

towards gender-sensitive classrooms guide for teachers



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Foreword

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has been working to develop and implement a comprehensive Agency-wide strategy on gender mainstreaming. The importance of gender equality to human and societal development is reflected in the global Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5, 'achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls'. It is reiterated in the education goal, SDG 4, which is to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all'.

This Gender Guide illustrates the importance that UNRWA education programme places on gender equity and equality, as reflected throughout the UNRWA education reform of 2011-2016. It is developed to support the over 20,000 UNRWA Teachers and Education Staff in the five Fields of UNRWA's operation in ensuring the gender-responsiveness of teaching in the classroom and of the overall culture and environment of schools.

In education, gender equality means an inclusive and child-centred quality education, one which takes into account the needs of both girls and boys to enable each child to develop their full potential. As such, gender needs to be emphasised at all levels, from policies to strategies, to classroom practice and the role of educators is therefore crucial role in creating and maintaining the overall environment.

This Guide seeks to strengthen the awareness most specifically of UNRWA teachers on gender issues and to highlight how classroom practices can help address gender biases towards gender-equitable teaching.

I hope you find the UNRWA 'Gender Guide for Teachers' useful in your day to day work.

Sincerely,



Caroline Pontefract
Director of Education

Introduction

UNRWA is a UN Agency committed to adherence to all UN values, one of which is gender equality. The Gender Equality Policy (2007) and Gender Equality Strategy (2016-2021) for mainstreaming gender across all the Agency's operations and programmes, reflect this commitment.

In order for all Palestine refugees to have equal access to quality education, it is essential that gender gaps in education are addressed. These gaps may include different levels of: access to educational services, teacher support, student engagement in classroom activities and academic achievement. Gender equality and equity are a key concern for UNRWA and it is essential to provide Palestine refugee boys and girls with equal access to quality education and equal opportunities in the classroom. The Education Reform addresses gender as a cross-cutting issue, integrating it in all its policies, strategies and programmes. In particular, gender is explicitly addressed as a key dimension of the Inclusive Education approach. UNRWA's Inclusive Education Policy promotes equal access to quality and equitable education for boys and girls in UNRWA schools, recognising the need to identify and address their diverse learning, health and psychosocial needs and to support them to reach their full potential, regardless of gender. This Guide contributes to advancing UNRWA gender equality goals by supporting all UNRWA teachers to adopt a gender lens in their daily interaction with their students.

For the purpose of this Guide, 'gender' is defined as the socially-constructed attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female¹; 'sex' refers to the biological characteristics and differences between men and women; 'gender equality' happens when access to opportunities is not determined by or dependent on sex, and women and men enjoy equal opportunities, resources and rewards²; 'gender equity' is the process of being fair to both sexes, which ultimately leads to gender equality³; 'gender mainstreaming' is a strategy to achieve the goal of gender equality, and this guide seeks to promote it in daily classroom practices.⁴

1. The rationale for the gender guide for teachers

When teachers interact with students, it is crucial not to perpetuate any possible bias in everyday gestures, words and behaviour. Addressing gender imbalances in UNRWA schools is essential if girls and boys are to develop their full potential. Even if teachers are aware of existing gender biases, they might subconsciously and unintentionally be reinforcing them. This Guide will help teachers question some of their practices and rethink some traditional habits that unintentionally perpetuate these patterns. Teachers are simultaneously educators, role models, sources of psychosocial support for students and leaders in the wider community. Their role in addressing gender stereotypes in the classroom is crucial.

Enhancing gender equality is one of the key areas of the Inclusive Education approach, which aspires to ensure equal opportunities for learning to all students, 'regardless of gender, abilities, disabilities, socio-economic status, health, and psychosocial needs.'⁵ Promoting a stronger emphasis on gender will contribute to ensuring quality education for Palestine refugee children. This also helps address gender inequities in education, including the academic achievement gaps between girls and boys highlighted by the Monitoring of Learning Achievement (MLA) surveys conducted in 2013 and 2016, where girls outperform boys.

¹ UN Women (2011): Important Concepts underlying Gender Mainstreaming p.1, see:

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/pdf/factsheet2.pdf>

² UNRWA (2015): Taking Gender into Account in Our Work: A Practical Reference Tool

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ See UN Women's definition at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/gendermainstreaming.htm>

⁵ UNRWA Inclusive Education Policy (2013).

2. The purpose of the gender guide for teachers

Improving teachers' understanding of gender issues and providing them with activities to address gender biases are the two key goals of the Guide. The practices and activities that the Gender Guide recommends will enable teachers to identify and respond to any gender-related barriers to education. Teachers can smoothly integrate these practices into their daily work, such as: gender-neutral language, to avoid language biases; teaching in mixed schools, to address gender in coeducational schools; gender in the curriculum, to mitigate possible curriculum biases, in accordance with the Agency's Curriculum Framework; gender and dropout, regarding the impact of gender issues on student attendance; gender and disability, for students with disabilities to fully participate in classroom activities without gender biases; gender-based violence (GBV) and education, to support students exposed to GBV; gender and education in emergencies, to help students in particular distress due to protracted conflict. All UNRWA teachers can use this Guide as a support tool in their daily work. Over the next pages, there are approaches which teachers can use to challenge potential gender biases, and ensure that classroom practices, materials used and teacher-student interaction are all gender-neutral. We will begin by looking at how teachers can adjust their language for this purpose.

3. Using and promoting gender-neutral language

If your students hear you using gender-biased language, this might reinforce pre-existing gender stereotypes. If instead they hear you using language that promotes gender equality they are more likely to question their own assumptions about gender. It is important to reflect on how you talk to your students and be aware of how the way you speak might influence their views on gender, even unintentionally. It is equally important for you to be aware of the language students are using with each other, so you can address any gender stereotypes or bullying based on gender.

Examples of recommended practices for gender-neutral language

- ❖ Avoid always using exclusionary forms when addressing students. Choose inclusive language and challenge male and female stereotypes, for instance when you give example of jobs that might traditionally be done by men or women, e.g. "the engineer made her calculations and then directed her staff to finish the work", or "the nurse assisted his patients". Applying this practice constantly will have a positive impact on female students' personal aspirations and on boys' perceptions of what girls can achieve.
- ❖ Try to avoid using gendered terms, unless the context makes it essential to specify the gender, and refer to "people" or "children" rather than to "men" or "boys." For example, instead of asking if students help their mothers with the cooking, you can ask if they help their families with the cooking.
- ❖ Avoid statements that generalise about what boys and girls are like or do e.g. "girls tend to..." or "boys are more..."
- ❖ Actively challenge gender-biased language if you hear your students using it. If you hear students saying "boys shouldn't cry" or "you're throwing like a girl" you should confront them in a positive manner. Use these as teachable moments, asking students to discuss where these gender stereotypes come from and why they use this language. In the same way, do not be afraid to challenge gender-biased language that you come across in textbooks, listening activities, videos, or any other written or spoken material in the classroom.
- ❖ When giving feedback to students, try to reverse gender stereotypes in psychological and personality traits. For example, instead of praising girls for being "gentle", "caring" or "neatly dressed", praise them for being "brave" or "independent". Instead of always praising boys for being "strong" or "clever", praise them for being "empathetic" or "kind".

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- ❖ Never use language that marginalises, belittles or labels a student based on their gender. Ensure that any use of such language by students is challenged and appropriate action taken. Actively encourage the use of gender-sensitive, non-violent and non-abusive language in the classroom to ensure that your classroom is a child-friendly, safe, violence-free, welcoming and inclusive place for all your students.

4. Teaching in mixed-gender classrooms

Whilst the majority of UNRWA schools are single-sex, teachers working in mixed schools need to make sure that boys and girls in their classroom have equal opportunities to benefit from their education and equal space to engage in learning activities. Classroom practices in mixed schools should not reinforce gender stereotypes, and should stimulate girl-boy cooperation on an equal basis. You should teach and interact with students in such a way that girls and boys both know that no one gender group will be favoured.

Examples of recommended practices for teachers in mixed-gender schools

- ❖ The seating arrangement in your classroom should give an equal opportunity for both boys and girls to participate in class, and interact with the teacher and other students. Make sure that seat distribution encourages girl-boy cooperation. When possible, use a U-shaped desk layout and other forms of flexible classroom layout that promote interaction and collaborative work between girls and boys. You can refer to SBTD Module 1 'Developing an active Pedagogy' for additional information.
- ❖ Call equally on boys and girls to answer questions, offer their thoughts and opinions during class and write these on the writing board.
- ❖ Give tasks to boys and girls in the classroom that do not reinforce gender stereotypes. For example, give them the same opportunities to carry out tasks traditionally associated with a given gender, such as cleaning the board, or carrying boxes and teaching material.
- ❖ In cooperative activities such as classroom pair/group work, you can sometimes try to mix boys and girls to ensure group diversity, while ensuring a gender-balanced task allocation.
- ❖ Ensure boys and girls have equal opportunities to participate in school decision-making, including equal representation in the School Parliament and equal opportunities to take on leadership roles in the school (leading classroom activities, school clubs, teams or associations).
- ❖ When classroom rules and the school code of conduct are developed, make sure that they clearly emphasise the equality of girls and boys and promote a culture of inclusion, diversity and acceptance of differences.
- ❖ Use positive reinforcement techniques. When you identify good behaviours in gender relations (such as positive boys-girls cooperation and equal gender roles), acknowledge them and reinforce them through different forms of feedback including verbal praise, smile, nod, eye contact. This can create a chain effect in mixed classrooms and bring about a virtuous circle of positive behaviour and gender relations.

5. Gender in the curriculum: a rights-based approach

Gender analysis of the curriculum is an essential component of the UNRWA's Framework for the Analysis and Quality Implementation of the Curriculum. Accordingly Gender analysis should be undertaken to address "behaviours, attitudes, teaching practices, textbooks and other materials that enforce gender stereotypes and bias."⁶ UNRWA Curriculum Framework places a strong emphasis on gender equality as a means to respect UN Values and ensure an inclusive, bias-free curriculum that meets the needs of all children.

Ideally the curriculum should challenge gender stereotypes and promote gender equality through language, images and content. However, the representation of males and females in textbooks can sometimes perpetuate gender stereotypes. Men may be portrayed at work, in high-profile positions and in the public sphere, whilst women are often depicted engaging in child-rearing and household activities. This is a key issue, because the portrayal of gender stereotypes in textbooks can influence and limit individual choices with regard to subjects and extra-curricular activities in school, further education and professional life. For example, if girls only see men portrayed as scientists in their textbooks, they may think that science is a subject only for boys. UNRWA schools in all Fields of operation follow the Host country curricula, but as a teacher you can enrich the content and make it gender-sensitive.⁷ Your role in enriching the curriculum is essential and below you can find some examples on how you can mitigate any possible gender bias in the curriculum.

Examples of recommended practices for teachers for a gender-sensitive curriculum

- ❖ When textbooks contain glaring gender stereotypes and misconceptions, address them explicitly to ensure your teaching is gender-responsive. Ask your students what they think about them and explore gender-neutral alternative representations. You can do that through group work sessions, to foster interaction and the exchange of views on gender.
- ❖ Address possible language imbalances in the curriculum materials, including the language issues mentioned in Section 3 of this guide. The same applies to images and illustrations that may be reinforcing stereotypical gender attributes and social expectations, including roles in the public and private spheres.
- ❖ When the curriculum feminises certain roles (hairdresser, nurse, teacher, cook in the house) while masculinising others (engineer or company director), challenge this with students in a constructive, but critical way. Use examples from everyday life to illustrate that professions are not gender-specific and ask students to elaborate on why that is the case, preferably through brief group work sessions.
- ❖ When controversial or worrisome opinions related to gender in the curriculum emerge from an individual student or a group, you can constructively challenge them and debunk the underlying assumptions. For instance, if students reinforce traditional gender stereotypes or express negative views on gender equality, take time to ask students what prompts them to think that. Repeating this practice over time will prompt students to reflect on some socially-constructed misconceptions on gender relations.

The UNRWA Human Rights Conflict Resolution and Tolerance Teacher Toolkit can also be useful in ensuring existing curricula are "human rights friendly", including considering how to ensure that the curriculum is free from gender stereotypes and biases. This guidance is adapted below to provide suggestions on how gender equality can be promoted in different subjects in UNRWA schools.

⁶UNRWA (2013): UNRWA Framework for the Analysis and Quality Implementation of the Curriculum.

⁷Find further resources in UNESCO (2012): Gender and the Curriculum: a list of resources.

Examples of recommended practices for a gender-sensitive curriculum in: Arabic and English (and French in Lebanon and Syria); Civic/National education; Social Studies, History and Geography; Sciences and Mathematics

- ❖ When reading a novel or short story in the class, ask students to keep in mind how men and women are portrayed throughout the novel. What words are used to describe men and women? What roles are given to men and women and what type of decision do they take? Are the more central characters male or female? Once the reading is completed, encourage students to think about how the portrayal of men and women in literature might affect their roles in society.
- ❖ As part of teaching civic or national education, teach students about the history of the right to vote for women in Palestine, the country you live in and around the world. Encourage students to think critically about the importance of the right to vote for women – what did it mean for women to vote? Are there still barriers to women’s civic participation today? Are there barriers in other realms (economy, society)? When possible, use data and available statistics to illustrate the importance of the issues (women’s literacy and employment rates, etc). You can also ask students to collect information on what percentage of elected representatives are female in different parts of the world. Encourage students to think critically about why this is and what it means.
- ❖ Ask students to research and give presentations on the lives and achievements of (Arab) female historical figures as part of history class. Encourage students to reflect on why the achievements of women in history are often invisible. This can be complemented by putting on the classroom walls posters or drawings representing famous women, as a permanent reminder of their achievements.
- ❖ Ask students to think about the differing roles expected of boys and girls, men and women, in the Palestine refugee culture. Encourage students to debate whether these differing role expectations are positive or negative and why.
- ❖ Ask students to explore some of the main scientific discoveries presented in the curriculum - were these made by men and women equally? Encourage students to think about why this is – is it because women’s discoveries are viewed as less important than men’s or because of differences in access to education and work?
- ❖ In biology classes, encourage students to think critically about the difference between sex (biological differences between men and women) and gender (socially constructed attributes and opportunities associated with sex). For example, give student a list of biological (e.g. genetics and body differences) and socially-constructed (e.g. access to labour market, household tasks) differences between men and women and ask them to categorise them. Again, you can find ways to challenge any controversial view that may emerge and help students reflect on some of their assumptions.
- ❖ Some gender-related activities of the Human Rights, Conflict Resolution and Tolerance Teacher Toolkit are particularly relevant as they can be easily implemented in the classroom. In the ‘General Human Rights’ theme, they are: Activity 1 ‘Our Classroom Agreement’; Activity 4 ‘Introducing Children’s’ Rights’; Activity 34 ‘The Human Rights Temperature of Our School’. In the ‘Equality and Non-Discrimination’ theme you can look at Activity 10 ‘Labels’, Activity 23 ‘Once Upon a Time’, Activity 27 ‘Is This Really True About Boys and Girls?’, Activity 30 ‘What I Like and What I Do’, Activity 37 ‘Who’s Who?’. In the ‘Conflict resolution’ theme you can refer to Activity 6 ‘Role Plays on Bullying’, Activity 26 ‘Bullying Scenes’ and Activity 32 ‘Picturing Ways Out of Violence’.⁸

⁸You can refer to this UNRWA HRCRT video on gender stereotypes ‘Equal Rights between Girls and Boys’: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q5vjz9biw2A>

6. Gender and student dropout

Another important dimension to take into account as a teacher is the relationship between gender and dropout. The UNRWA study on school dropouts (2010-2011 academic year) revealed how dropout trends vary for boys and girls. The report found that:

- ❖ There was a higher rate of dropout amongst boys than girls in all Fields except Jordan;
- ❖ Although the immediate triggers to dropout were the same for both boys and girls (low academic engagement and low academic achievement) there were significant differences in the personal reasons behind boys' and girls' drop-out. Boys were much more likely than girls to report work to support their families as a reason to drop out while girls tended to report early marriage as a reason for dropping out;
- ❖ Early warning signs for dropout are different for boys than girls. Frequent absence from school is a common indicator that a boy is at risk of dropping out of school. Girls at risk of dropping out were less likely to be frequently absent from school prior to dropping out than boys.

It is important that you, as a teacher, understand that the drivers to dropout and warning signs that a child is at-risk from dropout are different for boys and girls. The following set of practices is intended to help you take into account some gender-specific issues that can help you prevent and reduce dropout among your students

Examples of recommended practices for teachers on gender and dropout

- ❖ When you notice instances of repeated absenteeism (particularly for boys) try to engage the student and, if needed, their parents, reasserting the importance of continuous attendance and of investing in children's education. You can seek the collaboration of School Counsellors to promote school attendance and to remind parents of the crucial role of education for a child's development and their future. This can help bring into question non-education options pursued by children, such as engaging in work (typically for boys) and marriage or household activities (typically for girls), as identified by UNRWA dropout study.
- ❖ Pay particular attention to low achievers and frequent absentees among the boys. This is because low academic achievement is a major driver of dropout and in UNRWA schools boys tend to underperform compared with girls. When addressing individual low achievement, you can exchange views with other teachers to understand if a student's low achievement is a subject-specific issue, and in some cases engaging the school-based Student Support Team may be appropriate.

7. Gender and disability

UNRWA has an unwavering commitment to provide quality education to students with disabilities, impairments and additional learning needs. In accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, UNRWA defines people with disabilities as *'those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, which in interaction with various attitudinal and environmental barriers hinder their full participation in society on an equal basis with others'*. This is important for this Guide because gender discrimination, compounded by disability discrimination, can lead to a double form of discrimination against girls with disabilities. This can have a negative impact on access to equal educational opportunities for girls with disabilities.

An UNRWA study from 2010 showed the extent of double discrimination against girls with disability. In the case of Jordan Field 49% of women with disabilities are illiterate compared to 22.7% of men with disabilities. Educating a girl with disability may be viewed as a low-ranking priority in household decision-making. Many girls with disabilities are not sent to school because

they are seen as unlikely to get married, which is sometimes seen as an important reason to invest in girls' education. Due to lack of appropriate support, girls with disabilities who do manage to attend school may face extra barriers as compared with boys with disabilities and as compared with other girls. Girls with disabilities are also known to be more likely to be targets of gender-based violence (GBV), whether at home, in the community, on their way to and from school, and at school itself.

It is important that you, as a teacher, understand the barriers girls with disabilities are likely to face to enter and stay at school. Child-centred teaching practices adapted to the learning styles of all children, including those with disabilities, is key to help ensure girls with disabilities have equal opportunities to engage and learn. You must model inclusive language and behaviour and work towards making the school and classroom environment welcoming of diversity.

Examples of recommended practices for teachers to address disability in a gender-sensitive manner

- ❖ Ensure that you focus on the strengths, talents and abilities of both girls and boys with disabilities (rather than on their disabilities), and that you communicate these to parents. Help pupils who learn more slowly, or irregularly, set individual achievable targets and also develop personal education plans for children with disabilities, utilising adapted teaching and assessment approaches if appropriate. Make girls with disabilities feel welcome and valued, by yourself as well as by other students.
- ❖ When conducting a gender analysis of the curriculum, also look at the representation of girls and boys with disability in the textbooks and learning materials. Persons with disabilities are often absent in textbooks, or portrayed as weak or incapable, which reinforces the idea that they cannot achieve success in life. Encourage your students to think critically about representations of persons with disabilities in textbooks, as well as how this interacts with issues of gender. What stereotypes can they see about men with disabilities? Are these different to the stereotypes about women with disability? Discuss with your students why this may be the case and to what extent "disability" may be a social and cultural construct which reflects attitudes of society.
- ❖ Make both boys and girls with disabilities feel welcome and valued, by yourself as well as by other students. The Human Rights, Conflict Resolution and Tolerance Teacher Toolkit envisages specific classroom activities to promote diversity and the rights of children with disabilities: you can refer in particular to Activity 18 (Blind Trust) and Activity 28 (One School For All).
- ❖ Be alert for any discrimination against students due to gender, disability or the interlinking of both, whether by students or other staff. Actively approach other teachers, the Student Support Team and the School Principal if you become aware of such discrimination.
- ❖ Never use language that marginalises, belittles or labels a student based on their gender, disability or the interlinking of both. Ensure that any use of such language by students is challenged and appropriate action taken. Actively encourage the use of disability-inclusive, gender-sensitive, non-violent and non-abusive language.
- ❖ Be aware that girls with disabilities are at greater risk of GBV than other girls. You can refer to Section 8 of this Guide on GBV and education for advice on identifying and responding to cases of GBV.
- ❖ In classroom, prompt students to reflect collectively on the obstacles faced by people with disability in the school and in society. You can ask open questions on the barriers existing at the school level for students with physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments. Do they think that some of these barriers apply differently to boys and girls? If so, what can be done to address them? You can discuss these issues with your colleagues and, when relevant, you can bring some of your students' reflections to the attention of your School Principal, Student Support Team and School Counsellors to explore possible changes needed.

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- ❖ You are also encouraged to look at the UNRWA Disability Policy, its UNRWA Disability Toolkit, and the Teacher's Toolkit for identifying Students' Diverse Needs, with particular attention to Tool 1 (Inclusive school and classroom practices), Tool 2 (Healthy School Criteria), Tool 3 (Teacher's record of students with additional needs), Tool 4 (Individual Education Plan), Tool 5 (Psychosocial needs), Tool 13 (Common Health Needs), Tool 14 (Chronic Health Needs), Tool 15 (Visual Impairment), Tool 16 (Hearing impairment), Tool 17 (Physical Impairment), Tool 18 (Intellectual impairment), and Tool 19 (Speech, language and communication impairments).

8. Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and education

UNRWA has a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of violence in its installations, including GBV. UNRWA defines GBV as "any act (...) which leads to, or may lead to, physical, sexual or psychological harm, against a person on the basis of gender or social role in a society or culture, including threats, beatings, violence related to dowry, non-marital violence, rape, sexual violence related to exploitation, sexual harassment and intimidation in the workplace or school, trafficking in women, sexual exploitation and forced prostitution."⁹ GBV can lead to the denial of equal access to education on the basis of gender, for example forcing girls into early marriage and thereby preventing them from finishing their education. Unfortunately GBV is a world-wide phenomenon and as such it affects boys and girls in UNRWA schools in all Fields to varying degrees.

Gender inequalities are among the root causes of GBV. As a teacher in UNRWA school, you can play a crucial role in promoting gender equality, which is critical in preventing GBV. Although schools should be child-friendly, safe, violence-free, welcoming and inclusive environments for all children, both boys and girls can experience GBV at school, including corporal punishment, bullying, and sexual harassment. GBV can have a serious health and psychological impact on children, impeding their learning. Experiencing GBV can cause children to lose concentration and find it difficult to focus, leading to difficulties in learning and deterioration in school performance. The UNRWA Perceptual Survey found that one of the largest gender effects was with regard to repeated hitting or mocking, to which girls seemed to be more consistently exposed to.

As a teacher you will spend long periods of time with your students and hopefully build relationships of trust and confidence so that you also play an important role in preventing GBV and identifying children at risk in cooperation with School Counsellors, in accordance with existing referral systems for GBV.

UNRWA is looking to strengthen its Child Protection Referral System, building the capacity of school staff and assigning PSS counsellors to schools, which will create an enabling environment for the identification and response to GBV in education.

Examples of recommended practices to address Gender-Based Violence in schools

- ❖ In class, discuss with students the concept of violence and its implications. It is recommendable to delve into the reasons behind violence: why are some individuals violent, whether verbally or physically? Are women more exposed to certain forms of violence than men? What can be done to eliminate gender-based violence from the community?

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⁹UNRWA (2012) Working with Gender-Based Violence survivors: reference training manual for frontline staff.

- ❖ When you identify negative or discriminatory behaviour based on gender, challenge the students involved. You should both comfort the students targeted and adopt appropriate discipline measures for the offenders. Bear in mind that the most effective discipline measures are educative and not punitive, and they should always be geared towards a full reintegration of your students that have misbehaved. Taking time to peacefully and constructively confront students on their misbehaviours is an essential component of educative discipline and you should strive to do that. You can coordinate with School Counsellors for additional best practices and referral possibilities for children with extensive needs in this area.
- ❖ Make sure your students learn about GBV-related topics, such as age and developmentally appropriate reproductive health and healthy relationships, and foster skills for GBV prevention, such as advocacy and reporting skills (to encourage students and give them confidence to tell someone if something is wrong), risk and self-management skills, and community cognitive skills (skills for self-esteem, anger management and protection from abuse). You can refer to the School Health Strategy, which emphasises health education and the need for awareness on reproductive health issues.
- ❖ In class you can sensitise students on existing international practices and initiatives, including the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the 16-day campaign against Gender Violence (25 November-10 December).
- ❖ You can involve students in organising targeted prevention activities with parents and the wider community on topics such as: using positive behaviour management techniques and non-violent discipline methods, preventing child marriage or tackling bullying in school.
- ❖ When dealing with a suspected GBV survivor, act in a non-judgemental way and reassure them that disclosure is very important and that support will be provided. You can find out more about techniques to deal with GBV survivors through UNRWA's GBV Manual: Working with Gender-Based Violence Survivors – Reference Training Manual for Frontline Staff, which includes activities like games, role plays and other forms of group work that can be easily enacted in the classroom. The Manual provides information on GBV, its effects and on approaches to address it. You should familiarise yourself with Unit 7 on the Role of Educators, which explains how to identify children who have experienced or are experiencing GBV, and how to effectively intervene. You can also refer to the Teacher's Toolkit for Identifying and Responding to Students' Diverse Needs, in particular Tool 5 (Psychosocial Needs), Tool 6 (Behaviour Management), Tool 7 (Children affected by Conflict and Crisis/Emergencies). The PSS Framework can also be a useful reference, in particular with regard to protective factors, coping mechanisms and children's emotional resilience.

9. Gender and education in emergencies

UNRWA schools operate in different contexts, ranging from a relative stability in Jordan, to more complex environments in Gaza, the West Bank and Lebanon, and to protracted armed conflict in Syria. As a result, Palestine refugee children attend school in contexts of poverty, displacement, exclusion, isolation, conflict and emergencies, all of which can have different impacts on access to equal education opportunities for boys and girls.

UNRWA has worked to provide continuity of education to Palestine refugee children (boys and girls) during emergencies, by strengthening its overall education in emergencies approach that builds on recent wider reform of UNRWA education system. The Teacher's Toolkit for Identifying and Responding to Students' Diverse Needs, the existing referral systems for GBV and the PSS framework all contribute to preparedness for emergencies. These systems, already implemented in times of normalcy, are further scaled up in crisis contexts in order to meet the changing needs of Palestine refugee children. Additional measures include safe learning spaces, conducting safety and security trainings for students and staff and providing self-learning material. The Self-Learning programme includes educational TV programmes and interactive material and allows students to have access to educational material in their places of residence. In addition, UNRWA provides

specific psycho-social support to children and youth, which can be continued in post-emergency settings as a means for recovery.

In emergency situations, pre-existing gender vulnerabilities may be heightened. Girls may be at greater risk of early marriage, as parents may marry their daughters earlier for security or for financial reasons. A recent study¹⁰ on child protection and gender-based violence reported rising early marriage trends for Syrian women and girls as well as Palestine refugees from Syria. In an emergency context, girls might also miss out on access to school due to parents' fears for their safety. Boys might instead be at risk of joining militias and becoming involved in armed conflict, or being sent to work to raise money for their families. GBV often increases during conflicts for both girls and boys. Sexual violence also affects girls and boys in many so-called 'normal' situations, but at times of crisis and in conflict situations, the magnitude may be greater and the impact intensified because prevention, referral and support mechanisms may erode. It is important for you, as a teacher, to be aware of the increased vulnerabilities to GBV of boys and girls and to other protection risks (e.g. child abuse, child labour and recruitment in armed groups) that might impact on their access to education or their ability to learn even if they remain in school. Whether in times of emergency or times of relative normalcy, your primary responsibility as a teacher is to continue to provide quality education to all children, boys and girls, and you can use the Gender Guide for Teachers as a supporting tool in order to provide constant support to children through child-centred education, ensuring students' well-being in a safe environment.

Examples of recommended practices for teachers on gender and education in emergencies

- ❖ When possible, ensure that teaching takes place in safe learning spaces, where children can learn in a protected and child-friendly environment and also engage in recreational activities. Educational facilities can provide a safe physical space for children and youth, sheltering them from violence, including — especially for girls — sexual and gender-based violence.
- ❖ Scale up recreational activities such as play, sports, games, singing and dancing; these activities can help provide emotional and psychosocial support to student in distress. You should equally target boys and girls in need. Take into account possible gender preferences to ensure that recreational activities are gender-sensitive, allowing male and female learners to do activities that are familiar, reassuring and fun.
- ❖ Ensure the support of community members and other stakeholders to ensure safe travels (e.g. patrols to schools) to and from school, particularly for girls.
- ❖ You can put greater focus on sensitising boys and girls on key topics such as life skills, reproductive health education, the dangers of joining armed groups, and conflict resolution. You can explain the increased risks of GBV in emergency situations and discuss these issues with your students. It is important that you prepare these topics together with peers, the School Counsellors and the School Principals, in order to convey a unified message to students.
- ❖ Use UNRWA's Self-Learning Programme, when possible, to ensure that out-of-school boys and girls catch up on missed schooling opportunities.
- ❖ You should also help yourself through self-care, emergencies may also have a negative impact on you as a teacher. Taking care of your own psychosocial well-being in emergencies is essential for you to be able to support your students. Education staff self-care, as highlighted in the PSS Framework, is essential to establish and maintain personal health. Support groups can act as spaces where you and your colleagues can share experiences and help each other cope with the negative impact of emergencies on your own personal well-being.

¹⁰ Anani, G. 2013. Dimensions of gender-based violence against Syrian refugees in Lebanon, available at <http://www.fmreview.org/detention/anani.html>

10. Summary

UNRWA is committed to providing quality inclusive education, which respects the rights and appreciates the diversity of all Palestine refugee children. Removing barriers to access and creating equal opportunity for all enables UNRWA students to realise their full potential. A strong commitment to gender equality and equity is central to the UNRWA education programme and, in particular, to the inclusive education approach. It is central that teachers are able to identify and address gender gaps and barriers and take this commitment into the classroom on a daily basis. This Guide has provided concrete practices towards making your teaching gender-neutral and in line with UNRWA goals in this area. The recommendations of this Guide can be integrated progressively into your daily work, with your language, teaching strategies and interaction with students becoming closer to those practices which promote gender equality. You can also explore with your colleagues other ways of addressing gender gaps and imbalances, and how best to sensitise your students on gender issues. We hope you find this Guide useful.

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