Expert Group Meeting on
"Shelters for Survivors of Violence: Availability and Accessibility"
18-19 February 2019
Committee Room II (B1 Level), UN House, Beirut, Lebanon

Agenda

Day 1: Monday, 18 February 2019	
8.30 – 9.00	**Registration**
9.00 – 9.30	**Opening remarks (ESCWA, WAVE, ABAAD, UNFPA) and introductions**

9.30 – 10.45   Session 1: Setting the scene

The first session will set the scene for the Expert Group Meeting by presenting the need for shelters in the Arab region as part of a larger comprehensive approach to combat violence against women. The session will also present the rationale for and outline of the study and highlight the main challenges to the study's preparation.

The discussion will be guided by the following questions:

- Why do women's shelters matter? What have we learned from international experiences?
- How do women's shelters operate as a part of a comprehensive approach to combating violence against women? How do they complement other interventions and mechanisms, such as protection orders?
- Have women benefited from shelter services in the Arab region? What has been the response?

10.45 – 11.00	**Coffee Break**

11.00 – 12.30   Session 2: The role of shelters in a comprehensive approach to combating violence against women

The session will discuss how shelters contribute to enhancing the protection of survivors and will review the study's conceptual framework. This will involve a global review of the key normative frameworks and best practices utilized when running shelters. It will also discuss key normative and empirical arguments in favor of shelters, including the comments made by the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, as well as the relevant commitments of Arab States to address violence against women.

The discussion will be guided by the following questions:

- Out of the principles and standards for shelters, what do you think are the three most important services that shelters should prioritize? Do you have any examples of where shelters have used these to enhance their practice?
- What examples do you have of NGOs running shelters using state obligations and international human rights law to improve their ability to run shelters and encourage Governments to fund them?
- How can shelters run by NGOs in the Arab region further demonstrate their effectiveness at providing the specialized support women need? Do you have any examples of models that highlight the difference between general shelters and specialized shelters for women escaping violence with a gendered approach not already covered in the report?

12.30 – 13.30	**Lunch Break**

13.30 – 15.00   **Session 3: Overview of shelters in the Arab region**

The session will present an overview of shelters in the Arab region based on data collected from qualitative surveys sent to National Women's Machineries and shelters. This will also include a discussion of the number of shelters in the region, as well as their accessibility and availability, the services they provide, the legislation governing their operation, and their governmental or non-governmental status.

The discussion will be guided by the following questions:

- What are your initial reflections on the data the report provides on shelters in the Arab region? How does this compare to your own experience of women's shelters?
- Is there a need for additional standards for shelters providing support to women who have experienced different types of violence (partner violence, domestic violence, rape and sexual violence by strangers, so-called "crimes of honor"), and/or other issues such as poverty to ensure that women have access to the targeted support they need? Do you have any examples of similar shelters and how they organize their support to meet the range of women's needs?
- What documentation is essential for shelters to improve their understanding, practice and evidence their success? How can this be strengthened in shelters with limited resources? Please give examples of where this has been successful.

15.00 – 15.30   **Q&A and conclusions of the day**

Day 2: Tuesday, 19 February 2019

10.15 – 10.30   **Coffee**

10.30 – 12.00   **Session 4: National laws influencing the efficiency and effectiveness of shelters**

The session will explore why women may or may not access shelters in the Arab region, focusing primarily on socio-cultural norms and the juridico-legal (formal, religious and customary) environment in which shelters function. The session will discuss how regional and national legal frameworks may or may not conflict with the provision of shelters.

The discussion will be guided by the following questions:

- What is the best way to address plural legal systems in the Arab region to facilitate greater numbers of and access to women's shelters, particularly when States allow personal status laws to take precedence over other legislation?
- What role might specific criminal laws play (anti-drug laws; anti-prostitution laws; anti-trafficking laws) in hindering women's access to shelters in the Arab region or elsewhere?
- What steps can be taken to create legislation and/or policy that improves the presence of and the services provided by women's shelters in the Arab region?

12.00 – 13.30   **Session 5: Policy recommendations**

The session will develop a series of concrete of policy recommendations for Arab States to enhance the presence and effectiveness of shelters and their services in the Arab region.

The discussion will be guided by the following questions:

- What might a holistic and comprehensive response to shelter provision look like in the Arab region?
- How best to link shelter services with other mechanisms (such as protection orders) and support services?
- How best to ensure some type of policy standardization in the creation and running of shelters in the Arab region?

13.30 – 14.00   **Closing remarks**

14.00 – 15.00   **Lunch**