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Whole of Syria

Gender-Based Violence Area of
Responsibility

VOICES

from Syria

2020

*Assessment Findings of the
Humanitarian Needs Overview*

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Voices from Syria 2020

Forward

With the Syria crisis now in its ninth year, the country continues to endure the cumulative effects that have fundamentally altered its social and gender dynamics for the foreseeable future. While parts of Syria appear to be stabilizing, active conflict persists in other parts. The situation continues to be largely unpredictable, and the persistent effects of conflict and displacement are now so profoundly ingrained to the extent that conventional, short-term responses are no longer sufficient.

This report provides an in-depth look into the lives of women and girls who continue to demonstrate unrelenting resilience in the face of conflict. The information, quotations and recommendations contained in this report serve as a valuable resource for aid agencies in delivering a comprehensive and effective GBV response to one of the most protracted crises of the twenty-first century.

As in previous years, gender-based violence (GBV) continues to impact the lives of Syrian women and girls throughout the country. Sexual violence, restriction of movement, forced and early marriage, and family and domestic violence are among the most common violations experienced by Syrian women and girls. Information obtained this year shows unambiguously that none of these forms of violence have abated, while new trends — such as forced puberty — continue to emerge, revealing the extent to which the crisis has altered the social fabric of countless Syrian communities.

Of particular concern is the fact that GBV has become somewhat normalized in the wake of the crisis; in the words of one adolescent girl, it has become “the new normal.” Another adolescent girl stated that “women and girls are constantly forced to look over their shoulders” for fear of being assaulted or abducted, meaning that an entire generation of Syrian girls are grappling on a daily basis with the threat of harassment, sexual violence, forced marriage, physical violence and early pregnancy. This has cast a shadow of fear that inhibits the ability of women and girls to reach their full potential but also prevents their effective participation in peacebuilding and social development.

As stated in previous years, an integral characteristic of these challenges and violations is that they are intrinsically interlinked. A girl who was on the cusp of adolescence when the crisis began may now have endured several marriages, with children of her own to feed and protect, which further increasing her risks to GBV.

Despite these challenges, this report also sheds light on the positive developments that have also taken place over the past nine years. For example, women and girls’ safe spaces continue to serve as singular lifelines in numerous communities, with a wide array of awareness and engagement activities taking place throughout the year. More survivors are coming to seek services - confirming an improvement in the quality of services. While this demonstrates that the response is on the right track, much more needs to be done to offset the collective 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 contributed to ensure a GBV response is available in Syria.

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/clusters - Camp Coordination and Camp Management, Early Recovery and Livelihoods, Education, Food Security, Health, Nutrition, Protection, Child Protection, Mine Action, Shelter and Non-Food Items, Agriculture and Food Security, and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) - 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 neighbouring countries (cross-border operations through UNSC Resolution 2449) together to harmonise (and improve effectiveness) of the response. It is comprised of one comprehensive framework, a common response plan and a supporting coordination structure.

Table of Contents

Forward	4
Impact Of The Crisis From A Feminist Perspective	11
Impact of the crisis	13
Scope of Analysis	13
GBV Consequences on Women and Girls.....	13
Risk Analysis and Monitoring of Situation And Needs	17
Education	18
Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM)	18
Food, Security and Livelihoods (FSL)	18
Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)	18
Shelter/Non-Food Items (NFI)	19
Child Protection	19
General Protection	20
Humanitarian Distributions	21
Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Analysis	25
Affected Population	26
Types of Gender-Based Violence	28
Crisis and Gender Related Risks To GBV	38
Conflict-Related GBV Risk Factors	38
Location of Violence.....	38
Movement Restrictions for Women and Girls	39
Civil Documentation and Housing, Land and Property (HLP)	42
Negative Coping Mechanisms	46
Overview of existing services For GBV Survivors and those at risk of GBV	50
Reach of GBV Programming In 2019 (Jan-Dec).....	50
GBV Programming: Access, Quality and Satisfaction, Barriers to Services	50
Women and Girls' Safe Spaces	50
GBV Specialized Services	53
Health Services (CMR Protocols)	53
Legal system/justice	54
Barriers to Accessing Services	55
Intersectoral Analysis	57
GBV Aor Achievements, Recommendations and Way Forward	65
Achievements (Jan-Dec 2019)	66
Annexes	73
Terminology	76
References	81



Summary of Findings

Information gathered in 2019, reconfirmed that various types of GBV continue to pervade the lives of women and girls, particularly adolescent girls. Deep-rooted social norms, compounded by the length of the crisis and mounting lawlessness in some areas, are normalising this violence, severely affecting the detrimental psychosocial wellbeing and continued erosion of women's and girls' rights. Women, girls, boys and men have confirmed that GBV occurs everywhere: in homes, at schools, in the market, on the street, both in urban and rural areas and in and outside of IDP camps.

Physical violence, emotional and psychological violence, sexual violence, exploitation and harassment, domestic violence, family violence against women and girls and early/forced marriage are types of GBV identified over the years. Adolescent girls are forced into marriage by parents for several reasons, such as easing financial burdens, as well as to protect them against sexual violence, abuse and exploitation: *"One of the causes of problems is lack of money. Women are raped, kidnapped and parents marry their daughters to get rid of them and throw the burden on someone else."* (Woman from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate)

Another reason for early marriage that came out strongly this year is «unrelated people living together». This is especially problematic in areas like north-west Syria where the recent displacement of hundreds of thousands of IDPs and lack of space has forced many people to live together. Families tend to normalise this kind of arrangement by forcing their daughters into marrying other members that they share accommodation with. The girl is often wed to a man much older than her and/or already married, which is likely to increase her vulnerability to other forms of GBV: *"As a result of early marriage, there will be a lack of mutual understanding. If they have children, their children will feel lost. Also, she may be exposed to violence."* (Adolescent girl from Quneitra sub district, Quneitra governorate)

More so than other years, participants cited online harassment, sextortion and revenge pornography. This abuse mostly affects adolescent girls and widows, including unwanted sexual text messages or blackmail using photos of women and girls: *"I used to hear that cyber harassment is between two people who know each other. That's not the case anymore. As soon as the man acquires the girl's phone number, the harassment begins even without a previous encounter with the girl."* (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub)

In north-west Syria, reported incidents of rape are on the increase, which does not necessarily mean an increase in prevalence but signifies an improvement in the quality of services². Only a few participants identified sexual violence perpetrated against men and boys, although *"young boys are exposed to sexual harassment,"* according to a woman from Homs sub district, Homs governorate. However, GBV experts in north-west Syria noted the increase in males, especially boys, disclosing and seeking care through GBV specialised services. Also of note, sexual violence of both males and females is still perceived to happen within detention facilities.

Economic violence and denial of resources, opportunities or services was raised as a concern more frequently this year. The adolescent girl's statement below highlights that women and girls are in some instances forced by their husbands and or male family members to work to generate revenue: *"At work, girls and women are subject to violence by men, forcing them to work hard on farmland, taking away the money they earn by force and prioritising hard labour over education."* (Adolescent girl from Tell Abiad sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate). In some circumstances, women and adolescent girls who earn an income are denied their right to manage household income and resources: *"Men are entitled to everything, even their wives' salaries."* (Woman from As Sweida sub district, As Sweida governorate). Other women and girls, especially widowed and divorced, are denied inheritance, property or alimony; while girls are sometimes denied access to school or to recreational or other social activities.

New GBV trends identified this year, especially in areas of north-west Syria, are sex-selected abortion to ensure having sons, forced pregnancy to bridge a perceived demographic gap and forced puberty of girls, the process of giving girls hormones so that they reach puberty earlier and get married earlier.

Even if some of the GBV trends have come out more strongly in certain areas of the country, the experience of the last eight years tells that when a GBV type exists in a certain location it is likely to be happening more broadly. We should therefore view the issue based on this assumption.

As in previous years, women, girls, adolescent girls, particularly if they are widowed, divorced and/or displaced, as well as women with disabilities and older women, were identified as affected populations most at risk of GBV. More so than in 2018, women and girls pointedly noted the inequality that exists between male and females, and

2 Turkey Cross Border GBV Sub-Cluster and Reproductive Health Technical Working Group, Rape Incident Report, July 2019.

identified the role of negative social norms or customs and traditions in hampering the realisation of their rights: *"Even if women are granted their rights, customs and traditions still exist and we must respect them with regard to freedom."* (Woman from Homs sub district, Homs governorate)

Some consequences of violence identified were shame and stigma, psychosocial distress, health problems, loss of childhood, and fear. The increase in reported suicides and suicide attempts by GBV survivors is also an alarming emerging trend³. As in previous years, women and girls noted the fear of sexual violence as a concern contributing to psychosocial distress and a further limitation of their movements, which is already restricted by parents, husbands and family members who harbour the same concerns. One mother was concerned about *"sexual violence, child rape and harassment at school, to the extent that she feels afraid of sending their daughters to school"*. (Woman from Jebel Saman sub district, Aleppo governorate)

Another reason for this movement restriction is adherence to customs and traditions, which are rooted in patriarchy: *"There are some restrictions on movement because of the customs and traditions of society."* (Adolescent girl from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate). Gender norms held by family and community members – which restrict the freedoms and movements of women and girls – have become the primary obstacle to accessing GBV-specialised services: *"We have faced some challenges from parents about coming to the centre. [Parents ask:] how will you go alone as a woman? What can you learn at this age? It is all of no use. [Or:] you are a widow. What will people say about you when they see you going alone?"* (Woman from Hama sub district, Hama governorate)

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 GBV services are available and accessible, women and girls expressed high satisfaction with the services received.

In addition, 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: *"There may be sexual exploitation. A woman might be given her aid, but she might be sexually abused."* (Woman from Quneitra sub district, Quneitra governorate)

Again in 2019, as in all prior years, silence, victim blaming, movement restriction, aggression and use of violence, running away, crying and engaging in unhealthy behaviours are the main negative coping mechanisms: *"When it comes to rape, she doesn't want to speak to anybody and so she suffers a difficult psychological ordeal."* (Adolescent girl from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate) They also mentioned that silence around GBV incidents, especially of sexual violence, is used to protect them and the family from shame: *"Women keep silent about the violence they face for fear of shame. There are no rules that protect women."* (Woman from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate)

Positive coping mechanisms were also identified, in particular family and community support, raising awareness, seeking support from protection services, positive activities or actions such as building self-esteem, studying, gymnastics or journaling, in addition to stepping away from the violence and seeking health services.

3 MHPSS WG, Online Survey on Self Harm/Suicide in NW Syria among MHPSS Workers, 2019. Findings available at: <https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrl-joiMjg1MzdiZjktZWZkZS00ZTM0LWFKZDQtZDk3YjM3ODdmYTdiliwidCI6ImY2MTBjMG13LWJkMjQtNGIzOS04MTBiLTNkYzI4MGFmYjU5MCIslm-MiOjh9>



1



Impact Of The Crisis From A Feminist Perspective

Across Syria an estimated 11.06 million people (50% women and 43% children)⁴ are in need of various forms of humanitarian assistance, with women and girls facing particularly high levels of vulnerability. While the violence has reduced in some parts of the country over the past year, there have been intense hostilities in Idlib, northern Hama, and western Aleppo as well as in the north-east governorates of Ar Raqqa and Al Hasakah, that continue to dictate the humanitarian needs of women, girls, men and boys. However, throughout past and present hostilities, GBV has remained a constant factor in the lives of Syrian women and girls. An estimated 6.1 million people remain internally displaced, with 1.4 million population movements recorded in the first 10 months of the year.⁵ Furthermore, in 2019, some 3.22 million women of reproductive age (15-49), including 483,000 women who are expected to become pregnant in 2020 and their children, are in acute need of assistance⁶.

Specifically, the humanitarian situation in north-west Syria has experienced continuous deterioration during 2019. A total of 834,965 movements were tracked in Idlib between January and October⁷. Between April and September more than 400,000 people have fled their homes in search of safety and to access basic services⁸, while in December only, almost 300,000 people were displaced - mostly in southern parts of Idlib - to reach safer areas in the north. Of those, 80 percent are estimated to be women and children.⁹ Displacement patterns over the course of 2019 saw people impacted by hostilities moving toward densely populated areas of northern Idlib governorate, with Dana sub-district receiving the largest number of individuals. Many of these individuals and families have experienced displacement multiple times, which makes them extremely vulnerable to additional shocks, with women and girls at greater risk of harm and exploitation during flight. Women and girls that experienced displacement repeatedly have also experienced various forms of violence and trauma multiple times throughout almost nine years of crisis.

The most recent waves of displacement add increasing vulnerability for people in an already dire humanitarian situation in north-west Syria, especially in light of the shortage of shelter options, the increase in rents and the fact that some displaced people stay out in the open¹⁰; these are all serious GBV concerns for women and girls. In addition, overcrowding and lack of shelter has led to serious protection and privacy concerns for women and girls including forced marriages as a result

of many unrelated people sharing the same households. Over the course of only two days (28-30 August 2019), seven medical facilities were reportedly damaged by airstrikes according to WHO, with at least two of those being paediatrics and maternity hospitals¹¹, while over the course of the year, 110 health facilities have been fully destroyed while 473 are partially damaged¹².

In north-east Syria, since the beginning of the military operations on 9 October 2019, as of November a total of 77,622 individuals remained displaced to communities within Al Hasakah, Ar-Raqqa, Aleppo and Deir-ez-Zor Governorates, in addition to an estimated 15,164 individuals who were reported to have fled to Iraq¹³. Between 4 December 2018 and 31 March 2019, more than 63,000 people were displaced from ISIL-held areas in south-eastern Deir-ez-Zor governorate and were transferred to Al Hol camp in Al Hasakah governorate following intense airstrikes and ground hostilities in the area. However, the camp infrastructure was designed for a much smaller population (approximately 10,000 people were staying at Al Hol camp prior to December 2018¹⁴). Thus, the rapid expansion of the camp due to the influx of IDPs created frequent overcrowding in reception areas. Displaced people were sometimes compelled to sleep in the open for the lack of emergency shelter, which posed GBV risks for women, girls, men and boys.¹⁵

Following the escalation of hostilities in north-eastern Syria, a number of (mainly cross-border) actors temporarily suspended activities in Al Hol, which particularly impacted the health and protection sectors. The decline in protection partner presence significantly reduced the nature and scale of protection activities in the camp, with most activities limited to community mobilisation and awareness raising¹⁶.

In 2019, IDPs continued to experience restrictions of movement which impacted their access to essential services. As the displacement situation becomes protracted, with IDP families having resided for almost a year in dire camp conditions, the level of stress, frustration and anxiety is increasing, bringing negative implications on familial and community relations. Women, girls, youths, older people and persons with disabilities are among the most vulnerable living in IDP sites. Furthermore, as of 19 November 2019, the population of Al Hol is 68,744 people, or 19,030 households, 94% of which are women and children and 53% are children under 12¹⁷.

4 Syria Humanitarian Needs Overview 2020

5 Syria Humanitarian Needs Overview 2020

6 Syria Humanitarian Needs Overview 2020

7 Syria Humanitarian Needs Overview 2020

8 "Syrian Arab Republic: Recent Developments in north-western Syria," Situation Report No.13, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), October 8, 2019

9 "Syrian Arab Republic: Recent Developments in north-western Syria," Situation Report No.4, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), January 2, 2020

10 "Syrian Arab Republic: Recent Developments in north-western Syria," Situation Report No. 4, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), January 2, 2020

11 "Syrian Arab Republic: Recent Developments in north-western Syria," Situation Report No.11, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), September 6, 2019

12 Syria Humanitarian Needs Overview 2020

13 North-east Syria - HNAP Flash Update #17-13 Nov 2019

14 "Syria Crisis: North-East Syria" Situation Report No.31 (15 December 2018-31 March 2019), UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 15 December 2018-31 March 2019

15 "Syria Crisis: North-East Syria" Situation Report No.31 (15 December 2018-31 March 2019), UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 15 December 2018-31 March 2019

16 Al Hol Situation Report—As of 19 Nov 2019," UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Nov 21, 2019

17 Al Hol Situation Report—As of 19 Nov 2019," UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Nov 21, 2019

Impact of the crisis

The Syria crisis is one of the most severe and protracted humanitarian crises in the world today and has impacted women, men, girls and boys differently. Around 7% of IDP households and 9% of total households are female headed, with higher percentages for Aleppo and Homs, at 12% and 10% respectively.¹⁸ The crisis has permanently altered the fabric of society in the nation, with far-reaching consequences for its future resilience.

Women and girls have had a unique experience of the crisis and are often exposed to different risks and vulnerabilities. Traditional gender roles have changed due to the large-scale displacements, family separation, and economic crisis (unemployment). This, in turn, has driven high levels of family separation, with women becoming heads of households and thus the primary breadwinners. In other households, male members are present, however they are unable to secure employment or other financial sources to maintain their families. Women and girls are therefore forced into work. Consequently, women and girls face increased risks of GBV such as sexual exploitation and abuse by employers, denial of resources, opportunities or services, such as education or male family members denying them their earnings from employment.

In addition, women also face an increased risk of intimate partner violence stemming from their partner's frustration of not living up to masculine standards for being head of household and primary breadwinner. Lastly, women and girls are confronted with early and forced marriage, to diminish household food and financial burdens, or more often, as a misperceived protective measure from sexual violence.

Scope of Analysis

Data collection, and thus, monitoring of key indicators and outcomes for GBV prevention and response is a challenge, linked to the sensitivities in collecting quantitative data on GBV incidences and its prevalence. Lack of trust and stigma in disclosing a GBV incidence to public or private actors providing medical, PSS and legal services are just two challenges GBV actors face in collecting quantitative data on GBV. In addition, fear of reprisal by perpetrators and their family and community members serves as an impediment to disclosure. Furthermore, in government-controlled areas, mandatory reporting on sexual violence¹⁹ must be adhered to and thus serves as an impediment to disclosure on sexual violence cases.

These factors explain the importance of qualitative assessments to inform programming design, monitoring

and evaluation. The report's analysis is shaped by qualitative assessments²⁰ conducted with women, girls, men and boys, 12-14, 15-17, and 18 and over to determine the types of violence experienced, the affected populations, coping mechanisms, access and barriers to GBV specialised and other services. The analysis also covers other protection concerns such as civil documentation, mine action, housing, land and property issues, child protection and decision-making roles in the areas of long term planning, as well as return, relocation and local integration for IDPs.

As in previous years, focus group participants noted the pervasiveness of violence, namely it occurs everywhere and impacts everyone. However, participants also noted that the sub-populations most impacted by GBV are adolescent girls, girls, women, divorced women, widows and other female head of households, women and girls with disabilities, elderly women and displaced women and girls. Hence, the prioritisation of women and girls in the analysis, as they have noted there is no place that they feel safe, not even in their homes.

A combination of access limitations, and specific difficulties associated with the monitoring of GBV continues to hamper efforts to establish a comprehensive understanding of the outcomes of GBV humanitarian interventions in Syria in all geographic locations. Geographic locations of coverage of the qualitative assessments largely remained the same with the addition of a few new sub-districts where access was possible, as well as where newly displaced populations were identified. Specifically, community FGDs were conducted in 34 sub-districts and communities.

GBV Consequences on Women and Girls

*"Gender roles, and the inequalities that underpin them, have fuelled and amplified the impact of these violations, inflicting multifaceted harms upon survivors, thereby shaping differently their negative experiences. For example, although gendered harms clearly encompass physical and bodily harm, they often also encompass unacknowledged harm, including distinctive socioeconomic and moral harms, which negatively impact the exercise of a broad range of human rights."*²¹

The consequences of GBV on women and girls are manifold and are often interlinked. A woman who has experienced sexual violence will most likely have experienced physical, verbal and emotional violence in order to subdue her and make her less resistant: *"Some men beat their wife to have sex with them."* (Woman from Lattakia sub district, Lattakia governorate). Thus, physical violence and sexual violence can cause injury, disability and in some cases death.

nation of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Nov 21, 2019

18 Humanitarian Needs Assessment Programme (HNAP) Syria, 'Syria Socioeconomic and Demographic Report', September 2019

19 Mandatory reporting laws require that people in certain professions report sexual violence to a proper authority, such as a law enforcement agency or government protective services.

20 See dedicated annex on Methodology for details.

21 A/HRC/42/51, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, Aug 2019

Harmful traditional practices can also have fatal consequences for girls: *"Early marriage leads to their [girls'] exposure to early diseases and increased likelihood of death, especially when giving birth."* (Adolescent girl from Homs sub district, Homs governorate). In most other cases, early forced marriage results in a loss of childhood, i.e. the right to play and learn: *"Women who got married early were denied their childhood."* (Adolescent girl from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate)

In addition, early/forced marriage places women and girls in a lifelong cycle of dependence, as they lose opportunities to choose an autonomous path to their educational, social and economic development: *"I believe that the most significant consequence of early marriage is deprivation of education. Consequently, they lose the opportunity to find a respectable job. This makes the girl vulnerable and causes her to feel afraid of the husband or her mother-in-law."* (Adolescent girl from Tartous sub district, Tartous governorate)

Shame, stigma and possible family and community rejection are also consequences experienced and feared by women and girls: *"Parents sometimes believe what people say about their daughters instead of believing what their daughters say. It seems that they do not want to understand what happened."* (Adolescent girl from Damascus sub district, Damascus governorate). Psychological distress is often another consequence of GBV: *"Women who have been injured suffer from emotional and psychological crises."* (Adolescent boy from Dana sub district, Idlib governorate), while constant sense of fear underpins the lives of women and girl GBV survivors, as well as those who are at risk of it: *"I control everything I do to make sure nothing bad happens to me."* (Adolescent girl from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate)

In cases of sexual violence, the possible shame and stigma that can be incurred, leads some survivors to commit suicide²²: *"Sexual violence has the most terrible impact on women. It can affect women's relationships with their children and lead women to suicide."* (Woman from Afrin sub district, Aleppo governorate). Some women and girls see suicide as the only option if they cannot disclose to a protection entity: *"Girls are forbidden to access healthcare, legal care and psychological care, and girls might consider suicide."* (Adolescent girl from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate). GBV experts confirmed that suicidal thoughts have been disclosed by clients: *"We're working with one GBV survivor with suicidal thoughts."* (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub)

Lastly, after nine years of hostilities, airstrikes and shelling, entrenched harmful social norms and negative coping strategies, violence in Syria has become normal-

ised: *"People who suffer the most violence are us girls. We are not allowed to continue our studying. Women suffer beating from their husbands and they are used to this thing. They can talk openly about this to their neighbours. I might talk about this to my mother. We are used to this. We are starting to think that it is normal that this is part of raising us and part of the culture we were raised in."* (Adolescent girl from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate)

As the adolescent girl from Al Bab sub-district has highlighted, normalisation of violence can easily root various forms of violence such as early marriage, sexual harassment and verbal and emotional abuse as a way of life or "part of our culture." Normalisation of violence can have negative long-term impacts on women and girls individually, as well as on families and communities. When women and girls are denied the opportunity and right to become socially and economically productive members within their families and communities, the development of the nation as a whole is stunted.

22 "As a reaction to violence, women commit suicide." (Woman from Daret Azza sub district, Aleppo governorate); "I know girls in my school who used to cry a lot and who had a lot of blackness under her eyes. She had suffered harassment by her step-father. At first she thought of committing suicide by pills." (Adolescent girl from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate); "I was about to commit suicide when my husband was killed in a battle." (Woman from Atareb sub district, Aleppo governorate)



An abstract geometric pattern featuring a central white star with a dark blue number '2' inside. The star is surrounded by a grid of squares, each divided into triangles of various colors: dark blue, teal, pink, and purple. The pattern is symmetrical and has a modern, minimalist aesthetic.

2



Risk Analysis and Monitoring of Situation And Needs

During 2019, GBV actors have been working with humanitarian actors in order to address the GBV risks faced by women and girls when implementing their interventions and the GBV risk mitigation measures needed to decrease such risks. In 2019, GBV and other humanitarian actors have been successful in conducting and participating in trainings, developing checklists, building referral systems and mechanisms to reduce GBV risks for beneficiaries of humanitarian aid. However, GBV remains a critical risk for beneficiaries accessing humanitarian assistance.



Education

"Most girls are unable to complete their studies due to fear of kidnapping and death. Parents are afraid that the girl will be kidnapped and bring shame to the parents or incur greater financial expenses." (Woman from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate)

Overwhelmingly, the fear of violence has been identified as a reason for not sending children – and particularly daughters – to school. The violence noted included kidnapping and subsequently sexual violence, sexual harassment on the way to school as well as within school grounds, and physical²³ and sexual harassment²⁴ by staff.



Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM)

"Sexual violence occurs in collective latrines sometimes, especially for young girls, women, widows, divorced women and people with intellectual disabilities, especially at night." (Adolescent girl from Al Hool sub district, Al Hasakah governorate)

Many focus group discussion (FGD) participants in north-east Syria noted the forms of violence that they experience within IDP sites. Such forms of violence ranged from sexual violence²⁵ as noted by the adolescent girl in Al Hool. While others noted there is inadequate attention provided to the needs of older people as well as child and adolescent unaccompanied children.²⁶

- 23 "Violence against girls is practiced by the teacher when she swears at students if they don't do their homework or uses beatings as a means of education." (Adolescent girl from Harim sub district, Idlib governorate)
- 24 "Sexual harassment of girls is common in schools. My daughter was once harassed by the cleaning worker." (Woman from Homs sub district, Homs governorate)
- 25 "Some women in the camp are fearful about dealing with the authorities for sexual purposes." (Man from Al Hol sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate); "Women may be subjected to sexual harassment by the authorities in the evening under the pretext of inspection and this is contrary to our customs and traditions." (Man from Al Hol sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate)
- 26 "There is considerable neglect of older people by parents and service



Food, Security and Livelihoods (FSL)

"People might be exploited to get food aid." (Woman from Atareb sub district, Aleppo governorate). *"There are difficulties in reaching food relief services because of sexual and economic exploitation, as well as not allowing women to go out unescorted."* (Adolescent boy from Ar Raqqa sub district Ar Raqqa governorate). *"Sexual harassment occurs when bread is distributed within heavy crowds, while the beneficiaries are insulted by the distributors. There is also harassment, especially for kids."* (Man from Salqin sub district, Idlib governorate)

Sexual and economic exploitation²⁷ at food distribution sites are risks associated with receiving food aid. Some respondents noted that the contents of food aid are sold²⁸, the food provided was of low quality²⁹ or food aid was not available,³⁰ all of which places women and girls at risk of exploitation, as women and girls may participate in transactional sex in order to receive food. Divorced and widowed women as well as persons with disabilities often have their food aid stolen.³¹ Meeting the requirements in receiving food aid is sometimes difficult,³² thus some GBV survivors may be excluded.



Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

"Violence occurs in gathering and dark places, water distribution points and the reception section, especially during access to water, where some receive large quantities of water without restrictions, leading to increased problems that amount to beatings in front of water tanks. Women are insulted and beaten." (Adolescent boy from Al Hool sub district Al Hasakah governorate)

The violence that women and girls experience at water distribution points is mostly verbal and physical violence. While lack of water has forced some camp residents in north-east Syria to bathe in dams³³, where numerous GBV risks are posed for women and girls, such as mixing

providers in the camp. Neglect can be viewed as psychological violence for some children and adolescents, as unaccompanied children between the ages of 6-14 years do not receive attention from some of relevant providers." (Man from Qahtaniyyeh sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate)

- 27 "It is difficult to access food aid, and people are asked for money to receive their allocation." (Adolescent boy from Qahtaniyyeh sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate)
- 28 "Some people sell their aid basket." (Man from Idlib sub district, Idlib governorate)
- 29 "Food aids are not sufficient. The aids are of low quality." (Man from Dana sub district, Idlib governorate)
- 30 "Basically no services – even food aid is not available." (Man from Harim sub district, Idlib governorate)
- 31 "Sometimes, camp managers exploit divorced, widows and people with disabilities by stealing their allocation because such people are restricted and can't ask for their rights." (Adolescent boy from Dana sub district, Idlib governorate)
- 32 "It is difficult to meet all the requirements to claim food aid." (Woman from Homs sub district, Homs governorate)
- 33 "Lack of water pushes people to wash in the dam." (Adolescent boy from Al Hasakeh sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate)

with men and boys as they bathe. If men and boys know when they bathe, they can be assaulted on the way, during bathing or upon their return from the dams.

Many participants noted the distance from water tanks that they must walk in order to obtain water.³⁴ Water must be obtained several times a day for drinking, cooking and bathing, with women and girls being the primary household members to secure water for family needs. Thus, women and girls are placed at risk of sexual and physical violence while walking such long distances, as water is needed in the early morning as well as in the evening, when it is often dark.

There is a perceived lack of standards for hygiene distribution, as vulnerable persons, such as children, older people and persons with disabilities do not receive adequate distributions.³⁵ Respondents also noted that women and girls experience sexual harassment when they fetch water.³⁶

Furthermore, the gender disaggregated WASH overview shows that 45% of all assessed households reported that toilets shared by four or more households were not segregated by sex, with higher percentages for Al Hasakeh (74%), Ar Raqqa (59%) and Deir ez Zor (51%), while 54% of all assessed households reported at least one protection issue related to toilet facilities available in camps and sites, such as harassment due to lack of privacy, poor lighting and lack of locks³⁷.



Shelter/Non-Food Items (NFI)

"Living in shelters and mixing with different people." A woman from Idlib sub-district sharing a violence risk factor for women and girls.

Living with strangers and having minimal support³⁸ for shelter poses a risk for GBV, hence why some respondents suggested that camps be eliminated and houses that are habitable and regulated be identified.³⁹ Some women and girls noted that they experience emotional violence through insults when they receive aid in the form of non-food items.⁴⁰ Others also noted that ethnic minorities mixing with local residents can also be a violence risk factor.⁴¹

34 "Water is not easily accessible at all because the tanks are far from the camp." (Woman from Azaz sub district, Aleppo governorate)

35 "We need special hygiene aid for older people, people with disabilities and children. There are no standards for distribution." (Woman from Idlib sub district, Idlib governorate)

36 "There are many types of violence; there are many cases of harassment against girls and women, especially when women and girls go to get water." (Adolescent boy from Ar Raqqa sub district Ar Raqqa governorate)

37 Gender Disaggregated WASH Overview – HNO 2020, Dec 2019

38 "In the shelter centre, there is no care by the organisations. People live with strangers and support is minimal." (Man from Idlib sub district, Idlib governorate)

39 "Camps must be eliminated and properly-designed houses must be built." (Man from Idlib sub district, Idlib governorate)

40 "Recipients of the service are neglected and insulted, whether physically or morally." (Adolescent girl from Jisr Ash Shugur sub district, Idlib governorate)

41 "One of the things that helps prevent violence is to provide accommodation for ethnic groups so that there will be no clashes and quarrels with



Child Protection

"Although there are organisations to protect children, you can still find out-of-school girls and women living in harsh conditions, spending most of the day on the streets and forced to beg. These girls and women are exposed to daily harassment and miss out on basic rights such as education and access to health services, because of their bad economic situation." (Man from Salqin sub district, Idlib governorate)

Under the Convention of the Right of the Child⁴², children have a right to actively participate in the decisions that impact their lives. In 2019, adolescents who participated in the FGDs expressed that children are involved in decision making⁴³ in certain situations. Of note, children were asked this question in the context of long-term planning, including return, relocation and local integration for IDPs. Specifically, one adolescent girl expressed that *"our families ask us and we share in the process. We influence our families and their opinions."* (Adolescent girl from Salqin sub district, Idlib governorate). Another adolescent boy stated that *"decisions are in the hands of the father, but children can discuss and intervene in the decision."* (Adolescent boy from Al Hasakah sub district, Al Hasakah governorate)

Many children have been left as unaccompanied and separated children throughout nine years of crisis. In 2019, FGD participants noted, as in previous years, that children have become unaccompanied, separated and/or head of households, due to the death of one parent⁴⁴ and remarriage of another where the child is not wanted in the new household, (notably the remarriage of the mother). Other

local resident groups." (Adolescent girl from Idlib sub district, Idlib governorate)

42 Syria Arab Republic became a signatory on 14 August 1993

43 "It is important to take the opinions of children and discuss all that matters the family with them." (Woman from Salqin sub district, Idlib governorate); "I discuss the matter of going back home with my father and he gives me optimism, and pays attention to what I say." (Young adolescent boy from Salqin sub district, Idlib governorate); "I discuss with my family and children and hear the views of everyone. I talk to the old and young because we live within the same family and bear the burdens of each other." (Man from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate); "Parents take the biggest role in planning, and some of them consult the youth." (Adolescent boy from Ar Raqqa sub district Ar Raqqa governorate); "Children take a small role in decision-making." (Man from Ras Al Ain sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate); "I let my 5-year-old daughter make the decision whether she wanted to stay in her grandfather's house who lived outside the camp or stay with me and my daughter. She chose to stay with me, her mother." (Woman from Al Hol sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate)

44 "One of the girls stated that the reason may be due to the death of the father and the marriage of the mother or vice versa, so the child remains alone." (Adolescent girl from Harim sub district, Idlib governorate); "The cause of these cases is the death of the mother and father. This is beyond our control but we can help children." (Woman from Harim sub district, Idlib governorate); "The reasons for separation include the death of the parents or their arrest or death in military operations." (Man from Al Hasakeh sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate); "There are separate children in the camp due to the death of the parents and these children live with their grandparents." (Woman from Ras Al Ain sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate)

causes include divorce⁴⁵, displacement⁴⁶ and detention or disappearance of a parent⁴⁷, usually the father.

Unaccompanied/separated children and/or child-headed households are at risk of various forms of violence. They experience verbal and physical violence by other children within their host families⁴⁸ and are marginalised from community structures. In other instances children will isolate unaccompanied/separated children from play groups because of their status of being without parents.⁴⁹ Some respondents noted the exploitation they experience by their care-takers, such as being forced to work or beg.⁵⁰ Another noted the violence they experience, especially sexual violence⁵¹ and the potential marginalisation they experience when they survive such violence: *"unaccompanied children are exposed to community neglect, organ trade, child labour, sexual abuse, and mistreatment. Girls that have suffered rape or sexual abuse become outcasts."* (Woman from Daret Azza sub district, Aleppo governorate). The psychological and emotional distress that children experience due to witnessing the violence against their family members, such as the killing of their parent or caregivers was also underlined⁵². They are then further victimised by violence through exploitation and maltreatment by other caregivers and/or community members.⁵³ Child labour was identified again as one of the many

child rights' violations that children face, especially girls. Child labour is a form of violence as it harms the mental, social, physical and psychological development of children. As noted by respondents, the crisis continues to deprive children of their right to an education, as they are forced to meet the financial needs of their families.

"Children are deprived of education and they are forced to work in jobs that are physically unsuitable to provide the requirements of living. They do so either by helping the father to support the family or, in cases of dead fathers, the child might work for long hours in order to make a living for his brothers, sisters, and mother." (Woman from Al Hasakah sub district, Al Hasakah governorate)

Children may be at risk of being forced to work when they are within the vicinity of restaurants and cafes.⁵⁴ Boys are particularly vulnerable to the worst forms of child labour and abuse⁵⁵, while girls were noted to be at extreme risk of exploitation⁵⁶, verbal and sexual harassment when forced to work⁵⁷ or beg.⁵⁸



General Protection

Lastly, as in previous years, lack of civil documentation was noted by FGD participants. FGD participants identified some of the challenges linked to lack of civil documentation such as inability to access aid⁵⁹ and registering children for school: *"I cannot get aid because I have four children, but only two are registered. Therefore, they do not give me enough aid. I cannot register my children at school and we cannot leave the country."* (Woman from Daret Azza sub district, Aleppo governorate). FGD participants also cited an inability to travel or secure employment without the required civil documentation: *"There are many people who couldn't travel or have a job here due to lack of documentation."* (Man from Dana sub district, Idlib governorate)

Other respondents noted that lack of civil documentation is due to the expense, coupled with fear of travelling to insecure locations⁶⁰ to obtain documents: *"Many*

- 45 Children live with other relatives because of the deaths of a caregiver or divorce and problems between their parents. (Woman from Tell Abiad sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate); "Children might be separated due to divorce, death of parents, and displacement." (Woman from Atareb sub district, Aleppo governorate); "Children can be separated due to divorce, displacement, and death of a parent. Such children live in the streets or mosques. There is no one to take care of such children, who are exploited, homeless, and abused." (Man from Kisreh sub district, Deir-ez-Zor governorate)
- 46 "There are cases of children being separated from their parents because of panic and fear during the forced displacement from their areas." (Adolescent boy from Azaz sub district, Aleppo governorate)
- 47 "There are three children who live with their grandfather because their father was arrested, and their mother left them afterwards." (Woman from Kisreh sub district, Deir-ez-Zor governorate); "Yes, a child said that his father is missing and his mother left him and does not know where she is. He lives in his grandmother's house." (Adolescent boy from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate)
- 48 "There is physical and verbal violence experienced by unaccompanied and separated children from other children who live with their families." (Adolescent girl from Al Hol sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate)
- 49 "They are always isolated from the children who don't play with them." (Man from Daret Azza sub district, Aleppo governorate)
- 50 "The conditions of these children depend on the care provider. They are usually maltreated. They might be forced into child labour and beggary. They are deprived of education and all rights." (Adolescent boy from Dana sub district, Idlib governorate)
- 51 "In my opinion, the risks apply and affect the girl more because she is the weakest. Her reputation is also at risk. Moreover, they are deprived of education, and in the future people will look down on them because they do not have parents." (Woman from Azaz sub district, Aleppo governorate); "Such children are deprived of their rights, especially education and care, and are vulnerable to sexual exploitation. Separated children are more vulnerable to exploitation, and girls are more vulnerable than boys." (Man from Afrin sub district, Aleppo governorate); "One participant said that she is living with her uncle and experiencing bad psychological and financial circumstances." (Adolescent girl from Qahtaniyyeh sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate)
- 52 "There are great psychological risks to children, especially those who witnessed a family member dying beneath the rubble. Such scenes will not go from their memory until they become older. This has caused mental illnesses, especially in children everywhere." (Man from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate)
- 53 "Some people travel and leave their children with their relatives. Such children are beaten and forced to do hard work. They miss their families and experience emotional crises." (Adolescent boy from Abu Kamal sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate)

- 54 "Young boys and girls are exposed to violence in public places like restaurants and cafes because they might be obliged to work there." (Woman from Homs sub district, Homs governorate)
- 55 "Boys are exposed to heavy labour, abuse, deprivation of education, and recruitment." (Woman from Harasta sub district, Rural Damascus governorate)
- 56 "A child might be exploited by their employer to give him her wage and we are ashamed of talking about this to anybody. If we talk, we will be banned and we will be scandalised more." (Adolescent girl from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate)
- 57 "The director keeps abusing me in my job for personal purposes because I am a girl and he is blackmailing me economically." (Young adolescent girl from As Sweida sub district, As Sweida governorate)
- 58 "There are girls aged 11-12 who beg in markets and streets and are exposed to the most severe forms of verbal violence and harassment." (Woman from Idlib sub district, Idlib governorate)
- 59 "It affects undocumented people and their eligibility for humanitarian assistance or the ability to pursue education, employment, or civil rights." (Woman from Jisr Ash Shugur sub district, Idlib governorate)
- 60 "Insecurity and the absence of authority was the reason for the lack of official identification papers for most of the population of the region. Our fear of large gatherings of people and air raids is the greatest difficulty." (Man from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate)

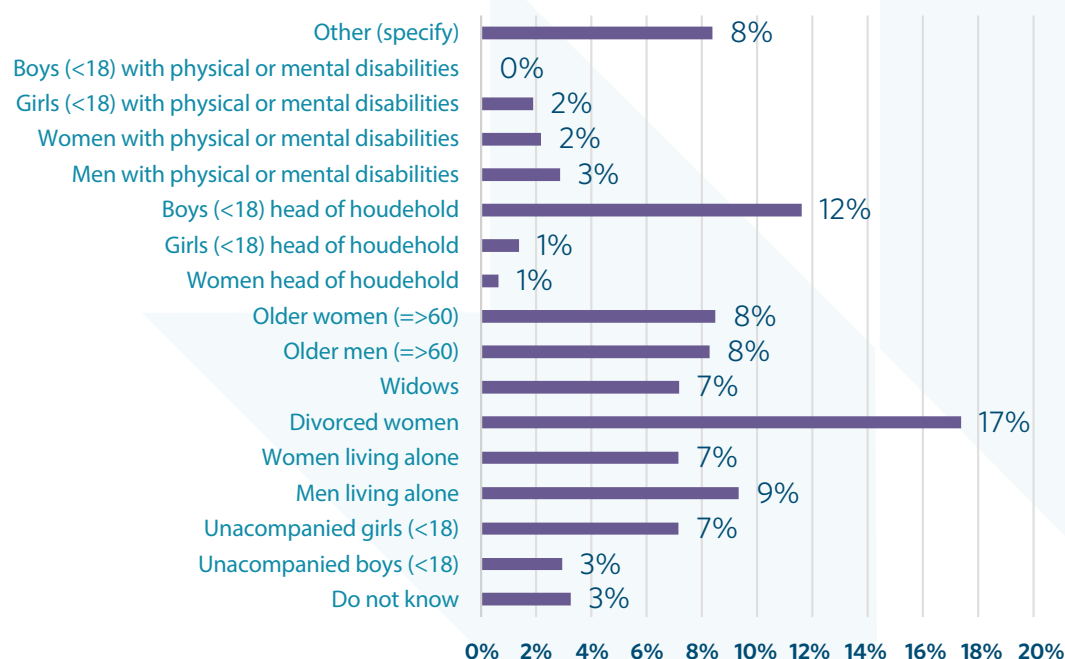
people have lost their official documentation and find it expensive and dangerous to travel to other areas to obtain replacements.” (Woman from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate). Another woman in north-east Syria confirms the cost burden in obtaining necessary civil documentation: “I have two children who are not registered in the Syrian State because of their demand for 10,000 Syrian pounds per child, and I do not currently have that amount.” (Woman from Al Hasakah sub district, Al Hasakah governorate). Meanwhile, complicated procedures impede securing civil documentation: “Obtaining official documents needs complicated procedures. Some people have lost their official documentation. Some people find it difficult to find a permit for residence.” (Man from Qahtaniyyeh sub district, Al Hasakah governorate). Other gender-related risks linked to lack of civil documentation are further highlighted in Part 3.

Humanitarian Distributions

Those who are responsible for distributing aid take money from beneficiaries. Sometimes there is exploitation of women by these actors (harassment), especially for widows, divorced women and girls. Safety concerns for access to service are fear of violence, harassment, humiliation, exploitation and theft. (Adolescent girl from Jisr Ash Shugur sub district, Idlib governorate)

As in previous years, exploitation⁶¹, of a sexual and financial nature, sexual harassment⁶², favouritism by heads of associations⁶³ and corruption⁶⁴ in the distribution of aid persists. Divorced and widowed women, persons with disabilities or who are older, as well as ethnic minorities, face specific safety risks due to their status.⁶⁵ Data from multi-sector needs assessments (MSNA) also demonstrates the vulnerability of at risk groups such as divorced women during distributions.

Graph 1: Groups that are at risk of exclusion from receiving humanitarian aid and services



Over the last few years, these threats – which are essentially barriers to aid – continue to place girls at risk of

61 “Some humanitarian workers demand part of the monthly share in exchange for the services provided for us.” (Adolescent girl from Ras Al Ain sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate); “There is considerable discrimination in the distribution of aid. There is no fair distribution. There is exploitation of girls or anyone in need of aid.” (Adolescent girl from Homs sub district, Homs governorate)

62 “Women are exploited, sexually, in order to receive aid.” (Woman from Atareb sub district, Aleppo governorate)

63 “There are some people who use their connections to get a kind of assistance they do not actually deserve.” (Woman from Homs sub district, Homs governorate); “Aid is not distributed equitably, as some people receive it more than once. The heads of associations discriminate between their relatives and other persons.” (Woman from Homs sub district, Homs governorate)

64 “There is no justice. There is corruption.” (Adolescent girl from Homs sub district, Homs governorate)

65 “There are barriers for people with disabilities, because they and older people sometimes have to wait long hours for a service. Women are also harassed and exploited.” (Man from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate); “Women, divorced women, widows and people with disabilities can’t access aid due to exploitation.” (Man from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate); “Women, girls, and minorities do not receive fair treatment in terms of aid.” (Adolescent boy from Kisreh sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate)

violence to receive what is part of their right as internally displaced persons and vulnerable host community members. Aid distributors should be providing women and girls with the means to avoid resorting to negative coping mechanisms. Instead, women and girls are placed in the desperate situation of making a “choice” between short- or long-term shame. They can provide a sexual favour at time of distribution – and eat. Or they can refuse – with the likely outcome that they will submit to other men in the camp when they are starving for food. Really, they are not given a choice at all. Thus, women and girls, particularly widowed and divorced, face extreme stigma, as people assume that they have been sexually harassed or that they have agreed to being exploited in exchange for aid. Furthermore, as the economic crisis places more financial stress on households and poverty increases, individuals will do whatever it takes to ensure they receive aid, even if they are not entitled to it. Those who are entitled and in desperate need will often lose out, as a result.⁶⁶

Distributions and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

“There are some barriers to obtaining aid. The distribution places are not safe and they are very distant. (Man from Atareb Sub district, Aleppo Governorate)

“There are cases of exploitation, both financial and in terms of other favours, to receive aid. Distribution is made to unregistered persons and in some cases we are harassed to get aid.” (Woman from Homs Sub district, Homs Governorate)

“Humanitarian aid is not given to people who deserve it, for several reasons, including discrimination, non-application of humanitarian standards and exploitation. When women get aid, there are many concerns, such as aerial bombardment, the security situation, violence, harassment, disrespect, abuse and exploitation. Distributions are not provided free of charge, but are paid for by some persons (men - the elderly - people with disabilities) and things may even amount to sexual exploitation if the beneficiaries are women.” (Woman from Jisr Ash Shugur sub district Idleb Governorate)

“When aid is available, women can’t access them due to sexual exploitation.” (Woman from Kisreh sub district Deir-ez-Zor Governorate)

“Sometimes they ask for money or sexual harassment. (Adolescent girl from Kisreh sub district Deir-ez-Zor Governorate)

“Women are at risk of sexual exploitation when receiving these services.” (Woman from Kisreh sub district Deir-ez-Zor Governorate)

“Aid is distributed to the relatives of people in charge or to anyone who pays money.” (Man from Kisreh sub district Deir-ez-Zor Governorate)

⁶⁶ “Humanitarian aids are unfairly distributed. One of the people responsible for aids registered his two daughters as widows to receive aid.” (Woman from Qahtaniyyeh sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate)





3



Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Analysis

Affected Population

As a constant pattern over the last nine years of the crisis, women are one of the most vulnerable sub-populations at risk of violence, including “women and girls”⁶⁷; “widows and divorced women”⁶⁸ and adolescent girls. Specifically, girls experience sexual violence, are forced to work⁶⁹ in locations and types of jobs that place them at risk of sexual and economic exploitation or are forced to beg. One GBV expert noted: “Now we are seeing increased trends of sexual abuse and harassment against girls.” (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub). Thus their movement is restricted by parents, even from attending school, as a protective measure from sexual violence.⁷⁰ Within the category of girls, adolescent girls were identified as a sub-population affected by various forms of violence and that are under the constant microscope: “Society criticises girls for anything they do. Any action done by girls is seen as a shameful case.” (Adolescent girl from Damascus sub district, Damascus governorate). Adolescent girl respondents noted that all and any action can be scrutinised⁷¹, ridiculed⁷² and punished.⁷³

“We girls and women are the most oppressed. A little more oppression and they will hold us accountable for every breath we take!” (Adolescent girl from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate)

Adolescents also noted that they are not permitted to make decisions⁷⁴ and are prohibited from participating in most basic activities unless they have explicit permission. Consequently, adolescent girls live in a state of fear of the violence they may experience: “When we walk in the street, we always look right and left and suspect every person approaching. We mistrust every car passing in front of us. There is always a state of fear and tension.” (Adolescent girl from Idlib sub district, Idlib governorate). Many girls must therefore be accompanied by a male companion: “Girls often cannot walk on the street unless they are accompanied by someone like her father or brother.” (Adolescent girl from Idlib sub district, Idlib governorate).

Furthermore, adolescent girls described the blanket of silence⁷⁵ they must live under. They dare not express any objection to the restrictions they experience and/or the violence they experience, for fear of punishment by parents and family members: “Girls can’t say anything because they will be punished for it.” (Adolescent girl from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate)

“Divorced girls are generally exposed to verbal violence by neighbours. Even if the girl stands at the door of the tent and speaks with someone on the phone, people would say that she is talking to a young man and she is not respectable.” (Adolescent girl from Al Hasakah sub district, Al Hasakah governorate)

Divorced and widowed women and girls were also cited most often as a sub-population suffering from various forms of violence. Namely, divorced and widowed women are deemed by the community as second-class citizens⁷⁶ because they are no longer virgins, and thus, perceived as having compromised morals that would lead to them seducing men in the community.⁷⁷ While adolescent girls are targeted, those who are divorced and widowed face even greater scrutiny. Divorced and widowed women and girls must contend with many layers of vulnerabilities as they are female, some are adolescents, others may have a disability, and all are “tainted” by a “shameful” civil status.

On the basis that divorce is increasing amongst many women and adolescent girls who have been married early, it’s fair to conclude that the sub-population of divorced women and girls – and thus women and adolescent girls who are stigmatised and discriminated against – may also be increasing. They are also left vulnerable to exploitation,⁷⁸ forced marriage⁷⁹ to repair their damaged status of “divorced or widowed”, and must bear constant verbal abuse by family and community members: “My husband and I are actually sort of separated, but I did not fle for divorce just because I do not like people telling me that I have to get married or it is not good for me to go out alone. This is how our community thinks. If other women know that I am divorced, they feel jealous or afraid that their husbands may take a liking to me.” (Woman from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate)

67 “Women and girls are the most vulnerable to violence.” (Man from Kisreh sub district, Deir-ez-Zor governorate)

68 “Women and divorced women are the most vulnerable to violence.” (Woman from Kisreh sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate)

69 “Girls are forced to work as servants for their care providers.” (Man from Kisreh sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate)

70 “Girls and children are not allowed to move at night for fear of abuse.” (Man from Qahtaniyyeh sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate); “Girls are not allowed to act freely or leave the house.” (Adolescent girl from Homs sub district, Homs governorate)

71 “If a girl has a problem or is suffering from a defect, she is always reminded of it and insulted.” (Adolescent girl from Hama sub district, Hama governorate)

72 “Girls are not allowed to ride bicycles because people will start saying bad things about her.” (Adolescent girl from Damascus sub district, Damascus governorate)

73 “My parents used to beat me if I did something bad. When I asked my mother why I was beaten my mother would tell me that they beat me for my own good.” (Adolescent girl from Harim sub district, Idlib governorate)

74 “To be brief, everything is prohibited for girls.” (Adolescent girl from Damascus sub district, Damascus governorate); “They are marginalised and not consulted in the matters connected to their private life.” (Adolescent girl from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate)

75 “Girls have to do house chores and have no right to speak.” (Adolescent boy from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate)

76 “The society’s view of divorced women has always caused me problems.” (Woman from As Sweida sub district, As Sweida governorate); “The society holds a low opinion of widows and divorced women. Everyone talks in a bad way about them.” (Woman from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate); “Divorcees are considered disabled in the society and subject to violence. (Young adolescent boy from Salqin sub district, Idlib governorate)

77 “If other women know that I am divorced, they feel jealous or afraid that their husbands may take a liking to me.” (Woman from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate); “Women feel jealous of widows and divorced women because their husbands may take a liking to them.” (Woman from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate)

78 “The groups most affected by violence are widows and divorced women. Examples include being blackmailed by the camp manager for women, when they want to register for food aid.” (Man from Harim sub district, Idlib governorate)

79 “Weak women, divorced women, widows, and underage girls are forced to marry.” (Adolescent girl from Dana sub district, Idlib governorate); “Divorced women get a remarriage arranged by their families.” (Adolescent boy from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate)

Divorced and widowed women are often separated from other residents within many IDP sites as a protective measure, mostly in north-west Syria. Namely, 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. This is a direct consequence of being more isolated, visible and accessible to individuals who seek to exploit, abuse and shame them.⁸⁰ The WoS GBV AoR identified these divorced and widowed camps in 2018 as a new trend, and in 2019, men, women boys and girls themselves have noted the existence and operation of such camps/sections of camps: *"Widows and divorced women have a special section in the camp complex. These places prevent such women from integrating into the community and deprive them from their children who are under 15 years old."* (Man from Dana sub district, Idlib governorate). Another woman FGD participant from north-east Syria noted: *"women in certain section of the camp are more vulnerable to violence than other women in other sections because most of them are divorced and widowed"* (Woman from Al Hool sub district, Al Hasakah governorate). Her observations highlighted that divorced and widowed women are separated from other camp residents and are at more risk of violence due to being easily identifiable and accessible within the camp.

As in 2018, older women and women with disabilities were identified as an affected population. **Older women** are subjected to verbal violence, neglect⁸¹ and exploitation (of assets) by family members,⁸² as well as by community members.⁸³

"There is a man who lived with his mother who was old. He used to beat her and scream at her and feed his wife and children without feeding his mother. He always wanted her to die, and after her death he felt content." (Adolescent girl from Harim sub district, Idlib governorate)

Older women do not have their opinions taken into consideration nor are they consulted on matters that affect their lives: *"Violence against older people is verbal. They are not cared for, their opinion is not taken into consideration, and they are not consulted in any matter."* (Adolescent girl from Deir ez Zor sub district, Deir ez Zor

governorate). Older persons were noted as not being treated fairly during distributions.⁸⁴

"There is violence against people with disabilities. Physical and psychological violence is practiced against them. Some families believe that handcuffing people with disabilities is the best solution to deal with them." (Adolescent boy from Atareb sub district, Aleppo governorate)

Persons with disabilities were noted as a vulnerable group at risk of violence as they were in 2018. In some instances, respondents differentiated between physical and mental disabilities, but as in 2018, many did not. In the instances where persons with mental disabilities were identified, respondents noted that they are subjected to physical and verbal violence⁸⁵. In addition, it was noted that people with disabilities are treated with violence as a way to control them from hurting others⁸⁶: *"My nephew is tied up by his mother all the time in front of the tent with iron chains so he doesn't move because he has a mental disability."* (Adolescent girl from Tell Abiad sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate). Women with disabilities are an at-risk group for sexual violence: *"There are some cases of sexual violence. A mute woman was raped and her family refused to help her."* (Adolescent boy from Qahtaniyyeh sub district, Al Hasakah governorate). People with disabilities are treated in this way as it is deemed shameful to have a person with disability as a family member.⁸⁷

Internally displaced women and girls were also identified as a vulnerable group at risk of various forms of violence. Women and girls respondents identified their vulnerability to early/forced marriage: *"Many displaced girls were married at a young age either because of poverty or for fear of rape."* (Woman from Tartous sub district, Tartous governorate). Others noted exploitation⁸⁸, and customs and traditions⁸⁹ as causes of concern. The vulnerability of ethnic group minorities came up strongly in 2019: *"Sometimes violence can be through racist words (when you call somebody after the name of his/her region). This has a negative impact on children's personality and makes them hate education."* (Woman from Afrin sub district, Aleppo governorate). They are at risk of

80 Guidance Note: Mitigating Protection Risks in Widowed and Divorced Women and Girl- Only IDP Sites produced in January 2019 by the GBV Sub-Cluster, Protection Cluster, CP SC and CCCM in Gaziantep

81 "There are families that neglect their parents and treat them very rudely. They do not pay attention to them." (Adolescent girl from Azaz sub district, Aleppo governorate)

82 "They also said that older people are exposed to violence, and that they are beaten by their sons." (Woman from Jebel Saman sub district, Aleppo governorate); "Elderly people are also sometimes subjected to violence by their sons or their sons' wives, abandoning them and not meeting their needs." (Woman from Hama sub district, Hama governorate)

83 "Older people are exposed to bad words by young people." (Adolescent boy from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate); "Old people are exposed to disrespect from others, neglect and humiliation." (Man from Mare sub district, Aleppo governorate)

84 "Older people do not access their right to aid distributions." (Adolescent boy from Al Hasakeh sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate)

85 "People with intellectual disabilities are also more vulnerable to physical and verbal violence." (Adolescent girl from Al Hol sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate)

86 "Mentally handicapped persons are also beaten on the street because they can harm pedestrians. They are beaten so they don't hurt people again." (Man from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate); "People with disabilities are subjected to all kinds of violence, beatings, cursing, and imprisonment inside their homes. A participant said that when a mentally handicapped person went out onto the street, his parents beat him and imprisoned him. Another participant said that he knew two disabled people that were tied by their parents." (Man from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate)

87 "People with disabilities suffer neglect and are considered a stigma." (Woman from Daret Azza sub district, Aleppo governorate)

88 "Most residents of Al-Hol camp are insulted by local authorities." (Man from Al Hol sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate); "There are many exploitation cases in the district, especially after the displaced people arrived." (Man from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate)

89 "Vulnerable groups to violence are women and girls, especially internally displaced women, divorced women, and widows because of the rotten customs and traditions, and the bad economic situation." (Adolescent girl from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate)

exploitation, discrimination, verbal and physical violence,⁹⁰ with many remaining silent about the violence they face.⁹¹

More so than in 2018, respondents, including GBV experts, noted that men and boys are affected by various forms of violence. In particular, boys were identified as experiencing verbal violence in school⁹², forced labour⁹³, physical violence as well as sexual harassment.⁹⁴ GBV experts also noted a disclosure of sexual violence against a boy that they have received⁹⁵: *"Boys 16-18 years old have difficulty accessing services and they are subjected to sexual assault."* (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub).

Types of Gender-Based Violence

As in previous years, various forms of GBV were noted. Sexual violence was cited as the type of violence that was reported more compared to previous years, in particular in north-west Syria. Similarly, denial of resources, opportunities or services are perceived to be more widespread. In particular, chronic unemployment, increasing food insecurity and poverty levels, denial of inheritance, denial of education were foremost on the minds of FGD participants. They were often cited as the push factor for violence and the perpetration of abuse: men against women, husband against wife, mother against children, neighbour against neighbour. However, as in previous years, physical⁹⁶ and economic violence, emotional abuse and early marriage are forms of violence that women and girls continue to experience. The normalisation of various forms of violence may also be an underlining factor for many participants. As noted earlier, the GBV women and girls experience is increasingly becoming part of a culture linked to living through and surviving crisis.

90 "These groups, such as Gager and Iraqis, are exposed to exploitation, verbal and physical violence, discrimination, and negligence." (Man from Dana sub district, Idlib governorate); "They detained our neighbour because he was a Sunni and when he was released there were visible signs of violence on his body." (Adolescent girl from Tell Abiad sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate)

91 "As for minorities, they just keep silent and do not react because they feel they have no support." (Woman from Azaz sub district, Aleppo governorate)

92 "Young boys are exposed to verbal violence at schools from their teachers or classmates (bullying)." (Woman from Homs sub district, Homs governorate)

93 "Boys are exposed to child labour. They have become the breadwinners of their families in many households." (Woman from Dana sub district, Idlib governorate)

94 "Young boys are exposed to physical violence. Also, young boys are exposed to sexual harassment." (Woman from Homs sub district, Homs governorate)

95 "We received one case of sexual violence in Idlib – a boy of 10 years old." (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub)

96 "Now we have even more increased trends of physical abuse. Early and forced marriage are decreasing whereas physical abuse has significantly increased as well as psychological abuse. Physical abuse and deprivation of resources are very common and even more evident than early marriage." (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub)

Figure 1: Life Cycle of Violence for Women and Girls

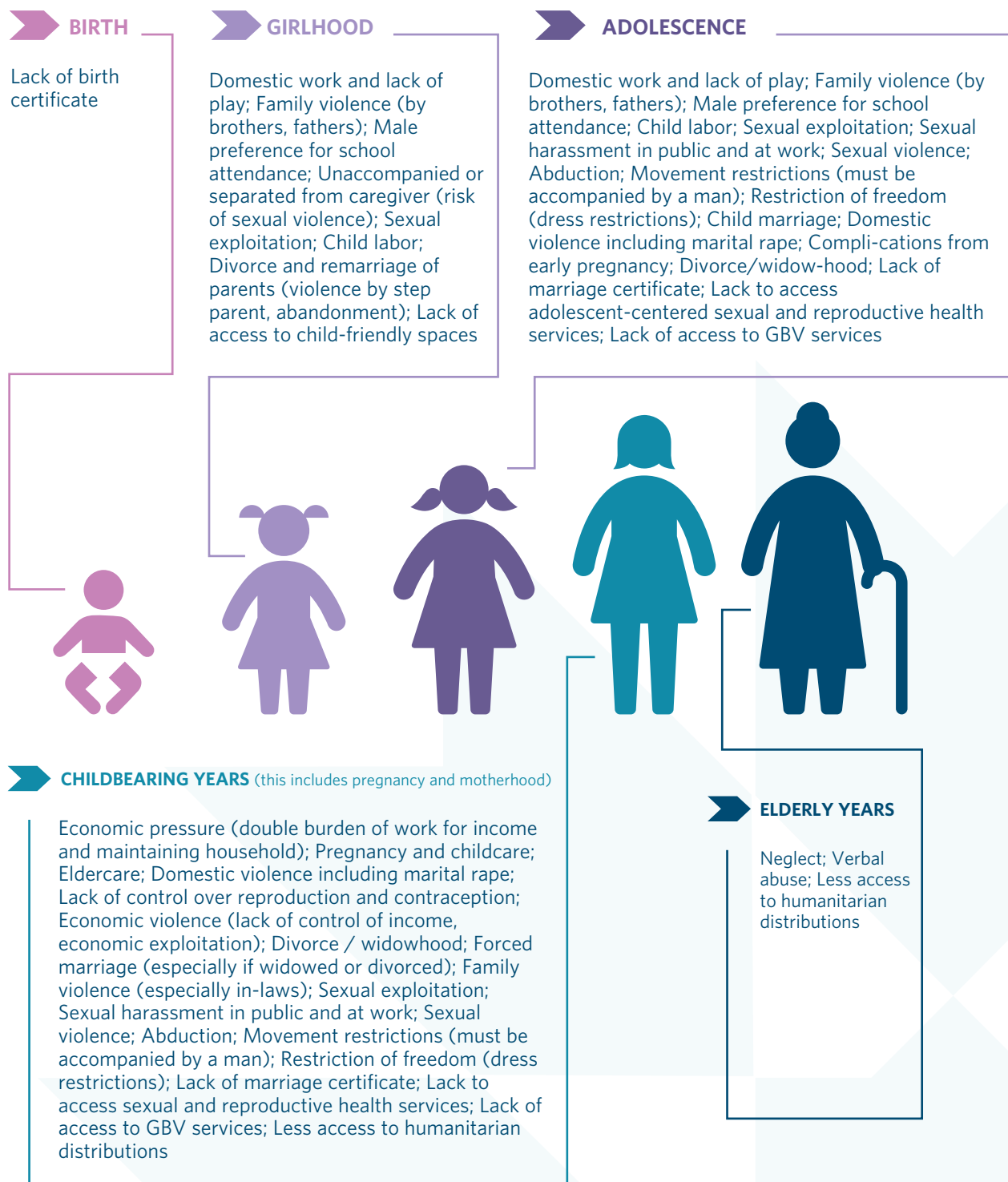


Figure 2: GBV Trend analysis



CONSISTENT TRENDS:

- Various forms of physical and emotional violence;
 - Sexual exploitation/harassment;
 - Domestic and family violence;
- Child/forced marriage



TRENDS REPORTED MORE FREQUENTLY:

- Online harassment
- Revenge pornography /sextortion
- Sexual violence
- Denial of resources and opportunities



NEWLY REPORTED TRENDS:

- Forced pregnancy
- Forced puberty
- Gender selected abortion
- Denial of working women's opportunities to marry

Physical Violence

"Most women are beaten and humiliated." (Young adolescent boy from Idleb sub district, Idleb governorate)
"I once heard a man who said that he has to beat a woman before he sits with her." (Woman from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate).

Physical violence is a permanent fixture within the daily lives of Syrian women and girls in 2019, with women being the overarching umbrella term to women who are divorced, widowed, displaced, living with a disability, elderly as well as girls and adolescent girls.

Physical violence is experienced within marriage: *"I used to suffer violence from my father who would beat me, and now my husband deals the same way, but to a lesser degree."* (Woman from As Sweida sub district, As Sweida governorate). The same is true for family members: *"As for little girls, they are subjected to physical violence at home."* (Adolescent girl from Tartous sub district, Tartous governorate). Girls and boys experience physical violence by peers⁹⁷, by teachers and older students⁹⁸ as well by parents.⁹⁹

Physical violence is cited as part of the traditions and customs¹⁰⁰ and considered a mechanism of control, especially of adolescent wives,¹⁰¹. Women are often abused¹⁰² for the most minor infractions while conducting her "duties" as a wife: *"May God help them if they fall short in doing any of their duties. They would suffer beating, rebukes and being prevented from going out."* (Adolescent boy from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate). Physical violence was also cited as a method to teach women to be upstanding members of the household.¹⁰³ Physical violence by strangers was also noted as "normal"¹⁰⁴.

97 "They receive beatings that leaves marks on the body when they clash with their peers." (Adolescent boy from Azaz sub district, Aleppo governorate)

98 "Boys and girls are subjected to physical violence in schools." (Young adolescent boy from Idleb sub district, Idleb governorate); "Boys and girls are subjected to physical violence in schools, either by teachers or sometimes by older students." (Young adolescent boy from Idleb sub district, Idleb governorate); "Violence in that the teacher beats the students if they do not do their homework." (Adolescent girl from Harim sub district, Idleb governorate); "I remember once a teacher beat a student for not writing his assignment." (Adolescent boy from Harim sub district, Idleb governorate)

99 "Parents often beat their children because of the pressures of life." (Young adolescent boy from Idleb sub district, Idleb governorate)

100 "Women and children are beaten by men because of our traditions." (Woman from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate)

101 "The husband can be violent and beats her always while she is young and scared. She cannot defend herself." (Adolescent girl from Tartous sub district, Tartous governorate)

102 "I suffered from violence during my first year of marriage. I told my husband that if he beats me, I would either kill him or kill myself." (Woman from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate)

103 "There are backward beliefs that women should be abused and beaten in order to improve their morals." (Adolescent girl from Dara sub district, Dara governorate)

104 "We saw a woman with a big stick beating bystanders and we ran away for fear." (Adolescent boy from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate); "Children are beaten on the street because it is normal." (Man from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate)

Emotional & Psychological Violence

"Verbal and psychological violence (cursing and swearing) is unfortunately widespread and most wives are subjected to it by their husbands." (Woman from Tartous sub district, Tartous governorate).

"I feel like my husband owns me and I have no right to make a decision." (Woman from As Sweida sub district, As Sweida governorate)

In 2019, FGD participants, of all ages and both sexes, noted the verbal, emotional and psychological violence they experience on a daily basis. FGD participants noted that women are consistently insulted as well as repeatedly told that they have to cook and clean.¹⁰⁵ Adolescent girls noted that verbal violence is a common occurrence for them within the home and are reminded of any defect they may have – or that they are simply ignored.¹⁰⁶

They also noted the pervasiveness of verbal abuse perpetrated against divorced and widowed women merely for their civil status¹⁰⁷: *"Divorced and widowed women are subjected to verbal violence by the surrounding community and their families. Divorced women become almost a shame for their families and cause them a big problem, leading to psychological pressure and isolation from society."* (Adolescent girl from Tell Abiad sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate).

Additionally, older women are particularly prone to verbal violence and are marginalised within the home by family members.¹⁰⁸ Respondents talked of how men are prone to psychological violence due to their inability to care for their families. This was also a form of violence identified in 2018 and used as a justification for why men perpetrate violence. Difficult life circumstances are a push factor to why mothers verbally abuse their children according to information collected.¹⁰⁹

105 "Men always insult women and remind them that their work is cooking and cleaning." (Woman from Homs sub district, Homs governorate)

106 "I have to arrange lunch tables and the room. They start venting against me with rebukes and insults. This is how girls live with their parents." (Adolescent girl from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate); "We are used to verbal or physical violence by the father or mother." (Adolescent girl from Al Hol sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate); "If a girl has a problem or is suffering from a defect, she is always reminded of it and insulted." (Adolescent girl from Hama sub district, Hama governorate); "Examples of verbal and psychological violence are cussing in front of people or abusing the girl and ignoring her." (Adolescent girl from Tartous sub district, Tartous governorate)

107 "Divorced women are more vulnerable to verbal violence." (Adolescent girl from Al Hasakeh sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate); Our neighbour used to quarrel with her mother after her divorce from her husband. She was forced to live with her family and hear her mother calling her "Divorced" out loud instead of her name. Her mother used to insult her and everyone criticised her and sometimes she was accused of acts she did not do." (Adolescent girl from Hama sub district, Hama governorate)

108 "Violence against older people is verbal. They are not cared for, their opinion is not taken into consideration, and they are not consulted in any matter." (Adolescent girl from Deir ez Zor sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate); "Older people are exposed to verbal violence and disrespect, and this affects their health significantly." (Woman from Deir ez Zor sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate)

109 "There is verbal violence such as insults that mothers say to children as a result of difficult conditions in the camp." (Adolescent girl from Al Hol sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate)

Economic Violence and Denial of Resources, Opportunities or Services

"My husband said that 75% of my income is his because he allowed me to work." (Woman from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate)

Women and girls underlined the widespread economic violence they experience at home in the form of denial of resources, opportunities or services, as well as in the workplace. GBV experts noted a new trend amongst women and girls, namely *"working women deprived the right to marry (by their families) so they can keep making use of their income"*. (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub).

Furthermore, GBV experts identified the increase in denial of resources, opportunities or services as a new trend in 2019: *"There's also deprivation of resources, forcing women to have babies or depriving them from having babies have increased."* (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub). One adolescent girl confirmed this trend by sharing her own experience: *"My father refuses the idea of letting me get married in order to keep me at home to provide for him and work as a servant."* (Adolescent girl from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate).

Adolescent girls noted that girls are exploited sexually and economically in the workplace¹¹⁰: *"The director keeps abusing me in my job because I am a girl and he is blackmailing me financially."* (Young adolescent girl from As Sweida sub district, As Sweida governorate)

FGD participants overwhelmingly noted that women, especially divorced and widowed women, are exploited through low paying wages because they are women¹¹¹. They are denied the opportunity to work¹¹² or conversely they are forced to work without having control over their earnings¹¹³: *"My aunt had a job, but her husband forced her to give him her salary every month. She had some money and she bought a house. Her husband claimed ownership of the house. He is so mean to her when it comes to money. He once threatened her with divorce just because she gave their son money without telling him."* (Woman from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate)

Women are denied their right to their dowries and/or

110 "There is no violence, but exploitation exists, and nothing has changed." (Adolescent girl from Tell Abiad sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate)

111 "When a woman works, her salary is lower than that of a man because she is a woman." (Woman from Homs sub district, Homs governorate); "Divorced women and widows are financially exploited; they receive low wages in their jobs." (Adolescent boy from Qahataniyyeh sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate)

112 "Another type [of exploitation] is depriving women from their right to work." (Woman from Quneitra sub district, Quneitra governorate)

113 "Women are the most oppressed, because men take everything away from their mothers and demand that their wives provide proper meals with very little money. They are beaten and shouted at if they fail, even though the amount of money given is not enough for anything." (Adolescent boy from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate); "I know a woman that works, and her husband takes her salary and gives her only what he wants to give her." (Woman from Tartous sub district, Tartous governorate); "She knows a working woman who is subjected to violence, beatings and threats of divorce when she refuses to give her salary to her husband to pay his debts." (Woman from Al Hasakeh sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate)

inheritances.¹¹⁴ As noted in the study “Women and the Justice Sector in the North-Western Syria” by Proximity International, published in October 2018, inheritance disputes are most likely: *“Due to the large number of men who have been killed or disappeared over the course of the conflict.” In addition, many women “relinquished inheritance rights to their husbands prior to the conflict, as well as the fact that marriage contracts often fail to cover assets, such as houses, that were acquired during the course of the marriage”.*

Again in 2019, on the violence experienced by men, respondents cited the economic pressures they face as head of households and identified lack of employment, non-payment or low salaries¹¹⁵ as push factors to why they perpetrate violence – even though women and girls experience the same forms of exploitation and violence: *“Men are vulnerable to violence. They are exploited most of the time by the employer and are not given adequate pay.”* (Adolescent girl from Tell Abiad sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate)

Women with disabilities are exploited in the workplace: *“When they get a job in the camp, their employer will take advantage of their disability by paying just a small percentage of the salary they are due.”* (Woman from Al Hasakah sub district, Al Hasakah governorate). Older women were noted as incapable of working¹¹⁶. This made them financially (and otherwise) dependent on their family. In some households, older persons are forced to relinquish their assets and property¹¹⁷: *“I used to live with a family and there was an elderly woman and her son-in-law said to her ‘give me all you have in return for having you in the house’. When she gave him all her possessions, he threw her out. He took everything and then moved away.”* (Woman from Azaz sub district, Aleppo governorate).

Sexual Violence

“Sexual violence has the most terrible impact on women. It can affect women’s relationships with their children and lead women to suicide.” (Woman from Afrin sub district, Aleppo governorate)

Figure 3: Types of Sexual violence



Women experience rape.¹¹⁸ Furthermore the threat¹¹⁹ of all forms of sexual violence that can culminate with rape, is a constant fear in their lives: *“Girls have no choice over what they wear, and most people are affected by the terrorist groups in this respect. Girls are vulnerable to sexual harassment because there are many gatherings of young males everywhere. Girls experience sexual abuse on the way to school. Some girls are exploited when they work in jobs, such as agriculture. Once a girl was raped by many men, and this caused her to have a mental breakdown.”* (Adolescent girl from Qahtaniyyeh sub district, Al Hasakah governorate).

In 2019, there were large transfers of IDPS to Al Hol camp where some women, girls and boys are Yazidi sexual violence survivors¹²⁰. Expert FGDs have revealed a substantial increase in reported cases of rape and sexual violence¹²¹:

114 “My brother took over the inheritance after my father died. My sisters and I were deprived of it.” (Woman from Homs sub district, Homs governorate); “Many husbands deny women the right to their dowry after divorcing them and prefer to go to jail for a certain period rather than pay cash. Sometimes the girl’s father controls it and forces her to give up her right.” (Woman from Hama sub district, Hama governorate); “Divorced and widowed women are forcibly deprived of property and deprived of their inheritance.” (Adolescent girl from Tell Abiad sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate)

115 “The economic reasons are the non-payment of salaries to workers, which leads to psychological pressure and lack of job opportunities mostly for men.” (Adolescent girl from Tell Abiad sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate); “I think that the lack of job opportunities for men is one of the most common forms of violence against men.” (Woman from Deir ez Zor sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate)

116 “I am 50 years old. Old people have lots of needs and can’t work. Therefore, they experience violence by others and are deprived of resources.” (Woman from Afrin sub district, Aleppo governorate)

117 “Sons treat their parents unjustly. They divide their parents’ wealth while they are still alive.” (Woman from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate)

118 “Once a woman went to the store at night to buy something, and she was raped by three men.” (Adolescent boy from Qahtaniyyeh sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate); “A 60-year-old woman was robbed of all her gold and money. Three young men broke into her house and raped her.” (Woman from Idlib sub district, Idlib governorate)

119 “Girls and women have to go out to work in farms from the early morning which puts them at risk of rape by men and boys because the streets and fields are empty.” (Adolescent girl from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate)

120 “Along with ISIL family members, a large number of Yazidi women, girls and boys surfaced from the last ISIL stronghold in Baghuz and were taken by SDF to Al-Hol camp. Often accompanied in the camp by the families of their captors, many concealed their ethnic and religious identities fearing retaliation by ISIL supporters and threats that the group might return. Others feared that the stigma emanating from the myriad atrocities committed against them, including sexual slavery and rape, would exclude them from the Yazidi community, as they had often been told that by ISIL fighters while in captivity.” (A/HRC/42/51, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, Aug 2019)

121 “There was more disclosure around rape, especially in Afrin, Marat al Numan and Atareb, possibly because we provide GBV services in health centres. We now receive two or three cases of rape per month.” (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub); “We’ve seen an increase in disclosure of sexual violence, possibly because of the service we pro-

"There is an increase in rape cases of brothers against sisters. In one case, the mother gave her consent and said that 'it's his right'". (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub).

Specifically, the Turkey Cross Border GBV Sub-Cluster and Reproductive Health Technical Working Group Rape Incident Report for May-June 2019 noted an increase in rape cases reported by GBV Sub-Cluster (GBV SC) and by Reproductive Health Technical Working Group (RH TWG) members operating in north-west Syria. It noted that 47% of these cases required immediate Clinical Management of Rape treatment. 53% of these cases were disclosed directly to medical staff and referred for GBV specialised services, whereas 47% of cases were disclosed to GBV service providers and referred for urgent medical services as needed. The report also noted that all rape incidents were reported by females with 41% of disclosed cases comprised of girls under the age of 18. Of the incidents reported, 29% of these cases were committed by an intimate partner and all the remaining incidents were committed by either male family members, armed groups or unknown perpetrators. Finally, marital rape¹²² perpetrated by men and sexual violence as experienced by men and boys¹²³ - but limited reference to it as compared to women and girls - were mentioned by respondents, including GBV experts.

Online harassment, revenge pornography, sextortion

Online harassment, revenge pornography, sextortion¹²⁴ have increased this year throughout the country. Adolescent girls, widowed and divorced women were identified as being more vulnerable as targets for cyber harassment. Specifically, GBV experts noted some of the risks associated with cyber harassment: *"It has serious risks on women and girls who are exposed to this type of violence. Sometimes fake web pages are created with naked photos using known names of women in the community. This especially affects widowed or divorced women and girls."* (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub). In addition: *"Girls who are not allowed to do anything by their family usually find comfort in frequenting social media platforms and talking to others through these platforms which exposes them quite often to protection risks."* (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub).

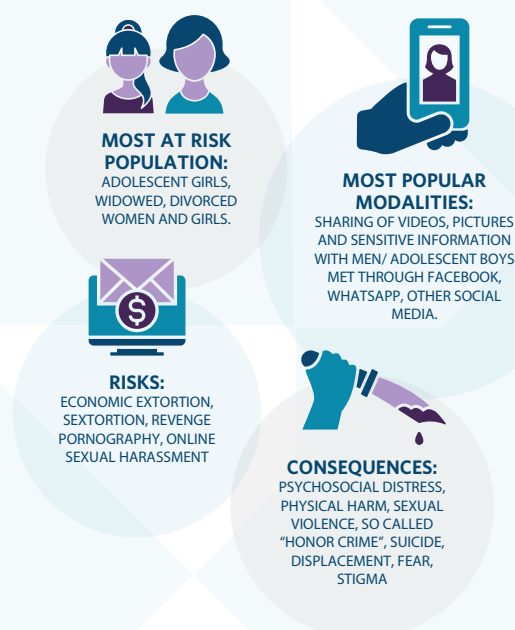
- vide in WGSS that focuses on family planning, which may encourage disclosure." (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub)
- 122 "Men are practicing more violence during sex such as beating and tying women to bed in order to reach pleasure with 'sadistic acts'. (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub); "Sexual violence is a problem. We hear a lot about cases of marital rape with girls and women. Even the husbands think that it is their right to have sex whenever they want to." (Woman from Tartous sub district, Tartous governorate)
- 123 "Boys may be subjected to sexual violence and harassment in schools." (Woman from Homs sub district, Homs governorate); Boys are exposed to sexual violence by other men and boys. Boys take the whole blame and hide what happened especially, when the perpetrator holds an important status in the community. I also worked with a boy who survived sexual assault and then suffered from family blame and psychological abuse." (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub)
- 124 "There are new types of violence such as violence on Facebook. Some people attack and abuse women and girls on Facebook." (Woman from Tartous sub district, Tartous governorate)

Once the photos have been made public, it is often difficult to develop a safety plan for the women and girls who have been victimised through cyber harassment: *"It is very difficult to work with those cases because the girl already shared the pictures with the perpetrator. Negotiation with the perpetrator is very risky and the safety planning is difficult as there is not much we can do to stop the perpetrator from sharing the pictures more widely."* (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub). Consequently, women and girls may flee in order to escape such harassment, which brings social and economic consequences on their lives and their families'.

This was the case of one woman and her daughter, after the mother attempted to negotiate for the photos taken of her daughter not to be shared: *"When the mother tried to interfere, the perpetrator demanded that she have sex with him to keep him silent. In this instance the risk was extended to the mother as well and the entire family was separated as a result. The girl escaped and no one knows where she is, while the mother moved to another city."* (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub)

A new component within this growing trend is the practice of husbands filming their wives during sexual intercourse: *"After the religious marriage (sharia) takes place, the woman will have intimate sexual relationship with the man who is now considered her husband. He will videotape their sexual intercourse, divorce the woman and then start blackmailing her by sharing the videos."* (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub) A GBV expert also identified the use of technology to harass adolescent boys: *"There are cases of adolescent boys being raped and videotaped. They are then blackmailed, saying that if he doesn't do the same with others, they will share the videos publicly."* (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub).

Figure 4: Main Features of On-line Harassment



Sexual harassment and exploitation

Sexual harassment has been a pervasive form of sexual violence cited throughout almost nine years of crisis, with 2019 being no different. Girls and divorced women in particular are vulnerable to sexual harassment. Such harassment occurs in schools which leads to many girls not attending school¹²⁵, in markets,¹²⁶ and on the street: *"The biggest form of violence is catcalling at girls in the street. A girl might be walking and then she suddenly hears somebody catcalling her. The perpetrator places his hand on a certain area and then quickly runs off. Honestly, it is dependent on the area where you live, and how they think, and how they were raised."* (Adolescent girl from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate).

The continued perpetration of sexual harassment appears to be rooted in entrenched social norms about women's and girls' sexuality. For example, a reason given by one adult man from Mare sub-district is that women "ask for sexual harassment" when they do not adhere to social norms around attire: *"Some cases of harassment of women are due to several reasons, including the lack of commitment of some women to the customs and traditions of the city. They go out with improper clothes and put on makeup."* (Man from Mare sub district, Aleppo governorate). Divorced women are viewed as persons that can be sexually harassed because they are no longer deemed chaste: *"Divorced women are more likely to be sexually harassed as they are not virgins."* (Adolescent girl from Al Hasakah sub district, Al Hasakah governorate).

Lastly, persons with disabilities are at high risk of sexual harassment (and assault/rape) due to their inability to either physically escape and/or comprehend what is happening: *"People with disabilities are at risk of sexual harassment and rape, whether children or women. Someone held a child in the tent and tried to sexually assault him."* (Woman from Ras Al Ain sub district, Al Hasakah governorate).

The consequence of sexual harassment can be fatal¹²⁷: *"If a girl suffers harassment or beating or being catcalled by young men, then the accepted reason is that the girl encouraged it. If things escalate and she is sexually abused, then there is the possibility that the girl will be killed. The guys then stroll around town like nothing ever happened. (Strong sigh)."* (Man from Salqin sub district, Idlib governorate)

Sexual exploitation during humanitarian distributions has also been identified as a form of violence. However,

it is a form of sexual violence in other contexts such as procuring employment¹²⁸ and receiving salaries: *"Women may be deprived of their salaries, forced into sex without their will, and forced into many things they do not want."* (Woman from Homs sub district, Homs governorate)

Domestic Violence

"There was a woman who tried to sell her child's bed to buy cigarettes for her husband and credit for his mobile phone, but she could not sell the bed. So, he was angry with her, and beat her." (Woman from Al Hasakah sub district, Al Hasakah governorate)

The various forms of violence that have been identified, such as physical, verbal, emotional and psychological violence, often occur in the home. Thus, respondents, including GBV experts¹²⁹ often cited the domestic violence that occurs within homes. Namely, husbands beat their wives due to the pressures they face as head of household¹³⁰. Parents abuse their children¹³¹ with girls bearing the brunt more than boys within a household¹³²: *"There is violence at home. There is discrimination between boys and girls that leads to hatred between siblings."* (Adolescent girl from Salqin sub district, Idlib governorate). Meanwhile, widowed women *"experience terrible pressure and violence from their families"*. (Adolescent boy from Afrin sub district, Aleppo governorate)

Marriage-related Violence

GBV experts have heard reports from clients that husbands demand that their wives mimic sex acts they have been forced to view in pornographic films: *"Due to wide spread use of the internet, husbands are forcing wives to watch sex scenes/porn and apply the same sexual acts. They threaten women with physical violence if they don't obey."* (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub).

128 "There is also sexual exploitation in exchange for work, money and assistance. I have heard about so many cases of exploitation in exchange for work and money." (Woman from Azaz sub district, Aleppo governorate)

129 "There is more disclosure for cases of domestic abuse in all of its forms (i.e. intimate partner violence)." (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub)

130 "My husband is unemployed, so I suffer from violence at home." (Woman from Atareb sub district, Aleppo governorate); "Men can't find a job. Domestic violence affects children's relationships with friends. Girls are forced to serve their brothers." (Adolescent girl from Afrin sub district, Aleppo governorate); "The most common type of violence in the camp is violence by men against their wives by beating them." (Woman from Al Hasakeh sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate); "There are many types of violence such as domestic violence, while beating women and girls is one of the habits of men in the community." (Adolescent boy from Ar Raqqa sub district Ar Raqqa governorate)

131 "Mothers beat their children cruelly. I know a girl who can't control her bladder (IS THIS THE BEST WORDING?? Or is it more colloquial like - 'who wets herself' because of beating." (Woman from Tell Abiad sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate); "There is domestic violence in the home. Children are always subjected to violence because children are inherently weak, have no rights and suffer from begging and early employment, which is one of the most severe forms of violence against children." (Adolescent girl from Deir ez Zor sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate)

132 "My father and mother beat my sisters if they go out alone, out of fear." (Adolescent boy from Daret Azza sub district Aleppo governorate); "Neighbours provoke parents to beat their daughters." (Adolescent girl from Al Hasakeh sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate)

125 "Moreover, harassment has spread in schools which lead to the prevention of girls from going to schools and denying them of education opportunities." (Adolescent girl from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate); "Sexual harassment of girls is common in schools. My daughter was once harassed by the cleaning worker." (Woman from Homs sub district, Homs governorate)

126 "Girls are vulnerable to harassment in the camp market." (Adolescent boy from Al Hasakeh sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate)

127 "We know of a girl that was killed by her brother because of rumours in the community of what was happening to her and the "shame" for the family. This explains how dangerous these situations can become." (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub)

FGD participants also identified the rise of polygamy: *"There was a pregnant woman with eight children who had been beaten by her husband because she refused to let him marry another woman."* (Woman from Al Hasakah sub district, Al Hasakah governorate). Polygamy is also used as a protective measure for widowed women as noted by GBV experts: *"Polygamy is becoming widespread due to many families living together. There are incidents where widows are forced into re-marrying their brothers-in-law, either to stop inheritance leaving the family or so that kids are not raised by strange men. Women sometimes accept this in order to have someone help in raising their kids."* (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub)

Being divorced emerged as a form of violence. The fear of stigma and shame from being divorced is prohibiting women from seeking it, even if it may be in her best interests.¹³³ The threat of violence is therefore used as a form of psychological violence to force women to do what men want¹³⁴. In addition, divorce can be used as a weapon against mothers from having custody of or access to other children: *"I was kept away from my two-year-old daughter because I asked for divorce from a very bad husband. He subjected me to all kinds of violence from beating, cursing, deprivation and humiliation. I am now subjected to psychological violence caused by the gossip of people and my community because I am divorced. In addition, I suffer from psychological trauma because I was deprived of my daughter when her father took her abroad."* (Woman from Azaz sub district, Aleppo governorate)

The status of divorce is used to prohibit women from remarrying, as families do not want their sons to marry an unchaste woman (as she is not a virgin): *"People don't allow their sons to marry a divorced woman because, according to them, such a woman brings shame."* (Adolescent boy from Afrin sub district, Aleppo governorate)

Early/Forced Marriage

"Some families consider it a solution to pass on responsibility of their daughter." (Woman from As Sweida sub district, As Sweida governorate); *"Girls suffer from different types of violence such as forced marriage, which happens as a result of poverty and traditions. Girls are deprived of education and are not well understood by their parents."* (Woman from Dana sub district, Idleb governorate)

In 2019, GBV experts noted a disturbing trend of hormone therapy being used on prepubescent girls as a means of marrying girls at an early age. This is specifically relevant in southern rural Idleb, where three cases of this nature were presented this year: *"We noted a trend of cases of early marriage before puberty (10-12 years*

old). In some instances, the families are forcing puberty of girls by giving medicines/hormones at home in order for girls to have their period as soon as they get married." (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub)

In 2019, FGD participants continued to identify early/forced marriage as a form of violence experienced by adolescent girls. Multisector Needs Assessments (MSNA) also confirmed such a trend. 69% of key informants surveyed noted that early/forced marriage is occurring in the communities they live in (either happening and very common or happening but not very common), with 14% of key informants stating that early marriage is very common for adolescent girls. MSNA findings highlight that 91% of key informants who identified girls in the community as having been separated from their families reported early marriage as the cause, whereas that cause was only found by 37% key informants for boys.

Some of the identified reasons for early forced marriage were to ease financial burdens within the home,¹³⁵ due to customs and traditions¹³⁶ that is associated with lack of education and/or fanaticism¹³⁷. The practice is also a means of escaping to a life that is perceived to be better,¹³⁸ as well as a to cover the shame of sexual violence: *"The guys who harass them then marry them. Therefore, covering up the scandal is deemed better than an honour killing. They find a pretext for marriage. The girls remain silent - they do not accept their husbands, but try to live with them."* (Adolescent girl from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate)

MSNA findings confirmed social and cultural practices to be the primary push factor to early marriage, as cited by 98% of key informants. Financial hardship were the second. However, key informants also noted that sharing common housing with unrelated people is clearly linked to early marriage (cited as the third push factor by 21% of key informants).

133 "My husband and I are actually sort of separated, but I did not file for divorce just because I do not like people telling me that I have to get married or it is not good for me to go out alone. This is how our community thinks. If other women know that I am divorced, they feel jealous or afraid that their husbands may take a liking to me." (Woman from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate)

134 "My grandfather always shouts at my grandmother and threatens her with divorce if she disagrees with him." (Adolescent boy from Daret Azza sub district Aleppo governorate)

135 "If a young man or a married man who is wealthy, regardless of his age and marital status, proposes to marry any girl in the camp, the girl is forced to marry him even if she does not want to." (Adolescent girl from Al Hol sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate); "One of the girls has mentioned that she is an orphan living with her mother and her younger brother, and she was forced to marry an older man who is married and has a big family. He took advantage of the fact that there is no one to protect her. He prevented her from marrying anyone else saying: 'don't you dream of marrying anyone other than me.'" (Adolescent girl from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate)

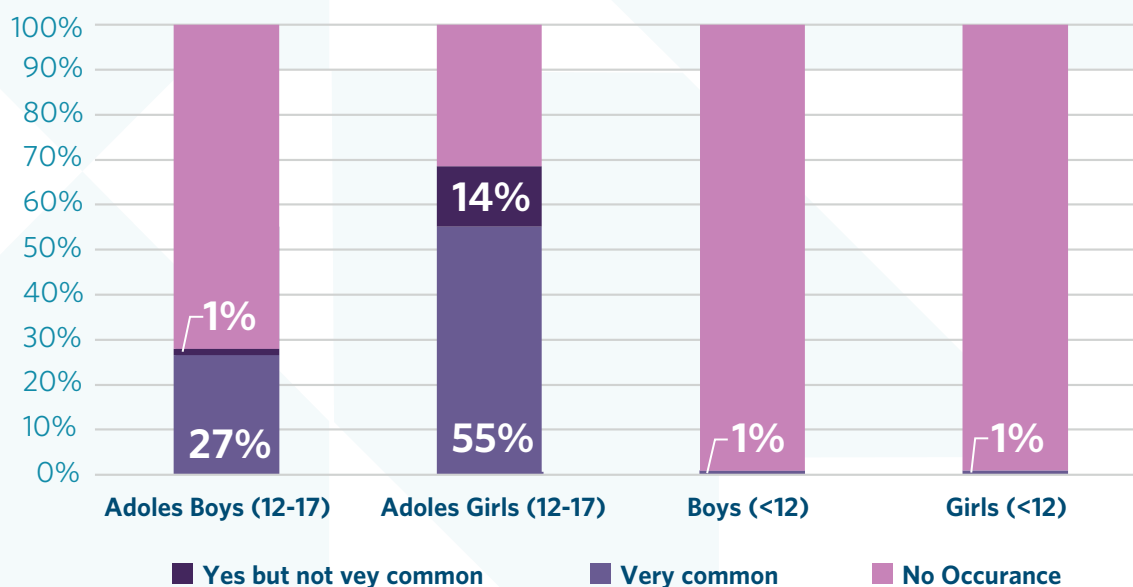
136 "Sometimes, even if the girls do not want to marry, they would be forced. They would be told that they do not know what's good for them. They would be rebuked, and everybody would beat them if they do not listen to what they're told to do." (Adolescent boy from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate)

137 "There are some families who deprive girls if an education to make them marry - or because of ignorance and fanaticism. They think that girls must not go out of their homes, and should not learn because a girl is going to marry at the end of the day, anyway." (Adolescent girl from Lattakia sub district, Lattakia governorate)

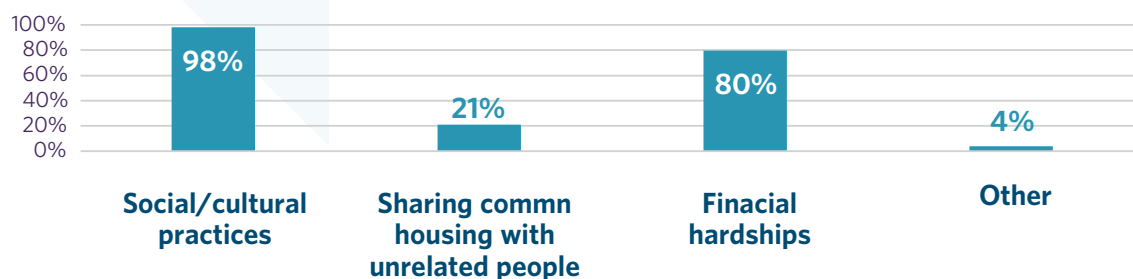
138 "Perhaps the girl is living in bad conditions with her parents, so her marriage is an opportunity to be able to live in better conditions." (Woman from Homs sub district, Homs governorate)



Graph 2: MSNA Findings on Early Marriage: Occurrence by Population Group



Graph 3: MSNA 2019 Findings on Early Marriage: Reported Causes



Some of the main cited consequences of early/forced marriage were the loss of childhood,¹³⁹ the inability of girls to adequately develop physically, and even health problems associated with early pregnancy that follows her early marriage¹⁴⁰, as well as psychological consequences, such as the inability to mature sufficiently¹⁴¹.

However, despite the many negative consequences of early/forced marriage cited, some women would still marry their daughters early if the "right conditions" prevailed: *"If the husband has all the social qualifications to get married like a certificate, a good financial situation, and is open toward the idea of letting the girl continue her studies, the girl can accept the idea of getting married to that man. Taking into consideration the bad conditions that resulted from the war and the rarity of young people, parents feel that they are obliged to marry their daughters when good young men propose to them, regardless of the age of the girl and her physical and psychological capacity to be his wife."* (Woman from Al Hasakah sub district, Al Hasakah governorate)

139 "I got married at an early age and had five children. Now I play with them because I didn't live my childhood." (Woman from Homs sub district, Homs governorate); "I was married at an early age. I was deprived of education, work, play and living my childhood. I was deprived of tenderness. I found it hard to take responsibility. There was no upside." (Woman from Deir ez Zor sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate)

140 "A girl who gets married early may not get pregnant due to her young age and could be exposed to many problems related to pregnancy." (Adolescent girl from Hama sub district, Hama governorate)

141 "She cannot do anything when she gets married early. In fact, she even does not know exactly what is going on. She is not mature enough to understand everything." (Woman from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate)

➤ **Figure 5: Early Marriage**

Early/forced marriage



➤ 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
- Overcrowded shelters

➤ 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
- Normalization of a forced co-habitation through marriage to a boy/man with whom she shares the shelter

➤ 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

Crisis and Gender Related Risks To GBV

During crisis, there are various forms of violence that are directly linked to gender while also being interlinked with one another. Namely, in 2019, FGD participants cited armed recruitment of men and boys,¹⁴² but not of girls as was the trend in 2018. However, UN reports¹⁴³ noted that armed recruitment increased in 2019 of children, both boys and girls, as a means to ease financial strains. Trafficking¹⁴⁴ was noted, but was not a highly identified form of gender related violence as in 2018. Some respondents identified abduction as linked to organ trading,¹⁴⁵ while GBV experts identified abduction as a form of violence perpetrated against adolescent girls. In addition, the intrusive procedure of “virginity testing”¹⁴⁶ to prove that sexual violence did not occur during the period of abduction is often used as a misguided way of protecting the reputation of the family: *“The abduction of adolescent girls and sexual abuse during those times of abduction leads to severe stigma that follows the entire family of that girl. Girls try to secure medical statements through virginity testing to prove that they are still virgins, but this doesn’t help with the stigma after abduction.”* (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub). Virginity testing is a form of sexual violence in itself and a violation of human rights. It is also often used to prove the chastity of adolescent girls before marriage during crisis when sexual violence is widespread and such chastity is perceived to be at risk: *“Virginity testing is very widespread and becoming a normal practice especially before marriage (in order to get a proof of virginity).”* (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub)

Forced serial marriages arranged by parents/families to ease financial burdens were noted: *“A girl was married by her mother’s orders while she was still 13 years old. After a short time she was made to divorce her husband, and then married again and again for money only. Today, the child*

is still under 17 years old and has been married 3 times.” (Woman from Azaz sub district, Aleppo governorate)

GBV experts also identified as a new trend in 2019 forced pregnancy¹⁴⁷ as a means to replenish the lives lost during crisis: *“Women are forced to get pregnant in order to compensate for the loss of lives in Syria due to conflict. This is leading to multiple forced pregnancies on an annual basis.”* (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub). Meanwhile, other men are forcing their wives to have sex-selected abortions to ensure they have sons: *“During my pregnancy, my husband thought that it was a boy and when he discovered that it was a girl, he forced me to abort.”* (Woman from Deir ez Zor sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate). Lastly, GBV experts noted that induced puberty has been disclosed to them as a means to expedite menstruation and thus ready girls for marriage and pregnancy at an earlier age: *“In some instances, the families are forcing puberty of girls by giving medicines/hormones at home in order for girls to have their period as soon as they get married.”* (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub)¹⁴⁸

The fear of arrest and detention as forms of violence was also mentioned this year. Men and boys experience various forms of violence when arrested and detained, including sexual violence¹⁴⁹, but women were also noted to experience violence during and after detention: *“They said that there is psychological pressure on women in particular as a result of the conditions suffered by force, such as detention or even imprisonment. In this case, the community’s view of her is that of blame and contempt. Only a very people ever show kindness to these women.”* (Woman from Azaz sub district, Aleppo governorate)

However in 2019, the sexual violence that women endure during their detainment was specifically noted, as well as the grave consequences they experience once they are released¹⁵⁰: *“Women in prison are beaten, insulted and raped. Therefore, women who are released from prisons are rejected by the community when they return home.”* (Adolescent boy from Dana sub district, Idlib governorate)

Conflict-Related GBV Risk Factors

Location of Violence

“Violence is everywhere, especially against women and girls (family, work, school). It is because of traditions and society’s perception of women. Women may be exposed to

142 “Boys are vulnerable to obligatory recruitment.” (Man from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate)

143 “Rapidly increasing instances of child marriage, child labour and forced recruitment serve as testimony to the negative coping mechanisms to alleviate financial constraints.” (A/HRC/42/51, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, Aug 2019); The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 806 children (670 boys, 136 girls), 22% of whom were under 15 years of age (179), and 94% of whom were used in combat roles (754). 2018 Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism Annual Report JUNE 2019

144 “There are cases of rape during the journey of displacement (from Syria to Turkey) by traffickers.” (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub); “Everyone said that violence is more targeted towards women and children, and refugees going to other countries.” (Adolescent girl from Salqin sub district, Idlib governorate)

145 “A girl was kidnapped from her house by a gang in order to sell her organs.” (Adolescent girl from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate); “A girl was kidnapped from a nearby village in order to harvest her organs when she went to one of the fields.” (Adolescent boy from Ar Raqqa sub district Ar Raqqa governorate)

146 “Virginity testing” is the inspection of the female genitalia to assess if the examinee has had or has been habituated to sexual intercourse. According to a 2014 WHO publication (http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/136101/1/WHO_RHR_14.26_eng.pdf), the invasive and degrading “virginity test” or the “two-finger test” has “no scientific validity”. The WHO handbook upholds the widely accepted medical view that such tests are “worthless” and provides no evidence of whether a woman or a girl has had sexual intercourse or has been raped. (<https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/stima/document/guidance-note-virginity-testing>)

147 Men threaten their wives sometimes that they will re-marry in case the women don’t deliver as many babies as they want. (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub)

148 GBV expert noted three cases were received in southern rural Idlib

149 Men experience the worst violence in prisons, where such violence often leads to death. Men are tortured and insulted, and sometimes limbs might be imputed for the purpose of investigation. (Adolescent boy from Dana sub district, Idlib governorate)

150 “There has been sexual violence against women in detention.” (Man from Azaz sub district, Aleppo governorate); “When girls and women are released from detention they are not accepted by the community. They might be exposed to divorce, physical and psychological diseases, deprivation of resources or children, and isolation.” (Man from Dana sub district, Idlib governorate)

violence because of a meal of food that the husband did not like, and there are many other cases. The most violent places for girls are everywhere.” (Adolescent boy from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate)

Violence occurs everywhere¹⁵¹: “Violence occurs everywhere, particularly at home, school, public places, distribution places, and bakeries.” (Man from Kisreh sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate). Specifically, home¹⁵² is one of the places where violence happens: “Most types of violence occur at home by parents, brothers on girls, as well as by husbands on their wives.” (Woman from Hama sub district, Hama governorate). Poverty, lack of resources and lack of privacy are some of the triggers for violence to occur within the home: “Violence mainly occurs at home as a result of pressures laid on parents. Such pressures are caused by poverty, lack of resources, cramped living space and lack of privacy.” (Woman from Dana sub district, Idlib governorate)

School¹⁵³, including the way to and from it, was another location identified where violence occurs: “Harassment has spread in schools, which means girls are prevented from going to schools and denied education opportunities.” (Adolescent girl from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate). Furthermore, camps¹⁵⁴ were cited as a place of violence: “Girls and boys experience sexual abuse at camps.” (Adolescent girl from Afrin sub district, Aleppo governorate). Deteriorating conditions within the camps are a push factor for violence to occur: “One of the most frequent causes of violence is the deterioration of the living conditions in the camp.” (Woman from Al Hasakah sub district, Al Hasakah governorate). The workplace¹⁵⁵ is another cited place of violence: “Women are sometimes targeted. They are insulted for working in the harvest and they are insulted if they don’t work well.” (Adolescent boy from Daret Azza sub district Aleppo governorate).

Medical facilities were also noted as a place where violence occurs: “A woman was harassed by a doctor when

she went to the medical point for treatment. She was asked to have an illicit relationship with him.” (Woman from Al Hool sub district, Al Hasakah governorate). Lastly, several other locations were noted as places of violence such as public/crowded spaces¹⁵⁶, roads/streets¹⁵⁷, checkpoints¹⁵⁸, public transport¹⁵⁹ and online sites¹⁶⁰.

Movement Restrictions for Women and Girls

“This girl was prevented from going to middle school because the school in their village is destroyed. Her father refused to allow her to go to a distant school for fear that something harmful may happen to her or that she might bring shame to all the family. This is why she was deprived of her education, although she was an outstanding student during primary school.” (Woman from Al Hasakah sub district, Al Hasakah governorate)

Figure 6: Movement Restrictions



- 151 “Violence is everywhere. Husbands beat their wives, and fathers beat their children.” (Adolescent girl from Quneitra sub district, Quneitra governorate); “I think that the violent environment leads to violent people, and it is everywhere.” (Adolescent girl from Lattakia sub district, Lattakia governorate); “Violence mainly occurs everywhere. Women can experience violence anywhere because women are vulnerable.” (Woman from Harasta sub district, Rural Damascus governorate)
- 152 “There is a lot of violence in the house: the father hits his children or the mother, and the mother hits her children. This greatly affects children.” (Adolescent girl from Homs sub district, Homs governorate)
- 153 “Harassment, i.e. sexual violence, occurs in schools by boys, as they harass girls.” (Adolescent girl from Al Hol sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate); “When they go to school, girls are exposed to verbal violence.” (Adolescent girl from Tell Abiad sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate); “Sometimes, there is physical violence by other children in school and when going to school.” (Adolescent girl from Al Hol sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate); “The shelling is focused on hospitals and schools.” (Man from Harim sub district, Idlib governorate)
- 154 “Violence occurs regularly (IS THIS RIGHT??) in camps.” (Man from Kisreh sub district, Deir-ez-Zor governorate)
- 155 “Young people are sometimes exposed to verbal violence at the workplace.” (Woman from Homs sub district, Homs governorate); “Children are the most vulnerable to violence at workplace. They are insulted, beaten and forced to do hard work for long hours for a low wage.” (Woman from Dana sub district, Idlib governorate); “Girls are exploited in jobs such as farming, and are forced to do hard work. Girls might be sent to work in workshops outside the city to earn little money.” (Adolescent girl from Abu Kamal sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate)

- 156 “The places where we face violence are on the road, in public spaces and, for girls, on the way back from school.” (Adolescent girl from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate)
- 157 “Violence happens at homes, camps, and public streets.” (Adolescent girl from Kisreh sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate)
- 158 “Women suffer harassment and exploitation on checkpoints before they are allowed to pass. This may be in the form of threats of arrest or the risk of being kidnapped.” (Woman from Salqin sub district, Idlib governorate)
- 159 “Women and girls experience violence on public transport.” (Adolescent boy from Afrin sub district, Aleppo governorate)
- 160 “It’s noted that one of the most common reasons for the increase in the risk of violence for women is the impact and spread of pornography among men. It sows bad ideas about women and misleads men with unethical practices by women and girls.” (Adolescent girl from Tell Abiad sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate); “There is a guy blackmailing a girl with her pictures and she is engaged. Her family cannot do anything or find a solution.” (Adolescent girl from Salqin sub district, Idlib governorate)

As in previous years, the restriction of movement of women and girls is widespread and is either self-imposed or imposed by family, as linked to the lack of security and the various forms of violence that they are vulnerable to. Such restriction therefore serves as a perceived protective measure: *"Girls do not have freedom of movement because their families are afraid for them."* (Woman from Daret Azza sub district, Aleppo governorate). Women and girls specifically noted that they fear being abducted and the shame and stigma that is linked to it¹⁶¹: *"The deteriorating security situation, individuals could not move freely, especially adolescent girls, women and children, for fear of community talk, kidnapping and assassination. The security situation has become worse than before and there are many stories and incidents of people who have been kidnapped and killed because of the lack of laws to limit these incidents. Girls and women were able to cope with this situation by not moving on their own and not going out of the house at night. They ask others to meet their needs, for fear about their reputation and themselves."* (Adolescent girl from Jisr Ash Shugur sub district, Idlib governorate). Furthermore, they fear the sexual violence¹⁶², including sexual harassment¹⁶³, that they might face if they leave their homes. As was stated, this fear is particularly linked to being kidnapped¹⁶⁴: *"I believe that the crisis has caused a lot of concerns for parents and they have started restricting their daughters' freedom more, because girls and women are more prone to violence and rape in wartime."* (Woman from Tartous sub district, Tartous governorate)

Social norms, customs and traditions¹⁶⁵ restrict the movement of women and girls, particularly if they have

a disability¹⁶⁶: *"Some parents do not allow their children with disabilities to go out for fear of society's attitude towards them."* (Man from Idlib sub district, Idlib governorate) and/or if they are widowed/divorced¹⁶⁷ in order to protect the reputation¹⁶⁸ of the family: *"Widows and divorcees do not have freedom of movement because they are afraid of what the people would say."* (Woman from Daret Azza sub district, Aleppo governorate)

MSNA findings confirmed that social norms, customs and traditions serve to restrict movement of women and girls. Specifically, MSNA findings found that movement restrictions are reported in 58% of communities. Spousal/family/community restrictions were identified as a cause in 60% of the communities where the movement restrictions occur. Self-imposed restriction is due to the social norms around how women and girls should dress¹⁶⁹, the obligation of girls to inform parents of every movement¹⁷⁰ and the allowances that are made for boys because of their gender,¹⁷¹ as it is perceived that girls are at higher risk to specific forms of violence (sexual violence and abduction for sexual assault/rape) than boys.

MSNA findings also noted that women and adolescent girls who have been displaced are most restricted in terms of their movement for many of the reasons provided.

161 "Adult women and girls are afraid of being kidnapped because there is nothing to protect them." (Adolescent boy from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate); "We can move but is not safe. Women cannot move like they want because they are afraid they would be attacked or kidnapped." (Woman from Daret Azza sub district, Aleppo governorate); "Girls can't move for fear of kidnapping." (Adolescent girl from Kisreh sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate); "We are afraid of being kidnapped so our parents prevent us from studying and doing everything." (Adolescent girl from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate)

162 "Mobility has become exclusive to specific areas and within certain hours. The reasons for this are the lack of security and the large number of incidents to which young men and women in our community are exposed, especially students, while traveling from one area to another." (Man from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate); "There is a great fear of the movement of children due to the occurrence of abductions and trade in organs in the camp." (Man from Al Hol sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate); "Girls need to be accompanied by a family member such as father, mother and brother." (Adolescent girl from Al Hol sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate); "Movement is highly restricted in the area due to the damage caused by the terrorist groups. Girls are prevented from going out without a male companion." (Adolescent girl from Qahtaniyyeh sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate); "I also do not allow my sister to go to the market, but my brother and my mother go instead for fear for my sister's safety." (Adolescent boy from Al Hol sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate)

163 "Girls' movement is restricted because of their parents' concern. Girls do not go to markets unless they are escorted by their mother because of the harassment they suffer from boys." (Adolescent girl from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate)

164 "Girls are barred from attending school for fear of sexual abuse and kidnapping." (Woman from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate)

165 "Customs and traditions do not allow much movement, especially for girls alone in the camp." (Adolescent girl from Ras Al Ain sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate)

166 "People with disabilities do not have the freedom to move because of their condition." (Woman from Daret Azza sub district, Aleppo governorate)

167 "Widows and divorcees do not have freedom at all to move because of they are afraid of what the people will say and how the society will blame them if they suffer something. They have a different area." (Woman from Daret Azza sub district, Aleppo governorate); "Widows and divorced women can't move due to traditions." (Adolescent girl from Kisreh sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate); "My aunt is a young widow and she can't go out alone due to traditions." (Adolescent girl from Atareb sub district, Aleppo governorate)

168 "Women must seek permission from all family members. They must not make relationships and friendships in case they damage their reputation." (Adolescent girl from Deir ez Zor sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate)

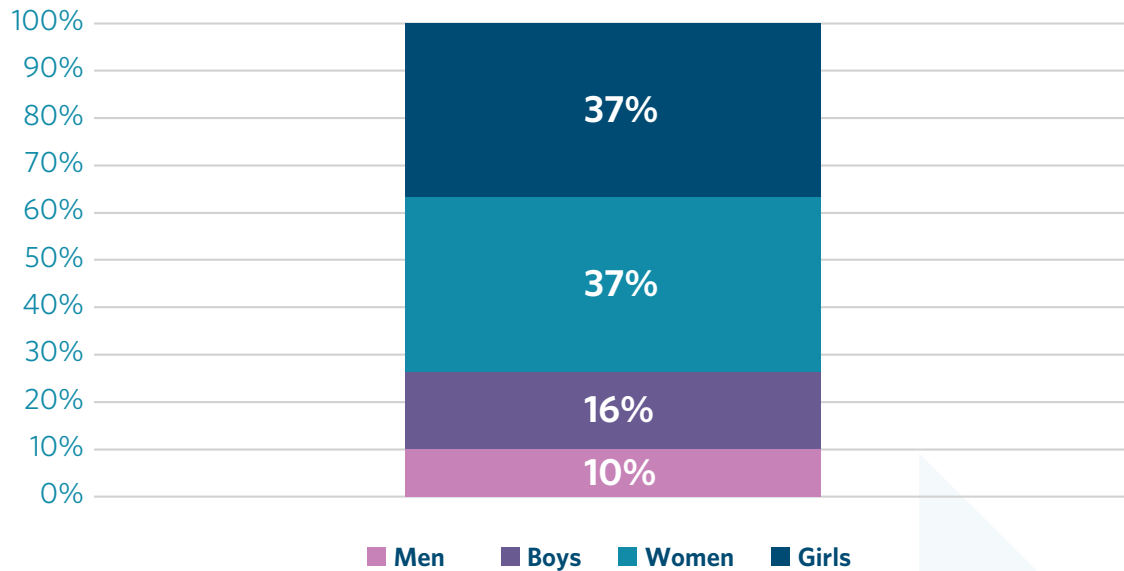
169 "There are restrictions on our movement. If we go out, we feel that all men look at us because the nature of our clothing is different from that of the inhabitants of Harem." (Woman from Harim sub district, Idlib governorate)

170 "As for me, I cannot move freely as long as I have to tell my parents about all my movements." (Adolescent girl from Azaz sub district, Aleppo governorate)

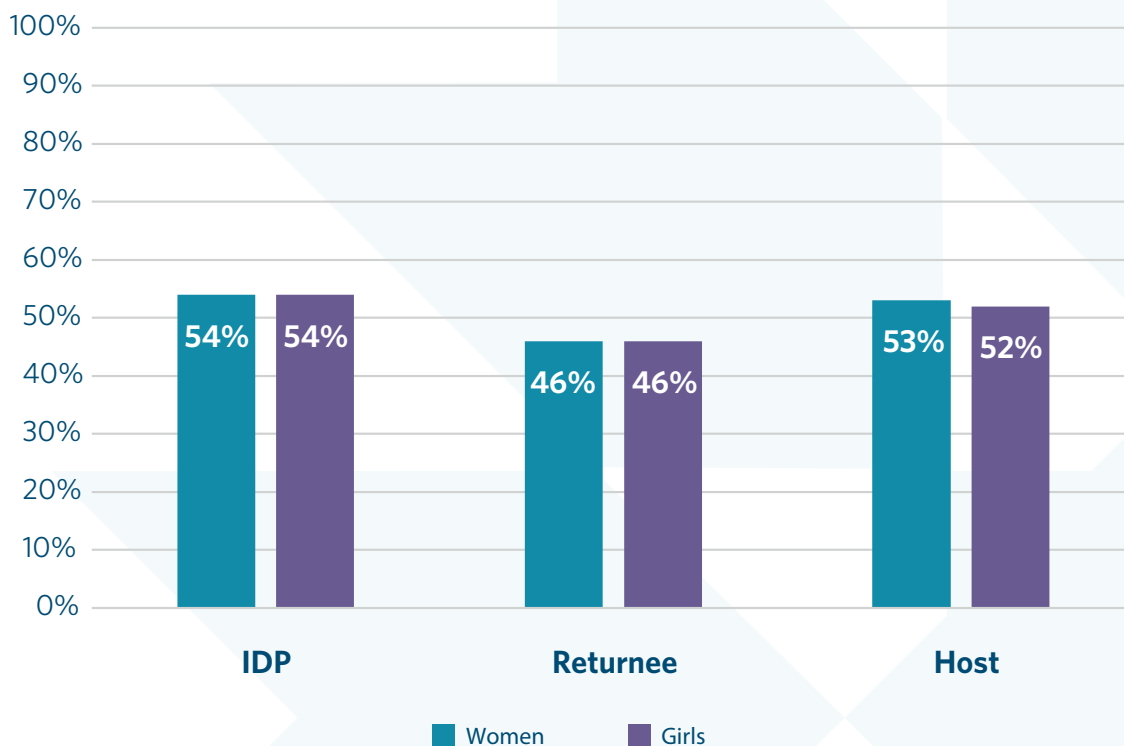
171 "The girls also expressed their desire to go out their home without any constraints or company, like boys who are as old as they are." (Adolescent girl from Al Hasakeh sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate); "Boys can come and go as they like, but girls cannot do so. It is better for them not to leave because people will start talking about them." (Adolescent girl from Daret Azza sub district, Aleppo governorate)



Graph 4: MSNA 2019 Findings on Movement Restrictions: Spousal/Family/Community Restrictions by Population Group



Graph 5: MSNA 2019 Findings on Movement Restrictions: Women and girls affected by spousal/family/community restrictions by displacement status



The lack of civil documentation¹⁷² restricts the movement of women and girls: *"Women and girls have difficulties when moving within the free areas due to lack of documentation and their commitment to wear the required clothes."* (Man from Dana sub district, Idleb governorate). The consequences of movement restriction for women and girls negatively impacts on their ability to fully enjoy their rights: *"Restricting movement of girls deprives them of education"*¹⁷³. (Woman from Ras Al Ain sub district, Al Hasakah governorate). It also impacts psychologically on women and girls: *"As a result of movement restrictions, girls have suffered from isolation from society, denial of education (not being allowed to travel to pursue their studies), impaired personality and a sense of insignificance."* (Adolescent girl from Jisr Ash Shugur sub district, Idleb governorate).

Such restriction does not end with the end of hostilities and the consequence of being denied an education may potentially be a legacy of the crisis in the immediate future of girls: *"During the crisis, we started to feel more concerned about girls, especially now. Their parents do not allow them to travel to study in Damascus or in other governorates because they are afraid for them."* (Woman from Tartous sub district, Tartous governorate). The psychological impact from movement restrictions includes the pressure¹⁷⁴ and fear¹⁷⁵ that shrouds the lives of women and girls: *"We are under considerable psychological pressure regarding freedom of movement."* (Man from Ras Al Ain sub district, Al Hasakah governorate). An adolescent girl from Idlib agreed: *"Movement and fear of these circumstances that we are experiencing have affected us psychologically. Here in Idlib, we have heard many stories of abduction, murder and kidnapping of girls in particular."* (Adolescent girl from Idleb sub district, Idleb governorate).

Movement restrictions also led adolescent girls to opt for early marriage¹⁷⁶ as a means of escape: *"Movement restriction generates psychological stress and lack of personality which could make them opt for early marriage as a solution to get rid of their parents' authority."* (Adolescent girl from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate).

It was mentioned that *"persons with disabilities remain at home and do not mix with the community, and this isolation causes them to lose their mind"*. (Man from Mare sub district, Aleppo governorate).

Lastly, women and girls may have to create economic opportunities at home due to the combined effect of movement restriction and financial pressures: *"Women work at home by selling cosmetics in order to feel safe and because they are in dire need of money."* (Woman from Idleb sub district, Idleb governorate)

Civil Documentation and Housing, Land and Property (HLP)

"There are no civil documents for many events, the most important of which are births, deaths and marriage contracts. Access to official documents is worsening year after year." (Woman from Jisr Ash Shugur sub district, Idleb governorate)

"There are no government-run civil registries currently operating in non-Government of Syria (GoS) controlled territories. Therefore, obtaining government records requires crossing front-lines into GoS controlled areas, a dangerous act that some civilians will nonetheless undertake in order to receive their documents. It is more difficult for women to complete this trip than men. In GoS controlled areas, the Personal Status Law restricts the movement of unaccompanied women, though no instances of its implementation were reported by interviewees. Moreover, social stigmas associated with women traveling alone coupled with the possible burden of caring for children and families further discourage some women from making the trip!"

172 "We feel that we live inside a prison because of the difficulty of entering and leaving. Inside the camp movement is normal and we can move around. As for getting out of the camp, it is very difficult and it is only through referrals." (Adolescent girl from Tell Abiad sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate); "People find it difficult to move due to lack of official documentation." (Adolescent girl from Kisreh sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate)

173 "This prevents children from going to school, especially when the bombardment is intensive." (Woman from Dana sub district, Idleb governorate); "Boys and girls find it difficult to go to school." (Adolescent girl from Afrin sub district, Aleppo governorate); "Girls are barred from school for fear of sexual abuse and kidnapping." (Woman from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate)

174 "This situation lays many psychological pressures on people." (Woman from Kisreh sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate)

175 "My father and mother beat my sisters if they leave alone, out of fear for their safety." (Adolescent boy from Daret Azza sub district Aleppo governorate); "Girls face psychological stress due to displacement and harassment by boys. They are not allowed out of the house unless they are escorted by their mother." (Adolescent girl from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate)

176 "There are many consequences for the lack of freedom of movement. For example, many girls have left school and married early because of fear of movement, aerial bombardment and kidnapping." (Adolescent girl from Idleb sub district, Idleb governorate)

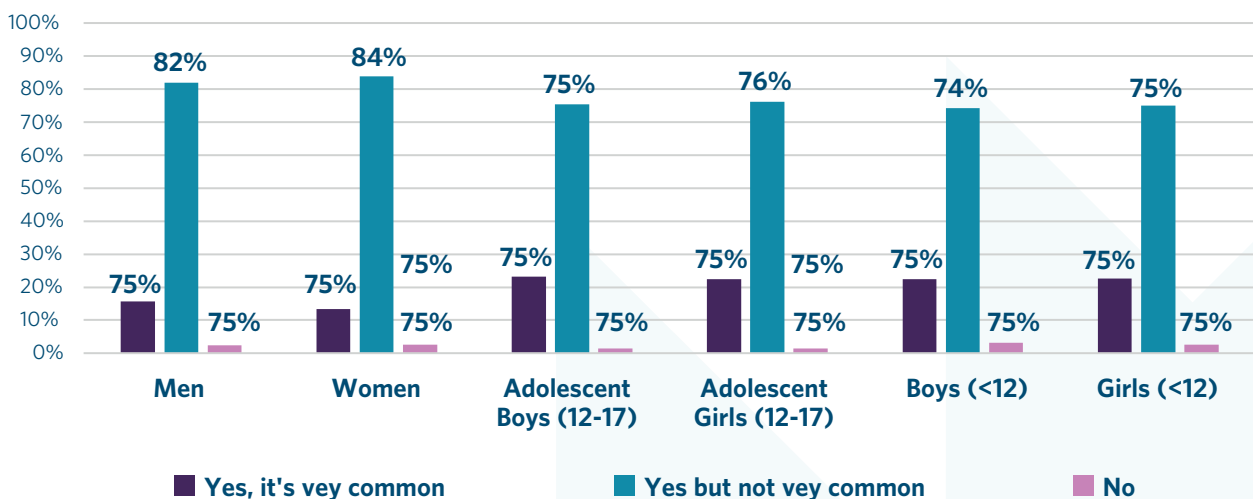
As in in previous years, lack of civil documentation has increased the vulnerability of women and their children and families, particularly in registering marriage

es¹⁷⁷, births¹⁷⁸ and deaths.¹⁷⁹ MSNA findings highlight that 100% of sampled communities inside Syria report lack/loss of civil documentation. 98% of men surveyed stated this has occurred with 16% stating that it is very common. 97% of women surveyed stated this has occurred, with 13% stating that it is very common.

Firstly, the types of documents that they have the most difficulty obtaining are marriage certificates¹⁸⁰, birth

certificates¹⁸¹, family books¹⁸² and identification cards¹⁸³ as well as proving property ownership and school attainment.¹⁸⁴ Secondly, there are several reasons as to why they lack civil documentation in the conduct of their daily lives. Primarily, loss during bombardment/airstrikes and displacement¹⁸⁵: *"Many people have lost their official papers because of the bombardment or displacement from one place to another."* (Woman from Daret Azza sub district, Aleppo governorate).

Graph 6: MSNA 2019 Findings on Lack/Loss of Civil Documentation



177 "One Idlib City interviewee described a dilemma faced by a family member who obtained a marriage certificate in an area controlled by one armed faction, and then attempted to obtain a family booklet in an area controlled by a second faction. The second faction demanded that the individual nullify his original marriage certificate and apply for a new one before obtaining the family booklet." (Proximity International, Women and the Justice Sector in North-Western Syria, Oct 2018)

178 "Syrian women, moreover, faced difficulties in registering their children. As Syrian nationality is conferred to a child through his or her Syrian father, Syrian women encountered obstacles when proceeding administratively with civil registration in the absence of the father. Despite legal provisions enabling women to confer Syrian nationality without proving a legal link to the father, including children born out of wedlock, such as in cases of rape, this appeared rarely to be the case, likely owing to social norms and the stigma attached." (A/HRC/42/51, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, Aug 2019)

179 "Without an official death certificate, women were unable to move forward with the legal aspects of the deaths, which, in turn, impeded inheritance and custody rights and severely restricted freedom of movement, in particular of travel abroad with minor children." August 2019 Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic

180 "Inability to certify marriage contracts in courts due to lack of official documents." (Man from Salqin sub district, Idlib governorate); "Women who have nothing to prove their marriage face a lot of difficulties. Their children exist in the community and they have no IDs, so nobody is willing to register them." (Woman from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate); "Widows whose husbands died before their marriage papers were certified are facing great difficulties in registering their children." (Woman from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate)

181 "People who don't have documentation can't register their babies, prove their identity or obtain food aid." (Man from Atareb sub district, Aleppo governorate); "Many people can't register their marriage or new-born babies." (Woman from Kisreh sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate)

182 "People get fake family books so they can make a living." (Woman from Harim sub district, Idlib governorate); "People get fake family books to get services." (Man from Harim sub district, Idlib governorate); "My brother is married with children and no one has accepted to register him because there is no family book. He registered his name with the local authorities, but this did not work." (Adolescent girl from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate)

183 "She does not have an ID or a personal identification card or a passport that allows her to move within or outside Syria." (Woman from Salqin sub district, Idlib governorate); "It is difficult to obtain an ID. Legal procedure take a long time. It is difficult to obtain property contracts. New-born babies can't be registered legally." (Woman from Afrin sub district, Aleppo governorate); "I went to get a personal card for me and my brother because my father was afraid of going to register my little brother for fear of imprisonment. My other brother had died after joining the Kurds." (Adolescent girl from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate)

184 "Some families have lost ownership documents of their lands and houses, as well as certificates and school certificates." (Adolescent boy from Tell Abiad sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate)

185 "The loss of old documents was the reason behind not issuing any new documents for a large group of people, because we live in a state of war and we don't know when it ends." (Man from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate)

Some FGD participants said that their documents were confiscated by an authoritative body: *"Our documents were detained by the camp administration who refused to give them back until we left the camp for good."* (Man from Ras Al Ain sub district, Al Hasakah governorate) The challenges people have in obtaining civil documentation range from lack of civil registries¹⁸⁶ or lack of coordination of local bodies that register civil documentation¹⁸⁷ to fear of arrest¹⁸⁸ and/or being kidnapped: *"The most important challenges in obtaining and renewing official documents are fear of arrest and insecurity during travel and being kidnapped by different groups, especially for women, girls, divorced women and widows who are afraid to travel alone because they risk being detained."* (Woman from Jisr Ash Shugur sub district, Idlib governorate).

Some women are placed in the impossible situation of needing a witness¹⁸⁹ to prove their claim/identity, or in some cases where they do not have recognised marriage certificates, but are also required to prove their marriage to register their children¹⁹⁰: *"Women who have nothing to prove their marriage face a lot of difficulties and their children exist in the community, but they have no IDs and nobody is willing to register them."* (Woman from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate). Furthermore, one may need to pay high fines¹⁹¹ and/or be well connected with the relevant persons or bodies¹⁹² to register for a family book or other documentation: *"Everything is happening through patronage. If you are not well connected, you cannot do anything. My son is not registered yet because his father is missing."* (Woman from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate).

Lastly, there is the challenge of being forced to travel to GOS areas to obtain documentation. For an undocumented IDP, this is considered risky: *"Some women resort to going to government-controlled areas to get family*

booklets. They are desperate to provide for the future of their children by registering them." (Woman from Daret Azza sub district, Aleppo governorate). Furthermore, taking the risk to travel to dangerous areas is necessary as camp officials often do not provide¹⁹³ necessary civil documentation. However, at times such risks may still not prove worth: *"The situation is getting worse, as the government-controlled areas (GoS) and world countries don't recognise documentation issued in non-GOS areas, while in non-GOS areas, the documentation issued by the GOS after 2015 is usually not accepted."* (Woman from Dana sub district, Idlib governorate)

Lastly, persons with disabilities, widowed/divorced women have particular difficulties obtaining documentation due to their status: *"People with disabilities, divorcees and widows suffer more difficulty than other categories when issuing these documents."* (Woman from Salqin sub district, Idlib governorate)

*"A lack of appropriate documentation can entrench the vulnerabilities of many women and children. For example, women whose husbands have disappeared find themselves in a difficult legal situation whereby they are unable to register themselves as widows and divorced women"*¹⁹⁴.

FGD participants indicated the consequences of not having recognised civil documentation for women and adolescent girls are many. This hardship is summarised by one adult male from Dana sub-district: *"There's a lack of belonging, deprivation of humanitarian aid, deprivation of education, using false documentation and inability to own property."* (Man from Dana sub district, Idlib governorate). Women FGD participants noted that they can be arrested (and be subject to violence during arrest)¹⁹⁵ for not having civil documents, inability to assert their rights¹⁹⁶, and experience challenges in traveling¹⁹⁷ especially with children.

186 "Lack of competent authorities that are able to issue documents." (Man from Salqin sub district, Idlib governorate); "There are no real estate and civil registration centres recognised by the government." (Man from Mare sub district, Aleppo governorate); "Accessing official documents is a problem because there is no institution of the Syrian government. Instead there is the People's House and communes that issue identification certificates and documents required by humanitarian organisations." (Woman from Tell Abiad sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate); "This problem cannot be brought to an end because of the absence of government." (Man from Harim sub district, Idlib governorate)

187 "There's a lack of coordination between civil affairs centres in cities and towns in the liberated areas." (Man from Salqin sub district, Idlib governorate)

188 "Men and women – and even young men and women – are afraid of being arrested when going to obtain their documents." (Woman from Salqin sub district, Idlib governorate)

189 "It is very difficult to obtain official documentation because men are afraid of traveling to other areas to obtain them. Therefore, women are dependent on going and obtaining official documentation. One woman went to register her four children but couldn't do it because she needed witnesses from the village." (Woman from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate)

190 "There is great difficulty in issuing the complete documents because there is no old reference to prove the authenticity of the information." (Man from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate)

191 "People are asked for large delay fines (is this 'bribes/fees to avoid delays'??)." (Woman from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate); "People have to pay a lot of money for documentation." (Woman from Kisreh sub district, Deir-ez-Zor governorate)

192 "Obtaining official documents is difficult and there is favouritism." (Man from Afrin sub district, Aleppo governorate)

193 "There is difficulty in obtaining new documents because the camp administration prevents this." (Man from Al Hol sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate); "My daughter lives in a government-controlled area and wants to document her marriage, but they ask for the family book and the camp administration does not give such proof to the IDPs. The camp administration gives copies of it, until they leave the camp and then the IDP hand over all their documents. The problem is that the Syrian government does not recognise these copies, and insists on original documents." (Woman from Al Hasakeh sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate)

194 Proximity International, Women and the Justice Sector in North-Western Syria, Oct 2018

195 "One of the participants was married in GOS areas and went there to obtain a passport. The Syrian authorities arrested her and subjected her to verbal abuse and physical violence." (Woman from Harim sub district, Idlib governorate); "Many people have been arrested due to lack of official documentation." (Man from Kisreh sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate)

196 "A person is denied his/her right to education if there are no personal documents." (Adolescent boy from Ras Al Ain sub district Al Hasakeh governorate); "It is difficult to obtain licenses. Divorced women and widows find it difficult to claim their rights due to the pressure laid by their husbands' families on them." (Man from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate); "If somebody loses their ID, they will lose their personal freedom and the freedom of movement." (Adolescent boy from Ras Al Ain sub district Al Hasakeh governorate); "Lack of civil documentation results in identity loss, deprivation of education and travel, and document forgery." (Woman from Dana sub district, Idlib governorate)

197 "Loss of documents endangers a person and may lead to non-return and denial of access to services, and it also leads to investigation." (Man from Al Hasakeh sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate)

The most pressing concern for GBV and humanitarian actors is the inability of women and adolescent girls to access humanitarian assistance and aid distributions¹⁹⁸ due to lack of civil documentation: *"I cannot get aid because I have four children, but only two are registered. Therefore, they do not give me enough aid. I cannot register my children at school and we cannot leave the country."* (Woman from Daret Azza sub district, Aleppo governorate). Another woman FGD participant stated that: *"There are three cases of people deprived of some services because of the lack of these documents. One of which is a child deprived of school and education, the other is a man deprived of dental treatment and hospitalisation, and the third was deprived the right to movement in the district."* (Woman from Azaz sub district, Aleppo governorate)

"There are consequences if you have no documents, like the difficulty of access to services such as education, distributions, medical, and movement, as well as the deprivation of some rights such as marriage and legal issues and inheritance." (Woman from Azaz sub district, Aleppo governorate)

As in 2018, women FGD participants noted the necessity of obtaining non-official documentation¹⁹⁹ to meet their needs²⁰⁰, especially to access distributions²⁰¹: *"I obtained false documentation to receive aid."* (Woman from Atareb sub district, Aleppo governorate). However, once women take the risk in securing forged documents, they do not provide access to services and/or opportunities²⁰² as hoped: *"Those who have received unofficial documents do not benefit from them everywhere and are being denied employment and education opportunities because of this."* (Woman from Jisr Ash Shugur sub district, Idlib governorate)

"I own a piece of land I inherited from my family and now I cannot dispose of it or sell it, although it belongs to me." (Woman from Harim sub district, Idlib governorate)

Adequate housing is necessary for women and adolescent girls, especially as heads of households. They must have safe and affordable housing, so that they can protect themselves and their children from violence, as well as provide them with an adequate place to eat, sleep and grow. Women FGD participants also identified how lack of civil documentation or witnesses impedes their access to and/or proving ownership of property²⁰³ placing them at further risk of violence: *"My father died since the beginning of the crisis. Currently there are problems with our house because there are no witnesses to the ownership of the house. We have been threatened by anonymous persons."* (Woman from Idlib sub district, Idlib governorate)

Widowed/divorced women are susceptible to exploitation linked to the lack of property documentation: *"Divorced and widowed women are more likely to lose or have their housing, land and property documents stolen."* (Woman from Al Hasakah sub district, Al Hasakah governorate)

Women FGD participants also identified other challenges with housing, land and property such as disputed ownership²⁰⁴, unlawful confiscation/occupation²⁰⁵, and challenges with renting housing²⁰⁶ which are, again, linked to lack of civil documentation. One woman from Daret Azza sub-district stated that: *"The dispute might be about property by more than one party, and lack of documents for some property can lead to such disputes and problems. This also leads to losing their rights to the property."* (Woman from Daret Azza sub district,

198 "When we ask the council or any organisation to get food aid or enrol children in school, they require a family book or ID card. We lost all our cards because of the shelling and destruction in our village." (Woman from Harim sub district, Idlib governorate); "It affects undocumented people and their eligibility for humanitarian assistance, or their ability to pursue education, employment or civil rights. The women stated that those who have received unofficial documents do not benefit from them everywhere and are being denied employment and education opportunities as a result." (Woman from Jisr Ash Shugar sub district, Idlib governorate); "In my opinion, many widows and divorced women have difficulty accessing aid, sometimes because they are vulnerable with no breadwinner and sometimes because they don't have identity documents." (Adolescent girl from Idlib sub district, Idlib governorate); "People who don't have documents can't register their babies, prove their identity or obtain food aid." (Man from Atareb sub district, Aleppo governorate)

199 "Faced with what might seem like an impossible task, many research participants explained that women (and men) are likely to resort to forgery." (Proximity International, Women and the Justice Sector in North-Western Syria, Oct 2018); "People do so because they can't obtain official documentation from the Government controlled areas." (Woman from Dana sub district, Idlib governorate)

200 "People get fake family books so they can make a living." (Woman from Harim sub district, Idlib governorate); "Most people resort to obtaining false documentations to move from one region to another and to complete their education." (Woman from Dana sub district, Idlib governorate); "The participants said that many people forged official documentations, such as degrees and IDs, in order to travel and get a job." (Woman from Dana sub district, Idlib governorate)

201 "False documentation can't be detected during distributions." (Man from Kisreh sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate)

202 "Many people have obtained unofficial documentation, but they are not internationally recognised." (Woman from Dana sub district, Idlib governorate)

203 "It is difficult to obtain official documentation for lands and houses. There are many disputes over properties." (Man from Qahtaniyyeh sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate); "Land may be forcibly removed because there are no documents proving ownership of the land. The property of older people is taken from them by force." (Adolescent girl from Tell Abiad sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate); "There are difficulties in documenting agricultural lands and land purchased for housing." (Woman from Azaz sub district, Aleppo governorate); "There is nothing to prove your ownership, especially if you are displaced." (Woman from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate)

204 "There have been many disputes between people, especially relatives, due to lack of government, confusion, loss of documentation, and spread of fraud." (Woman from Atareb sub district, Aleppo governorate); "There are many disputes over properties. People do not want to go to government authorities to obtain new documentation for fear of being arrested and because it is expensive to go there." (Woman from Kisreh sub district Deir ez Zor governorate); "There are many disputes over rain-fed lands." (Woman from Kisreh sub district, Deir-ez-Zor governorate)

205 "The existing armed groups sometimes rob people of their rights. They take the lands, the houses, and the property of the people." (Woman from Salqin sub district, Idlib governorate); "NSAG and some factions put their hands on the houses under the pretext that the owner of the house is abroad or with the GoS. This becomes a pretext to take his house." (Woman from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate)

206 "Lots of problems happen during the rent. We were treated as strangers and not nationals or people from the region." (Woman from Harim sub district, Idlib governorate); Raising house rent when knowing about a new wave of displacement coming – trying to exploit widows in exchange for a place to stay. The lack of places to stay causes large numbers of displaced people to live in confined spaces. This causes heinous things to happen. (Man from Salqin sub district, Idlib governorate); "Sometimes the landowner forces them to work for him to allow them to set up a tent in his land." (Adolescent boy from Jisr Ash Shugur sub district, Idlib governorate)

Aleppo governorate). Other women FGD participants from Idlib sub-district noted the unlawful confiscation and occupation they endured: *"My grandfather's house was taken over as booty."* (Woman from Idlib sub district, Idlib governorate). Likewise: *"Because of a conflict between ethnic groups and local people, my house was taken over."* (Woman from Idlib sub district, Idlib governorate). Meanwhile, a woman from Mare sub-district noted the increase in rental prices which again places women and their children at risk of violence (transactional sex, exploitation). Women will sacrifice spending on food and other basic necessities in order to ensure she can pay her rent: *"There are no houses for rent, especially if the family's financial situation is not good. House rents have risen dramatically. There were many problems between the landlord and the tenant because of the higher rent than previous years."* (Woman from Mare sub district, Aleppo governorate)

Coping Mechanisms

Respondents identified various coping mechanisms, both negative and positive, that women and girls resort to after experiencing violence, with a new trend in participants identifying unhealthy behaviours (smoking, excessive use of social media) as a negative coping mechanism. However, more so in 2019 than in 2018, positive coping mechanisms were also identified to cope with violence or the threat of violence, such as drawing and attending the gym.

Negative Coping Mechanisms

Silence or non-disclosure²⁰⁷, victim blaming, movement restriction, running away, aggression and use of violence, unhealthy behaviours as well as crying are the primary negative coping mechanisms, with some of these mechanisms overlapping with one another, i.e. silence being linked to avoiding being blamed for the violence perpetrated – and possibly killed to protect the reputation of the family.

"Girls would remain silent if they suffer any kind of sexual violence because of the mindset of their parents. They would also remain silent because they would be blamed. There will be a scandal and she might be killed." (Adolescent girl from Salqin sub district, Idlib governorate)

Adolescent girls stated that they would remain silent or not disclose the violence they experience, especially sexual violence, as it would bring shame²⁰⁸ upon their

family and could possibly lead to death (honour killing): *"Women do not complain because they are afraid of getting killed. A girl once complained to a court because she was getting beaten and mistreated. She was put in prison for two days to remain safe, and then the family intervened. She was taken out of prison and killed the same night without the killer being held accountable."* (Woman from Daret Azza sub district, Aleppo governorate). Some women noted that they keep silent to protect their children²⁰⁹: *"Women have to keep silent about the violence they face in order to save the future of their children."* (Woman from Afrin sub district, Aleppo governorate)

Silence is often utilised as a coping mechanism because of the negative repercussions by family members to whom women and girls disclose to. Due to customs and traditions²¹⁰, family members see the violence perpetrated against women as something she has brought upon herself – therefore she needs to be punished for it. Furthermore, those same customs and traditions lead many community members to speak ill²¹¹ of the woman or girl who experiences sexual violence rather than sympathise with her situation, especially if she submits a complaint to a protection entity²¹². Thus, women and girls remain silent to keep the sexual violence hidden or secret – and to protect their families from shame and stigma: *"Sometimes, they feel afraid and do nothing. They do not want other people to talk about them. People talk about what girls do a lot."* (Adolescent girl from Damascus sub district, Damascus governorate). As another adolescent girl stated: *"Teenage girls usually face violence with silence for fear of parents and stigma in the community."* (Adolescent girl from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate). Another woman stated that: *"Society has become accustomed to violence and adapted to it through silence and non-disclosure. Nothing is said to any official body that could reduce the rate of violence or take action."* (Woman from Jisr Ash Shugur sub district, Idlib governorate). This may be a sentiment that is increasing as respondents seem to agree that there is nothing that can be done to stop the violence²¹³.

wife can't complain to the police if her husband beats her because this means shame in our society." (Woman from Lattakia sub district, Lattakia governorate); "Women keep silent about the violence they face for fear of shame. There are no rules that protect women." (Woman from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate)

209 "Most girls and women ignore violence, especially married women, for the sake of their children and husbands." (Adolescent girl from Al Hasakeh sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate)

210 "If women or girls are harassed, they cannot talk about these cases because of the violence that their parents may practice on them after they find out, because of customs and traditions." (Adolescent girl from Al Hol sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate); "Girls face violence with silence due to the customs and traditions and for fear of the stigma." (Adolescent girl from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate); "She spoke about a girl who used to live in GoS areas and who used to wear indecent clothing. She got raped but she merely started praying against the person who raped her and she remained silent." (Adolescent girl from Salqin sub district, Idlib governorate)

211 "I don't do anything because if I opened up about my problems, people would know my problems and talk about them." (Woman from Harim sub district, Idlib governorate)

212 "Women can't make complaints against their husbands or brothers when they experience violence. Such complaints can cause women to experience more violence because the community rejects the idea of women making complaints to authorities." (Adolescent girl from Dana sub district, Idlib governorate)

213 "No nobody can do anything except for remaining silent." (Woman from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate)

207 "Sometimes, we try to ignore what is happening so that life goes on." (Woman from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate); "You cannot say anything if you are harassed by one of your relatives." (Woman from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate)

208 "As for raped girls, they are not allowed to leave the house nor to declare that she was raped, because this would bring shame to her family." (Adolescent boy from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate); "Women in our society have nothing to do because they cannot challenge violence due to the circumstances and the society. A

Lastly, ethnic minorities²¹⁴ and persons with disabilities²¹⁵ are not able to speak of the violence they experience as they do not have the necessary support to do so: *"When people with disabilities are subjected to violence by their parents, they cannot do anything."* (Woman from Al Hool sub district, Al Hasakah governorate)

Silence may also be utilised to avoid movement restriction, which is another negative coping mechanism²¹⁶: *"I was verbally harassed and nearly abducted when I was in a street almost empty of people. But when I screamed out loudly, I was left alone. I did not say a word to any of my family members about what happened for fear that I would be deprived of education and the right to leave the house."* (Adolescent girl from Deir ez Zor sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate)

"Girls that suffer violence do not admit it because they fear society shame and backbiting from relatives. The relationship between us and our families is weak. We feel afraid about telling them about anything happening with us." (Adolescent girl from Daret Azza sub district, Aleppo governorate)

When violence, especially sexual violence, occurs, family and community members tend to blame the victim²¹⁷ for what has happened to her, again imposed by social norms²¹⁸: *"For girls, or women that suffer violence in the market, they are blamed under the pretext that she did not dress properly. They would say that if she had been dressed properly, she would not have brought this headache for her family. She should not raise her voice and should not shout. A woman's voice is something sacred. How can she talk to the police or go to the doctor or a psychiatrist? We are not allowed to have these things."* (Adolescent girl from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate).

Running away²¹⁹ from the situation is another negative

coping mechanism especially for those experiencing domestic violence within the home: *"Some parents beat their daughters, so their daughters run away from home."* (Adolescent boy from Qahtaniyyeh sub district, Al Hasakah governorate).

"I suffered from violence during my first year of marriage. I told my husband that if he beats me, I would either kill him or kill myself." (Woman from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate)

Some respondents stated that responding with violence to violence²²⁰ is a form of coping mechanism: *"When exposed to violence, the response is often violence."* (Adolescent girl from Dana sub district, Idlib governorate). Others cited aggression against others in the household²²¹, as one adolescent boy said: *"Women may shout when experiencing violence."* (Adolescent boy from Afrin sub district, Aleppo governorate)

One adolescent girl noted that anger is how she deals with violence: *"I used to get very irritated about anything and started breaking everything I saw."* (Adolescent girl from Azaz sub district, Aleppo governorate). One form of coping with violence is resorting to unhealthy habits, such as smoking or WhatsApp and excessive use of social media to seek solace. This will open adolescent girls to further violence, as it has been noted that social media is a channel for sexual violence and exploitation: *"She might turn away from reality and resort to WhatsApp to talk to guys that make her feel important and safe. She might even try smoking."* (Adolescent girl from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate)

"Crying is the woman's only weapon. Whenever something terrible happens, I sit alone and cry." (Woman from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate)

Many women and girls noted crying²²² is a form of coping with violence, especially if they feel there is nothing else to be done or if she cannot leave the house: *"As for girls, they cannot escape and leave the house because*

214 "As for minorities, they just keep silent and do not react because they feel they have no support." (Woman from Azaz sub district, Aleppo governorate)

215 "I do not do anything because I am disabled and cannot move." (Adolescent boy from Al Hol sub district Al Hasakeh governorate)

216 "Accompanying a mother or parents taking a girl to school." (Adolescent girl from Ras Al Ain sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate); "It is limited in narrow streets and we go with our parents because there are soldiers on the streets." (Adolescent boy from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate); "I don't allow my sister to go alone to the market." (Adolescent boy from Al Hol sub district Al Hasakeh governorate)

217 Some of them increase the violence when it happens by blaming the girl or the boy who suffered from violence. In addition, they talk bad about them in the community." (Adolescent girl from Azaz sub district, Aleppo governorate); "If a girl suffers harassment or beating or being catcalled by young men, then the accepted reason is that the girl encouraged it. If things escalate and she is sexually abused, then there is the possibility that the girl will be killed. The guys then stroll around town like nothing ever happened. (Strong sigh)." (Man from Salqin sub district, Idlib governorate); "Even if girls are exposed to the words of young people, they are to blame. People say that girls are the ones who make the young man do it." (Adolescent girl from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate); "If I complain about some persons, they would come back with witnesses to prove that I am wrong, so I would be blamed." (Adolescent boy from Al Hol sub district Al Hasakeh governorate)

218 "There is a fear imposed by customs and traditions. If women complain, they are blamed by others." (Adolescent girl from Deir ez Zor sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate)

219 "Our neighbour's daughter was assaulted by a man whose father sold all his property and travelled to Germany with all of his family." (Adolescent girl from Salqin sub district, Idlib governorate); "I know a

16-year-old girl, married, who was part of a WhatsApp group that had both girls and boys. Her husband found out and told her father who is in a military group. The girl escaped and ran away to another location because her father has a history of domestic abuse including forcing her to undergo virginity testing just because she once left the house and took a taxi." (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub)

220 "When exposed to violence, the response is violent confrontation, especially if the violence is perpetrated by a person of the same sex (Adolescent girl from Dana sub district, Idlib governorate)

221 "Addiction, smoking, breaking things, and being angry over nothing." (Adolescent girl from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate); "As for boys, most of them dispense of their negative energy that comes from the violence they are subjected to either by being rude, disturbing and aggressive behaviour. They beat their brothers or scream for the most trivial reasons - and even no reason at all. Otherwise, they do negative actions such as smoking or resorting to bad company." (Woman from Azaz sub district, Aleppo governorate)

222 "One time, a young man chased me and I was very scared. He pulled me from the back so I fell to the ground. I started screaming and shivering from fear until he ran off. I cried for a long time." (Adolescent girl from Hama sub district, Hama governorate); "When a girl is subjected to violence, she first cries and then complains to her friend or sister." (Adolescent girl from Hama sub district, Hama governorate); "When I am subjected to violence, I cry. After crying I feel relaxed because I cannot do anything. So I cry!" (Adolescent girl from Tartous sub district, Tartous governorate); "I cry because crying relaxes the soul." (Woman from Harim sub district, Idlib governorate)

of customs and traditions. They just stay in a room in the house and start crying." (Adolescent boy from Tell Abiad sub district Ar Raqqa governorate). Lastly, in limited instances, divorce²²³, early/forced marriage,²²⁴ and prayer²²⁵ were identified as negative coping mechanisms.

Positive Coping Mechanisms

Women and girls identified disclosure as a positive coping mechanism even when it is to family members²²⁶: "Women complain to families, girls complain to the adults, her friends or the school administration. If they complain to the court, they might be able to get their rights." (Woman from Daret Azza sub district, Aleppo governorate). Others mentioned that disclosure sometimes happens to trusted non-family persons²²⁷ or police stations²²⁸, to a justice actor²²⁹ and/or case management services.²³⁰

"According to our society, a woman should complain only to her father and mother to claim her right from her husband or resort to her uncles in the event of the death of her parents." (Woman from Al Hasakah sub district, Al Hasakah governorate)

Family support²³¹ was a coping mechanism that was

identified as positive for women and girls: "If women are subjected to violence and beaten by their husbands, they will first turn to their families." (Woman from Homs sub district, Homs governorate) Others noted that this does not happen often: "It is possible for someone who is subjected to violence to resort to some relatives and friends, but this does not happen all the time." (Man from Idlib sub district, Idlib governorate).

Community support such as a wise or older person²³², a member of a religious body²³³, or community police were also mentioned: "People can solve disputes by resorting to chief men, camp managers, and the police." (Man from Dana sub district, Idlib governorate)

"Teenagers can attend the awareness sessions and spread this awareness among their family members and friends." (Adolescent boy from Qahtaniyyeh sub district, Al Hasakah governorate)

Raising awareness²³⁴ is another form of positive coping mechanism noted, which should target families and communities in general: "Raising the awareness of society in general." (Man from Daret Azza sub district, Aleppo governorate). While others noted that such awareness building should be for parents²³⁵, and men²³⁶ specifically, as they are often perpetrators of violence:

- 223 "In case of repeated violence, we may resort to justice and divorce." (Adolescent girl from Homs sub district, Homs governorate)
- 224 "Divorced women prefer to remarry so that they will not be exposed to violence." (Woman from Idlib sub district, Idlib governorate); "Furthermore, rapidly increasing instances of child marriage, child labour and forced recruitment serve as testimony to the negative coping mechanisms to alleviate the financial constraints." (A/HRC/42/51, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, Aug 2019)
- 225 "Most women said that the only solution to this problem is to pray to Allah." (Woman from Dana sub district, Idlib governorate); "They ask Allah to ease things and continue living for the sake of their children." (Adolescent boy from Daret Azza sub district Aleppo governorate)
- 226 "Boys receive their rights by complaining to parents who respond to them." (Adolescent girl from Tell Abiad sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate)
- 227 "All participants said that we should talk to trusted people about the violence we face." (Woman from Harasta sub district, Rural Damascus governorate)
- 228 "We can tell the police station about such cases of harassment." (Woman from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate); "We can ask the police for help. We can also seek help from other people." (Adolescent girl from Damascus sub district, Damascus governorate)
- 229 "We should first consult a lawyer." (Woman from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate)
- 230 "A girl said that she feels at liberty to tell case management specialists about her problems because these centres have high standards of confidentiality." (Adolescent girl from Dana sub district, Idlib governorate)
- 231 "We recourse to parents to complain about the violence we are subjected to." (Adolescent girl from Homs sub district, Homs governorate); "In the event that I have been subjected to violence by my husband, I will resort to my father and brother. If the violence is severe, I will resort to the judiciary." (Woman from Homs sub district, Homs governorate); "I resort to one of my brothers or to my father." (Adolescent girl from Dara sub district, Dara governorate); "Women, widows and divorced women resort to a close and reliable person." (Adolescent girl from Dana sub district, Idlib governorate); "Some assaulted women turn to their relatives." (Woman from Al Hol sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate); "If the incidence of physical or verbal violence increases, we are obliged to tell parents to act about it, especially if the girl or woman is abused and subjected to it by men." (Adolescent girl from Al Hol sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate); "The ask their mothers for help." (Young adolescent girl from Kisreh sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate); "Divorced and widowed people can turn to relatives or close friends and family." (Adolescent girl from Tell Abiad sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate); In some cases, women resort to their

- fathers, mothers and brothers to solve their problems with their husbands." (Man from Tell Abiad sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate); We tell our grandfather and he advises our father and promises that this won't happen again." (Adolescent boy from Daret Azza sub district Aleppo governorate)
- 232 "We can seek help from a close friend." (Woman from Quneitra sub district, Quneitra governorate); "We can seek help from a wise person." (Woman from Quneitra sub district, Quneitra governorate); "We may resort to some older persons to resolve the problems of violence in the camp with regard to youth, women and children." (Man from Al Hasakeh sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate); "In some cases, people resort to experienced people to ask them for help to reduce violence." (Adolescent boy from Kisreh sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate); We face this violence through the advice of some groups, especially older people." (Man from Al Hol sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate)
- 233 "People may resort to Sheikhs or the camp manager." (Man from Dana sub district, Idlib governorate); "Some women said that in the event of violence, they turn to an active person in the community." (Woman from Jisr Ash Shugur sub district, Idlib governorate); "Some elderly people go to mosques." (Young adolescent boy from Idlib sub district, Idlib governorate); They resort to religion and religious sermons and read the Koran. (Man from Ras Al Ain sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate)
- 234 "There are no measures that limit violence, except to conduct awareness sessions and take into account the effects of violence on society." (Woman from Deir ez Zor sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate); "I believe that there should be meetings concerned with violence and abused women, and they should help spread awareness." (Woman from Tartous sub district, Tartous governorate); "We can reduce violence with awareness raising sessions on the risks of violence." (Man from Qahtaniyyeh sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate) "People should be provided with awareness." (Adolescent girl from Afrin sub district, Aleppo governorate)
- 235 "I believe that we should spread awareness about violence and all its types, especially for men because they are the ones that practice violence." (Woman from Tartous sub district, Tartous governorate); "There are awareness sessions we attend that provide us with the knowledge to deal with our daughters and respect their opinions." (Woman from Homs sub district, Homs governorate); Parents should be given prompt and sensitised sessions on all the problems of society in order to keep their children from being kidnapped." (Woman from Idlib sub district, Idlib governorate); "Raising the awareness of old women in order to influence their daughters and grand-daughters." (Man from Daret Azza sub district, Aleppo governorate)
- 236 "Raising the awareness of men." (Man from Daret Azza sub district, Aleppo governorate); "Awareness sessions for men." (Woman from As Sweida sub district, As Sweida governorate)

"Educating men about the role of women in society." (Man from Daret Azza sub district, Aleppo governorate)

Some women and girls noted that they seek support from protection services²³⁷ as a way to cope with the violence perpetrated against them. The services they seek are psychosocial support²³⁸ within primarily Women and Girl Safe Spaces²³⁹ and/or Child Friendly Spaces or child protection organisations.²⁴⁰ Some women and girls also noted that they would access formal justice mechanisms²⁴¹ to cope with violence where such systems are still functioning: *"In case of repeated violence, we may resort to justice and divorce."* (Adolescent girl from Homs sub district, Homs governorate). Others stated that they would fight back against²⁴² those try-

ing to perpetrate violence against them, especially in instances of sexual harassment: *"If a girl is harassed in the street, she tries to defend herself by crying out loud or yelling."* (Adolescent girl from Damascus sub district, Damascus governorate). Finally positive activities²⁴³ or actions such as building self-esteem²⁴⁴, studying²⁴⁵, going to the gym²⁴⁶ or journaling²⁴⁷. Furthermore, stepping away from the violence and seeking health services²⁴⁸ were mentioned as positive coping mechanisms.

237 "The presence of some organisations helped people in accessing types of medical or education and psychological services." (Young adolescent boy from Idleb sub district, Idleb governorate)

238 "I resort to a psychological counsellor to solve the problem – and stay away from relatives." (Young adolescent girl from As Sweida sub district, As Sweida governorate)

239 "It is possible to speak at the centre to advise us and not to do anything." (Adolescent girl from Homs sub district, Homs governorate); "Psychological support at the centre may help me solve my problem." (Woman from Homs sub district, Homs governorate); "I think one should use the Safe Space Centre to take appropriate action in case of violence against women, men, children or older people." (Woman from Deir ez Zor sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate); "Women and girls can get help in case they were subjected to violence through one of the Humanitarian Services Centres or through the legal bodies." (Adolescent girl from Dara sub district, Dara governorate); "The Women and Girls' Safe Space is where I have found the greatest guidance." (Woman from Dara sub district, Dara governorate); "Anyone exposed to violence has to go to the right support centre." (Adolescent girl from Quneitra sub district, Quneitra governorate); "We search for girls' protection centres or courses for girls and women." (Adolescent girl from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate); "In the event of violence, women should go to community centres in the area – in the absence of community centres, to the nearest judicial place." (Adolescent girl from Idleb sub district, Idleb governorate); "There should be community centres, awareness centres and psychological support for women in particular and society in general. There should be legal advice on all issues of society." (Woman from Idleb sub district, Idleb governorate); "There are centres providing protection services in the camp (psychological support sessions for women - friendly space centres - legal counselling centres)." (Man from Al Hasakeh sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate); "Women turn to community centres and women's empowerment centres." (Young adolescent boy from Idleb sub district, Idleb governorate)

240 "The presence of some organisations helped people in accessing types of medical or education and psychological services." (Young adolescent boy from Idleb sub district, Idleb governorate); "They preferred to use case management and child protection workers because they feel safe to talk to them. They help them overcome their problems by listening to them and guiding them to the right behaviour." (Adolescent girl from Dana sub district, Idleb governorate); "Some people get help from the humanitarian organisations that support children." (Adolescent girl from Kisreh sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate); "Boys can get help by visiting health centres and protection services provided by humanitarian organisations." (Adolescent boy from Kisreh sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate)

241 "It was suggested that women should go to the law in specific cases to limit violence and regain their rights." (Woman from Harasta sub district, Rural Damascus governorate); "In the event that I have been subjected to violence by my husband, I will resort to my father and brother. If the violence is severe, I will resort to the judiciary." (Woman from Homs sub district, Homs governorate); "Women can resort to the judiciary, which may cause embarrassment and problems with their family." (Woman from Lattakia sub district, Lattakia governorate); "I think legal advice is the best way to solve the problem." (Young adolescent girl from As Sweida sub district, As Sweida governorate); "When different types of violence, occur regardless of the type, men try to intervene because we are proud people. We are Arabs. In my opinion, we can reduce violence by enacting laws to protect those exposed to violence. Legal organisations and competent authorities should then apply these laws." (Man from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate)

242 "Some girls are subjected to verbal harassment. Some girls answer back and some do not." (Adolescent girl from Al Hasakeh sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate); "A girl sometimes tries to beat the molester

as a kind of self-defense." (Adolescent girl from Damascus sub district, Damascus governorate); "Sometimes women and men try to defend themselves and responding to the violence as a way of limiting it." (Woman from Hama sub district, Hama governorate); "I would like them to conduct a self-defence course, in anticipation of any emergency women may face on the streets." (Woman from Deir ez Zor sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate); "Women with strong personalities who are self-confident can stand up against these men." (Adolescent girl from Daret Azza sub district, Aleppo governorate)

243 "Alternatively, following up skills, training, or acquiring new preferred hobbies, such as new languages." (Adolescent girl from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate)

244 "We should learn, strengthen our personalities, and build our self-confidence in order to protect ourselves from all types of violence. But we need a foundation for that. Hence, we want education to be better and the centres to be more committed." (Adolescent girl from Azaz sub district, Aleppo governorate)

245 "Study and work may help the girl to challenge violence because she becomes more aware and more self-confident." (Adolescent girl from Lattakia sub district, Lattakia governorate)

246 "Girls are drawn to learning something they like, such as drawing, singing or going to the gym. They might write stories or novels." (Adolescent girl from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate)

247 "They may write thoughts or memories in their notebooks." (Young adolescent boy from Idleb sub district, Idleb governorate)

248 "Women and girls turn to the medical centre. (Adolescent boy from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate); "Girls can get help when their parents take them to the health centre." Adolescent boy from Kisreh sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate; "People go to health centres if they have physical injuries." (Man from Kisreh sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate); "Boys can get help by visiting health centres and protection services provided by humanitarian organisations." Adolescent boy from Kisreh sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate

Overview of existing services For GBV Survivors and those at risk of GBV

Reach of GBV Programming In 2019 (Jan-Dec)

GBV services have expanded their reach over the course of 2019. GBV actors have reached 1,937,677 beneficiaries through 119 GBV actors, in 1,985 communities, in 217 sub-districts with 311,242 GBV specialised services. Specifically, 234,772 women and 166,318 girls have been reached with empowerment activities which include awareness raising through direct contact initiatives, life skills and livelihood activities as well as vocational training. Consequently, Turkey Cross Border GBV Sub-Cluster and Reproductive Health Technical Working Group (RH TWG) members reported an increase of rape disclosures in 2019, specifically, *“a total of 17 rape cases over the period of May- June 2019”*²⁴⁹, with approximately half being reported during the 72-120 hour period, which is required to provide life-saving treatment. Such reports are evidence that sexual violence disclosures are increasing as a result of GBV actor awareness raising and the presence of accessible quality GBV specialised services. Furthermore, increased disclosure stems from stronger referrals and an improved collaboration between GBV and health staff, as evidenced by the 24,693 women and 7,279 girl GBV survivors that received focused psychosocial support, including individual and group counselling and 4,559 women and 2,024 girls who were referred to medical services.

Dignity kits are a key part of humanitarian assistance for women and girls as they contain menstrual and other hygiene products, underwear and head scarf, which provide women and girls with vital basic necessities that they do not have to obtain through exploitative means. Dignity kits are provided to women and girls (and not the whole household) as the contents contain life-saving items (such as sanitary pads) that facilitate women and girl survivors to seek PSS and GBV specialised services when menstruating. Without such items, many survivors would delay or not seek services at all, which would be detrimental to women and girls in situations where emergency contraception (EC) and post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) need to be administered within a specific time window. Nonetheless, GBV actors have noted, particularly in recent emergencies, that distribution of dignity kits is not always enough. When women and girls lack shelter or access to private latrines or other private settings, then they may be deterred from using the contents of the dignity kits anyway.

Between January and December 2019, GBV actors provided 133,195 women and 20,336 girls with dignity

kits. 105,327 women and 28,438 girls at risk of GBV received individual and group counselling. GBV experts and women and girl FGD participants noted their satisfaction with the services provided through GBV programming.

GBV Programming: Access, Quality and Satisfaction, Barriers to Services

Women and Girls' Safe Spaces

Some women and girls noted availability and access²⁵⁰ to Women and Girls' Safe Spaces (WGSSs)²⁵¹ in their areas: *“My family has no problem coming to the centre and I am encouraged to do so. I started organising my daily schedule around home chores, cooking and going to the centre.”* (Woman from Homs sub district, Homs governorate). *“One adult male FGD stated that vulnerable sub-populations such as widowed and divorced women feel free and safe to attend activities within the WGSSs: “There are no problems. Widows, girls, and married women go to the women's centre because they can come and go with total respect.”* (Man from Salqin sub district, Idlib governorate).

However, other respondents noted that there are either no or limited WGSSs: *“There are some spaces but there is not enough awareness of the services that these places provide. Also, the services provided in these centres are not completely active.”* (Woman from Homs sub district, Homs governorate). *“Some women and girls noted that widowed and divorced women experience challenges accessing WGSSs. Meanwhile, persons with disabili-*

250 “There are no barriers to accessing the service in the camp, such as going to psychological support centres as well as education course.” (Adolescent girl from Tell Abiad sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate)

251 “The participants said that violence practiced against widows and divorced women is decreasing due to efforts exerted by women centres. Such centres play a role in qualifying and educating such women so that they can be effective in the community.” (Woman from Dana sub district, Idlib governorate); “Women go to the women's safe spaces in the camp to attend stress relief sessions or attend awareness sessions at the medical survey point on preventing violence against children. Some use the complaints box in the event of violence by the camp's actors.” (Woman from Al Hasakeh sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate); “As for the services, there are safe spaces for women and girls.” (Adolescent girl from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate); “Most protection centres are for women and girls. If only there were centres for men and boys, this would have solved half of the problems of women and girls.” (Adolescent girl from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate); “In our region there are many protection centres. For example, the Centre for the Protection and Empowerment of women has helped women to fend for themselves.” (Man from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate); “There is a creativity centre for women that contributes to successful work.” (Man from Daret Azza sub district, Aleppo governorate)

249 Turkey Cross Border GBV Sub-Cluster and Reproductive Health Technical Working Group (RH TWG) Rape Incident Report, May-June 2019

ties²⁵² and older persons²⁵³ experience challenges accessing community centres that offer protection services: *"There may be difficulty in accessing the centre for people with disabilities and older people due to the difficulty of their movement. Widows and divorced women may find it difficult because of the attitude of the community to them. What makes it easier for them is that the centre is open to women and girls only."* (Adolescent girl from Hama sub district, Hama governorate).

Centre location²⁵⁴ and distance from beneficiaries' homes was another challenge for many women and girls (and not only people with disabilities and older persons). The distance was noted to be far within a context of poor roads, expensive transportation fees and safety concerns²⁵⁵: *"I come from the Southern Sand area which is far, and there is no transportation. I walk a distance, then take the bus and spend about one hour and a half to reach the centre."* (Adolescent girl from Lattakia sub district, Lattakia governorate).

Current emergencies in north-west Syria have reduced the geographic range within which services are provided, which results in a higher concentration of services in a smaller geographic area. While in north-east Syria, the emergency situation has resulted in access constraints as well as change in lines of control where such services are not easily provided and therefore less accessible to beneficiaries. Thus, in 2019, satisfaction with services has a wider range of responses due to these very different geographical contexts. Respondents who do have access are satisfied with services, their quality and activities provided. Specifically, GBV experts noted that the number of WGSSs make them accessible²⁵⁶ and that there is: *"Increasing disclosure of*

sexual violence, possibly because of the service we provide in WGSS focusing on family planning, which may encourage disclosure." (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub). However, some FGD participants noted that *"there are no safe spaces for women"*. (Woman from Kisreh sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate). Some said that they are limited²⁵⁷: *"There are safe spaces in the camp. However, they are not enough. We demanded to increase these spaces to accommodate the camp."* (Woman from Al Hool sub district, Al Hasakah governorate).

One GBV expert noted that: *"Sport activities at the WGSS have proven quite useful for women to find a way to let go of stress and to reduce their weight, which was one of the reasons they were being abused by their families and partners. Livelihood activities also helped vulnerable women become economically independent and reduce their exposure to GBV. Life skills also improved the skills of women in communicating with their intimate partners."* (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub).

Some women and girls also noted the high quality of activities provided through their expression of satisfaction²⁵⁸.

"I lost my sense of isolation and improved my psychological state. My life has changed for the better, because the services supported my talents, helped me to develop professional skills and listened with complete confidentiality. This was a relief for me." (Woman from Deir ez Zor sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate)

- 252 Two of my neighbours with disabilities do not have wheelchairs. Many people with disabilities are unable to go to community centres or receive services." (Adolescent girl from Idleb sub district, Idleb governorate); My son wants to go but no one is helping him because he has a disability and all the centres have stairs and are difficult to reach." (Woman from Homs sub district, Homs governorate); "People with mobility disabilities do not have access to services because they have no support staff." (Adolescent girl from Al Hol sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate)
- 253 "There is a group of elderly people who do not have access to services because of their chronic diseases, and because they have no breadwinners." (Adolescent girl from Al Hol sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate); "The place is far away for adults. Sometimes there are stairs in the building and the centre is at the top." (Adolescent boy from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate)
- 254 "Women have difficulties accessing women empowerment centres because the road is uneven and because there is a long distance to reach the centre. There is only one women's centre that can't suit the needs of beneficiaries. There is no special equipment there for people with disabilities (toilets, entrances, wheelchairs)." (Man from Dana sub district, Idleb governorate); "People with disabilities, divorced women, and widows have barriers to accessing these services due to the long distance and bad roads." (Adolescent boy from Dana sub district, Idleb governorate); "I think that the most important obstacle is the distance from the countryside to the city, which prevents the rural population from coming to the centre." (Adolescent girl from Lattakia sub district, Lattakia governorate); "There are no centres that care for girls except for the woman's health and improvement centre in Abo Qubih Eastern, which is far and difficult to access." (Adolescent girl from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate)
- 255 "There is difficulty in accessing protection centres, especially for women and children, which may be due to the remoteness of the centre for fear of harassment or kidnapping." (Man from Al Hasakeh sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate)
- 256 "WGSS and PSS spaces are very widespread across our areas of operation." (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub)

- 257 "The area lacks activity centres for girls and women, except for the woman's health and improvement centre which provides PSS and awareness sessions." (Adolescent girl from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate); "There are no women's centres other than the Women's House." (Woman from Tell Abiad sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate); "There is a Women's House centre in the village to provide PSS in the village." (Woman from Tell Abiad sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate); "There are no safe spaces for girls, and girls are prevented from going out." (Adolescent boy from Kisreh sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate); "There are protection centres for women and girls in section III and IV." (Adolescent girl from Al Hol sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate); "Everyone agreed there are women protection centres but they are not enough for the numbers in the area and there are no centres or safe spaces for children." (Adolescent girl from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate); "Services are available in our area such as child-friendly centres, safe spaces for women, civil documentation and psychological support for children and women – but they are very limited." (Adolescent girl from Idleb sub district, Idleb governorate)
- 258 "My life has changed. I needed a career to move forward in my life. This has been a success. Through the Women's Support and Empowerment Centre, I was given the opportunity to learn and join a course." (Woman from Deir ez Zor sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate); "My relationship with my husband has also changed for the better because of the psychological comfort I gained from the centre." (Woman from Deir ez Zor sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate); "For me, I am from outside the governorate of Deir Ez-Zor and when I came to the centre, I was able to build new social relationships. It has changed my life, as I have effectively integrated into the community, lost the sense of isolation and improved my mental condition for the better through psychological support." (Woman from Deir ez Zor sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate); "My life changed due to awareness sessions and building healthy social relationships. I had no friends before. Through the centre, I started to build social relationships and became more experienced in the field of life. I lost my sense of isolation." (Woman from Deir ez Zor sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate); "The Women and Girls' Safe Space is where I have found the greatest guidance." (Woman from Dara sub district, Dara governorate); "My daughter and I were depressed, but the psychological support team made us feel welcome." (Woman from As Sweida sub district, As Sweida governorate)

The WGSSs and the activities provide stress relief, improve physical and psychological well-being and open opportunities for women and girls through skill and language development: *"On the social level, my life has changed a lot. I have been able to develop my skills, and face the difficulties that confront me by growing my talents, enhancing my self-confidence, acquiring new ideas and solutions in my life. In addition, I'm now stronger in my profession."* (Woman from Deir ez Zor sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate)

More specifically, some services offered by GBV actors, often through WGSSs, were particularly praised, such as awareness raising²⁵⁹, PSS, and vocational training. Awareness raising is an important GBV activity that must continue in order to combat gender inequality, which is at the root of GBV: *"It is possible to have awareness sessions that are the most effective and beneficial thing for society, especially for women. These sessions raise community awareness of women's rights and enable them to better understand life because of widespread ignorance."* (Adolescent girl from Idlib sub district, Idlib governorate)

Such awareness should be directed at parents²⁶⁰ and in particular men: *"Raising the awareness of men about the rights of women."* (Adolescent girl from Salqin sub district, Idlib governorate). GBV experts also noted that there are positive outcomes being seen now due to more structured awareness²⁶¹ and ongoing campaigns over the last eight years: *"Activists and feminists are trying to challenge these offensive statements toward women*

and girls. Previously this was perceived as the norm and nobody would raise concern, but now that people are more aware of this being an abuse. There is more attention and people are starting to fight against it – and the situation is improving." (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub).

In 2019, it was noted by GBV experts that *"psychosocial support is also available and better²⁶² than before"*. (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub). Women and girls noted that through PSS they are able to safely disclose incidences of GBV²⁶³, attain skills to better communicate with intimate partners²⁶⁴, relieve stress²⁶⁵, combat depression²⁶⁶ and even suicidal thoughts: *"I was hopeless and about to commit suicide, but my parents supported me and I started to attend psychological support sessions at women empowerment centres. Such centres are very vital for cases like mine."* (Adolescent girl from Atareb sub district, Aleppo governorate)

Women and girls noted the need for vocational trainings where they do not exist:²⁶⁷ *"There should be vocational training and job opportunities."* (Adolescent girl from Afrin sub district, Aleppo governorate). Others noted the importance of vocational training²⁶⁸ they already receive through GBV and other protection actors. Specifically, some women noted the importance

- 259 "I can attend the awareness sessions and my parents do support me due to the circumstances I have been through. (Note: The participant was very frank about what happened to her unlike others, and she encouraged them to talk)." (Adolescent girl from Atareb sub district, Aleppo governorate); "There are many centres that provide both men and women with awareness sessions on violence. Some participants don't attend these sessions although they do know about them." (Woman from Atareb sub district, Aleppo governorate); "Also, we've seen further awareness spread among people on the importance of reporting." (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub); "Staff of humanitarian organizations come to us. They gather us in the public kitchens and provide awareness sessions, guidance and discussions." (Adolescent boy from Al Hol sub district Al Hasakeh governorate); "Awareness sessions are very useful for IDPs and women to help their daughters in the future." (Woman from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate); "There are some awareness campaigns in the area, but they are not sufficient." (Adolescent girl from Kisreh sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate); "Community awareness, especially for girls, should be sensitised to the importance of the rights of children. Girls should be allowed to move freely, to play and gain an education. (Adolescent boy from Tell Abiad sub district Ar Raqqa governorate)
- 260 "To invite parents and explain awareness in the sessions provided to girls, so that they can be encouraged." (Adolescent girl from Salqin sub district, Idlib governorate); "In order to prevent violence: there should be more awareness sessions for parents and teenage girls." (Adolescent girl from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate); "Families are supported through awareness campaigns. Adolescents are also supported through awareness-raising by humanitarian organisations and the involvement of adolescents in decision-making." (Woman from Tell Abiad sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate)
- 261 "Awareness toolkits – especially the messages on sexuality and sexual violence (including virginity testing) – were much needed. They encouraged disclosure of such incidents and helped with their interventions on these cases." (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub); "When the outreach teams used the awareness toolkit with adolescent boys, they raised awareness on the matter. They realised that cyber harassment is not understood as such, by boys. Possibly women don't consider this as dangerous or harmful as other types of violence, and therefore are not disclosing it." (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub);

- 262 "CM and PSS are available and of good quality." (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub)
- 263 "There is a centre that provides individual psychological support confidentially to people who were subjected to violence." (Adolescent girl from Al Hasakeh sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate); "There are psychological support centres like yours. I felt very comfortable when I talked to the social worker. If I felt they would reveal my secrets, I would be distressed." (Adolescent girl from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate)
- 264 "She could solve some of her marital problems as a result of coming to the safe space at the centre and attending PSS courses." (Woman from Dara sub district, Dara governorate)
- 265 "I am grateful to the psychosocial support team, which provides guidance to reduce violence. I would like to thank them for the awareness sessions that give us the mental strength to face anything we are exposed to. These sessions relieve stress in the event of violence." (Woman from Deir ez Zor sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate); "There are PSS centres in order to relax and she can ask someone there to help her." (Adolescent girl from Azaz sub district, Aleppo governorate)
- 266 "My daughter and I were depressed, but the psychological support department made us feel comfortable." (Woman from As Sweida sub district, As Sweida governorate); "If there were psychological support centres we would learn a lot of things." (Adolescent girl from Harim sub district, Idlib governorate); "There is psychological support in friendly spaces - the women's home also offers psychological support." (Woman from Tell Abiad sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate)
- 267 "Free training and courses should be provided for young girls and boys." (Man from Idlib sub district, Idlib governorate); "There is another organisation that teaches trades and professions, and an organisation in which there is psychological support for young people and projects." (Man from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate); "One of the participants requested to set up a special centre for women because there is no place to turn to learn crafts and help their husbands." (Woman from Harim sub district, Idlib governorate)
- 268 "My financial situation has become better by joining the beauty course and gaining the skill in learning a new profession. My skills have also been developed through the support I received from the Women's Support and Empowerment Centre." (Woman from Deir ez Zor sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate); "I have learned a profession that I like a long time ago. I had a great desire to learn sewing in order to make clothes for me and for my sisters. Moreover, it was a way for me to relieve myself and escape stress. I have benefitted a lot from the awareness session and PSS." (Adolescent girl from Tartous sub district, Tartous governorate); Some participants said that they go to GBV Prevention Centre in Atama because it provides recreational activities, nursing courses, and knitting courses. Other women don't go to this centre because there is no English teacher or computer courses." (Adolescent girl from Dana sub district, Idlib governorate)

of learning a skill that they could use at home, which – in light of social norms and safety concerns – could be of great benefit to widowed and divorced women: *“I have benefitted a lot from the vocational training (the sewing course). My skills were very basic before, and now I am much more proficient; and at least I am working at home for my family.”* (Woman from Tartous sub district, Tartous governorate).

One woman mentioned the increase of locations for vocational training for women, but also noted these same locations only serve in a limited sense or not at all adolescent boys, people with disabilities and older persons: *“There is a prevalence of women support and more training than before. There is training for the young men, but not on a large scale. There are no centres to support or care for persons with disabilities and older people.”* (Woman from Idleb sub district, Idleb governorate)

GBV Specialised Services

GBV experts primarily noted the increased use²⁶⁹ of GBV specialised services by beneficiaries due to the integration of such services with sexual and reproductive health services²⁷⁰, increased funding (for the few organisations that managed to increase their GBV budget)²⁷¹, improved capacity²⁷² of GBV staff providing such services, and improved referral.²⁷³ However, the referrals need to be strengthened in some locations where GBV specialised services are offered especially in a context of multi-sectoral approaches to providing assistance: *“We are often not able to refer survivors to the food security livelihood sector and when we are able to refer, the criteria for food and livelihood assistance are very strict and the GBV survivors normally don’t meet them. These criteria should be revised to ensure support for GBV survivors.”* (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub)

269 “There is more disclosure around rape, especially in Afrin, Marat al Numan and Atareb, possibly because we provide GBV services in health centres. We now receive two or three cases of rape per month.” (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub)

270 “Health facilities are now more equipped with GBV integrated services or the same organisations are opening standalone safe spaces.” (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub)

271 “Yes, more specialised services, maybe because the funding was higher and we were able to increase the services. The coverage of our programmes is not balanced between Aleppo and Idleb. For Idleb we’re covering a smaller area and there is a good coverage of services now, less so in Aleppo.” (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub); “The participants said that the situation has improved since last year due to the existence of GBV support centres.” (Woman from Harasta sub district, Rural Damascus governorate)

272 “More GBV specialised services are available and we don’t have issues any more of survivors coming and service providers not knowing where to refer them for services. Agree that Aleppo has less services than Idleb, not only in terms of coverage, but also quality, especially because staff have less experience and shorter time working in the sector.” (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub)

273 “Doctors now have more information about how to refer survivors of GBV to specialised services.” (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub); “PSS and GBV services are high on demand by the community. There is a lot of coordination between GBV and CP programming and linkages and referrals between WGSS and CFS/Youth centres. More referrals and coordination need to happen between service providers in Idleb and Aleppo especially that there are now cases who are in areas that fall in between the two.” (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub)

Health Services (CMR Protocols)

In 2019, 47% of rape cases in Turkey Cross Border required immediate Clinical Management of Rape²⁷⁴ (CMR) with 53% of these cases being disclosed directly to medical staff and referred for GBV specialised services. Meanwhile, 47% of cases were disclosed to GBV service providers and referred for urgent medical services as needed, which highlights the importance of collaborative work between GBV and health actors²⁷⁵. In addition, over the last eight months improvements have been made with the knowledge base of some GBV service providers: As one GBV expert noted: *“The post rape kit used to be unknown by service providers and was previously used for other non-rape related cases. Now those kits are available in the room of case managers. Medical service providers are only allowed to use them for rape cases.”* (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub)

However, some GBV experts noted that CMR services are not available in some locations and survivors need to be driven to where they exist: *“In Jisr Ash Shugur, there are not enough specialised services, and CMR services are especially lacking. Survivors will need to be driven to Idleb city where the closest CMR service is available.”* (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub). In addition, there are difficulties with referral specifically for (CMR) for GBV survivors: *“We see difficulties in referrals. As a medical service provider, we find it difficult to refer to other medical providers, especially when there is a lack of medication for CMR services. In another case, one of the referral focal points was the head of office and we were afraid to share sensitive information with the head of office.”* (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub).

Likewise, experts noted that CMR staff and facilities are not adequately prepared to receive GBV survivors, especially in light of the immediateness they will need to be attended to once they arrive: *“CMR/health service provider need to be better prepared. If you say that you provide CMR, you should not be waiting for a survivor to come first before getting everything ready to receive and support her.”* (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub).

However, the report also notes challenges faced by actors providing CMR services. Specifically, virginity testing continues to be administered on girls and women who have survived sexual violence. Consequently, girls who are subjected to virginity testing must endure another form of sexual violence which leads to further deterioration of their psychosocial wellbeing. Also, GBV guiding principles of safety and confidentiality are not always properly followed by health facility staff (both medical and non-medical personnel) as well as other individuals who might be involved in one way or another in working with survivors. This again compromises

274 “Best practices in the clinical management of people who have been raped in emergency situations. It is intended for adaptation to each situation, taking into account national policies and practices, and availability of materials and drugs.” <https://www.unfpa.org/publications/clinical-management-rape-survivors>

275 Turkey Cross Border GBV Sub-Cluster and Reproductive Health Technical Working Group Rape Incident Report for May-June 2019

the well-being and confidentiality that must be provided to sexual violence survivors.

Legal system/justice

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women safeguards the right of women to access justice in order to realise all the rights protected under the convention. The right to justice encompasses justiciability, availability, accessibility, good-quality and accountability. Specifically, availability requires the establishment of courts and other quasi-judicial or other bodies in urban, rural and remote areas, as well as their maintenance and funding.²⁷⁶ Accessibility requires that all justice systems, both formal and quasi-judicial systems, are secure, affordable and physically accessible to women, and are adapted and appropriate to the needs of women.²⁷⁷ Due to the crisis, there are many challenges that do not allow for various aspects of a formal judicial system to function, such as adequate structures and knowledgeable and capacitated justice actors. However, in some geographic locations, such conditions can be met through mobile courts²⁷⁸ and other targeted outreach activities²⁷⁹ and/or use of IT solutions²⁸⁰ for video conferencing to facilitate the holding of court hearings.

According to the study Women and the Justice Sector in North-Western Syria published in October 2018, there are several challenges to accessing the justice system. First, a lack of awareness of rights and in some cases, notable for IDPS, a lack of awareness of the range of justice institutions that exist within the community. Furthermore, less educated and economically deprived women, as well as young women, were unaware of available options and participants in the study noted only courageous women can access courts²⁸¹. Secondly, there are a number of disincentives from accessing formal justice systems such as a lack of women working in formal courts²⁸² and social norms – particu-

larly issues related to domestic and sexual violence – that prohibit women from submitting complaints²⁸³. Likewise, women cannot enter some courts without a male guardian, thus complicating their ability to physically access a courthouse as well as limiting the range of issues they may bring before the court²⁸⁴. According to the study, most women that do access formal justice systems, do so to file a divorce or address an inheritance dispute. Women FGD participants shared their experiences with the justice system which reflects some of the findings of the study.

Many women and girls expressed their lack of faith²⁸⁵ in formal legal systems due to social norms²⁸⁶ that deem women and girls shameful if they submit a complaint: *"Sometimes women turn to a lawyer to get their rights or to alleviate the violence they face. Often women are afraid of doing so and the situation gets worse if her husband or father knows about it. For example, a girl is often deprived of her inheritance or deferred dowry and her father forces her to give up this right."* (Woman from Hama sub district, Hama governorate).

Other women cited safety concerns and movement restriction for not accessing justice: *"Regarding civil documents and legal aid, women said that these services are not available and expressed their fear to access them due to insecurity, kidnapping, customs, traditions and the difficulty of movement."* (Woman from Jisr Ash Shughur sub district, Idlib governorate). While others noted the lengthy and/or inadequate²⁸⁷ legal processes of submitting a complaint results in women and girls desisting or waiting without a determined end date to the process or not doing anything at all²⁸⁸: *"One woman sued her ex-husband to*

276 General recommendation on women's access to justice, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, July 2015, section 16(b)

277 General recommendation on women's access to justice, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, July 2015, section 16(c)

278 General recommendation on women's access to justice, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, July 2015, section 17(b)

279 General recommendation on women's access to justice, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, July 2015, section 17(c)

280 General recommendation on women's access to justice, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, July 2015, section 17(d)

281 "Only women who are 'courageous' and 'have strong personalities' are likely to have their cases fairly assessed in a court. Some interviewees suggested that factors such as age, education, and social class were likely to enhance a woman's capacity in this regard. Women with low education or social class, conversely, were reported to be less likely to be aware of and to utilise justice institutions. This was for several reasons, including the fact that poor women were often illiterate and rarely left the house without their husbands' consent. As such, while it is difficult to generalise women's experiences of the justice sector, it is clear that the sector as a whole is not currently structured in such a way as to ensure fairness for all women, but rather that a woman's guarantee to justice is predicated on her capacity for self-advocacy." (Proximity International, Women and the Justice Sector in North-Western Syria, Oct 2018)

282 "The formal court systems of Idlib and western Aleppo governorates

can be challenging for civilians without armed group connections to navigate and secure just decisions on their cases. In addition to these difficulties, women are also adversely affected by the lack of professional women in both the courts and police. Although HTS has allowed women to participate nominally in these institutions, they do not hold the power necessary to change their structures." (Proximity International, Women and the Justice Sector in North-Western Syria, Oct 2018)

283 "Compounding the lack of professional women in the justice sector are well-established cultural barriers to accessing both formal and informal justice institutions. Mechanisms existed in local communities prior to the conflict and are often utilised in domestic cases where family reputation and honour is at stake." Women and the Justice Sector in North-Western Syria, October 2018

284 Women and the Justice Sector in North-Western Syria, October 2018

285 "I feel there is no law and so we cannot go to court. There is no safety." (Adolescent girl from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate); "Local and legal services are ineffective and unhelpful and benefit nobody." (Woman from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate); "There are no legal procedures to protect women from violence." (Man from Kisreh sub district, Deir-ez-Zor governorate)

286 "There are deterrent laws by the Women's Commission that prevent violence against women. However, women do not resort to the Women's Commission because of customs and traditions that see the intervention of a third-party contrary to their customs. If one of them does resort to the Women's Commission, they are ostracised by members of society because of male control over women." (Adolescent boy from Tell Abiad sub district Ar Raqqa governorate)

287 "Compensatory and judicial procedures are to submit complaints, but these complaints do not meet the services properly due to lack of knowledge of the procedures required." (Man from Idlib sub district, Idlib governorate)

288 "The judiciary needs the means and support to be able to regain your right. One woman has filed a complaint with the judiciary regarding the subject of harassment and so far, the judiciary has been unable to bring the person who did it." (Man from Harim sub district, Idlib governorate)

force him to pay supporting money for his children. Her case took so long and never achieved anything.” (Woman from Qahtaniyyeh sub district, Al Hasakah governorate).

Barriers to Accessing Services

“There are men who do not want their daughters and women to go to protection centres because of customs and traditions.” (Adolescent girl from Al Hool sub district, Al Hasakah governorate)

Particular at-risk groups face barriers to accessing services, such as divorced or widowed women and girls that face challenges due to their civil status: “Some groups and individuals do not have access to services, including widows, divorcees and people with disabilities. There is no one to hear them and help them. Older, divorced and widowed women do not have their rights in society.” (Adolescent girl from Tell Abiad sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate). In addition, being a person with disability²⁸⁹ and/or being old is a primary obstacle to accessing services due to the physical barriers of getting to, and entering the facility where the service is provided: “People with disabilities have access difficulties because the centres are far away and they do not have wheelchairs.” (Man from Al Hasakah sub district, Al Hasakah governorate).

Moreover, negative social norms associated with having a child or family member with disability impedes access by this vulnerable group to services: “I think that there is a difficulty in accessing the centre because they often need companions, and the parents may feel shy to bring their disabled daughters to the centre.” (Woman from Lattakia sub district, Lattakia governorate). One man noted that the legal status of women may serve as a barrier to services: “In order for these groups to reach services, there should be rights for the displaced through residency.” (Man from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate)

Another barrier is fear of safety concerns²⁹⁰, such as

the ones identified by one adolescent girl from Jisr Ash Shugur sub-district: “There are several obstacles preventing the beneficiary from accessing services such as the security situation, fear of being kidnapped or assassinated, customs and traditions, lack of family trust, distance and discrimination.” (Adolescent girl from Jisr Ash Shugur sub district, Idlib governorate). Thus, many women and girls must be accompanied²⁹¹ in order to access services. If they need to disclose or discuss a GBV related issue, this will serve as a disincentive. Closely linked to safety concerns are negative social norms²⁹² that serve as a barrier to women and girls accessing services: “Girls find it difficult to access these services due to the fear of being scorned by their community.” (Woman from Dana sub district, Idlib governorate). Parents²⁹³ can discourage their daughters from accessing them: “Our parents do not allow us to come to the centre and they want us to give up the idea of coming to the centre. This is the biggest challenge.” (Adolescent girl from Damascus sub district, Damascus governorate)

Lack of trust²⁹⁴ in the services provided is another identified barrier: “Women’s lack of trust in relief organisations.” (Adolescent boy from Ar Raqqa sub district Ar Raqqa governorate). There is also a lack of awareness²⁹⁵ that such services exist: “Many residents of the area within the city are unaware of the existence of such centres and services. We suggest that more advertisements, especially via the Internet and brochures, be published so that women know about the availability of the centre and its services.” (Woman from Hama sub district, Hama governorate)

289 “People with disabilities, divorced women, and widows have barriers to accessing these services due to the long distance and bad roads.” (Adolescent boy from Dana sub district, Idlib governorate); “Most of the protection services available in the community are for women, widows and people with disabilities, but the access to the services for these people is difficult because they are disabled and away from the protection centres. This barrier makes it easier to rob them and they also remain silent.” (Man from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate)

290 “Air strikes make people afraid of going to such centres.” (Man from Atareb sub district, Aleppo governorate); “There is difficulty in accessing protection centres, especially for women and children, which may be due to the remoteness of the centre for fear of harassment or kidnapping.” (Man from Al Hasakeh sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate); “The participants stated that there are difficulties in accessing services, including congested, unsafe and unsuitable roads due to the intensive movement of the military aircraft. People may not go to these centres because it is thought that such centres are targeted by air strikes. Some participants said they did not allow his wife or daughter to go to the service centres.” (Adolescent boy from Atareb sub district, Aleppo governorate); “Sometimes when my sister and I come to the centre, they say some words or throw stones at us and we can’t do anything about it.” (Adolescent girl from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate); “I think that mothers worry about the place in which they will leave their children while being in the centre, and this, in my opinion, prevents many women from joining the centre.” (Woman from Lattakia sub district, Lattakia governorate); “I am afraid that men might come to the centre and if the parents know this, they will prevent their daughters from coming here. Sometimes we are afraid of cars on the roads, especially cars with kidnappers. There are many incidents of abduction of girls aged 15 years and below.” (Adolescent

girl from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate); “There are men who prevent their women from going to protection centres for fear of leaving children alone in the tent.” (Adolescent girl from Al Hol sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate); “Parents refuse these centres because they think that once girls go out, they will be more exposed to threats.” (Adolescent girl from Salqin sub district, Idlib governorate)

291 “There are some adolescents who were denied from attending courses that could be very useful to them because they do not have a companion to come with them.” (Woman from Ar Raqqa sub district Ar Raqqa Governorate); “No woman can go on a health leave as she has to be accompanied. The camp administration only allows the patient to go out alone, which makes the woman refuse to go out for fear for her safety outside the camp.” (Adolescent boy from Al Hol sub district Al Hasakeh governorate)

292 “The community does not encourage us to come to the centre.” (Woman from Homs sub district, Homs governorate); “Widows, divorced women and some adolescent girls face difficulties in reaching the centre with respect to the consent of their relatives or the absence of a companion to take them to the centre.” (Woman from Hama sub district, Hama governorate); “The majority of girls cannot go to safe spaces because of the rejection of parents, customs and traditions.” (Adolescent girl from Afrin sub district, Aleppo governorate)

293 “Some girls want to come, but because of the pressure of the parents, they cannot.” (Adolescent girl from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate); “At this age, we cannot get medical or psychological care unless our parents know about it and agree to it.” (Adolescent girl from Harim sub district, Idlib governorate); “Participants said that they can’t access awareness or protection centres without the consent of the head of their family.” (Adolescent girl from Atareb sub district, Aleppo governorate)

294 “People may also not resort to legal procedures due to lack of trust in such institutions.” (Woman from Dana sub district, Idlib governorate)

295 “Women and girls are prevented by their husbands and families who don’t know about the benefits of such centres.” (Adolescent girl from Afrin sub district, Aleppo governorate); “It is different for adolescents because they lack awareness of the importance of these services being offered to them.” (Adolescent girl from Tell Abiad sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate); “Some do not know anything about the centre and consider it a place for entertainment.” (Adolescent girl from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate)

The image features a central white star with a dark blue number '4' inside. The star is surrounded by a complex geometric pattern of triangles in various colors: dark blue, teal, pink, and purple. The pattern is symmetrical and creates a quilt-like effect. The number '4' is positioned in the center of the star, which is the focal point of the design.

4



Intersectoral Analysis

"She should not raise her voice and should not shout. A woman's voice is something sacred. How can she talk to the police or go to the doctor or a psychiatrist? We are not allowed to have these things." (Adolescent girl from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate)

"Women's rights are taken away. There is discrimination between men and women. This was before and is still now." (Man from Daret Azza sub district, Aleppo governorate)

"A man abuses the wife physically and verbally and deprives her from going to her family. He lets her bear all the burdens, binds her with domestic chores, marginalises her from society, erases her personality, and does not allow her to take part in decision-making." (Adolescent girl from Tell Abiad sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate)

Reducing GBV and the risk to GBV is the responsibility of all humanitarian actors, not just those working on GBV programming, hence the work that GBV actors have been doing on GBV risk mitigation throughout the response to the Syria crisis and particularly in the last two years. Therefore, when looking at mitigating risks, all actors must take into account the gender inequalities that are at the root of GBV and how those impact the way women and girls are perceived within the home and in the community, and consequently whether or not they access the humanitarian assistance that is provided.

Thus, this section will look at the views on the gender inequality women and girls experience within homes and therefore their role in decision making on long term planning. Furthermore, this section will look at the violence risk factors they face when accessing humanitarian assistance and distributions. This evaluation will better inform the interventions designed and implemented by actors in improving gender equality and equity, as well as reducing the occurrence of GBV in humanitarian programming.

"Sticking to old traditions and conventions increases violence. For example, a woman who gives birth to girls only is treated badly." (Woman from Homs sub district, Homs governorate)

In 2019, more so than was done in 2018, women and girls specifically noted the gender discrimination they face within their home²⁹⁶ and often cite it being directly

linked to the violence they experience. One adolescent girl said that gender discrimination starts young, which hints at the planting of seeds of how girls are viewed and treated²⁹⁷ throughout their life cycle: *"Discrimination between a girl and a boy make them hate each other."* (Adolescent girl from Damascus sub district, Damascus governorate). Another woman notes how girls do not receive the same portions of food and money as boys: *"Sometimes there is discrimination in the same family between the girl and the boy regarding food and money."* (Woman from Homs sub district, Homs governorate). Another adolescent girl noted that such differences potentially solidifies within the minds of boys and roots the behaviour that should be exhibited toward girls and women: *"I think what makes guys become so full of themselves, and not respect girls, is that his parents originally raise him so that he can do whatever he likes. He grows up thinking that it is very normal not to respect girls."* (Adolescent girl from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate)

"Women have many rights, but they do not enjoy any of them – it is always said that women have the task of taking care of their husbands and children and working at home – because our customs and traditions deprive women of many rights. Authority in our society is masculine. Either a brother, husband or son controls a girl's life." (Woman from Hama sub district, Hama governorate)

Thus, it is no surprise that negative social norms, or customs and traditions²⁹⁸, are noted by beneficiaries as a violence risk factor in exercising their rights as women and girls: *"The existence of customs and traditions so far prevents women from obtaining their full rights."* (Woman from Homs sub district, Homs governorate). This prejudice also covers the various forms of violence they experience such as early/forced marriage²⁹⁹: *"Girls are subjected to early marriage because of the customs and*

allowed to have a decision." (Adolescent girl from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate); "There is a big bias for boys in our society. After I got back to live with my children in my family's home, there were more restrictions than before. For example, for waking up, there is a set time. I was upset when my dad screamed at 8am to wake me up while talking to my brother calmly. What is the difference between me and my brother so that I will be treated this way and reprimanded, while my brother is quietly awakened?" (Woman from Hama sub district, Hama governorate)

297 "Within families, there is discrimination between boys and girls." (Woman from Homs sub district, Homs governorate)

298 "Violence is caused by traditions, customs and the security situation." (Woman from Daret Azza sub district, Aleppo governorate); "I believe that the community is what stops women from getting their rights be it in divorce or in inheritance. Women cannot get inheritance due to the customs and traditions. It is the community's opinion which deprives her." (Woman from Tartous sub district, Tartous governorate); "Society has a negative view of women and men are seen as all good." (Adolescent boy from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate); "Boys abuse girls because we live in a society where men impose strict restrictions that are based on disrespect for the rights of girls and women. Girls and women are marginalised." (Adolescent girl from Tell Abiad sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate); "Parents do not allow their daughters to go to learn because of customs and traditions." (Adolescent girl from Al Hasakeh sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate)

299 "Girls suffer from different types of violence such as forced marriage, which happens as a result of poverty and traditions. Girls are deprived of education and are not well understood by their parents." (Woman from Dana sub district, Idlib governorate); "Her mother had been married since she was 13 years old and encourages her daughter to do the same. She thinks it's normal to get married at the age of 13. She should be able to start running the house early on in life." (Adolescent girl from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate)

296 "Sarah said that her aunt's husband did an act of violence when he forced his daughters to marry though they were still young. He also has the final say in everything, while his daughters have no opinion at all. He also beats them." (Adolescent boys and girls from Jebel Saman sub district, Aleppo governorate); "Sometimes I buy some essentials but the financial authority is in the hands of my brother or father." (Adolescent girl from Homs sub district, Homs governorate); "The biggest violence we see is that women and girls are forbidden from going outside the home. They are not allowed to share their opinions and are not

traditions." (Adolescent girl from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate). Likewise, domestic violence: *"Violence exists instinctively everywhere. Domestic violence occurs due to traditions."* (Man from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate). Negative social norms pose a violence risk factor to vulnerable groups, for example widowed or divorced women and girls³⁰⁰, old women or women with disabilities.³⁰¹

"Women are the most vulnerable to violence due to poverty." (Adolescent boy from Kisreh sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate)

The continued poverty³⁰² and pressures linked to poor finances as well as the stresses of living life during crisis³⁰³ are also risk factors for women and girls who experience violence: *"Because of poverty and lack of resources, we are forced to neglect and punish our children if they make mistakes."* (Man from Harim sub district, Idlib governorate). An adolescent girl also spoke of the financial and life stresses that serve as risk factors to violence: *"Children from 1 to 14 years' experience physical and verbal violence by their parents at home due to the bad living conditions (crisis, financial difficulties, more than one family living in one tent)."* (Adolescent girl from Dana sub district, Idlib governorate). "Furthermore, a woman expressed that: *"The suffering of life drives a man to practice violence against his wife, both verbal and sexual."* (Woman from As Sweida sub district, As Sweida governorate). Another man confirmed such a risk factor: *"The presence of men in the home permanently as a result of lack of employment leads to violence. The man constantly beats his children and his wife because of his anger."* (Man

from Harim sub district, Idlib governorate)

Poverty combined with pressures of living life during crisis serves as a risk factor for some adolescent girls choosing early marriage as a form of escape: *"Girls are the ones who demand marriage to get rid of the pressures they suffer in society. They do not know that the pressures caused by early marriage are more than the pressures they are exposed to before marriage. Marriage is a difficult responsibility and it is difficult to assume such responsibility at an early age."* (Adolescent girl from Deir ez Zor sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate)

Displacement³⁰⁴ has been identified as a violence risk factor mainly in areas accessible through cross border operations: *"I married off my young daughter because of the current situation and because of our moving from one place to another."* (Woman from Harim sub district, Idlib governorate). Similarly chaos³⁰⁵, lack of law and order³⁰⁶ and the violent culture³⁰⁷ that has ensued since the crisis began serves as violence risk factors: *"The children of the crisis have become violent because they were raised during war, and they have seen violence everywhere."* (Adolescent girl from Lattakia sub district, Lattakia governorate). One woman noted that the use of drugs and alcohol³⁰⁸ poses a violence risk factor: *"There are many people consuming alcohol in the area, so there have been many rape cases."* (Woman from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate)

"In my opinion, the things that increase the risk of violence are crowded places, especially in shelters where there is little lighting. Families live using the LED light and the bathrooms are shared." (Adolescent girl from Idlib sub district, Idlib governorate)

In 2019, as in previous years, overcrowding³⁰⁹, lack of

300 "Widows and divorced women do not have full freedom of movement because of the perception of society, especially rural society." (Man from Idlib sub district, Idlib governorate)

301 "Some parents feel ashamed of their disabled children because of the society's view of them." (Young adolescent boy from Idlib sub district, Idlib governorate)

302 "I think the crisis has increased violence because of the economic situation and the pressures of life." (Woman from Lattakia sub district, Lattakia governorate); "Violence mainly occurs at home as a result of pressures laid on parents. Such pressures are the result of poverty, lack of resources, cramped houses, and lack of privacy." (Woman from Dana sub district, Idlib governorate); "Violence against women in society is neglect, inability to satisfy all their financial desires and daily necessities, and inability to adapt within society." (Adolescent boy from Jisr Ash Shugur sub district, Idlib governorate); "What increases violence is being poor and not having money." (Adolescent girl from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate); "I am married and have four children. My husband is unemployed, and this causes lots of problems. Therefore, my husband beats me and the children." (Woman from Afrin sub district, Aleppo governorate); "The financial situation enhances violence; men beat their wives and children when they come stressed from work." (Adolescent girl from Kisreh sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate)

303 "Psychological violence resulting from psychological and social pressures due to difficult living conditions." (Woman from Harim sub district, Idlib governorate); "Whenever my husband returns home angry because of work and the current situation he beats me. I get angry with him and at the same time he is unable to meet our needs and can do nothing. I, in turn, pray to God to release his distress." (Woman from Harim sub district, Idlib governorate); "Violence is the stress of life and the problems in the camp." (Woman from Ras Al Ain sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate); "Violence is the result of children's psychological pressure, camp stress and poor living conditions." (Woman from Ras Al Ain sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate); "Violence last year was much lower than this year, due to the large numbers in the camp and the poor conditions in the camp. This was reflected negatively on the women's treatment of their children, such as beatings and cursing, as most of them are heads of the families and suffer from psychological pressure." (Woman from Al Hol sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate)

304 "Women, especially old women, are always homesick. They can't adapt to living at camps. They consider this displacement the biggest violence." (Woman from Dana sub district, Idlib governorate); "Residents sometimes practice violence against displaced people." (Man from Kisreh sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate); "We cannot adapt to the current situation because of the difficulty of living in the camp, especially with regard to violence." (Man from Al Hasakeh sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate)

305 "Some people kill others without fear of anyone because there are no laws that punish criminals." (Woman from Abu Kamal sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate)

306 "There are incidents of currency counterfeiting largely due to the absence of government." (Woman from Idlib sub district, Idlib governorate); "Some older people are exposed to physical and verbal violence due to lack of legal procedures. Older people should be taken care of and supported." (Man from Atareb sub district, Aleppo governorate)

307 "With the proliferation of weapons by young and old, with people who are good at it and with those who are not good at it, the risk of violence also increases." (Adolescent girl from Idlib sub district, Idlib governorate); "The act of carrying guns has become a common occurrence and a sign of manhood for some young men." (Woman from Abu Kamal sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate); "Some people shoot in the air, which causes terror among people." (Man from Kisreh sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate); "There is a kind of verbal violence that turns into violent behaviour. This is prevalent among boys when they argue. They threaten to burn down tents. They are just copying adults' behaviour." (Adolescent girl from Al Hol sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate)

308 "Some women take drugs and alcohol, and then they use violence against their families." (Woman from Afrin sub district, Aleppo governorate)

309 "Overcrowded places exacerbate violence." (Man from Ras Al Ain sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate)

privacy³¹⁰ and lighting serve as violence risk factors. For example, overcrowding in particular is a violence risk factor that impacts humanitarian actors providing shelter and camp management: *"Many families live in the same house or tent. This makes people irritable and are likely to become violent."* (Adolescent girl from Dana sub district, Idlib governorate). In addition: *"People feel afraid of crowded areas where there are no lights."* (Young adolescent boy from Mare sub district, Aleppo governorate).

WASH³¹¹ can cause flare-ups: *"Violence occurs in gatherings and dark places, water distribution points and the reception section. In particular, the tension escalates due to access to water, because some receive large quantities of water without restrictions, leading to increased stress that results in beatings in front of the water tanks. Women are insulted and beaten."* (Adolescent boy from Al Hool sub district Al Hasakah governorate). Also, food distribution: *"Places of congestion, especially in front of bread distributing places. If you say a word a problem occurs and some people beat each other."* (Adolescent girl from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate).

Lack of privacy is a violence risk factor impacting shelter and camp management: *"Living with strangers increases the risk of violence leading to exploitation."* (Adolescent girl from Al Hool sub district, Al Hasakah governorate). Lack of lighting³¹², especially in overcrowded places³¹³ in such locations as camp³¹⁴ kitchens and bathrooms³¹⁵ and distribution/collective points³¹⁶ serve as a violence risk factor: *"Lack of lighting and sometimes its non-existence in most collective facilities increases the risk of violence."* (Adolescent girl from Al Hool sub district, Al Hasakah governorate).

"I feel that the thing that causes the most violence is fear." (Adolescent girl from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate)

Lastly, lack of awareness³¹⁷ and fear³¹⁸ also serve as violence risk factors. Specifically, one adolescent girl said that: *"A great deal of the people we are dealing with are either old or uneducated. They are not able to understand us."* (Adolescent girl from Damascus sub district, Damascus governorate). One adolescent boy summarises how fear touches every aspect of girls' lives: *"Parents are afraid for their girls and how society views them. A girl does not know what to wear out of fear. Girls' parents give them a hard time and do not let them go out without saying why and there is no advice provided."* (Adolescent boy from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate). Fear is also a risk factor for such forms of violence as forced marriage: *"Widows³¹⁹ marry married men for fear of violence."* (Man from Idlib sub district, Idlib governorate)

When we take into account the perceptions of a subordinate status within homes and the community it is not surprising that many women and girls do not play a large, if any, role in decision making within the home or consequently in the decisions made for long term plans. Respondents, both IDP and host, noted that men make the final decisions on long term planning, which for IDPs include return, relocation and local integration.

Others simply noted that they do not have any long-term plans³²⁰. Among those that provided reasons³²¹ as to why they do not have long term plans, these centred around the instability and lack of security they face on a daily basis. Namely: *"People don't set plans for the future because they live insecurely."* (Woman from Dana sub district, Idlib governorate). Another adolescent girl said that: *"We are no longer planning for anything after the war we have witnessed and what we have seen. My family says*

- 310 "Living with relatives who interfere in how we should raise our children." (Adolescent girl from Afrin sub district, Aleppo governorate); "Sometimes problems and insults occur between the neighbours because the tents are close to each other." (Adolescent boy from Al Hasakeh sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate); "In the old tents where women's privacy is invaded when they take off their clothes. This causes violence between the owner of the tent and his neighbours." (Adolescent boy from Ras Al Ain sub district Al Hasakeh governorate); "There is no privacy." (Woman from Al Hol sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate)
- 311 "When there is congestion to receive the allocation of water there are insults and cursing and beatings." (Adolescent boy from Al Hasakeh sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate)
- 312 "In my opinion, one of the things that help prevent violence is to put full lighting in the streets day and night, to protect people from kidnapping and assaults." (Adolescent girl from Idlib sub district, Idlib governorate); "There should be streetlights to prevent abuse at night." (Woman from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate); "Lack of streetlights and deserted areas help increase violence." (Young adolescent girl from Kisreh sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate)
- 313 "Non-illuminated areas at night and not overcrowded places." (Man from Harim sub district, Idlib governorate); "There are things that increase the risk of violence, such as the crowded and dimly-lit places, which prevent women and girls from going out at night." (Adolescent boy from Ras Al Ain sub district Al Hasakeh governorate)
- 314 "The camp should be illuminated at night to avoid problems." (Adolescent boy from Al Hasakeh sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate)
- 315 "Things that increase violence are the lack of lighting in kitchens and public bathrooms." (Woman from Al Hol sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate)
- 316 "There is no lighting in the collective facilities and this is causing problems, especially at night." (Adolescent girl from Al Hol sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate)

- 317 "Early marriage can result in a lack of understanding between the girl and her husband either because of her young age and his old age, or because they are both young and unaware of how to understand and deal with each other." (Adolescent girl from Hama sub district, Hama governorate)
- 318 "At work, the manager forces employees to do things they do not want, exploiting them for their need to work. They do not reject his demands for fear of being dismissed." (Woman from Homs sub district, Homs governorate); "If I go out of my house, I always wonder if I will return to it." (Man from Idlib sub district, Idlib governorate)
- 319 "One of the internally displaced girls talked about a landlord harassing a widow, and the latter had to accept it and keep quiet for fear of eviction because she has no place to stay with her children." (Adolescent girl from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate)
- 320 "When there is mass displacement, people go to the safest area and never consult anyone on where to go." (Woman from Afrin sub district, Aleppo governorate); "People do not discuss any future plans." (Woman from Kisreh sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate); "There are no solutions or plans due to the current situation. The social situation prevents people from thinking." (Man from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate); "People are upset about the current situation. There are no future plans due to the bad circumstances." (Man from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate)
- 321 "There are some obstacles to solutions because of instability in general." (Man from Harim sub district, Idlib governorate)
- "What we experience every day, changes how we view life." (Adolescent girl from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate); "Our dreams and our plans are many, but what stops us is the lack of safety in the region." (Adolescent girl from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate); "There is no stability so how can we plan for the future? We live without plans, living from day to day." (Woman from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate); "I always plan, but unfortunately there is nothing happening. All the plans remain without action." (Woman from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate); "Yes we always discuss and plan, but plans are monthly or weekly." (Woman from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate).

that there are many obstacles in life that have not allowed us to think about anything. These include especially death and murder. There is no safety." (Adolescent girl from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate).

Some women and girls noted that they live day to day and week to week: *"Because of what we have seen, we no longer plan. We live day to day and week to week without thinking of the future."* (Woman from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate). Others mentioned that they will return³²² to their home of origin: *"I hope we could go back to our original homes to be comfortable."* (Woman from Harim sub district, Idlib governorate). Some respondents said they would like to relocate:³²³ *"It is difficult for me to stay here. There is no work or school in the first place. They haven't even allowed me to study. There is room for me to leave and go somewhere else. Maybe I can work or study there."* (Adolescent boy from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate). Others expressed how they are trying to integrate locally:³²⁴ *"People are thinking about looking for a job, raising their children, looking for safety, and integrating within the community."* (Man from Dana sub district, Idlib governorate). Another man shared the same outlook: *"There is no plan to return to our homes. Currently we are staying in this place and most of our homes are destroyed and controlled by others."* (Man from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate).

322 "I hope that this war is over so that we can return to our homes in Damascus and live in peace without oppression and without losing the people and things we love." (Adolescent girl from Harim sub district, Idlib governorate); "We want to return to our homes." (Adolescent boy from Harim sub district, Idlib governorate); "My only plan is to come back to my home." (Man from Atareb sub district, Aleppo governorate); "Planning to return to our home after the area becomes independent and we no longer suffer bombardment." (Man from Daret Azza sub district, Aleppo governorate); "Sometimes displaced women and children want to go back to their houses, but men don't want for political and economic reasons." (Man from Kisreh sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate); "People whose homes have been demolished and have no possibility of repair or work and complete their lives. Most of those who travelled to Germany did not even think for a moment to return even if their homes were safe." (Woman from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate)

323 "I am waiting until the road to Turkey is opened so that I can go to my husband because of the bad and difficult living conditions here." (Woman from Harim sub district, Idlib governorate); "We are not thinking about staying here. There is no safety or stability in the first place. So once things are easier, and you're able to leave, we will leave. But it is all expensive and there is a lot of exploitation. Studying here is difficult and there is a lot of discrimination." (Adolescent boy from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate)

324 "Some families discussed the hope to return. Internally displaced people think of long-term solutions to keep their safety and they would like to return to their hometown. But there are people who cannot go back and they prefer the place where we are. They all share the opinion but the greatest ruling authority is men." (Woman from Daret Azza sub district, Aleppo governorate); "The most important plans currently in Atama Camp are looking for a job, raising their children, looking for safety, and integrating with the community (for new IDPs)." (Man from Dana sub district, Idlib governorate); "We cannot go back. It is only a dream. Our house is already gone. We are trying and working to stay in one place and to adapt to the situation. There is a difficulty in finding work and studying here, especially with the discrimination issues." (Adolescent boy from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate); "For me it's about education and learning. My father is running a business. He has opened a shop and my mom also works. We have arranged the house and found it close to my grandparents. We are moving here, because house rent is high." (Adolescent boy from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate); "We're trying to gather enough money to start the new house where we can stay and live. Everyone's trying to find work or study so that we can settle in the area – even though the people around are hard to handle." (Adolescent boy from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate); "Displaced people don't plan to go back to their home areas. They just think about how to make a living." (Adolescent boy from Qahtaniyyeh sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate)

Long-term plans, including those related to return, relocation and local integration, are determined through a process of consulting with the family³²⁵: *"There is a discussion within the family regarding the decision-making."* (Woman from Al Hool sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate), and another woman: *"All family members make plans and discuss them so that everyone is comfortable."* (Woman from Mare sub district, Aleppo governorate). However, men are the final decision makers: *"The biggest burden remains with the father because he has to make the final decision."* (Woman from Idlib sub district, Idlib governorate). Persons with disabilities³²⁶ have no role in decision making: *"Disabled people are marginalised and have no role."* (Woman from Dana sub district, Idlib governorate). The same is true for widowed and divorced women³²⁷: *"Divorcees and widows do not have the right to take decision."* (Woman from Salqin sub district, Idlib governorate)

"Women and children are not involved in preparing these plans, and their opinions are usually made fun of." (Adolescent boy from Kisreh sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate)

Many noted that it is men that make all decisions within the home:³²⁸ *"Men are the ones responsible for such*

325 "Families are responsible for residence affairs and long-term solutions." (Man from Salqin sub district, Idlib governorate); "Women are not involved in this matter. We should only implement and not reject any decision. We have no right to take any decisions." (Woman from Mare sub district, Aleppo governorate); "In my opinion there are things that should be discussed by all family members to make a joint decision, but there are other things that do not need everyone's participation." (Woman from Mare sub district, Aleppo governorate); "My family and I share long-term decisions." (Woman from Al Hasakeh sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate); "People with disabilities participate in decision-making." (Adolescent girl from Tell Abiad sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate); "All members of the family play this role and take part in decision making regarding our relocation or return. All members of the family are involved in deciding whether to return or move, even older people. One of the participants says: 'When we were displaced before entering the camp, my father used to make me choose between going to my mother's relatives or my father's relatives.'" (Adolescent girl from Tell Abiad sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate); "Some families discuss their plans unanimously." (Man from Kisreh sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate); "Old people participate in decision-making and women participate in decision-making in general." (Woman from Ras Al Ain sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate); "We all take part in making decisions, especially the ones related to going out of the camp." (Adolescent girl from Ras Al Ain sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate)

326 Women, girls, and people with disabilities are not involved in decision making due to the traditions. (Woman from Kisreh sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate); People with disabilities are not taken into consideration and are not involved in decision-making. (Woman from Ras Al Ain sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate)

327 All decisions are made by husbands (for married women) or by fathers (for widows and divorced women)." (Woman from Atareb sub district, Aleppo governorate); men are the people who make decisions in the family. They might consult others in the family but for widows and divorcees nobody takes their opinions. The man responsible for them might be the one to take such decisions, especially those relating to matters of displacement (Woman from Daret Azza sub district, Aleppo governorate)

328 Our father asks us and tells us about the negative and positive and negative sides, but in the end he is the one to make decisions (Adolescent girl from Salqin sub district, Idlib governorate); Men are the one who take decisions and most of the time they do not consult anyone. Nobody cares about women and nobody listens to them (Woman from Daret Azza sub district, Aleppo governorate); My father doesn't consult us on anything (Adolescent boy from Harim sub district, Idlib governorate); No one discusses this because it is the father who makes the decision (Man from Harim sub district, Idlib governorate); I take responsibility for the decision as I am the head of the family and determine the future of my children and my wife is the biggest one. I have to be firm and careful in making the decision, of course, after hearing the

decisions and they do not take the opinions of women." (Woman from Daret Azza sub district, Aleppo governorate). One man noted that: *"Discussion is unnecessary and does not work."* (Man from Harim sub district, Idleb governorate). Another adolescent boy stated: *"Women do not have the right to share regarding long-term solutions."* (Young adolescent boy from Salqin sub district, Idleb governorate). An adolescent girl expressed that: *"Men make the decision and control everything."* (Adolescent girl from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate).

However, some women and girls mentioned that women are included in decision making³²⁹: *"For me, I discuss everything with my husband, and we decide on things together. We want to raise some money to buy a house and stay here because we are tired of moving from house to house."* (Woman from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate). However, this may depend on the situation³³⁰: *"It is possible to participate in taking a decision but that depends on the circumstance."* (Woman from Idleb sub district, Idleb governorate). For example, one that impacts children or the household³³¹: *"I am the decision maker of my children (with disabilities)."* (Woman from Atareb sub district, Aleppo governorate). In some cases of widow-headed households³³², they are the ones who make decisions: *"There are some widows who are decision makers."* (Woman from Al Hool sub district, Al Hasakah governorate).

views of all. (Man from Al Bab sub district, Aleppo governorate); Some women don't participate in making any decision (Man from Idleb sub district, Idleb governorate); Yes, the family does discuss, but women, boys, and girls have no role. Because they have no role in this ignorant community. Because of the customs and traditions. (Adolescent girl from Kisreh sub district, Deir ez Zor governorate); As for women, they have no role in planning. (Adolescent boy from Ar Raqqa sub district Ar Raqqa governorate); Men marginalise the role of boys and girls in making important decisions, and they are only consulted in trivial matters and most of the times they are not listened to. (Adolescent boy from Ar Raqqa sub district Ar Raqqa governorate); People do not discuss their future because men dominate decision-planning. Therefore, men discuss with one another to set plans for the future, and women are entirely margined. (Man from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate); There is no effective role for women or children in decision-making. (Woman from Ras Al Ain sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate); With regard to decision-making, women have no say in traveling or staying in case the husband decides to do so, but only executes his orders. (Woman from Ar Raqqa sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate)

Women and girls can't express their opinions. (Adolescent boy from Qahaniyyeh sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate); Some families set future plans, but the final decision is taken by males. (Man from Qahaniyyeh sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate)

329 "Men and women equally share the decision-making process. However, widows and divorcees are very few when it comes to taking the decisions." (Woman from Daret Azza sub district, Aleppo governorate); "The father and the mother are the only ones to decide, and they share in the process." (Adolescent girl from Salqin sub district, Idleb governorate); "Women share in the planning and solutions with their husbands." (Young adolescent boy from Salqin sub district, Idleb governorate); "Women pressure men into moving from one place to another." (Man from Salqin sub district, Idleb governorate);

330 "It is possible that I participate in the decision but it depends on the subject." (Man from Idleb sub district, Idleb governorate); "There are some families where men have weak personalities and the decisions are made by women." (Woman from Al Hol sub district, Al Hasakeh governorate)

331 "Women are the cornerstone of the house and they know the most about it." (Man from Salqin sub district, Idleb governorate); "Women have the biggest rights and are the deciders when it comes to changing location." (Man from Salqin sub district, Idleb governorate)

332 "Divorced and widowed women have a role in decision-making and are involved in making plans." (Adolescent girl from Tell Abiad sub district, Ar Raqqa governorate)





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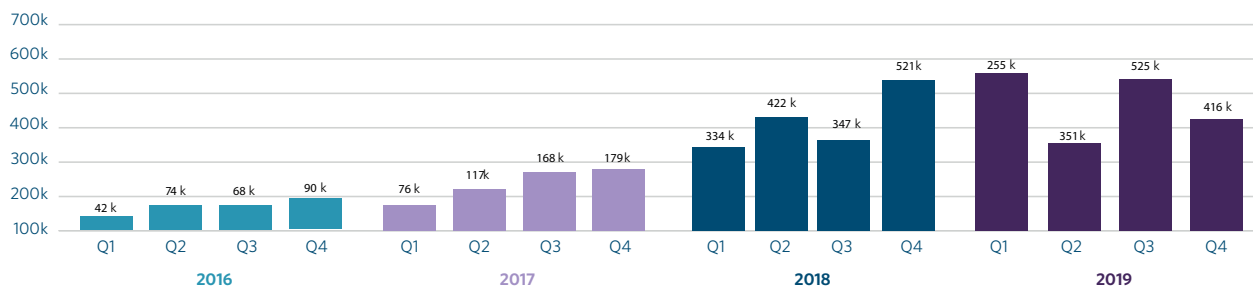


GBV Aor Achievements, Recommendations and Way Forward

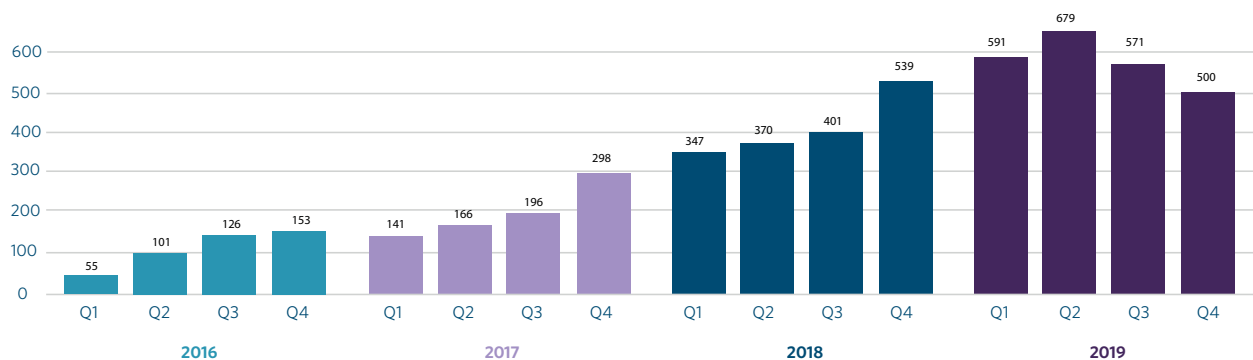
Achievements (Jan-Dec 2019)



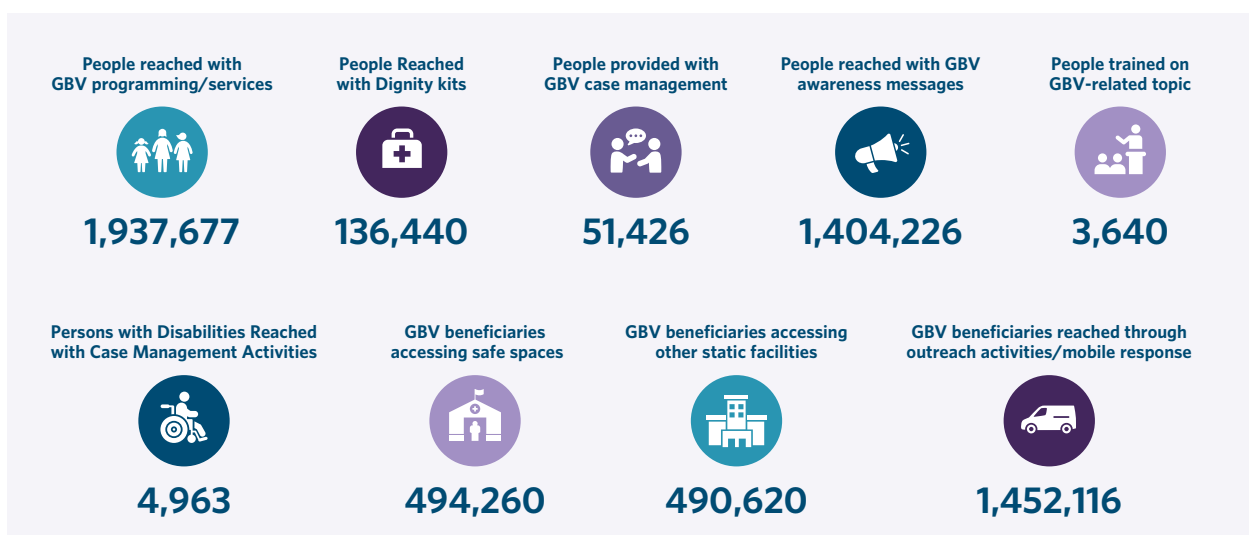
Graph 6 - Total Beneficiaries Reached by Year and Quarter



Graph 7 - Communities Reached by Year and Quarter



"Figure XXX: Overall achievements of the WoS GBV AoR (Jan - Dec 2019)"



During the 2019 Humanitarian Response Plan members of the GBV AoR recorded several achievements.

The GBV AoR continued to assist GBV survivors with specialised services, including case management and PSS, and worked to enhance the capacity of these services to address different needs of survivors, including enhancing the provision of cash assistance in the framework of case management³³³.

On top of regular programming, the GBV AoR was also able to continue responding to emergencies, especially in north-west and north-east Syria, providing information on availability of services and on GBV risk mitigation, supporting newly displaced people with PFA and PSS, referrals to specialised GBV services and distribution of dignity kits.

The GBV AoR worked to improve the capacity of GBV actors through the development of a taskforce committed to this objective in the Turkey Cross Border Hub. While in the Syria hub, the GBV AoR not only strengthened the capacity of humanitarian actors on GBV risk mitigation on basic concepts and principles in service provision to GBV survivors, but also worked to continuously strengthen the capacity of protection actors, especially during the emergency response in Al Hol. The Syria hub improved integration of referral pathways for GBV/RH with trainings conducted with health workers on identifying GBV cases, principles of Do No Harm and ethical referrals in collaboration with WHO. UNFPA Syria, with the support of GBV AoR members, developed a manual on mental health and psycho-social support (MHPSS) and provided support to the National Observatory of Gender-Based Violence³³⁴.

The Turkey Cross Border Hub rolled out its GBV awareness-raising toolkit as well as reviewing its Young Mother's Club³³⁵ service provider manual to better address GBV issues, concepts and services. A number of GBV experts noted that the *"Young Mother's Club has really helped us work with married adolescent girls which was previously a challenge for us."* (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub).

The GBV AoR has noted the satisfaction with which users/beneficiaries view GBV specialised services, as

well as outreach and awareness raising. 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. Of note, adolescent girls and women discussed the importance of continuing advocacy educating and building awareness on the rights of women and girls, but also in improving GBV specialised services in terms of accessibility for older persons and people with disabilities, notably the legal component of the referral pathway.

The GBV AoR made strides in GBV mitigation, developing materials for humanitarian actors as well as conducting GBV risk mitigation sessions in all governorates. Furthermore, a GBV risk mitigation training package with specific case studies for five different clusters was developed, with two Training of Trainers conducted as part of its rollout in the Turkey Cross Border hub. The GBV AoR also ensured that humanitarian sectors conducted a GBV risk analysis within their respective sections of the 2019 Humanitarian Needs Overview.

Recommendations and Way Forward

Health Services (CMR)

Inside Syria, post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) kits cannot be used as national protocols require that they be administered through the national AIDS control council (or equivalent). Consequently, such a requirement can stigmatise survivors if they access such treatment through such entities. Additionally, accessing PEP through such entities could also trigger mandatory reporting on how the survivor was exposed to HIV.

According to the Turkey Cross Border Rape Incident Report, GBV and health sector coordination around CMR was enhanced through capacity building endeavours, as well as technical support and better sharing and understanding of technical tools (such as the CMR protocol). Other assets included increased medical service providers' understanding of rape symptoms, dissemination of awareness-raising messages to improve access to services, and the broadcasting of referral pathways or other referral options. *«Before, when I used to call focal points from health they would not understand what I was asking for. Now there is more collaboration and understanding between us.»* (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub)

However, there are several steps that need to be taken in order to improve CMR provision, which can be applied across all hubs:

Health facilities providing CMR services should always have valid Post-Rape Kits and at least 1-2 medical focal point trained on CMR. The CMR protocol must be followed at all times;

In any CMR training, at least one post rape kit should

333 Turkey Cross Border Hub developed a guidance note on cash in case management.

334 UNFPA, in cooperation with the Syrian Commission for Family Affairs and Population (SCFAP), established the GBV national observatory, which in its pilot phase is comprised of 20 observatory points in Damascus and Rural Damascus (in hospitals, police stations and NGOs). The aim of the project is to report and collect data about GBV-related cases and issues, with attention to ensuring a survivor centered approach that follows basic principles of safety and security, confidentiality, non-discrimination and informed consent.

335 "The YMC corrected many misconceptions at the level of married adolescent girls about family planning for example and how to deal with their newborns." (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub); "YMC was quite useful because it reaches married adolescent girls who don't have the needed background on sexual health and how to deal with daily stressors of life. We have decided to implement this activity in the WGSS in order to reach adolescent girls who frequent these spaces." (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub)

be used, so that participants can become familiar with its content. Whenever possible, it is advisable to have at least one female trainer and to cover data protection policies developed by the GBV SC and RH TWG; Both medical and non-medical health facility staff need to be trained on GBV guiding principles and GBV risk mitigation. Trainings should not be a one-off occasion and should be constantly followed with refresher trainings and technical support sessions; Both training facilitators and participants should come from diverse GBV and health background to allow exchange of expertise. All those involved should work with survivors over the same ground; Speaking in a direct manner about rape with relevant service providers (e.g. not avoiding using terms such as rape and sexual assault) helps to address the issue and change attitudes surrounding rape; Senior management endorsement and support is paramount in ensuring that CMR policies and procedures are in place; Continuing to share the GBV district level FP contacts among non-GBV actors and with the community themselves facilitates access to GBV specialised services including CMR.

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS)

In 2019, FGD participants noted their satisfaction with PSS services. However, GBV experts noted that several beneficiaries attempted to access PSS but were actually in need of mental health services as well. GBV experts noted: *"MHPSS services are still not always available."* (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub). In addition: *"Providing MHPSS services is still a challenge. Following up with survivors and providing case management follow up sessions is difficult without the provision of material support."* (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub). As a result, some beneficiaries are left for extended periods of time without care: *"MHPSS services are scarce. I had a case who had to wait for an entire week to access MHPSS services and then the doctor was absent that day, so she had to wait even longer."* (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub). Thus GBV actors must work with MHPSS experts, taskforce members and/or with the Physical Rehabilitation task force in order to strengthen identification and mapping of MHPSS. They also need to work together on issues related to suicide prevention and awareness raising which is already starting to happen in NWS.

Cash Assistance

FGD participants noted the dire economic situation that many have found themselves during eight years of humanitarian crisis. In particular, participants shared their experiences with economic exploitation, denial of resources and lack of control of finances within the home to purchase food and basic necessities – and much less for transportation to attend GBV specialised services, especially when husbands or other family members

may restrict their movement for such purposes. In addition, experts noted that survivors are not provided with basic services, as they are still not always prioritised in Shelter, FSL or other interventions.

Thus, GBV actors may want to consider the use of, or expansion of using cash assistance within their programming to fill in immediate gaps, but less so longer term needs: *"Medical services are not always available, this is why cash in case management is especially important."* (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub). Meanwhile, two women noted that: *"Financial assistance is not available, and the community is in dire need."* (Adolescent girl from Idleb sub district, Idleb governorate). However, a GBV expert raised the possible challenges of doing so: *"Regarding use of cash in case management, I sense there is still a fear among staff to take this step, but we will need to better understand what are the risks they fear."* (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub)

Coordination and Referral

GBV experts noted the improved integration, and thus coordination, of GBV services within health services. Thus, this should be continued with health and SRH partners: *"No clusters used to believe in GBV, especially health, but now we are seeing a change and high levels of coordination and most importantly more belief in the issue of GBV. Health organisations, as well as other clusters, are interested in having their teams trained on GBV. Indeed, education teams in their organisation asked to be trained on GBV basics and risk mitigation."* (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub). Furthermore: *"Referral with the health sector is well established and explored. Facilities count on the referral pathway more regularly, especially for dignity kits. There is good coordination in Aleppo in terms of referrals with other organisations working there."* (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub)

GBV experts noted several challenges with making referrals, even after extensive work on GBV risk mitigation over the last one to two years. Referrals are well established with health, MHPSS, livelihoods³³⁶, but they are not meeting expected results for shelter and education for example, therefore more GBV risk mitigation in other sectors is needed. *"Inside Syria, the referral system is working well as staff know about the services that are available. Referrals happen more internally within the organisation, but also to other organisations."* (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub).

Lastly, due to the many challenges identified with access to formal justice institutions and processes, GBV experts have recommended that: *"We should also have a legal counsellor in our spaces to provide legal support to our beneficiaries, which will be beneficial for case management."* (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub)

336 "Services are there, people are accessing services, but there are issues with referrals, especially livelihood service providers. We should discuss how protection/GBV cases can be prioritised in livelihood programs." (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub)

Male survivors of sexual violence

Addressing the needs of male GBV survivors is an issue that has arisen in many GBV humanitarian programs. This was particularly true in September 2018, when the publication, “Destroyed from Within: Sexual Violence against men and boys in Syria and Turkey” by All Survivors Project, documented sexual violence and abuse experienced by men and boys during the Syria crisis. Thus in 2019, the GBV AoR began to explore how GBV programming needed to and could encompass the needs of men and boys regarding prevention and response to sexual violence. Of note, the needs of men and boys in GBV in case management has been part of ongoing advocacy, however, in 2020 greater efforts will be made to stress the importance of a multi-sectoral approach to all survivors, including men. Also in 2019, the GBV AoR continued to address men and boys as agents of change to reducing violence against women and girls.

GBV experts noted that: *“Similarly to the work done on sexual violence with women – when we were not able to speak freely about sexual violence at the beginning without previous awareness raising, preparedness, and creating safe spaces – a similar process will need to happen before we are able to target men. We will need to raise awareness, have spaces where disclosure can happen in accordance with principles and we should have trained staff, including male doctors, male nurses and urologists. This will take a long time.”* (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub).

Another GBV expert noted that: *“There was a good experience with adolescent boys with awareness raising toolkits conducted in a school with the agreement of the headmaster. Otherwise, it can prove difficult, especially because there is no place where we can regularly meet with men. Even in the community centre, men’s ability to access services is limited as the Local Council will raise concerns if men and women access the same centre.”* (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub). However, it was also noted: *“The percentage of men who are exposed to violence is very limited. Before thinking of having spaces where case management could be provided for men, we need to have spaces to empower and raise awareness of men which will be more beneficial, especially that men are even more afraid of stigma than women.”* (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub)

GBV experts raised the challenges of targeting men and boys for both prevention and response programming: *“We don’t reach all. We mostly target women and girls. We reach men and boys only through outreach and with focus on awareness raising. Even in awareness raising we couldn’t reach many men and boys because we don’t have enough male staff in our outreach teams. We should provide life skills sessions for boys as well. We should have more male outreach staff and have them trained on case management in case they come across a case of a male survivor.”* (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub). Lastly, GBV experts noted that there are cases of sexual violence against men and boys, but male staff must be adequately trained to provide case management, in-

cluding PSS and individual counselling through site by site consultation with actors in the field: *“I think our staff are ready, both men (especially those who are part of the child protection team) and women, to receive these disclosures, as they were also engaged in providing case management to male children. However, I agree that the environment in general is not supportive of this kind of services being provided to male survivors by women, so may not be easy.”* (GBV expert from Turkey Cross Border Hub).

It is to be noted that entry points for male survivors might be different from those of women and girls, with health actors playing a crucial role in the overall assistance to male survivors, which often includes rehabilitation and mental health support, in addition to CMR. In Syria, CMR trainings generally target midwives as well as other health providers such as gynaecologists, nurses, paediatricians and urologists. CMR trainings follow global interagency curriculums that have been contextualised and are meant to equip service providers with skills that enable the provision of quality care for both female and male survivors of rape. Work with the child protection cluster/sector to address the needs of adolescent boy survivors should be strengthened in 2020.

Way Forward

Based on the analyses provided in this report, as well as building on the achievements made by the GBV AoR throughout 2019, and the 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan Strategy, the following is recommended in moving forward as GBV and humanitarian actors in 2020:

1. Expand GBV interventions and increase the provision of quality specialised GBV services.

GBV actors should continue to provide services where access is possible and enhance the quality of services provided. Service provision can be enhanced with the support of other humanitarian clusters/sectors. Humanitarian actors need to ensure the safe design and implementation of their interventions. Specific issues that need to be addressed are better inclusion of GBV survivors in humanitarian assistance, overcrowding, lack of lighting, distances to receive aid, and negative social norms that impede widowed and divorced women and girls, persons with disabilities and older persons from accessing humanitarian assistance and at times placing them at risk of GBV. Such actions can take the form of advocating to and supporting organisations and agencies on improving criteria for assistance, facilitating referrals to needed educational and livelihood services, eliminating GBV risks (possibility of mobile units to female-only designated distribution points, as well as designated days/hours for only people with disabilities or older people to receive aid, or separate camp areas, etc). GBV actors can support other humanitarian actors with continued training and technical support to curriculum, guidelines, checklists and other materials.

2. Enable access for all GBV survivors to health services, including MHPSS, that will address their specific needs.

GBV actors should continue to work with health actors in order to integrate GBV, SRH and other health services, such as MHPSS. This can be achieved through continued advocacy on principles and adherence to criteria for referral and care (such as CMR), continued integration of GBV and SRH services in mobile and static delivery points and development and rollout of MHPSS materials that will address the disabilities of survivors of violence experienced during such contexts as detainment and trafficking. GBV and MHPSS actors should further collaborate on prevention of suicide among survivors.

3. Enhance capacity of service providers to provide supervision and quality control.

GBV actors can aim to provide refresher trainings internally to review procedures and materials – such Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) were developed and rolled-out – and update where necessary. They can explore alternatives to face-to-face individual counselling, such as by phone or online, for persons with disabilities, older persons and males who cannot access facilities. Alternatively, they can explore group counselling for persons with disabilities and older persons and/or enhance outreach work to address inclusivity and build the understanding that ability and age status does not have to be an isolating social status (i.e. increase understanding that “I am not the only one”). Where feasible, developing safe havens or shelters for survivors who must be extricated from places of violence. GBV actors should continue to look at building models that are client and community specific to address safety, emotional management (how to manage feelings in a non-harmful way), addressing loss and trauma, and resilience.

4. Prevention strategies will be further developed to contribute to the prevention of GBV with a focus on changing harmful social norms.

GBV actors have done much work on a large-scale basis to educate populations on GBV and risks linked to GBV and where services can be provided. Direct quotes provided in this report highlight that such campaigns have been successful. A number of women and girls in 2019 specifically cited the rights they are deserved to have invoked and protected. They also identified the issues of discrimination and gender inequality they feel needs to be eradicated through the education of men and boys. In addition, they identified the shame and lack of knowledge of how to provide care to persons with disabilities and older persons as well as customs and traditions continuing supporting gender inequality. Thus, GBV actors should consider developing smaller campaigns that are affected population targeted and/or targeted at family or community units. Namely, content of information and communication materials, radio messaging and other awareness raising tools should

reflect the needs and mental capacities of persons with disabilities and older persons. Campaigns addressing men and boys should target both males and females separately, but also consider targeting family units to discuss the importance of providing girls and boys with equal opportunities and access to resources, as well as the negative and positive impacts on the life cycles of both girls and boys. Lastly, campaigns and messaging should emphasise and aim at social change within families and communities. Thus, more structured prevention programmes with repeated sessions with the same population groups to follow larger campaigns or awareness sessions should be explored.

5. Inclusive Services that will take into consideration the specific needs, realities, priorities, strengths and vulnerabilities of people with disabilities and older people, women and girls, female headed households and women who are divorced or widowhood.

GBV actors should strengthen (or develop) activities and projects aimed at persons with disabilities, older persons, and men and boys. Persons with disabilities and older persons activities can address supporting these at-risk groups by improving physical access to facilities such as placing activities on the first floor, arranging transportation or providing stipends for transportation fees, or mobile outreach specific to these at-risk populations. Response services of these at-risk groups should address their specific needs. In order to adequately address this, GBV actors should seek funding to build staff capacity in providing specific psychological first aid, PSS, integrated GBV and sexual and reproductive health and case management for persons with disabilities and older persons.

Furthermore, GBV actors should review protocols, guidelines and organisational procedures to address the needs of these two affected populations. GBV actors should in 2020 begin or continue exploring with field staff how to improve organisational capacity to provide prevention activities to men and boys. This can be done by reviewing already established tools and materials to address the needs of men and boys as agents of change; by expanding upon what works or changing what doesn't, by developing new materials and by overcoming obstacles to providing such services. This includes the lack of safe space or physical building to conduct activities and/or social norms that dictate that men and boys should not address such issues as gender equality and equity for women and/or sexual violence perpetrated against males.

Lastly, care for sexual assault survivors must be strengthened, particularly adherence to Clinical Management of Rape Guidelines by all service providers. Thus, GBV actors can work with health and other actors to provide training and continuous capacity building and technical support on CMR. Such training addresses clinical aspects, however, also emphasises basic GBV concepts, as well as confronting negative attitudes and social norms harboured by non-GBV actors who provide CMR treatment. Additionally, a multisectoral ap-

proach is fundamental if adequate care will be provided for all survivors of sexual violence.

Governorate Analysis

According to the 'Syria Socioeconomic and Demographic Report' September 2019 published by the Humanitarian Needs Assessment Programme (HNAP) Syria, 78 percent of IDPs in Syria are clustered within just 5 governorates: Idleb, Rural Damascus, Aleppo, Damascus and Lattakia. Of the IDP households surveyed, 10 percent are between 25 and 29 years old, 7 percent are female headed, with female head of households (HHs) being more common in Aleppo and Homs, where they compose 12 percent and 10 percent of HHs. Rates of widows are highest in Tartous, Aleppo, Deir-ez-Zor and Homs, "and these percentages are exaggerated due to high rates of female widows compared to men". The HNAP survey found that over one in ten women are widows: 14 percent in Tartous, 12 percent in Aleppo, 11 percent in Deir-ez-Zor and 10 percent in Homs. The report also notes that high widows' rates in Tartous and Homs may be due to voluntary conscription to either government or other armed forces. The report also notes that high rates of female widows in Aleppo and Deir-ez-Zor may be due to war-related deaths, since both governorates have endured a large burden of conflict-related violence.

The report also notes that in Idleb governorate, the total rate of IDP households having had suffered multiple displacements is as high as 77 percent. Of note, shelter conditions in the governorate are dire, with 25 percent of households living in critical shelters: *"In my opinion, the things that increase the risk of violence are crowded places, especially in shelters where there is little lighting."* (Adolescent girl from Idleb sub district, Idleb governorate)

Lastly, the report identifies the percentage of IDP households without a family member and the reasons for such absences. Specifically, 29 percent of IDP households report that they are without one member of their household and 11 percent report that they are without two. In Deir-ez-Zor, there is a high proportion of missing household members where nearly half of all households are missing at least one household member and 22 percent are missing two. Rates are especially high among IDP households in the governorate with 38 percent missing more than one household member and 24 percent missing one. 78 percent of absent household members are male and 22 percent are female. Missing male household members are most likely to have migrated out of Syria (46 percent) or have suffered conflict-related death (27 percent). Missing female members were most likely to have suffered conflict or non-conflict related death (31 and 28 percent, respectively). 66 percent of household absence due to movement within Syria is accounted for by individuals between 15 and 29 years old, while 80 percent of absence due to movement outside of Syria is accounted for by 15 to 34-year olds.

The HNAP report further highlights the need for actors in the governorates mentioned to review services to meet the needs of the affected populations identified in the GBV risk component of this report, such as widows. They should also note the economic stress and pressure that many households live under and how that serves as a violence risk factor, as identified by FGD participants in this report. Thus, GBV actors should review services provided in all governorates, but particularly in governorates where emergencies have recently occurred in north-east Syria such as Ar Raqqa and Al Hasakah where IDPs have moved from hostility impacted areas to more safe areas. The same can also be said for those governorates that are continuing to experience hostility or threat of hostility, as well as receiving large influxes of IDPs, such as Idleb, northern Hama and western Aleppo.

GBV Services provided Against Humanitarian Response Plan Indicators in 2019

A review of GBV programming/services provided at governorate level highlights that overall, GBV actors are strong in providing GBV awareness campaign messages both through direct contact and through various forms of media. Provision of GBV case management is good but is always an area that can be improved with increased access to areas and communities as well as with adequate financial support. Likewise, noting that beneficiaries identified obstacles to accessing Women and Girl Safe Spaces (distance, transportation fees and negative social norms restricting movement to access them), GBV actors may consider focusing on strengthening GBV program design in order to support beneficiaries overcoming such obstacles.

Some GBV actors providing services in some governorates can strengthen some service provision areas. GBV actors working in Deir-ez Zor and As Sweida governorates have not been able to reach persons with disabilities with case management activities thus GBV actors may need to review service/intervention design and implementation in order to better include this GBV affected population in light of the violence they experience and being at particular risk of violence due to their ability status. The same can be said for As Sweida, Dara'a, Deir-ez-Zor, Quneitra Homs and Tartous governorates on GBV first line responders as well as other humanitarian actors on GBV risk mitigation. First line responders should address ongoing GBV cases and receive potential IDP women and girl survivors moving from hostility impacted areas, when conditions allow for access to conduct such training.

A geometric pattern featuring a central white six-pointed star. Inside the star is a dark blue number '6'. The background is composed of various colored triangles and polygons in shades of dark blue, teal, pink, and purple, arranged in a symmetrical, quilt-like fashion.

6

Annexes

Annexes

Data Sources

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 organisations 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 NGOs.³³⁷ 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 delivered.³³⁸

Methodology

Focus Group Discussion (North East Syria and Turkey Cross Border Hubs)

FGDs conducted by the Protection Sector of the north-east Syria 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.

The hubs conducted 4 FGDs per sub-district in Al Hol, Al Hasakah, Ras Al Ain, Qahtaniyyeh, Abu Kamal, Afrin, Jisr Ash Shugur, Salqin, Al Bab, Daret Azza, Mare, Azaz, Harim, Dana, Atareb and Idleb sub-districts; 8 FGDs in Tell Abiad sub-district (4 in camp and 4 out of camp) and 16 FGDs in Kisreh 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 (GBV, general protection, child protection, mine action).

337 OCHA, 4Ws FAQ and Glossary, 2018

338 Id.

GBV expert focus group discussions

The aim of the Expert FGDs 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, FGDs as well as any other secondary literature data sources. GBV Expert FGDs were conducted in Syria (2 in Aleppo) and Turkey (Gaziantep). 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 2019 with the aim of compiling all available 2019 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.

Information Gaps and Limitations

There are a number of gaps and limitations that should be noted. First, the focus group discussions could only be conducted in areas where there is physical access by protection actors. Thus, where FGDs could not take place, the GBV AoR relied upon UNPA program data that did not address all areas of the questionnaire as well as reflecting mixed gender groups. Secondly, there was over representation of Tell Abiad and Kisreh sub-districts due to the need of conducting FGDs in and out of camps to capture IDP population that were in camp contexts as well as self-settled outside of camp contexts. Third, quantitative data on GBV was taken from the Multisector Needs Assessment which only addressed one GBV issue, early/forced marriage. Proxy data on gender was relied upon for movement restriction, kidnapping/abduction, access to civil documentation and exclusion from humanitarian assistance.

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 as-

cribed (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 over 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. Examples 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 GBV. 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 resilience.

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 GBV. 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 resilience.

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