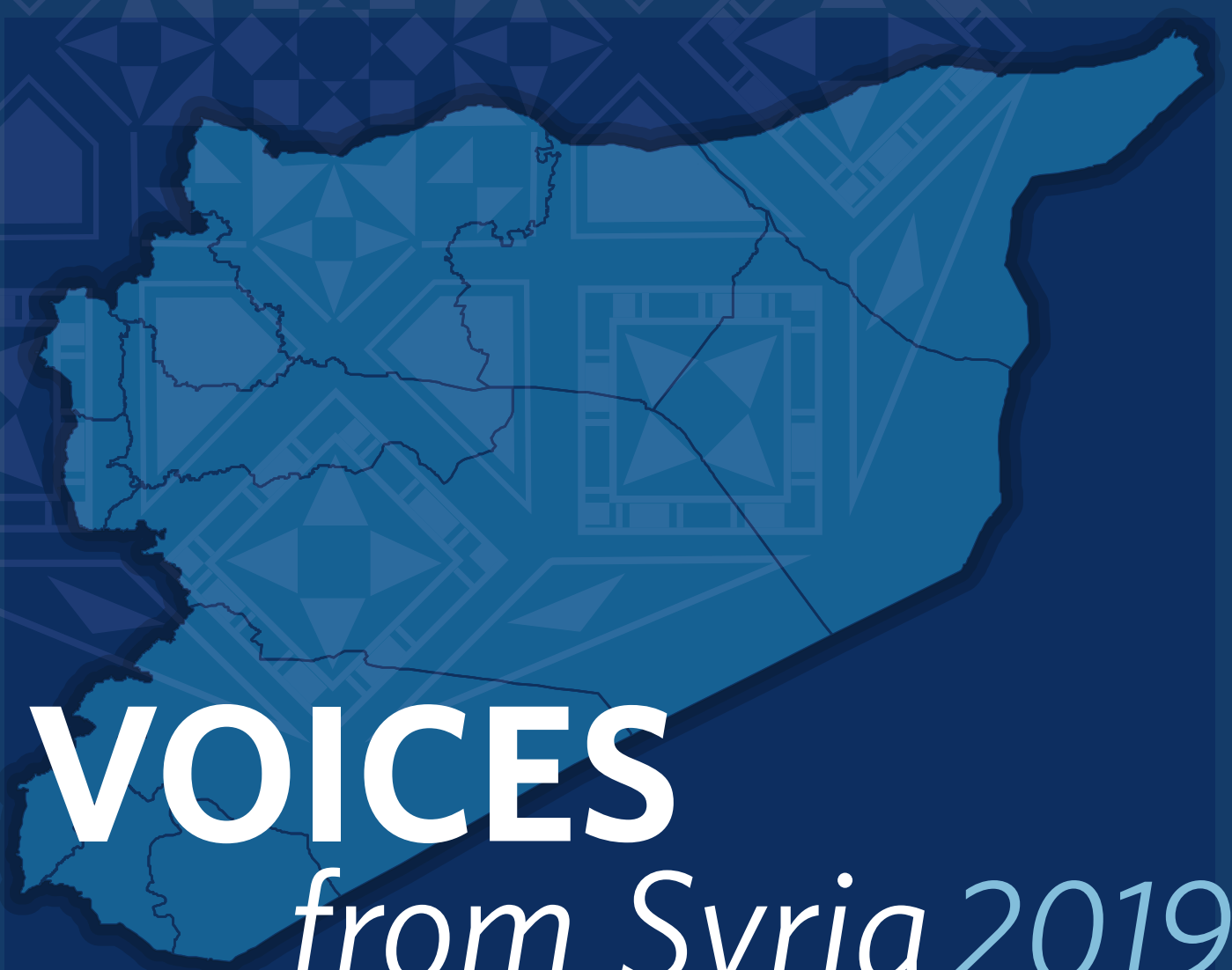


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Whole of Syria
Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility

A stylized map of Syria is centered on the page. The map is filled with a light blue color and has a dark blue outline. The background of the entire page is a dark blue gradient with a subtle geometric pattern of triangles and squares. The title 'VOICES from Syria 2019' is overlaid on the map. 'VOICES' is in large, bold, white capital letters. 'from Syria 2019' is in a white script font, with '2019' in a light blue color.

VOICES *from Syria 2019*

Assessment Findings of the Humanitarian Needs Overview





VOICES *from Syria* 2019

Assessment Findings of the Humanitarian Needs Overview



Foreward

With the Syria crisis approaching its ninth year, the country faces a new reality in which gender dynamics have been significantly altered. Even as parts of Syria appear to be stabilizing, the situation has long since passed a tipping point in terms of accumulated effects, with women and girls shouldering the larger portion of the consequences of the crisis. The lingering ramifications of conflict and displacement are now so fundamentally ingrained that they require long-term and strategic solutions.

This report provides an in-depth look into the lives of women and girls who are striving to find their place in the aftermath of conflict. The information, individual accounts and recommendations contained in this report serve as a valuable primer for aid agencies in delivering a comprehensive and effective response to gender-based violence, which continues to pervade the lives of women and girls throughout Syria.

Previous iterations of this report have highlighted the increasingly complex web of violence that permeates the lives of women and girls due to conflict and displacement. Restriction of movement, forced and early marriage, and family and domestic violence are among the most common violations experienced by Syrian women and girls. The higher quality data obtained this year shows unequivocally that none of these forms of violence lessened in their impact, in addition to providing a clearer picture of the extensions of the negative coping mechanisms that have accompanied the crisis.

Moreover, the data obtained this year reveals the critical threshold the crisis has passed in terms of generational change, effectively redefining the worldview of Syrian women and - perhaps more substantively - adolescent girls. One adolescent girl describes this reality as the "fear of everything," which results in an entire generation of girls grappling with the threat of harassment, sexual violence, forced marriage and early pregnancy, which essentially stunts their development and inhibits their ability to reach their full potential as individuals.

Meanwhile, these challenges and abuses remain significantly interlinked, particularly given the protracted nature of the crisis. A girl who was on the cusp of adolescence when the crisis began may now have experienced several marriages, having been divorced or widowed along the way. She may find herself the sole breadwinner of a household, with children to feed and protect, further exposing her to the risk of exploitation and violence.

While these long-standing challenges persist, the report also sheds light on some positive developments. For example, in certain areas, awareness-raising and social advocacy have begun to turn public opinion against so-called honour crimes as a way of dealing with perceived family shame. Likewise, disclosure of rape and assault in some camps has increased, signifying a notable improvement in services. In addition, attendees at women and girls' safe spaces continue to highlight the importance of these services to their overall wellbeing, indicating that the response is on the right track. Still, much more needs to be done to offset the cumulative effects of years of instability.

Our heartfelt thanks go to all those who have contributed to this publication, particularly to the courageous women and girls who have generously shared their testimonies. We are also grateful to all the donors whose support has enabled the delivery of a wide array of programmes geared toward Syrian women and girls region-wide, which has helped provide them with the platforms and support they need to share their stories with the world.



Luay SHABANEH UNFPA

Regional Director, Arab States Regional Office (ASRO)

Intended use of the Report

The primary aim of *Voices from Syria* is to support the development and implementation of humanitarian programmes to prevent and respond to gender-based violence (GBV) across the Whole of Syria response¹. The publication is also intended to be a resource for humanitarian workers' programming *within other sectors such as camp coordination, food security, WASH and Education*, and others to better understand the risks of GBV that need to be mitigated throughout their response.

Voices from Syria does not represent prevalence data on GBV. No specific allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse were made when gathering information for this publication. This report should be read with an understanding of the complexities of the context of Syria. It is important to note that this publication is not intended to present a picture of Syria to the media or provide journalists with information on GBV. *Voices from Syria* is not to be quoted by – or to – colleagues working in the media. If any journalist is interested in further information on GBV in Syria they should contact GBV coordinators in the hubs as listed under humanitarianresponse.org

¹ The Whole of Syria (WoS) coordination approach was established in 2015 to bring humanitarian actors working in Syria and in neighboring countries (cross-border operations through UNSC Resolution 2449) together to harmonize (and improve effectiveness) of the response. It is comprised of one comprehensive framework, a common response plan and a supporting coordination structure.

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1





Summary Of Findings



Summary of Findings

Assessments and data gathered in 2018, as has been done for Voices 2017 and 2016, reconfirmed that GBV – particularly sexual violence and sexual harassment, domestic violence, family violence against women and girls, and early/forced marriage – continues to pervade the lives of women and girls, particularly adolescent girls. Women, girls, boys and men have confirmed that GBV occurs in homes, at schools and universities, in the market, and on the street. In a word: everywhere. The fear of sexual violence – both generally and associated with abduction – is a concern raised by women and girls contributing to psychosocial distress. It is a further limitation of their movements in some parts of Syria, which is already restricted by parents, husbands and family members who harbour the same concerns. One reason for this movement restriction – which was given in other years but came out more strongly this year in certain areas – was adherence to customs and traditions rooted in patriarchy: *“The mobility of women is highly restricted because of the customs and traditions.” (Adolescent girl from Daret Azza sub-district, Aleppo governorate).* Focus group discussion (FGD) participants also cited fear of sexual violence as a reason for movement restriction, both self-imposed and by family members. Participants did not identify sexual violence perpetrated against men and boys as a strong concern in their communities. However, the All Survivors Project publication “Destroyed from Within: Sexual Violence against men and boys in Syria and Turkey” (September 2018) has documented sexual violence and abuse experienced by men and boys during the Syria crisis. Also of note, sexual violence is still perceived in 2018 to be a torture tactic within detention and prisons against both males and females. Indeed, reports conducted by the Independent Commission of Inquiry documented such activity up until December 2017. Additionally, during home arrests, the daughters, wives and female relatives of detained men and boys were raped and sexually assaulted².

According to FGD participants – and in line with global trends – movement restriction was the primary obstacle to accessing GBV-specialised services. These constraints limit women and girls’ access to services, humanitarian aid and generally infringe upon their wider human rights. However, it is worth highlighting that where services are available and accessible, women and girls expressed high satisfaction with the standard received.

Adolescent girls are forced into early marriage by parents who want to protect them against sexual violence, abuse and exploitation. However, the girl is often wed to a man who is much older than her, which may well increase her vulnerability to GBV: *“Such marriage[s] lead to problems because of the age difference.” (Man from Afrin sub-district, Aleppo governorate)*

Such adversities have become commonplace in recent years, as the protracted crisis continues to contribute to financial stress, livelihood and food insecurity in Syria. Women and girls, have said that the threat of divorce is used to force women and adolescent girls to conform to customs and traditions, as well as financial control: *“Some men force their wives to work and if they refuse, they divorce them.” (Adolescent girl from Karama sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate).* This adolescent girl’s statement highlights that women are in some instances forced by their husbands to work to generate revenue. In some circumstances, women and adolescent girls who earn an income are denied their right to manage household income and resources. As in the past years, the fear of **sexual harassment and sexual exploitation that women and girls face** at distribution sites, results in them feeling unsafe and avoid going at all. On a more positive note, women and girls have stated that where GBV specialised services exist, they really improve their lives.

While most forms of violence experienced by women and girls in Syria were reported in previous editions of this publication, there were fresh concerns voiced in the FGDs. Participants identified armed recruitment as a conflict-related GBV risk and a form of child labour that is impacting girls. Another new trend is the use of technology to sexually harass adolescent girls, such as unwanted sexual text messages or blackmail using photos of women and girls: *“Sexual abuse cases of young women are done in many ways, starting by abuse through the phone and blackmailing with photos which subsequently lead to sexual abuse and exploitation. This exploitation is widespread in society.” (GBV Expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub).*

² Human Rights Council, “I lost my dignity”: Sexual and gender-based violence in the Syrian Arab Republic, Conference room paper of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, Thirty-seventh session, 26 February – 23 March 2018, A/HRC/37/CRP.3



A complex, repeating geometric pattern in shades of gray, featuring various polygons, stars, and interlocking shapes, creating a textured, crystalline background.

GBV Data Sources, Assessments & Coverage



GBV Data sources, Assessments and Coverage

The challenges of collecting data on GBV issues are well documented, especially in societies where discussions around GBV are considered shameful or taboo. Assessments conducted and gathered for the 2019 Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO), quantitative and qualitative information on sexual violence, sexual harassment and early/forced marriage provided by women, men, and adolescent through key informants and focus group participants in various sub-districts within governorates across Syria. The GBV Area of Responsibility (AoR) for the purposes of the Focus Group Discussions (FGD) has defined girls and boys as 0-11, adolescents as 12-14 and 15-17, adults as 18+ and the elderly as 60+. Below is an overview of assessments and data points that informed the GBV analysis.

Assessment	Led By	Type/Tool	Type of Data
Protection Focus Group Discussions	Protection Sector (Turkey hub only and NES)	FGD Guidance Note	Qualitative
GBV Expert Focus Group Discussions	Turkey and Jordan Cross Border Hubs	Delphi Method GBV statements drafted by GBV coordinators/IMS	Qualitative
UNFPA Programme reports	UNFPA Syria	Programme monitoring-focus group discussions	Qualitative
Secondary Literature Data Desk Review	GBV AoR	N/A	Qualitative

Despite the on-going conflict across Syria, the assessments were successful in recording the GBV concerns of Syrians living in twelve governorates: Data from all assessments (both quantitative and qualitative) was collected at community level and consolidated for the analysis. It was collected in 27 communities located in 26 sub-districts out of 272 sub-districts across the country. The reason for the decreased number of community protection FGD from previous years is twofold. Firstly, the Jordan Cross Border Hub was in the midst of an emergency that subsequently led to a shift in line of control and the closure of the operation – therefore no FGDs could be conducted. Secondly, GBV AoR members wanted a deeper understanding of the GBV issues that have been highlighted in prior publications (sexual violence, violence occurring at distribution sites), therefore there was an agreement that the sampling should focus on quality of FGDs rather than quantity. Data was obtained through 34 FGDs by NWS protection actors, 30 protection actors in NES, and 3 GBV Expert FGDs organised by the Turkey hub (2) and the Jordan Hub (1), as well as existing secondary literature including UNFPA programme data inside Syria representing 256 women, 211 girls (under 18), 110 boys (under 18), and 110 men. FGD participants were disaggregated by age and sex, including adolescent girls and boys (12-14 and 15-17), as well as women and men (age 18 and above).

As in previous years, the aim of the assessments looked to understand these 5 themes:

- Different types of GBV
- Availability of and access to specialised services for GBV survivors
- Coping strategies employed by GBV survivors
- Movement restrictions for women and girls
- Risks to women and girls when accessing aid

Additional gender analysis is provided on issues such as civil documentation, as well as housing, land and property, given that these are protection concerns that have emerged in Syria in recent years.

Adherence to ethical guidelines

GBV remains underreported globally due to fears of stigma, retaliation, lack of /inadequate information of where to report, mandatory reporting to police officers and limited availability and/or accessibility of services. Moreover, it is widely understood that in emergency situations many forms of GBV are occurring regardless of available data and that they are significantly aggravated when they occur. However, the aim of the assessments was not to determine the overall prevalence of types of GBV. According to the *IASC GBV Guidelines*³, the aim of seeking population-based data on the true magnitude of GBV should not be a priority in any emergency, due to the safety and ethical challenges in collecting it. Likewise, when gathering data on sexual violence, the ethical and safety recommendations for collecting information on sexual violence in emergencies were taken into account⁴.

Data Limitations

GBV, and in particular sexual violence, is underreported, and rarely discussed openly, by women, adolescent girls and boys and men during times of peace and normalcy within any societal context. Reporting and tracking of gender-based violence is plagued with a whole host of challenges such as safety to disclose, capacity to collect and conduct and analysis of data, identifying and accounting for bias in source data etc. As such, it is interesting to note that both females and males in all datasets highlighted the types of GBV that take place in Syria.

In addition, distribution of FGDs were not representative of the whole country. Many of the FGDs were from Idlib and only one expert focus group discussion took place in the South due to the sudden onset of emergency in the Southern region of Syria (caused by changes in areas of control).

Some FGD participants expressed a positive experience with the FGD sessions: *"All of the participants were affected by the crisis and the current events, each of whom had a story or an episode that she experienced during this crisis. All the participants loved this session and the discussion and asked to have these focused sessions repeated because they expressed their views and ideas freely and clearly."* (Adolescent girl from Heish sub-district, Idlib governorate).

However, others said that they were not able to express themselves freely for fear of repercussion if others found out what they said: *"Girls refused to participate in this discussion as they think that answering these questions will get them into trouble and those questions should be asked to their mothers only, not to them."* (GBV May 2018 Safety Audit from Kheil Dar'a, Jordan Cross Border Hub)

3 IASC GBV Guidelines, 2015, gbvguidelines.org

4 WHO, 2007, WHO Ethical and safety recommendations for researching, documenting, and monitoring sexual violence in emergencies

3





Findings

Affected populations at particular risk of GBV⁵

Women and girls continue to experience various forms of violence in their homes, in flight from danger, and within internally displaced persons (IDPs) camps and other places—yet these experiences are generally hidden under a blanket of silence as is often the case around the world. As in the past years, the forms of violence that are the most common in Syria are sexual violence, domestic violence, and early/forced marriage.

In the 2019 assessments, the findings from all qualitative data sources indicated that women and girls are still disproportionately affected by gender-based violence in Syria as in any other country in conflict. Women and girls have fears related to their safety, whether as a result of crime or the crisis, that inhibit their movement, whether in gaining an education, earning a living and/or accessing health or psychosocial services. Women's and girls' fears are related to the violence they can be subjected to within the home by family members and in the street as they try to make a semblance of normal life in the midst of deep conflict. Specifically, the crisis has further entrenched patriarchal norms and customs that impede women and girl empowerment in the name of protection, as *"women are the most vulnerable to violence and are the weakest group in society"*, (Man from Khan Shaykun sub-district, Idlib governorate). Culture is often responsible for how the problem of violence against women is viewed and addressed. When GBV survivors, especially women and girls, speak out about the abuse, it is often considered a shame for the family and community – and can lead to harmful consequences for the survivor herself, including stigma, estrangement and so-called honour crimes.

Girls

In Syria, as is the case globally, the cycle of violence against women begins from childhood. Girls are often subjected to violence from a very young age in many parts of the world—with such GBV types as female genital cutting/mutilation and early/forced marriage—which impedes their access to education, vocational skills, employment and many other life opportunities. Education and vocational opportunities open the door for girls to develop the skills, and psychological and emotional awareness, to make autonomous decisions on all aspects of their life at every developmental stage, such as whether to marry, with whom and when to have children, and how to live their lives after divorce and widowhood. One girl highlighted a primary fear

of girls and their parents: *"They tried to kidnap me and my little sister when we were coming back from school."* (Adolescent girl from Masyaf, sub-district, Hama governorate). Such incidences cause fear for both girls and their parents, inhibiting girls from leaving the home. This freedom is an integral part of obtaining an education, namely learning how to navigate dangers and establish relationships with those outside of their known circles. Girls and women become sheltered and further dependent on family members to make decisions for them on major life events.

Education also includes the importance of understanding an individual's human and legal rights, and their role in society. It is also the importance of making autonomous decisions regarding their bodies: reproductive health, providing consent and the path their lives will take. It should be noted, that women's economic empowerment can contribute to decreasing GBV risk as well as contribute to increasing GBV risk, particularly intimate partner violence (IPV), and result in mixed outcomes within a given setting. Namely, GBV risks decrease "by improving women's financial autonomy, bargaining power and self-esteem" while potentially increasing GBV risks if "disruption of traditional gender roles results in backlash from intimate partners or communities."⁶ Therefore, it is imperative that the root causes of GBV are addressed – customs and social norms, as well as patriarchy at the heart of institutional policies and laws – in order to adequately eradicate the violence that women and girls face within homes and communities. This scrutiny is vital in opening the door for them to achieve their health, social and financial goals.

"We girls (adolescents) cannot move freely. We can go to school, but we cannot move as often as we like, because our parents prevent us. When they see one of us out on our own, people start talking about her as being disrespectful. That's the way of our culture, especially for girls. We don't have the right to do so. Girls only work at home, but when a girl gets married she can go out to her relatives or to her friends or wherever she wants, and that's what motivates girls to get married." (Adolescent girl from Karama sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate)

⁵ The GBV AoR for this publication has defined girls/boys as 0-11 years, adolescents as 12-14 and 15-17, adults 18+ and elderly as 60+

⁶ VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT Presentation, Anna-Karin Jaffors, Deputy Regional Director, UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, 23 February, 2017

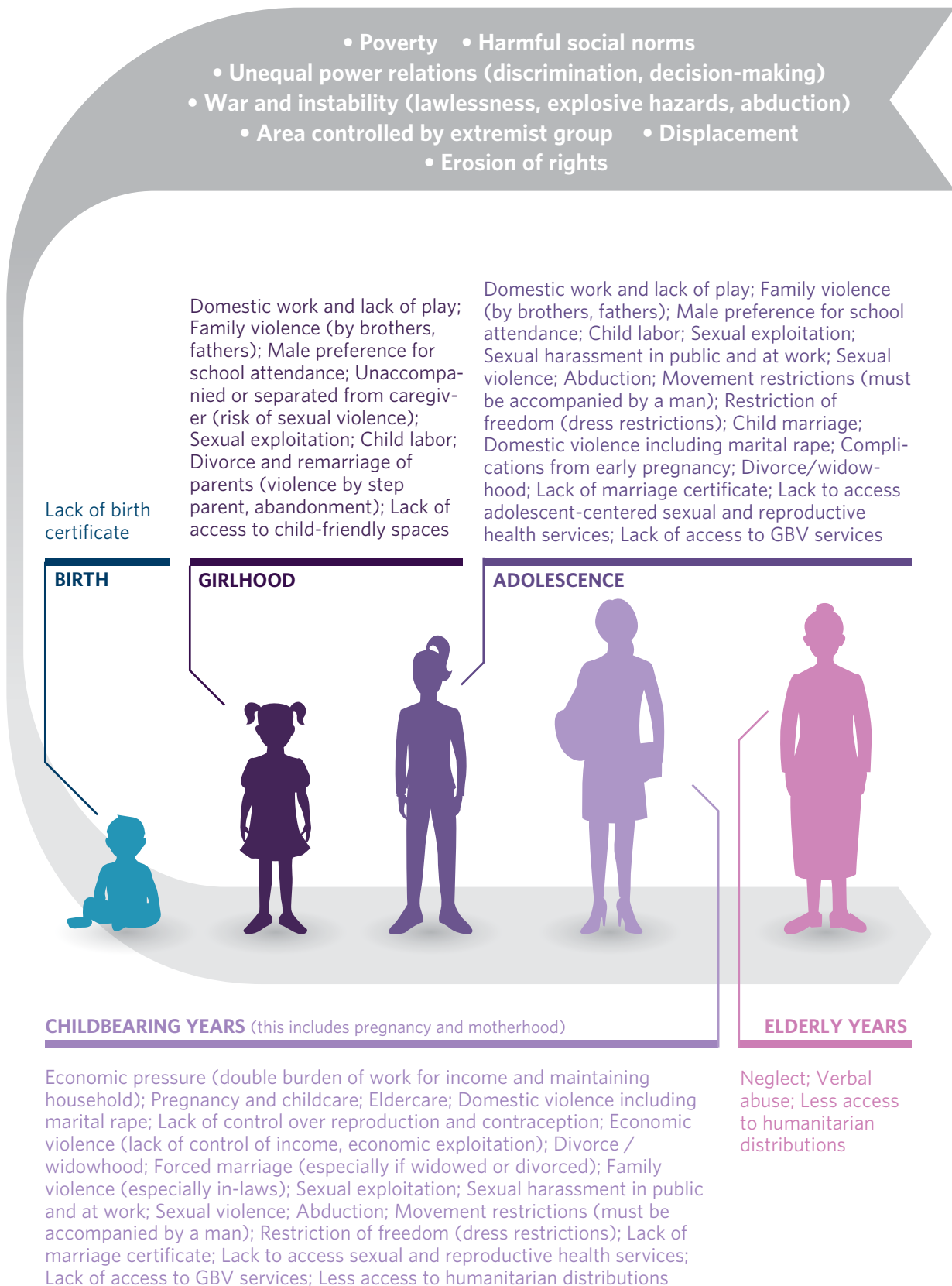


Figure 1: Life Cycle of Violence for Women and Girls

Adolescent Girls

Adolescent girls bear the brunt of the crisis. They must confront GBV risks, as well as ingrained traditional and social norms that limit their development, and consequently alter the path their lives take. They are subjected to movement restrictions, enter forced and early marriage, and confront sexual and physical violence on a daily basis.

Rigid constraints on mobility are placed on adolescent girls with reasons ranging from fear of explosives to the need to protect, with the latter often being steeped in social customs and norms. Such beliefs can lead to adolescent girls being forced into early marriage as a means of protection by parents. Specifically, parents deem it necessary to shield their daughters from sexual contact (consensual intercourse, by sexual assault or rape) in order to maintain their chastity and thus protect the family's reputation and preserve their "marriageability." Early marriage is also perceived as an exit strategy by girls themselves for the "greater freedom" of managing their own household. They do not understand the full implications of marriage, or even the possibility of entering into a worse situation whether through lack of food, poor shelter, or an abusive husband. Unfortunately, adolescent girls have received negative messages about their role in the family throughout the crisis. As one adolescent girl told us: *"Girls are forced to get married at an early age so that parents get rid of their responsibilities."* (Adolescent girl from Ein Issa sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate).

Many early/forced marriages end in divorce leaving young women, often still adolescents, stigmatised by the divorce, with one or even two children. They are then at further risk of GBV, such as being isolated/ostracised by family and community members, sexually exploited to meet daily needs, or forced to marry quickly, and at times, through temporary marriages with different men over a short period of time. The children from these temporary marriages are often not registered and thus not entitled to maintenance or other services offered to children with birth certificates. The ages of many adolescent girls in 2018 ranged from 5 to 11 years old when the crisis began in 2011. The concepts of marriage and the importance of placing family above all else are seeds that were planted and cultivated during some of the most formative years of these girls' young lives. Moreover, the complex context of Syria today feeds the notion of girls being a burden and of subordinate status. The stereotypical roles they must fill in marriage and family life — cooking, cleaning, giving birth, and caring for others — are the only ones they deem themselves worthy of fulfilling. This is particularly evident in some areas of Syria, whereas in others, women and girls are freer to work and to strive for jobs typically considered for men such as being a minister, engineer etc.

"There is a difference between girls and boys: boys are able to move alone because they are considered men according to customs and traditions." (Adolescent girl from Ein Issa sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate)

Furthermore, these social norms and customs are strictly reinforced by the communities that adolescent girls live in: *"whenever a girl goes out, everybody watches her."* (Woman from Kafr Nobol sub-district, Idlib governorate). Thus, many girls choose not to leave their homes for fear of *"gossip and flirting."* (Adolescent girl from Afrin sub-district, Aleppo governorate). Adolescent girls are often viewed in a special light within the eyes of family and community members — although this doesn't reflect the support she will receive to mitigate the impact of the crisis on her development, education and success in life. Rather, she is observed to ensure she does not bring shame upon her family or the community — through her behaviour in public but also by being exposed to the possibility of violence that could taint her prospects for marriage (either through perceived improper behaviour or experiencing sexual violence that places her virginity at risk).

"When cases of kidnapping take place and a girl is kidnapped and raped, parents became terrified, and they stop sending their girls to school. If they do, they escort them on the way back and forth." (Adolescent boy from Janudiyeh sub-district, Idlib governorate).

With adolescent girls, the violence that they experience directly within the home, in school, and in public spaces in the form of sexual harassment, sexual abuse and exploitation have a profound and reverberating effect. Movement restrictions impact adolescent girls' physical access to an education, recreational activities, vocational and employment opportunities. In addition, the imposed movement restrictions upon adolescent girls result in psychological and emotional consequences for them. Firstly, adolescent girls spoke of how *"restricting girls' movement makes girls drop out school, and become isolated and gloomy."* (Adolescent girl from Janudiyeh sub-district, Idlib governorate). This insight speaks to the mental health challenges that many adolescents have experienced during the crisis, such as psychological distress that can lead to a diagnosis of mild to severe depression, trauma and social isolation.

Moreover, it is important to remain aware of the indirect psychological and emotional violence that they experience when their role within the family and community is minimised to being a burden or liability. Women are essentially relegated to the status of second-class citizens within families and communities. One community-based expert supports this when she told us that *"if you have a 13 or 14 year old girl the family will send a 6-year-old boy 'to protect' her."* (GBV Expert)

from Jordan Cross Border Hub). In addition, many girls (as well as women), voluntarily or forced upon them by parents and family, change their appearance/dress in order to cope with the threat of sexual violence: *“The first thing I did is that I started to wear a long jacket and hijab in order to protect myself. (Angrily). I must fear only Allah not anyone else.” (Woman from Afrin sub-district, Aleppo governorate).*

One adolescent boy stated that a *“girl should not wear attractive clothes or make up,” (Adolescent boy from Afrin sub-district, Aleppo governorate)* in order to protect herself from sexual violence. Another male said that *“women here have changed their clothes style: they started to wear a hijab and long clothes in order to avoid sexual abuse.” (Man from Afrin sub-district, Aleppo governorate).* Lastly, a father directly stated that *“I keep my daughter at home and force her to wear a hijab.” (Man from Afrin sub-district, Aleppo governorate).*

When adolescent girls were asked what changes they wanted to see in Syria, their responses overwhelmingly focused on what was needed to make their futures brighter. Safety and security were foremost, as one adolescent girl stated: *“we wish girls were safe and secure.” (Adolescent girl from Mansura sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate).* A safe and secure family and community would allow them to access schools and vocational classes so that they can be educated. Likewise, a safer environment would allow their parents to feel secure in letting them move more freely, whether to attend school, training courses and visit family and friends. Unfortunately – as revealed by many of the adolescent girl FGD participants – deep-rooted customs and traditions steeped in gender inequality will not permit girls to access the education they so desire – even when safety and security measures would allow them to do so.

Women

“Widows and divorcees are exposed to violence. Society is not interested in them.” (Adolescent boy from Khan Shaykun sub-district, Idleb governorate).

Women face several other layers of social status that increases their risk to violence. Specifically, women and adolescent girls can also be widows, divorced, separated, displaced, have a disability and/or be head of households. In other words, women and adolescent girls can be labelled with any one or ALL of these statuses. According to FGD participants, *“widows, divorced and GBV survivors are particularly vulnerable to GBV, due to their limited control over decisions made about them.” (May 2018 GBV Safety Audit from Nawa Dar’a, Jordan Cross Border Hub).* Furthermore, *“this group faces both verbal and physical violence which negatively influences their psychological state as well as their economic state as they bear the burden of providing the basic needs of their children”, as they are often head of household. (Woman from Janudiyeh sub-district, Idleb governorate).*

Divorced women and widows

“Divorced women and widows are insulted whatever they do.” (Adolescent girl from Ein Issa sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate).

Widowed women within the communities where focus group discussions took place are deemed to be individuals in need of protection as they were involuntarily placed within their social situation. While divorced women are perceived to be deserved of the abuse, exploitation and violence they face, because divorce is considered a remedy that should not be sought. Many women have been divorced by their partners, legally or because their marriage certificates cannot be found or were lost. Thus, husbands in this situation take advantage to leave the marriage without any legal (filing for a divorce) or familial (paying dowry) complications. Other women had to seek divorce due to domestic violence within the marriage. However, divorced women and adolescent girls' family and community members often do not consider the many push and pull factors that force women into their socio-economic situation. Thus, many of these women whether widowed, divorced or separated find themselves vulnerable to an array of abuse and exploitation at the hands of extended family members and community members.

Furthermore, due to the stigma they face for their civil status, divorced women and widows are often homebound and therefore do not access essential GBV specialised services and humanitarian assistance. Other widows and divorced women and adolescent girls have been forced into designated areas within IDP camps called “widow camps” where they are further at risk of exploitation, gender-based violence (including sexual violence), family separation and forced marriages. This stigmatisation hinders their right to freedom of movement and access to humanitarian assistance.

Women and Adolescent Girls with Disabilities⁷

“Some people pray that their disabled child dies.” (Woman from Kafr Nobol sub-district, Idleb governorate).

Persons with disabilities (PwD), especially women and adolescent girls, are at high risk of various forms of

⁷ FGD participants did not always note the type of disability, i.e. “person with disability” and when a physical or mental disability was mentioned, specifics on that disability, also, were not added, i.e. autistic, blind, etc.

violence. They encounter more barriers than men and boys for receiving assistance (support) or in accessing services for rehabilitation, and thus may be less able to integrate or re-integrate socially and economically within the community. An adolescent girl captures one of the many factors that make PwD women and girls at higher risk of violence when she states that *“the most vulnerable to violence are those with physical and mental disabilities, especially because they cannot defend themselves and do not have the ability to prevent violence.”* (Adolescent girl from Damascus sub-district, Damascus governorate).

Specifically, many private and public spaces do not accommodate the needs of PwDs while health, psychosocial support services (PSS) and legal services often do not make information accessible to those with cognitive, visual or hearing impairments. *“The physically disabled complain about not taking into account their privacy when standing in the queue or when building facilities, especially the toilets, as there are no specialist facilities for them to use.”* (Woman from Ein Issa sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate).

In addition, PwDs have little or no access to services due to lack of appropriate transportation and/or facilities offering the service: *“Persons with disabilities must rely on people being available to deliver aid. However, in general, there is a great deal of neglect in this regard. People with disabilities are not taken into consideration.”* (Adolescent boy from Khan Shaykun, Idlib governorate). Moreover, caregivers of PwDs are stigmatised within their communities because they care for a PwD daughter, son, or other family member. The financial strain and food insecurity experienced because they and the PwD they care for cannot work or are homebound due to a lack of adequate transportation and facilities for humanitarian assistance, means they are very often at higher risk of experiencing violence. Specifically, they are often sexually exploited in order to meet the basic needs of themselves and the PwD they care for.

“A mentally disabled girl was kidnapped and abused by a bread seller. The girl’s mother defended her, and did not let her brothers kill her. Eventually, she killed her because the news spread.” (Woman from Heish sub-district, Idlib governorate).

Another layer of hardship frequently faced by PwDs is the lack of understanding by their families and communities of how attitudinal and environmental barriers contribute to disability, how this consequently increases the risk of GBV, and how the family can best support a woman and girl living with a disability. Thus, many view their family member with a disability as a burden and/or shame that must be hidden or locked away so as not to cause problems outside the family: *“Mentally disabled people are tied up so they do not hurt people.”* (Adolescent girl from Ein Issa sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate).

Yet, it is the very fact that they have a disability that

makes PwDs more vulnerable to sexual abuse. For example, one FGD participant shared that *“a girl was abducted and raped in a cemetery by an old person. Taking into consideration that the girl had a mental disorder, he lacked the religious values and morals to deter him from doing such an act.”* (Woman from Daret Azza sub-district, Aleppo governorate).

Displaced Women and Adolescent Girls

Displaced women and girls, along with being women, girls, widows, divorced, head of households and/or PwDs, are made further vulnerable by their displacement status. Many internally displaced women (IDPs): *“are more vulnerable as they are not known within the community,”* (May 2018 GBV Safety Audit from Nawa Dar’a, Jordan Cross Border Hub). This bars them from connecting with the social networks that provide information as well as protection.

Furthermore, constraints on movement in and out of camps/shelters – and the fact they are known to be displaced and in dire financial circumstances – makes them further vulnerable to financial and economical exploitation in terms of the types of work they do (domestic, agricultural) and the wages they are paid, if at all: *“The displaced women said that they were being exploited and are asked by employers for bribes to hire them. For example, when female employees register employment applications, they are pushed down the priority list. They are denied their rightful salary.”* (Woman from Ein Issa sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate)

Elderly women

“Old women move freely, but sometimes the lack of transportation and security in the region prevents them from going anywhere alone, except with the husband or one of their brothers.”

The life cycle of violence experienced by women moves from childhood, through adulthood and into her elderly years. At this phase of life, older women experience age-related illnesses or simply many years of hard work. Child bearing or crisis-related injuries/disabilities (explosives) have taken a toll on their physical condition, such as restricted mobility, sight or hearing. Many elderly women, particularly widows, are dependent on their siblings or children to care for them if they cannot access transportation or if services/distribution sites are not accessible within easy access of their residence.

According to the American Association for the Advancement of Science, aging is not a protective shield for older women during a humanitarian crisis as they lack resources, social networks and often have experienced long periods of displacement and trauma, particularly during protracted crisis⁸.

8 American Association for the Advancement of Science, Age is No Pro-

Thus, *“the elderly are vulnerable to verbal violence,” (Woman from Hole sub-district, Al-Hasakeh governorate)* and other forms of psychological and emotional abuse. This includes social neglect when resources are limited within nuclear and extended families: *“old people are beaten, insulted, and neglected.” (Adolescent girl from Ein Issa sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate).*

It is most likely that this violence occurs at the hands of family members as one FGD participant stated: *“some sons make fun of their old parents or shout at them.” (Man from Al Bab sub-district, Aleppo governorate).* One of the women in the session clarified that *“an 82-year-old woman lives with her son, and her daughter-in-law verbally abuses her, oppresses her, and doesn’t allow her to speak freely. As a result, she is all but mute. She only speaks very rarely.” (Woman from Janudiyeh sub-district, Idlib governorate).*

Men and Boys

“Men are vulnerable to violence; they can be arrested and tortured. Men might be kidnapped or arrested without any reason. Men might be accused of belonging to PKK and duly arrested.” (Adolescent boy from Afrin sub-district, Aleppo governorate).

FDG participants also referred to the types of violence (not all are forms of GBV), that men and boys experience, primarily fear of abduction for ransom, armed recruitment, organ trafficking and only in one instance sexual violence: *“There is a kidnapping. It is to take boys compulsively and sexually assault them.” (Adolescent boy from Al Bab sub-district, Aleppo governorate).*

One adolescent girl stated: *“children can be at school or at home, and they are abducted for the purpose of body organ trafficking.” (Adolescent girl from Daret Azza sub-district, Aleppo governorate).* FGD participants often identified the physical and verbal violence that boys are subjected to: *“Not every form of violence is harmful, e.g. when a father acts violently with his son, he is doing so to discipline him. If my brother tells a lie, I must beat him to stop him doing it again. When my son does something good, I must reward him. This is called disciplining not violence.” (Man from Afrin sub-district, Aleppo governorate).*

However, participants often gave examples of men as perpetrators of violence due to the stresses associated with conflict. Namely, FGD participants, both male and female of all ages, revealed that men experience psychological stress often due to no longer being head of household and thus, financially providing for their families, and fear of abduction when they leave the home in search of work: *“Men are more exposed to psychological violence because of the pressures and the difficult conditions in all aspects of their lives,” (Woman from Daret Azza sub-district, Aleppo governorate).*

However, what many FGD participants did not specifically identify, but is equally true is that women, adolescent girls and boys are also subjected to psychological stress due to the many fears that men have. Although they are subjected to the same type of stress as men, they are not identified as perpetrators of violence or excused for the violence they inflict. Namely, psychological stress underlies many of the reasons cited as why men commit violence against women and children yet the same is not done for women, adolescent girls and boys who may commit violence: *“our traditions don’t call for love. A man talks to his wife in a disrespectful way. Violence is a natural habit in our community.” (Man from Afrin sub-district, Aleppo governorate).*

Types of Gender-Based Violence

The following section documents the types of GBV that FGD participants said occurs within their families, schools, communities and essentially everywhere in Syria: *“Violence doesn’t happen in only one place. It happens anywhere.” (Woman from Daret Azza sub-district, Aleppo governorate).* The categorisation of various forms of violence is linked to the types that were most often mentioned by FGD participants and most experienced by those detailed in the affected population section.

Sexual Violence

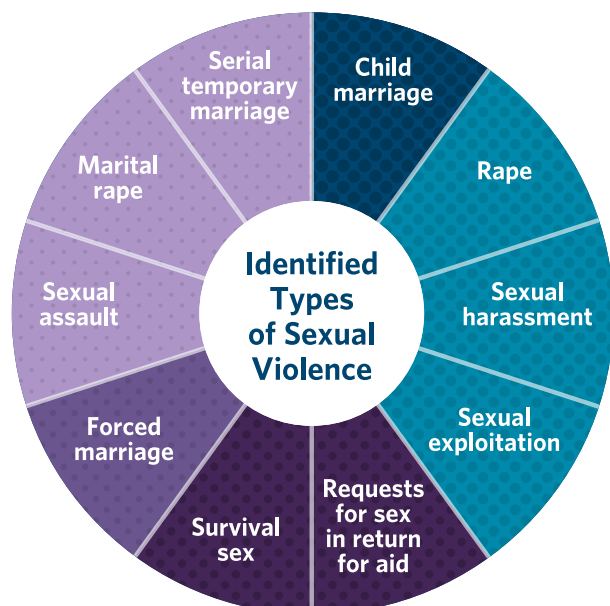


Figure 2: Contributing Factors and Impact of Child Marriage

Rape and sexual assault

Many women and girls stated that they feared rape and

sexual assault on a daily basis. Participants of FGDs said that perpetrators of rape and sexual assault were male. FGD participants cited cases of rape of girls as young as 13 years old: *"A little girl was raped by her father and then killed, and the incident was discovered after the father fled."* (Adolescent girl from Damascus sub-district, Damascus governorate).

Women and girls reported that camps were particularly dangerous, and that rape and sexual assault may occur both in public, such as at communal latrines or water collection points, as well as at home and in overcrowded shelters. Both in and outside of camps, many participants spoke of rape and sexual assault within the context of abduction. One FGD participant mentioned the risk of survivors being drugged and raped. Though this was not commonly mentioned, it may be a trend to be aware of by protection actors in some areas: *"There are people from the community who come to the camp through smuggling, especially from the river. They bring narcotics with them and distribute them in the camp. People are drugged, and then subjected to rape and sexual violence."* (Adolescent girl from Areesheh sub-district, Al Hasakeh governorate).

Some GBV experts mentioned observing increased disclosure of rape and sexual assault in camps and among IDPs because of successful awareness raising. They believe this higher rate of disclosure also owes to the lack of other available community support mechanisms, such as disclosure to supportive friends or family members, as well as increased GBV service availability in certain locations.

Sexual harassment

"At the age of nine, I was subjected to sexual harassment by a stranger. Due to my young age, I did not know what he was trying to do, thinking he was being nice to me. As I approached my home, one of my relatives saw us. They grabbed my hand and pulled me away. At that time, I had not realised what was going on. However, I began to realise once I grew up." (Adolescent girl from Tartous sub-district, Tartous governorate).

Shouts, insults, threats, groping and other street harassment of a sexual nature by men toward women and girls pose a daily nuisance and fear, often developing into a barrier that prohibits women and girls from leaving their homes: *"We experience verbal violence such as loud shouting and bad words. We are insulted with bad words. I am shy of saying the words we hear."* (Adolescent girl from Ein Issa sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate).

Harassment of this form may be perpetrated by men of any age, even boys, as well as by neighbours and family members, but was noted to be particularly frightening when coming from taxi or bus drivers, or from those linked with armed groups, as women feared they could be abducted. Sexual harassment is a harrowing experience for women and girls and when bystanders witness it happening and do nothing to intervene they thereby encourage a culture of silence: Bystanders say

and do nothing, women and girls must not complain and perpetrators are immune to social and legal censor.

Camps and shelters, markets, streets, distribution points, hospitals and a woman's workplace were all cited as dangerous locations where women and girls face sexual harassment. Sexual harassment related to technology, such as unwanted sexual text messages or blackmail using photos of women and girls, were also cited as a concern for women and girls: *"Girls face threats by phone. They are photographed at weddings and then blackmailed to do whatever the criminals demand."* (Adolescent girl from Ma'arrat An Nu'man sub-district, Idlib governorate). Girls in particular mentioned the dangers of walking home from school or fetching water, and at those times when they are away from parental supervision, such as when girls may be working in fields or at markets.

Sexual exploitation

Poverty, displacement, being head of household, or being of a young age and away from parental supervision, coupled with gender inequalities, are all understood to put women and girls in positions of reduced power and therefore increase the risk of sexual exploitation. Girls, widows and divorcees were noted to be particularly vulnerable: *"Women, especially widows and divorced women who have children, work for long hours to earn money. Such women are vulnerable to sexual abuse."* (Adolescent boy from Ein Issa sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate).

"Girls who sell bread are under risk of being sexually exploited, and this is very dangerous. Girls who beg are at risk of being sexually abused, especially when those girls are too young to defend themselves." (Woman from Ein Issa sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate).

Sexual exploitation was also reported in the form of prostitution or survival sex, where women are forced to have sex in exchange for money or goods in order to support their families: *"Sometimes a wealthy person pays money to a poor woman to have sex with her."* (Adolescent boy from Ma'arrat An Nu'man sub-district, Idlib governorate). One expert FGD also cited family members trafficking women for sex in exchange for money: *"Cases of sexual violence occur through the trafficking of wives and sisters, in which some men exploit their wives to get money and make them work in prostitution."* (GBV Expert from the Turkey Cross Border Hub).

In one FGD, participants brought up exploitation of women while trying to cross from Syria into Turkey: *"The most common type of violence related to financial transactions is in the houses of human traffickers, where women from all areas and nationalities are crammed in those houses before they cross over to Turkey. The traffickers subject them to exploitation and violence."* (Woman from Janudiyeh sub-district, Idlib governorate)

As in previous editions of this annual Voices publication, sexual exploitation was raised in the context of

humanitarian assistance. According to a woman FGD participant: *"The widow, a mother, will not go to the centre. She sends her son to get the aid for fear of being harassed or insulted by hurtful words. Local councils are responsible for ensuring their safety and must deliver this aid to the homes of people. I am sure that widows will pay the cost of delivering the aid to their homes. While they may go to get their share at the beginning, they will soon stop for fear of exploitation or harassment."* (Woman from Daret Azza sub-district, Aleppo governorate).

So-called honour killings

"I heard about somebody who killed his sister. After he had killed her, he shouted 'I have cleared my shame'." (Man from Kafr Nobol sub-district, Idlib governorate).

Compared to previous years, the FGD participants were asked more specifically about the occurrence of honour killings in their communities. This resulted in additional details and context of cases of murder of women and girls by their family members in the name of honour or "cleansing shame" from the family. Victims mentioned are a woman or girl (never a man) and most cases are linked with sexual violence, though not necessarily rape. In some cases, it occurs even as a reaction to street harassment or assault, or in other cases assumed sexual violence during abduction: *"A mentally-disabled girl was kidnapped and abused. Her mother initially defended her and did not let her brothers kill her. But eventually, she killed her because the news spread."* (Woman from Heish sub-district, Idlib governorate).

In one case, a honour killing was linked with girls making autonomous decisions on whom and when to marry: *"Two girls were killed because a girl ran away from her parents and married the young man whom she loved. After she returned, the parents slaughtered the girl and her relative who helped her in front of everyone."* (Woman from Lattakia sub-district, Lattakia governorate).

So-called honour killings have been publicly shared through social media to demonstrate the cleansing of the family's "shame" and, possibly, as a tactic to ensure future "shameful" acts are not imitated. For example, a young woman was murdered on camera by her brother as a result of rumours that she had committed adultery. However, the truth was that a scorned suitor posted images of the young woman online. She was dragged from her home and shot.⁹

While some mentioned that honour killing has increased since the onset of the crisis because of an increase in sexual violence, and because of an increase in lawlessness, some FGD participants insinuated a reduction in the social acceptance of the practice and some (though limited) official sanction for perpetrators. This reflects the successful awareness-building taking place through GBV interventions and programming:

"There are very few honour killings, and if it exists, it is a disgrace for the family. The victim's sisters may never marry because of it and people speak poorly of the parents." (Karama sub-district, Ar Raqqa governorate). Also: *"My mother-in-law's sister was killed by her father because he suspected that she was betraying her husband. Although she swore her innocence on the Koran, he did not believe her. They sentenced him to two years' imprisonment for committing an honour crime."* (Adolescent girl from Tartous sub-district, Tartous governorate). GBV experts suggested that families might attempt to hide a so-called honour killing by reporting it as suicide, as happens in other parts of the world.

Domestic Violence

"Domestic violence is the most common violence in our community because of local traditions and customs, and because our community is patriarchal. A husband beats his wife and does not allow her to go out. Women are also not allowed to work so that they stay financially controlled by their husbands." (Woman from Al-Thawrah sub-district, Al Hasakeh governorate).

Domestic violence is not a new phenomenon in Syria, and is often normalised and ingrained in social norms. It can encompass emotional, physical, sexual, psychological, financial and economic violence. The incidents of **physical violence** toward women that were mentioned by FGD participants most commonly occurred within the home, and were perpetrated by intimate partners: *"There are many youth who think that beating and insulting the woman is the proper way to control her and making her submit to your will."* (Woman from Heish sub-district, Idlib governorate).

Marital rape was reported by women, in one case with the justification that it is a necessary measure to prevent men's infidelity: *"My husband forces me to have sex. I cannot prevent him, and I feel disgusted and insulted afterwards."* (Woman from Masyaf, sub-district, Hama governorate). Likewise: *"Women are always forced to please their husbands so that they do not sin with other women."* (Woman from Heish sub-district, Idlib governorate).

Women also report **economic violence** at the hand of intimate partners, such as being prevented from working or men taking their wife's wages: *"Women work for low wages and for long hours, such as picking olives. The husband then takes all the money to buy cigarettes and for whatever is needed for the house."* (Adolescent girl from Heish sub-district, Idlib governorate). **Economic violence** prevents women from achieving a level of independence and resiliency needed to cope with crisis.

In times of crisis, the impact of domestic violence is amplified, increasing women's vulnerability and psychological distress. This is especially true for women who experience domestic violence, who report feeling

⁹ "They see no shame: 'honour' killing video shows plight of Syrian women", The Guardian, November 12, 2018

that nowhere is safe and free of violence, whether inside or outside the home. Violence at the hands of an intimate partner tends to be cyclical and repeated rather than a one-time incident. Episodes often escalate in severity and can result in serious physical injury: *"I know a girl who was forced by her parents to marry her cousin. After marriage, she was beaten and humiliated. He even broke one of her ribs."* (Adolescent girl from Kisreh sub-district, Deir-ez-Zor governorate).

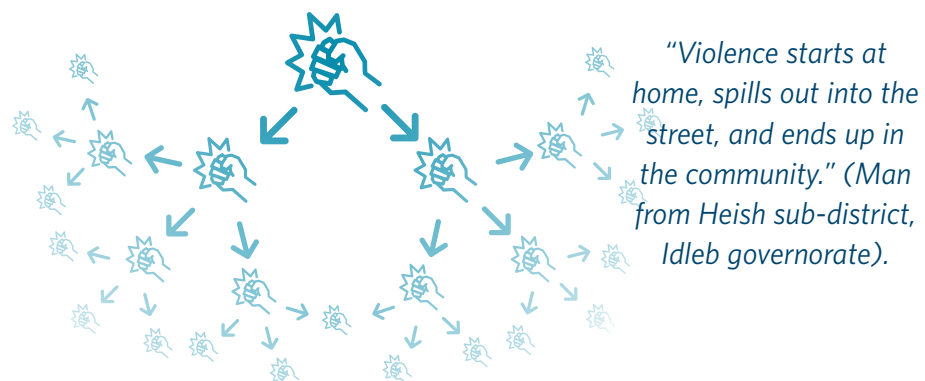
Divorce may be used as a threat for women to remain in an abusive relationships, as a divorced woman will often be deprived of inheritance rights and child custody, in addition to the other vulnerabilities that widowed and divorced women face. *"The man tells his wife, 'If you do not like it, my parents can take the children, especially if they can receive relief packages because of them. This will ruin the life of the children.'" (Woman from Ma'arrat An Nu'man sub-district, Idlib governorate).*

Furthermore, adolescent girls who have been divorced are at risk to the same deprivations and violations as divorced women, however, they face additional layers of vulnerability and risk of temporary marriages and sexual exploitation, at this much younger age. Similarly, women also report **polygamy (polygyny)** as a threat to women's rights within a marriage: *"Women are most vulnerable to violence in all respects in our community, especially by the husband. The husband would marry two or three times (polygamy) and leave her, or divorce her to deprive her of her rights."* (Woman from Kisreh sub-district, Deir-ez-Zor governorate).

Figure 3: Contributing Factors to Increased Domestic Violence



Violence Spreads from the Home To The Community



Family Violence

Often closely linked with domestic violence, violence between family members contributes to the home being considered an unsafe place for many women and children. Violence can be emotional, psychological, physical, sexual, economic, or – especially for children – can take the form of neglect. Family violence against girls in particular was used to enforce movement restrictions and freedom, and to control sexuality: *“If I go out to the neighbours and my father sees me, he comes immediately and beats me.”* (Adolescent girl from Karama sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate). Women also face violence at the hands of her in-laws, notably in situations where the couple and in-laws live together in the same home: *“There is great fear on the part of women, especially fear of her husband’s family.”* (Woman from Kisreh sub-district, Deir-ez-Zor governorate).

Early/Forced marriage

Marriage of children under 18 years old is not a new phenomenon in Syria in various parts of the country. It is a practice that is linked to custom and tradition, associated with the belief that women need protection by men. However, the protracted nature of the crisis has influenced the nature of early/forced marriage to place a heavier impact on girls. One FGD participant estimated that up to *“60% of girls in their community were already married by the age of 18, some as young as 12 or 13 years old.”* (Adolescent girl from Ein Issa sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate).

Early/forced marriage has changed from a traditional practice to a coping mechanism in the crisis. Families may arrange marriages for their girls because they perceive it as a means either of **preventing sexual violence**, or **dealing with the shame and stigma** of girls who have experienced sexual violence: *“We take appropriate measures to prevent sexual violence. Boys and girls are married at an early age to avoid these bad habits.”* (Woman from Karama sub-district, Ar Raqqa governorate). Also: *“A 12-year-old girl was lost and three days later she was found showing evidence of torture, and then forced to marry.”* (Adolescent girl from Aricha camp, Areesheh sub-district, Al Hasakeh governorate).

Marriage of their daughter may also ease economic burden by reducing the family size and accessing the dowry, as a means of income. This may be more common in camps and among IDPs, who face increased protection risks and poverty: *“The early marriage rate is high for young girls (14-16 years old). Parents force their daughters to marry at an early age to get rid of the expense.”* (Woman from Karama sub-district, Ar Raqqa governorate).

Furthermore, FGD participants discussed overcrowding and multiple, unrelated families living within tents and/or dwellings as a contributing factor to increased early/forced marriages. Specifically, many unrelated persons living in a small house/tent due to the influx of IDPs, pushes many families to force girls and boys living in the same household to get married to “normalise” this living situation: *“Cases of violence have been reported in*

the refugee centres for the internally-displaced people and among the refugees themselves who marry their daughters at an early age too.” (Adolescent girl from As-sweida sub-district, As-Sweida governorate).

Girls themselves may be motivated to marry under the perception that it will allow them greater freedom of movement and escape from restrictions imposed by their family: *“We girls cannot move freely. When they see us out on our own, people start talking about us as being disrespectful. But when a girl gets married she can go out to her relatives or to her friends or wherever she wants, and that’s what motivates the girls to get married.”* (Adolescent girl from Karama sub-district, Ar Raqqa governorate).

Additionally, unaccompanied and separated girls may see marriage as an opportunity to leave an unsatisfactory home situation: *“Find a bridegroom to marry and you’ll get away from living with your mother’s husband or in your grandfather’s house.”* (Adolescent girl from Heish sub-district, Idlib governorate). One FGD participant mentioned a link between terrorist groups marrying separated or unaccompanied girls: *“The terrorist groups get married to the girls who are separated from their parents.”* (Woman from Al-Thawrah sub-district, Al Hasakeh governorate).

Although early marriage is reported to remain a widespread practice – made worse by the conflict – some FGD participants mentioned a changing mentality among parents. This is due to ongoing awareness raising, especially among mothers, against the practice: *“In Dar’a and Surha, women are more aware about reporting the violence. They agree that child marriage is a problem and they would like to stop it.”* (GBV Expert from Jordan Cross Border Hub). Many adolescent girls themselves, when asked what one thing they would change in their community, shared their hope that the practice of early/forced marriage would one day be ended.

The risks and negative impacts of early/forced marriage for girls are substantial. Girls engaging in sexual activity are more at risk of sexually-transmitted infections, while early pregnancies pose enormous health risks, including even death, for both the mother and her baby: *“A 13-year-old girl got married against her will and aborted her child because of her young age.”* (Adolescent girl from Aricha camp, Areesheh sub-district, Al Hasakeh governorate). Likewise: *“A 15-year-old girl who got married died during childbirth.”* (Adolescent girl from Ma’arrat An Nu’mān sub-district, Idlib governorate).



Early/forced marriage

All-encompassing issues

- Protracted crisis
- Customs and traditions
 - Belief that women are weaker and need protection by men
 - Shame and stigma resulting from sexual violence



Girl exposed to risks due to the crisis

- Displacement
- Living in shelter or camp
- Exposure to safety concerns e.g. kidnapping, sexual harassment, and sexual violence
- Abandonment / orphan / female-headed household
- Increased poverty
- Out of school
- Child labour



Girl gets married under perceived sense of protection and to ease financial burden

- No decision-making power
- Possible marriage to combatant, family member, adolescent boy
- Dowry as means of income, financial relief through reducing family size
- Girls may perceive marriage as a coping mechanism to family-imposed restrictions



Impact of early/forced marriage

- Loss of childhood
- Lack of independence and self-confidence
- Denial of education / employment opportunities
- Movement restrictions
- Early pregnancy and associated potential complications
- Domestic violence / marital rape
- Social isolation
- Psychological distress / depression
- Sexually transmitted infections and other health complications
- Difficulty raising children
- Divorce or widowhood
- Survival sex and sexual exploitation

Midwives interviewed in Idlib provide support on some of the many reproductive health complications that adolescent girls experience once they have been married at an early age: *“Two weeks ago I was called because a 14-year-old gave birth at home in a village. Because of her young age and small body, the head of the foetus damaged her badly. I referred her for surgical repair, as it needs surgery under general anaesthesia. I exploded, angry with the parents. Her mother cried, saying that this marriage was a huge mistake and that she feels responsible for the torment and the pain of her daughter. This has to stop. We need to inform families and restore the rights of our children, our girls.”* (Midwife from rural Idlib).

“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. She has the face of an innocent child, but it's clear to see what happens to 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.” (Midwife from urban Idlib).

Once married, girls are often forced **to drop out of school and face additional restrictions of freedom and movement**. Married girls are moreover at risk of domestic violence and may be isolated from friends and family, particularly in cases where the girl was married during displacement and her family moved on to a different location. All of these issues can take a toll on married girls and create a missed opportunity to mature, develop independence and self-confidence before entering into marriage.

Participants highlighted that early/forced marriage often ends in **widowhood or divorce**, adding to the many layers of vulnerability she is already experiencing: *“People of the village consider early marriage as a type of violence because it usually ends with divorce after a few months. This year, there have been 50 divorces in the village.”* (Man from Janudiyeh sub-district, Idlib governorate). This is especially damaging when young mothers are left to care for children on their own: *“The uneducated girl will marry early and have children, and is then unable to raise them properly. Her family will suffer, and the hardship will become overwhelming.”* (Man from Khan Shaykun, Idlib governorate).

Verbal, emotional & psychological violence

“Women always hear words that make them feel less important and worth less than men.” (Woman from Damascus sub-district, Damascus governorate).

FGD participants noted facing verbal violence in the form of insults or offenses targeting a person's dignity on the street, in the home and even via text messaging and social media. For women and girls, this was reported to take the form of gossip, slander and insults related to women's sexuality, honour and reputation: *“Women face violence and cannot complain because people would start telling them words like ‘Slut’, ‘This is disrespectful’, and ‘How dare you do that?’”* (Woman from Karama sub-district, Ar Raqqa governorate).

Much of the verbal violence reported by women and girls happened on the streets in the form of sexual harassment by men (see sexual harassment section) or perpetrated by intimate partners or family members (see domestic violence and family violence sections). However, FGD participants also spoke of the daily fear and impact of verbal violence by community members in general: *“The judgment of the community is ruthless.”* (Woman from Homs sub-district, Homs governorate). Widows and divorcees are reported to be especially vulnerable to this type of violence: *“Violence in the community is directed at some people such as widows who are subjected to undesirable and hurtful words. They are also ostracised.”* (Man from Heish sub-district, Idlib governorate).

Both the fear and perpetration of verbal, emotional and psychological violence that women and girls face on a daily basis contributes to the restriction of movement enforced by parents, family and community, or self-imposed: *“There is a fear of movement due to harassment or the possibility of abuse or rape on the way to where they are going.”* (GBV Expert from Jordan Cross Border Hub).

Denial of Resources

Denial of resources is a form of GBV cited by FGD participants that they experienced in the form of being denied financial resources but also denied access to education and other services: *“Denial of resources is coming out strongly now regarding food and education.”* (GBV Expert from Jordan Cross Border Hub). Another GBV Expert shared with us that *“previously, we used to deal more with domestic violence cases, but now we deal with deprivation of resources to a large extent.”* (GBV Expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub).

Furthermore, one woman FGD participant stated that *“financial violence is the most common type because it is the main reason that causes people to be exploited and leads to other types of violence.”* (Woman from Tartous sub-district, Tartous governorate). An adolescent girl FGD participant shared that *“preventing girls from going to school was violent,”* and the type of violence she witnesses most in her community. (Adolescent girl from Ma'arrat An Nu'man sub-district, Idlib governorate). Another adolescent girl stated that, *“family and social violence and denial of education,”* (Adolescent girl from Ariha sub-district, Idlib governorate) this were forms of GBV in her community.

Impact of GBV

Though certain types of GBV have more specific impacts on women and girls (see sections on domestic violence and early/forced marriage), there are many

common negative impacts of GBV regardless of the type.

Psychological distress

FGD participants identified a long list of distress symptoms caused by GBV: *"Fear, anxiety, depression, aggression, stress, shyness, distrust of others, trauma, nervous breakdown, mental health disorders, grief, lack of confidence, lack of self-esteem, loss of childhood for girls. The person feels tired, hates life and cannot love anyone."* (Woman from Karama sub-district, Ar Raqqa governorate).

Victim blaming

Women and girls are often blamed for the violence that is committed against them – from sexual harassment on the street, to domestic violence and sexual violence: *"Some people say that a girl will not receive such insults unless she is loose."* (Adolescent girl from Ein Issa sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate). The belief that GBV is the woman's fault results in punishment and retribution against the survivor rather than the perpetrator. Anger against the survivor was a common denominator in families' reactions to GBV survivors: *"Most families blame, beat, isolate and maltreat women and girls for sexual violence against them."* (May 2018 GBV Safety Audit, Nawa Daraa, Jordan Cross Border Hub).

Stigma and shame

Culturally, heavy emphasis is placed on female virginity and modesty as part of personal and family honour. Experience of GBV threatens this honour in various ways, resulting in shame, scandal, and social stigma. The fear of these has a significant effect on controlling women's behaviour. For example, sexual violence, the assumption of sexual violence, or even being approached by a man on the street could be considered a defamation of women's sexual purity: *"If someone comes to address a girl, young men start talking about her."* (Adolescent Girl from Karama sub-district, Ar Raqqa governorate).

In addition, access to freedoms that are normal for men, such as being able to move freely or access justice in cases of violence, may be considered an offence to the notion of female modesty, and provoke similar reactions of shame and stigma.

Social Isolation

GBV may result in survivors' feelings of social isolation and loneliness through a range of mechanisms. On one level, psychological distress and distrust may cause survivors to withdraw from society: *"A person who has experienced violence might isolate herself from the community."* (Woman from Al-Thawrah sub-district, Al Hasakeh governorate). Most survivors feel unsafe in disclosing their experience of violence to others, due to shame and stigma (see Coping Mechanisms), intensifying these feelings of isolation. On another level, movement restrictions and feeling unsafe may force women to stop working, girls to drop out of school, and both to reduce their ability to socialise with others. Consequently, women and adolescent girls are deprived of fulfilling their potential and achieving their goals and dreams. Additionally, they are denied the opportunity and right to become socially and economically productive members within their families and communities – ultimately stunting the development of the nation as a whole.

Injury and death

FGD participants spoke of serious physical injuries or death related to rape, abduction, domestic violence, honour killings, suicide and early/forced marriage: *"A woman had just delivered a baby and was raped by an armed actor. She died shortly after."* (GBV Expert from Jordan Cross Border Hub). Furthermore, the practice of a perpetrator marrying his rape victims is legalised as well as socially encouraged.¹⁰

¹⁰ Law 508 of the Penal Code facilitates impunity for rape, and pressures women to marry their rapists. Article 508 of the Penal Code provides for a reduced sentence of two years if a rapist marries his victim. Prior to an amendment introduced in 2011, a perpetrator was exempt from punishment altogether if he married the victim. ILAC Rule of Law Assessment Report: Syria 2017

Crisis and Gender Related Risks to GBV

Crisis and insecurity have a negative effect on everyone regardless of age and sex. However, women and girls face an additional layer of distinct risks related essentially to gender and gender inequality.

Abduction

Overall, FGD participants mentioned abduction as a fear or risk for women and girls more frequently than for men and boys in certain sub-districts. Some FGD participants asserted that abduction did not happen in their region, and there was less mention of abducting men for forced recruitment or detention/arrest compared to previous years: *"There were kidnappings at the beginning of the war, but now there is a drop in kidnappings."* (Woman from Kisreh sub-district, Deir-ez-Zor governorate). However, others mentioned an increase in abducting specifically for women and girls: *"There are cases of kidnapping because of vengeance, and kidnapping girls is increasing."* (Adolescent boy from Heish sub-district, Idlib governorate).

While males and females were reported to be equally vulnerable to abduction for ransom, revenge, political reasons, or organ trafficking (especially for children), women and girls face the added risk of rape and sexual assault as a motivation for, or consequence of, abduction. Most cases of abduction cited in FGDs that were linked with sexual violence were reported to have rape as the motivation for the abduction, though one example given was also linked with political motivations by armed groups: *"We have encountered cases of kidnapping. For example, a woman was kidnapped because her husband belongs to a certain faction and was subjected to sexual and physical violence."* (GBV Expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub).

Children, especially girls, were reported to be at risk of abduction while going to and from school: *"They tried to kidnap me and my little sister when we were coming back from school."* (Adolescent girl from Masyaf sub-district, Hama governorate). Reports of detainment, although not commonly cited, were also linked to abducting of women and girls: *"Kidnapping occurs for girls and women by being detained. These people, after leaving the prison, come to the safe space and are provided with psychological support."* (GBV Expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub).

The impact of abduction of women and girls and the associated sexual violence ranged from movement restrictions and prevention of school attendance, to physical violence and murder by the abductors, to honour killings and suicide after the woman or girl was released: *"Women and children are subjected to violence and rape. A while ago, a girl was found dead. She had been raped in the woods."* (Woman from Khan Shaykun, Idlib governorate).

"A teenager kidnapped a girl under the pretext of love. He lured the girl to an isolated area and then raped her. I heard that the girl committed suicide afterwards." (Woman from Tartous sub-district, Tartous governorate).

Conflict-related GBV risk factors

While GBV is based on an imbalance of power between men and women, girls and boys – as well as gender inequality and discrimination – FGDs have highlighted several interlinked factors in conflict, crisis and insecurity that exacerbate unequal power differentials between perpetrators of violence and survivors.

Displacement

Fighting and insecurity have sent millions of people away from their homes. Displacement, especially when prolonged, can increase GBV through exposure to unsafe locations such as checkpoints, separation of families, changed family structures and consequentially gender dynamics, disruption of social support networks, stress, lack of awareness of available services, or lack of services at all. In addition, displacement causes a loss of assets and employment where many IDPs lack job opportunities. This leads to increased economic pressure, with people often living in crowded conditions – either in IDP shelters/tents or in shared apartment homes (related and non-related individuals): *"In Deir Ez Zor, women moved from East of Euphrates to West, from urban to rural areas. Changing the environment and moving to a new and unfamiliar location brings a higher risk of sexual violence."* (GBV Expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub).

Living in the camps or communal shelters, where many IDPs and refugees end up, brings about additional risks of GBV, such as lack of adequate lighting (see Links with other Sectors section). Furthermore, when individuals are in flight from danger, and seek refuge, they face specific risks which is particularly true of women and girls regarding sexual violence and exploitation.

Lawlessness

The absence of law enforcement, including police and judicial redress mechanisms, is linked with an increase in violence in general, as well as for GBV specifically. Perpetrators of violence face no accountability to deter their actions, and survivors face a lack of formal protection: *"We are not safe. There is no law to protect people. Crimes and kidnapping have spread widely, and women are affected the most through restriction to their freedom of movement. They cannot move or go anywhere."* (Woman from Daret Azza sub-district, Aleppo governorate). Another important aspect of the lawlessness in Syria is the dismantling of pre-crisis social structures, which also erodes existing social protection mechanisms.

Overcrowding and mixing of men and women

Displacement, living in crowded camps and shelters, or even a woman simply being present in a crowded public place such as a distribution site, gives men proximity and access to women's private spaces (e.g. dressing room or bathroom in a home she had pre-crisis) that they would not have had access to otherwise: *"The girls told us about some of the incidents of violence that occurred recently in private places and some distribution points."* (Adolescent girl from Ariha sub-district, Idlib governorate).

Perpetrators of sexual violence, inclusive of sexual harassment, abuse this access. Overcrowding and crowded places were specifically mentioned as dangerous, as perpetrators can act without bystanders noticing. Overcrowding in tents, or many families living in the same space, poses similar risks for violence: *"The large number of people in each tent aggravates violence."* (Woman from Ein Issa sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate). Other FDG participants also identified overcrowding within tents and the home as a source of violence: *"Sometimes, violence is inflicted by relatives inside the family as a result of crowding in confined spaces such as shelter centres, therefore they cannot tell anyone."* (Adolescent girl from Tartous sub-district, Tartous governorate). Likewise: *"People living at camps know every detail about each other. A person even knows what the people in the next tent are wearing, which enhances sexual abuse."* (Man from Al Bab sub-district, Aleppo governorate).

Poverty & unemployment

The inability to access basic needs for herself and her family, and reliance on humanitarian aid distributions, can make women vulnerable to sexual exploitation and survival sex: *"There are reports of survival sex: having sex to support their families in exchange for money and goods. It is now common knowledge in the camp that certain tents are from women who are exchanging sex for something."* (GBV Expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub). Another adult male FDG participant expressed that, *"women can also be obliged to practice prostitution."* (Man from Al Bab sub-district, Aleppo governorate; GBV Expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub).

This is especially the case for female heads of household, such as widows and divorcees, who carry the responsibility of their household by themselves: *"Sexual violence cases have increased recently because of poverty and because of those who are in power. People in a position of power are free to do what they want, and there is nobody to control them."* (Man from Al Bab sub-district, Aleppo governorate).

FDG participants said that poverty and unemployment may increase the likelihood of men committing GBV due to stress (also see Stress & Pressure below): *"I believe that the lack of employment opportunities and expenses, and high prices cause problems and violence, such as a husband's violence against his wife."* (Adolescent girl from Heish sub-district, Idlib governorate). However, the same FDG participants failed to mention that women

and adolescent girls also experience the same stress due to poverty, unemployment and food insecurity, but they rarely commit incidents of GBV as a result. Yet again, FDG participants alluded to the underlying discriminatory beliefs and gender inequality that place women and girls in a position of subordination and thus "obligated" to be recipients of violence. Young men in particular may be more likely to commit acts of violence due to idleness: *"There could be cases of violence by teenagers in the camp due to lack of adequate educational centres, not involving them in camp activities, and not filling their spare time."* (Adolescent boy from Aricha camp, Areesheh sub-district, Al Hasakeh governorate).

Psychosocial Consequences of War/Crisis

Poverty, unemployment and displacement over seven long years of hardship create a level of stress and pressure for men, women, boys and girls that may lower the threshold at which they resort to violence: *"Everybody is angry at this situation. Men express their anger by shouting at and beating their wives. Mothers express their anger by beating their children, and children do the same by fighting with each other."* (Woman from Ein Issa sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate).

Men in particular may interpret these stresses as a threat to the traditional balance of power in families, especially the culturally important role of household provider. To counteract these feelings of powerlessness and in order to reaffirm gender roles, men may resort to violence, especially against their wife and children: *"My husband practices violence on me because he wants to prove his authority and his importance."* (Woman from Masyaf sub-district, Hama governorate).

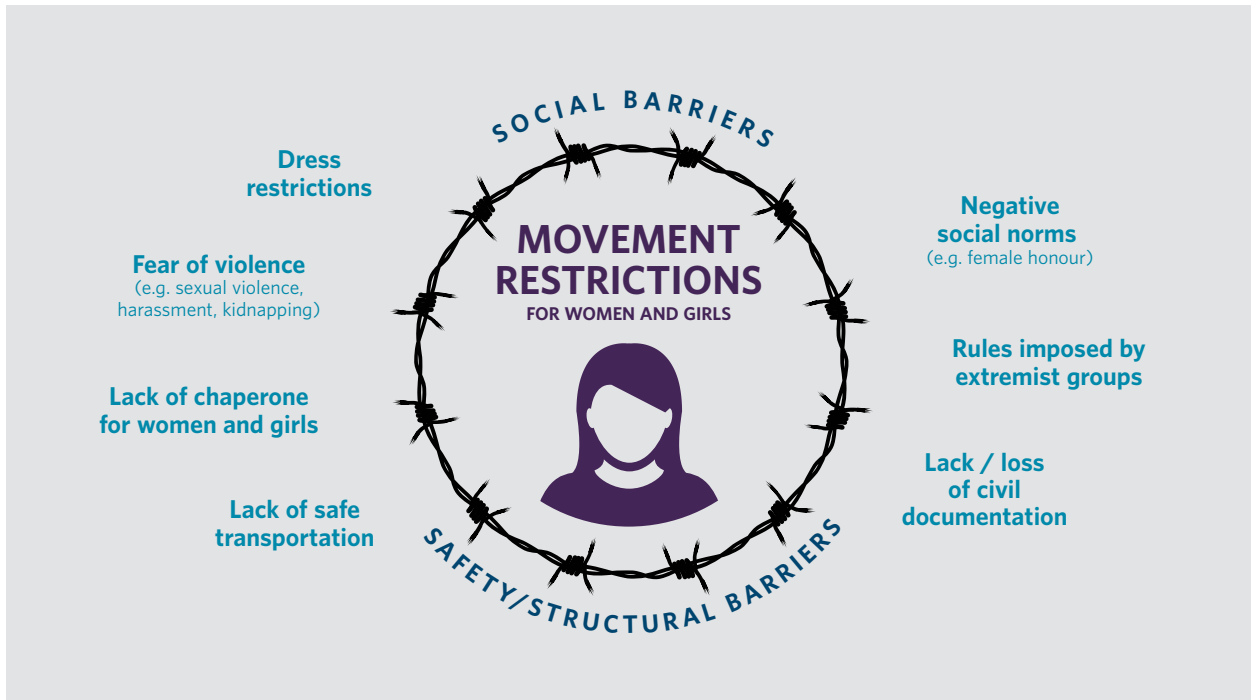
Location of violence

"There is no safe space for women and children." (Adolescent boy from Ein Issa sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate).

There are very few places that women and girls consider safe and free from GBV. Some places, such as violence occurring in the home, may have been considered as risky before the crisis. However, other locations cited by women and girls are specific to a humanitarian setting, such as roadblocks, distribution points, camps and shelters in general, and within them specifically communal bathrooms, kitchens, and tents. Women and girls feel unsafe in places related to their daily activities, such as in markets, at the workplace, on the street, on the way to school, at the hospital, in farmland, and at water access points such as river banks. Women and girls also reported feeling unsafe in crowded areas and in empty areas, in town and on the outskirts of town, in wide spaces and in narrow alleys, in public and in private.

Restrictions of Movement & Freedom

*"It is always women who are restricted. Men can control their movements and work and study. Women cannot."
(Woman from Masyaf sub-district, Hama governorate).*



Movement restrictions for women and girls

In addition to movement restrictions related to safety and security faced by everyone in a conflict situation, women and girls face an additional layer of movement restrictions related to the risk of sexual violence and harmful gender and social norms. For example, in some camps, there are strict restrictions on movements outside of the camp for both men and women. However, inside the camp, FGD participants report that men can move freely, while women still hardly move at all.

The threat of abduction, sexual violence and sexual harassment leads to movement restrictions for many women and girls, as they may feel unsafe moving in certain areas, or family members may impose movement restrictions as a means of protection: *"Now safety has been lost and there is no law to protect people. Crimes and kidnapping have spread widely, and women are affected the most by restricting their freedom of movement. They cannot move or go anywhere."* (Woman from Daret Azza sub-district, Aleppo governorate).

The most commonly cited reason behind movement restrictions for women and girls was related to **harmful gender norms** rather than safety. These are socially-imposed: *"There is no restriction on the freedom*

of movement. Everyone can move freely within the community, especially after the cessation of fighting. But there is a restriction on social freedom and this is for women only and varies from one family to another." (Woman from Daret Azza sub-district, Aleppo governorate). Movement restrictions tend to worsen when girls reach adolescence and society starts to view them more as women than as children, which is also when risks of GBV increase. In some cases, family members or husbands impose movement restrictions: *"There are some men who prevent their women from leaving the tent."* (Woman from Hole sub-district, Al-Hasakeh governorate).

In addition, male family members force women and girls to have a male companion or "protector" when they leave their homes, even when that male companion is merely a child: *"Everybody agrees that the situation is not safe, so girls cannot move alone at night or at other certain times. If you have a 13 or 14 year old the family will send a 6-year-old boy 'to protect' her. 'Accompanied' should really be an adult who can actually protect her."* (GBV Expert from Jordan Cross Border Hub). In other cases, restrictions are imposed by social norms related to shame and reputation: *"The specific reasons behind restricting women's movements, especially girls, are the customs, traditions and culture of the society. But for men and young men, no one restricts them."* (Woman from Aricha camp, Areesh sub-district, Al Hasakeh governorate).

In some cases, areas controlled by extremist groups may impose additional restrictions, such as requiring women to be accompanied by a male family member: *“Women and girls who live under the rule of the terrorist groups are the most restricted because they can’t move unless they are accompanied by an unmarried¹¹ person.”* (Woman from Al-Thawrah sub-district, Al Hasakeh governorate).

Women and girls report that movement restrictions lead to loneliness and social isolation, along with dropping out of school, being unable to work, increased vulnerability and loss of rights and independence. *“This has negative psychological impact, such as feelings of anger, frustration, nervousness and depression: I almost die and feel suffocated because I am prevented from going out by my mother.”* (Woman from Tartous sub-district, Tartous governorate).

Restrictions of freedom for women and girls

“Women certainly cannot do what they want like men.” (Adolescent girl from Tartous sub-district, Tartous governorate).

Women and girls face restrictions or control over the way that they dress in public, both as a type of violence and coping mechanism to prevent sexual harassment. In areas controlled by extremist groups, women and girls are forced to dress especially conservatively: *“For women and girls who live under the rule of the terrorist groups, men have to force their women to wear specific clothes (Sharia clothes), and women are always likely to be criticised for their clothes.”* (Woman from Al-Malikeyyeh sub-district, Al Hasakeh governorate). Even in areas not controlled by extremist groups, women and girls face criticism and harassment if dressing in ways that others deem too provocative or outside of existing gender norms: *“Girls wearing trousers are harassed by young men.”* (Adolescent boy from Al Bab sub-district, Aleppo governorate).

Girls in particular may be denied education due to parents’ concern over their safety, or due to early/forced marriage, the latter being necessary to preserve family honour and reputation. Sexual violence and sexual harassment risks are often the main reasons cited for girls to drop – or be taken – out of school by their parents: *“A girl was kidnapped and raped. Parents became terrified, and they stopped sending their girls to schools. If they do, they escort them on the way there and back.”* (Adolescent boy Janudiyeh sub-district, Idlib governorate). Girls also report restrictions on their social life, including their choice of friends and their sexuality: *“Girls who are discovered to be in love are beaten by parents.”* (Man from Afrin sub-district, Aleppo governorate).

Civil documentation and HLP

“People are unable to prove their identity or ownership, and are not free to move. People become at the risk of being questioned. Sedition arises between people due to the loss of houses and lands caused by the lack of documents proving them. This affects the humanitarian relations and can also cause people to be stopped at checkpoints.” (Adolescent girl from Ras Al-Ain sub-district, Hasakeh governorate).

During periods of peace and stability, civil documentation – such as birth, marriage and death certificates, identification cards, and land titles to name a few – provide the basis for being able to conduct numerous daily transactions. During war and conflict, civil registration and documentation is also vitally important to individuals. The consequence of their absence is particularly harmful to women and girls. However, *“some women do not have documents because they were destroyed as a result of the shelling, and some have their documents in the camp,”* (Woman from Aricha camp, Areesheh sub-district, Al Hasakeh governorate). This leaves many women and girls without a legal identity.

Lack of legal identity is particularly problematic in a socioeconomic context where social norms and customs subvert women’s and girls’ rights. Having a recognised legal identity is therefore fundamental for establishing these rights in legal proceedings. Without a legal identity, asserting their claims during civil proceedings for divorce, custody and maintenance, property ownership as well as in criminal matters for sexual abuse, exploitation and rape can be challenging or even moot, as one adolescent girl highlights: *“Lack of recognition leads to hindering transactions and requiring extra expenditure required to reregister.”* (Adolescent girl from Ras Al-Ain sub-district, Hasakeh governorate).

Another adolescent girl FGD participant shared that: *“People are unable to prove their identity or property ownership, and are not free to move. They fall at risk of being arrested.”* (Adolescent girl from Ras Al-Ain sub-district, Hasakeh governorate). Lack of civil documentation can also stop women – and especially adolescent girls – forced into early marriages – from receiving legal as well as traditional rights within their marriage contracts. In a court of law, they can be denied their dowry and maintenance for children after divorce: *“A young man in the village married a girl and had a baby with her. Then, he divorced her with nothing to prove that the marriage ever happened (no marriage certificate, family statement, or anything), so she was denied her dowry due to the lack of*

11 Unmarried in this quote refers to a person considered one she cannot marry under law

such documents.” (Man from Janudiyeh sub-district, Idleb governorate).

Furthermore, civil documentation opens the door to rights and services, especially during a crisis where women and girls are in need of various forms of humanitarian aid. Civil documentation allows for proof of legal identity. Without it, many displaced women and their children can become not only landless but also stateless.

Over the last seven years, lack of civil documentation and challenges proving land/property ownership has increasingly become a major obstacle in the lives of Syrians living in non-government controlled areas, particularly for women and girls, in order to obtain education, prove civil status, and access services. A female FGD participant said that *“persons are in danger if they lose their documents and cannot move, rent and buy houses and may be arrested and not get work because of the loss of documents.” (Woman from Ras Al-Ain sub-district, Hasakeh governorate).*

“Commonly, people lose their documents because of war, destruction and displacement,” (Woman from Hole sub-district, Al-Hasakeh governorate) which has led to many persons, *“not receiving salaries because they do not have documents.” (Man from Hole sub-district, Al-Hasakeh governorate).* In order to obtain such documents, women and girls, or their husbands, sons, and brothers would have to enter state-controlled areas, thus risking arrest and detention for any number of reasons. One woman simply summarised what many may feel in Syria today: *“I do not have an ID card because I’d have to go to the state-controlled areas to get one and I dare not go there.” (Woman from Khan Shaykun, Idleb governorate).* Some Syrians take the risk of seeking unofficial documents, however there are accompanying risks that can further complicate living circumstances that are already fraught with obstacles. One female FGD participant shared that *“unquestionably, there is fear around obtaining non-official documents. If we went to the government controlled areas and they discovered that they were forged, we might be imprisoned.” (Woman from Karama sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate).* However, this is the course that many feel forced to take as Syrians attempt to bring normalcy to their lives as they seek to educate themselves, marry, have babies, and create a semblance of a future. One adolescent girl told us that, *“not allowing people to get documents has a negative impact on everyone such as restricting the movement of adults and girls. They do not have an official document to prove their marriage or even a recognised education certificate.” (Adolescent girl from Daret Azza sub-district, Aleppo governorate).*

As mentioned, lack of civil documentation also impacts the ability of Syrians to prove home and property ownership. In general, home and property ownership provide stability, as when one rents, s/he is at the mercy of the owner who can tell the tenant to vacate the property at any time. In addition, costs of finding a new home and moving can quickly add up especially if this occurs within short periods of time, diverting vital finances from other basic needs. Before the crisis, women may have faced obstacles in owning and maintaining farm land and/or a private residence due

to social norms and customs. After the crisis, women that have become widowed, divorced, separated and/or displaced face further obstacles: firstly because of their perceived role within the community (i.e. alone without a male protector; an unknown person) and also because they lack civil documentation.

Thus they are at risk of being turned out from their home and forced to seek alternative housing with little funds at their disposal. This is precisely the sentiment that one woman expressed when she stated, *“when we go to rent a house, the landlord does not accept the contract in writing. He wants the contract to be verbal so that he can remove us whenever he pleases.” (Woman from Karama sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate).*

For one adolescent girl, *“the most important social problems are related to inheritance: selling and purchasing of land and the weak role of law in the regaining of people’s rights, especially if the person is powerless.” (Adolescent girl from Daret Azza sub-district, Aleppo governorate).* Inheritance rights is another area that during stable periods is riddled with obstacles and problems for women and girls due to many traditional practices. During crisis, *“the absence of official papers leads to the improper distribution of inheritance. Women in these circumstances would not get their rights.” (Man from Ma’arrat An Nu’man sub-district, Idleb governorate).*

In non-conflict countries, the importance of property ownership is crucial to the well-being of women, and their children, as secure housing provides safe shelter and protection from homelessness after divorce, widowhood, and/or job loss. Furthermore, assets under women’s control give them greater bargaining power and often contribute appreciably to important welfare outcomes for the household, such as improved outcomes in new-born birth weight, child education and reducing early marriage. Thus, the importance of safe and secure housing shows in the psychological well-being of women and their children. Safe and secure housing safeguards women and their children from inclement weather, direct and indirect violence, as well as escalating costs associated with moving from one residence to the next or living with relatives, which can incur costs from relatives or lead to perceptions as a burden/liability. One woman captured this sentiment when she said, *“there is congestion in the houses because of the large number of families living together, which causes quarrels between them and problems like hatred/discomfort/high cost.” (Woman from Karama sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate).*

“The women said the lack of documentation proving the title of lands, shops or houses makes them 30% more liable to danger.” (Woman from Janudiyeh sub-district, Idleb governorate).

Coping Mechanisms

"Nobody is going to stand by her side." (Woman from As-sweida sub-district, As-Sweida governorate).

The most common theme among responses of FGD participants on coping with violence was that the burden of preventing and responding to GBV is put on the shoulders of the survivor herself.

Silence

The most frequently cited way for women and girls to cope after experiencing GBV was to tell no one about it, to remain silent and keep it a secret. Many FGD participants cited non-disclosure as the only coping mechanism available to female survivors of violence in order to protect their families from, and avoid, scandal, retaliation, gossip, shame and social stigma, along with preventing additional restrictions of movement and freedom, further violence or punishment. In the event of sexual violence, a girl would inform her father last because *"the father cannot handle the situation in a rational way and this can lead to beatings and confinement."* (Adolescent girl from Damascus sub-district, Damascus governorate).

This feeling of helplessness was linked to the belief that actions taken against violence would not change the situation, and would only make the situation worse, and that social norms prohibit speaking of GBV: *"Society has the perspective that women are weak and therefore they surrender. They tend to use silence to deal with issues and they do not file a complaint as this brings shame on her and her family, so the incident is kept secret for the fear of being scandalised, especially in the case of sexual violence."* (Woman from Daret Azza sub-district, Aleppo governorate). FGD participants spoke of the psychological toll of keeping violence hidden, leading to depression.

In dealing with stigma and shame, especially related to sexual violence, FGD participants also cited forced marriage and suicide as coping mechanisms even when such actions are forced actions that express their inability to cope: *"Sexual abuse is dealt with in two different ways: either by silence or marrying the two people involved in the incident."* (Woman from Daret Azza sub-district, Aleppo governorate). Likewise: *"Beggings the perpetrator in order to keep the crime a secret and requesting marriage."* (Adolescent girl from Damascus sub-district, Damascus governorate).

Defend, avoid and escape

Self-defence, such as screaming to attract attention, trying to escape and run away, or fight back against her attacker were cited as coping mechanisms at the

moment of violence, though this was reported to be more available to men than women: *"I protect myself by shielding my body from beatings. Sometimes, I cover my head and run away to a safe room. Unfortunately, this is all I can do to alleviate physical pain."* (Woman from Ein Issa sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate).

Women and girls also mentioned reducing risks and avoiding situations that might be risky by leaving work or dropping out of school, movement restrictions (especially parents forcing girls to stay at home, and women and girls needing to be accompanied by a man), and changes in dress: *"Girls cope by avoiding meeting people."* (Adolescent girl from Mansura sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate) and *"Women here have changed their clothes style: they started to wear hijab and long clothes in order to avoid sexual abuse."* (Man from Afrin sub-district, Aleppo governorate).

Children may run away from home in order to avoid family violence, or survivors move to another community to avoid shame. In some cases, married women may resort to divorce: *"Many women are divorced because of this, because the husband does not let the woman spend money as she wants and takes the salary by force."* (Adolescent girl from Heish sub-district, Idleb governorate).

De-escalate and mediate

In cases of domestic violence, women may attempt to de-escalate the situation: *"I talk to him and then obey him the woman is always the one who compromises."* (Woman from Heish sub-district, Idleb governorate). Mediation was also cited as a coping mechanism and an alternative to legal action: *"The issue of sexual violence can often be resolved locally and in a friendly way, because of the improbability of taking the case to the court."* (Woman from Ma'arrat An Nu'man sub-district, Idleb governorate). Another said: *"we treat cases of violence by seeing both parties and listening to them both. We solve their problems through written commitment and recover the rights, if any, and oblige the husband to write a pledge not to hit his wife again."* (Woman from Kisreh sub-district, Deir-ez-Zor governorate).

However, mediation is not the ideal first-line response to domestic violence, as it is not a positive coping mechanism. Indeed, mediation, and particularly family mediation, can increase risks for the survivor. The preferred course of action is for all GBV survivors to seek specialised GBV services where case workers/ counsellors will work with the survivor to secure safe shelter, develop a safety plan and begin health and PSS treatment.

Family and community support

Some FGD participants spoke of disclosing violence to family members, especially parents. In cases of domestic violence, the woman may seek refuge at her parents' house, or her family may step in to advocate for her. Some FGDs participants mentioned being unable to access further services without first informing their family, particularly in the case of girls. Women told us that *"in the event of any kind of sexual violence*

against girls, the first refuge is the mother, who helps the abused child access psychological support centres; in cases of sexual violence, generally it is not outside the family.” (Woman from Ariha sub-district, Idleb governorate). In cases when the survivor fears the reaction of her family, she may disclose to a friend instead: “We turn to a friend because sometimes she is closer to us than our parents and we are not afraid to tell her the truth.” (Adolescent girl from Heish sub-district, Idleb governorate).

Disclosure was conditional upon having available someone who is close, trusted and reliable, “a person with a good reputation with the ability to handle the situation.” (Woman from Ma’arrat An Nu’man sub-district, Idleb governorate).

coping mechanism, highlighting the importance of confidentiality in order for survivors to feel safe in reporting (See GBV services section). Some FGD participants cited seeking justice or reporting an incident to authorities as a coping mechanism (such as police, armed factions, Sharia courts, community elders, camp administration, Local Council, reconciliation committee), it was more common for men and boys to see this as an available option compared to women and girls: “When we face problems such as harassment, we tell our mothers or brothers about the problem. If it is not resolved, we turn to the camp administration or camp security.” (Adolescent girl from Aricha camp, Areesh sub-district, Al Hasakeh governorate). Though rarely cited, a few FGD participants cited reporting the incident on social media as a possible option.

Seeking services

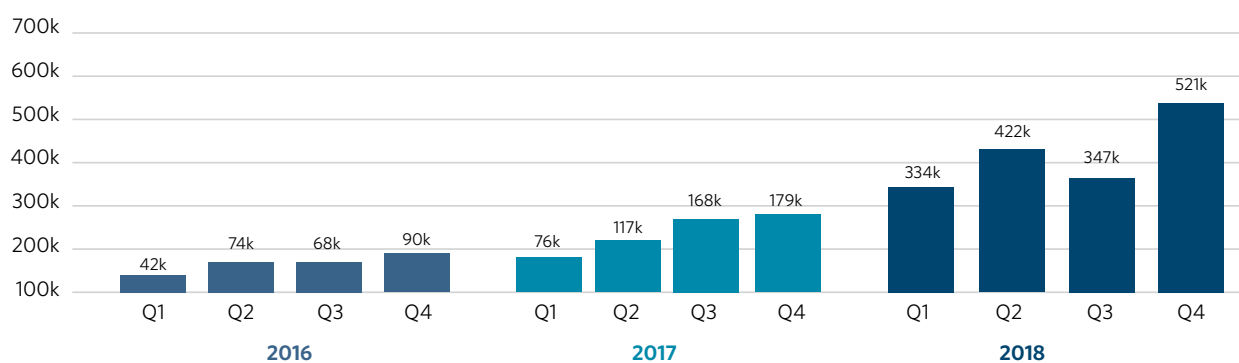
Some women and girls saw accessing health and psychosocial support services, as well as Women and Girls Safe Spaces (WGSSs), as an available

Services for GBV survivors

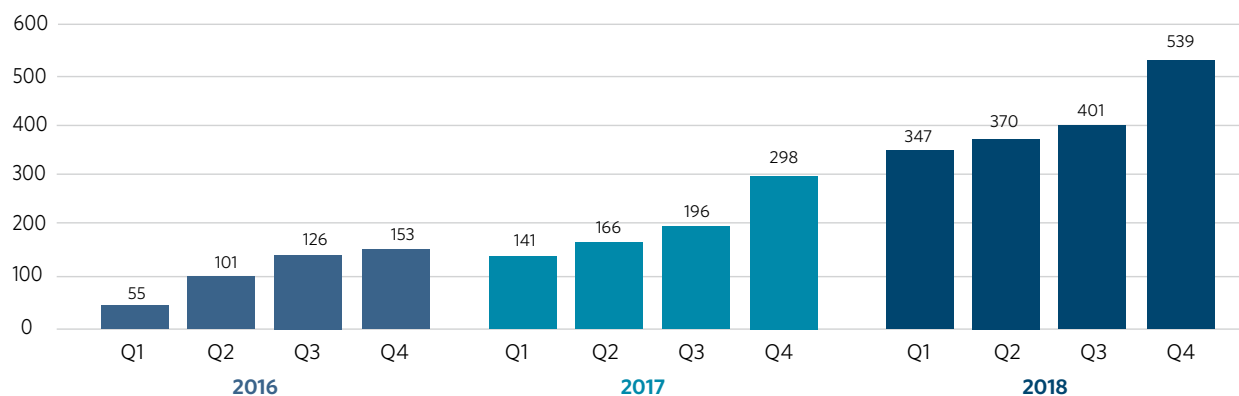
Reach of GBV Programming in 2018

During 2018, GBV programming reached 799,239 beneficiaries in 722 communities in 182 sub-districts through 119 GBV actors throughout Syria. In comparison, in 2017 GBV programming reached 550,000 beneficiaries in 298 communities in 114 sub-districts through 70 GBV actors, thereby demonstrating the expansion of services over the last year.

Total Beneficiaries Reached by Year and Quarter



Communities Reached by Year and Quarter



GBV programming and services have expanded enormously since the onset of the crisis and the coordination of GBV services. In 2015, there were only 22 organisations working on GBV and now there are over 100. There were few specialised services and the number of WGSSs were limited.

GBV Programming: access, quality and satisfaction

Globally we know that outreach efforts and awareness raising within the community increase the **possibility of survivors accessing** needed services. This is a function of survivors' increased awareness and trust in services, as well as a stronger collaboration and referral system between service providers where available. The same is true in Syria: *"Outreach teams are understanding the concept of referrals and have started to refer cases. Availability of health services and vocational trainings increases the possibility for disclosure."* (GBV Expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub). However, GBV experts note that, even if specialised GBV services are in place such as case management and psychosocial support, **comprehensive care for GBV survivors is difficult if other services are unavailable**, overburdened or of substandard quality, including health services, legal aid, emergency cash or financial aid, shelters, livelihoods or vocational training.

"Services are there. The issue is different level of quality of services depending on different organisations. Lack of supervision, follow up of the services. We noticed this through the referrals that we're receiving. The turnover of the staff is affecting the quality of the services. When the manager goes the quality of the service collapses, or if the people in the field leave the quality will change." (GBV Expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub).

While in some areas referral mechanisms and services mapping were reported to be functioning well, GBV experts noted the **need to strengthen** these further to improve coordination between service providers as well as the capacity of partners to provide GBV specialised services. Women and girls in FGDs, as well as GBV experts also noted the need for livelihoods and vocational training, as well as loans or microcredit for small business: *"We need to cover immediate services, generating income activities, so that women can become more independent and take decisions to say no to violence."* (GBV Expert from Jordan Cross Border Hub). Other high-need services noted by women and girls was financial support, such as a salary for widows and divorcees, elderly and disabled, and more specialised mental health services.

FGD participants spoke of the availability of some local initiatives focused on women and girls, such as awareness centres or a women's affairs office within

the Local Council: *"There are awareness centres within the Council where an old woman advises girls and women. She is not a specialist but has experience as a result of her long life."* (Adolescent girl from Kisreh subdistrict, Deir-ez-Zor governorate). Women also said that *"there is a women's affairs office for the local council."* (Woman from Ariha sub-district, Idleb governorate).

Women and girls expressed a **high level of satisfaction** for available services when they were able to access them. Clients of GBV services note improvements in self-confidence, trust and social connection, independence especially economic, knowledge of rights, and ability to protect themselves from violence: *"When I come to the women's support centre I feel comfortable and safe. I have benefited a lot. I have learned a simple profession through the handicraft course. It made me stronger. I sell what I make even for little money, but I no longer wait for my husband to give me money for my needs."* (Woman from Masyaf sub-district, Hama governorate). Beyond specialised GBV services like case management, FGD participants also noted satisfaction with livelihoods and vocational trainings where they were available: *"English and computer courses helped my self-development a lot, especially when they are free, as I cannot pay any fee to an educational centre."* (Woman from Masyaf sub-district, Hama governorate).

Gaps in supervision, lack of support on case monitoring, follow-up of services and turnover of staff is affecting the quality of services: *"Staff care and self-care is still a gap. There is stress related to the high the number of cases each staff is responsible for."* (GBV Expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub). FGD participants also expressed frustration over disruption in services due to short project cycles, which make the provision of services unreliable and make it difficult to build trust with clients: *"There are psychological support centres, but they cannot practice their tasks effectively because these centres open for a short time then close. They say that the project has been terminated. Don't those who plan for this project know that it should continue in order to make it a success?!"* (Man from Al Bab sub-district, Aleppo governorate).

Continuity of care is crucial to the physical and psychological wellbeing of a GBV survivor. Continuous care not only increases survivor satisfaction with the services provided, but it allows the actors involved in her treatment (medical providers, counsellors, psychologists, legal advocates) to adequately assess, monitor and complete care. Continuity of care contributes to the accumulated knowledge of actors involved in the referral pathway, which saves time, allows for adequate case management and builds trust with community members that these services are functional and sustainable. Functional continuous care within a community opens the door for other survivors to come forward who otherwise would not have utilised GBV specialised services. Continuity of care also contributes to building a healthy protection system as humanitarian actors build capacity and infrastructure at the community level. In this way, during recovery and transition, a robust referral pathway is in place for national, sub-national and local civil society and/or government entities to continue service provision.

GBV experts as well as women and girls noted the **limitations of available services in terms of violence prevention specific to men and boys**. *"I suffer from the violence that my husband practices on me... When I come to the centre here, I feel better. Unfortunately, with my husband I cannot do anything. He does not change, and I cannot change anything in my life."* (Woman Masyaf sub-district, Hama governorate). Another said: *"Children are being sexually abused. It is not enough to protect with PSS."* (GBV Expert from Jordan Cross Border Hub). It should be noted that services that do not follow GBV guiding principles and standards and that are administered by staff that are not trained on GBV prevention and response are dangerous, sometimes creating further harm, hence the essential nature of continuous capacity strengthening of service providers.

Women and girls in FGDs cited the need for increased **awareness raising** including community members, community leaders and family members, particularly men and boys, in order to work on violence prevention and holding perpetrators to account for their actions. This awareness raising is reported to be especially relevant around the emotional needs of survivors and to encourage family acceptance and support, as an effort to reduce stigma around violence, and to begin to change the perception that a survivor of violence is at fault or has damaged her and her family's honour.

Stories from women accessing GBV specialised services

"I am afraid for modern society and the time we are currently living. I fear loneliness, especially after the abduction of my brother by people who were trusted, so I have lost confidence in everyone except in this centre where I feel very comfortable, which is the feeling I miss the most in my life outside the centre." (Woman from Masyaf sub-district, Hama governorate).

"I hope there are safe houses, where women can live permanently. I resist my husband's violence in ways I have acquired from the social worker. For example, when he tries to hit me on the head, I try to protect my head by putting my hands on my head and covering it. When he runs to catch me, I try to escape to a room free of sharp items such as knives, as well as move away from the balcony to protect myself from greater risks." (Woman from Masyaf sub-district, Hama governorate).

"In cases of violence against women and boys, they often resort to the safe spaces for women which try to involve them in community services." (Woman from Ariha sub-district, Idlib governorate)

"I know a woman who was physically abused by her husband. She sought refuge in the safe space for women. Now, she is in a good situation, after she got the help needed from the services available in the centre. (Adolescent girl from As-Sweida sub-district, As-Sweida governorate)

"I was subjected to marital, psychological and economic violence. My husband treated me harshly and did not respect my opinion on any subject. He told everyone that I did not understand anything and that I was his servant. But then I visited the women's support centre. After several sessions with the social worker, I became somewhat stronger and decided to consult with the centre's lawyer. I tried to understand my legal rights to face my husband in a measured way. I decided to put an end to my life with him peacefully, and to work and study. (Woman from Masyaf sub-district, Hama governorate).

GBV experts and FGD participants also highlighted the importance of raising awareness around the risks of early/forced marriage for the girl, as well as involving men and boys in violence prevention through behaviour change: *"We must train men that there are different forms of expressing yourself other than violence."* (GBV Expert from Jordan Cross Border Hub). GBV experts also stressed the need to expand awareness raising beyond targeting just women, as this may put women at risk: *"We should involve the whole community, not just women. There is a fine line of increasing awareness, because going to an awareness session takes her out of the home which can increase her to violence."* (GBV Expert from Jordan Cross Border Hub).

Barriers to services

GBV specialised services

Feelings of shame and stigma that prevent survivors from disclosing their experience of violence (Coping mechanisms), along with cultural and safety factors related to movement restrictions, were reported to prevent survivors from seeking GBV services. On an individual level, survivors may feel shame for needing to access a service at all: *"We all need a psychiatrist because of what we are witnessing in this war, but unfortunately, people in our community do not like going to psychiatrists because they think that psychiatrists are doctors of mad people and visiting them would be shameful."* (Man from Al Bab sub-district, Aleppo governorate). Survivors may also feel shame that others know that they have experienced GBV: *"Women feel afraid and ashamed that other women might know that they are subjected to violence by their parents or husbands."* (Adolescent girl from Damascus sub-district, Damascus governorate).

On an interpersonal level, survivors may fear, and face the real risk of gossip or scandal by seeking GBV services. This verbal abuse is related to bringing shame to the family and damaging to the survivor's reputation, with the potential consequences of rejection by the family or divorce by their husband: *"Some parents do not accept to send their daughters to the centre in order to protect their reputation."* (Adolescent girl from Talkalakh Kalakh sub-district, Homs governorate). Another said: *"There are still a lot of women and girls who are in desperate need, but we do not reach them. Culturally/socially, they cannot leave home as it brings shame to the family when they do so."* (GBV Expert from Jordan Cross Border Hub).

Women and girls report the fear of facing street harassment and verbal abuse if seen accessing the services: *"There is a house for women, but women cannot go because of people's words and abusive taunts."* (Adolescent girl from Karama sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate). Likewise: *"Sometimes a woman cannot attend WGSS, as neighbours or men would verbally abuse her."* (GBV Expert from Jordan Cross Border Hub).

Given the substantial potential risks and restrictive cultural norms, women and girls noted the **importance of feeling safe** in order to disclose and seek services. Service providers must take steps to ensure confidentiality and build trust, both of which require

time, outreach efforts, high quality of services and continued presence: *"Increase of disclosure is related to the improvement of the quality of the services and trust with the beneficiaries. In areas where we already had presence there is an increase in the number of disclosure of rape and sexual violence cases, especially in camps."* (GBV Expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub).

Part of these feelings of safety include **maintaining a "women-only" space**, free from the risks that women and girls identified in mixed-gender contexts, in addition to the risks of other community members' gossip. *"In one centre with integrated services (reproductive health, psychosocial support, case management), girls feel safer and disclosure is higher. Another centre has more referrals but because it is a community centre, there is less disclosure and more work is required in order to build trust of survivors."* (GBV Expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub)

"Women, girls, and boys might resort to safe spaces in order to receive health and legal services because the location is secret and provides protection in case violence is repeated." (Woman from Damascus sub-district, Damascus governorate).

FGD participants also mentioned restrictions from extremist groups, impunity for perpetrators, fear of retribution, and safety risks such as fear of abduction and lack of safe transportation as barriers to accessing services: *"There are some child- and woman-friendly centres, but sometimes we are afraid of going for fear of facing a security incident due to the crowds."* (Woman from Janudiyeh sub-district, Idlib governorate). Lack of awareness of the existence of services as well as the usefulness of the services was also noted as a barrier to access. Girls in particular may lack information about the availability of GBV services, and a lack of understanding of the persistent threat of GBV in both public and private spaces affects community members' understanding of the need for safe spaces for women and girls: *"Some people in community do not see the need for WGSSs because women have their homes."* (GBV Expert from Jordan Cross Border Hub).

GBV experts noted strategies put in place to make GBV services more inclusive, **to overcome barriers to access, and to reach vulnerable populations**, such as those in rural areas, PWDs, adolescent girls, older women, widows, divorcees, IDPs, and pregnant women.

- Outreach teams conducting house-to-house visits for basic care (though complicated cases need more comprehensive care): *"Some women, especially GBV survivors, reported their preference for home visits."* (GBV Expert from Jordan Cross Border Hub)
- Expanding mobile outreach, covering larger geographic area: *"We can reach people with special needs through the mobile team, and we target large numbers of such people."* (GBV Expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub)
- Providing day care or nannies in WGSS facilities, allowing access for women without childcare options: *"Empowerment centres should be expanded*

to include child entertainment centres. Some women suffer from the problem of a lack of a free safe space for children.” (Woman from Tartous sub-district, Tartous governorate).

- Opening the centres for longer hours¹².
- Providing transportation to services: “There are vans to provide transport to hospitals and safe spaces for very specific groups like IDPs and pregnant women.” (GBV Expert from Jordan Cross Border Hub). Also: “This year there was an increase in access to the services because they provided transportation, and witnessed challenges when this was not provided.” (GBV Expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub)
- Tailoring sessions and outreach to specific populations, in order to ensure that services relevant and to overcome barriers to access: “We offer sessions for female adolescents within the safe space and provide them with topics dedicated to adolescents.” (GBV Expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub). Also: “We work with parents to allow their daughters to come to centres but this does not always work.” (GBV Expert from Jordan Cross Border Hub).
- Other innovations proposed by GBV experts for future programming include:
 - Development of a mobile app or hotline, allowing clients to connect to a service provider without leaving home.
 - Employ older women as focal points or in WGSS centres.

Seeking justice

“Justice is not for women. It benefits men instead. Our society is male-driven, always in favour of men and blaming women.” (Woman from Lattakia sub-district, Lattakia governorate).

FGD participants noted particular barriers to accessing legal or judicial action after experiencing GBV. Justice systems and legal mechanisms for adjudicating legal issues vary across Syria. In some areas of Syria there are functioning components within formal legal systems, while in other areas informal justice systems have filled the gap where formal systems are non-existent. And in yet other areas, such as Northeast Syria, the Kurdish Security Administration provides adjudication for legal matters.

In non-government controlled areas – **formal justice systems may simply not exist in some places, but where they do, women and girls report distrusting them.** In some cases this is due to corruption and inequality: “The court is against the weak instead of by their side.” (Woman from Daret Azza sub-district, Aleppo governorate). Also: “There is no equity in the courts because of the lack of true faith, the non-application of the Islamic

law and favouritism and bribes.” (Woman from Daret Azza sub-district, Aleppo governorate). In other cases, women and girls report that the legal process is ineffective due to intervention by armed groups or community members: “Once a person who had kidnapped a girl was taken to prison, but he was released an hour later because his relatives are from the Free Army.” (Man from Al Bab sub-district, Aleppo governorate). Another said: “Women are empowered and complain about their husbands and brothers who are imprisoned until the community intervenes with the woman to give up her right.” (Man from Hole sub-district, Al-Hasakeh governorate).

Alternatively, intimate partners may be able to evade accountability for domestic violence by divorcing their wife: “Most likely, such problems are not solved because, according to the culture of Deir ez-Zor, the man refuses to submit to these councils and divorces his wife instead.” (Woman from Kisreh sub-district, Deir-ez-Zor governorate).

However, for many women and girls, the effectiveness of the legal system is irrelevant. The shame, disgrace, social isolation, and verbal abuse that women and girls may face if they seek justice prevent them from considering it as an option: “Such a thing as sexual violence is tolerated and kept as a secret. No complaints are filed despite the existence of judicial authorities, which can be effective or ineffective.” (Woman from Daret Azza sub-district, Aleppo governorate).

While gender norms accept that a man would be able to defend his rights by filing a complaint if he faced violence, a woman who does the same would be considered ignorant, rebellious, and lacking faith: “Anyone who turns to the court is ostracised by the community, because its of ignorance and lack of true faith, especially when we want the court to restore our rights.” (Woman from Daret Azza sub-district, Aleppo governorate).

“If she files a complaint at the court, she will be considered a rebel who wants to act like a man, and that is disgraceful and inappropriate in our culture. People would start verbally abusing her and her family.” (Woman from Karama sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate).

¹² Opening longer hours would be dependent on the availability of transportation especially during winter due to inclement weather conditions and/or daylight hours.

Links between GBV and other humanitarian sectors

Throughout the assessments, clear risks of GBV were identified in other sectors.. This highlights the need for holistic, multisector approaches to GBV prevention and response that also takes into account the IASC Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action (2015) and the continue need for reinforcing the need for collective responsibility to address GBV

Education

Many FGD participants reported feeling unsafe at school. Most commonly, girls report experiencing sexual harassment on the way to and from school. Parents may not allow girls to go to school for fear of abduction or sexual harassment on the way there and back. Sexual violence as well as verbal violence against girls were also reported to take place within school committed by both teachers and peers: *"When I was in school they said some bad words to me because I wore the hijab, so I left the school."* (Adolescent girl from Tartous sub-district, Tartous governorate). Some FGD participants report being able to speak with female teachers or the school principal about violence, though girls may hesitate to disclose experiences of violence for fear that their parents will force them to drop out of school.

Early marriage often prevents girls from continuing education: *"It is better to make a match for our daughters which helps them avoid the source of sexual abuse i.e. school."* (Man from Afrin sub-district, Aleppo governorate). Some FGD participants highlighted the opportunity for schools to prevent violence through awareness raising. Specifically, information on available specialised GBV services is rarely disseminated in schools and referrals are still infrequent.

Food, Security and Livelihoods (FSL)

Women and girls are often tasked to procure food whether at food distribution sites or through farm labour, necessitating travel to remote, isolated or unfamiliar areas: *"for girls, their work in farmlands makes them vulnerable to sexual and verbal abuse."* (Woman from Janudiyeh sub-district, Idlib governorate). Likewise, unsafe locations of distribution sites for food and agricultural inputs, long distances required to travel and heavy weight of food rations require that women and girls (both those with or without disabilities) seek assistance. This places them at risk of sexual exploitation and abuse for those who may coerce them to provide sex in exchange for that assistance:

"Some said they heard about women who were financially or sexually exploited before receiving distributions." (Woman from Tartous sub-district, Tartous governorate). Another said: *"There are great concerns and most of the beneficiaries after the first visit to the aid centre did not come back because of the verbal, sexual and psychological violence."* (Woman from Lattakia sub-district, Lattakia governorate).

Food insecurity also leads to negative coping mechanisms for poor parents such as forced early marriage: *"All of us are subjected to violence. The strong person dominates the weak in our country. The man tells his wife: if you do not like it, my parents can take the children, especially if they can receive relief packages because of them. They will ruin the life of the child. In the past, a 14-year-old girl was not married until she got a high school diploma. But now they arrange her marriage and destroy her life."* (Woman from Ma'arrat An Nu'man sub-district, Idlib governorate).

As one woman shared when asked about the barrier to accessing food aid, *"for divorcees and widows, concerns are sexual exploitation [at distribution sites]."* (Woman from Hole sub-district, Al-Hasakeh governorate). Another adolescent girl shared that *"it is difficult to access the distributions for these groups, especially widows, divorcees, the elderly, and mentally and physically disabled people."* (Adolescent girl from Hole sub-district, Al-Hasakeh governorate).

FGD participants also shared other obstacles in accessing food aid services such as customs and traditions, as well as restricted movement for certain affected populations: *"Divorcees or widows often cannot access because of customs and traditions."* (Adolescent girl from Hole sub-district, Al-Hasakeh governorate). Other participants noted the strict criteria in order to receive aid which at times excludes certain vulnerable groups in need of food aid, such as widowed and divorced women and adolescent girls: *"There are criteria that are not applicable to all categories mentioned,"* (Adolescent boy from Ariha sub-district, Idlib governorate) and *"access to humanitarian assistance is difficult because of the many criteria for obtaining it."* (Woman from Ariha sub-district, Idlib governorate).

Others noted how the lack of civil documentation impedes access to aid. Another person spoke about some people's loss of humanitarian aid due to not having a family booklet or a family statement: *"Most NGOs rely on these documents and those without are denied services."* (Man from Janudiyeh sub-district, Idlib governorate). Lastly, some FGD participants noted the remote location of some distribution especially in light of the lack of transportation as well as overcrowding, which can impede access to much-needed food aid: *"Concerns may arise about receiving their shares because of the overcrowding that occurs during the distribution, the lack of transportation and the remote place of the distribution centre, taking into account that children are the ones who come to get the aid."* (Woman from Daret Azza sub-district, Aleppo governorate).

Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

In Northeast Syria, women and girls are usually tasked with fetching water for the household and for livestock when water services are insufficient. This activity has been identified by women and girls as risky especially for sexual harassment: *"When we go to bring water, we are abused with bad words. We are told bad words such as 'I like your breasts' and your body is beautiful."* (Adolescent girl from Ein Issa sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate).

Latrines and bathrooms, especially in camps, were repeatedly identified as unsafe and a location where women and girls are at risk for sexual violence: *"In the bathroom, there was an incident of a 13-year-old girl who was raped 3 months ago."* (Woman from Aricha camp, Areesheh sub-district, Al Hasakeh governorate). This is due to the latrines being shared by men and women, as well as inadequate mechanisms for securing the doors, and inadequate safety measures to make the latrines accessible at night. Men and boys may also understand the vulnerable context of latrines and take advantage of it: *"Toilets are shared by both men and women. The doors of the toilets cannot be closed. I cannot go to the toilet alone because at any time somebody might try to open the door while I am inside."* (Adolescent girl from Ein Issa sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate). Also: *"Through a small window, some boys watch girls and women while they are in the bathrooms."* (Adolescent boy from Ein Issa sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate).

Shelter/CCCM

"Most areas at risk are in camps, because the design of the camps doesn't reduce risks for sexual violence. I noticed that GBV mainstreaming in my organisation made a big difference in how other sectors engaged with beneficiaries." (GBV Expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub).

FGD participants and GBV experts noted certain elements related to the design of camps that increase risk of GBV, such as lack of lighting, overcrowding, and lack of privacy for women and girls (notably in kitchens and bathrooms): *"The big number of people in each tent aggravates violence. Sometimes we do not have a place to sleep."* (Woman from Ein Issa sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate). In some camps, or sections of camps, widowed and divorced women and girls have been segregated in an attempt to supposedly better serve their needs.

In fact, this 'protection' has increased their exposure to GBV risks, including sexual violence, emotional and verbal abuse, forced marriage, polygamy and serial temporary marriages, movement restrictions, economic violence and exploitation as well as other protection violations, as a consequence of being more isolated, visible and accessible to individuals who seek to exploit, abuse and shame them: *"Women appreciate*

that they have food and shelter in these camps. But they cannot move freely and cannot access other basic services." (Guidance Note: Mitigating Protection Risks in Widowed and Divorced Women and Girl- Only IDP Sites produced in Jan 2019 by the GBV SC, Protection Cluster, CP SC and CCCM in Gaziantep). Likewise: *"They do not feel safe in this camp. Any visitor can enter and harass the women. The men who come to these camps are looking for marriage and thus it is perceived that the women, if they get married, they will get help with their children (again another form of 'protection')."* (Guidance Note: Mitigating Protection Risks in Widowed and Divorced Women and Girl- Only IDP Sites produced in Jan 2019 by the GBV SC, Protection Cluster, CP SC and CCCM in Gaziantep)

Another compared the camps to incarceration: *"Those camps make access very difficult, so it's like a big prison: women can't even bring bread from outside until someone brings it to them."* (Guidance Note: Mitigating Protection Risks in Widowed and Divorced Women and Girl- Only IDP Sites produced in Jan 2019 by the GBV SC, Protection Cluster, CP SC and CCCM in Gaziantep). More generally in IDP camps, tents create particular problems around privacy, due to lack of security and close proximity to other tents: *"Girls are sexually abused and exploited inside their tents (the tents can be easily breached because they are not well made)."* (Adolescent boy from Ein Issa sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate).

While in other instances, partners lack space to express intimacy: *"A man cannot sleep with his wife because there are too many people in each tent."* (Woman from Ein Issa sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate). This can lead to increased tension and possibly lead to intimate partner violence. Unoccupied buildings and houses were also noted to be locations where violence takes place. Some women and girls, especially if they are living as head of household (divorced, widowed) face risks of sexual and other kind of exploitation associated with rental agreements, such as sex for housing benefits. One woman FGD participant highlighted the precarious situation that women and girls live in, and underlined the possibility of sexual exploitation in the context of the crisis: *"When we go to rent a house, the landlord does not accept the contract in writing. He wants the contract to be verbal so that he can remove us whenever he pleases."* (Woman from Karama sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate).

Similarly, for those women and girls living in camps (insecure tent structures) or in urban areas in buildings/houses that have been severely impacted by the conflict, their risk of sexual exploitation and abuse increases as they cannot ensure appropriate security standards (no or broken doors/windows, lack of lockable doors, etc.).

Camps should ensure that adequate lighting is available, such as in the form of solar lamps or torches in public areas including latrines and transition areas between neighbourhoods or sections of the camp. FGD participants also identified the need for plans to protect women and girls: *"Mobilise communities to develop and implement security plans to protect women and girls, particularly at night. Provide support for this implementation."* (May 2018 GBV Safety Audit, Nawa Daraa, Jordan Cross Border Hub). Communities should

also prevent the use of unoccupied houses by ensuring that are adequately locked or destroyed.

Health

FGD participants stressed the importance of GBV survivors being able to access medical care as a coping mechanism. While many reported having access to existing health services, some FGD participants reported that they did not exist, or there were gaps in gynaecological services and medical professionals trained to treat on clinical management of rape. GBV experts reported that even when health services were in place, many survivors were not accessing services within the critical window of 72 to 120 hours after the incident of violence. Reported barriers to accessing health services mirror the barriers identified in accessing other GBV services, such as fear of shame and gossip, and movement restrictions or lack of transportation: *"When we are beaten, we cannot go to the doctor because people will gossip about us," (Adolescent girl from Ein Issa sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate)* and *"women and girls still have more restrictions of movement and mobility to access services. For example, to access health facilities women need to be accompanied by men in many circumstances."* (GBV Expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub).

Medical centres were also identified as places where violence may occur: *"Violence takes place at hospitals due to overcrowding and the lack of care shown toward patients."* (Man from Heish sub-district, Idlib governorate). Furthermore, "virginity testing", which is also often referred to as hymen, "two-finger" or per vaginal examination, is an inspection of female genitalia designed to determine whether a woman or girl has had vaginal intercourse. This is an accepted and encouraged practice in some parts of Syria and is in fact a form of sexual violence perpetrated by the families by forcing their daughter to be subjected to it: *"The girl entered first, then the mother, then the father, then the rest of the family. She was whipped for only for standing next to a guy, and they checked her virginity to make sure."* (Woman from Heish sub-district, Idlib governorate). This 'custom' is also supported by medical practitioners who conduct the test: *"Virginity examination is in great demand. We have difficulty in raising awareness about this issue because the community supports virginity examination and sometimes the medical staff supports and facilitates this procedure. I think we have to work to educate the medical staff."* (GBV Expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub).

Women and girls stress the importance of service quality, specifically confidentiality and trust, in order for survivors to feel safe enough to access health services. This may be in the form of female medical staff: *"Women have the most confidence/trust with the midwife in the health facility so that is who they report to."* (GBV Expert from Jordan Cross Border Hub). Even then, survivors may not feel comfortable reporting certain types of violence, so may report something else in order to avoid embarrassment and shame: *"Women's awareness has increased, and they are reporting more. They do not say it is sexual violence. They just say it is domestic violence."* (GBV Expert from Jordan Cross Border Hub).

GBV experts identified positive trends that showed strengthening referrals between health services and GBV services, due to outreach and awareness raising.

"Referrals are going well, especially thanks to the good relations built with staff working in the health facilities. We even organise awareness raising sessions, where PSS workers conduct a session in the health facility and health workers conduct a session in the WGSS. Health is a good entry point for GBV survivors and we faced increase in disclosure in health facilities." (GBV Expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub).

Child protection

Girls face similar types of GBV as women, including sexual violence, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation, domestic and family violence, and abduction. Family violence and street harassment may escalate at puberty, when culturally society may start thinking of girls as women. Incidents of physical violence toward women mentioned by FGD participants occurred within the home, and were perpetrated by intimate partners but also by family members. Family violence against girls, particularly by the father, was reported by FGD participants to increase at adolescence, and be related to instilling society's gender norms into girls' beliefs and behaviour as well as reinforcing the perception of the father's masculinity: *"The most common thing is customs and traditions, and that makes the father beat his daughters. If he does not do so, he is not considered a man. The mother says he must discipline and educate you. If he does not do so, how will you be raised up with morals?"* (Adolescent girl from Karama sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate).

Restrictions of movement and freedoms may also escalate at puberty for similar reasons. Some FGD participants report not allowing their daughters out of the house at all. This violence and restrictions may cause severe psychosocial distress for girls, and girls report similar limitations in the coping mechanisms available to them in response to violence. Girls engaging in child labour are at particular risk of GBV, especially as peddlers, working in markets, agriculture, begging or other work that is out of parent's supervision. In addition, children may be sent to retrieve distributions, putting girls at risk of sexual harassment: *"There is child labour in the camp. Children are employed to transfer aid from distribution centres to tents, and girls are more likely than boys to be vulnerable to sexual harassment."* (Woman from Ras Al-Ain sub-district, Hasakeh governorate).

Boys were identified as working in construction, factories, selling fuel, carpentry, car mechanics and blacksmithing: *"There are children who work as car and motorcycle mechanics, and they face violence. They work for free as apprentices because a child has to learn a profession in order to support his parents in the future."* (Man from Janudiyeh sub-district, Idlib governorate). Often in these various places of employment that use

child labour, children are at risk of, and experience, sexual harassment, exploitation and violence: *“Sexual violence often happens to girls while they are working at shops, and they are verbally harassed.”* (Adolescent girl from Ariha sub-district, Idlib governorate).

Boys and girls are both at risk of violence at the hands of their parents or caregivers, more frequently noted as perpetrated by male family members (fathers, brothers and uncles) rather than female (mothers, sisters or aunts). In addition, step-parents may be more violent toward children of a previous marriage.

Early/forced marriage is reported in certain areas to occur as young as 13 years old, with risks including early pregnancy and related health complications, as well as the social difficulties of being a young widow or divorcee, or young mother.

In addition, **harmful gender norms around household dynamics** may have negative effects on children. For example, when women widows or divorcees remarry, they may be forced to abandon their children from a previous marriage. In cases of divorce, in-laws may try to obstruct a mother from having full child custody.

GBV services must ensure that they can meet the specific needs of girls. Women also identified the need for adequate nurseries, kindergartens, childcare and child friendly spaces and areas where children can play safely. Awareness raising efforts should help parents find ways to talk to their children about GBV: *“People should be made aware, and preferably indirectly. Parents may find it embarrassing to educate their children about such behaviour when sexual violence is involved.”* (Man from Khan Shaykun sub-district, Idlib governorate). Forced recruitment of children into armed groups increases the risks of GBV particularly for girls¹³. Unlike in prior years of this publication, girls were mentioned at being at risk of armed recruitment: *“Girls can be recruited in Jihad and thus killed.”* (Adolescent girl from Afrin sub-district, Aleppo governorate) and *“Girls are more involved than boys concerning child labor. The most dangerous is the recruiting with the armed groups.”* (Man from Kafr Nobol sub-district, Idlib governorate). However, other FGD participants stated that the most dangerous form of child labor is armed recruitment primarily experienced by boys: *“recruitment of children and their involvement in armed conflicts, especially for boys.”* (Adolescent boy from Aricha camp, Arishah sub-district, Al Hasakah governorate) The 2018 Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC) report stated that the recruitment and use of boys (263) and girls (152) were also prevalent during the reporting period (12 per cent of the verified cases

Humanitarian distributions

Due to the fear of sexual harassment and **sexual exploitation that women and girls face** at distribution sites, some feel unsafe and avoid going at all. Some women only have access to distributions if someone from their family can bring it to them, making it extremely difficult for widows, divorcees and unaccompanied girls to benefit from aid: *“Aid distributions are overcrowded, chaotic, disorganised. People who are powerless in general cannot get their fair share, such as orphans, some women and widows who are afraid of harassment or exploitation.”* (Adolescent girl from Daret Azza sub-district, Aleppo governorate).

Sexual harassment and exploitation at distribution sites is often perceived to be common by some community members. Women and girls who go to collect aid might face shame and stigma from community members based solely on the assumption that they were harassed and received assistance in exchange for sexual favours, whether or not such incidences occurred: *“Women are at risk during aid distribution. Women who get aid are stigmatised because they are thought to have given something in return.”* (GBV Expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub).

While no specific allegations were made, women and girls mentioned during FGDs that verbal harassment, groping by men waiting in lines, sexual propositions by aid distributors and other men that offer to help with transport in exchange for sexual favours is a possibility at any time: *“During the distribution of aid, we are abused. Some men touch the women standing in the queue. We cannot say anything.”* (Adolescent girl from Ein Issa sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate).

“Once a girl from our village went to receive a nutrition basket. Since she did not have anyone to help her carry it and could not carry it on her own, she put it on the ground and waited for someone to pass by and help her. A man pulled over and told her to put it in his car. When she asked what he wanted in return, he replied, ‘What I want takes place at your house.’” (Woman from Heish sub-district, Idlib governorate).

Other barriers that women and girls report in accessing aid are **lack of civil documentation**, especially for married minors without official marriage documents: *“If the marriages of minors are not registered officially, it is a disaster for them. When they come to get aid, they are deprived of their shares, as they don’t have identity cards.”* (Woman from Daret Azza sub-district, Aleppo governorate). Another barrier is the need to be **photographed when receiving aid**: *“Taking pictures of us when we receive the basket or anything at the distribution sites causes us serious security concerns,”* (Woman from Hole sub-district, Al-Hasakeh governorate) and *“Some families in extreme hardship refuse to accept humanitarian aid distributed by NGOs since the latter post pictures on social media. These families feel such behaviour is violating their sense of dignity.”* (NGO FGD, Idlib, Panos Moutzis Visit, Oct 2018).

¹³ In other humanitarian crises such as Somalia, Columbia, DRC GBV risks for girls include labor and/or sexual exploitation and in some circumstances forced to be wives and/or sex slaves of male combatants.

Given their negative experiences at distribution sites, women and girls as well as GBV experts identified **recommendations to make distributions safer** and more accessible for women and girls:

- Female staff at distribution sites, as distributors and also as accountability staff. Women representation in the Local Council: *"The girls, under the age of 18, who work in the civil council, were appointed through the elections that took place in the Komens to be appointed as employees."* (Adolescent girl from Kisreh sub-district, Deir-ez-Zor governorate)
- Distribution sites and coordination should be designed/consulted upon by women and girls through WGSSs: *"Most beneficiaries after the first visit to the aid distribution centre did not come back because of the verbal, sexual and psychological violence. Everyone wishes that safe space centres would be in charge of distribution because some women do not have a man who can retrieve aid for them."* (Woman from Lattakia sub-district, Lattakia governorate).
- Deliver aid to homes, safely and systematically to avoid further exploitation by those in charge of delivery: *"Local councils are responsible for ensuring safety and must deliver aid to the homes of people."* (Woman from Daret Azza sub-district, Aleppo governorate).
- Priority distributions for vulnerable groups such as widows and divorcees, elderly, pregnant and lactating women.
- Better lighting and organisation in addition to separate lines for men and women. Separate lines were noted to be ineffective without proper organisation, as the lines would not stay separate in chaotic and disorganised distribution sites.
- Separate time allotments for women and men to collect aid.
- Reporting sexual violence on social media: *"Information about sexual exploitation risks at distribution points is disseminated more on Facebook rather than disclosing to humanitarian actors."* (GBV Expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub).

"Improving the quality of the food basket provided by the World Food Program (foods for summer + foods for winter) and supporting the basket by providing breakfast and dinner." (Woman from Hole sub-district, Al-Hasakeh governorate)

"Displaced as well as poor people are ashamed to go to access the relief packages." (Adolescent boy from Ma'arrat An Nu'man sub-district, Idleb governorate).

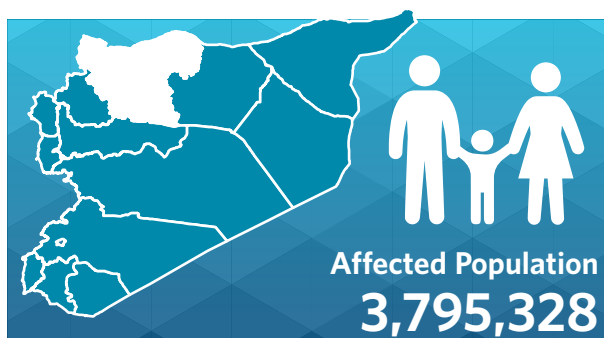


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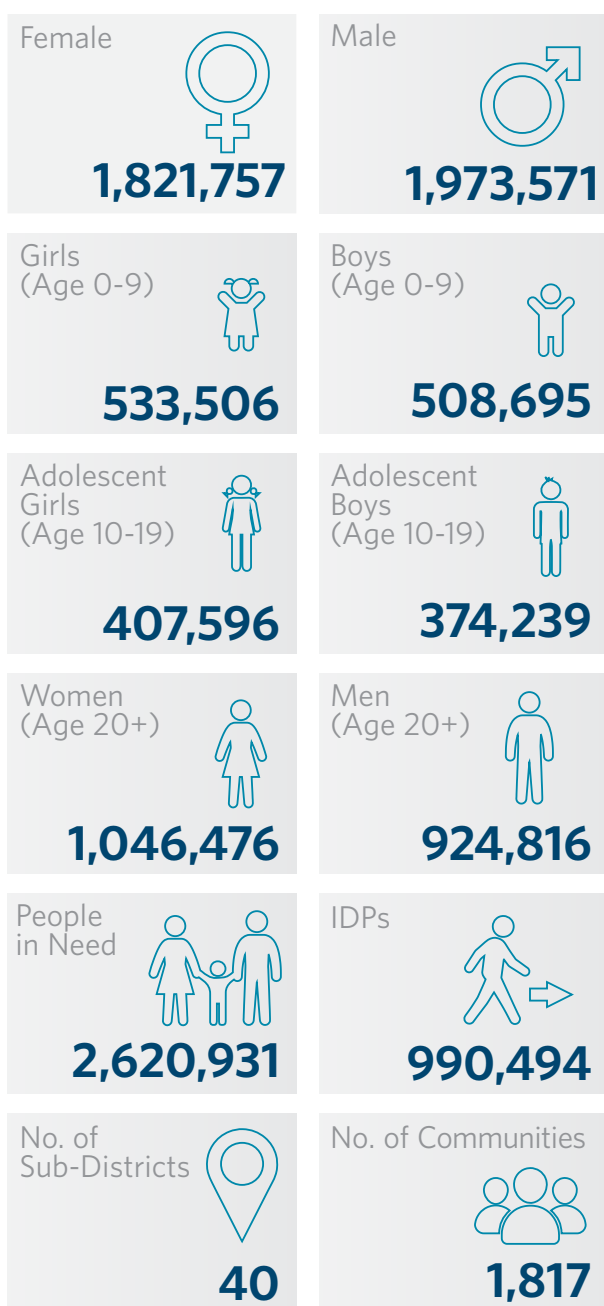


Results by Governorate¹⁴

¹⁴ Aleppo Governorate FGDs took place in Jebel Saman , Daret Azza, Al Bab and Afrin sub-districts. Furthermore, findings for Damascus, Jebel Saman, Maday, Homs, Talkalakh, Masyaf, Lattakia, Tartous, and As-Sweida sub-district were from UNFPA program data and all other sub-districts from FGDS conducted by protection actors. In addition, data found in the governorate headers was based on the August 2018 OCHA Population Figures.



Governorate Overview



Population Data, Aleppo

Aleppo

Affected Population, Types of Violence and Coping Mechanisms

Sexual violence was a form of gender based violence most identified by the FGD participants in this governorate, with many citing that although it is occurring it is *"not reported due to the stigma."* (Adolescent girl from Jebel Saman sub-district, Aleppo governorate). FGD participants expressed that *"women are weaker than men"*, thus they are more vulnerable to sexual violence than others. This occurs in markets, schools and streets, while also expressing that *"men are less likely to be the victims of sexual violence."* (Adolescent girl from Daret Azza sub-district, Aleppo governorate).

FGD participants noted that there is *"violence in schools, children are subject to physical and psychological abuse in their work, on the streets and in the neighbourhood, which, in turn, provokes more violence."* (Woman from Daret Azza sub-district, Aleppo governorate). Furthermore, *"abuse takes place at home. Women are humiliated by their husbands. Parents are the reason for why their daughters are exposed to violence because they allow their husbands to beat their daughters and they never stand by their side."* (Woman from Daret Azza sub-district, Aleppo governorate).

Movement among women and girls is restricted due to safety concerns: *"there is no freedom to travel in our area because of the lack of safety and it's impossible for women to move easily, especially at night."* (Woman from Daret Azza sub-district, Aleppo governorate); especially in light of the sexual harassment they face in public spaces. As one adolescent girl stated: *"girls are treated unfairly. They are talked about badly, which ruins their reputation. They are flirted with when they walk down the street."* (Adolescent girl from Afrin sub-district, Aleppo governorate). The FGD participants noted that women and girls are the primary targets of GBV in this governorate mentioning specific groups such as girls, divorcees, widows and those persons with a disability.

Early/forced marriage is the coping strategy utilised by many parents as a protective measure against sexual violence in this governorate, with one male FGD participant, most likely a father, stating that *"it is better to make a match for our daughters which lets them avoid the source of sexual abuse at school."* (Man from Afrin sub-district, Aleppo governorate). While some FGD participants stated that *"women resort to silence due to customs and traditions. They rarely and secretly resort to the judicial authorities."* (Woman from Daret Azza sub-district, Aleppo governorate).

Others stated, *"when women are raped while they are kidnapped, they might commit suicide or be murdered by their own family after they are released,"* (Man from Al Bab sub-district, Aleppo governorate), highlighting how so-called honour killing is utilised to repair a family's reputation after a girl experiences perceived sexual violence in this governorate.

"People cannot move freely inside or outside Afrin due to the lack of safety." (Adolescent boy from Afrin sub-district, Aleppo governorate).

Restriction of Freedoms and Movement Restriction

In Aleppo governorate, women and girls are disproportionately impacted by the restriction of freedoms and movement restriction for various reasons. The reasons for restrictions that were most cited by FGD participants were custom and tradition, and safety and security. Specifically, one adolescent girl noted that *"the group with the greatest restrictions is women because of the customs and traditions."* (Adolescent girl from Daret Azza sub-district, Aleppo governorate), while another woman stated that *"women are subject to physical and social violence as well as social pressure and the deprivation of their rights."* (Woman from Daret Azza sub-district, Aleppo governorate). Another woman noted that restriction of freedoms is forced upon them by husbands and fathers but also by male siblings: *"Male siblings are in control, imposing restrictive dress codes."* (Woman from Jebel Saman sub-district, Aleppo governorate).

Many FGD participants stated that the restriction of freedoms and movement restriction are strongly linked to the risk of violence that women and girls face: *"Girls are at risk of being harassed and abducted in other communities."* (Adolescent boy from Al Bab sub-district, Aleppo governorate). Another adolescent boy stated that *"women are at risk of rape and harassment,"* (Adolescent boy from Al Bab sub-district, Aleppo governorate), and yet another adolescent boy stated that *"girls cannot move freely because they are afraid of sexual abuse."* (Adolescent boy from Afrin sub-district, Aleppo governorate).

Adolescent girl FGD participants noted that movement restrictions are linked to the fear of community members shaming and stigmatising them: *"Girls are afraid of gossip and flirting."* (Adolescent girl from Afrin sub-district, Aleppo governorate). FGD participants also noted that men and boys experience movement restriction related to the fear of abduction: *"Boys are afraid of kidnapping and robbing,"* (Adolescent girl from Afrin sub-district, Aleppo governorate), as well as arrest and detention: *"Young men are at risk of being arrested."* (Man from Afrin sub-district, Aleppo governorate).

Another adolescent girl noted the danger of explosive remnants as a reason for movement restriction and the fear of parents to let their children leave the home: *"In the outskirts of the city there are explosive remnants of the war and there are car bombs or mines in the markets, so we cannot always get out of our houses. Even our parents do not allow us for fear of being hurt."* (Adolescent girl from Daret Azza sub-district, Aleppo governorate).

"Repression, lack of education, solitude, doing house chores only, depression," (Woman from Jebel Saman sub-district, Aleppo governorate) are a few of the consequences that FGD participants noted as a result of movement restriction and restriction of freedoms. It was also noted that *"women cannot meet the needs of the home: sometimes they cannot go to work, and sometimes there is sexual exploitation."* (Man from Daret Azza sub-district, Aleppo governorate).

Civil Documentation

The lack of civil documentation in Aleppo governorate has led to several challenges as shared by the FGD participants. This includes restricting movement *"for*

men and boys. They try not to go out on isolated roads, especially at night. girls and women must be accompanied by a man." (Adolescent boy from Daret Azza sub-district, Aleppo governorate). Likewise, movement restriction impedes the pursuit of educational and employment opportunities because many *"girls and boys are deprived of recognised academic diplomas and thus lose their future,"* (Adolescent girl from Daret Azza sub-district, Aleppo governorate). It can also infringe upon persons' ability to assert property ownership: *"People have bought many estates recently, but they don't have official documentation because there are no official offices issuing such documents."* (Man from Afrin sub-district, Aleppo governorate).

FGD participants also noted the challenges associated with official and non-official documentation. One adult male stated that *"documents issued by the unofficial Syrian government are valid only in the liberated areas and are intended to obtain access to humanitarian assistance and facilitate the freedom of movement between liberated cities."* (Woman from Daret Azza sub-district, Aleppo governorate). An adolescent girl also pointed to the challenges of documentation and obtaining humanitarian assistance: *"even when receiving aid, personal identification cards are important and some people fake cards in order to get the aid."* (Adolescent girl from Daret Azza sub-district, Aleppo governorate).

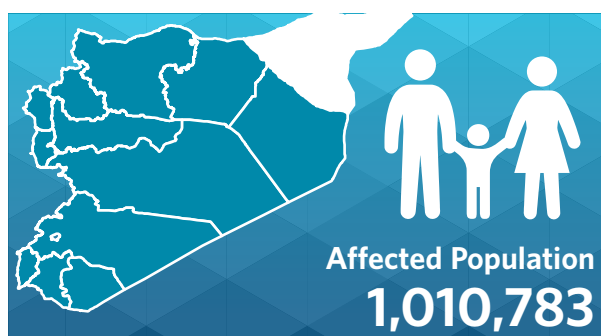
Another adolescent girl stated that *"not having official documents makes the person marginalised and unable to move or travel easily."* (Adolescent girl from Daret Azza sub-district, Aleppo governorate). While another woman stated that she does *"not want to obtain unofficial papers. Another group might come to the area and prosecute me for this."* (Woman from Afrin sub-district, Aleppo governorate).

Access to Services

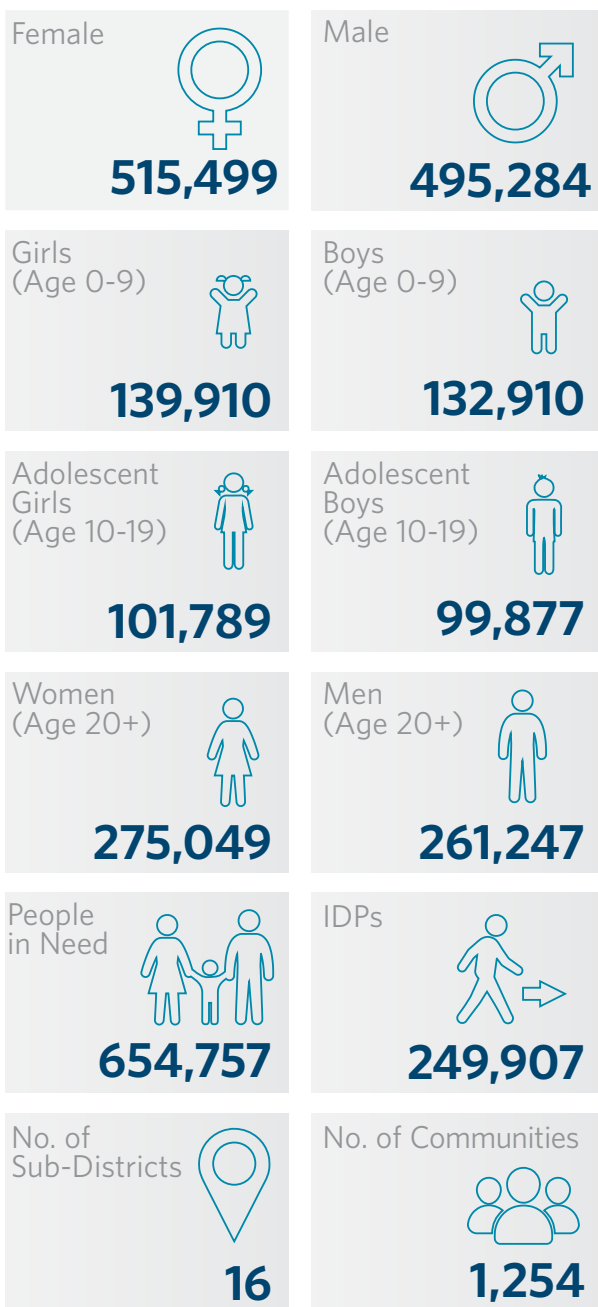
When asked about access to specialised GBV services, FGD participants noted that *"even good centres may not be available for a woman to go to if beaten by her husband for fear of what might people say about her."* (Adolescent girl from Daret Azza sub-district, Aleppo governorate). Thus, services are available and accessible by some as expressed by an adolescent girl when she stated that there are *"hospitals, relief centres and women's support centres. It is possible for everyone to get them. There are psychosocial support centres that are very useful."* (Adolescent boy from Daret Azza sub-district, Aleppo governorate).

Other FGD participants agreed that services are available, however distance, lack of transportation and customs and traditions serve as barriers to accessing them: *"There is only one office to support women. The difficulties to access these centres are related to transportation facilities and customs and traditions."* (Woman from Daret Azza sub-district, Aleppo governorate).

"Girls are more vulnerable to sexual and physical abuse than boys." (Adolescent girl from Daret Azza sub-district, Aleppo governorate)



Governorate Overview



Population Data, Al-Hasakeh

Al-Hasakeh

Affected Population, Types of Violence and Coping Mechanisms

Girls, divorced women and widows were identified to be the most vulnerable to gender-based violence in this governorate. One woman stated that *"girls are more vulnerable to violence due to customs, traditions and community culture,"* (Woman from Hole sub-district, Al-Hasakeh governorate) while *"most widows and divorced women do not discuss the subject of violence, especially sexual violence, for fear of the reaction of society."* (Woman from Hole sub-district, Al-Hasakeh governorate).

Other forms of violence identified by FGD participants were emotional/psychological, physical violence and economic violence particularly by family members. FGD participants stated that *"the elderly are vulnerable to verbal violence and women face physical violence, verbal violence, and economic violence. The husband, brother or father takes her monthly income or deprives her of her allowance."* (Woman from Aricha camp, Areesheh sub-district, Al-Hasakeh governorate). In addition, one woman stated that *"there are honour crimes in the community and the people affected are primarily the father, mother, parents, relatives and the victim, and the community in general."* (Woman from Aricha camp, Areesheh sub-district, Al-Hasakeh governorate).

Thus, FGD participants have expressed that customs and traditions are both the vehicle for violence to be perpetuated and serving as a barrier to disclose the violence that women, girls, men and boys experience in this governorate: *"Everyone is prone to harassment and violence, but we cannot talk about these cases because of the violence committed by families as well as the customs and traditions."* (Adolescent girl from Hole sub-district, Al-Hasakeh governorate). One adolescent girl stated that *"we are not able to talk about sexual violence, if it exists, because of the customs and traditions."* (Adolescent girl from Hole sub-district, Al-Hasakeh governorate). The persons most vulnerable to violence are girls, widows, divorcees, and persons with a disability.

Early/forced marriage was identified as a coping strategy utilised in this governorate in cases of sexual violence, as shared by an adolescent girl: *"A 12-year-old girl was lost and three days later she was found with evidence of torture and then forced to marry."* (Adolescent girl from Aricha camp, Areesheh sub-district, Al-Hasakeh governorate).

"The camp is like a large prison that we can move inside." (Man from Ras Al-Ain sub-district, Hasakeh governorate).

Restriction of Freedoms and Movement Restriction

In Hasakeh governorate, some focus group participants noted that *"there is no restriction of movement inside and outside the camp. We can move day and night and if we go outside the camp we take a leave from the camp"*

administration.” (Adolescent boy from Aricha camp, Areesheh sub-district, Al Hasakeh governorate). However, a vast majority of the focus group participants in this governorate stated that *“the specific reasons behind the restriction of women’s movements, especially girls, are the customs, traditions and culture of the society, but for men and young men, no one restricts them.”* (Woman from Aricha camp, Areesheh sub-district, Al Hasakeh governorate).

Some of the women participants noted that women, especially widowed and divorced women are most impacted by movement restrictions due to custom and traditions: *“Widows and divorcees are the most vulnerable group because of the culture of society.”* (Woman from Aricha camp, Areesheh sub-district, Al Hasakeh governorate). Some women also noted that movement restriction due to custom and tradition is strongly linked to protecting girls from sexual violence and the consequences it can have on her marriage prospects: *“Women’s movement is generally restricted due to customs and traditions, especially girls for fear of rape.”* (Woman from Hole sub-district, Al-Hasakeh governorate).

Adolescent girl focus group participants expressed that *“they stay in their tents and do not go out, and protect themselves by the father or mother or a relative or neighbour.”* (Adolescent girls from Aricha camp, Areesheh sub-district, Al Hasakeh governorate). Some women participants stated that when adolescent girls do leave their tents they must *“take a neighbour or family to the market, for example, to buy necessities.”* (Women from Aricha camp, Areesheh sub-district, Al Hasakeh governorate).

In addition, women stated that movement restrictions have become so constraining that a *“girl does not go out alone to public places,”* (Women from Aricha camp, Areesheh sub-district, Al Hasakeh governorate) nor can *“girls go from one sector to another without the approval of the parents.”* (Adolescent girl from Hole sub-district, Al-Hasakeh governorate). One woman even noted that a girl must be *“accompanied by her mother to the bathroom.”* (Woman from Aricha camp, Areesheh sub-district, Al Hasakeh governorate).

The adolescent girls in these focus group discussions expressed the negative impact that movement restriction has on them. Namely, *“feeling angry if you do not go out,”* (Adolescent girl from Aricha camp, Areesheh sub-district, Al Hasakeh governorate), and *“this affects our mental health and we often feel bored. We are unable to access the school sometimes.”* (Adolescent girl from Hole sub-district, Al-Hasakeh governorate).

Civil Documentation

In Al Hasakeh governorate, FGD participants expressed their concerns regarding what will happen once they can return to their place of origin. Will they have a home? Will they be able to obtain documents to prove ownership? Where will they live if they do not have documents? Many of the focus group participants worry what the impact of the lack of civil documentation will be on them while others noted present challenges due to lack of documents.

Specifically, one adolescent girl stated that *“people are unable to prove their identity or ownership, and are not free to move. People face the risk of arrest. Sedition arises between people due to the loss of houses and lands caused by the lack of documents proving them. This affects the human relations and can also cause people to be stopped at checkpoints.”* Some participants noted that the loss of documentation was due to confiscation: *“Confiscation when we arrive at the camp.”* (Woman from Aricha camp, Areesheh sub-district, Al Hasakeh governorate). Another woman noted that *“we could not register our children at birth, putting them at risk of lack of identity.”* (Man from Ras Al-Ain sub-district, Hasakeh governorate).

The lack of civil registries is another challenge that focus group participants expressed as a concern: *“There are problems related to obtaining official documents when returning to areas of shifted control because there is no place to obtain a declaration of ownership and there are no documents of ownership.”* (Woman from Aricha camp, Areesheh sub-district, Al Hasakeh governorate). And when documents are obtained, focus group participants stated that *“there are concerns that these documents will not be accepted by the Syrian government,”* (Man from Aricha camp, Areesheh sub-district, Al Hasakeh governorate). In addition, *“when we return to our state-controlled areas we will be arrested.”* (Woman from Hole sub-district, Al-Hasakeh governorate).

Others are not looking at the long-term consequences of not having civil documentation: *“We do not face real consequences, because here there are facilities inside the camp. For example, access to services and distributions does not require the presence of official documents, because these things are ready. Here, there is a very large facility. I have a special card from UNHCR with my name and a sector number, and I receive the distributions.”* (Man from Aricha camp, Areesheh sub-district, Al Hasakeh governorate).

Access to Services

In this governorate many FGD participants noted a shortage in services ranging from protection services, child-friendly spaces for girls, Shelter/NFI and livelihood opportunities. Namely, FGD participants stated that *“we do not know about these services (protection services),”* (Woman from Aricha camp, Areesheh sub-district, Al Hasakeh governorate) *“There are no child-friendly spaces and special places for women and girls,”* (Adolescent girl from Aricha camp, Areesheh sub-district, Al Hasakeh governorate) *“We need food and clothes, especially for children,”* (Woman from (Adolescent girl from Aricha camp, Areesheh sub-district, Al Hasakeh governorate) *“We need caravans instead of tents because we will be staying here in the camp.”* (Woman from Aricha camp, Areesheh sub-district, Al Hasakeh governorate)

Other FGD participants noted that there is *“difficult access for the disabled and the elderly to the bathroom and latrine service and difficulty in reaching the distribution places.”* (Woman from Aricha camp, Areesheh sub-district, Al Hasakeh governorate). Specific groups such as young widows and PwDs also experience difficulty accessing services. One woman stated that *“young widows find*

it difficult to leave their children in the tent, especially when distributions are made" (Woman from Aricha camp, Areesheh sub-district, Al Hasakeh governorate) and another woman stated that "there are people who are unable to reach these points, such as the elderly, persons with disabilities, and pregnant women." (Woman from Aricha camp, Areesheh sub-district, Al Hasakeh governorate). FGD participants expressed that "there are no judicial and local mechanisms to solve problems because there is no specific body or organisation defending the displaced in the camp. There are only tribal solutions within the camp," (Woman from Ras Al-Ain sub-district, Hasakeh governorate), while another woman stated that there are judicial mechanisms available however, "our customs and traditions do not allow us to resort to these mechanisms." (Woman from Hole sub-district, Al-Hasakeh governorate).

Focus group participants noted "for humanitarian aid, everyone gets aid, and no one is denied it. When people do not have documents, they take their share in a day or two. Most of the aid they get is food, health and all other supplies." (Woman from Aricha camp, Areesheh sub-district, Al Hasakeh governorate), while another participant stated that "outside the camp [civil documents] are requested, and the result is deprivation of distributions outside the camp." (Man from Ras Al-Ain sub-district, Hasakeh governorate).

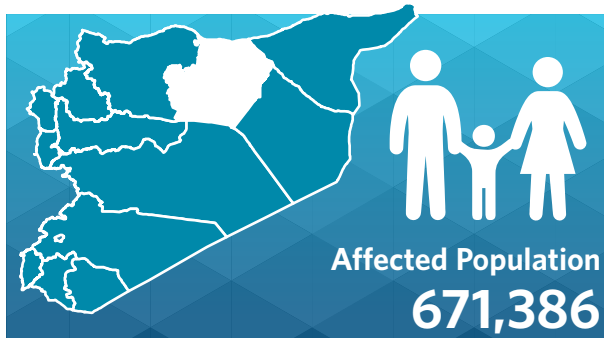
"The most vulnerable groups are the underage girls." (Adolescent girl from Aricha camp, Areesheh sub-district, Al Hasakeh governorate).

"Most widows and divorced women do not discuss the subject of violence, especially sexual violence, for fear of the reaction of society." (Woman from Hole sub-district, Al-Hasakeh governorate).

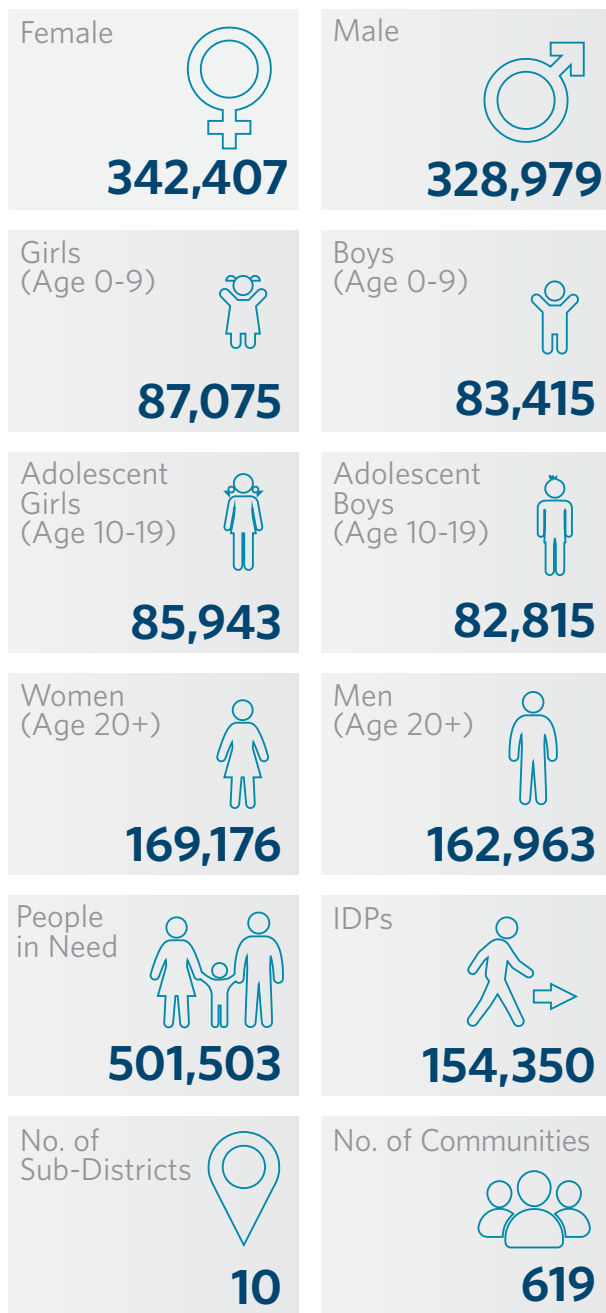
"Mentally disabled people suffer beating and swearing more." (Adolescent boy from Hole sub-district, Al-Hasakeh governorate).

Reported Coping Mechanisms in Response to Violence and Unmet Needs





Governorate Overview



Population Data, Ar-Raqqa

Ar-Raqqa

Affected Population, Types of Violence and Coping Mechanisms

In Ar-Raqqa governorate, women, girls, especially adolescent girls, widows, divorced, displaced, elderly women and persons with disabilities are the most impacted by various forms of GBV: *"Women are the most vulnerable to violence. Girls experience violence practiced by their parents. When girls want to go out, their mothers get worried. Boys are beaten by their parents. Mentally disabled people are tied up in order not to hurt people. Divorced women and widows are insulted whatever they do. Old people are beaten, insulted, and neglected."* (Adolescent girl from Ein Issa sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate).

Boys were also identified as an affected population specifically to physical violence by family members, employers and community members, however not to the same extent as girls are to physical violence. Namely, *"the most vulnerable to such beatings are boys and girls. Significantly, boys are beaten but not like girls."* (Adolescent girl from Karama sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate).

Many adolescent girls and women noted that *"girls are afraid of sexual harassment"*. (Woman from Ein Issa sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate). One adolescent girl highlighted the sexual harassment that adolescent girls face on a daily basis: *"A young man says words to girls such as 'you have a beautiful waist', 'your eyes are beautiful'."* (Adolescent girl from Karama sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate). In addition, girls are harassed when attempting to complete the most basic of daily tasks: *"girls who go to fetch water from waterways are harassed by young men."* (Adolescent girl from Karama sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate).

In Ar-Raqqa governorate, many of the women and adolescent girls noted the patriarchal community within which they live. They say they are controlled by custom and tradition, and identified the triggers to various forms of GBV against adolescent girls as well as the stigma and discrimination they face within families and in their communities: *"Poverty, traditions and customs, the small space, the bad administration of the camp, and the communal bathrooms at the camp. There is no safe space for women and children."* (Adolescent boy from Ein Issa sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate). *"When a husband dies, people begin to hold women accountable for all their actions. When she leaves the house, she is accused of being disrespectful and goes out without any deterrent."* (Adolescent girl from Karama sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate).

Sexual violence is a form of GBV identified by FGD participants in this governorate and one adolescent girl adequately summarises the various forms and locations where sexual violence occurs, and the coping mechanism employed, namely silence:

"Women and girls are the most vulnerable to sexual violence. Somebody might push us intentionally while we

are walking. Toilets are shared by both men and women. The doors of the toilets cannot be closed. I cannot go to the toilet alone because at any time somebody might try to open the door while I am inside. When we go to bring water, we are abused with bad words. We are told bad words such as "I like your breasts" and "your body is beautiful". We cannot tell our parents about this abuse because there will be a dispute. It is better to keep it as a secret. Some people say that a girl does not receive such insults unless she is loose. Soldiers sometimes try to abuse girls. During the distribution of aid, we are abused. Some men touch the women standing in the queue. We cannot say anything. When we go to the market to buy something, again some men come and try to touch us." (Adolescent girl from Ein Issa sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate).

In addition: "Women, especially widows and divorced women who have children, work for long hours to earn money. Some sell clothes. Such women are vulnerable to sexual abuse." (Adolescent boy from Ein Issa sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate).

Honour killings were identified as occurring due to the crisis but on rare occasions: "There is [honour killing], but very little. If it exists, the woman is the victim, she is killed and this is a disgrace for the family, and for her sisters who may never marry because of it." (Woman from Karama sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate). Meanwhile, FGD participants noted that "kidnapping increased during the crisis. The crisis has increased this, especially during the occupation of the Free Army and ISIS." (Adolescent girl from Karama sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate).

In order to protect girls from the risk of sexual violence, parents arrange early/forced marriages for their daughters: "There are many widows who are too young (16-17-18 years old). Such women have children. In our community, once a girl becomes an adult, her family forces her to get married." (Adolescent girl from Ein Issa sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate). However one woman stated that early/forced marriage is used to alleviate challenges with finances and/or food insecurity: "The early marriage rate is high for young girls (14-15-16-18). Parents force their daughters to marry at an early age to get rid of their expenses, and to avoid bad experiences." (Woman from Karama sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate).

Other girls use early/forced marriage as a coping mechanism for the stringent restrictions placed on them due to customs, traditions and fear of stigma should they experience a GBV incidence: "Yes, there is a difference between persons. For example, we girls (adolescents) cannot move freely. We can go to school, but we cannot move as often as we like, because our parents prevent us. When they see one of us moving freely as she likes, people start talking about her as being disrespectful because of the nature of our habits, especially the girls because we do not have the right to do so. Girls only work at home, but when a girl gets married she can go out to her relatives or to her friends or wherever she wants, and that's what motivates the girls to get married." (Adolescent girl from Karama sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate)

Many of the women and adolescent girl FGD participants expressed that "there is nothing a girl can do to protect herself, but stay silent and accept reality. Moreover, they

hold her responsible for whatever happens." (Adolescent girl from Karama sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate). Another adolescent girl stated that "if a girl is hit or something happens to her, she cannot complain and cannot go to the doctor or to a clinic or the like." (Adolescent girl from Karama sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate). As stated by another adolescent girl: "They cannot resort to anyone." (Adolescent girl from Karama sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate).

If there are places for women and adolescent girls to access specialised GBV services, one woman expressed that "they cannot resort to it. If she complains, she will be considered a rebel who wants to act like men, and that is inappropriate in our culture." (Woman from Karama sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate). Or, as another woman put it: "There is a centre for women and a court, but women usually do not go there because people would start saying verbally abusing them and their families." (Woman from Karama sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate). By contrast, "boys often recover their rights in person or make groups of their friends and fight back." (Adolescent girl from Karama sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate)

Restriction of Freedoms and Movement Restriction

In Ar-Raqqa governorate, women and adolescent girls expressed that there is extreme movement restriction imposed by the family due to custom and traditions as well as for safety and security concerns. If women and girls leave their homes and camps unaccompanied they are discriminated and stigmatised, even if they have no choice to do so in order to meet their basic necessities. One woman stated: "As for the movement outside the camp, there is a restriction on the movement of women because there are rumours that there are women who leave the camp to work in prostitution in the town of Ayn Issa." (Woman from Ein Issa sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate). Another woman stated that "women can move but there is difficulty if the place is far away. They must be accompanied by their male family members to protect them." (Woman from Karama sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate).

Women and adolescent girls experience the most movement restriction because of the sexual violence they are at risk for in unlit areas, insecure tents and bathroom facilities: "Girls are sexually abused and exploited in the communal bathrooms and inside their tents. The tents can be easily breached because they are not well made." (Adolescent boy from Ein Issa sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate).

Other groups vulnerable to movement restriction are women with disabilities and elderly women: "The disabled and the elderly need someone to take them to their destination," (Woman from Karama sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate) due to the "lack of transportation and lack of security in the region that prevents them from going anywhere alone, except with the husband or one of her brothers." (Adolescent girl from Karama sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate).

Civil Documentation

In Ar-Raqqa governorate, "many people lost their

identity cards because of destruction or confiscation by ISIS militants.” (Woman from Karama sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate). Yet, the lack of civil documentation imposes many obstacles to the lives of all, but particularly for women and girls, bearing in the mind the many movement restrictions that are already imposed on them by custom, tradition, protection, coping mechanisms and fear: “There are many obstacles for everyone. Those who do not have official documents cannot even move outside the camp.” (Woman from Ein Issa sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate). The added layer of inadequate documentation when attempting to pass checkpoints and/or access services makes life more challenging. One woman stated that “many boys, girls and young children do not have proof of their identity,” (Woman from Karama sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate), while an adolescent girl alluded to the benefits of having civil documentation when she said that “those who have IDs and family record books live better”. (Adolescent girl from Ein Issa sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate). This presumably referred to the educational services and humanitarian assistance those with civil documentation are able to access.

FGD participants stated that “our documents are in the archives of the camp administration and we cannot be sure that they are protected and exist. Only when we want to move from the camp, then we will know if they exist or if we can get out without them.” (Man from Ein Issa sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate). Obtaining civil documentation that will be officially recognised would require putting parents and their daughters at risk of violence, abduction and/or arrest: “People are afraid of taking their girls to other governorates to get official documentations.” (Adolescent girl from Mansura sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate).

FGD participants acknowledged that “there are identification certificates issued by the camp administration for the displaced. There is a marriage certificate from the administration and a statement or notification of birth from the hospitals where the birth takes place. Conversely, there is no form or paper given to the refugees.” (Man from Ein Issa sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate). However, many expressed that “there are no civil documents or legal assistance.” (Adolescent girl from Ein Issa sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate) and that “unquestionably, there is fear in the case of obtaining non-official documents. If we went to the [government] controlled areas and they discovered that they were forged, we might be imprisoned.” (Woman from Karama sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate).

Access to Services

In Ar-Raqqa governorate, FGD participants noted that services—educational, health, legal and specialised GBV services—are available however many services are not sufficient, such as PSS: “girls can get health care from an NGO mobile clinic. This clinic opens three days a week. They can also get help from the Kurdish Red Crescent clinic, which opens twice a week. They can get permission to go to private hospitals in the city. However, there are no centres for social support.” (Adolescent boy from Ein Issa sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate).

Another adolescent supports this opinion that WGSSs

are difficult for women and girls to access: “There is a house for women, but it’s only part time, and women cannot go because of other people’s insults and verbal abuse.” (Adolescent girl from Karama sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate). Some adolescent FGD participants noted that “we have services and schools but most of them are inactive. There are only four schools in operation. They said they will open 10 schools this year, and they will bring books to the students, but we do not believe that.” (Adolescent girl from Karama sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate).

In addition: “There is a dispensary where vaccines and medicines are provided. There are also some doctors in it. But the dispensary is far away. The nearby dispensary was burned and no longer works. We need to walk for a long distance and there is no transportation.” (Adolescent girl from Karama sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate).

Although many services are available, customs and traditions serve as a huge barrier to access to services as many women and adolescent girls face discrimination and stigma if they attempt to access these services: “These services cater for everyone, including adults and children, as mentioned. We have a court, a council, a municipality and even a women’s home, but women and girls cannot go there, because if one of them goes, the community will say inappropriate words about her.” (Adolescent girl from Karama sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate).

PwDs face challenges in accessing services because adequate transportation is not available, and/or the facility is not wheelchair accessible: “The disabled cannot go to school because it is not equipped and because of the difficulty of getting there and back. How will they go to school and learn in class, if they cannot walk and sit on a wheelchair? The streets are not paved, so they cannot go to school on their wheelchairs.” (Adolescent girl from Karama sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate).

FGD participants also noted that humanitarian assistance is inaccessible if there is a lack of civil documentation: “Some people do not get humanitarian aid because they do not have official documentations.” (Adolescent girl from Mansura sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate). If such assistance is accessible, women and girls fear the threat of sexual harassment and violence that is known to happen in distribution queues. One adolescent girl said that “when there were big crowds around distribution points, there were cases of harassment that led to problems between families. This prevents the divorced or widowed women from going to the distribution, as they don’t want to be exposed to insults.” (Adolescent girl from Karama sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate).

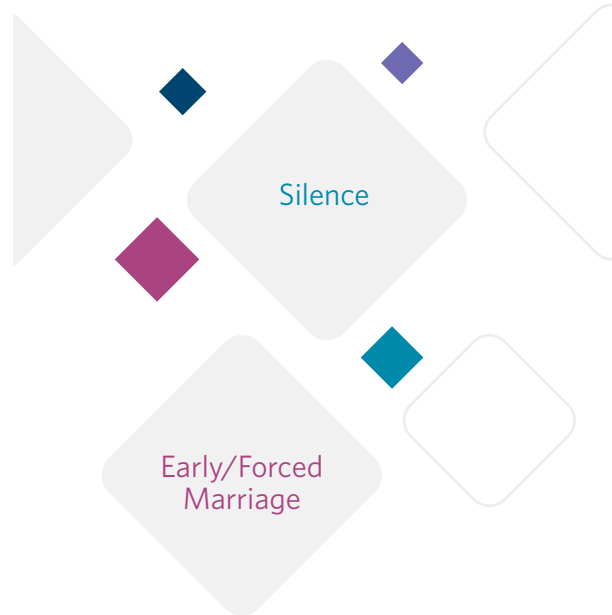
Furthermore, another adolescent girl stated that “we are sexually abused while distributing aid. It is dark there because there is no electricity.” (Adolescent girl from Ein Issa sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate). Also: “For the disabled, their parents go to receive the distributions instead. If the disabled person is a man and he does not have a friend or family member who claims his share, then he does not get it because of his inability to go out. Nobody comes with his distributions.” (Adolescent girl from Karama sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate).

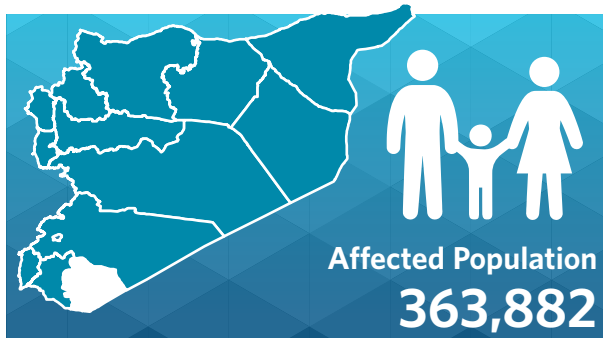
FGD participants also discussed other services that are challenging to access such as water. Many girls are potentially put at risk of GBV when they travel outside of the camp to fetch water and fuel: *"We have water because we are on the banks of the Euphrates River, but the water network is not provided for everyone. More than half of the people do not have access to water, which makes them carry water from the Euphrates on their heads. Girls and women transport water for their home and livestock cows and sheep."* (Adolescent girl from Karama sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate).

"The most common thing is customs and traditions, and that makes the father beat his daughters. If he does not do so, he is not considered a man. The mother says he must discipline you and educate you. If he does not do so, how will you be raised up with morals?" (Adolescent girl from Karama sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate).

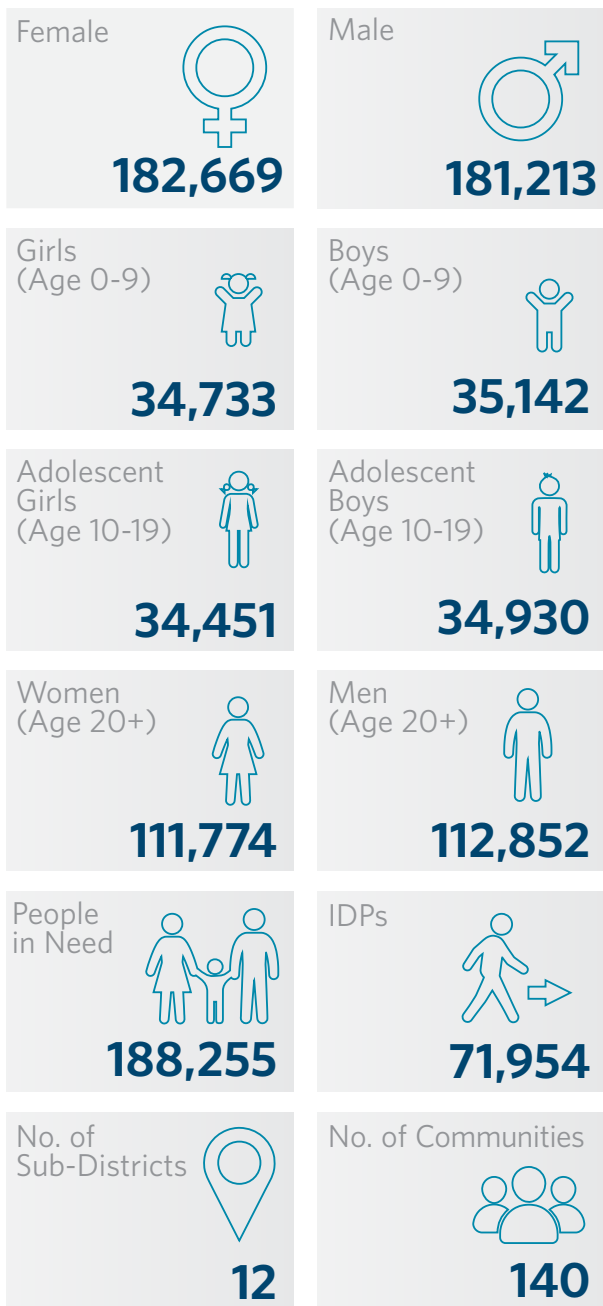
"If someone comes to address a girl, young men start talking about her." (Adolescent girl from Karama sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate).

Reported Coping Mechanisms in Response to Violence and Unmet Needs





Governorate Overview



Population Data, As-Sweida

As-Sweida

Affected Population, Types of Violence, and Coping Mechanisms

"It is a patriarchal community, and women are always the ones subjected to violence and deprived of their rights." (Woman from As-sweida sub-district, As-Sweida governorate).

In As-Sweida governorate, FGD participants identified rape, sexual harassment, early/forced marriage (girls and boys), abduction, honour killings and family violence experienced by primarily women and girls. One adolescent girl expressed that *"fears you must confront in our community are psychological violence, hurt, harm, humiliation, and mockery"*. (Adolescent girl from As-sweida sub-district, As-Sweida governorate).

Another stated that *"parents abuse their children by beating, terrifying and torturing them"*. (Adolescent girl from As-sweida sub-district, As-Sweida governorate). One woman stated that *"honour killings are very frequent. This phenomenon is increasing because of the internet and immorality."* (Woman from As-sweida sub-district, As-Sweida governorate). Her comments highlight how technology, i.e. texting and social media, is used to perpetuate GBV. Women and girls use silence as a negative coping mechanism out of fear of societal condemnation of the GBV incident she has experienced, particularly for sexual violence. Namely, one woman stated that *"in cases of rape, girls stay silent because of tradition and fear of scandal."* (Woman from As-sweida sub-district, As-Sweida governorate).

Adolescent girls, women, internally displaced, widows and married women were identified as the most vulnerable to GBV in this governorate. One woman stated that *"teenage girls are the most prone to sexual violence,"* (Woman from As-sweida sub-district, As-Sweida governorate) and an adolescent girl stated that *"women in general and wives in particular are more affected by violence."* (Adolescent girl from As-sweida sub-district, As-Sweida governorate). Adolescent FGD participants stated that *"habits and traditions may restrict women and girls' movement"*. (Adolescent girl from As-sweida sub-district, As-Sweida governorate).

In As Sweida governorate, some women resort to family support: *"It is possible to turn to your father, mother, or in-laws."* (Adolescent girl from As-sweida sub-district, As-Sweida governorate). Other choose silence: *"Women are weaker, and the community prevents her from talking."* (Woman from As-sweida sub-district, As-Sweida governorate). For others, self-defence is their coping strategy when they experience a GBV incident: *"Nobody is going to stand by her side. She should be strong and defend herself."* (Woman from As-sweida sub-district, As-Sweida governorate).

Restriction of Freedoms and Movement Restrictions

In As Sweida governorate, some FGD participants stated that *"we move freely and there are no restrictions"*. (Adolescent girl from As-sweida sub-district, As-Sweida governorate).

governorate). However, the overwhelming sentiment by FGD participants was expressed by this adolescent girl: *"There is no sense of safety at night. If we try to go for a walk, we feel afraid."* (Adolescent girl from As-sweida sub-district, As-Sweida governorate).

There was also the sentiment that *"children and women are most likely to be the victims of abduction,"* (Adolescent girl from As-sweida sub-district, As-Sweida governorate) if they were to leave their homes. Adolescent girl FGD participants also expressed that *"habits and traditions may restrict women and girls' movement."* Lastly, a woman FGD participant noted the challenges faced by divorced women when she said that *"divorced women are the most vulnerable to restrictions and violence."*

Civil Documentation

FGD participants did not share experiences on civil documentation for this governorate

Access to Services

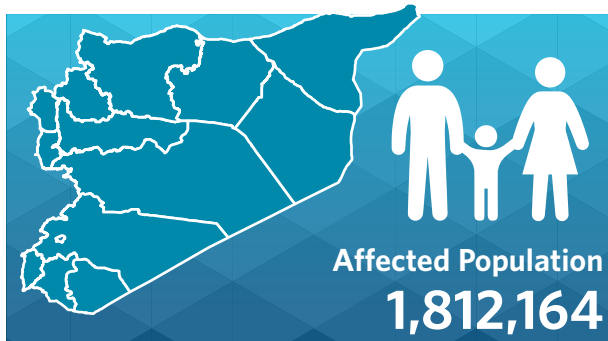
When seeking specialised GBV services, women and girl FGD participants said they find them at women's centres, as well as local legal services, where available: *"I only know about WGSSs."* (Woman from As-sweida sub-district, As-Sweida governorate).

"Women should gain the physical strength and skills to defend herself. If she gets raped, she could resort to available associations that have several services which help psychologically, socially, legally, and medically." (Woman from As-sweida sub-district, As-Sweida governorate).

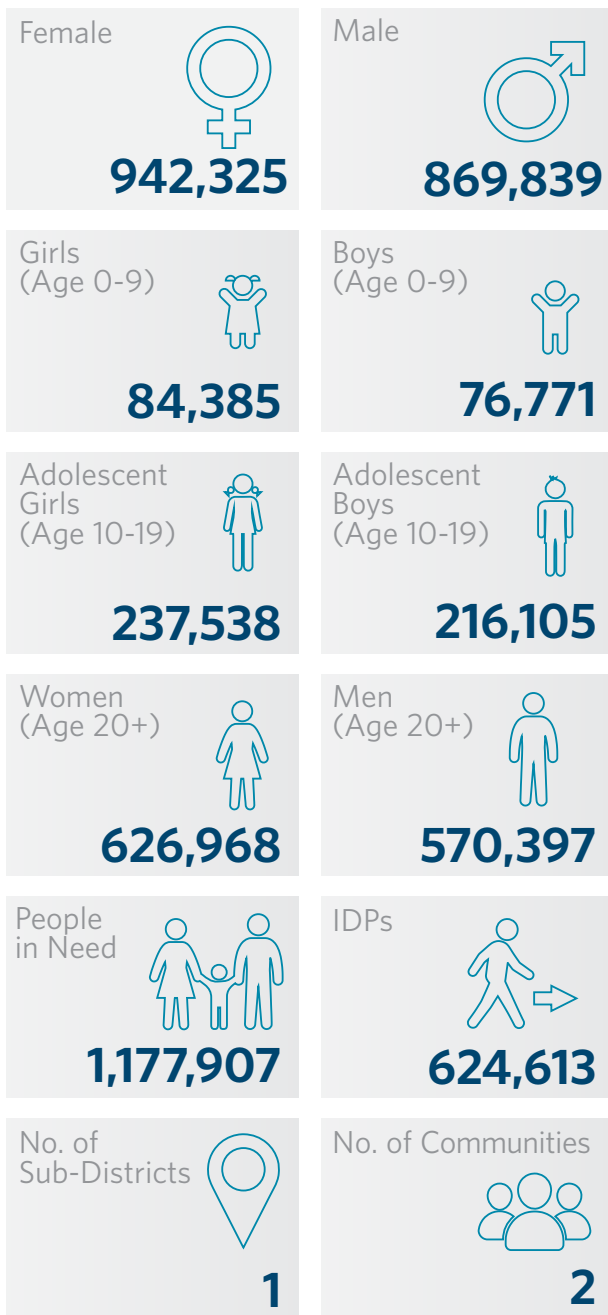
"I know a woman who was physically abused by her husband. She turned to the women's safe space. Now, she is in a good situation after she got the help needed from the services available in the centre." (Adolescent girl from As-sweida sub-district, As-Sweida governorate).

Reported Coping Mechanisms in Response to Violence and Unmet Needs





Governorate Overview



Population Data, Damascus

Damascus

Affected Population, Types of Violence, and Coping Mechanisms

"Girls are the most vulnerable to sexual violence at home, on the street and in closed areas." (Adolescent girl from Damascus sub-district, Damascus governorate).

In Damascus governorate, FGD participants identified sexual violence, physical violence (e.g. domestic violence), and so-called honour killings as forms for of GBV experienced by girls, widows, divorcees and women in general.

FGD participants identified over-crowding within shelters and homes, as well as on the street as places where violence, and particularly sexual violence, is perpetrated. One woman stated that *"risks of violence increase more when girls and boys live in houses that have bigger families in crowded suburbs"*. (Woman from Damascus sub-district, Damascus governorate). An adolescent girl noted that *"children are also exposed to sexual violence (harassment and rape) in the street, in abandoned places and in shelters because of overcrowding."* (Adolescent girl from Damascus sub-district, Damascus governorate). Furthermore: *"Honour-killings take place but are kept a secret to safeguard the family as all its members might be affected as a result,"* (Woman from Damascus sub-district, Damascus governorate).

This woman's statement highlights the culture of silence surrounding those who experience GBV, and how social norms govern how survivors cope with it. Likewise, it shows how families and communities respond to a survivor of GBV. When a survivor experiences sexual violence, one woman stated that the coping strategy is *"silence. Only recently, women have turned to humanitarian and woman support centres to receive medical care and legal advice, although always in secrecy."* (Woman from Damascus sub-district, Damascus governorate). Another stressed secretiveness, rather than privacy and confidentiality, to discuss how and where violence is disclosed: *"Women, girls, and boys mostly remain silent after suffering violence in order to prevent bigger risks. They might also resort to safe spaces in order to receive medical, health or legal services because the location is secret and provides protection in case violence is repeated."* (Woman from Damascus sub-district, Damascus governorate).

By comparison, men are perceived as *"meeting violence with violence, and resorting to security centres. A small percentage turn to legal and psychological services that are currently considered better than what they were before."* (Woman from Damascus sub-district, Damascus governorate).

Restriction of Freedoms and Movement Restrictions

In Damascus governorate, women FGD participants reflected upon the restrictive context in which women and girls are living within this governorate: *"There are*

customs that limit their movements and force them to stay at home.” (Woman from Damascus sub-district, Damascus governorate). FGD participants noted that movement restrictions are experienced by various groups for specific reasons. Namely “girls’ movement is restricted for fear of abduction and rape; children, for fear of kidnapping and organ trafficking; divorced women out of fear for society because people look at them as flawed women due to customs and traditions; and widows, for fear of people’s gossip.” (Adolescent girl from Damascus sub-district, Damascus governorate).

In Damascus governorate, FGD participants identified the multiple consequences of movement restriction, as well as the restrictions on women’s and girls’ freedoms. One adolescent girl stated that movement restriction results in the **“fear of everything,”** and she elaborated with a list of the detrimental psychological impacts that movement restrictions have on adolescent girls: *“Tension, depression, weak character, living without a goal, and the inability to realise dreams.”* (Adolescent girl from Damascus sub-district, Damascus governorate). Another adolescent girl identified further consequences of movement restriction: *“Not being allowed to come or go freely; not being able to make decisions; being prevented from raising children her own way; pressures from in-laws; not being allowed to work; and forfeiting the simplest rights (e.g. healthcare).”* (Adolescent girl from Damascus sub-district, Damascus governorate)

Civil Documentation

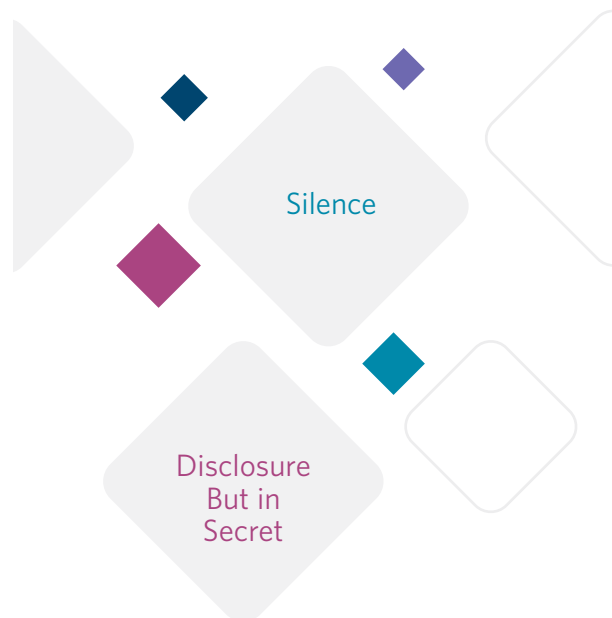
In Damascus governorate, one woman FGD participant stated that the lack of civil documentation negatively impacts the lives of Syrians: *“The community receives humanitarian distributions. However, obstacles are present in the form of numerous civil papers in order to ensure the rights, displacement, and the way employees treat people.”*

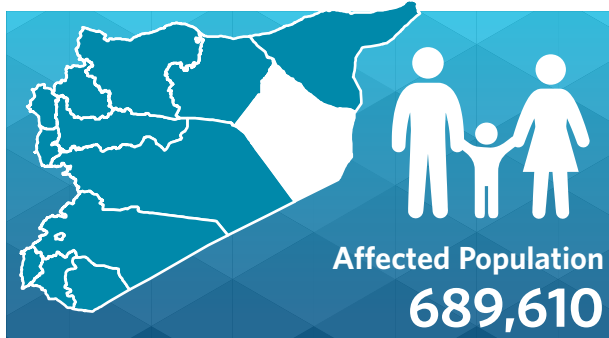
Access to Services

FGD participants in this governorate stated that *“there are legal avenues but these are unused because of the laws forcing perpetrators to marry their victims.”* (Woman from Damascus sub-district, Damascus governorate). The FGD participants recommended increased awareness sessions within the governorate to improve GBV survivors access to specialised services. Namely, *“repeated group lectures that talk about women’s issues in their lives and at home.”* (Woman from Damascus sub-district, Damascus governorate), as well as *“questions and legal lectures to let women know their rights and how to act.”* (Woman from Damascus sub-district, Damascus governorate).

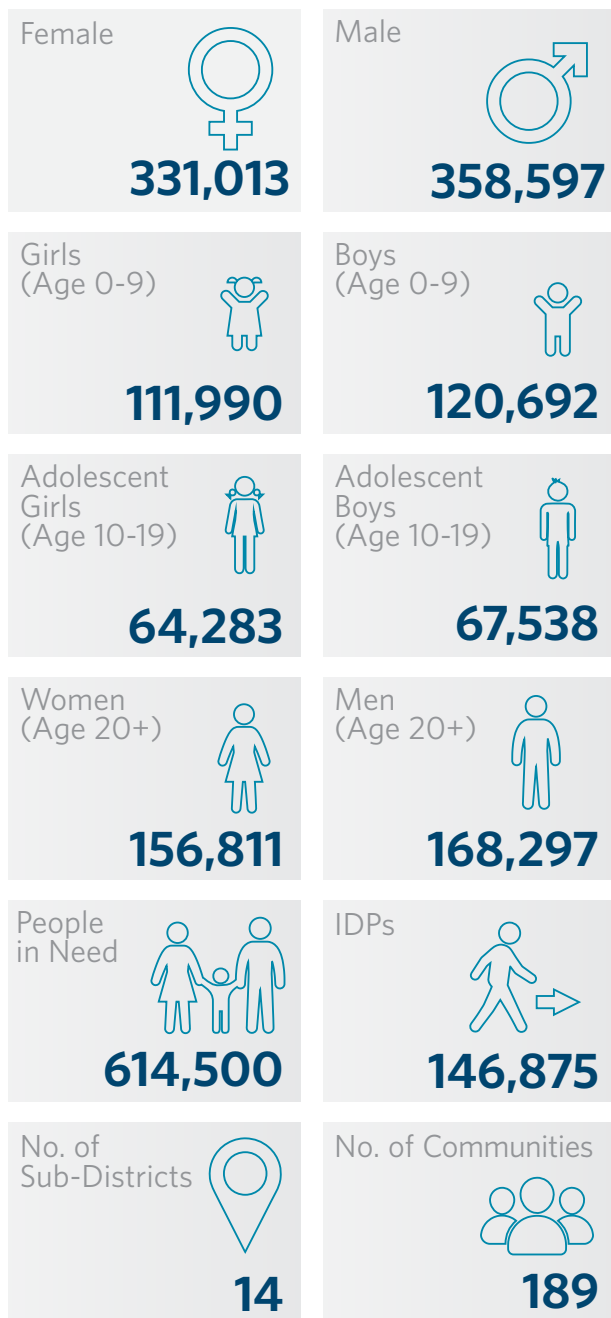
“Women are more prone to being beaten and suffering violence committed by men, in particular our husbands. Women cannot take any decisions at home, and their only job is to clean and serve. Women always hear words that let them feel that they are less important and worth less than men.” (Woman from Damascus sub-district, Damascus governorate).

Reported Coping Mechanisms in Response to Violence and Unmet Needs





Governorate Overview



Population Data, Deir-ez-Zor

Deir-ez-Zor

Affected Population, Types of Violence, and Coping Mechanisms

In Deir-ez-Zor governorate, women in general overwhelmingly experience GBV, with domestic violence being the most cited form of GBV: *"Women are most vulnerable to violence in all respects in our community, especially by the husband. The husband would deprive the wife of her rights and marry two or three times (polygamy), and leave her or divorce her and deprive her of the rights."* (Woman from Kisreh sub-district, Deir-ez-Zor governorate). Furthermore, the FGD participants shared that *"yes, there is violence against women, especially working women. There is great fear on the part of women, and especially fear of her husband's family."* (Woman from Kisreh sub-district, Deir-ez-Zor governorate).

One FGD participant stated that *"there are many types of violence that women are subjected to such as humiliation, beatings and divorce,"* (Woman from Aricha camp, Areesheh sub-district, Al Hasakeh governorate), while another woman shared that *"because of polygamy and early marriage, there are many children who are not raised by their own parents, as a result of the separation of parents in general. These children are not treated fairly. No one is responsible for raising them or meeting their living requirements, which makes them join armed groups."* (Woman from Kisreh sub-district, Deir-ez-Zor governorate).

Women and girls in Deir-ez-Zor governorate resort to community mechanisms as well as women and girls' safe spaces as coping strategies: *"We treat cases of violence by seeing both parties and listening to them both. We solve their problems through written commitment and recover their rights, if any, and oblige the husband to write a pledge not to hit his wife again."* (Woman from Kisreh sub-district, Deir-ez-Zor governorate). Meanwhile, an adolescent girl mentioned community support mechanisms for GBV support: *"There are awareness centres within the council where an old woman advises girls and women. She is not a specialist but has experience as a result of her long life."* (Adolescent girl from Kisreh sub-district, Deir-ez-Zor governorate).

However, another FGD participant stated that *"most likely, such problems are not solved because, according to the culture of Deir ez-Zor, the man refuses to submit to these councils and divorces his wife instead."* (Woman from Aricha camp, Areesheh sub-district, Al Hasakeh governorate). Other FGD participants identified the services they access in order to address GBV, namely WGSSs: *"I work at the Women's Protection Centre. We have many problems that we solve by bringing together the parties and then reconciling them. If the problem is not resolved, they are referred to the Prosecution Board."* (Adolescent girl from Kisreh sub-district, Deir-ez-Zor governorate).

Another FGD participant stated that the WGSS can serve as a protective buffer to domestic violence but not necessarily from the threat of divorce that is used as a weapon to control women from escaping an

abusive intimate partner: *"Now, a woman can go and file a complaint against her husband without fear as before, but her husband will divorce her afterwards."* (Adolescent girl from Kisreh sub-district, Deir-ez-Zor governorate).

Restriction of Freedoms and Movement Restriction

In Deir-ez-Zor, FGD participants would initially state that movement is not restricted – but then continue to highlight the many challenges they face in moving from one area to the other, especially if civil documentation is not available, and even in medical emergencies. One adolescent girl explained that *"a transit permit is needed which we must use at checkpoints, especially for the residents of Deir ez-Zor when they move to nearby areas. The girls need this document to cross into the areas of Al-Hasakeh and Qamishli. If there is an emergency, military vehicles enter, or else they have to seek permission. For example, one of the residents of the area was shot at a wedding party at night, and when he was taken by the ambulance, those responsible for the barriers asked if he had official permission to leave."* (Adolescent girl from Kisreh sub-district, Deir-ez-Zor governorate). Another woman stated that customs and traditions prove to be the biggest obstacle to freedom of movement: *"There is no restriction on women's movement. There are weak women who surrender their independence to the control of men, and then there are women living in complete freedom."* (Woman from Kisreh sub-district, Deir-ez-Zor governorate)

Civil Documentation

In Deir-ez-zor, adolescent girls do not have civil identification cards and must rely on family books or identification certificates. One adolescent girl stated that, *"we, as girls under the age of 18, do not have civil IDs so we use identification certificates or family books. Family books are not accepted at checkpoints. We cannot go to other areas using the family book."* (Adolescent girl from Kisreh sub-district, Deir-ez-Zor governorate). A woman stated that *"we cannot register new births,"* (Woman from Aricha camp, Areeshah sub-district, Al Hasakeh governorate), while unregistered children and their mothers are placed in vulnerable positions because birth certificates are often necessary to access many services including health, food and shelter.

Once women and girls have the identification certificate, the challenges they experience are not necessarily alleviated. One woman pointed out that *"this certificate is recognised only in northern Syria. A person must check the civil registration centre in Damascus or Deir ez-Zor to register a new child or issue a new identity card to be able to move within the provinces inside Syria. We suffer a lot because of this problem."* (Woman from Aricha camp, Areeshah sub-district, Al Hasakeh governorate).

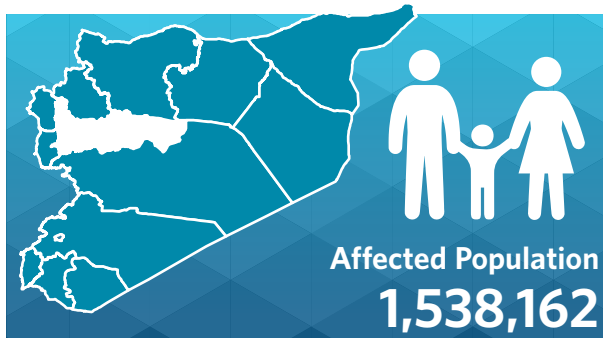
Access to Services

In Deir-ez Zor, the FGD participants noted that *"there are awareness centres within the Council where an old woman advises girls and women. She is not a specialist but has experience as a result of her long life,"* (Adolescent girl from Kisreh subdistrict, Deir-ez-Zor governorate), as well as *"literacy courses at the centre for girls who have*

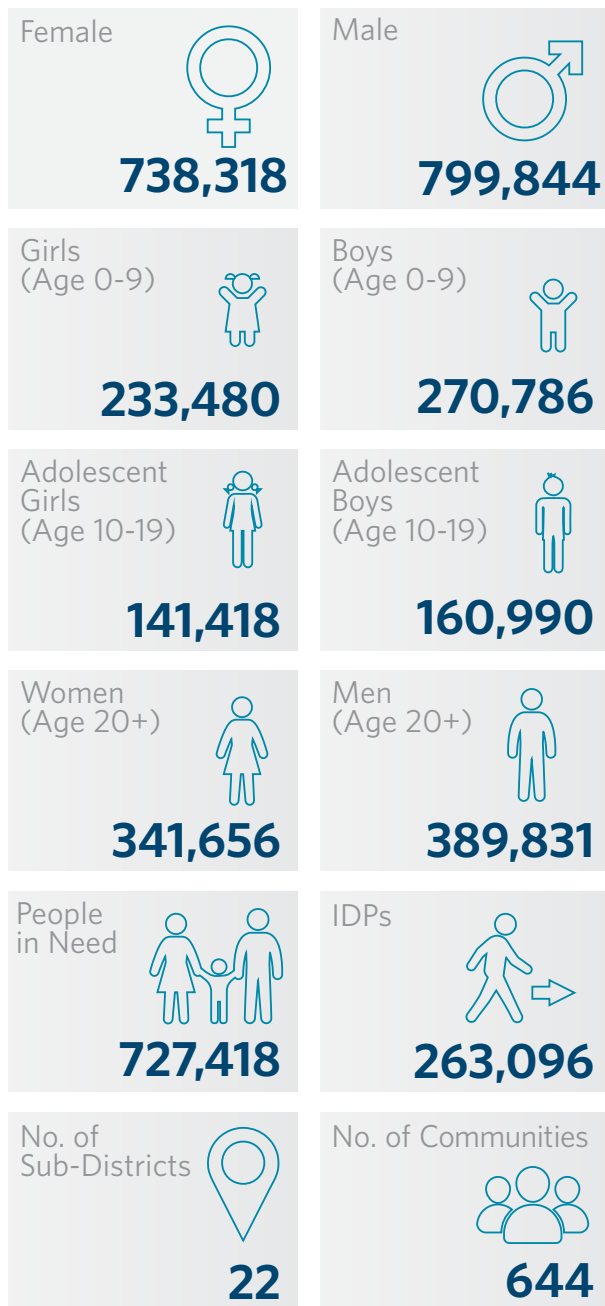
missed education. They promised us that there would be courses and employment opportunities for girls in sewing workshops, but the project has not yet been implemented." (Adolescent girl from Kisreh sub-district, Deir-ez-Zor governorate). However, FGD participants did not identify the challenges they face in accessing services nor the services that need to be improved upon in order to adequately serve GBV survivors.

Reported Coping Mechanisms in Response to Violence and Unmet Needs





Governorate Overview



Population Data, Hama

Hama

Affected Population, Types of Violence, and Coping Mechanisms

Hama governorate FGD participants noted family violence, sexual violence and harassment as forms of GBV in their homes and communities. One adolescent girl stated that *"violence in the family is from the mother and father or brother and older sister. They also control our finances and stop us from leaving the house or visiting friends."* (Adolescent girl from Masyaf sub-district, Hama governorate). One woman FGD participant shared the marital rape she experiences: *"my husband forces me to have sex. I cannot prevent him, and I feel disgusted and insulted afterwards."* (Woman from Masyaf sub-district, Hama governorate).

Another woman expressed her concerns about sexual violence, as it can impact her daughters as well as her son: *"Sexual violence exists outside and within their married lives. I have fears about my daughters and I always try to get them to know about it, but I have concerns about my 11-year-old son being more harassed than his brothers, especially in the light of the crisis and poverty we are experiencing, and the tendency of adolescents to watch pornographic films and videos."* (Woman from Masyaf sub-district, Hama governorate).

The FGD participants said that women and girls are the most affected by violence in this governorate: *"Women are always the most vulnerable to violence"* and *"Girls are always more vulnerable to violence."* (Adolescent girl from Masyaf sub-district, Hama governorate). They are also the most subjected to movement restriction: *"It is always women who are restricted. Men can control their movements and work and study. The exception is in open societies, where women move rather easily and wear what they want. But no matter how liberated the women are, I think men constantly watch them and express their observations and desires, even though they must hide them from society."* (Woman from Masyaf sub-district, Hama governorate).

One adolescent girl said that *"boys do not need protection from violence."* (Adolescent girl from Masyaf sub-district, Hama governorate). The coping strategies employed in this governorate to address GBV include self-defence: *"I protect myself by protecting my body from beatings. Sometimes, I cover my head and run away to a safe room. Unfortunately, this is all I can do to alleviate the physical pain."* (Woman from Masyaf sub-district, Hama governorate). Others access GBV specialised services: *"I started to solve my problems by talking to a social worker and the psychologist."* (Adolescent girl from Masyaf sub-district, Hama governorate).

Restriction of Freedoms and Movement Restriction

In Hama governorate, when asked about the group most likely to have restricted movement, participants responded that *"girls aged 11 to 20 years were more likely to have restricted movement."* (Woman from Masyaf sub-district, Hama governorate). FGD participants in this governorate identified that movement restriction by

parents, fathers and husbands is rooted in customs and traditions. According to one adolescent girl: *"I cannot have a friend or talk to any boy, especially outside the school. My mother says that our customs and traditions do not allow us to do so."* (Adolescent girl from Masyaf sub-district, Hama governorate).

Some women FGD participants stated that there is freedom of movement: *"I used to travel with my husband or my mother-in-law, but in this city I can move easily, pay bills and carry all my provisions from the market."* (Woman from Masyaf sub-district, Hama governorate). However, others have customs and traditions that restrict them: *"Before we were displaced, I had not moved freely in Aleppo, and always had my husband with me. Here this is somewhat better even though I feel that he is always watching me."* (Woman from Masyaf sub-district, Hama governorate).

Civil Documentation

FGD participants did not share experiences on civil documentation for this governorate.

Access to Services

In Hama, the FGD participants expressed their satisfaction with the services provided through humanitarian aid organisations and specifically the women and girls' safe spaces: *"There are many associations and organisations that provide assistance and safe spaces for women and children."* (Woman from Masyaf sub-district, Hama governorate). *"The girls expressed their happiness at the presence of a women's support centre that supports them and helps them solve their problems, develop personally and defend themselves against any harassment."* (Adolescent girl from Masyaf sub-district, Hama governorate).

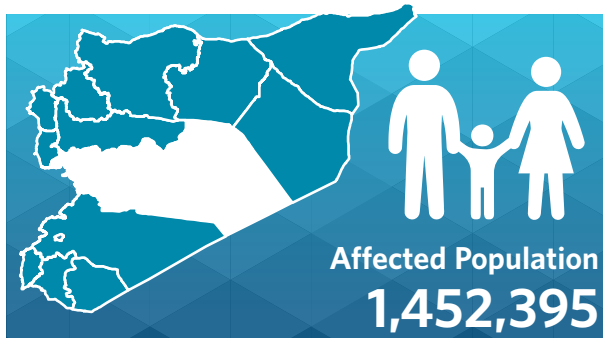
FGD participants expressed that although the WGSSs provide useful services, these services are not always accessible due to distance (and most likely lack of transportation). *"I find it difficult because the centre is far from my home."* (Adolescent girl from Masyaf sub-district, Hama governorate). Others are restricted by parents for safety and/or social norms: *"I can access the centre easily but some of my friends cannot come because their house is far away, and their parents do not allow them to leave the house."* (Adolescent girl from Masyaf sub-district, Hama governorate).

"I was subjected to marital, psychological and economic violence. My husband treated me harshly and did not respect my opinion on any subject. He tried to make out to everyone that I did not understand anything and that I was his servant. But then I visited the women's support centre in Masyaf. After several sessions with the social worker, I became somewhat stronger and decided to consult with the centre's lawyer. I tried to understand my legal rights to face my husband in a measured way. I decided to put an end to my life with him peacefully, and to work and study." (Woman from Masyaf sub-district, Hama governorate).

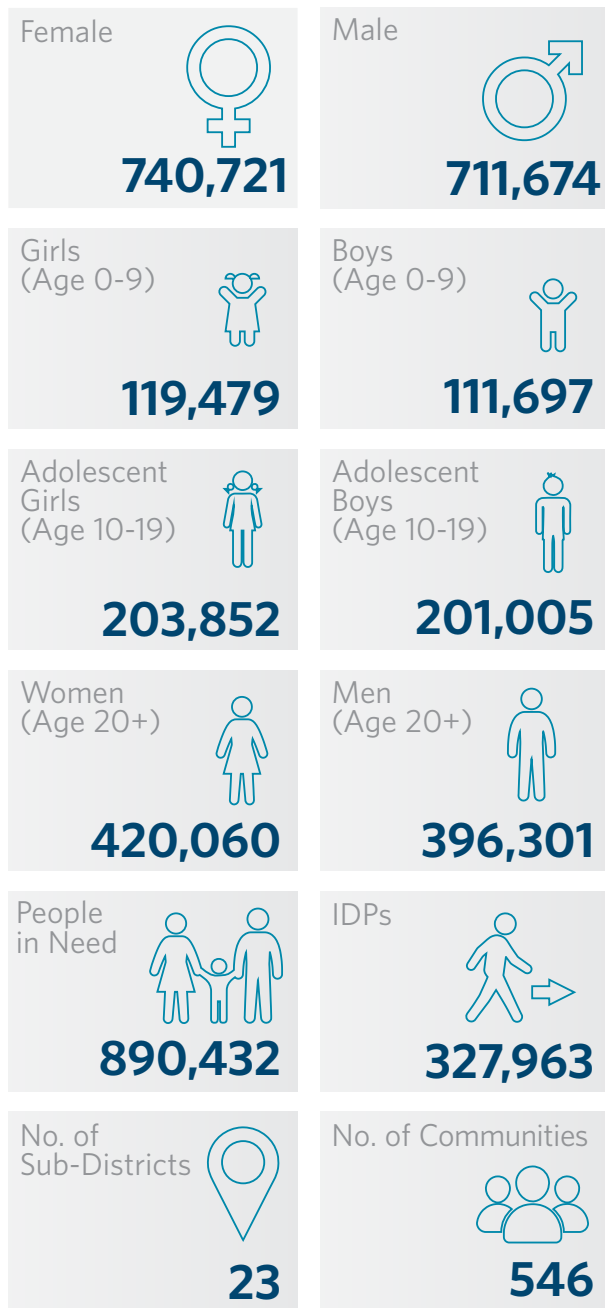
"I know that when I come here I feel comfortable and happier than any other time of the day." (Adolescent girl from Masyaf sub-district, Hama governorate).

Reported Coping Mechanisms in Response to Violence and Unmet Needs





Governorate Overview



Population Data, Homs

Homs

Affected Population, Types of Violence, and Coping Mechanisms

Gender based violence experienced in Homs governorate are psychological/emotional violence, physical violence as well as honour crimes: *"Honour crimes (in secrecy) and fear of customs and traditions."* (Adolescent girl from Homs sub-district, Homs governorate). An adolescent girl stated that *"the violence that girls suffer from is verbal abuse. This occurs everywhere: at home or outside it, at the university or at work."* (Adolescent girl from Homs sub-district, Homs governorate). Another adolescent girl stated, *"we are sometimes exposed to physical violence and harassment, in particular on buses and all other kinds of transport."* (Adolescent girl from Homs sub-district, Homs governorate).

Yet some of the FGD participants stated that they never heard of sexual violence (although many acknowledged honour crimes): *"All girls replied that they did not know if there were cases of sexual violence because they had never heard of it before."* (Adolescent girl from Talkalakh sub-district, Homs governorate). While other adolescent girls stated that *"we heard that there were cases of women being harassed in the aid distribution areas."* (Adolescent girl from Homs sub-district, Homs governorate). Also: *"women and girls suffer from restrictions because of the habits and traditions."* (Woman from Talkalakh sub-district, Homs governorate).

As is the case across the conflict impacted areas, women, girls, widows, persons with a disability and the elderly are the populations most affected by violence. Namely, FGD participants expressed that *"women and girls were more vulnerable to sexual abuse,"* (Woman from Talkalakh sub-district, Homs governorate); *"children and girls aged 14-15 may be harassed,"* (Adolescent girl from Talkalakh sub-district, Homs governorate); *"the groups that are mostly abused are the mentally disabled since they can't defend themselves,"* (Woman from Talkalakh sub-district, Homs governorate); and that *"the elderly may be verbally abused and insulted."* (Woman from Talkalakh sub-district, Homs governorate).

The GBV coping strategies employed in this governorate are self-defence, family support and accessing specialised GBV services. FGD participants stated that women and girls *"can distance themselves, cry out for help or take a stance to save herself from violence or harassment."* (Adolescent girl from Homs sub-district, Homs governorate). One adolescent girl stated that *"as for girls, they should talk about everything to their parents."* (Adolescent girl from Talkalakh sub-district, Homs governorate) *"Like this centre, other care centres provide protection by offering legal, psychological and social consultation as well as raising awareness sessions."* (Woman from Talkalakh sub-district, Homs governorate).

Restriction of Freedoms and Movement Restriction

In Homs governorate, FGD participants primarily identified customs and traditions as the reason for movement restrictions: *"Women and girls suffer*

from restrictions because of the habits and traditions." (Woman from Talkalakh sub-district, Homs governorate). An adolescent girl stated that "some parents refuse to send their daughters to the centre in order to protect their reputation, believing that this is wrong." (Adolescent girl from Talkalakh sub-district, Homs governorate). Another adolescent girl identified the many responsibilities that girls and adolescent girls must endure within the homes, as a restriction on their movement: "The girl cannot go out because of the huge responsibilities and the housework she has." (Adolescent girl from Talkalakh sub-district, Homs governorate). Some of the adolescent girl FGD participants pointed to the disparate way in which girl and boy adolescents are treated regarding their freedoms and ability to move outside the home: "Parents do not restrict their son's movement because, in their opinion, young men can do whatever they want." (Adolescent girl from Talkalakh sub-district, Homs governorate).

Lastly, male figures within the home, whether the father, husband or brothers are able to restrict the movement of women and girls within the home: "Some women cannot visit the centre because their husbands wouldn't allow them," and "some aren't allowed by their brothers to come to the centre." (Woman from Talkalakh sub-district, Homs governorate).

Civil Documentation

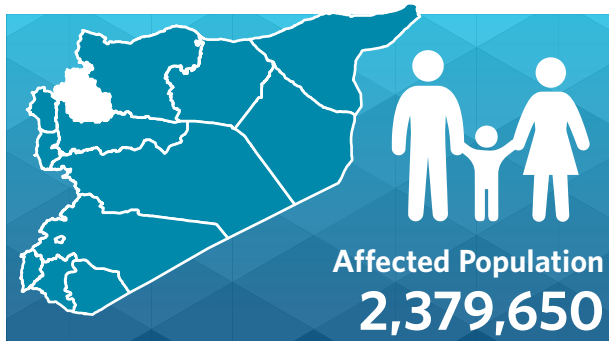
FGD participants did not share experiences on civil documentation for this governorate.

Access to Services

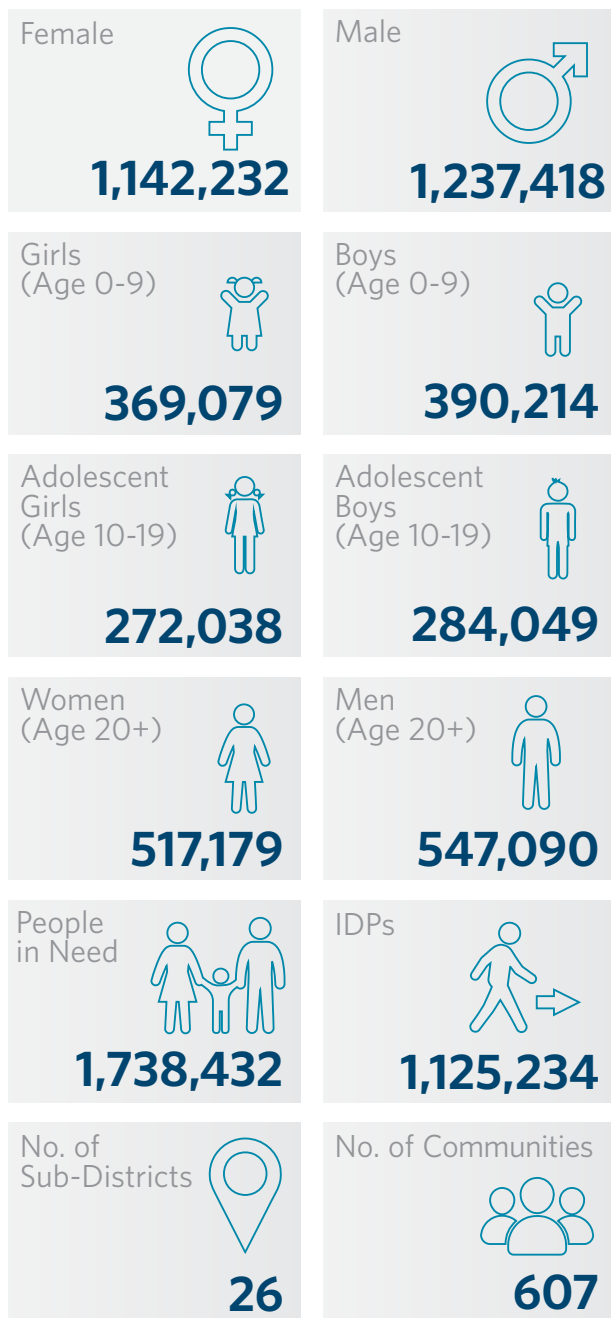
In Homs governorate specialised GBV services are available but inaccessible as customs and traditions impede women and girls from leaving their homes to receive services within WGSS due to safety concerns or from potential stigma: "Some widows care about what people might say about them, so they don't come." (Woman from Talkalakh sub-district, Homs governorate). An adolescent FGD participant said that "some parents refuse to send their daughters to the centre in order to protect their reputation, believing that this is wrong." (Adolescent girl from Talkalakh sub-district, Homs governorate) and another stated that "the customs and traditions in our village prevent the girl from going out so as to protect her from people's hurtful gossip." (Adolescent girl from Talkalakh sub-district, Homs governorate). Again: "Some women cannot visit the centre because their husbands wouldn't allow them." (Woman from Talkalakh sub-district, Homs governorate).

Reported Coping Mechanisms in Response to Violence and Unmet Needs





Governorate Overview



Population Data, Idlib

Idlib

Affected Population, Types of Violence and Coping Mechanisms

In Idlib governorate, sexual violence came out strongly as the form of GBV experienced primarily by widows, divorced women, persons with disabilities and girls. In this governorate, FGD participants identified abduction for the purposes of sexual violence. One adolescent boy stated that *"kidnapping exists. Boys and girls are kidnapped and raped then, thrown aside,"* (Adolescent boy from Ma'arrat An Nu'man sub-district, Idlib governorate). Another adolescent boy stated: *"children are kidnapped and raped, and sometimes killed and thrown on the edge of the road,"* (Adolescent boy from Ma'arrat An Nu'man sub-district, Idlib governorate).

Along with sexual violence on the street, marital rape is occurring in this governorate: *"sometimes when a woman is asleep, her husband wakes her up to pleasure him,"* (Woman from Heish sub-district, Idlib governorate). Another adolescent boy alludes to the occurrence of honour killings as a strategy to address sexual violence: *"I hear from elders that someone killed his sister, so they accused her of eloping with a man, but she turned out to be innocent,"* (Adolescent boy from Ma'arrat An Nu'man sub-district, Idlib governorate). Sexual exploitation is also occurring in Idlib: *"Sometimes a wealthy person pays money to a poor woman to have sex with her,"* (Adolescent boy from Ma'arrat An Nu'man sub-district, Idlib governorate).

Virginity testing was also identified in this governorate as a form of GBV experienced by adolescent girls: *"The girl entered first, then the mother, then the father, then the rest of the family. She was whipped for only for standing next to a guy, and they checked her virginity to make sure,"* (Woman from Heish sub-district, Idlib governorate). Early/forced marriage was also identified as a form of GBV occurring in this governorate: *"The uneducated girl will marry early and have children, and is then unable to raise them properly. Her family will suffer, and the hardship will become overwhelming,"* (Man from Khan Shaykun sub-district, Idlib governorate).

Other women are experiencing physical violence at the hands of their intimate partners who feel they have impunity to inflict violence – as shared by one male FGD participant: *"there was a case of violence by one of the men towards his wife. He beat his wife and insulted her in front of other people, saying go to the doctor. He was not afraid,"* (Man from Khan Shaykun sub-district, Idlib governorate). FGD participants also addressed the denial of resources experienced by women and girls: *"Our neighbour's girls work all day on the land and they cannot get any money. All the money goes to their father,"* (Woman from Heish sub-district, Idlib governorate).

The impact of violence in Idlib governorate, as shared by FGD participants, has been that *"people can't move freely because of the lack of safety, kidnapping, fear, and the lack of transport,"* (Woman from Kafr Nobol sub-district, Idlib governorate). Others said that *"girls who experience violence will be isolated, depressed, frightened,*

and aggressive," (Woman from Kafr Nobol sub-district, Idleb governorate), "while other women and girls may become isolated, have a nervous breakdown and/or commit suicide." (Woman from Kafr Nobol sub-district, Idleb governorate).

FGD participants in Idleb governorate identified the most vulnerable groups to violence as "women, widows and divorced women who are exposed to violence in society by relatives," (Adolescent girl from Ma'arrat An Nu'man sub-district, Idleb governorate). Many owe this vulnerability to not having a male figure in the home: "Widows and divorced, because there is no man who may take them, and they also afraid of kidnapping." (Adolescent boy from Ma'arrat An Nu'man sub-district, Idleb governorate). In addition, FGD participants stated that "disabled people are beaten and imprisoned," (Woman from Khan Shaykun sub-district, Idleb governorate) and "those who are mentally ill experience more violence." (Woman from Kafr Nobol sub-district, Idleb governorate).

Some of the coping strategies mentioned by FGD participants have been family support, silence, and fleeing the community. Specifically, one adolescent girl stated that "after an incident of sexual violence, girls are sometimes taken outside the city for a month or two by a relative to help them recover psychologically." (Adolescent girl from Ma'arrat An Nu'man sub-district, Idleb governorate).

"I could not defend myself when I was threatened, and I could not take my daughter from her father, as she is not registered in the Civil Status Register. My husband (he divorced me) threatened that if I spoke to the court, my father would be handed over to the armed factions. Therefore I could not speak out." (Woman from Ma'arrat An Nu'man sub-district, Idleb governorate).

Another FGD participant stated that "concerning the crime of rape, I believe the most simple solution is to escape immediately. Then she can start to process it and realise how to best to handle it." (Woman from Ma'arrat An Nu'man sub-district, Idleb governorate). Other FGD women participants stated that "in the event of any kind of sexual violence, the first refuge is the mother, who helps the abused child access psychological support centres. In cases of sexual violence, help rarely comes from outside the family." (Woman from Ariha sub-district, Idleb governorate). Meanwhile, other FGD participants said that "some of the affected people, especially poor women, do not do anything at all and do not complain to anybody." (Adolescent boy from Ma'arrat An Nu'man sub-district, Idleb governorate).

Restriction of Freedoms and Movement Restriction

In Idleb governorate, a variety of reasons were given for movement restrictions, including abduction: "All movement stopped in our village and other villages because of the large number of kidnappings. Nobody dared to leave." (Adolescent boy from Ma'arrat An Nu'man sub-district, Idleb governorate). Likewise bombings: "nobody is traveling around the country because of the large number

of bombings and mines." (Adolescent boy from Ma'arrat An Nu'man sub-district, Idleb governorate). As well as customs and traditions: "There were differences between men and women. They all agree that girls or women are most at risk of restricted movement for a variety of reasons, most of which are due to customs and traditions that limit the movement of girls, society, and fear of parents." (Adolescent girl from Heish sub-district, Idleb governorate).

Specifically, one male FGD participant expressed that "nobody moves freely. Women fear rape and harassment." (Man from Ma'arrat An Nu'man sub-district, Idleb governorate). One adolescent boy captured the restrictive environment that many women endure in this governorate: "Women do not leave home except for necessity." (Adolescent boy from Ma'arrat An Nu'man sub-district, Idleb governorate). While another adolescent boy highlighted the freedom that men have in this governorate: "In general, men can go wherever they want but women cannot." (Adolescent boy from Ma'arrat An Nu'man sub-district, Idleb governorate).

Some women FGD participants noted that there is freedom of movement as "they stated that they had no difficulty to move especially at daytime, but it is hard at night. All the women affirmed that there was full freedom for women to move." (Woman from Ma'arrat An Nu'man sub-district, Idleb governorate). However other female FGD participants specifically identified the constraint of custom and tradition on their lives as women and adolescent girls: "There are women whose husbands do not allow them to go to the protection service centre." (Adolescent girl from Ma'arrat An Nu'man sub-district, Idleb governorate); another adolescent stated that "if a widow wanted to go out to see some of her neighbours, she would hear a lot of insults that tell her to stay in her house." (Adolescent girl from Khan Shaykun sub-district, Idleb governorate). Another adolescent girl said that "girls cannot go to aid centres because of people's gossip, but they are allowed to go to school." (Adolescent girl from Kafr Nobol sub-district, Idleb governorate). Lastly, one adult male FGD participant expressed that "there are many women who are assaulted by their husbands, and these husbands suppress all of their wives' rights because of the current situation. There are many youth who think that beating and insulting the woman is the proper way to control her and making her submit to your will." (Man from Janudiye sub-district, Idleb governorate).

Civil Documentation

In Idleb governorate, the FGD participants identified the reasons for lack of civil documentation (loss, destruction, confiscation); the challenges they face in conducting their lives in the face of not having civil documentation (births and marriages are not recognised, inability to access services/humanitarian assistance); and the steps they must take in obtaining official and unofficial documents; and the concerns they have regarding both.

Namely, some FGD participants expressed that civil documentation can be confiscated by various groups: "the family book can be taken by the coalition." (Man from Ma'arrat An Nu'man sub-district, Idleb governorate). Other FGD participants said that civil documentation

was also destroyed: *"Many houses were damaged, so many ownership documents were lost there."* (Man from Kafr Nobol sub-district, Idlib governorate). Others stated that *"around 40% of the people in the village have no civil documentations, either because they were left behind during displacement or because they were destroyed during the bombing."* (Man from Janudiyeh sub-district, Idlib governorate). Finally, others stated that *"many houses were demolished, documents of property belonging to people were burned, and there were few centres for the management of people's civil status."* (Man from Ariha sub-district, Idlib governorate).

FGD participants identified the challenges they face conducting their daily lives without civil documentation. One adult man stated that *"we need these documents in our day-to-day dealings or transactions and for access to assistance. Perhaps there is a solution by extracting family data from the civil registry in the city, but it is informal and is specific to each city only."* (Man from Khan Shaykun sub-district, Idlib governorate).

Other FGD participants identified that the most basic civil process of birth registration is an almost insurmountable challenge: *"When a new baby is born, it can't be recorded in the civil status offices."* (Woman from Kafr Nobol sub-district, Idlib governorate). Also: *"many people have children who have not yet been recorded in the civil status offices."* (Adolescent girl from Kafr Nobol sub-district, Idlib governorate).

FGD participants shared the difficulties they have in obtaining new civil documents, particularly when many civil registries have been destroyed: *"Identity documents are lost due to the bombing and the civil registry is exposed to theft and damage. There is no official alternative in areas outside the control of the regime."* (Man from Khan Shaykun sub-district, Idlib governorate).

Some FGD participants identified that they must go to the [government controlled] areas that are difficult or dangerous for the them to access: *"If we want to get a family book or to register a new-born baby, we have to go to government controlled areas,"* (Man from Ma'arrat An Nu'man sub-district, Idlib governorate).

When official documents are obtained they are not always recognised by authorities in the areas that FGD participants live: *"Identity papers in our territories are not recognised by anybody else."* (Man from Ma'arrat An Nu'man sub-district, Idlib governorate). One woman FGD participant stated that *"I need to bring people to testify that I have a degree and that I have a certificate,"* (Woman from Khan Shaykun sub-district, Idlib governorate), when she needs to prove her official civil document.

The consequences of not having official civil documentation are numerous. One adult provided a succinct summary of the negative impact of lack of civil documentation on Syrians, which has many reverberations for them: *"The consequences of this issue are chaotic. There are children who have been born and are five years old. They have no name. They are not recognised anywhere. Their lives have been destroyed and they cannot enrol them in school or other government departments."* (Woman from Ma'arrat An Nu'man sub-district, Idlib governorate).

This man's sentiment was often echoed by other FGD participants: *"When people trade in estates, they bring many eyewitnesses because there are no official papers. This lack of documents leads to many disputes."* (Man from Kafr Nobol sub-district, Idlib governorate). Another said: *"There are some young men and women who are unable to get a job opportunity because they were unable to retrieve their obtained certificates or something to prove their educational level. In addition, going back to the regime-controlled areas has become difficult."* (Woman from Janudiyeh sub-district, Idlib governorate). Lastly, *"there is an infringement of people's rights due to the absence of official papers proving ownership of the land and thus a person does not let his sister inherit her money."* (Man from Ma'arrat An Nu'man sub-district, Idlib governorate).

Some FGD participants discussed the reasons and concerns for obtaining non-official civil documents: *"Sometimes people are obliged to get false documents in order to regain their rights,"* (Man from Kafr Nobol sub-district, Idlib governorate). Another woman stated that her *"brother obtained a false identity card in order to prove his identity in areas that are not under the control of the state while trying to go to Turkey. We are afraid of security barriers."* (Woman from Ma'arrat An Nu'man sub-district, Idlib governorate).

One man stated that *"we need these documents in our day-to-day dealings or transactions and for access to assistance. Perhaps there is a solution by extracting family data from the civil registry in the city, but it is informal and is specific to each city only."* (Man from Khan Shaykun, Idlib governorate). The concerns associated with obtaining non-official documents were also shared: *"People who resort to forgery always suffer from tension and fear."* (Woman from Khan Shaykun, Idlib governorate). One participant shared his specific concern: *"I got a nursing teaching certificate and I am worried that it might not be recognised."* (Man from Heish sub-district, Idlib governorate). Yet, one male adult stated that *"you can find false IDs, degrees, and family documents everywhere,"* (Man from Kafr Nobol sub-district, Idlib governorate), demonstrating the desperation of some Syrians living in the Idlib governorate. One FGD participant backed this up: *"Some people's loss of humanitarian aid is due to not having a family booklet or a family statement. Most NGOs rely on these documents and those without are denied services."* (Man from Janudiyeh sub-district, Idlib governorate).

Another woman FGD participant shared her GBV experience related to civil documentation (denial of resources): *"I went to the notary for papers because my husband's family took my family book from me. I went to the notary for a family statement in order to get aid and to go to the doctor."* (Woman from Ma'arrat An Nu'man sub-district, Idlib governorate).

Access to Services

Services are available in Idlib governorate, however GBV survivors encounter barriers to access. FGD participants noted that *"women are afraid of [someone] harassing them, especially when receiving relief packages."* (Adolescent boy from Ma'arrat An Nu'man sub-district, Idlib governorate). Another women FGD participant

stated that “many widowed and divorced women refuse to go to these centres because of the way others may look at them.” (Woman from Khan Shaykun, Idlib governorate).

“There are great concerns and most of the beneficiaries after the first visit to the aid centre did not come back because of the verbal, sexual and psychological violence. Everyone wishes that safe space centres would take charge of aid distribution because some women do not have a man who can do it for them.” (Woman from Khan Shaykun, Idlib governorate).

Social norms and traditions meanwhile impede women's access in this governorate: “There are women whose husbands do not allow them to go to the protection service centre.” (Adolescent girl from Ma'arrat An Nu'man sub-district, Idlib governorate). FGD facilitators noted that “through conversing with the women within the focus group, we talked about the humanitarian aid (distributions), whether these services reach their areas and typical difficulties. They reported that there are some child and woman friendly centres that provide psychological support. However, sometimes, they are even afraid of going to these centres for fear of facing a security incident due to the crowds.” (Janudiyeh sub-district, Idlib governorate).

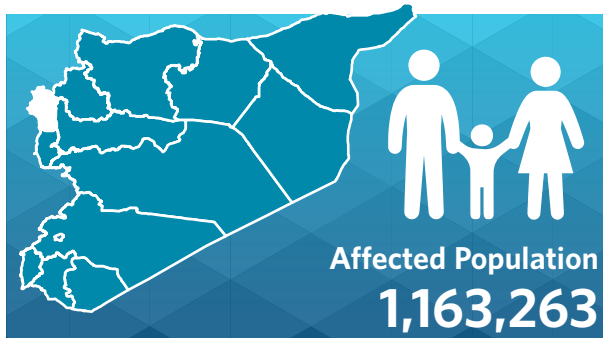
However, some male FGD participants noted that “there are a limited number of psychological support centres. There are not any safe spaces for women and girls,” (Man from Kafr Nobol sub-district, Idlib governorate). Also that: “There aren't any legal courts or any legal mechanisms.” (Woman from Kafr Nobol sub-district, Idlib governorate). Women FGD participants provided reasons to why there are barriers to legal mechanisms, “Namely, the absence of one unified commander, and that the court belongs to one armed faction and not to all.” (Women from Ma'arrat An Nu'man sub-district, Idlib governorate). Other women FGD participants stated that “there are no bodies and institutions that regulate the affairs and needs of society as they should. There is no centralised body.” (Women from Ma'arrat An Nu'man sub-district, Idlib governorate).

“There are some people who are forced to do so by workers in the same sector or by persons who are experienced in such issues. They start to provide oil in return and gain from other things by exploiting the needs of women whose awareness should be raised to defend themselves and resort to safe space centres to meet their needs and prevent others from exploiting them.” (Woman from Lattakia sub-district, Lattakia governorate).

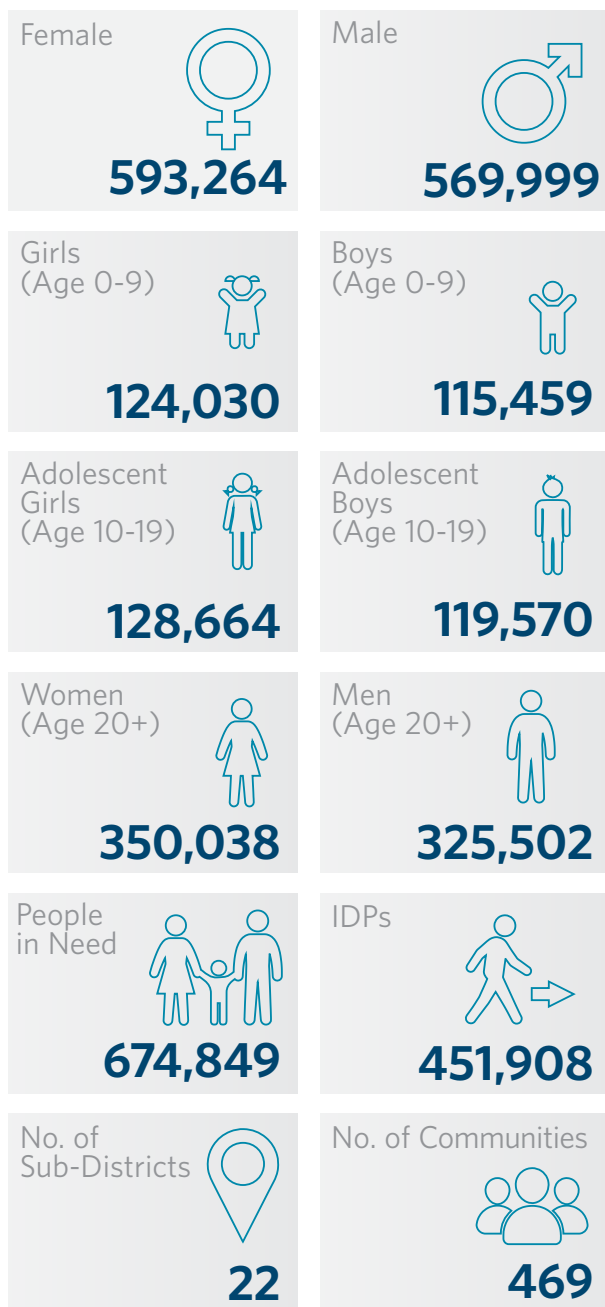
Reported Coping Mechanisms in Response to Violence and Unmet Needs



“All of us are subjected to violence. The strong person dominates the weak in our country. The man tells his wife: if you do not like it, my parents can take the children, especially if they can receive relief packages because of them. They will ruin the life of the child. In the past, a 14-year-old girl was not married until she got a high school diploma. But now they arrange her marriage and destroy her life. We feel afraid to send girls to school because of the large number of barriers.” (Woman from Ma'arrat An Nu'man sub-district, Idlib governorate).



Governorate Overview



Population Data, Lattakia

Lattakia

Affected Population, Types of Violence, and Coping Mechanisms

In Lattakia governorate FGD participants expressed that “physical violence from husband to wife,” (Woman from Lattakia sub-district, Lattakia governorate), “marital rape,” (Woman from Lattakia sub-district, Lattakia governorate), honour crimes and sexual exploitation are forms of GBV experienced in this governorate: “Two girls were killed because a girl ran away from her parents and married the young man whom she loved. After she returned, the parents slaughtered the girl, and her relative who helped her, in front of everyone.” (Woman from Lattakia sub-district, Lattakia governorate). FGD participants stated that “those most exposed to violence are divorced women, unemployed women, women who have no breadwinner, mentally-disabled women, displaced women, as well as girls and teenagers.” (Woman from Lattakia sub-district, Lattakia governorate).

The primary GBV coping strategy utilised in this governorate is self-defence: “fighting violence with violence and protecting themselves by escaping.” (Woman from Lattakia sub-district, Lattakia governorate). FGD participants specifically expressed that “they do not seek legal redress, because of the bad reputation and stigma they might gain,” (Woman from Lattakia sub-district, Lattakia governorate), and that “there are also clauses in the law that indirectly helps the violent person. In all cases, justice is not for women but for the benefit of men, because society is male-driven and always in favour of male. Women are always blamed. The law itself is quite fair, but there are those who exploit this law through bribery and favour.” (Woman from Lattakia sub-district, Lattakia governorate).

Restriction of Freedoms and Movement Restriction

In Lattakia governorate, some FGD participants stated that “the most vulnerable groups to restriction of movement are married women, rural women, widows, divorcees, teenage girls and children.” (Woman from Lattakia sub-district, Lattakia governorate). Others said that “at first, they refused to allow us to enter into the city because we came from a governorate that was out of state control. Now, however, there is full freedom of movement for men, women and children.” (Woman from Lattakia sub-district, Lattakia governorate). One woman FGD participant echoed the group’s sentiment while identifying the cause of movement restriction for adolescent boys: “Yes, usually girls and women are not free while men are free except for young men at conscription age.” (Woman from Lattakia sub-district, Lattakia governorate). Lastly, one women FGD participant expressed the consequences of restricting women’s and girls’ movement: “psychological problems (depression, aggression, introversion), girls running away, engaging in indecent activities through the internet and social media.” (Woman from Lattakia sub-district, Lattakia governorate).

Civil Documentation

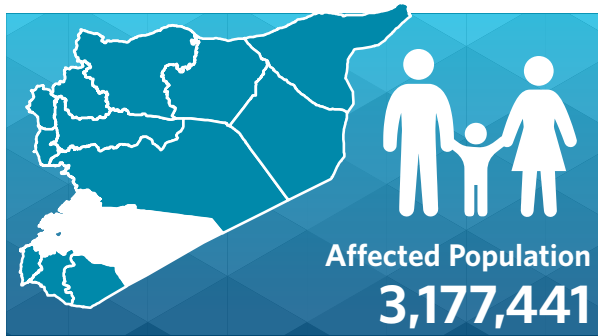
FGD participants did not share experiences on civil documentation for this governorate.

Access to Services

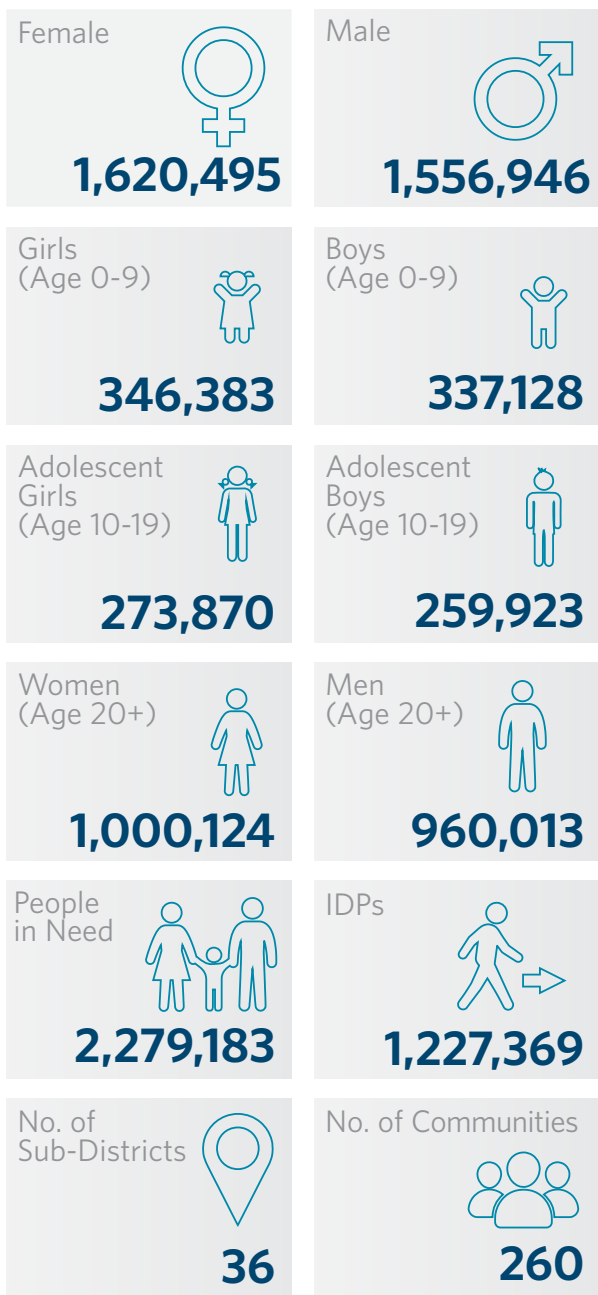
Other FGD participants expressed that fear of sexual harassment and abuse can occur at distribution sites and that, generally, humanitarian aid service provided are insufficiently coordinated: *"These aids are distributed in all its forms and lack of respect associated with verbal abuse and material exploitation, especially for the wives of martyrs and widows."* (Woman from Lattakia sub-district, Lattakia governorate).

Reported Coping Mechanisms in Response to Violence and Unmet Needs





Governorate Overview



Population Data, Rural Damascus

Rural Damascus

Affected Population, Types of Violence, and Coping Mechanisms

In Rural Damascus governorate, FGD participants identified GBV in the form of “*emotional and psychological violence*,” (Adolescent girl from Madaya sub-district, Rural Damascus governorate); “*verbal violence, physical violence, violence committed by male siblings, early marriage*,” (Woman from Madaya sub-district, Rural Damascus governorate); and “*beating because of lack of awareness, excessive oppression against girls, and early marriage*.” (Adolescent girl from Madaya sub-district, Rural Damascus governorate).

Regarding abductions, FGD participants in this governorate said “*there are rare cases in our community*,” (Adolescent girl from Madaya sub-district, Rural Damascus governorate), while one woman FGD participant expressed that “*awareness is high and there are no groups that are vulnerable[to sexual violence]*.” (Woman from Madaya sub-district, Rural Damascus governorate).

FGD participants also stated that “*there is a difference for women, girls and female adolescents. The difference is caused by societal restrictions, customs and traditions*,” (Woman from Madaya sub-district, Rural Damascus governorate), and that “*girls are more commonly subjected to restrictions than boys*.” (Adolescent girl from Madaya sub-district, Rural Damascus governorate).

Restriction of Freedoms and Movement Restriction

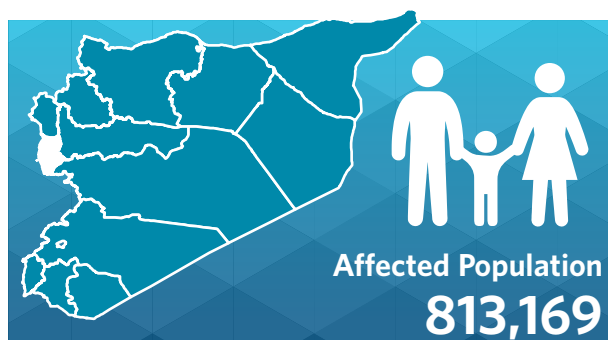
In Rural Damascus governorate, FGD participants stated that “*there is a difference for women, girls and female adolescents. The difference is caused by societal restrictions, customs and traditions*,” (Woman from Madaya sub-district, Rural Damascus governorate), and that “*girls are more commonly subjected to restrictions than boys*.” (Adolescent girl from Madaya sub-district, Rural Damascus governorate), while one adolescent girl specifically stated that the lack of transportation is a cause of movement restriction: “*Yes. They [women and girls] can move freely. Neighbouring cities, however, often have difficulties around transportation*.” (Adolescent girl from Madaya sub-district, Rural Damascus governorate).

Civil Documentation

FGD participants did not share experiences on civil documentation for this governorate.

Access to Services

This is the only governorate where coping mechanisms were not shared by FGD participants yet many FGD participants identified women and girls' safe spaces as providing needed GBV and other services: “*The presence of protection centres such as for protecting homeless children, protecting divorcees, and people with special needs*.” (Woman from Madaya sub-district, Rural Damascus governorate). Other FGD participants shared that sexual violence is occurring but legal mechanisms are not adequate to address such cases: “*Everyone agreed on the presence of sexual violence which is kept a secret in the society and is not spoken about. This is due to a rising fear of societal reprisal. People do not involve the law because they want to ‘take matters into their own hands’ and believe ‘honour is a red line’*.” (Woman from Tartous sub-district, Tartous governorate).



Governorate Overview

Female

**414,716**

Male

**398,453**Girls
(Age 0-9)**94,963**Boys
(Age 0-9)**89,462**Adolescent
Girls
(Age 10-19)**76,608**Adolescent
Boys
(Age 10-19)**71,589**Women
(Age 20+)**247,839**Men
(Age 20+)**232,708**People
in Need**335,088**

IDPs

**138,313**No. of
Sub-Districts**27**

No. of Communities

**461**

Population Data, Tartous

Tartous

Affected Population, Types of Violence, and Coping Mechanisms

In Tartous governorate some FGD participants stated that *"verbal abuse is the worst kind of violence that women face at home and outside, and that it is committed by the husband and in-laws,"* (Woman from Tartous sub-district, Tartous governorate). Others stated that *"financial violence is the most common type because it is the most common cause of exploitation and leads to other types of violence."* (Woman from Tartous sub-district, Tartous governorate). The rest said, *"that psychological violence is what they suffer the most (widows, divorcees, female IDPs)." (Woman from Tartous sub-district, Tartous governorate).* In this governorate, the FGD facilitator noted *"regarding honour killings, nobody witnessed any. It can be seen from the reactions that some things were left unsaid and people did not wish to talk."* (Adult woman FGD Tartous sub-district, Tartous governorate).

Regarding vulnerable groups to GBV, adolescent girls participating in FGDs in this governorate expressed *"that women, girls, widows, and displaced women are subject to verbal, economical, and sexual violence more than others because of their difficult social situation."* (Adolescent girl from Tartous sub-district, Tartous governorate). One woman FGD participant also noted those with disabilities are vulnerable to violence: *"Others think that people suffering from disabilities are the weak group that may suffer violence because of their inability to protect themselves."* (Woman from Tartous sub-district, Tartous governorate).

Regarding disclosure and coping strategies, FGD participants expressed that *"young girls also suffer violence and remain silent due to fear of society, and submission to the rules of patriarchy. According to what they say, cannot change this reality."* (Woman from Tartous sub-district, Tartous governorate). One adolescent FGD participant succinctly captured the climate around the occurrence of violence and the strategy to respond to it: *"People keep silent and do not speak."* (Adolescent girl from Tartous sub-district, Tartous governorate). Disclosure to family members is not a strategy employed in this governorate according to one adolescent girl: *"Girls feel afraid to inform their parents."* (Adolescent girl from Tartous sub-district, Tartous governorate). The same goes for women: *"Women suffer from violence in all its forms in all societies and all cases. They remain silent out of their fear of their families, husbands and society."* (Woman from Tartous sub-district, Tartous governorate).

Restriction of Freedoms and Movement Restriction

In Tartous governorate, there was a mixed response among the FGD participants, vacillating from freedom of movement to movement restriction depending on what age group was being asked. Specifically, adolescent girls expressed that there is restriction of movement while some adult women stated that there was freedom of movement. One adolescent girl stated that *"most girls said that their movement is restricted because of social traditions and customs,"* (Adolescent girl from Tartous

sub-district, Tartous governorate), while another woman FGD participant confirmed this sentiment: *"Women are restricted because of male domination."* (Woman from Tartous sub-district, Tartous governorate).

Adolescent girl FGD participants in this governorate provided consensus on who was disproportionately impacted by movement restrictions: *"Everyone answered that women, girls, children, divorced, and widows are the most prone to movement restrictions for several reasons. Specifically, their family situation is an obstacle, as sometimes the father does not allow it."* (Adolescent girl from Tartous sub-district, Tartous governorate). Some of the consequences that women and girls experiences as a result of movement restrictions are: *"suicide in case of preventing them from going out. Nervousness. Psychological pressure."* (Adolescent girl from Tartous sub-district, Tartous governorate).

Civil Documentation

In Tartous governorate, one woman FGD participant stated her challenges with accessing humanitarian assistance due to a lack of civil documentation: *"[She] does not receive this service due to the lack of a rent contract for the house since it is a prerequisite for receiving distributions."* (Woman from Tartous sub-district, Tartous governorate).

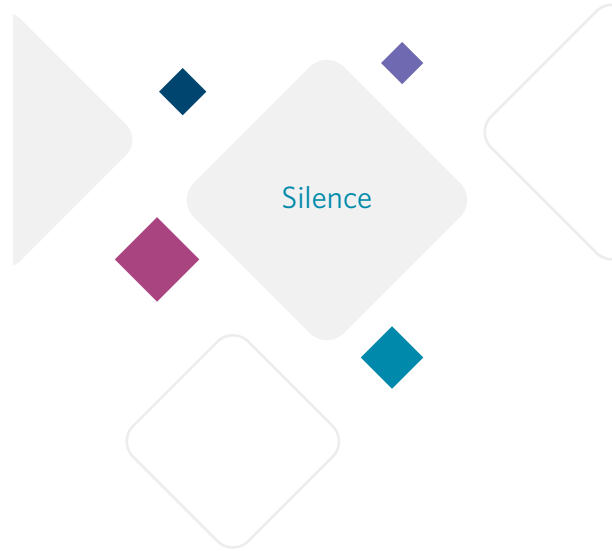
Access to Services

The available services in Tartous governorate are *"local associations and humanitarian organisations that provide divergent services such as healthcare, psychological care, and legal assistance. In addition, women empowerment and support centres."* (Adolescent girl from Tartous sub-district, Tartous governorate). Barriers to services are *"that there is a category in society that does not know about these services because they are far from the centre,"* (Woman from Tartous sub-district, Tartous governorate). And that *"there are people who cannot access these services, such as elders and people with special needs."* (Adolescent girl from Tartous sub-district, Tartous governorate). In addition, *"there is a law, but fear of parents, customs and traditions prevents girls from complaining."* (Adolescent girl from Tartous sub-district, Tartous governorate).

One FGD participant said that *"services that previously did not exist and are now very important are the empowerment centres that have contributed effectively to guiding women to a safe place. They have rehabilitated them, and restored their confidence in themselves and their ability to learn new things. This was achieved by teaching them new life and professional skills that enable them to earn their living without needing anyone's help."* (Woman from Tartous sub-district, Tartous governorate).

When asked how available services can be improved, women FGD participants stated that they *"prefer to have the empowerment centres expanded to include a larger space, more activities and to have child entertainment centres attached to them. Some women suffer from the problem of a lack of a free safe space for children."* (Woman from Tartous sub-district, Tartous governorate).

Reported Coping Mechanisms in Response to Violence and Unmet Needs



5





Recommendations

Recommendations

The following are recommendations that reflect the voices of the women, men, girls and boys that participated in the FGDs as well as GBV experts and other colleagues who provide support to GBV survivors and technical input into GBV prevention and response interventions.

Summary of Recommendations from the Women, Girl, Men and Boy Voices of Syria

- Increased awareness raising on various issues especially targeting adolescent boys
- Specialised GBV services for orphans, PWDs and the elderly
- Improved WGSS accessibility (child care, location, transportation)
- Provision of mental health services for GBV survivors
- Increase the number of health/medical facilities
- Vocational skill building and employment opportunities
- Increased women/girl participation in community based activities (decision making roles)
- Improved coordination amongst humanitarian assistance providers
- Fairness and transparency on who can access services.

FGD Participants

Increase Awareness raising on GBV Basic Concepts

Many of the women, girl, men and boy FGD participants identified the need for improved awareness building on GBV basic concepts, with one adolescent girl stating that *"girls want special services that raise their awareness sexually, intellectually and professionally"*. (Adolescent girl from Damascus sub-district, Damascus governorate). Another adolescent boy stated that awareness activities should *"build the capacity of adolescent males (Providing awareness sessions about adolescent issues)"*. (Adolescent boy from Hole sub-district, Al-Hasakeh governorate). The need to *"educate parents because they are bound by customs and traditions,"* was noted by an adolescent girl. (Adolescent girl from Karama sub-district, Ar-Raqqa governorate). Thus improved awareness building activities on GBV basic concepts and where to access specialised GBV services is needed as some FGD participants stated that *"there are a limited number of psychological support centres. There are not any safe spaces for women and girls."* (Man from Kafr Nobol sub-district, Idleb governorate).

Improve Access to services (including GBV services) for People with Disabilities, the Elderly and Mothers with Children

Centres (whether WGSS or community) should also be equipped both for physical access of PwDs as well as provide information and services that are accessible to individuals with mental disabilities. One woman participant stated: *"There are no special centres for the care of the disabled, the elderly and people with special needs."* (Woman from Ariha sub-district, Idleb governorate), and another adult male FGD participant noted that what was needed are *"centres for people with special needs, the disabled, physical care centres, and care centres for the elderly."* (Man from Ariha sub-district, Idleb governorate).

FGD participants also would like improved WGSS accessibility such as child care where the *"the empowerment centres are expanded to include a larger space, more activities and to have child entertainment centres attached to them. Some women suffer from the problem of a lack of a free safe space for children."* (Woman from Tartous sub-district, Tartous governorate).

WGSS location is important especially where transportation is limited or non-existent: *"We need care centres for the orphans and children such as child friendly centres and it is difficult to have access to these centres because of the far distance to the centre and the lack of means of transportation. But if these centres are inside the city, this will make the villagers feel more reassured about their children's journey to the centre to minimise their worries concerning abduction or exposure to shelling."* (Woman from Daret Azza sub-district, Aleppo governorate).

Improve Access to GBV Specialised Services

When asked about the GBV specialised services available to them, such as PSS, health and legal services, some FGD participants stated, generally, that *"services related to protection are rare and hardly available."* (Man from Afrin sub-district, Aleppo governorate). Yet, others identified particular specialised GBV services that need improvement such as PSS: *"We need lectures on depression and stress,"* (Woman from Homs sub-district, Homs governorate) and mental

health: *"The solution is that there must be a psychiatrist to help those exposed to violence."* (Adolescent girl from Ma'arrat An Nu'man sub-district, Idlib governorate).

Other FGD participants identified the need for medical facilities: *"We need hospitals and medical centres more than anything else."* (Adolescent girl from Khan Shaykun, Idlib governorate). FGD participants also identified the need for women's social, educational and economic empowerment. One woman stated that *"we need sewing, drawing and first aid courses."* (Woman from Homs sub-district, Homs governorate), while an adolescent boy noted that *"the services we currently lack are educational centres and training courses for boys because there are girls' centres."* (Adolescent boy from Daret Azza sub-district, Aleppo governorate). Another woman stated that *"we need transportation, education, medical centres and electricity, and all the women gathered on these points."* (Woman from Ma'arrat An Nu'man sub-district, Idlib governorate).

Improve Coordination

FGD participants raised the need for improved coordination amongst GBV specialised service providers: *"There are many associations and organisations interested in these cases, yet they do not have joint working mechanism to ensure safety and security or even to reduce these problems. The problems are growing everyday despite the psychological support providers, while the media and the internet play a negative role. Therefore, we need to exert efforts to reduce the violence effects, and to have all organisations working collaboratively to develop a mechanism against violence."* (Woman from Lattakia sub-district, Lattakia governorate)

GBV Experts

Many of the GBV Experts echoed the recommendations of the FGD participants. The GBV experts noted that there is general lack of awareness amongst newly arrived IDPs: *"I know we can't measure this with the number of disclosure received, but the level of awareness of IDPs that came in the recent influxes is much lower than the awareness of people we have been targeting for some time."* Another GBV expert stated that *"looking at the situation in the reception centres and zero point, the situation is worse, because we need to start from scratch to raise awareness on all basic concepts including in particular access to services."* (GBV Expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub). Thus, this shows the extra effort needed for GBV prevention and increasing access to services requires: the work done in a community with a certain targeted population starts over again when a displacement happens or when the targeted population changes.

Another GBV expert noted that awareness raising needs to be done on making potential IDP users aware that the services they received in one geographic location may not be the same ones offered in a new location once they leave: *"Humanitarians don't invest enough in raising awareness on the risks related to moving to a new community, access to services, etc."* (GBV Expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub). Another GBV expert expressed that capacity building needs—and the efforts to address them—are enormous thus capacity building should continue and be even more coordinated in order to overcome the challenges posed by turnover and the highly technical nature of GBV: *"Services are accessible. The increased of disclosure is not linked to the quality of services, which is affected by the high turnover. This is the sector which requires more capacity building investment."* (GBV Expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub)

However, other experts pointed out that there is a gap in in some locations on CMR provision *"Health and specifically CMR still a gap. Also the CMR services included in the referral pathways are not working. Organisations are saying that they don't have this service in place. Mental health services are not widely available. There are no psychologists in our centres, but the rest of services are well provided;"* (GBV Expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub). Likewise other services: *"referral to other services are limited because there are few or no income generating activities, shelter, police, or legal services."* (GBV Expert from Jordan Cross Border Hub)

Overview of 2018 GBV AoR Achievements and 2019 Way Forward¹⁵

GBV services have expanded its reach over the course of the year. Most importantly, the GBV AoR has noted the satisfaction with which users/beneficiaries view GBV specialised services, as well as outreach and awareness raising. *"In Dar'a and Surha, women are more aware about reporting the violence. They agree that child marriage is a problem and they would like to stop it."* (GBV Expert from Jordan Cross Border Hub). Beneficiaries and GBV experts alike have noted that the mindset of parents, family and community members are changing. Now, they are more knowledgeable of basic GBV concepts and the negative impact of some social norms and traditions, like early/forced marriage, so-called honour killing, and virginity testing have been conducted on women, and especially on adolescent girls. Of note, adolescent girls and women discussed the importance of continuing advocacy on eliminating early forced marriage, but also in improving GBV specialised services, notably the legal component of

¹⁵ More detailed reporting is available in the Period Monitoring Report of the Whole of Syria and the way forward is laid out in the 2019 HRP strategy.

the referral pathway.

In Syria, as in other parts of the world where there is a humanitarian crisis, access to justice on the wide range of GBV issues experienced by survivors is a challenge. However, in the ensuing year, the GBV AoR aims to strengthen the capacity of partners on legal information provision and access to justice.

The GBV AoR has made several strides in its coordination and programming that will be continued and expanded upon where feasible. The Damascus and Turkey Cross Border operation achievements are highlighted as they provide a foundation to further recommendations for activities in 2019.

Achievements

As of December 2018, the Whole of Syria (WoS) GBV AoR has reached 842 communities in 197 Sub-districts and has specialised services in 337 communities. Nearly 330,000 services were provided and 6,800 GBV actors were trained. Over 1,05 million beneficiaries were reached with prevention and empowerment activities.

In order to mitigate the risk of GBV, 1,300 humanitarian actors were trained on GBV across all operational hubs of Syria (Syria, Turkey and Jordan). The senior leadership in Syria endorsed GBV as a non-negotiable issue that must be address throughout the response. The GBV AoR worked with all sectors in Syria to improve the identification of GBV in each sectoral response in order to develop strategies to address them. Specifically, the GBV AoR supported WoS humanitarian coordinators to develop GBV risk mitigation priorities, key actions and GBV indicators that will be used as a guide to shape their interventions, assessments and inputs into the HNO and HRP. The WoS GBV AoR also worked with the WoS PSEA Coordinator as well as actors working on distributions to make humanitarian assistance safer from exploitation and abuse. All hubs worked with the local PSEA network to train staff and strengthen referral pathways.

Previous HNO and Voices findings highlighted the needs of adolescent girls and in response the WoS GBV AoR drafted and launched *Listen, Engage and Empower: A strategy to address the needs of adolescent girls in the Whole of Syria in 2018*¹⁶.

All operational hubs aimed to develop, endorse and/or revise GBV Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). Specifically, the Turkey Cross Border GBV Sub-Cluster (SC) revised its SoPs, which were signed by GBV SC members, the Jordan Cross Border Working group developed and updated of interagency SOPs, while the Syria GBV Sub-sector is in the process of finalisation and endorsement by Government partners and GBV Sub sector members. A guidance note on Ethical Closure of GBV Programs¹⁷, a unique tool to support GBV actors in their efforts to develop exit plans was drafted and finalised by the Jordan Working Group and the Turkey Cross Border GBV SC.

The Turkey Cross Border GBV SC developed a GBV Awareness Raising Toolkit¹⁸ to improve prevention activities targeting women, adolescent girls, men and adolescent boys and conducted training of trainers (ToT) to support the full rollout of this resource inside NW Syria. Turkey Cross Border GBV SC and Syria GBV sub sector members engaged in awareness raising and empowerment of women and girls in WGSSs and through outreach. GBV actors in all hubs continued to provide case management and psychosocial support to GBV survivors and the Syria and Turkey Cross Border GBV coordination groups developed and disseminated GBV referral pathways and other referral options, including to and from other sectors, in an effort to improve the multi-sectoral support to survivors. The Turkey Cross Border GBV SC members initiated adolescent girl specific programming, such as targeting young mothers in dedicated GBV and reproductive health awareness sessions. Others continued to dedicate times and spaces in WGSSs, targeting girls with self-esteem and life skills programmes.

The Syria and Turkey Cross GBV coordination groups provided leadership on emergency preparedness and coordination during the IDP influx crises in East Ghouta, Afrin and NES. Turkey Cross Border GBV actors were particularly effective in Idlib, while the Syria GBV sub sector was fully responding to the East Ghouta crisis once control was assumed by the Syrian government. The Turkey Cross Border GBV SC responded through a standardised emergency response model, which provides integrated GBV, CP, protection and MA services, including the dissemination of standardised messages on prevention and access to services, PFA and PSS in static facilities and through outreach, referrals to specialised services and distribution of dignity kits. The Jordan Cross Border GBV Working Group as well as Syria GBV sub sector developed referral pathways with guidance in both in English and Arabic on how to make safe referral contributed to the emergency response by protection partners in June 2018 in South Syria and throughout the country.

The Jordan Cross Border Working Group was able to strengthen capacity for the coordination of prevention and response to GBV in South Syria, conduct monthly meetings along with achieving several milestones. These included:

16 Listen, Engage and Empower: A strategy to address the needs of adolescent girls in the Whole of Syria in 2018: <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/whole-of-syria/document/whole-syria-adolescent-girl-strategy>

17 <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/guidance-note-ethical-closure-gbv-programmes-gbv-sc-whole-syria>

18 <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/hearing-and-being-voices-syria-working-together-raise-awareness-gender>

developing the first work plan for the working group; the first ever safety audit to identify GBV risks in two locations in South Syria; organising a workshop on contingency planning and future of GBV response in South Syria; and facilitating implementation of the Adolescent Girl Strategy that was developed by UNFPA. Moreover, in order to mitigate GBV risk, a revision of Shelter-GBV strategy was completed.

All GBV coordination groups build the capacity of its members as well as humanitarian actors working in other sectors. The Turkey Cross Border GBV SC continued implementation of its capacity building strategy, ensuring staff of GBV SC members increased their capacity to provide GBV prevention and response services, including specific aspects of case management (child survivors, case management for early married girls, etc.). Additionally, Syria and Turkey Cross Border SCs supported CMR training to take place targeting both GBV and reproductive health actors.

The Syria GBV sub-sector along with the Syria Health sector participated in a webinar highlighting their work as a best practice on inter-sector coordination organised by the Global GBV AoR, Syria UNFPA and WHO as sector lead agencies. In December 2018, in order to review achievements and challenges on GBV mainstreaming and risk mitigation, a meeting was hosted by the WoS GBV AoR in order to prepare humanitarian actors with adequate GBV inputs into their components of the HNO and HRP as well as discuss a way forward for 2019.

The 16 days of activism against GBV campaign was conducted in all governorates of Syria raising awareness of different groups (e.g. men, boys, girls, women, humanitarian workers, local authorities) on our common responsibility to prevent GBV and engaging women and girls attending WGSS during the year to facilitate discussions with others.

The GBV coordination groups actively engaged in advocacy to keep the attention towards risks of GBV throughout Syria, with special attention to the situation of widows and divorced women and adolescent girls, especially those living in women and girls-only IDP sites, and the GBV risks associated with the multi-layered vulnerabilities they experience. While also advising the humanitarian leadership on different protection/GBV concerns of GBV and on the importance of addressing GBV throughout sectors on their humanitarian interventions and bridging activities towards recovery and transition.

Way Forward

In addition to what is stated in the HRP 2019, the WoS GBV AoR will continue to facilitate GBV mainstreaming and risk mitigation activities and advocacy at the WoS level among humanitarian sector actors and leadership and support the Syria and Turkey Cross Border GBV AoRs by highlighting their best practices in this arena. The WoS GBV AoR will also continue to advocate on the need to focus on the GBV risks faced by adolescent girls and highlight their challenges and successes in accessing services and educational/vocational opportunities.

The Syria and Turkey GBV coordination hubs will continue to increase the field level coordination, through capacity building, case discussions, consultations and increased M&E, including with new standardised tools¹⁹. This will be achieved through a strong engagement of GBV actors on the ground, who will take the lead in field level coordination and capacity building.

The focus will also be on inclusion of women and girls with disabilities, especially in WGSS, and exploring the possibility to standardise cash interventions in the framework of case management. Additionally, the Turkey Cross Border GBV SC will further roll out the GBV awareness raising toolkit to ensure the engagement of all targeted groups (women, adolescent girls, men, adolescent boys) in better understanding of basic, as well as more elaborated GBV concepts. More support will also be provided to GBV actors to develop exit plans of their GBV programmes²⁰.

The Syria GBV sub-sector aims to scale up the integration of GBV into reproductive health programs, provide further trainings on GBV mainstreaming in humanitarian action across all sectors and follow-up on sector plans for GBV risk mitigation, conduct a roll-out of the Government of Syria endorsed GBV SoPs with a series of trainings for sector partners on updated referral pathways, develop capacity building programs (targeting sector partners particularly health) on case management and clinical management of rape as well as target men and boys within GBV programming as agents of change.

¹⁹ Whole of Syria – Turkey hub GBV SC, Standard operating procedures for GBV prevention and response, Nov 2018 <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/stima/document/whole-syriaturkey-hub-gbv-sc-sops-enar>

²⁰ Whole of Syria – Turkey/Jordan hubs GBV AoR, Guidance note on ethical closure of GBV programmes, Sep 2018 <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/stima/document/guidance-noteethical-closure-gbv-programmsenar>

6





Annexes

Annex 1: Methodological Approaches of Qualitative Assessments

Quantitative Data (explanation and map)

Quantitative data for Voices was drawn from 4Ws data that is used to monitor and evaluate GBV programming and interventions. Humanitarian actors in emergencies often encounter challenges in knowing Who is Where, When, doing What (4Ws) with regard to GBV services and activities. 4Ws information is essential to inform coordination. The 4Ws tool generally aims to map support by GBV and protection actors.

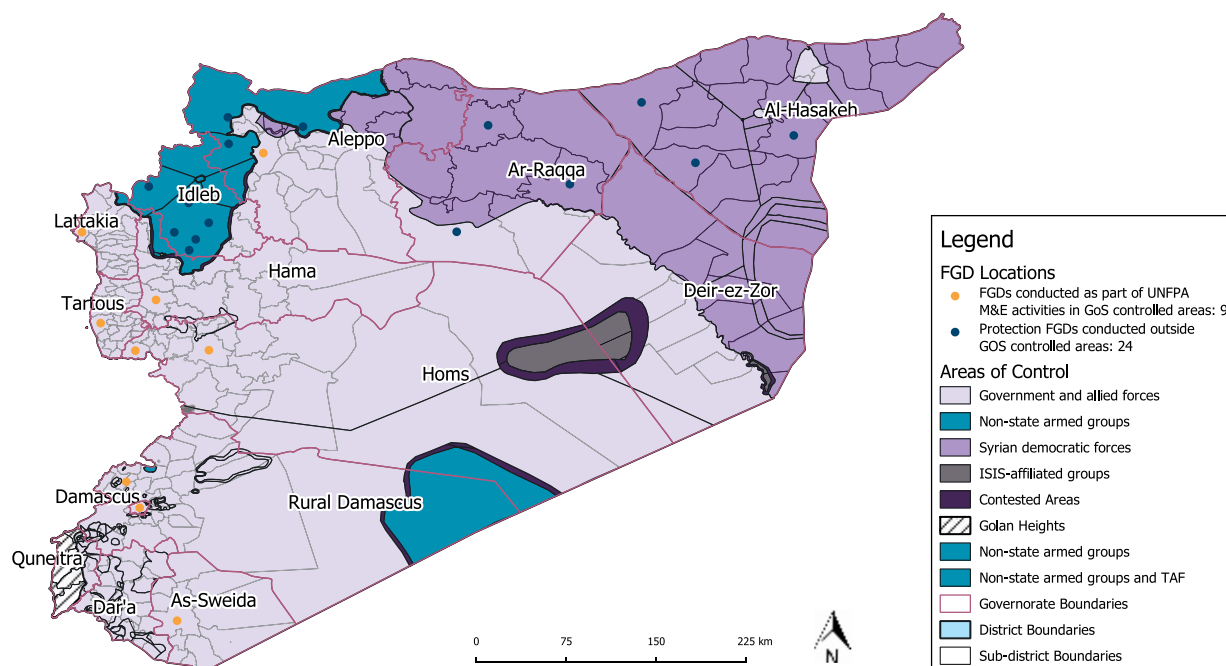
The 4W dataset is designed to provide key information regarding which organizations are carrying out which activities in which locations in which period – from within Syria and cross-border. The 4Ws include activities from UN agencies as well as international and Syrian NGOs²¹. The monthly reports provide a detailed account on humanitarian activities by modality, location at the community level, type of assistance or service, number of beneficiaries, etc. It includes information on assistance brought into Syria or purchased locally, as well as services delivered²².

Focus Group Discussion (Jordan and Turkey Cross Border Hubs)

FGDs conducted by the Protection Sector of the Jordan and Turkey hubs used the following sampling criteria for selecting sub-districts:

- % of IDPs in the sub-district in relation to overall number of IDPs in Syria
- Population size of sub-district
- Each hub reviewed the list of sub-districts and identified capacities of partners, access, feasibility of conducting FGD.

Sub-Districts Inside Syria where Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were Conducted



Date of Creation: 22/02/2019
Data Source: UNFPA Regional Syria Response Hub

Disclaimer: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement. Information visualized on this map is not to be considered complete or geographically correct. Area of influence data reflects latest OCHA data as of January 2019.

21 OCHA, 4Ws FAQ and Glossary, 2018

22 Id.

The hubs conducted two FGDS per sub-district for Al Bab, As Sweida, Homs, Jebel Saman, Karama, Kisreh, Lattakia, Madaya, Mansura, Masyaf, and Tall Kalakh sub-districts; 4 FGDs per sub-district in Afrin, Damascus, Daret Azza, Heish, Hole, Janudiyeh, Kafr Nobol, Khan Shaykun, Ma'arrat An Nu'man, Ras Al Ain, and Tartous sub-districts; 7 FGDs in Ein Issa sub-district and 8 FGDs in Areesh sub-district with participants disaggregated by sex and age, namely FGDs with adolescent girls (age 12-14 and 15-17), adolescent boys (age 12-14 and 15-17), women (age 18 above) and men (age 18 above).

Each FGD included between 6 and 10 participants (with two FGDS -one in Homs and one in Lattakia sub-districts- with 12-15 participants), constituting a representative sample of the sub-district, i.e. different types of people, professions and backgrounds within the sub-district.

A streamlined Arabic tool across hubs for joint analysis was developed, with an annexed glossary of terminology related to protection issues in English and Arabic. Facilitators were trained on the Arabic tool and glossary during preparation for the roll out, and a Training of Trainers (ToT) package in Arabic was provided, including tools, annexes and templates. FGDs were based on the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, independence and neutrality and on the 'Do No Harm' principle. Participants were told that by engaging in the discussion, humanitarian aid would not be delivered in exchange for information. Participants were given the opportunity to make an informed decision about their potential participation in the FGDs and informed consent was obtained by the facilitators. Privacy of participants and confidentiality of data was ensured.

Moreover, it was ensured that facilitators and note takers were of the same sex as the FGD participants and that facilitators were selected on the basis of having had training on protection issues, on how to respond to disclosures during or after the FGD and on guiding principles of respect, confidentiality, non-discrimination and safety.

Following data collection, the raw data in Arabic was sent by hub focal points to GBV AoR at WoS level for translation and data coding (using MAXQDA software). Minimum code taxonomy was provided by GBV, general protection, child protection, mine action in advance and also comprised geographical data points as well as age and sex disaggregation, if available. The analysis of FGD data was done by each protection sector (gender-based violence, general protection, child protection, mine action).

GBV expert focus group discussions

The aim of the Expert Focus Group Discussions (FGD) was to agree upon several expert statements on the impact of the crisis with regards to GBV inside Syria. The expert statements complemented data coming from the quantitative assessments, Focus Group Discussions as well as any other secondary literature data sources. GBV Expert FGDs were conducted in Syria (Aleppo), Turkey (Gaziantep) and Jordan (Amman). In all Expert FGDs the Delphi Method was used, which is a widely used technique for gathering data from respondents within their domain of expertise. It is a method which is especially well suited for consensus building and it has the objective of developing agreed-upon, joint statements of experts on specific issues. All Expert FGD facilitators were protection experts, in particular on GBV issues. They were all neutral in terms of the Syria Crisis, with an understanding of its context and previous experience in facilitation of this type of FGD. All discussions and information shared in GBV Experts' FGDs were anonymised. A first analysis of the GBV Expert FGDs was done by observers, note-takers and facilitators directly after the FGD had taken place, followed by further analysis by the GBV AoR at WoS level, taking findings from other data sources into account for triangulation. The analysis and coding of this data was streamlined with that of the other qualitative data.

Secondary Literature data desk review

A secondary literature data review was carried out throughout 2018 with the aim of compiling all available 2018 data on GBV inside Syria. Sources of information for the review included various assessment reports from partners working inside Syria, UN Inter-Agency Mission Reports of convoys, into besieged and hard-to-reach areas, safety audits and OHCHR reports. The analysis and coding of this data was streamlined with that of the other qualitative data.

Annex 2: Definitions of Key Terminology

Abduction

The criminal taking away a person by persuasion, by fraud, or by open force or violence. It is the unlawful interference with a family relationship, such as the taking of a child from its parent, irrespective of whether the person abducted consents or not. Kidnapping is the taking away of a person by force, threat, or deceit, with intent to cause him or her to be detained against his or her will. Kidnapping may be done for ransom or for political or other purposes.

Child or minor

Article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) defines a child as “every human being below the age of 18 years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.” The Committee on the Rights of the Child, the monitoring body for the Convention, has encouraged States to review the age of majority if it is set below 18 and to increase the level of protection for all children under 18. Minors are considered unable to evaluate and understand the consequences of their choices and give informed consent, especially for sexual acts.

Child labour

The term ‘child labour’ is often defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development. It refers to work that: • is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and interferes with their schooling by: • depriving them of the opportunity to attend school; • obliging them to leave school prematurely; or • requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work. In its most extreme forms, child labour involves children being enslaved, separated from their families, exposed to serious hazards and illnesses and/or left to fend for themselves on the streets of large cities — often at a very early age. Whether or not particular forms of ‘work’ can be called ‘child labour’ depends on the child’s age, the type and hours of work performed, the conditions under which it is performed and the objectives pursued by individual countries.

Confidentiality

An ethical principle associated with medical and social service professions. Maintaining confidentiality requires that service providers protect information gathered about clients and agree only to share information about a client’s case with their explicit permission. All written information is kept in locked files and only non-identifying information is written down on case files. Maintaining confidentiality about abuse means service providers never discuss case details with family or friends, or with colleagues whose knowledge of the abuse is deemed unnecessary. There are limits to confidentiality while working with children or clients who express intent to harm themselves or someone else.

Conflict-related sexual violence

‘Conflict-related sexual violence’ refers to incidents or (for SCR 1960 listing purposes) patterns of sexual violence, that is rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilisation, or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity, against women, men, girls or boys. Such incidents or patterns occur in conflict or post-conflict settings or other situations of concern (e.g. political strife). They also have a direct or indirect nexus with the conflict or political strife itself, i.e. a temporal, geographical and/or causal link. In addition to the international character of the suspected crimes (that can, depending on the circumstances, constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity, acts of torture or genocide), the link with conflict may be evident in the profile and motivations of the perpetrator(s), the profile of the victim(s), the climate of impunity/weakened State capacity, cross-border dimensions and/or the fact that it violates the terms of a ceasefire agreement’.

Consent/informed consent

Refers to approval or assent, particularly and especially after thoughtful consideration. Free and informed consent is given based upon a clear appreciation and understanding of the facts, implications and future consequences of an action. In order to give informed consent, the individual concerned must have all adequate relevant facts at the time consent is given and be able to evaluate and understand the consequences of an action. They also must be aware of and have the power to exercise their right to refuse to engage in an action and/or to not be coerced (i.e. being persuaded based on force or threats). Children are generally considered unable to provide informed consent because they do not have the ability and/or experience to anticipate the implications of an action, and they may not

understand or be empowered to exercise their right to refuse. There are also instances where consent might not be possible due to cognitive impairments and/or physical, sensory or intellectual disabilities.

Denial of Resources, Opportunities or Services

Denial of rightful access to economic resources/assets or livelihood opportunities, education, health or other social services. Examples include a widow prevented from receiving an inheritance, earnings forcibly taken by an intimate partner or family member, a woman prevented from using contraceptives, a girl separated from attending school, etc. Economic abuse is included in this category. Some acts of confinement may also fall under this category.

Disability

Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. (UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities)

Domestic violence (DV) and intimate partner violence (IPV)

While these terms are sometimes used interchangeably, there are important distinctions between them. 'Domestic violence' is a term used to describe violence that takes place within the home or family between intimate partners as well as between other family members. 'Intimate partner violence' applies specifically to violence occurring between intimate partners (married, cohabiting, boyfriend/girlfriend or other close relationships), and is defined by WHO as behaviour by an intimate partner or ex-partner that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm, including physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse and controlling behaviours. This type of violence may also include the denial of resources, opportunities or services.

Economic abuse / Violence

An aspect of abuse where abusers control victims' finances to prevent them from accessing resources, working or maintaining control of earnings, achieving self-sufficiency and gaining financial independence.

Emotional abuse (also referred to as psychological abuse)

Infliction of mental or emotional pain or injury. Examples include: threats of physical or sexual violence, intimidation, humiliation, forced isolation, social exclusion, stalking, verbal harassment, unwanted attention, remarks, gestures or written words of a sexual and/or menacing nature, destruction of cherished things, etc. 'Sexual harassment' is included in this category of GBV.

Empowerment of women

The empowerment of women concerns women gaining power and control over their own lives. It involves awareness raising, building self-confidence, expansion of choices, increased access to and control over resources, and actions to transform the structures and institutions that reinforce and perpetuate gender discrimination and inequality.

Forced marriage and child (also referred to as early) marriage

Forced marriage is the marriage of an individual against her or his will. Child marriage is a formal marriage or informal union before age 18. Even though some countries permit marriage before age 18, international human rights standards classify these as child marriages, reasoning that those under age 18 are unable to give informed consent. Therefore, child marriage is a form of forced marriage as children are not legally competent to agree to such unions.

Gender

Refers to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as the relations between women and those between men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialisation processes. They are context/ time-specific and changeable. Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman or a man in a given context. In most societies there are differences and inequalities between women and men in responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken, access to and control over resources, as well as decision-making opportunities. Gender is part of the broader socio-cultural context.

Gender-based violence

An umbrella term for any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will and that is based on socially ascribed (i.e. gender) differences between males and females. The term 'gender-based violence' is primarily used to

underscore the fact that structural, gender-based power differentials between males and females around the world place females at risk for multiple forms of violence. As agreed in the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993), this includes acts that inflict physical, mental or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life. The term is also used by some actors to describe some forms of sexual violence against males and /or targeted violence against LGBTI populations, in these cases when referencing violence related to gender-inequitable norms of masculinity and/or norms of gender identity.

Gender-disaggregated data

The collection of data on males and females separately in relation to all aspects of their functioning-ethnicity, class, caste, age, location, etc.

Gender Equality

This refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognising the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not a women's issue but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centred development.

Gender roles

A set of social and behavioural expectations or beliefs about how members of a culture should behave according to their biological sex; the distinct roles and responsibilities of men, women and other genders in a given culture. Gender roles vary among different societies and cultures, classes, ages and during different periods in history. Gender-specific roles and responsibilities are often conditioned by household structure, access to resources, specific impacts of the global economy, and other locally relevant factors such as ecological conditions.

Harmful traditional practices

Cultural, social and religious customs and traditions that can be harmful to a person's mental or physical health. Every social grouping in the world has specific traditional cultural practices and beliefs, some of which are beneficial to all members, while others are harmful to a specific group, such as women. These harmful traditional practices include female genital mutilation (FGM); forced feeding of women; child marriage; the various taboos or practices that prevent women from controlling their own fertility; nutritional taboos and traditional birth practices; son preference and its implications for the status of the girl child; female infanticide; early pregnancy; and dowry price. Other harmful traditional practices affecting children include binding, scarring, burning, branding, violent initiation rites, fattening, forced marriage, so-called honour crimes and dowry-related violence, exorcism or 'witchcraft'.

So-Called Honour Killings

Violence stemming from a perceived desire to safeguard family "honour", which in turn is embodied in female behaviour that challenges men's control women, including control exerted through sexual, familial and social roles and expectations assigned to women by traditional ideology. Such female behaviour may include: adultery, extramarital sex, premarital relationships that may or may not include sexual relations, rape, dating someone unacceptable to the family and violations of restrictions imposed on women and girls' dress, employment or educational opportunities, social lifestyle, or freedom of movement.

Perpetrator

Person, group or institution that directly inflicts or otherwise supports violence or other abuse inflicted on another against his/her will.

Physical assault/ Violence

An act of physical violence that is not sexual in nature. Example include: hitting, slapping, choking, cutting, shoving, burning, shooting or use of any weapons, acid attacks or any other act that results in pain, discomfort or injury.

Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA)

As highlighted in the Secretary-General's 'Bulletin on Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse' (ST/SGB/2003/13), PSEA relates specifically to the responsibilities of international humanitarian, development and peacekeeping actors to prevent incidents of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by United

Nations, NGO, and inter-governments (IGO) personnel against the affected population, to set up confidential reporting mechanisms, and to take safe and ethical action as quickly as possible when incidents do occur.

Rape

Physically forced or otherwise coerced penetration-even if slight-of the vagina, anus or mouth with a penis or other body part. It also includes penetration of the vagina or anus with an object. Rape includes marital rape and anal rape/sodomy. The attempt to do so is known as attempted rape. Rape of a person by two or more perpetrators is known as gang rape.

Separated child

A child separated from both parents, or from their previous legal or customary primary caregiver, but not necessarily from other relatives. These may, therefore, include children accompanied by other adult family members.

Sexual abuse

The term 'sexual abuse' means the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions

Sexual assault

Any form of non-consensual sexual contact that does not result in or include penetration. Examples include: attempted rape, as well as unwanted kissing, fondling, or touching of genitalia and buttocks.

Sexual exploitation

The term 'sexual exploitation' means any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power or trust for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another. Some types of forced and/or coerced prostitution can fall under this category.

Sexual harassment

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

Sexual violence

For the purposes of this publication, sexual violence includes, at least, rape/attempted rape, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation. Sexual violence is "any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic a person's sexuality, using coercion, threats of harm or physical force, by any person regardless of relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work". Sexual violence takes many forms, including rape, sexual slavery and/or trafficking, forced pregnancy, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation and/or abuse, and forced abortion.

Survivor

A survivor is a person who has experienced gender-based violence. The terms 'victim' and 'survivor' can be used interchangeably. 'Victim' is a term often used in the legal and medical sectors. 'Survivor' is the term generally preferred in the psychological and social support sectors because it implies resiliency.

Trafficking in persons

The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.

Unaccompanied child

A child who has been separated from both parents and other relatives and is not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so. This means that a child may be completely without adult care, or may be cared for by someone not related or known to the child, or not their usual caregiver, e.g. a neighbour, another child under 18, or a stranger.

Victim

A victim is a person who has experienced gender-based violence. The term recognises that a violation against one's human rights has occurred. The terms 'victim' and 'survivor' can be used interchangeably. 'Victim' is a term often used in the legal and medical sectors. 'Survivor' is the term generally preferred in the psychological and social support sectors because it implies resiliency.

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