



# ASSESSMENT OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN DURING THE WAR ON GAZA 2023-2024

November 2024



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

This study, entitled "Assessment of Gender-Based Violence against Women during the War on Gaza (2023-2024)", was conducted by the Sub-Cluster on Gender-Based Violence (GBV) with support from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in partnership with the Women's Affairs Centre, provides a comprehensive analysis of the facts of gender-based violence experienced by women and girls during the ongoing war on Gaza from 7 October 2023 to 30 September 2024.

The period during which this study was conducted is highly sensitive, coinciding with the events and violations that followed 7 October, and which continue to date. Nevertheless, we hope that our study will contribute valuable insights into this phenomenon following the end of the war, aiding in addressing its impacts and providing necessary support to survivors of violence.

## Study Methodology

This study adopted a multi-tool, mixed-method approach to achieve its objectives, including:

- (1) A Field Survey (questionnaire) involving 500 female respondents (single, married, divorced, separated/abandoned, widowed, injured, detained, disabled, and violence survivors) from all Gaza provinces based on an estimated proportion of women in these provinces during the war;
- (2) Direct and semi-structured interviews, conducting 15 interviews with abused women and violence survivors, and 10 interviews with service providers working in various fields of support;
- (3) Holding 3 focus group sessions with abused women and violence survivors.

# KEY FINDINGS

## Income and Living Standards

40.2% of respondents do not receive any monthly income for their households, while 38.8% of households earn a monthly income of less than 1,000 shekels.

84.2% of the respondents in the study sample confirmed that their households rely on aid.

## Privacy and Security

97% of the female respondents report the loss of privacy. 83.4% of them lack basic needs such as food, water, hygiene; 75.9% are displaced in adjoining cloth tents, 69% of them lack a place for rest and sleep, 68.2% of them have difficulty with bathroom access, 64% due to being monitored by others, and 55.9% due to living in the same place with others.

98.8% of the female respondents confirmed they do not feel safe. 98.4% of them fear bombing and targeting of their homes, 80.4% do not feel safe due to a lack of safe living conditions, 70.9% due to the loss of sources of security, 62.3% due to alienation and a lack of privacy and comfort, 53.8% due to displacement and having to be around strangers, 46.4% due to ethical and social breakdowns, 40.3% due to continuous exposure to violence, and 21.3% due to family separation.

## Displacement and War Damage

93.8% of respondents' houses were either partially or completely damaged (53% were completely damaged, 40.8% were partially damaged).

Only 1% of the study sample were non-displaced, with 67.8% in the central/Deir al-Balah and Khan Yunis governorates, 15.6% in Rafah, and 15.6% internally displaced in the northern governorates.

28.7% were displaced more than 7 times (11.9% of them were displaced 10 times or more), while 38.2% were displaced 4 to 6 times.

94% of the displaced women live in tents, with 43.2% in camps, 24% in street tents, and 26.8% inside schools and universities.

64% of the female respondents live with more than 8 persons, (38.8% living with 11 persons or more).

54.4% live with their immediate families, 30% with extended family, 24.2% with the extended family of the husband, and 7.8% with friends.

## Loss

77.4% are bereaved, with 28.9% having lost more than 20 family members.

76% of bereaved women have lost at least one relative, 32.6% have lost a sibling, 12.1% have lost their spouses, 10.9% have lost at least one child, 9.8% have lost their fathers, and 6.2% have lost their mothers.



## Exposure to Violence

96.8% of the female respondents experienced violence including GBV (before, during, or before and during the war). 93.8% experienced violence during the war (66.2% before and during the war, 27.6% only during the war).

90.6% of those exposed to violence experienced it sometimes or repeatedly (42.4% experienced it repeatedly, 48.2% sometimes experienced it).

90% of the victims stated that violence increased during the war compared to before the war. Meanwhile, 6.1% indicated that the violence level had not changed.

## Types of Violence

97.9% of the abused women experienced verbal violence, 90.4% experienced psychological violence, 52.2% were exposed to economic violence and denial of access to resources, 39.9% experienced physical violence, 35.2% encountered social violence, and 11.9% were victims of sexual violence.

## Violence Perpetrators

63.8% encountered violence from their spouses, 43.3% from their husbands' families, 20% from their relatives, 14.3% from their siblings, and 14.1% from their male children.

31.6% were exposed to violence from humanitarian workers and service providers, 29.9% from strangers, and 22% from shelter managers/coordinators.

## Locations of Violence

82.9% of the abused women confirmed that violence occurred inside the house/tent where they reside, 51% inside camps/shelters, 36.7% at aid distribution points, 26.4% while walking on the street or in the market, 16.4% within service-providing institutions, 15.5% by telephone/mobile or the Internet, 7.7% inside health facilities, and 3.6% at the workplace.

## Reasons for violence (as claimed by the abusers)

82.7% attributed violence to external pressure release, 76.5% to poor economic conditions during the war, 58% to interference by family and others in daily life, 56.9% to upbringing and education, 36.5% to increased interaction with strangers, 33% due to repeated displacement and family separation, 31% to the abuser's power over women, and 13% due to drug and substance abuse.

## Mechanisms for Combatting Violence

46.5% remain silent about violence and do not report it, 36.2% talk to the abuser and ask them to stop, 35.6% try to defend themselves, 27.9% seek help from their families, and 18.3% resort to feminist, civil society, or international institutions.

## Reasons for abused women remaining silent towards violence

77.5% prefer to keep silent about violence to maintain their families, 39.9% out of fear of increased punishment and dominance, 37.2% due to fear of shame and social stigma, and equally because they do not know who to turn to and how to act, 30.7% believe that confronting violence does not change the abuser's behaviour, 24.3% are accustomed to violence, and 17% fear divorce.

## Types of Violence at Aid Distribution Points

94.9% were exposed to verbal abuse, insults, and humiliation at aid distribution points, 15.8% experienced sexual harassment, 7.1% experienced sexual abuse, 4.7% experienced sexual exploitation, and 4.3% experienced physical violence.

## Mechanisms for Combatting Violence at Aid Distribution Points

66.8% of the female survivors at the aid distribution points kept silent, 22.9% filed complaints with aid-providing entities, and 2% filed complaints with private institutions (SAWA), while 8.3% resorted to other means (speaking to the abuser or shouting).

## Impact of violence on survivors' behaviour

70.4% show introverted behaviour and a reluctance to engage in conversation with others, 50.7% perpetrate violence against others, especially children, 43.3% refrain from eating and drinking, 35.2% neglect themselves and the persons around them, and 32.8% leave places where they encounter violence, while 8.3% consider or attempt suicide.

## Women's suggestions for reducing violence

75.4% believe that raising awareness among women about protection issues during crises can reduce violence, 72% believe that educating men about violence issues (risks and effects) helps curb the phenomenon, 71% believe that providing multi-sectoral services to violence survivors mitigates it, 56.8% emphasize providing protection and shelter for abused women, 43% suggest training humanitarian workers to combat gender-based violence, exploitation, and sexual abuse can also help reduce violence, and 36% confirm that complaint mechanisms should be activated within various institutions.

## Types of institutions where women seek assistance

44.4% of women seek assistance from health institutions, 33.5% from women's organizations, 33.3% from civil institutions, 19.9% from governmental institutions, and 18.3% from international organizations, while 26.6% are unaware of the types of service-providing institutions.

92.2% of those who sought the assistance of institutions confirmed that they received the services.

62% of service beneficiaries received food parcels, 52.8% received healthcare services, 36.1% received psychosocial support services, 35.6% received awareness and education services, 31.2% received tent services, 26.6% received cash aid services, 21.5% received dignity/hygiene kits, and 12.1% received legal consultation services.

72.9% encountered transportation and mobility challenges while receiving services from institutions, 41.2% struggled financially with travel costs, 42.2% experienced restrictions on their movements by spouses or family members, or fear leaving their children, 21.3% encountered challenges due to changes in institution locations, and 16.2% due to communication and Internet problems.

95.2% of those receiving services from institutions are somewhat satisfied, with 56.9% being slightly satisfied.

78.2% believe that the provided services do not fully meet their needs, 44.6% find one-time service provision insufficient, 38.5% cite poor quality of the provided services, 31% cite issues related to the service providers themselves, and 24.2% state that the service provision lacks privacy and dignity.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## International Institutions

- There should be collaboration with international, human rights, and security bodies to support ending the occupation, starting with ceasing military aggression on Gaza, lifting the blockade, reconstruction, and improving living conditions for women and families in Gaza.
- International and regional alliances should be created to expand the circle of international solidarity to embody methods of protecting women and girls in accordance with relevant international resolutions and human rights standards.
- Cooperation and partnership should be enhanced between international organizations, human rights civil society institutions, women's rights organizations, and humanitarian bodies to exchange resources and experiences, ensuring the rapid and effective delivery of services.
- Standards within international bodies relating to the effectiveness of women's participation in the planning and management of relief aid should be applied to ensure consideration of the needs of women and key groups.
- Periodic assessments of the needs of vulnerable women, girls, and affected groups should be concluded through the collection of data and information to adapt services to changing needs, such as monitoring by an international, third party which gives objectivity and legitimacy to the information and promote application of the ethical standard in data collection and reporting, that can be handed over to the agreed partners in the post-conflict environment.
- Support to grass-roots women-led (WLO) and women-rights organizations (WRO) should continue in order to secure and increase the capacity to protect from GBV in Gaza. Engagement with local WLOs and WROs will also encourage help-seeking by survivors as they are best placed to ensure culturally sensitive service provision.

## Service Providers

- Mechanisms should be developed for appropriate response during times of conflict, whether through social media or helplines, to facilitate access to information about, and to services in challenging circumstances and provide psychological and social support to affected women and girls.
- Providing gender sensitive and comprehensive healthcare services: Psychological and reproductive health services and trauma treatment should be provided, as well as basic needs such as food, water, shelter, and medication.
- Mobile units should be created to provide social support, psychological services, and healthcare in displacement areas, especially in the locations remote from the static service delivery points in order to enable timely and safe identification and access to services.
- Effective partnerships between various service providers should be created to exchange information and utilize available resources across sectors to provide protection for abused women.



## Women's institutions and organizations

- Partnerships and collaboration between service providers, aid organizations, and women's institutions should be created to participate in managing service and assistance programmes.
- Fear of social stigma and isolation is one of the reasons deterring women and girls from seeking help. Women organizations and institutions are the best places to combat this stigma, through public education and awareness campaigns, enhancing prevention in the process.
- The scope of awareness programmes on gender-based violence should be enhanced, in addition to disseminating information on safe spaces and how to access support.
- Essential supplies should be secured; in addition to collaborating with humanitarian agencies to secure essential items such as food, water, and healthcare for displaced individuals. The women's institutions and organizations should advocate for these women and girls, especially those with disabilities, who are prioritized in service provision across sectors and clusters (and can safely access it).
- There should be coordination and collaboration with the management of shelters and displacement camps from international bodies and national committees to enhance ways to prevent and protect women, girls, and persons with disabilities from violence.
- There should be coordination and collaboration with all institutions working in the development field and disability-focused institutions in order to enable the rapid response mechanisms swiftly identifying the most vulnerable groups of women and girls and prioritizing their access to the mechanism.
- Supporting female leadership participation: The participation of female leaders and girls should be supported in committees making decisions about the services provided, in addition to enhancing the effectiveness of the response to meet real needs.
- In cooperation with all stakeholders, ensuring the effective and efficient protection from sexual exploitation, sexual abuse and sexual harassment (PSEA) mechanisms are in place, that the population is aware of them and feels safe to report the cases of SEA. With support of the international organizations and the authorities, enabling protection of the survivor and promoting measures that will prevent repetition of the incident.

## General Measures

- Establishing mechanisms for reporting cases of violence: Creating safe and confidential mechanisms for reporting violence and exploitation cases and ensuring the availability of mechanisms across the Gaza Strip. The mechanisms must improve the protection of survivors, especially those reporting the SEA.
- Local Staff Training: Training local volunteers to be points of contact to provide support and assistance to women, girls, and persons with disabilities in their communities.
- Creating evaluation and monitoring systems: Adopting evaluation systems to continuously monitor the effectiveness of programmes and services in order to ensure the improvement of service quality and the protection of the rights of women and girls.