



النهضة العربية للديمقراطية والتنمية  
Arab Renaissance for Democracy & Development



اللجنة الوطنية الأردنية  
لشؤون المرأة  
The Jordanian National  
Commission for Women



Gender  
Justice

# Localizing Research on Domestic Violence

April 2022



With support from  
Finland's development  
cooperation





**ARDD**

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## Acronyms and Abbreviations

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| <b>ARDD</b>     | Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development                         |
| <b>CBO</b>      | Community-based organization   |
| <b>CSO</b>      | Civil society organization   |
| <b>JONAF</b>    | Jordanian National NGO Forum   |
| <b>MoSD</b>     | Ministry of Social Development   |
| <b>NGO</b>      | Non-governmental organization  |
| <b>UN</b>       | United Nations   |
| <b>UN Women</b> | United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women |
| <b>UNDP</b>     | United Nations Development Programme                                   |
| <b>UNICEF</b>   | United Nations Children’s Fund   |
| <b>VAWG</b>     | Violence Against Women and Girls                                       |
| <b>DV</b>       | Domestic Violence  |
| <b>GBV</b>      | Gender-based Violence  |
| <b>KII</b>      | Key Informant Interviews   |
| <b>FGD</b>      | Focus Group Discussions  |

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## Executive Summary

Domestic violence has worsened in Jordan during the COVID-19 pandemic, with organizations specialized in providing services to survivors of gender-based violence reporting an increase in its prevalence and more limited access to services due to restrictions of movement and measures imposed by the pandemic. This led to the need to develop local capacity to respond to domestic violence. The research adopted a bottom-up approach to understand the local communities' views on gender-based violence and identify key perceptions related to access to services. To gain insight into the community perspectives, ARDD collaborated with civil society organizations from the Jordan National NGO Forum (JONAF) Coalition. JONAF was established in 2016, an initiative of ARDD in collaboration with CSOs, CBOs, experts, and media activists from different regions of the Kingdom. JONAF works to coordinate and lead the national humanitarian response and development efforts in Jordan.

Training sessions involving the 11 civil society organizations from the JONAF to launch this research and build common understanding on gender-based violence and how to address it. The methodology of the research followed a holistic approach consisting of a desk review that informed the development of the quantitative and qualitative data collection tools. The civil society organizations carried out 350 surveys, 30 focus group discussions, and 45 key informant interviews. The sample covered the Northern, Southern, and Central regions of Jordan. The key areas that the research explores are:

1. What are the community's perspectives on gender-based violence?
2. From a local perspective, what are the barriers to accessing services?
3. What can be done to improve the current support mechanisms for survivors of violence against women?

The main conclusions and recommendation of this process are as follows:

### **Raising awareness about and building trust in services providers**

Inadequate knowledge of service providers' policies and procedures discourages victims from filing complaints. Families may know about the Family Protection Department, but are often unaware of the services the department and local civil society organizations provide, or of their role in protecting victims of domestic violence. By collaborating with CSOs, the FPD will be able to expand awareness about its work and enable access to its services to a broader region, so CSOs can refer cases to the FPD, as well as equip FPD with communication material that helps it reach local communities.

Misconceptions and some negative perceptions concerning the FPD were voiced, from respondents who believe that the department does not respect confidentiality and does not offer proper protection to victims. Responses also showed that stereotypes and cultural misconceptions, shared by all stakeholders, including services providers, families and those who offer close support to victims, limit victims' attempts to seek out the department's services.

Services providers, and particularly the FPD, need to build trust in their services, and make

their procedures and principles known. Victims of domestic violence should be able to file complaints safely and in an atmosphere of trust. FPD and other services providers should make their working mechanism, including the complaint filing process, known and their staff must adhere to it to create a secure environment. If trust is built and confidentiality is ensured, women will be encouraged to speak about their cases and more victims will trust the quality of services they may seek. Respondents also highlighted fear of retaliation as a hindrance to reporting domestic violence and, which makes it incumbent on the FPD, specifically, to improve its protection services, ensure confidentiality, and train better its staff working in outside of Amman.

### **Understanding the needs of victims of domestic violence and working toward economic empowerment as a risk-mitigating measure**

Respondents highlighted that it is important that the PFD and civil society organizations that assist domestic violence survivors better understand the needs of survivors. Based on the locals' perspective, the key needs identified were better psychological support through boosting the FPD capacity and that of other services providers through training of staff and or assigning psychologists to render services. Economic empowerment through provision of job opportunities and cash assistance was repeatedly highlighted and could be a way of addressing the unequal power structure within families, which limits women's decision-making process. Economic empowerment needs to be prioritized to preclude husbands and male members of the family from controlling women's income. Furthermore, several communities emphasized the importance of assisting survivors of domestic violence with legal advice and support, mainly in cases of divorce or custody disputes.

Responses also showed that not all forms of violence are acknowledged as such, with only physical violence seen in need of response and services. It was even mentioned that some women might "over-react" and endanger the family cohesion by complaining. It was also highlighted that fear and the stigma of divorce limits the victims' options.

It is necessary, therefore, to continue raising awareness about domestic violence, its types, its impact, its roots causes, and for gender justice to improve its response to the needs of survivors of domestic violence, since community and family perspectives continue to channel conservative views that limit survivors' chances of escaping the pervasive circle of the violence.

### **Building a network to empower women to fight against GBV**

The topic of domestic violence continues to be perceived as too sensitive in Jordanian society, and women refrain from reporting it due to factors such as societal norms, fear of retaliation, maintaining family cohesion, and economic challenges. To maintain confidentiality and not to endanger the cohesion of their families, respondents highlighted that survivor turn to their family members for assistance and support.

Establishing a network that empowers women to fight against GBV would create a safe and comfortable environment in which women can discuss GBV and support each other. Moreover, the network could serve as a platform for women to discuss all issues related to domestic violence, ways to prevent it and lower the risk of it happening in a trusted and safe environment.

These networks need to be established at local level and start conversation on support, access to services, prevention, and risk mitigation based on the reality of local survivors. The networks can connect with national organizations and JONAF in an ideal structure that would help raise awareness about women’s rights and advocate for gender justice, enforcement of laws and furthering equality, to address the root causes of domestic violence and improve access to services by protecting the rights of women, including mothers who often put up with domestic violence for fear of losing the custody of their children.

## Introduction

Domestic violence has been a prominent issue in Jordan long before the COVID-19 pandemic. It has been the most prevalent form of violence against women. And since domestic violence is prevalent in all communities and regions, it is a global concern. COVID-19 caused a 33 percent increase in domestic violence cases in Jordan.. Gender-based violence has intensified as a consequence of the strict lockdowns and curfews imposed by the government. COVID-19 restrictions have had a significant impact on the economic health of households across Jordan, where many families’ sources of income were impacted.

The Jordanian framework for protecting families from domestic violence defines domestic violence as ”any act or omission taken by a family member to cause physical or mental harm to other member/s in the same family.” (The National Council for Family Affairs, 2016) Article 1 of the 1993 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women defines violence against women as “any act of gender-based violence that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, such as threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether committed in public or in private.” (UN, 1993)

Women’s rights are infringed upon by domestic violence, which is committed primarily by intimate partners. (WHO, 2021) Gender inequalities are a major cause of this global public health and clinical health problem. (Ibid) The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that approximately a third (27%) of all women between the ages of 15 and 49 who are in a relationship have experienced physical and/or sexual violence at the hands of their intimate partners. (Ibid)

In Jordan, most research on domestic violence is conducted via a top-down approach, with international or national actors (generally at government level) leading the research. As a consequence, local community perspectives are often neglected or unheard, which makes it necessary to adopt a bottom-up approach that takes into account locals’ opinions on domestic violence. Such approach would make it possible to understand the local communities’ views on gender-based violence and identify key issues common to these communities. This approach makes several questions necessary.

1. What are the community’s perspectives on gender-based violence?
4. From a local perspective, what are the barriers to accessing services?
5. What can be done to improve the current support mechanisms for survivors of violence against women?

To achieve a bottom-up approach, ARDD worked with civil society organizations members of the JONAF coalition who work directly with women. JONAF was established in 2016, in an initiative by ARDD in collaboration with CSOs, CBOs, experts, and media activists from different regions of the Kingdom. JONAF works in tandem with government officials and local and country-wide decision makers to coordinate and lead the national humanitarian response and development efforts in Jordan. JONAF has four key areas of work which are: Localization, Decentralization, Emergency Response, and UN Security Council Resolution 1325. Currently, JONAF consists of 50 member organizations from across the Kingdom, including four CSOs with observer status.

The purpose of this report is to examine domestic violence from the community perspective, following an opinion-based approach. Local community perceptions and attitudes about violence against women and girls are explored in this report that focuses on societal awareness, attitudes, and responses to gender-based violence. To delve into the report's objective a localized approach was adopted, whereby ARDD worked on building the capacity of 11 civil society organizations (CSOs) members of the JONAF coalition through online training/webinars on methods and techniques of collecting data. To gather local insight, CSOs conducted surveys, key informant interviews, and focus groups with their communities. The purpose of the training was to empower CSOs to conduct their own research on topics that concern their communities. The objective of the research is to:

1. Enable local CBOs/ CSOs to identify diverse types of domestic violence in their communities.
2. Allow Local CBOs/ CSOs to build awareness on the signs and effects of Domestic Violence against Women
3. Provide a space for Local CBOs and CSOs to develop community-owned prevention and responses mechanisms to improve support to VAWG survivors.

## Methodology

The report adopts a holistic methodology, including a desk review that incorporates the latest information and statistics from national, local, and international reports, such as national surveys, Jordan Population and Family Health Survey (2017-2018) as well as local and international reports and assessments on violence against women. Based on the desk review, a set of accessible research tools were designed for the use of CSOs to contribute data from their communities to the discourse, and several discussions and tests were held internally and with participating CSOs to finalize the tools. Once the tools were established, the CSOs were invited to attend online training sessions (webinars) to familiarize themselves with the research tools and learn best practices. The holistic methodology consists of 350 quantitative surveys and qualitative data (30 FGD, 45 KII ), to map the prevalence of and work done regarding domestic violence in Jordan and the wider region. The sample chosen covered the three main regions of the country (north, south, and central), both rural and urban areas. Eight governorates were canvassed: Irbid and Ma'raq, in the north, Amman, Madaba and Balqa, in the center, and Karak, Tafleeh and Ma'an, in the south (see Figure 1).

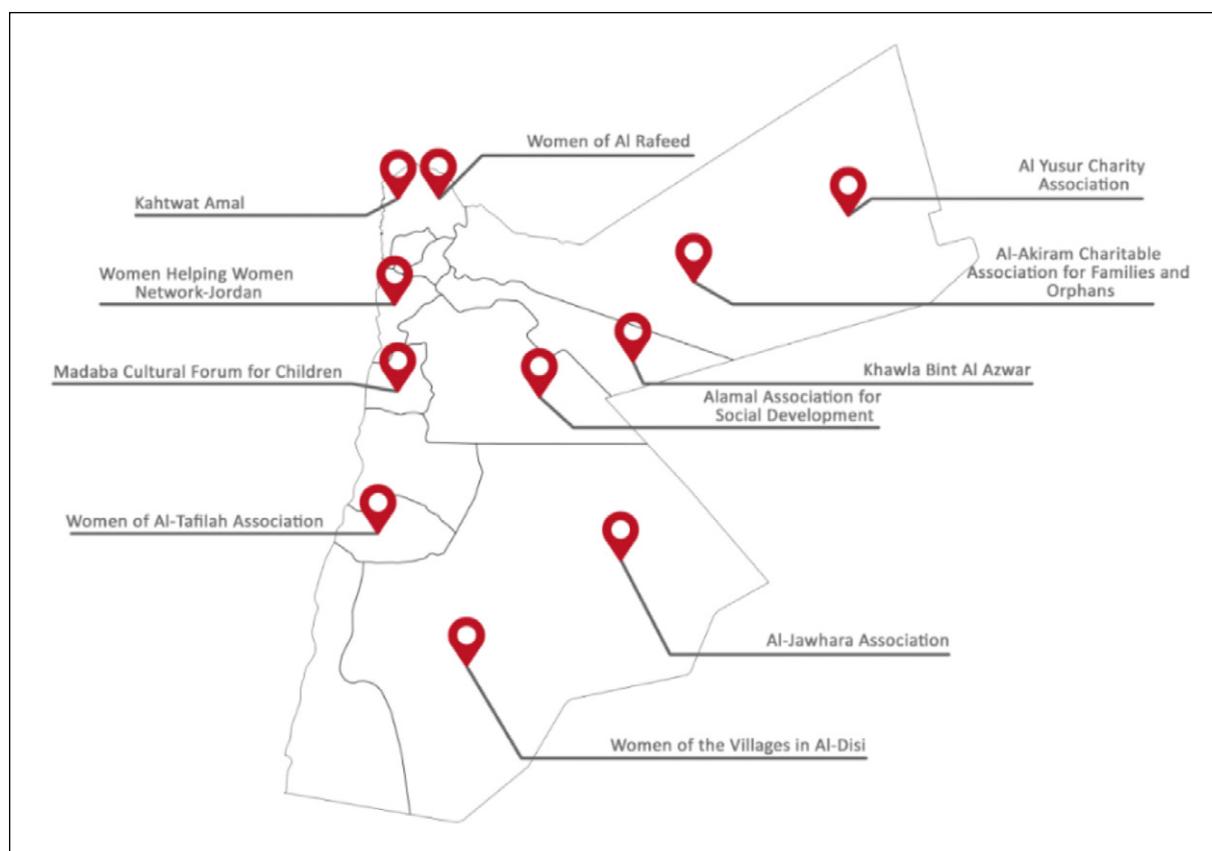


Figure 1: Geographic Distribution of Participating CSOs

## Survey

The survey covered several topics relevant to the research and was designed taking into consideration the sensitivities of discussing domestic violence. The first section screened for demographics to disaggregate data in the analysis process. The second section covered community awareness about GBV, including respondents' perception of the frequency of domestic abuse, survivors' reactions, responses to domestic violence, and the main drivers of domestic violence. The third section documented cases of domestic violence in which participants were asked to share any experience they had had since they were 15 years old and the way they handled it, if applicable. The fourth section presented multiple scenarios that a woman might find herself in and asked the participants how they would react. The final section requested participants to communicate their levels of awareness about the role of reporting mechanisms and of organizations that deal with domestic violence, as well as their opinion on the most-needed training for SGBV survivors.

Each CSO was required to conduct 30 surveys of women aged 15-49 from their communities, half of them Jordanians and half of other nationalities. The survey was designed and conducted using KoBo Toolbox, and data collected by each CSO, and participant information received over the phone or through face-to-face interviews. In total, the CSOs collected 350 survey responses.

## **Focus group discussions and key informant interviews**

CSOs were equipped with the relevant skills and tools to conduct qualitative interviews. CSOs from the JONAF coalition working with women were selected to conduct these focus groups and key informant interviews.

### ***Focus group discussions***

The focus group discussion (FGD) guide included questions on the definition of domestic violence, drivers of such violence, the impact of it and who is affected, the reasons that prevent women from reporting, the relevance of reporting, the experience of reporting or reaching out for help, and alternative interventions. CSOs were tasked with conducting three FGDs (a total of 30 FGDs were conducted) with the following demographics:

- Married women in their 30s or 40s with children
- Single girls aged 15-25 years old
- Married men in their 30s or 40s with children
- Married women and married men in their 30s or 40s with children
- Women with different levels of education

### ***Key informant interviews***

CSOs were asked to conduct five key informant interviews (a total of 45 KIIs were conducted) with individuals who have experience dealing with domestic violence, including, but not limited to, FPD employees, social workers, community leaders, lawyers, and religious officials. These key informants were asked questions about the most prevalent types of domestic violence, the law enforcement changes, and legal system amendments needed to enhance the efficiency of responses to domestic violence, and methods to tackle domestic violence at community and individual level.

## **Limitations of the research**

During the data collection process, several issues were raised by CSOs. The most prominent challenge was gaining the trust of participants in the survey, as domestic violence is considered a sensitive and private issue. Despite assurances from the data collectors that the participants' anonymity will be preserved and kept confidential in the research, many women were hesitant to complete the survey and may have limited their responses.

On the other hand, the majority of CSOs reported active interaction and vibrant discussions among participants; moreover, participants expressed appreciation for having such an important topic addressed. In some FGDs, participants reported being relieved and satisfied for having discussed and expressed their opinions on domestic violence.

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## Overview of Gender-based Violence in Jordan

The latest Jordan Population and Family Health Survey, of 2017, which was conducted at national level with 14,689 ever-married women aged 15-49, that 21% of ever-married Jordanian women have experienced violence since age 15, while 2% experienced it during pregnancy. (JPFHS, 2019) According to the JPFHS 2017-18 surveys, the percentage of ever-married women who have experienced physical violence since age 15 was 32% in 2007 and 34% in 2012. Furthermore, fewer women reported experiencing physical violence during their pregnancy (2%) in 2017-18, compared to 5%-7% in earlier surveys.

### The impact of COVID-19 on gender-based violence

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on society and increased tensions at home, leading to growing number of cases of domestic violence. The preventive measures taken to deal with COVID-19 forcibly kept women locked in with their abusers. In the first month the nationwide curfew was imposed, 1,534 cases of domestic violence were reported, a 33% increase over the same period of the year before, the FPD Directorate of the reported in an interview with Al Mamlaka TV. In addition, Jordan witnessed nine femicides since the beginning of 2020, while it recorded six femicides in 2019 (Social and Economic Council and UN Women, 2020).

The Center for Strategic Studies at the University of Jordan conducted a survey during the lockdown period; 58% of the sample surveyed reported an increase in domestic violence cases (62% of women, compared to 54% of men). While 23% of the sample stated that they witnessed domestic violence during the lockdown, most of those incidents involved verbal violence, while 29% stated that they had witnessed increased violence in the neighborhood, and among relatives and friends.

### National Jordanian framework for protection from domestic violence

In 2005, the National Framework for Family Protection organized is the first response to gender-based violence which was established under the umbrella of the NCFV "The National Framework aims to develop a flexible and efficient working approach for various involved stakeholders to ensure efficient responsiveness to the needs of survivors of violence." (UN, 2008) The Jordanian response focuses on coordinating the work of the ministries of education, health, and social development, and defines procedures and protocols for protecting survivors of violence.

Domestic violence in Jordan is addressed in several pieces of legislation. For example, in the Penal Code act No. 16, of 1960, there is direct and indirect reference to domestic violence "The Penal Code criminalizes acts constituting sexual and physical violence, injury to reputation" (United Nations Development Program, 2018), *and forms of harassment against women.* " *Domestic Violence Law No. (15)* was promulgated on April 27, 2017, and states: "The law requires the Family Protection Department to settle disputes in misdemeanor cases filed by survivors, and enables courts to impose protective measures and protection orders." (Ibid); it replaced the previous Law on Protection from Domestic Violence No. 6 of 2008.

Various reforms must be made by Jordan to assist and protect women who are at risk of violence and harassment. It is imperative that the Jordanian parliament enact laws and legislation that will guarantee the safety, dignity, and respect of all women, as well as laws that mete out strict penalties for abusers. Human rights organizations must be trained to deal with cases of violence and provide adequate protection for the survivors. Media institutions must implement training programs to educate society, as well as revise the media discourse on violence against women. Research and studies should be conducted to accurately understand its causes and societal implications. Furthermore, the role of the judiciary in resolving conflicts arising from domestic violence by following up on settlements, must be enhanced, rather than following administrative procedures, and strengthening protection orders.

**The main national policies relevant to gender-based violence (GBV) are:**

- Comprehensive National Human Rights Plan (2016–2025)
- National Strategy for Women in Jordan (2013–2017) National Framework for Family Protection (2016)
- National Strategic Plan for Protection against Family Violence (2005–2009)
- Communication Strategy on Gender-based Violence (2016–2025)
- National Strategy and Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking (2010–2012)
- National Jordanian Strategy for the Elderly (2018–2022)
- National Plan for the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2017)

The second objective of the Third Pillar of the Comprehensive National Human Rights Plan (2016–2025) is to promote and protect women’s rights to ensure justice and equal opportunities. Key activities listed in the plan for achieving this objective are:

- Review laws related to women’s rights and propose amendments in a participatory framework.
- Ascertain the extent of the implementation of the legislation related to women’s rights in public and private sector institutions.
- Provide a safe environment for women to live a stable life in the family, work, and society.
- Conduct a comprehensive revision of national plans, strategies, and programs targeting their development and implementation to ensure women’s enjoyment of rights.
- Draft national policies that empower women and take into account financial aspects within the general budget law.
- Organize capacity-building programs for governmental and non-governmental institutions regarding women’s rights.

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## Types and frequencies of domestic violence in Jordan

According to the JPFHS 2017 survey, around a quarter (26%) of ever-married women aged 15-49 experienced spousal physical, sexual, or emotional violence. Emotional violence is the most prominent case, being reported by approximately 21% of the surveyed women, whereas 18% say they experienced physical violence, and 5% sexual violence. When asked whether they had suffered physical injuries as a result of spousal violence, 24% of ever-married women reported physical or sexual injuries, while 22% reported cuts, bruises, or aches, and 8% reported eye injuries, sprains, dislocations or burns. (JPFHS, 2017)

Globally, various studies attribute gender-based violence and intimate partner violence to demographic factors. Demographics that are correlated to partner violence are fragile household economic status, employment or income level, level of education, location of residence, marriage age, marital status, gender inequities, non-participatory decision-making mechanisms, and previous history of intimate partner violence survivorization. A study by M. Al Nsour conducted in 2009 in Jordan reveals that one-third of women over the age of 35 justify physical violence. Echoing the same findings, the JPFHS reports that women aged 15-19 are more tolerant of physical violence than older women (63% versus 45%-47%).

Both studies found that unemployed women are more likely to justify physical violence than working women, and household wealth is inversely proportional with giving justification to physical violence. For example, 60% of women in the poorest quintile agree that physical violence is justified for some reason, compared to 31% of women in the wealthiest quintile (Mohannad Al Nsour et. al, 2009; JPFHS, 2017). The justification of violence declines as a woman's education level increases.

According to the National Survey, which assesses characteristics associated with experiencing physical violence, urban women are slightly more likely (21%) to have experienced physical violence since age 15 than rural women (19%). Moreover, more women in the Central regions (24%) reported experiencing physical violence since age 15 than women in the Northern (18%) and Southern (12%) regions. Regarding spousal sexual violence, women in the Southern regions (2%) are less likely than women in the Northern (5%) and Central (6%) regions to experience this type of violence.

Higher education levels among women reduce the likelihood of them being subject to physical violence. A significant difference is evident regarding physical violence amongst women with an elementary level of education (8%), in comparison to those with secondary education (4%). There is also a connection between marital status and physical violence, in which divorced/separated or widowed women are more likely to have been subject to physical violence. In addition, formerly married women (14%) are more likely to report spousal sexual violence than currently married women (5%). (Ibid)

In Jordan, domestic murders increased by 300% between 2018 and 2019, with seven cases in 2018 and 22 in 2019. The Ministry of Social Development's women shelters provided assistance to only 810 of the 6,965 women who were survivors of violence. According to the Public Security Directorate's statistical crime report, 26,521 crimes were committed in 2019, 7.57% more than in 2018, when 24,654 crimes were committed. (Euromed, 2020)

## Care and Support for Women Facing Gender-Based Violence

According to the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor for 2019, only 19% of ever-married women who experienced any type of spousal physical or sexual violence sought help, and only 3% filed a complaint. Jordan recorded 21 domestic murders (of women) in 2019; 71.1% of women experienced physical violence from their current husbands and 15.1% of married women had experienced violence from their previous husbands; 25.9% of married women between the ages of 14 and 49 had experienced physical, sexual, or emotional violence, and 24% of women who had faced violence were injured as a result; 26 out of 100 women experienced physical, sexual, or emotional violence from their husbands.

The report revealed that 13.3% of girls had experienced physical violence from their brothers, and 11.9% from their fathers. In the 2018 JPFHS survey, currently married women (18%) were less likely to seek help than formerly married women (24%). In terms of geographical distribution, women in the Southern regions (15%) were less likely to seek help compared to women in the Northern regions (23%) and women in the Central regions (18%).

The most common source for help for sexually and physically violated women were their own families (77%). Other sources were their husbands' families (21%), neighbors (6%) and social work organizations (6%). On the other hand, 3% or less of women suffering domestic violence seek help from services providers such as doctors/medical personnel, lawyers, and the police.

There are two fundamental principles to women-centered care: rights-based approach, which ensures respect for women's rights within international human rights agreements; gender sensitivity and equality, by being aware of power differences between men and women and how these factors into their mutual behavior.

Ensuring equal healthcare treatment for both men and women, while considering women's specific health needs is essential. Violence against women may arise from the unequal levels of power enjoyed by women and men. Women often have less agency and freedom than men, including less access to resources, be they financial or informational, and do not always have the freedom to make their own decisions. This inequality in power, often a matter of culture, shame and women's low self-esteem may sometimes be the reasons for violence against women. While women might seek health care, many will not disclose who the perpetrator of the act of violence against them is due to shame, fear of being judged, or fear of their partner.

First-line providers of emotional and physical support and care should do so without encroaching on women's privacy. First-line support is often the most essential care that can be provided. While it might be all the aid that one can provide, it can greatly help those seeking it.

There are five main tasks in first-line support: listen with empathy and without judgment; inquire about the women's needs and concerns; validate their experience by showing that you understand and believe them; discuss a plan for protection in case of future violence and harm; provide support and raise awareness about the social support services available.

## Referral mechanisms of GBV survivors and protection facilities

There are entities, programs and functions in place to protect women facing violence in Jordan, such as the Family Protection Department centers, spread around the country, including two centers in Syrian refugee camps. The women's protection system at government level enables filing complaints, offering judicial and social protection, and offering shelter at the Ministry of Social Development. While the government does undertake such actions, it needs immense advancement and development for it to become more effective.

Complaints may be filed through the PSD website form or by contacting authorities (the police). These services are also offered by FPJD through their social media platforms (Facebook Messenger, Instagram, WhatsApp), official E-mail, main FPJD website, and the 911 mobile application. Complaints may be also filed through relevant stakeholders as seen in table 1.1. Among the services provided by these stakeholders: receiving and reporting cases, referring cases, psychosocial and legal services, and providing shelter.

### Stakeholders:

- Juveniles and Family protection departments, healthcare centers, mental health, psychosocial support, and rehabilitation centers.
- Family Protection Directorate
- Public Security Directorate
- Ministry of Social Development's Women Shelters
- Dar Amaneh (Safe houses for women)
- Dar Karameh/ human trafficking survivors
- Dar Al Wifaq/ Irbid and Amman
- Higher Council for family affairs
- The Ministerial Committee for Women Empowerment
- Arab women organization

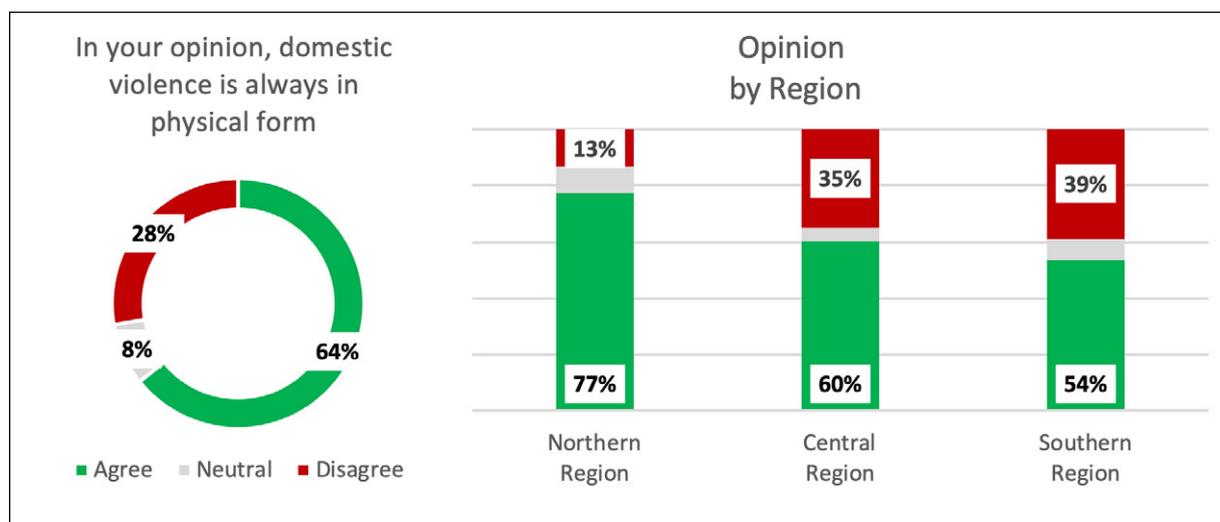
## Exploring Community Perceptions on Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is a prominent issue in Jordan. Anybody may be victim of domestic violence regardless of age, race, gender, sexual orientation, belief or class. The study found that the majority of the participants (87%) reported that domestic violence is a prominent issue in Jordan, and a similar percentage (90%) agreed with the statement that anyone can be subject to domestic violence, regardless of their background. The primary causes of domestic violence are personal habits and traditions and the low economic status of a family. Approximately, two-thirds of the participants attributed domestic violence to tradition and a similar percentage prioritized

the low economic status of a family as a key factor. A deeper analysis uncovered that participants from the Northern governorates were more likely to view personal habits and traditions as the main driver of domestic violence, whereas participants from the Southern governorates were more likely to consider the low economic status of the family as the top cause.

### Lack of awareness about what constitutes domestic violence

According to The National Council for Family Affairs 2016, domestic violence can be physical or/and mental harm. However, it seems that there is a lack of awareness about what constitutes domestic violence, with 64% of the participants believing that domestic violence always manifests physically (e.g., shoving, punching, slapping or hitting). This indicates that women in Jordan are not aware that mental harm qualifies as domestic violence, they might not be aware that they are subject to mental forms of domestic violence. The Northern Communities showed higher levels of awareness about what constitutes domestic violence, while those residing in the southern regions showed lower levels of awareness. During a discussion with the participating CSOs, it was suggested that these findings reflect the communities’ focus on physical violence as the most direct and tangible form of violence.



Q. In your opinion, domestic violence is always in physical form such as shoving, punching, slapping, or hitting

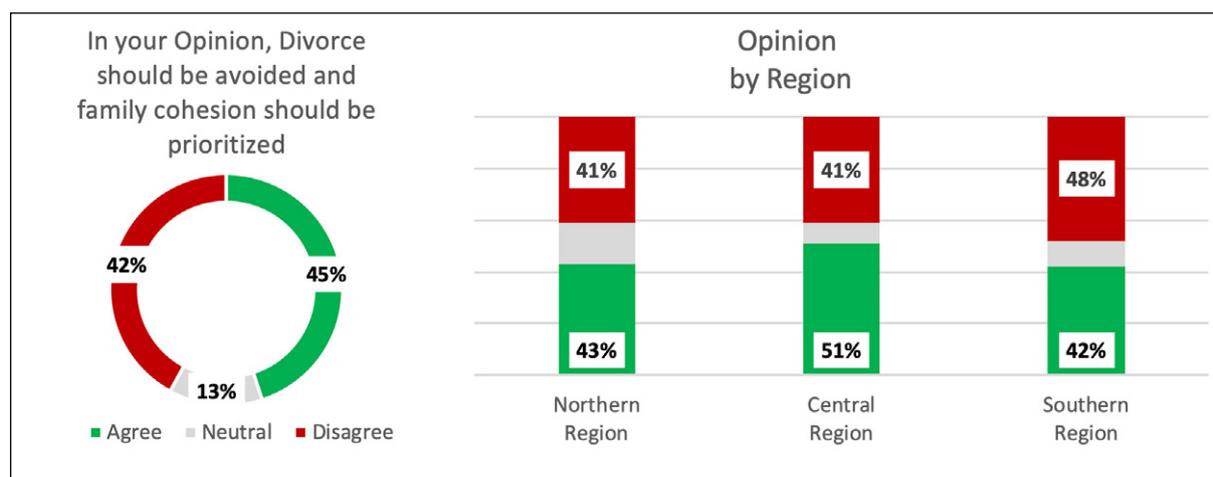
### Misconceptions about classifications of GBV

The trivialization of mild and moderate cases of domestic violence is evident within the communities. Half of the participants claimed that not all classifications of violence (mild, moderate, severe) are equal in their influence. Among those who said that not all forms of violence have an equal impact, around half (49%) said that ignoring mild and moderate levels of violence would reduce violence over time. This misperception can prompt further harm and violence towards women as the situations are neglected. However, a significant number of individ-

uals are aware that all classifications of violence have an equal impact. Education proved to increase awareness about the need to reject and take action against all acts of violence; the higher the level of education the higher the awareness that no act of violence should be ignored. Income is another factor impacting awareness levels, as women in the lower social-economic bracket were more likely to ignore mild or moderate cases of violence. Furthermore, refugee communities were also slightly more likely to ignore mild or moderate cases of violence.

### The social dilemma of divorce and family cohesion in Jordan

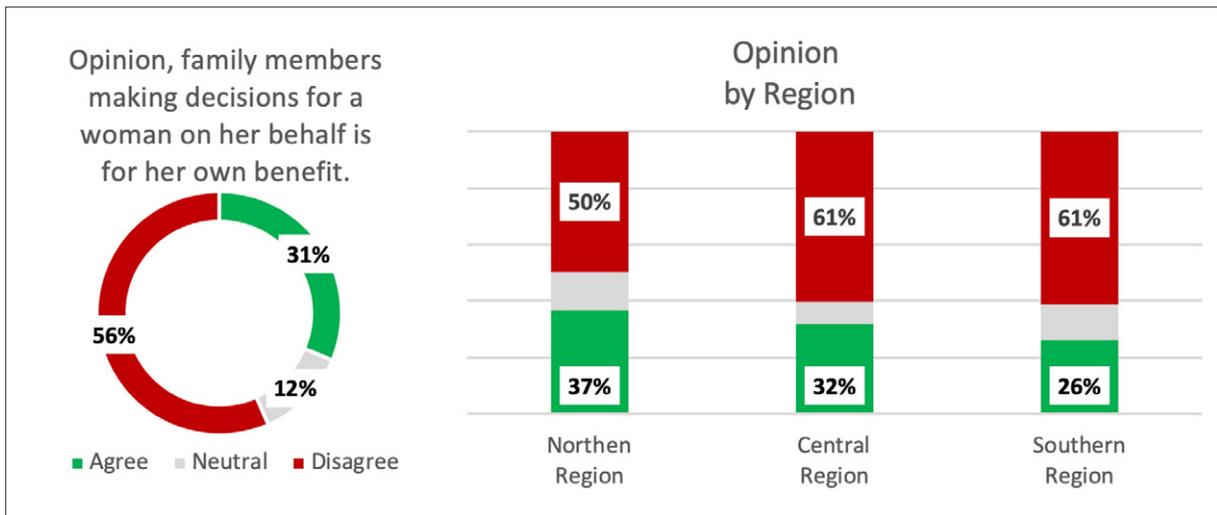
The generalized belief in Jordan is that divorce is not an option, even in cases of domestic violence. This is driven by the fact that “divorce should always be avoided and family cohesion should be prioritized, regardless of the impact of violence on women”, as stated by one of the respondents. Economic and social factors play a vital role in resorting to divorce in cases of domestic violence. “Women stay in abusive relationships because of fear of economic and social problems after separation or divorce.” (Shackelford, 2021) The survey uncovered that two out of every five women would avoid divorce to maintain their family’s cohesion. This was more apparent in the central regions of the country.



Q. In your opinion, divorce should always be avoided and family cohesion should be prioritized regardless of the impact of violence on women.

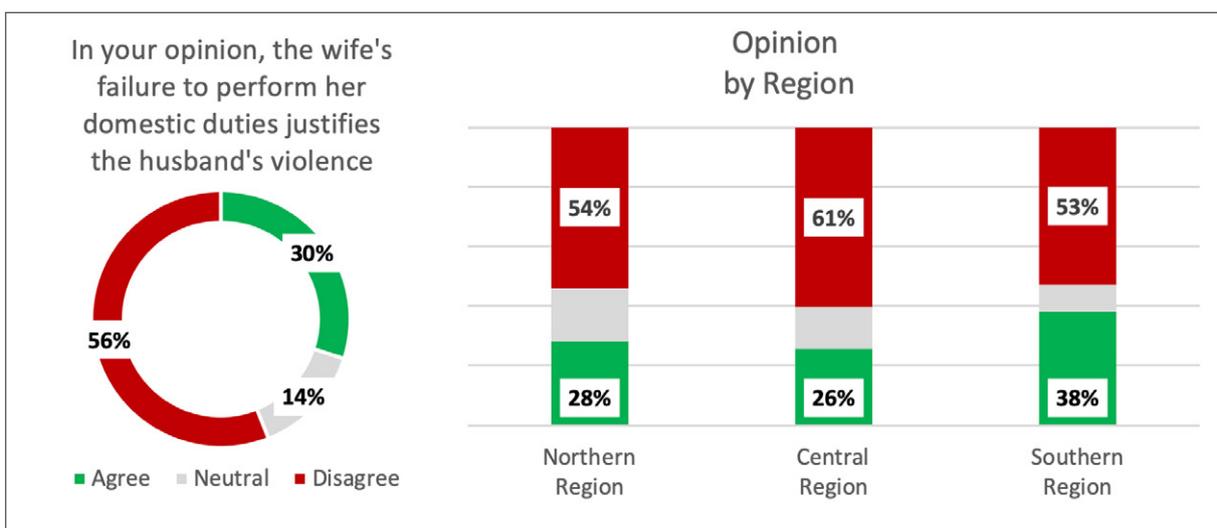
### Unequal household power dynamic a driver to GBV

Domestic violence often occurs when there is an unequal power dynamic in families. The participants were presented with the statement “In your opinion, family members making decisions for a woman on her behalf is to her benefit”, about one-third of the sample agreed with the statement, whereas over a half disagreed with it. Noticeable differences were discerned at the community level; the majority of participants in the southern region (61%) disagreed with the statement, whereas participants from the Northern regions showed slightly higher levels of acceptance towards family members making decisions on their behalf (37%).



Q. In your opinion, family members (parents, husband, brothers...) making decisions for a woman on her behalf is for her own benefit.

Women were asked if they believed that a wife’s failure to perform domestic duties justifies violence perpetrated by the husband. The majority of the women (56%) do not agree that domestic violence is justifiable in cases where household duties are not performed. A common misperception is evident within the southern communities, where 38 percent of individuals believe that domestic violence is justifiable in cases of neglect of domestic duties. Gender-based violence is often justified in many cultures when women do not follow traditional gender roles or norms. (Heise and Ellsberg, 2001)



Q. In your opinion, the wife’s failure to perform her domestic duties or some of them justifies the husband some forms

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## **Denial of reality**

Globally, there is a perception that women can “overreact” to domestic violence or exaggerate it to gain the sympathy of others. According to Sahu 2020, women are often accused of overreacting by the community and judicial systems. This misperception is evident in the Jordanian context but should not be generalized. Even a significant number of women (34%) agreed that women tend to overreact to domestic violence to gain sympathy. However, a larger number disagreed with the statement (43%). Denial of reality, which happens when a woman is criticized and accused of being too sensitive or overreacting, makes her experience ignored and classified as illogical or untrue. (Coates and Paludi, 2011)

## **Cases of domestic violence are preferably resolved behind closed doors (scenario analysis)**

To understand participants’ responses to different cases of domestic violence, the survey included a section that presented situations that women might potentially find themselves in. Participants were then asked to choose the top three responses they might give. The options provided were informed by literature and interviews with experts and CSOs.

***Scenario 1: Your aggressor (husband) pushed you and caused your injuries because you did not have lunch ready on time.***

The answers showed that survivors of domestic violence would rather deal with cases of domestic violence behind closed doors, with only family members involved, rather than report the case to authorities. Participants’ choices involved requesting help from their family members (65%), from their husbands’ family members (44%). In which 39 % of women preferred discussing the issue with the aggressor to agree and reach a permanent solution. Only a small number (18%) of participants said they would seek support from the Family Protection Department. These responses remained consistent across surveyed communities, yet some slight differences appeared in the central region of Jordan as individuals were more likely to consult/confide in their friends for support.

***Scenario 2: Your aggressor verbally assaulted you more than once, causing you a lot of psychological pain and sadness.***

The second scenario got reactions similar to those in the first scenario, with individuals requesting help from either their family (57%) or their husband’s family (45%). Individuals were also likely to discuss the issue with the aggressor to agree and reach a permanent solution to the problem (38%). Unlike in the first scenario, individuals in the second tended to perceive verbal violence as subjacent to physical violence, and so were less likely to report the issue to authorities and would rather not take any action (16%).

***Scenario 3: Your husband has forced you to hand over your entire monthly salary to pay off his debts over a long period of time, and he does not accept that you keep part of it.***

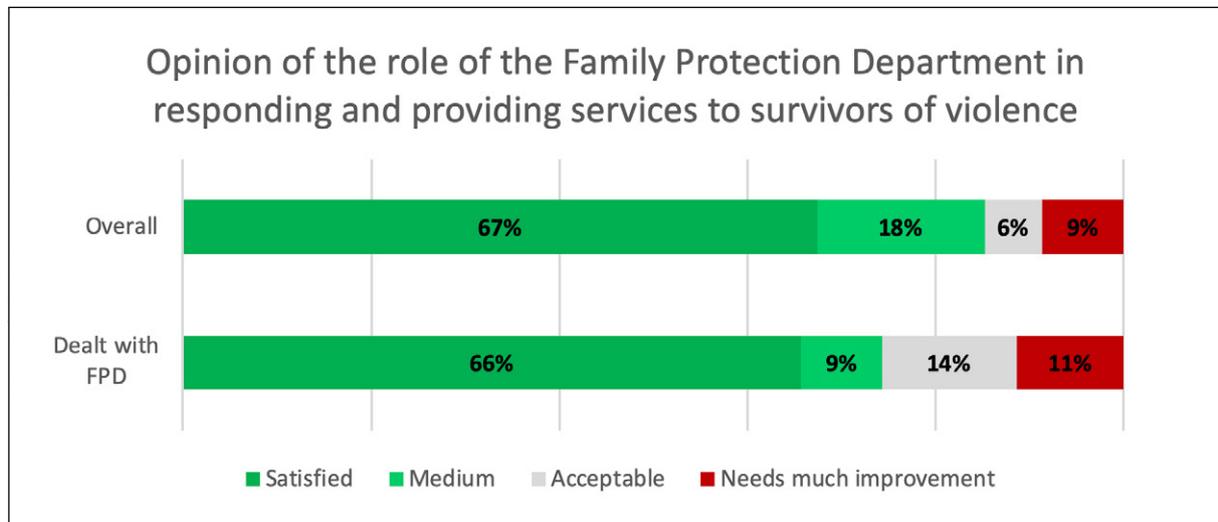
A trend was noticed across all three scenarios in which individuals tend to try to resolve issues internally, in the presence of their families, before any escalation and animosity. A quarter of the participants would give their salary to their husbands without taking any action (26%). On the other hand, three quarters (75.71%) chose to refuse the husband’s request, rallying the help of their families or their husbands’ families on the matter. A significant portion (18%) would file a complaint to the Family Protection Department in such scenario.

## Perception on ease of access to the Family Protection Department

### Familiarity with the mandate of the Family Protection Department

The nature of the work of the Family Protection Department tends to be fairly known to the respondents, with two-thirds (65.71%) of the communities having some level of knowledge on the nature of the work. High levels of familiarity were reported by participants residing in governorates of the Central region of Jordan. Despite the fact that more than seven in every 10 individuals are familiar with the work of the Family Protection Department, only 15.22% of the sample ever tried to deal with it. This indicates the need for department to educate and inform locals with low familiarity levels on the nature of its work.

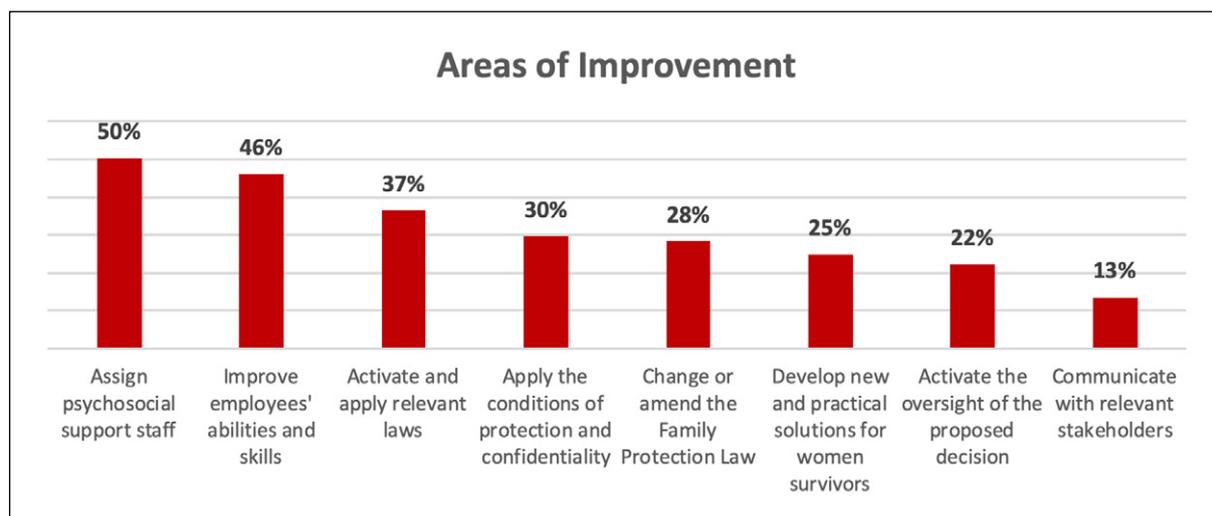
### Opinions on the role of FPD



Q. What is your opinion on the role of the Family Protection Department in responding and providing services to survivors of violence?

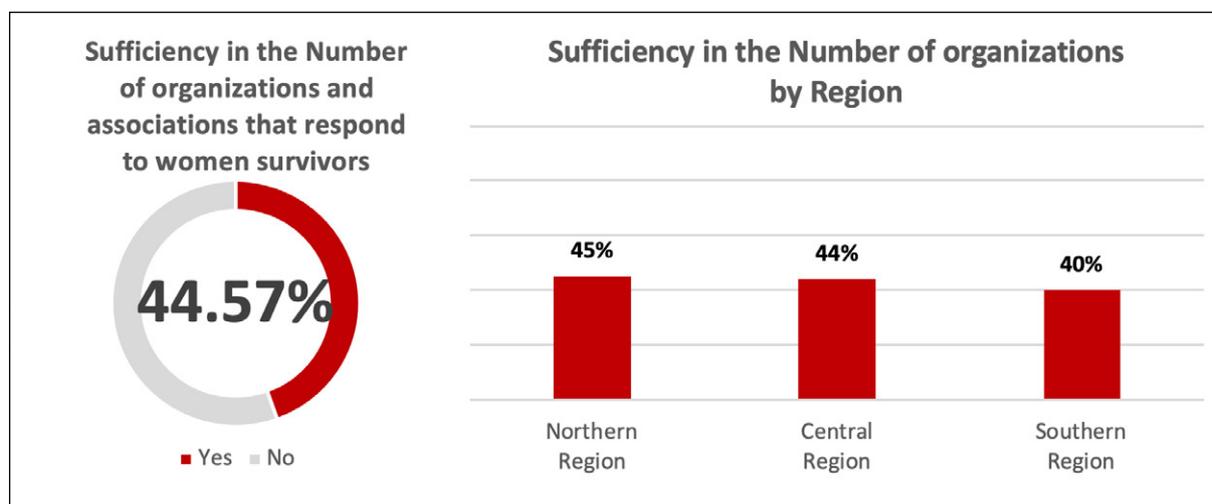
To entice satisfaction with the role of the FPD in responding and providing services to survivors of violence, sampled individuals suggested several improvements, mainly focused on human capacity building. Most required improvement was assigning psychosocial support staff (50%), followed by improving employees’ abilities and skills (46%). Other areas of improvement were law enforcement, by activating and applying relevant laws (36%), applying the conditions of

protection and confidentiality (29%), changing or amending the Family Protection Law (28%). A participant in the webinar said she was satisfied with the current law, but considers its application inefficient.



Q. In your opinion, what are the areas that need improvement?

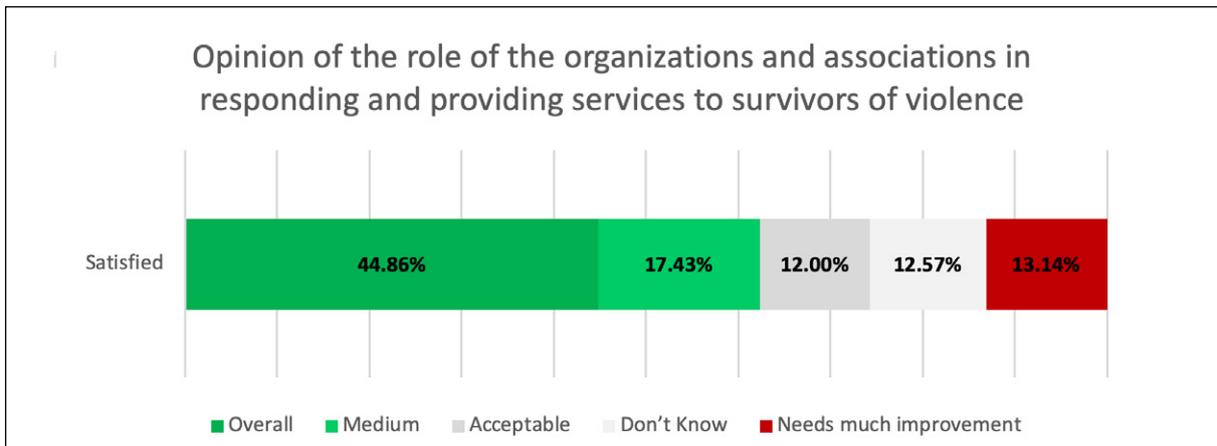
At community level, differences regarding the areas of improvement were noticed; these differences can be attributed to the different needs of each community as well as to the performance of the servicing center. While eight communities suggested assigning and improving the employees' capacities at the FPD as a first priority, which aligns with the overall average, some communities prioritized different improvements. However, communities in the Northern regions of Jordan focused mainly on activating and applying relevant laws, and providing a practical alternative for survivors.



Q. In your opinion, are the number of organizations and associations that respond to women survivors sufficient?

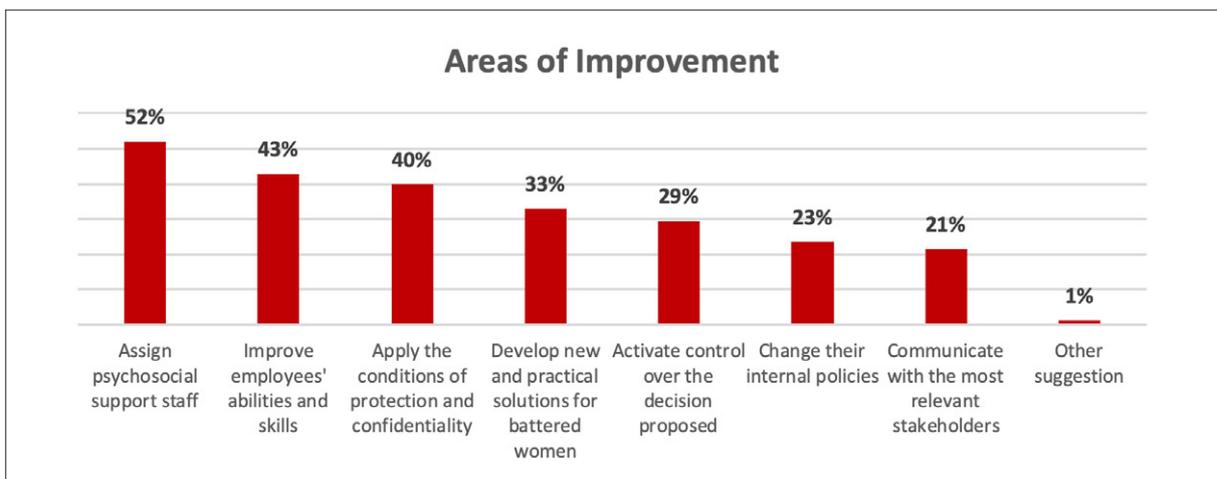
### Opinions on the role of organizations and associations

Satisfaction with response and provision of services to survivors of violence by organizations and associations is considerably low, with lower than half of the participants (45%) satisfied. Participants from the Central regions of Jordan tend to show higher satisfaction levels vis-à-vis the role of organizations and associations, with 51 percent being satisfied, which is still a low rate of satisfaction. The Northern regions show below-average satisfaction levels, with only 38 percent of participants being satisfied. The poor satisfaction levels can be associated with the lack of awareness of the role of organizations and associations.



Q. What is your opinion on the role of organizations and associations in responding and providing services to survivors of violence?

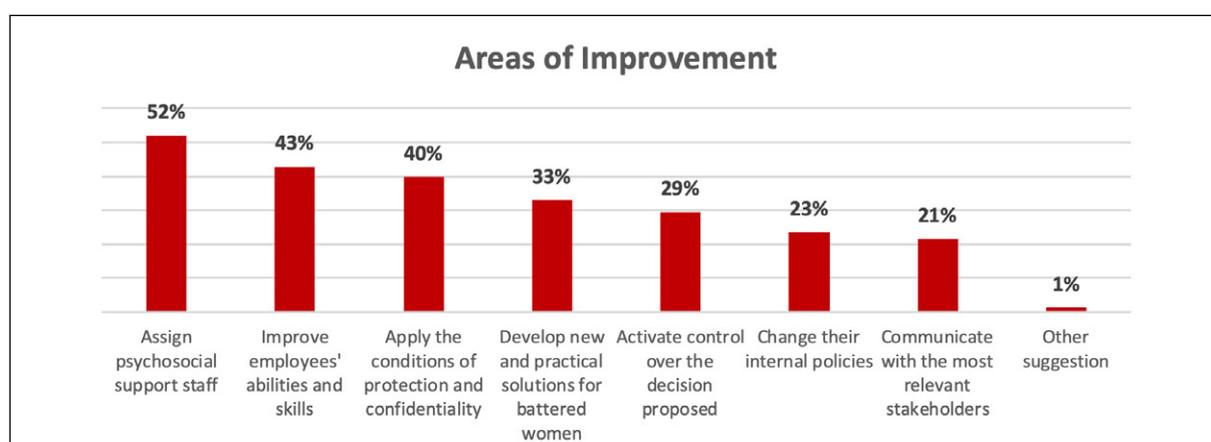
To improve satisfaction levels, the participants' suggestions here were similar to those to improve FPD. The focus was mainly on improving the capacities of the human capital of these associations/organizations, were psychosocial support staff (52%) and improving employees' abilities and skills (42%) were seen as most essential. The participants also prioritized the practical solutions as they suggested applying the conditions of protection and confidentiality (39%) and developing new and practical solutions for women (32%).



Q. Do you have any suggestions to improve their work?

## Addressing the Needs and the Building Capacities of GBV Survivors

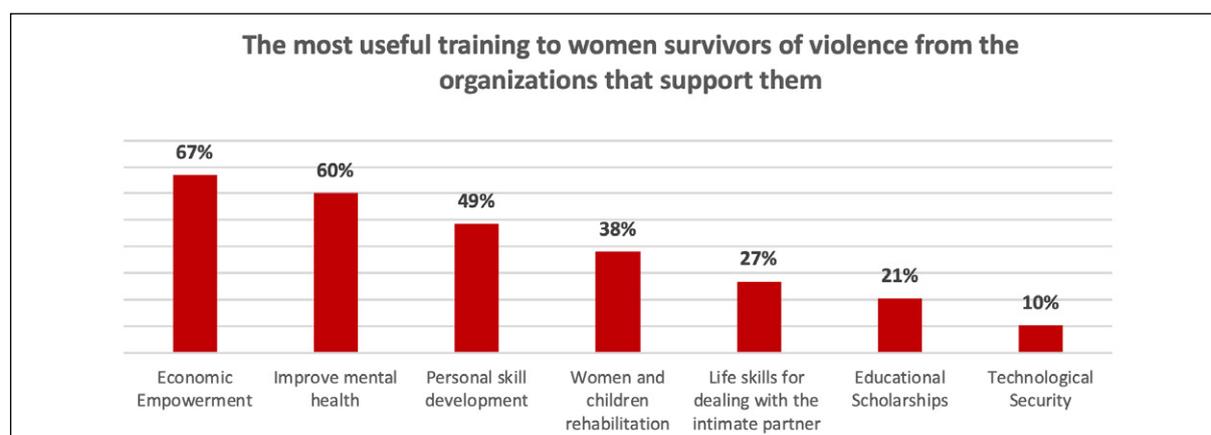
Post the closing of a complaint file, individuals felt that providing economic empowerment would be a key opportunity to support survivors of gender-based violence. The majority of participants backed up provision of job opportunities (80%) and cash aid (37%). Participants also endorsed provision of security and protection, with around half of the participants (43%) asking for the provision of shelters and a smaller segment (26%) asking for legal aid and consultation, and personal security protection (22%). One-third of the participants were in favor of personal skill-building in the form of educational opportunities (30%) and provision of social support (32%). It should be noted that participants focused mainly on empowering survivors of violence and assisting them in rebuilding their lives.



Q. After closing the complaint file, what services and opportunities do the woman need officially against the violence she has been exposed to?

### The most useful training for women survivors of violence

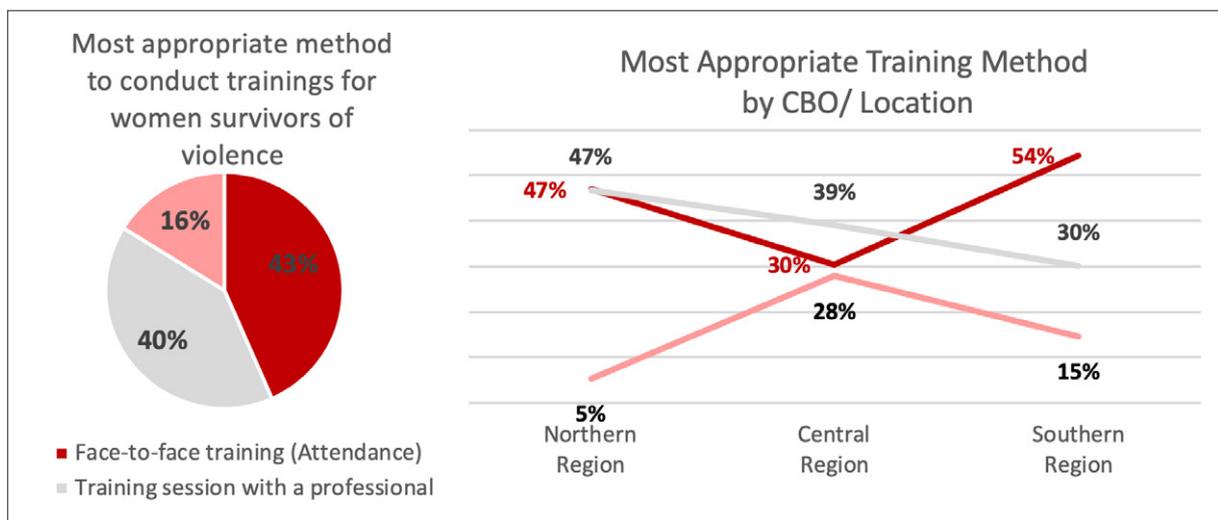
Economic empowerment and mental health services should go hand-in-hand with rebuilding the capabilities of survivors. Regarding the means of support, a majority of participants (67%) favored training to attain economic empowerment, but also emphasized the need to provide support to improve the survivors' mental health (60%). A significant segment focused on developing a survivor's personal skills (49%).



Q. What training (topics) would be most useful to women survivors of violence from the organizations that support them?

### The most appropriate method to conduct training for women survivors of violence

The survey was taken during the COVID-19 pandemic, but despite the restriction imposed by it, physical distancing being one such restriction, individuals favored in-person training over digital means of training. The participants were asked to identify the most appropriate method to conduct training for women survivors of violence. The preferred methods were face-to-face training (43%), followed by training sessions with a professional (40%). A minor group (16%) preferred conducting training online. This higher rate favoring in-person training can be attributed to the lack of human, emotional, interaction and to economic/financial barriers. Participants from the Southern regions were highly in favor of face-to-face training (54%). Those from the Central regions were in favor of training sessions with professionals (39%), and 28% of them were inclined toward online training.



Q. What is the most appropriate way to conduct training for women survivors of violence?

## Reporting Cases of Domestic Violence through the lens of the community

Local communities suggest that fear determines women to be unwilling to report cases of domestic violence. Refusal to report violence against women can be attributed to social norms and culture, fear of retaliation, family cohesion and custody, and lack of awareness and trust in the Juvenile and Family Protection Department. Other reasons for not reporting violence against women may be poverty.

### Societal norms and culture

In Jordanian communities, culture and traditions play a crucial role, often shaping social norms. Women in Jordan live in a predominantly patriarchal society where the culture of shame is evident and where divorce is often perceived as shameful for women and their families. Accord-

ing to one participant, “a woman fears the environment around her as well as the culture and social norms; people are fed culture from a young age and the culture of shame acts as a taboo”. Consequently, when a woman gets divorced, society usually judges negatively the woman, rather than with her husband.

### **Family cohesion and custody**

Family cohesion implies both a woman’s immediate family such as parents, siblings, and children. A woman will not report her case out of “fear of losing her children and her family” stated one of the participants. To avoid parental pressures and the family’s reaction (which may often be abandonment), women often refrain from reporting their cases to authorities. Often women are discouraged from reporting cases due to child custody concerns. If the result of reporting a case is divorce or separation a woman may lose custody of her children, which might leave her in an abusive household

### **Fear of retaliation**

Women are hesitant to come forward due to the fear of retaliation and threats, one participant stated. “So that the problems do not escalate after she reports the case.” An abuse survivor generally fears that her abuser, or her own family members, will cause her harm, such as murder, permanent injury, or worse abuse.

### **Lack of awareness and trust in FPD**

Victims of domestic violence are often hesitant to file complaints due to inadequate knowledge of the FPD services and procedures. One of the participants said that “some women do not know how to file a complaint and where to file it”. Some people do not trust that the FPD preserves anonymity, or its protection mechanism, which is yet another component that prevents them from filing a complaint. FPD may be perceived negatively, as a place that destroys family cohesion and betrays anonymity, thus putting people at risk. This perception is more evident among Syrian refugees who do not believe that laws and procedures will protect them.

### **Poor economic situation**

The economic situation is another element that might deter people from reporting cases of domestic violence. Survivors of domestic violence who have a poor economic situation are less likely to report their cases, according to the focus groups. Lack of access to a sustainable source of income is often to blame for this, along with the lack of adequate accommodation. As a result, women often put up with the violence they suffer at home to ensure that their children are provided for financially.

### Non-disclosure - the norm: cases of domestic violence

Reporting incidents via submitting complaints to relevant authorities is seen as a potential driver to an increase in the level of domestic violence by approximately two-thirds of the participants. Domestic violence is considered a very private and sensitive experience for families. Around half (44.64%) of participants preferred not to share any experience of violence that they may have encountered since turning 15. According to a study published by BMC 2020 "women described feelings of embarrassment and shame from disclosure, reflecting that domestic violence is perceived as a private issue and that sharing experiences with others would not be accepted." (Shaheen et al., 2020)

Survivors of domestic violence would rather stay silent about their cases than file a report. "Secrets create, and are reinforced by, fear and shame." (Jackson, 2008) The majority of the survey participants who had been subject to domestic violence (53.68%) mentioned that they did not disclose the incident they faced to anyone. Most of the participants chose to remain silent about the violence they faced, others, almost half of them (50%), did not wish to report their incidents, but deal with them by themselves. A small segment (17%) considered the incident that happened to them minor, therefore believed they should not report it, and 27% felt the incident should be kept secret to avoid shame or embarrassment. One in 10 participants feared the revenge of the abuser, therefore they did not report their case.

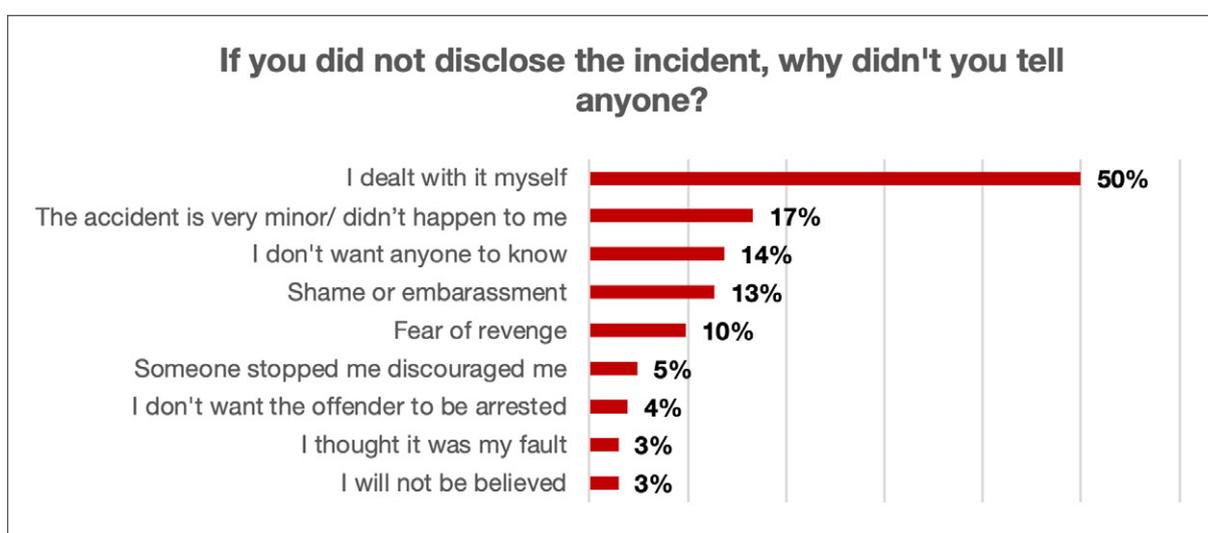
The findings indicate that individuals would rather stay silent than report abuse. This, in turn, shows that there is need to provide a safe space for individuals to report their cases and to educate women about the importance of reporting cases of domestic violence.



Q. In your opinion, the wife's failure to perform her domestic duties or some of them justifies the husband some forms of violence.

Over half of the participants who had experienced domestic violence (53.68%) did not tell anyone about their experience. Most participants chose to remain silent about the violence they faced, and almost half of them (50%) preferred to deal with the incident themselves. A small segment (17%) justified the incident that happened to them as minor, therefore, believed they should not report it, 27% percent felt that the incident should be kept secret, to avoid shame or embarrassment, and one in 10 participants feared the revenge of the abuser, therefore did not report their case.

The findings indicate that individuals would rather stay silent than report the incident, this indicates a need to provide a safe space for individuals to report their case as well as educate women about the importance of reporting domestic violence cases.



Q. If you did not disclose the incident, why didn't you tell anyone?

## COVID-19 Implications on Domestic Violence

### Poor Economic Situations a driver to Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is a crisis that has long lasted the covid-19 pandemic, however, a significant increase in cases report was noticed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Poor economic conditions and overburdened heads of households are the key factors that contribute to domestic violence. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, many people lost their jobs. Wages also decreased, putting increased strain and responsibilities on heads of households who were unable to provide for their families and cover bills. While the government offered different forms of financial assistance, some individuals were not eligible to access them or the assistance was not enough to support their families.

### *Example*

A participant stated "Poverty and need are a major cause of violence, generating problems, and leading to violence against women and in some cases the children. Therefore, the economic aspect during Corona is a reason for the increase in cases of violence, especially when individuals lost their jobs and were faced with obligations, and this often led to feeling pressure, and he relieved this pressure by exercising violence on the family."

### **Impact of COVID-19 on Mental Health**

COVID-19 heightened tensions among family members. If individuals, especially husbands, used to spend most of their time at work before the pandemic, restrictions forced families to stay at home. People were not accustomed to staying at home, now families had to spend more time together, husbands felt more stress and responsibilities, and household conflicts started become more numerous. Disputes were more likely to occur, which also increased the likelihood of domestic violence taking place. According to numerous key informants, verbal violence has been the most common form of domestic violence during the pandemic. Interestingly, many viewed verbal violence as a normal means of coping with the stresses and implications of the pandemic.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **Raising awareness about and building trust in services providers**

Inadequate knowledge of service providers' policies and procedures discourages victims from filing complaints. Families may know about the Family Protection Department, but are often unaware of the services the department and local civil society organizations provide, or of their role in protecting victims of domestic violence. By collaborating with CSOs, the FPD will be able to expand awareness about its work and enable access to its services to a broader region, so CSOs can refer cases to the FPD, as well as equip FPD with communication material that helps it reach local communities.

Misconceptions and some negative perceptions concerning the FPD were voiced, from respondents who believe that the department does not respect confidentiality and does not offer proper protection to victims. Responses also showed that stereotypes and cultural misconceptions, shared by all stakeholders, including services providers, families and those who offer close support to victims, limit victims' attempts to seek out the department's services.

Services providers, and particularly the FPD, need to build trust in their services, and make their procedures and principles known. Victims of domestic violence should be able to file complaints safely and in an atmosphere of trust. FPD and other services providers should make their working mechanism, including the complaint filing process, known and their staff must adhere to it to create a secure environment. If trust is built and confidentiality is ensured, women will be encouraged to speak about their cases and more victims will trust the quality of services they may seek. Respondents also highlighted fear of retaliation as a hindrance to reporting domestic violence and, which makes it incumbent on the FPD, specifically, to improve its protection services, ensure confidentiality, and train better its staff working in outside of Amman.

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## **Understanding the needs of victims of domestic violence and working toward economic empowerment as a risk-mitigating measure**

Respondents highlighted that it is important that the PFD and civil society organizations that assist domestic violence survivors better understand the needs of survivors. Based on the locals' perspective, the key needs identified were better psychological support through boosting the FPD capacity and that of other services providers through training of staff and or assigning psychologists to render services. Economic empowerment through provision of job opportunities and cash assistance was repeatedly highlighted and could be a way of addressing the unequal power structure within families, which limits women's decision-making process. Economic empowerment needs to be prioritized to preclude husbands and male members of the family from controlling women's income. Furthermore, several communities emphasized the importance of assisting survivors of domestic violence with legal advice and support, mainly in cases of divorce or custody disputes.

Responses also showed that not all forms of violence are acknowledged as such, with only physical violence seen in need of response and services. It was even mentioned that some women might "over-react" and endanger the family cohesion by complaining. It was also highlighted that fear and the stigma of divorce limits the victims' options.

It is necessary, therefore, to continue raising awareness about domestic violence, its types, its impact, its roots causes, and for gender justice to improve its response to the needs of survivors of domestic violence, since community and family perspectives continue to channel conservative views that limit survivors' chances of escaping the pervasive circle of the violence.

## **Building a network to empower women to fight against GBV**

The topic of domestic violence continues to be perceived as too sensitive in Jordanian society, and women refrain from reporting it due to factors such as societal norms, fear of retaliation, maintaining family cohesion, and economic challenges. To maintain confidentiality and not to endanger the cohesion of their families, respondents highlighted that survivor turn to their family members for assistance and support.

Establishing a network that empowers women to fight against GBV would create a safe and comfortable environment in which women can discuss GBV and support each other. Moreover, the network could serve as a platform for women to discuss all issues related to domestic violence, ways to prevent it and lower the risk of it happening in a trusted and safe environment.

These networks need to be established at local level and start conversation on support, access to services, prevention, and risk mitigation based on the reality of local survivors. The networks can connect with national organizations and JONAF in an ideal structure that would help raise awareness about women's rights and advocate for gender justice, enforcement of laws and furthering equality, to address the root causes of domestic violence and improve access to services by protecting the rights of women, including mothers who often put up with domestic violence for fear of losing the custody of their children.

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## Annex: Definitions and classifications of Domestic Violence

The national Jordanian framework for protecting families from domestic violence classifications defined four main types of domestic violence, these are:

- *Physical violence*: using (or threatening to use) physical power in which any physical damage or harm is caused. For instance: beating, injuries, biting, burning by chemical or burning or distorting materials, or any other acts that could cause physical harm to the body.
- *Sexual violence*: any violence that includes sexual acts like sexual assault or harassment or forced sexual solicitation.
- *Mental violence*: any act that causes mental disorder/ disturbance, emotional or mental pain, like insulting, humiliating, threatening, isolating from friends or family, deprivation from freedoms, among others.
- *Neglect*: failing to meet duties and commitments toward another family member while being able to, such as providing mental and health care, and basic livelihood needs like food, shelter, clothes, health, and education services.

Another classification for domestic violence by international actors includes the following:

- *Sexual Assault*: “This refers to forced sex or rape; it can be by someone a woman knows (partner, family member, friend or acquaintance) or by a stranger.” (UNFPA. 2016.)
- *Intimate Partner Violence*: “Refers to ongoing or past violence and abuse by an intimate partner or ex-partner —a husband, boyfriend or lover, either current or past.” (UNFPA. 2016.)
- *Physical Violence*: “Includes causing injury or harm to the body by, for example, hitting, kicking or beating, pushing, hurting with a weapon.” (UNFPA. 2016.)
- *Economic abuse*: “as preventing her from knowing about/accessing family income and/ or preventing her from working outside the home.” (BMC, 2019)
- *Gender-Based Violence*: “Refer to the acts of violence intentionally committed against women, such as sexual harassment, rape, domestic violence, and many others.” (Euromed, 2020)



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