



النهضة العربية للديمقراطية والتنمية  
Arab Renaissance for Democracy & Development



اللجنة الوطنية الأردنية  
لشؤون المرأة  
The Jordanian National  
Commission for Women



# Gender Justice



Policy Brief

**Women's Advocacy Issues- Volume 5**

## Enhancing Access to Services for Survivors of Domestic Violence: Building Trust in National and Local Services Providers

April 2022



With support from  
Finland's development  
cooperation





**ARDD**

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Building Trust in National and Local Services Providers**

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## Acronyms and Abbreviations

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

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## Purpose of the Action Research

This brief explores the local response to domestic violence , with a focus on identifying the local perceptions towards the roles and mechanisms of the Family Protection Department and Local Civil Society actors. The brief provides policy recommendations guided by insights from various actors from the local community on their perceptions of domestic violence and the response provided by various actors. To gain insight into the community perspectives, ARRD 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 of 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, ARRD 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 were held 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.

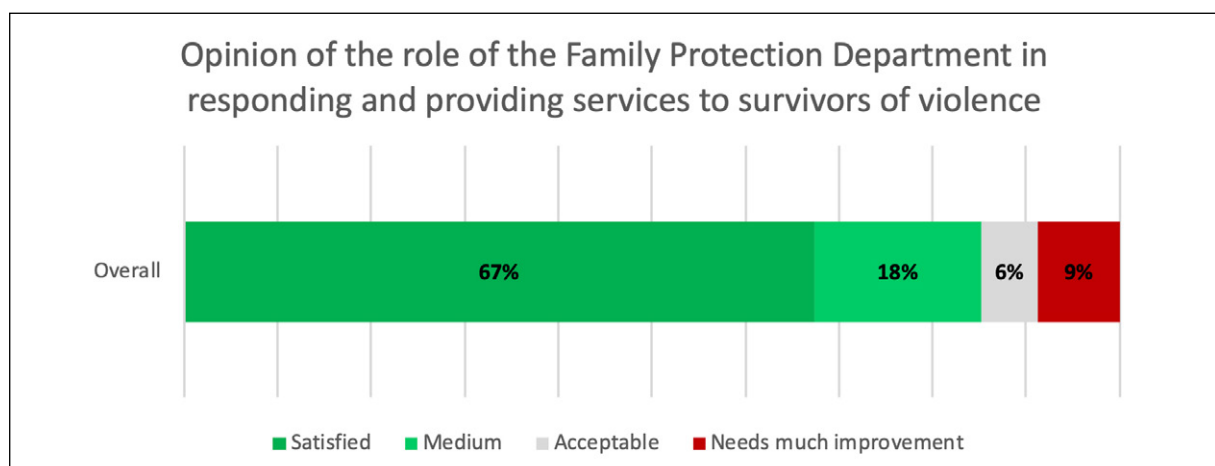
The research-action showed that families lack information about the mechanisms and role of the Family Protection Department and other relevant stakeholders when it comes to domestic violence. The absence of trust is evident among respondents with concerns over confidentiality and misconceptions limiting understanding of processes mixing with stereotypes around GBV survivors by the participants. Additionally, lack of knowledge and awareness towards the services provided by the family protection department and other stakeholders often deters women from reporting their cases, rather dealing with their cases internally with their families.

## Extended lack of trust in services providers including local organizations

### *Perception on ease of access to the Family Protection Department*

The nature of the work of the Family Protection Department tends to be fairly known to the respondents, with two-thirds (65.71%) of the communities having some level of knowledge on the nature of the work. Even though more than seven in every 10 individuals are familiar with the work of the Family Protection Department, only 15.22% of the sample ever tried to contact them. This indicates the need for department to communicate further and disseminate information widely and locally on the services provided.

When asked about their opinion on the role of FPD in responding and providing services to survivors of domestic violence, the participants showed fair levels of satisfaction, with two-thirds (67.39) being satisfied with the department’s work .The satisfaction rate remains similar when we disaggregate participants among those that dealt with the FPD. However, higher levels of dissatisfaction (needs much improvement and acceptability) were noticed amongst those who asked the FPD for help (26%) than among the rest of the surveyed sample (14.79%) . This is generally derived from the low knowledge about the role of FPD as individuals are aware of it, but lack knowledge about the procedures of accessing its services and its working mechanism. According to the KII, one of the key drivers of dissatisfaction is that “The Family Protection Department does not provide the necessary support for women, as the procedures followed do not lead to a reduction in violence”. An example that was recurrent across one community was regarding a woman who resorted to relocating to a different country as her abuser threatened her and her daughter.



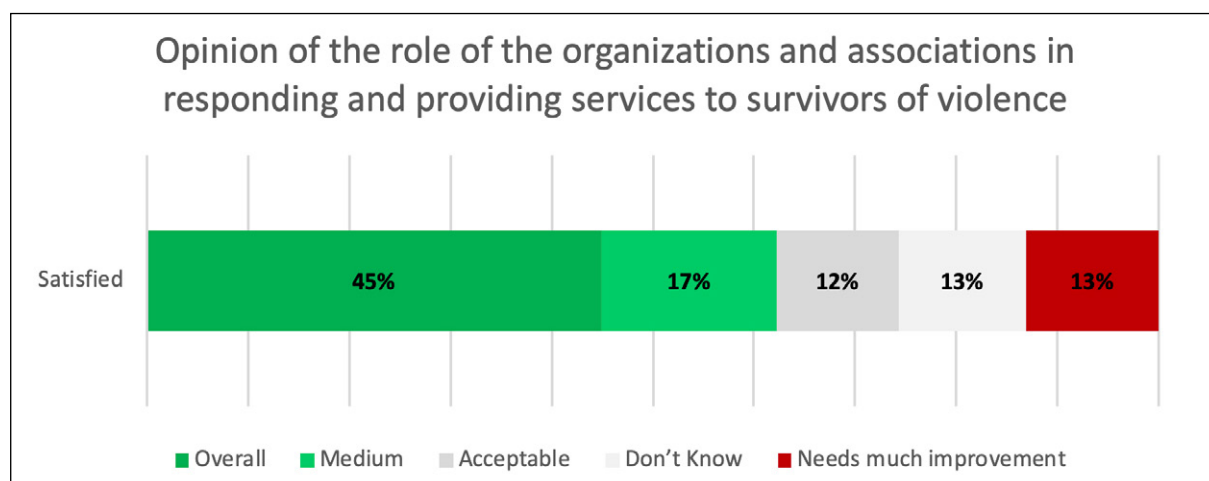
Q. What is your opinion on the role of the Family Protection Department in responding and providing services to survivors of violence?

## Perception on the access to services provided by local organizations and associations

There is evident lack of awareness about the role of CSOs and CBOs in domestic violence issues, as mentioned in the focus group discussions and KIIs. Therefore, individuals feel that there is a lack of support from organizations and associations that respond to domestic violence. Furthermore, more than half of the participants (55%) suggest that the current number of organizations is insufficient.

### *Opinions on the role of organizations and associations*

Satisfaction with response and provision of services to survivors of violence by organizations and associations is considerably low, with lower than half of the participants (45%) satisfied. The poor satisfaction levels can be associated with the lack of awareness of the role of organizations and associations.



Q. What is your opinion on the role of organizations and associations in responding and providing services to survivors of violence?

## Lack of knowledge and understanding of services

### *Cases of domestic violence are preferably resolved behind closed doors (scenario analysis)*

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 scenarios involved three forms of domestic violence: physical form, verbal form, and financial abuse. The scenarios illustrated similar responses with the majority of the participants across all scenarios dealing with their cases behind closed doors, with only family members being involved and reporting their cases to authority being avoided.



### ***The social dilemma of divorce and family cohesion in Jordan***

The generalized belief in Jordan is that divorce is not an option, even in cases of domestic violence. This is driven by the fact that “divorce should always be avoided and family cohesion should be prioritized, regardless of the impact of violence on women”, as stated by one of the respondents. Economic and social factors play a vital role in resorting to divorce in cases of domestic violence. “Women stay in abusive relationships because of fear of economic and social problems after separation or divorce.” (Shackelford, 2021) The survey uncovered that two out of every five women would avoid divorce to maintain their family’s cohesion.

### ***Denial of reality***

Globally, there is a perception that women can “overreact” to domestic violence or exaggerate it to gain the sympathy of others. According to Sahu 2020, women are often accused of overreacting by the community and judicial systems. This misperception is evident in the Jordanian context but should not be generalized. Even a significant number of women (34%) agreed that women tend to overreact to domestic violence to gain sympathy. However, a larger number disagreed with the statement (43%). Denial of reality, which happens when a woman is criticized and accused of being too sensitive or overreacting, makes her experience ignored and classified as illogical or untrue. (Coates and Paludi, 2011)

## **Extended Misconception Around Seeking Support for Domestic Violence**

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 are not aware that mental harm qualifies as domestic violence, they might not be aware that they are subject to mental forms of domestic violence.

### ***Women Refrain from Reporting their cases due Lack of awareness and trust in FPD***

Survivors of domestic violence are often hesitant to file complaints due to inadequate knowledge of the FPD services and procedures. One of the participants said that “some women do not know how to file a complaint and where to file it”. Some people do not trust that the FPD preserves confidentiality, or its mechanism to protect their rights, which is yet another component that prevents them from filing a complaint. FPD may be perceived negatively, as a place that destroys family cohesion and betrays confidentiality, thus putting people at risk. This perception is more evident among Syrian refugees who do not believe that laws and procedures will protect them.

## **Recommendations**

### **Increase local knowledge about services providers**

Inadequate knowledge of service providers' policies and procedures discourages survivors from filing complaints. Families may know about the Family Protection Department but are often unaware of the services the department and local civil society organizations provide, or of their specific role in protecting survivors of domestic violence and ensuring their security. By collaborating with CSOs, the FPD will be able to expand awareness about its work and enable access to its services to a broader region, so CSOs can refer cases to the FPD. The FPD can provide the CSOs with communication material on their role and services provided that would reach local communities.

### **Build local capacity to raise awareness about domestic violence, access to services beyond stereotypes**

Misconceptions and some negative perceptions concerning the FPD were voiced, by respondents who believe that the department does not respect confidentiality and does not offer proper protection to survivors. Responses also showed that stereotypes and cultural misconceptions, shared by all stakeholders, including services providers, families, and those who offer close support to survivors, limit women's and potential survivors attempts to seek out the department's services.

### **Clarify and build knowledge and awareness about safety procedures.**




Services providers, and particularly the FPD, need to build trust in their services and make their procedures and principles known. Survivors of domestic violence should be able to file complaints safely and in an atmosphere of trust. FPD and other services providers should make their working mechanism, including the complaint filing process, known and their staff must adhere to principles that will contribute to create a secure environment. If trust is built and confidentiality is ensured, women and potential survivors will be encouraged to speak about their cases and will trust the quality of services they may seek. Respondents also highlighted the fear of retaliation as a hindrance to reporting domestic violence, which makes it incumbent on the FPD, specifically, to improve its protection services mainly when it comes to safety of survivors, ensure confidentiality, and train better its staff working outside of Amman.



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