



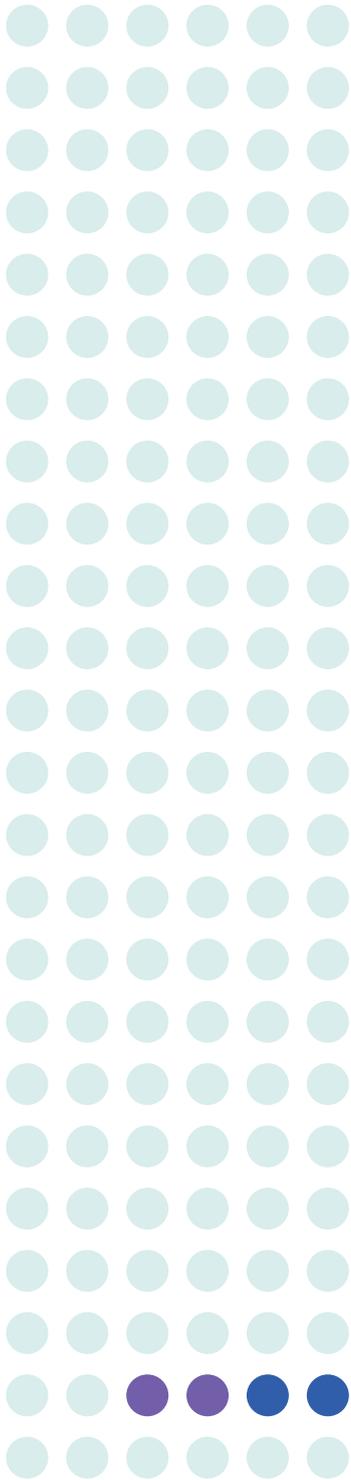
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Ministry Of Women's Affairs



Representative Office of Norway
to the Palestinian Authority



Bridging the Gender Gap:

Mapping and Analysis of Gender Policies in Palestine (2011-2017)

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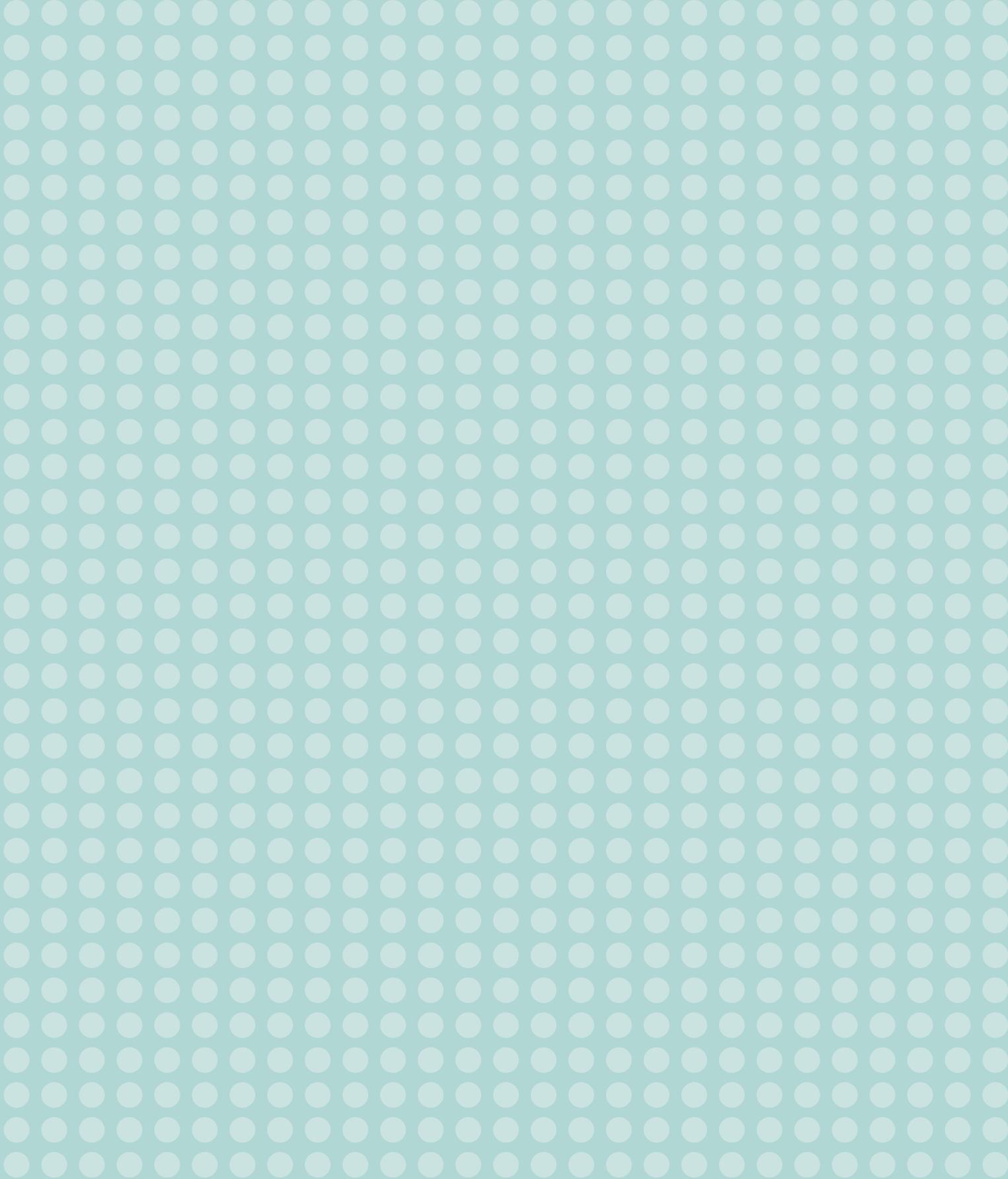


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Foreword

I am proud to present the first mapping and study on gender policies in Palestine conducted in partnership with the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA). The report, 'Bridging the Gender Gap: Mapping and Analysis of Gender Policies in Palestine (2011-2017)' was conducted by the Gender Policy Institute (GPI), a program of UNESCO scheduled to expire on 31 August 2019.

Gender equality is one of UNESCO's global priorities and its work is rooted in a two-pronged approach: 'stand-alone' programmes and integrating gender within UNESCO's five areas of competence (education, natural sciences, social and human sciences, culture, and communication and information). The office in Ramallah focuses on three thematic areas (culture, education, and communication and information) in which gender equality is integrated as well as supports initiatives such as GPI.

In December 2017, UNESCO and MoWA began mapping gender policies endorsed by the Palestinian Government between 2011 and 2017. This phase collected, documented and reviewed gender policies and interventions, and assessed the extent of implementation (full, partial, none). This mapping, a first time initiative, created a baseline that GPI, the government, civil society organizations (CSOs) and other partners can utilize in their gender policy work. Following was an analysis of the national planning processes, the formulation of the policies and interventions.

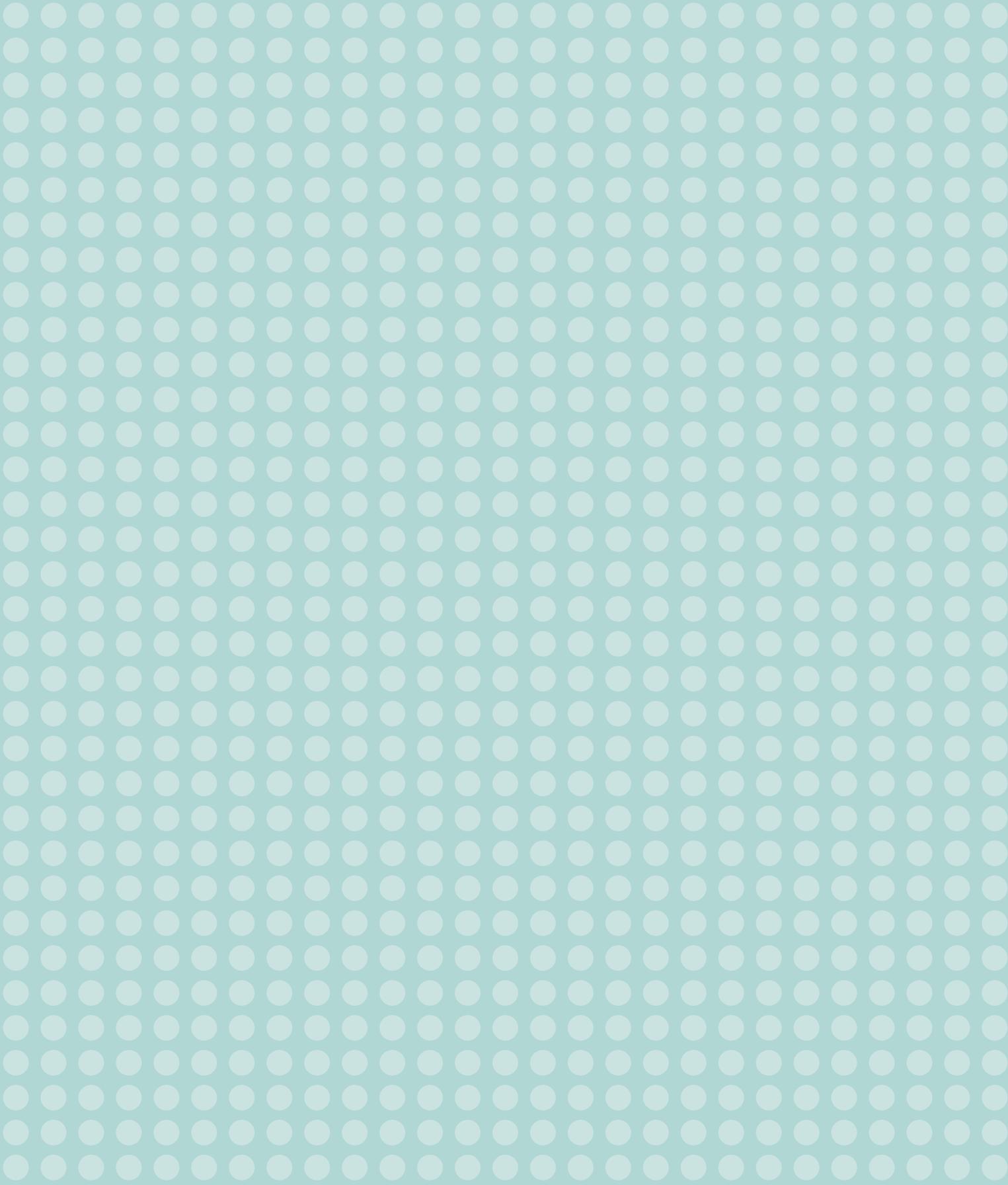
Report findings highlighted that between 2011 and 2017, the government promulgated 97 gender related policies with 702 accompanying policy interventions or activities for the implementation. The mapped policies and interventions (activities) were designed to create opportunities for increased equality between men and women in key areas including:

- Gender institutionalizing and mainstreaming
- Women's political participation and leadership
- Women's economic empowerment and rights
- Social development and women's protection from violence
- Women's access to justice and public services

The analysis found that of the 702 policy interventions, only 93 were fully or partially implemented and further noted there was a limited impact on the status of women. Taking into account a range of factors, external and internal, affecting implementation, the study found that 8.9 percent of policy interventions were fully implemented, 37 percent partially, 35 percent not implemented, and insufficient information available to assess the remaining 19 percent.

Women and girls have made great achievements in Palestine. However, these achievements have yet to translate into greater opportunities, increased equality or substantial participation. Structural inequalities persist. Thus, it is imperative that these gaps are addressed through initiatives that aim to eliminate discriminatory laws and legal provisions as well as review, monitor and report on policies. In order to advance the status of women, the utilization of evidence-based data and analysis must go hand in hand with demand for equal access to services, resources and opportunities across all spheres. We hope that this report will contribute to further to these investments in and work toward gender equality in Palestine.

Junaid Sorosh-Wali
Office-in-Charge, Head of Office
UNESCO National Office for Palestine



First, we immensely appreciate this hard work, dedication, and significant contribution for this analysis designated by UNESCO and support of the Norwegian representatives, as this mapping combined consolidation and analysis of all policies, where it is the first time genuine efforts are rightly oriented to unify approaches towards gender equality and women empowerment policies.

Despite the omission of the report to shed light on a number of significant references, such as the Women's Rights Document; initiated since 1994 and based on the most fundamental principles of the Declaration of Independence the "principle of equality", and the limitation in enforcing the Palestinian Authority laws in Area C and in Hamas-controlled Gaza. However, it highlights the repeal of some discriminatory legal provisions against women in March 2018, the accession of Palestine to a number of competent bodies and agencies and the signing of conventions and protocols relating to women, including the Optional Protocol to the CEDAW, which demonstrated the seriousness of the Palestinian political will in favor of women.

In line with the Government's 100-day plan, and in line with the government's program of strengthening citizens' steadfastness and building confidence with the government, the Ministry of Women's Affairs persisted on activating the national committees through establishing Consultative Council to include representatives from government and civil society, and move on to harmonizing national laws with international conventions, simulating the concerns of citizens by organizing dialogue sessions at governorate level and crystallizing those concerns into policy interventions to be integrated into the Ministry's plans while aiming at affecting tangible impact on the lives of women

These efforts require concerted efforts, developing networking mechanisms, coordination with the international community and donors, and strengthening partnership of governmental institutions with civil society organizations and political parties as important levers for change to ensure successful practical implementation and asserting genuine and broad consultations to provide a comprehensive national framework aiming at unifying the efforts while working within one vision to ensure women's just rights.

Finally, we call upon everyone from partner state agencies, civil society organizations and international organizations to direct the compass in the next stage on political, economic, legal, cultural and social empowerment and protect our people from the actions and violations in general and on the Palestinian women in particular.

Dr. Amal Hamad

Minister of Women's Affairs

Executive Summary

The following report was undertaken by the Gender Policy Institute (GPI), a programme of UNESCO, and in cooperation with the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA). The report is based on a two-phased initiative. First, to **conduct a mapping of current PA policies related to gender equality**, non-discrimination and women's rights. Second, based on the mapping, **conduct an initial analysis about gender policy implementation, and gaps and challenges related to the findings**. This is the first effort to comprehensively collect, organize and map out such policies, to review the extent to which they have been implemented and to provide initial analysis about these policies and the processes in which they are formulated and implemented. It is a practical step forward to understand why there is a continued and significant gap between policies made and the reality for women across Palestine. However, noting this, **the report is not a formal evaluation of the individual policies**, but rather a starting point to understand the span of policies, activities and corresponding procedures that impact implementation.

The **outcomes** of this report are three-fold:

1. To develop a **baseline on gender equality policies** through an intensive mapping exercise including the number of endorsed policies and policy interventions as well as an overview of level of implementation.
2. To generate **evidence-based data and information** through the review and analysis of these policies, thematic and sectoral areas in which these policies fall, an examination of the quality of the policies, their level of implementation and/or non-implementation, main achievements, gaps, structural, political and technical challenges and policy-level recommendations
3. To propose **specific policy and process related recommendations** for MoWA, GPI and other stakeholders based on the above two products

Introduction

The first chapter of the report provides an **overview of the report processes, methodologies and intended outcomes**. It also discusses the general limitations of the mapping and analysis including, inter alia, the lack of standardized approaches, procedures and definitions utilized in the gender policy development process. Also, the absence of a centralized documentation and information system coupled with the lack of monitor and evaluation made it difficult to gather, collate and effectively assess the policies. The section continues with a brief overview explaining the utility of gender policy process and why they are an important element to good governance. The final two sections briefly outline the contextual analysis and status of women in Palestine in which to position the mapping and analysis.

Gender Policy Mapping

The second chapter provides **a summary of the mapping exercise and its findings**. The gender policies reviewed included those which were endorsed by successive Palestinian Governments between in 2011 and 2017. They were divided into five thematic areas: economic, social, political, cultural and legal. The mapping then classified the policies according to the level of implementation: fully, partially, not, planned or no information available.

The following frameworks were reviewed since these serve as the primary government strategies used for generating gender related polices and interventions:

1. Three Cross-Sectoral National Gender Strategies (2011-2013, 2014-2016, and 2017-2022) led by the Ministry of Women's Affairs
2. National Strategy to Combat Violence against Women (2011-2019)
3. National Action Plan for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325
4. National Policy Agenda (2017-2022)
5. National Development Plans (2011-2013, 2014-2016)

A total of 97 policies and 702 corresponding activities/interventions were generated from these national strategies and mapped in this review. 93 of the 702 policy interventions were partially or fully implemented. The largest number of policies promulgated was for social development (32) with one fully and seven partially implemented. The least number of policies promulgated was for culture (7) with none fully and one partially implemented.



The section then goes on to discuss challenges related to these policies and their general lack of implementation. Two categories of challenges are identified: overarching political and socio-economic, and those related to the ministerial level specific to gender policy processes. The political and socio-economic challenges are further divided into external and internal challenges. **The external challenges examine the impacts of the unstable security situation, including occupation, while the internal challenges explore the constraints within the Palestinian government and economy. The ministerial level challenges explore the processes and procedures (or absence of) and their negative consequences on the implementation of gender policies.** The final section briefly highlights the accomplishments of the government with respect to advancing select issues related to gender equality and women's rights in Palestine.

Gender Policy Analysis

The third chapter delves further into the government's **long term gender related priorities as the framework to present the policy analysis findings.** There is a section dedicated to each priority area in which the policy related accomplishments and challenges are identified along with suggested points to consider moving forward. The five policy priorities and main findings are summarized as followed:

- **Gender institutionalization:** The core feature of mainstreaming gender equality across the government and its work were the creation of the Gender Units. While this could be a critical tool for gender integration, the report notes there is a significant range of challenges with these Units which renders them not so effective
- **Women's political participation and leadership:** Despite quotas and supporting interventions, policies and interventions have not resulted in a significant increase in women's participation as decision makers and leaders
- **Women's economic empowerment and rights:** There has been insufficient investment in new or revised labor laws that would expand opportunities for women to secure employment, equal wages and access to capital.
- **Social development and women's protection from violence:** While there remain many discriminatory practices, there was progress in social development particularly in the area of reducing violence against women.
- **Women's access to justice and public services:** Similarly, there has been some progress in women's access to justice and public services especially in relation to responding to violence against women. However, there remain critical gaps especially for women who are residing in certain areas such as Area C, East Jerusalem and Gaza.

The chapter concludes with an overview of a number of **general lessons learned in conducting the analysis.** These points include the continued commitment to the same priorities acknowledging that they are not yet achieved. Also, the government and its partnerships with civil society organizations are focusing increasing resources toward gender equality initiatives particularly in relation to economic and ending violence activities.

Moving Forward

The fourth and final section of the report **summarizes the main elements of progress made over the past decade toward gender equality through effective policy development.** The following section then highlights the key areas where improvement is essential for further progress along with **short-term targeted recommendations for moving forward.** The targeted areas and **recommendations are organized around the main facets of the policy development cycle:**

Cross cutting structural changes for gender integration

1. **Revamp the Gender Units:** MoWA should lead a substantive reflection and review exercise on the Gender Units and determine a path forward.
2. **Introduce Gender Budgeting:** MoWA can explore how it can introduce this tool to analyze the budget's differing impacts on men and women, and allocate funds accordingly as well as set targets to direct funds to achieve such results.
3. **Establish standardized definitions and procedures:** MoWA can lead the process for establishing standardized definition of concepts related to gender equality and its accompanying policy processes and procedures including sequencing of cross sector policy development.

Policy formulation

4. **Incorporate a bottom-up approach:** MoWA, through partnership with CSOs, can utilize a tested participatory approach that is suitable for the Palestinian context and ensures appropriate levels of input and is applied consistently in all gender related policy development.
5. **Cultivate gender policy analysis expertise:** MoWA, through partnership with GPI, can review and prioritize core areas requiring gender analysis as well as build national capacities and expertise to conduct that analysis.
6. **Reassess causal linkages between strategic outputs and outcomes:** Using the theory of change or similar tool, test the causal links between activities and policies in the recent cross sector strategy at its midterm review as a useful starting point.

Policy adoption

7. **Develop CEDAW plan of action to implement report recommendations:** MoWA can formulate and lead a coalition to support implementation of CEDAW report recommendations with a deadline of the next periodic report.

Policy implementation and M&E

8. **Standard approach for feedback loop:** MoWA, in partnership with GPI and PCBS, can develop a feedback loop mechanism to ensure a consistent flow and exchange of information throughout the policy implementation processes including M&E.
9. **Establish M&E department in MoWA:** M&E unit within MoWA can work on systemization of data collection and identifying the responsibilities of different stakeholders/actors. Strengthening M&E has the potential of improve implementation and reach policy results, and then feedback into evidence-based planning.

Introduction

Overview

This gender policy mapping and review is part of a baseline initiative undertaken by the Gender Policy Institute (GPI), a program of UNESCO¹ scheduled to expire on 31 August 2019, in partnership with the Ministry of Women’s Affairs (MoWA). Its primary objective is to map out and review the span of policies and interventions related to gender equality, non-discrimination and women’s rights as endorsed by Palestinian Authority from 2011 through 2017. This is the first effort to comprehensively collect, organize and map out such policies, to review the extent to which they have been implemented and to provide initial analysis about these policies and the processes in which they are formulated and implemented. It is the first step to understand why there is a continued and significant gap between policies made and the reality for women across Palestine. The findings are meant to inform multiple audiences, but primarily for MoWA and GPI to guide their policy work in a practical way moving forward. However, the findings will be hopefully useful for other decision makers and stakeholders including the line ministries, women’s civil society organizations, relevant international organizations and possibly donors.

The report is based on a two-pronged approach: first the mapping of gender policies and second the review and analysis. The collection, organization and mapping focused on policies and corresponding interventions related to gender equality, non-discrimination and women’s rights in Palestine which were endorsed by successive Palestinian Governments between in 2011 and 2017. The policies were divided into five thematic areas: economic, social, political, cultural and legal. The mapping then classified the policies according to the level of implementation: fully, partially, not, planned or no information available. The methodology of the overall report focused on collecting relevant documents and policies (electronic and paper resources) and conducting individual and group interviews to solicit additional details such as target groups, timeframe, major achievements and general challenges encountered or which prevented implementation. The following frameworks were utilized for the collection and review of policies since these are the main PA frameworks for generating gender related polices and interventions:

3	Three Cross-Sectoral National Gender Strategies <i>led by the Ministry of Women's Affairs</i>	(2011-2013, 2014-2016, and 2017-2022)
1	National Strategy to Combat Violence against Women	(2011-2019)
1	National Action Plan for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325	
1	National Policy Agenda	(2017-2022)
2	National Development Plans	(2011-2014, 2013-2016)

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5. National Development Plans (2011-2014, 2013-2016)

The importance of this report is that it is the first comprehensive collection, mapping and review of gender related polices and interventions. Moreover, it is the first attempt to assess the level of implementation of these policies, interventions, and the structural and institutional factors that contributed to the implementation or impediment of these policies. As a result of the planning process and as advised by the technical committee formed for supporting this report, a decision was made to focus on policies identified in the cross-sectoral national gender strategies, as the overarching framework, and including the national plans and strategies led, endorsed and implemented by the Ministry of Women’s Affairs and partners. These are the main strategies generating gender related policies and interventions.

1. The GPI takes forward and builds on UNESCO’s program, the Palestinian Women’s Research and Documentation Center (PWRDC) - funded by the Government of Norway, GPI is a programme of UNESCO scheduled to expire on 30 August 2019. GPI was granted a legal identity as an independent autonomous national institute established through a Cabinet of minister’s decree on 10 June 2019. With the establishment of its legal identity GPI became the first Gender Policy focused institute established via a cabinet decree in Palestine and the Arab Region as a whole.

Outcomes

The outcomes of this report are three-fold:

1. To develop a baseline on gender equality and women's empowerment policies through an intensive mapping exercise including the number of endorsed policies and policy interventions as well as an overview of level of implementation. The baseline will be utilized as a concrete planning tool for future gender policy processes
2. To generate evidence-based data and information through the review and analysis of these policies, thematic and sectoral areas in which these policies fall, an examination of the quality of the policies, their level of implementation and/or non-implementation, target groups, impact on women, main achievements, gaps, structural, political and technical challenges and policy-level recommendations
3. To propose specific policy and process related recommendations for MoWA and other stakeholders based on the above two products

Finally, this report will contribute hopefully in providing a reference for other efforts promoting gender equality and empowerment of women in Palestine. In this context, the report intended to answer the following questions:

1. Do the processes of planning, policy development and policy-making enable the institutional structures to conduct effective gender-responsive analysis in different sectors?
2. To what extent are policies implemented, which groups are targeted and what are the features of those groups?
3. What is the sectoral distribution of policies and in what sectors and thematic areas have policies been implemented or not implemented?
4. Are there policies conflicting with the implementation of gender policies in government ministries and institutions and if so, to what degree?
5. What factors have facilitated and/or hampered implementation of policies?

Methodology

The report utilized a methodology which integrated descriptive and qualitative approaches with a focus on a participatory approach, mainly in the analysis of results. The study was carried out in partnership with MoWA and in consultation with other line ministries including justice, interior, planning as well as with the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), Civil Service Bureau and the Prime Minister's office. A technical committee was formed comprised of experts from the West Bank and Gaza in the fields of policy, planning and gender and statistics which played a pivotal role in the development of the questions and analysis process. The committee included representatives from government and research sectors, academia, civil society organizations and national human rights bodies.² Finally, over seventy individual interviews and focus group discussions were conducted to support and complement the analysis processes.

Phase I: Mapping gender related policies

The first phase comprised of the mapping of gender equality and women's empowerment policies endorsed by successive Palestinian Governments between 2011 and 2017. The mapping created a baseline for the qualitative study and provides a framework which GPI and MoWA can utilize to develop future policy related initiatives. The mapping included collection and review of relevant documents, policies and reports, individual and group interviews. It covered information on groups, timeframes, key achievements and challenges as well as constraints hampering implementation of these policies. Policies were classified according to five development/thematic areas: economic, social, political, cultural and legal. Also, the policies were reviewed according to the extent of their implementation: full, partial, not, planned or no data available. The selected policies were gathered primarily from the following national level documents:

2. Member of the technical committee : Ministry of Women's Affairs: Amin Assi and Fatima Radaida; Institute of Women Studies / Birzeit University (IWS.BZU): Dr Lena Me'ari and Dr. Islah Jad; Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR): Dr Khadija Zahran; Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS): Ashraf Hamdan; Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counseling (WCLAC): Amal Abu Srour; Women's Affairs Center (WAC) / Gaza Strip: Amal Siam; Center for Women's Legal Research and Consulting (CWLRC) / Gaza Strip: Dr. Zeinab Ghoneimi; and the Culture and Free Thought Association (CFTA): Dr. Maryam Zaqout.

1. The three cross-sectoral national gender strategies led by the Ministry of Women’s Affairs for the years 2011-2013, 2014-2016 and 2017-2022
2. National Strategy to Combat Violence against Women (2011-2019)
3. National Action Plan for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325
4. National Policy Agenda (2017-2022)
5. National Development Plans (2011-2013, 2014-2016)

Phase 2: Review and analysis of mapping

The second phase primarily utilized the mapping as well as reviewed relevant strategies, plans and reports issued by the MoWA, the Palestinian Council of Ministers and relevant civil society organizations including: Women’s Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC), Women’s Affairs Technical Committee (WATC), Agricultural Development Association, Rural Women Development Association, Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development (PWWSD), Women’s Studies Centre (WSC), Women’s Affairs Center (Gaza Strip) and Center for Women’s Legal Research and Consulting (Gaza Strip).

Additional qualitative information was solicited from primary sources in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip through targeted male and female stakeholders who are involved in the development and implementation of national plans. These include the Palestinian Council of Ministers, MoWA, Interior and Finance and Planning; gender units; PCBS; civil society organizations whose mandate includes working on women’s rights, human rights and development issues. Moreover, female and male planning and gender experts, university students, women from rural areas, Jerusalem, along with academic research institutions active in gender and women’s rights. Qualitative research tools used to collect data from their primary sources included:

- 18 individual structured and semi-structured interviews (8 in Gaza Strip and 10 in the West Bank)
- 7 in-depth individual interviews (3 in Gaza Strip and 4 in the West Bank)
- 4 focus groups (2 in Gaza Strip and 2 in the West Bank)
- 3 structured and semi-structured group interviews conducted in the West Bank
- One workshop targeting gender units in ministries and government agencies in the West Bank



Limitations of the mapping and analysis

There are a number of constraints and limitations to this mapping and its accompanying analysis including the following:

- This is the first mapping exercise on a national level and thus is not a comparative analysis but rather established a baseline
- There is confusion between what constitutes a policy versus an activity or intervention to implement a policy
- The review looked only at policies resulting from the main strategies and frameworks led by MoWA; there might be other one-off gender related or non-discrimination policies endorsed but these were not captured in this review

- The absence of a centralized documentation and information system which impeded the ease and comprehensive nature of the data collection processes
- There is an absence of clarity and/or standardized definition for gender equality, non-discrimination and other relevant terms
- There is an absence of a functioning and standardized process for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness and impact of gender related policies
- The focus of the review is limited to the extent of implementation; the report at this stage is not an evaluation of individual policies and their effectiveness or impact on women
- There is limited available information, in particular on the financial aspects including budgets committed and disbursed, implemented policies and policy interventions and their objectives, due to the multitude of stakeholders involved in the development of and influence on gender equality and women's empowerment strategies and plans
- Government planning and analyses processes characterized by continuous change; there is an absence of standardized approaches and processes for policy formulation and development
- Lack of and/or restricted access to the Gaza Strip
- The study did not include information on the progress made on the implementation of relevant policies identified in the Ministry of Women's Affairs Cross-Sectoral National Strategy 2017-2022 since implementation is under way.

Importance of gender policy: an overview

Public policy includes the laws, rules and regulations intended to accomplish certain goals as promulgated by a government entity. In Palestine, as in any society, public policies affect lives of all groups within society. Policies, intended and unintended, can impact women and girls, and men and boys in different ways. Typically, 'one size fits all' approach does not allow for or correct gender inequities or other discriminating imbalances in a society. The tools of gender policy planning and analysis create opportunities for gender gaps and structural inequalities to be identified. These processes help highlight the disparities between men and women, and enable policy makers to then have the accurate information necessary to create effective policy solutions.

Public policy has the potential to make strategic change;³ it can either perpetuate discrimination and gender inequality or seek to eliminate discrimination and promote gender equality. Governments can have a significant role, through effective policy making, to create and broaden opportunities for women and influence women's status and wellbeing. Gender equality in a society is not just a social justice issue, but good for the economy and for the wellbeing of half its citizenry. While a necessary starting point, mainstreaming these tools in public policy processes and procedures alone will not automatically result in the desired change of improved status of women or greater equality in society. The effectiveness of these policies depends on the political will to support implementation; the availability and commitment of resources; the capacity to implement; and accountability mechanisms are in place. These key elements are essential in determining whether the gender policy will be effective.⁴

Studies have shown that there are many challenges to gender mainstreaming in public policies including:⁵

1. Lack of understanding generally in society and among decision and policy makers regarding definitions and concepts of gender equality and women's empowerment. For example, gender is still interpreted as a women's issue rather than a social construct defining what is masculine and what is feminine. The result is often a focus on women's issues because through the analysis it is understood that often systems and practices discriminate against women or perpetuate the inequality.
2. Limiting gender policies to quantitative perspective such a quotas for participation. While these types of policies are useful to bringing about a critical mass and changing the dynamics, they are insufficient. Gender policies need to equally tackle social practices and norms that perpetuate patriarchy. These types of policies are long term and progress must reflect their impact on the status of women.⁶
3. Participation in the process of development, designing and formulation of policies: A review of literature on national planning and policy-making highlights the continued exclusion of women participating in these processes and when they do, it is often to 'check the box' rather than genuine participation.⁷

3. Broadwick, Elizabeth (2012). Implement a Gender Perspective in Public Policy: What It Means and How We Can Do It Better. Australian Human Rights Commission, Retrieved from: <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/news/speeches/applying-gender-perspective-public-policy-what-it-means-and-how-we-can-do-it-better>

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. Individual Interview, R. S. September, 2018.

7. Broadwick, Elizabeth, Implement a Gender Perspective in Public Policy: What It Means and How We Can Do It Better (2012)

Context analysis

Gender focused policy planning and formulation is a challenge within any functioning government. Even among democratic states which prioritize gender equality in society, implementing such policies requires time, sustained resources and political will. Sweden is one of the more progressive and successful examples, and the approach of gender focused policies has been underway for over four decades and still evolving. For Palestine, this process is and will continue to be a daunting challenge notably owing to tensions with Israel and the unstable security situation, as well as occupation which set limits on its ability to function, the effectiveness of policies and their accountability.

The human rights of Palestinians are undermined in many aspects of their lives including limiting access to schools, health services, labor and land. There are many layers of uncertainty with neither protection nor security. Public space is shrinking, social and geographical fragmentation is deepening and economic inequalities are increasing, especially for women in Palestinian society. Society is becoming more insular and conservative which impedes women progress further.⁸ Public policies cannot be developed in isolation of this context. Consequently, this limits the capacity of national policies to meet livelihood and development needs of men and women as well as impedes ability to usher in society to a more advanced state of justice and gender equality.

The United Nations report Common Country Analysis 2016: Leave No One Behind: A Perspective on Vulnerability and Structural Disadvantage in Palestine⁹ as a preparatory framework for its development plans for the next five years (2018-2022) identified a number of population groups as particularly vulnerable.¹⁰ The assessment identified five structural factors that contribute to this vulnerability in Palestine including: 1. location, i.e. place of residence; 2. high level of exposure to violence; 3. access to economic opportunities; 4. institutional and political factors; 5. social and cultural rules. The study recommended that, until “no one is left behind,” there are several areas in which the UN and its governing counterparts must act upon including: 1. Improving data collection and analysis so that policies can be adapted to meet the needs of these groups; 2. Diversifying partnerships to better respond to these disadvantaged groups including their participation; 3. Greater investment in integrated cross-sectoral planning processes; and 4. Accountability on achieving sustainable development goals and UN resolution 1325 must be shared undertaking as long as the current unstable situation continues.

Status of women in Palestine

Owing to the above outlined context, the gender gap has widened over the past decades. Women suffer multiple negative impacts from the security situation, including occupation, as well as from a deepening religious and conservative society. The result is a decrease in access to public space, growing exclusion from political and economic participation with women’s rights violated on a daily basis, through harassment, violence, access to health care denial of work, etc. The increasing use of traditional and religious practices rooted in patriarchy enabled the power of the tribal and religious structure at the expense of weakening contemporary societal and legal structures.

Despite ongoing efforts to expand rule of law, and increase social justice and gender equality, power relations remain imbalanced in status and roles of women and men. The more fragile and marginalized the group is, the more the status of women and girls has deteriorated. Patriarchal rules are influencing the division of labor, leading to more male domination in society, and control of power and resources. These practices contribute to women’s reduction to primarily a reproductive role and to household care functions. These traditional trends and behaviors that focus on the reproductive role of women result in early marriage and early childbearing as well.¹¹

The Palestinian government has adopted various national policies and strategies through which it is committed to transparency, accountability and respect for human rights and specifically women’s rights. The government’s commitment is reflected through its efforts to integrate gender equality within the National Policy Agenda, the creation of the gender units and the cross sector strategy to institutionalize these practices. The Declaration of Independence (1988) guarantees the full equality between men and women and the Palestinian Basic Law grants women full rights, equality and non-discrimination. Also, Palestine ratified in 2014 the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination

8. Institute of Women’s Studies, Building links to integrated strategies and policies to empower Palestinian women (2013)

9. United Nations, Common Country Analysis 2016: Leave No One Behind: A Perspective on Vulnerability and Structural Disadvantage in Palestine. https://unsco.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/cca_report_en.pdf.

10. Ibid.(Page 13):Vulnerable groups include: adolescent girls, women exposed to gender-based violence, food-insecure households headed by women, children with access barriers to school, children in labor force, children exposed to violence, out-of-school children, youth, the elderly and population groups In Area C, Bedouin and pastoral communities residing in Area C, residents of the Gaza Strip who are unable to access clean water or sanitation, Hebron residents in Area H2, residents of the confrontation zones, persons with disabilities and individuals in urgent need for medical treatment, refugees living in extreme poverty, refugees living in camps, small farmers, non-Bedouin shepherds, fishermen and the working poor.

11. United Nations, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Common Country Analysis (2016)

against Women (CEDAW)¹² which is a key normative framework for women's rights and gender equality. However, the incorporation of national laws in line with CEDAW has not occurred. Laws, such as the Penal Code and Criminal Law, continue to hold valid articles that contradict the principles of equality and non-discrimination. Thus, despite passage of symbolic policies and normative frameworks, the essential laws that would improve the status of women in Palestine remain unpassable.

12. <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/0360793A.pdf>

Gender Policy Mapping

Objective

As indicated above, the first phase of the overall report was the gender policy mapping exercise¹³ which focused on soliciting and collecting policies related to Gender Equality endorsed and/or adopted by the Government between 2010 and 2017, translating them to Arabic and English, and mapping them according to thematic areas. The mapping exercise identified the level of implementation of policies addressing gender equality and women's empowerment and to consolidate them into one document. The broader mapping was then used as the basis to facilitate the analysis process for the second phase discussed in the next section. It is worth noting, this is the first ever mapping exercise on the national level. However, it does not attempt to conduct a comparative analysis, but rather set the groundwork for a baseline. The focus at this stage is on the extent of implementation of policies rather than on its effectiveness or impact on the targeted group in general, and on changing the status of women in particular.

Breakdown of policies and extent of implementation¹⁴

1. The policies mapped were from the main gender related national level strategies between 2011 and 2017 including:
2. Three cross-sectoral national gender strategies led by MoWA for the years 2011-2013, 2014-2016 and 2017-2022
3. National Strategy to Combat Violence against Women (2011-2019)
4. National Action Plan for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325
5. National Policy Agenda (2017-2022)
6. National Development Plans (2011-2013, 2014-2016)

A total of 97 policies and 702 corresponding activities/interventions were generated from these national strategies and mapped in this review. The policies were classified according to five main thematic areas:

1. Social including education, health, sports, infrastructure, enhancing peace, media
2. Legal including law, combating violence, personal status, institutionalization
3. Political including control over land and resources, infrastructure, international protection, institutionalization
4. Cultural including culture of violence, social traditions/norms
5. Economic including labor, private sector, social justice, combating poverty



13. Gender Policy Institute/UNESCO, Gender and Empowerment Policy Mapping, April 2018

14. Ibid

The policy implementation was assessed to be either fully, partially, not implemented, planned or no information available. 93 of the 702 policy interventions were partially or fully implemented. The largest number of policies is under the social category (32) with one implemented and seven partially implemented. The least number of policies were under culture (7) with none implemented and one partial. It is worth noting that data and information of all policies and interventions was not available. Additionally, the level of implementation for what was available was not necessarily clear based on reports reviewed. Thus, while the mapping is a comprehensive review of what is available and first of its kind, the data series remains incomplete. Overall, the statistics raise significant questions regarding the large number of interventions and policies generated with little or unknown implementation for the majority. The following provides a graphic summary of the mapping:¹⁵



Challenges¹⁶

The gender policy mapping exercise enabled the identification of a number of challenges and gaps related to the overall policy processes. These can be divided into two categories: 1. Overarching political and socio-economic challenges and 2. The ministerial level procedures specific to gender policy processes.

Political and socio-economic challenges

There are two sets of challenges in this domain: external and internal. These set of challenges critically limits policy design, reach and implementation and is largely beyond the influence of those decision makers and stakeholders who work on gender equality and women's rights.

External challenges include:

- The continued policies and practices of Israel and the security situation, as well as settlements especially in areas under Israeli control in the West Bank
- The growing geographical fragmentation of the West Bank and Gaza has divided communities along barriers such as the separation barrier
- Growing influences of regional religious, political and cultural conservatism that is influencing growing segments of Palestinian society and negatively impacting women's status
- Foreign government policies and financial contributions have a direct impact on access to resources for the Palestinian Authority and civil society organizations as well; shrinking resources is impacting work related to gender equality and women's rights significantly

Internal challenges include:

- Financial resources are limited and insufficient for the demands placed on the government; in addition, there are distributive choices made internally that limit resources toward gender equality and women's rights. For example, in 2017, MoWA received 0.04 percent of the national budget in which approximately 92 percent was

15. Ibid

16. Ibid

expended on salaries and operating expenses.¹⁷ A representative from the Ministry of Finance noted that on a national level, there was “a significant decrease in funding compared to previous years, from \$1.8 billion in 2007 to around \$620 million for fiscal year 2017”¹⁸

- Human resources are limited as well; there is scant gender analytical expertise within the government
- The Palestinian Legislative Council is non-functioning
- The economy is weakening
- There is an overall lack of political will toward creating equality rights and opportunities for women and men; increasing patriarchy.

Ministerial level challenges

The Cabinet mandates the development of the Cross Sectoral Plans for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment and it is intended to be situated within the broader framework of the National Development Plan. The methodology for preparing strategic plans is issued by the Ministry of Finance and Planning, but is designed for specific sectors rather than across sectors. Thus, MoWA revised and adapted the approach. The Cross Sectoral Plan for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment is the basis from which other gender related strategies and policies are developed (see Annex II for additional details to the processes and procedures for developing this plan).

The following highlights challenges related to this and the broader gender policy development processes:

- The process of agenda setting is not clear
- There are commitments to integrate gender, but no implementation plans for national development policies (symbolic commitment only)
- While there is an attempt to define and standardize concepts and definitions related to gender equality, women’s empowerment, mainstreaming, etc., there remains confusion among many decision makers and stakeholders and a general lack of consistency and clarity of interpretation
- The current policy approach for gender policy development, including the cross sector planning, is ‘top-down’ rather than ‘bottom-up’ which presents its own inherent set of limitations as an approach
- National and technical teams in the development process do not continue to support implementation processes
- There is an absence of gender analysis in the processes (qualitative and quantitative)
- The changing and varied structures of strategy and planning processes leads to inconsistent approaches and mixed types of information and data presented
- Linkages between results/outcomes and interventions/activities are not clear; often activities are repeated but yet fail to achieve the related outcome
- Related, there is often a mix up between what is an objective and result versus an activity or intervention
- The methodology and responsibility of data collection is not clear
- There is an absence of effective M&E planning in the overall strategic process as well as human and financial resources committed for this within implementation (although this appears to be changing)

In addition to process challenges, it is worth noting the challenges related to the Gender Units and their portfolio of work since they are a critical piece of the gender machinery in addition to MoWA. The Gender Units are established across many of the ministries as a connector with the work of MoWA as the gender lead and as an ‘in house’ technical expert on gender. While in theory the gender units are a progressive ‘tool’ to support institutionalization of gender equality across ministries, the reality has played out quite differently. The following highlights challenges as they relate to gender policy processes:

- The effectiveness of the individual Gender Unit rests on the capacity and commitment of the individuals assigned to that Unit; thus, they are inconsistent in the quality of services provided

17. Independent Commission on Human Rights, Office of the Ombudsman (2017), Analysis of the General Budget for the year 2017 from a Human Rights Perspective. Ramallah, Palestine

18. Interview with N.A on 28 August 2018.

- The political commitment of the Minister drives the legitimacy and function of the Gender Unit
- The approach and application of the Gender Unit as a tool is not consistent across Ministries; some have Units and others have portfolios
- Most Gender Units lack authority and resources to be really effective
- There is an absence of consistent application of policy directives and little or no M&E

Achievements¹⁹

According to the first Annual Report on Government Performance, the draft report of the Third Annual Report of Government Performance, and report on Beijing 20+ achievements include:

- Developing a unified organizational structure for gender units
- Establishing *Tawasul* centers
- Endorsing gender budgeting²⁰
- Conducting capacity building to gender units in ministries²¹
- Establishing Gender Units in some ministries²².
- Establishing the National Committee to Combat Violence
- Establishing National Committee for the implementation of UN resolution 1325
- Launching the national framework document for the implementation of the UNSCR 1325
- Establishing National Referral System for battered women
- Launching the “Family Protection Act”
- Signing a number of Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) with international institutions.²³

19. Ibid

20. Several workshops in gender budgeting had been organized throughout 2011-2017, in collaboration between MoWA and UN Women. These targeted planning and Budgeting Committees. Ministry of Finance and Planning has not intensive its effort in this regard. However, MoWA plans to pilot gender-sensitive budgeting in 2018 with MoL selected as case study. This will be based on the Morocco experience with adaptation to Palestine.

21. Capacity building activities included Gender mainstreaming in economic policies, programs and budgets; Analysis and Planning from a Gender Perspective; Gender mainstreaming in the media, and participating in the international conference on gender responsive budgeting.

22. MoWA is working in this issue. So far, 27 Gender Units were established in different ministries and authorities.

23. Including: UNESCO (enhancing research skills), Al-Marsad (monitoring the status of Palestinian women in Gaza), Action against Hunger (enhancing democracy and economic activities in Area C), Near East Foundation (Advancement of women projects in Palestine), the Center for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Victims of Torture, and Al-Hayat newspaper to allocate a page to cover women's issues from a gender perspective.

Gender Policy Analysis

Based on the mapping and broad challenges presented above, this section delves further into the government's long term gender related priorities as a framework to present the policy analysis findings.

As discussed, the Cross Sectoral Plans for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (2011-2013, 2014-2016 and 2017-2022) are the primary strategies for tackling gender inequality. The other gender related strategies and policies focus largely on one or more of these five main areas as well. As such, each thematic area will be reviewed as outlined in the chart below (see Annex IV for details).

Strategic goals for gender equality and the empowerment of women



Gender institutionalization and mainstreaming

Institutionalization of gender in policies, processes and procedures across government bodies is the essential and foundational strategy for the cross-sectoral plans. This objective of institutionalizing gender equality is also at the core of MoWA's mandate. Its primary function is to provide the leadership, vision and technical support to achieve this objective within the public sector. As such, the objective has been maintained in MoWA's three cross-sectoral strategic plans.

A significant achievement of this policy stream was the formation of the Gender Units, women's and gender profiles, and women's or gender groups. The Council of Ministers, on the recommendation of the MoWA, demonstrated the necessary political will to approve the forming of Gender Units and defined their functions and organizational structure in ministries and non-ministerial governmental institutions. The Council adopted the gender responsive budget and decreed the formation of the National Committee for Gender, with male and female representatives from the government, civil society and the private sector.

According to MoWA, there were 24 Gender Units by 2018. The Gender Units completed numerous awareness-raising and capacity-building programs related to gender mainstreaming across ministries and developing gender focused policies. There are 10 policies for the gender institutionalization process (three of which were repeated by MoWA (2011-2014 & 2017-2022)). Those policies were considered qualitative and were gradually developed in relation to the formation of the Gender Units, institutionalization and government commitment to accountability and integration.

However, difficulties and constraints riddle the structure of those Units, and financial and human resources in a number of the ministries and institutions are limited. There is a misconception that Gender Units and MoWA alone shoulder the responsibility for institutionalizing and mainstreaming gender. Meanwhile, gender issues, equality and empowerment of women are a general concern of the government despite an overall lack of commitment. Those Units are assigned ambitious tasks and role, while there are explicit disparities in individual and professional abilities. The outcome of the Gender Unit Workshop, held for analysis purpose on 6th September 2018, demonstrated the

need for advanced and specialized gender training, follow-up, monitoring, impact, integration, budgeting, qualitative research, alliance building, gender statistics reading, policy analysis and evaluation. The outcome showed that gender is still perceived as a women's issue, that the Gender Units continue to be marginalized and are absent from the decision-making processes.

The review of the 2014-2016 Plan noted that though most of the interventions including the objective of gender integration and mainstreaming were implemented, the results are limited. Compounding the absence of results is the lack of consistent data and information, and the ineffectiveness of the limited monitoring and evaluation system. The report summarizes that the reasons for this is because of the insufficiency of trained staff in planning and gender-based policy-making, although MoWA has launched many initiatives. The results also showed that the gap persists, and noted the lack of reports that monitor the performance of formal and informal institutions concerned with gender equality issues. Finally, the report demonstrated that no accountability mechanisms were developed.²⁴

The objective of institutionalization of gender in the most recent MoWA strategic plan (2017-2022) stressed that "institutionalizing issues of gender equality and justice and the empowerment of women in all government institutions" through five policies:

- Strengthen the role of gender-responsive gender units in government ministries and institutions
- Strengthen the role of formal and informal national machineries on women's issues and gender
- Develop accountability mechanisms for gender equality issues (monitoring and evaluation, aid coordination mechanisms and gender responsive budgeting)
- Gender perspective in all official institutions
- Capacity building of MoWA in line with requirements of achieving cross-sectoral national strategy to promote gender equality and justice

Here we notice a gap in the five policies where it focuses on limited aspects of institutionalization, mainly capacity building.

Considerations for gender mainstreaming and institutionalization

- MoWA, in partnership with civil society, should organize and lead a substantive reflection on the lack of overall productivity and authority of the Gender Units and determine a more effective way forward considering the consistent lack of resources and political will for these bodies. Simultaneously, the Minister of Women's Affairs must identify a clearer mechanisms for catalyze buy-in from the decision makers across the Ministries and foremost the Council of Ministers.
- Subsequently, MoWA should pilot alternative or adapted approaches that might be more effective than the current structure and function. One possibility might be restructuring the work system of Gender Units and their division according to the main development sectors (four main sectors), along with an explicitly agreed work plan and a communication system with the Council of Ministers and the Ministry of Women Affairs on one hand and with ministries and agencies in the same main development sector on the other hand. Furthermore, responsibility for gender mainstreaming should be shared by all ministries and their main divisions, and not just gender units.
- Explore the possibility of developing the complaints system/procedures related to the units and linking them directly to the Council of Ministers and the General Personnel Council to conduct accountability for gender-based abuse and discrimination and weak cooperation with the units. It is also recommended to recruit staff of the units to provide them with academic and practical expertise in gender / planning and policy.

Women's political participation and leadership²⁵

This is one of the most strategic issues under development. Genuine and substantial participation can potential result in structural changes in women's status and power relations in society, and thus in defining roles, as well as in reducing gender discrimination and inequality. A total of nine policies were developed of which four were repeated in the 2014-2016 and 2017-2022 strategies.

This objective was emphasized in the three cross-sectoral plans of the Ministry of Women's Affairs, as a fifth objective in the Ministry's Strategic Plan (2011-2013): "activating the role of women and enabling them to actively participate in political life and decision-making" through three policies; taking legal measures to increase women participation of women in the political sphere; taking appropriate measures to undo cultural and social heritage misgivings on the role

24. Ibid.

25. Ministry of Women Affairs, Reports of the review of strategic plans for the periods (2011-2013, 2014-2016) and the Strategic Plan for the years (2017-2022)

of women in society; taking appropriate measures to develop women's capacities and skills.²⁶ Here we notice another gap where policies have focused on capacity-building and cultural heritage as primary constraint preventing or limiting women's political participation and decision-making.

In MoWA's 2014-2016 strategy, the objective of "women's participation in decision-making in institutions" increased (i.e. it was designated a result or outcome). It was stipulated to be achieved through two policies: necessary measures to increase proportion of women in decision-making positions and to build women's leadership capacities in institutions. The latter is rather an intervention, or activity, than policy.²⁷ In MoWA's 2017-2022 strategy, it was stipulated that "participation of women in decision-making positions in governmental and non-governmental institutions that affect the lives of men and women shall be increased by at least ten percent." This will be achieved through four policies:²⁸

- Develop institutional policies enabling women to access leadership bodies of official institutions
- Building women leadership capacities in institutions (this is where this policy or intervention has been maintained for limited achievement in the previous plan and also being an ongoing activity to have more women leaders)
- Influencing the will of policy-maker in institutes for enabling women to attain leadership positions
- Developing mechanisms and programs that enable women to be involved in leading community, party and trade union institutions

In this area, it is noticed that policies are again addressing capacity building and gender institutionalization policies, despite the allocation of a strategic objective to the latter.

Despite achievements, the results of the plan's implementation showed no significant changes made in achieving women's right in the sphere of political participation and decision-making. Some of the training conducted was intended to build capacity of female candidates, and members of local bodies and others who are active in the public sector. However, this has not affected their positions, neither in their institutions nor in public life.²⁹ The results of individual interviews and focus groups in both Gaza Strip and the West Bank indicated this to be the case. "Women's participation in political life and decision-making is mainly affected immensely by the political will of decision-makers in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip. Moreover, patriarchal power relations, tribal customs and traditions [remain] a major limitation [and] does not support or encourage women to occupy leadership and political positions."³⁰

The official report of the State of Palestine on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)³¹ stressed that while relevant legislation endorsed a number of temporary positive measures to accelerate de facto equality between sexes and to ensure women's participation in public life, they do not meet minimum international standards especially unions and associations. Meanwhile, customs and traditions governed by male patriarchal mentality are the main obstacle to women benefitting from their rights, especially political. Those obstacles may be summarized in the following:

- Irregularity in election in Palestine at the general, local, union, party and unions levels
- Low level of community awareness of the role of women, especially in political life, as well as lack of efficiency and professionalism for acceptance and selection in the political arena, especially in elections
- Financial inability of the majority of women to run their electoral campaigns, and lack of interest of funders to support them
- Lack of confidence in women by the society and decision-makers; they are denied their rights to advance

The Review of MoWA's 2012-2013 strategy³² indicated an increase in the percentage of women members of the Legislative Council from 12.8 percent to 14.9 percent (not 20 percent). The percentage of women representation in local bodies increased from 18 to 24 percent while women's percentage leading trade unions increased from 7 to 16 percent and their percentage in high positions increased from 19.7 to 23 percent. The number of women ministers in the government increased from 4 to 7 ministers in 2013. This number settled at 4 once again in the 17th Palestinian government (the current one, 2018). This indicates that the number of women ministers in the government has been affected by political polarization when government was formed and not by planned policies and interventions.

On indicators of achievement and gaps, the Review Report of the 2014-2016 plan noted that indicators of women participation in decision-making in institutions reported a slight increase in percentage and numbers.³³ However, these increases have not manifested in the intended change. According to the indicators, women's participation in decision-

26. National Cross-Sectoral Strategy Document for Promoting Gender Equality and Equity and Empowerment of Women (2014- 2016), p. 6

27. National Cross-sectoral Strategy Document for Promoting Gender Equality and Equity and Empowerment of Women (2017- 2022), p. 39

28. National Cross-Sectoral Strategy Document for Promoting Gender Equality and Equity (2011-2013), p. 38 <https://www.mowa.pna.ps>

29. Report of the State of Palestine, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 24 May 2017.

30. Individual interviews and focus group discussions held in Gaza Strip and West Bank between on July, August and September.

31. Ministry of Women Affairs, Report of the Strategy Review for the years (2011-2013)

32. Ibid

33. Sharif, Maher, State of Development in Palestine, http://www.ppp.ps/ar_page.php?id=15e6dc3y22965699Y15e6dc3

making has not improved significantly (both quantitatively and qualitatively and in terms of the nature and quality of women's positions). The limited interventions implemented have not bridged the existing policy gap and no mechanisms have been developed to ensure women's ascension to decision-making positions or employment in government institutions. There was weak follow-up of institutions concerned with ensuring representation of women in all relevant policy-making committees in official and civil institutions. Finally, other reasons for this may include weak development opportunities, weak human resources management policies applied in the public sector, non-serious approaches by political parties to implement their programs and slogans for increasing leadership role of women in these parties.

Considerations for women's political participation and leadership

- Reconsider existing policies in terms of their effectiveness in achieving this strategic objective
- Research and develop non-stereotyped tools, mobilization programs and affirmative action measures to bridge the gap, such as a policy that states that "the priority of appointments and promotions is for women" and propose to design a five to ten year campaign to bridge the gender gap in politics and decision making positions
- Develop media policies, means of high technologies and innovative tools, such as social media, art and theater, and in schools and universities (sustainable rather than seasonal) to help change the stereotype
- Develop qualitative research and analysis
- Develop qualitative indicators not only quantitative indicators that focus on the participation of women as a number at the expense of force to influence and reflect the interests of women and marginalized groups at the decision-making table

Women's economic empowerment and rights

Activation of economic participation is the outcome of a coherent and complementary network of policies, and an outcome of programs and interventions. These policies require genuine changes to systems, laws and social and economic structures, and to plans and policies. A total of thirteen policies were developed of which two of them. MoWA's 2011-2013 strategy aimed to increase women's participation in the labor market through five policies:³⁴

- Taking legislative and executive measures to protect working women from all forms of discrimination in the workplace
- Creating employment opportunities and granting right to social security for unemployed women with 13 or more years of education
- Adopting a strategy for institutionalizing and integrating gender issues in economic-oriented ministries
- Pursuing a policy of incentives to increase women's participation in the labor market
- Ensuring legal social protection in both informal and household economics

Policies in the economic sphere have included "institutionalization and gender mainstreaming", in spite of setting a strategic objective for institutionalization, and policies do not address the private sector.

The objective of economic participation was included in the Ministry's 2014-2016 strategy which stated that "women's participation in the labor sector has increased" (it was drafted as an outcome) through three policies:³⁵

- Ensuring decent work for women working in public, private, domestic and international sectors operating in Palestine
- Ensuring availability of work opportunities for women
- Increasing competitiveness of women's products and associations at the national, regional and global levels

In the 2017-2022 cross-sectoral plan, the objective of economic participation was expressed in the form of "enhancing participation of women in the economic sector" which included five policies:³⁶

- Promoting decent work standards for women public, private, domestic and international sectors operating in Palestine
- Adopting simulative and protective legislation for small enterprises and working women
- Empowering women entrepreneurs and persons with disabilities for needed funding and expertise
- Increasing competitiveness of women's products organizations at the national, regional and global levels
- Developing a vocational, technical education and training system, which will have to be organized and effective in supporting the labor market with skilled and semi-skilled labor of both sexes

34. Ibid. p.5

35. National Cross-sectoral Strategy Document for Promoting Gender Equality and Equity and Empowerment of Women (2017- 2022), p. 40. <https://www.mowa.pna.ps>

36. National Cross-sectoral Strategy Document for Promoting Gender Equality and Equity and Empowerment of Women (2011- 2013), p. 36. <https://www.mowa.pna.ps>

Although a set of interventions was implemented for women's economic empowerment, this policy was not achieved. For example, PCBS statistics revealed that: women's participation in the labor force was 10.3 percent in 2001 and 19 percent in 2017. The unemployment rate was 32.9 percent for females in 2012 and 47.4 percent in 2017. These figures indicate the limited ability of proposed policies to bridge the gender gap in the labor market. The main structural reasons behind the weak economic participation of women in particular, and the increase in unemployment rates for men and women alike, are due to the fragility and weakness of the Palestinian economy and malfunctioning of the economic structure at the national level.

The results of the focus group discussions and individual interviews also noted that "employers still prefer to employ men to avoid granting maternity leave and breastfeeding breaks to young mothers" and "men are socially treated as breadwinners, compared to the perception of women and young women as "helping the husband or household head" and not as breadwinner." Also, the right to work is a human right, whether for male or female, and the role of the state policies is to promote and protect this right for both sexes. Woman's employment is not considered important by an employer. Meanwhile, proposed policies between 2011-2016 like decent work and increasing income through small project are unable to contribute to the creation/guarantee of employment opportunities in light of high rates of unemployment and the decline in the performance of the national economy in general, especially for the younger group of women and men. As for the increased competitiveness of products and the granting of incentive and small projects policies. They are still limited or intangible or almost non-existent in the labor market.

When reviewing the 2011-2013 plan, the indicators noted that participation rate of women in the organized sector increased from 7 to 8 percent, while participation of women in the labor market increased from 15.7 to 17.4 percent. The review of the 2014-2016 plan indicated that no decent work legislation³⁷ was enacted and the capacity building program was not completed nor was additional support provided to the Directorate General for Inspections and Labor Administration. The review stressed that there were limited awareness campaigns implemented within the context of decent work for women because of lack of guidance materials and sufficient number of workers in the programs. The review noted that official and private institutions, funding institutions and international institutions progressed in some areas related to the provision of training and capital to create projects for women which contributed to the creation of employment opportunities. However, there was no relevant data about the income women achieved and if the employment opportunities were temporary or sustainable.

Considerations for women's economic empowerment and rights

- Proposing a policy that considers women and men equal income earners (dual earners) with interventions that allow for restructuring of prevailing social and cultural systems and structures towards women's work. The current socio-economic changes demonstrate that women are breadwinners and contribute to the reproduction process of the family through their economic role, both formally and informally. The results of the focused discussion groups and individual interviews demonstrate that there are contradictory attitudes. We see "changes or transformations in the society. When a young man searches for a life partner, he or his family looks for a young working woman. Sometimes they prefer a permanent job, especially in the public, or education sector, seen as a stereotypical sector that enables women to match their reproductive and productive roles"³⁸
- Initiating an in-depth review on economic and monetary policies and their impact on women, marginalized groups and low-income people
- Working on the policy of trade union organization, the collective cooperative action policy and the policy of real tax exemptions, as well as the amendment of the economy and investment laws to benefit women

Social development and women's protection from violence

Social protections reflect changes and developments that have occurred in the legal, economic and political structures. They also reflect the extent and progress of society. The gender gap in this theme and in the social sector needs urgent interventions to stop discrimination and violations against women, as well as strategic interventions to create a qualitative shift in social status and gender roles. The Palestinian government has expressed its commitment to ensure that women enjoy equal rights with men, and that Palestinian legislation protects women from all forms of violence. A total of thirty five policies were designed between 2011 and 2017.

37. Examples of policies under the strategic objective of women economic participation in CSNGS 2014-2016: guarantee the decent work for women in the public, NGOs and international organization in Palestine, guarantee job opportunity for women, increasing the competition capabilities for women's and women's association productions while the 2011-2013 CSNGS included five policies: 1. Taking the all executive and legislation procedures which guarantee women's worker from all of discriminations in the working places. 2. Taking all of suitable procedures to save job opportunities and social pensions system for women who suffer from unemployment and having more than 13 years in education. 3. A adopting a motivation policy to help in increase women participation in the labor market. 4. Adopting a strategy for gender mainstream in the related ministries to the economic fields. 5. Guarantee the legal social protection for women in the informal and household economy.

38. Individual interview (A. J.) on 25/7/2018

The Palestinian government publicly expressed its commitment to ensure that women entitled to equal rights through Palestinian laws and legislation which affirms protecting women against all forms of violence by imposing punitive measures. This commitment manifested when the President signed the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and annulment of certain articles of the [Palestinian] Penal Code including the so-called honor killings, as well as the constitution of the National Committee against Violence, the adoption of the National Strategy against Violence (2011-2019), and the formation of the National Committee for Resolution 1325. The 2017-2022 National Development Plan reaffirms the commitment of the Government and its partners to strive for protecting women from all forms of violence through a comprehensive revision of all legislation in force in Palestine to guarantee rights of women and ensure that policies and plans developed by public institutions are non-discriminatory and do not tolerate violence committed against women.

The objective of combating violence against women is include in the 2011-2013 MoWA strategy calling to “reduce rate of violence against women in all its forms” through a single policy aimed at protecting women from all forms of domestic and sexual violence through deterrent laws and procedures.³⁹ The objective of combating violence against women was included in MoWA’s 2014-2016 strategy as the number two target “Violence against Palestinian women in all its forms has decreased.” This was to be achieved through four policie:⁴⁰

- “Ensuring women’s access to justice”
- “Developing social services for battered and vulnerable women”
- “Exposing Israeli abuses against women (areas C, Jerusalem, residency, female prisoners and persons with disabilities)”
- “Promoting a community culture against violence”.

The same objective was mentioned in MoWA’s 2017-2022 strategy as the main objective calling for “reducing by half the rate of all forms of violence against Palestinian women” through eight policies:⁴¹

- “Ensuring women’s access to justice and accountability of offenders”
- “Development of social, educational, health, policing and judicial services for survivors”
- “Enacting local laws and regulations that limit violence”
- “Provision of economic and living conditions necessary to support the steadfastness of Palestinian women and girls under occupation”
- “Accountability of Israel in the current security situation, internationally and nationally, for its crimes against Palestinian women and girls”
- “Building institutional capacity for monitoring and documentation mechanisms for the enforcement of decisions”
- “Supporting community initiatives in promoting community culture against violence”
- “Creating mechanisms for accountability and follow-up of informal justice”.

The 2011-2019 national strategic plan to combat violence against women consists of six strategic objectives and 19 policies, including six policies listed in the sixth objective of the strategy on community culture. The objective aimed at changing societal attitudes towards violence against women by strengthening the principle of prevention. The strategy was developed to address and deal with the issue of violence against women at the national level in a holistic perspective that consider all factors affecting violence such as culture, legislation and laws, protection services, procedures, institutional structures, processing and exchange of information and networking with all relevant parties.⁴²

The results of the review of the reports indicate that there is a limited impact of efforts made by the Government and its partners, civil society, the private sector and international institutions, to combat violence against women. Violence against women and girls remains an urgent issue that needs further efforts, foremost among which is the political will to pass and enforce proposed laws, legislation and procedures and allocation of financial resources to them from the State budget.

The 2011-2013 review report noted that the first indicator of the percentage of survivors attending women centers

39. National Cross-sectoral Strategy Document for Promoting Gender Equality and Equity and Empowerment of Women (2011- 2013), p. 5

40. National Cross-sectoral Strategy Document for Promoting Gender Equality and Equity and Empowerment of Women(2011- 2013), p. 39

41. Plan (2011-2013) and Plan (2014-2016) included some objectives relating to justice and empowerment of Jerusalemite women and empowerment of women to enjoy family law and civil rights guaranteeing equality and justice, greater protection of women’s health and women’s access to basic services without discrimination by focusing on marginalized areas and groups adapted to gender needs. The objectives included policies on domestic and international legal and mobilization measures to protect the rights of women, especially the sacred ones, such as mobility and residence. The strategy (2017-2022) included the fifth objective, which was intended to improve the quality of life of poor and marginalized households, which includes 8 policies related to education, water and energy services, infrastructure development for working women, quality health services, postnatal services, Sexual and reproductive health. The objective was a culture policy: to enable youth and cultural institutions and clubs in all cities, villages and camps to provide services to boys and girls, creative men and women, and creative and sports enthusiasts.

42. Document of the National Plan for the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325: Women, Peace and Security, Palestine (2017-2019), p. 12

or institutions for consultation dropped from 1.7 to 0.7 percent. The percentage of women who were married and experienced all forms of domestic violence declined from 30 to 27 percent. The percentage of women who have never been married and experienced all forms of domestic violence dropped from 50 to 45 percent.

The Plan Review Report (2014-2016) noted that the implementation of several interventions, such as the Ministry of Justice's preparation of a gender-sensitive complaints system in institutions and ministries ensuring women's access to justice. The Women's Legal and Social Counseling Center (WCLAC) worked on reviewing laws and identifying legal gaps which amount to violation of women's rights and are not commensurate with the international conventions signed by the State of Palestine, especially CEDAW, such as the Family Protection Act against Violence and Personal Status Law, the Penal Code and the Social Security Law. The Center published legal papers showing gaps in regulating laws. Regarding the policy of developing social services for survivors and vulnerable women, the review noted that interventions implemented by the Ministry of Social Affairs and other civil society organizations contributed to relative progress though there is still a gap in certain aspects of the policy, particularly those related to the enactment of legislation and policies related to the protection of women, provision of resources for the protection and rehabilitation, and provision of legal assistance for critical cases.

As far as exposure of violations related to women's violence is concerned, the policy included working trends related to strengthening national efforts in presenting the case of released women prisoners and prisoners in all relevant international forums and providing all forms of political, economic and moral support to prisoners and their families, especially women. This policy focuses on supporting all women in Area C in having full access to Palestinian citizenship through legal aid and support to protect the rights of women living in Jerusalem and in Area C. Although women's agencies and the Ministry of Prisoners' Affairs have achieved a lot⁴³ of what was achieved remains limited compared to violations in the policy which persists.

Regarding the policy of promoting community culture against violence, the policy is generally linked to the development of community awareness towards violence reduction and reporting by raising awareness of active agencies and citizens in general, and women in particular.

Considerations for social development and women's protection from violence

There is a continued need to consolidate and better coordinate efforts related to ending violence against women

Resolution 1325 should be associated to ongoing national efforts to implement sectoral and cross-sectoral strategies for gender equality and justice for the period 2017-2022. Resolution items related Palestinians should be advanced along with efforts made by the United Nations in cooperation and networking and alliance with international organizations working in **this area**

Women's access to justice and public services

The above objective was included in the Cross-Sectoral Strategy for Equality, Equity and Women's Empowerment for the period 2017-2022. It has eight policies⁴⁴ on:

- Early education
- Enrollment in schools
- Enrollment of persons with disabilities in schools
- Reduction of dropout in secondary school, especially males
- Development of facilities for persons with disabilities; access to water and energy services at appropriate and regular prices
- Development of an appropriate infrastructure for women workers in security apparatus, ministries and government institutions
- Empowerment of youth clubs and cultural centers, for the provision of sports services and physical activities for boys and girls
- Measures for marginalized groups and areas access for quality health services, access to postnatal services, diet and sexual and reproductive health services

In evaluating the Ministry's strategy for the period 2014-2016, regarding this objective, which stipulated that "women have access to all basic services without discrimination, that women have access to health and education services to a good degree" the following was recommended:

43. Ibid

44. The cross-sectoral strategy to promote gender equality and justice and empowerment of women (2017-2022), led by the Ministry of Women's Affairs.

- Gather information and prepare participatory qualitative research with these groups directly to identify their needs from their own point of view
- Coordinate with local authorities and municipalities, especially in remote areas located on the outskirts of governorates, and those adjacent to the separation barrier or Bedouin communities, as the latter are the most able to reach these groups, and usually have a thorough knowledge of the conditions of the population of these communities
- To meeting the needs of these groups, it is necessary to develop funding policies and allocate budgets from the general budget of the government otherwise these activities will remain useless for the poor and the marginalized

Considerations for women's access to justice and public services

- Develop policies for water and electricity services directly with companies that provide these services
- Develop an accountability system and policy for each ministry and government body regarding their commitment to implement
- Review and analyze policies designed and implemented show a policy gap in official information and media, infrastructure, technology, tourism and archeology, arts and literature, environment, youth and sports, cash, investment and property

General lessons

- It is essential to maintain the priority strategic objectives in which unmet objectives and results persist. This includes violence against women, participation in political life and decision-making positions, women's economic development and empowerment, women's access to services without discrimination. The strategic objective of institutionalizing and mainstreaming gender in the government apparatus is particularly important because it intersects and affects all service development sectors.
- The 2017-2022 strategy⁴⁵ is comprehensive and ambitious. An example of this is the first objective: "Violence against women in all its forms has been reduced by half." However, the policies associated with it were not based on in-depth qualitative analysis. What is available is digital statistics covering the period since the implementation of the PCBS Domestic Violence Survey in 2011. The causes and cycles of violence are complex and intertwined. They intersect with all aspects of the political, economic and cultural life of the population. The plan has high expectations with more than 300 policy interventions in all areas of development. It is recommended that it is endorsed as a framework until 2030, with the importance of reviewing policies, developing clear agreed implementation plans and structuring a follow-up and evaluation system to measure achievements of the plan and its impact on the quantitative and qualitative status of women.
- The government, civil society and international organizations have contributed to the implementation of policy interventions with civil society activities focused on awareness raising, capacity building, exchange of experience and networking, law and legislative reviews, lobbying and protection campaigns (in partnership with relevant authorities), documenting women's experiences, working on programs in political and economic empowerment, humanitarian relief work, grant and microcredit programs for women and cooperatives, small farmers and growers, small producers and producers, and targeting the agricultural sector and rural and remote areas, Area C and highly marginalized areas.
- The Justice Sector (Judicial Council, Ministry of Justice and the Public Prosecution) recorded a significant achievement through the *Sawasiya* program funded by the UNDP. This achievement can be documented and disseminated to benefit from it. Process and structure in the field of justice and the elimination of discrimination by focusing on detailed operational systems and procedures, and not only on laws in general. As results showed, detailed executive procedures would be an obstacle to the implementation of general laws even if they provide or include non-discriminatory laws.
- Civil society organizations in the Gaza Strip, in particular women's organizations working on issues of protecting women from violence, have documented patterns of work which have enabled them to make a difference in the lives of some of women in the prevailing political system in the Gaza Strip through cooperation and coordination to protect women and girls victims of social violence.
- Information dissemination and access to different plans, services and interventions intended for women, marginalized groups and the poor are important.

45. National Cross-Sectoral Strategy Document to Promote Equality, Justice and Empowerment of Women (2017-2022) p. 39

Moving Forward

The following summarizes the main elements of progress made over the past decade toward gender equality through effective policy development as reflected in the report. The report then highlights the key areas where improvement is essential for further progress along with short-term targeted recommendations for moving forward (for broader political level policy recommendations see Annex V).

Progress to date

- The Palestinian Government and its leadership have made positive strides in elevating the issue of gender equality and women's rights in its agenda. There are formal commitments made to international normative frameworks, national strategies, policies and statistical data gathering to promote this issue. While it is largely rhetoric and symbolic than substantive, it does create space and resources to take forward practical initiatives. However, the result to date is very limited impact on the status of Palestinian women. Reports, studies, statistical data and interviews indicate that women and girls encounter systemic structural obstacles toward the realization of their civil and human rights⁴⁶
- The need to end violence against women in Palestine is probably the one issue that progressed in the last decade especially for improved access to services and a shift in the national dialogue on the topic. Policies endorsed in the National Strategy to Combat Violence against Women (2011 – 2019) and the National Action Plan for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 (2017 – 2019) intersect with strategic objectives and policies incorporated in MoWA's cross-sectoral gender strategies. These two documents encompass comprehensive detailed plans for broader policies in the areas protection, violence against women and women's political leadership and participation
- MoWA, in partnership with the women's civil society organizations, has played a critical role in bringing gender equality, women's empowerment and social justice to the forefront of the government's agenda including pushing through new and adapted policies
- The period of 2010-2017 witnessed considerable improvement in institutionalizing gender and human rights in the national planning process including applying a participatory approach, institutionalization of procedures, content development and reconfiguring planning documents. Notwithstanding these attainments,⁴⁷ various reports indicate that additional criterion are required in order to further generate benchmarks including specialized expertise in policy development, costing, and monitoring and oversight mechanisms to track and measure change, and coherence and networking with relevant sectors

Recommendations

Cross cutting structural changes required for gender integration

The report highlighted three critical challenges that cut across gender policy related efforts within the Ministries. The first is the establishment of the Gender Units which in theory could be a core feature for institutionalizing gender. They were established within government to ensure mainstreaming, and to scrutinize and follow up government programs and policies from a gender perspective. The report noted⁴⁸ that there is disparity among the Units including the level of their influence, technical capacity and access to resources, and they are often excluded from the decision-making bodies within the ministries. Additionally, the report noted that fiscal austerity is often used as a pretext for the lack of resource support toward integrating gender equality through the government. While in fact, gender budgeting is a demonstrated way for the PA to promote equality through fiscal policy; thereby, helping during austerity rather than an excuse to not support gender equality. Gender budgeting is a useful tool to aid the Ministry of Finance by addressing economic losses. Finally, inconsistent and shifting definitions create confusion and allow for individual interpretation. Also, gender policy processes need to be standardized across strategies and time. Three recommendations include:

Revamp the Gender Units: MoWA should lead a substantive reflection and review exercise on the Gender Units and determine a path forward. The challenges presented have been debated repeatedly as have the calls for more training, resources and authority in their respective ministries. However, this approach continues to be ineffective.

46. Ministry of Women's Affairs. Strategic Review Report 2014-2016. Ramallah- Palestine.

47. Cross Sectorial Gender Strategy plans (2011-2013, 2014-2016, 2017-2022), VAW Strategy 2011-2019

48. Focus group discussion held on 6/9/2018 with the representatives of the Gender Units

Given this reality, is there another more effective path, structure or approach? The exercise needs to answer this question and develop a plan of action moving forward.

Introduce Gender Budgeting: MoWA can explore a partnership with UN Women (with possible EU support as it does for this in other countries) how it can introduce this tool to analyze the budget's differing impacts on men and women, and allocate funds accordingly as well as set targets to direct funds to achieve such results.

Establish standardized definitions and procedures: MoWA can lead the process for establishing standardized definition of concepts related to gender equality and its accompanying policy processes and procedures including sequencing of cross sector policy development.

Policy formulation

The report highlighted a number of challenges positioned within the realm of policy formulation. It is in essence the process by which policy makers answer the question: what is a solution to the problem identified. It is the process of identifying and analyzing a range of data and information to determine potential solutions. In addition to developing the policy, appropriate activities must be linked to ensure results through the full implementation process. Five challenges were noted repeatedly in this area for which three recommendations are suggested:

- Reliance on 'top-down' approach which undercuts effective formulation because of the absence of genuine participation by relevant individuals and groups especially considering the increasing geographical fragmentation of Palestine
- Insufficient gender analysis of data and information in the formulation process
- Implementation did not occur because there were insufficient specificities in the in the supporting interventions failing to address: who, what, where, when and how
- The same activities are repeated in each subsequent strategy, but the objective is still not achieved
- The policy is adopted but not implemented because there are insufficient resources to do so.

Incorporate a bottom-up approach: MoWA, through partnership with CSOs, can utilize a tested participatory approach that is suitable for the Palestinian context and ensures appropriate levels of input and is applied consistently in all gender related policy development.

Cultivate gender policy analysis expertise: MoWA, through partnership with GPI, can review and prioritize core areas requiring gender analysis as well as build national capacities and expertise to conduct that analysis. This will enable modifications to current policies which are not bringing about results, and contribute to stronger policy formulation, and eventually full and effective implementation.

Reassess causal linkages between strategic outputs and outcomes: The large number of unimplemented policies and repeated activities/interventions without results indicates that there is some sort of disconnect between the outputs and outcomes. Using the theory of change or similar tool, test the causal links between activities and policies in the recent cross sector strategy at its midterm review as a useful starting point.

Policy adoption

In the decision making process, political will is essential to promulgation. Political will is the critical component for translating commitments to tangible results: Need to shift from rhetoric to practice. The rhetoric or discourse on gender equality is reflected in the highest echelons of government including in the National Policy Agenda (2017–2022). However, the action remains limited. While the State of Palestine acceded to the CEDAW Convention in 2014 and submitted the State's party report, it is not yet clear if it will act on recommendations. While there is the Declaration of Independence and the Palestinian Basic Law guaranteeing equal right between women and men and securing women's rights, the Personal Status Law and Penal Code continue to not fulfill these commitments. These are just a few examples highlighting the gap between symbolic support and genuine action.

Develop CEDAW plan of action to implement report recommendations: MoWA can formulate and lead a coalition to support implementation of CEDAW report recommendations with a deadline of the next periodic report. It should work in partnership to establish accountability mechanism for this process to hold itself and other PA entities accountable.

Policy implementation and M&E

The policy implementation occurs over a span of time and phases; it's the set of activities that need to be carried out to achieve the policy enacted. Initially, it is necessary to establish a responsible team to lay the groundwork. Following are periods of exploration, testing and piloting activities. Only then is a roll out plan designed with feedback loops, systems of data collection and M&E processes in place. Ideally full implementation will result over the intended time frame. The report noted the following repeated challenges with respect to implementation:

- Teams and coalitions were formulated at the beginning policy stages, but then were never tasked with responsibility for any follow through or accountability throughout the processes of implementation stages
- In order to strengthen efforts for gender equality, communication mechanisms among national institutions and organizations require improvement. Mechanisms for an agreed upon feedback loop are essential to connect efforts and measure impact on a macro level and at the activity level. Several positive examples exist including the Higher National Committee for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 (government) and the National Coalition for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 (civil society). Each of these bodies includes representatives from the other who play a central role in ensuring a feedback loop exists for communication, exchange of information and reports among all partners
- There is largely an absence of data collection relevant to monitoring policies in place. PCBS is the primary agency collecting data but their purpose is statistical rather than analytical. There is a need for more in depth, consistent and standardized approach for gender analysis
- Availability of and access to information is essential for planning, documentation, monitoring and evaluation. As gender equality, women's rights and social justice are the responsibility of the whole of government, the ultimate body responsible for ensuring proper reporting and access to information remains with the Office of the Prime Minister. While MoWA has developed tools and mechanisms for national reporting including the establishment of the National Observatory on Violence against Women, further measure are required for measuring
- M&E processes are largely absent and require a standardized approach as well in line with the data collection; both of which feedback into the system of monitoring whether policies are being implemented successfully or not and why

Standard approach for feedback loop: MoWA, in partnership with GPI and PCBS, can develop a feedback loop mechanism to ensure a consistent flow and exchange of information throughout the policy implementation processes including M&E.

Establish M&E department in MoWA: M&E unit within MoWA can work on systemization of data collection and identifying the responsibilities of different stakeholders/actors. Strengthening M&E has the potential of improve implementation and reach policy results, and then feedback into evidence-based planning. MoWA, as a first step, has identified a team of 4-6 staff to follow-up on the implementation of current strategies. However, the staff requires further support in capacity building.

Conclusion

The dominant discourse and the centrality of issues of equality and women's empowerment are the essential responsibilities of MoWA, the broader gender machinery and civil society organizations mandated to work on women's rights. However, unless gender equality and women's rights become central to the work of the whole of government, there will continue to be limited progress for effective and full gender related policy implementation. The lack of enforcement of laws, legislations, strategies and policies for gender equality and women's rights highlight the persistent perception these are merely 'women's issues' and not of paramount concern to society at large.

Annexes

Annex I

General statistics related to the status of women

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) is increasingly tracking data on women and girls and ensuring it presents its data disaggregated by age and sex. The following summarizes some basic facts relevant to the status of women and girls according to data collected for reports in 2018:

Half of the Palestinian society is female and the gender ratio is 103.3 percent (103 males for every 100 females). It also indicates that female-headed households comprised 10.6 percent of Palestinian households in 2017 (11.2 percent in the West Bank and 9.5 percent in the Gaza Strip). Furthermore, statistics show that 20 percent of Palestinian females married at an early age (under 18). The rate of early marriage for females was 20.5 percent compared to 1.0 percent for males and in the West Bank, this percentage was 19.9 percent of the total number of married women, while in the Gaza Strip it was 21.6 percent of the total number in 2016.

According to PCBS, the Palestinian society is a young one, where by mid-2017, individuals under 15 years of age constituted 38.9 percent of the total population (39.1 percent males and 38.7 percent females). The youth aged 15-29 account for 29.7 percent, the elderly (65 years and over) 2.9 percent of the total Palestinian population (43.9 percent men and 56.1 percent women). The percentage of divorced women was 1.8 percent compared to 0.3% for males and widows / separated was 5.9 percent compared to 0.6 percent for males.

In terms of education, although statistics indicate that women continue to progress in literacy, there is still a gap in favor of males amounting to 3.0 percent, with female literacy rate at 95.6 percent compared to 98.6 percent for males in 2017. Data shows that the gross enrollment rates for males in secondary school reached 60.5 percent compared to 80.4 percent for females, in the academic year 2016/2017.

In terms of participation in the labor market, data indicate that there is a gap in the participation rate in the labor force and the daily wage rate among women and men. The percentage of female participation in the labor force reached 19.0 percent of the total working-age females in 2017 compared to 10.3 percent. The percentage of male participation stood at 71.2 percent in 2017. As far as the daily wage gap between females and males is considered, the average daily wage for females was 84.6 Israeli shekels compared to 119.6 shekels in 2017. On unemployment rate among women and men aged 15 years and over, half of females in this age group were unemployed, whereas the rate of unemployment among females participating in the labor force was 47.4 percent compared 22.3 percent for males. Among those 15-29, 65.8 percent of young women were unemployed. Unemployment among women with 13 or more years of education was 53.8 percent of total women in this group.

In terms of participation in public life and in decision-making positions, 21.2 percent of members of local councils in the West Bank are females compared to 78.8 percent in 2017, 82.7 percent of judges are males, compared to 17.3 percent females, while 66.6 percent of practicing lawyers are men compared to 33.4 percent females. Meanwhile 82.0 percent of prosecutors were men compared to 18.0 percent females in 2016. The percentage of Palestinian women ambassadors did not exceed 5.8 percent compared to 94.2 percent for males. Furthermore, 32 percent of engineers registered in the Palestine Engineers Association are women compared 67.7 percent men, while about 12.4 percent of members of the Student Council in the West Bank universities are females compared to 87.6 percent of males. In the meantime, 42.7 percent of employees in the civil public sector are females compared to 57.3 percent males. In the civil sector, females constitute 11.3 percent of the total general managers, compared to 88.7 percent of males.

Half of the Palestinian society is female



- 103 males for every 100 females
- Female-headed households 10.6%
- Early marriage for females was 20.5%

The Palestinian society is a young one



- Under 15 years 38.9%
- 15-29 years 29.7%
- 65 and over 2.9%

women continue to progress in literacy



- Literacy rate: 95.6% for female to 98.6% for male

Gap in the participation rate in the labor force and wage rate among women and men



- Participation in the labor force: Femal 19.0% - male 71.2%
- Average daily wage, in shekels: Femal 84.6 - male 119.6
- Unemployment rate: Femal 47.4% - male 22.3%

participation in public life and in decision-making positions



- Members of local councils: Femal 21.2% - male 78.8%
- Judges: Femal 17.3% - male 82.7%
- Civil sector general managers: Femal 11.3% - male 88.7%

Annex I I

Vision and conceptual framework of the planning process

The Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) current Cross-Sectoral National Gender Strategy (CSNGS) (2017-2022), is implemented by the Ministry in partnership with civil society organizations, international organizations and others. The strategy envisions a "Palestinian society in which men, women, girls and boys enjoy equal rights and opportunities in both public and private spheres."⁴⁹ The strategy is to be realized through five strategic objectives, 30 policies and 300 policy interventions which are proposed to be implemented by the end of 2022. The plan defined the terms of empowerment of women, equality between men and women and justice⁵⁰ to provide a guiding conceptual framework. However, those terms were not elaborated, nor their purpose defined, in both the public and private spheres, as was reflected in the vision.

The CSNGS **defines gender** as "*the differentiation between men and women associated with the roles, responsibilities and opportunities of women or men, as derived from local concepts and cultures, and not by biological aspects.*"⁵¹ According to UN Women, gender refers to "*the roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society at a given time considers appropriate for men and women. In addition to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, gender also refers to the relations between women and those between men.*"⁵²

The strategy **defines women's empowerment** as "*women are able to manage their lives in a way that enables them to achieve the values and goals they believe in and to be self-reliant and to take decisions or to influence - collectively or individually - issues that affect their lives. Empowerment in general is a process that results from an environment that ensures these values and helps to create a favorable outlook that in the long-term provides women and men with necessary resources, knowledge, and right of expression, political representation and organizational capacity.*"⁵³ The Strategy **defines equality between women and men** as "*all human beings, male and female, are free to develop their own abilities and capacities and to choose the way they conduct their own lives without any gender-related constraints.*" The definition continues, "*This does not mean that women and men are alike, rather this means that they are equal in opportunities, responsibilities and roles. Moreover, this also means equity in opportunities available for them to conduct their lives and have access to social-value goods and resources, and the freedom to utilize them. To realize this, it is sometimes necessary to empower groups with limited means, to have access to, or to advance resources.*"⁵⁴ Finally, the strategy **defines justice**, which generally means "*equity in dealing with men and women, each according to their own needs. This may also include equal treatment or differential treatment. However, this shall be exercised in a manner that guarantees equality in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and available opportunities. Meanwhile, in the context of development, achieving equality between women and men requires constructive measures, which compensate for historical and social deprivation of women.*"⁵⁵

Methodology for preparing strategic plans to promote gender equality (CSNGS 2017 – 2022)

The cross-sectoral national gender strategy is designed to promote gender equality, justice and empowerment of women. The national planning processes are commissioned by the Palestinian Council of Ministers, which decides and announces the start of the planning process at the national level, as part of the preparation of the National Development Plan, consisting of various sectoral plans (18), and cross-sectoral plans (including 3 plans for women, youth and environment).⁵⁶ The methodology for preparing the CSNGS is based on a participatory approach of which the below stakeholders participated:

1. The Ministry of Women's Affairs leads the preparation process for the development of the cross-sectoral national gender strategy. For this purpose, a national team of technical experts was formed for its preparation.
2. Representatives of ministries and government⁵⁷ entities (mainly gender units) and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics(PCBS).⁵⁸

49. Palestinian Ministry of Women's Affairs (2017), National Cross-Sectoral Strategy for Promoting Gender Equality, Justice and the Empowerment of Women (2017-2022), p.29.

50. Ibid, p. 8

51. Ibid, p. 8

52. UN Women, Gender Equality Glossary, See: <https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/mod/glossary/view.php?id=36&mode=letter&hook=G>

53. Palestinian Ministry of Women's Affairs (2017), "National Cross-Sectoral Strategy for Promoting Gender Equality, Justice and the Empowerment of Women" 2017-2022, p.8

54. Ibid, p. 8

55. Ibid, p. 8

56. Number of cross-sectoral and sectoral strategies for national planning for 2017-2022

57. Palestinian Ministry of Women's Affairs, 2017, National Cross-Sectoral Strategy for Promoting Gender Equality, Justice and the Empowerment of Women 2017-2022, p.14

58. The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) began participating in the national planning team for the development of cross-sectoral national gender strategies in 2014.

3. Representatives of civil society organizations,⁵⁹ mainly women's and human rights organizations, including representatives of women's federations, unions and coalitions. The Ministry of Women's Affairs decides which expertise, institutions and federations, unions and coalitions form the national planning team. Female representatives of Tawasol Centers⁶⁰ were involved in some workshops held for the preparation of the CSNGS (2017-2022).
4. Representatives from the private sector (weak or non-existent participation).⁶¹
5. International organizations: The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), as the United Nations entity specialized in the field of gender equality, supports MoWA's technical team through the recruitment of experts and specialists. On a parallel level, MoWA held consultations with many international organizations active in the area of women's human rights.⁶²

Palestinians in the Gaza Strip did not participate in the preparation of two cross-sectoral national gender strategies, specifically the CSNGS's developed for 2011-2013 and 2014-2017, however, they were involved in the preparation of the 2017-2022 CSNGS where a few workshops were held during the preparation process.

During the preparation process for the development of the CSNGS (2017-2022), the MoWA held 30 workshops⁶³ with various partners. Gender gaps were deliberated in the various sectoral strategies; 20 problems/issues were identified and the top five were classified as priority areas and were designed as strategic objectives. It is important to note that the Palestinian Ministry of Finance and Planning (MoFP) announces the methodology for the preparation of sectoral and cross-sectoral strategies through circulars with a Guide for the Preparation of Sectoral and Cross-Sectoral Plans⁶⁴ containing technical and administrative procedures and instructions for the plan's preparation.

According to an interview with a technical advisor who participated in the development of the CSNGS, cross-sectoral planning should be first completed, followed by sectoral planning to incorporate approved priorities and policies of cross-sectoral plans into sectoral plans.⁶⁵ According to interviews conducted, the strategic plans and degree of commitment were weakened because of confusion of concepts. Moreover, there were varying interpretations on the role of government institutions and entities to implement; some understood that it was mandatory to implement endorsed plans while others viewed priorities as a guide for government, civil society, international organizations and donors for the coming years. The Ministry of Finance and Planning determines a number of programs and their financial ceiling in consultation and coordination with relevant ministries. These programs are then approved as work plans for each ministry/government body and subsequently receive budgets accordingly. The diagram below illustrates the 'top down' hierarchy of the planning process.



59. Palestinian Ministry of Women's Affairs, 2017, National Cross-Sectoral Strategy for Promoting Gender Equality, Justice and the Empowerment of Women 2017-2022, p.14

60. The Tawasol Centers were established in coordination between the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Provincial Affairs Office at the President's Office, with direct support of the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation. One of its objectives is to provide decision makers with a database to enable them build strategies based on the concept of gender, and to contribute to changing stereotypical image of women and their roles in society in all fields. See Ministry of Women's Affairs: www.mowa.pna.ps/mechanisms-tools/65.html

61. It is clear from the review of the national team preparing the cross-sectoral national gender strategy (2017-2022) that the team does not include any male or female representatives of the private sector (p. 61) http://www.mowa.gov.ps/img/20181129_08_5713_5.pdf

62. Palestinian Ministry of Women's Affairs, 2017, National Cross-Sectoral Strategy for Promoting Gender Equality, Justice and the Empowerment of Women 2017-2022, p.8

63. Ibid, p.6

64. Palestinian Ministry of Finance and Planning, 2016, Guide for the Preparation of Sectoral and Cross-Sectoral Plans (available in hard-copy)

65. An interview with a technical advisor who participated in the preparation of the (2017-2022) CSNGS

Completion of the preparation of strategic strategies

The responsibilities of the national and technical planning teams (at the ministerial level) culminates at the finalization of the strategies and these teams have no role in the post planning processes, such as monitoring and evaluation as well as tools or a system to collect information on achievements and indicators to track and measure achievements. The CSNGS is then used as reference for the development of programs and projects targeting women and men by certain civil society and international organizations. This was re-iterated and validated during a discussion held with civil society organizations for the purpose of this study. Representatives of civil society organizations shared that the CGNGS and other national strategies as reference for approval by relevant government ministries and for funding proposals as areas of proposed funding must be aligned to priorities identified in national strategies.⁶⁶ This indicates that strategies are a tool to channel both government and non-government funding.

National and international references as a basis for national policy-making

National and international references, treaties, covenants and conventions provide practical normative frameworks for the promotion of gender equality and women's rights. The references are a useful starting point for decision makers to formulate policies that potentially can result in a qualitative shift in power relations within Palestinian society. Moreover, these references offer an accountability tool that actors and institutions active in the field of women's rights and gender (rights-holders) can use to hold the Palestinian Government (duty-bearers) institutions accountable for their commitments to the implementation of international treaties and conventions and the impact on gender relations in the Palestinian context. The most important of these references include:

References ⁶⁷	
Palestinian Declaration of Independence	The Palestinian Declaration of Independence ensures full equality among all Palestinians, women and men, in exercising their civil rights and freedoms without discrimination. It explicitly states that: « <i>The State of Palestine is the state of Palestinians wherever they may be, to develop their national and cultural identity and enjoy full equality of rights. Political and religious convictions and human dignity will be safeguarded by means of a parliamentary democratic system of governance, itself based on freedom of opinion and freedom of association. The rights of minorities will duly be respected by the majority, as minorities must abide by decisions of the majority. Governance will be based on principles of social justice, equality and non-discrimination in the civil rights of men or women, on grounds of race, religion, color or sex, under the protection of a constitution which ensures the rule of law and an independent judiciary. These principles shall not allow departure from Palestine's age-old spiritual and civilizational heritage of tolerance and religious coexistence.</i> » The document also proclaims the commitment of the State of Palestine to « <i>the principles and purposes of the United Nations, and to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.</i> » ⁶⁸
The Palestinian Basic Law, amended in 2003 and then 2005	The amended Basic Law 2003 and then 2005, as well as its preamble, prohibits discrimination against women. It enshrines the equality of all Palestinians before the law and the judiciary without discrimination. Article (9) explicitly stipulated, « Palestinians shall be equal before the law and the judiciary, without distinction based upon race, sex, color, religion, political views or disability. » ⁶⁹ Moreover, Article (10) stipulates that « <i>1. Human rights and fundamental freedoms are binding and must be respected. 2. The Palestinian National Authority shall act without delay to accede to regional and international declarations and charters that protect human rights.</i> » ⁷⁰ Finally, Article (11) stipulates that, « <i>1. Personal freedom is a natural right and is guaranteed and not affected, etc....</i> » ⁷¹ « <i>The Law prohibits discrimination against women and upholds equality between women and men, including access to public office and international labor, in which the principles of supreme legal value that would render any legislation that does not comply with these principles shall be repealed and annulled by the Constitutional Court.</i> » ⁷²

66. Outcome of a focus discussion with civil society organizations on 14/8/2018

67. Palestinian Ministry of Women's Affairs, 2017, National Cross-Sectoral Strategy for Promoting Gender Equality, Justice and the Empowerment of Women" 2017-2022, pp. 10 – 14

68. Institute for Palestine Studies. See: https://www.palestine-studies.org/sites/default/files/Palestinian_declaration.pdf

69. State of Palestine, Palestinian Basic Law 2003 and amended 2005, Article 9. See: Palestine Legal Portal. See: https://www.bal.ps/law/basic_law.pdf

70. Ibid. Article (10)

71. Ibid. Article (11)

72. Palestinian Ministry of Women's Affairs, 2017, National Cross-Sectoral Strategy for Promoting Gender Equality, Justice and the Empowerment of Women 2017-2022, p.12

Palestinian Women's Rights Charter (2008)	The Charter, adopted by the President of the State of Palestine on 8 March 2008 and an initiative between a coalition of civil society organizations and the Ministry of Women's Affairs, stipulates the principle of equality between men and women in all civil, political, economic and social rights and prohibits discrimination against them. It was declared as a source to guide the enactment of legislation and development of relevant programs, plans and policies. ⁷³
Decision of the PLO Central Council	In March 2015, the Central Council of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) passed a resolution entitled «Achieving full equality for Palestinian women and enhancing their participation in the Palestine Liberation Organization and all institutions of the State of Palestine, and that women's participation shall not be less than 30%». ⁷⁴
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)	The State of Palestine acceded to the Convention on 2 May 2014 without any reservations. Article 8 of the Convention provides that States Parties shall "take all appropriate measures to ensure to women, on equal terms with men and without any discrimination, the opportunity to represent their Governments at the international level and to participate in the work of international organizations". ⁷⁵ This article is read in conjunction with the general context, objectives and other obligations of States parties, in particular their obligation to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and in particular to participate in formulating and implementing government policy, and holding public office and to perform all public functions at all levels of government (Art. 7), as well as their (State parties) commitment to take all appropriate measures aimed at the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women without delay, including enacting legislation and forming policies that promote gender equality and empowerment of women, and ensuring their practical implementation (Article 2). The Convention stipulates that State parties take temporary special measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality between men and women also (Article 4), as well as their commitment to change social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women (Article 5). The Convention also deliberates in Article 15 on equality before the law. ⁷⁶
Convention on the Political Rights of Women	The State of Palestine acceded to the Convention on the Political Rights of Women on 2 May 2014 without any reservations. Article 3 of the Convention provides that «Women shall be entitled to hold public office and to exercise all public functions, established by national law, on equal terms with men, without any discrimination. Women are entitled to hold public office and to exercise all public functions established under national legislation on equal terms with men without any discrimination». ⁷⁷
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	The State of Palestine acceded to the Covenant on 2 May 2014 without any reservations. The Covenant states in article III that «The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to ensure the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all civil and political rights set forth in the present Covenant». ⁷⁸
UN Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security	The UN Resolution 1325 states that "In 2000 the United Nation's Security Council recognized not only the particular effect conflict had on women but the need to include them as active stakeholders in conflict prevention and resolution." The Security Council passed Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (SCR 1325) emphasizing the need to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate gender sensitivity and include women in approaches on security and peace-building especially those affected by the conflict. • Sensitize peacekeepers, the police and judiciary on gender issues in conflict and adopt measures to ensure the protection and adherence to the human rights of women and girls. • Ensure that the special needs of women and girls in conflicts are attended to. • Support an increased role for women as military observers, civilian police, humanitarian and human rights observers. • Have women represented from communities who have experienced armed conflict to have their voices heard in conflict resolution processes and be a part of all decision-making levels as an equal partner for conflict resolution, prevention and sustainable peace.⁷⁹

73 General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW) and the Palestinian Ministry of Women's Affairs, 2008, See: http://www.pcdcr.org/arabic/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/women_rights.pdf

74 Palestinian News and Info Agency (WAFA), 2015, See: http://info.wafa.ps/ar_page.aspx?id=9570

75 United Nations, 1979, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, See: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/0360793A.pdf> and <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm>

76 Ibid. <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm>

77 United Nations, 1953, Convention on the Political Rights of Women, See: https://treaties.un.org/doc/Treaties/1954/07/19540707%2000-40%20AM/Ch_XVI_1p.pdf and for Arabic Minnesota: <http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/arab/b023.html>

78 <https://www.ohchr.org/ar/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CESCR.aspx>

79 <http://www.unesco.org/new/ar/social-and-human-sciences/themes/gender-equality/gender-peace-and-conflict/un-security-council-resolution-1325>

<p>General Assembly Resolution A/RES/66/130 19th December 2011</p>	<p>The Resolution calls upon all States to enhance the political participation of women, to accelerate the achievement of equality between men and women and, in all situations, including in situations of political transition, to promote and protect the human rights of women with respect to: (a) Engaging in political activities; (b) Taking part in the conduct of public affairs; (c) Associating freely; (d) Assembling peacefully; (e) Expressing their opinions and seeking, receiving and imparting information and ideas freely; (f) Voting in elections and public referendums and being eligible for election to publicly elected bodies on equal terms with men; (g) Participating in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof, holding public office and performing public functions at all levels of government.⁸⁰</p>
<p>Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action</p>	<p>The Declaration calls on governments, the international community, civil society, including non-governmental organizations and the private sector to take strategic action in the following critical areas of concern: poverty, education and training, health, violence, armed conflict, economy, power and decision-making positions, institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, human rights, media, environment and child. It also urges States parties to strengthen the role of women and to ensure their equal representation at all levels of decision-making in national and international institutions that may make or influence policy on issues related to peacekeeping, preventive diplomacy and related activities.⁸¹</p>
<p>Sustainable Development Goals Especially the 5th Goal</p>	<p>Sustainable Development Goal 5 of the 2030 Agenda seeks to achieve gender equality and empowerment for all women and girls, specifically:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere 2. Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation 3. Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage 4. Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family 5. Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life. 6. Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights. 7. Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources. 8. Enhance the use of enabling technology, information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women 9. Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels. 10. At the same time, gender is an important component that intersects with all 17 sustainable development goals, which means the importance of considering by all partners and actors in the fields of development and sustainable development.⁸²

80 <https://undocs.org/ar/A/RES/66/130>

81 <http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/arabic/BeijingDeclPI.html>

82 <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/ar/gender-equality/>

Effective mechanisms to achieve gender equality and women empowerment

The work on women's rights and on achieving equality between men and women focuses on different sectors and national mechanisms.⁸³ It also intersects with the work of many organizations and international bodies and institutions located and operating in Palestine as shown in the table below:

National Mechanisms	Institution	Role
Government Mechanisms	Ministry of Women Affairs	The Ministry was established in 2003 as a government mechanism to promote the comprehensive status of women and to develop government commitment in developing policies, strategies and measures aimed at the elimination of discrimination against women and their effective implementation. The Ministry has adopted relevant international conventions and the Beijing Platform for Action since its inception. The Ministry also works on devising several measures to promote equality between women and men, including draft legislations and legislative amendments, various economic, cultural, social and media strategies to promote equality in various sectors, promote awareness of women's rights and institutionalize gender in the work of relevant ministries and institutions. The Ministry also works on activating national unity, and coordinates efforts among all institutions, and participates in dialogue in order to reach a consensus on priorities for action on women's rights.
	Ministry of Social Development	As the official body leading the social protection sector, the Ministry works on providing social protection and eliminating all forms of marginalization, violence and social exclusion, and promoting social cohesion through a system of relief, protection and development policies, measures and interventions aimed at combating poverty and unemployment and promoting social justice.
	Gender Units	Gender Units were established within governmental institutions and entities to ensure gender institutionalization in different sectors, and to scrutinize and follow up government programs and policies from a gender perspective. Currently, there are 24 units. The units face several challenges including disparities in terms of their roles, structures and human capacities, despite a ministerial decision to unify their structures and roles and the absence of a unified budget for their work. Gender units are the right hand of the Ministry of Women's Affairs, which is responsible for the integration and mainstreaming of gender in ministries and other governmental entities. Interviews, and a focus group discussion held for the purpose of this study, indicate that there is disparity among the units including at the levels of mobility, change, and technical capacity and space available to them. The units are affected by their immediate environment and the dominant discourse in their ministries and governmental entities including the perceptions of decision-makers towards gender and gender equality. A majority of units suffer from a lack of clarity and in giving priority to gender issues. The units are at times marginalized, and excluded from the decision-making bodies within the ministries. During the workshop, the units demonstrated a strong interest in their roles and responsibilities as well as the motivation to the work according to their job descriptions. Representatives noted the existence of a permanent weakness in tools and the system of communication with the Ministry of Women's Affairs.
Semi-governmental Mechanisms	Women Development Departments	These departments were established in all governorates beginning in 2007 with the objective of enhancing the status of women, women's empowerment and providing gender sensitive services

83 <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/0360793A.pdf>

Palestine Liberation Organization	General Union of Palestinian Women	The Union was founded in 1965 as a democratic masses-based organization and a base of the PLO with branches throughout the world. In Palestine, branches exist in every governorate. The Union organizes efforts of Palestinian women and their integration into the movement. The GUPW also organizes and reinforces the participation of Palestinian women at the political, social and economic levels, and enhances women's empowerment and enables them participate effectively at all levels. The GUPW also leads the National Coalition for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325.
	Municipal and Local Bodies and Councils	Local government bodies exist on a decentralized level including municipalities, local councils, village councils or joint committees and councils in all Palestinian towns, villages, in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. They are responsible for decentralized planning, implementation and follow-up in order to serve citizens. They are directly responsible for provision of infrastructure projects, water and electricity services and humanitarian relief services (recently local authorities are a key partner in any development programs and projects implemented in their communities).
Civil Society Institutions	Women's Institutions	These institutions have supported and empowered women in all fields and have contributed in promoting community awareness in regards to women's rights and status. These institutions play an important role in combatting customs and practices that discriminate against women. They also provide various services, particularly support for women victims of violence and provision of hotlines and safe houses. They also lead, engage and participate in preparing and advocating for amendments on legislation in line with women's rights and promoting their effective application.
	Development Civil society Organizations	These organizations target rural and marginalized areas, as well as Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip. Services and programs include agricultural development, socio-economic empowerment, environment and climate change, food security and reconstruction, health, service provision and awareness and dissemination of democratic thought, capacity building, and care for people with special needs, and cultural, artistic, heritage and alternative tourism. Their programs particularly target women, remote areas and vulnerable groups.
International Mechanisms	International and United Nations organizations	Main role of international and UN is through funding and the implementation of development and humanitarian programs, and by influencing the formulation of strategic directions and funding

Annex III

Qualitative analysis based on fieldwork results

The results of the qualitative field research are consistent with validate and elucidate findings in the report with minimal differentiation. The interviews, meetings and consultative workshops conducted for this analysis revealed the depth of the impact of the current security situation, including occupation, on the process of policy design and implementation due to the volatile political reality including the economic, social and cultural context. The effects varied from subjective factors reflecting inadequate simulation of reality from a gender perspective, limited or lack of experience in gender mainstreaming in sectoral and cross-sectorial national development plans; and existing objective factors in the living situation that imposes itself on all aspects of development work, and the mass movement, and thus the process of social transformation.

Reality governs the policy process

It is clear for both government and society what challenges are imposed by the unstable security situation, especially with regards to development and social transformation and how subsequently external policies and shocks can affect society.

This state of perception is reflected in various forms of formal and communal thinking and actions. On the one hand, there is a sense of the importance of resistance, development and social change, which can activate community participation and complemented by marginalized and excluded communities. On the other hand, the realization that the unstable security situation has the capacity to destroy, prevent and restrict mobility, impede the implementation of interventions, reduce their impact, recognize the level of dependence and limited sovereignty and negatively affect the design and implementation of policies. This created a situation of skepticism regarding the plans and strategies and their ability to bring about the desired developmental changes while living in a protracted crisis.

It is increasingly recognized and acknowledged that unstable security situation has resulted in limiting the capacity of the Palestinian Government to affect developmental changes through planning and designing projects and interventions in the areas of sustainable development and infrastructure. The situation tends to perpetuate the impacts affecting Palestinian society as whole and therefore social justice issues such as policies for the institutionalization of gender (including in the political spheres), social protection and access to justice, economic security and rights become secondary overarching national issues. Existence and survival therefore become primary national issues. An example of this is Pillar 3 of the National Policy Agenda/NPA (2017 – 2022)⁸⁴ entitled “Sustainable Development” which states that “sustainability will never be achieved if Palestinians continue to live a fractured existence where our youth fear for their future and doubt they will ever have a country to call their own. Notwithstanding these challenges, the Palestinian Government re-iterates its commitment to its citizens.

As stated by the Palestinian Government, a prerequisite for attaining sustainable development is the independence of the Palestinian economy which would then lead to creating opportunities for the reduction in unemployment and poverty and achieving social justice. Continued dependence of the Palestinian economy on the Israeli economy, the mobility restrictions and the blockade on the Gaza Strip are direct factors that prevent the Palestinian Government from building a strong economy. The division among Palestinian parties also contributes to de-development, particularly in the Gaza Strip whereby unemployment rates have soared.

The situation has also negatively influenced donor’s financial support resulting in a reduction of funding, thus increasing the responsibility of the Palestinian Government to meet planned commitments and obligations identified in national strategies and plans. The curtailment of funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has affected funding to civil society organizations in general and women’s organizations in particular, whose role is critical in the implementation of national plans and policies to bring about a process of cultural change towards the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women.

Political will

The results of the focus group discussions (FGD) and individual interviews in the West Bank and Gaza Strip indicated that political will is a key factor in the prioritization of gender equality and fundamental for action and accountability. It

84 State of Palestine (2016) National Policy Agenda 2017 – 2022 ‘Putting Citizens First’ See pp.34- 44: <http://pmo.gov.ps/WebSite/Upload/Documents/GOVPLAN/NPA%20English.pdf>

also presents a basis for progress and achievement at the operational level through advocacy, mobilization, reforming laws, legislation, regulations, policies and procedures, and institutional structures, which requires longer periods of time and non-traditional efforts. Feminists and researchers have also pointed out that the “liberal approach” (through legal reforms) alone is not sufficient to bring about fundamental transformations in patriarchal institutional structures and prevailing power relations in society. Transformative approaches for effective partnership and coalition building, networking, communication and planning are required. This has to be primarily led and driven by the masses, women and men, especially disadvantaged social groups, who are affected by the current reality. This requires re-shaping the discourse on gender equality and women’s rights at the formal and informal levels (government, civil society, private sector, international institutions and donors) and Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) institutions.

The lack of political will among decision and policy-makers to change the status quo was among one of the main obstacles for reform according to many interviewees. According to one interviewee, “In participating in the review of several national plans, we noted that each plan encompasses specific provisions for women and marginalized groups... this is an indicator that the Government prioritizes equality and empowerment.”⁸⁵ The interviewee continued, “Discourse on gender equality and discrimination has emerged by the Government and the Council of Ministers, however, this has yet to effectively materialize from commitments to tangible results. This requires implementation, allocation of financial resources and investment in human resources, etc.”⁸⁶ There was consensus on these issues among all interviewees and participants in focus discussion groups in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Another interviewee shared the same opinion; however, she underscored the discrepancies between plans (commitments) and effective implementation including the decision taken in 2018 by the Palestinian National Council (PNC) to increase the quota for women’s political representation to 30 percent. The interviewee shared that while some strategies/plans have prioritized women’s empowerment and women’s access to justice, there remains a gap between the will to develop visions, strategies and plans on the one hand, and the political will to implement those strategies and plans.⁸⁷

The lack of political will is best demonstrated in the national annual budget allocation to the Ministry of Women’s Affairs (MoWA) which remains insignificant. The Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR) maintains that the national budget is the main tool through which to reduce the gender gap and end violence against women.⁸⁸ The lack of political will is also reflected in the lack of implementation of decisions adopted by the Council of Ministers including the 2008 resolution to establish gender units in all line ministries in order to support and monitor gender equality and women’s empowerment on three levels; plans, policies and budgets. However, since the establishment of the gender units, non-compliance persists on the three levels, as substantiated during a focus group discussion with representatives of Gender Units.⁸⁹

Cultural norms

Cultural norms, prevailing laws and patriarchy, which perpetuate discrimination based on sex, are the primary challenges facing Palestinian women. This is reflected in the system of laws, discriminatory policies against women, and the institutional structures administering these laws, regulations and policies, as well as the ineffective representation of women. The Penal Code (criminal law) and Personal Status Law (family law)⁹⁰ discriminate against women in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The Personal Status Law governs family-related matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, and alimony and child custody while the Penal Code should ensure protection for women from gender-based violence and discrimination. Articles in the Penal Code and the Personal Status Law coupled with cultural norms reduce women’s rights and agency and do not guarantee protection for women from violence or discrimination. For the latter, the lacks of employment opportunities result in women becoming more susceptible to poverty. This is mainly due to structural distortion of the economic and labor markets where women are concentrated in certain jobs and roles. Exclusion from political participation in decision-making structures and processes including political negotiations and national reconciliation as well as in senior level positions within the civil service is another area where women face discrimination. One example is the gains achieved prior to the internal political division in municipal elections were lost, especially in Gaza Strip where women won 17 percent of seats in municipal councils.

85. Interview with Z.K held on 12/8/2018

86. Ibid

87. Interview with H.A held on 16/9/2018

88. Independent Commission on Human Rights, Office of the Ombudsman (2017), Analysis of the General Budget for the year 2017 from a Human Rights Perspective. Ramallah, Palestine.

89. Focus group discussion with representatives of gender units on 6 September 2018

90. Al-Botmeh, R. (2011). A Review of Palestinian Legislation from a Women’s Rights Perspective. United Nations Development Programme, See: <http://www.undp.ps/en/newsroom/publications/pdf/other/womenrreview.pdf>

There is a core contradiction in the strategies, policies and regulations themselves. The prevailing culture considers women as a burden rather than breadwinners and their role is a reproductive one rather than productive one. Accordingly, strategies and laws do not take into account women's equality with men. They do not correspond with the vision of empowering women to promote gender equality. Moreover, plans to promote gender equality in pension and social security laws were drafted without clear directions on how to apply and implement them. They were developed devoid of a comprehensive analysis of the community structure which would ensure that the planned policies will be implemented and how the effects on gender roles and power relations in the targeted communities.

According to an interviewee, "I believe that the main reason for acceding to international conventions such as CEDAW is not to protect women as much as to try to place oneself in a world of extreme imbalance in order to show that we are part of the civilized world. However, this is not clearly reflected in the overall practice and laws."⁹¹ Another interviewee shared that "When reviewing relevant documents, it seems that there is political will to apply a human rights-based approach based on women's empowerment, gender equality and social justice. This is only one paper. Two factors play a crucial role when it comes to political will. First, conditions imposed by donors, such as the European Union member states and the Quartet, ensures that projects/programs are engendered. Second, [there must be a] willingness of the Palestinian Government to project positive discrimination by adopting strategies and policies that support women's issues."⁹²

Policies enforced have not produced tangible results in terms of cultural shifts. According to interviewees and participants in focus group discussions, women continue to be treated as second class citizens. Many disclosed that the percentage of women in the public sector (42 percent) is not proportional to women in actual decision-making positions in governmental (less than 12 percent). These decisions made by the highest echelons of government promote the prevailing stereotypes and perceptions of women and their roles in the public sphere. Cultural transformation towards the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women cannot be limited to acceding to international treaties and conventions, foremost of which is the CEDAW. Leveraging change requires amending the Penal Code and the Personal Status Law.

The political division has prevented the unification of the laws, legislations and policies between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The non-functionality of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) has prevented the introduction of new legislation for women's rights. This in turn has weakened the representation of women in decision-making positions and hindered efforts to remove the historical injustice resulting from patriarchal systems. In the Gaza Strip, masculinities have been translated in different fora including the policy of imposing headscarves in schools and universities and the campaigns of 'morality and virtue' in accessing public spaces indicate that context specific policies are required for the promotion of divergent cultural norms towards equality and the empowerment of women.

National Planning: Institutional structures and processes

A gender approach in analysis and data

The availability of information and data directly influence the development and formulation of policies. The development and formulation of policies require qualitative information and quantitative data aggregated and disaggregated on the geographic, social, economic, political, cultural and environmental realities of the population. Numerous reports and plans indicate that the absence of qualitative gender-based information and research has impeded the mainstreaming of gender in the preparation of sectoral and cross-sectoral strategies and plans. The availability of statistics constitutes a starting point. However, they require further analysis in relation to other factors including: geographic, social, political, and economic predispositions and tendencies and their impact on the lives of women and men.

Conceptual framework on gender and related terms

Contentious terminology and unclear definitions associated with gender, gender equality and women's rights perpetuate individual, institutional and societal misperceptions. The absence of officially recognized terminologies and definitions also has enabled decision-makers, policy-makers and stakeholders to make their own individual interpretation. The discrepancy in the lack of unified terminologies and definitions negatively affects how these terminologies are applied and reported on during the planning, implementation, and evaluation phases of the strategies. This is explicitly demonstrated in the prevailing discourse in the work environment as the gender-related definitions made available in the Cross-Sectoral National Gender Strategies are non-existent in sectoral, and cross-sectoral and national strategies and documents. This issue was addressed by one of the interviewees who noted, "The response to this issue was that there is general agreement on the terminologies and definitions, but to what degree is there consistency in the application of these concepts and

91. Interview with Y.I on 12/9/2018

92. Interview with A. N. N. on 9/9/2018

how have they been reflected positively on ministerial commitments? This requires qualitative tools in order to objectively measure change and impact.”⁹³

Patriarchal structures and their impact on policies from a gender perspective

A cultural blur exists in relation to the concept of gender and the promotion of gender equality among officials of the Palestinian Government. This is best reflected in the inconsistency in the government’s endeavors to mainstream gender in sectoral and cross-sectoral strategies, plans and institutional structures. This is also reflected in the endeavor of the Palestinian Government to engage women’s organizations in the development of these plans: “In the Gaza Strip, it was more of a formality, for example, following a struggle, the General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW) was allowed to nominate one delegate to the Committee for the Harmonization of Legislation and only one representative from the women’s movement. While this undoubtedly reflects the level of confidence in the GUPW as a quasi-formal institution, our expertise as lawyers, politicians, experts in management, planning and human development are not considered. In other words, this action made it clear to us that there is no place for women representatives, women’s organizations and civil society organizations active in women’s rights in the development and drafting of plans, legislation, and policies, particularly women and women’s organizations in the Gaza Strip.”⁹⁴ Another interviewee shared, “since the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, governmental institutions have been male dominated institutions where gender equality was never a priority. For example, Palestinian women have been excluded from political participation even though they have been active, alongside men, in the political movement since the 1960s, in Palestine and abroad. This changed when the Palestinian Authority was established. For policymakers, we were outside of their frame of reference and they missed the opportunity for a real partnership. The Palestinian Authority began to mirror the actions of other Arab countries through the exclusion of women.”⁹⁵

Interviewees from the Gaza Strip also acknowledge the difficulty of being included in the national planning process given the fact that the Palestinian Government is located in the West Bank, which has a significant impact on the government’s vision on a national scope including the situation of women in the Gaza Strip. This was experienced during the preparation of the CSNGS. The first draft of the strategy was prepared in Ramallah and then sent to the Gaza Strip for comments and reflection of priorities and policies. Another example was the development of the National Action Plan for the Implementation of UNSCR1325. The document was drafted in Ramallah and then sent to the Gaza Strip to provide comments.⁹⁶ Another interviewee shared that the geographic fragmentation has led to a perception of superiority among individuals in Ramallah, where ultimately, decisions are made, and in the Gaza Strip, their role is to implement decisions which have been made.⁹⁷ Individuals and civil society organizations and women’s machineries in the West Bank have shared that they actively participated in the preparation of the CSNGS and that the division prevented the majority of leaders in the women’s movement from the Gaza Strip to actively engage. While women from the Gaza Strip participated and engaged in the development of various strategies and reports including the National Action Plan for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325, the CEDAW Shadow report, the National Strategy to Combat Violence against Women (2011–2019) and the CSNGS 2017–2022 reflected that the level of participation was limited and ineffective.

Civil society organizations especially in Gaza Strip have not managed to provide civil servants in state institutions with the proper capacity building on women’s issues, and the persistent cultural structures continues to impede the implementation of gender equality and women’s empowerment policies. For example, in the field of education, despite a change in the curriculum, teachers still discriminate between students.⁹⁸ Gender equality and women’s rights experts and consultants also face challenges. First, those that are recruited by governmental institutions must represent the official positions of government despite holding divergent opinions. Second, many experts seconded to ministries and other government entities play a central role in developing capacities of government employees. However, as the majority of these individuals are seconded by international organizations, whom they are accountable to, they represent the vision of the donor, not necessarily that of national institutions.⁹⁹

Monitoring and evaluation frameworks

Monitoring and evaluation frameworks are critical management tools that aid in the performance towards the achievement of results. Monitoring ensures proper tracking of action plans and activities during the course of their implementation.

93 In-depth individual interview A. N., 28/8/2018

94 Interview with A.H.A on 16/9/2018

95 In-depth Interview with S.A on 14/8/2018

96 In-depth Interview with E.E.D on 12/9/2018

97 Individual and FGD held on 9/2018

98 FGD and individual interviews in Gaza Strip on August and September, 2018

99 Ibid

This framework allows for the identification of achievements and failures, possible causes and it can offer better insights on how to improve implementation, in order to achieve the set objectives. While objectives in national plans are mainly associated with a set of quantitative indicators, they were not sufficient for evaluation as plans and institutional structures lacked tools for horizontal and vertical follow-up and evaluation. Focus Group Discussions and individual interviews conducted shared that “lack or weakness of structures and processes of monitoring, evaluation and follow-up was one of the main obstacles in the implementation of the plans.”¹⁰⁰ An interviewee in the Gaza Strip shared, “there is a set of basic principles for these plans, including the issue of equality, and women’s issues are cross-sectoral ones that must be present in all sectors. Unfortunately, these are just principles and not translated into practice. This means, for example, that the Ministry of Agriculture in the West Bank has nothing to do with the Ministry of Agriculture in the Gaza Strip.”¹⁰¹ While assessments and evaluations have been conducted for selected national plans, there is absence of evaluations for the performance of governmental ministries.

Accountability

Accountability is an essential factor for the implementation of government’s commitments. It pushes relevant parties in fulfilling their obligations and promises to the people. It was unanimously agreed that lack of accountability has negatively affected the commitment of the government institutions in implementing their plans and commitments. Representatives from civil society in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, as well as those interviewed, explain individually and unanimously, that the lack of accountability towards gender issues is mainly due to the disruption of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), the weakness of political parties and their absorption into the political establishment, conflict of interests some times between the stakeholders like civil society, government, international organizations and private sector. On the role of civil society and its ability to influence public policies, the Palestinian Civil Society Scale Study of 2016 indicates that civil society’s influence on public policy is very limited and ad hoc.¹⁰² Civil society organizations use the Cross-Sectoral National Gender strategy (CSNGS) as a frame of reference for developing their programs and projects. At the same time, these organizations indicated that it was difficult to follow up implementation of a certain national plan.

Budgets and financial resources

Budgets guide the direction of any approved plan or strategy. Views of those interviewed differ on the basis of their personal interpretation and understanding of national strategies, including the CSNGS 2017- 2022, though the general consensus that plans and strategies can materialize without the allocation of financial resources. Some perceived that the “Planning is a national requirement to mobilize resources, but the government does not comply with these funding strategies of investing in national needs and developing clear strategies and implementation plans including all partners.”¹⁰³ Subsequently, the government considers these plans as “indicative plans which they endorse but eventually not approve. How can plans get approval when there are no resources allocated to them and when they are dependent on foreign financing?”¹⁰⁴ For example, the Ministry of Women’s Affairs CSNGS 2017- 2022 is very ambitious and somewhat unrealistic. Some policies require a vast amount of funding, such as the policy for combating poverty and unemployment. The Ministry of Finance and Planning allocates resources within the program budgets of each ministry, including MoWA which has two programs: the Women’s Protection and Empowerment Program and the Administrative Program. The budget shows that the highest expenditure is for salaries and operating expenses, while minimal resources are spent on development. It is noteworthy, as mentioned in a workshop held for gender units and individual interviews that gender issues fall under the developmental budget item, which explains the limited funding for gender issues.

100. Interviews and In-depth interviews and FGD in July, August and September, 2018

101. Interview with Sh.A on 9/9/2018

102. Palestinian Civil Society Scale Study, 2016

مجلس تنسيق العمل الاهلي. 2016. مقياس المجتمع المدني الفلسطيني. رام الله - فلسطين

103. Interview with A. N. A. on 28/8/2018

104. Ibid

Annex IV

Broader policy-oriented recommendations

Recommendations to the Palestinian Government

1. Achieve national reconciliation and seek to put an end to the Palestinian divide
2. Nationalize and harmonize Palestinian laws with international treaties and conventions ratified by the State of Palestine (CEDAW, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, among others);
3. Implement the National Action Plan for UNSCR 1325 for women's political participation and women, peace and security;
4. Develop and implement a centralized results-based system to monitor, report on and evaluate government implementation and accountability of endorsed gender equality and women's empowerment policies;
5. Revise the current economic approach as well as the monetary, investment, and fiscal policies to ensure that they serve women and especially marginalized groups adapted to current socio-economic realities of an unstable security situation.

Recommendations to the Ministry of Finance and Planning

1. Revise the conceptual framework of the planning process and its relevant technical procedures, including the cross-sectoral planning procedures and the mechanisms for integration of cross-sectoral planning in sectoral plans;
2. Review the framework for the preparation of national plans and policies in order to ensure the effective participation of all stakeholders and to take into consideration current reality and a population who do not have sovereignty or control over their resources;
3. In partnership with MoWA, prepare a manual for the utilization of all government entities and institutions to include definitions terminologies and concepts relating to gender and social issues with the expectation that harmonization is applied in the development of national, sectoral and cross-sectoral plans;
4. Develop a manual/guide on how to formulate and develop policies using a gender lens;
5. Set up a system to follow-up, oversee, and monitor plans/strategies and report on their social impact; and
6. Provision of annual allocations from the national budget for gender equality, women's empowerment, and marginalized groups.
7. Implementing the gender based budgeting approach (GBB) in the planning process.

Recommendations to the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Gender Units

1. Focus on the policy role of MoWA on leading the process of gender mainstreaming and institutionalization in public sector institutions;
2. Prioritize qualitative analysis of policies, focus less on the quantitative aspects, and adopt policies that contribute to structural social changes in terms of power relations in favor of women and marginalized groups;
3. Review the policies and interventions set forth in the 2017-2022 Strategy, select at least one qualitative policy from each pillar, conduct a financial analysis, allocate a budget, and develop an implementation plan to realize the policy, in cooperation and partnership with all concerned parties;
4. Activate monitoring and evaluation tools and set up a system of internal and external communication with partners (inside and outside the MoWA);
5. Adopt a holistic and inclusive integrated approach towards planning that takes into account gender differences in the lifestyles of women and girls' and is aligned with existing strategies and plans;
6. Restructure gender units by dividing them according to the four main development sectors, provided that they are accompanied with a clear and agreed action plan as well as communication mechanisms with the Council of Ministers and the MoWA on the one hand, and concerned ministries and government agencies on the other hand. The

responsibility for gender mainstreaming is not solely borne by gender units, but rather shared among all ministries and their institutional structures; and

7. Activate/set up a complaint system dedicated to gender units and directly linked to the Council of Ministers and the General Personnel Council to ensure accountability for mistreatment and discrimination against women and lack of cooperation with gender units.
8. Enhance mechanisms in place for the institutionalization of gender in government institutions and all stakeholders, according to priority areas.

Recommendations to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics

1. Harmonize the statistical map with the national planning process;
2. Ensure that national statistics and reports are comprehensive in terms of providing sex-disaggregated data;
3. Develop the work of statistical departments in ministries and government agencies to guarantee effectiveness in the production of statistical and qualitative reports;
4. Establish a national monitoring and reporting system for gender indicators; and
5. Develop gender-sensitive statistical indicators in the sectors where policy gaps were detected, such as infrastructure, environment, art, literature and sports.

Recommendations for the Women's Movement and Civil Society Institutions

1. Document women's experiences as part of a national campaign to advocate for women's rights;
2. Reinforce partnership relations between government agencies and civil society organizations, and refrain from considering any of them as the rival of the other;
3. Unify efforts aiming at repealing laws that infringe upon and violate freedoms and enact laws that guarantee gender equality;
4. Combat all forms of violence against women; coordinate on the ground and political actions between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in order to build a feminist/social movement capable of exerting pressure on the Government, the PA, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO); and monitor the implementation of decisions by the PLO, the PA, and the political parties;
5. Target males and females in empowerment and awareness-raising programs and involve youth in such activities;
6. Open channels of communication and dialogue with the Government to address the challenges faced by women, particularly in the Gaza Strip;
7. Build strong and solid alliances among civil society organizations in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip that are concerned with issues related to the NPA and Sectoral Policy Agenda;
8. Strengthen community oversight and accountability capacities; and
9. Strengthen partnerships with international non-governmental organizations working in the same field.

Recommendations for all partners

1. Initiate dialogues and discussions at the level of the President's Office, the Government, and political parties, and among the feminist movement, civil society organizations, and political parties, in order to conduct an in-depth assessment of the prevailing discourse and review the available advocacy tools, and design more effective tools for tangible progress in the status of Palestinian women and girls;
2. Analyze current policies and their impact across all sectors from a gender perspective; and
3. Invest in supporting gender equality and women's rights initiatives in the Gaza Strip and Jerusalem and Area C in the West Bank.
4. Invest in the Pillars and policies as identified in the NPA pertaining to justice and social, economic and political empowerment.