



Read-out of No Lost Generation donor briefing and roundtable discussion on *Gender Based Violence against adolescent girls and boys*



On 9 May, 2018 Germany and the UK co-hosted a regional discussion in Amman, Jordan under the umbrella of the No Lost Generation (NLG) initiative, on Gender Based Violence (GBV) against adolescent girls and boys in countries affected by the Syria crisis. The event brought together donors and humanitarian agencies (both UN and NGO) for a briefing on the current evidence base, effective programmatic approaches, current gaps in knowledge and required shifts in laws and policies.

Participants included representatives from GIZ, the Embassy of the Netherlands, the Embassy of Norway, USAID, UNESCO, the Embassy of Sweden, the Embassy of the Republic of Korea, the Canadian Embassy, the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation, the Swiss Embassy and the ILO. Under the leadership of UNFPA presentations were provided by UNICEF, UNHCR, WVI and Plan International.

The No Lost Generation initiative is a concerted effort by humanitarians, donors, governments and other partners to secure the safety and futures of a whole generation of children and young people in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan and Egypt. Comprised of work under three pillars – Education, Child Protection and Adolescents & Youth – embedded in existing humanitarian plans, it is a powerful call to invest in the resilience, capacities and potential of children, adolescents and youth on which the future of the region depends. No Lost Generation is co-led by UNICEF, Mercy Corps, Save the Children and World Vision. To find out more go to www.nolostgeneration.org.

Highlights from presenters:

In their **opening remarks the co-hosts Mario Stumm of the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, and Katrina Stringer of DFID** underlined the impact of violence - including early marriage, sexual violence, and other forms of GBV – and the interlinkages with other Protection concerns such as child labour. They also reflected on the achievement of results in the Education sector and the need to integrate approaches between Education and GBV. They challenged the group to interrogate current modalities for funding, programming and advocacy to address GBV in the countries affected by the Syria and Iraq crises and to identify what works, what does not work and where new thinking or efforts are needed in the eighth year of the crisis. Finally, they also underlined the strategic importance of addressing GBV, given that protection and equality of women and girls is now proven to correlate strongly with peace, stability, economic growth and other development measures.

Jennifer Miquel, the Head of the Syria Hub A.I. for UNFPA, presented on the types of GBV that are most affecting adolescent girls, and the adolescent girl strategy to address GBV and Sexual and Reproductive Health (SHR) risks. She described how adolescent girls – who are disproportionately affected by GBV - tend to be invisible in all aspects of humanitarian response but also literally, as they can be confined to the home and isolated, and tend not to be consulted or represented in programs, decision making bodies and platforms that affect their lives. Rates of child marriage are increasing in the countries affected by the Syria and Iraq crises, which increases early pregnancies and related health risks curtailing access to education. Adolescent girls are particularly at risk of sexual violence, that is life threatening for survivors, and can bring risk of so-called “honour killing”. Prevailing social norms and attitudes are often reflected in service provision; and adolescent girls have limited access to SRH services and information.

The legal frameworks in the region facilitate and exacerbate the violence experienced by women and girls, for example by failing to recognise rape within marriage, through mandatory reporting, or through reduced sentences for so-called “honour crimes”. Within non-government controlled areas of Syria there is no clear legal framework at all and this contributes to an environment of lawlessness and a sense of impunity.

The coordination mechanisms existing in all countries and hubs in the region offer an opportunity for the humanitarian community to address GBV systematically and effectively. In particular, the **Adolescent Girl Strategy for the Whole of Syria** and a **Regional Accountability Framework on Child Marriage (RAF) in the Arab States** are frameworks in place to facilitate effective, coordinated joint actions based on consultation with affected populations, adolescent girls and to promote best practices.

Holly Berman, Senior Regional Protection Officer (SGBV) for UNHCR, presented on Sexual Violence against adolescent boys, focusing on new evidence published by UNHCR in October 2017. The findings of this included the following:

- Inside Syria, detention – which disproportionately affects males - is a major risk factor for sexual violence against adolescent boys by parties to the conflict.
- In Syria and in refugee hosting countries, exposure to child labour increases the risks of sexual violence, exploitation and abuse. Technology, explicit photos and videos are used as a device to initiate and sustain this violence.
- Syrian boys are victimised in countries of asylum in the region by older boys and men from various sectors of the community. Sexual violence against boys is contributing to school dropout in refugee hosting countries.
- BGTI persons are at particular risk of sexual violence perpetrated by armed groups inside Syria.
- Male survivors of violence face significant barriers to accessing services, including laws and social norms.

- For boys who are survivors of sexual violence, it is essential to ensure that existing child protection programming is fully inclusive of their specific needs and vulnerabilities.
- Considering that GBV disproportionately affects women and girls it is essential to have services for boys and men without diverting resources and by preserving programming which is focused exclusively on women and girls.

Ridiona Stana, Regional Child Protection Technical Advisor with World Vision and Olivia Gimeno, Regional GBV & SRHR Specialist with Plan International, presented on effective programmatic approaches in the region for addressing GBV. They shared an outline of effective strategies to continue to support and leverage GBV efforts, which included:

- Maintaining predictable and sustained investment in GBV related programming, including multi-year funding modalities – and avoiding, analysing and addressing gaps in funding which have a direct, negative impact on GBV service provision and other types of GBV programming the ground;
- Ensuring that funding is flexible in order to support inception phases, participatory consultation (including with adolescent girls and boys) and piloting of innovative approaches – all of which are essential for effective GBV programming in order to maximize results;
- Using holistic, multi-level approaches (e.g. at the individual/adolescent, caregiver, community and institutional levels and involving all key decision-makers and influencers, including faith leaders, as well as engaging men and boys);
- Promoting multi-sectoral linkages with Education, Livelihoods, Cash Assistance and Health as key sectors and mainstreaming GBV considerations into sectors for risk mitigation;
- Continuing to invest in and strengthen dedicated GBV staffing and build local capacity through trainings and other forms of ongoing capacity-building, including mentorship of specialised service provision;
- Facilitating learning and dialogue on GBV approaches and strengthening the evidence base which supports both programming and advocacy.

Gender Based Violence (GBV) including sexual violence against adolescents - some key facts:

- In the course of the Syria crisis, rates of child marriage have increased from 12% to 37% in Jordan.
- Girls under the age of 15 are five times more likely to die of a pregnancy-related cause than women in their twenties.
- In Jordan girls reporting cases of forced marriage is 69.2%, 10.2% for physical assault, 10% emotional abuse, 5.3% denial of resources, 4% sexual assault and 1.2 % rape. Sexual violence is under reported because of high stigma associated.
- Reports state that females aged 14 to 21 years are at greatest risk of sexual violence in Syria.
- In Syria 65% of focus groups across the whole country point that girls are being restricted in their movements. Overall, women and girls are described as being in need of a '*male protector*' and as '*inherently*' vulnerable.
- 79% of Syrian refugee households in Jordan and nearly all (96%) in Lebanon rely on some form of negative coping strategy such as child marriage and child labour – with children in these situations at heightened risk of gender based violence and sexual violence.
- In a recent survey 19.5% to 27% of male respondents in Lebanon, Jordan, KRI confirmed having suffered unwanted sexual contact or harassment as boys.

Highlights from the discussion:

Both stand-alone programming to address GBV with specialized services for prevention and response, and the integration of risk mitigation measures into existing and planned programmes in all sectors of the response are important. GBV mainstreaming is a humanitarian imperative for other sectors and useful strategy to achieve some

‘quick wins’ – it does not require formal change in priorities, draws on resources and networks which are already in place, minimizing risks in our aid intervention and impact for positive gender transformative change.

Attitudes that condone or tolerate violence against women and blame the victim are deeply entrenched throughout society in nearly all parts of the world - albeit to varying degrees. Changing these attitudes and beliefs is a challenging, long-term process that requires a sustained commitment by actors, as well as efforts to harness traditional and social media strategies and support influencing and advocacy work. It requires employing a multisectoral approach and working at different levels with individuals, the community, and the wider society.

It was emphasized that GBV remains a priority and should stay prominent on the agenda for investment throughout the humanitarian to development nexus, particularly as conflict-related violations only continue to augment and vulnerabilities increase in refugee contexts. Gender-based violence is clearly an issue of fundamental human rights, including women’s rights. But it is also a serious public health issue and an important barrier to the socio-economic development of refugee countries. Multi-year, flexible, and predictable funding is essential to achieve results in GBV-related programming, since this allows for the establishment of trust at community level; building capacity of staff and local partners; adjustment of approaches based on learning; and effective work on social norms. Sustained investment in capacity building through a mentorship approach ensure that we invest in local partners and local resources that will be able to respond to GBV and contribute to rebuild the fabric of society beyond the crisis. However, the current humanitarian planning cycle is one year for the Syria and Iraq HRPs, and two years for the 3RP (although in 3RP countries the nationally-led plans have a longer duration). An extended humanitarian planning and funding cycle would facilitate improved programming for GBV, strengthening of national capacity and systems. It may also be effective to ensure that GBV is framed and seen as an essential component within the global movement for human capital in development, linked to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in order to expand the funding modalities available.

Given that humanitarian and development actors have a shared goal of eradicating GBV, there are many different entry points that can be used to achieve these – programming is just one. Within the UN system, the current reform, which includes different ways of working at country and regional levels, must be leveraged to ensure that GBV remains high on the agenda and that the empowerment of girls and women more broadly – an important factor in addressing GBV is a priority. Within the countries affected by the Syria and Iraq crises, as planning and funding modalities shift from humanitarian to development, reconstruction and stabilisation; it will be essential to position GBV and the empowerment of women and girls in that agenda, including improving access to employment. At country-level, changes in the legal and policy framework can be difficult to achieve, but it is extremely important to keep advocating and incrementally opening up the space for greater realisation of children’s and women’s rights.

Donors and member states have made significant progress in highlighting the importance of addressing GBV, and ensuring that GBV receives adequate funding. Effective leadership within the international community is one of the important factors in promoting the importance of addressing GBV. ECHO currently leads the Call to Action and it will be important to have a strong actor to hand this over to next year. This is an opportunity to build a wider alliance for addressing GBV and learning from and leveraging program approaches in the region in order to promote the protection of adolescents and others from GBV.

What we can do now to more effectively address GBV:

No Lost Generation partners can:

- Use the No Lost Generation platforms to advocate for policy reforms required to address GBV in the countries affected by the Syria and Iraq crises – including sharing agreed GBV messaging and advocacy objectives down to country level via the GBV coordination mechanisms;

- Continue to use learning and new evidence to refine GBV programming: including responding to the new evidence on sexual violence against adolescent boys;
Ensure that UN reforms at country and regional level support continued attention to empowerment of women and girls, and eradication of GBV;
Explore and tap into new sources and modalities of funding for GBV related programming, including making full use of development and post conflict funding streams;
- Explore modalities to continue to share and advance effective resources, approaches, and practices on GBV, including targeted models for adolescent girls and boys, within the NLG and through other regional initiatives (e.g. RAF on Child Marriage); and
- Convene a future donor briefing on GBV to revisit progress and developments, using suggested actions from this event as a reference.



Photo by UNFPA Regional Syria Response Hub.

Donors and UN member states can:

- Continue to promote and support adolescent-focused analysis, service provision approaches, and programming related to GBV, maintaining dedicated funding for adolescent girls while also exploring modalities to support adolescent boys;
- Continue to increase the proportion of GBV sector funding which is multi-year, predictable and flexible – and therefore best supports GBV related programming;
- Continue to expand support for multi-sectoral and holistic approaches to address GBV concerns, such as child marriage;
- Use their influence to promote and enhance the operationalisation and integration of relevant, measurable and effective GBV related objectives and standards into programming in other sectors; and
- Use their influence and leverage to push for the legal and policy changes required to strengthen GBV prevention and response at country-level and to bring national legal frameworks in line with international law.

Key messages emerging from the event:

The following key messages are derived from the donor briefing note circulated in advance of the event, and adjusted to reflect the discussions in the room. Participants in the event encouraged everyone in the wider humanitarian and development community to share and promote these messages in their networks as they see fit.

- GBV is a life-threatening human rights violation with long-term consequences for survivors. It is urgent and it is damaging the prospects for a peaceful and prosperous future. Women and girls are disproportionately affected by GBV in all settings and face heightened risks in emergency and humanitarian settings. Adolescent girls in particular face high level of risk of child marriage, sexual violence, and other forms of GBV. In responding to this, both the immediate-term (e.g. services for survivors) and the longer-term (including prevention and empowerment of women and girls as part of that) must be taken into account.

- Evidence confirms that boys and male adolescents face significant exposure to sexual violence in situations of conflict and displacement, including the Syria crisis, such that there is a need for inclusive and dedicated multi-sectoral prevention and response initiatives for male survivors and persons at risk (without jeopardizing dedicated programming and resources for women and girls).
- Resources for GBV programming need to be flexible and long-term, in order to support approaches that are holistic, responsive to participation from girls and evolutions in the context, and based on learning. As part of this, it is critical to invest in sufficient and qualified GBV staffing to support targeted GBV programming and GBV mainstreaming, including through pipelines/rosters, trainings and ongoing capacity-building efforts.
- GBV-related objectives on both risk mitigation/prevention and response (e.g. referral of survivors and those at risk) must be included in all sectors of the response; and achievement of these measured and reported on throughout the program cycle with a view toward increasing operationalization and effectiveness. It is also important to explore integrated responses between GBV and other sectors, such as Education, and multi-sectoral approaches to child marriage and other GBV concerns for effective prevention and response.
- Humanitarian and development actors should trial innovative approaches, including the use of technology, to achieve GBV-related results at scale through all their programming.
- Local ownership of interventions and leadership from within the region on the policy agenda will expedite results; it is important that efforts to counter GBV are not characterized as an 'imported' or 'imposed' agenda.
- Sensitive and effective methodologies for changing social norms are central to achieving results in relation to GBV. Donors, researchers and humanitarian and development actors must continue to generate, share and apply learning on what works in this area, including from other contexts.
- Across the region, there is an urgent need to build a legal and policy environment in line with international standards in relation to GBV and gender equality. Humanitarian and development actors must contribute to this by explicitly sharing key, agreed advocacy objectives, as well as the evidence to support them (the case for change), to donors, UN member States and other stakeholders with influence. These actors in turn must contribute by using all their influence and leverage to push for change. Framing advances in GBV in terms of stability, investment in human capital, and securing economic growth and development may be helpful to achieve advocacy gains.

"Most of us get married because our fathers take lack of security as an excuse- as if the husband provides security to them".

Adolescent girl from Dana sub district, Idleb governorate, Syria

"I would build schools, hospitals, places for playing and protection children from unexploded mines."

Adolescent girl from Maaret Tamrin sub-district, Idleb governorate, Syria

"Our society, our parents and our political leaders are the reasons why youth have no voice today"

Kurdish male youth in Dohuk, Iraq

"We would like this war to end and for the displaced people to go back home...My wish is that my father would come back so that he and my mother could hug me forever, and that everyone in this country would be happy again."

Adolescent girl from Nawa sub-district, Dara' Governorate, Syria