To mark the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence campaign (25th November - 10th December), UNRWA will be holding a panel discussion on the 6 December. The panel discussion will address the recent regional changes in legal frameworks related to violence against women and their effect on the work of UNRWA in the area of GBV programming and service provision.

Roll-out of UNRWA GBV Guidelines in Syria
Integration of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Programming into Emergencies:

GBV occurring in emergencies is not created in vacuum; emergencies occur against the backdrop of a certain set of gender power dynamics. Whereas the main causes of GBV are rooted in gender inequality and discrimination, risks of GBV are exacerbated when protective systems and structures erode during emergencies, increasing both vulnerabilities and risks. Other factors which exacerbate the risk of GBV include: increased militarization, displacement, scarcity of resources, disruption of community services, and at times, changing cultural and gender norms.

It is within this context that GBV must be understood as a life-threatening protection issue which needs to be taken into account from the onset of emergencies. In this respect, UNRWA developed the project Building Safety: Mainstreaming GBV Interventions into Emergency Preparedness, Prevention and Response within the context of the Safe from the Start Initiative. The project involves multiple levels of action to increase the Agency’s capacity to address GBV in emergencies, including the provision of technical guidance and the design of supporting tools in the sphere of prevention, mitigation and response.

The development of sectoral Guidelines on the Integration of GBV Risk Mitigation in Emergency Response in the form of technical instructions, which aim at establishing key actions for the mitigation of GBV in emergencies, is one of the main project components.

The guidelines, finalized earlier in 2017, aim at contributing to the enhancement of the Agency’s emergency preparedness and response capacity through the incorporation of a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of both the particular risks and experiences of women, men, girls and boys, as well as the intersectionality of vulnerability and risk factors such as age, disability, and gender across these groups.

To launch the roll-out of the guidelines, the Gender Section at HQ carried a two-day training in Syria, engaging 25 field colleagues involved in emergency response who are not specialized on GBV. Staff invited to the training included shelter managers, education staff, health staff, relief social workers, as well as Infrastructure and Camp Improvement Programme (ICIP) staff. Building on previous capacity-building efforts on GBV, the training began with a refresher on key concepts related to GBV, with an in-depth focus on GBV in emergencies. The focus of the training was to use case studies relevant to experience UNRWA has gained in Syria to build staff capacity in identifying gender and GBV-related risks and identifying key actions to address them. The workshop further emphasized key tools that can be of support to frontline staff, including safety audits and community participation tools. The training relied on resources which accompany the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action.

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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 Palestinian 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.