



Islamic Relief Palestine

Gender-based violence against women and girls in Gaza

Protection and Inclusion Framework

Acknowledgements

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Executive summary

Globally, one in three women will experience gender-based violence, in the form of physical or sexual violence, throughout their lifetime. In Gaza, patriarchal gender norms and traditions contribute to the acceptance of violence against women and girls, as in other patriarchal societies, but have been exacerbated by the decades-long blockade of Gaza that heavily restricts movement of people and goods. These conditions have disproportionately affected women and girls.

This study looks at GBV, in particular domestic and Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) perpetrated against women from across Gaza. It focuses on the experiences of widowed, abandoned, single, married and remarried women in Gaza and, in particular, those of beneficiaries of three Islamic Relief Palestine programmes: “Enhancing Economic Empowerment”; “Recovering Wellbeing of Children”; and the “Orphan Sponsorship programme”. Drawing on their experiences, the study identifies a range of forms of Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) that are prevalent in Gaza. It makes a series of recommendations to inform future GBV prevention and response strategies for humanitarian actors in Gaza.

Its aim is to analyse protection against domestic and IPV and contribute to preventing and mitigating risks associated with Islamic Relief’s work with vulnerable women and girls.

Drawing on the experiences of women and girls from across Gaza, the study identifies a range of forms of Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) that are prevalent in Gaza, in particular in regards to widowed and abandoned women. It makes a series of recommendations to inform future GBV prevention and response strategies for humanitarian actors, including awareness raising activities, communication, programme interventions, mental health & psychosocial support, legal support and advocacy and partnership development.



Introduction

Gender justice and gender-based violence

Global efforts to tackle and reduce gender-based violence (GBV) are increasingly focused on promoting gender justice (GJ) and transforming the power dynamics and gender norms that underpin social relations and constitute the root causes of violence against women and girls.

Sustainable Development Goal 5, part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by all United Nations Member States to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all, focuses on gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. It aims to end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere and eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking, sexual and other types of exploitation.

Not only is the achievement of gender equality and the right to be able to live free of violence and discrimination a goal in itself, it is also “integral to all dimensions of inclusive and sustainable development. In short, all the SDGs depend on the achievement of Goal 5.”¹

Islamic Relief defines GJ as a term that “encapsulates both equity and equality. These terms, as complementary, emphasise both the equal value and importance of women, girls, men and boys to society, and the importance of equity in treatment of all people, regardless of their status.”²

GBV is a term that encapsulates all gender identities and is defined as violence that is directed against a person on the basis of gender.³ Islamic Relief acknowledges that many forms of violence against men and boys exist and recognises the importance of designing targeted GBV programming to address their needs. Based on figures from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 13% of men in Gaza have been subjected to abuse by their partners at one point in their life.⁴

However, it is also globally recognised that the majority of GBV survivors are women and, while most GBV service providers integrate the possibility of men and boys being victims into their programming, they tend to receive fewer cases.

This study focuses on GBV as perpetrated against women and girls and, for the purposes of this study, GBV refers to violence against women and girls, and the term is used interchangeably with Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)



Islamic Relief uses the internationally recognised definition of violence against women, as outlined in the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women: “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.”⁶

Globally, one in three women will experience GBV, in the form of physical or sexual violence, throughout their lifetime, while as many as 38% of murders of women are committed by an intimate partner.⁷

Situations of conflict, post-conflict and displacement may exacerbate existing violence, such as by intimate partners, as well as non-partner sexual violence, and may also lead to new forms of violence against women.

Violence against women and girls is not only a cause of gender inequality, but a consequence of it, reinforced in many places by discriminatory laws and exclusionary social norms that undermine women and girl’s opportunities for education, income and independence.⁸

Aspects around gender equality and VAWG are intertwined and cannot be dealt with separately. As such, any gender sensitive programming will have to address protection and GBV at its core to achieve gender equality.

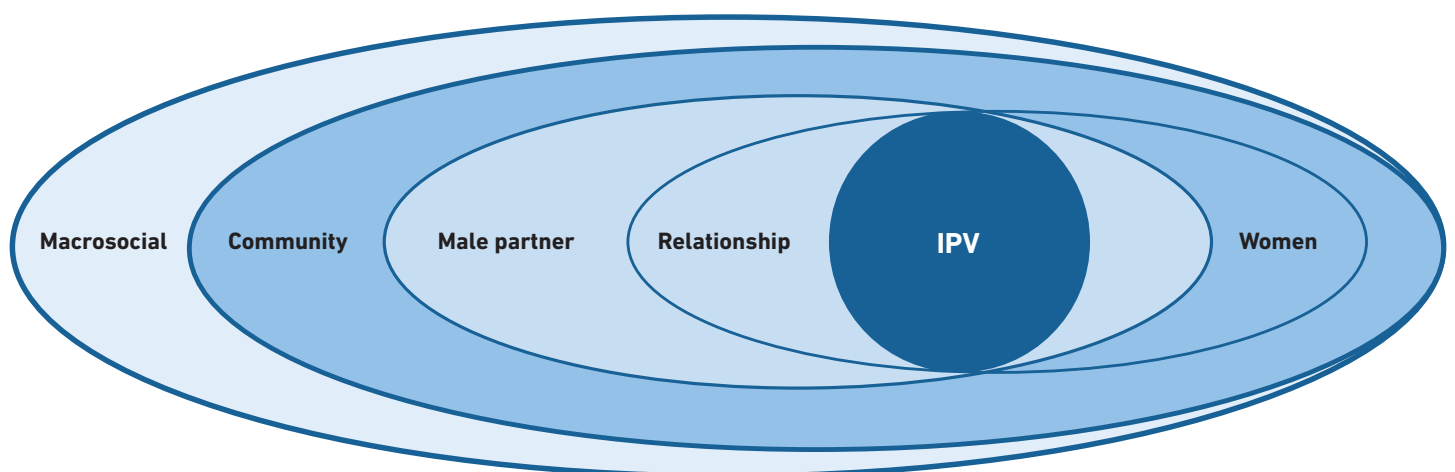
The following analysis will highlight forms of violence against women and girls, using Islamic relief’s experience in Gaza. It will also introduce Islamic Relief’s Protection & Inclusion (P&I) framework and strategies for GBV programming protection and response.

Domestic and Intimate Partner Violence

Types of GBV vary from one context to another, with domestic and intimate partner violence (IPV) prevalent in diverse communities around the world. Domestic violence refers to abusive behaviour (physical, sexual, emotional violence and neglect) that occurs within the private, domestic sphere, generally between individuals who are related through blood or intimacy.

In most contexts, IPV is the most common type of domestic violence, but in some societies, violence by in-laws is also common. IPV usually consists of a pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviours, including physical, sexual and psychological attacks, as well as economic coercion, by a current or former intimate partner.⁹

The ecological model is the commonly used framework to describe the survivor – perpetrator relationship within their surrounding context. It is also used to identify programmatic approaches for GBV protection and response.¹⁰ While this report looks at a number of forms of IPV, many of the targeted group are single, widowed or separated women and the report also identifies and analyses elements of violence from the community and wider macrosocial systems.



Gender-based violence at a multiple levels of society: Ecological model¹⁰

Islamic Relief's approach to gender equality, protection and inclusion

Islamic Relief is committed to working towards the attainment of the SDGs, in particular SDG5: 'Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls', within its global strategy framework. This framework is underpinned by the 'Leave no one behind' commitment and the Core Humanitarian Standards on Quality and Accountability (CHS) which calls for an understanding of, accountability and response to the needs, risks and capacities of different groups, including women and girls and people with disabilities.

Islamic Relief is also a signatory to the World Humanitarian Summit 'Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies'¹¹ and works on integrating protection and GBV response and prevention measures throughout its programmes in both humanitarian and development settings.

Islamic Relief has also released policy briefings to unpack some forms of GBV, including child marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM/C) and is currently leading on a consultation of the launch of a global gender justice declaration.

IRW Gender Justice policy statement¹²

Inspired and guided by our faith values, Islamic Relief is fully committed to upholding the dignity of all people and eradicating poverty and suffering through promoting justice, equity and the equal value and importance of women, girls, men and boys, as well as ensuring the protection and promotion of the family as the cornerstone of society.

In supporting the achievement of holistic wellbeing and the fulfilment of human potential, we endeavour to integrate gender perspectives that promote justice for males and females into all our humanitarian, development and advocacy work in a faith literate and culturally-sensitive way.

We will continue to expand our important programmes focussed on providing justice, protection and empowerment, ensuring equitable impact, and the effective access, participation, recognition and voice of both males and females.

Islamic Relief's programmatic approach to domestic and intimate partner violence

Responding to, preventing and mitigating risks associated with domestic and IPV is one of the most challenging areas of work for humanitarian relief INGOs. It requires dismantling root causes and structural inequalities that occur in a private sphere and which are socially hidden and unreported. It could also potentially create a strong backlash from local communities and result in negative knock-on effects on humanitarian aid. Venturing into protection and GBV programming requires extensive, in-depth knowledge of a cultural and social context with a high level of sensitivity to instigate and support change from within that context, rather than importing and imposing external practices from elsewhere.

Protection against IPV and any other threats and risks that are associated with Islamic Relief's work has been introduced through the organisation's intersectionality framework in 2017. The purpose of the framework is to enable Islamic Relief to assess and improve the extent to which its humanitarian and development programming is protective, sensitive and inclusive, through responsiveness to age, gender and other diversities, to the needs of at risk groups, including women and girls at risk of IPV and women and girls with disabilities and/or other excluding factors.

Islamic Relief's intersectionality framework

Islamic Relief has developed an intersectionality framework that places Protection and Inclusion (P&I) at the core of all of its programming. This approach is based on the 6 As – Analysis, Adapted Assistance, Attention to Negative Effects, Adequate Participation, Accountability and Adequate Capacity – and is designed to ensure that P&I is integrated throughout its humanitarian programming.

A comprehensive Analysis of the needs of all men, women, boys and girls of different ages and people with disabilities, along with systematic collection of Sex, Age and Disability disaggregated data, ensures P&I is integrated into programme design. Adapted Assistance for flexible, inclusive programme implementation and Attention to negative effects covers the “do no harm” approach, including being sensitive to and aware of the cultural and social context in which the programme is operating. Adequate participation looks at the meaningful participation of all social groups throughout the programme lifecycle, with rigorous measures in place to ensure Accountability to all at risk groups. Finally, Adequate capacity ensures the relevant Islamic Relief country office teams and national partners possess appropriate resources and have

the right policies in place to efficiently mainstream P&I considerations throughout the programme.

This study is a crucial element of Islamic Relief’s P&I framework and attempts to analyse needs and assess risks associated with its programming. The study focuses on experiences and learnings from Gaza, particularly beneficiaries of three Islamic Relief Palestine programmes: “Enhancing Economic Empowerment”, “Recovering Wellbeing of Children” and the “Orphan Sponsorship programme.”

Learnings and conclusions in this report are drawn from focus group discussions (FGDs) and interviews with women and girls that participated in these two projects, as well as the results of an age, gender and diversity analysis and a knowledge, attitudes and practices survey. They are supported with insights from case studies from the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based violence campaign 2019.

The report aims to inform future GBV programming approaches in Gaza to recognise excluded groups and enable Islamic Relief Palestine and potentially other humanitarian actors to adapt their response and approaches accordingly.



Background to this study

Islamic Relief Palestine

Islamic Relief Palestine has been working in Gaza since 1998. The organisation implements a range of programmes, including addressing livelihood, economic empowerment and child welfare support. Among the organisation's flagship activities is the orphan sponsorship programme, which targets female-headed households and widows.

The Orphan Sponsorship programme is based on providing monetary support to the child's guardian i.e. their mothers, on a quarterly basis. Since the programme's introduction, Islamic Relief Palestine have introduced additional components to the programme to help improve living conditions for the whole family and contribute to the child's wellbeing. These components include providing access to healthcare, education, shelter, family counselling, psychosocial support and cash for work programmes. As of February 2020, the programme sponsored 6,890 children (3,270 girls and 3,620 boys)¹³ 20% of women from the target group have remarried.

The Recovering Wellbeing of Children project aims to comprehensively address the needs of children in Gaza through the provision of psychosocial (PSS) support for children and caregivers. It also provides PSS-Sport based activities for children and teachers at schools and other community-based activities through local partners. Between February 2018 and February 2020, the project targeted more than 8,000 children and caregivers through group and individual PSS sessions.

The Enhancing Economic Empowerment programme contributes to improving the living conditions of female-headed households and is designed to empower Palestinian women to increase their economic autonomy and the financial resources of themselves and their families. In 2019, the project targeted 50 women, aged between 23 and 79, supporting income generating activities by funding start-up businesses and providing training throughout the project's lifecycle, including financial advice, ongoing guidance and advice on trade links.¹⁴

GBV programming approaches

Islamic Relief Palestine works to empower women and enhance their participation and capabilities in all interventions. From 2014 to 2015, the gender component has been incorporated into projects to address GBV by educating males and females throughout the Gaza Strip about GBV and its types and risks to Palestinian society in general and women in particular. Projects also identify existing protection mechanisms and ways of supporting GBV survivors through a strong referral system to specialised services.

Islamic Relief Palestine also focuses on GBV prevention through financial support and economic empowerment programmes. Since 2017, 253 women have been financially empowered through the provision of grants for small projects. Women received capacity building support in financial and administrative project management as well as awareness raising sessions on GBV.

Protection and inclusion

Since the introduction of the P&I framework into Islamic Relief Palestine's programming in 2017, various programmatic interventions have identified abandoned and divorced women as the most excluded group. Islamic Relief Palestine have focused more of their efforts in targeting women and girls who are further left behind, in particular, women and girls with disabilities. A comprehensive analysis for the age, gender and diversity needs assessment is integrated into programme design and findings from those analysis reports feed into programme design.

GBV and IPV in Gaza

Any analysis of the prevalence and forms of violence against women in Gaza and the effectiveness of programmatic interventions to address GBV must take into account the Gaza context. Countless crises and external events have compounded to create a unique situation that has a deep and direct impact on GBV, its causes and its consequences.

Years of living under Israeli policies of siege, blockade, repeated military offensives and internal political divisions have devastated infrastructure and had catastrophic effects on the social, physical and psychological wellbeing of those living in Gaza.¹⁵

Patriarchal gender norms and traditions contribute to the acceptance of violence against women and girls, as in other patriarchal societies, but have been exacerbated by the decades-long blockade of Gaza that heavily restricts movement of people and goods. As such, the prevalence of violence against women by their husbands is significantly higher in the Gaza Strip than in the West Bank.¹⁶ Various studies demonstrate the negative impact of the blockade on women's conditions in Gaza, including the impact of electricity and fuel shortages which cause greater psychological stress and threaten the stability of the family. 61% of women believe the blockade and electricity cuts have contributed to a higher rate of domestic violence against women.¹⁷

It is within this context that programmatic interventions designed to address GBV in Gaza and, of particular note for this study, among widowed and abandoned women in Gaza, as well as the integration of Islamic Relief's P&I framework throughout those programmes, must be analysed and assessed.¹⁸

Methodology

The main findings of this report are based on primary data collected by Islamic Relief Palestine during three FGDs and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with a total of 42 women.

Three FGDs were undertaken with 21 widowed women aged between 30 and 50 years old, with education levels ranging from primary education to bachelor's degree.

KIIs were undertaken with a further 21 women, including 7 widowed women aged between 40 and 60 years old and 14 children and adolescents (8 girls and 6 boys) aged between 11 and 22 years old.

The FGDs and KII collected data on age gender and diversity analysis which includes gender roles, access and control over resources and gender needs using an intersectional lens (See annex 1 for analysis framework).

A Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices survey on gender and GBV was also completed with 365 women from across Gaza, who participated in one of 15 awareness raising sessions delivered by Islamic Relief Palestine (See Annex 2 for survey questions). The women undertook pre and post-awareness raising workshop questionnaires on gender and GBV, to increase understanding of the root causes and consequences of violence against women. Participants came from across Gaza, including North Gaza, Middle Area, Khan Younis and Rafah. The majority of respondents were stay at home mothers/housewives (54%) and only 13% are employed.

Case studies of women and girls from Islamic Relief Palestine's orphan sponsorship programme provided additional insight into the experiences of GBV survivors and societal attitudes towards GBV in Gaza. Secondary data and other relevant research findings are derived from the Palestinian Bureau for National Statistics, which published a report in November 2019 entitled Preliminary Results of the Violence Survey in Palestinian Society.¹⁹

"This programme changed my life."

"My husband left me because I gave birth to 4 girls, but I worked hard, I wanted my girls to be educated and all 4 of them have now finished their university degree. I used to work for a trader and raise their cattle sheep. Islamic Relief supported me in starting my own business and buying two cattle sheep. I raised them and now I already have five cattle sheep. I intend to continue trading and raising the cattle sheep and have a dignified source of income. I work from after dawn prayer until 10 pm and my daughters come to help me at times. Although I am over 60 years old, I have a lot of energy and optimism for my business to grow."



Islamic Relief Palestine

9 Dec 2019 · 🌐

" تركني زوجي لأنني أنجبت أربعة بنات، لكنهن أجمل هدايا الله لي، رغم كل الظروف القاسية التي عايشتها إلا أنني قمت بتعليمهم حتى تخرجوا من الجامعة، ولا أرى أن دوري معهم قد انتهى، فأنا أواصل العمل من أجل الكسب الطيب لهم، أود أن أكون حتى آخر لحظات حياتي مصدر فخر وإلهام لهم. " السيدة و. عام 68

وتقول " الإغاثة الإسلامية ساعدتني في أن أكون مصدر فخر لبناتي بعد أن قامت بمنحي تمويلًا لمشروع صغير لتربية الأغنام نكسب منه قوت يومنا.

وتتابع " في السابق كنت أعمل على تربية الأغنام لأحد التجار، لكن بعد أن حصلت على المنحة قمت بشراء رأسين من الأغنام وإنشاء مكان صغير في الأرض لتربيتهم.

تستكمل حديثها " حينما قمت بجلب الأغنام من السوق كنت سعيدة للغاية لأنه سيصبح لدي مصدر رزق ولن أتعتمد على أحد في توفير ما يلزم بناتي من احتياجات.

وتضيف " الآن أصبح لدي 5 رؤوس من الأغنام، سأعمل على رعايتهم وسأواصل التجارة بهم وشراء مجموعة أخرى جديدة من الأغنام.

رغم عمرها الذي تجاوز الستين عامًا إلى أنها تأتي كل يوم إلى المزرعة من أجل رعاية الأغنام تقول " أنا كل يوم من بعد صلاة الفجر وحتى الساعة العاشرة ليلاً أقوم على متابعة الأغنام وتقديم الطعام لهم، وتأتي بناتي أيضًا لمساعدتي في بعض الأحيان.

وتستكمل حديثها " لدي أمل كبير في أن تصبح لدي مزرعة فأنا لدي الكثير من الطموحات التي سأسعى لتحقيقها من وراء عملي.

وتختتم حديثها " أشكر كل من ساعدني ومد يد العون لي، وأنا أدعو لهم كثيرًا بالبركة في أرزاقهم، لأنهم ساعدوني في توفير مصدر رزق لنا.

#حملة16يوم

#ThroughHEReyes
#16daysactivism

👍❤️ 79

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Findings and analysis

Violence against women and girls in Gaza and its social stigma

The discussions that took place during the KIIs and the FGDs, along with the pre-post awareness raising workshop survey results, reveal that a number of different forms of VAWG are apparent in Gaza, including both physical and non-physical forms of abuse. Although neglect and emotional abuse are included in the standard definition of VAWG, it is these less visible forms of violence that are harder to track, tackle and address through humanitarian programmes. Yet these forms of abuse emerged as being particularly prevalent during this research. While four in five women that participated in the pre-post workshop questionnaire

stated that they are physically abused by others, 93% stated that they had suffered or still suffer from verbal harassment if they fail to achieve something.

Social and relationship status determine and identify women's roles in society. While married women may have some form of social protection acquired by virtue of marriage, abandoned, divorced and widowed women are a neglected social group who suffer not only from domestic violence, but also from social stigma.



Women are labelled as “abandoned” if they are left by their spouses. It is largely economic drivers that force men to migrate and leave their wives and children behind. However, over time, contact is lost and their wives become socially recognised as “abandoned”.

Women are legally allowed to file for divorce, but divorced women are socially blamed for their broken relationships and are considered a burden on their families. As a result, a lot of women choose not to divorce their missing husbands so as to avoid this social stigma. Divorced women also represent a “threat” for other women, as they could be taken as second wives, which means their actions are continually questioned and open for criticism. Avoiding social stigma and protecting children from going through the experience of parental separation forces a lot of women to live in abusive relationships. 61% of women that participated in the pre-post workshop questionnaire stated that they ‘always’ prefer not to report the types of violence to which they are exposed because it reduces their dignity. From a practical perspective, 25% of women had no knowledge of how to seek legal aid in their community and 35% were unaware that wives are able to file court cases to ensure financial support from their husbands.

“I had a very miserable childhood, my father used to beat me up and then he married me off to my cousin without my consent, who in turn is treating me badly and verbally scolds me in front of my own children” (N. 28 years of age, Gaza)

Widowed women, in comparison with divorced or abandoned women, face relatively less social stigma. Nevertheless, they are expected to follow strict social norms, including caring for their in-laws while being a single parent and they face near impossible choices regarding remarriage and maintaining custody of their children.

Widowed women are not deemed to be capable of managing their own finances or trusted to be financially independent. They can be legally taken advantage of as they are often unsure of their rights, such as when they are pressured to sign away their custody rights to their children.

This creates a sense of social protection in the form of forcing widowed women to remarry, often to their deceased husband’s brother. Yet widowed women, if they decide to re-marry, can also face losing custody of their children.

Economic status is also a major factor in identifying types and patterns of violence. Married women in the poorest households are three times more likely to experience repetitive physical violence than well-off women (29% versus 9%).²⁰

Emotional consequences

Widowed women and women who experience emotional abuse suffer from long-lasting trauma. These women stated that they suffer from low confidence, loss of self-esteem, low sense of decision making ability, social isolation and loss of pleasure or motivation to attend social events and gatherings. Based on the results of the pre-post workshop survey, the majority of respondents stated that they suffer from one form or another of mental health & psychosocial support (MHPSS needs): 60-70% of participants indicated that they always suffer from nightmares, loss of appetite, find it difficult to manage stress and are depressed. More than 40% also indicated that they have suicidal thoughts.

According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, emotional abuse is the overarching type of violence that most women and girls experience, regardless of their relationship status.²¹ Particular groups, including adolescent girls, older women and women and girls with disabilities, are at higher risk of violence, discrimination and social stigma. 50% of married women with disabilities are subjected to emotional abuse by their partners and elderly women (65 years and above) are exposed to abuse more than elderly men.²²

“Women and girls with disabilities suffer the most, 82 taxi cars passed by and I am waiting for one of them to stop by and take me to work, but none of them would because I am physically impaired” (Nisreen. 40 years of age, Gaza).

Women who are widowed, abandoned or divorced are among the furthest left behind in a large proportion of humanitarian and development work. Their own capacity development, skills and wellbeing are often overshadowed, and they are most likely to qualify for support if they are single mothers when their children are the direct recipients of aid.

Traditional gender roles

Men and women in Gaza assume very traditional gender roles. All reproductive household work, including care for elderly family members and in-laws, is the primary responsibility of women. Productive and income generating tasks are the responsibility of men in the household. However, among widowed and single mothers, women are also expected to play a productive role, bearing what is normally referred to as the “triple role” in their community: reproductive, productive and community-based responsibilities. Older children have care responsibilities towards their younger siblings, especially if their mothers remarry. Women have less decision making power in a patriarchal society, where fathers, brothers and husbands have full control over resources. Working women spend their entire income on their households and some have mentioned being subjected to violence if they refused to do so.

There is a rudimentary understanding of basic gender and GBV concepts. Results from the pre-post workshop survey demonstrate that participants’ understanding of gender as a social construct – and how it relates to different forms of violence – increased significantly following the workshop (90% of participants understood gender as a social construct after the workshop compared to 47% pre-workshop).

GBV awareness raising sessions also showed an increase in women and girls’ understanding of the significant role of customs and traditions in perpetuating violence (50% of participants pre-workshop compared to 91% of participants post-workshop agreed with the statement). Discussions also showed an increase in their understanding of different forms of violence, while also considering early marriage as a form of violence (63% of women and girls recognised early marriage as a form of GBV pre-workshop compared to 92% post-workshop).

One participant said:

“There are things that I wasn't aware of as forms of GBV, for example the fact that my husband scolds and swears on me and my family. After I attended those workshops on GBV I knew this is not normal anymore, and verbal abuse shouldn't be accepted, I feel I should stand up for my rights.” (A. 38 years of age, Gaza).

Global GBV programming approaches

GBV programming is normally designed within response mitigation and prevention parameters, closely associated with the stages of a crisis.²³ GBV prevention and mitigation activities usually occur at a pre-crisis stage or at a later stage towards reconstruction and stability. Prevention and mitigation are based on a long-term commitment and involve multiple and collaborative resources which normally require a stable setting. However, elements of prevention and mitigation are also incorporated during a crisis, including to report abuse and seek assistance. Responding to GBV is a life-saving commitment which includes providing psychosocial support, building referral pathways to health services and linkages for cash for work and other economic empowerment activities.

To design comprehensive GBV prevention and response programmes, it is important to encourage community members to report abuse and seek support at the initial incidence of violence. This awareness raising effort could take place at an individual, family, community and society level,²⁴ while ensuring adequate services are in place to deal with and respond to violence.

Community based protection

Globally, women and girls who are subjected to violence hesitate to report abuse and this is particularly the case in Gaza. According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, only 1% of women and girls that were subjected to some form of GBV headed to a psychological or legal assistance centre and only a further 1% resorted to a police station or a household's protection unit to file a complaint or to gain assistance or protection against their husband.

"I slept in the hospital for 2 days because I was harshly beaten by my husband, it's not the first time, it's a constant thing for him to do." (S. 29 years of age, Gaza).

Women and girls who choose to speak up against violence confide in their family members, close friends and neighbours. Results from the survey showed that 50% of women and girls who reported abuse use non-formal, community-based protection methods.²⁵ Families and/or community leaders (Makhateer) are the first line of support, where family issues are being resolved without legal intervention. Islamic Relief Palestine recognises the importance and potential of community-based protection methods and incorporates these alongside faith-based responses to prevent GBV. However, it is also vital to carefully identify the appropriate individuals within the community to work with to tackle GBV, as women can at times be encouraged or forced to stay in abusive relationships by community leaders, thereby further perpetuating GBV.

To encourage and advocate for embedded community based protection systems and during the 16 days of activism, Islamic Relief Palestine launched campaigns using different social media platforms, local radio and billboards. The organisation participated in global Islamic Relief Worldwide initiatives in 2018 ('Honour Her') and in 2019 ('Through HER eyes')²⁶ highlighting Islamic values that call for justice and protection of women and girls, using examples from the Quran and sayings of the prophet Mohammed P.B.U.H.²⁷

"Only an honourable man treats women with honour and integrity, and only a vile and dishonourable man humiliates and degrades women."

"The most complete of the believers in faith are those with the best character, and the best of you are the best in behaviour to their women."

#throughHEReyes 2019 Islamic Relief Gaza

A journey with Islamic Relief Palestine

Hadeel is a mother of a three-year-old child. Currently, she lives with her mother after her divorce. As Being the only breadwinner for her child and her family, she has faced many difficulties. Hadeel's father died when she was just fifteen and left her and her mother without a breadwinner. Life was never easy. Still, there was a chance for her to live as she was sponsored by the one-to-one sponsorship program at Islamic Relief Palestine. The organisation supported her and repaired her leaking room while she was at high school.

Hadeel used to be a high-achieving student: "I completed secondary school with a 98% average. I will never forget that moment of happiness. I made everyone proud." Islamic Relief Palestine allowed Hadeel to continue her university studies as an English Language student. She graduated with excellence.

Hadeel then worked as an intern at Islamic Relief Palestine after she finished her studies: "This money helped me pay my debts and to buy medicine for my son, who suffers from allergies."



Hadeel's work helped her to overcome sad memories and experiences. "My dream came true. This dream enabled me to find a suitable job that helped me cover my family's basic needs. I became very strong and independent. I was never afraid after getting my BA certificate.

"When I come to my work, I forget my sorrows. I am assigned different tasks including office and field work. The feedback I received was very positive and encouraging. I like the friendly and healthy work environment at Islamic Relief Palestine. When Islamic Relief called me for work, I was so happy because I desperately needed to start my career path and to earn money to cover my needs.

"I managed to buy a washing machine from the first paycheck I got from my job. We did not have one, and we had to wash our clothes manually. This situation was very tough and painful, especially during winter. Alhumdulillah,, winter will come, and now my mother will be very comfortable."

"My words are not enough to thank Islamic Relief Palestine for this continuous support. May Allah bless you."

Conclusions and recommendations

This report has identified the prevalence of a wide variety of forms of VAWG in Gaza and demonstrated the importance of awareness raising activities on GBV as a vital tool to begin identifying the role and impact of gender norms, customs and traditions in perpetuating GBV in its different forms, including not just physical but also emotional abuse and early marriage.

A comprehensive GBV prevention and response strategy must encompass all humanitarian programming and identify and target at risk groups across an organisation's programmatic interventions.

An increase in general awareness on GBV within community members provides reasons to be optimistic that GBV prevention and mitigation strategies can lead to long-term societal and attitude change. The pre-and post-workshop surveys for Islamic Relief Palestine's GBV sessions showed a 24.5% increase in the groups' overall understanding, knowledge and attitudes towards GBV. The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics has also undertaken a comparative analysis of GBV data from 2011 to 2019, which shows a decrease in reported cases of GBV, from 42% in 2011 to 29% in 2019.

Unfortunately, available data from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics is not disaggregated by age or disability. The overall decrease of GBV reported cases does not necessarily mean that there is an actual decrease in incidents of GBV, but could instead indicate that survivors have chosen to remain silent. This highlights the importance of documenting GBV cases and collecting disaggregated data to design responsive and preventive programmes that could be integrated into Islamic Relief's and other humanitarian actors' programming.

Awareness raising & communication

- Prioritise awareness raising sessions for individuals, women and girls, with a particular focus on human rights, which provide those individuals with opportunities to better understand their individual rights and to report exploitation and abuse.
- Awareness raising sessions can challenge existing gender norms and roles and shift power dynamics and target men and boys to support in reproductive roles, including housework and the raising of children.
- Seek a broad range of means to actively engage with women and girls, through social media and other platforms, such as billboards and posters, to raise awareness and advocate for protection and inclusion.
- Allocate resources on protection and inclusion in all projects to conduct awareness raising sessions as an integral part of all programmes.
- Identify creative means to deliver awareness raising sessions and reach particular at risk groups, including women and girls with disabilities, such as through social gatherings or picnics.

Programme interventions

- Identify barriers to the inclusion of people with disabilities in programming and make programming more responsive to their needs.
- Target resources at income generating activities to economically empower women, in particular at risk groups, including those with disabilities, such as the Enhancing Economic Empowerment programme.
- Provide additional support to women and girls to increase their management and leadership skills.
- Build the capacity of women leaders to become focal points and advocate for change within their community.
- Design holistic programmes, such as the Orphan Sponsorship programme, that can address the needs of children while at the same time providing economic support to at risk or socially isolated women.
- Provide hot line support for GBV survivors.
- Mental Health & Psychosocial Support (MHPSS).
- More investment is needed to provide free services for MHPSS. 40% of surveyed women indicated that they face tremendous pressure being a single parent and consequently require MHPSS.

Legal support & advocacy

- Women and girls also require legal support and improved advocacy work with legal authorities, both to address GBV and related issues, such as custody disputes during any separation or divorce proceedings.
- Islamic Relief Palestine and other humanitarian actors should partner with local and/or national women's rights organisations to develop appropriate and safe referral pathways to legal institutions and support.

Partnership Development

- Partner and coordinate with faith readers to include protection and inclusion messaging alongside their sermons and religious lessons.
- Build partnerships with local NGOs to support social integration of widowed and divorced women and women with disabilities in their own programmes.
- Develop community-based protection methods but carry out risk assessment with any potential community leaders and partners, to be sure not to reinforce existing customs and traditions and further perpetuate GBV against women and girls.

Annex 1: Age, gender and diversity analysis tool template

Gender roles	Females of all ages	Males of all ages	Females of all ages with disabilities	Males of all ages with disabilities	Females of distinctive excluded social identity	Males of distinctive excluded social identity
Reproductive						
Productive						
Community work						
Consistency based politics						

Access and control	Females of all ages	Males of all ages	Females of all ages with disabilities	Males of all ages with disabilities	Females of distinctive excluded social identity	Males of distinctive excluded social identity
<p><i>Resources males and females have access to and what control over for example;</i></p> <p><i>Land, equipment, labour, cash, income, education, basic needs (such as food, clothing, shelter), time and others</i></p>						
Resources used to carry out the tasks identified in gender roles profile						
Who controls the use of these resources and the decision over using them						

Gender needs	Females of all ages	Males of all ages	Females of all ages with disabilities	Males of all ages with disabilities	Females of distinctive excluded social identity	Males of distinctive excluded social identity
Short-term needs (practical gender needs)						
Long-term needs of people						

Annex 2: Knowledge, attitude and practices survey results

Understanding gender and GBV

Statement	Pre/post	Degree of approval					Average %	Interpretation	Average change
		Very Low	Low	Medium	High	Very high			
I have basic understanding and knowledge of gender	Pre	56.3%	17.2%	20.8%	3.5%	2.2%	35.6%	Medium	50.7%
	Post	4.3%	7.2%	3.4%	22.8%	62.3%	86.3%	High	
I know what are the basic gender roles and I am able to differentiate them	Pre	38.9%	31.4%	18.2%	9.4%	2.1%	40.9%	Medium	49.4%
	Post	3.1%	2.4%	4.2%	20.3%	70.0%	90.3%	High	
I am able to identify violence and its different types	Pre	24.3%	26.7%	19.4%	18.6%	11.0%	53.1%	Medium	37.9%
	Post	1.8%	2.6%	8.4%	13.4%	73.8%	91.0%	High	
I understand the consequences of violence on the community in general and women in particular	Pre	31.2%	28.6%	25.1%	11.3%	3.8%	45.6%	Medium	42.7%
	Post	1.2%	6.7%	8.1%	17.4%	66.6%	88.3%	High	
I know of the organisations and service providers for GBV services	Pre	43.4%	37.2%	16.8%	1.8%	0.8%	35.9%	Medium	50.9%
	Post	8.3%	6.8%	2.9%	6.8%	75.2%	86.8%	High	
Knowledge on Gender and GBV	Pre	38.8%	28.2%	20.1%	8.9%	4.0%	42.2%	Medium	46.3%
	Post	3.7%	5.1%	5.4%	16.1%	69.6%	88.5%	High	

Gender as a social construct

Statement	Results	Responses			Average change
		Yes	No	I don't know	
There is a difference between sex and gender	Pre	41.9%	46.6%	11.5%	46.3%
	Post	88.2%	6.8%	4.9%	
Customs and traditions play a vital role when it comes to enforcing violence	Pre	49.9%	36.7%	13.4%	40.8%
	Post	90.7%	3.8%	5.5%	
Violence usually occurs when we don't understand basic gender needs of men and women	Pre	48.5%	31.2%	20.3%	43.3%
	Post	91.8%	2.7%	5.5%	
Women and the only victims of GBV	Pre	59.7%	31.2%	9.0%	51.3%
	Post	9.3%	82.5%	8.2%	
Early marriage is a form of GBV	Pre	62.5%	20.5%	17.0%	29.9%
	Post	92.3%	5.2%	2.5%	
Understanding gender as a social construct	Pre	46.8%			42.3%
	Post	89.1%			

Psychosocial needs

Statement	Never	Sometimes	A lot	Always	Average %	Interpretation
I feel annoyed and depressed even on trivial issues	8.8%	15.6%	16.7%	58.9%	81.4%	High
I suffer from anxiety and fear	10.4%	14.0%	23.6%	52.1%	79.3%	High
I feel disliked and would like to spend most of my time alone	17.3%	11.2%	15.9%	55.6%	77.5%	High
I have negative feelings and suicidal thoughts	23.0%	20.5%	17.5%	38.9%	68.1%	High
I suffer from loss of appetite	6.8%	12.9%	19.7%	60.5%	83.5%	High
I find it difficult to manage stress	8.2%	10.4%	15.9%	65.5%	84.7%	High
I suffer from nightmares	10.4%	8.5%	11.2%	69.9%	85.1%	High
Psychosocial needs	79.9%					High

Gender-based violence

Statement	Never	Sometimes	A lot	Always	Average%	Interpretation
I solve my problems without harming myself or others	18.4%	14.0%	31.5%	36.2%	71.4%	High
I get physically abused by others	19.5%	11.5%	27.9%	41.1%	72.7%	High
I was or I am still suffering from being sexually harassed against my will	33.2%	29.3%	20.5%	17.0%	55.3%	Medium
I was or I am still suffering from verbal harassment (cursing) etc. if I fail to achieve something	6.8%	10.1%	24.9%	58.1%	83.6%	High
I prefer not to report the types of violence I get exposed to because that reduce my dignity	7.1%	8.2%	23.8%	60.8%	84.6%	High
Gender based violence	73.5%					High

Legal support

Statement	Never	Sometimes	A lot	Always	Average%	Interpretation
Women and men need to have access to legal services and aid at an individual and social levels	4.1%	6.6%	17.5%	71.8%	89.2%	High
I know how to seek legal aid in my community	24.9%	28.2%	37.8%	9.0%	57.7%	Medium
Women require legal representation to protect their inheritance and property rights	3.6%	5.8%	10.7%	80.0%	91.8%	High
I have sufficient knowledge on civil laws	44.7%	32.1%	17.0%	6.3%	46.2%	Medium
Women are allowed to file a case in court for her inheritance rights without her male guardian's knowledge	40.5%	35.3%	22.7%	1.4%	46.2%	Medium
Wives are able to file court cases to ensure financial support from their husbands or ex-husbands	35.3%	37.5%	25.5%	1.6%	48.4%	Medium
Personal status law applied in Gaza since the Ottoman era requires change	37.5%	34.2%	25.5%	2.7%	48.4%	Medium
Current laws prevent different forms of gender based violence	37.3%	28.2%	33.2%	1.4%	49.7%	Medium
Knowledge for legal aid	49.4%					Medium
Approaches for legal aid	90.5%					High

Endnotes

- ¹ UN Women "SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls", available at [<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/women-and-the-sdgs/sdg-5-gender-equality>]
- ² Islamic Relief Worldwide, (April 2015) "Gender Justice policy", available at [<https://www.islamic-relief.org/publications/>]
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- ⁹ UNiTE, (2019) "Intimate partner violence for United Nations staff in Asia", available at [https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20eseasia/docs/publications/2019/10/ap-ipv_guidance_final_24nov2019y-r03.pdf?la=en&vs=345]
- ¹⁰ Humanitarian Practice Network, (Jan 2014) "Preventing and responding to gender-based violence in humanitarian crises", adapted from figure 1 Gender-Based Violence at a multiple levels of society, available at [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a089b2ed915d3cfd0003a8/GBV_in_emergencies_NP_77_web.pdf]
- ¹¹ IRW is a partner on the "Call to action on protection from gender-based violence in emergencies", more information available at [<https://www.calltoactiongbv.com/partners>]
- ¹² Islamic Relief Worldwide, (April 2015) "Gender Justice policy", available at [<https://www.islamic-relief.org/publications/>]
- ¹³ Data is also disaggregated by age: 715 are aged 0 to 5 years; 2840 are 6 to 12 years; 2415 are 13 to 17 years; and 920 are 18 to 24 years.
- ¹⁴ Of the 50 women targeted, 28 are aged 23 to 49 years; 18 are 50 to 59 years; 3 are 60 to 69 years; and 1 is 70-79 years. 20 of the women are married, 26 are widowed, 2 are divorced and 2 are single.
- ¹⁵ UN Women, (Sep 2017) "Navigating through shattered paths: NGO service providers and women survivors of Gender-Based Violence, an assessment of GBV services in Gaza", available at [<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/unwpcogbvresearch2017.pdf>]
- ¹⁶ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, (2019) "Preliminary Results of the Violence Survey in Palestinian Society", available at [<http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Downloads/book2480.pdf>]
- ¹⁷ UNFPA GBV Sub-Cluster, (May 2017) "The Humanitarian Impact of Gaza's Electricity and Fuel Crisis on Gender-based Violence and services", available at [<https://palestine.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Humanitarian%20Impact%20of%20Gaza%27s%20Electricity%20and%20Fuel%20Crisis%20on%20Gender-based%20Violence%20and%20services%20-%2029%20May%202017.pdf>]
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- ²⁰ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, (2019) "Preliminary Results of the Violence Survey in Palestinian Society", available at [<http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Downloads/book2480.pdf>]
- ²¹ According to the Palestinian national statistics survey 29% of married women respondents said they have been subjected to some form of violence during their lifetime by their partner. Type of abuse (57% emotional abuse, 18% physical abuse, 9% sexual abuse and 15% economical). More information available at [<http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Downloads/book2480.pdf>]
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- ²⁴ UN Women, (2010) "Operating within the ecological model", available at: [<https://www.endvawnow.org/en/articles/310-operating-within-the-ecological-model.html>]
- ²⁵ According to the Palestinian national statistics survey, 24% resorted to their parents, and 20% spoke to their parents about the abuse but didn't leave their homes, and 6% spoke with their colleagues or neighbour to seek advice for protection. More information available at [<http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Downloads/book2480.pdf>]
- ²⁶ Add reference: according to the results of national survey 24% resorted to their parents, and 20% spoke to their parents about the abuse but didn't leave their homes, and 6% spoke with their colleagues or neighbour to seek advice for protection.
- ²⁷ Global campaigns #HonourHer and #throughHEReyes in 2018 and 2019 where IR Gaza participated



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