

# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

not just a private matter

**Domestic violence** is one of the main widespread forms of gender based violence which affects women disproportionately.

## DEFINITION

Domestic violence must be understood in the context of structural inequalities and power imbalances between male and female individuals in the family and social norms in society that allow it to occur. The definition of violence against women came clear in the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, where it is understood as **“a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women and shall mean all acts of gender-based violence that result in, or are likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private.”** Within this context, domestic violence is considered as any “physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation.

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AS A FORM OF GENDER BASED-VIOLENCE (GBV)

Violence against women and girls is deeply rooted in gender inequalities that deny women and girls the same opportunities as men and boys, making them more vulnerable to structural and inter personal violence. In times of emergencies, humanitarian crisis, and war, violence against women increases and becomes systematic and widespread. Therefore, it must be addressed from the earliest stages of an emergency response through the resilience and recovery phases and into post conflict development efforts.



**9.3 OF EVERY 10**  
domestic violence cases  
are women and girls

Since the beginning of the Syria crisis the IRC has focused its efforts on meeting the specific needs of Syrian refugee women and girls, recognizing the particular risks of gender-based violence they face: early and forced marriage, domestic violence (including physical, emotional and economic violence), sexual harassment and exploitation.

Domestic violence in particular is the main form of violence survivors of GBV have reported to humanitarian agencies. The SGBV Sub Working group estimates that more than 50% of the survivors seeking support from humanitarian agencies in Jordan are survivors of domestic violence, while 66% of the incidents reported to the IRC in 2015 were allegedly perpetrated by the survivor's male spouse. Despite the impact of domestic violence on Syrian women and girls and their families, little has been done by the humanitarian community to address this.

Domestic violence continues to be perceived as a private matter and not within the scope of traditional humanitarian aid, due diligence standards and States' commitments.

Adolescent girls in particular are victims of abuses within the domestic sphere represented by cases of early marriage. With displacement, an increased number of Syrian refugee girls are being married at a younger age. Whereas at the beginning of the Syria crisis (2012), early marriage cases constituted %18 of the total number of registered marriages among the Syrian refugee population in Jordan, the following year, this figure increased to %25 and a further increase occurred in the first quarter of 2014, representing %32 of all registered marriages amongst Syrian refugees in Jordan. More recent data from the GBVIMS, covering the year 2015, stated that %32.7 of GBV survivors who received support were cases of forced and early marriage.

In 2008, Jordan adopted a legislation to protect victims of domestic violence, giving victims, for the first time, access to protection orders. It provides confidential proceedings and procedures to detain alleged abusers. Victims can also receive direct compensation. Yet the law has left a number of gaps in place. Most relevant is the fact that the law being family centered, rather than survivor centered, leaves a heavy focus on reconciliation, to the possible detriment of protecting the victims.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recognize domestic violence as a significant concern within the humanitarian agenda. Humanitarian strategies, guidance, and plans should explicitly include domestic violence as a significant concern warranting specialized attention and programming.
- The humanitarian community including donors need to consider domestic violence a protection priority and increase funding for programs that respond to and prevent GBV amongst Syrian refugees.

- Support mainstreamed approaches to addressing domestic violence. Specific attention should be focused on addressing domestic violence both within the GBV sector as well as in broader health, food security, education, protection and economic initiatives. In this sense IRC-Jordan program of cash assistance for women survivors of GBV constitutes a good practice that proves how supporting women with economic resources has a positive impact on reducing their exposition to violence.
- Humanitarian agencies should scale up their involvement in the prevention of SGBV amongst Syrian refugees, focusing on needs and gaps identified by the SGBV SWG and by the GBVIMS Task Force.
- Donors and humanitarian agencies need to invest in increasing reproductive health services and primary health care for Syrian refugee women and girls. The expansion of these services will facilitate the reporting and referral of SGBV cases including domestic violence.
- Donors and humanitarian agencies should target providing livelihood opportunities for women survivors of SGBV including domestic violence. Combined with empowering activities, this can help survivors of SGBV to recover, gain access to resources, have a better future, and eventually reduce incidents of domestic violence.
- Humanitarian agencies need to strengthen their outreach activities and mobile service delivery to allow for a greater number of women, especially those who have their movement restricted, to have access to response services.