

OUR RESPONSE TO GBV DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

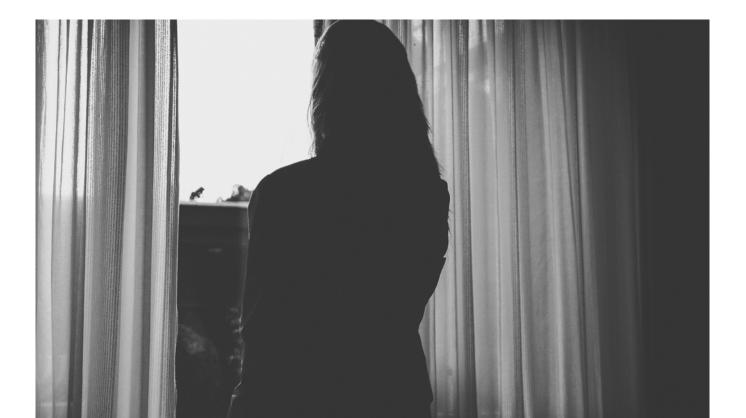
MAY 2020

THE OBJECTIVE

Today, the world is facing grave challenges as the COVID-19 pandemic prompts an unprecedented response from countries around the globe, whose health systems are now put to the test. We are beginning to see not only the direct but also indirect impacts that COVID-19 is having on the health, economy and wellbeing of people. While we are all affected by this pandemic, it goes without saying that the impacts may be felt by some more than others. Marginalized and vulnerable groups such as refugees, people with disabilities, women, children and those falling below the poverty line are hit the hardest. With domestic and unpaid care responsibilities and as frontline health and social sector responders, women and girls are increasingly exposed to COVID-19. Furthermore, genderbased violence risks at home and public spaces are exacerbated due to selfisolation, misuse of power, heightened tensions, financial uncertainties, and disruption of life-saving services and other pressures.

Since the onset of the pandemic, ABAAD put together a plan to ensure continuity of life-saving services while putting the best interest of its right holders as priority and at the centre of the response.

This report highlights numbers and impact from the ground.



THE FIGURES

In order to accurately reflect the reality on the ground and the magnitude of the GBV issue in Lebanon, ABAAD assigned <u>IPSOS</u> to conduct a survey according to which:

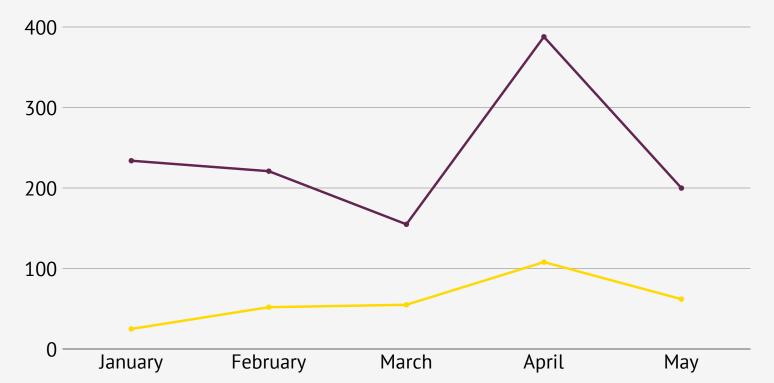


of men and women, out of a total of 500, have observed an increase in harassment/violence/abuse against women and girls since the COVID-19 outbreak in Lebanon

of women and girls, out of a total of 250, reported feeling less safe since the COVID-19 lockdown in Lebanon

A SPIKE IN CALLS TO THE HELPLINE

From January of this year up until May 11, ABAAD received **1,198** calls to its 24/7 helpline compared to **1,193** in all of 2019



THE RESPONSE

CRISIS PHONE COUNSELLING, EMERGENCY SUPPORT SERVICES AND AWARENESS RAISING

ABAAD developed internal case management guidelines to provide crisis phone counselling and emergency support services via phone, and face-to-face for high-risk cases. The specialised team are also providing community-based awareness sessions on COVID-19 and psychosocial support sessions via conference calls and Whatsapp groups.



1,300 people took part in ABAAD's online awareness sessions

231 people benefited from e-counselling sessions

SAFE SHELTERING WITH ADAPTED POLICIES & GUIDELINES

ABAAD's Emergency Safe Shelters continue to operate amidst lockdown with new guidelines and procedures that ensure the protection of the staff and rightholders from the spread of COVID-19.

During the lockdown, I was repetitively abused by my husband and when he started to physically hurt my children, I decided to seek refuge at ABAAD's shelter with the support of my friend. I've been receiving emotional and psychological support. The team is also supporting with how to deal with my youngest child who suffers from Autism

35-year old mother of four children

DISTRIBUTION OF HYGIENE KITS, DIGNITY KITS AND FOOD PARCELS

As part of ABAAD's GBV prevention and response during the COVID-19 pandemic, we aimed at equipping vulnerable families with materials and knowledge necessary to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and ensuring that women have access to appropriate items to support hygiene, health, dignity and well-being.

Furthermore, considering the gendered dimensions of the COVID-19 outbreak, especially in regards to its impact on GBV, the purpose of the distribution is to mitigate the increase of domestic violence in families. In situations of increased stress and vulnerability, as this, it is documented that men release anger towards their family and children. Abusers may withhold money used to obtain necessary items (e.g. hand sanitizer or disinfectants), share misinformation about the pandemic in order to control or frighten survivors, or feel more justified to escalate isolation tactics (in light of the encouraged social distancing measures). Where women are primarily responsible for procuring and cooking food for the family, increasing food insecurity as a result of the crises may place them at heightened risk of intimate partner and other forms of domestic violence due to heightened tensions in the household. The distribution therefore targeted GBV survivors and vulnerable women rightholders from ABAAD centres across the country.

820 KITS 1,500 FOOD PARCELS

820 KITS were distributed through ABAAD's Women and Girls Safe Spaces across the country as well as the Social Development Centers of the Ministry for Social Affairs

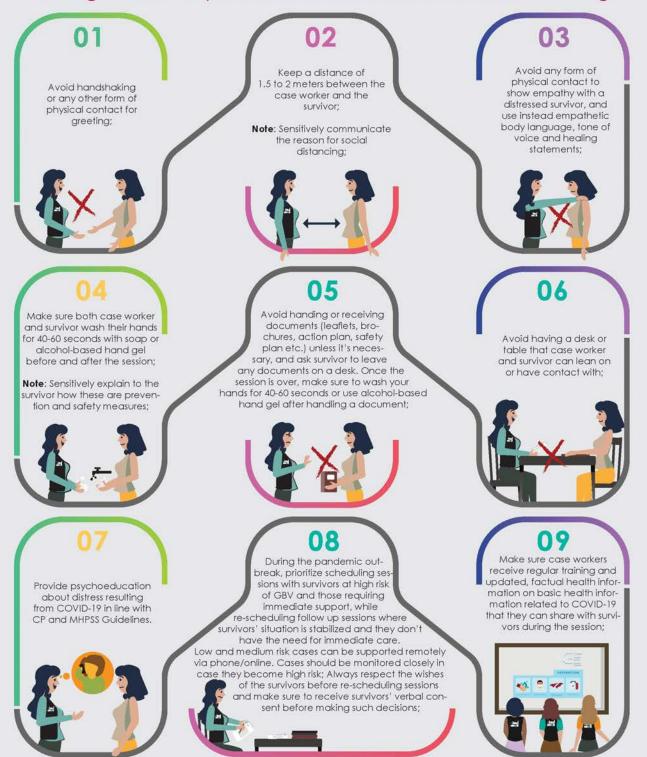
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PUBLISHING RELEVANT GUIDELINES AND RESOURCES

- Best Practices Texting & Messaging with Survivors during COVID-19 (English)
- Practical Measures to Take in GBV Case Management during COVID-19 (English, Arabic)
- Practical Hygiene Measures for Psychosocial Support (PSS) Focused Non-Speacialized Services for Women and Girls During COVID-19 (English, Arabic)
- A Few Tips for Men during COVID-19 (English, Arabic)

PRACTICAL MEASURES TO TAKE IN GBV CASE MANAGEMENT during COVID-19 pandemic outbreak include the following



ADVOCATING FOR AN ENHANCED NATIONAL RESPONSE

ABAAD took the initiative and drafted The National Response to Violence Against Women During the COVID-19 Outbreak. It is crucial that the Government of Lebanon adopts the following immediate measures as well as urge all the main players, stakeholders, UN agencies and civil society organizations to pool their efforts and resources in order to coordinate and collaborate together and create a response synergy that would serve to prevent domestic violence and improve support services to survivors.

- **Establish** a temporary ministerial committee named "National Committee for Preventing Domestic Violence"
- Allocate adequate human and financial resources
- **Support** all activities and services related to reducing domestic violence
- Develop and promote remote methods for reporting and counseling
- Enhance Support Services
- Strengthen Collaboration and Capacities of Partners

CAMPAIGNING FOR SOLIDARITY

On April 16, ABAAD launched a nationwide awareness campaign under the hashtag **#LockdownNotLockup**, asking people to share ABAAD's Helpline from their balconies along with messages of solidarity. The purpose was to tell women residing behind closed doors that they are not alone and that they can reach out for support when needed.

Hundreds of people took part in ABAAD's initiative across Lebanon, sharing message of hope and telling women that they don't have to suffer in silence.





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