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# COUNTRY GENDER ASSESSMENT OF THE AGRICULTURE AND RURAL SECTOR

## Palestine



**COUNTRY  
GENDER  
ASSESSMENT  
SERIES**

**NEAR EAST AND  
NORTH AFRICA**



# **COUNTRY GENDER ASSESSMENT OF THE AGRICULTURE AND RURAL SECTOR**

**COUNTRY GENDER ASSESSMENT SERIES**

**Palestine**

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Cover:

A young Palestinian agro-entrepreneur shows off some strawberries in her farm near the West Bank city of Jenin.

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# Foreword



Palestinian women provide 87 percent of the labour required for livestock production and 54 percent for crop production, in addition to their mainstream gender roles of child rearing and taking care of the household. In 2019, the agriculture sector employed 6.7 percent of the total of employed women and 5.9 percent of employed males. However, these statistics tend to under-represent women employment as they consider only the work devoted to produce for the market, while most of women's work in agriculture is devoted to production for household-consumption. On average, Palestinian women work eight percent more hours per day than their male counterparts, while earning 15 percent less average daily wage. Bridging the gender gap in the agricultural sector and promoting gender equality and women's empowerment is hence central to achieving food and nutrition security, rural poverty reduction and sustainable development for all Palestinians. It is against this background that the FAO Coordination office for the West Bank and Gaza Strip (WBGS) programme commissioned this Country Gender Assessment (CGA) to support the review and formulation of gender-responsive sectoral policies, strategies and projects.

The findings of this assessment reveal the existing gaps between women and men and point at opportunities and actions that all actors can take towards the empowerment of rural women in the agricultural sector. This assessment also draws attention to the feminization of agriculture that is taking place, as more men are pursuing lucrative employment opportunities in the Israeli market. Women have increasingly replaced men in agricultural production processes, mostly within the local communities. It is evident that despite the difficulties they confront, Palestinian women, when given a chance, can provide financial support to their families through agricultural production and employment creation for themselves and other women

as is demonstrated by the success of women-led agriculture associations and cooperatives. Overall, the findings of this assessment show that women's critical role in food production and poverty reduction can be enhanced when their rights to land ownership and other resources are assured; they are provided with technical assistance and agricultural knowledge; their access to large-scale markets is increased and the constraints of traditions that limit their roles as leaders in the agri-food sector are lifted.

My gratitude goes out to all those involved in the production of this assessment. I am confident that, once internalized and addressed by the various actors involved, its findings and recommendations will ultimately contribute to the economic and social empowerment of women in the Palestinian agriculture sector and improve the livelihoods of women in the Palestinian society in general. This assessment will also inform FAO's programming and policy work, including the upcoming Country Programming Framework (CPF) and the contribution of the office to the planning of the United Nations' humanitarian and developmental interventions. It also provides a solid baseline for monitoring the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the National Investment Plan (NIP) for food and nutrition security and other government policies and programmes.

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and Gaza Strip Program

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This Country Gender Assessment (CGA, or Assessment) was commissioned by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) as part of the implementation of FAO's corporate Gender Equality Policy to support the review and formulation of gender-responsive sectoral policies, strategies and projects and to accelerate the implementation of the North Africa and Near East Regional Gender Strategy.

The Assessment was conducted under the overall supervision of Ciro Fiorillo, Head of Office, FAO Palestine, with support from Intissar Eshtayah, Programme Support Associate and Gender Focal Point, and Rana Hannoun, Economist, FAO Palestine. Technical supervision was provided by Malika Abdelali-Martini, Gender Officer, Agriculture and Rural Development, FAO, Rome, and Clara Mi Young Park, Regional Gender Officer for North Africa and Near East. The report was prepared by Luna Saadeh and

Fida Barghouti, independent consultants, and benefited from technical editing and comments by Clara Mi Young Park and Malika Abdelali-Martini.

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# Acronyms and abbreviations I

<b>ARIJ</b>	Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem	<b>IHRL</b>	international human rights law
<b>CBO</b>	community-based organization	<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>CEDAW</b>	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	<b>JPSL</b>	Jordanian Personal Status Law
<b>CGA</b>	Country Gender Assessment	<b>MAS</b>	Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute
<b>CPF</b>	Country Programming Framework	<b>MoA</b>	Ministry of Agriculture
<b>EFRL</b>	Egyptian Family Rights Law	<b>MoH</b>	Ministry of Health
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	<b>MoL</b>	Ministry of Labour
<b>FGD</b>	focus group discussion	<b>MoWA</b>	Ministry of Women’s Affairs
<b>GAD</b>	gender and development	<b>NASS</b>	National Agricultural Sector Strategy 2017–2022
<b>GDC</b>	General Directorate of Cooperatives	<b>NGO</b>	nongovernmental organization
<b>GDI</b>	Gender Development Index	<b>NIS</b>	new Israeli shekel
<b>GDP</b>	gross domestic product	<b>OCHA</b>	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
<b>GNI</b>	gross national income	<b>OPT</b>	occupied Palestinian territory
<b>GRB</b>	gender-responsive budgeting	<b>PA</b>	Palestinian Authority
<b>GS</b>	Gaza Strip	<b>PARC</b>	Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee
<b>GUs</b>	Gender Units	<b>PCBS</b>	Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
<b>HDI</b>	Human Development Index	<b>PoA</b>	plan of action
<b>IHDI</b>	Inequality-Adjusted Human Development Index	<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals

<b>UN</b>	United Nations	<b>UNSDCF</b>	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
<b>UNCTAD</b>	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development	<b>VC</b>	value chain
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund	<b>WB</b>	West Bank
<b>UNRWA</b>	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East	<b>WBGS</b>	West Bank and Gaza Strip

# Executive summary



This Country Gender Assessment (CGA, or Assessment), conducted in Palestine's West Bank and Gaza Strip, examines existing gender roles and gaps between men and women in agriculture and rural development and explores practical needs, strategic interests and perspectives on gender equality. The Assessment is based on review of available literature and extensive interviews with relevant stakeholders, including individual women, women's cooperatives and associations, and a variety of governmental and international organizations. The Assessment presents existing policies, strategies, plans and programmes and highlights the main challenges and opportunities for enhancing gender equality in agriculture and rural development. The CGA concludes by discussing the findings and providing a list of recommendations.

Agriculture remains a dominant sector of the Palestinian economy. It represents a major component of the GDP and employs a large fraction of the population. Furthermore, the agricultural sector is a major earner of foreign exchange and supplies the basic needs of the majority of the local population (Srouji, 2016). Women carry out an estimated 87 percent of livestock-related labour and 54 percent of agricultural crop production labour, which are sources of income for thousands of Palestinian families as well as key to securing the food basket (ibid.).

The Assessment highlights a number of issues that contribute to a gender gap in agriculture. It documents how the existing division of gender roles restricts women's access to equal opportunities and limits their productivity. Many factors affect women's and girls' status in society and their participation in the labour force. Palestinian society is dominated by a patriarchal structure that hinders the improvement of women's and girls' lives. This plays out in social, cultural, economic

and political dimensions. For instance, restrictions on women's mobility and access to resources prevent them from realizing their full potential, including limiting their ability to participate actively in the labour force.

The Assessment finds that discriminatory laws serve as barriers to women's and girl's participation in agricultural production. It also finds that improved involvement of women in productive agricultural work could benefit the wellbeing of entire families through boosted household incomes.

The Government of Palestine is committed to gender mainstreaming. Many national strategies and policies have been formulated with the intention of supporting and securing Palestinian women's rights, including the National Policy Agenda, the Cross-Sectoral National Gender Strategy, the National Strategy to Combat Violence Against Women 2011–2019, and the Gender Charter for the Aid Coordination Structure in Palestine. However, limitations of governance due to both external factors (particularly Israeli policies and the overall security situation) and internal factors such as insufficient government capacity have hindered adequate implementation and enforcement of existing laws and policies that would raise women's status and reinforce their effective participation in decision making over income and productive resources (JICA, 2016). For example, women are involved in the harvesting, collecting, and sorting of crops but are excluded further down the value chain. They generally have no access to more lucrative activities, such as trade in profitable markets. Patriarchal social norms also deprive women of their right to inheritance, as women who claim their inheritance are deemed as breaching societal customs and traditions.<sup>1</sup> Women's inability to own and access land and natural resources has, in turn, limited their access to loans, which are either denied due to lack

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<sup>1</sup> In relation to inheritance, the Jordanian Personal Status Law of 1976 is applied in the West Bank and the Family Law of 1954 in the Gaza Strip, both based on Sharia law. Sharia rules regarding inheritance generally provide that women receive half the amount given to a male sibling. For example, a daughter would receive a share of the estate of her father that is half of her brother's share. In practice, women often do not even receive the inheritance to which they are legally entitled and may be pressured by male relatives to waive their rights entirely. In certain cases, women have been killed for asking for their inheritance, and families have pretended that the murders were due to the women's misconduct and were required to preserve family honor (UNDP, 2018a).

of collateral or offered at much higher interest rates. Moreover, a large portion of women's work in the agricultural sector is unpaid because it is considered to be a contribution to family farming activities. It is worth noting that this is not only seen in the agricultural sector; there is a prevailing gender wage gap between men and women in other sectors as well.

Many women participate in cooperatives/associations where they can market their products, but these remain limited in their ability to access financing for their members due to a lack of capacity-building opportunities on how to finance projects and access information. Moreover, these cooperatives have limited access to technological innovations that would add value to their products and support their marketing.

Based on analysis of the findings, the Assessment presents recommendations for priority actions for FAO West Bank and Gaza Strip (WBGs), the Palestinian Government and other stakeholders. For the Palestinian Government, recommendations cover a variety of areas, including policies and legislation, institutional technical capacity development, and enhancement of monitoring and evaluation units to fill in gaps in data and information. For FAO's WBGs office, recommendations focus on allocation of human and financial resources for capacity development trainings on gender mainstreaming and gender sensitization. For other partners and stakeholders, recommendations focus on capacity-building opportunities and fundraising for gender equality-related projects and initiatives.



A woman from Al Aqrabanya women's cooperative tending to a vegetable garden, near the West Bank city of Nablus.

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A Palestinian farmer collects lemon from his farm in Atel village near the West Bank city of Tulkarem.

©FAO/A. Bardeneh

# 1. Introduction



The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has recognized the importance of gender equality both as a human right with value in and of itself and for its role in the achievement of FAO's mandate to eradicate hunger and poverty worldwide by raising levels of nutrition, improving agricultural productivity and natural resource management, and improving the lives of the rural population.

The FAO Policy on Gender Equality 2020-2030 (2021) identifies gender mainstreaming and women-targeted actions as a twofold strategy for the achievement of gender equality in the agricultural and rural sector. In this regard, the Policy sets out a number of minimum standards for gender mainstreaming. These include the requirement to undertake a Country Gender Assessment for the formulation of country programmes established between FAO and member country governments, articulated as Country Programme Frameworks (CPFs), and to carry out gender analysis at the identification and formulation stages of technical assistance projects.

The rationale behind this requirement is that it is fundamental for FAO to have up-to-date, objective information on hand in order to plan evidence-based country-level support for gender equality and women's empowerment, which are key to improved food security, nutrition and poverty reduction.

The Country Programming Framework (CPF) is a framework for agreed priorities in the cooperation between FAO and a national government. It is a planning tool for FAO to prioritize, guide and manage its assistance at the country level in a comprehensive and structured manner. It sets priority areas and activities for FAO assistance in support of the attainment of the country's agriculture, fisheries, natural resources management and rural development policy-related objectives, including food and nutrition security, gender equality and capacity development.

## 1.1. Background: objectives of the Assessment

The main objective of the Assessment is to explore the situation of women compared to that of men in agriculture and rural development in Palestine, with a view to understand the extent to which rural women are able to realize their rights and potential in those areas where FAO is mandated to assist the Palestinian Government. The information generated from this exercise will be used to inform country-level planning and programming, including the formulation of the CPF as well as any other FAO interventions at the country level, including project formulation and policy and technical advice in line with national development priorities and FAO's mandate and strategic framework. Additionally, the Assessment will contribute to the formulation and implementation of Palestine's next United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF).

This Country Gender Assessment (CGA) of Palestine's agricultural sector and rural development was undertaken by FAO between 2019 and 2020 to serve the following objectives:

- » inform gender-sensitive planning and programming of FAO at the country level, in particular the formulation and revision of the Country Programming Framework (CPF) for Palestine;
- » inform other FAO interventions at the country level, including project formulation and policy and technical advice, in line with national development priorities and FAO's mandate and strategic framework; and
- » facilitate FAO's contribution to the United Nations (UN) Country Team's Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) report and to the formulation and implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) for Palestine by providing up-to-date and objective

information on the situation of rural women in the country.

## 1.2. FAO's priority areas of work in Palestine

Since 2002, FAO, in partnership with the Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture, has worked on promoting the sustainable development of agriculture; fostering the resilience of communities; improving food security and adequate nutrition of farmers, herders and fishers; and enhancing national institutional capacities in delivering quality services. In its CPF for Palestine for 2018–2022, FAO set out the following four priority areas for partnership with the Palestinian Government, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development:

- » **Priority 1:** Sustainably managed natural resources in agrifood value chains
- » **Priority 2:** Increased competitiveness of agrifood value chains
- » **Priority 3:** Enhanced protection and inclusion of highly vulnerable groups in agrifood value chains
- » **Priority 4:** Improved safety, quality, nutritional value and sustainability of food consumption

With the overall objective of contributing to the wellbeing of Palestinians by making agrifood systems more inclusive, sustainable and resilient, FAO has formed partnerships with the Palestinian Government, civil society and nongovernmental organization (NGO) partners, and the Palestinian private sector. To support this endeavour, FAO developed its first CPF for Palestine for 2018–2022, in line with the National Policy Agenda, relevant national sectoral strategies and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (FAO, 2018).

The CPF aims to contribute to the strategic goals of the National Agricultural Sector Strategy 2017–2022 (NASS) by focusing on key challenges, including: environmentally unsustainable practices within agrifood value chains (primarily, though not exclusively, at the agricultural production level); low competitiveness of farms and firms within agrifood value chains; socio-economic exclusion, especially of youth, women, small-scale producers and highly vulnerable groups such as Bedouins; and, finally, unsatisfactory quality, safety, nutritional value and sustainability of food consumption.

The CPF provides the opportunity for focused engagement around the country's priorities. For example, as it addresses the challenges that hinder the growth of the agricultural and rural sector, one main

aim is to improve agrifood value chains (VCs) by making them more inclusive, sustainable and resilient and by enhancing products (plants and livestock) from the production to the consumption stage.

## 1.3. Methodology and structure of the report

Guided by the objectives of the CGA, methods involved both primary and secondary data collection. This approach was adopted to arrive at practical recommendations to enhance the visibility of marginalized groups and to amplify their voices to policymakers of local and international institutions and to human rights activists.

Secondary data collection involved a comprehensive overview of the available literature and statistics related to rural development and agriculture in Palestine. The documents reviewed, covering gender concerns in agriculture and in the informal sector, included the CPF, Country Assessment, pieces of legislation, policies, academic literature, statistical information, UN publications, CEDAW reports and other relevant documentation of the Government and NGOs. The national legal framework was compared to international human rights law (IHRL), with a focus on CEDAW, in order to highlight the strengths and weaknesses that facilitate or hinder women's full participation in agriculture and rural development.

Primary data collection was necessary to fill information gaps identified through the literature review. This involved collecting data through interviews with national stakeholders, FAO technical staff, other UN staff, representatives of different departments and units at the Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture, international organizations and implementing partners. A total of fifty interviews were conducted with representatives of organizations, as listed in Annex 1. Additional individual interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with farmers, particularly female farmers, to understand the needs, challenges, gaps, and local capacities in agriculture and in rural areas from a gendered lens. In addition to individual interviews, four focus group discussions were held with groups of women farmers from various areas of the WB (north, south and central), and four focus group discussions were held in Gaza (north, south and central), as detailed in Annex 2. The total number of women farmers heard from, via both individual interviews and focus groups, was 93, and the total number of men farmers heard from was 21. All farmers consulted were beneficiaries of FAO projects. Some were members of local cooperatives while others worked independently.



## 1.4. Organization of the report

Following this introductory section, the second section provides a brief overview of the country context, looking at the political and socio-economic situation facing women nationally. First, it outlines the conditions of agriculture, rural development and human development from a gender perspective. Second, it describes the relevant legal and institutional policies for gender equality and the frameworks adopted for women's empowerment in agriculture and rural development. Based on the data gathered for this Assessment, the third section provides a gender analysis of agriculture and the rural sector, including

gender roles and gender inequalities in different subsectors of agriculture and rural development, and defines the challenges small producers, processors and traders face based on social, economic and political realities. The fourth section provides a stakeholder analysis, presenting some potential partners for FAO in promoting gender equality and supporting the empowerment of women in agriculture and the rural sector of Palestine. The final section presents a summary of the main findings and outlines recommendations for the Palestinian Government, FAO, and local and international partners to promote gender equality through development of the agricultural and rural sector.



A Palestinian farmer collects thyme from a farm during a women's cooperatives exchange visit near the West Bank city of Qalqiliya.  
©FAO/A. Bardeneh

# 2. Country context



Since the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, Palestine has witnessed political instability and turmoil. The political reality and, consequently, the economic situation have deteriorated, especially since the Second Intifada that began in 2000.

The complex political setting and the prolonged Israeli occupation in Palestine, characterized by frequent incidences of violence and violations of international law, continue to adversely affect advances in Palestinian women's political, civil, social and economic rights (ESCWA, 2019). Israeli policies of home destruction, displacement, isolation and geographical fragmentation of areas, land confiscation, uprooting of trees, expansion of settlements, building of an apartheid wall, etc. have detrimentally affected the living standards of Palestinians. The cumulative effects of all of these factors have negatively impacted institutional structures, implementation of rules and regulations, and gender relations and gender equality.

Since 2007, Israel has imposed a restrictive blockade on Gaza, where nearly two million residents are essentially trapped, in that they are denied free access to the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory (OPT) and to the outside world. Gaza has also suffered a series of Israeli military offensives since the imposition of the blockade, including in July–August 2014 and in August 2018. These factors have led to catastrophic living conditions, including extremely high poverty and unemployment rates, continuous electricity cuts and a dire water and sanitation situation (ESCWA, 2019).

## 2.1. Overview of the agricultural and rural sectors

Although Palestine is a small country, it is endowed with a diverse range of climate zones and a topography that can be classified into five agroecological zones (PIPA, 2019; Ministry of Agriculture, 2016). This geography provides Palestinians with rich biodiversity and a wide range of agricultural opportunities. The Coastal Plain Zone (Gaza Strip) extends from the north to the south

along the south-eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea and is dubbed the "fish basket" of Palestine. The Semi-Coastal Zone (north-western corner of the WB) includes the governorates of Jenin, Tulkarem and Qalqilya and receives the most annual rainfall. The Middle Elevation Zone extends from Jenin in the north to Hebron in the south. The Steppe Zone extends from eastern Jenin to the Dead Sea. The Ghor (Western Jordan Valley), the most fertile zone of the West Bank, is off-limits to Palestinians and farmed by Israeli settlers. Agriculture in Palestine relies on crop cultivation, which mainly includes olives (~54 percent of the cultivated area), fruit trees (~10 percent), field crops (~24 percent), and vegetables (~10 percent). In the WB, olive tree cultivation covers the largest percentage of agricultural areas, occupying approximately 57 percent of cultivated land, while the remaining areas produce field crops (24 percent), vegetables (10 percent) and fruit trees (almost 9 percent). In the GS, vegetable crops constitute 32 percent of the total cultivated area, followed by olive trees (24 percent), field crops (23 percent) and fruit trees (21 percent) (PalTrade, 2014).

The agricultural sector is one of the main pillars of the Palestinian economy and an essential contributor to the national GDP. Smallholder agriculture is also a major contributor to household incomes and food security. The sector is divided into four main sub-sectors, namely: 1) crops; 2) livestock; 3) fisheries and aquaculture (including capture fisheries); and 4) forestry. It is a vital sector that helps ensure food security, generates employment opportunities, and is a crucial source of informal income for Palestinian families, especially for women. There are, however, many challenges facing the sector. Livestock production (dairy, poultry and grazing) is unstable and expensive due to a lack of access to land for grazing; very limited cultivation of barley; lack of access to water; and extensive regulations for the raising of livestock. The agricultural sector also suffers from insufficient irrigation, especially in Area C (WB), where only approximately 19 percent of the cultivated land is irrigated (Office of the Quartet Representative, 2013). Over the past ten years,

unemployment rates in Palestine have increased and the agricultural sector became the most impoverished sector in Palestine. Unemployment rates peaked in 2008 when they reached 41 percent in the Gaza Strip. According to the World Bank (2013), main obstacles to the Palestinian agricultural sector include widespread restrictions on land access and/or confiscation of lands for natural reserves, as well as for military and settler use. The root causes of the conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians are control over and ownership of land, and these disputes take a heavy toll upon the agricultural sector.

The value of agricultural production was USD 721.5 million in 2015 (Ministry of Agriculture, 2016). Within the same context, agriculture value-added was USD 286.4 million, or 3.8 percent of GDP, in 2014. This represented a significant drop from 2000, when agriculture value-added contributed 8.2 percent of GDP. Furthermore, while the respective values of agricultural imports and exports had been roughly equivalent in the early 1970s, in the range of USD 20–30 million, over time, annual agricultural imports increased until they exceeded exports significantly. Total agricultural imports amounted to approximately USD 212 million in 2014, while agricultural exports amounted to USD 67 million, accounting for nearly 7 percent of total exports (ibid.).

In 2006, the labour force in the agricultural sector constituted 16.7 percent of the total labour force (12.6 percent of working men and 35.1 percent of working women). This number fell to 10.4 percent in 2014 and to 8.7 percent in 2015, when the percentage of men working in the agricultural sector was estimated at 7.8 percent of all male workers, and the percentage of women officially working in the sector was estimated at 13.1 percent of all female workers (Ministry of Agriculture, 2016). Even though these numbers do not account for the unofficial and often unpaid work women perform in the sector, they indicate the relative importance of the agricultural sector to women.

Several local studies have addressed the impact of the occupation on Palestinian women in general, but few of them have discussed its impact on women engaged in the agricultural sector (Qazzaz, Mrar and 'Adwan, 2005; Marrar, 2009; Sarafi and Samarah, 2016; FAO, 2011). Israel's policy of isolating areas within the Palestinian territories has increased the obstacles and challenges Palestinian women face, such as their lack of freedom of choice, access to resources, property rights and freedom of movement. Area C communities, by virtue of their remote location, lack basic services such as health clinics and schools; they

suffer from water scarcity, poor infrastructure, and the absence of sewerage, electricity and many other essential types of infrastructure and facilities. These conditions further contribute to denying women their fundamental rights. Furthermore, barriers such as the high risk of violence in these locations have led to tighter family control over women's movement, motivated by fear and the wish to provide security. Women thus opt to engage in jobs that are available nearby their homes or at home, which sharply reduces their employment opportunities. Additionally, many women are deprived of access to health care because clinics are located far away from their areas of residence – a condition that falls within the category of occupation-related policies that exacerbate women's isolation. Poor infrastructure increases women and girls' work burdens both in their homes and in family farming, the latter generally considered a women's task because it is unpaid work.

Women-led microbusinesses, such as agrifood processing within Palestine's private sector, are faced with various challenges that include a lack of productive capacity to compete profitably on the global market; a lack of trade opportunities both locally and abroad; high-priced raw materials; high export fees; unfair competition in the local market caused by cheap imported products coming mainly from China or Israel; and a lack of national protection mechanisms for products that are generated by women's businesses, a measure that would strengthen their market share.

## 2.2. Socio-economic characteristics of the country

### 2.2.1. Gender-specific social norms and practices

Prevailing social norms and culture in Palestine deepen entrenched gender roles, reinforce patriarchal structures in both private and public spaces, and contribute to maintaining gender inequalities and gaps. These norms reinforce women's reproductive role and prevent them from actively engaging in the public sphere. The next section on demographic context will discuss in more detail how women continue to suffer from violence that is perpetuated at home, at work and in public spaces.

Religious factors play an important role in society and culture, affecting women's rights. Personal status laws based on Sunni religious teachings are applied to Muslim women while Christian personal status laws apply to Christian women, with the exception of inheritance law, which is based on Sharia law for all citizens. Numerous women's initiatives calling for the amending of these laws, especially the personal status

laws, have been rejected or remain suspended. Many institutions work exclusively based on Islamic law and have refused to address calls to amend these laws.<sup>2</sup>

Women's participation in the Palestinian economy is thus also shaped, limited and constrained by social barriers and stereotypical perceptions of their traditional role in society and in the economy. These discriminatory perceptions and practices hamper women's equal access to education, economic opportunities, employment and income. The gender gap in key sectors remains an impediment to women's participation in the economy and in the labour market. Women's employment is also challenged by factors such as their health condition, level of education, freedom of movement, patriarchal norms and traditions and discriminatory national legislation against women. There is limited mainstreaming of gender equality in private and public institutions and a lack of fair laws protecting women's rights in the workplace, such as pay equity and access to social security.

In a patriarchal culture in which customs and traditions, as well as official and customary laws, promote discrimination against them, women are particularly vulnerable to violence. National studies (Barghouthi and Saadeh, 2014) highlight that violence against women and girls is a serious problem in Palestine as a result of the prevailing patriarchal culture, rooted in men's higher authority over ownership and control of resources. Households and communal structures follow patriarchal norms, with males exercising dominance while women are expected to be compliant and subservient (Saadeh, Barghouthi and Muaqet, 2019).

This situation is confirmed by the results of the 2011 Domestic Violence Survey, which showed that around 37 percent of married women had been exposed to at least one form of violence by their husbands, 29.9 percent in the WB, and 51.1 percent in the GS (PCBS, 2011). However, fewer than 1 percent sought help from a social worker, shelter, civil society organization or the police. The 2011 Domestic Violence Survey also revealed that women who were not employed outside the home were subjected to more violence from their husbands than women who worked outside the home (*ibid.*). Furthermore, women who described their family's economic situation as poor were subjected to greater psychological, physical and sexual assault, in addition to social and economic abuse, as compared to women who described their family's economic situation as medium to excellent

(Haj-Yahia, 2013). Silence over violence against women and girls is generally reinforced by a non-supportive legal system that fails to criminalize domestic violence. In Palestine, penal laws do not penalize acts of domestic violence, stemming from a traditional belief that family issues should be managed within the boundaries of the family.

Rural women are further hampered by isolation caused by occupation-related impediments and by the confiscation of the fertile land of which they are key caretakers. The burden upon women is thus doubled, as they must tend to both land and family. Despite this vital role, however, women still lack the right to ownership or control over resources, and they do not have a voice in decision making, especially young women. Abandoning agricultural work due to shrinking lands and the ongoing conflict over natural resources, they look for alternative employment that is more profitable and formally remunerated.

### 2.2.2. Demography and population dynamics

Palestinians belong to two main faiths, Islam and Christianity, with Islam being stipulated in the Basic Law<sup>3</sup> in Article 4. The Sunni community constitutes the majority of the population, with 4 615 683 members, whereas Christians count 46 850 devotees (PCBS, 2019a).

According to the Population, Housing and Establishments Census 2017 carried out by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) (PCBS, 2019a), the Palestinian population in 2017 was 4 781 248 (2 881 957 in the WB and 1 899 291 in the GS), with an additional 8 million living in neighbouring countries and elsewhere around the world. The estimated annual population growth rate was 2.8 percent. The majority of the population – 77.1 percent – lived in urban areas, 14.6 percent in rural areas and 8.3 percent in refugee camps. The number of Palestinian households in the State of Palestine amounted to 928 022, with 76.9 percent of them living in urban areas, 15.1 percent in rural areas and 8 percent in refugee camps. The average size of the Palestinian family was 5.1 persons. The percentage of households living as nuclear families was 84.9 percent, while 10 percent of households were headed by females (10.4 percent in the WB and 9.4 percent in the GS).

The Palestinian population is young, with 45 percent below the age of 18 years (PCBS, 2018a). However, as fertility declines, the average age of the population

<sup>2</sup> For more information on this topic, see Section 3.2 of this study.

<sup>3</sup> The Basic law, established in 2002, is the proposed constitution of a future Palestinian state. Under the Basic Law, Islam is the official religion in Palestine and principles of Islamic Sharia law are to be the main source of legislation, while respect and sanctity of all other religions are to be maintained.

is expected to increase. Based on 2017 projections, the population will reach 6.9 million in 2030, and will double by 2050, reaching 9.5 million, despite a significant reduction in fertility rates (Courbage, Abu Hamad and Zagha, 2016). This increase is expected to be accompanied by a shift in the age structure of the population, as the percentage of youth (aged 0–14 years) is expected to decrease to 25 percent by 2050, with a slight increase in the percentage of older people (aged 65 years and older). Additionally, the percentage of the working age population (aged 15–64 years) is expected to increase from 57.8 percent in 2015 to 61 percent by 2030, and to continue to rise to as much as 67 percent of the total population by 2050. These trends will lead to increased pressure on the labour market and on natural resources, especially land, water and forests (ibid.).

Palestine's total fertility rate continues to decline, as in 2014 an average of 3.8 children were born per woman, compared to 6 children in 1997; however, it is still one of the highest rates in the region. The mean number of children ever born for women ever married in Palestine in 2017 was 4.4 births (PCBS, 2018a).

Between 2005 and 2017, Palestine's Human Development Index (HDI)<sup>4</sup> value increased from 0.657 to 0.686, an increase of 4.4 percent. Between 1990 and 2017, life expectancy at birth in the WBGS increased by 5.5 years, the mean years of schooling increased by 1.3 years, and expected years of schooling increased by 3.0 years (UNDP, 2018c). Additionally, the gross national income (GNI) per capita increased by about 74.9 percent between 1990 and 2017. Palestine's 2017 HDI value placed it above the average for countries in the medium human development group (0.645) and below the average for Arab states (0.699), with a ranking of 119 out of 189 countries (ibid.). Yet, to gain a clearer

view of Palestine's overall performance, the Inequality-Adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI) needs to be considered. Adjusted for inequality, Palestine's HDI drops to 0.583, indicating that there are significant inequalities within Palestinian society (ibid.). When disaggregated by gender, the 2017 HDI value for female Palestinians is 0.623, in contrast with 0.710 for males, resulting in a Gender Development Index (GDI)<sup>5</sup> value of 0.877 (ibid.).

### 2.2.3. Poverty

Over recent years, donor aid to the Palestinian territories has been in decline. This has impacted economic growth, which slowed to 2.4 percent in 2017. What minor growth there was mainly led by the West Bank; in Gaza, economic growth was a mere 0.5 percent compared to 8 percent in 2016 (World Bank, 2018). In the context of sluggish economic performance, living standards have continued to decline in both West Bank and Gaza Strip. In 2018, around 2.5 million Palestinians, half of the population, required humanitarian assistance (OCHA, 2018; ESCWA, 2019).

According to PCBS, in 2017, 29.2 percent of individuals were living below the poverty level, up from just under 26 percent in 2011. Moreover, the incidence of deep poverty increased from nearly 13 percent in 2011 to 16.8 percent in 2017 (PCBS, 2017a).

While poverty in the West Bank declined by 22 percent, it increased by almost 36 percent in the Gaza Strip. The poverty increase was even more severe for the poorest of the poor in the Gaza Strip, as measured by deep poverty, poverty gap and poverty severity indices. This was not so for the West Bank, however, where deep poverty decreased from 7.6 percent in 2011 to 5.8 percent in 2017. Thus, the situation of the poor has been worsening in the Gaza Strip compared to the West Bank (PCBS, 2017a).

**Table 1: Percentage distribution of population by poverty status, 2017 (Source: PCBS, 2017a)**

Region	Deep poor		Poor (excluding deep poor)		Non-poor		Total	
	Value	Contribution (%)	Value	Contribution (%)	Value	Contribution (%)	Value	Contribution (%)
West Bank	5.8	21.0	8.1	39.3	86.1	73.9	100.0	60.8
Gaza Strip	33.7	79.0	19.3	60.7	47.0	26.1	100.0	39.3
Total	16.8	100.0	12.5	100.0	70.8	100.0	100.0	100.0

<sup>4</sup> The Human Development Index (HDI) is a summary measure of achievements in three key dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, access to knowledge and a decent standard of living. The HDI is the geometric mean of normalized indices for each of the three dimensions (UNDP, 2018b).

<sup>5</sup> The Gender Development Index (GDI) measures gender inequalities in achievement in three basic dimensions of human development: health, measured by female and male life expectancy at birth; education, measured by female and male expected years of schooling for children and female and male mean years of schooling for adults ages 25 years and older; and command over economic resources, measured by female and male estimated earned income (UNDP, 2018b).

In 2017, female-headed households constituted about 10.1 percent of households in Palestine. Although this group is one of the highest recipients of public assistance in both Gaza Strip and the West Bank, poverty rates among individuals living in female-headed households stood at 30.6 percent compared to 29.2 percent for those living in male-headed

households. About 20 percent of the individuals living in female-headed households suffered from deep poverty, unable to fulfil the minimum requirements for food, clothing and housing, compared to about 17 percent of the individuals living in male-headed households (PCBS, 2017a).

**Table 2: Poverty rates among population by sex of head of household, 2017 (Source: PCBS, 2017a)**

Sex	Poverty rate		Poverty gap		Severity of poverty		Deep poverty	
	Value	Contribution (%)	Value	Contribution (%)	Value	Contribution (%)	Value	Contribution (%)
Male	29.2	93.6	7.9	93.8	3.1	94.5	16.6	92.9
Female	30.6	6.4	8.0	6.2	2.8	5.5	19.6	7.3
Total	29.2	100.0	7.9	100.0	3.1	100.0	16.8	100.0

#### 2.2.4. Health

West Bank communities, especially those located in Area C, face severe challenges in accessing primary health care services. While humanitarian partners provide some relief through mobile health clinics, many of these clinics face delays and disruptions that hamper or prevent access for people in need of their services.

In the Gaza Strip, the health care sector has been severely affected by the ongoing blockade, with the energy crisis exacerbating the situation. Hospitals face partial or complete closure due to fuel shortages and suffer from a chronic shortage of essential medicines and consumables. Movement restrictions that confine patients in Gaza put them at high risk of medical complications and deteriorating health.

All vulnerable communities in the WBGs suffer due to the ongoing restrictions on the movement of patients and health workers, which hamper access to essential, life-saving health services. Moreover, due to funding cuts by international donors, the Palestinian Government has made budget reductions in the health sector in the WBGs, negatively affecting the rights of individuals, especially those of the most marginalized groups such as women and girls, the disabled and the elderly.

Despite the difficulties facing the Palestinian Ministry of Health (MoH), government and non-governmental interventions have contributed to improvements to the health sector. As a result, life expectancy has increased for both males and females in Palestine, rising from 67 years in 1992 to 73.9 years in 2018 (72.8 years for males and 75.1 years for females (MoH, 2019).

Early motherhood is still a common phenomenon in the WBGs. According to PCBS, 22 percent of married women currently aged 20–24 years have had a child before the age of 18 years. The data show differences in this percentage according to region, mother's education and wealth index. This percentage increases to 25.1 percent in the GS compared to 19.6 percent in the WB. Furthermore, rates of pregnancy under the age of 18 are three times higher among women with basic education than among those with higher education, and rates are also higher among women living in poor households (PCBS, 2018b).

In 2016, the number of births reported in Palestine was 130 497, of which 72 327 children were born in the WB (55.4 percent of all reported births) and 58 170 in the GS (44.6 percent of all reported births). Data indicate that the percentage of home deliveries was only 0.1 percent, whereas 99.9 percent of births occurred at qualified health facilities and were assisted by specialized and/or trained medical personnel. Of these, 53.6 percent were carried out in MoH hospitals, as the MoH provides full coverage of child birth costs for women insured by the Government (MoH, 2017).

Reported deaths in Palestine in 2016 amounted to 10 940, of which 7 177 occurred in the WB (65.5 percent of all reported deaths), whereas 3 763 deaths occurred in the GS (34.4 percent) (MoH, 2017). The reported maternal mortality rate in Palestine in 2016 was 13.8 deaths per 100 000 live births, with 12.4 deaths per 100 000 live births in the WB and 15.5 deaths per 100 000 live births in the GS (MoH, 2017).

The total number of visits pregnant women made to primary health care centres reached 154 251 in

2017. The percentage of pregnant women enrolled in MoH centres was 43.6 percent. For reported live births in 2017, of the mothers who visited primary health care centres run by the MoH, 25.1 percent visited doctors and 76.7 percent visited nurses. In 2016, 5 067 pregnant women were referred to high-risk pregnancy clinics, constituting 15.5 percent of all pregnant women registered in MoH maternal and child health clinics, while total visits to high-risk pregnancy centres amounted to 26 341 during the same period (ibid.).

Regarding the nutritional status of children, MoH data indicate a fluctuation in the proportion of children under five years of age who were short of stature between 2000 and 2014, from 7.5 percent in 2000, rising to 10.3 percent in 2010, and decreasing to 7.4 percent in 2014 (MoH, 2017). The percentage of children under the age of five who suffered from wasting was 1.4 percent in 2000, rising to 3.2 percent in 2010, and declining to 1.2 percent in 2014. The number of children under the age of 5 who were underweight was 2.5 percent in 2000 and 1.4 percent in 2014. Anaemia among children aged 12 months was 38.7 percent in the WB during 2017; simple anaemia was recorded in 94.2 percent of the total registered cases. The percentage of children (0–17 years old) with health insurance was 80 percent in 2016, with 67.2 percent of children in the WB and 95.6 percent of children in the GS insured.

In its provision of health services to girls and women, the MoH draws on women's stereotypical role and focuses on family planning and ante- or perinatal care, paying much less attention to the other health needs of women throughout their lifecycle. This neglect affects not only the quality and distribution of the

services provided, but also their compatibility with the needs of all members of society, contributing to inconsistencies in service providers, standards and quality levels (General Union of Palestinian Women, 2017).

### 2.2.5. Education and literacy

Student enrolment rates at the primary level are high in Palestine, with 95.4 percent of children enrolled in basic education. The gender gap is minimal at the primary level, possibly because basic education is free and compulsory for nine years. Primary education begins at the average age of five years and eight months and lasts for ten years, followed by a two-year programme of secondary academic or vocational training. Schools run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), furthermore, contribute to the high rate of education among both sexes, as they provide free access to education for refugee children.

Gender parity in education has been achieved, and there is now a higher number of females enrolled in basic, secondary and higher education than males. This is also the case at the university level, where the gap between females and males widens (ESCWA, 2019).

Table 3 indicates that in 2018, 44.9 percent of girls and women above age 15 years carried a secondary school level or higher degree, which is higher than boys and men, at 38.9 percent (compared to 19.7 among women and 27.3 among men in 1995). The lower percentage for males can be attributed to withdrawal from education among male students due either to low academic achievement or entering the workforce to support their families, whether out of family pressure or by choice.

**Table 3: Percentage of population (15 years and above) by educational attainment, region and sex, 2018 (PCBS, 2018c)**

Educational attainment	Palestine			West Bank			Gaza Strip		
	Males (%)	Females (%)	Both (%)	Males (%)	Females (%)	Both (%)	Males (%)	Females (%)	Both (%)
Illiterate	1.3	4.3	2.8	1.3	4.8	3.0	1.3	3.4	2.4
Can read and write	5.2	5.3	5.2	5.3	6.4	5.8	5.1	3.5	4.3
Elementary	14.7	10.9	12.8	16.2	11.9	14.1	12.4	9.3	10.8
Preparatory	39.9	34.6	37.3	41.1	34.6	37.9	37.8	34.8	36.3
Secondary	19.8	22.8	21.3	19.3	21.2	20.3	20.5	25.4	22.9
Associate diploma	5.6	5.6	5.6	4.5	4.7	4.6	7.4	7.1	7.3
Bachelor and above	13.5	16.5	15.0	12.3	16.4	14.3	15.5	16.5	16.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0



**Table 4: Drop-out rates by region, stage and sex, 2016/17 (Source: PCBS, 2017c)**

Region	Stage	Drop-out rate (%)		
		Total	Males	Females
Palestine	Total	0.9	1.1	0.8
	Basic	0.7	0.9	0.5
	Secondary	2.4	2.5	2.4
West Bank	Total	1.0	1.3	0.8
	Basic	0.8	1.1	0.5
	Secondary	2.8	3.0	2.5
Gaza Strip	Total	0.8	0.8	0.8
	Basic	0.6	0.6	0.6
	Secondary	2.0	1.8	2.2

As shown in Table 4, the scholastic year of 2016/17 witnessed a drop-out rate of 1.1 percent among males compared to 0.8 percent among females. When comparing the drop-out rate based on the educational stage, the highest rate is among males in the tenth and eleventh grades, while the highest drop-out rate among females is in the eleventh and twelfth grades.

As for people with disabilities, reports of institutions working for the rights of persons with disabilities indicate that measures and procedures that would provide barrier-free facilities and ensure universal access to the right to education are insufficient or lacking. The absence of an adequate infrastructure for this group has contributed to the isolation of persons with disabilities, hindering their access to educational institutions at various educational stages (PCBS, 2017b).

Despite general improvement in the quality of and access to education in Palestine, the sector is facing many challenges. Most important is the Israeli occupation policy, expressed in the demolishing of schools and in refusing to allow their construction or expansion in Area C, where barriers and closures further impede access to schools that are located in remote areas for teachers who may not live in the location where they teach. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported that in the WB, factors such as the detention of children, military operations, settler-related incidents, lack of physical infrastructure as a result of building restrictions in Area C and East Jerusalem, restrictions on movement through barriers and checkpoints imposed by Israel's occupation regime, demolitions and threats of demolition, clashes between students on their way to school and occupation forces, and the detention of teachers at checkpoints all affect

access to a safe and suitable educational environment and impact the quality of education for thousands of Palestinian children (OCHA, 2019). In the GS, armed conflict and the resulting damage and destruction of facilities, the Israeli blockade, and the internal Palestinian divide have severely disrupted all services, including the ability to conduct regular educational activities. Combined with their adverse psychosocial effects, these factors have affected student wellbeing, performance and completion rates (ibid.).

Most of the Bedouin communities live in areas very isolated from the main cities or village centres with scarce internal roads and public transportation, making the costs for receiving health or education services unbearably high. Moreover, students feel unsafe and insecure on the way to school. The location of universities and colleges in the centres of cities also limits young women's access to higher education. In many cases, the only option for girls is to end studies in order to save money. The reduction of the quality and scope of coverage of health and education services and the simultaneous increase in expenses have long-term implications for the households of the herding communities and their prospects of development (UNDP, 2013).

The lack of financial resources, especially with the ongoing decline in external donor aid, has further limited the possibilities to develop the education sector. The fact that UNRWA schools are suffering from a severe shortage of financial resources due to funding cuts has contributed to the challenges in efforts to provide high-quality education in Palestine.

In addition to the above-mentioned challenges, another major issue affecting educated women and men in Palestine is that public and private investments made in education are not matched by the opportunities offered in the labour market and many highly qualified women are kept outside the labour market (ILO, 2018). Vocational education continues to follow gender stereotypes, relegating women to professions such as secretarial work, teaching and tailoring, whereas vocational training in industry and crafts is more directed at men.

In Gaza, the long-standing blockade, which is in its thirteenth year, and continuing military assaults have damaged school infrastructure, and chronic power shortages have affected the ability of students to study at school. These conditions have adversely impacted the overall quality of education, as well as girls' right to education and the potential employment prospects of young women. It is worth noting that 70 percent of UNRWA schools and over 63 percent of government schools in Gaza operate on a double or triple shift

system, which has reduced instruction time to four hours a day (OCHA, 2019). These conditions could worsen further should the UNRWA funding crisis remain unresolved (ESCWA, 2019).

### 2.2.6. Basic infrastructure

The prolonged Israeli occupation has had severe repercussions on domestic infrastructure. A study entitled 'Targeting infrastructure and livelihoods in the West Bank and Gaza Strip' (Weinthal and Sowers, 2019) examined 982 cases of destruction and demolition carried out in the WBGs by settlers and Israeli soldiers between 2006 and 2017. Out of these, 685 incidents were demolition of Palestinian housing and infrastructure, with 75 percent targeting the agricultural sector, 20 percent targeting water systems and 4 percent targeting energy infrastructure. Nearly 70 percent of the incidents in agriculture involved olive and fruit trees. Damage, demolition and theft of water and energy infrastructure, furthermore, prevented the tending or harvesting of crops and discouraged investment. The authors concluded that the "targeting of water, energy and agricultural infrastructures under protracted occupation creates vulnerability and undermines livelihoods among Palestinians in the occupied territories" (Weinthal and Sowers, 2019, p. 323). Such conditions have helped "create a humanitarian crisis in Gaza and a fragmented, donor-dependent series of encircled enclaves in the West Bank" with long-term reverberating effects upon both human welfare and ecosystems (Weinthal and Sowers, 2019, p. 340).

In Area C and East Jerusalem, 740 000 citizens in 612 communities are prevented from using their natural resources through occupation policies that aim to facilitate Israel's ongoing land annexation, settlement building, house demolition and displacement policy. As a result, Palestinians are simultaneously denied access to their resources and permission to construct even the most basic economic and social infrastructure.

Palestinian society therefore suffers from deteriorating living conditions in Area C, is denied access to basic services that include water and electricity, and is far from being guaranteed decent housing. Israeli control over resources applies to water, land, natural gas, oil and minerals (State of Palestine, 2018). This situation creates an extra burden on women. In the face of geographic fragmentation and isolation and the absence of basic infrastructure and services, poverty and conservative traditions are exacerbated, which translates into few economic opportunities available for women in particular (United Nations, 2019).

In East Jerusalem, a key driver of women's vulnerability has been the wall – also known as the separation

barrier – in the West Bank. The separation barrier has resulted in tens of thousands of Palestinian Jerusalemites, especially from Kafr Aqab and Shu'fat refugee camps, being "walled out" of the city. Although households in walled out communities of East Jerusalem have retained their permanent residency status and continue to pay municipal taxes, their access to health, education and municipal services has become even more restricted. The neighbourhoods and enclaves cut off by the separation barrier suffer from limited provision of basic infrastructure and services. Movement restrictions, including difficulties in crossing checkpoints, have also rendered their access to services that are only available on the other side of the separation barrier difficult (ESCWA, 2019). Israeli barriers to movement entail violations of a wide range of human rights law and international humanitarian law. They also "have a gender-specific impact and pose a substantial risk especially for (expectant) mothers, female students and workers, resulting in systematic denial of their socioeconomic rights" (ESCWA, 2019, p. 2). Gaza's infrastructure and service delivery have rapidly deteriorated and have been further undermined by the chronic energy shortages. According to the Gender-Based Violence Sub-cluster of United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the "electricity and fuel crisis has only further intensified the situation, making the living conditions of women worse, disrupting almost all aspects of daily life, especially the household tasks, which by society are considered the job of women" (ibid.).

### 2.2.7. Employment

Despite high educational attainment rates among women and girls, women's access to employment remains restricted. Palestine has one of the lowest labour force participation rates in the Arab region due to a very low participation of women. The labour force participation rate for individuals aged 15 years and above is 46 percent in Palestine (72 percent for males and 21 percent for females). The rate for the West Bank is also 46 percent (74 percent for males and 18 percent for females), compared to 47 percent in Gaza Strip (68 percent for males and 26 percent for females). Female labour force participation rates are particularly low in East Jerusalem. For instance, in 2017, only 6.7 percent of women were in the labour force, compared to 56.4 percent of men (PCBS 2018b).

Table 5 shows distribution of individuals (males, females and both) by sector and location. Palestinian women's participation in the labour force is concentrated in the services sector, where 66.4 percent of women are employed, compared to 29.4 percent of men. In agriculture, hunting, and fishing, 7.7 percent of women engage (officially), compared to 6.5 percent of men (PCBS, 2019b).

**Table 5: Percentage of employed individuals (15 years and above) in Palestine by economic activity, sex and place of work, 2018 (PCBS, 2019b)**

Economic activity	Place of work											
	Total	Males	Females	Total			Males			Females		
				Israel and settlements	Gaza Strip	West Bank	Israel and settlements	Gaza Strip	West Bank	Israel and settlements	Gaza Strip	West Bank
Agriculture, hunting & fishing	6.3	6.2	6.8	6.8	5.7	6.5	6.7	6.1	6.2	26.4	3.4	7.8
Mining, quarrying & manufacturing	13	13.8	9.0	13.9	6	16	13.8	6.5	17.2	14.8	2.9	11
Construction	17	20.9	0.3	64.3	3.5	13.7	64.9	4.1	16.8	0.8	0	0.4
Commerce, hotels and restaurants	21.7	23.6	11	9.6	21.8	24.3	9.6	24.8	27.0	15.3	4.2	13.2
Transportation, storage and communication	6.2	6.9	2.2	2.2	8.6	6.0	2.2	9.8	6.8	6.9	1.5	2.4
Services and other branches	35.1	28.6	70.7	3.2	54.4	33.5	2.8	48.7	26	35.8	88	65.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Addressing the untapped potential of unemployed women would have positive benefits for their personal lives, their families, the economy and the whole of society. More action should thus be taken to ensure women's full economic participation and empowerment. One important step lies in creating more effective links between the supply and demand sides of the labour market, for instance, promoting the demand for women's participation in the labour market through concrete policies, as well as addressing institutional and market barriers facing women's engagement. Additionally, "To ease the entry of women into the labour force, the availability of childcare facilities and flexible working arrangements must be enhanced and the principle of equal pay for work

of equal value, in line with the Equal Remuneration Convention of the International Labour Organization, must be enforced" (ESCWA, 2019, p. 36).

The last point above on equal pay for equal work bears emphasizing. As shown in Table 6, a gender wage gap persists in the agricultural sector, with the average daily wage being 82.8 NIS for men and 66.9 NIS for women (81 percent of what men earn).<sup>6</sup> Similar disparities can be seen in other sectors. Across all economic activities, the average daily wage for women is NIS 92.3 (USD 25) compared to NIS 128.6 (USD 35.50) for men (PCBS, 2019b). However, women work longer hours on average.

<sup>6</sup> As of July 2020, 1 new Israeli shekel (NIS) is equivalent to 0.29 US dollars (USD).

**Table 6: Average of weekly work hours, monthly work days and daily wage for wage employees (15 years and above) in Palestine by sex and economic activity, 2018 (Source: PCBS, 2019b)**

Economic activity	Median daily wage (NIS)			Average daily wage (NIS)			Average monthly days			Average weekly hours		
	Males	Females	Both	Males	Females	Both	Males	Females	Both	Males	Females	Both
Agriculture, hunting, fishing	70.0	60.0	70.0	82.8	66.9	82.2	18.3	21.5	18.4	34.8	42.3	35.1
Average for all economic sectors	100.0	92.3	100.0	128.6	92.5	123.0	22.0	23.0	22.1	42.8	35.1	41.6

### 2.2.8. Political rights (participation and representation) and citizenship

Despite some achievements, such as securing a 20 percent quota of representation in the Legislative Council and local councils and the ratification without reservations of CEDAW, gender disparities in the political realm remain significant, with widespread discrimination against women in terms of access and opportunities (Samaroo, 2018).

In the Palestinian Legislative Council, the 20 percent representation quota is applied to proportional representation only and has led to the election of 17 women out of a total of 132 seats on the council, which equals 13 percent.<sup>7</sup> In both 2012 and 2017, municipal elections resulted in a 21 percent representation of women. More than 55 percent of these female candidates won by acclamation, meaning a vote by voice rather than by ballot (Central Elections Commission – Palestine, 2017). The ongoing internal division between the WB and the GS has had a negative impact on Palestinian women in Gaza because the 2012 and 2017 municipal elections took place only in the WB (Samaroo, 2018).

In the public sector, the proportion of women who occupy decision-making positions is limited to 11.7 percent, with women comprising only 16 percent of deputy ministers, 3 percent of assistant undersecretaries and 12 percent of general directors (PCBS, 2016). This figure rises to 22.7 percent in terms of women assuming the position of minister, with five out of a total of 22 ministers being women. However, there is only one female governor out of a total of 16, and only one woman among the 18-member Palestine

Liberation Organization (PLO) Executive Committee (PASSIA, 2015). In diplomacy, women comprised only 5.8 percent of Palestinian ambassadors in 2016 (PCBS, 2016). Figures do not improve significantly in the judicial sector, as only 17.2 percent of the judiciary and 16.7 percent of the public prosecution staff are women (ibid.).

National laws contribute to gender discrimination and to the marginalization of women, despite feminist initiatives that aim to advance the status of women. Similar to women's representation in the professional and economic spheres, the figures above reveal that women's political participation and access to decision-making positions in Palestine are primarily hampered by traditions and customs perpetuating the perception that women are auxiliary to their male counterparts.

## 2.3. Policy and legislative context and institutional and financial arrangements for gender equality and women's empowerment

The WBGs is subjected to a range of governance conditions and jurisdictional statuses. For administrative purposes, and as stipulated by the Oslo Accords, the WB remains divided into areas A, B, and C. Area A, comprising only 18 percent of the WB, is under the administrative control of the Palestinian Authority (PA); Area B's administrative control is shared between the PA and the State of Israel; and Area C, 61 percent of the WB, is under the full control of the State of Israel. The WB is further divided into Israeli-made cantons such as Areas H1 and H2 in the Hebron District, with H1 under

<sup>7</sup> The 2005 Election Law (Law No. 9) and the 2007 Decree on the Election Law state that political parties must have at least one woman among the first three candidates on the list, at least one woman among the next four, and one woman among every five for the rest of the list (Article 4). The law applies to the proportional representation component of the election, and the lists are closed. This guarantees about 20 percent women among the candidates (see the Gender Quotas Database: <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas/country-view/246/35>).

the administrative control of the PA, and H2, comprising 20 percent of Hebron and its historic centre, under the control of the State of Israel. Jerusalem is under full control of the State of Israel, and the Palestinians who live there as “permanent residents” are under constant threat of forced transfer and eviction. Rural areas in the WB have been separated from cities through an Israeli-imposed permit regime, the separation barrier, roadblocks and checkpoints. In the GS, the borders, water and airspace are fully controlled by the State of Israel. Moreover, Israel’s control of the OPT has separated the WB from the GS.

The State of Palestine was recognized as a non-voting member state of the United Nations in 2012. In 2014, it ratified seven international human rights treaties and conventions, including the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

In 2015, 193 countries – including the State of Palestine – formally adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that pledges to “leave no one behind.” The State of Palestine has begun to take on the measures necessary to achieve the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by forming a national team composed of representatives from the private sector, the Government and civil society institutions. Additionally, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) has started to select indicators that are relevant to the Palestinian reality, adopting 125 out of the 244 indicators associated with the SDGs. These indicators are applied to locally available gender data to assess the State of Palestine’s achievements in gender mainstreaming.

### **2.3.1. Policy and legal frameworks (national gender policy/strategy)**

Another realm in which women experience discrimination is in the legal realm. Following the 1967 war, the West Bank came under Jordanian control and Jordanian law took effect, while the Gaza Strip came under the control of Egypt and followed Egyptian law. In matters relating to marriage and family relations, the provisions of the 1976 Jordanian Personal Status Law (JPSL) are effective in the WB, and the 1954 Egyptian Family Rights Law (EFRL) is in force in the GS. Both the JPSL and EFRL regulate issues relating to marriage and family relations and include discriminatory provisions regarding, in particular: age of marriage, divorce, polygamy, guardianship, custodianship, adoption, inheritance, child support, common properties and

testimony. Under these laws, men are allowed to marry up to four wives, bound only by the “condition” that they ensure justice and equality among these wives, while women are prohibited from marrying without the permission of a male guardian (Saadeh, Barghouthi and Muaqqet, 2019). Only women who have previously been married or women who obtain court approval can marry without a male guardian’s permission (JPSL No. 16, Articles 6 and 13 and EFRL No. 303, Article 9). It is worth mentioning that both the 1967 JPSL and 1954 EFRL have not been amended to comply with CEDAW (ESCWA, 2019).

Men have the right to dissolve their marriage by saying a divorce formula without the wife’s consent, and the divorce can occur in the wife’s absence. In contrast, women may seek a divorce only on the basis of “dispute and discord” (JPSL in the WB) or “harm” (EFRL in the GS). A husband’s unhindered right to divorce without his wife’s consent is a cause of great insecurity (both emotionally and economically) for women (Saadeh, Barghouthi and Muaqqet, 2019).

As mentioned above, even though legislation and Sharia law provide women with the right to independently own and dispose of property, in practice, they are hindered from enjoying such rights due to legal, cultural, and societal barriers. For example, a woman who inherits property may be pressured by male relatives to relinquish her interests and rights, citing the preservation of family wealth as a pretext (Saadeh, Barghouthi and Muaqqet, 2019).

Due to the political divisions among the WB, East Jerusalem and the GS, legislation is fragmented in Palestine. This applies especially to the major laws that regulate social relations, such as personal status laws and the penal code. While Jordanian and Egyptian personal status and penal code laws are applied in the WB and GS respectively, reflecting remnants of the respective political authorities governing these areas before 1967, laws related to business, the economic sphere, civil rights and elections have been unified by the PA and are implemented in both the WB and the GS.

Efforts to work on local laws began with the establishment of the PA in 1993 when women’s institutions proposed amending existing legislation to protect women’s rights. As the laws in force are generally considered biased and seen as discriminating against women, the feminist movement advocated for legal reforms to improve women’s rights. Women’s rights organizations such as Women’s Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling, the Palestinian Working Women Society for Development, the Women’s Affairs Technical Committee and the General Union of Palestinian

Women proposed several legal amendments and drafts based on human rights. The most important of these amendments addressed the Personal Status Law (WB), the Penal Code (WB) and the Basic Law, i.e. the body of law that regulates social relations among citizens at the family and community levels. Due to the absence of real political will to integrate women's rights into the drafting of laws and national policies, to date the majority of the amendments and draft law proposals, such as the Family Protection Law, have not been approved by the Palestinian parliament.

With the Legislative Council suspended since 2006, many decisions have been issued by presidential decrees, most of them related to public and commercial concerns. Many promises have been made by political parties in the PLO, vowing to support amendments proposed by the women's movement, yet these promises remain words on paper. For example, political parties signed an ethical memorandum with women's rights organizations pledging to adopt a 30 percent quota at all levels of

decision making. To date, this promise has not been translated into action or reality.

The State of Palestine has, however, enhanced tribal control by adopting the Tribal Affairs Department as a recognized entity within the structure of governmental institutions.<sup>8</sup> This move has negatively impacted women because tribal rulings are considered to have higher authority than the law when it comes to family affairs. In light of prevalent discriminatory norms and stereotypes, this is particularly detrimental to women (General Union of Palestinian Women, 2017). The majority of cases that concern violence against women, especially rape cases, are resolved within the tribe, generally siding with males. Frequently, the victim is merely silenced and/or returned to her family – even if that means she may be exposed to violence again.

While outdated laws are still in place, many strategies and policies aimed at achieving the protection of women and gender equality have been approved by the Council of Ministers, as described in Table 7.

**Table 7: Gender references in national decisions, policies and strategies**

Title	Gender highlights
<b>Declaration of Independence, 1988</b>	This document, considered the most important legal reference in the legislative domain in Palestine, affirms the total equality of all, without discrimination for any reason.
<b>Amended Basic Law, 2003</b>	The general legal framework of the Amended Basic Law, as well as its preamble, prohibits discrimination against women and enshrines the equality of all Palestinians before the law and the judiciary without discrimination. Article IX states that "Palestinians before the law and the judiciary should not be discriminated against, regardless of race, sex, colour, religion, political opinion or disability." [Translated from Arabic]
<b>Palestinian Women's Bill of Rights Document, 2008</b>	Adopted by the President as an official document, the Women's Bill of Rights is based on the principle of equality between men and women regarding all civil, political, economic and social rights. It explicitly prohibits discrimination against women.
<b>Executive decisions</b>	
<b>Decision of the Central Council of the Palestine Liberation Organization, 2015</b>	The PLO's Central Council stated the intent to achieve full equality for women and to reinforce their participation in all institutions of the State of Palestine, with a minimum participation rate of at least 30 percent.
<b>Decision to form Gender Units, 2008 and 2009</b>	The decision was taken by the Cabinet of Ministers to establish Gender Units (GUs) in order to mainstream gender at the national level. GUs are tasked with the responsibility to plan and follow up on the implementation of the gender sectoral plan.
<b>Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB) and formulation of the National Committee for GRB, 2012</b>	A framework for gender-responsive budgeting was adopted and a national committee was formed to activate it. Until now, however, no work has been done on implementing GRB. The Government's justification for this inaction is lack of financial resources due to the prevailing economic situation and dependency on external financing. These measures are not considered a priority.

<sup>8</sup> In 1994, President Yasser Arafat established the Tribal Affairs Department, which was intended to monitor the traditional system of resolving conflicts. A central mediation committee was also established, along with specialized departments in the different counties with special expertise in traditional law (*urf*). In Gaza, the Self Government Authority even started paying blood money (*diya*) in order to calm local unrest and to form ties of loyalty (Birzeit University, 2006; International Crisis Group, 2007).

Title	Gender highlights
<b>National Committee to Combat Violence Against Women, 2009</b>	This committee was formed by the Council of Ministers and tasked with following up on the mechanism formulation, coordination, and networking efforts that are necessary to implement the Strategic Plan to Combat Violence Against Women, 2012–2019 (see below).
<b>National Committee for Resolution 1325</b>	This committee was established as an executive coordinating mechanism for the implementation of the framework for UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and for the documentation of all related activities.
<b>National Observatory of Violence against Women, 2016</b>	The Observatory is a national programme to monitor and follow up on all aspects of violence against women in the State of Palestine. It is tasked with the documentation, study, analysis and supervision of policy formulation, implementation and planning processes. To this end, the Observatory collects and gathers the required information and statistical data to help implement studies, papers and field surveys related to violence against women. Furthermore, for effective processing of data, the Observatory standardizes measurement tools needed to meet the requirements of publishing and comparison.
<b>Decision to Integrate Gender Units into National Planning Committees, 2018</b>	This decision, adopted by the Council of Ministers, states the need to integrate the Gender Units into a national planning team that includes the Department of Planning and the financial departments of all ministries. The participation of the GUs in this team is considered a vital factor in gender mainstreaming, in line with the agreed-upon intentions and obligations of the State of Palestine.
<b>Strategies</b>	
<b>Strategic National Framework Document for Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325</b>	This framework represents an integrated national strategy aimed at a) unifying official and private efforts within a common framework; b) providing a unified strategic vision; and c) drafting a clear action plan that expresses Palestinian orientations related to the implementation of UN Resolution 1325 and its implementation at the local level. It takes into consideration the specificity of the Palestinian reality and the existence of the Israeli occupation and its ongoing violations against Palestinian women and girl refugees, prisoners and residents of the WBGS, including East Jerusalem.
<b>National Trans-Sectoral Strategy for the Promotion of Gender Equality and Equity 2011–2013 [in Arabic]</b>	Considered the first document adopted at the national level to address the issue of gender equality, this strategy was an important indicator of the Government's vision regarding the role of women. It addressed the reality of rural women in one of its interventions and aimed to empower women in the agricultural sector.
<b>Strategic Plan to Combat Violence Against Women, 2012–2019</b>	Adopted through a decision taken by the Council of Ministers, this strategic plan aimed to identify the roles and responsibilities of various governmental and non-governmental parties in combatting violence against women and girls in Palestine.
<b>Cross-Sectoral National Strategy Document to Promote Gender Equality, Justice and Women's Empowerment, 2014–2016 [in Arabic]</b>	This strategy was part of the development plan (National Policy Agenda 2014–2016) of the State of Palestine. It reflected the Government's commitment to gender issues and to principles of equality and equal opportunities and pledged to secure the active participation of all stakeholders in efforts to eliminate all forms of gender discrimination and to empower Palestinian women. It was an update of the previous cross-sectoral plan.
<b>Cross-Sectoral Strategy for Promoting Gender Equality and Equity in the National Development Plan 2017–2022</b>	This strategy was a continuation of the Government's work on gender mainstreaming across all sectors. The strategy envisions "a Palestinian society in which men, women, girls and boys enjoy equal citizenship rights and opportunities, in both the public and private spheres" [translated from Arabic]. In order to achieve this vision, five strategic objectives were identified in five main sectors: economic empowerment, political participation, combating violence against women, equality in legislation and in the judiciary system, and improving the quality of life for poor households. The strategy addressed all women in Palestinian society and highlighted rural women in some interventions, such as improving the income of women who work in small enterprises or with agricultural cooperatives.

Title	Gender highlights
<p><b>Executive Plan of Security Council Resolution 1325, 2015</b></p>	<p>This document contains the national plan for the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325, issued in 2000, addressing the conditions of women, security and peace in the State of Palestine for the years 2017–2019. It identified programmes, projects and activities developed in line with the Strategic National Framework Document for the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325, approved by the Council of Ministers in 2015. Additionally, this action plan encouraged the allocation of resources, the monitoring of budgets and the mobilization of overall domestic and international support. The plan aimed to protect Palestinian women and girls from Israeli attacks and rights violations, to ensure international accountability, and to ensure the participation of women, without discrimination, in all campaigns and levels of decision-making, at both the local and international levels, through the development of protection mechanisms for women and girls. It also pledged to work on increasing the involvement of women in all levels of peacekeeping and conflict-resolution measures and to integrate their views into peace and reconciliation agreements.</p>
<p><b>The Agricultural Sector Strategy: A Shared Vision 2011–2013</b></p>	<p>The strategic objectives of this strategy targeted all community groups, without mentioning women in particular. At the level of interventions, however, under the first strategic objective, the development and implementation of “policies that will promote farmers’ perseverance, attachment to their land, and land retention” was specifically mentioned. The strategy furthermore pledged to “support and protect marginalized groups, especially small-scale farmers, the rural poor, women and Bedouins.” In order to achieve this policy, the following interventions were proposed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Intensify income diversification projects.</li> <li>2. Increase labour-intensive projects.</li> <li>3. Empower women in the agricultural sector.</li> </ol>
<p><b>National Agriculture Sector Strategy (NASS) 2017–2022: Resilience and Sustainable Development</b></p>	<p>This strategy’s main aim is to support the steadfastness of Palestinians in general, and of farmers in particular, in the face of occupation-related policies and restrictions applied by Israel. Among the notable contents of the strategy, based on an evaluation of the previous strategy for 2011–2013, is recognition of the need to include all citizens without exception. This sets the foundation for the following principles (among others) included in the strategy:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Equality and justice: “Equality and justice will guide our work to ensure a decent living for all. They also entail that development is a right of all men and women, boys and girls, without any discrimination or marginalization based on sex, region, or age. Priority should be always provided for the less fortunate” (Ministry of Agriculture, 2016, p. 29).</li> <li>2. Active participation: Active participation ensures the involvement of female and male farmers and producers in the planning, evaluation and implementation processes of any agricultural intervention.</li> </ol> <p>This second principle is reflected in NASS’s first and fourth strategic goals, which clearly highlight the need for “empowering female and male farmers in all governorates to overcome the negative effects of Israeli practices, while enforcing farmers’ presence in their lands and improving their agriculture, income and standard of living” (Ministry of Agriculture, 2016, p. 29) and for supporting female and male farmers and entrepreneurs in accessing the quality agricultural services needed for increasing value along improved agricultural value chains.</p>

### 2.3.2. Institutional and financial arrangements (national gender machinery)

At the executive level, few of the Government’s pledges have been translated into national policies and strategies that would be in line with the international agreements that Palestine has signed, including CEDAW. Financial and human resources allocated by the PA are still insufficient to mainstream gender equality beyond the limited influence of Gender Units and have not included ministries in general. Yet, a decision adopted by the Council of Ministers in 2018

states the need to integrate the Gender Units into the national planning team that involves the Department of Planning and the financial departments of all ministries.

The participation of the GUs in this team is considered a vital factor in gender mainstreaming, in line with the agreed-upon intentions and obligations of the State of Palestine. However, despite some limited progress, these units have not realized the vision and goals that prompted their creation. Instead, decision makers have treated them as employment units for their male and



female staff, void of any job description, and have not granted them the decision-making powers provided in the decision taken by the Council of Ministers. On the contrary, the establishing of these units has contributed to an increase in the discrimination against women because all cases related to women are now considered special cases and referred to the Gender Units. This has aggravated the discrimination against women and led to their exclusion from other institutional spaces of the Government (Saadeh, 2014).



A young woman sorting and packaging dates at a date factory in the Jordan valley, West Bank.

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# 3. Gender analysis of the agriculture and rural sector/rural livelihoods

The promotion of gender equality in Palestine, specifically in agriculture and rural development, and the empowerment of women in general, is greatly hindered by the dominant patriarchal culture shaping the power dynamics between women and men in Palestinian society. These power dynamics are deeply engrained in Palestinian rural society, determining the different roles that men and women play and affecting their different contributions in the processes of agricultural production. For instance, based on the customary division of roles between men and women in rural areas, women are often responsible for activities such as preparing the land, ploughing, cultivation and harvesting, while men are responsible for activities such as maintaining equipment, transporting, sales and marketing (more details are provided in Table 10 of this report on the different roles of men and women in agricultural work).

Furthermore, women are also responsible for maintaining the household, including all household work and childcare activities. With this in mind, both the available literature and the research results confirm that this division of responsibilities along gender lines significantly increases the burden that is imposed on women due to the triple role they perform in their households, in their communities and in the productive realm, with the agricultural sector largely dependent upon women's labour. Even though official numbers do not reflect reality – since much of women's work in agriculture is carried out informally – the findings of this study also confirm this to be the case in the communities visited.

The above-cited studies also point to the obstacles and challenges that hamper the empowerment of women and negatively affect their participation in the agricultural sector. These include:

- » Traditions and customary practices in Palestinian society often deny women their right to claim an inheritance and their right to access and control land and natural resources. This in turn limits their ability to take out loans due to lack of collateral. Lack of collateral also means that even in the few cases when women are able to obtain loans, they have to pay higher interest rates than men.
- » In addition to lacking access to and control over productive assets and resources, women also lack funds, financing opportunities and marketing facilities for their products (crops and livestock).
- » Israeli practices and restrictions limit the movement of Palestinians – men and women – and deny them access to their fertile lands and to water resources in Area C. Given that women bear the major responsibility for cultivating the land, the burden of transporting water to their lands is borne by them.
- » Israeli confiscation of lands, uprooting of trees, expansion of settlements, building of the separation barrier, blockade of Gaza, limitation of the fishing area (6 nautical miles), and destruction of the VCs in Gaza hinder or prevent development in the agricultural sector (OCHA, 2014).
- » Cultural restrictions imposed on women often limit their ability to engage in activities or work alongside men who are not members of their family (Srouji, 2016). Women are often denied fair participation in mixed-gender agricultural cooperatives.
- » Agricultural extension services are weak and female extension agents are lacking, thereby hindering outreach to female farmers (since cultural traditions

often restrict male extension agents from providing services to women).

- » The deterioration of Palestine's socio-political status, caused by the Israeli occupation, is a major factor hindering the development of VCs. It jeopardizes the interventions that are needed to promote the sector, enhance women's engagement and role in the development of the sector, and support their families' livelihoods.
- » Although the Palestinian Government recognizes the significance of women's contributions to the sector and the economy, little is done to promote their role, be it at the legislative or the practical level.
- » Women suffer from social exclusion and lack of professional skills.
- » Women's work in the agricultural sector is generally unpaid.
- » Gender-based wage inequalities often place women in a disadvantaged position compared to their male counterparts.
- » A significant gender bias exists in the provision of training sessions offered by governmental, civil society and private initiatives.
- » Appropriate facilities to ease the burdens placed upon women (e.g. toilets in marketplaces, child-care facilities, etc.) are often lacking or poor in quality.
- » The budget allocated for the agricultural sector is insufficient, especially for marginalized groups such as women, youth and Bedouins.

Furthermore, a policy brief prepared by the Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee (PARC) entitled *Delivering women farmer's rights* (PARC, n.d.) lists the challenges that hinder the empowerment of women in the agricultural sector. The paper stresses the measures that need to be taken by decision makers in order to enhance the situation of the women, who make up about 66 percent of the agricultural labour force. The paper suggests that the absence of women smallholder farmers in Palestine's agricultural policies is reflected in four main ways. First, women lack access to and control of the land. Second, women lack access to the financing and extension services offered by the state. Third, state investments in the agricultural sector are very limited and tend to overlook women. And fourth,

women engage extensively in unpaid care work such as childcare, family farming, household maintenance, etc. The policy brief provides recommendations for decision makers who aim to enhance women's participation in the sector, suggesting legislative measures and other mechanisms to guarantee Palestinian women's empowerment and enhance the role women play in the growth of the sector.

A more thorough examination of the issues and challenges facing women in the agricultural sector is presented in section 3.3 of this report, which highlights the different roles of men and women in the agricultural sector, the resulting gender disparities, and the challenges caused by the gendered division of work in this sector.

While the prevailing political and economic situation in the Palestinian territories affects both men and women, women face a multi-faceted disadvantage due to the unequal power dynamics prevalent in Palestinian society. These challenges are exacerbated by trends of increasing feminization of agriculture in Palestine,<sup>9</sup> in which the share of females economically active in agriculture has risen from 64.8 percent in 1980 to 72.5 percent in 2010 (Abdelali-Martini and Dey de Pryck, 2015). This trend has been mostly a result of male rural-urban migration, thereby leaving the majority of agricultural production to be handled by women, often unpaid. Given that their role in agriculture is in addition to their roles in housekeeping, caregiving and community involvement, often with negative health consequences, there is an urgent need to support women in agriculture, including opportunities to reduce their manual labour burden, increase their wages and enhance their livelihoods and the livelihoods for their families.

Relatedly, a study conducted for the Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS) entitled *Means of enhancing the role of women in the Palestinian agricultural sector* highlights the importance of empowering Palestinian women in order to "build the capacity, improve the status, and raise the contribution of Palestinian women working in the agricultural sector" (Srouji, 2016, p. 1). The study sheds light on the challenges Palestinian women face, showing that these challenges hamper women's formal participation in the agricultural sector, especially barriers related to inheritance and traditional customs. It also highlights that while female participation in the formal labour force is still very low, about a third of Palestinian women work informally in the agricultural sector

<sup>9</sup> Feminization of agriculture is "[a]n increase in the percentage of women in the agricultural labour force relative to men, either because more women are working and/or because fewer men are working in agriculture" (Lastarria-Cornhiel, 2008, p. 2).

(32.9 percent).<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, the study shows that women's land holdings (as individuals or groups) are numbered at 7 666 out of a total of 111 310 holdings (i.e. 6.8 percent of all holdings), of which 6 388 are located in the WB and 1 278 in Gaza.

The Srouji (2016) study also points out that even though female workers in the sector represent a higher percentage than males, women receive lower wages than men. The study thus stresses the importance of encouraging female farmers to join cooperatives and of providing them with advice, training, access to financing and markets, etc. The involvement of women in such cooperatives/associations improves their collective power, enabling them to form cooperative links and marketing associations and to trade products and skills. It also reduces costs borne by female producers by allowing them to share the costs of inputs, transportation, marketing and other agricultural activities that can be done collectively. This in turn enhances women's income-generating opportunities and improves their livelihoods. Women's involvement in cooperatives also has social and psychological benefits, by promoting a sense of belonging and allowing women to become a part of a community working towards a common goal. In line with these findings, a study prepared by FAO (2011) entitled *Palestinian*

*women's cooperatives and agricultural value chains* stressed the importance of achieving sustainability by targeting Palestinian women as beneficiaries of efforts to eradicate poverty. In this study, FAO recommends adopting interventions that empower women and increase their economic participation in the agricultural sector through the establishment of women's cooperatives and the creation of VCs that support their production processes and the marketing of their products.

### 3.1. Gender mainstreaming in policies, strategies and investment plans on food and nutrition security, agriculture and rural development

Efforts to address the challenges of gender inequality in the agricultural sector can be seen in the Palestinian Government's work to develop the sector as part of broader efforts to enhance the livelihoods of its citizens and boost the national economy. Its National Agricultural Sector Strategy 2017–2022 (NASS) – with the subtitle of 'Resilience and Sustainable Development' – focuses on five strategic objectives. These objectives are intended to guide the institutions involved in agricultural development when developing their programmes and setting their priorities.

**Table 8: The five strategic objectives of the National Agricultural Sector Strategy 2017–2022**

Strategic objective	Policy priorities
<p><b>Enhance female and male farmers' resilience and steadfastness on their lands.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Mobilize international support to restrain Israeli violations impeding agricultural development, particularly restrictions on access to/use of natural resources, borders, infrastructure demolition and uprooting of trees.</li> <li>2. Institutionalize and develop technical and financial resources dedicated to the Risk Prevention and Agricultural Insurance Fund.</li> <li>3. Provide a suitable environment for agricultural production and for development of youth and farmers in Area C, border areas and Jerusalem through continuous coordination with all parties to provide infrastructure services to farmers and producers in marginalized areas, as well as agricultural programmes and projects for the poor, marginalized and women entrepreneurs.</li> <li>4. Establish agricultural control on border crossings and national reference laboratories.</li> <li>5. Empower farmers and producers to access available courts to secure their rights.</li> </ol>

<sup>10</sup> Exact numbers for the informal engagement of women in agriculture are difficult to obtain and range from one-third to two-thirds of women. Srouji (2016) lists 32.9 percent; FAO (2011) states that 39 percent of women work in the informal agricultural sector; and PARC (n.d.) lists a higher estimate of 66 percent.

Strategic objective	Policy priorities
<p><b>Sustainably manage natural and agricultural resources and improve adaptation to climate change.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establish large water facilities in arable irrigated areas through the transfer of water, water collection, and/or wastewater treatment and increase the efficiency of the available water.</li> <li>2. Provide the necessary support for land reclamation and road construction to link all agricultural land or lands that could be cultivated.</li> <li>3. Take measures to adapt to and/or mitigate the negative impacts of climate change and natural disasters, particularly high temperatures, fluctuating precipitation and declining rain water.</li> <li>4. Intensify efforts of official institutions, local authorities and research centres to protect forests and natural reserves, to organize and develop pastures, and to protect agricultural biodiversity throughout Palestine.</li> <li>5. Continue the greening of Palestine as a responsibility of all institutions, local authorities, schools and universities.</li> <li>6. Protect agricultural lands from urban expansion, especially land in plain areas and high-value agricultural lands.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Intensify agricultural production, productivity, and competitiveness in local and international markets and increase the agriculture sector's contribution to the gross domestic product and to food security.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Guide and support farmers' initiatives towards intensive and semi-intensive production systems, as well as the application of modern systems of agricultural production in line with the requirements of sustainable development.</li> <li>2. Strengthen the role of applied research in official research centres and universities in developing extension services for both crop and livestock agriculture.</li> <li>3. Improve communication between agricultural extension and veterinarians with respect to the transfer and dissemination of agricultural knowledge, proper agricultural planning and commitment in the agricultural calendar.</li> <li>4. Develop agricultural products for both crops and animals.</li> <li>5. Develop initiatives and national policies to reduce the cost of production of inputs, especially prices of fodders, fertilizers and pesticides.</li> <li>6. Preserve rural culture based on the cultivation of land with trees and crops, as well as livestock, by households.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Enable both female and male farmers and entrepreneurs to access the quality agricultural services that are needed to increase and improve product values along agricultural value chains.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Find mechanisms to ensure access to funding for small farmers, women and youth with the aim of enhancing their current operations and creating new entrepreneurial agricultural businesses.</li> <li>2. Empower youth, women, farmers and entrepreneurs to access quality services in agricultural business development and intensification to support entrepreneurship in the agricultural sector.</li> <li>3. Highlight the role of women in agricultural work and their contributions to national output and enable them to strengthen both their income gained from agricultural work and their contributions to the gross national product (GNP).</li> <li>4. Enhance information systems related to marketing, improvement of product quality, activation of controls over crossings, the promotion of national products and infrastructure development in marketing.</li> <li>5. Allocate human and physical resources capable of developing agricultural research that is based on the needs of farmers and extension workers.</li> <li>6. Activate procedures that ensure public health and phytosanitation.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Develop effective and efficient institutional and legal frameworks.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Continuously lobby Palestinian decision makers and international and United Nations organizations to allocate budgets for the agricultural sector that are coherent with the economic, social and political role of the sector.</li> <li>2. Conduct regular capacity building for all workers in the agricultural private sector, the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), and agricultural councils and associations.</li> <li>3. Enhance institutional environments, including premises, equipment and transportation for MoA employees, as well as for agricultural councils, unions and cooperatives.</li> <li>4. Strengthen cooperation and exchange of knowledge among stakeholders towards achieving the Strategy while avoiding duplication and developing a results-based management approach.</li> <li>5. Extend and update pieces of legislation governing the agricultural sector.</li> <li>6. Join international conventions, treaties and organizations that support the national policy agenda for agriculture.</li> </ol>

The NASS focuses on increasing the production of high-value crops, boosting production per acre, extending cultivated areas and strengthening livestock production. It highlights the importance of involving private sector investors, focusing especially on the Palestinian financing and banking institutions that consider the sector a high-risk sector. The Strategy also emphasizes that while much has been accomplished in terms of legislation, these efforts are not enough, and it stresses that much more work is needed to support both female and male farmers. The NASS recognizes the importance of women's empowerment in the sector and aims to increase the number of women producers and women's cooperatives that export and market their products. It does not, however, put forward enough measures and interventions to promote women's role in agricultural development. Nor does it sufficiently address the obstacles and challenges female farmers face in the sector or offer suggestions on how to support women farmers, despite their many contributions to the sector.

Complementing the NASS is the Food and Nutrition Security (FNS) National Investment Plan for 2020–2022, focused on the following six strategic objectives:<sup>11</sup>

1. hunger ended in Palestine;
2. malnutrition ended in Palestine;
3. agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers doubled;
4. sustainable food production systems ensured and resilient agricultural practices implemented;
5. diversity of plant and animal genetic resources for food and agriculture maintained; and
6. enabling environment for FNS created.

### **3.2. Institutional and financial arrangements for gender mainstreaming in agriculture and rural development**

In order to ensure gender mainstreaming across different sectors, 35 Women's Units were created in all ministries by the Council of Ministers' decision No. 15/12/09/CM/AQ of 2005. On 28 July 2008, based on a request from the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA), Decision No. 08/65/12/CM/SF was issued to amend the earlier decision, changing the title of Women's Units to Gender Units (GUs) and spelling out the tasks, responsibilities, and organizational structures of these units. Their task is to contribute to and monitor the mainstreaming of gender issues in ministerial policies, plans and programmes. Governmental commitment

towards gender issues was also reflected in the Council of Ministers issuing Decision No. 01/05/13/CM/SF in 2009, which stipulates that the Government and ministries adopt gender-sensitive budgets. Yet, as highlighted in section 2.3.2, despite the establishment of these units, they have not functioned as effectively as they could and they have been treated as a separate entity instead of a cross-cutting unit to integrate gender into all ministerial activities.

Another development was the appointment of a gender focal point in the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) in 2016. The main mandates of the gender focal point are to review strategies, policies, studies and projects from a gender perspective and to ensure that MoA programs are gender sensitive in formulation and implementation.

In addition to the role of the Government in mainstreaming gender within its ministries, and specifically within the MoA, we observe that there are many other actors in Palestine also working towards promoting gender equality in the agricultural sector. For example, some of the actors working towards this common goal in Palestine include Oxfam, UN Women, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and national civil society organizations, as detailed in Table 11.

### **3.3. Gender inequalities in the context of agriculture, rural development and food and nutrition security**

This section analyses the data collected in the field through individual interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs). The analysis is organized by sections corresponding to the 11 key pillars that have been adopted by FAO to measure gender dimensions in the value chain.

#### **3.3.1. Gender roles and dynamics**

Based on the desk review and field research, the following issues were examined:

- » gender roles in the agricultural sector and their impact on women's empowerment;
- » gender disparities and their impact on women's participation in the agricultural sector; and
- » time management based on the gendered division of work.

In the context of the patriarchal culture prevalent in Palestinian society in general, discussion of roles and responsibilities by gender in the agricultural sector and in rural development is an urgent necessity

<sup>11</sup> See [https://fscluster.org/sites/default/files/documents/fns\\_-\\_national\\_investment\\_plan.pdf](https://fscluster.org/sites/default/files/documents/fns_-_national_investment_plan.pdf).

to understand the power dynamics affecting the development process in rural Palestine. The findings of this study show that there are three main variables that affect the extent of men's and women's participation in the agricultural sector: age, marital status and geographic location.

#### » Age

Female interviewees pointed out that the younger generation is reluctant to participate in agriculture and therefore suggested that youth should be encouraged by the Government and by external stakeholders through incentives for engagement in agriculture.

#### » Marital status

The interviews and FGDs conducted with female farmers from rural Palestinian communities revealed that the marital status of women determines their freedom and opportunities for participation in the labour market, whether in agriculture or elsewhere. For the most part, unmarried women, divorcees and widowed women are at the greatest disadvantage in Palestinian society. The interviews and FGDs indicated that divorced and widowed women are more vulnerable to societal constraints that restrict their freedom of movement due to social stigmatization. These women have to leave their homes frequently to look for work and tend to errands and household responsibilities due to the absence of the husband as the so-called protector of the family, but this is often frowned upon. The extent to which women are able to participate in economic and social activities often depends on the dominant culture of the communities they live in, the support of their extended family, and the opportunities that are available to them. Divorced women suffer from an additional disadvantage in that they often have to take care of their extended family as well (e.g. the grandmother, grandfather and other extended family members from the mother's side).

According to one female farmer from Al Zawaida area in Gaza: **“If the house is far away, I, as a divorcee, would be allowed to go to work in the morning. I don't mind going, but the problem is how people talk about you. I am affected by how society views me when I leave for work at 5 a.m. They start asking questions, wondering where I am going at this hour, even if I am leaving with other women to go to work. But I don't care about what they have to say anymore because if I did, I couldn't leave the house or work”** (woman farmer from Al-Zawaida, GS).

With regard to unmarried women and young girls, FGDs with study participants showed that parents impose restrictions on them, preventing them from participating in agricultural activities outside the garden

or the household. Thus, they stay at home to engage in housework. One interviewee emphasized that: **“My parents don't allow me to participate in any activity; I only go with them to do olive picking. Otherwise, I stay home all the time and sometimes do embroidery”** (unmarried woman from Beit Duqqu, WB).

#### » Geographic location

In terms of geographic location, the FGDs revealed that there is a slight difference between regions when it comes to the participation of women in all agricultural value chain stages, with differences most apparent in post-production stages such as sales and marketing.

As mentioned above, the Ministry of Agriculture has identified five agroecological zones in Palestine. Of these, the Coastal Plain Zone (Gaza Strip) is generally more conservative regarding women's participation in the government sector and more emphasis is placed on limiting women's role to agriculture for the household and family work there. This is also the case in some Bedouin communities.

#### Intersection of the different factors leading to gender inequality

As can be observed from the interviews and FGDs, women's disadvantaged position in society is a result of the intersection of multiple factors, including gendered division of labour, age, marital status, geographic location and other challenges related to access to resources, institutional framework and socio-political climate. This section provides some real-life examples of women's experiences with these multiple layers of discrimination.

Regarding the gendered division of labour, when women were asked about their personal experiences with inequality between women and men in food production, sales and marketing, they indicated that men have access to and enjoy privileges that facilitate their participation in the public sphere. Such privileges may be as simple as owning or being allowed to drive a car. According to one female interviewee from Deir Ballout, West Bank: **“The big problem is that men have cars that allow them to buy and sell goods. If women had cars, the problem would be solved. Women could sell their products to men at a price they would both agree to. But male merchants are now somewhat used to having women work with the association; therefore, women have a little more autonomy and independence than before”** (female member of Al Ibdaa' Cooperative Association for Food Production, Deir Ballout, WB).

Furthermore, other interviewees from the same cooperative in Deir Ballout highlighted that as a



women's association, females are involved in all processes of the cooperative. This has allowed women to gain control over the production process as well as over their income, thereby allowing them to assert their presence in society. The experiences of the female members of the cooperative in Deir Ballout indicate that the more women are empowered and gain control over the means of production, the greater their self-confidence and independence and the greater their empowerment to participate fully in the rural development process.

Nonetheless, despite progress by women to enhance their role in society, one interviewee stated that:

**“Gender disparities do play a role. Men leave the country more frequently, and they get to attend more courses that develop their ideas and skills”** (female farmer from Deir Ballout, WB).

#### **Time management and triple burden of responsibility**

The division of work according to gender roles is reflected in how men and women manage time and how their work is distributed. Results of this study's field work in both the WB and the GS indicate that women spend more time on domestic work, including

production for the household, than do men. This is in addition to their role as active participants in society (e.g. community activities and others). All women interviewed stated that they work up to 12 hours a day and spend this time between domestic and productive roles that their communities expect them to fulfil.

Even though women work longer hours than men, their work in the informal sector remains unaccounted for in the national income. A time management survey conducted by PCBS showed that women spend 93.1 percent of their time on household duties, family care and other activities related to the household, including on food production, which is ignored in national income statistics. In comparison, men spend only 56.8 percent of their time on such duties (PCBS, 2012).

Table 9 provides a breakdown of activities performed by women and men inside their homes during the day, as described by women interviewed during the field study.

Regarding the roles of men and women in agricultural work, according to interviews and FGDs in both the WB and the GS, roles are divided as indicated in Table 10.

**Table 9: Daily time distribution based on gender**

Time	Activity	Female	Male
4 am	» Pray	X	
5–6 am	» Feed and water livestock	X	
6–8 am	» Prepare breakfast and get children ready for school, university, or work	X	
	» Prepare breakfast for the husband	X	
8 am – 2 pm	» Clean the house	X	X
	» Work on the family farm	X	X (Some interviewed men do farm work.)
2–4 pm	» Prepare lunch for the family	X	
	» Clean up after lunch	X	
4–7 pm	» Prepare food for the husband	X	
	» Return to the field to finish work	X	X (In some cases, women farmers referred to the participation of men in agricultural work after finishing their employed work.)
	» Clean and feed the cattle	X	
	» Put the cattle in the barn	X	
7–9 pm	» Prepare dinner	X	
	» Supervise children before bedtime	X	
	» Go out with friends		X
9–11.30 pm	» Clean home after dinner	X	
	» Spend time watching TV and with spouse	X	X

Table 10: Roles of men and women in agricultural work

Tasks	Women	Men	Reasons, based on research results
<b>Production value chain</b>			
Preparing land	X		
Ploughing	X	X	Ploughing requires men's physical strength.
Cultivation	X		
Bringing water to dilute fertilizer	X		
Fertilization		X	Because of the heavy weight of fertilizer bags, women are unable to perform this task.
Weed removal	X		
Harvest	X	X	Mainly women, but all family members participate.
Classification of fruits/peeling	X		
Transportation (from farm to street)		X	Because social norms restrict women's movement, men tend to transport the products. Also, men have cars and therefore are better able to move from one place to another.
Marketing		X	Men have access to the private sector and, according to social norms, are expected to perform this task.
Processing/adding value		X	
Maintenance of agricultural equipment		X	Men have the skills and knowledge to deal with the equipment.
<b>Agribusiness administration</b>			
Record keeping	X	X	In cooperatives and agri-companies (e.g. marketing and processing companies), management is carried out by female employees, but men generally work as accountants.
Sales administration	X	X	The majority of interviewees explained that whereas the women's cooperatives are usually managed by female employees, the cooperative's (male) director takes care of coordination with the stakeholders.
Logistics services	X		
<b>Financial management</b>			
Negotiation of prices		X	At women's cooperatives, men from the local community act as mediators and perform this task. For individual women farmers, it is their husband's job.
Receiving payments		X	In the cooperatives, payments are paid directly to the director. For individual female farmers, husbands receive the payments and give a portion to their wives to maintain family needs.
Financial decisions	X	X	The majority of women and men interviewed indicated that some decisions related to the family and home – such as buying or paying for home supplies, clothing, seeds, school fees, etc. – are the responsibility of women in consultation with men. However, decisions related to buying assets, such as a car, or regarding any issue not within the home, are primarily made by men. Even with home-related issues, the majority of participants indicated that the final approval is made by men.
Going to the bank to take out loans		X	Women indicated that they do not own any assets that they could mortgage. Additionally, women were averse to taking loans out of concern that loans could cause more damage and increase poverty rather than help them. Due to the limited resources women and families have available, it can be too risky to take out a loan.

Tasks	Women	Men	Reasons, based on research results
Going to the bank to deposit savings		X	While typically done by men, all women and men stated that under the prevailing economic situation, it has become difficult for families to save money. All the income generated is spent on family needs.

Gender roles are among the qualitative indicators that measure the achievements of any society towards equality and development. The reinforcement of stereotypical and discriminatory gender roles contributes to increased workloads for women and excludes them from active participation in development. For example, prevailing approaches towards rural development in Palestine, such as those adopted by the Ministry of Agriculture and supporting institutions, tend to encourage the participation of women in agricultural production as a mechanism for economic empowerment, as opposed to supporting them in marketing, value addition, access to markets, control over resources, etc. Such approaches, which tend to increase women's workloads without generating much value, need to be replaced or supported by other interventions that are based on a human rights approach as well as labour-reducing approaches to enhancing agricultural productivity. Furthermore, rather than empowering women, current humanitarian intervention plans are orientated around women helping to raise the living standards and to maintain the financial security of their families, ignoring the extra burden that this places upon them. Additionally, women's participation in agriculture is seen as part of the national project that demands the "protection of the land." There is thus the irony that women are called upon to protect the land while lacking full protections themselves, since, due to prevailing traditional understandings of gender roles, women are not considered to be full citizens by policy makers.<sup>12</sup>

Women must be regarded as citizens who have the right to manage and control their lives and the available resources to guarantee their independence. Full citizenship leads to freedom of choice, equal opportunities, and equal access to resources and property. Facilitating women's equal and full access to resources and services and ensuring their full participation in agricultural VCs can go a long way towards strengthening their socio-economic status. Similarly, stereotypical understandings of gender roles must be changed, and women's status must be enhanced so they can have access to resources and participate in decision-making throughout the VC.

### 3.3.2. Food and nutrition security

This section analyses the impact of women's participation in the agricultural sector on efforts to combat poverty and food insecurity, both within the family and at the community level. The research findings indicate that women's participation in the sector helps to improve the overall status of the family. However, as the agricultural sector in Palestine continues to face political and socio-economic constraints, women's participation faces a paradox. On the one hand, women are playing a critical role in contributing to the family's sustenance, helping prevent extreme poverty and impoverishment by not only providing food for the family table but also generating income through sales of their products. On the other hand, this involvement frequently comes at the expense of their health and overall wellbeing, and often goes unpaid and unaccounted for.

This CGA has found that women's cooperatives in the WBGS are partly contributing to women's economic empowerment, as they allow women to market and sell their products, increase their production-related knowledge through workshops and lectures, and raise their awareness of their rights through access to information. The study's findings also show that these cooperatives and other associations formed by women workers indeed have helped overcome financial crises, as they help women sell their products and generate additional income to meet their needs in terms of food, education and health. These benefits, however, do not extend to individual women farmers not involved in the cooperatives. Furthermore, external interventions that support women do not tend to be sufficiently holistic and long-term-oriented in their approaches. While many interventions tend to raise awareness of health-related issues facing women and of the detrimental effects of strict gender roles, only some provide specialized economic empowerment activities ranging from crop techniques to marketing assistance that empower women over the long-run. As one participant of a FGD with women in Beit Duqqu, West Bank stressed: **"Usually, institutions come and have their programmes. By giving us courses on women's rights or raising awareness about health issues, they do things that are important. But by now**

<sup>12</sup> Citizenship is not limited to the traditional concept of political participation but includes the concepts of justice and equality. Individuals who are given equal rights enjoy full citizenship, from which privileges and rights arise. Palestinian women are deprived of equal rights in all aspects, including social, economic and political rights.

**we are tired of the same lectures; we must work on projects... Some institutions gave us a milk machine and then disappeared. That's not enough. [We need to learn how to use it and help in how to market our products.]”** (focus group of women from Beit Duqqu).

This study also found that interventions that sell women's products at low prices at fairs or to local merchants do not contribute to lifting women farmers from poverty. Interventions must help women sell their products to international markets or allow them to compete locally with Israeli manufactured goods.

Additionally, some women farmers in the WBGs have moved beyond the traditional family circles and expectations due to their awareness, capacities and continuous self-development, which in turn has been reflected in the security of their families. Therefore, the initiatives offered by various organizations that focus on self-development, empowerment and transformational leadership have contributed to providing financial security for some families.

**“We are twelve individuals in my family. The girls are older now, and, thank God, I never needed people's handouts or have even asked for help. I am self-sufficient and have done it all from the land I planted to feed my daughters. I make yogurt, butter and goat cheese, and I also raise and sell chickens, rabbits, turkeys, pigeons, ducks and more. These animals have also provided essential food for my family. My husband brings in some money, and we use this to pay our bills, including electricity, water and transportation. I have sold sheep and paid for the education of my five daughters who are in college – two of them are enrolled at Al-Quds Open University and three are at Polytechnic University. I have never asked anyone for help, not even for 10 shekels, including my sister, who has a better income than me, or even my sister-in-law. I do not have much money, but I have what I need to cover my basic needs. Because I was able to save, I bought a piece of land and built on it, and we also bought a piece of land through my husband, who has taken a loan of NIS 6 000 from his government employer where he is a clerk. We continue to pay a monthly fee to pay back this loan. I have built a home for us and, God willing, I will also build a house for my children in order to help them. I love agriculture”** (Female farmer from Dura, Hebron, WB).

In terms of the services provided by different organizations, one critical area of concern is the lack of services that facilitate women's access to and ability to benefit from productive resources. One major need is childcare, for example in the form of nurseries run

by cooperatives or organizations to provide childcare during their members' working hours. Women also often lack the time to access much-needed health care services. Additionally, some of the women interviewed shared that they do not have the resources to renovate their homes to meet minimum adequate housing standards and requirements; others discussed the need for national policies that protect wages in the informal agricultural sector where the majority of workers are women. These are fundamental issues that could help women overcome their difficult realities.

**“We ourselves hope that an organization supports us and creates projects for us. Our home is about to fall apart and is really not suitable for us to live in, no matter whether it is summer or winter – it has lots of asbestos. I would like to work on a project that generates income from sheep, to expand on what I have. But I don't even have land for grazing or for taking care of the sheep. I was given two sheep, and I worked on expanding that number and now have a total of seven. I sell the sheep and spend the money on my children to take care of them. I have three children with disabilities, and I have a daughter that has a problem with her cornea that requires extensive care – I cannot rest. We are ten individuals in my family, including my husband and children. I go twice a week to Gaza for medical treatment. My one daughter had a corneal transplant, but I have another daughter that also requires the same transplant, and it will cost NIS 30 000 NIS”** (woman farmer from Wadi al-Salaqa, GS).

Women in the WBGs have indicated that fewer alternatives are available to them compared to men. The prevailing culture restricts women's movement and stigmatizes them if they search for alternative work. Men, on the other hand, are free in their search for employment, and the community accepts this, even if they work in Israel, because men are considered to be the primary breadwinners of the family. Here, political factors contribute to the burden on women and increase their level of poverty, mainly affecting women heads of households, divorced women and widows.

**“Men can work a little, yet women's work is non-stop, demanding and rigorous. Women have to take care of and provide all essentials for the children while also taking care of the home. Men do not work as hard, and if a man cannot find work here, he looks for work in Israel in order to make ends meet and save money for the family. Women do not have money or alternatives. Women have to accept their situation in order to benefit, even if only a little”** (female member of Anabta Women's Cooperative, WB).

An examination of men's perspectives towards the reproductive role of women reflected their attitudes of superiority toward women. They do not consider women's reproductive labour to be work in the first place. This was highlighted by men's recommendations for solutions to reduce women's work burdens. In discussion groups, men pointed out that the reproductive role of women that requires them to stay at home provides them with comfort compared to the productive work that is done by men and considered the essential work.

**“If I have 5 dunums [half a hectare], there is a possibility to teach my kids, sending them to schools and universities. Science has developed today, and we can have machines and learn how to use them. This means that if I have 5 dunums and machines, I can do a lot for my family. If the woman works on the land, this benefits the children, their habits, eating and drinking. The man of the house gets tired and fatigued from working outside the house. Let him work and let her be dedicated to the housework – that is fair. This way, she will raise her children well because she is the educator of future generations”** (member of a men's focus group from Al-Mawasi, GS).

In a political and economic reality as unstable as it is in Palestine, it is vital to consider women's points of view on the matter of empowerment, as empowered women represented a minority in the sample. Women stressed the importance, and correlated the achievement, of self-empowerment with employment and productivity, which underpins the importance of holistic interventions for attaining higher success rates.

### 3.3.3. Participation in development planning and decision-making in the public sphere

The interviews indicated that the women's cooperatives were established at the initiative of the women themselves, reflecting their desire for and capability of leadership.<sup>13</sup> These cooperatives have been able to provide local employment opportunities for women through the production and sale of agricultural products, as well as opportunities to engage in leadership roles. Cooperatives have contributed to the enhancement of women's skills and confidence, and leaders of these cooperatives have opened channels of communication with local and international institutions for support. For example, some interviewees indicated that in order to attain administrative and financial management skills, they approached the University of

Bethlehem: **“At first, we were no experts, but after we participated in workshops with the cooperative in partnership with the University of Bethlehem, we learned about administrative matters and how to work in communication, about the elections, and more”** (Female member of Al Ibdaa' Cooperative Association for Food Production, Deir Ballout, WB).

Local and international organizations such as CARE, Oxfam, the Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee (PARC), the Union of Agricultural Work Committees (UAWC) and UN Women, among other, often provide technical and in-kind support to the cooperatives with the overall aim of fostering the economic empowerment of women. The majority of assistance is provided at the level of services or as support in the acquisition of machinery or kitchen appliances, as well as through courses on project management and product improvement.

The cooperative members interviewed indicated that, due to the limited budgets allocated by the supporting institutions, not all needs of food production processes tend to be met. While several initiatives supported by institutional partners have made a positive impact by meeting part of the actual needs, the remaining gaps mean that a majority of women are unable upgrade their level of production or improve marketing. Cooperatives in the GS are particularly hard hit because the constraints and closures imposed upon them impede women's access to resources. Moreover, most cooperatives – with the exception of the Karma Association and Al-'Aqabaa Society, which are headed by men – suffer from a lack of communication with the private sector and from exploitation, such as not receiving adequate remuneration for their products.

### 3.3.4. Representation in rural organizations

This section takes a deeper look at the eight women's cooperatives targeted by FAO programmes that were examined in this study, looking at their structural and administrative frameworks and their programmes and activities. It also addresses the impact of these cooperatives on the empowerment of women in the agricultural sector and in society in general.

FAO is currently supporting 84 women's associations in WBGS. Over 900 women farmers and members of women's associations have been trained in agricultural production and natural resource management skills. The model employed by FAO aims to increase the

<sup>13</sup> A cooperative is defined as a legal entity registered with the Ministry of Labour or the Ministry of the Interior representing a group of individuals that come together to achieve a common objective. It is ruled by Cooperative Law No. 17 of 1956, which was amended in 2004. There are many forms of cooperatives. Agricultural entities are the most common and may specialize in, for example, beekeeping or livestock. There are also cooperatives that help people with housing, provide services for savings and credit, protect consumers, share electricity and water resources, etc.

possibilities available to associations, helping them to enhance their knowledge in agriculture and trade their products near their villages in order to circumvent the severe movement restrictions within the WB and between the WB and the GS. Members' involvement in women's associations improves their collective power, enabling them to form cooperative links and marketing associations and to trade products or skills (FAO, 2016).

All of the interviewed cooperatives specialize in agricultural production, and the work is entirely carried out by women. The results from the interviews, however, indicate a distinction between the cooperatives originally formed by the women themselves (as was the case for three cooperatives in the WB) and the cooperatives that were established as part of previously existing local institutions. In the cooperatives founded by women, in the aim of changing their realities in their villages and empowering themselves economically, the administrative positions in the cooperatives are occupied by women. In the cooperatives that were established as part of previously existing local institutions, the administrative positions are held by men even though the members are women. Furthermore, the CGA findings highlight that while women are involved in the process of production, they are generally excluded from the final phases of distribution and marketing. These activities are carried out by men due to the movement restrictions imposed on women by political circumstances and social constraints and because men are better connected to the external environment.

The cooperatives create employment opportunities for women, helping them to overcome their difficult economic realities, even though the income generated is generally limited. Many of the female farmers interviewed stressed the important role of cooperatives in helping them generate an income that positively impacts the livelihoods of their families, enabling them to meet their families' needs in terms of education, food, clothing and health care. Moreover, not only are women experiencing economic empowerment and enhancing their skills and knowledge in processes of agricultural production, but, in the case of the women-initiated cooperatives, women are also holding administrative and financial positions and participating more visibly in the community. Thus, supported by external institutions such as FAO or the Ma'an Development Center, cooperatives form an essential step in the process of empowering women. This CGA also found that the commitment of women

and their determination to succeed in their work are positively shaping communities' perceptions towards the cooperatives and raising awareness of women's achievements.

The FGDs conducted with male participants showed that men recognize the commitment and great effort women put into the cooperatives, yet they believe that women's work should remain limited to food production and processing and that there are tasks that women cannot perform, such as the distribution of the products and financial transactions. Changing such perceptions will require concerted efforts. Donors need to have holistic visions and plans for the services, machinery, skills, knowledge and networking (including marketing) opportunities they provide, which means they must also make efforts to foster social change in their approach to rural development. The cooperatives also need to enhance their efforts in this realm when targeting women in the agricultural sector. Successfully changing perceptions of gender roles will empower all actors along the VC and increase the quality of life for all.

An important point highlighted in the interviews is the fact that during the process of establishing the cooperatives, the participating members contributed amounts ranging from 150 to 500 Jordanian dinars.<sup>14</sup> Such contribution requirements may pose an impediment to the enrolment of poor women who may not be able to pay the participation fees in light of harsh economic realities and difficult political conditions, particularly in border areas in the GS and Area C in the WB. As a result, membership is limited to women who can afford the membership fee, even though cooperatives assert that membership is open to all without any discrimination.

Available data show that women express their overall satisfaction with the economic empowerment and the availability of income through the cooperatives, but they also stress the importance of burden sharing and division of roles with men. The goal is to provide food security for the family without neglecting the rights of women and marginalized groups and while taking into consideration the increased responsibilities and obligations women face due to the reproductive roles they play. This is in line with the work of Pattnaik *et al.* (2018) in their critiques of the equation of empowerment with an increase in productive work. According to these authors:

» Involvement in agriculture should not be confused

<sup>14</sup> One Jordanian dinar is equivalent to USD 1.41 as of June 2020.

with women's empowerment. Women's involvement as cultivators may not, for many, be financially empowering given the sector is already experiencing severe decline and is no longer considered a profitable occupation. They may be denied significant decision-making powers in relation to household assets, lack viable livelihood alternatives, and be forced to undertake economic activities that have been left by men. Such involvement occurs under duress and could be termed 'feminization out of compulsion' or the 'feminization of agrarian distresses'. Furthermore, the type of feminization of agriculture that the data present implies a concentration of women either in agricultural labour or 'other-work', and could be related to what the Gimenez (1987) described as 'feminization of poverty'. (Pattnaik *et al.*, 2018, p. 151)

In conclusion, the findings of this CGA show that there remains a gap in the work of cooperatives regarding processes of empowerment. The mechanisms used to empower women economically must be enhanced, and much work remains to be done in order to provide women with inclusive services. It is necessary to offer training sessions in various aspects other than the production process, with the objective of contributing to social change. The process of empowerment requires holistic planning for the programmes in order to change the distribution of roles and ease the burden on women. Resources must be invested into the participation of women in the agricultural sector to bring about cooperation at all stages of the productive process, including marketing, ownership and control over resources.

### 3.3.5. Agricultural and rural employment

Informal and seasonal employment is a widespread phenomenon in the agricultural sector, and it is carried out mostly by women, as reported by institutions and cooperatives. There are, however, no official statistics on informal employment. Moreover, the law fails to provide a legal framework to protect workers from the exploitation and marginalization that is frequently associated with such employment. The lack of protective mechanisms leaves women doubly vulnerable – to exploitation from the private sector and to neglect from the government sector. Women who work in Israeli settlements, it was noted, suffer even more. As their work in the settlements remains undeclared, not only do they work without benefits or legal protection, but they also face social stigmatization, as society disapproves of women working in the Israeli labour market. Men's work in settlements amidst rising unemployment, however, is considered acceptable due to their being heads of households and primary providers.

Even though the agricultural strategic plan addresses the importance of finding alternatives to work in Israel and in settlements and encourages employment in the OPT, the Palestinian Government has not succeeded in fostering a conducive environment for doing so due to occupation-related measures such as Israel's control over natural resources and over the Palestinian market.

With this reality, the rights of working women have been neglected in many areas such as health and wages, along with lack of a union or other body that would protect their legal rights as part of the informal employment sector. A number of articles in the Palestinian Labour Law and in its executive regulations still need to be amended. For example, Article 3 excludes domestic workers, such as house cleaners and persons who work for their family members, largely comprised of women. The study entitled *Women in the shadow: women and the informal sector in Palestine* [in Arabic] states that women constitute the largest segment in the informal sector, especially in agricultural work (Sarraf and Samarah, 2016). For the most part, work in agriculture is considered a family business, and as such, is mostly performed by women and without pay. Lack of acknowledgement of the work of women, particularly blatant in the agricultural sector, illustrates the gap between policies, national trends and women's actual realities. It is also an indication that efforts such as cooperatives that have focused on economic empowerment have failed to sufficiently address human rights aspects. Addressing these aspects is stipulated by CEDAW.

### 3.3.6. Rural advisory services (agricultural extension services)

Based on the interviews conducted in the WB and the GS, it is clear that extension in the various areas of the VC is considered crucial and has a direct and positive effect. As women farmers primarily depend on traditional, frequently outdated methods for agricultural production, they welcome extension courses to provide them with new skills and information. Women farmers reported experiencing an improved quality of their crop and/or animal production as a result of applying the information provided by agricultural extension agents.

**“We worked with organizations that offered extensive training sessions and extension in the production of Armenian cucumber through the Palestinian Centre. Our country depends on agriculture, and women are accustomed to planting Armenian cucumber, having learned it from their elders. At first, they did not accept the idea that someone would come from the outside to teach and guide them, but two years ago, the harvest was destroyed due to disease, and they did not know why**

**and lost the cucumber crop that season. Last year, we coordinated with the Palestinian Centre and held awareness sessions about Armenian cucumber farming, and the participants accepted the ideas proposed by an agricultural engineer. This year the harvest has doubled. Today, women ask the engineer for help if any disease has hit the harvest, and the engineer provides them with the solution”** (female member of Al Ibdaa’ Cooperative Association for Food Production, Deir Ballout, WB).

The data collected for this CGA show that the majority of those who benefit from the specialized courses in food processing are women, as they are not only heavily involved in the production processes, but also in food processing, which is considered by both men and women as a role best carried out by women. Training courses of interest to men, the study found, include those on tree trimming, land ploughing and agricultural machinery, activities that Palestinian society considers suitable for men.

This study also examined the preference and extent of acceptance of the gender of extension workers among both men and women in the context of an agricultural community that depends on female labour while operating within patriarchal norms. Study participants comprised of women working in the agricultural sector were asked whether they prefer to work with female or male agricultural extensionists from the MoA. Their answers indicated that the majority of women tend to prefer female agricultural workers for two main reasons. First, women wish to preserve the reputation of their families and to avoid the spreading of any rumours in their traditionally oriented communities when working alone in the field with a male extension worker in the early hours of the day and in the absence of their spouses; this is considered an unacceptable practice for rural women. Many institutions fail to consider this key issue that must be taken into consideration in order to encourage women’s participation and facilitate their gaining new skills. Second, female participants expressed that they feel more at ease and are better able to communicate when working with female rather than male experts, thus benefitting more from the training and guidance sessions.

**“Women prefer a woman (female extension worker); they feel closer to her and consider her easier to deal with”** (female farmer from Seida, WB).

Some women pointed out that male agricultural extension workers look down on female farmers because they are convinced that women are unable to understand agricultural instructions. Therefore, these

workers give less importance to the training sessions that target women.

In conclusion, agricultural extension courses are considered essential for the empowerment of women working in the agricultural sector. The data show that the integration of all individuals in the production process must be achieved, and interventions need to engage all groups in extension courses at all stages of the value chain. The provision of extension services by the Ministry of Agriculture is still limited, and much work is needed to develop and expand best practices based on the needs of the individuals involved and on geographical distribution. Women highlighted a lack of clarity on how to find information on or gain access to the cooperatives and organizations that hold training and awareness sessions or provide extension. Indeed, cooperatives lack expertise and precise mechanisms regarding the use of media and social platforms to publicize their activities and extension services.

### 3.3.7. Rural finance

Microfinance institutions and rural saving and credit cooperatives provide financial services in rural areas, as other financial institutions, such as commercial banks, are not accessible for most rural men and women. The specialized lending sector is considered an emerging sector in Palestine, although it is a very small sector compared to the banking sector, with volume of transactions over the last three years under 2.5 percent of all banking transactions and constituting less than 1 percent of the GDP. This limited success is related to the nature of the political, economic, security and social environment in which it operates. There is weak awareness of this option among the targeted sector and eligible farmers, and the religious factor (i.e. prohibition of earning or paying interests under Sharia law), furthermore, is causing the volume of specialized lending activities to remain low.

Most of the loans granted in the agricultural sector are small loans to poor and less advantaged groups in rural areas and refugee camps. Data show that the small loans granted by specialized lending institutions in 2013 amounted to USD 56.9 million (68.7 percent of small loans) in the WB and to USD 25.9 million (31.3 percent) in the GS. The number of clients reached 32 761 in the WB, 47.4 percent of whom were women, and 15 411 clients in the GS, 22.3 percent of whom were women (Abed-Alkarim, Abed and Abu Zaitoon, 2013). With many loans taken out for the improvement of housing conditions, the housing sector accounted for the highest percentage, representing 25.7 percent of the small loans taken in 2012. The housing sector was followed by the trade sector, which accounted for 23.1 percent of small loans in 2012 (USD 19.3 million).



The agricultural sector came in third, at 19.6 percent of small loans (USD 16.3 million), followed by the services sector at 5.14 percent (USD 12 million). The rest was distributed among the industry and consumption sectors (ibid.). Furthermore, 88 percent of female farmers rely on self-generated savings to fund agricultural processes. When these resources are insufficient the same percentage seeks interest-free loans from relatives and friends. Those who seek funding through microfinance institutions constitute 10 percent, whereas 4 percent of women seek soft loans through projects, and only 2 percent turn to banks for borrowing purposes to fund their production processes (ibid.).

The findings of this CGA also revealed that farmers of both genders have limited access to loans, even though most of them suffer from an inability to save and from the need to borrow. First, there is a general scarcity of institutions that offer loans at low interest rates to farmers, and second, a lack of guarantees generally required by lenders hinders farmers' ability to obtain loans, especially when husbands are unable to work and a permanent source of funding is not available.

**“No, I have never dealt with [banks], and if I wanted to get a loan, how will I pay it back? It’s possible to pay one month but I can’t pay the next”** (woman farmer from Al-Zawaida, Deir-Al-Balah, GS).

**“I’m aware that there are institutions that provide loans, but we’re afraid because it’s forbidden in our religion”** (woman farmer from Dura, WB).

Savings-and-loans cooperatives, as revealed by the results of this CGA, provide interest-free loans to female members. The majority of women interviewed, however, do not spend the loans they receive to fund production-related projects but rather to educate their children, both male and female; to contribute to the expenses of their sons' marriages; and/or to contribute to the construction or renovation of their houses.

### 3.3.8. Technology

When agricultural technology is introduced, significant achievements can be noted, such as higher production rates and the planting of new, strategic crops. The possession or use of modern agricultural equipment is essential for Palestinian farmers at all levels of farming operations, from cultivation to harvest, and has positive impacts, as it raises profit and the economic feasibility of agricultural processes. Srouji (2016) noted that Palestinian farmers use a variety of production machines that include tractors, ploughs, manual and mechanical sprayers, transport vehicles, and more.

Among women, 71 percent use tractors, 79 percent use ploughs, 71 percent use manual spraying machines, 32 percent use mechanical spraying machines, 34 percent use transport vehicles and 20 percent use other agricultural machines (ibid.).

While Srouji (2016) did not provide sex-disaggregated data that show differences in the use of such techniques between male and female farmers, the results of the interviews and FGDs conducted for this CGA indicate that men and women use different types of equipment. Men more frequently mentioned adopting machinery that requires physical strength and/or intensive labour, while women more frequently mentioned adopting technologies related to weeding, harvesting, composting and sprinkler irrigation.

These technologies are compatible with the duties that families and communities assign to women, which include activities such as food preparation, the production of minor crops for self-consumption, and waste management.

Most of the qualitative findings of this Assessment indicate that both men and women still use traditional and rudimentary tools for production, and some findings contradict the findings of Srouji (2016). For example, the majority of female and male participants reported low usage of tractors in general and very low usage of tractors by women, as the rugged nature of the land and the random distribution of trees make it difficult for tractors to operate. Consequently, the potential for increased tractor use to support an expansion of the amount of agricultural goods produced or sold by men and women is low.

**“In the past two to three years, some people brought in new machines that require level and plain land. Such machines can’t be used on the rough fields over here. Also, our way of planting trees is not suitable for the machines you are talking about. The trees here are grown at random and not organized in lines. Our land and agriculture methods are not prepared for such a thing”** (woman farmer during FGD, Dura, Hebron, WB).

Furthermore, in some areas where the environment is suitable for tractors to operate, their cost makes them difficult to be purchased or even rented by either men or women. The majority of rural men and women cannot afford the rental cost of a tractor without external support or subsidy. Thus, they plough the land by a tractor only once a year. Those who own tractors tend to have older, worn out equipment that can require a maintenance cost ranging from NIS 1 500 to 2 000 monthly, a considerable amount for most farmers.

**“We only have the tractor, and I swear to God that I pay 1 500 to 2 000 shekels every month for repair work”** (male farmer from Dura, Hebron, WB).

**“Nowadays, there is a ploughing tractor. It is a burden on the woman to pay its full costs. But if an institution were to adopt this issue, so that she pays only half the price, this would relieve her. We are still working on the land with a hatchet”** (individual woman farmer from Deir Ballout, WB)

The CGA results also reveal that in food processing, women have adopted modern technologies to varying degrees. Most women with access to improved, modern technologies were introduced to these through special projects by local and international NGOs. By adopting equipment such as the ploughing tractor, these technologies improve farmers' production, increase their income and reduce the drudgery associated with farm labour.

**“For example, in tomato paste manufacturing, the woman works from the morning ‘til the evening pressing tomatoes by hands. It is hard work and causes back pain. Four years ago, we bought an electric juicer with a production rate of over 100 kilos per hour. This has much increased productivity”** (female member of KafrLaqif Cooperative, WB).

The CGA results also indicate, however, that some cooperatives are unable to benefit, partially or completely, from some of the agricultural machinery they may have obtained through local or international institutions. Reasons include:

- » The machines cannot be used for a particular food processing activity because the supplier did not comply with the given specifications.
- » The women cannot produce large quantities of product because they lack the opportunities to market them.
- » The women cannot market their products at local or external markets because they are unable to license them at official institutions such as the Ministry of Health because they cannot afford the high licensing fees that can reach up to NIS 17 000.

**“These machines were brought by Oxfam, but something was missing. There was a defect in their specifications, and they did not operate properly. We have not been able to use them until now because there is a missing part in the filling machine. The packaging of the machine was broken before we even used it. Oxfam requested certain defined specifications, but the supplier did not abide by these specifications. We informed them, but no one**

**responded... Because of selling difficulties, we can't mix. We have to process large quantities, but we mix only upon demand because, as we said, the Ministry of Health charges 17 000 shekels for the license fee, so we don't even care about the missing part”** (members of the women's focus group in Seida, WB).

Some women, especially among the elderly, still prefer to use traditional methods in food processing, even though there are modern technologies available that can reduce the burden placed on them. Such a preference tends to stem from an individual's inclination to stick to methods inherited and learned from parents, the unavailability of alternatives, the low cost of these technologies and the fear that women's employment opportunities may be reduced.

**“I like the traditional methods of work and don't want them to become extinct; I consider them part of our heritage”** (female president of Dura Women's Cooperative for Food Processing, Dura, WB).

When study participants were asked about their needs in terms of tools and machinery that would support their agricultural work, answers indicated a clear difference between the needs of male and female farmers, reflecting the different roles they play in the agricultural sector. For example, women expressed the need for techniques that support food processing, such as advanced thyme mills, sterilization machines, honey separators, integrated processing units, kneading machines, pasteurizers for olive butter manufacturing, special clothing for manufacturing processes, and first aid kits. Men, in turn, expressed their need for advanced equipment that saves them time and effort when ploughing the land.

**“All the projects are implemented through primitive methods. Therefore, we need machines and development. Pasteurizing 100 olive butter jars takes a whole day when the women must bring a large cooking pot with water to a boil, add the jars, and then let them cool down. This takes a long time, so we need a pasteurizer”** (female member of Beita Women's Cooperative, WB).

In most of the target areas where raising cattle is a principal activity, farmers suffer from animals destroying their crops. To protect their gardens from animals – especially from cows, goats and sheep – female and male farmers have to fence them in with sticks. This is a tedious task, expected to be carried out by wives and children, and therefore limits the sizes of gardens.

The women in the discussion groups, particularly in the GS, focused on their need for poultry feeders

and watering systems, hatcheries, poultry warmers, barns for the rehabilitation of livestock, feed-cutting machines, and machines for the chopping and milling of agricultural waste.

**“We have women who breed sheep, but they don’t have barns to shelter their sheep. These women need space, feeders, and some more sheep so they can have a source of income. If only they could have, for example, milking machines and equipment for dairy production, so they could make cheese and yogurt, or water filters, so they could water the animals with desalinated water because salty water is not suitable for agriculture and irrigation! ... Agriculture also requires irrigation networks, water dynamos, pesticide sprayers, and fences to surround the land, since most of the land is open and at risk of damage by the passing sheep... Solar energy is necessary as well for women who breed poultry and for the greenhouses – these are also in need of technologies”** (Women farmers from the focus group in Al-Mawasi, GS).

The interviews revealed that the majority of farmers use both natural and chemical fertilizers in their production processes. It has been noted, however, that female farmers who use natural fertilizers outnumber the ones who apply chemical fertilizers, possibly because natural fertilizers are cheaper. The higher proportion of mixed-farming farmers using natural fertilizers compared to crop farmers can be explained by the availability of such fertilizers in mixed farms.

**“We now apply new fertilization methods using organic fertilizers and insecticides and stick to special irrigation periods. Many things that we have learned are new for us and for all farmers”** (female farmer from Al-Jalama, WB).

### 3.3.9. Land

Women’s status has commonly been defined through their degree of ownership, access to, and control over land and natural resources (including food, income and other forms of wealth) as well as social resources (including knowledge, power and prestige). To ensure that such control is equitable and effective, women must have access to transportation, credit, markets and financing, as well as the support of legal, customary and family institutions (FAO, 2002).

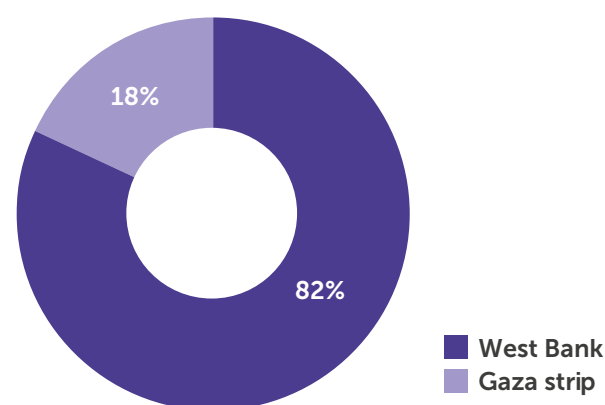
Women in Palestine have limited access to and ownership of land and assets, which leads to limited access to loans and other financial services because they cannot provide collateral, as raised by many of the women interviewed for this study. This situation severely restricts their opportunities for entrepreneurship. While

local incubators provide some relief in this area, their programmes mostly target young women and recent graduates, leaving older women less able to start their own businesses.

Equitable access to land is a human rights issue, and, as the UN Economic and Social Council Commission on the Status of Women states, “land rights discrimination is a violation of human rights” (FAO, 2002, p. 9). Nevertheless, local studies have shown that the provisions that allow women to hold land rights are limited, as this is considered a male privilege in Palestinian culture (Al-Botmeh, 2013a, 2013b). Even though Palestinian legislation provides for women’s rights, legal procedures and cultural and community barriers form significant impediments to their enjoyment of these rights. Gender differences in access to land must be recognized if objectives such as increasing land productivity and promoting sustainable resource management are to be met.

For example, the results of the 2010 agricultural census indicate that the number of agricultural holdings in the OPT has reached 111 310 holdings, of which 90 908 (82 percent) are located in the WB (see Figure 1) and 20 402 (18 percent) in the GS (PCBS, 2010). Agricultural holdings engaging in plant crops constituted 71 percent of the agricultural holdings; those raising animals constituted 13 percent, and mixed agricultural holdings constituted 16 percent of the total holdings (ibid.).

**Figure 1: Percentage of agricultural holdings in the OPT by region, 2009/10**



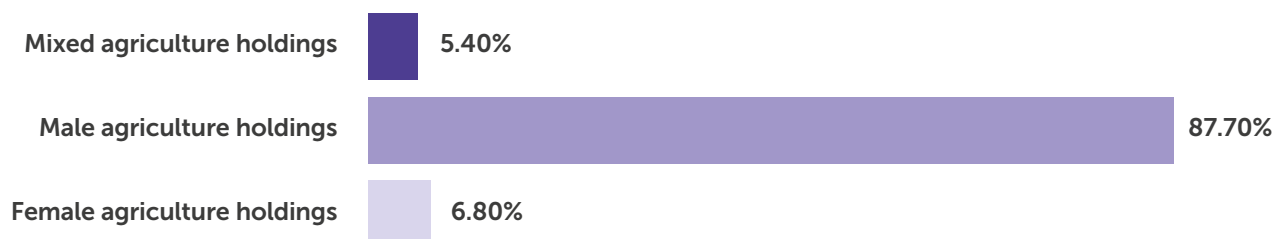
Source: PCBS, 2010.

Census results also revealed that women have limited access to agricultural resources, particularly agricultural land, as the most essential resource of agricultural production. The percentage of male-held holdings of agricultural land accounted for 87.7% of agricultural

holdings, compared with only 6.8% for women (see Figure 2). Mixed-gender holdings accounted for the lowest percentage, included in the 5.8 percent of holdings held in partnership. Partnership-held holdings fall into three categories: male–female partnerships, male partnerships, and female partnerships.

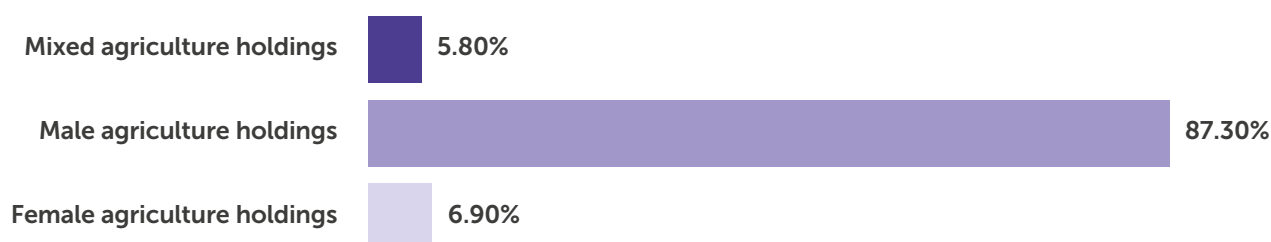
Examination by region showed only marginal differences, with women in the GS owning even less land than their sisters in the WB (see Figures 3 and 4). Incidentally, the census did not differentiate between mixed partnerships that included women and those that involved only men.

**Figure 2: Percentage of agricultural holdings in the Palestinian Territory by gender, 2009/10**



Source: PCBS, 2010.

**Figure 3: Percentage of agricultural holdings in the WB by gender, 2009/2010**



Source: PCBS, 2010.

**Figure 4: Percentage of agricultural holdings in the GS by gender, 2009/10**



Source: PCBS, 2010.

The individual interviews and FGDs with male and female farmers also stressed that women’s direct access to land through renting, purchase or inheritance is frequently limited.

**“Men have more control over resources than women. All the lands are registered in their names”** (female farmer from Dura, WB).

**“Few women have their own lands. Such lands are either inherited from their fathers, or the women buy 1–2 square meters if they are employed [and can afford it]”** (female farmers from a focus group in Al-Mawasi, GS).

Women are able, however, to access land through use rights. Since women are frequently the major food producers of a household, there are usually customary provisions for indirect access to land in terms of use rights acquired through kinship and through their status as wives, mothers, sisters and/or daughters.

**“I grow the agricultural land with my husband. Women go to work wherever and whenever work is available, even at night. The woman is more active than the man because she is the one who thinks about food, drinks and taking care of the children. She is responsible for everything. I brought up eight children, and all of them are educated. When**

**your children are good at school, you have to do your best so that they can continue with their education. You can't let them down"** (woman farmer from Al-Zawaida, GS).

Remarkably, individual female farmers from the area around Al-Jalama in the Jenin governorate and from Deir Ballout in the Salfit governorate were more likely to hold agricultural land. These women explained that this is the result of several factors. One of them is the absence of their husbands, who work in official jobs outside the governorate or in Israeli settlements and thus have given their wives more lenience to make decisions on their own regarding the households and farms. Secondly, the geographic location near the Green Line provides opportunities for women in this location to sell their products to Palestinians from the 1948 areas<sup>15</sup> who come to buy products that are cheaper in the WB than in the Israeli market. These women are in charge of the sale of their crops, and some are opening their own bank accounts. A number of them have driver's licenses and may use their husbands' cars, while others, whose husbands don't own cars, are considering buying one to help them manage their many tasks.

**"I told you that our area is different. In other areas, a man might feel embarrassment to admit that a greenhouse is registered under his wife's name, but my husband registered it under my name in our area, and I don't feel that there are many obstacles. It was indeed a problem in earlier days, but now the situation is better, and people accept that women work, come and go, and get educated"** (woman farmer from Al-Jalama, WB).

As expressed by the majority of female farmers in the targeted areas in the WBGs, existing use rights may not grant enough security for women and other dependents when women are exposed to particular social and economic conditions. Regarding the circumstances that cause an increasing number of women to become heads of households, participants in the FGDs and individual interviews mentioned the dissolution of traditional family structures through divorce, separation or death.

Some female farmers expressed their inability to access land through control-over-property rights, specifically the right to benefit financially from the sale

and marketing of crops, which negatively impacts their productivity and mental health.

**"[Being deprived of the right to sell her products] impacts the psychological state of a woman. She feels enthusiastic and happy with her production and looks forward to the time when she can sell it; she may play an influential role in her community. But when she is about to harvest the fruits of her efforts, her husband or brother (i.e. the owner of the land) protests, demanding that he sell the products under the excuse that it's a disgrace for a woman to deal with male farmers or merchants, insisting that she should not go to the market. He then sells the product, puts half of the revenue in his pocket, and acts as if he was doing her a favour by leaving the other half for her. This affects her mental health and energy. She becomes lazier and eventually stays at home. The result is more unemployment, no jobs, and no energy – just frustration. As a result of men's dictatorship and robbery, she becomes a dependent person who lives at the poverty line – after she had been a breadwinner"** (woman farmer from Al-Shoka, GS).

When women and men farmers were asked about the impact of women's owning and controlling agricultural land, the responses varied between males and females. Most female farmers supported the opinion that if women were to obtain greater access to and control over land, the positive impacts would be felt on many levels. First and foremost, it would benefit the welfare of the family. Women stated that, most likely, poverty and deprivation among families would be reduced if they were given more independence over economic resources because they tend to spend relatively more resources on their families' basic needs than do men. Therefore, if women were given the right to access or/and own land, it would positively affect a household's food provision and the education and health of both male and female children.

**"Yes, there is no difference, both my husband and I work in agriculture. But when I own the land [and its profits], I increase my expenditure on the house. We women think more about the house and about meeting our children's' needs. Personally, I prefer that the land remains in my name. Why? I am speaking on behalf of women because sometimes I need to get things for myself. For example, today,**

<sup>15</sup> Palestinians from the 1948 areas refers to Palestinians who remained on their land during the "Nakba" when the state of Israel was declared and more than 700 000 Palestinian Arabs – about half of prewar Palestine's Arab population – fled or were expelled from their homes, during the 1948 war. According to Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics, Israel's Arab population in 2019 was estimated at 1 890 000, representing 20.95% of the country's population. The majority of these identify themselves as Arab or Palestinian by nationality and Israeli by citizenship.

**I am going to Tulkarem. My daughter has passed her driver's license exam, and I want to buy her a gift. I asked my husband; he said he doesn't have money. I asked the boys; they said they don't have any either. But when I have money, I am able to save some of it for necessities"** (female farmer from the focus group in Seida, WB)

Secondly, women's ownership over their land would have an impact on efficiency because it would allow them to increase their profit (for example by not having to pay for a lease), reinvest part of this profit, make strategic decisions in a timely manner regarding the expansion and development of their crops, and thus increase productivity.

**"I work on land that I am leasing. But if the land was mine, I could save the lease money. Also, I know how to grow and how to dwarf and take care of tomatoes. I am skilful in the tomato business. If I owned the land, I would install greenhouses and grow tomatoes, potatoes, and Jew's mallow (molokhiyya). Yes, I would install agricultural greenhouses and work in them properly. I would raise livestock as well"** (female member of the focus group in Beit Lahia, GS).

Thirdly, women's ownership of their land fosters equality and empowerment. The women farmers interviewed stated that their access to agricultural land and their control over the profits resulting from their ownership and labour have symbolic value. Control over land holds great significance for them and profoundly and directly impacts their self-confidence and sense of power and safety. Moreover, it reinforces a balanced relationship between men and women in the family, which not only reflects positively on women's welfare but also has direct economic benefits and impacts on women's participation in the political and social domains. Owning a productive resource such as land can affect aspects such as nutrition, fertility, and decision-making in the family – and may also combat violence.

**"[If she owns her own land,] she'll feel happy, safe and secure, less concerned about any future hardship or poverty, and she won't be begging others for money. She'll feel powerful instead of constantly having to ask, 'Give me money, my husband, give me money'"** (woman farmer from the focus group in Seida, WB).

Women from both the WB and the GS stated that men's mentality and lack of moral and material appreciation for women farmers make them feel insecure and threatened. This reinforces their economic dependency

on their husbands and/or on other males in the family, even though these women understand that they are making significant contributions to the family's wellbeing by bearing housekeeping responsibilities besides the long hours they spend on doing unpaid work in agriculture.

**"I work in an olive field. I plant, I and pull out and trim weeds, collect straw, and hire workers. I told [my husband], 'Give me a wage like all the other workers.' He replied, 'You eat and drink.' I swear this is his answer. I am not the only one in this situation; we are all the same"** (woman farmer from the focus group in Seida, WB).

This issue was discussed in particular during FGDs with male farmers from the area around Al-Jiftlek in the Jericho governorate, the Jordan Valley area, and in the Tulkarem governorate. The majority of the interviewees were of the opinion that women do not need to own agricultural lands as long as they work with their families in agriculture. They did not consider this situation to be one of male dominance but rather as cooperation between all family members to secure food and meet the family's needs. However, these men deny women the right to benefit from farming revenues in the way they please and consider appropriate; they deny women the right to improve their status in the private realm and to develop their participation in the local community.

**"I don't think that it is important for a woman to own agricultural land. Since she works with her father or husband on the land, everyone benefits"** (male farmer from Al-Jiftlek, WB).

The majority of male farmers believe that access to and possession of agricultural land, selling its products, and negotiating with traders are male roles and privileges. They consider a women's role to be confined to family-related responsibilities and caretaking on the one hand, and to extend to agricultural work on the other – but only to the cultivation and harvesting of crops, as is the tradition.

It became apparent during the FGDs that a minority of male farmers believe that women's access to and control over agricultural land may lead to an effective and substantial increase in women's agricultural productivity, improve the family's access to food and/or enhance the family's wellbeing – but not necessarily so, as long as women's access to other resources is constrained by the burdens and duties imposed on them in the private sphere and impeded by the cultural barriers that restrict women's freedom to sell, except within their narrow local environment. These

men believe that women must also have access to resources such as agricultural inputs and knowledge, and must have skills in bargaining and in the marketing of farm products.

The differences between the responses of male and female farmers shows, beyond any doubt, that the interventions of governmental and non-governmental institutions to date have had little to no actual impact on perceptions of the role of women in the agriculture business. Women are expected to tend to the land and grow crops to provide food for their families while men control the profits from crop sales. Government interventions have not reached the level of deepening men's awareness of the importance of women enjoying access to land and exercising effective control over sales and over income gained from their agricultural production. Instead, these interventions have reinforced the dominant attitudes and values that are shared by the men who hold political power.

Relatedly, a female farmer from the Jordan Valley pointed out that some men control projects that they present as being owned by female farmers. In these cases, women are used as a bridge to access resources because many institutions require that women benefit from projects. Women may be empowered for a short time, but once the institution steps back, the situation returns to the old conditions. Even worse, the women involved may be left feeling more oppressed after they have lost a project that initially was presented in their name, remaining under the mercy of the land owner.

**“We once had a project to grow fish, supported by FAO. But the land for the project was not ours. When the project ended, the owner of the land where we had put the pool took control over the land [and the project], and we were left out”** (woman farmer from Al-Jiftlek, WB).

### 3.3.10. Crops

Women play vital but unrecognized roles in crop production, in the securing of household food security and in household nutrition. Failure to recognize these contributions is costly. It results in misguided policies and programmes, lost agricultural output and associated income flows, higher levels of poverty, and food and nutritional insecurity (World Bank, 2007).

Srouji (2016) provides a helpful overview of crop production in Palestine as linked to gender. He notes that plant crops are either rain-fed or irrigated. The main rain-fed crops are wheat, onions, garlic, almond trees, apples and grapes, among others, whereas the most important irrigated crops are tomatoes, cucumbers,

eggplants, squash, spinach, citrus trees and guava, among others. When growing irrigated crops, farmers depend on available water sources such as artesian wells, collection wells or tanks, which are limited in the WBGS. Srouji's study showed that among the surveyed female plant-growing farmers, 48 percent depended on rain-fed agriculture, while 52 percent depended on irrigated agriculture. In irrigated agriculture, crops can be grown either exposed (open field) or protected (in greenhouses). The percentage of female farmer respondents engaged in exposed agriculture was about 68 percent, while the percentage of those engaged in protected agriculture was 32 percent.

Although detailed statistics on gender and crop production in Palestine are not available, and figures only consider the geographical context, the findings of this CGA reveal that female farmers in the WBGS are more involved in crop production than male farmers. Women are mainly involved in preparing the land, planting, harvesting, grading, husking and processing/ value addition. Men carry out the heavy labour with tasks such as ploughing, fertilizer application, maintaining farm equipment and transportation (from farm to road), as well as the final stages of the VC, namely marketing, negotiating prices, receiving payments, financial decision-making and going to the bank to take out loans and deposit savings.

**“The man first spreads the seeds, and then it is the female's role to do the watering, harvesting, and grading and husking. It all depends on the woman at the end. The man only contributes very little in agriculture, working where his intervention is needed, but anything else is thrown at the woman and her children”** (woman farmer from Al-Shoka, GS).

The findings also revealed that women's contribution to growing secondary crops such as legumes and vegetables is even more significant. As reported by female farmers in the FGDs, women grow these crops mainly in their home gardens, providing essential nutrients – and frequently, this becomes the only food that is available during a lean season when major crops fail.

### **Agricultural value chains, agrifood systems, infrastructure, markets and trade**

One of the most pressing issues in the agricultural sector is limited marketing capacity, which is one of the main pillars of agricultural VCs. The marketing system in Palestine suffers from lack of structure and clear guidelines, which directly affects the income of farmers and hinders their ability to operate self-sufficiently or to make a decent living based on the income from their crops (ARIJ, 2015).

A study by the Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem (ARIJ) found that the majority of farmers (60 percent) sell their products by delivering them to the local markets in governorates (ARIJ, 2015). Another frequently adopted strategy is to sell on the family farm to an agent who comes to collect the products. This is one of the most prominent means by which products are delivered to both the local market and outside markets and the preferred strategy for 38 percent of Palestinian farmers because it reduces their costs of transporting their products. Only 2 percent of the farmers surveyed for the ARIJ study directly exported their agricultural products to foreign markets – a strategy rarely used due to weak financial capabilities, poor infrastructure and weak relations with international markets. No data are available regarding women selling their products at local fairs and seasonal markets, but women have expressed being dissatisfied with these outlets for their products because they are unstable, and they must pay the organizers for their participation.

The available data do not indicate gender differences in agrifood trade. The findings of this CGA revealed, however, that women and men in the WBGS are engaged in agrifood trade to different extents in terms of volume and scale of trade. Women are frequently involved in small-scale retail in local markets and tend to face challenges in accessing more distant markets within Palestine as compared to men, due to limited access to transport, market information and mobility. Women are unable to spend enough time away from their homes to build a wider market for their products (fresh and processed), as traditions and the multiple demands placed upon them limit their mobility. Hence, their locally marketed products are generally sold for a lesser profit compared to the products sold by men.

**“It is easier for men to access the market. There was a period of time when I suggested to our female members that we should work with men to benefit from [their market access], but they refused. The reason why men can more easily access the market is that according to the traditions on which our society is built, there are different roles for women and men”** (female member of Qabalan Women’s Cooperative, WB).

The methods used by some women producers when marketing plant and animal products include selling their products from their home through social mediator cooperatives, selling them through cooperation initiatives in supermarkets in their villages or nearby towns, or participating in local or international exhibitions organized by women’s organizations in cities in Palestine and abroad.

**“Women participate in local and international exhibitions in Jordan, Lebanon and Algeria. The local exhibitions aren’t as useful after the number of cooperation initiatives has increased”** (female member of Beita Women’s Cooperative, WB).

Female farmers encounter a number of problems in the marketing of their agricultural products, such as a reduction in prices, the expectation that they will offer high discounts, and selling for debts with agents at times when they are unable to pay them back either partially or totally. Also, some traders don’t buy crops reliably, causing female farmers to lose their products of the day either partially or totally.

**“Men are scroungers! For example, one might want 5 kilograms of honey, and since it’s an association, they might think that it’s for free. And when I tell them that it costs 250 shekels, they send only 230. Why would they take the price down 20 shekels when it’s my right? And when I call, they ignore me. So, I stop selling honey to those people. When they want thyme, and I deliver it, they don’t pay for the delivery because they think that since it’s an association, everything is cheap and women don’t get exhausted. But when women buy our products, they pay fully, with no deductions”** (member of focus group, Seida Women’s Cooperative, WB).

Cooperatives are slightly more active than individual female farmers when marketing their products, as indicated by the interviews and discussion groups. In general, women engage more in retail and small-scale home-based marketing of processed products such as honey, cheese, yogurt, thyme, pickles and mixtures of medical herbs, whereas men are more engaged in large-scale trading of processed foods.

In light of this reality, women are becoming more marginalized yet more tolerant of the burden they must carry by sustaining domestic agriculture as well as household workloads. The women farmers interviewed, whether they engage as individuals or as members of cooperatives, have pointed out that men’s absence due to paid employment and their subsequently intensified engagement in agriculture have contributed to the increased division of gender roles. Women participate in agricultural production both to meet the needs of the family by growing agricultural products such as vegetables, fruits, legumes, and herbs and to generate income for the family through the sale of their products. Thus, even though agriculture is still primarily based on traditional technologies, women are trying to manage crop and livestock production to cover the needs of both their families and the market, whereas men engage



in agriculture with the intention of producing their products for income generation through sale.

**“Women’s vision is different from men’s vision. Women look at the financial and social aspects, but they do not care about large profits; they just want a stable income. Men, on the other hand, view things in a commercial way”** (female member of Al ‘Aqrabaniya Cooperative, WB).

The findings of this CGA show that gender roles in agricultural processes are clearly defined and reflect the male-oriented cultural realities. Women are involved in preparing the land and in planting and harvesting the crops, and they clean and feed cattle and poultry, as such activities complement their reproductive duties at home. In contrast, men are tasked with spraying pesticides and with selling the products in the market. Some of the men interviewed acknowledged the extra burden that is placed on women who work on the land and/or care for livestock in addition to their work at home, where they engage in childcare, cooking and cleaning, among other tasks. Both men and women, however, take for granted that these tasks are the responsibility of women.

**“Men and women work together. She will do what she can handle and will leave whatever she can’t to him. For example, I clean under the trees and handle planting, watering and harvesting. I do almost as much as the man. To care for the poultry, I wake up early and feed and clean up after them. Basically, I handle hygiene”** (woman farmer from Al-Zawayda, GS).

Among the women interviewed who work through cooperatives – either as workers employed in the agricultural production of the cooperatives or as independent growers – the majority indicated that the primary responsibility in the agriculture processes lies with women. This is true for all stages of the VCs in the agricultural sector, excluding the final stages, namely the marketing and distribution of the products.

When examining the role of women in the sales process, the results varied according to the geographical area and the social status of women in both the WB and the GS. The majority of married women indicated that men take care of sales. In cases where women are involved in the sale of the products, this happens within a cooperative where women carry out the entire process from production to marketing, such as in Deir Ballout’s women’s cooperative. This somewhat exceptional situation may be due to the fact that the shepherding sector generates 35 percent of people’s income in Deir Ballout, and women’s

heavy involvement in the most important source of income allows them to assert their presence while the local men work in factories and engage as craftsmen.

**“Men don’t have any role in the agricultural process of Deir Ballout. Women handle and run everything that is related to agriculture, from planting to selling the product”** (woman farmer from Al Ibdaa’ Cooperative Association for Food Production, Deir Ballout, WB)

Sales outside of cooperatives, such as at local markets and to traders, are carried out by men because the prevailing culture restricts women’s freedom of movement and prevents them from freely leaving their villages.

**“No, not me! My husband. I don’t go to the market or anything. Even if merchants come to the house, I wouldn’t see them because my husband is responsible for that”** (woman farmer from Wadi Al-Salaqa, GS)

The agricultural sector currently suffers from weak infrastructure. For instance, farmers suffer from an annual growth rate of input prices estimated at 10 percent. They also suffer from continuous water scarcity that affects production as a direct result of Israeli-imposed restrictions on the development of water infrastructure. This blocks opportunities for real agricultural development, as it directly limits the prospects for the development of irrigated agriculture that could play a more important economic, social and political role in rebuilding the Palestinian economy (PCBS, 2013; UNCTAD, 2015). The price of one cubic meter of water ranges from NIS 1.9 to 15 (ARIJ, 2015). The estimated total amount of water used for agriculture does not exceed 150 million cubic meters annually (with 60 million cubic meters consumed in the WB and 90 million cubic meters consumed in the GS), representing 45 percent of the total water consumption of Palestinians.

The above-mentioned ARIJ study also revealed that farmers suffer from relatively high rates of spoilage of their agricultural products due to lack of infrastructure such as refrigerated storehouses and because poor techniques are applied when products are loaded and unloaded. Moreover, there is no database in Palestine that keeps a record of the needs of local markets, which affects the balance between supply and demand of agricultural products. This leads to a surplus in the production of some products and a deficit in others. Such a database is essential for the development of the agricultural sector and could facilitate fairness in the

allocation of funds to compensate farmers for losses they incur due to natural disasters and harsh weather conditions (ARIJ, 2015).

While there is a lack of gender-disaggregated data at the national level to indicate the differentiated impacts of weak infrastructure in the agricultural sector on women and men, the CGA findings show that both sexes suffer from the ruggedness of rural roads. This is especially the case in areas such as Dura in the Hebron governorate, where the high cost of land reclamation prevents the diversification and expansion of products, causes an increased price for ploughing in rugged areas, and increases the price and availability of water amidst lack of artesian water wells. Increasing input prices frequently mean that profits fail to cover the costs of agricultural work. The situation for some farmers is so dire that they can no longer afford the cost and time involved in caring for greenhouses, eventually forcing them to remove them and to sell their structure at low prices.

**“We don’t have a real road. The roads are rugged, and the [government] hasn’t opened an agricultural road for us. Not one agricultural service is provided for us. That’s first of all. Second, we have flooding in winter and have asked the municipality and the agriculture department to provide us with tanks so that we can benefit from the water in the summer. They promise us, but then they don’t keep their promises. Third of all, the greenhouses were ripped apart in winter. The [government] asked us to open bank accounts, but ‘till now we’re still waiting for them to compensate us for our losses. They didn’t get us plastic, and now I’m forced to break [the greenhouses] into parts and to sell them at low prices because I can’t fix them”** (male farmer from Dura, WB).

Female farmers also pointed to the importance of paving agricultural roads to reduce the time and effort spent in reaching agrarian lands. They stated the need to dig water wells to reduce the cost of having to bring in water and asked for assistance in putting fences around their agricultural lands to protect them from the wild boars in the area.

One of the farmers reported that some women designed and placed a wood oven on their agricultural land to alleviate their double burden of having to perform agricultural and domestic tasks under difficult conditions such as rugged roads and long distances between their homes and the farms that make it challenging to come and go.

In addition to the general problem of water shortage, in the GS, there are the problems of water salinity and of

repeated electricity cut-offs, which affect production as well as affecting women’s psychological states.

Each and every female and male farmer in all areas of the WBGs has pointed out the problem that refrigerators are not available for storing products until the next day. This makes farmers susceptible to traders who control the prices and at times prevents them from marketing the entirety of their products.

### 3.3.11. Livestock

In addition to being a source of income generation, livestock also holds distinctive cultural and traditional importance within Palestine’s agricultural sector. Furthermore, livestock is of particular economic and social importance at the household and national levels for Palestinians, as it embodies their perseverance and adherence to the land under the threat of confiscation and settlement. It is dominated by cattle, poultry, sheep, goats, beekeeping and fish and provides income and food for thousands of Palestinian households in rural areas and Bedouin communities in the WBGs (Ministry of Agriculture, 2015).

The total number of agricultural holdings in Palestine was 105 238 during the agricultural year 2010/11, as shown by the agricultural statistics released by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS, 2010). Crop holdings are the most common, comprising about 68.2 percent, followed by mixed holdings at 21.8 percent and livestock holdings with 10 percent. Of the livestock and mixed holdings, there were 39 625 heads of cows, 732 399 heads of sheep, 240 136 heads of goats, 8 744 000 poultry and 44 278 beehives.

The agricultural sector in Palestine contributed a total of USD 322.6 million at the national level for the year 2012, comprising about 5.9 percent of the GDP. Of this percentage, livestock contributed about 40 percent of the agricultural GDP. Livestock also directly contributes to the food supply in the form of meat, milk and eggs, and indirectly provides income, savings, asset value and employment to households of smallholders.

Recently, the livestock sector in Palestine has encountered difficulties in securing necessary production requirements and technical support. The household economies of breeders have been adversely affected by construction of the separation barrier, confiscation of land for establishment of settlements, closed military zones and development of national nature reserves. On top of all these difficulties imposed by Israeli access restrictions, the high cost of imported commercial fodder as a replacement for lost grazing land, recurrent drought and the outbreak of animal diseases have created additional obstacles

for developing the livestock sector in Palestine. In particular, climate change has – and will continue to have – multiple impacts on livestock, from heat stress, to livestock diseases, to feed quality and availability.

As for women's livestock holdings, these stood at 7.6 percent compared to 92.4 percent for men during the year 2009/10. In terms of working hours, the women surveyed by Srouji (2016) reported spending between 2 to 11 hours per day on animal farming, with an average of 5.6 hours daily, while men did not exceed one hour daily. Srouji found that approximately 87% of the total daily work required for animal farming was done by the women surveyed. The study also revealed that 47 percent of female livestock farmers receive guidance from agricultural guides from the Ministry of Agriculture, 16 percent through civil society organizations, 23 percent through cooperative societies and 3 percent through the private sector. The agricultural guides' visits range from 0 to 24 hours and average five visits annually. Sometimes farmers visit agricultural guides at their offices, averaging three visits annually.

Srouji (2016) also found that female livestock farmers manufacture many animal products, including milk, yogurt, cheese, butter, jams, honey mixed with vegan

products such as nuts and fennel seeds, leather materials of various kinds, wool products such as decorations and luxurious gowns for the winter, and creams and lotions to soften and tighten skin and prevent burns. These products are marketed through home marketing (64 percent), sold to traders (22 percent), sold on the farm (8 percent), sold in the nearest city, generally placed on a flat surface in the street (2 percent), or marketed via other outlets such as exhibitions, cooperative societies or sale to a local shop.

The problems encountered by female livestock farmers in marketing their manufactured products include low prices and underestimation of the quality of their products; selling with debt; delayed payments; difficult mobility between customers; mostly relying on orders and collecting money by relying on the speed and credibility of the customers; the need to sell on a daily basis due to lack of refrigerators to preserve products for the next day; inability to market full quantities; and traders' monopoly and control over pricing (since only a few traders buy such products and may request sales discounts of up to 5 percent). Women farmers also face other problems related to the prices of production requirements, especially with regard to packaging (Srouji, 2016).



A Palestinian farmer  
collects Strawberries  
at his farm in Mawasi  
Khan Younes south  
of Gaza City.

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# 4. Stakeholder analysis



The efforts that have been undertaken by MoWA, UN Women and other international partners working to institutionalize gender in the vision, trends and policies of Palestinian government institutions have not succeeded in surmounting the considerable obstacles this process is facing. These obstacles must be overcome if Palestine is to become a society rooted in social justice. Various studies published on women's rights and gender issues in agriculture and rural development have pointed out the main obstacles to efforts endeavouring to mainstream gender and to allocate gender-responsive budgets. These can be summarized as follows:

At the political and economic levels:

- » The Palestinian political-economic reality, under the political and economic domination of the Israeli occupation, prevents the establishment of a Palestinian state that has sovereignty over its economy and borders. Repeated invasions and the ensuing human insecurity have necessitated that existing resources are spent on relief and humanitarian programmes rather than on nation-building.
- » The Oslo and Paris economic agreements have affected the distribution of governmental resources. Currently, the PA spends at least one-third of its budget on security. Given this political situation with its negative repercussions on the Palestinian economy, external financing is the greatest source of revenue for the PA, and this must comply with the political interests of donors. Thus, gender issues, beyond paying lip service to them, remain at the bottom of the state's pyramid of priorities.

At the institutional and cultural levels:

- » Although the development of a participatory Cross-Sectoral Gender Plan was led by MoWA, the internal environment of government institutions is still patriarchal in nature and therefore not well suited to carry out the gender plan's recommendations or to

implement the associated strategies. Key ministries lack awareness of the importance of integrating gender-sensitive considerations into the national plan, and there is no budgeting to implement the cross-sectoral national strategy that was approved by the cabinet. Moreover, gender budgeting is lacking from the Government's general budget.

- » Mechanisms to ensure gender mainstreaming are the responsibility of MoWA and the GUs, but the latter lack the formal authority and capacity to mobilize support for the implementation of the Cross-Sectoral Gender Plan. As cited by the MoWA (2011), the problems hindering GUs from performing their duties include:

- » Some ministries lack the will and commitment to implement decisions, thereby hindering the GUs that are dependent on ministerial structures.
- » The ministerial GUs do not have an adequate number of qualified staff, and existing staff lack the required capacity and skills in gender mainstreaming.
- » GUs suffer from inadequate budget allocations.
- » GU staff members are frequently excluded from participation in planning and budgeting, as the prevailing culture within ministries is still not supportive of gender issues.
- » The level of coordination and cooperation is low between the GUs and other directorates and units at their respective ministries.
- » A comprehensive sex-disaggregated database is lacking in most ministries, and where available tends to need updating.
- » MoWA has no framework for monitoring and evaluation processes nor an administrative unit that would be in charge of overseeing the implementation of the National Cross-Sectoral Strategy for Promoting Gender Equality and Equity in the National Development Plan 2017–2022 in government and private institutions. Moreover, MoWA's technical capacity in this area is limited.
- » The reductions in funding that Palestine has been experiencing are caused by the general economic

and political situation in the Arab world. Given the emergency conditions in many Arab states, the bulk of funding for humanitarian aid has been redirected to countries other than Palestine. This decline in international assistance has contributed to competition over funding between MoWA and civil society institutions, particularly women's organizations. In the Government's budget – with dependency on foreign aid and insufficient funds cited as justifications – no money has been allocated to activate parliamentary decisions regarding gender issues, and no activities to address gender-related issues are being carried out. No specified programme in this regard exists in the national agenda. This in turn negatively impacts UN efforts to empower women. It also negatively impacts efforts to obtain financial resources to implement the gender-responsive budget that exists only in theory, even though the State of Palestine has undersigned CEDAW as the first framework for such engagement. This reality is an indication of the absence of a holistic vision among financiers on gender mainstreaming and on the importance of gender-responsive budgeting when measuring development indicators in Palestine.

- › Civil society institutions play a weak role in ensuring gender accountability and evaluation. Although women's institutions in particular play an important role in gender sensitization within the socio-political framework, their action is neither cumulative nor sustainable. Additionally, there is a lack of focus on gender-responsive budgeting, and effective results in the gender integration process are not being ensured.

Within this context, the following section presents some of the potential partners that could aid in promoting gender equality and support the empowerment of women in agriculture and the rural sector of Palestine. Public sector partners, UN agencies, international NGOs, development partners, and other civil society organizations are working to advance gender equality in agriculture and rural development. FAO could work with key institutions such as UN Women, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and Oxfam to carry out advocacy and policy work, implement projects, provide technical support and oversight assistance to the Government, fund agricultural programmes and projects, etc. Table 11 suggests some areas for collaboration.

**Table 11: Key stakeholders and potential areas for collaboration**

Agency	Initiatives on gender	Areas for collaboration
ILO	<p>The International Labour Organization (ILO) aims to improve equal access to employment opportunities for women in the occupied Palestinian territory by ensuring the availability of decent jobs, fostering market-driven skills, strengthening cooperatives, improving working conditions and fostering legal, economic and social empowerment.</p> <p>The ILO is currently focusing on promoting equality and empowering women through the project entitled 'Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.' This project facilitates women's entry into the workforce and supports the strengthening of women's cooperatives as a way to promote economic opportunities and empowerment for women.</p> <p>Accordingly, the project aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› promote non-discrimination in the workplace;</li> <li>› enhance women's economic empowerment through innovative cooperatives;</li> <li>› improve the capacity of national institutions to address structural barriers that impede women's participation in the labour force; and</li> <li>› create more jobs of higher quality at the grassroots and community levels by strengthening viable, member-controlled cooperatives to work as social and economic enterprises.</li> </ul>	<p>Areas in which FAO and ILO could collaborate include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› promoting and building the capacities of stakeholders in performing gender-neutral job evaluations, reviewing legislation, formulating evidence-based policies and raising awareness of the need to ensure pay equity in the public and private sectors;</li> <li>› identifying new economic sub-sectors and non-traditional ventures and niches for women's cooperatives where the potential for job creation exists;</li> <li>› building the capacities of the staff at the General Directorate of Cooperatives (GDC) at the Palestinian Ministry of Labour (MoL) to provide support services and guidance for women's cooperatives; and</li> <li>› enhancing the institutional knowledge of women's cooperatives in the areas of marketing, product quality improvement, VC processes, and ways to develop linkages between local product providers and international markets.</li> </ul>

Agency	Initiatives on gender	Areas for collaboration
<b>OXFAM</b>	<p>Oxfam is implementing a three-year consortium project entitled 'Beyond the Barriers: Promotion of gender-sensitive and sustainable rural development to ensure the food security and resilience of vulnerable communities in the West Bank' in cooperation with the Italian NGO Gruppo di Volontariato Civile (GVC) and with local partners Palestinian Livestock Development Centre (PLDC) and Rural Women Development Society (RWDS). This project aims to strengthen the internal and networking capacities of herders and of Bedouin communities living in Area C and in the Seam Zone of the WB by protecting, developing and advocating for community-based resource and livelihood enhancement opportunities, with special attention to women's economic and social empowerment.</p>	<p>Areas in which FAO and Oxfam could collaborate include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» building the capacities of communities to access fodder through improved grazing area management and innovative cooperative mechanisms;</li> <li>» increasing the abilities and resources of communities – and especially of women – to develop new opportunities for income generation and market access;</li> <li>» building the capacities of women and men living in Area C and in the Seam Zone of the WB, encouraging them to participate in gender-sensitive policy dialogues on matters related to their livelihoods; and</li> <li>» raising awareness among national and international stakeholders of the rights to gender-sensitive sustainable and rural development and food security.</li> </ul>
<b>UN Women</b>	<p>UN Women provides technical and financial support to the Palestinian Government, women's organizations and civil society advocates by supporting efforts to promote Palestinian women's human rights, improving access to and delivery of quality services to the most vulnerable women and girls, and empowering Palestinian women and girls as rights holders.</p> <p>UN Women focuses its interventions on increasing women's participation in and equal benefits from economic growth; securing women's participation and leadership in agribusiness, the private sector and politics; and assuring that women and girls live lives free from violence.</p> <p>In 2015, UN Women initiated the regional programme 'Men and Women for Gender Equality,' aiming to enhance gender equality in the Arab Region by fostering understanding of the root causes of gender inequality and by addressing these causes through innovative approaches involving both men and women in Egypt, Morocco, Lebanon and Palestine. Phase I of the programme, unique to the region, focused on engaging men and boys in achieving gender equality in partnership with women and girls, while also promoting the rights of women in the family by providing alternative interpretations of religious texts.</p> <p>UN Women is currently building Phase II of the program on a solid foundation of results established and lessons learned during Phase I in order to accelerate transformative change with respect to gender equality and women's rights. Phase II seeks broader community outreach and institutional and legal change.</p>	<p>Areas in which FAO, UN Women and Palestinian national partners could collaborate include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» assessing structural barriers that prevent women from economic participation and providing women entrepreneurs with the needed skills, financial resources and partnership opportunities to access an equal share of the market;</li> <li>» building the capacities of policy makers to effectively implement, track and monitor the Government's peace and security commitments towards women and to place women's rights at the centre of humanitarian action in Palestine;</li> <li>» drafting, revising and working towards the approval of laws, policies and strategies that promote gender equality;</li> <li>» integrating gender-responsive practices into key institutions and networks (e.g. academia, faith-based, media, governmental); and</li> <li>» developing community-based programmes that advocate against gender-discriminatory practices and/or discriminatory laws supported by male champions at the community, national and regional levels.</li> </ul>
<b>MoWA</b>	<p>The National Cross-Sectoral Strategy for Promoting Gender Equality and Equity in the National Development Plan 2017–2022 sets out a set of objectives it seeks to achieve through the cross-sectoral strategic planning process. Aiming to institutionalize gender in the work of relevant ministries and institutions in key sectors, one of MoWA's goals is to promote women's participation in the economic sector.</p>	<p>Areas in which FAO could collaborate with MoWA and other national partners include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» promoting legislation to stimulate and protect small enterprises and working women;</li> <li>» providing access to funding and expertise for women entrepreneurs and persons with disabilities; and</li> <li>» increasing the competitiveness of the products of women and women's associations at the national level and in regional and international markets.</li> </ul>

Agency	Initiatives on gender	Areas for collaboration
MoA	<p>MoA is the main governmental body that leads agricultural development processes and is responsible for the formation of the umbrella under which civil society and international institutions work.</p> <p>MoA has identified its role in and contribution to achieving the sector's strategic objectives through three main programmes: the Agricultural Development Programme, the Enhancing Agricultural Services Programme and the Administrative Programme.</p> <p>In 2016, the MoA established a gender focal point.</p>	<p>Areas in which FAO could collaborate with MoA and with other national partners include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» providing technical support to ensure that MoA's three main programmes are developed using gender analysis and assuring that the projects comply with national obligations under CEDAW Article 14 and the Sustainable Development Goals on mainstreaming gender equality in agriculture;</li> <li>» building the gender analysis skills of MoA staff, enabling them to develop and implement programmes and projects that advocate for and equally harness the productive roles of women and men;</li> <li>» engaging external expertise to ensure integration of gender and development (GAD) in project design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and reporting;</li> <li>» promoting the utilization of GAD funds for the enhancement of GAD organizational capacities and awareness; and</li> <li>» developing gender-responsive training materials, checklists and guidelines to help MoA implement practical and effective strategies that assist technical and extension staff in addressing women's needs as related to their specific activities in agricultural production, including in agricultural value chains.</li> </ul>
MoL	<p>MoL is preparing the Palestinian national cooperative sector strategy in efforts led by the General Directorate of Cooperatives (GDC) and supported by the ILO and key national stakeholders. The national strategy is built around the three main pillars of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. promotion of an institutional environment that enables cooperatives to grow and develop;</li> <li>2. improvement of the financial and organizational performance of cooperatives; and</li> <li>3. expansion of cooperatives into new and emerging sectors such as recycling, renewable energy, etc.</li> </ol> <p>The strategy also highlights the need to invest in the education of cooperative staff, to improve the literacy of youth and to explore the potential of utilizing new technologies.</p>	<p>Areas in which FAO, MoL, GDC, donors and other national partners could collaborate include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» building the capacities of women's cooperatives to help them fulfil the mandates for which they were originally established;</li> <li>» providing women's cooperatives with technical assistance to allow them to engage in sound business planning processes underpinned by participatory approaches that help the cooperatives refine, clarify and rearticulate their missions, visions and business objectives;</li> <li>» supporting women's cooperatives in efforts to gain access to financing and to implement their business plans; and</li> <li>» supporting the documentation of the successes of women's cooperatives and helping them share their experience with other cooperatives to motivate and support less effective cooperatives in organizational reform.</li> </ul>
Gender Units in government institutions	<p>In order to ensure gender mainstreaming across different sectors, 35 Women's Units were created in all ministries by the Council of Ministers' decision No. 15/12/09/CM/AQ of 2005. On 28 July 2008, based on a request from MoWA, Decision No. 08/65/12/CM/SF was issued to amend the earlier decision, changing the title of Women's Units to Gender Units (GUs) and spelling out the tasks, responsibilities and organizational structures of these units.</p> <p>The task of GUs is to contribute to and monitor the mainstreaming of gender issues in ministerial policies, plans and programmes. Governmental commitment towards gender issues was also reflected in the Council of Ministers' Decision No. 01/05/13/CM/SF in 2009, which stipulates that the government and ministries adopt gender-sensitive budgets.</p>	<p>Areas in which FAO could collaborate with the Gender Units include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» closely coordinating with the Gender Unit in MoA to inform targeting of women beneficiaries.</li> <li>» providing capacity support to the Gender Unit in MoA to conduct gender reviews of the ministry's plans and programs and make recommendations for improvement.</li> </ul>



Agency	Initiatives on gender	Areas for collaboration
<b>National civil society organizations</b>	<p>National civil society organizations are working on three main axes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Capacity development: The organizations hold training programmes for women's cooperatives on management and planning as well as food production (e.g. dates, cheese) and organic farming.</li> <li>2. Raising community awareness on women's rights among women and men: This work, conducted mainly by women's organizations such as the Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling, the Palestinian Working Women Society for Development and the YMCA Women's Training Centre, focuses on women's right to inheritance as an essential component of women's empowerment and resource control.</li> <li>3. Micro-funds for agricultural projects: Organizations working in the rural development sector such as the Ma'an Development Center provide women with loans to start agricultural projects such as growing food, reclaiming and cultivating land, and raising livestock.</li> </ol>	<p>Areas in which FAO and national civil society organizations could collaborate include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» developing a unified training module on GAD integration in project design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and reporting to be used by all partners involved in rural development;</li> <li>» providing training of trainers on new skills and knowledge regarding technology and women in the agricultural sector;</li> <li>» focusing on the optimal use of natural resources, especially water; developing different irrigation methods to provide more water sources for the agricultural sector; and</li> <li>» supporting and strengthening coalitions of civil society organizations working in the agriculture and development sector to effectively advocate for changing the cooperatives law from a gender perspective.</li> </ul>



A Palestinian woman from a Bedouin community tends to some sheep in front of a movable animal shelter.

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# 5. Main findings and recommendations

## 5.1. Main findings

The agricultural sector constitutes an important component of the Palestinian economy, as well as being key to the wellbeing and security of Palestinian citizens. Contingent upon the availability of natural resources, agriculture holds the potential to contribute even more significantly to the country's development. The many obstacles to the development of the agricultural sector, however, prevent its progress and the reaching of its full potential, placing a large segment of Palestinians in the face of poverty. Israel's control over Palestine's natural resources, necessary for any rural development, and its control over its geographical borders give the occupying regime complete control over the exportation of Palestinian products and the identification of these products. This influence is carried out in a manner that serves the Israeli economy at the expense of development in the State of Palestine. The ensuing situation obstructs efforts to achieve the goals of the Sustainable Development Agenda, adopted by countries under the slogan "leave no one behind."

In the context of these challenges, marginalized groups – especially women, who play an important role in the agricultural sector – become more vulnerable to further marginalization and to falling below the poverty line. Rural women and small entrepreneurs, including women's cooperatives in particular, are subjected to double violations regarding their access to and utilization of available resources. Infringements on women's right to own land and to move about freely, as well as their heavy burden of engaging in multiple roles without recognition or compensation of their efforts, impede women's ability to produce their own crops, prevent them from learning how to operate modern agricultural tools and technologies, and block them from accessing information on how to engage in marketing, thus inhibiting their ability to benefit from the results of their labour. Societal and

familial control under patriarchal ideology reinforce the restrictions placed on women, exacerbated by the lack of political security, very limited access to services such as health care, and the absence of protection through the law. All of these factors limit the empowerment of women in the public and private arenas. The overall situation contradicts the provisions outlined in Article 14 of CEDAW, particularly regarding rural women, even though the State of Palestine has adopted this agreement without reservation.

The prevailing oppressive occupation policies, lack of commitment among Palestinian government institutions, and the patriarchal culture entrenched in society and in the political system in Palestine all contribute to the obstacles faced by women in general, and rural women in particular, in their quest for economic empowerment. The altering of this patriarchal culture requires efforts not only by women's institutions but also by the state. A government's readiness to raise awareness of and modify stereotypical gender roles is an indication of its commitment to engage in the process of securing women's rights and achieving equality and social justice for all citizens.

The findings of this study show that the interventions of institutions toward the empowerment of rural women, especially in the agricultural sector, have failed to contribute to bringing about a change in social roles. The division of gender roles is still entrenched in family relations and reflected in communities and in the market. Within the production chain, this study shows that women's role is limited to tasks around agricultural production and food preparation, as they are generally excluded from distribution, marketing and utilization of profits. The prevailing economic reality has furthermore contributed to the reinforcement of this gendered division, especially in the absence of financial resources to market the products of women's associations. This study also shows that to this day, men control the

buying and selling processes as well as the resources obtained from agricultural activities, even if carried out by women.

With limited land availability and the prevailing lack of investment in agricultural land due to political constraints, state investment in modern agriculture is limited, and women still rely upon traditional techniques. Women's general confinement to domestic realms and the patriarchal culture under which they live relegate them to farming for their households. Nevertheless, increasing feminization of agriculture is taking place in Palestine as men are drawn to more lucrative employment in the Israeli market. Women have increasingly replaced men in the agricultural production process, but only within the local community in their areas of residence – and primarily in their gardens.

The economic problems of the agricultural sector contribute to women's inability to access various resources, such as education in rural development, health care and information relevant to their role as agricultural producers, including information on projects and support offered by institutions engaged in economic development and women's empowerment. The political division of the WB into areas A, B and C further hampers the possibility of implementing programmes, whether governmental or foreign, while the closure imposed on Gaza is making life in the strip increasingly unbearable, giving rural women little opportunity to engage in self-empowerment through agricultural production.

Poor infrastructure and lack of public services in marginalized areas have further increased women's marginalization and inhibited their ability both to tend to practical needs and to engage in activities that could contribute to improving their social, economic and political realities. Women's focus and attention is dedicated to taking care of family needs, particularly around food, shelter, education and health care. Difficulties in meeting these basic needs negatively affect women's empowerment and hinder their active participation in rural development.

Bridging the gender gap in the agricultural sector will not only help rural women; it is also key to efforts to reduce poverty and improve food security. Women's critical role in food production and poverty reduction can be enhanced when their rights to ownership of land and other resources are assured, their lower level of technical agricultural knowledge is addressed, their limited access to large-scale markets is increased, and the constraints of tradition and culture that reinforce women's role as farm workers rather than as leaders

in agrifood trade are lifted. Rural women demonstrate that they are capable of providing financial support to their families through agricultural production; they are creating employment opportunities for themselves and other women by creating associations and cooperatives. The study findings reveal that female farmers are well able to prosper and flourish, provided that their access to resources is enhanced, because they are ready and willing to adopt and adapt to new practices. Consequently, efforts to develop and improve both the agricultural sector and livelihoods of the rural population must prioritize supporting and motivating women, so that they may realize what they are capable of alongside men.

## 5.2. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this Assessment, listed below are recommendations for the enhancement of gender equality by the Government of Palestine, FAO and other partners/stakeholders.

### 5.2.1. Recommendations for the Government of Palestine

- » Women farmers must be supported in claiming their right to inherit agricultural land, since owning and registering land in their name allows them to benefit from agricultural projects and facilitates their access to necessary funding.
- » Women must have access to long-term loans with low interest rates that enable them to rent land and rent or purchase other material resources that are necessary to develop their products.
- » A gender audit of the Ministry of Agriculture should be conducted to assess gaps and opportunities in enhancing gender mainstreaming and gender sensitization in its policies and strategies.
- » The involvement of women's organizations and cooperatives and of individual women farmers in processes of decision making and policy formulation should be strengthened and streamlined.
- » The role of the gender focal point in the MoA should be strengthened by enhancing their capacities and terms of reference.
- » Capacity building for the monitoring and evaluation unit at MoA is needed in order to understand changes in women's status in rural areas.
- » A sex-disaggregated database on agriculture and the rural sector must be created, based on the SDGs and relevant national indicators, as identified by PCBS.

- » Advocacy campaigns must be launched at the international and local levels to shed light on the realities of land confiscation, movement restrictions, control over water resources, limited access of women and men to their lands, and daily harassments from settlers.
- » The national strategy for the agricultural sector should include a detailed guide on how to mainstream gender perspectives into all agricultural VC activities for both crops and livestock, with FAO's support.
- » Government ministries should establish mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the activities of women, men and rural youth in agriculture and rural development.
- » Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) must be developed as a step not only towards accountability regarding women's rights but also towards greater public transparency, economic stability and concrete actions for women's empowerment. Additionally, GRB will help the Government understand how to adjust its priorities and reallocate its resources, so as to fulfil obligations towards equality in line with CEDAW.
- » Local governance must better support marginalized areas by developing major bypass roads and by creating alternative safe and equitable roads for farmers.

### **5.2.2. Recommendations for FAO**

- » Special courses must be held for female farmers on technical aspects of production techniques to help them keep up with the latest developments in farming methods.
- » Training sessions and workshops should be provided to enhance the skills of women farmers in areas related to leadership, administration, management, advocacy and communications skills.
- » Capacity building on addressing gender inequalities and issues across the agricultural sector should be conducted for all partners and stakeholders.
- » Women should be encouraged to join agricultural cooperatives and associations in order to enhance both their leadership and livelihoods.
- » Partnerships should be forged with other UN agencies to engage in joint programmes to enhance the effectiveness of interventions related to gender equality and women's empowerment.

### **5.2.3. Recommendations for other partners/ stakeholders**

- » A network should be created among local cooperative associations on one hand and local and international organizations on the other in order to create a platform where women can exchange information, knowledge, expertise and experiences.
- » Knowledge and awareness of local partners in terms of gender integration and mainstreaming in project cycles should be strengthened, with a focus on monitoring and evaluation.



Palestinian farmer  
harvesting cucumbers  
at his farm in Atel  
village near the West  
Bank city of Tulkarem.

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A Palestinian Fishermen  
arranges his fish catch  
as he starts the day  
at Gaza's fish market.  
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# Annexes



## Annex 1: List of organizations consulted and their locations

Name of organization	Number of interviews	Area	Governorate
<b>West Bank</b>			
<b>Community-based organizations</b>			
Dura Women's Cooperative for Food Processing	2	Dura	Dura
Al-Jeftlik Women's Cooperative for Food Processing	2	Al-Jeftlik	Jericho
Seida Women's Cooperative	2	Seida	Tulkarem
Beit Duqqu Women's Cooperative for Growth and Development	2	Beit Duqqu	Jerusalem
Beita Women's Cooperative	2	Beita	Nablus
Kafr Laqif Women's Cooperative	2	KafrLaqif	Qalqilya
Al Ibdaa' Cooperative Association for Food Production, Deir Ballout	2	Deir Ballout	Salfit
Al-'Aqabaa Agriculture Cooperative	2	Al-'Aqabaa	Tubas
Qabalan Women's Cooperative	2	Qabalan	Nablus
Al-Jalama Women's Association	2	Al-Jalama	Jenin
Al-'Aqrabaniya Women's Cooperative	2	Al 'Aqrabaniya	Nablus
Anabta Women's Cooperative	2	Anabta	Tulkarem
Al-Shioukh Cooperative Society for Livestock and Productivity	2	Al-Shioukh	Hebron
Farkha Cooperative Society	2	Farkha	Salfit
Rural Women's Cooperative Society for Saving and Credit	2	Hebron	Hebron
<b>Governmental organizations</b>			
Ministry of Agriculture	1	Ramallah	Ramallah
Ministry of Labour	1	Ramallah	Ramallah
Ministry of Women's Affairs	1	Ramallah	Ramallah

Name of organization	Number of interviews	Area	Governorate
<b>International organizations</b>			
International Labour Organization (ILO)	1	Jerusalem	Jerusalem
<b>Nongovernmental organizations</b>			
Palestinian Hydrological Association	1		Ramallah
Ma'an Development Center	1		Ramallah
<b>Total</b>		36	
<b>Gaza Strip</b>			
<b>Individual interview locations</b>			
Al-Fukhari	2	Khan Younis	Gaza
Abu Toaima	2	Abasan	
Al-Mawasi	2	Khan Younis	
Khuzaa	2	Rafah	
Al-Zawaida	2	Central Gaza	
Al-Shoka	2	Rafah	
Beit Lahia	2	Beit Lahia	Northern Gaza Strip
<b>Total</b>		14	

## Annex 2: Distribution of focus group discussions

Village	Number of FGDs	Area
<b>West Bank</b>		
Al-Jeftlik and Al-'Aqrabaniya	1	Jordan Valley
Dura	1	Dura
Seida	1	Tulkarem
Al-Jalama	1	Jenin
<b>Total number of FGDs in WB</b>		4
<b>Gaza Strip</b>		
Al-Zawaida	1	Middle Gaza
Mawasi	1	South Khan Younis
Khuzaa and Shoka	1	South Rafah
Beit Lahia	1	North Gaza
<b>Total number of FGDs in GS</b>		4

**Note:** The field work was conducted in areas where FAO is implementing projects.

### Annex 3: Questions for government representatives

Objectives	Questions
<b>Gaps, constraints, needs and priorities</b>	
<b>First objective: to identify the needs, constraints priorities and gaps of both women and men in the areas targeted by FAO</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are the value chains and markets in which women and men participate? At what level(s) are they mainly present?</li> <li>2. What restrictions do women and men face in activities related to agriculture?</li> <li>3. How do gender disparities affect household food security, poverty, agricultural production and rural employment?</li> <li>4. Why do these problems (gender disparities) occur and persist? What can be done in order for family roles and responsibilities to be shared equally among all family members?</li> <li>5. What are some of the practical barriers that hinder women's ability to fully engage in agricultural activities and rural development? Can you suggest ways to remove such barriers?</li> <li>6. How has the occupation/political situation in the country affected rural women and men? Is there a difference in how men and women adapt to this situation?</li> <li>7. Do women participate directly in the use of productive lands, use of forests, livestock raising and aquaculture?</li> <li>8. What needs to be changed in terms of the traditional roles of men and women to increase agricultural productivity?</li> <li>9. What do men and women need to increase crop and livestock production?</li> <li>10. What would you suggest as appropriate and sustainable ways to meet the needs of men and women in agriculture?</li> </ol>
<b>Progress towards empowering women</b>	
<b>Second objective: to assess progress towards women's empowerment and gender equality in the agricultural sector</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What were the main achievements recorded at the household and community levels in the country with regard to women's empowerment and gender equality in the agricultural sector?</li> <li>2. Do you have ongoing programs aimed at improving agricultural livelihoods? If so, to what extent and how have these programs improved women's lives at the family and community levels?</li> <li>3. Can you provide examples of good practices/ successful approaches that have been effective in Palestine with regard to improving women's livelihoods? How and why have these worked?</li> <li>4. What do you suggest doing differently in order to empower women in the country?</li> <li>5. In what economic activities have you supported the participation of rural women and why?</li> </ol>
<b>Gender equality, women's empowerment, food security and agricultural growth</b>	
<b>Third objective: to study and examine the links between gender equality, women's empowerment, food security and agricultural growth</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do women engage in agriculture for commercial production or for self-sufficiency?</li> <li>2. To what extent can women make decisions in agricultural production and marketing? What decisions do women make?</li> <li>3. Are women farmers able to access successful extension agents, trainers, advisors and private farmers with which to exchange information and learn?</li> <li>4. Are both men and women able to access financial services to improve their agricultural production? If not, why not? If yes, what financial services are accessed by rural women and men farmers in the country?</li> </ol>
<b>Institutional capacity</b>	



Objectives	Questions
<p><b>Fourth objective: to assess institutional capacities for gender equality and women's empowerment</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do you have a gender adviser in your organization? If yes, do you contact him/her? How often? If not, who, if anyone, advises you on how to integrate gender into your programming?</li> <li>2. Do you have a policy, directive framework and/or strategy on gender in agriculture to guide the integration of this issue into your work?</li> <li>3. Do you have other tools that enable you to integrate gender into your work?</li> <li>4. Have you ever received training or attended educational sessions on gender issues in the agricultural sector?</li> <li>5. What would help you to better integrate gender into your work?</li> </ol>
Recommendations and identification of stakeholders	
<p><b>Fifth objective: provide recommendations and guidance for future gender-responsive programs and projects, as well as identify potential partners for gender-related activities</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are your recommendations for improving the efficacy of the program in strengthening the position of women and men in the agricultural sector?</li> <li>2. Are there any others (civil society organizations, networks, private companies and/or individuals) involved in agricultural activities from a gender perspective in your area? What is their vision/approach? What is your working relationship with them, if any?</li> <li>3. What should agricultural research institutions contribute to ensuring gender equality in the agricultural sector in Palestine?</li> </ol>

## Annex 4: Interview questions for women farmers

Open-ended questions for semi-structured interviews with individual women farmers. Interviewees were selected based on those who appeared to be able to provide more in-depth information on the issues raised during the focus group discussions.

1. What are the roles of men and women in agriculture and rural development?
2. Are there any organizations that focus on empowering women, especially with regard to agriculture? Do you interact with them?
3. What are the constraints or barriers preventing women from fully engaging in agriculture and agricultural business activities?
4. Can you suggest solutions to improve the position of women in agriculture and improve gender equality?
5. Are you aware of any new technologies or equipment that might help women in their work, whether in the home or in income-generating businesses?
6. To what extent are women able to access each of the following resources (list one by one), and is there a difference between the access of women and men?
  - › land
  - › agricultural training and information
  - › agricultural inputs (seeds, fertilizers, etc.).
  - › agricultural techniques and equipment
  - › water
  - › loans/saving systems
  - › healthcare
7. What are the traditional practices that impact access to and control over resources in society?
8. How is the household income from agriculture managed?
9. Do husbands and wives both collect income from agricultural sources?
10. Who decides how to spend agricultural income?
11. What percentage of this income is spent on:
  - › agricultural income-generating investments?
  - › food and nutrition?
  - › health care?
  - › education?
  - › other?
12. What are the most common expenses for women and men, respectively?
13. When does a woman's day start and end roughly? And a man's day?

## Annex 5: Questions for agricultural cooperative members

**Background information:** Association's name, scope and number of members, disaggregated by sex

### General information

- » How was this cooperative formed?
- » What is the leadership structure of this association? (with attention to the leadership of women in administration)
- » What activities do you do?
- » Which group(s) of people participate most in the activities of the association?
- » What benefits do farmers (men and women) get from this association?
- » Is there any precondition for entering the association (land ownership, savings, livestock)?
- » Is there any other support you get from other partners, for example local government, NGOs?

### Progress towards empowering women

- » What are the gender inequalities in food production, sales, marketing and processing?
- » How does gender inequality affect food security and poverty reduction?
- » How do gender disparities affect agricultural productivity and rural employment?
- » What techniques are used to reduce the workload of women and increase their productivity, (especially with regard to effort-saving techniques such as irrigation)?
- » Which techniques have the most potential for supporting women's empowerment in agriculture?

## Annex 6: Sample questions for focus group discussions with men and women farmers

Questions for focus group discussions with farmers at the community level (men and women in separate groups).

**Background information:** Assessment of age, level of education, household size, average size of land, crops cultivated, and livestock held by discussion participants

### Roles and responsibilities in agricultural activities, including ownership over resources

1. Does each of you work in agriculture? What kinds of agricultural activities do you do?
2. What are the average areas of land cultivated by women and men, respectively?
3. What crops do you cultivate and on how much land?
4. (For women) Do you own the land you cultivate? (Evaluate affirmative and negative answers.) If yes, how and since when did you gain ownership? If not, who owns the land and what level of control do you have on the ground? What effect does it have on you if someone else owns and controls your farmland?
5. Do you keep livestock? What kind of livestock? Who owns the livestock that you keep (by species)? Who makes decisions about selling and slaughtering family animals? How are responsibilities in livestock keeping divided in your home (who does what)?
6. Who owns and controls the profits from agricultural/livestock activities?

### Agricultural techniques

1. What kind of agricultural methods/techniques do you use? (Make list of methods and techniques used.)
2. How many of you use these methods and techniques? (List techniques and evaluate affirmative and negative responses.)
3. Why do/don't you use these methods and techniques?
4. Who presented the agricultural techniques that you use to you?
5. When were the techniques presented to you?
6. How many people within the community adopted these techniques? (Evaluate numbers.)

7. Why do you think they adopted/did not adopt these technologies?

### Extension services

1. Do you know of any agricultural extensionists in this community? What support services reach you in this community?
2. What kind of services do agricultural extensionists provide?
3. How many of you have heard about agricultural trainings in new farming methods? (Evaluate affirmative and negative responses.) Have you ever attended one (or more) of these trainings? (Evaluate numbers of women and men trained and the methods in which they were trained.)
4. Evaluate the trainings from 1-5, 1 being poor and 5 being excellent.
5. Do you have the ability to practice the new farming methods you have been trained in? (Evaluate affirmative and negative responses and reasons.)
6. (For women) Is being a woman hindering or preventing you from accessing trainings and/or other agricultural information? If so, why?
7. Do you prefer to work with a woman or a man as an agricultural extensionist? why?

### Dynamics within the family and use of farm income

1. Who is responsible for selling products from the farm?
2. Who owns and controls the profits from farming/livestock activities?
3. How do you share the money? (Evaluate the proportions for men and women.)
4. How do you plan the use the revenues from the farm product sales?
5. Which family members are involved in planning the use of the money?
6. How many of you use the money to buy inputs? (Evaluate responses and the reasons.)
7. How many of you use the money to buy more land, hire workers and/or other activities to make your farm bigger and better? (Evaluate yes and no and reasons.)

**Roles and responsibilities of men and women in agriculture:**

Use A to indicate the family member who is primarily doing the task.

Use B to denote the family member who is involved in the task, but to a lesser degree.

Task	Women	Men	Explanation
<b>Production</b>			
Preparing the land			
Tillage			
Cultivation			
Bringing water to dilute fertilizer			
Fertilizer application			
Weeding			
Harvesting			
Fruit classification/peeling			
Transportation (from farm to street)			
Marketing			
Processing/adding value			
Maintenance of agricultural equipment			
<b>Agribusiness management</b>			
Record keeping			
Sales administration			
Logistics services			
<b>Financial management</b>			
Negotiating prices			
Receiving payments			
Making financial decisions			
Going to the bank for loans			
Going to the bank to deposit savings			





# COUNTRY GENDER ASSESSMENT

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