

# SEXUAL and GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

## SYRIAN REFUGEES in Jordan

Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Sub-Working Group  
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Since the beginning of the Syrian conflict in 2011, well over 2,000,000 Syrians have fled to neighbouring countries. Almost 600,000 of these have come to Jordan<sup>1</sup> and live in camps and non-camp settings. Both as a direct result of the conflict and while fleeing from Syria to Jordan, some families have been separated. Traditional protection networks have broken down, which has increased the vulnerability of women, girls, boys and men to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV).<sup>2</sup>

## SGBV among Syrian refugees in Jordan

Numerous assessments have been conducted to better understand the challenges that Syrian women, girls, boys and men face in relation to SGBV in Jordan, which have included the analysis of case management data. Forms of SGBV identified include, among others, domestic violence, early marriage, and sexual violence.<sup>3</sup> A prominent concern expressed by Syrian adolescent boys and girls is physical and psychological violence committed by family members.<sup>4</sup>

### Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is the most commonly reported form of SGBV both inside and outside the camps. Social workers, psychologists, and lawyers, estimate that over 50% of the survivors seeking support services, are survivors of domestic violence. Syrian women have reported that their husbands are under immense stress and that this increases physical and psychological violence against them and against children within the home.<sup>5</sup> SGBV incidents are most often reported to have been perpetrated by male relatives (husbands, uncles, and brothers).

In 2012, 13% of all registered marriages for Jordanians and 18% for Syrians in Jordan were "early marriages".<sup>7</sup> Conversely, many parents have reported to humanitarian workers that this is not an appropriate environment to get married due to financial constraints, limited social networks and differences between cultural norms in Syria and Jordan.



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### Early and Forced marriage<sup>6</sup>

Early marriage is a culturally accepted practice for many of the Syrian refugees in Jordan. Parents believe that community members will show more respect for married girls and women. They believe that marriage might secure a better future for them and ease the financial burden on families who depend on humanitarian aid.

1. <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>

2. Findings from the Inter-Agency Child Protection and Gender-Based Violence Assessment in the Zaatari Refugee Camp, Child Protection and Gender-Based Violence Sub-Working Group Jordan, 2013.

3. While it is essential to acknowledge the existence of SGBV, the inaccurate coverage of women and girls as solely vulnerable, has caused negative perceptions and subsequently has limited the mobility of women and girls out of fear. SGBV experts advocate for different approaches that also represent the power of women and girls and reduce the current generalized stigmatization of refugee women and girls in Jordan.

4. Mental Health/Psychosocial and Child Protection Assessment for Syrian Refugee Adolescents in Zaatari Refugee Camp, IMC/UNICEF, July 2013.

5. Child Protection and Gender-Based Violence Sub-Working Group Jordan, idem., CARE International, Syrian Refugees in Urban Jordan, 2013.

6. Forced marriage is defined as "the marriage of an individual against her or his will". (GBVIMS User Guide 2010). Early or child marriage (marriage under the age of legal consent) is a form of forced marriage as the girls are not legally competent to agree to such unions. Sexual and Gender-Based Violence against Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons, (UNHCR, 2003).

According to the national definition the legal age of marriage in Jordan is set at 18 years as stipulated in article (10) of the Personal Status Law, but marriage above 15 can be allowed through a special approval from Sharia court judges.

7. UNICEF Assessment on Early Marriage in Jordan, 2014. The data in this assessment is based only on registered marriages in the Sharia Court. Data for 2013 are forthcoming.