



**ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF SYRIAN
WOMEN REFUGEES AND HOST
COMMUNITIES IN THE ARAB REGION –
FINAL EVALUATION OF UN WOMEN
REGIONAL PROJECT (2014-2016)**



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EVALUATION REPORT



**UNITED NATIONS ENTITY FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND
WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT (UN WOMEN)**

Cairo, July 2017



Planet 50-50 by 2030
Step It Up for Gender Equality

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*Annexes available as a separate document at: <https://gate.unwomen.org/Evaluation/Details?evaluationId=10144>

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ARDD	Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development
CfW	Cash for Work
CRSF	Comprehensive Regional Strategy Framework
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
EU	European Union
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FRL	Female Rural Leader
GBV	Gender Based Violence
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
JD	Jordanian Dinar
KAP	Knowledge Attitude Practice
KRI	Kurdish region of Iraq
MEAL	Monitoring Evaluation Accountability and Learning
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoI	Ministry of Interior
MoSA	Ministry of Social Affairs
MoSS	Ministry of Social Solidarity
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAP	National Action Plan
NCW	National Commission for Women
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
PRS	Palestinian Refugees from Syria
ROAS	Regional Office of Arab States
RRR	Regional Refugee and Resilience
SDC	Social Development Centre
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
SRAD	Syrian Refugees Affairs Directorate
ToR	Terms of Reference

UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund
USD	United States Dollar
VAW	Violence against Women
WB	World Bank
WEO	Women's Empowerment Organisation
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation
WRO	Women's Rehabilitation Organisation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This final evaluation of the Government of Japan – UN Women ‘Economic Empowerment of Syrian Women Refugees in the Arab Region’ regional project aims to contribute to enhancing UN Women Regional Office for Arab States’ (ROAS) approach to programming in humanitarian action, specifically the Syrian response. The evaluation is intended both as an opportunity for organisational learning as well as an accountability tool.

Evaluation Objectives and Scope

The specific objectives of the evaluation were to: (i) assess the relevance of UN Women’s ROAS project strategy in supporting Syrian women’s economic empowerment and enhancing their protection, as well as UN Women’s comparative advantage/ added value in this area as compared with key partners; (ii) assess effectiveness and efficiency in progressing towards the achievement of results; (iii) identify and validate lessons learned and good practice examples of work supported by UN Women; and (iv) provide actionable recommendations with respect to UN Women’s strategy on promoting Syrian women’s economic empowerment in the region.

The targeted users of the evaluation are UN Women Senior Management, project staff, and key stakeholders (donors, other regional actors, UN system) working on the Syrian response. The evaluation covered the entire project period (April 2014 to March 2016). The geographical scope of the evaluation included the five countries (Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria) where the project was implemented.

Context

The ongoing Syrian civil war, which began in 2011, has precipitated one of the largest humanitarian crises in history. The vast majority of refugees have sought refuge in the neighbouring countries of Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. The first four countries host a combined 2.1 million refugees, while Turkey has provided shelter to 2.7 million refugees. Within Syria there are 6.1 million internally displaced people (IDP).¹

One of the most challenging issues for Syrian refugees is the lack of access to livelihood opportunities in host countries. Legal and policy frameworks in host countries make it difficult for refugees to obtain formal employment. The crisis has also contributed to an increase in the unemployment rates in host countries. This is not only due to the large numbers of Syrian refugees competing informally for low skilled jobs at below

market rates, but also to the financial loss from the cessation of trade with Syria as a result of the conflict.

Women and girls constitute half of the internally displaced in Syria as well as the Syrian refugee population in the four target countries of Egypt, Iraq Jordan and Lebanon.² Over the past five years it has become increasingly evident that the Syrian conflict has disproportionately had negative impacts on Syrian women and girls by reinforcing and exacerbating pre-existing gender inequalities. This translates to greater curbs on women and girls’ movement in the public sphere, resulting in constraints to their participation in social and economic activities, access to education, as well as access to basic services. The breakdown of traditional social protection mechanisms coupled with a disruption to gender norms have made women and girls even more vulnerable to various forms of SGBV, including forced and early marriage and survival sex. Women also have had less access to economic opportunities than their male counterparts. Unemployment rates among women in the region are 22 percent above the unemployment rates for men.

In April 2014, ROAS launched the “Economic Empowerment of Syrian Women Refugees in the Arab Region” two-year regional project, financed by the Government of Japan with a total budget of USD 2,996,000. The overall goal of the project was to empower vulnerable Syrian women economically and strengthen their capacities to claim their rights through increased access to economic recovery opportunities, training and meaningful engagement in community life. The project logic was that strengthening the resilience of the target group through increased livelihoods opportunities, as well as SGBV and women’s rights awareness training and advocacy, would mitigate negative coping mechanisms such as early and forced marriage, human trafficking, domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence. The project was implemented in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. In Iraq and Jordan, the project was implemented in refugee camps, whereas in Egypt and Lebanon, activities were in host communities where refugees had settled. The project design and planning strategy were adapted to the national context of each country.

Evaluation Methodology

The overall approach to the evaluation was utilization-focused and gender and human rights responsive. The evaluation utilised the OECD-DAC criteria of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency; GEHR was mainstreamed across the criteria, with evaluation questions exploring issues of gender equality and human rights. The evaluation process

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

²<http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>

adhered to the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards for Evaluation and Ethical Code of Conduct. Additionally, the UNEG guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations has been followed at every stage of the evaluation process.

The evaluation had four progressive stages: inception; data collection; data analysis; and reporting and dissemination. Evaluation findings draw on: (i) an extensive document review including relevant UN Women strategies, project documents and progress reports, as well as international human rights and international humanitarian law relevant to the refugee context, and regional and national frameworks to understand this complex intervention and the context of each country, gain insights into the nuances of the project's design and objectives, and understand the external factors that may have facilitated or constrained the project to deliver its intended outputs and outcomes; and (ii) interviews and focus group discussions with institutional and individual stakeholders. Field visits were conducted to Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon.

In total, the evaluation includes the views and perspectives of 176 stakeholders (146 women and 29 men), both institutional and individual.

Key Findings

Relevance

The project was found to be relevant in view of national and regional frameworks and commitments and priorities of the host governments. It aligned with relevant normative frameworks as well as the priorities of UN Women at global, regional and national levels and with two of the five key priority objectives of the Regional Response Plan 6 (RRP6), specifically prevention and response to sexual and gender-based violence and meaningful community participation and durable solutions. UN Women adopted a multi-pronged approach to protection which combined SGBV interventions and livelihoods. Where implemented in host communities, the project espoused a broader notion of protection, recognising as noted in RRP6 that 'adequate refugee protection cannot be maintained without enhancing social cohesion' (RRP6). The project was successfully designed to complement and add value to the RRP6 and subsequent refugee response plans both in terms of partnering with other UN agencies to maximise complementarity as well as targeting women for cash for work opportunities in Za'atari and Baserma, two camps where women had disproportionately less access to cash for work opportunities.

Furthermore, the project was realistic in its approach given the existing policy frameworks and national agendas of the host countries, as well as the available opportunities, resources and settings i.e. refugee camp or host community. In navigating structural and policy level barriers to formal employment

and other challenges, the project managed to provide avenues for income generation. The cash-for-work engaged women in areas of work that capitalized on their existing skill-sets, enhancing these existing skills through on the job training.

The commissioning and use of assessments, as well as surveys of women in target populations on their preferred vocational areas ensured that the project adopted an informed and participatory approach in addressing the needs and priorities, as well as the key risks faced by vulnerable women. In adopting this approach, however, the vocational areas identified by UN Women and project participants were primarily traditionally female dominated occupations. While this was due to a number of factors, including the available opportunities and the comfort zone of women, it may not have taken full advantage of opportunities in refugee camps and host communities.

The structured approach using assessments and vulnerability criteria to identify participants and leveraging the knowledge and experience of people from the community to identify and reach out to women in the refugee camps and/or host community also ensured the selection of those who were most vulnerable.

Project activities were also designed in ways that were gender responsive and allowed for greater participation by women. This included the availability of child care centres, the scheduling of the trainings, and the availability of safe spaces in the centres for participants to interact and share their experiences with each other.

Especially relevant and strategic was the partnership approach adopted by the project. UN Women forged a range of partnerships at national level to meet the diverse requirements of the project and maximize comparative advantage. UN Women entered such partnerships with a view to leveraging existing infrastructure, collaborating with organisations with the requisite technical expertise and using existing networks of partner organisations to maximize the reach of the project. This partnership approach was designed to increase UN Women's operational capabilities and impact in each of the five countries. The partnerships with different types of stakeholders, e.g. government, civil society and UN, each allowed for greater complementarity and sustainability. Partnerships with other UN agencies combined the mandates and strengths of agencies, ensured coordination of efforts and avoided duplication.

The project provided opportunities to expand UN Women's humanitarian action into countries where it had not previously worked on humanitarian issues as well as to build on and expand existing work. It established a strong multi-country base for UN Women to further develop its humanitarian action approach. While lessons learned during implementation in one country informed the experience of other countries through management at the regional level, no

formal exchanges / mechanisms for exchange were established between staff and / or partners in the different countries. Such exchanges on project experiences and achievements at the national level may have more systematically provided valuable insights to inform organisational learning and impact.

Effectiveness

The project has achieved its planned outputs and there is evidence of contribution to progress towards envisioned outcomes. Monitoring data validated by interviews and focus group discussions indicated that the project has realised the outputs identified at the outset both with respect to increased access to economic opportunities (cash for work and vocational training), opportunities for participation in community decision-making, as well as SGBV and women's rights awareness and capacity building of SGBV service delivery providers. The level of achievement of some outputs varied between countries based on how the project was adapted at country level.

At outcome level, there is emerging evidence that the project has successfully contributed to some elements of empowerment, both economic and social, through these actions. The degree of reduction in SGBV and VAWG is less clear as this remains a sensitive subject; nonetheless, interviews with women indicated that project participation has contributed to reduced tensions and stress levels in the household.

Furthermore, access to vocational training and cash for work has enabled some women to obtain follow-on economic opportunities through both self and other employment. However, given legislative and other contextual constraints this has not been systematic and has largely remained in the informal sector. Anecdotal evidence from project staff supported by evidence from fieldwork indicated that some women in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon have capitalised on the skills and cash received to start their own business and/or gain other employment particularly in hairdressing and tailoring.

The formation of co-operatives in Lebanon provided one strategy to address the challenge of securing continued income. Lebanese women formed the cooperative, as Syrian refugees faced several policy and administrative barriers to getting work permits in the country. However, due to the good relations fostered between the groups, Syrian women were informally involved in the support jobs of the co-operative and received daily remuneration. The cooperative approach has helped in creating potentially sustainable income generating structures that could survive beyond the UN Women intervention.

The money received from the project did enable participants to make spending decisions based on their own needs and priorities. Many of the women reported spending the money

on repaying debts, medical bills, and children's needs.

One of the significant results of the project was the creation of safe spaces for women. This aspect of the project has been received well and appreciated by participants. In all four countries visited, women – both refugees and from host communities look forward to going to the centres. Respondents mentioned that centres provided them with opportunities to have discussions with other women who come from the same background, share similar problems, and are able to empathise. The centres acted as a platform for coping with stress, as women discussed these issues with each other and sometimes with trainers and staff.

Access to cash to fulfil additional requirements and priorities coupled with spending time outside the house at training or work or in the safe spaces was also reported to have contributed to a decrease in household tension and stress levels. In host community settings, collective training and workshops allowed for the creation of social cohesion and greater understanding and interaction between Syrian refugee and host community women.

Participants' ability to earn and control income, albeit short-term, enhanced their sense of agency. Women expressed a new sense of independence, greater participation in household decision-making, and an increased sense of self-worth and dignity. Respondents witnessed changes in the perception of their family members and neighbours. Their ability to provide financial assistance to the family helped them to negotiate their position with respect to decision-making within the family. In Jordan, where UN Women had longer experience working on humanitarian action the project also aimed at enhancing women's collective agency. Women's committees were formed in Za'atari camp to ensure that women's concerns and priorities were addressed in the camp. The women's committee successfully negotiated with the camp manager to increase the duration of the power supply and to reduce the frequency of power shortages/cuts.

While respondents reported increased knowledge as a result of SGBV / women's rights awareness trainings, the evaluation found that this component could have been developed more fully. Women reported varying levels of engagement. This component did not follow a common framework or methodology which adapted to the different contexts may have helped to make the project more effective. Where UN Women had more experience working with refugees, the SGBV component was more developed and included greater outreach and referral mechanisms.

The engagement of men and boys in SGBV / women's rights awareness trainings, something expressed as important by women participants, was also a challenge, particularly as it was not an explicit part of the project design in all countries. Strategies which opened with discussions on stress and coping mechanisms and then introduced SGBV seemed to be more effective in engaging men.

Lastly, while the project logical framework had clearly defined indicators, the monitoring system did not enable a systematic capture of medium term results of the project. There was also no formal, systematic follow-up of participants once they had completed the training, including information on the tangible medium-term results of the project (i.e., the number of women who capitalised on the training and accessed the labour market). The large amount of data generated by existing reporting mechanisms was also not fully leveraged to inform ongoing project implementation.

The integration of elements of the human rights based approach and gender quality principles was evident throughout the programme. For example, the inclusion of sessions on gender equality and women's rights was an important element in addressing cultural and structural barriers to gender equality and women's empowerment. This aspect could have been further developed as well both within the context of the SGBV / women's rights awareness trainings but also in using explicit and comprehensive rights based and gender analyses to inform the design of the programme.

Efficiency

The project has achieved its targets within the intended timeframe and the allocated financial resources. Furthermore, the management structure and project team have contributed to achieving results.

An important factor that led to project efficiency was UN Women's partnership with different organizations, leveraging UN existing infrastructure and networks. This avoided creation of parallel structures, enabled judicious use of financial resources and a shorter start-up time.

Though UN Women has traditionally focused primarily on development, it met the challenge of implementing a humanitarian project in this context. The difference in processes did not have a negative impact on the efficiency of the project as it circumvented any obstacles by maintaining flexibility of management and coordination across countries. Furthermore, the creation of linkages across stakeholders ensured the availability of relevant expertise, wherever required. This also aided the project in functioning within its mandate of time and achieving its objectives. While the evaluation revealed that while every country's agenda was executed sufficiently there was limited knowledge sharing between implementing countries. The lack of mechanisms that enabled and advanced such cross-country collaboration resulted in the project evolving as fragmented country-wise interventions as opposed to an overall regional programme.

Conclusions

Conclusion 1: Despite limited funding, UN Women successfully leveraged partnerships and existing resources and capacities,

both in terms of project implementation and expanding funding of cash for work, to enhance its coverage and quality and to use project resources strategically and efficiently. Ensuring the necessary capacities at national and local levels and complementarity of efforts will be critical to continuing and expanding these efforts.

Conclusion 2: The regional project was the first ROAS project in humanitarian action. The focus on women's economic opportunities and SGBV reflected two key, yet historically neglected, elements of humanitarian action. Through this UN Women started to increasingly engage with the humanitarian architecture in Egypt, Iraq and Lebanon. This engagement was primarily focused on informing other stakeholders about the project and project coordination. Moving forward UN Women should take advantage of its presence to expand its efforts to complement and enhance the capacities of other key actors to deliver on gender equality in their humanitarian response.

Conclusion 3: The project successfully navigated existing political, practical and bureaucratic constraints, to deliver on its intended outputs in terms of provision of vocation training and cash for work opportunities. For the majority of women, the economic benefits were short-term UN Women establishing agreements with other entities to secure goods from the cash-for-work component rather than import them as well and forming cooperatives can be potential strategies for longer-term benefits. However, sustainable strategies will require work on multiple levels, including policy, community, and individual capacities.

Conclusion 4: The project successfully integrated GEHR principles in the design and implementation of the project. However, the project as designed and the relatively short time-frame led to a focus that was more concentrated on the humanitarian end of the humanitarian-development continuum. This limited what could be achieved with respect to women's empowerment

Recommendations

The recommendations for the project are developed with the vision of strengthening key areas and are, in order of priority, as follows:

Recommendation 1: As the Syrian response moves towards an increasing focus on resilience, UN Women should consider articulating a more explicit and holistic framework for working on gender equality women's empowerment in humanitarian action for future interventions. This framework should be measurable and look across the humanitarian-development continuum. This conceptual framework should incorporate a Theory of Change, accounting for - *security and well-being of refugee women, individual agency of women, shift in power relations and structure of legal policies and frameworks.*

Recommendation 2: UN Women should establish a comprehensive Monitoring Evaluation Accountability and Learning (MEAL) system to inform future work in humanitarian action. This will allow it to track progress, detect unintended results, assess the impact, and be accountable to stakeholders.

Recommendation 3: UN Women should place greater focus on capacity development of implementing partners to strengthen national capacities on ensuring humanitarian action is gender responsive. Investing in implementing partners' capacities allows them to better support, reinforce and strengthen nationally led, gender-responsive humanitarian and early recovery interventions.

Recommendation 4: UN Women should include a more robust SGBV component as part of its broader efforts to enhance social protection. This should include expanding partnerships with other actors who are working on SGBV and expanding the work on engaging men and boys in addressing sexual and gender based violence through the identification and leveraging of good practices.

Recommendation 5: The creation of sustainable economic opportunities for Syrian refugees and host communities remains a great challenge. UN Women should explore different modalities for ensuring sustainable economic opportunities for vulnerable women from Syrian refugee and host communities in partnership with other key actors. This can include advocacy for policy change, training and integration of women into less traditionally female areas of employment where there is sufficient market demand, and the expansion of agreements with other actors (public and private) to procure goods / services produced by women on an ongoing basis.

Recommendation 6: UN Women should advocate for multi-year funding to enable longer-term planning and programming in humanitarian action. This can contribute to substantial gains in intervention relevance, quality, effectiveness and efficiency. Most importantly, supporting women's economic empowerment and SGBV requires a longer-term, multi-dimensional approach which addresses the underlying causes of gender inequality.

1 BACKGROUND

1.1

Introduction

The UN Women Regional Office Arab States (ROAS) commissioned Ernest & Young India to undertake a final evaluation of the two-year regional project, implemented from April 2014 to March 2016. As per the terms of reference, “the main purpose of the final project evaluation is to contribute to enhancing UN Women ROAS’s approach to programming in the humanitarian field and the Syrian response. The findings will be used to inform future programmatic decisions, organisational

learning and accountability to the Government of Japan as well as for the identification of good practices to supporting Syrian women’s economic empowerment. The evaluation is also expected to feed into UN Women’s flagship project on resilience. The targeted users of the evaluation are UN Women Senior Management, project staff, and key stakeholders (donors, other regional actors, UN system) working on the Syrian response.”

1.2

Evaluation objectives and scope

The specific objectives of the evaluation were to:

- a. Assess the **relevance** of UN Women’s ROAS project strategy in supporting Syrian women’s economic empowerment and enhancing their protection, as well as UN Women’s comparative advantage/added value in this area as compared with key partners;
- b. Assess **effectiveness** and **efficiency** in progressing towards the achievement of results;
- c. Identify and validate **lessons learned and good practice examples** of work supported by UN Women;

- d. Provide **actionable recommendations** with respect to UN Women’s strategy on promoting Syrian women’s economic empowerment in the region.

Given the relatively short duration and nature of the project, impact and sustainability were not assessed.

The evaluation covered the entire project period (April 2014 to March 2016) and assessed both the economic and SGBV components. The geographical scope of the evaluation included the five countries (Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria) where the project was implemented.

1.3

Evaluation methodology

The evaluation utilised the OECD-DAC criteria of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency; gender equality and human rights (GEHR) were mainstreamed across the objectives and criteria, with key evaluation questions exploring issues of gender equality and human rights. The United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards for Evaluation³ and UNEG Code of Conduct⁴ was adhered to throughout the evaluation. Additionally, the UNEG guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender

Equality in Evaluations⁵ has been followed at every stage of the evaluation process.

The evaluation team was comprised to ensure gender balance and complementary skill sets. The three-member team, comprised of two women and one man, included a gender and humanitarian expert with experience in the region, and two evaluation experts with experience in gender. This allowed for viewing the project through a diverse lens for the evaluation. The team adopted a consultative and participatory approach towards the

³www.unevaluation.org/document/download/2601

⁴www.unhcr.org/research/evalreports/57a4a2a17/uneq-code-conduct-evaluation-un-system.html

⁵www.uneval.org/documents/download/1294

evaluation - from the inception phase to report writing. UN Women staff and other stakeholders were consulted at all stages of the evaluation.

The data collection process was designed and implemented in a manner that respected the cultural sensitivities of the target areas. The evaluation team ensured that all stakeholders, irrespective of involvement with the project or position of responsibility were treated fairly and given equal opportunity.

The team also maintained due regard for cultural, religious, age, gender and other such differences and were prepared to seek assistance from UN Women staff, national consultants or other partners familiar with the context if clarity was required.

Ethical safeguards were integrated in the evaluation, including:

- a. The consent of all participants was obtained prior to beginning the interview process.
- b. The team provided complete clarity on the purpose behind the evaluation to the stakeholders prior to soliciting their participation.
- c. The evaluation team ensured that stakeholders did not face any risk, hindrance or harm.
- d. The team ensured that no personal information that was collected could be traced back to any individual.

The evaluation had four phases —Inception, Data Collection, Data Analysis and Reporting and Dissemination.

Phase 1: Inception Phase

Prior to the actual evaluation process, the evaluation team undertook a number of activities to form a strong foundation and develop a thorough understanding of the various conceptual aspects, as well as the operational landscape of project implementation.

a. Desk Review: The evaluation began with a review of relevant project documents, country reports, project guidelines and progress reports, as well as international human rights and international humanitarian law relevant to the refugee context, and regional and national frameworks and documents pertaining to the countries where the project activities were undertaken. A list of documents consulted is included in Annex V. This stage was crucial for understanding this complex intervention and the context of each country. It also helped in gaining insights into the nuances of the project's design and objectives, and understanding the external factors that may have facilitated or constrained the project to deliver

its intended outputs and outcomes. Thereafter, the entire set of documents reviewed was summarised in the form of a literature review log.

b. Data Collection Tools: An evaluation matrix was developed in consultation with UN Women detailing the key evaluation questions, the relevant sub-questions, indicators and corresponding tools (Annex II). Semi-structured questionnaires were developed for various categories of respondents: relevant UN Women staff at regional and country levels, government officials, implementing agencies, UN agency officials, and vocational trainers. Focus group discussion guides were also developed to assess the relevance and effects (positive and negative) of the project, from the perspective of project participants. Additional, specific questions were developed for the case studies in Jordan and Lebanon.

c. Selection of participants in evaluation: A stakeholder mapping was conducted to identify the key individuals and organisations who should be included in the evaluation and how. These stakeholders included both duty bearers (including governments, UN Women, implementing partners) and rights-holders (participants). The stakeholder mapping was used to ensure that a broad range of stakeholders were included in the evaluation. The team adopted a purposive sampling technique to identify survey respondents and focus group participants. Given the diverse backgrounds of project participants (nationality, marital status, age and the components they participated in), a maximum variation approach was used to take include the varying backgrounds of participants.

Phase 2: Data Collection

The data collection phase involved field visits to Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon in July 2016 as well as virtual communications with stakeholders in Iraq and Syria. Respondents included participants in interventions and those who may not have participated directly but were affected, such as men and boys. One of the criteria used for selection of respondents was ensuring stakeholders with different roles in the project were represented. The project primarily targeted women; therefore, the focus group discussions were primarily with women. Wherever possible and relevant, men were also included. Focus group discussions (FGDs), in-depth interviews and semi-structured interviews were conducted with different sets of stakeholders in all four countries.

Table 1**Total number of stakeholders consulted**

Stakeholder	No. of Respondents		Total
	Women	Men	
UN Women	09	01	10
UN agencies	05	02	07
Government	03	01	04
CSOs	05	05	10
Donor	03	01	04
Project Participants	122	19	141
Total	147	29	176

In total, the evaluation includes the views and perspectives of 176 stakeholders, 147 women and 29 men, representing both institutional and individual stakeholders (Table 2). A list of respondents is included in Annex IV.

Focus Group Discussions: A total of 10 FGDs were conducted in Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon (four each in Jordan and Lebanon and two in Egypt). In total, 141 project participants (122 women and 19 men) participated in FGDs. Each group had a facilitator and one person to record the discussions. The discussions aimed at getting a nuanced understanding of different project components, how they were received, the challenges they faced and to what extent they made a difference in participants' lives. Additionally, one FGD was conducted with young women and men community mobilisers/peer educators in Lebanon.

In-depth Interviews (IDIs): Follow-up in-depth interviews were also conducted with a select number of focus group participants. The criteria for selecting individuals for IDIs was to explore further individual experiences where the project had made a difference in the lives of participants or where they had taken a leadership role. This allowed the evaluators to explore in more detail some of the factors that contributed to positive project outcomes. In all, 13 IDIs were conducted, with three, five and six individuals in Egypt, Lebanon and Jordan, respectively. In all three countries, interviewees were women, except for Jordan where a man, covered under the cash-for-work component, was interviewed. In Iraq, the evaluation team used IDIs as a data collection tool, owing to the logistical convenience in arranging them. Interviews were also conducted with trainers in all countries of field work. Interviews were also conducted with representatives from UN Women, other UN

agencies, implementing partners, government representatives and representatives from the donor in each country.

Case studies were prepared for Jordan and Lebanon to explore the different strategies adopted in different contexts to get a deeper understanding of a humanitarian approach in a refugee camp setting (Jordan) versus a host community setting (Lebanon).

- In Jordan, the case study focused on Za'atari refugee camp and examined the relevance and effectiveness of the cash-for-work and the SGBV prevention and response strategy/component in a refugee camp setting.
- In Lebanon, the case study examined the strategy to integrate Syrian women into markets through cooperatives in light of some of the barriers to accessing the market formally.

Phase 3: Data Analysis

Based on primary data collected and secondary research (desk review), data was collated, organised and analysed using a framework analysis approach. This analysis entailed the researchers familiarizing themselves with the data collected,

identifying emerging patterns and after mapping these out for different categories of respondents, forming linkages to interpret the data. Initial findings were developed after data had been collected from the four countries; evaluators did the first level of analysis while in the field. Later the responses collected were organised, as per the three criteria, to draw patterns from the insights given by the respondents. FGDs and interviews provided a diversity of opinion, yet recurring themes emerged in the analysis.

Triangulation of data facilitated validation of the findings. Cross verification from two or more sources tested the consistency of findings and increased the chance to control, or at least assess, some of the causes influencing the results. Triangulation, as a way of analysis, was not just about validation, but also about deepening and widening, the team's understanding of the complexities of the issues. It allowed the team to examine multiple perspectives and interpretations to explain in greater detail the findings from the evaluation. The varied contexts in each country gave a more nuanced understanding from the view point of individuals, both women and men, living in host communities and in camp settings, as well as the partnerships forged as part of the project.

Phase 4: Report Writing and Dissemination

The evaluation report has been structured around the OECD-DAC criteria. Before submitting the draft evaluation report, the report was reviewed by the Ernest & Young's technical expert and by an internal quality reviewer.

To make the report accessible to a broader range of stakeholders the executive summary will be available in Arabic, as well as an evaluation brief in English and Arabic.

Data Limitations and Constraints

- While the team made all efforts to interview stakeholders who actively participated in the project design and implementation, some were not present at the time the field visits. Telephonic interviews were carried out with them, which may have resulted in a loss of information to understand the nuances of the project.
- Data collection in Syria was conducted through telephonic interviews due to the security situation. This limited the range of stakeholders consulted. As a result, and due to the shorter implementation timeframe, the level of analysis is lower in the case of Syria, as opposed to the other countries where field consultations were held.

2 EVALUATION CONTEXT

2.1

Regional background and context

One of the greatest challenges the world faces today is conflict-related displacement. United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) data provides evidence that global forced displacement has increased in 2015, with record-high numbers. By the end of 2015, 65.3 million individuals were forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, generalized violence or human rights violations. More than half (54 per cent) of all refugees worldwide came from just three countries: the Syrian Arab Republic (4.9 million), Afghanistan (2.7 million) and Somalia (1.1 million).⁶

International humanitarian law and human rights law form the foundation of refugee law and are designed to protect refugees and asylum seekers. The most prominent international humanitarian law instrument is the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (Refugee Convention, 1951) and its Protocol (1967), which defines “refugee” and establishes the principle of *non-refoulement* under Article 33.⁷ *Non-refoulement* is universally regarded as a human right and part of international customary law. At the regional level, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) developed the Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in 1969. There is no binding regional legislation concerning refugees or displacement specific to the Middle East and North Africa or the League of Arab States.

The Syrian civil war, which began in 2011, has precipitated one of the largest humanitarian crises in history. The fighting, coupled with the lack of access to basic necessities has been responsible for the largest refugee crisis since World War II. The vast majority of refugees have moved towards the neighbouring countries of Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. The first four countries host a combined 2.1 million refugees; more than 29,000

refugees have been registered across North Africa. Within Syria itself there are 6.1 million internally displaced people (IDP).⁸

Syrian refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) face a number of challenges, including difficulties in accessing adequate food, shelter, health care, education and other basic needs. One of the most challenging issues for Syrian refugees is the right to work in host countries. The lack of access to livelihood opportunities in host countries limits refugees’ ability to secure their basic needs. While the 1951 Convention also includes the right to work (Articles 17 to 19), several countries in the region including, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon are not signatories. National legal frameworks in host countries and employability in many host communities make it difficult for refugees to obtain formal employment. This forces many into the informal labour market, where, as per anecdotal evidence, there are low wages and of exploitation. The crisis has also contributed to an increase in the unemployment rates in the host countries. This is not only due to the large numbers of Syrian refugees competing informally for low skilled jobs at below market rates, but also due to the financial loss from the cessation of trade with Syria as a result of the conflict. This has led to tensions between refugees and local communities who compete for the same jobs. Host countries, already facing challenges concerning employment, now must contend with these challenges on a larger scale. Unemployment rates in host countries have reached 25-30 per cent, significantly higher than the global unemployment rate of 13 per cent, reported by the International Labour Organisation (ILO).⁹

Regional and National Response

In response to the growing humanitarian crisis in Syria and neighbouring countries, governments in the region and other humanitarian actors including UN agencies have developed national and regional response plans since March 2012 to serve as a comprehensive framework for coordinating the regional refugee response. These actors

⁶Global Trends—Forced displacement in 2015, UNHCR, p.3

⁷Article 33(1) of the Convention reads: “No Contracting State shall expel or return (*refouler*) a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.” Additionally, The Fourth Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (1949) specifically addresses the rights of civilians and displaced persons under Article 44, as does the Additional Protocol I (1977). Within international human rights law, Article 3 of the Convention against Torture (1984) and Article 22 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) protect against *refoulement*.

⁸<http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>

⁹Unemployment rates (between the ages of 15-24) in target countries according to World Bank statistics for 2014: Egypt (42%); Iraq (34.6%); Jordan (28.8%); Lebanon (20.7 %); Syria (30.1%).

initially built their response to the Syrian crisis on the assumption that the conflict would be resolved within a relatively short time. The Regional Response Plan 6 (RRP6), which covers January-December 2014, informed UN Women's regional project. RRP 6 brought together the plans developed under the leadership of the governments of Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey and international humanitarian actors, including UN agencies, to ensure protection, humanitarian assistance and to strengthen the coping mechanisms of women refugees and host communities. The RRP6 was designed to ensure meaningful participation of communities, promote community-based protection and provide support to vulnerable individuals, host communities and municipalities by complementing or supporting national government-led responses. Building resilience and ensuring social cohesion among refugee and host communities was also an important element.

The protracted nature of Syrian conflict has informed the transition to a longer term and more comprehensive approach through a humanitarian and stabilisation approach to address the needs of the Syrian refugees and the respective populations affected by the refugee influx.

Box 1. Regional Response Plan 6

The RRP6 addresses three target groups: refugees in camps; refugees residing outside camps and host communities. The plan maintains protection as its core objective and responds to the immediate humanitarian needs of refugees, including protection and essential services, food, health, education, and material assistance in support of the most vulnerable. Refugee protection within the context of the Syria refugee response focuses on five priority objectives: access to territory and registration, prevention and response to SGBV, child protection (including strategic links between SGBV, child protection and education), meaningful community participation and durable solutions.

Impact on Women

'(...) there are two important aspects of the experience of people in crisis that are not in sight, and are insufficiently in mind in humanitarian action: the extensive sexual violence and domestic violence experienced by women and girls; and conversely, the strong drive of women and girls to lead humanitarian response and to acquire the skills and resources that enable them to rebuild their lives. Governments and humanitarian agencies focus attention on providing food, water, basic medical care and shelter. Protection and a means of livelihood are relegated to non-essentials. Yet, safety and a means to rebuild their lives and reduce vulnerability are what women also want and urgently need.'

Statement by UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, 20 May 2016

Women and girls constitute half of the internally displaced in Syria as well as the Syrian refugee population in the four target countries of Egypt, Iraq Jordan and Lebanon.¹⁰ Over the past five years it has become increasingly evident that as in other conflicts around the world, the Syrian conflict has disproportionately had negative impacts on Syrian women and girls by reinforcing and exacerbating pre-existing gender inequalities. This translates to greater curbs on women and girls' movements in the public sphere, resulting in constraints to their participation in social and economic activities, access to education, as well as access to basic services. The breakdown of traditional social protection mechanisms coupled with a disruption to gender norms have made women and girls even more vulnerable to various forms of SGBV, including forced and

early marriage and survival sex. While it is unclear whether the rates of early marriage differ from before the conflict, it has certainly emerged as a perceived protective factor for young females. Domestic violence and other forms of SGBV continue to be dealt with inside the family, rather than by turning to service providers, if available.

Refugees face a number of economic hardships in general; however, women have had less access to economic opportunities than their male counterparts. The unemployment rate among women in the region is significantly higher when compared to men. Unemployment rates among women in the region are 22 percentage points above the unemployment rates for men. A 2015 WFP report on Egypt, Lebanon and Turkey indicated

¹⁰<http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>

¹¹For the purpose of this evaluation, female-headed households are defined as those where women are the breadwinners because either she is widowed or her husband or another senior male family member is not living with her.

¹²Situation Update June 2015 Syria Crisis Regional Response - <http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/ep/wfp276498.pdf>

¹³UNHCR, Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon 2015, December 2015, p. 12, available at: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?>

that female-headed households¹¹ have a higher rate of vulnerability than male-headed households,¹² which is significant since the UN reports that one in five Syrian

refugee households are headed by women.¹³ Annex VI provides an overview of the prevailing context by country.

2.2

UN Women approach to humanitarian action

The aim of UN Women's engagement in humanitarian action is to complement and enhance UN efforts to ensure consistency and sustainability in addressing gender equality concerns across the humanitarian-development continuum, meeting women's immediate survival and safety needs and supporting women's empowerment for the longer-term resilience of communities and sustainability of humanitarian action. A number of normative frameworks guide UN Women's work on humanitarian action:

- a. General Assembly A/RES/64/289 - July 2010 System Wide Coherence (establishment of UN Women).
- b. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979)
- c. Beijing Platform for Action (1995)
- d. UN Security Council Resolution: 1325, 1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, 2106 and 2122
- e. Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (2004 and 2010)
- f. ECOSOC Resolutions E/RES/2012/3 and E/RES/2013/6 - Strengthening the Coordination of Emergency

Humanitarian Assistance of the United Nations (2012 and 2013)

g. Commission on the Status of Women Resolution 56/2 and its 2014 follow up – Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (2012 and 2014).

h. GA Resolution 67/209- International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (2013)

Box 2. UN Women Humanitarian Strategy 2014-17

The concept of *humanitarian action* includes response, disaster risk reduction and preparedness for risk prevention and mitigation, and early recovery. UN Women engages across this space in order to complement and enhance UN efforts to -move away from a short-term, service provision model to one that builds on development gains, enhances sustainability and national ownership, strengthens the resilience of communities and countries - and is accountable to the populations affected by crisis. *In this context, UN Women's humanitarian work will focus on preparedness, response and the transition to early recovery."*

2.3

Project Overview

The Economic Empowerment of Syrian Women Refugees in the Arab Region was a two-year regional project launched in April 2014. The Government of Japan funded the USD 2,996,000 project. The overall goal of the project was to empower vulnerable Syrian women economically and strengthen their capacities to claim their rights through increased access to economic recovery opportunities, training and meaningful engagement in community life. The project sought to achieve the overall goal through two main outcomes and four outputs.

Outcome 1: Empowering vulnerable Syrian women and girls through increased access to economic opportunities, trainings and opportunities of meaningful participation in community decisions. To achieve this, the project defined

two outputs:

- a. Establishment and expansion of women's community centres, which offer vulnerable Syrian women opportunities of participation in community decision-making.
- b. Increased access to income generation activities through the 'cash-for-work' component of the project.

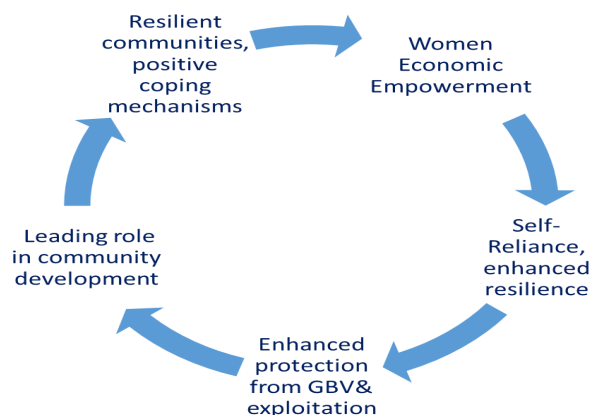
Outcome 2: Reduction in Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) and Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) with the aim to strengthen the capacity of vulnerable Syrian women to claim their rights and engage meaningfully in community decision-making. To achieve the second outcome, the project defined two outputs:

- a. Conducting advocacy campaigns to increase awareness on women’s rights and the capacities of Syrian women.
- b. Strengthening the capacities of service providers to provide effective service delivery to survivors of SGBV.

At global level, UN Women’s work in humanitarian action primarily falls under Strategic Plan Development Results Framework Impact 4 – “Peace and security and humanitarian action are shaped by women and men’s equal leadership and participation. At regional and country level, humanitarian action is inextricably linked to other areas of the Strategic Notes, specifically Ending Violence against Women and Girls (EVAWG) and Women’s Economic Empowerment (WEE).

The project logic was that strengthening the resilience of vulnerable women through increased livelihoods opportunities, as well as SGBV and women’s rights awareness training and advocacy, would mitigate negative coping mechanisms such as early and forced marriage, human trafficking, domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence (Figure 1).

Figure 1
Project logic



UN Women implemented the project with the dual aims of economically empowering Syrian women in line with the ‘Do no harm’ principles that seek to cultivate good practices that minimize harm when developing refugee protection programming;¹⁴ and tackling SGBV and creating awareness with regards to VAWG. In the countries where the project was implemented in host communities, participants from host communities were included to

forestall potential social tension. The project used vocational training, cash for work and SGBV and women’s rights awareness trainings to increase access to livelihood opportunities and strengthen the coping abilities of at-risk Syrian women refugees and women from host communities. This aimed to further strengthen their position in the community, as they are able to generate their own income, have an increased level of independence and assume a greater role within the community.

The regional project was an upscaling of “Leadership, Empowerment, Assistance, and Durable Solutions for Syrian Women Refugees project,”¹⁵ which UN Women Jordan implemented in Za’atari refugee camp in 2012. The regional project was implemented in different settings within Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. In Iraq and Jordan, the project was implemented in refugee camps, whereas in Egypt and Lebanon, activities were in host communities where refugees had settled. Refugee camp settings (Iraq and Jordan) included a cash for work component, while in host communities (Egypt and Lebanon) women participated in vocational training and received a transportation allowance. In all countries,

participants were selected based on agreed upon vulnerability criteria.

The project design was adapted to the national context of each country. In all countries UN Women partnered with government and civil society organisations. Project budgets at country level were allocated based on the number of refugees in each country and were - Egypt: 110,000 USD, Iraq: 400,000 USD, Jordan: 700,000 USD, Lebanon: 600,000 USD and Syria: 600,000 USD. An additional 531,000 USD was allocated to the ROAS for project management. Annex X provides more detail on partnerships, target groups and activities in each of the five countries.

¹⁴http://gbvguidelines.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/2015-IASC-Gender-based-Violence-Guidelines_lo-res.pdf, p. 45

¹⁵Pro-doc, Economic Empowerment of Syrian Women Refugees and Host Communities in the Arab Region - The project established a women’s protection and vocational training centre known as the “Women and Girls Oasis,” as well as a cash-for-work component.

3 FINDINGS

3.1

Relevance

Extent to which approach is relevant, realistic and strategic

Finding 1 - The project was relevant in view of national and regional frameworks and commitments and priorities of the host governments. It was also aligned with relevant normative frameworks and priorities of UN Women at global, regional and national levels.

Alignment with national and regional frameworks and priorities

In line with RRP6, the primary objective of the project was the protection of at-risk and vulnerable women. The project aligned with two of the five key priority objectives of the RRP6 and national response plans,¹⁶ specifically prevention and response to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and meaningful community participation and durable solutions. UN Women adopted a multi-dimensional approach to protection which combined SGBV interventions and livelihoods. The implementation of SGBV / women's rights awareness training and access to prevention and referral services and safe spaces were all important elements of improving women and girls' protection in the five countries. The promotion of livelihoods through vocational training and / or cash for work with the aim of decreasing negative coping

mechanisms was another important element. Where the project was being implemented in host communities the project also adopted a broader notion of protection, recognising as noted in RRP6 that 'adequate refugee protection cannot be maintained without enhancing social cohesion'. (RRP6) The emphasis on fostering social cohesion between refugee and host communities in Egypt and Lebanon through access of Syrian and host community women to vocational training, joint SGBV/ women's rights training, safe spaces for interaction was also an important objective of the RRP6 as well as national strategies aligned with the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plans in Egypt, Jordan, Iraq and Lebanon, and national responses including the National Resilience Plan (2014-2016) for Jordan, the Jordan Response Plan and the Lebanese Crisis Response Plan and the Lebanon Roadmap of Priority Interventions for Stabilization from the Syrian conflict.

Alignment with UN Women priorities

The project was aligned with the UN Women Strategic Plan 2014-17¹⁷ and Humanitarian Strategy 2014-2017,¹⁸ as well as the Strategic Notes of ROAS and country offices in Iraq and Jordan who directly implemented it. The work links to three impact areas in the strategic plan, notably women's peace and security¹⁹ (Impact Area 4), women's economic empowerment²⁰ (Impact Area 2), as well as ending violence against women²¹ (Impact Area 3). These areas are clearly reflected in the outcomes of the project which aim at

Box 3. Promoting Social Cohesion

The promotion of social cohesion between refugees and women from the host communities was an important result of the project. In Egypt and Lebanon, the collective training and workshops allowed for the creation of social cohesion. While during the early stages there were tensions between the groups, the constant interaction among them gradually led to the alleviation of such tensions. Integration of Syrian and host community women into the training project established a sense of companionship, ownership, self-confidence and acted as common ground for dialogue and participation, to bridge the cultural barriers.

¹⁶National response plans include National Resilience Plan (2014-2016) for Jordan, the Jordan Response Plan, the Lebanese Crisis Response Plan and the Lebanon Roadmap of Priority Interventions for Stabilization from the Syrian conflict, national level plans aligned with 3RP in Egypt and Iraq.

¹⁷UN Women Strategic Plan, 2014-2017, Making this the Century for Women and Gender Equality

¹⁸Humanitarian Strategy (2014-2017), UN Women

¹⁹Peace and security and humanitarian action are shaped by women and men's equal leadership and participation and defines humanitarian action as including preparedness and disaster risk reduction, response and early recovery."

²⁰Women, especially the poorest and most excluded, are economically empowered and benefit from development

²¹Women and girls live a life free from violence

empowering vulnerable Syrian women through increased access to economic recovery opportunities and enhancing capacities for meaningful community participation, as well as reducing VAW to allow Syrian women to claim their rights and meaningfully engage in community decision-making. These linkages recognise the importance of adopting a multi-faceted approach to protection and providing vulnerable women with a platform to realise their individual agency and remove barriers that prevent their empowerment and participation in society.

The regional project also addressed elements of the UN Women Humanitarian Strategy which aims to ensure that humanitarian responses are structured to address gender equality and women's empowerment concerns across the humanitarian-development continuum. The project aimed

to enhance women's skills to promote their current and future economic opportunities looked beyond the immediate humanitarian response. The inclusion on SGBV / women's rights training for women and girls, as well as men and boys' awareness sessions also supported efforts to promote women's' rights.

The importance of partnership and coordination highlighted in the strategy and central to the UN Women mandate in achieving GEWE was clearly demonstrated by the myriad partnerships that UN Women maintained in the different countries. These partnerships took different forms and the role of each partner was clearly specified. Further analysis on the extent and nature of these partnerships can be found in the later stages of the report.

Finding 2 - The project was realistic in its approach given the existing policy frameworks and national agendas of the host countries. The project design was tailored to account for the context in each of the intervention countries, as well as available resources.

The project was realistic as it accounted for challenges and yet managed to provide avenues for income generation. The legal frameworks and policies regarding refugees and displacement in each country affected the types of activities which could be implemented, particularly with respect to access to economic opportunities. The project was developed keeping in mind the existing policies and legal recognition that had been granted to refugees in the specific contexts as well as the availability of resources and setting i.e. refugee camp or host community.

Vocational trainings implemented in host communities relied on the notion that women could access opportunities in the surrounding communities. In contrast, in refugee camps where refugee mobility was more limited due to policies and / or camp location, CfW was the most realistic option. Vocational training would have not sufficed to achieve the project's objectives since even with an enhanced skill-set, there would have been no or

limited avenues for refugees to seek outside employment. Activities for income generation in both contexts focused on addressing the needs of the immediate community and involved services such as community kitchens, food processing and tailoring. The cash-for-work and to vocational training engaged women in the work that capitalized on their existing skill-sets, and enhancing these existing skills through on the job training.

In Lebanon, due to the difficulties and barriers faced by Syrians in obtaining work permits, the project conducted vocational training and supported the creation of co-operatives between Syrian and Lebanese women. While Syrian women could not formally work in the country, the development of their skills allowed them to participate informally, especially as is seen in the case of Syrian and Lebanese women working together in a catering and cooking cooperative.

Finding 3 - The partnership approach adopted by the project was strategic. UN Women partnered with entities which not only had the requisite technical expertise, but also had existing infrastructure and networks to ensure broad coverage and impact.

UN Women forged a range of partnerships at national level to meet the diverse requirements of the project and maximize comparative advantage. UN Women entered such partnerships with a view to collaborating with organisations with the requisite technical expertise, using

existing networks of partner organisations to maximize the reach of the project and leveraging existing infrastructure. UN Women's partnership approach was designed to increase its operational capabilities and impact in each of the five countries. Partnerships with the

different types of stakeholders, e.g. government, civil society and UN, each allowed for greater complementarity and sustainability. The nature and type of partnerships have been context specific.

Partnership with both government and civil society organizations, particularly in Egypt and Lebanon where the project was being implemented in host communities, allowed UN Women to **leverage existing infrastructure and networks** to build on and implement project activities. In both countries, vocational training and gender awareness sessions were conducted in government and NGO centres. In Egypt, UN Women established a joint partnership with the NCW's cadre of Female Rural Leaders (FRLs) played a central role in reaching out to refugees in various governorates to disseminate information about the project and identify vulnerable women to participate in the project. Similarly, in Lebanon, UN Women partnered with the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA), which coordinates the national humanitarian response and operates Social Development Centres (SDCs) across the country. MoSA's SDCs had basic infrastructure to implement project activities. In addition, the location of CSOs in Egypt and Lebanon, INSAN Foundation and Safadi Foundation's, respectively, in areas of high concentration of refugees and their existing infrastructural capability allowed both organisations, to leverage their facilities.

While UN Women provided financial support in upgrading the infrastructure of existing centres, by utilizing existing infrastructure, UN Women ensured that resources were not invested in creating duplicate structures and saved the time it would have otherwise spent on establishing centres. This allowed UN Women to focus on implementation of project activities. Partnership with

government was also felt to have fostered national ownership of the project and allowed for smoother implementation.

UN Women's engagement with CSOs in four countries, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon, **capitalized on their technical expertise, provision of essential services to SGBV survivors and experience working at the local level.** CARE, the partner in Egypt leveraged its extensive experience of working on gender and its manual to tailor sessions on gender, women's rights and SGBV to the target audience and project requirements. Similarly, in Lebanon, ABAAD which had experience conducting several trainings on gender was found to be the most relevant partner.²² The participation of CARE and ABAAD, both organisations with a combination of international and local experience and expertise in conducting such exercises, provided a platform to ensure that gender component of the project accurately reflected the needs and situations of the intended beneficiaries. CSO partners' experience of working at a local level amongst target populations were also strong assets. In Egypt and in Lebanon, Insan Foundation and Safadi Foundation, respectively, were able to quickly identify and mobilise community members to participate in the project. Similarly, in Iraq, where local implementing partners, namely, the WEO and WRO, were involved in the project, they leveraged their well-established connections and networks in the region, as well as lessons learned from their work in other refugee camps and host communities with vulnerable women in informing project components. Through its partnership with WEO, the project agreed with a Kurdish private bank to distribute the garments produced by the refugees under the cash-for-work component.

Finding 4 - The project provided opportunities to expand UN Women's humanitarian action into countries where it had not previously worked on humanitarian issues as well as to build on and expand existing work. It has provided UN Women a strong multi-country base to further develop its humanitarian approach. While not part of the project design, mechanisms for learning and exchange between different countries were not systematically integrated.

As previously mentioned, the project design was informed by the Oases project, implemented by UN Women in Jordan. The experience gained while working with refugees in camp and host community settings in Jordan was instrumental in growing the capacities of UN Women humanitarian action in response to the Syria crisis. UN Women staff from the Iraq CO visited Za'atari camp in Jordan to learn from the experience. The project allowed UN Women to use lessons and good practices from the experience in Jordan to expand its humanitarian action

into new countries and deepen its work in Jordan. Through the project, UN Women has also established new partnerships in Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon and Syria and expand partnerships and coordination in Jordan.

In countries where UN Women had been working on GEWE, specifically Egypt, Iraq and Lebanon, the project is UN Women's first intervention in humanitarian action. UN

²²ABAAD-Center for Gender Equality was sub-contracted by Safadi Foundation to implement the GBV components. They report to the latter which reports to UN Women on results

Women staff in Egypt, Lebanon and Iraq began attending the SGBV working group. UN Women ROAS and country offices also established working relationships with new civil society organizations. The project has also strategically positioned UN Women with respective governments and has provided a foundation for future interventions. UN Women's partnership with UNDP and UNFPA in Syria where UN Women did not have an operational presence also allowed UN Women to expand work into new countries. In Jordan, where the country office had been working in this area since late 2012, project funding allowed for the expansion of its partnerships with WFP, UNICEF and UNFPA to reach more women and men in the camp.

Given that this was a relatively new area of work for UN Women in the region, the initial visit of UN Women Iraq CO staff to Jordan was very informative in setting up their own intervention. While lessons learned during implementation in one country informed the experience of other countries through management at the regional level, no formal exchanges / mechanisms for exchange were established between staff and / or partners in the different countries. Such exchanges on project experiences and achievements at the national level may have more systematically provided valuable insights to inform organisational learning and impact.

Alignment with the needs and priorities of target groups, including the most vulnerable

Finding 5 - The project focused on addressing the needs and priorities, as well as the key risks faced by vulnerable women.

The regional project was informed by assessments in the different countries, as well as surveys of women in target populations on preferred vocational areas.

Given structural and policy level barriers to formal employment, UN Women identified vocational skills women could use in their current context in all countries as well as potentially for the 'day after'. The vocational training and cash for work allowed women to enhance their skills. It also provided those receiving cash the **ability to make spending decisions based on their priorities**. While women refugees received aid and benefits, these fulfil their basic requirements; the cash received not only allowed them to fulfil some of the needs which were not being met by assistance from aid agencies, but to also decide how to spend the money received based on their own priorities. As discussed in the effectiveness section, women were able to spend money on their children, purchase items such as gifts for the family which were otherwise unaffordable luxuries, and in some cases, buy tools (sewing machines, curling irons, hairdryers, etc.) to start their own businesses in refugee camps or host communities.

The combination of economic opportunity mechanisms in these contexts. As one FGD participant noted,

"Since our husbands are at home throughout the day without any work, and they are also worried about their future, the situation is stressful. It leads to arguments between the couple and it often ends in physical abuse" -

FGD participant at Za'atari camp, Jordan

The project also aimed to involve men in awareness raising sessions and advocacy efforts recognizing the important role they can play in addressing SGBV risks faced by women. This strategy aligned with other UN Women projects, including the 16 Days of Activism against GBV campaign and the HeForShe campaign.

The establishment / strengthening of community centres as safe spaces where women could congregate and express themselves freely also addressed a need of refugee women. The centres became important focal points for women to gather in a safe environment for recreational, educational and psychosocial activities. The sharing of experiences and the discussion of common situations helped women understand each other's perspective and learn coping skills from others. In host

Box 4. Oases: safe spaces for women and girls in Za'atari refugee camp

"Oases", safe spaces for women and girls, offer economic opportunities, protection referral services, day care services- and provide life skills through literacy, Arabic and English language classes, computer classes, tailoring, hairdressing, drawing, mosaic and handicraft workshops and gymnastics. With its programme of recreational, educational and psychosocial activities in the 'Women and Girls Oasis', Syrian refugee women and teenage girls are given a space to socialise and meet among themselves as well as with the national and international staff of the project.

community settings, these centres also provided a platform for interaction among refugees and host communities and helped in developing a greater understanding of common concerns and coping mechanisms, as well as promoting social cohesion. The women's committee established in Za'atari camp in Jordan has provided women with a platform through which to discuss and voice their concerns and priorities in the camp.

These components together provided ways to address women's lack of income as well as increased levels of stress and tension many vulnerable households and women faced without work and / or other outlets and created a conducive environment for women to participate. The safe spaces served as an important coping mechanism. Other elements of the project design which facilitated women's participation were the availability of day care centres. In Egypt and Lebanon, these were located within the centres; in Iraq and Jordan, they were located nearby the training/ cash-for-work venue and were easily accessible. UN

Women's proactivity in identifying the need and come up with a solution was appreciated by most participants.

'UN Women staff considered us partners in success, they had a wonderful smile on their faces and that was enough to make my day. We are all members of a big family caring for each other, creating the momentum to improve our work performance.'

Project participant - Jordan

The timing of trainings was another aspect that illustrated prioritisation of participants' needs. In all countries, due recognition was given to, participants' convenience while planning for training sessions. In most of the countries the timings of the trainings were from late morning to late afternoon. This allowed women to take care of household tasks before and after the training, which for most of them was of prime importance. This was of more importance in Egypt and Lebanon, where women had to spend time commuting to training venues.

Finding 6 (a) - The project deployed a structured approach to identifying participants, leveraging the knowledge and experience of people from the community to identify and reach out to women in the refugee camps and/or host community. This ensured the selection of those who were most vulnerable.

The intervention was targeted to women who were the most vulnerable. A defined criterion and fair and transparent process, developed in consultation with partner organisations, was used to assess vulnerability for selection of participants. While each country was provided some flexibility in identification of participants, priority was given to women who were supporting their families and who were most vulnerable. In Egypt, NCW and INSAN Foundation used vulnerability criteria to identify at-risk groups – widows, women-headed households, number of income earners in the family, number of dependents etc. for selection of participants. In Lebanon, the selection of trainees was done by staff from the Safadi Foundation in conjunction with the SDCs and based on a seven-point parameter system to assess the vulnerability of a potential beneficiary. The criteria were: single woman unaccompanied by male family members, widow caring for minor children, single woman caring for elderly dependents, whether the woman faced possible risk of becoming a victim of GBV due to living condition, local environment etc., whether the woman faced the risk of forced marriage, whether the woman was caring for a husband who was a victim of conflict either through a

physical war injury or trauma and finally whether the woman was the head of the household. In Jordan and Iraq, the selection of participants was done using similar vulnerability criteria to Egypt.

In host communities, partners tapped into women and men from the communities to disseminate information about the project and to identify and reach out to vulnerable women in the community. In Egypt, the project drew on INSAN Foundation staff some of who were Syrian refugees residing in 6th October city and NCW's female rural leaders who were based in the communities. Similarly, in Iraq, trainers and facilitators were Syrians living in the refugee camp and used their familiarity with those residing in the camp to reach out to the most vulnerable. Peer educators, employed in Lebanon, for the gender awareness components, were drawn from the host communities and thus comprised both Syrians and Lebanese women. These educators were important in reaching out to women within their own communities and spreading awareness about the activities conducted under the project.

Finding 6 (b) - An informed and participatory approach was deployed to identify areas for vocational training. While participatory approach ensured that the priority and interest of participants, vis-à-vis vocational trainings, were addressed, the areas identified by UN Women and project participants were primarily traditionally female dominated occupations.

For women to relate with trainings and to ensure their participation, it was important to involve them in the identification of trades in which they would be trained. Different approaches were adopted by different agencies to conduct the needs assessment; while some resorted to a more formal approach, others undertook it informally. Surveys of the women in Egypt indicated that women were primarily interested in sewing, crochet, embroidery, hairdressing and first aid. In Lebanon, the Safadi Foundation also conducted an informal group discussion with women at the centres to come up with a list of courses. Since FTL’s sole focus is on food processing, women were trained on different aspects of food processing including jam making, pickle making and catering.

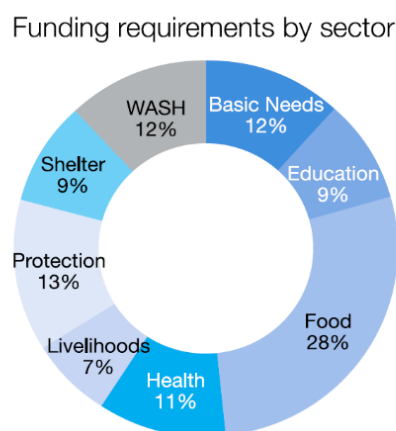
Most of the vocational training offered by UN Women and validated and / or identified by women in the community were in traditionally women dominated occupations. This was due to several factors, including the available opportunities and the comfort areas of women. Mobile phone repairing, which was identified as a trade in Lebanon, was somewhat an unconventional area of training for women and girls. On enquiring, it was shared that the SDC staff member identified this trade based on her observations. Many women residing in the area used mobile phones but were hesitant to go to repair shops managed by males. She, therefore, requested training in this area and it was found to be very successful. In Jordan, where UN Women tried to integrate women into some of the construction work in the refugee camp there was little interest.

Complementarity and value-added of UN Women approach

Finding 7 - The project was successfully designed to complement and add value to the RRP6 and subsequent refugee response plans in terms of the target group, geographic area and areas of work.

In focusing its efforts on protection and livelihoods for marginalised women and girls, UN Women addressed two key areas of humanitarian action within the framework of the RRP6 which would enhance women’s ability to rebuild their lives and reduce their vulnerability. In the immediate response to the Syrian crisis, humanitarian actions were designed to provide refugees with their immediate needs. With its dual focus on protection and livelihoods, UN Women complemented and added value to the work on the ground, in terms of population reached, work on livelihoods which was the smallest sector with respect to funding requirements in RRP6 (figure 2), the geographic areas in which it worked, and the nature of the intervention. As previously stated, the project focused on reaching the most vulnerable women through the use of community mobilizers and vulnerability criteria. In targeting women for CfW, it also reached groups in Iraq and Jordan which traditionally had less access to CfW (see text box). The project also worked in host communities with high concentrations of refugees. In Lebanon, UN Women selected Akkar as one of the districts for project implementation due to the high ratio of refugees. Additionally, the lack of INGOs operating in Beirut (Tarik

Figure 2
RRP6: Syria Refugee Response Plan



Jadidah) influenced the selection of the SDC. The introduction of women’s rights training into the SGBV component as well as the availability of safe spaces were also two components which demonstrated added value to the protection work.

UN Women also partnered with other organisations, particularly sister UN agencies, to ensure complementarity of efforts. These partnerships **combined the mandates and strengths of agencies, ensured coordination of efforts and avoided duplication.** In Jordan, for example, UN Women partnered with UNICEF, UNHCR, WFP and UNFPA. The partnership with UNICEF allowed UN Women to support the cash for work component, in Za’atari camp, through an agreement under which women in UN Women’s cash for work component produced infant-care kits for UNICEF to purchase locally and distribute rather than procuring them from abroad.

UN Women also partnered with UNFPA on livelihood and legal awareness, while WFP was responsible for food security. Similarly, in Syria, where UN Women did not have an operational presence, it partnered with UNFPA and UNDP. UNFPA had been working extensively in the country to provide safe spaces for women, the provision of GBV case management and other related trainings to first responders as well certain trainings such as tailoring and computer classes. The funds provided by UN Women allowed UNFPA to scale up these project components, as they leveraged on already existing capacities. The collaboration with UNDP also allowed for the expansion of their early recovery and resilience interventions and capitalisation on its area-based approach for planning and

Box 5. Enhancing women’s access to CfW in Iraq and Jordan

Despite comprising half of the refugee population, women and girls have not benefited equally from cash for work opportunities. 2014 data from UNHCR indicates that women and girls comprise only one-quarter of cash for work participants in Za’atari. Similarly, in a study conducted in 2014 in Iraq, only 12 percent of households reported having a female member hired in CfW activities since their arrival. UN Women in Iraq and Jordan has worked to address this gap by focusing their cash-for-work on women and girls. Cash-for-work opportunities include tailoring school uniforms, repurposing UNHCR tents into reusable bags, craft-making, teaching, and working as beauticians, security guards and childcare professionals.

(Source: Basic Needs and Livelihood Working Group CfW fact-sheets Economic Survey of Syrian Refugees, Refugee Camps, KRI <http://www.reachresourcecentre.info/system/files/resource->

implementation at the local level.²³ Leveraging the combined expertise of both agencies, the UNDP-UN Women joint effort provided direct support through start-up grants, restoration of small businesses and value chains, sustainable employment creation, vocational training and the provision of productive assets to women.

3.2 Effectiveness

Progress towards results

Finding 1 - The project has achieved its planned outputs and there is evidence of contribution to progress towards envisioned outcomes. While the project logical framework had clearly defined indicators, the monitoring system did not enable a systematic capture of medium term results of the project.

Monitoring data validated by interviews and focus group discussions indicated that the project has realised the outputs identified at the outset both with respect to increased access to economic opportunities (cash for work and vocational training), opportunities for participation in community decision-making (outcome 1), as well as SGBV and women’s rights awareness and capacity building of SGBV service delivery providers (outcome 2) (see Table 6). For some outputs the level of achievement varied between countries based on how the project was adapted at country level. Community centres were established or expanded in all countries except Syria. In refugee camp

settings, Iraq and Jordan, access to economic opportunities was largely structured around cash for work, while efforts in host communities focused on vocational training with those attending receiving a transportation allowance. Similarly, while women participated in SGBV/ women’s rights awareness training in all countries, advocacy campaigns and capacity development of service

²³The area based approach involves targeting a small, homogenous and socially cohesive territory as the target area for interventions. Members of this community are bound by common cultures and traditions and a shared identity, based on common needs and expectations. This particular profile accurately fits IDPs in the country and allows for humanitarian interventions to be designed to cater to the most pressing needs of the target community.

providers were conducted in a subset of the countries.

Table 6

Project achievements

Indicator	No
Number of participants in cash for work	528
Number of community centres established/strengthened	14
Number of advocacy campaigns conducted	3
Number of women who received GBV training	1024
Number of participants reached with advocacy campaigns	2030

Source: Project progress reports

At outcome level as discussed below, there is emerging evidence that the project has successfully addressed some elements of empowerment (outcome 1) through these actions. The degree of reduction in SGBV and VAWG (outcome 2) is less clear as this remains a sensitive subject; nonetheless, interviews with women indicated that project participation has contributed to reduced tensions and stress levels in the household.

The project log frame had detailed indicators to assess progress towards results, sources that would be used to verify the progress on the indicators and the risks or

assumptions related to data collection. Sources included evaluation surveys, field visits, Knowledge, Attitude, Practice (KAP) studies and project records. While information was available for output level indicators, data on outcome indicators was more difficult to ascertain due to such studies not having been conducted. This was possibly due to the relatively short project period. The evaluation team also found limited ongoing monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of the project. While staff did have information about the ongoing activities, collation of data and its analysis could have been improved. There was no dedicated M&E officer/specialist, which meant monitoring was not undertaken in a focused and systematic manner. There was also no formal follow-up of participants once they had completed the training, including information on the tangible medium-term results of the project (i.e., the number of women who capitalised on the training and accessed the labour market).

An important aspect of the project would have been the development of capacities of implementing partners, particularly in being able to monitor their own project components. While not part of the project scope, interactions with stakeholders demonstrated an expectation to receive training on monitoring. UN Women was unable to fill this capacity gap due to logistics issues and a lack of time.

Finding 2 - Access to vocational training and cash for work has enabled some women to obtain follow-on economic opportunities through both self and other employment. However, given legislative and other contextual constraints this has not been systematic and has largely remained in the informal sector.

Anecdotal evidence from project staff supported by evidence from fieldwork indicated that some women in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon have capitalised on the skills and cash received to start their own business and / or gain other employment. Interactions with CSOs and implementing partners show that despite the short duration of the sessions there are several cases of participants who used the skills to establish functional small business, as reflected in the text box below.

A number of women in Egypt, Iraq and Jordan recounted that they were able to buy a sewing machine with cash received from the project; other women who participated in the hairdressing training or cash-for-work bought some supplies to try to start their own business. Most women though had other spending priorities, including paying debts, medical bills, and children’s needs. A small number

of women living in host communities also found informal work in beauty salons or other businesses. The majority of women, however, were not able to secure employment once their participation in the project ended. The cash-for-work component was an effective mechanism to provide short term employment. With both the cash-for-work and vocational training, women were only able to participate in the project for a limited time to give a greater number or women access to these opportunities. Once ‘graduated’ their work opportunities were limited due to the policy framework and overall context. The setting of the refugee camps, particularly Baserma camp which was small and was located at a significant distance from Erbil with limited public transport, provided limited business opportunities. Women who had received cash-for-work for hairdressing

recounted how it was difficult to charge for hairdressing services in the camp as women could get them free of charge from hairdressing cash for work participants.

The formation of co-operatives in Lebanon provided one potential strategy to address some of the challenges. Lebanese women formed the cooperative, as Syrian refugees faced several policy and administrative barriers to getting work permits in the country. However, due to the good relations fostered between the groups, Syrian women were informally involved in the support jobs of the co-operative and received remuneration on a daily basis. *The cooperative approach has helped in creating sustainable income generating structures that could survive beyond the UN Women humanitarian intervention: The cooperatives have helped the trained Lebanese and Syrian women leverage the knowledge gained through agro-business trainings to improve their livelihoods and provided an opportunity for recovery, building resilience and promoting sustainable development. recovery, building resilience and promoting sustainable development.*

The co-operative was showcased at an event conducted by MoSA in Tripoli and food prepared by them was served to the participants. The cooperatives not only improved the livelihoods of vulnerable Lebanese women and those refugee women who were involved but also increased social cohesion.

The focus of the economic opportunities component was largely in traditionally female identified areas. This was due to a multitude of factors, including: the policy

'We knew that the cash-for-work opportunity will come to an end and the chance of getting another opportunity was limited, but now we have got used to going out for work. I had a space in my caravan; we managed to save from our salaries, put in the one-month bonus offered by UN Women. We also borrowed money from relatives and bought two sewing machines and an electric generator. Now, we have some money left over to buy Lycra material fabrics (preferred by Syrian women), yarns, accessories, etc. We have hands-on experience in sewing, designing models, marketing our services and selling our products through word-of-mouth & WhatsApp at cost price to attract customers. We started this small project two months ago. Half of the profits go into buying materials and the other half to pay off the debt. Sometimes, we offer our services for free to poor vulnerable women who would like to recycle their old clothes to make clothes for their children. We aspire to expand our small project, provide job opportunities to other women and display our products in camp shops so that women can find all that they need within the camp itself.'

Women participant in Jordan

framework in the host countries, the limited opportunities in refugee camps and, to a lesser extent, host communities, the existing skill sets and education levels of the women, and the familiarity of the areas to targeted women. There were examples of expanding the vocational training women received to non-traditional areas; in Lebanon, some participants received training on repairing mobile phones.

Finding 3 - The multi-pronged project approach has resulted in both economic and social gains for women. In this regard, the project made significant contributions to strengthening women's resilience. It has also resulted in positive unintended outcomes for communities.

The project has led to several intended and unintended positive results, both economic and non-economic. The changes can be seen both at an individual level and at the community level.

Economic benefits

Interactions with participants suggest that the project has created a sense of purpose and greater agency for them. In all four countries visited, women – both refugees and from host communities look forward to going to the centres. Many of them expressed that the project has made them realise the skills that they possessed and is providing them with an opportunity to refine them. The crisis also placed severe restrictions on the purchasing power of refugees,

which, in turn, affected their ability to access resources that are not a part of aid packages provided by various agencies. Cash-for-work allowed participants to make spending decisions based on their own priorities. The provision of money for work that they like or are good at, was a positive aspect of the project. Respondents were positive about the tangible financial benefits provided by the cash-for-work. Several women under the project were heads of their household, widowed or with husbands who were not with them. Other women had husbands who also were not employed. The access to economic benefits allowed these women to support and / or contribute financially to the household.

Interactions further suggest that most women are spending the money to supplement basic requirements and fulfil other priorities, which would not have been possible in the absence of the project. One respondent, who was a widow with five children stated that the project had brought a “100 per cent” change in her life; due to the project, she could afford food supplies and other necessities for her family.

Non-economic benefits

An example of the project’s effect on inculcating agency within women is seen in Jordan where several women’s committees were formed in the camp and were addressing issues related to SGBV. These committees were comprised women from different districts in the camp. The positive aspect of the committees was that they were created by the women themselves and met at regular intervals (weekly or fortnightly) to discuss issues and lobby the camp management. What is significant about these committees is that they do not have any office bearers.

‘The cash-for-work has changed men and the community’s notions about women. My neighbours’ attitude changed, they no longer criticise me when I leave my children and go to work. My husband supported me, took care of the children in my absence and encouraged me to ignore the neighbours’ negative comments. Now, my neighbours approach me for advice on how to join the cash-for-work programme and I help them.’ She continued, ‘I used to be totally dependent on my husband, he was the sole decision maker in the family. Now, I’m free to do whatever I wish to with my salary. He said: you earned the money and only you have the right to spend it. We jointly made a decision to help my in-laws in Syria with my earnings. Joining the cash-for-work was a huge turning point in my life. My husband has discovered my real personality and abilities.’

Cash for work participant, Jordan

The project also aimed to build women’s individual and collective agency, by enabling them to make independent decisions, and participate in community decision-making processes. For example, in Za’atari camp, electric power shortages are a long-standing problem. During the day, refugees depend on electric generators if they can afford the gasoline or kerosene necessary to operate them. During the holy month of Ramadan, this problem is heightened with increased electricity consumption as people stay up late into. In response, a women’s committee formed under the civic engagement work and advocacy organized by ARDD-Legal Aid addressed the problem. The women’s committee approached the camp manager to increase the duration of the power supply and to reduce the frequency of power shortages/cuts. They succeeded in their endeavour and continued to follow the matter up with the camp manager and the Jordanian authorities. Before their participation in the project, they perhaps would not have had the confidence or have been organised as a group/committee to deal with such civic

problems. To that extent, the project has been very successful and presents an effective model that can be replicated. The quote below from a respondent in Jordan accurately sums up the change created by the project.

‘The work has provided me with a new sense of independence and functioned as a positive catalyst in building my self-worth and dignity.’

The project has also reported to have contributed to ease household tensions. Access to cash which allowed them to fulfil additional requirements and priorities eased some of the anxieties/frustration leading to less tension at home. Further, the practice of coming to centres every day, reduced the time that they were confined at home. This was instrumental in easing the stress they sometimes faced due to tension with husbands, who without employment, also remained at home all the time. Cash-for-work projects has provided some refugee women some level of protection from violence through the easing of familial tensions. The increased access to funds accorded by the new income source acted as a stabilising factor in the home environment, which consequently acted as a mitigating factor for domestic violence. Interaction with other refugee women and spending time outside the home have led to widening the perspective of refugee women towards life and learning from others’ coping mechanisms, which have helped them with their stressful situations more effectively.

‘I used to be depressed and tense from staying indoors for a long time, then I felt better when I met the other women. I can hang out with them, laugh and spend a joyful time.’

‘The Oases became a lighthouse for women. The job opportunities gave women a reason to go out; especially for those who lost their husbands, it gave them hope that life goes on, no matter what happens.’

Jordan project participant

There is also some emerging evidence that the project has led to some change in household dynamics and gender norms as a result of women’s participation in vocational training, cash for work and any follow-on economic opportunities. The extent to which this is sustainable given the short-term nature of some of the interventions remains to be seen. Project participants have witnessed changes in the perception of their family members and neighbours. Their ability to provide financial assistance to the family helped them to negotiate their position with respect to decision-making within the family. This especially holds true for Jordan and Iraq where women were provided cash for work and for Lebanon for those women who were part of the cooperative. Interactions

with women in both countries present two different scenarios. There are some cases in the aforementioned countries where men took on the responsibility of taking care of the children while women were working or attending trainings, but there are also instances where this was not the case. In such cases, there was an increase in workload for women, since along with attending trainings or working, women also had to manage household chores.

One of the significant changes that project led to was the creation and / or expansion of safe spaces for women. This aspect of the project has been received well and appreciated by participants. Respondents mentioned that centres provided them with avenues to have discussions with other women who came from the same background and share similar problems. Being from the same background, women empathised with each other. While these discussions centred on issues concerning their day to day lives, sometimes these were more complex. In such situations, the centres also acted as a platform for coping with stress, as women discussed these issues with each other and sometimes with trainers and staff. Facilitators have also led discussions on how to effectively cope with stress at home.

In host communities setting of Egypt and Lebanon, strategies used for economic empowerment provided opportunity to enhance social cohesion between host community women and refugee women. The collective training and workshops allowed for the creation of social cohesion and the alleviation of tensions. While during the early stages there were tensions between the groups, the constant interaction among them gradually led to the dissolution of such tensions. Integration of Syrian and Lebanese women into the training project established a sense of companionship, ownership, self-confidence and acted as common ground for dialogue and participation, to bridge the cultural barriers among Syrians and Lebanese women. On the professional front, interaction between women helped them to diversify their skill set. This was further facilitated by the appointment of focal point representatives to manage and de-escalate tensions between the groups and act as intermediaries.

Finding 4 - The SGBV component did not adhere to a common framework across the different countries. While the project engaged a large number of participants, some of aspects of this component did not emerge as effective. Where UN Women had more experience working with refugees, the SGBV component was more developed.

SGBV was identified as a key area of intervention by UN Women and SGBV/women's rights awareness training and sessions was the core activity conducted in each country. Their duration and content of the sessions varied in the different countries, but all included information on forms of SGBV, gender and women's rights. Countries then integrated other elements based on their capacities and experience. In Jordan, which had the longest experience working with Syrian refugees, and to a less formalised extent in Iraq, referrals mechanisms were also in place. UN Women also partnered with UNFPA in Jordan and in Syria which brought in the expertise of UNFPA on GBV.

Overall, the training and sessions were well received by those interviewed; while the impact of these sessions needs a longer time to be assessed, it was observed that these sessions were able to at least initiate conversation on gender. Women discussed some of the benefits from attending the SGBV sessions. As explained by one of the

respondents, it raised her awareness of problems associated with early marriage as it violates girls' rights to health, education and limits her opportunity for a career. She spoke about her own personal experience after her 16-year-old daughter was married:

'A girl has dreams and she has to learn so she can realize them. My daughter was looking forward to completing her grade 10 education but she got married, she got pregnant and left school. She is a mother at 16 years of age; physically her body can't withstand the pregnancy and she's suffering complications, and psychologically she isn't mature enough to perceive marriage responsibilities.' The mother eventually convinced her to go back to school. She continued, 'When I go back to Syria, I will be the agent for change. My husband regretted putting our daughter through early marriage. I will talk and discuss early marriage problems within my community, I will try to make the change and convey my personal experience.'

Nonetheless, discussions with trainers and participants highlighted that there was scope to expand and deepen this component. Trainers discussed some of the practical challenges in holding sessions, including the times at which the sessions were held and the duration which was not seen as sufficient to derive the benefits of such sessions. They also encountered difficulty in motivating people to attend sessions and if people come they were not always interested in discussing gender and related issues. The presence of a more experienced person in the group helped focus discussions. Participants, in Lebanon and Egypt also expressed their desire for follow-up sessions, as well as psychosocial support sessions, to assist and support individuals after the training. Moreover, in host community settings cultural differences sometimes reduced the effectiveness of SGBV sessions. In Egypt and Lebanon women from the host community did not wish to attend sessions with Syrian women. While women from host community would share other cuisine, culinary and other expertise with Syrian women, they were not comfortable sharing and discussing private matters related to gender and SGBV and its impact on their lives. It was shared that the SGBV sessions in Lebanon and Egypt were attended mostly by Syrian women.

Although men and boys were involved in SGBV training in Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon motivating men to attend sessions on gender and engaging them was also difficult given the sensitive nature of the topic and conservatism in some the communities. For many men, discussing their

problems 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 are expected to be able to do. Other challenges related to timing and duration of sessions which sometimes conflicted with other work. Project teams in the different countries attempted to use the promotion of soft skills as an entry point for GBV training. In Jordan, SGBV was gradually introduced over two workshops. The first workshop opened discussions about the causes of stress in the context of the camp, the symptoms of stress, and the positive coping mechanisms that are available to men and male youth 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 workshop, 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. One participant said, *'The most important benefit [from the sessions] was learning how to control our stress.'* Several participants in all countries shared how hard it was for some women to communicate with their husbands and sons who sometimes abuse them. They felt that SGBV training for men in the communities would have a significant impact addressing SGBV in the community and should be an area of focus.

Integration of gender equality and human rights in project design and implementation

Finding 5 - UN Women has successfully weaved/incorporated elements of gender equality and human rights based approach in the design and implementation of the project.

UN Women has a strategy for substantive equality that informs projects conducted by the agency.²⁴ UN Women aligned the project, in the design stage, with its approach towards substantive equality, and thereby the larger principles of gender equality, in several ways. While the project sought to support the economic empowerment of women, through the building of their capacities to access income-generation opportunities, an equally important outcome of the project was the creation of gender awareness to ensure that women could play an active role in community-decision making. Such an approach recognised that while income generation could support

women in redressing disadvantage, building awareness on gender across society was a pre-requisite to ensure that existing stigmas were countered, social and institutional structures that created barriers for the empowerment of women were addressed and that the political participation and social inclusion of women was maintained. With this in mind, UN Women also included men and boys in the gender awareness sessions. Such a move was aligned with previous gender equality campaigns such as the HeForShe campaign, which recognises the role of men and boys as important stakeholders in achieving gender equality.

Further, the needs assessments, which were conducted prior to the implementation of the project, gave a platform

²⁴Discussion Paper: Gender Equality and Human Rights, For Progress of the World's Women 2015-2016, Sandra Fredman and Beth Goldblatt, 2015

for women to express themselves and put forward their needs. This resulted in the project taking into account the needs and concerns of the intended participants, enabling the project to be structured around them.

The provision of “safe spaces” for women was an important move and aligned with human rights principles. The safety and security of an individual is a basic human right and safe spaces form an important mechanism to deliver this right. The aim of the strategy was to create an environment conducive for conducting recreational, educational and psychosocial activities for women. The sharing of experiences and social gatherings became a powerful coping mechanism for women, who shared their stress with others who had undergone similar distressing situations. These centres were the primary delivery points for gender awareness sessions, trainings and discussions on SGBV, including its causes, contributing factors and connection with other human rights violations. The decision to expand the reach of the project and target not only Syrian refugee women, but also women from host communities, was further evidence of the project working to ensure that vulnerable women from the communities who were also economically disadvantaged and exposed to GBV were also included.

Through a combination of the aforementioned aspects in the design phase, the overall strategy has integrated elements of a GEHR approach. Other examples, mentioned in other sections, include:

- a. Country Offices and the Regional Office were staffed with gender experts, ensuring that an understanding of gender-based approaches was integrated into the design and implementation of the project.
- b. Ensuring the **participation** of women in the selection of activities under which trainings were to be carried out took place using formal and informal surveys.
- c. Where possible giving priority to women trainers, many of whom were from the refugee community, who possessed the relevant skill-sets. This had a dual benefit of not only providing them with income, but in creating a conducive environment for other women to attend the trainings.
- d. Ensuring the **inclusion** of the most vulnerable and at-risk women in the community through the use of vulnerability criteria and community mobilisers.

Worth noting, however, is that UN Women needs to articulate and unpack the term “women’s empowerment,” as well as the components of empowerment when developing a programmatic approach in this area. The current project addressed two aspects of women’s empowerment: women’s access to finances/income and awareness of SGBV. These components are not enough to increase women’s empowerment; they can contribute to the sum, but individually they cannot achieve empowerment.

The main enabling and hindering factors in achievement of results

Finding 6 - Strong strategic partners established by UN Women with government, UN and civil society organisations as well as the ability in certain contexts to integrate and build on the work beyond the limited project period were found to be key enabling factors for achievement of results. In all countries, however, policy and legislative frameworks placed constraints on medium to longer term gains.

UN Women forging strategic partnerships was important in ensuring that the project maximised its reach and capitalised on local expertise. The ability to identify and work with strong partners with existing facilities and networks in the communities where the project was implemented was central to the achievement of the intended results within a short timeframe. These partnerships allowed UN Women to use its resources more effectively in the different countries, minimising duplication and focusing on comparative advantage.

In Jordan where project activities built on previous work and were embedded in broader work which would continue and in Lebanon where project funds for a second phase were secured for a second phase, UN Women was able to develop a longer-term perspective that leveraged lessons learned and built on existing work. This has allowed for the expansion of the SGBV component in Jordan to broaden the focus beyond awareness sessions. It has also enabled the exploration of more sustainable economic opportunities for Syrian refugees and women from host communities both through coops in the evaluated project as well as through job placement under a new phase in Lebanon.

However, the legislative and policy frameworks in each country with respect to refugees' legal rights and status was a key constraint, particularly with respect to supporting sustainable economic opportunities for refugee women. The 1951 Refugee Convention lays down basic minimum standards for the treatment of refugees, including the right to work (Articles 17 to 19), which is also enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 23.1) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Part III, Article 6). Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon are not signatories. Consequently, while host countries in the region have welcomed the largest numbers of Syrian refugees, legal and policy frameworks in some of these countries, as well as economic circumstances have limited refugees' right to work and subsequently the types of on the ground interventions with respect to economic opportunities. Ensuring that the intervention was aligned with national priorities and strategies, working with government partners, and including vulnerable women from the host

community where possible has given UN Women increased scope to shape project activities to begin to create linkages with other actors under the CfW component or through the cooperative model in Lebanon to promote economic benefit beyond project participation. However, the larger context has contributed to economic opportunities / access to income being short-term and when available beyond the period of project participation, largely concentrated in the informal sector. At a practical level, where possible in this intervention, UN Women has attempted to mitigate some of these issues through mobilisation efforts and advocacy for decent work opportunities via actions such as regulating informal labour, advocating for minimum wage for the work women in the project are doing, promoting safety at work, providing social protection and encouraging sustainable enterprise development.

3.3

Efficiency

Leveraging and managing resources

Finding 1 - The management structure and project teams have contributed to the effective and efficient implementation of the project. The further strengthening of monitoring and knowledge sharing mechanisms could have further enhanced efficiency and effectiveness.

The management structure and human resources available at various levels and stages were appropriate. At a broad level, the regional office was responsible for advocacy efforts, ensuring efficient management of country specific processes and co-ordination between relevant parties. Project management allowed for flexibility in planning and implementation at country level to ensure that activities remained relevant to the national context and women's needs and priorities.

The number and distribution of the project team at the regional and country level offices was also sufficient. While at the time of project initiation UN Women had no country office in Lebanon, project management hired a project coordinator based in Lebanon to liaise with partners and follow-up on ongoing work; this allowed for interaction with and support not only to partners, but also ongoing engagement with the GBV working work. With the exception of Iraq, there was no turnover in terms of the

project team for most of the project which contributed to coherence and continuity in approach and partnerships.

The evaluation further highlighted that the technical competence and the dedication of the project team was an important contributor to the effective and efficient implementation of the project. Expertise was also maximized by creating linkages across stakeholders and ensuring the addition of relevant expertise, wherever required. The project displayed an efficient utilisation of human resources by employing specialists and experts in sectoral and functional departments, as well as equipping existing resources with required skills to be able to execute responsibilities successfully.

While the experience of project management, staff and partners contributed to the efficient and effective implementation of interventions, UN Women missed opportunities for leveraging the information collected and project experiences and the to inform organisational

learning. Monitoring of project activities was conducted on an ongoing basis; with quarterly progress reports produced. While the project collected large amounts of data and performance-based observations and had reporting mechanisms in place, the data was not being systematically used to better inform on-going activities. The project would have also benefited from the inclusion of qualitative indicators to assess the *quality* of the outputs and gain a greater understanding of what is and is not working and why. For example, recording the number of women and girls or men who benefit from outreach activities or receive skills training provides no indication of the relative appropriateness (or not) of these activities. The lack of a dedicated M&E officer/specialist also presented challenges in ensuring that monitoring was undertaken in a strategic and systematic manner and the data collected systematically informed ongoing project activities. While project funding and structures generally do not enable longer term monitoring and evaluation once the project is over, there was also no formal follow-up of participants once they had completed the training, including information on the tangible medium-term results of the project (i.e., the number of women who capitalised on the training and accessed the labour market). Having a M+E system which allowed for systematic follow-up would contribute to understanding the extent to which women

were able to capitalise on trainings. This effort would include developing the capacities of partners to more effectively monitor their own project components. While not part of the project scope, interactions with stakeholders demonstrated an expectation to receive training on monitoring. UN Women was unable to fill this capacity gap due to logistics issues and a lack of time.

While lessons learned during implementation in one country informed the experience of other countries through management at the regional level, no formal mechanisms / processes for exchange were established between staff and / or partners in the different countries. It also resulted in the project presenting as multi-country intervention versus a regional programme. Given that this was a relatively new area of work for UN Women in the region, the initial visit of UN Women Iraq CO staff to Jordan was very informative in setting up their own intervention. Such exchanges on project experiences and achievements at the national level may have more systematically provided valuable insights to inform organisational learning.

Finding 2 - The project has achieved its targets within the given timeframe and the allocated financial resources. UN Women was able to use project funds efficiently and strategically. Its partnership approach allowed it to leverage existing resources to avoid delays and duplication.

While UN Women is not a humanitarian actor, it was able to meet the challenge of implementing the project in this context. At the time of the project evaluation 98 percent of funds had been utilized and the project was on track to achieve 100 per cent utilisation of funds within the planned timeframe (table 7). **Project management mitigated any operational challenges by maintaining flexibility of management and ensuring coordination across countries.** Consultations with relevant stakeholders at regional and country levels indicated that the initial budget allocations were tentatively assigned in agreement with the headquarters at the beginning of the project. However, the built-in flexibility of the project allowed for re-allocations among target countries to meet high demands for the project's services in countries such as Jordan and Egypt. Some funds were reallocated from Syria to other countries due to some delay in receiving the government's response. The project was efficient in re-allocating and maximising effectiveness.

Another important factor that enhanced project efficiency was UN Women's partnership approach. As previously mentioned (relevance, finding 3) the project leveraged existing infrastructural mechanisms in every country. This allowed the project to capitalise on the available resources (human and financial), avoid duplication and maximise available funds and deliver within the planned timeframe. UN Women through its partnership with government agencies could utilise the existing infrastructure.

Table 7**Country-wise allocation and utilisation of funds**

Country	Funds Allocated (USD)	Percentage Allocated	Funds Utilized (USD)	Percentage Utilized
Egypt	110,000	4	110,000	100
Lebanon	600,000	16	483,000	100
Jordan	700,000	24	700,000	100
Iraq	400,000	14	382,000	96
Syria	600,000	20	600,000	100
Regional	531,000	22	621,000	96
Total	2,941,000	100	2,896,000	98

- Funds allocated show the total funds assigned to each country for project activities.
- Percentage allocated shows the percentage of funds assigned to each country in comparison to the overall project budget.
- Funds utilised show the total funds utilised by each county for project activities.
- Percentage utilised shows the utilisation of funds in comparison with the funds allocated. It shows whether funds were over or under-utilised.²⁵

²⁵The information provided in the table is provisional and based on the data made available at the time of the evaluation.

4 CONCLUSIONS

Conclusion 1

Despite limited funding levels relative to other humanitarian actors, UN Women has leveraged partnerships and existing resources and capacities, to enhance its coverage and quality and use project resources strategically and efficiently. Ensuring the necessary capacities at national and local levels and complementarity of efforts will be critical to continuing and expanding these efforts.

Evaluation criteria: Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency

UN Women's partnership approach has allowed it to maximise its own resources in terms of project funds and expertise to deliver on intended results efficiently and effectively, as well as ensure the relevance of its intervention. Leveraging existing infrastructure for safe spaces and vocational centres allowed UN Women to focus on providing only those materials which were needed and for the broadening of the future purpose and functioning of those spaces. The presence of its partners in local communities has also enabled it to reach vulnerable women through partners' networks and community

mobilisers in host communities. Similarly, the hiring of facilitators / trainers from the refugee camps has also tapped into their local knowledge to more effectively and efficiently reach vulnerable women. Recognizing the challenges with respect to funding and the protracted nature of the conflict, it is important to continue to build on these efforts to promote national ownership and enhance national capacities to respond to humanitarian crisis.

Partnerships with other actors including sister UN agencies has also promoted greater efficiency and effectiveness through a complementarity of efforts, particularly in Jordan and Syria where partnerships were established with UNFPA, UNDP and others. The work with UNFPA in these countries has allowed for expansion of the SGBV component to focus on other critical components related to SGBV in humanitarian contexts. Expanding these partnerships will be critical to ensuring that vulnerable women's needs and priorities are addressed through a multi-pronged, holistic approach that capitalises on each agencies' comparative advantage.

Conclusion 2

The regional project was the first ROAS project in humanitarian action. Through this UN Women started to increasingly engage with the humanitarian architecture in Egypt, Iraq and Lebanon. Moving forward UN Women should take advantage of its presence to expand its efforts to complement and enhance the capacities of other key actors to deliver on gender equality in their humanitarian response.

Evaluation criteria: Relevance and Effectiveness

Building on the foundation that it has established through this project UN Women is now better positioned to complement and enhance UN efforts to ensure consistency and sustainability in addressing gender equality concerns across the humanitarian-development continuum. The

project has provided entry points for further work particularly in Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, and Syria where UN Women's work on the Syrian response was new at the time of the intervention. While the engagement was primarily focused on informing other stakeholders about the project and project coordination, UN Women can expand on this engagement to include broader coordination on gender equality and women's empowerment in humanitarian action. This will require additional resources, both financial and human.

Conclusion 3

The project successfully navigated existing policy, practical and bureaucratic constraints, to deliver on its intended outputs in terms of provision of vocation training and cash for work opportunities. For the majority of women, the economic benefits were short-term. UN Women establishing agreements with other entities to secure goods from the cash-for-work component rather than import them as well as forming cooperatives can be potential strategies for longer-term benefits. However, sustainable strategies will require work on multiple levels, including policy, community, and individual capacities.

Evaluation criteria: *Relevance and Effectiveness*

The project sought ways given existing constraints to provide women with economic opportunities beyond their participation in the project economic activities (cash for work and vocational training) with varying levels of success. In refugee camp settings, strategies including agreements with other actors for participating women to produce needed goods locally in Jordan and to a lesser extent Iraq, have had some success in expanding the numbers reached and providing additional services to the community from surplus funds. The extent to which longer-term agreements with other actors outside of the

refugee camps to produce goods using a cash for work modality can be facilitated is a question to be further explored; however, cash for work is not intended as a source of long-term employment. In the host community setting of Lebanon, the formation of cooperatives has demonstrated some success in sustaining women's income beyond the project period. In both refugee camp and host community settings the focus of cash-for-work and vocational training has been primarily in traditional female dominated fields, which can limit the range of opportunities available to women. While there has been some reported resistance from women into moving into less female dominated fields, the evaluation found that there is a willingness to explore other options; vocational training on cell phone repair in Lebanon is one example. Promoting more sustainable solutions will require work at multiple levels, including: policy level advocacy on the right to work, identification of existing and future opportunities based on market needs, ensuring women can access these opportunities, changing norms on acceptable fields of work for women, and fostering more gender sensitive working environments. This will require multi-stakeholder partnerships.

Conclusion 4

The project successfully integrated GEHR principles in its design and implementation and focused on women's economic opportunities and SGBV two key, yet historically neglected, elements of humanitarian action. However, the project design and relatively short time-frame led to a focus that was more concentrated on the humanitarian end of the humanitarian-development continuum. This limited what could be achieved with respect to women's empowerment.

Evaluation criteria: *Relevance and Effectiveness*

Women and girls continue to be disadvantaged in humanitarian action. UN Women focused on key areas of humanitarian action women's economic opportunities and protection to promote women's empowerment. This approach recognised that strengthening the resilience of vulnerable women through increased livelihoods opportunities, as well as SGBV and women's rights awareness training and advocacy, could mitigate negative coping mechanisms. Women highlighted both the positive economic and non-economic effects from project participation at individual, household and community

level. Given that for the majority of women in four of the five countries the economic benefits were short-term there is a need to increasingly focus on a model that 'builds on development gains and enhances sustainability' in order to strengthen resilience and support gender equality and women's empowerment.

To enhance the approach to addressing gender equality and women's empowerment in humanitarian action, there is a need to articulate a framework that is clear and measurable for working on women's empowerment in humanitarian action. In the Women Empowerment Framework, used by Oxfam and other organisations, women's lives are depicted as being affected by gendered, patriarchal power structures within the domains of the individual, family, community and systems. Where women's labour and work is concerned, gendered power structures, class, caste (or tribal affiliation) and religion determine not only what work the woman can do, but also all work-related aspects such as wage structures, policies governing the workplace, level of education and social mobility. The approach should be situated with an over-

arching articulation of women's rights, access to labour, patriarchal structures and intersecting issues in the given contexts. Taking a more focused and systematic approach requires a project to develop explicit structural parameters for analysis and tracking change. This would create a deeper understanding of structures that act as catalysts in the lives of women.

This conceptual framework must also incorporate a Theory of Change. Such a Theory would have to be developed accounting for the aspects listed below:

a. *Security and well-being of refugee women:* Women have the options necessary to end, mitigate or adapt to threats to their human rights, and have the capacity and freedom to pursue, access and exercise these options. This would be kept in line with a human security approach

b. *Individual agency of women:* The factor is based on the capability of a woman to envisage a desired future as well as the means and platform to achieve it. Finally, it is critical that a woman can utilise these avenues to realise her choice. For instance, a woman who has her rights respected (even under refugee status), earn an income to pay her children's education (for example), and live a life with greater security and dignity as opposed to a life confined

by patriarchal barriers, would be able to fulfil many of her own aspirations.

c. *Shift in power relations:* Shifts in awareness, agency and power that enable a greater voice, choices and decision making ability for refugee women.

d. *Structure of legal policies and frameworks:* Legal frameworks and the institutional policies, practices and accountabilities that lead to the formal recognition and protection of the rights of refugee women.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations for the project are developed with the vision of strengthening key areas and are, in order of priority, as follows:

1. As the Syrian response moves towards an increasing focus on resilience, UN Women should consider articulating a more explicit and holistic framework for working on women's empowerment in humanitarian action for future interventions.

a. Clarify the project's focus on women's empowerment through a lens of women's human rights.

b. 'Enhanced knowledge and skills,' represent one component of women becoming 'empowered to make informed decisions'. Given that women and girls are embedded in patriarchal social systems, it is necessary to also address the range of other factors influencing these decisions.

c. At the project outcome level, an explicit framework for working on women's empowerment in humanitarian action would help define what changes in the status of women and girls (with respect to their improved decision making capacity, fulfilment of rights, and reduction of vulnerability) will be assessed.

d. At the output level, it is necessary to develop qualitative indicators to assess the *quality* of the outputs and gain a greater understanding of what is and is not working and why.

e. At the impact level, UN Women should collect information to see what 'systemic change' has been brought about rather than emphasising the achievement of target numbers.

2. UN Women should establish a comprehensive Monitoring Evaluation Accountability and Learning (MEAL) system to inform of future work in humanitarian action and gain a greater understanding of intended and unintended results of its interventions.

UN Women needs to establish a comprehensive Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) system to track progress and document and evaluate the outcomes (the 'Change') of its interventions in the longer-term. The MEAL system will enable UN Women to build, manage, and share the knowledge and hands-on experience produced under its short-term humanitarian interventions.

The different interventions were relevant in a humanitarian crisis setting but more robust measures for monitoring effectiveness of humanitarian interventions and looking at outcomes were missing. These measures would have enhanced and systematised efforts to make adjustments in real time, which is crucial in a humanitarian setting.

A comprehensive MEAL system has an integral component of "Data Dissemination and Use" or a "Communication Strategy" necessary for effective communication, feedback and reporting to all key stakeholders. A communications strategy is a policy-driven approach to providing stakeholders with information about a project. The plan formally defines who should be given specific information, when that information should be delivered and what communication channels will be used to deliver the information. Having a communication strategy in place will ensure periodic and effective progress reporting of UN Women and accountability to all stakeholders.

UN Women should explore with donors, the possibility of building in additional time to the project period to conduct tracer studies on women who participated in the project to assess medium and longer-term intended and unintended results related to employment, SGBV, empowerment, etc.; more studies are required to assess the relationship of providing economic opportunities / increased income for women and risk to SGBV.

3. UN Women should place greater focus on the capacity development of implementing partners to strengthen national capacities on ensuring humanitarian action is gender responsive.

Although UN Women follows a rigorous selection procedure for implementing partners, it should invest in building the human and institutional capacities of implementing partners starting with a comprehensive assessment to developing a Human and Institutional Capacity Development Plan (HICD). Investing in implementing partners' capacities allows a partner to cultivate the skills to support, reinforce and strengthen nationally led, gender-responsive humanitarian and early recovery interventions (i.e., Human & Institutional Sustainability Measures). Supporting partners' capacities

can foster sustainability and ability to effectively respond to current and future crises. Building and investing in partners' MEAL systems and capacities, project management and implementation and reporting capacities can help UN Women and partners document their successes and lessons learnt for future programming.

4. UN Women should include a more robust SGBV component as part of its broader efforts to enhance social protection. This should include expanding partnerships with others actors who are working on SGBV and expanding the work on engaging men and boys in addressing sexual and gender based violence through the identification and leveraging of good practices.

Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action 2015: Reducing risk, promoting resilience and aiding recovery (2015) have been developed by multi-sectoral agencies on how to include GBV in project planning.²⁶ While elements of this manual may have been integrated to different extents in the different countries, UN Women should ensure that this manual and other global guidance is used more systematically while designing the SGBV component in the future humanitarian action. Lessons learned from implementation of the project should also be built into this strategy to ensure that project components are based on the latest and most relevant information. UN Women should also focus on enhancing national and local capacities on SGBV. This will ensure a trained cadre of protection officers who could implement and sustain efforts to combat SGBV.

UN Women should also identify and document good practices to engage men and enhance their participation in SGBV initiatives, including placing more emphasis on the importance of men providing support to women's initiatives. This may include a scaling up of the 'HeForShe' Campaign to engage men in the promotion of women's rights, and enhancing their participation in SGBV sessions taking into consideration patriarchal structures, cultural norms and traditions. These efforts should also stress the role of men and boys as allies in SGBV prevention, not just perpetrators; they should also recognize that men and boys are sometimes survivors of SGBV.

Suggestions offered by female participants to increase men and boys' engagement included raising men and boys' awareness of the subject matter's importance and benefits to their families. Male community and religious leaders can

also serve as mentors or opinion formers. Also, incentives could be effective, such as financial or in-kind incentives like job opportunities or involving men in implementing interventions. Likewise, civic participation methods to organise meetings, rallies, and marches may be used to attract male participants in supporting community causes.

Joining alliances and networks like the MenEngage Alliance,²⁷ an organisation working with men and boys for gender equality, can support UN Women in increasing men's involvement and participation. UN Women and partners need to include strategies for civic engagement where both men and women can come together to jointly solve pressing community problems, especially when implementing community-based initiatives for the prevention of SGBV.

5. The creation of sustainable economic opportunities for Syrian refugees and host communities remains a great challenge. UN Women should explore different modalities for ensuring sustainable economic opportunities for vulnerable women from Syrian refugee and host communities in partnership with other key actors working on this.

As the Syrian crisis moves into its sixth year, the international community is increasingly focusing on improving both the policy environment and programmatic approaches to livelihoods, both decent employment and self-employment initiatives. The UN Women regional project created economic opportunities within the existing parameters set by the policy environment and economic conditions, many of which were temporary economic opportunities. As the space for discussion of policy change has expanded and there is commitment to create 1.1 million new jobs in the region by 2018, key actors are exploring how to most effectively enhance and expand economic opportunities. The 3RP Regional Refugee Response Plan 2017-18 has identified several promising approaches based on a Multi-Country Economic Opportunities Assessment.²⁸ UN Women can play a key role in ensuring that women have equal access and have the necessary capacities to access new opportunities, as well as initiatives are gender-responsive. As many of these opportunities may not be in sectors which are traditionally female-dominated, this will likely require community mobilisation efforts to address resistance to women working in certain sectors.

²⁶ Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action: Reducing risk, promoting resilience and aiding recovery- http://gbvguidelines.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/2015-IASC-Gender-based-Violence-Guidelines_lo-res.pdf

²⁷ MenEngage Alliance <http://menengage.org/about-us/>

²⁸ <http://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/3RP-Regional-Strategic-Overview-2017-18.pdf>

Moving forward, UN Women should work on both the programmatic and policy levels to ensure sustainable economic opportunities. In the short and medium-term, UN Women should continue to explore the potential to expand partnerships (public and private) to fund longer-term cash for work opportunities. This could include expanding / establishing agreements with other UN agencies (e.g. UNICEF) and private sector (e.g. factories) for refugee women to provide the needed goods and services. UN Women should also work with other actors, including ILO, UNDP and WFP to ensure that women are integrated into their livelihoods initiatives and have equal opportunities. Taking into consideration the individual country contexts and labour policies, clear exit strategies should be developed that link participants to follow up economic opportunities or micro-finance services so that participants and their families when the project ends. At policy level, UN Women should also work with partners on advocating for greater access to formal work opportunities in host countries.

6. UN Women should advocate for multi-year funding to enable longer-term planning and programming in humanitarian action.

Multi-year funding has become increasingly important as the Syrian crisis has become protracted. As argued in the paper, Multi-Year Humanitarian Funding in Protracted Crises: The Case for Donor Support,²⁹ multi-year funding can improve: “1) programme quality and effectiveness; 2) programme efficiency and value-for-money; 3) relations with communities and partners; 4) staff management and

partnerships; and 5) system strengthening and community resilience”.

Most importantly, supporting women’s economic empowerment and SGBV requires a longer-term, multi-dimensional approach which addresses the underlying causes of gender inequality. Addressing entrenched gender norms and unequal power relations that affect women’s economic opportunities and access and control over resources will not only require ensuring that women have the requisite human, financial and social capital to participate on equal footing with men, but that communities accept women entering traditionally male dominated occupations, which entail long-term strategies and ongoing community engagement.

²⁹<http://care.ca/sites/default/files/files/publications/Multi-Year%20Humanitarian%20Funding%20in%20Protracted%20Crises%20-%20Collaborative%20Pap....pdf>

UN WOMEN IS THE UN ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN. A GLOBAL CHAMPION FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS, UN WOMEN WAS ESTABLISHED TO ACCELERATE PROGRESS ON MEETING THEIR NEEDS WORLDWIDE.

UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to implement these standards. It stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on five priority areas: increasing women's leadership and participation; ending violence against women; engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes; enhancing women's economic empowerment; and making gender equality central to national development planning and budgeting. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality.



Planet 50-50 by 2030
Step It Up for Gender Equality

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