

## Fact Sheet: Empowered Aid Lebanon

What is empowered aid? Empowered Aid represents aid interventions that are focused on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), where we seek to develop humanitarian aid distribution models that reduce power disparities and give those most affected by abuse—refugee women and girls—a sustained voice in how aid is delivered.

### Overview

In May 2022, World Vision Lebanon (WVL) distributed 2,762 disinfection kits to a targeted group of Syrian refugees residing in informal tented settlements in Bekaa Governorate, Lebanon. In parallel, we carried out 56 safety audits, filled out 294 short in-person questionnaires at points of distribution, and conducted eight focus group discussions with 66 male and female participants of both Lebanese and Syrian nationality.

This not only supported needs identified by the humanitarian response but was also part of Empowered Aid's efforts to reduce sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) in aid distributions by identifying risk factors (Phase 1) and building evidence on safer distribution mechanisms and monitoring (Phase 2)



The WASH team in Bekaa distributing buckets to the refugees and explains the safety measures they should do to prevent the spread of COVID-19. © World Vision

WVL applied four of the recommendations made by Syrian refugee women and girls including:

- Assigning times for groups of families to collect distributions, delivering aid at household level, with at least two aid workers in mixed-sex or all-women teams,
- Involving more women aid workers or women's committees in distributions,
- Implementing sex-segregated lines and waiting areas during distributions, and
- Sensitizing the community on Gender-based Violence (GBV)/ Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) including SEA complaint mechanisms.

### Findings

#### INFORMATION COMMUNICATION

A majority of Point of Distribution Questionnaire (PoDQ) respondents (74%) received the information on the distribution by written communication (i.e. leaflets SMS texts), followed by phone calls (35%) and word of mouth (16% of women, 3% of men). Information was delivered to all aid recipients verbally (safety audit), and it was noted in 14 of the 56 sites (25%) that the Shawish would notify aid recipients of changes

**90% of PoDQ participants said they prefer to receive information by written communication (i.e. leaflets, SMS texts, etc.), followed by phone calls (56%).**

Aid recipients primarily received their information from aid workers (67%) followed by community leaders (19%) and friends and family (16%) (PoDQ). The Shawish often shares the information, and aid organizations need to co-ordinate more closely with the Shawish to share information (Syrian women in Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). Information on criteria and the distribution was delivered in a clear and timely manner at all distribution sites, particularly important as one safety audit noted that a majority of the information recipients are female.

**Almost all PoDQ respondents (93%) said aid workers were the most effective or useful on sharing information, followed by community leaders (10%).**

**95% of PoDQ respondents reported that women and girls are most likely to receive information on the distribution, while men and boys are 5% most likely to hear.** Women more likely to hear about the distribution (Syrian women, Syrian men, Lebanese men in FGDs).

86% of respondents said men and boys are least likely to hear about information on the distribution, while 14% said women and girls (PoDQ). Reasons cited as to why women are more likely to hear the information included that husbands feel humiliated, are shy, at work, missing, or in jail, and that women should receive the assistance.

### SAFETY AT DISTRIBUTION

70% of PODQ respondents said they felt safe at distributions, while 28% said they felt a lack of safety. **Reasons for lack of safety included physical/verbal fighting and theft (27%) COVID-19 exposure (21%), SEA (13%), and GBV (7%)**

Syrian and Lebanese women reported feeling safer due to sex-segregated lines and more female staff present at distributions (focus group discussions), and **the safety audit reported that 75% distribution sites had sex-segregated lines, and 88% distribution sites had female staff present.**

### SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE (SEA) RISKS

In the PODQ (5%) and focus group discussions (Syrian women, Lebanese women), participants reported seeing or hearing of SEA at distributions. All received referral information upon sharing. Syrian and Lebanese men reported that they had not seen or heard of SEA (focus group discussions).

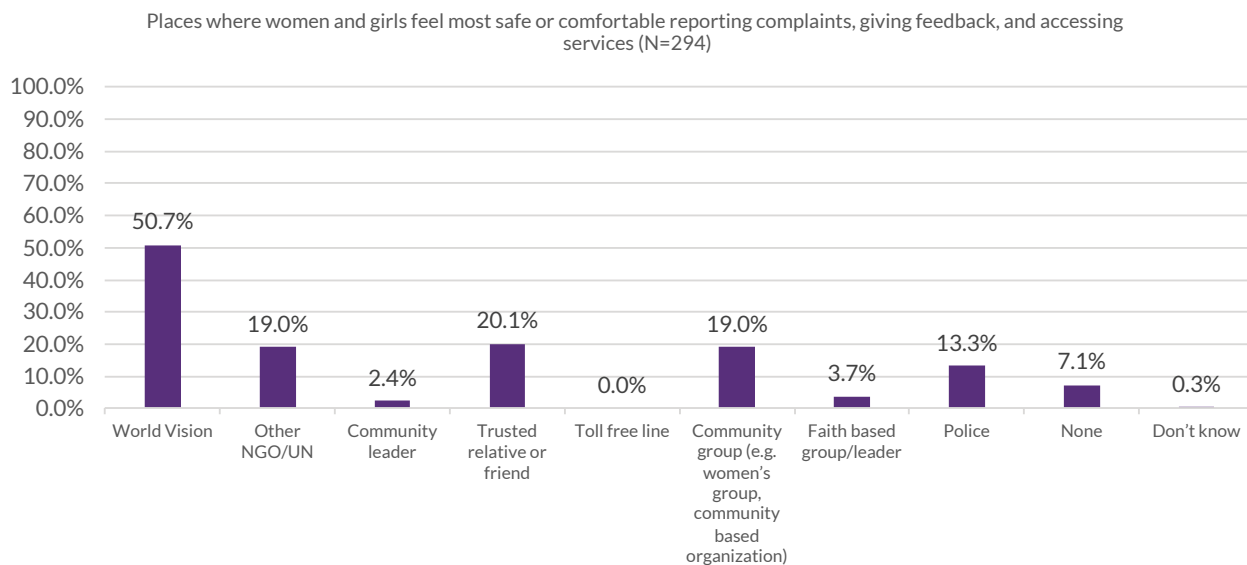
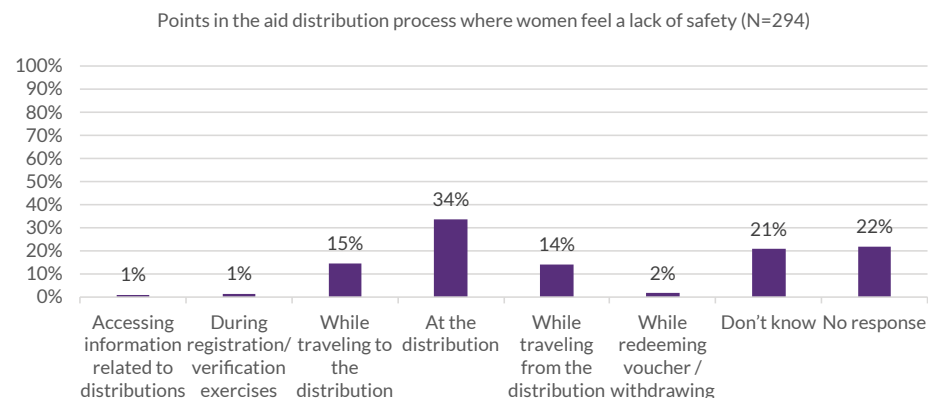
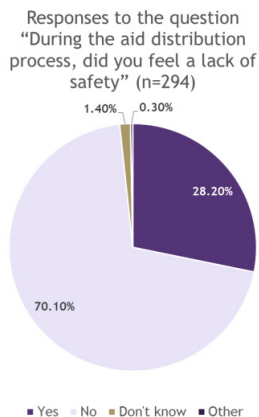
**Traveling to and from the distribution were cited as risky for women and girls safety** (focus group discussions), as well as the second (and third point in the distribution where respondents reported feeling the least safe (PODQ).

### Reporting mechanism

Women respondents of the PODQ and women and men in the focus groups reported a lack of trust in reporting mechanisms and NGOs as well as **fear of familial or community backlash prevent reporting.**



*“The main issue is to believe her if she reports such incidents, he [the abuser] might be a good communicator who is able to defend himself. So she might not find anyone able or willing to listen to her, understand her and hold the abuser accountable” – female participant at focus group discussion*



## Recommendations



Continue to implement SEA risk mitigation measures and safety recommendations like sex-segregated lines and gender-balance on distribution teams with female staff present at all times, particularly as participants validated their effectiveness to increase safety during the distribution



Focus on safety at the distribution and traveling to and from the distribution, mainly through:

- 1 Increasing the presence of female staff at distribution sites
- 2 Ensuring trained staff are present to identify and monitor safety
- 3 Separating distribution participants into different groups and assigning different times to groups to reduce crowded lines
- 4 Specifying lines for people with disability and special needs and make wheelchairs available for elderly
- 5 Exploring ways to provide transport support or formal/informal accompaniment systems, particularly for unaccompanied or vulnerable women and girls
- 6 Identifying ways to support transport of heavy aid items, particularly for PSNs. Findings also suggest to have female staff accompany female participants while transporting the aid back home
- 7 Coordinating with child protection team at WWL to create a safe space for children with their caregivers (children activities)
- 8 Providing first aid kit at all distribution sites



Improve complaint/reporting mechanisms to build confidence amongst the community through utilizing multiple and diverse methods for sharing information and receiving complaints along with setting up help desks at distribution sites



Creating clear SEA feedback mechanism and awareness raising is suggested to guide distribution participants on how to file complaints related to sexual assault



Provide equitable information sharing on distributions, contents and wait of the kits through Community Mobilizers (CMs), while making sure right holders are informed a day or two before the distribution



Expand ways of working with communities to prevent early/forced marriage and intimate partner violence, in addition to raising awareness on SEA and GBV, and its impact on the community. Following the SEA SoP at cluster level and revising WWL safeguarding and WaSH SoPs is needed. Training suppliers on safeguarding, Child Protection (CP), SEA, and GBV, as well as regular training of WWL staff on SEA are suggested



Distributing aid to Syrian community at ITSs, with Shawish being present at the distribution



Providing lockable latrines at distribution sites, accessible to people with special needs and disability



Creating WaSH committees and showing visibility at distribution sites at the long run

Empowered Aid is an initiative of the Global Women's Institute in partnership with World Vision and other global to local humanitarian actors. More information, resources and tools can be found at: [empoweredaid.gwu.edu](http://empoweredaid.gwu.edu)

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