16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM
CAMPAIGN AGAINST
GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

EVENT REPORT

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BACKGROUND

Since the beginning of the Syrian conflict in 2011, well over 6 million Syrians have fled to neighboring countries. Almost 2.5 million of Syrians have come to Turkey and live in camps and non-camp settings. Both as a direct result of the conflict in Syria and while fleeing from Syria to Turkey, some families have been separated. Traditional protection networks have broken down, which has increased the vulnerability of women, girls, boys and men to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV).

Violence against Women (VAW) occurs in all societies and at any stage of a woman’s lifecycle. It can even occur before a girl is born through sex selective abortion and menace women throughout their old age. Some types of VAW such as sexual violence and domestic violence occur in all cultures, although they are more common in some than others. Even while violence against women could be occurred in the more common cultures, in case of conflict situations, women and girls become most vulnerable group to have huge risk exposing to violence.

IMPR Humanitarian has been conducting numerous activities at the Urfa Community Center to reduce the risks of exploitation and abuse and the effects of SGBV cases that have occurred in Şanlıurfa. One of these activities is aim to raise awareness on SGBV among host community and Syrians in Turkey through 16 days of activism campaign.
16 Days of Activism to end violence against women is an international awareness-raising campaign to influence behavior change to end gender violence as a fundamental human rights issue. The campaign takes place annually in the period between 25 November (International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women) and 10 December (Human Rights Day). IMPR Humanitarian has conducted a range of activities through 24th year’s 16 days of activism theme, “From Peace in the Home to Peace in the World: Make Education Safe for All” recognizes that education is a public good and a fundamental human right recognized in Article 26 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and upheld in various international and regional human rights conventions and treaties.

Campaign schedule had been developed based upon IMPR Humanitarian’s observations on the field, demands and needs of beneficiaries determined thorough conducted community focus group discussions and decisions of IMPR Humanitarian’s Women and Youth Committees. Also during the planning period of the campaign IMPR Humanitarian have used “Rutgers’ Take Action Kit” 473 beneficiaries have attended the campaigns’ activities.

Number of Beneficiaries who attended the IMPR Humanitarian’s 16 Days of Activism Campaign

1  http://16dayscwgl.rutgers.edu/2015-campaign/take-action-kit
Subjects of raising awareness and group counseling sessions had been determined based upon the various result of educational survey which was carried out targeting Syrians who attend the community center regular activities by IMPR Humanitarian Education Department.

In connection with conducted special event, IMPR Humanitarian had worked in cooperation with Provincial Directorate of Family and Social Policies Ministry to consider the demands of both host community and Syrian refugees in Şanlıurfa. This report shows IMPR Humanitarian’s intervention during the 16 days of activism at the Urfa Community Center and outside of the Urfa Community Center.

**Community Focus Group Discussion with Syrian Women on Gender Based Violence**

IMPR Humanitarian had launched the campaign through conducting community focus group discussions which aimed to more understanding of challenges that Syrian women and girls face in relation of SGBV. Methodologically, 4 focus group discussions had been carried out targeting 40 adult Syrian women to identify the forms of GBV, role of communities to prevent violence, reasons and results of GBV in Şanlıurfa context. Questioners and essential steps had been developed under the supervision of IMPR Academia and FGD sessions had been started through introduction to agree on confidentiality. Environment had been set-up to make attendances feel more comfortable to talk freely.
According to the results of FGD sessions, most of women have shared their ideas and opinions about challenges that displaced women would face on SGBV. Some of attendances have emphasized that challenges and problems for them is being exposed to physical, emotional and sexual abuse as well as exploitation. These challenges could develop psychological disorder, distress, over think, lack of sleep or pressure to women in general.

According to the women who had attended the FGD sessions, most of violence forms occur in the family. Therefore most of them emphasized that marriage decision should be taken carefully. One of the beneficiaries had liken the marriage to ship and she says; “it needs compromise.”

“When I got married my husband was not satisfied with my beauty. So he used to hit me all the time. I complained the situation to my family. But nothing changed. The marriage didn’t last long since I was forced to marriage by my family.”

“I choose to marry with the man who I wanted. But I was not happy, I have 5 children. There was not trust between me and my husband. I couldn’t take the insults and cursing anymore. So right now I live alone.”
On the other hand lack of education, depriving women’s rights, traditions, economical conditions have been given by the beneficiaries as a reason of violence. When women or girls are exposed to abuse or harassment, their fear from family and community would prevent them from speaking out and this makes their feeling of safety and security is decreased. All participants have emphasized that community centers have significant contribution to empowering women in terms of developing their skills and their coping mechanisms during crisis.

**Community Focus Group Discussion with Syrian Adults on Accessing to Education**

Syrian conflict as precipitating of huge humanitarian crisis has turned 5th year. Millions of Syrians have obligated to displace and their future is still uncertain. As of November 2015, Turkey has been hosting 2.2 million Syrian. Most of them is children and youth. Children and youth of Syria, who have more affected from the conflict, have been continuing to pay heavy price of the situation. Their life, education and psychological condition are under huge risk. Education and protection needs of Syrian children and youth in Turkey have been increasing as days pass. Even although 746.000 Syrian are in school age, 451.000 of them can’t access the education due to lack of information, economical circumstances, etc.In terms of 16 days activism campaign, 2 FGD sessions had been conducted targeting 20 Syrian youth to have more understanding on the main barriers and challenges for them accessing education. Questioners and essential steps had been developed under the supervision of IMPR Academia and FGD sessions had been started through introduction to agree on confidentiality.
Environment had been set-up to make attendances feel more comfortable to talk freely. Characteristic features of teenage period, war effects on youth, importance of schooling, and gender inequality on accessing education have been discussed during the sessions. Youth, who attended to FGD sessions, had identified the school a place to learn science and good morals, to start designing their future, to improve their skills. Also Syrian youth had emphasized that lots of Syrian can’t enroll to school due to work condition, lack of information, and lack of economical circumstances. Most of them had indicated that schooling has huge positive effects on Syrians to prevent negative expression methods such as smoking, violence, alcohol, and drugs etc. Therefore attendances had suggested having more information how to enroll schools and long-termed solutions to enhance the economical circumstances.

**Painting to leave message on “make education safe for all”**

IMPR Humanitarian gave a free space to both host community members and Syrians to write their ideas, feelings, and reactions about education and gender-based violence on white awning. It was observed that it drew the attention of different age groups who were highly inspired to make their words visible to others in different languages. Messages that were written on the awning have showed that there is no different approach among cultures to against gender-based violence and to emphasize the importance of education.
**Campaign on Social Media**

Social media has a key role to turn heads on different subjects. Therefore during the 16 days of activism, social media has taken important place showing to people conducted activities and joining the social media discussions via hash tags. On 25th of November and 10th of December, IMPR Humanitarian’s staffs, volunteers and beneficiaries have changed their profile pictures of their own social media accounts with their message against gender-based violence through using “#16days” hash tags. On the other hand, during the campaign period some quotas from beneficiaries have been shared on the social media and it gave changes to other people to see the Syrians’ ideas.

**IMPR Humanitarian and ASPIM Have Organized Joint Event about Violence against Women**

Joint special event was held on 26th November by IMPR Humanitarian and Urfa provincial directorate of Family and Social Policies within the scope of 16 days of activism campaign for the prevention of violence against women. Ensar Sener, Şanlıurfa Provincial Immigration Administration Director, Mahmut Sonmez, AFAD provincial director and Murat Demirkol, Provincial Directorate of Şanlıurfa Family and Social Affairs also attended the event and Murat Demirkol, indicated that the women play important role of shaping our social life.

IMPR Humanitarian Women Community Center Officer Kevser Issa gave an opening speech and she said that “In the world the violence against women increasingly continue day by day. As well as the women are exposed to violence in their daily life, the women who are in war circumstances, they are also exposed violence brutally. For this reason, we are against the every type of violence towards women.

Within the scope of event, painting exhibition which consists of 16 paintings describing gender based violence was held by IMPR Urfa CC activity beneficiaries. Different type of performance was delivered by IMPR Humanitarian Youth Orchestra, theatre and dance group. Moreover, throughout the event, all male and female participants left a message on the canvas related with gender based violence.
Syrians and local community showed great interest in the event which was organized to raise the awareness of violence against women both in local community and in the Syrian community. On the other hand, news agencies also showed interest to the event.

**Group Counseling Session on educational opportunities for Syrians in Turkey**

IMPR Humanitarian Education Department, within the scope of 16 days of activism campaign, has conducted workshop on available educational services for Syrians targeting 19 beneficiaries. During the workshop subjects of right to education in national and international law, available educational opportunities for Syrians, and Scholarship opportunities for university and master degree explained to the beneficiaries.

**Raising Awareness Sessions**

IMPR Humanitarian believes that raising people's awareness and knowledge about some topics could lead to changing behaviors. Therefore during the 16 days of activism campaign IMPR Humanitarian also has conducted numerous of raising awareness sessions on the subjects of understanding of gender-roles in the communities, affects of child marriages on accessing to education, affects of child labor on accessing to education, importance of hygiene at temporary education centers.
Combating Discrimination Workshop

One of the fundamental principles underlying human rights is that of equality between human beings. Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) proclaims that “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”. The corollary of the principle of equality is that of non-discrimination. Discrimination occurs when people in the same situation are treated differently for no objective reason.

Unfortunately, many factors still give rise to discrimination in the modern world, including people’s ethnic, national or social origins, their religion, language, gender. Political leanings, sexual orientation, age, state of health and so forth. Forms of discriminations based on claims of ‘race’, i.e. racism, remain among the most widespread today.

It is very seen the variety of discrimination is happening in Syrian community after ongoing Syrian community. There are some changes of the community component. Early marriage, discrimination between ethnicity and sectarian and religious increased. For this reason this workshop was organized as part of the initiatives effort to strengthen the community especially starting from the youths. It aimed to create peaceful atmosphere among teenagers and remind them some points of the importance of the diversity. This workshop was developed by IMPR Humanitarian Urfa Community Center targeting teenagers. Firstly the aim of the workshop was presented and followed by the creation of the ground rules and expectation of the participants and after that the agenda was explained. Following agenda has been conducted during the workshop:

- Pre-test and expectations
- What are the discrimination, prejudice and stereotypes? –through explanations and sharing
- Different type of discrimination- FGD
- Labels and reactions- through games
- How to combat with discrimination?-Solutions
- Evaluations
GBV Workshop

Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is a particularly disturbing phenomenon which exists in all regions of the world. The term refers to any harmful act that is perpetrated against one person’s will and that is based on socially ascribed (gender) differences between males and females. It includes acts that inflict physical, mental, or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

SGBV entails widespread human rights violations, and is often linked to unequal gender relations within communities and abuses of power. It can take the form of sexual violence or persecution by the authorities, or can be the result of discrimination embedded in legislation or prevailing societal norms and practices. It can be both a cause of forced displacement and an intolerable part of the displacement experience.

All persons of concern, including refugees suffer disproportionately from SGBV, not only as a form of persecution and at the outbreak of a conflict but also during displacement. Effective protection can be established only by preventing SGBV, identifying risks and responding to survivors, using a coordinated, multi-sectoral approach.

In terms of 16 days of activism campaign, a raising awareness session on SGBV was conducted targeting 14 beneficiaries. The session started through giving a definition of SGBV with reference to the international human rights. Consequences of gender-based violence, its effects on women and children have been discussed during the session. SGBV has a big risk and threaten for children life and especially for women who are exposed for abuse and more vulnerable to violence, exploitation and violations because of their age, sex and social status.

Women could face various forms of SGBV in home, community, work place. Some of these forms have been introduced such as physical or emotional violence, trafficking of girls and women, domestic violence, sexual harassment at work, exploitation, child marriage, financial abuse, emotional abuse, etc. The participants interacted in a good way, and some of them shared personal experiences related to SGBV which happened to them during displacement such as forced marriage and
domestic violence. At the end of sessions, following topics have been identified as factors of SGBV:

- Social isolation
- Knowledge of family members relating to SGBV
- Attitudes of family members relating to SGBV
- Capacity to share care-giving in the household
- Change in gender roles for men and women in a household
- Size of family, age and gender of children in the family
- Lack of education
- Community support networks

Conclusion

The 16 Days Campaign ended on December 10 - Human Rights Day- but our collective work to end gender-based violence around the world is all 365 days of the year. There are still gaps to raise awareness and increase the knowledge of people on GBV issues. Prevention strategies should be strengthened. Civilians must be protected.

As prevention strategies of IMPR Humanitarian on the protection of GBV issues, IMPR Humanitarian has been continuing its women protection and GBV activities in Şanlıurfa through its Women’s Community Center since March 2015. On the other hand, ensuring women’s reproductive health, raising their awareness and promoting displaced women’s dignity will enhance women’s healthy and protection. Therefore on the year of 2016, IMPR Humanitarian will be increasing the number of Women’s Community Center in Batman, Ankara and Adana. Prevention from gender-based violence might ensure through empowering of women and raising awareness of communities. Consequently the increasing number of women and girls safe spaces will ensure to prevent GBV issues as a key strategy for the protection and empowerment of women and girls affected by the Syrian crisis.

Organizations working for women’s protection have to strengthen the collaboration among each other by producing resources and materials to reinforce advocacy efforts to achieve more peaceful world for women and girls free of gender-based violence.
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