LISTEN, ENGAGE AND EMPOWER
Addressing the needs of adolescent girls in Syria and the region

Briefing and Round Table discussion
What do we mean when we say “adolescent girls”

- Adolescent girls are defined as girls from ages 10-19
- Adolescence is a time when many girls start to assume the roles of adult women
- Globally:
  - over 16 million adolescent girls become mothers annually
  - Girls under the age of 15 are five times more likely to die of a pregnancy-related cause than women in their twenties
  - Growing evidence shows that in times of humanitarian crisis, child marriage rates increase, with a disproportionate impact on girls
Adolescent Girls and the Syria crisis

- Adolescent girls are **invisible**.
- They often **lack mobility** to move safely and freely outside the home, which limits their ability to obtain services and increases their isolation.
- High risk of **sexual violence** and **child marriage** (from 12 to 37% increase in Jordan).
- Risk increase in **domestic work**, on the way to school, when out of school.
- **Divorced and widowed** adolescent girls are particularly at risk of stigmatization and many forms of GBV.

2017 GBV IMS report for Jordan Girls report cases are forced marriage 69.2%, 10% for physical assault, 10% emotional abuse, 5.3 denial of resources, 4.2% sexual violence, 1.2% rape.

“Some old men marry young girls and exploit their need for money. They give parents a lot of money to marry their little daughter. (Man from Ma’arrat An Nu’man sub-district, Idlib governorate)

Child marriage “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 subdistrict, Idlib governorate)
Adolescent girls and reproductive health

• Most adolescent girls lack and **crave information** about the physical and psychosocial changes that they undergo during adolescence, such as the menstrual period.

• Unmarried adolescent girls have **difficulty accessing SRH** services and clinics due to mobility difficulties and disapproving attitudes of service providers.

• Adolescent girls **do not exercise full control over decision-making** regarding their bodies and reproductive health.

• Medical staff treatment often mirrors stigmatizing social norms and perceptions especially around the importance of virginity.

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On average, adolescent girls comprise 20% of ante-natal care visits and deliveries in UNFPA supported reproductive health facilities.

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**Midwife from urban Idleb:**

I will tell you the story of a twelve years old girl who has been married for a year to a grown-up man and has no knowledge of sexual relations between men and women. The girl got married after her first menstrual period. She came complaining of pain in the genital area and pain in the lower abdomen around the bladder. Innocence and childhood are clear on her face but fully demonstrate what happens with her every night. The husband wants her to get pregnant. She asked me what she has to do to get pregnant, she knows nothing about how children are conceived. She is just twelve. She is a child.
**Policy Environment**

- Rape or molestation charges dropped if perpetrator marries victims.
- Marital rape is not recognized
- Protection orders only for married women
- Reduced sentence for so called-honor crime
- Mandatory reporting
- Absence of clear legal framework and enforcement agencies in opposition held areas of Syria

"When a girl is raped, this problem is solved by either marriage or murder. (Adolescent girl from Nawa sub-district, Dar’a governorate)"

A friend of mine had been kidnapped for a whole month and after that she came back and we heard that her father had slaughtered her. (Adolescent girl from Mare sub-district, Aleppo governorate)"
Opportunities

• **Adolescent Girl Strategy for the Whole of Syria** The aim of this strategy is to empower Syrian adolescent girls through the provision of humanitarian assistance to allow them to achieve equal rights and control over their lives, to make the choices that they want, and to lead a meaningful and happy lives.

• **Multi-stakeholders Regional Accountability Framework on Child Marriage (RAF) in the Arab States** A newly created coordination mechanism among partners in the Arab States (UN agencies, INGOs, Academics) to maximize results and avoid duplications in ending child marriage. Partners identified, through the RAF, priority areas of joint actions and future joint programming.
Key asks

Increased understanding of adolescent girls differential needs

Improved policy and legal framework

GBV specialized response and risk mitigation activities

Multi-stakeholder involvement

*Investing in adolescent girls is investing in the future.*
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 hub me forever, and that everyone in this country would be happy again.

Adolescent girl from Nawa sub-district, Dara’ Governorate

Resources available:
https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiMjkxMjE4ZTctYmMxMy00NzU2LTljNTctY2Y4NTE4MGEzYmIwIiwidCI6IjZjOTBmNzA3LTUxYzgtNGY1ZC04MGFjLiLTBlNTA5ZWYxZGZ2MCIsImMiOjl9

#NOLOST GENERATION

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UNFPA - The UN Population Fund
UNHCR - The UN Refugee Agency
World Vision
PLAN