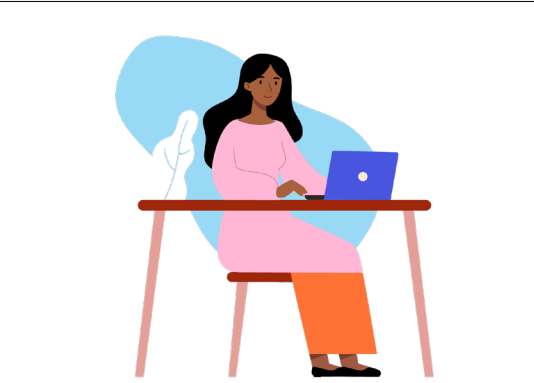




LAAHA: A VIRTUAL SAFE SPACE FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS



GOAL

Laaha, the first-ever digital web-based platform created by UNICEF with women and girls, from crisis-affected regions has two primary objectives:

1. Increase knowledge on gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual and reproductive health (SRH) by providing quality and accurate information to girls and women about menstrual health and hygiene, healthy relationships, how to stay safe and know one's rights, financial literacy, female anatomy and services for women and girls facing violence. In time, this digital space will replicate the sense of a safe social network that physical safe spaces provide.
2. Reduce isolation by building safe spheres of support for adolescent girls through peer-to-peer connection through a moderated user forum.

WHAT IS THE NEED

- One in three women experience violence in their lifetime and 12 million girls are married before they reach the age of 18 – violence that is exponentially made worse during humanitarian crises such as climate-based disasters, areas experiencing civil unrest, and impoverished populations.
- Safe spaces are a key approach to working with women and girls, providing them with access to information, links to services - including GBV response and prevention services, skill-building, peer connection, and support, especially in humanitarian crises. Yet, they often face barriers to accessing these physical safe spaces because of distance, security concerns, harmful gender norms, and domestic responsibilities. In humanitarian contexts characterized by insecurity, dynamic conflict, and further movement restrictions, women and girls face even greater barriers to accessing physical safe spaces. COVID-19 only exacerbated these challenges.
- When the COVID-19 pandemic broke, the digital transformation accelerated internet usage up to 60%. However, many digital innovations do not respond to the specific needs of women and girls and in some cases can put them at risk of further harm. Resourcing GBV services that extend access to a greater number of women and girls living in crisis and conflict affected environments and supporting innovation through good digital citizenship has therefore become more urgent.

FUNDING: US\$750,000

WHO WILL BENEFIT

- Laaha, available globally, is currently deployed in

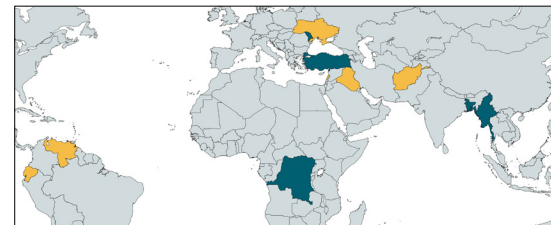
Afghanistan
Ecuador
Iraq

Lebanon
Ukraine
Venezuela

- In 2024, it will be deployed in

Bangladesh
Democratic
Republic of Congo

Moldova
Myanmar
Türkiye



With Zonta International's support, UNICEF will:

- Reach one million women and girls across the world by 2026 through Laaha's linguistically and culturally inclusive content.
- Achieve the ambitious targets of content availability in 20 languages by 2026 on Laaha.
- Provide guidance on safe GBV online moderation for women and girls.
- Show the impact of Laaha so that it can be replicated over time.

OUTCOME

The key outcome of Laaha is to facilitate access to information and services in a way that is safe, culturally appropriate, and accessible to adolescent girls and women, particularly those who face higher levels of marginalization, such as girls with disabilities and married girls.



"I believe if there was a website like Laaha growing up, I would have had a better experience starting from within myself and the protection that I needed from the outside world."

-19-year-old, Iraq



"I wanted to get help because my in-laws are very abusive and I want a house for me, my husband, and my son."

- Zara, 17-year-old refugee from Iraq



"I like the site because there are things you don't like to ask, its embarrassing to ask my mother and other people."

- Maria, 14-year-old, Ecuador



"And the truth is that I felt safe visiting the site. It's not like visiting other sites. There can be so many different sources of information - it can be true, or it can be a lie."

- Ella, 25-year-old, Iraq

HOW DOES IT WORK?



1. Laaha brought womens' and girls' voices to the core of the design process of the platform. Designers account for the gender digital divide and build accessibility for low literacy levels.



2. Women and girls can find information they have asked for including menstrual health and hygiene, healthy relationships, how to stay safe and know one's rights, financial literacy, female anatomy, and available services for women and girls facing violence or abuse.



3. Laaha provides information through articles, podcasts, and videos on their rights as women and girls, their bodies, their health and where to find the help they need.



4. A new development of an interactive chatbox allows users to find answers and to talk with a trained GBV specialist moderating for safety. The forum is overseen by a dedicated team of counselors from local partner organizations.



5. To guarantee the safety and the integrity of the system, the forum's posting functionality is disabled during times when moderators are unavailable. Laaha also supports complete anonymity, not collecting any personally identifying information like names, phone numbers or demographic details.



6. Moderators are trained through a robust framework set up by specialists and NGO partners and includes a moderator's guide, training programs and a code of conduct.



7. To ensure accessibility, Laaha content is built to use limited text and emphasize videos and other visual formats to engage users regardless of literacy or fluency with digital tools.



8. The platform is currently available in seven languages: English, Arabic, Dari, Pashtu, Spanish, Kurdish and Ukrainian.



9. An exit button always on screen allows for a quick exit from the site and clears the cache.



SUPPORTS

