites and broadly aim to enhance the equal access to the vaccine so that no one is left behind during the COVID-19 vaccine roll-out:

### **I. Recommendations for Health care providers for vaccine center in and out of camps:**

- To ensure a Community based approach with the participation of women, men, boys and girls through the implementation of Safety audit within the biggest Vaccination Centers so that we can proceed with GBV/SEA risks analysis or participatory Safety Walk <sup>7</sup>and with mitigation strategy (such as arrangements to manage queues and triage)
- Community based approach with the support of community leaders, ethno-religious/tribal leaders for raising awareness on equal access to vaccination in camps and urban areas (for example the importance for the whole community members to be vaccinated)
- Support the integration of Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) messaging in Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) and other communication efforts on vaccines in camps and urban areas.

### **II. Recommendations for the Government of Jordan**

- Provide care support for children and transportation cost to enable women, girls, elderly, persons with disability, and other marginalized groups to travel to vaccination sites.
- Ensure that official information about vaccination and registration is accessible to all groups by diversifying means of communications. Engage civil society and women's organizations in disseminating information and support the registration process.

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<sup>7</sup> Nutrition Cluster. Participatory Safety Walk Guide. Retrieved from <https://www.nutritioncluster.net/sites/nutritioncluster.com/files/2020-01/Participatory-Safety-Walk-Guide.docx>.

- Ensure that vaccination sites are accessible, safe for all including the Person with disabilities and allocate resources for the provision of transportation fee to the most vulnerable;
- To support the creation of child friendly spaces within vaccine centers to enhance an equal access and suppress obstacles/barriers faced by female headed households.
- Display/disseminate Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) messages in vaccination centers.
- Work with women-led/women’s rights organizations, community-based support groups for elderly, organizations of persons with disabilities to facilitate access to digital registration platforms.
- Ensure private rooms in vaccination centers to ensure safe and confidential disclosure and counselling.
- To ensure a safe and reliable Sex and Age disaggregated data collection in all vaccination sites
- To allocate resources for mobile vaccination to reach persons with limited mobility and other hard to reach/isolated groups.



Elderly woman refugee supported with transportation to reach COVID-19 vaccine center in Zadari camp

### III. Recommendation to GBV services providers in and out of camps:

- Support the training of health service providers, volunteers and outreach workers on GBV safe referral and on reporting SEA
- Provide up-to-date awareness information on GBV and services for vaccination sites and clear guidance on safe and informed referrals through the Amaali application using different means of communication.
- Display emergency phone number for survivors of GBV, display leaflet, flyers, posters on walls in vaccine centers on GBV in camps
- Ensure private rooms in vaccination centers to ensure safe and confidential disclosure and counselling.
- Disseminate information about available GBV services and Amaali application through social media, Radio channels and existing community-based approaches.
- Support vulnerable groups when required to access and register for vaccination through the online platform.
- GBV service providers to update referral pathways and outreach information to ensure vaccine health workers and communities know how to safely link people to GBV prevention and response services<sup>8</sup>
- Information about essential services for women, including Intimate Partner Violence for GBV survivors, as well as mental health services should be kept open and active.

<sup>8</sup> [https://gbvaor.net/thematic-areas?term\\_node\\_tid\\_depth\\_1%5B121%5D=121](https://gbvaor.net/thematic-areas?term_node_tid_depth_1%5B121%5D=121)

- Information on life-saving services and connection with GBV case management should be communicated clearly and adequately to women and girls<sup>9</sup>

## Key messages on GBV/SEA during the COVID-19 vaccine roll-out:

Targeted group	Topic	Message
Everyone	COVID-19 Vaccine	Vaccination is free for all nationalities. No one should ask for any compensation to facilitate access to it.
Everyone/camps	COVID-19 Vaccine	Vaccination is free all nationalities. No one should ask for any compensation to facilitate access to it. If you have witnessed/been victim of vaccination related fraud, please contact (add complaints hotline)
Woman and Girls	GBV	If you are intimidated or pressured regarding the COVID-19 vaccine, do not remain silent. Seek confidential counselling and support from the toll-free helplines [add helpline/hotline number(s)]. You have the right to freely decide about getting vaccinated.
Everyone	GBV	Listen and Link’’: If someone experiences gender-based violence and asks for help, you can be a source of support: “listen” to their problem and “link” them to information about helplines and/or other social support services available in your area. Download Amaali app to find a service closer to you. Remember, it’s not the survivor’s fault.
Everyone	GBV	Amaali is a mobile application provides information about GBV services nationwide. You can download the application from the app store in your smartphone.

<sup>9</sup> [https://gbvaor.net/thematic-areas?term\\_node\\_tid\\_depth\\_1%5B121%5D=121](https://gbvaor.net/thematic-areas?term_node_tid_depth_1%5B121%5D=121)

<b>Community leaders</b>	<b>GBV</b>	As a leader in your community encourage women and girls participation in making the decision about getting COVID-19 vaccine and call to stop harmful practices from happening in your village/area. Guide your people and take action!
<b>Everyone</b>	<b>Gender equality</b>	You have the right to be vaccinated and to have equal access to vaccination centers. if you have specific needs know you can ask the support from the mobile vaccination team through your registration form for the vaccine.
<b>Everyone</b>	<b>PSEA</b>	You have the right to be informed about services and assistance being provided in your area, to complain and to report any inappropriate behavior, sexual exploitation or abuse by any humanitarian or health care staff, regardless of who they work for. - All reporting will be treated safely and confidentially and WILL NOT prevent you from getting assistance or services.
<b>Everyone</b>	<b>PSEA</b>	Remember that support and assistance are free. No one should ever ask for money, favors, or sex in exchange for assistance. You have the right to report anyone who attempts to exploit or abuse you without any fear of retaliation (INSERT contact and opening hours + reporting modalities for complaints)
<b>Men and boys</b>	<b>Engaging men and boys.</b>	Encourage women in your family to get information about COVID-19 vaccine and share their opinions regarding receiving it.

## Useful resources:

- Guidance Note on GBV Service Provision during COVID-19 in Jordan and a forward look to safe resume of services <https://reliefweb.int/report/jordan/guidance-note-gbv-service-provision-during-covid-19-jordan-and-forward-look-safe>
- COVID-19 vaccination and implications for gender-based violence (GBV) prevention and response in humanitarian settings - 22 February 2021. <https://gbvaor.net/sites/default/files/2021->

[03/Key%20messages%2C%20advocacy%20points\\_GBV%20and%20COVID-19%20vaccination\\_as%20of%2022%20Feb%202021\\_for%20uploading.pdf](#)

- Guidance note and checklist for tackling gender-related barriers to equitable COVID-19 vaccine deployment <https://www.genderhealthhub.org/articles/guidance-note-and-checklist-for-tackling-gender-related-barriers-to-equitable-covid-19-vaccine-deployment/>
- All you need to know about the National Vaccination Campaign in Jordan <https://help.unhcr.org/jordan/en/frequently-asked-questions-unhcr/covid-19-vaccine/>
- GBV WG, Amaali Application- COVID-19:
- [https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=jo.dwt.sgbv&hl=en\\_US](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=jo.dwt.sgbv&hl=en_US)