



النهضة العربية للديمقراطية والتنمية
Arab Renaissance for Democracy & Development

العدالة الجنسانية
Gender Justice



Legal Aid's Four Pillars for Engaging Men and Boys in SGBV Prevention in Zaatari Refugee Camp



2016



ARDD

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Contents

About This Report	3
Zaatari Refugee Camp	5
Using a Psychosocial Approach	7
Managing Stress and Anger	9
Masculinities	12
Do No Harm	15
Further Reading and Resources	17



About This Report

Across the world, more and more organizations are working with men and boys on questions of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). This reflects a growing awareness that men, in partnership with women, can play a significant role in ending SGBV and in the struggle for gender equality. Work with men and boys on SGBV is growing, in part, because of an increased recognition of the role that masculinities play in shaping men's behaviors and attitudes. While some visions of masculinity endorse and promote control over, and violence against, women, masculinities are everywhere plural, and subject to change and contestation. Working with men on SGBV prevention opens up spaces where visions of masculinity that promote violence and patriarchy can be challenged. Although the vast majority of perpetrators of SGBV are male, both in Jordan and across the world, in work on SGBV prevention men can be successfully engaged as potential allies in the struggle against SGBV, rather than as possible perpetrators. Working with men and boys to prevent SGBV does not and should not replace stand-alone initiatives with women and girls. Engaging men in the prevention of SGBV supports the efforts of women's movements and programs for women's empowerment, and helps to turn women's issues into social issues of concern for everyone. Men have a responsibility to use the power that they have been given to work towards the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women. Men are necessary partners in the struggle for gender equality.

This report, based on ARDD-Legal Aid's experiences of working with men and boys on SGBV prevention in Zaatari refugee camp, lays out four pillars of how SGBV prevention programs can be adapted to work effectively in the context. It first outlines the suitability of a psychosocial approach for SGBV prevention work in Zaatari, explaining how this can be used to build trust among participants, provide a useful service for male refugees, and create an environment in which progress can be made on sensitive gender questions. The report then focuses on, in turn, how to manage the stress and anger of refugees in Zaatari, how to understand prevailing conceptions of masculinities and gender relations, and how to ensure that the do no harm principle is adhered to in work in Zaatari.

Zaatari Refugee Camp



Zaatari Refugee Camp

Zaatari refugee camp is the second largest refugee camp in the world, by population, and is located in northern Jordan, a few kilometers from the Syrian border. Established in the summer of 2012, it is now a temporary 'home' to around 80,000 Syrian refugees. The population is young, with over half under 18, almost equally split between males and females, and mostly from Dera'a Province, in southern Syria.¹

The population of the camp is living in extremely difficult circumstances. Many live in over crowded accommodation, with minimal financial resources, few opportunities for work, and are not able to leave the camp. Due to these circumstances, and the dire effects of the on going conflict in Syria, refugees in Zaatari are suffering from very high levels of stress, and many have lost hope for the future. Among the many problems facing Zaatari are the high levels of sexual and gender-based violence, including domestic violence, early and forced marriage, sexual violence, and survival sex, yet community members are often unwilling to speak openly about what has happened to them, because of the stigma they might face.²

From October to December 2015, ARDD-Legal Aid worked with around 200 males from Zaatari camp, including a whole cross section of men and boys from the community - boys and elders, married and unmarried, employed and unemployed, educated and noneducated in yet another attempt to tackle the high levels of SGBV that are prevalent in the camp. The program for each small group consisted of two two hour workshops, the first of which focused on psychosocial support, and the second of which focused explicitly on gender-based violence. Both from the discussions held in the workshops, and the pre- and post-evaluation that was carried out, it was possible to see significant changes in participants' views, attitudes, and beliefs about stress and gender-based violence. For example, the proportion of men who understood that gender-based violence occurs more towards women than men increased from 57% before the workshops to 82% after the workshops, and the percentage who felt confident in dealing with psychological distress increased from 55% to 78%. All of the quotations in this report are from workshop participants.

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- 1 See UNHCR's online SyriaRegional Refugee Response Inter-agency Information Sharing Portal. The page for Zaatari is found here: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/settlement.php?id=176&country=107®ion=77>
 - 2 Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, Refugees in Jordan, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Sub-Working Group, June 2015.

Using a Psychosocial Approach



Using a Psychosocial Approach

“Our psyche has changed in the camp”

ARDD-Legal Aid’s work with men in Zaatari refugee camp has combined explicit SGBV prevention activities with the provision of psychosocial services to the targeted beneficiaries, mostly focused on stress relief. This joint approach was chosen in recognition of the fact that the Syrian crisis has led to the deterioration of the psychosocial well-being of Syrian refugees, including men and boys. Furthermore, based on years of experience working in Zaatari refugee camp, and with refugees in non-camp settings, it is clear that many male refugees feel like they have little access to psychosocial services in general, and very limited opportunities to discuss the issues facing them. Not having the ability to discuss their problems, and not being aware of or confident in positive coping mechanisms, has serious implications for the psychosocial well-being of men, and can lead to increased tensions and violence within the home and the wider community.

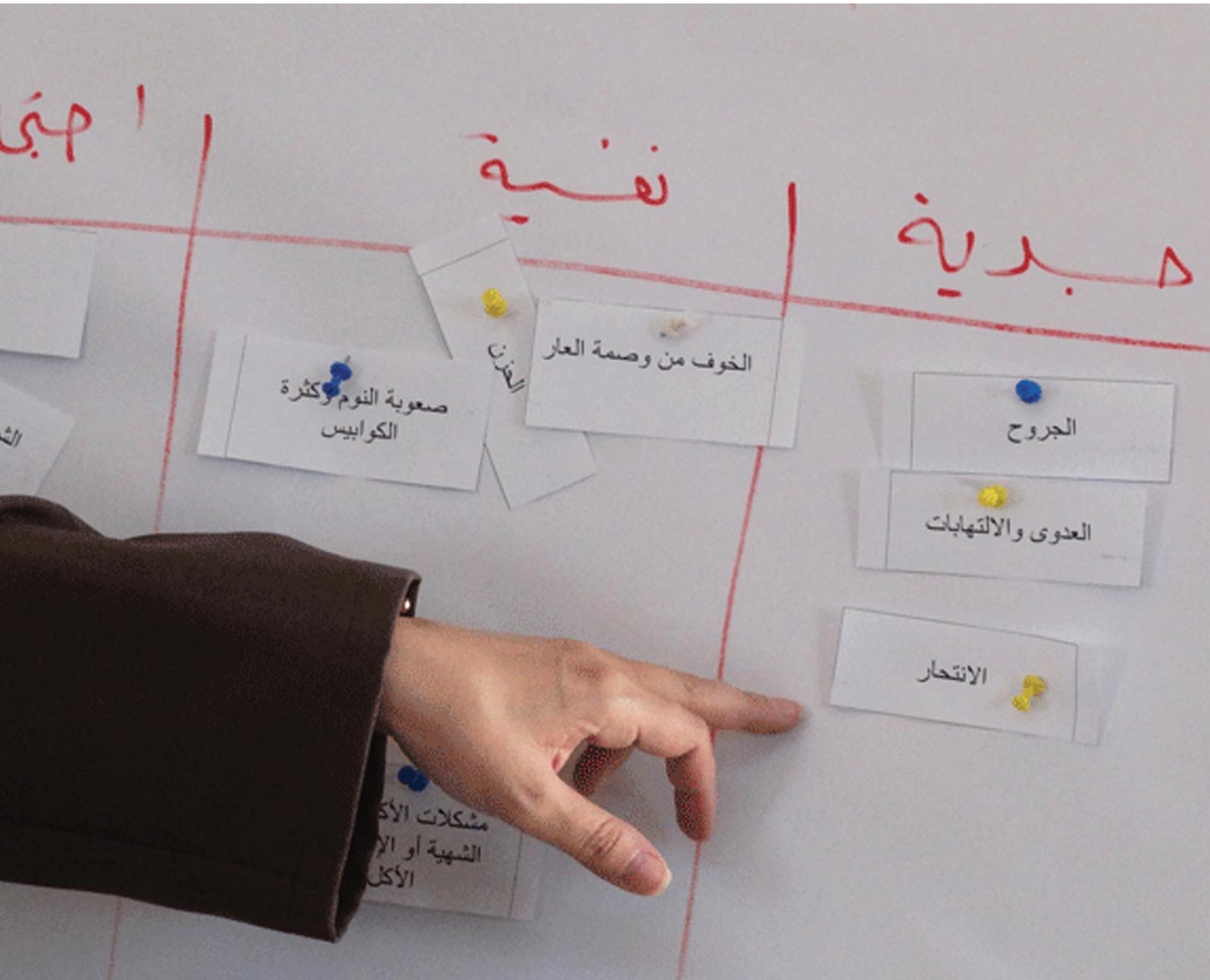
Based on these needs, ARDD-Legal Aid designed a program with two sessions, the first of which focused on stress and psychosocial support. It opened up discussions about the causes of stress in the context of the camp, the symptoms of stress, and the positive coping mechanisms that were available to men and boys within the context of the camp. This was also an opportunity for the group to become comfortable with each other, the trainer, the environment, and to get used to discussing difficult and sensitive topics. The second session, conducted a week later, was about SGBV awareness, increasing participants’ knowledge and understanding about the reality of SGBV, and focused on men’s roles in fighting SGBV, again thinking specifically about the Zaatari context.

“The most important benefit [from the sessions] was learning how to control our stress”

Building a program that was sensitive to men’s circumstances and world views allowed for the creation of stronger ties between the trainers and the participants, thereby facilitating more open, deep, and fruitful discussions. According to many men in the camp, stress is a key cause of the high levels of violence in the camp. Discussing the causes of violence, as men in the camp understand them, does not lead to that violence being condoned, or excused. On the contrary, it allows for a clearer distinction to be made between causes and excuses, for participants to feel that their views and well-being are taken seriously, and for discussions about positive psychological coping mechanisms to be tailored specifically to a particular group of individuals, their world views, and their social contexts.

“I have learned to think about solutions in a more positive way”

Managing Stress and Anger



Managing Stress and Anger

“Everyone in Zaatari camp has psychological pressures and stress”

Levels of stress in Zaatari camp are very high, because of the difficult social and economic circumstances that refugees are experiencing. A lot of the issues that are causing these high levels of stress are specific to the context of Zaatari camp, with many refugees in the camp feeling that conditions are better for those refugees who live in Jordanian host communities. While all refugees face difficult circumstances, there are additional problems associated with living in a camp, such as the close proximity of caravans, which affects people’s sense of privacy. One of the foremost difficulties is the fact that refugees require permission from the authorities to leave the premises of Zaatari refugee camp. Many refugees reported that it was extremely difficult to obtain ‘bail-out’ papers to leave the camp permanently. These factors exacerbate many refugees’ feelings of stress and anger.

Many men in Zaatari are angry about the lack of work opportunities, and about the ways they feel work is distributed. Many believe that humanitarian actors in the camp prefer to employ women, that you need personal or familial connections in order to get a job (“wasta”), and want a system in the camp that would distribute work opportunities widely, and more equitably. Many refugees are also unhappy with their broader relationships with humanitarian actors working in the camp – with men often commenting that they feel disrespected by humanitarian staff, that the programs offered by many organizations in the camp do not address their real needs.

“80 percent of our stress is because of our life in the camp.”

This does not mean, however, that all men found the same issues to be major causes of stress. Men who had a higher level of education are particularly stressed and angry about the lack of work opportunities, as most of the jobs available under cash-for-work schemes in Zaatari camp require manual skills, rather than advanced levels of academic education. Also for educated men the level of frustration is usually higher because their refugee status represents a more substantial change from their former lifestyles in Syria. Work was also often less of an issue for youth, many of whom might still want to focus on their education, but also do not yet feel the familial and social pressures and expectations associated with the role of a breadwinner.

**“There was stress in Syria but there was also work,
and here there isn’t work.”**

The difficult circumstances in the camp, and the high levels of stress and anger mean that refugees will be looking for solutions to their problems, and might expect that any humanitarian actors from outside of the community are in a position to offer solutions to their problems, or that they might have the requisite contacts, connections, and resources that are needed to find solutions.

Recommending solutions or activities that refugees cannot realistically undertake within the context of the camp is likely to increase their levels of stress and anger, making the work counterproductive, and making refugees disillusioned about the benefits of engaging with humanitarian actors.

Refugees do not often get the chance to have an open environment in which they can, with their peers and fellow members of the community, discuss their problems, what causes them stress, and the levels of stress that they are experiencing. Even though many of the problems that are causing refugees stress are structural, and neither refugees nor humanitarian actors are in a position to resolve them, allowing refugees the space and opportunity to discuss their stress and anger is, in and of itself, an important service that organizations can offer refugees.

Many men also find it difficult to talk openly about their problems because of the implicit challenge that this poses to their sense of masculinity (which is discussed more in the next section). For many men, discussing their weaknesses and difficulties in a public forum, or when they are not among friends and confidants, demonstrates both vulnerability and an inability to solve one's own problems, which men expect, and are expected, to be able to do. The difficulties associated with showing weakness were demonstrated in the workshops, for example when one participant was open about the fact that he often deferred to his wife in the home. Other participants were clearly very uncomfortable with this display of weakness, with many feeling that it was not an appropriate thing for a man to say, or an appropriate way for him to behave in the home.

Masculinities



Masculinities

“Gender roles have totally changed. Men are in the caravans and women are working.”

All work on sexual and gender-based violence involves, explicitly or implicitly, engaging with people’s understandings of gender and masculinities. Zaatari is no exception to this. From ARDD-Legal Aid’s experience, it became clear that changing gender relations are an important aspect of life for male refugees in the camp, and often an issue of great concern. Many men feel like their relationships with women are changing, that men are becoming weaker and women more powerful, and that women’s needs are prioritized over men’s.

As previously mentioned, there is a widespread perception that humanitarian actors in the camp prefer to offer jobs to women, rather than men. Many women are now the primary income earners for their families. This in turn has caused resentment among men, who feel that they are unable to fulfill their gendered responsibilities for their families, and that they are losing power that they are accustomed to having, both in their families and their community.

“If you don’t work, then you don’t have any presence. If you are a man then you have to be the protector of the family.”

Many, although certainly not all, men will openly acknowledge and discuss the levels of violence against women in the camp, including in their own homes. Yet many participants were often keen to note that men can be victims of violence, too, including at the hands of their wives. These suggestions, however, were always made in more general or vague terms, indicating that many people’s constructions of masculinity make it easier for them to be identified as a perpetrator of violence than a victim of violence.

Younger participants are often the first ones to talk about the increased levels of violence in the home, which they would often attribute to the stressful situation in the camp. This might have been easier for some of the younger participants to bring up, because many of them are not yet themselves heads of households, and so they might not feel that increased levels of violence reflect on them personally, in the way that older members of the community might.

Even within the same generation, though, views on masculinities are diverse, and many men in the camp offer progressive visions for gender relations. Providing spaces where these views can be heard and validated among peers is an extremely valuable way of promoting change. Practitioners can also engage with these views, and lead deeper discussions about men's ideas, utilizing the frameworks of the participants. For example, many men in the camp will express their opposition to SGBV with reference to Islam and its teachings, and find that spirituality is one way that they can practice positive coping techniques when they find themselves suffering from stress.

“Violence doesn't show masculinity. Masculinity is a man who controls himself when he is angry.”

Among key sites of masculine identity are:

- 1- A reluctance to show weakness.
- 2- There are hierarchies of power among men, as well as between men and women. Generational hierarchies among men may mean that different generations have different priorities and perspectives, and can also make it more difficult for different generations to talk openly in front of each other, particularly boys, who may feel embarrassed or shy in front of other men who are a lot older.
- 3- Protection and the foundation of patriarchy. According to renowned scholar Suad Joseph, the real foundation of patriarchy in Arab societies comes not from the relationship of children to their parents, but from the socialization of brothers and sisters, in which siblings of the opposite sex learn their sexual role by 'rehearsing' for each other.³

3 See Joseph, Suad (1999) 'Brother-Sister Relationships: Connectivity, Love, and Power in the Reproduction of Patriarchy in Lebanon', in Joseph, Suad (ed.) *Intimate Selving in Arab Families*, pp. 140-113.

Do No Harm



Do No Harm

In all humanitarian and development work, especially work with populations in vulnerable situations like refugees, it is crucial that we ensure that no harm is done to those with whom we work. Originally used in medicine, this principle, known as the **do no harm principle**, has become more widely used, including in the humanitarian, aid, and development sectors. Simply put, it means that we have an obligation to never hurt or injure (emotionally, physically or otherwise) the people we are working with.

In a context like Zaatari camp, as in any other humanitarian settings, this principle is of the utmost importance. Most refugees have been living in Zaatari for several years, and many are stressed, frustrated, and depressed about their circumstances. Many people's families have been scattered across the world, while ongoing events in Syria continue to cause death and destruction, which makes refugees feel that there is no hope for the future. Because refugees in Zaatari camp are looking desperately for solutions to their problems, practitioners must always be honest about what they are in a position to do, and to not do. Anyone working with refugees must be sure to never unduly raise people's expectations by telling them inaccurate information, or making promises that they cannot keep.

The Sphere Project has written highly regarded, internationally recognized sets of common principles and minimum standards for the delivery of humanitarian services. The Sphere Hand book, last published in 2011, is an excellent guide for all humanitarian practitioners. It reminds humanitarian actors that all people have:

- * the right to life with dignity
- * the right to receive humanitarian assistance
- * the right to protection and security

Its six core standards emphasize the following:

- * people's capacity and strategies to survive with dignity are integral to the design and approach of a humanitarian response.
- * humanitarian responses should be planned and implemented in coordination with the relevant authorities, humanitarian agencies, and civil society organizations.
- * priorities should be identified through a systematic assessment of the context.

- * the humanitarian response must meet the assessed needs to the disaster affected population in relation to the context, the risks faced, and the capacity of the affected people to cope and recover.
- * the performance of humanitarian agencies should be continually examined and communicated to stakeholders, and projects should be adapted in response to performance.
- * humanitarian agencies should provide appropriate management, supervisory, and psychosocial support for their staff, enabling them to have the knowledge, skills, behaviour and attitudes to plan and implement an effective humanitarian response with humanity and respect.

Adapted from The Sphere Project (2011) Sphere Handbook.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR) code of conduct reminds its staff of the importance of:

- * treating all refugees with respect and dignity.
- * seeking to understand the difficulties refugees have faced, and the disadvantaged position in which they may find themselves.
- * preventing, opposing, and combating all exploitation and abuse of refugees.
- * making responsible use of all information to which one has access through one's work with refugees.
- * refraining from any involvement in criminal or unethical activities.
- * refraining from any form of harassment, discrimination, physical or verbal abuse, intimidation or favouritism.

Adapted from UNHCR (2004) Code of Conduct and Explanatory Notes.

It is also important that all organizations ensure that their staff is being provided with adequate care and support. Gender-based violence is a difficult issue to tackle, and can be emotional and draining for the staff involved. It is therefore important that staff have a suitable opportunity to discuss what happened during each session, to raise issues that they felt emotionally affected by, and to talk to other members of staff if they are finding themselves emotionally affected by their work.

Further Reading and Resources

ARDD-Legal Aid: <http://ardd-jo.org/>

ARDD-Legal Aid (2015) Protecting Human Rights Through National Law in Zaatari

ARDD-Legal Aid (2014) Psychosocial Support to Victims of GBV: *ARDD-LA's Psychosocial Support Service*

Zaatari Refugee Camp

British Embassy Amman Policing Support Team (2015) *Safety Perceptions Survey: Syrian Za'atari Refugee Camp*

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UN Women (2013) *Gender-based Violence and Child Protection among Syrian Refugees in Jordan, with a focus on Early Marriage. Interagency report*

Roudi-Fahimi, Farzaneh (2010) *Child Marriage in the Middle East and North Africa*

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