



20  
23

ANNUAL  
REPORT

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# welcome to sawa organization's annual report 2023

## Overview

Sawa has spent most of 2023 in response to emergencies, from the escalating military violence against Palestinians in the northern West Bank, to the largest-scale and most devastating Israeli military aggression on the Gaza Strip in Palestinian history, starting from the last quarter of the year.

Sawa undertook a **three-month** emergency response to the large Israeli invasion of the Jenin Refugee Camp from July 2nd to July 4th, 2023. During this response, Sawa's Mobile Clinic provided women and children in Jenin Refugee Camp with group counselling, mental health support, and techniques for managing stress and dealing with trauma.



**It was during this response that Sawa also began taking steps to change Sawa's number, 121, to 164.**

The Helpline has long been known as the 121 Helpline, and 2023 brought a major change.

Previously, 121 was only available to Jawwal users. During the Jenin emergency, Sawa found that many mobile users of the northern West Bank are part of the Ooredoo mobile network. In order to better reach Palestinians in the North, the area in the West Bank that sees some of the most frequent military violence, Sawa acquired a number that would be more readily reached by both Jawwal and Ooredoo telecoms users.

**Sawa switched to 164, with the number provided for toll-free use by Jawwal, Paltel, and Ooredoo.**

Then almost immediately after the response to Israel's invasion of Jenin, the massive war on the Gaza Strip began on October 7th 2023, and is still ongoing as of writing this report. Sawa scaled up our emergency helpline operations, directed all media campaigns toward response to the situation in Gaza, and responded to requests from schools to give group counseling along with our usual awareness raising sessions.



# Sawa Helpline 164

Sawa maintained the 24/7 emergency helpline throughout 2023. **Sawa also decided to change the name of the Helpline from The “Women and Children’s Protection Helpline” to simply the “Remoting Counseling Helpline”** to reflect the evolving nature of Sawa's mandate, working to serve all Palestinian callers who request our assistance, egardless of age or gender.



Received Calls	86,349
Answered Calls	59,429
Unanswered Calls	26,920
Counseling Sessions	18,896
MHPSS sessions	7,283
Referrals	1,836
Medical Consultations	1,103

## Gaza May 2023 Emergency

**1,381**  
counseling  
sessions

Sawa entered emergency mode in response to the Israeli military assault on the Gaza Strip from May 9-13 2023.

**31%**

of these sessions were given to children,

where fear and panic was a prominent topic. As Child Helpline Day was observed on May 17th, Sawa continued providing its services to children. In May7, 162 counseling sessions were given to those ranging from 0-21 years of age."



## Gaza Oct 2023 Emergency

**When the emergency began, Sawa immediately prioritized providing non-stop service to the people of Gaza.**

**15411**  
ANSWERED CALLS

Remote counseling sessions on the Helpline were punctuated by heavy bombings in the background, heard by our counsellors as they tried to provide support.

# 90 Days Of War



5139

Counselling  
Sessions



15411

Answered  
Calls



22635

Received  
Calls



80

Training  
Hours



1466

Referrals



240

Physical Health  
Sessions



1891

Mhpss  
Sessions

## During the emergency, most callers request assistance regarding material aid, and Sawa provides referrals.

01

For information related to external cash voucher programs, Sawa is in continuous discussion with partners on where to direct callers.

02

From October onwards, most remote sessions on the 164 Helpline were related to Gazan callers' struggle in accessing basic needs, including access to food, clean water, medication, hygiene facilities, stable shelter, milk and diapers for infants, equipment and other resources for disabled children/family members, and clothes and blankets to protect against

03

Cases related to safeguarding and protection from sexual abuse and exploitation in the humanitarian context are referred to the PSEA Network, Sanad.



## Some challenges

specific to Sawa's response to the current Gaza emergency are:

- Telecommunications being unstable or completely being cut off from Gaza Strip, so Gazans may be cut off from services.

- External numbers that Sawa refers Gazan callers to are sometimes unresponsive so callers would return to Sawa in frustration of these external services not responding.

- Not unexpected but nonetheless challenging every time: heavy psychological tolls on counselors as they listen to harrowing and traumatic stories from Gazans, many of whom describe violence of the assault, surviving bombings, or mourning their loved ones.

- There are limited services available in Gaza for Sawa to refer callers to for services beyond psychosocial support. There is a struggle in being able to direct callers, such as for health interventions, where remote service is not enough. There is challenge in coordinating with actors in Gaza since telecommunications are unstable.

# Sawa Helpline Data

**Documentation in the database of the helpline is ongoing and is obligatory for each case where service is provided.**

The database is also the main source of all quantitative data related to the helpline. It is used when developing Sawa's factsheets or other material to highlight the needs that reached Sawa via the callers. The database also allows Sawa to monitor beneficiary response to promotional media such as SMS, Facebook, radio or word of mouth, so it informs our media activities in turn.



# Group Debriefing Sessions for Sawa Counselors

**Sawa underwent**

**52** **Weekly**

**Debriefing sessions  
with the counselors**

These sessions are especially important in the current situation, with counselors facing unprecedented risk of secondary trauma.

Counselors support people who have just lost or fled their homes, people who are grieving over family members or friends, and people who were living without basic necessities. They often end calls without knowing what will happen to the caller, or if they will hear from them again. Still, they must be ready to lend a supportive ear, counsel parents on how to soothe their children, and guide people to resources such as shelter, food, and medical care.

Debriefing develops counselors' capacities and aims to keep them psychologically healthy and safe.

# SAWA MEDIA



Sawa broadcasted radio spots that encouraged people to call in the event they are in a panic or don't know how to deal with their children's trauma .

Sawa created a new **Tele-gram** channel to more effectively reach Palestinian youth, as use of this media platform grew when the military assault on Gaza began.



On Sawa's social media pages, there was constant promotion of Sawa's number as well as messages about mental health, medical guidance, and other safety topics.

**219,750**

SMS text messages sent to promote Sawa's Helpline services.

# RIFQA

In 2023, Sawa completed the online registration platform for the new Rifqa program, for the medical accompaniment of patients from Gaza to hospitals in the West Bank, in coordination with partners in the Gaza Strip.

Sawa began making online announcements via our various social media platforms to encourage volunteers to register.

Sawa was able to **assist two cases** in 2023. With the Israeli military assault on Gaza, further development of the program has been put on hold, in order to prioritize Sawa's emergency response.



# Mobile Clinic

Sawa's Mobile Clinic program for providing psychosocial support, awareness-raising on GBV (Gender-Based Violence), awareness raising on sexual & reproductive health, PSEA, and basic medical check-ups was active throughout the year.



**provided 7 open days to 266 women**  
total from the above mentioned villages

The purpose of the open days was to give women the opportunity to engage with their larger community while also participating in activities for the promotion of mental and physical health, and refreshing their awareness of Sawa's availability as a resource for psychosocial support, legal consultations, and medical consultations should they require it.

# JENIN REFUGEE CAMP JUL 2023 EMERGENCY

In response to the large-scale Israeli assault on the Jenin refugee camp in early July 2023 **Sawa engaged in a**

## **3** Month long emergency response

where the Mobile Clinic team visited the women of the Jenin Refugee Camp, providing group counseling and support twice a week for about 3 months. Sawa would schedule the counseling based on the interventions coordinated by UNRWA and YMCA, and would plan according to the local neighborhoods and what was most suitable to the local women's coordinators. **More than 30 workshops were held with more than 400 women from the Jenin Refugee Camp.**

Sawa was active via the Mobile Clinic, providing women and children in Jenin Refugee Camp



- **Sawa also held 17 recreational activity workshops for 448 children in Jenin and villages from the Qalqiliya governorate.**

**There was significant risk due to constant later invasion of the camps and constant road checkpoints that would have the Mobile Clinic team on the road for hours and hours. Still, Sawa would strike the balance between keeping the Mobile Clinic team safe and seeing the program through till the end, to provide quality service to the women of the camp as much as Sawa's capacities could muster.**



The mothers Sawa worked with would often express their wish for Sawa to return:

'We only come here to see (Sawa)'

'We were waiting for Wednesday (when Sawa usually schedules the workshops)'

'We leave with smiles on our faces because of you', 'I cancelled my other appointments to be here'

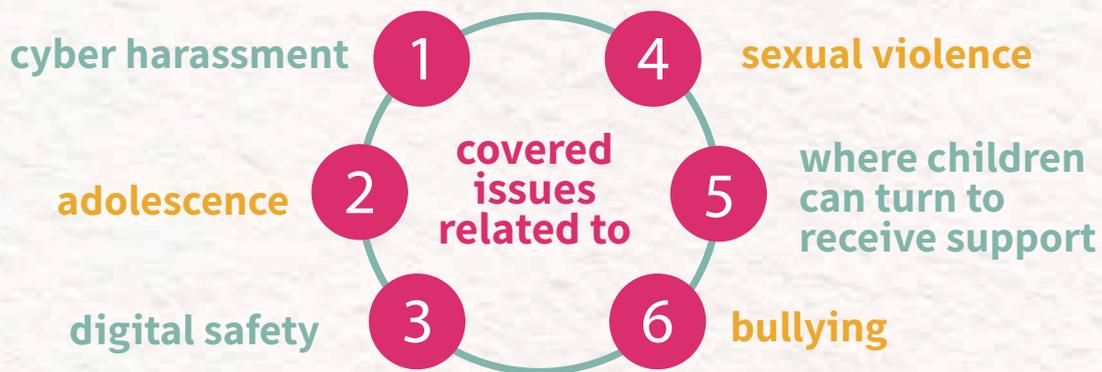
'The important thing is that we saw you today'

**Participants told us that the techniques introduced to them by Sawa are useful for:**

- giving the women a safe space, despite the frequent Israeli invasions on the camp that would renew the women's alarm and trauma again and again.
- allowing them to process and express their emotions.
- giving them an opportunity to gather and increase their sense of community.
- managing stress in their own households, and contributing to their resilience.

# Sawa School Workshops Program

In 2023, Sawa provided 44 school workshops to 1,484 students



**1** Discussion of Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (**PSEA**)

**2** Distributed new visual **comics** on the topic of sexual violence

**3** Younger students watched a play written by Sawa called "**Doso**"

When asked what they would do if their friends were ever exposed to violence, students said that they would help their friends themselves, stand with them always, advise them to go to a counsellor, advise them to tell their parents, or tell them to call 164.

About **88%** of **16 children** from a **5th grade class** indicated that they **learned something new and benefitted from workshops** on either a high or medium level.

When asked what they learned from the workshops, students answered, 'the bully is the one who is weak'.

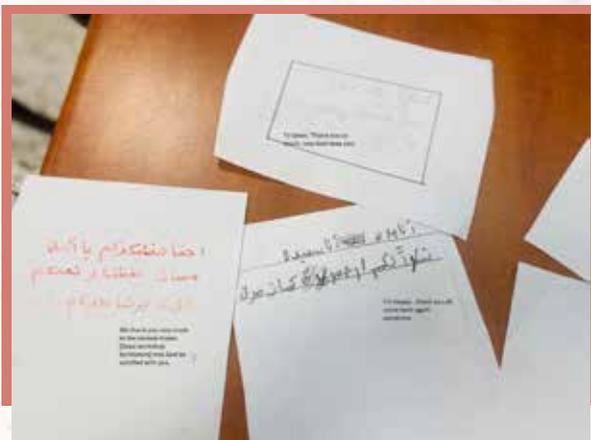
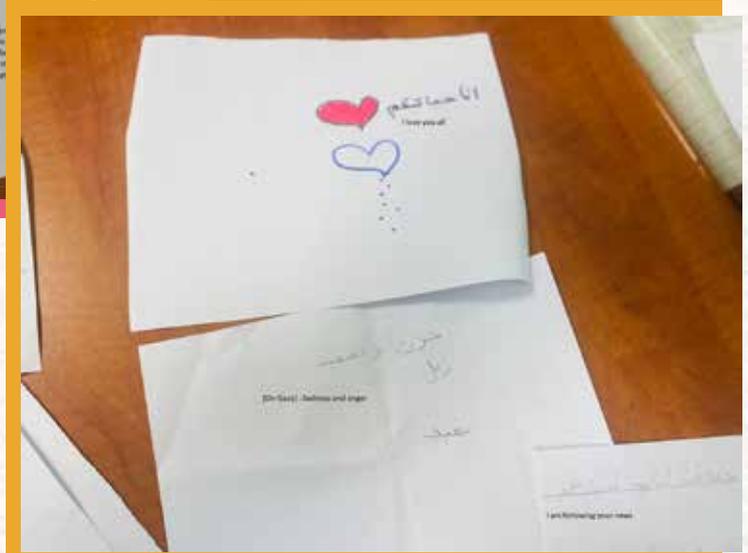
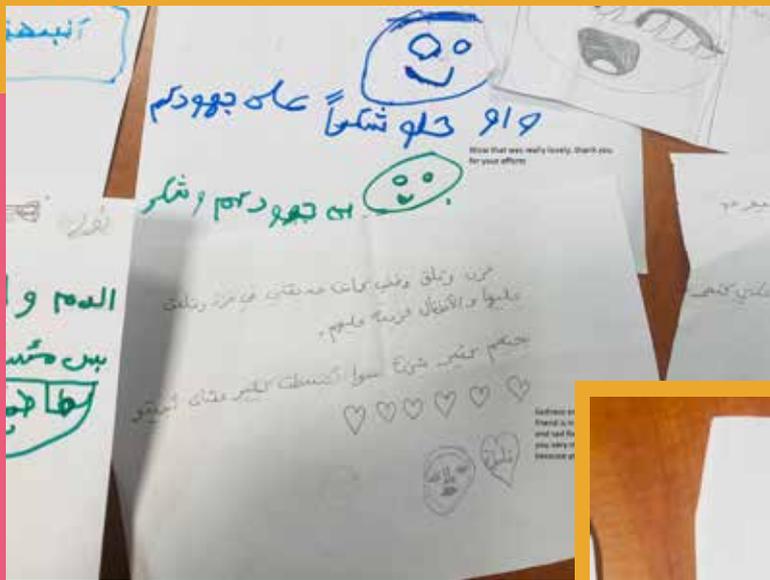
While discussing digital safety, facilitators would have the students describe the different apps that they use themselves, and asked the kids to explain what advice they had to avoid being harassed. The students gave each other advice on how it was important to make strong passwords in order to not get hacked and consequently blackmailed, and what types of photos they should and shouldn't post.



Students from the West Bank wrote out messages to the children of Gaza, wishing them safety and access to their basic rights. One student wrote, 'Sadness, worry, and anger; my friend is in Gaza and I worried for her and I am sad for the children. I love you very much, Sawa. We're very happy that you visited us.'



Children would call Sawa on the 164 Helpline, telling counsellors that they want them to 'come back again' and give them more workshops



# Capacity Building and Training to Professionals

**Sawa gave several capacity building to professionals from several sectors, training on how to respond to cases of violence and encouraging the victim-centered approach.**

## 10 Humanitarian Actors

**a comprehensive training providing protection services to those exposed to GBV**

These workers were based in various governorates, including Nablus. 83% of participants indicated that they benefitted from the training on a high level. Participants gained new knowledge on violence, trauma, its effects on the victim, and important definitions, such as the difference between harassment and exploitation. One person said they felt they were able to discuss topics related to GBV “without fear” and in a way that would be taken seriously, something they welcomed.

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## 57 Police

**Officers from the FJPU graduated**

**after 330 hours of training for the provision of services to victims of violence**

This training consisted of exercises for the Palestinian Family Justice Protection Unit (FJPU) related to understanding gender, violence and how to provide professional services to those exposed to GBV. The training curriculum was tailored by Sawa to suit the officers' needs. It offered practical skills and tools on how to communicate with survivors of violence and properly provide support and protection.

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## 20 Social Workers

**from MDM  
for provision of remote services  
during the Gaza emergency;**

Within the context of the ongoing assault on Gaza, Sawa was approached by actors who are considering developing their provision of remote counseling to the people of Gaza; 15 hrs were given to more than 20 case managers from various West Bank branches of MDM on how to provide counseling remotely.

# 18 professionals from the

**Palestinian prosecution, the Ministry of Social Development, and the FJPU came together in a training for the provision of services to people exposed to GBV.**

Sawa conducted a three-day workshop for civil society workers from various areas, including from the Family Justice Protection Unit, the Palestinian Public Prosecutors, and the Ministry of Development. Eighteen professionals, including eight men and ten women, participated in the workshop in Jericho. The training emphasized the victim-centered approach and how to properly protect the victim. It was beneficial for participants to hear about the mechanisms in place when assisting victims of GBV.

It was an opportunity from professionals from different sectors to hear out each others' challenges, discuss the gaps in referral, and acquire a more comprehensive outlook of the services available to GBV victims in the West Bank. Also discussed was the government-run National Referral System, and the challenges associated with it. Participants talked about how some cases were difficult and especially emotionally taxing, and how it is important to pay attention to one's well-being within the workplace in order to avoid burnout.

# 17 social workers from Gaza were trained on the management of sexual violence cases and PSEA

In Sawa's capacity as the national reporting channel for PSEA in the humanitarian context, we offered training to social workers, coordinators, responders, and other members of the PSEA network on how to provide services to victims of sexual violence under the PSEA framework.

You (Sawa) are a **mercy** from Allah

May Allah ease your **heart**, as you have eased mine.

Promise you'll keep talking to us and listening to us and **comforting us**?

I would like to **thank you** for listening to me and easing me of the burdens of this world.

Thank you, I didn't know I could think this way, you've **encouraged** me to give myself another chance.

Talking to you has reignited my **hope**. Thank you.

I know you can't help with anything (with material aid), but by Allah it's enough that you **listened** to me."

**Special thanks to Sawa's callers for their support,**

*without which Sawa could not continue*

UNICEF

Austrian Development Agency (ADA)

Surgir Foundation

War Child Holland

Women for Women International

Global Fund for Women

MDM-Switzerland

Palestine for Development

Mediterranean Women's Fund

Swiss Church Aid (HEKS)

Bread for the World

UNFPA via PMRS

Global Giving Foundation

Oxfam

***Thanks to Sawa's donors in 2023***