



ARDD

النهضة العربية للديمقراطية والتنمية
Arab Renaissance for Democracy & Development

Women's Advocacy Issues

Policy Brief

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**Economic empowerment and mitigating
domestic violence risks**

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ARDD	Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development
CBO	Community-based organization
CSO	Civil society organization
JONAF	Jordanian National NGO Forum
MoSD	Ministry of Social Development
NGO	Non-governmental organization
UN	United Nations
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls
DV	Domestic Violence
GBV	Gender-based Violence
KII	Key Informant Interviews
FGD	Focus Group Discussions

Purpose of the Research Action

This brief explores the local response to domestic violence through building local research capacity, with a focus on mitigating domestic violence risks. The brief offers policy recommendations guided by insights from various actors from the local community on their perceptions of domestic violence. To gain insight into the community perspectives, ARDD collaborated with 11 civil society organizations from the Jordan National NGO Forum (JONAF) Coalition and provided various training to prepare them to launch this research and build a common understanding on gender-based violence and how to address it.

Background and Methodology

Domestic violence has worsened in Jordan during the COVID-19 pandemic, with organizations specialized in providing services to survivors of gender-based violence reporting an increase in its prevalence and more limited access to services due to restrictions of movement and measures imposed by the government of Jordan to limit the pandemic. This led ARDD and partners to reflect on the need to develop local capacity to respond to domestic violence. The research adopted a bottom-up approach to understand the local communities' views on gender-based violence and identify key perceptions related to access to services. To gain insight into the community perspectives, ARDD collaborated with civil society organizations from the Jordan National NGO Forum (JONAF) Coalition. JONAF was established in 2016, an initiative of ARDD in collaboration with CSOs, CBOs, experts, and media activists from different regions of the Kingdom. JONAF works to coordinate and lead the national humanitarian response and development efforts in Jordan.

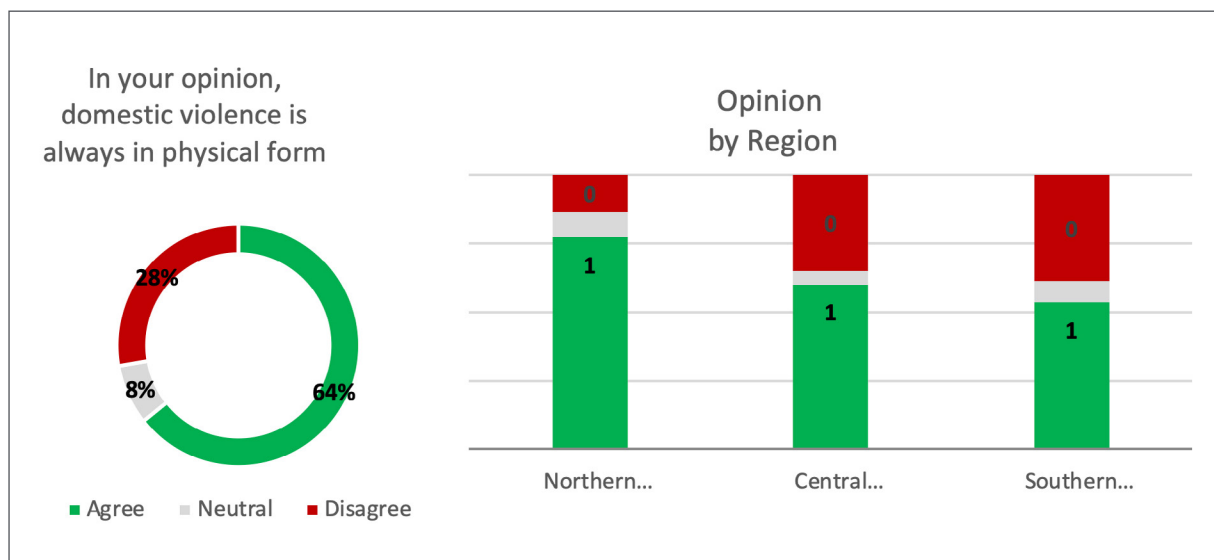
The research adopts a holistic methodology, consisting of a desk review that informed the development of the quantitative and qualitative data collection tools, several discussions and tests were held internally and with participating CSOs to finalize the tools. ARDD worked with civil society organizations (CSO's) members of the JONAF coalition who work directly with women, thus accessing insights from a local community perspective. The JONAF coalition advocates for promoting the localization of humanitarian work, thus delving into the local community perspective. Training sessions involving the 11 civil society organizations from the JONAF coalition to launch this research and build a common understanding of gender-based violence and how to address it. The civil society organizations carried out 350 surveys, 30 focus group discussions, and 45 key informant interviews. The sample covered the Northern, Southern, and Central regions of Jordan.

The study shed a light on the lack of awareness concerning the topic of domestic violence within the local communities, where perception of domestic violence is limited to its physical form. This lack of knowledge often leads individuals to be unaware or in denial when facing domestic violence often justifying other forms of domestic violence as lesser, indicating a need to raise awareness on the different form of domestic violence. The study also identified the local perspective towards the various needs of domestic violence survivors focusing on rehabilitation and empowerment. The participant emphasized the importance of better understanding the needs of domestic violence survivors and means of addressing them.

The Need to Build Community Understanding of Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is a prominent issue in Jordan. Anybody may be a survivor of domestic violence regardless of age, race, gender, sexual orientation, belief, or class. The study found that the majority of the participants (87%) reported that domestic violence is a prominent issue in Jordan, and a similar percentage (90%) agreed with the statement that anyone can be subject to domestic violence, regardless of their background. Approximately, two-thirds of the participants attributed domestic violence to tradition and a similar percentage prioritized the low economic status of a family as a key factor.

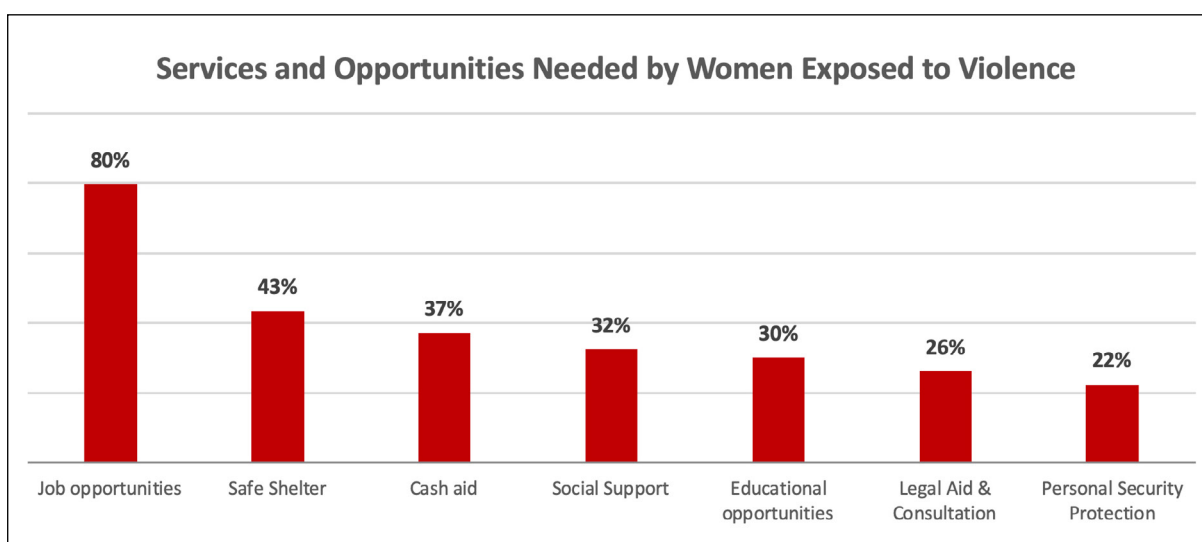
According to The National Council for Family Affairs 2016, domestic violence can be physical or/and mental harm. However, it seems that there is a lack of awareness about what constitutes domestic violence, with 64% of the participants believing that domestic violence always manifests physically (e.g., shoving, punching, slapping or hitting). This indicates that women in Jordan might not consider mental harm as domestic violence, they might not consider that they are subject to mental forms of domestic violence. The Northern Communities showed higher levels of awareness about what constitutes domestic violence, while those residing in the southern regions showed lower levels of awareness. During a discussion with the participating CSOs, it was suggested that these findings reflect the communities' focus on physical violence as the most direct and tangible form of violence.



Q. In your opinion, domestic violence is always in physical form such as shoving, punching, slapping, or hitting

Local Community Emphasis on Economic Empowerment and Employment

Post the closing of a complaint file, individuals felt that providing economic empowerment would be a key opportunity to support survivors of gender-based violence. The majority of participants backed up the provision of job opportunities (80%) and cash aid (37%). Participants also endorsed the provision of security and protection, with around half of the participants (43%) asking for the provision of shelters and a smaller segment (26%) asking for legal aid and consultation, and personal security protection (22%). One-third of the participants were in favor of personal skill-building in the form of educational opportunities (30%) and provision of social support (32%). It should be noted that participants focused mainly on empowering survivors of violence and assisting them in rebuilding their lives.



Q. After closing the complaint file, what services and opportunities do the woman need officially against the violence she has been exposed to?

Employment does not mean empowerment and husbands might still be in control of their wives' income

To understand participants' responses to different cases of domestic violence, the survey included a section that presented situations that women might potentially find themselves in. Participants were then asked to choose the top three responses they might give. The women were given the following scenario "Your husband has forced you to hand over your entire monthly salary to pay off his debts over a long period of time, and he does not accept that you keep part of it."

In response to the scenario, a significant segment of women would give their salary to their husbands without taking any action (26%), to avoid the escalation of the situation or to avoid disputes. On the other hand, three-quarters (75.71%) chose to refuse the husband's request, rallying the help of their families or their husbands' families on the matter. A significant portion (18%) would file a complaint to the Family Protection Department in such a scenario.

Recommendations

Ensure participatory approach to the identification of services offered to survivors that should be reviewed regularly

Respondents highlighted that it is important that the FPD and civil society organizations that assist domestic violence survivors better understand the needs of survivors. Based on the locals' perspective, the key needs identified were better psychological support through boosting the FPD capacity and that of other services providers through training of staff and or assigning psychologists to render services. Economic empowerment through the provision of job opportunities and cash assistance was repeatedly highlighted. Furthermore, several communities emphasized the importance of assisting survivors of domestic violence with legal advice and support, mainly in cases of divorce or custody disputes.

Build economic empowerment in a vision of mitigating domestic violence, taking into account the local perspective. While addressing the need of raising awareness about domestic violence

Economic empowerment through the provision of job opportunities and cash assistance was repeatedly highlighted. It is seen and stressed as a necessary service to rebuild the capacities of survivors of domestic violence and could be a way of addressing the unequal power structure within families, which limits women's decision-making process. Economic empowerment needs to be built with a focus on women's empowerment to preclude husbands and male members of the family from controlling women's income.

Responses also showed that not all forms of violence are acknowledged as such, with only physical violence perceived in need of response and services. It was even mentioned that some women might "over-react" and endanger the family cohesion by complaining. It was also highlighted that fear and the stigma of divorce limits the survivors' options. Therefore, it is necessary to continue raising awareness about domestic violence, its types, its impact, its roots causes, and for gender justice to improve its response to the needs of survivors of domestic violence since community and family perspectives continue to channel conservative views that limit survivors' chances of escaping the pervasive circle of the violence.

