monthly updates on gender issues in UNRWA and the region

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UNRWA provided a submission to the United Nations Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution A/RES/70/138 entitled ‘The Girl Child’. The submission includes updates on the progress of girls’ access to education and the obstacles that may preclude it, covering the 2015/16 scholastic year. For more information contact j.jelassi@unrwa.org.

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Stories from UNRWA

The Prevaling Realities of Working on Gender Equality at UNRWA: Progress and Challenges

Aicha: There is a need to support programme focal points by having full-time gender officers who are devoted to the role. We need to draw on the recommendations resulting from previous gender analysis, the gender mainstreaming report, and the annual gender task force workshops, which encourage gender focal points to improve their work towards gender equality. There should be an accountability system for any failure in achieving gender targets, and on the other hand we should appreciate the efforts of those who succeed in the advancement of the gender equality process.

Raajha: The Agency can highlight the work of women so that they serve as ‘role models’ for other male/female employees in the Agency and pioneers for other Palestine refugees.

What have been the challenges of working on gender equality in the areas of the Agency’s work?

Munir: We need to improve our understanding of the term gender equality to make sure that it reflects the complexity of the issue and that it guarantees equality for all: men, women, girls and boys. We need to have a gender balance to ensure that we are providing services we represent the whole picture, not just half.

Samira: There is a continued in need to increase awareness and knowledge about gender equality. Some continue to believe that girls should not continue their education or go to university, which we need to change.

Wafa: Most of the senior positions in UNRWA are occupied by men. It is noticeable that the number of women who apply for senior positions is often very limited and sometimes down to zero. This can be due to resistance; will a man be preferred? Family commitments may prevent women from taking senior positions due to engagements beyond regular working hours, and some women who have the potential to compete for senior positions do not receive proper or sufficient support from their supervisors.

It was an inspiration to learn about the efforts and ideas that the Gender Champions have to advance gender equality in the Agency. We still have a long way to go, but there are many dedicated individuals working hard to achieve gender equality to benefit future generations.
UNRWA is a United Nations agency established by the General Assembly in 1949 and mandated to provide assistance and protection to some 5 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.

Inspiring Story

Women of Budrus Protecting Their Village

In the West Bank village of Budrus, women confronted Israeli forces who had entered their village in January in order to demolish a house. Undaunted by the potential risks, several women forced their way into the house and held their ground, while others recovered women who were detained by the soldiers. The peaceful demonstrations by the residents of Budrus in the face of recurring Israeli incursions is spearheaded by the village’s women. With the perpetual risk of house demolitions and detention of the village’s young men, the women of Budrus are undertaking a significant effort to preserve the security of their village while concomitantly upholding their very security. Read more

Regional News

Jordan
The Jordanian Parliament heard the cacophonous outcry of protesters who, on Tuesday, 21 March, who called for the equitable provision of citizenship rights for children of Jordanian women married to non-Jordanians. Discriminatory laws that preclude the equal treatment of women and men continue to exist in Jordan. One such example is that citizenship is exclusively passed down through the male line. Official government figures hold that there are nearly 89,000 Jordanian women married to non-Jordanians and 356,000 children are registered with the Civil Status and Passports Department. Read more

Lebanon
Lebanon’s parliament is undertaking a commendable, yet long-awaited effort to raise awareness of sexual harassment and to criminalize such acts. The country’s legal code neither criminalizes nor defines sexual harassment. An independent website named HarassTracker, which allows victims of sexual harassment to anonymously report their experiences, has gone online and, with the Parliament’s engagement with the crime, has opened up a broader discussion of women’s issues in Lebanon. Read more

The Hiwar Centre for Youth and Women’s Empowerment is undertaking a robust effort to enhance women’s participation in the upcoming local council elections in the West Bank. The Centre aims to encourage women to both run as candidates and participate in voting in order to alter widespread stereotypes pertaining to women’s gender roles. Read more

Events of Interest

Transformative Leadership for Gender Equality and Women’s Rights - Training course
The UN Women Training Centre is organizing a multimodule training course aimed at senior managers of public and private sector organizations whose goals pertain to gender equality. The course will be dually held in Geneva and Nairobi in July and September respectively. Registration deadline for Geneva: 19 May; Nairobi: 14 July. Additionally, the course aspires to help industry leaders articulate and implement short-, medium- and long-term strategies that nurture a spirit of gender equality. Read more

Asian Women in Leadership Summit 2017 - 17 May
Singapore is hosting the annual summit with the aim of highlighting the challenges women face in attaining leadership roles in Asia. The summit aims to reflect on these issues and proffer meaningful ideas for promoting greater gender equality, which advances women’s roles in a leadership sphere. To register, click here. Read more

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Reports & Resources

UN WOMEN
A recent urgent report titled Path to Justice was published this month by UN Women, which highlights the intractable experience women often have in the region when confronting pernicious acts of violence towards them. The report cites several issues women encounter when pursuing a legal resolution to violence they experience, which have a detrimental effect on the fair and impartial adjudication of cases of violence against women by regional judges. Read more

UNDP
The Human Development Report 2016 draws stark conclusions regarding the incomparable detrimental effect conflict has on youth and women. It argues that gender discrimination and disparate political participation perpetuates women’s persistent inequality and that more meaningful change is required to improve women’s and girls’ livelihoods. Read more

UN WOMEN
A recent report published by UN Women and the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation titled the Training Manual of Gender and Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) mainstreams gender into the work of field facilitators and enhances understanding of FGM/C. Read more

UNFPA
An ‘Every Woman Every Child’ report titled Technical Guidance for Prioritizing Adolescent Health strategizes efforts the international community can take to address profound health concerns affecting women and children. Survive, thrive and transform makeup the Strategy’s three pillars. Read more

Facts of the Month

1 in 3 women globally have experienced either physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner or non-partner. Read more

800,000 people are trafficked across borders - 80 per cent are women and girls. Read more

united nations relief and works agency for palestine refugees in the near east

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