In various fields of operations UNRWA is assessing the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 and the gender section is working with the various teams on ensuring that gender is taken into account in these assessments. These assessments seek to examine the increase in aggressive behavior in the home affecting women and children, pauperization of vulnerable groups like women heading households, neglect of women and girls with disabilities, and female among the elderly.

**Success stories from UNRWA field Office in Syria: Providing psychological support to vulnerable groups during COVID-19**

The Relief and Social Services Programme (RSSP) established phone hotlines in all five Field offices to provide Palestine refugees with information on Agency services and social workers followed-up individual cases through phone calls and WhatsApp to provide health, hygiene and nutrition advice and to give support and information on emergency services. In Syria Field Office the RSSP team were using the hotlines and whatsapp groups to provide psycho-social support to vulnerable individuals. These are some of their success stories.

H. is a 30 years old woman with mild intellectual disability from the Hama camp. She received support from UNRWA, including support to enroll in sports (skiing and boccia) and participate in the Paraolympic Games. During the COVID-19 pandemic, movement restrictions have affected H’s ability to partake in activities and she feels isolated. Once UNRWA set up the support groups using social media, she joined one of them, and was able to discuss her family situation with others. She also got an offer to join a vocational training course that allowed her to connect with others and feel she can support her family in the future. Recently, she was able to get back to sports and won a competition with a financial reward that is supportive in these very difficult time.

R. is a 20-year-old woman with a hearing disability who lives in Husseiniyeh, a gathering 3 kilometers from Qabr Essit refugee camp in rural Damascus. Her parents wanted her to get married but she does not want to. This is one of many topics discussed in the WhatsApp group. Discussions involve various members of the support group, including persons with disabilities. The group shared their perspectives on the matter. They were supportive of her choice and her mother was also convinced. N. is 70 years old from Latakia (Al Aedoon) camp, and a member of the elderly support group. An UNRWA social worker made a check-in and found that N was feeling lonely and isolated from her family. Her children stopped visiting her after she remarried after the death of their father. She received regular support calls from the social worker assigned to her area that monitored her appreciation of herself. An UNRWA social worker assigned to N area called her regularly and worked on building N self-confidence. Only a few weeks later, N began visiting a women’s programme center and taking part in community activities. H. is 65 year-old and lives with his wife F, 60. They live alone in Homs as their children have all left the country. The social worker managing the support group contacted them by phone and through her assessment of their situation realized that H had several medical concerns which required regular monitoring. She found that H was feeling overwhelmed and unable to support her husband. She coordinated with the Health programme his access to his NCD treatment and a medical officer control visit. F coordinated with the UNRWA Health programme for access to his treatment, including scheduling a visit by a medical control officer. The officer continued her support to the couple and even visited them on Eid. For more information contact s.sahli@unrwa.org.
UNRWA is a United Nations agency established by the General Assembly in 1949 and mandated to provide assistance and protection to some 5.6 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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