

Helpline provides:
**Support and counseling
for women and girls**

2011-2013



Sawa Organization

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Introduction

Today nearly 4.5 million people live in Palestine. 2.8 million of them live in the West Bank which is equivalent to 61.4%. 1.7 million people live in the Gaza Strip, which is equivalent to 38.6 % of the total population.

The Palestinian community is young. Individuals in the age group of (0-14) are estimated at 39.9% from the total population of Palestine standing at 37.7% in the West Bank, and 43.3% in the Gaza Strip¹.

Poverty rate among Palestinians for the year 2011 stands at 17.8% in the West Bank and 38.8% in the Gaza Strip. The percentage of households headed by women because of the absence of husband or father has reached in 2012 to 9.6%. These families are usually poorer than the others where the poverty rate among these families is estimated at 22.5% in the West Bank compared to 29.7% in the Gaza Strip².

Palestinians have been living under Israeli occupation for 66 years thus restricting their movement, controlling their general resources and limiting their personal abilities. Meanwhile, the siege on the Gaza Strip continues, increasing pressures which affect people's daily lives.

When poverty, occupation and siege mix together, everyday economic, social, and family problems worsen. This will also contribute to a rise in violence in its various faces in the whole community and especially in the family. This results in the need to look for solutions and vent stress.

Sawa is one of the most important organizations which support whoever is exposed to harm and violence. It serves anyone seeking support to cope with difficult circumstances, from all ages, sexes and from all Palestinian areas.

The phenomenon of violence against women:

There is an abundance of definitions related to violence against women. However, there is no one absolute definition. We have chosen here the definition which is mentioned in the Universal Declaration on Violence Against Women (1993) which defines the term "violence against women" as any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including

1. The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics – Palestinians at the end of the year 2013 - http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_PCBS/Downloads/book2028.pdf - 2013/12/02

2. and Women in Palestine- Issues and Statistics, 2013 The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_PCBS/Downloads/book2015.pdf

threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.) Violence against women shall be understood to encompass, but not be limited to, the following:

(a) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spouse violence and violence related to exploitation;

(b) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution;

(c) Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs³.

International statistics indicate that; one of every three women has been beaten or sexually exploited during her life. The aggressor is often from the family or well known to the victim. Violence is also a common phenomenon which takes place all over social and cultural classes. Violence is common in developing countries and even developed countries. Religion, customs and traditions inspired by patriarchy are often used to consolidate power relations and control of women which are embodied in local, global, social, political, economic, laws & regulations and systems.

In Palestine the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics indicates that in the year of ⁴2013, women who have already been married are more exposed to violence. One woman of every two women in the Gaza Strip is exposed to domestic violence compared to one out of every three women in the West Bank. Physical violence is prevalent in high rates compared to those internationally recorded, where the rate in Gaza Strip reaches 34.8 % while in the West Bank, it is 17.4 % . Research and statistics indicate that the largest percentage of married women have been exposed to psychological violence, while unmarried women are more exposed to physical violence, particularly those of a younger age.

Causes that lead to the spread of the phenomenon of violence against women in Palestinian society are many and varied. One of them is the view

3. UN General Assembly, Universal Declaration on the elimination of violence against women, referenced on (1993). 2014/01/22 <http://www.genderclearinghouse.org/upload/Assets/Documents/pdf/DeclarationViolenceFemme93OK.pdf>

4. Palestinian central Bureau of statistics (2013). Men and Women in Palestine, statistics and issues 2013 .http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_PCBS/Downloads/book2015.pdf

that women is of lesser status and ability than men. It is on this basis that women are deprived of basic human rights. Customs and traditions emanating from the patriarchal culture which controls society, marginalize women and accept her oppression; abuse her inside her home and her family as a means of education and as a maintenance of order ; laws and regulations in general are linked to the culture of male community which facilitates the violation of women's rights in the workplace and in public space as well. Women's access to decision-making positions is not enough , thus changing laws and regulations that relate to women lives is a heavy complex process which needs great time and effort .

In addition to that, poverty and unemployment contribute to the high rate of violence in general , and in violence against women in particular .Added to this is the political situation and the ongoing occupation that exposes women directly and/or increase violence against them. This violence is usually perpetrated by men, who face the daily oppression and humiliation of occupation.

Despite the increasing prevalence of violence against women in the Palestinian community, women and girls often choose silence for fear of facing community and family. They blame themselves and bear the responsibility for what they are exposed to. This is perhaps due to lack of information , lack of awareness about their rights, or the adoption of ideas and opinions of patriarchal family and community that reinforce patriarchal power relations and the distribution of traditional roles between women and men . It becomes more difficult for women who are exposed to sexual violence; when she considers the revelation of what happened to her as a departure from social norms on which she was brought up, especially when she is afraid of the reaction of the community, family and legal institutions that operate according to unfair laws.

The Importance of support and helpline:

Taking into consideration male dominance, which plays an important role in preserving the upper hand for the perpetrator. Quite often the victim is forced to choose between silence and not looking for solutions or and facing the community which supports the aggressor. Therefore, there was a need to create a safe protected space for women and girls who are victims of violence, especially sexual violence and domestic violence in all their forms. This is because they are considered sensitive which cannot be discussed in the community. It was necessary to establish a supportive helpline to provides that space and give victims the ability to discuss the issues they are facing in addition to acquiring guidance and counseling

confidentially and freely. This helps restore their self-confidence , and enhance their ability to defend their right to live in dignity without violence.

In addition to that, protection and support centers also contribute to the process of societal change through workshops and training of different groups in the community to raise awareness about the issues of violence against women, as well as the responsibility of every individual to reduce this phenomenon. This is also coupled with the documentation of prevailing trends related to gender based violence in order to influence decision-makers so that they can work toward achieving justice and equality for all.

Sawa organization

Vision

Sawa seeks to be the major organization which works on changing the prevailing culture of violence, disseminating peace and security culture, to employ it for the sake of human and societal development to achieve a democratic society based on equality and social justice, and on human rights.

Mission

Sawa was established on 1998, as a Palestinian nonprofit organization working against all types of violence against women and children. It aims at spreading a culture of non-violence and gender equality in Palestinian society through confidentially helping, counseling and supporting violence victims.

To best serve the community, Sawa networks with other interested parties, uses up-to-date technology and employs it in serving the community, depending on a well-trained staff who can effectively render support and guidance to violence victims.

Objectives

1. Contribute toward eliminating all types of violence against women and children, especially gender-based and domestic violence.
2. To provide an opportunity for victims of violence to access safe support and protection.
3. To raise community awareness and bring the issue of violence out from the household domain into the community sphere.
4. To promote the spirit and values of voluntarism and mobilize community resources and support in addressing the issue of violence against women and children and attract community support to achieve that.
5. To be social entrepreneurs, using new technologies to provide social services.
6. To strengthen community oversight by improving the mechanisms which judge responsible parties who implement decisions on the issues of violence.

Programs

1. **121 Call Centre:** provides primary support and counseling for children and women who are victims of all types of violence.

- 2. Outreach Education and Psycho-social Mobile Clinic: Sawa conducts workshops and awareness-raising meetings for different sectors of the community, publishes printed educational materials on physical and sexual violence, sex education topics, in addition to training professionals working in fields relevant to our work.**
- 3. Volunteer and Training Program: Recruits, trains, and supports male and female volunteers to work through our programs.**

Protection helpline

The establishment of the hotline occurred in August with eight female volunteers qualified to offer phone support for victims of physical and sexual violence. Since that time, the center has distinguished itself by offering support and services to victims of violence in general and sexual violence in particular, in the areas of Jerusalem , the West Bank and Gaza.

Protection helpline for Palestinian children

The Palestinian children protection hotline was established on 2004. It represents Palestine in the global network Child Helpline International, which comprises more than 120 countries. This protection helpline aims to provide support and counseling for children and male and female youth who are exposed to any type of violence, abuse or neglect.

A qualified well trained phone counseling staff activates this helpline. By using advanced telecommunication technology, the staff works to fulfill the needs of the largest number of male and females beneficiaries. Moreover, Sawa provides counseling via email.

The Helpline not only serves callers, by supporting them, it also directs them to referral organizations in various fields if needed.

4. The Value of the Report

Sawa's work through the protection and support helplinefor women offers a lot of different services to the target audience. It also contributes in enhancing community awareness , particularly that of women, regarding their rights and ways to help ensure they are respected. Moreover Sawa documents anonymous case data in order to improve its work..

This report provides an analytical reading of Sawa's documented data. Its importance lies in conveying the organization's experience and knowledge about against women and girls in the Palestinian community to other organizations, decision makers and to community members who are involved in societal change as well as the international community especially those institutions and organizationsconcerned with the affairsof

women and girls and their rights.

Report Objectives

This report provides an analytical reading of the quantitative data related to female callers to the helpline, which have been documented at Sawa organization during the period between January 2011 and October 2013, according to the following variables: the reason for calling, year of call, age group, type of abuse, and residential area. This analysis comes in the framework of Sawa's efforts to improve and develop its work through learning from experience, follow up modifications, and changes that are related to female callers of the helpline.

The report also aims to highlight issues relevant to women and girls of all ages, with respect to violence against them, and to raise awareness about the possibilities to receive support in order to deal with these issues, in addition to influencing decision-makers to consider women's issues in their policies.

5. Methodology

1) Analyze the raw data that was provided by the organization for the period between January 2011 and October 2013, and identify the important and categories relevant to the concerns according to the variables listed above.

2) Focus groups with staff and volunteers at the organization's helpline - after a preliminary analysis of quantitative data there was a need to check their compatibility with the information gathered by the (male and female) counselors at the line. The questions that were discussed in the group were as follows:

- In their experience, what are the qualities and characteristics of female callers to the line.
- What are the difficulties they face during their work?
- What are the future challenges for them as female workers on the hotline?
- Some examples of the callers' concerns, and what was the counselor's role?
- Was there any call repetition from same caller, and for what reason?
- Are there any different trends as compared to the past years?

3- individual meetings with the General Manager and the focal point of the hotline

The researcher has met the General Manager and the administration members in an initial meeting which introduced her to the services provided and the aim of data analysis and reports.

- In an advanced stage, after the submission of a preliminary report, the researcher met the Hotline Coordinator to discuss the preliminary results.
- The researcher met the General Manager to listen to her observations about the primary report, to put in the organization and the researcher needs and expectations together to write a final report.
- The researcher presented a paper at Sawa's ninth conference. She presented the results of the preliminary report on the participants she also listened to the questions and observations which were taken in consideration when the report was written.

4-The reports includes examples of women's calls to the helpline in which pseudonyms have been used in order to keep a sense of privacy for the callers.

6 . Executive Summary

- There is a steady increase in the number of female callers on Sawa's helpline, which calls for the expansion and development of the service, and possibly increase the number of employees and hours of work on the line.
- The largest percentage of calls are to ask for information and advice, which requires the crew to collect as much information as possible on issues that concern the callers.
- Six categories of reasons associated with calls from females emerged: mental, psychological and social health, relationships with peers , abuse and violence, family relationships, physical health , and matters related to school.
- The percentage of calls from females has increased from 45% in 2011 to 52% in 2013.
- Calls from females ages 0-21 made up 76%, while the proportion of females callers in the age group between 22 and 55 + was 24%. This points to a need for training the staff on the needs and capabilities of this group, in addition to collecting information related to community services that deal with this group and communicate with them .
- Psychological violence is the highest percentage among all types of violence against women; it comprises 31%, followed by physical violence at 29%, sexual violence at 21% and abuse at 19%.
- Calls from females from the Gaza Strip make up the largest percentage at 61% compared to 37% from the West Bank , and 2% who did not specify

the place of residence.

7 .Analysis of quantitative data

General Introduction

The analysis is based on quantitative data and individual and group meetings with male and female employees in the organization. It is concerned only with information collected by the organization and cannot be generalized to the community.

60,657 calls have been documented; between January 2011 and October 2013 (34 months) , the age of callers and those who had someone call on their behalf fall within the age group of 0-80 years. The number of female callers has reached to 29934, which is equivalent to 49% of calls. The same proportion were male callers. 2% of callers did not mention their sex. If we compare this to last year's data, we will see the increase in the percentage of female callers which in 2013 reached to 52%. The statistics show the continuing increase of male and female callers. Please see Table 1:

Table 1
Percentage and number distribution of caller concerns
according to gender and year of call.

year	total	females		Males		Unknown	
		number	%	number	%	number	%
2011	18485	8220	45	9875	53	390	2
2012	24393	12444	51	11521	47	428	2
1-10 2013	17779	9270	52	8175	46	334	2
total	60657	29934	49	29571	49	1152	2

Female caller data analysis

I will present here the analytical reading of data on female callers during the period between 2011 and 2013, from all age groups and residential areas. Specifications which will be presented in the report include reason for the call, year of call, age group , type of abuse or violence, and the residential area.

1) The reason for call

Calls are classified according to categories related to the reasons for calls;

these include 15 categories, as presented in Table 2. It is possible for only one call to include several types of issues, therefore the number of calls in this category exceeds the real number.

Table 2 presents a list of categories approved by Sawa organization, which rely on international standards for children and women’s rights organizations.

Table number 2
List of categories

Main category	Details of each category
Physical health	Inquiry about disease, hospitalization, access to health care, medical advice.
Information request	Questions about the helpline, a professional looking for information, someone who is willing to volunteer, how to address issues related to children, thanks for the help.
Legal matters	Counseling and information, children marriage, child witness, legal representation, children in conflict with the law, laws conflicting with the rights of the child, request for accompaniment to police or courts.
Relationships with peers	Problems with friends, problems with partners, romantic relationships.
Family relationships	Parents are divorced or separated, a conflict over alimony and child support, relationship between parents and children, relationship with relatives, child custody and visitation, the unification of the family, threats by children, loss of parents, parents with addictions or parents with mental and psychological problems,
Issues related to school	Academic problems, problems with teachers, school dropout, anxiety related to performance, homework, problems related to adults, problems related to Tawjihi examinations
Mental, psychological, and social health	Boredom, depression, threats, divulging secrets, loss of appetite, anxiety, fear, purpose of life, low self-confidence, loneliness, phobias and obsession, self-harm, uncontrollable urination or bedwetting, death threats, control, economic deprivation, feeling suicidal.

Violence and abuse	Bullying, emotional abuse, neglect, physical abuse, sexual harassment, witnessing violence, an attempt to rape, gang rape, rape within the family, indecent assault, Report violence, domestic violence
occupation	phosphorus, thermal bombs, unexploded bombs, a witness to a violent incident, panic, displacement, injury, the constant fear of violence, imprisonment and house, children in an armed conflict.
Sexual matters	masturbation, pregnancy, contraception, information about sex and the facts of life, sexual fantasy, sexual identity, sexually-transmitted diseases, the hymen.
Discrimination	Ethnic, gender, domestic, religious, political, and regional.
Special needs	Mental, physical, mobility
Displacement, escaping from house, basic needs	Abandoned children, children in need of food, street children, seeking shelter, missing children, orphans, helping children get back to their families, resources and financial aid, child runaways.
drugs	Addiction, inquiries about drugs
Economic exploitation	Child labor, sexual exploitation, trafficking of homeless children, working in prostitution, home imprisonment, exploitation of children for criminal activities

Distribution of calls according to gender and reason for call

Table 3 shows the distribution of calls by gender and reason for call. We note that calls relating to females were more than the half of all calls under nine categories: physical health, legal matters, relations with peers, family relations, matters relating to school, mental, social and psychological health, abuse, violence, occupation, and discrimination. These are the categories wherein male callers made up more than half: request for information, sexual matters, special needs, homelessness and running away from home, drugs, and economic exploitation.

Table number 3
calls distribution according to sex and cause of call

Cause of call	total	females	%	males	%
Physical health	6592	3759	57	2833	43
Information request	39112	18100	46	21012	54
Legal matters	207	136	66	71	34
Relations with peers	9332	5939	64	3393	36
Family relations	7803	4996	64	2807	36
Matters relating to school	5946	3621	61	2325	39
Mental, psychological and social health	9774	6410	66	3364	34
Violence and abuse	8713	5899	68	2814	32
Occupation	866	450	52	416	48
Sexual matters	964	438	45	526	55
Discrimination	472	327	69	145	31
Special needs	514	242	47	272	53
Displacement, running away, basic needs.	550	199	36	351	64
Drugs	471	177	38	294	62
Economic exploitation	239	91	38	148	62
total	91555	50784	55	40771	45

The largest number of calls were made to request general information about the line , or professionals asking for information, people wanting to volunteer, or families looking for help with issues related to their children, as well as calls received from those who received help from the line to thank for the help. The number of calls in this category reached 39112, which is equivalent to 43% of the total calls. 18100 calls were from females, which is equivalent to 46%, while the number of calls by males in this category reached to 2012, which constitutes 54 % of the total number of calls.

The number of female callers requesting information from among all calls in all categories, was 50784, which is 55%, and is the highest percentage

here also in comparison to other categories. Request for information from female callers made up more than half the calls.

Data related to female callers and reasons for calls

Table 4 shows the distribution of calls related to females according to reason for call and year of call.

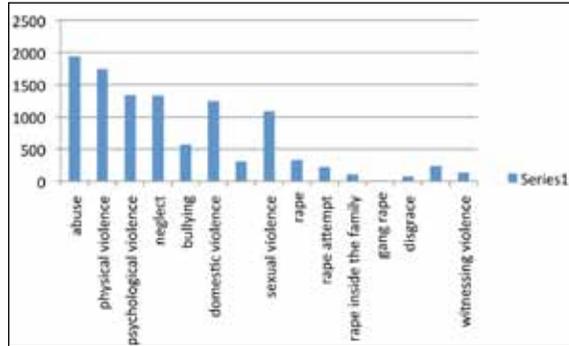
Table 4

The distribution of the number of calls from or on behalf of females according to reason for call and year

Cause of call	2011	2012	2013	total
Physical health	892	1758	1109	3759
Information request	4497	7586	6017	18100
Legal matters	40	44	52	136
Relations with peers	1673	2509	1757	5939
Family relations	1474	1953	1569	4996
Matters relating to school	1206	1362	1053	3621
Mental, psychological, and social health	1500	2489	2421	6410
Violence and abuse	1654	2301	1944	5899
Occupation	32	166	252	450
Sexual matters	149	172	117	438
Discrimination	116	105	106	327
Special needs	86	103	53	242
Displacement, runaways, basic needs	41	97	61	199
Drugs	61	48	68	177
Economical exploitation	17	35	39	91
Total	13438	20728	16618	50784

Figure 1

Distribution of female callers according to reason for call and year



If we exclude the category of information request, in addition to the categories wherein calls from females were less than 1% of the total calls from females (which include occupation, economic exploitation, drugs, special needs, displacement from home, and legal matters) we are left with six major categories, which include mental, psychological, and social health, relationships with peers, abuse and violence, family relationships, physical health, and matters related to school. See Figure 2

Figure 2

The distribution of the key categories related to females:



The analysis for the key categories of calls from females:

This analysis depends on quantitative data, and meetings with the organization's administration, as well as the Helpline Coordinator.. Again we emphasize here that this analysis concerns only helpline data and the organization's information, therefore this analysis cannot be generalized to the general community.

1) The abuse and violence category includes: bullying, emotional abuse, neglect, physical abuse, sexual harassment, a witnessing violence, an attempt to rape, gang rape, rape within the family, indecent assault, reporting on violence, and domestic violence. The number of calls from females in this category reached 5899, which is 68% of all calls compared to 32% by males. Calls in this category made up 19% of the total proportion of calls from females in the rest of the major categories.

The proportion of calls from females regarding abuse and violence is double the percentage of calls from male. This could indicate that females are more at risk of abuse and violence than males; moreover the helpline gives them the opportunity to talk about what happens to them in a protective manner without any pressure from the family or the society.

2) The category of mental, psychological, and social health includes: boredom, depression, threats, revealing secrets, loss of appetite, anxiety, fear, purpose of life, low self-confidence, autism, phobias and hallucinations, self-harm, bed wetting, death threats, controlling, economic deprivation, suicidal thoughts. There were 6410 calls from females, which formed 66% of calls, compared to 34% for calls from males.

The calls related to this category have formed 21% of calls from females compared to the rest of major calls. It shall be noted here that these calls usually fall into more than one category. For example, a girl who was sexually harassed suffers lack of self-confidence, fear, anxiety, and no desire to live. Palestinian women and girls live in the shadow of the patriarchal concepts and beliefs which make them feel guilty, ashamed, and responsible for being a victim of violence. This affects psychological health and their ability to deal with the psychological and social pressures surrounding them. This also undermines their self-confidence and their ability to trust people. Therefore they are looking for a way to find someone outside their family, community, and situation, to listen to their concerns. Sawa's hotline provides this.

3) The category of relationships with peers includes: problems with friends, problems with partners , and romantic relationships. The number of calls from females in this category was 5939 , which made up 64% of the overall total index, compared to 36% for males. The proportion of

calls from females in this category compared to the rest of the categories. Based on the interviews with the staff working on the hotline, it is possible to explain the rise in the proportion of calls by females in this category, by the social limitations on the relations among the sexes. Girls and women do not find interested listeners among their families and relatives. That is why they seek support from the hotline, looking for someone who listens carefully to them, away from the community's eyes and ears.

Moreover, the fact that a romantic relationship for a girl or young woman is considered as a social taboo, while boys and young men have the chance to go further, without the social constraints imposed on girls and women, may be another reason for having a higher percentage of calls from females.

4) The category of family relationships includes: divorced or separated parents, a dispute over alimony and child support, relationship between parents and children, relationship with relatives, child custody and visitation, unification of the family, threats by children, loss of parents, parents with addictions or mental and psychological problems. There were 4996 calls under this category, which made up 64% of the total, compared to 36% for males.

The percentage for this category among the calls by females in all categories is 16%, which may indicate that in a patriarchal society, women are often blamed for the failure of the marital relationship in the case of divorce and separation. Therefore it is often difficult for her to reveal her problems to anyone. It is difficult to get support from family and community regarding the issues of children custody and alimony. Therefore, she turns to the hotline to discuss her problems freely and ask for legal information.

A woman in her thirties went to the supermarket, after she was beaten cruelly by her husband's family, because of issues related to the property where she has been living, after the death of her husband. The woman says that her father in law registered the house in her name, but her husband's family did not want that. She went to hospital for treatment, where she was asked to report to the police about her brother-in-law's attack on her, and to go to a center which specializes in providing legal advice. Our role was to think with her about her options in order to make the best decision for herself and her children.

5-Issues related to school include: academic problems, problems with teachers, school dropout, anxiety related to performance, homework, problems related to adults, problems in *Tawjihi* exams. The number of

calls from females in this category is 3621, which is equivalent to 61% of overall total calls, compared to 39% for males.

The proportion of female callers in this category compared to major categories was 12%. A possible interpretation of this result is that girls sometimes are asked to take care of household affairs with their mothers, which increases pressure, and reduces the time they have available to study. This may affect their academic achievement. Moreover, in a patriarchal society girls are more likely to drop out of school, due to parents' decision to keep her home to do the housework, or have her get married. In addition to that, in many cases, girls are exposed to or have been exposed to certain situations which affect their well-being, such as sexual harassment or continuous rebuke by parents, not being able to share or talk about what happens to her. This directly affects their ability to focus, and decreases her self-confidence, which leads to decreased energy and a decline in educational achievement.

6-Physical health includes inquiries about the disease, hospitalization, access to health care, medical care. The number of female's calls is 3759, which formed 57% of the general calls, compared to 43% for males. The proportion of female's calls related to physical health is 12% compared to the rest of categories.

It is important to mention that there is a doctor who addresses calls related to physical health for four hours a week to offer advice and direct caller (male or female) according to their various concerns.

1) Years of calls

The data indicate that the total number of calls from males and females during the period from January 2013 until October 2013 is equal for the two sexes, but if we look at the data for each year separately, we find that the percentage of females' calls has increased. In 2011, it was at about 45%, but in the first ten months of 2013, it reached 53%. Please see table number 5

Table 5

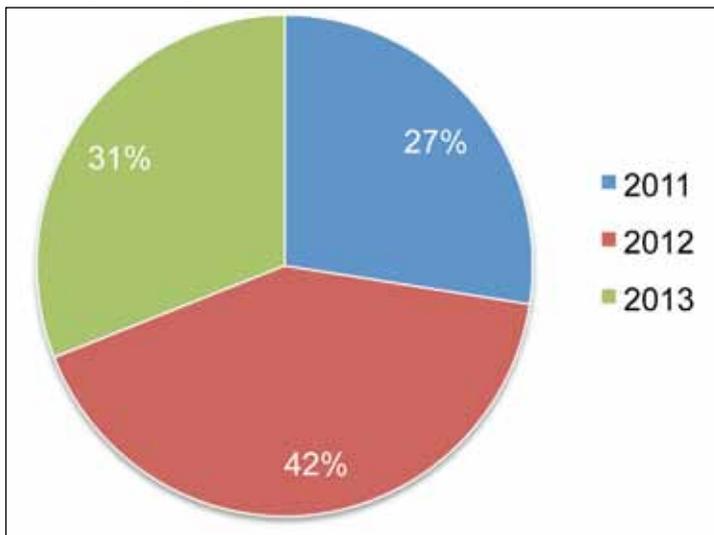
Call distribution among male and female callers according to year

year	total	Females	%	males	%
2011	18095	8220	45	9875	55
2012	23965	12444	52	11521	48
2013	17445	9270	53	8175	47
total	59505	29934	50	29571	50

It is clear through the documented data that the number of female callers, or calls on behalf of females, has increased. Where the number in the year 2011 was 8220 calls, which is equivalent to 27% of the total calls in the period from 2011 to 2013, it reached 12444 in 2012, which is equivalent to 42% of the total. It reached 9270 cases during the first ten months of the year 2013, which is equivalent to 31% of the total. Please see figure 3:

Figure 3

The percentage distribution of calls from females 2011-2013



The continuous increase in the number of calls to Sawa's helpline indicates that information about the line reached a larger number of beneficiaries (males and females). There is a real need for the services provided by the organization.

Im Ahmad (pseudonym), 36 years old, called us (Sawa) and said that her very young daughter has suffered sexual violence by her paternal cousin for 4 months. The little girl is suffering from academic problems. She is preoccupied with sexual matters and talks frequently about things not suitable or expected for a child her age. At the beginning we gave a consultation to the mother about restoring her child's self-confidence, coping with her problems, and helping her understand what is appropriate and inappropriate. Then the mother asked us to talk to the girl. When the girl called us she talked comfortably and described what happened to her. During the third call the mother said that her daughter is better than before, and she is back to her previous academic level and that the mother herself is not worried as she had been before the call.

2) Age groups

Sawa's helpline receives calls from all group ages (0-80 years old). There are calls from families, relatives and friends, who are seeking information for people whom they are concerned about, in addition to direct calls from the people who are suffering themselves.

Table 6 indicates the distribution of calls according to age group and sex. We find here that the number of females in four categories of age groups exceeds the number of males in the same age groups. There was 35% of calls in the age category 0-6 years old. There is a similar percentage in the age group 19-21, 52% in the age group from 21-26, 65% in the age group 26-35, and 66% in the age group from 35-55. One of the most important things to mention here is that the number of calls from the age group 16-18 and 19-21 was the highest among males and females.

Table 6
Call distribution during the period from 2011-2013, according to age group and sex

Age group	total	females	%	males	%
unknown	1793	821	46%	972	54%
0-6	4775	2537	53%	2238	47%
7-12	5144	2409	47%	2735	53%
13-15	8678	3807	44%	4871	56%
16-18	15647	7458	48%	8189	52%

19-21	11098	5867	53%	5231	47%
21-26	7526	3901	52%	3625	48%
26-35	1904	1230	65%	674	35%
35-55	2750	1813	66%	937	34%
55+	190	91	48%	99	52%
total	59505	29934	50%	29571	50%

If we look at the distribution of calls from/about females by age group, we find here that the highest percentage of calls is in the age group between 16 and 18 years old, which made up 25% of the total calls in the period between (2011-2013) which are 7458 cases. The lowest percentage of calls was for the age group 55 and over. The percentage of calls for the age group 13-21 was to 58% of the total calls. Please see table 7.

Table 7
Calls from females according to age group 2011-2013

Age group	2011	2012	The end of October 2013	Total
unknown	325	281	215	821
0-6	865	1453	219	2537
7-12	876	1052	481	2409
13-15	1101	1405	1301	3807
16-18	2220	3103	2135	7458
19-21	1457	2523	1887	5867
21-26	964	1688	1249	3901
26-35	55	20	1155	1230
35-55	338	874	601	1813
55+	19	45	27	91
total	8220	12444	9270	29934

If we divide the age groups into 2 categories, 0-21, and 22-55+, we notice that calls from females in the 0-21 age group make up 76%, thus requiring the training of staff on the needs of that age group in particular. The percentage of female callers in the age group 22-55 made up 24%. This

means that, for every four female callers, three are under the age of 22. Please see figure 4.

Figure 4
Female calls distribution according to age group

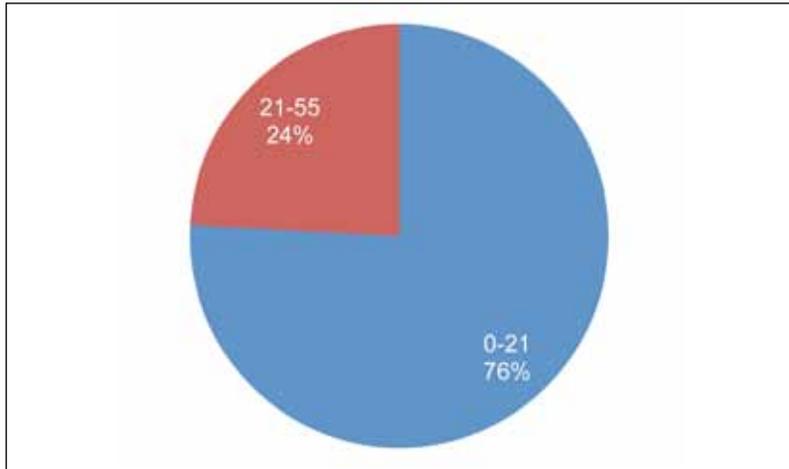
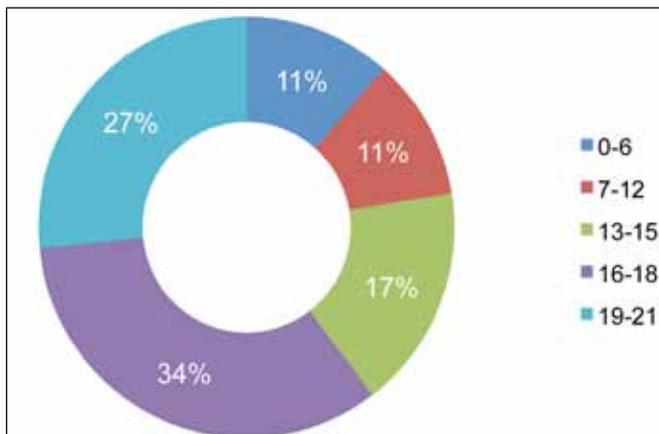


Figure 5 presents the distribution of calls among the first age group category (0-21 year old). It indicates the highest percentage of calls are from the age group 16-18, which is 34%. The rest of the age groups in this category were distributed as follows: 27% for the group 19-21; 17% for 13-15; 11% for both 0-6 and 7-12.

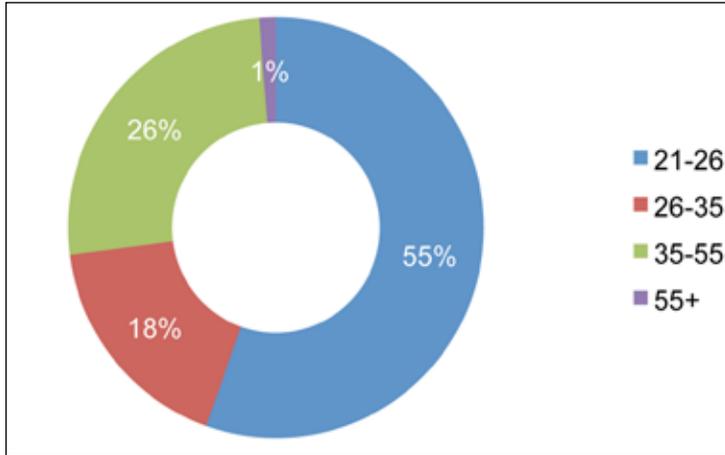
Figure 5:
Distribution of calls from females for the age group 0-21 years.



This phenomenon can be explained in various ways. First, younger females are more vulnerable to abuse and violence, they are aware of their personal, social and domestic rights, they also have the skills to use modern technologies, that helps them to find information from sources other than the home and the surrounding environment. There is a high percentage of married teenage girls and who are looking for answers to questions related to their lives. Family pressures on female teenagers are greater, pushing females to seek help and consultation. Adolescence usually marks the start of exploring romantic relationships, which are often based on sexual exploitation. Girls may therefore seek help to get out of an exploitative situation. Because Sawa's helpline provides consultation without taking personal information, it is considered as a safe opportunity for girls to speak freely and think about what is the most effective solution to their problems, without any need for the interference of the family or formal social organizations.

Amaal (a pseudonym) a 16 year old girl, was exposed to violence by her parents. Her father forced her to leave school, arguing that education is not suitable for girls, saying that education teaches many bad things and could lead to unacceptable behavior. Her father used to hit her hard, especially on her head. On one occasion, he caused her to bleed. She has seven siblings. Her father was violent with all of them, but particularly with her. He used to prevent her from leaving the house. He did not allow her to express her thoughts, and he even forced her to marry a man she did not love. When she called Sawa, they discussed how she should handle it if she was hit. She used to write after she was hit. After talking to us, she became a good writer. She discovered that she has a talent she did not know about before. She started to feel that she exists, and that she is useful. She says that she is now able to express her thoughts, and her father has started to listen to her. "You've helped me a lot. I'm convinced of what you've told me, you've taught me how to defend myself, even though they still bother me but at least they started to listen to me. Now I know how to deal with my parents, and how to be comfortable. I discovered that I am very brave and that is what I really love in my personality."

Figure 6
Distribution of calls from females in the age group 22-55+



The highest percentage of calls from females is from the second age group which is 21-26, which makes up 55% of females' calls. The age group 35-55 occupies the second place in this category; the percentage of received calls in this age group was 26%. The percentage was less for the age group 26-35, which was about 18%. While the lowest percentage was from the eldest, the percentage of the calls from whom older than 55 is 1%.

A woman called us after she discovered that her husband is being unfaithful to her with another woman. The woman was very sad. She emphasized that she still loves her husband, and has the ability to forgive him for the children's sake. She does not want to ruin their image of their father, although he was treating her poorly and carelessly. The counseling focused on how she views herself, and how the community will see her if her husband leaves her. Hurt, she wondered during the counseling session what her husband sees in the other woman which he does not see in his wife.

3) Types of abuse

Table 8 presents the number and distribution of calls from both genders, on the subjects of abuse and violence. The number of calls about this issue was 14291. 75% of calls are from females and 25% from males. The numbers and percentage indicate that more females called to seek help for violence and abuse than do males--three times as many. It's clear that

women are more exposed to all kind of abuse and violence inside and outside their homes. This reflects the reality of the community, which considers women inferior to men and treats her as such, giving men a higher status.. Males may avoid the line's services because of concepts of shame and masculinity.

Table 8
Number and percentage distribution of calls according to type of abuse and sex.

Type of abuse or violence	total	females	%	males	%
Abuse	2626	1936	74%	690	26%
Physical violence	2714	1738	64%	976	36%
Emotional\ psychological violence	1620	1336	82%	284	18%
Neglect	1633	1331	82%	302	18%
Bullying	969	570	59%	399	41%
Domestic violence	1700	1244	73%	456	27%
Sexual violence within the family	327	307	94%	20	6%
Sexual violence	1220	1085	89%	135	11%
Raping	392	331	84%	61	16%
Rape attempt	240	225	94%	15	6%
Rape within the family	115	106	92%	9	8%
Gang rape	25	12	48%	13	52%
Indecent assault	90	73	81%	17	19%
Reporting violence	400	239	60%	161	40%
Witness to violence	220	130	59%	90	41%
Total	14291	10663	75%	3628	25%

Table 9 indicates the distribution of the number of calls from females according to year and type of abuse. The data indicates that the largest number of calls from females concerned with abuse was 1936, 18% of calls from females. The number of calls from females about physical violence was 1738, 16% of the total number of calls. Emotional\psychological violence was estimated at 1336 which is 13%, as well as neglect that has reached 1331 calls and formed 13% of calls. The number of calls that are related to domestic violence was 1244, equivalent to 12%. Sexual

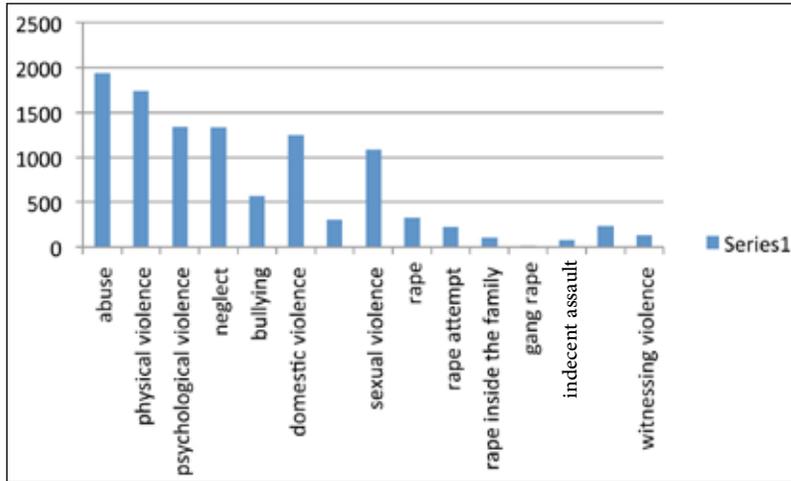
violence formed 10% of the calls, at 1085 calls. The number of calls related to individual and gang rape, rape attempts, and indecent assault was 641, 6% of calls from females. The total number of calls associated with sexual violence and rape within the family was 413, which is equal to 4%, while the proportion of calls reporting violence remain slow 2%, but the proportion of calls classified as witnessing violence did not exceed 1%.

Table 9
Distribution of the number of calls from females,
according to type of abuse

Types	2011	2012	The end of October 2013	Total
Abuse	454	813	669	1936
Physical violence	461	669	608	1738
Emotional\psychological violence	356	612	368	1336
Neglect	323	538	470	1331
Bullying	111	234	225	570
Domestic violence	235	472	537	1244
Sexual violence within the family	55	110	142	307
Sexual violence	358	437	290	1085
Rape	133	115	83	331
Rape attempts	77	81	67	225
Rape within the family	19	29	58	106
Gang rape	8	4		12
Indecent assault	29	26	18	73
Reporting violence	69	100	70	239
Witnessing violence	43	43	44	130
Total	2731	4283	3649	10663

Figure 7 shows the distribution of the number of calls for the years 2011-2013 according to type of abuse

Figure 7
distribution of number of calls according to type of abuse (2011-2013)

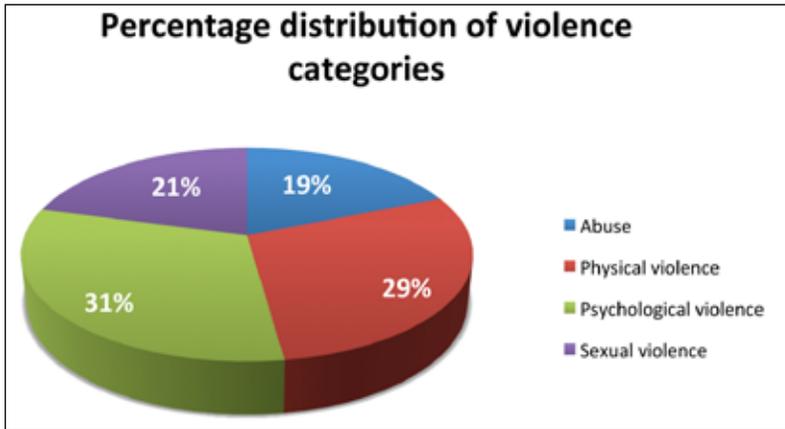


Fatima (a pseudonym) is 18 years old. She called Sawa for support in dealing with an abusive boyfriend. She began by telling the counselor that her lover battered her and treated her cruelly. After listening to her and giving her the space to talk, she told Sawa that he is 26 year old, he is married, but he also has sex with her. He is exploiting her sexually and emotionally, pretending that he loves her. The first time he had sex with her, he drugged and raped her. Since that time he, has been blackmailing her, saying if she does not obey him and have sex with him, he is going to tell her brother. After she came to Sawa, we worked with her to address the experience of having been drugged and raped. We began to show her that what he is pretending to do is not love. We helped her to end the situation by rejecting his calls. In addition to that, we worked on rebuilding her self-confidence, as she was blaming herself all the time. We convinced her that he is the one responsible for what happened to her.

Figure 8 shows the data collected in the period from 2011 until October 2013 in four categories: abuse, physical violence, including physical violence inside and outside the family, and domestic violence. Psychological violence includes emotional violence, neglect, and bullying. Sexual violence includes sexual assault, rape, rape attempts, and indecent assault. Psychological violence makes up the highest percentage among the types of violence against women, at 31%, followed by physical violence

at 29%, sexual violence at 21%, and abuse at 19%.

Figure 8
Distribution of the percentage of calls according to type
of violence and abuse



During the recent war on Gaza, a group of children(siblings) called us. They lived with their sick mother. They said that they could not leave the house during the bombing because their mother's health did not allow the family to move from place to place. Their father was busy with his second wife. He would go to her during the late hours of the night, without paying any attention to his children. We worked with the siblings on emotions of fear and how to overcome these feelings. We allowed them to express their anger toward their father. We thought with them about the possible ways to express their anger to him.

4) Place of residence

The data shows that the highest percentage of females calls was from the Gaza Strip. It reached 52% during 2011. It increased during 2012 to 65%, and on the first ten months of 2013 it reached 63%. This means the percentage is on a continuous increase.

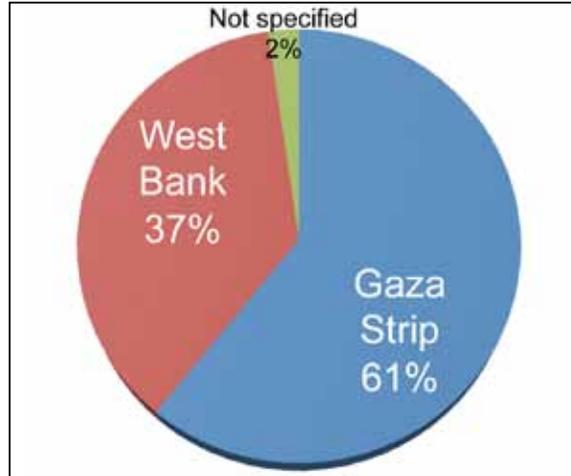
Table 10

shows the numerical distribution of calls according to place of residence

Residential area	2011	2012	2013	Total
Gaza	2278	4360	3269	9907
South Gaza	323	694	560	1577
Deir-Al-Balah	170	295	194	659
Khan-Younus	858	1487	990	3335
Rafah	679	1217	828	2724
Hebron	1277	1454	1257	3988
Ramallah-Al Biereh	725	831	586	2142
Jenin	520	628	437	1585
Nablus	350	461	375	1186
Bethlehem	284	375	268	927
Jerusalem	113	144	114	371
Tulkarem	76	105	78	259
Tubas	41	52	45	138
Silfet	40	70	81	191
Qaliqilya	36	53	37	126
Jericho	21	42	63	126
Unspecified	429	176	88	693
Total	8220	12444	9270	29934

Figure 9 indicates the percentage distribution of calls from females according to place of residence during the period from 2011 to October 2013. Calls from the Gaza Strip made up the highest percentage, at 61%, compared with 37% from the West Bank.

Figure 9
Percentage distribution of calls according to place of residence



The high number of calls from the Gaza Strip can be explained by several factors. Firstly, the population density in the Gaza Strip is 4,505 people per square kilometer, with 1.6 million people in an area of 365 square kilometers. It is possible that the population density is one of the reasons for the high percentage of calls from the Gaza Strip.

Secondly, the Gaza Strip is entirely isolated from the rest of the Palestinian Territories because of the occupation and the continuing siege. Moreover the social and economic situation there is very difficult due to high unemployment, poverty and political tension. All of the above make Sawa's helpline important as a way for Gazan callers to communicate with the outside world.

Thirdly, the dialect of the people who work on the helpline is different from the dialect of people in the Gaza Strip. This helps female callers from Gaza to feel comfortable and to trust that whatever they say will not come back to hurt them or reach the community where they live. Finally, although there is a large number of organizations which support women in Gaza, unfortunately they do not all the needs of female Gazans.

Figure 9 shows the distribution of calls from the Gaza Strip. The percentage of calls from Gaza was 54%. This high percentage could be due to the fact that all the female callers can identify themselves as Gazans to explain exactly where they live in Gaza. Khan-Younis had the second highest

percentage of calls, at about 18%. Rafah had 15%, South Gaza 9%, and Deir-Al Balah 4%.

Figure 10

Percentage distribution of calls from females in the Gaza Strip 2011-2013

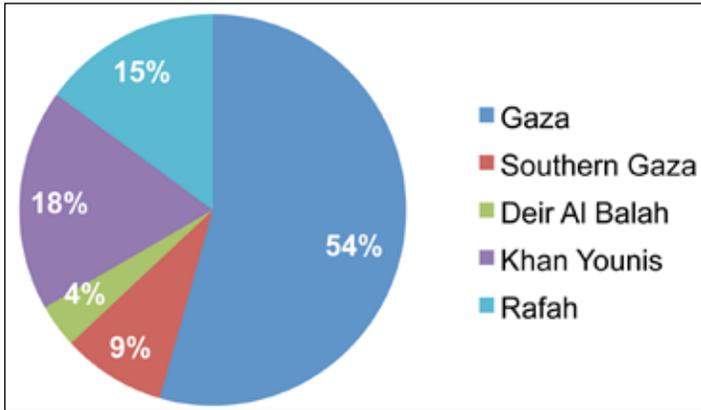
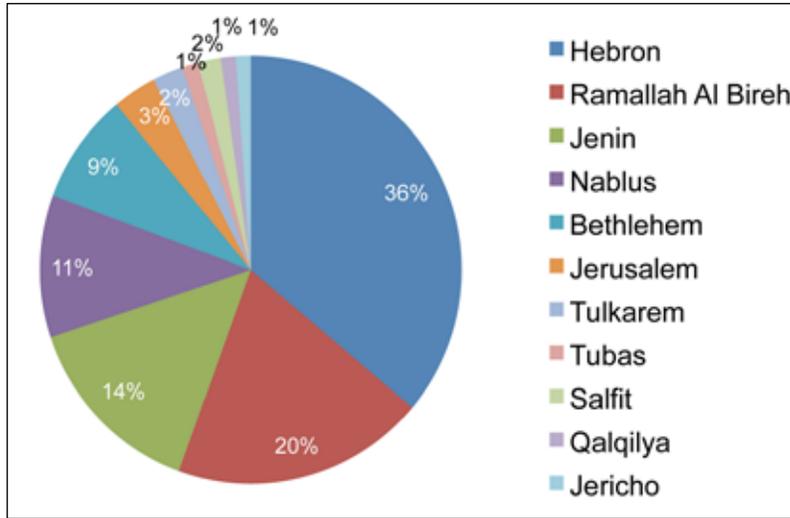


Figure 11 presents the percentage distribution of female callers in the West Bank. We note that the percentage of female callers from Hebron is the highest, at 36%. This might be due to the concentrated presence of the organization, exemplified by the many workshops and meetings held there. 20% were from Ramallah and Al Bire, where the main office is located (Ramallah), and the services are known to the community there. The percentage of calls from Jenin was 14%, from Nablus 11%, from Bethlehem 9%, and from Jerusalem 3%. Calls from the other cities make up no more than 2%. Although the organization and its services are well known by many people in many areas, the organization's activities cannot cover all areas in the same way.

Figure 11

Percentage distribution of calls from females in the West Bank 2011-2013



The focus group: major results

The researcher used this method after she made the primary analysis of the quantitative data in order to verify the results she had found. The researcher met with the helpline counselors.

Main results of this group:

- There was an agreement between the results of the quantitative analysis on age groups and those reached by the counselors in the organization. All of them agreed that the bulk of the calls are from young people that fall within the age group of 16-21. Most calls by this group are related to secondary school or university issues, especially organizing time and priorities. Many girls ask about what is more important, marriage or studying. Other issues include early marriage, issues related to teenagers, romantic relationships, marriage between relatives, and problems in sexual relationships between couples, especially among young women.
- Counselors confirm that most of calls are from the Gaza Strip.
- Female callers have the choice to speak to a man or a woman, but usually a woman is preferred.
- A caller may make as many calls as she wishes, depending on her need. Some callers make several calls within a week, or call back after a

month, or even after a year. This depends on their wishes.

- The organization's policy is not to give solutions, but to work together with the callers to come up with an appropriate solution that fits the caller's situation and capacities

- The callers share private personal issues with the counselors, which means that callers feel comfortable and trust the organization.

The counselors talked about the difficulties and challenges that face them:

- Sometimes a caller suffers from many problems that could raise the emotions of anger, sorrow and pain of the receiver thus affecting the counselor's ability to support the caller. However, the counselor's awareness and experience help her/him to separate her emotions and offer the required counseling.

- Some callers contact the line while very depressed about everyone around them, having reached a stage of losing trust in everyone. It is difficult for the counselor in this case to change the caller's attitude or to encourage her to try to resolve her situation, and this can sometimes lead to more frustration for the caller.

- Certain types of cases, for example, a case of sexual abuse within the family, causes the counselor to consider issues which provoke confusion about society and its values, resulting in anger and disgust, which may distract her/his attention.

- Sometimes the caller is not aware of her right to complain, especially if the abuser is her brother or her father, and this might make the issue more complex.

- Some callers do not realize that they have the right to file a complaint against anyone who abuses them, including their brothers or fathers, and this too may make the case even more difficult.

- Sometimes it is difficult to maintain a conversation with callers because sometimes a question posed by the counselor can lead the caller to hang up the phone and end the conversation.

- Many calls are made for the purpose of harassing counselors, annoying them and affecting their ability to work on the line.

- Working on the helpline for 5 hours is not an easy job, and that may lead to psychological stress for counselors.

- Addressing cases only by phone is a challenge, because it is impossible to see the reaction and the body language of the caller. This requires the development of high-level skills.

- Sometimes, because counselors may only speak with a caller once, it is not possible to know the long-term impact of the counseling.

- Counselors worry about callers after the session ends, especially those who have suffered violence, because it is not always possible to know if the caller's decisions on how to address the situation have had good results.

- Fear of not finding suitable social services, like the police, in case the caller decides to report on the violence she has been exposed to, and fear of possible danger to her life.

- The caller herself is sometimes afraid of family members discovering that their daughter is calling the helpline without their knowledge.

Sawa Organization is fully aware of the difficulties that face the staff of the helpline. Therefore, it holds weekly sessions for psychological support, and regular training for staff, in order to keep them in good mental health and to ensure the provision of the best assistance for those who need help.

S u m m a r y

It is clear that Sawa's support and protection helpline is popular among many individuals and organizations and that the increase in the number of calls is a shining proof about the line's importance and popularity.

The most important thing is that a high number of females have the courage to look for support. They have the ability to call the helpline and share things which are difficult to reveal to the community around them. Because the line is confidential and does not require any revelation of personal information, or meeting the caller directly, it is considered a secure space to speak about and vent about personal matters considered to be taboo in the community.

A large number of calls seek general information and answers which they cannot find in other places, or only with difficulty. The staff of the helpline provides the callers with the information to raise the awareness about their rights and laws that may help them in their daily lives.

Callers complaining about violence and abuse inside or outside the family will always find a listening ear and professional counseling to find a suitable resolution that best fits their situation. There is also the possibility of referring some cases to individual counseling at Sawa's face-to-face Counseling Center. Some cases may require referral to other specialized organizations for services Sawa does not offer.

Recommendations

- It is obvious that the organization has become known to a larger number of citizens, and use of the service is now spreading to many places in Palestine. However, there is still a need to reach out to other locations that are far from the big cities in order to introduce the services there, because Sawa is the only organization which offers a free support and protection helpline.
- The organization's work through the helpline is very important, as it offers the callers the opportunity to tell their stories in confidentiality and without any need for the revelation of personal details. In some cases where further guidance and follow-up is required, Sawa needs to intensify its communication with other organizations that provide services for women, and further build up an efficient referral system to ensure a good resolution for each case.
- It is important to communicate with the police and with medical centers to give them more information about the helpline, and to emphasize the importance of cooperation when they encounter relevant cases.
- Coordination and communication with active women's organizations in order to work together to get the best benefit out of the available resources and eliminate the spread of violence in the community at large and gender-based violence in particular.
- The organization trains and guides staff working on helplines continuously in order to improve work, but there are still issues that require special tackling like such as gay, lesbian, and bisexual issues. I think it is necessary to train staff in dealing with this group.
- Considering that the highest number of calls is from the age group 16-21, it is important to train staff on the needs and the abilities of this group in particular, and build relations with community and official organizations working with this group, in order to provide the best services. Sawa must be sure to continue to do this.