

SGBV in Iraq and Syria Crisis Context  
a new topic of SDC/humanitarian Aid

#SGBV

# Context

## In Iraq,

- sexual violence is employed as a tool of genocide against indigenous, religious, ethnic or political minorities like what happened to the minority of the Yzediz women.
- Reports have emerged of people-smugglers demanding sex as “payment of passage”
- In January alone, ISIL extorted \$850,000 for the release of 200 abducted Yezidis
- the ISIL leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi issued a “fatwa” in which women were transferred within Iraq and to the Syrian Arab Republic and presented to so-called “emirs” for sexual exploitation.
- ISIL has incorporated sexual violence into its systems of punishment and reward: during Ramadan, it ran a competition on memorizing the Koran, with the winners being promised Yezidi sex slaves as a prize

## In Syria

- In 2015 , the rate of underage marriage among Syrian refugee girls hosted in neighbouring Jordan, Lebanon or Turkey has more than doubled since the beginning of the crisis (from 12 to 26 per cent) owing to fears of sexual violence, lack of access to education and economic hardship.
- In interviews with female refugees in neighbouring countries, fear of rape is cited as a major factor inducing flight from the Syrian Arab Republic child marriage is often used as a negative coping strategy.

# The growing problem of child marriage among Syrian girls in Jordan



# Early marriage - a coping mechanism for Syrian refugees?

- Some Syrian refugees arriving in Jordan are opting to marry off their daughters at a young age believing that marital status offers a form of protection and insurance.
- “They rape girls who are as young as her in Syria now. If they raped a nine-year-old girl, they can do anything. I will not feel OK if I do not see her married to a decent man who can protect her,” said the father of Hanadi, a pregnant child bride in Jordan aged 14.
- “It is our tradition, but now it became a necessity. Syria is not a good place for women and girls any more,” Said the mother of Mariam, a 16- year old daughter married to a 35-old man.

# Legal point of view

- Personal status law sets the minimum age of marriage at 17 for boys and 16 for girls. However, religious leaders are allowed to make an exception and approve marriages (waiver) at the age of 13 for girls and 16 for boys. These marriages are only registered with the authorities when both spouses turn 18.
- Jordanian law sets the minimum age for marriage at 18 for both spouses, though in exceptional circumstances marriages involving 15-year-olds are allowed.
- "This is dangerous. It means girls could lose their rights if they are divorced or if they encounter disputes with their partners and it leads to severe health risks which leaves girls vulnerable." Eva Abu Halaweh, a lawyer from the local human rights group MIZAN

# Challenges

- A consistent concern is that fear and cultural stigma converge to prevent the vast majority of survivors of conflict-related sexual violence from coming forward to report such violence
- health providers often require survivors to report to the police before receiving care. The practice of mandatory reporting to the police also presents a barrier to access to care.
- There is a shortage of staff trained in the clinical management of rape.
- Sexual and reproductive health services, trauma counselling and reintegration support are severely limited.

# How do we work on SGBV in humanitarian settings?

**At policy level:** roles and capacities of government and civil society ?what are the legal frameworks and experiences we have and need to apply? What is the role, capacity and obligation of governments with respect to civil society organizations? What is the division of work? What are the obstacles around access to justice?

**At programming level:** what service provision and psychosocial, legal services do we provide? Who are stakeholders, actors and beneficiaries? What are coordination and referral mechanisms do we have ? Do we engage the perpetrators? How do we empower survivors of SGBV ? What are strategies for economic empowerment? Efforts to enhance the capacity of the United Nations system through the deployment of women's protection advisers should be accelerated.