



## Regional activity highlights

The conflict in Syria has caused the world's worst humanitarian emergency since World War II, according to the United Nations, requiring the biggest relief operation in its 64-year history. The complex civil war in Syria has intensified recently with the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) launching a sudden and murderous offensive across the region, forcing an average of one out of eight Syrians to flee across the border to neighbouring countries and has placed nearly half of the Syrian population and another 2 million displaced Iraqi persons in need to urgent help. Today, more than 3.5 million Syrian women and girls of reproductive age, of which 432,000 are pregnant, and more than 250,000 Iraqi displaced women are in dire need of urgent health and protection support.

An alarming and sudden Syrian refugee inflow took place, with more than 160,000 Syrian Kurds fleeing the advance of ISIS fighters and pouring across the border into Turkey. The movement of Syrian refugees continues to place an immense burden on neighbouring countries, increasing the pressure on the fragile systems of countries that are already suffering economically, socially as well as politically.

United Nations agencies, including UNFPA, are struggling to deal with the continuing influx and to meet refugees' minimum needs due to the lack of sufficient funds and the restriction of movement due to insecurity. The humanitarian situation is getting worse: refugees are struggling to cope with the current situation with women in particular living in distress, suffering from poor living conditions and in fear of sexual harassment and exploitation.

- **Syrian Arab Republic:** UNFPA reached 37,500 women of reproductive age with reproductive health and GBV services, including 960 women who benefited from the reproductive health voucher system. 5,600 dignity kits delivered to Iraqi pregnant women refugees in Al-Hasakah and 30,000 boxes of condoms delivered to support family planning services. UNFPA provided psychosocial support and medical examination to 6,100 women residing in affected areas. UNFPA partnered with 19 new public and private hospitals, aiming to scale up the provision of reproductive health services, including emergency obstetric care to the affected people in six governorates.

- **In Lebanon:** UNFPA certified 80 women as community leaders to deliver awareness sessions on a range of reproductive health and gender-based violence issues. UNFPA developed 80,000 reproductive health pamphlets, 150,000 reproductive health informative leaflets for Syrian refugees and printed 200,000 copies of pregnancy cards for women from the Syrian refugees and the Lebanese communities. A total of 251 women benefited from the GBV services provided at the Al Marj, Bekaa, Listening and Counselling

Center (LCC). UNFPA established a partnership with Intersos to enhance GBV response and prevention mechanisms at the community level in Mount Lebanon. Post-rape treatment kits were distributed to four health facilities in Beirut and Mount Lebanon, following the Clinical Management of Rape (CMR) health facility based-trainings.

- **In Jordan:** A total of 17,590 women and girls benefited from reproductive health services in August and September. UNFPA supported 20 selected primary health care centres with customized IUDs kits and supported the Institute of Family Health with 100 baby kits and 100 mother kits covering the needs for six months. During the reporting period 2,851 GBV survivors were supported with services, 10,104 refugees were reached through home-to-home visits and 5,393 persons were sensitized on GBV issues, services available and referral pathways both in camps and in host communities. UNFPA distributed 3,200 information and communication leaflets on reproductive health

- **Iraq:** Around 657 women and girls benefited from reproductive health services. UNFPA deployed 50 nurses and midwives to support the Department of Health in Dohuk to

provide reproductive health services for maternities and delivery rooms, distributed 1,000 women health booklets to Syrian refugee women in Erbil and Duhok governorates and delivered 61 reproductive health kits, including five kits designed to meet the emergency needs of population of 750,000 for three months. UNFPA provided GBV services to 1,520 women, launched youth spaces in Kawargosek and Darashakran camps and inaugurated the succor field in Domiz camp

- **Turkey:** UNFPA delivered 2,376 hygiene kits through the second cross border convoy to Northern Aleppo and Hama, 4,752 kits to Iraqi refugees in Sirkak, Mardin and Batman districts and another 4,752 kits to Syrian Kurds arriving from Kobani. UNFPA conducted two training courses on the Minimum Initial Service Package for reproductive health (MISP) for 42 Syrian service providers in Sanliurfa and in Gaziantep.

- **Egypt:** UNFPA built the capacity of 12 GBV service providers on the Clinical Management of Rape. UNFPA partnered with the Arab Medical Union to enhance the capacity of the 30 Syrian community health workers in Giza.

A story from the field, Syria Arab Republic

## The right to be a girl, and not a child bride ... A call from Nour to end up the cycle of violence in Syria

Early and forced marriage of girls was a long-standing issue in some Syrian communities even before the war started, but with the war, the numbers of early marriages have increased and the reasons for early marriages have changed. Various families are now marrying off their young girls to protect them in the absence of male family members or to reduce their financial burden. "No girls want this life, teenager Syrian girls are being forced into early marriages to save their families" said Nour\* a 12 years old young girl from Aleppo in the Syria Arab Republic, but there was no other choice, my family was confronting economic problems and I was a burden on them, I had to sacrifice my dreams of being a Syrian women leader for their happiness."

Like many internally displaced persons in Syrian, Nour and her family were forced to flee their home in April 2014 to one of the shelters in Damascus as violence increasingly intensified in their city in Aleppo, claiming the lives of thousands of people. Nine members of Nour's family are sharing one crowded room, living with barely any food, clothes, books or toys. In shelters, the majority of displaced people are unemployed, and families are spending their meager savings to survive and make their daily ends meet. The deteriorating economic and security situation is driving families to use different methods to protect and gain or save money and protect their girls. One of the methods that is utilized more and more is to marry off their young daughters. Unfortunately instead of protecting the girls, it often results in jeopardizing their health, education subjecting them to violence and abuse.

Nour found herself in the awful position of having to marry a much older man who she had never met before, but whome had offered her family a *mehr* (a mandatory bridal dowry usually provided in the form of money or possessions paid by the groom or by groom's father) large enough to support her family for nearly a year.

Nours's romantic perception of marriage vanished quickly and turned into a nightmare. Nour said "Making the adjustments to the reality of marriage and being in a new family environment was traumatic enough, but I became scared

and depressed as my husband constantly forced me to have sex with him against my wishes, often commanding me to oblige in front of his family members. I was not born for this."

Nour was advised by her mother to approach the UNFPA-supported AL Halbouni health clinic in Damascus, to help cope with her depression. The clinic is one of the three Syrian Family Planning Association clinics mandated to provide comprehensive services, such as medical examination, social services and legal counseling for survivors of gender-based violence.

"By the time Nour reached us, she was in a dire state — legally, mentally, physically, she was silent, and unable to discuss her situation", says Hala Haj Hussein, a social worker at the centre "As part of an integrated package of psychosocial, medical and legal support services provided by clinic, we supported Nour and counseled her with tips to communicate with her husband and his family. This was after subjecting her to a comprehensive medical examination and providing her with psychosocial support sessions to deal with the trauma of early marriage and forced sexual relations".

While Nour still remains withdrawn she has responded well to the therapy and there are positive signs of change. Ms. Hussein explained that Nour feels more confident and supported in making decisions. Her family is also supporting her and does not want to see her suffer either.

After months of reflection, Nour has decided to try to file for divorce. Nour is receiving free legal counseling services from a lawyer at the clinic. Moreover, the clinic, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, has helped Nour obtain official documents that are necessary to register in school again and provided her with the needed books.

Every girl should have a chance to reach her potential. "My dream has been crushed by the cruel realities of war... Yet, I am still alive, stronger and able to continue to study, hopefully achieve my dreams and make a change in my country and in the world." Nour said.

\*Name changed to protect identity

Syrian Arab Republic	
10,800,000	Number of people in need
432,000	Estimated number of pregnant women
2,700,000	Estimated number of women of reproductive age
Lebanon	
1,163,709	Number of people in need
20,597	Estimated number of pregnant women
287,522	Estimated number of women of reproductive age
Jordan	
618,086	Number of people in need
10,939	Estimated number of pregnant women
149,849	Estimated number of women of reproductive age
Iraq	
246,298	Number of people in need
4,359	Estimated number of pregnant women
47,606	Estimated number of women of reproductive age
Turkey	
1,350,000	Number of people in need
54,000	Estimated number of pregnant women
337,000	Estimated number of women of reproductive age
Egypt	
138,458	Number of people in need
2,450	Estimated number of pregnant women
34,811	Estimated number of women of reproductive age