

# REQUIREMENTS

for gender development in  
PALESTINIAN SOCIETY



Jerusalem  
Media &  
Communication  
Centre

**REQUIREMENTS**  
for gender development in  
**PALESTINIAN SOCIETY**

Jerusalem Media & Communication Centre (JMCC)

1995

---

**COPYRIGHT** © Jerusalem Media & Communication Centre  
August 1995

All Rights Reserved

**DESIGN JMCC**

**PRINT National Compay Printers**

Information in this report may be quoted providing full credit is given to the Jerusalem Media & Communication Centre (JMCC). No part of this report may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, or stored in any retrieval system of any nature, without the prior written permission of the JMCC.

مركز القدس للإعلام و الإتصال

JMCC

POB 25047, East Jerusalem

Tel 02-819 777 Fax 02-829 534

email [jmcc@baraka.org](mailto:jmcc@baraka.org)

---

---

## CONTENTS

<b>Preface</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>7</b>
<b><u>Part one -</u></b>	
<b>The Reality of Palestinian Women and the Developmental Obstacles until the early 1990's</b>	<b>15</b>
- Women and Education	17
- Women and Health	25
- Women's Status in the Palestinian Society	28
- The Political Status of Women	36
<b>Bibliography of Part One</b>	<b>39</b>
<b><u>Part Two -</u></b>	
<b>Development Needs of Women: An Agenda</b>	<b>43</b>
Social development needs	
1. Education	44
2. Health	52
Requirements for economic development	55
Developments requirements in constitutional and political life	58
<b>Bibliography of Part Two</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>63</b>

---

## List of Tables

- Table 1-** Distribution of Students According to Gender in the Districts of the West Bank 1986/1987
- Table 2-** Number of Schools, Classes and Students for Different Sectors in the Gaza Strip 1985/1986
- Table 3 "a" -** Aggregate Number of Females Registered in Schools 1989/1990
- Table 3 "b" -** Refugees Registered in UNRWA, Public and Private School (Grades 1-12), 1991/1992
- Table 3 "c" -** Percentage of Female Students in Relation to all Registered Students, 1990/1991
- Table 3 "d" -** Percentage of Registered Refugee Students in Relation to the Aggregate Sum of those Resigstered in the Year 1991/1990
- Table 3 "e" -** Average Registered in the Nablus and Hebron Villages in the Age 6-19. In relation to the overall aggregate size of registered school age students.
- Table 4 -** Number of Percentage of Drop-outs in Public Schools in the West Bank
- Table 5 -** Average School Drop-out Rate, October 1990 - October 1991
- Table 6 -** Visitation of women in the child-bearing age to clinics of the Medical Relief Committees.
- Table 7 -** Distribution of employed women in the West Bank and Gaza 1983/1984
- Table 8 -** Distribution of women in different professions who were interviewed for this study
- Table 9 "a" -** Membership in West Bank Trade Unions According to District.
- Table 9 "b" -** Membership in Gaza Strip Trade Unions According to District
- Table 10 -** Distribution of Secondary level students in the West Bank in the arts and science streams according to gender
- Table 11 -** Number of vocational schools and students enrollment for the year 1985/1986 in the Occupied Palestinian Territory

---

## **PREFACE**

The draft of this research on Palestinian requirements for gender development was carried out by the Palestinian Women's Studies Center in Jerusalem. The report was based mainly on field work and interviews with Palestinian experts interested in the field of development, particularly women's development.

Although numerous dramatic political developments have taken place since the start of this study nearly two years ago, its basic premises and conclusions will continue to be relevant as long as the primary elements of inequality and discrimination against women exist.

Elimination of all forms of discrimination against women in Palestine is not a dream, nor is it a far fetched goal. Much has to be done. JMCC believes that this study will contribute to this effort with the information it has collected. Basic data on women is lacking in many respects and this report is an attempt to fill some of the existing gaps. The Women's Studies Center worked diligently on this report and we offer our Thanks for their relentless efforts. We are also indebted to Dr. Rosina-Fawzia Al-Rawi for her meticulous review of the report and her contribution to the introduction and conclusion. We also appreciate the work of Ms. Stephanie Nolen who edited the report in English, and Ms. Samar Hawari who was responsible for overall production of this work.

Finally we would like to thank the Netherlands Organization for International Development Cooperation (NOVIB), whose continuing support for JMCC's work made this project possible.

---

## **INTRODUCTION**

by Dr. Rosina-Fawzia Al-Rawi

### **REQUIREMENTS FOR GENDER DEVELOPMENT IN PALESTINIAN SOCIETY**

"The State of Palestine is the state of Palestinians wherever they may be. The state is for them to enjoy in their collective national and cultural identity, theirs to pursue in a complete equality of rights. In it will be safeguarded their political and religious convictions and their human dignity by means of a parliamentary democratic system of governance, itself based on freedom of expression and the freedom to form parties. The rights of minorities will duly be respected by the majority, as minorities must abide by decisions of the majority. Governance will be based on principles of social justice, equality and non-discrimination in the public rights of men and women, on grounds of race, religion, color or sex under the aegis of a constitution which ensures the rule of law and an independent judiciary."

**Palestinian Declaration of Independence**



The proclamation of gender equality in the Declaration of Independence of the State (November 1988), forty years after the dissolution of Palestine, was the fruit of a long struggle on behalf of the Palestinian women and an indication of the legitimacy of the feminist movement. But in spite of this, women still have a long way to go towards this equality and to the closing of the gap between their expectations and the reality of their lives.

With the beginning of the peace process and the implementation of the Rule for Palestinian Autonomy a flow of official and nonofficial programs for development on all issues have been prepared for the building up of a Palestinian society.

Some of the unofficial organizations have laid stress in their programs on gender issues and their importance for the progress of society, but they have not been taken seriously by the Palestinian Authority, although the Declaration of Principle of State asks for nondiscrimination and equal possibilities for both sexes. But it seems that it will remain only at the level of "lip-service" not having any impact in practice. This is clearly reflected, for example, in the exclusion of women from nomination to the Palestinian Economic Council.

So despite a long and rich history of the involvement of Palestinian women in their people's struggle, there is still a deep disparity between their active role in the development of this society, on the national and social level, and their presence which is partial, if not to say absent from "official" Palestinian history.

### **Give women their rights, but later!**

The all-consuming struggle for independence, and the longing carried by both Palestinian men and women for their independence has pushed aside almost all other issues. So although the issue of the women has been frequently raised, it has always been postponed until the time when reforms, connected with the existence of a Palestinian Legislative Council elected by the people, can be attained. Many socially involved and active women have been aware of the need to improve the status of women in their

society, but they have been concerned that if a demand for their rights was to be pressed hard now, this would weaken the Palestinian struggle. The original slogan of the women's organizations has thus remained: "Let us support and fight side by side with our brother men!" leaving the gender issue for better times to come.

### **The new women's movement**

It was through the setting up of the first four women's committees in 1978 that changes in the women's movement, which had until then a "welfare" character, with activities such as supplying food for the needed families, taking care of families with members in prison, providing medical help...etc., thus filling the gap in public services than being occupied with achieving changes in the field of women's affairs and rights, were introduced. The "older" women's movement was actually an extension to the so-called natural tasks of women in their homes but by this "extension" they actually gave women their first public role and legitimized a social role for them, thus setting the first step for further developments.

The approach of the "new" women's movement towards class and gender problems have since been much more radical and they have understood the need for a real "grass-roots" mass movement, that would include, and mobilize, women of all classes. To guarantee cooperation between the four committees, which represent the four most important Palestinian ideological political streams, "The Higher Council of Women" was formed, providing a unifying framework to the Palestinian Women's Movement. Many activities and programs have been developed, such as the providing of literacy education and training classes for numerous of the professions in order to improve the situation of women, as well as setting up institutions, such as nurseries and kindergartens, to provide child-care facilities as a part of the infrastructure for working mothers. But this approach has not really furthered the situation of women, on the contrary it has introduced another responsibility to that of being a mother, a raiser of children and

housewife, in her being also partially responsible for the income of the family; thus increasing her burdens without leading to any real progress, or commitments by the Palestinian Authority to set aside resources for the care of women on a health, a working, or a political and social level.

### **The effect of the Israeli occupation on the status of Palestinian women**

The past 27 years of Israeli Occupation have undermined the basic Palestinian social structure and have brought about a retardation in the natural development of the society, due to the Israeli military occupation which has had the result of maintaining the rigidity of previously existing laws such as the Ottoman Law, as well as restrictions stemming from the influence of the British Mandate as well as from Jordan and Egypt. Restricted educational possibilities, the decline of health services and the collapse of the economic structure of the country, due to the confiscation of land and properties, the rationing of water and other arbitrary measures introduced by the Israeli forces have together resulted in the collapse of the economic structure of Palestine. The effect of this situation can be most markedly recognized in Palestinian women.

Deprived of their land and the right to live independently and freely, the Palestinian family has become one of the few institutions in which the Palestinians have been able to live and act as they were accustomed to doing. The family has thus gained an enormous importance as a protector of national identity and as a maintainer of the Palestinian culture.

The home and family, "the inner circle" and domain of women, has become the only arena where men have been able freely to enforce their otherwise restricted possibilities of control and domination. The home has also become, even more than formerly, the place where the menfolks could seek shelter from psychological wounds, and where they would be taken care of by the women members of the family.

A big family also has meant a stronger family and a stronger community, thus the bearing of children has become a national duty which women should carry out proudly.

On the one hand the Israeli occupation has reinforced the traditional duties of women, while on the other hand it has led, ironically also, to the development and change of their position in society, by confronting them with situations and circumstances which women in orderly conservative patriarchal societies, such as the normal Palestinian one, would usually not have to face.

As the result of the imprisonment of members of the family, especially the main provider of a family, or through the killing of a family member, or as a result of the men being obliged to travel to other countries to seek work because of lack of job-opportunities and also due to restrictions enforced by the Israeli forces such as curfews, strict controls on the road blocks or the restriction of travel up to a specific age, which mainly affected the male members of society, women have found themselves taking over responsibilities and work that were formerly the domain of men. In this way their influence has also spread into the "outer circle" of the community, which in a traditional society is always occupied by men.

This phenomena, which intensified during the popular uprising, the Intifada (1987-93), has achieved the result that the role of women in the struggle for national liberation cannot any longer be overlooked. It is due to this fact that women's committees have been able to reveal the fruits of their work and their effective ability in mobilizing and organizing the population, thus astonishing not only their fellow men but also the occupying powers who until then always reckoned the Palestinian Women's Movement as having little power and influence on the Palestinian society.

## **Steps towards a new era**

At the dawn of a new era and the implementation of the first and second part of the Rule for Palestinian Autonomy and the taking over of the responsibility for building up a new Palestinian society, there are again voices being raised which would like to return Palestinian women into their traditional domestic roles. It is therefore time for the women to clearly specify their demands and practical and strategic needs and to affirm them in the constitutional laws, and to clarify their future role in the Palestinian society.

Constitutional rights must be backed up by a strong women's lobby, which itself is carried and supported by a wide consensus of opinion amongst all classes of women in society regarding their rights and their dignity, and, at the same time, it must be strengthened by a well worked out agenda of programs and activities on their behalf.

In order to achieve this, information must be given about the true facts, and the suppression of development in the Palestinian society in general and in particular about the suppression of women. There exist already programs that began as research projects with the collecting of information, but they exist as blueprints and are still not systemized or arranged. But although they are on a small scale and in their first steps, they show and bring to light what is available and what is needed. Based on these the women's movement could put up a clear strategy for its primary steps forward by imposing them on the Palestinian authority. This could form a basic demand to include the women in their economic development strategy, so that they could participate on an equal level in forming decisions and taking part in administrative, technical and financial affairs, and subsequently in their supervision and execution.

The following report gives a realistic picture of women in our society and the oppressive elements which face them. The report, being based on field-researches, enters into the main areas of concern, such as women's education, health and work, as well as their political role and status in society.

The second part of the report discusses the requirements needed to develop the situation of women in the fields of education, health, the economy and the modification of the laws applying to women, proposing steps and ideas to develop their situation in society.

The following study, which was undertaken by women, could suitably form the blueprint for formulating programs of future development for the women's movement in the setting up of a democratic Palestinian society.



---

## **PART I**

### **THE REALITY OF PALESTINIAN WOMEN AND THE DEVELOPMENTAL OBSTACLES UNTIL THE EARLY 1990'S**

The natural development process of Palestinian society has, for 28 years, been hindered and warped by Israeli Occupation. The impact of the Occupation is clear in many facets of life. On the legislative and legal level, Israeli military orders have rendered different sources of legislation ineffective. The rigid nature of these laws have negatively influenced all aspects of daily life, including education, health, economic development, and politics. Educational opportunities, for example, have been limited, and health services have deteriorated and been unevenly distributed. Economic development was almost non-existent, as the pre-existing economic structure was essentially demolished, and all growth in the economy has been distorted by interdependence on the Israeli economy. Land confiscation and water appropriation have undermined a fundamentally agricultural society<sup>(1)</sup>.



Under Occupation, the Palestinian people in general, and women in particular, have not exercised their right to promulgate legislation which may contribute to the social development process. Women have been excluded from the political and legislative sphere, and thus there has been no change to those measures and institutions, developed in a patriarchal society, which are oppressive or discriminate against them. The existing laws very clearly discriminate against women. There are some aspects of the existing legislation which favor women, but their positive aspects are not applied, as will be evident later, in the discussion of laws pertaining to women's personal status, education, health, labor and political and economic life (2).

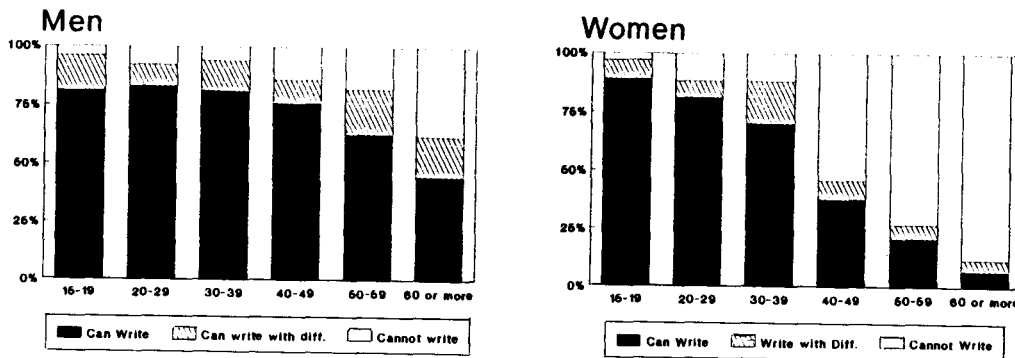
The laws governing personal status, which are based on Islamic *Sharia*, are intrinsically biased against the rights of women, and they have never been modified to rectify this. The legislation pertaining to marriage and divorce serves the rights of men, not women. A mother is entitled to custody of her children after divorce for only a limited number of years. Men's inheritance is double that of women, and in any event, the custom has been that women voluntarily or under duress relinquish their legal, or *Sharia*, right to ownership. In these laws, there is a very distinct discrimination between men and women. They are based on the Islamic *Sharia*, but it must be noted that some Arab countries like Tunisia, Morocco (3), the former Democratic Republic of Yemen and Iraq have made changes which guarantee women's rights without conflicting with the spirit of Islam. These changes include outlawing polygamy, ensuring divorce rights and increasing the age of child custody. And it must be noted that, within Islam, there are laws which ensure rights for women. For example, it is the right of women to set conditions in the marriage contract, such as keeping the right to divorce, and the marriageable age of women is restricted to above 17 (4). (While this age is still quite young, many families marry off their daughters even younger: 14.3 percent of all married women were married between the ages of 12 and 17(5).)

## WOMEN AND EDUCATION

The illiteracy rate among Palestinian women is quite high, and twice that of men. Obviously, this severely restricts both women's personal development and their employment opportunities. This is especially grave given the negative relationship between women's paid employment possibilities and education: work opportunities for women are effectively nonexistent when their educational level is limited to elementary school, a not uncommon case (6). The illiteracy rate is illustrated in Figure 1 (7). There is a clear difference in the level of education of men and women, and in the number of educational institutions available to men and to women until the early 1990s (see Tables 1 & 2)(8).

Figure 1

### Illiteracy Rate Among Both Sexes in the OPT According to age (15 years and above)



**Table 1**  
**Distribution of Students According to Gender in the Districts of the West Bank 1986/1987**

Area	ELEMENTARY			PREPARATORY			SECONDARY			TOTAL		
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
Jenin	13972	12672	26644	5931	4239	10170	3349	1954	50303	23252	18865	42117
Nablus	14655	135201	28175	5917	5052	10969	3217	3058	6275	23789	21630	45419
Tulkarem	13980	12950	26930	5826	4770	10596	3447	2939	6386	23253	20659	43921
Ramallah	16602	15342	31944	6110	5253	11363	2476	2092	4568	25188	22678	47875
Bethlehem	11627	10876	22503	4608	4178	8786	2135	1820	3955	18370	18374	35244
Hebron	24174	21433	45607	8083	6800	14883	4485	3217	7702	36742	31450	68192
Total	95010	867943	81803	36475	30292	66767	191019	15080	34180	150594	132165	282750

\* source: Zaru, Salah. Education Under Occupation: 1967-1988, pp. 436-440, 1988.

**Table 2**  
**Number of Schools, Classes and Students for Different Sectors**  
**in the Gaza Strip 1985/1986**

Lower Case	No. of institutions	No. of classes	Total	
			Total	of which male
Aggregate total	296	3940	166584	87730
- Government	93	1801	73487	37353
- UNRWA	160	1929	87789	46475
- Private	43	210	5427	3902
Kindergarten	54	176	5427	3109
- Government	-	-	-	-
- UNRWA	15	29	1170	679
- Private	39	147	4257	2430
Elementary	183	2417	105354	55518
- Government	60	1042	42409	22419
- UNRWA	120	1351	62244	32670
- Private	3	24	701	429
Preparatory	74	826	36342	18837
- Government	29	307	12194	6126
- UNRWA	43	509	23798	12549
- Private	2	10	350	162
Secondary	34	500	18542	9920
- Government	31	431	16965	8462
- UNRWA	1	40	577	577
- Private	2	29	1000	881
Teacher training schools	2	21	919	346
- Government	2	21	919	346
- UNRWA	-	-	-	-
- Private	-	-	-	-

\* source: Zaru, Salah. Education Under Occupation: 1967-1988, pp. 436-440, 1988.

Although recent research has found that elementary and preparatory education for women in Palestinian society is increasing, and, to a lesser degree, is also rising at the secondary levels (see Tables 3a, b, c, d) (9), the rate of increase of women's enrollment in undergraduate and graduate level study is much lower. Statistics for the 1993/94 academic year indicate that female students comprise 42.8 percent of the student body at local universities (10). (This percentage, however, does not include the aggregate number of university students who attend universities in and outside the country.)

**Table 3 "a"**  
**Aggregate Number of Females Registered in Schools**  
**(1989/1990)**

	Occupied Territories	West Bank	Gaza Strip
Elementary (Class 1-6)	174.442	90.613	56.829
Preparatory (Class 7-9)	51.357	31.539	19.818
Secondary (Class 10-12)	27.174	15.826	11.348
<b>Total</b>	<b>225.973</b>	<b>137.978</b>	<b>87.995</b>

\* Figures also include East Jerusalem.  
Source: Israeli Statistical Abstract, 1991, pp. 286-287.

**Table 3 "b"**  
**Refugees Registered in UNRWA, Public and Private School**  
**(Grades 1-12), 1991/1992**

West Bank		Gaza Strip	
Male	Female	Male	Female
39.731	7.691	68.891	60.024

Source: Statistical Yearbook 1991/1992 (No. 28), UNRWA, Education Department  
(Figure 7, P. 18).

**Table 3 "c"**  
**Percentage of Female Students in Relation to all Registered**  
**Students (1990/1991)**

	West Bank Government Schools	Gaza Strip UNRWA Schools
Elementary	47.2%	48.3%
Preparatory	45%	46.85%
Secondary	43%	-

**Table 3 "d"**  
**Percentage of Registered Refugee Students in Relation to the Aggregate**  
**Sum of those Registered in the Year 1989/1990**

	<b>West Bank</b>	<b>Gaza Strip</b>
<b>Male</b>	63%	81%
<b>Female</b>	58%	74%

**Table 3 "e"**  
**Average Registered in the Nablus and Hebron Villages in the Age 6-19**  
**In relation to the overall aggregate size of registered school age students**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Nablus</b>		<b>Hebron</b>	
	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
6-9	98.7	98.01	100	96.67
10-14	97.26	96.57	90.39	90
15-19	83.76	67.78	42.59	28.26

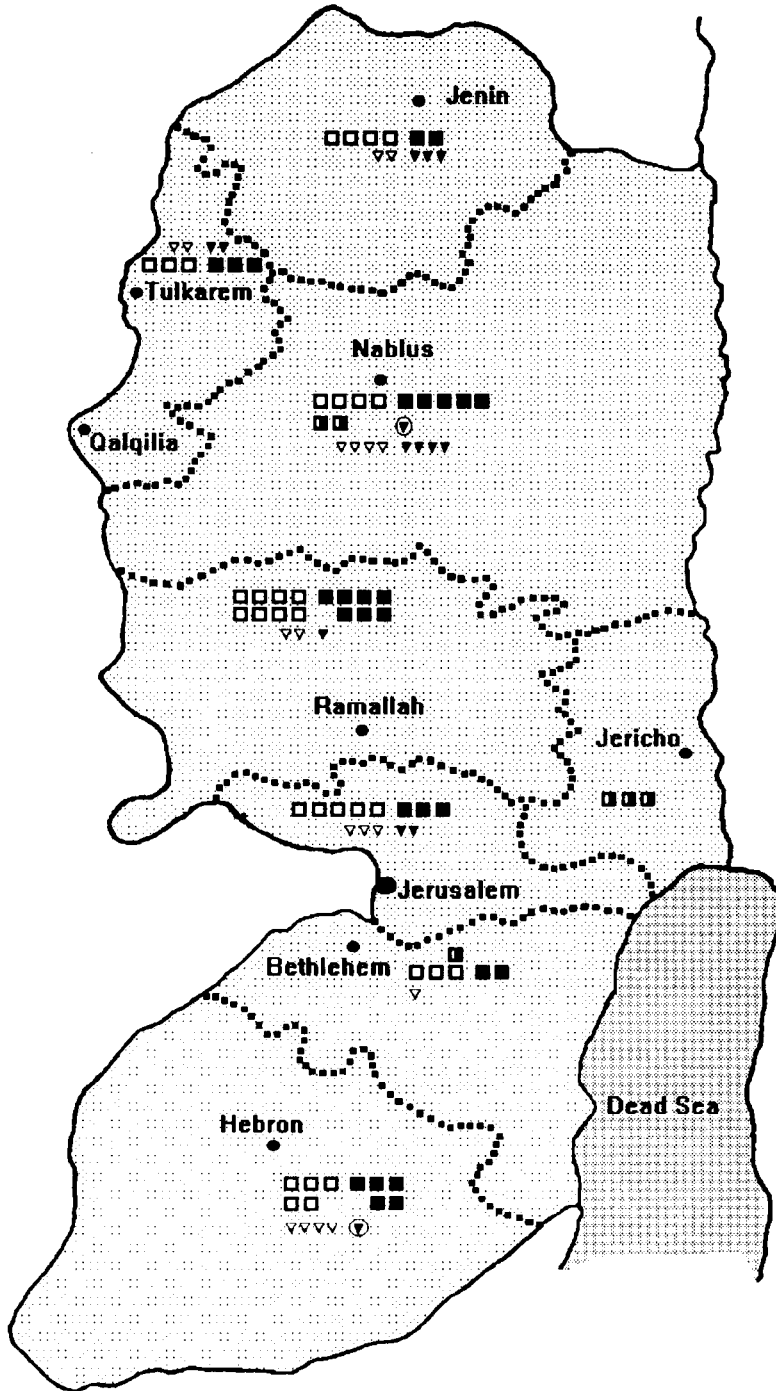
Formal education statistics for the 1989/90 academic year indicate that there were 225,972 female students registered in government, UNRWA and private schools. In 1990/91, at the preparatory level, women were 47.75 percent of the student body; at the elementary level, 45.09 percent; and in secondary schools, 43 percent<sup>(11)</sup>. As for university education, statistics from the Higher Education Council for 1993/94 show that the number of women in universities reached 10,675, which is 42.8 percent of the aggregate number of students<sup>(12)</sup>. In community colleges, which offer academic education in addition to specialized, technical and professional courses, the aggregate number of female students is 2,524, or 54.6 percent of all students. The number of female graduates in technical education in 1992/93 was 448 students, in comparison to 485 male students. And the number of female graduates in professional specialization's reached 115 female students, although there is no single college specializing in professional education in areas designated as appropriate for women<sup>(13)</sup>.

Professional education is available to females only in some schools and colleges, and through some educational centers, societies and popular women's organizations. These centers are not registered with the High Education Council, nor, with the exception of governmental institutions, recognized as formal education<sup>(14)</sup>. The available specializations are limited only to fields typically designated as women's labor, such as sewing, embroidery, textiles, esthetics, and secretarial training. In these cases, female students are accepted with certificates below the general secondary certificate.

However, there remain numerous serious problems with women's access to education. For example, there are few schools for women, compared with those for male students, especially in rural areas where the number of female students is much lower (see Figure 1)<sup>(15)</sup>. The intensely conservative social outlook of these regions produces a 20 percent drop-out rate and only 30 percent of all female students finish their education (see Tables 4 & 5)<sup>(16)</sup>. There are numerous social forces which influence women to leave school early, including the widespread practice of early marriage and young women's obligation to assist with domestic labor in the home, as their mothers are often involved in agriculture. Because families are typically quite large, girls are often required to take care of younger siblings, especially in situations where their mothers have paid work outside the home or are working in agriculture. Furthermore, the overall, very low, levels of household income make it impossible for many families to provide access to education for all of their children, and son-bias motivates most families to allocate the limited opportunities available to their male children. In addition, the social mores which demand strict supervision of a girl's movements, for example her trips from the village to the city, and prohibit mixing between the sexes also serve to limit the number of females attending universities. Dr. Fathia Nasro has argued that : *"Not enough parental awareness has been developed in regard to the importance of female education in the professional and technical fields in the manner essential to achieve the principle of equality in the provision of opportunities."* (18)

# Map 1

Geographic distribution of UNRWA schools in West Bank districts according to the Jordanian administration decisions and according to level and gender for the 1987/88 school year



Elementary		Preparatory	
▼	Male	■	
▽	Female	□	
⊕	Mixed	⊕	



**Table 4**  
**Number and Percentage of Drop-outs in Public Schools in the**  
**West Bank**

Stage	Class	Drop-outs		% Drop-outs	
		Male	Female	Male	Female
<b>Elementary</b>	1st Elementary	104	78	0.80%	0.70%
	2nd Elementary	57	62	0.50%	0.60%
	3rd Elementary	143	205	0.60%	0.94%
	4th Elementary	310	303	2.30%	2.80%
	5th Elementary	1125	1091	1.43%	1.70%
<b>Preparatory</b>	1st Preparatory	742	480	6.40%	5.60%
	2nd Preparatory	676	431	7.10%	6.10%
	3rd Preparatory	582	301	7.50%	5.40%
	Total	2000	1212	7.00%	5.70%
<b>Secondary</b>	1st Secondary	680	417	9.10%	7.30%
	2nd Secondary	245	210	6.40%	6.30%
	2nd Secondary	16	15	0.19%	2.10%
	3rd Secondary	195	112	6.50%	4.60%
	3rd Secondary	23	8	2.00%	1.10%
	Total	1169	764	4.98%	4.28%
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>4294</b>	<b>3067</b>	<b>3.44%</b>	<b>3.10%</b>

\* Figures available from the Education Department 1985/1986.

**Table 5**  
**Average School Drop-out Rate, October 1990 - October 1991**

	West Bank		Gaza Strip	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
6th Elementary	4.8	7	3.8	3.5
1st Preparatory	8.2	11.1	5.5	8.3
2nd Preparatory	12.8	12.2	6.3	11.7

Source: Statistical year book, 1991/1992, UNRWA, pp. 47-71.

## WOMEN AND HEALTH

Palestinian women have one of the highest fertility rates of any group of women in the world. It has been estimated that the aggregate fertility rate at the end of the 1980's was 6.1-6.95 in the West Bank and 6.5-7.89 in the Gaza Strip. Numerous negative health problems and economic and social consequences are associated with such high birth rates<sup>(19)</sup>. Research has found a high level of many diseases (such as anemia and malnutrition) among women, especially in the child-bearing period. According to UNRWA statistics, 60 percent of all pregnant women suffer from anemia in the last trimester, and 80 percent of all women in the Gaza Strip have a birth spacing of less than two years (one of the highest in the world.)<sup>(20)</sup>

Dr. Salwa Najjab, of the Union of Palestinian Medical Relief Committees, has found that most Palestinian women marry prior to the age of 18. Many continue to bear children past the age of 35, leading to increased health complications and maternal mortality. (It should be noted that the mortality rate amongst women is not available due to the absence of accurate information in the West Bank and Gaza<sup>(21)</sup> (see Figures 2 and 3)<sup>(22)</sup>.

Figure 2

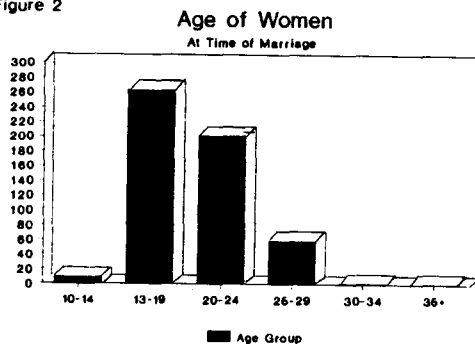
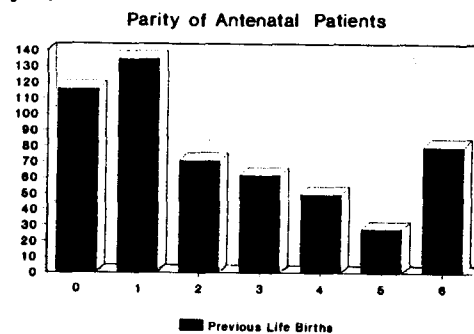


Figure 3



Health services for women are limited in general, and those which are available are concentrated on reproduction, as this is regarded as a valuable female social contribution. Women's overall access to health care is insufficient for their medical needs, Dr. Najjab argues. She has found (23) that the birth rate in the West Bank hospitals has dwindled from 63.8 percent in 1987 to 55.5 percent in 1991, which means that 45 percent of births are taking place in homes. Seventy-one percent of all West Bank residents reside in the rural areas, where medical centers, health clinics and ambulances are not available. Only 27 percent of clinics provide obstetric and gynecological services. The women's Health Program report showed that less than half of the women of child-bearing age visit the clinics of the Medical Relief Committees (see Table 6)(24).

**Table 6**  
**Visitation of women in the child-bearing age to clinics of the Medical Relief Committees**

Center	Population	Women of child-bearing age	Women out-patients
Jerusalem	-	-	-
Ethna	15000	3000	1180
Kharas	5000	1000	441
al-Dyuke	930	186	187
al-Oja	2600	520	394
al-Mkhyier	1400	280	159
Deir Abu Misha'l	2500	500	206
A'bud	1405	281	264
Sinjel	4000	800	354
Turmea'ya	2150	430	660
Tulkarem	-	-	-
al-Naserieh	3200	640	344
al-Zababdeh	2400	480	749
Tubas	17000	3400	1039
Sylt al-Harthieh	6850	1370	844
Maythloun	5300	1060	2120
Qalqilya	-	-	1105
Jabalila	-	-	903
Beit Hanoun	-	-	162
Abu Ta'mieh	-	-	101
Rafah	-	-	229
Bido	4750	950	802
Beit A'nan	4000	806	364

Source: Al-Najjab, Salwa, taken from Al-Barghouthi and Deibes, "Survey of Primary Health care in the West Bank".

A study conducted by the Health Development Information Project (Dr. Mustapha Barghouti and Ibrahim Deibes) found that delivery beds in hospitals in the West Bank were available as follows: Jenin-14, Tulkarem-15, Qalqilya-6, Nablus-74, Ramallah-28, Jerusalem-75, Jericho-5, Bethlehem-none, Beit Jala-8, Hebron-20(25). The study found 11 maternity hospitals in the West Bank, with a total of 152 beds, six general practitioners, 21 obstetricians and gynecologists, 10 pediatricians, five anesthesiologists, one cardiologist, one radiologist, 12 head nurses, 60 nurses, 11 nurses aids, 13 midwives, eight lab technicians, three anesthesiology technicians, and one X-ray technician (26).

Interviews with many doctors and health para-professionals indicate that the level of services specialized for women in hospitals is quite low, and hospitals lack medical equipment, beds and delivery operating rooms. There is no move towards improved access to these facilities, as hospitals face cut-backs in these areas. It is also possible that the delivery wards of several hospitals in Jerusalem may be closed due to financial problems (27).

Women's access to health is also impaired by the absence of comprehensive health insurance. For example, only 18 percent of rural residents of the West Bank are registered in the Israeli government health insurance scheme. Only 11 percent of those registered with government insurance have health centers in the areas of their residence(28). It can be extrapolated that, at best, only 9 percent of women benefit from the health insurance scheme.

Traditional societal mores and religious beliefs also negatively effect women's health. Dr. Sa'adi Jabber has argued, for example, that some hospitals, such as the Holy Family Hospital in Bethlehem, do not endorse the use of contraception(29). And despite a shortage of gynecologists, some women refuse to be examined by a male doctor. For example, a report for family planning indicates that in 1987 at the Tulkarem clinic, the previous average number of diaphragms inserted for women was 10 per year, but after female doctors were hired, the number of women using this method of contraception increased by 50 per month (30).

Women remain largely ignorant of many of the issues around their own health needs, throughout their lives, from adolescence to childbearing to menopause. The absence of sex education in schools and lack of access to accurate information about sexuality and reproduction in society contributes to that ignorance. Women's health is also negatively affected by legislation: for example, in the Jordanian civil service regulation, passed in 1960, which still regulates the West Bank, a woman is entitled to 45 days of maternity leave, during which she receives only half of her salary. This will obviously motivate women in difficult economic positions to make choices for financial, not health, reasons. There are also no laws protecting women against physical or psychological violence. Those laws which may safeguard women's health are frequently (again, often from economic necessity) ignored. For example, the existing labor law in the Gaza Strip stipulates that women should not be employed from 8 pm till 7 am. The law also prohibits women from holding physically dangerous jobs. The Jordanian labor law of 1960 and its amendments - chapter 9, articles 29-36 - include stipulations regarding health, safety, leisure, sanitation, etc., and the need to have separate lavatories for female workers. Paragraph 2 of Article 35 compels the employer to install a special room for the children of the female workers aged less than six in institutions employing more than 30 women. Chapter 11 of that law also forbids the employment of women in certain jobs that have health risks such as radiation or require work at night<sup>(31)</sup>.

## **WOMEN'S STATUS IN THE PALESTINIAN ECONOMY**

Palestinian women have restricted and inferior access to economic resources and limited economic independence. Their access to economic resources is largely determined by marriage; their standard of living is dependent on marriage and the family. Because their participation in the paid labor force is limited, women's economic position, isolated from marriage and the family, is quite bleak. <sup>(32)</sup>.

Women's economic reality is divided into two parts. In the pre-marriage phase, there are some limited job opportunities in

specific fields such as education and nursing, which are considered for appropriate for women in the still largely traditional Palestinian society, where there remains considerable opposition to the idea of women engaging in paid work outside the home. After marriage and the birth of children, women's capacity for work outside the home is greatly reduced. Their domestic responsibilities impair their access to economic independence.

Palestinian women who work outside the home are employed in the official sector in relatively high numbers. However, women's work has not necessarily been integrated into the productive developmental process. Prior to the Israeli Occupation, employment possibilities for women were available only to the educated, and then, only in the fields of education and nursing. Since the late 1960's and early 1970's, and as a result of the pressures of the deteriorating economic situation, women have found employment in the formal and informal sectors, and in different professional fields such as technical, academic, literary, commercial, agricultural, industrial and service professions (see Table 7)<sup>(33)</sup>. The survey of women's qualifications in eight different professions shows an increase in the percentage of professional women in different fields (see Table 8)<sup>(34)</sup>.

**Table 7**  
**Distribution of employed women in the West Bank and Gaza 1983/1984**

	West Bank	Gaza
Women in the technical, scientific, and academic sectors	21.6%	51.5%
Women in writing professions	4.3%	2.4%
Women in the trade sector	2.0%	7.0%
Women in the service sector	5.2%	4.0%
Women in the agricultural sector	57.5%	11.7%
Skilled women workers (industry)	8.4%	18.2%
Unskilled women workers (industry)	1.0%	5.1%
Total	100%	100%

**Table 8**  
**Distribution of women in different professions who were interviewed for this study**

Profession	Women Interviewed			Registered Women			% of women interviewed registered in professional associations	Source
	West Bank	Gaza	Total	West Bank	Gaza	Total		
<b>Academic</b>	36	7	43	133	15	148	29.05%	Higher Education Council
<b>Engineers</b>	28	11	39	180	38	218	17.89%	Engineers Union
<b>Lawyers</b>	16	20	36	34	41	75	48%	Lawyers' Syndicate
<b>Journalists</b>	19	-	19	28	3	31	61.29%	Journalists Union
<b>Health*</b>	386	211	579	-	-	-	-	-
	259	66	325	-	-	-	-	-
	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>749</b>	<b>315</b>	<b>1064</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>

\* Health: includes doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and lab technicians.

Large numbers of women have been employed in wage-labor in Israeli factories, in very poor conditions, where they are an abused and unprotected source of cheap labor. In addition, women laborers are often exploited by their Arab "middleman," through whom they must find work. The working conditions of women now employed in Palestinian factories and projects is no better; they also face poor conditions, long hours and very low wages<sup>(35)</sup>.

Current research suggests that the percentage of women in the labor force does not exceed 14 percent<sup>(36)</sup> of the total combined labor force in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, with the majority concentrated in the West Bank. These statistics, however, do not take into consideration the large number of women who work in the informal sector. These unregistered workers, who are not included in the labor force statistics, include women who work in subcontracting, those who do piece work, and those who are employed in subsistence agriculture and as domestics. Obviously, the reproductive labor of Palestinian women is not counted either. Studies of the informal sector work of Palestinian women reveal exploitative conditions and low remuneration<sup>(37)</sup>.

The majority of women working in the industrial sector are employed in the textile and sewing industry. More than 80 percent of the employees in this sector are women, the majority of whom are unskilled. The remaining female laborers are employed in food industries, and pharmaceutical and paper factories. Approximately 53.5 percent of women workers are paid less than 130 JDs, and the rest are paid less than 100 JDs. They work long hours in very poor conditions. Holidays are almost non-existent, even maternity leave is not available, and neither are compensation or basic services<sup>(38)</sup>. There is little organization of the workers, and thus no form of protection against exploitation. Only 17.6 percent of women workers in the West Bank are members of labor unions<sup>(39)</sup>.

Women's work in the agricultural sector has been negatively affected by confiscation and closure of almost half the cultivable land in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Land confiscation has robbed large numbers of women of their basic source of household income<sup>(40)</sup>. Nonetheless, women constitute 57.5 percent in the West Bank and 11.8 percent in the Gaza Strip of the overall women's' labor force. The majority of women employed in this sector are unpaid, as they work in family fields. In 1985, the number of



women being paid for work in the agricultural sector was only 9.5 percent of all those employed in this area<sup>(41)</sup>. Although women's labor is a fundamental input in the agricultural process, they rarely benefit from any of the extension services provided in this sector; social norms and patriarchal property ownership systems prevent this kind of formal recognition of women's contribution to agriculture<sup>(42)</sup>.

In 1985, 45.3 percent of all women in the labor force in the West Bank, and 74.8 percent in the Gaza Strip, were paid workers. The high percentage in Gaza is due to the fact that 72.6 percent of all women in paid labor were employed in service sector in Gaza<sup>(43)</sup>. Domestic labor and income-generating projects done at home are not included in these statistics and consequently are not included in the GDP. In a FAFO study<sup>(44)</sup>, women in the three sampled areas were found to spend 60 hours per week on domestic labor and income-generating activities. The study concluded that the great majority of women are employed in more than one full-time position in such productive and child-rearing activities. Some are paid and others are unpaid.

Women, particularly in rural areas, make a large contribution to the household economy. There has been no significant research on the number of women employed in this sector. Women's activities in this sector include raising poultry for eggs, "kitchen garden" agriculture, sewing piece work, textile and embroidery. Some of these are family projects directed by women. In an interview with a woman<sup>(45)</sup> aged thirty-seven, a mother of eight who works as a tailor and supervises an egg-laying project, she stated that "I wake up at six in the morning and check on the chickens, collect eggs, and put them in a carton and then distribute them at the shops in my village. I then assemble all the orders from outside the village, which are collected here at ten. Afterwards I go to work in the field to weed to harvest.. etc. The rest of the day I spend sewing clothes for women in the village. Evening hours I work with a friend of the family distributing milk and yogurt".

The main obstacle to women's economic development is the predominant set of social mores, which divide work by gender. Women's productive role is considered to be restricted to the home and labor in the family's fields and agricultural projects. If it is financially necessary for women to work outside the household, their employment must be limited to a few areas, mostly related to household chores. Women are rarely allowed equal opportunity in access to employment. They do not have access to technical and technological training and accordingly they lack the skills necessary for many industry jobs and managing economic projects. There is a massive deficiency in the provision of basic services for the children of working women, which is obviously a considerable obstacle to women's access to employment.

The Palestinian unemployment rate is extremely high (estimated at 30-35% in the West Bank and 65% in Gaza), as a result of distorted economic growth and Israeli restrictions on labor movement. In this overtly patriarchal society, there is a widespread belief that priority for paid work should be given to men. As a result, the unemployment rate for women is estimated at 87% (46); including "housewives".

The labor laws currently used in the West Bank also discriminate against women. While unquestionably oppressive to all workers, both men and women, their negative impact on women is heightened by the absence of labor unions for women workers (See table 9 "a" & 9 "b") (47). In this context we refer to some of these laws which hinder the development of women's role at work. These laws were discussed during a workshop held by the Women's Legal and Social Guidance Center in May, 1994 (48).

**Table 9 "a"**  
**Membership in West Bank Trade Unions according to District**

Jerusalem		Hebron		Bethlehem		Jericho		Ramallah		Nablus		Tulkarem		Jenin		Total	
Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
-	26	-	44	1	42	-	21	30	57	44	47	2	93	1	36	78	366

Yes = Membership In Trade Union  
 No = Non-membership

**Table 9 "b"**  
**Membership in Gaza Strip Trade Unions According to District**

Gaza		Khan-Yunis		Jabalia		Camps		Total	
Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
-	13	-	23	-	15	-	32	-	83

Yes = Membership In Trade Union  
 No = Non-membership

Denying women workers of the labor rights stipulated in law #21 of 1960 and its amendments. The labor law does not apply to a group of productive labor relations in accordance to article 2 of the law. This excludes women from benefiting from the rights stated in this law if they are employed in family or agricultural projects or if they work in domestic labor. This applies to a large percentage of women, especially in the rural areas and villages.

Female workers, to whom the law applies, are denied some of its essential provisions: annual leave (article 45 of the law), maternity leave (Article 50), maternity benefit (Article 52), and non-payment in return for their weekly day-off (Article 41).

The law does not oblige the employer to dispense wages, in whole or part, to the worker if s/he gets ill. Sick leave was only introduced with Military Order 1123 of 1985; 75% of the actual salary must be disbursed during the first fifteen days of illness, 50% of the actual salary for the following days, and 25% of the actual salary for the following thirty days, and if illness remains. Afterwards, the worker will be suspended from work and paid for her/his services. Despite this demand, this law remains unfair as women as more exposed to illness.

Women working in institutions established in accordance with the law in practice are entitled to a six-week maternity leave. The maternity "pay" equals half their salary for a six-week period.

As for those women employed in the public sector, they are entitled maternity grant which equals their entire salary while on their 45 day maternity leave. Undoubtedly this law is unfair to working mothers on the one hand. On the other hand the law denies this simple right to all women working in institutions where the law stated in paragraph 1 does not apply.

The labor law and the regulations promulgated accordingly are lacking in several respects, including old-age insurance, unemployment insurance, minimum wage, mandatory saving funds, health insurance for the worker and her/his family, child and family allowance, allowance for increase in living expenses.

The labor law applicable in the Gaza Strip also has many negative aspects (49). It also constitutes an obstacle to women's development because it does not fully adapt to the international labor legislation and the international labor agreements pertaining to labor:

- The labor law does not state the right of working women to leave in case of abortion, or leave without pay to accompany her spouse during for study abroad, or for taking care of children.

The labor law did not equate women with men in salaries, given that women receive 60% of their salaries during maternity leave. Even this amount is only paid if women work six months consecutively in the service of the employer prior to delivery.

- Clauses in maternity leave are inadequately explained. It says "a pregnant women may, if she desires, quit working a month prior to delivery". This leave should be mandatory and leave for delivery should be clearly defined. The length of leave should be increased.
- Women working in agriculture or in home production do not enjoy the specific protection stipulated in the labor law.
- The labor law does not state the need to protect women's health and safety during pregnancy, including such services as periodic prenatal checkups or provision of medical services to pregnant women during work hours.
- The law does not oblige employers to provide day care or nursery schools in the place of work.
- The labor law does not present any professional training opportunities and employers are not obliged to provide these.
- There is no provision to ensure the prosecution of any employer who physically or psychologically abuses female workers.

## **THE POLITICAL STATUS OF WOMEN**

The political status of women is bound up in the conditions of the Occupation. The Palestinian people in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip have not been able to participate in normal political activity, such as elections. Political activity has been paralyzed for more than twenty-eight years and the Israeli Occupation has destroyed many of the aspects related to political activities. Pre-existing laws were replaced with military orders that deny Palestinians the right to engage in public political activism. Accordingly, political activism was reduced to underground political parties and organizations and to their affiliated popular institutions whose work concentrated on national struggle to end Occupation.

Palestinians could not exercise their right to engage in political activity, with the one exception of the 1976 municipal elections.

On this occasion, a military order was passed, amending the election law, allowing women to participate both as voters and as candidates. Prior to this amendment, women were only allowed to vote.

Some women played an active political role, joining one of the political factions that were the only outlet for political activism in Palestinian society. Women's role was limited to anti-Occupation activities such as participating in public rallies, sit-in strikes, and distribution of political pamphlets. Large numbers of women were mobilized to participate in these factions, but their presence was desired only to promote a particular party platform or ensure the election of particular leader, or, in general, to support a pre-determined national agenda. It was never a priority, or even the intention, of these male-dominated factions to build upon the political concerns and input of women, or to allow them access to decision-making positions. For example, women abandoned their right to candidacy during the 1976 municipal elections for the sake of supporting the national program.

Similarly, women were not given access to leadership and decision-making positions in the different political factions. The small number of women who were represented in the leadership of the parties and the institutions of the PLO were represented not on the basis of a specific women's platform, but rather on national and partisan basis. This was due to the failure of political parties to adopt a women's program that ensured equal rights for women in the decision-making process.

There is clear discrimination in the constitutional setup in the Gaza Strip, established in 1962 (50), in which the voting and nomination rights in the legislative council were limited to the members of the committees of the Palestinian Arab National Union, in which women were not allowed to hold membership (Palestinian origin and male gender were conditions for membership: Articles 1, 4, 10, of the decision of the Administrative Governor General number 31 of the year 1960 concerning the method of election of the local committees to the Palestinian Arab National Union). Women were also barred from membership in the Legislative Council and the Executive Council since appointment was also governed by the same election conditions. Municipal Law number 1 for the year 1934 and its amendments have prohibited women the

right to vote and to be elected to municipal councils and their chambers of commerce. Male gender is a condition for voting and for nomination.

Lawyer Raja Shehadeh (during the workshop on Women and Legislation - Women and Political Legislation, organized by the Women's Legal and Social Counseling Center in June 1994) argued that Jordanian law is based on the premise that political activity is the natural sphere only of men and there is no role for women to play therein. There is no clear stipulation in Jordanian law which prevents women from being appointed to public posts, but a historical analysis of the implementation of this law reveals that it has effectively excluded women from positions in the judiciary, government departments, and provincial and municipal administrations<sup>(51)</sup>. In the Gaza Strip, it is legal for women to be employed in public service posts in government departments. It is worth mentioning in this context that, although the law is not discriminatory, some of these posts are symbolic such as those in the judiciary and in the public attorney's office. Similarly, the right of women to be appointed to posts in municipalities and in village councils, with the exception of councils and committees established by national legislation, are all closed to women, including the judicial council, the council for the regulation of films, etc.<sup>(52)</sup>.

---

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### PART ONE

1. I'bidat, Adnan, from a seminar by Ramzi Nahid, "A Future View of the Role of Palestinian Women in Post-Independence Period", pp 32, TEAM, 17-20 June 1993.
2. Look at Women's Rights and Legislation Project (the legal file prepared by the Women's Center for Legal and Social Guidance), unpublished. Documents used in workshops held in April and June, 1994.
3. Shuqair, Hafitha, "A Comparative Study of Laws Concerning Women and Family in the Arab Maghreb".
4. Personal Status Number 61/Article 1, 1976.
5. Al-Khamash, Ummayah, "Reproductive Health in Palestinian Society", unpublished, Union of Palestinian Medical Relief Committees, Jerusalem, 1993.
6. I'bidat, Adnan, pp 33.
7. Educational Network (newsletter), pp 7, No. 12 and 13, June-September 1993.
8. Zaru, Salah, "Education Under Occupation: 1967-1987," pp 436 and 440, University Graduates Association, Hebron, 1988.
9. Educational Network, pp 21-23.
10. Statistical Directory of Palestinian Universities and Colleges 1993/1994, High Educational Council, Jerusalem.
11. Educational Network, pp 21.
12. Statistical Directory, pp 2.
13. Ibid, pp 55-56.
14. Zaru, Salah, pp 218, 220-221.
15. 'Atiyah, Ihssan, et al, "Education in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Jericho", Statistical Publication, pp 340, Statistics Studies Center of The Arab Studies Society, Jerusalem, 1987.
16. Ibid, pp 327.
17. An interview with Janet Nicola, Ramallah Girls Secondary School principal.
18. An interview with Fathiya Nasro, Education Department of Bir Zeit University.
19. Al-Khamash, Ummayah, "Palestinian Society's Reproductive Health", pp 1.
20. Al-Najjab, Salwa, Annual Report: Women's Health Program, Union of Palestinian Medical Relief Committees, Jerusalem, 1993.
21. Ibid.
22. UNRWA/West Bank, Survey of Iron Deficiency Anemia Among



- Pregnant Women in West Bank Refugee Camps, pp 13, Jerusalem, April 1993.
23. Al-Najjab, Salwa, taken from Al-Barghouthi and Deibes, "Survey of Primary Health care in the West Bank".
  24. Ibid, pp 24.
  25. Al-Barghouthi, Mustapha and Deibes, Ibrahim, "Guidelines for Infrastructure and Health Services in the West Bank: Planning Health Care," pp xxiv-xxv, Health Development Information Project, 1993.
  26. Ibid.
  27. Interview with Dr. 'Idwan Al-Barghouthi, general physician in Augusta Victoria Hospital in Jerusalem.
  28. Al-Barghouthi, Mustapha, pp xvii.
  29. Interview with Dr. Sa'adeh Jaber, general physician in Holy Family Hospital in Bethlehem.
  30. Interview with Dima 'Iwaidah, administrative employee in Family Planning Society in Jerusalem.
  31. Information taken from two papers presented in Women's Rights and Legislation workshops. The first by Salwa Al-Sayegh, Deputy District Attorney in Gaza entitled, "Women Status in Labor Law Applied in the Gaza Strip". The second for Attorney 'Ala' Al-Bakri entitled "Women and Health Laws of Jordanian Law".
  32. FAFO (Institute for Applied Social Science), Palestinian Society, a summary of a study on living conditions in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and Arab Jerusalem, pp 17, 1994.
  33. Qatamesh, Ribhi, Palestinian Working Class Against Colonialism, pp 109, Al-Zahra' Center for Studies and Research, Jerusalem, 1989.
  34. Samour, Maysoun and Nisreen Badarneh, "Women's Capabilities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, a primary survey of women working in seven vocational fields, pp 12, Women's Studies Center, Jerusalem, 1994.
  35. Hindiyeh, Suha and 'Affaf Ghazawneh, "Women's Labor in Palestinian Factories in the West Bank and Gaza Strip", pp 33-54, Women's Studies Center, 1993.
  36. Qatamesh, 1989, pp 105.
  37. A collection of studies on which three research centers were established: Bissan Center for Research and Development, Women's Studies Center, and the Union of Agricultural Relief Committees.
  38. Hindiyeh, Suha and others, pp 85-92, 1993.
  39. Ibid, pp 59.
  40. l'bidat, 1993, pp 33.
  41. Qatamesh, 1989, pp 110.
  42. l'bidat, 1993, pp 23.
  43. Qatamesh, pp 109.
  44. Heidelberg Bank, Marianne and Qvensen Geir, "Palestinian Society in

Gaza, West and Arab Jerusalem: A Survey of Living Conditions," pp 294-300.

45. An interview with Imm Hassan from the village of Beit Sureek, west of Jerusalem.

46. I'bidat, 1993, pp 34.

47. Hindyeh, Suha, 1993, pp 60.

48. Al-Bakri, 'Ala' and Salwa Al-Sayyigh, two papers presented at the Women, Law, and Political Rights workshop organized by the Women's Center for Legal and Social Guidance.

49. Al-Sayyigh, Salwa.

50. Ibid

51. Ibid.

52. Ibid.



**DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF WOMEN: AN AGENDA**

A broad and comprehensive range of changes are needed if Palestinian women are to participate in socio-economic development in the OPT. Many of these changes will be complementary and have positively-reinforcing effects.

Legislation is particularly important. In all areas, including education, health, labor and politics, the law plays a special role in supporting the development of women, where it contains provisions to ensure gender equality. To ensure this kind of legal support, Palestinian women need committees of women specialized in this field to study all existing laws and legislature, establishing which provisions have positive effects for women, and also generally educate women about the law. There should also be committees to monitor the official agencies in their implementation of laws regarding the interests of women in various fields. This is an immediate and practical demand that will enable women to achieve their rights through the law.

Meanwhile, on the strategic plane, this endeavor can be helped by preparing draft laws and legislation taking into consideration the particular needs of women and eradicating all forms of bias against them. The draft laws should be submitted for endorsement and inclusion in the state laws.

Without this, there can be no comprehensive and sustainable development for women. The demand for laws to protect the rights of women and help to empower them is a consistent one. This is evident in analysis of women's developmental demands in various areas.

## **SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS**

### **1. Education**

In the interviews<sup>(1)</sup> conducted with a number of women and men specializing in education, along with some female students and women's activists, many requirements and recommendations were presented, around the subject of guaranteeing a progressive and equal role for women in education.

A top priority is a unified curriculum for female and male pupils, so that the Palestinian individual can be prepared for an active life in building a society where both sexes participate equally and without prejudice. Women must have a direct role in preparing future curricula

This requirement is in synch with the current work to renew and unify the curricula in Palestine. A 15-member committee headed by a woman, Dr. Fathiya Nasru, was created for this task. In an interview to find out the general features of the new curricula, she said:

*"When I envisioned the initial features of a Palestinian education system, I depended on the vision<sup>(2)</sup> in the [PLO] Declaration of Independence. This document regards Palestine to be for all Palestinians, and finds the rights of women and men to be equal in all fields. Based on this, the educational vision affirms giving the woman equal opportunity in all educational fields, including general education and university education, whether technical or academic.*

*In the curricula unification project, we equate women with men in all facets of life. We also aim to write the curricula in suitable Arabic language using both masculine and feminine terminology, dealing with women's issues and even having a home economics curricula for both males and females.*

*"Because the perception of women is based on the fact that they are able to produce and participate in decision-making, and that their role is not limited to motherhood and household tasks, the home economics curriculum deals with all facets of human life, regardless of gender. There is household awareness, environmental awareness, health, nutrition, family resource development, dealing with children, and participation in social organizations. All the units of the home economics curriculum aim to develop the concept of the family on the basis of the importance of cooperation between man and woman, and the need to work in the framework of equality in obligations and rights."*

As for teaching methods, the instructional method currently used must be revised. This method is highly unpopular with female students and affects their feelings about education. This method relies on memorization, preparing for the next exam, and is concerned only with the report card. This method should be replaced with those encouraging thought and creativity, methods based on activity and participation. The Friends Schools are a pioneer in this area. The former principal of the schools, Dr. Khalil Mahshi, said:

*"We in the Friends Schools care about the student as a human. We give him or her academic knowledge, the skills to create, and make the process one of discovery and learning through practice and activity.*

*"We must benefit from the creative and educational talents that look toward modernization and can help create new educational models that can be followed by other schools and the society at large. Holding to a rigid system of daily and general examinations keeps the female students busy in studying only for the exam and report card. It doesn't give them a chance to develop and create. The examination process must be replaced with an inquiry and discovery process. Concern should be given to extra-curricular education in girls schools, to give female students a chance to develop their talents and encourage them to create and be creative."*

As for education laws, according to the Jordanian and Egyptian laws in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the elementary and preparatory stages are mandatory. Egyptian law holds the student's guardian responsible for school attendance at those stages, and not sending a student is punishable by law. But due to the absence of any strict executive authority, the Mandatory Education Law was ignored for years. Thus, mandatory education is an important requirement for women's development.

It is worth mentioning that there are two viewpoints on this subject. Some view the mandatory period, up to the tenth grade, good; proponents of this view include international institutions such as UNICEF and UNESCO. The other viewpoint, which is clearly illustrated by Janet Nicola, claims that the tenth grade does not give female students the opportunity to totally refine their reading and writing skills. It is preferable to extend the mandatory period until the end of the secondary stage, particularly for females. This is important because young women of about 18 years are viewed as ready for marriage; mandatory education will help early marriage. Students who finish secondary school have the option of university studies; if they leave school before that stage, they lose other opportunities for learning. Female students who do not desire to complete their academic secondary education should have the chance to attend vocational secondary education, and to specialize in a chosen field.

The majority of those interviewed think that education from the elementary to the university stage should be free, so that those with low income do not have an excuse of only educating males. This will also give the opportunity for female students to complete their education to all stages.

There is a serious problem with a high rate of female truancy. This must be made completely illegal. Education law should penalize the parents who encourage truancy by their daughters, who are often called upon to assist with domestic responsibilities in place of attending school. School must also play a direct role by making the education process a positive one, to encourage attendance. The following is an experience of a girls school principal Samara Qlaibo:

*"We have been able, through the parents committee, to handle some of the individual cases; for example: one of the students was compelled to leave school because of her mother's illness. After the school and the parents committee reached a solution of permitting the student to skip one or two classes daily. This solution was a success".*

There is a need for special schools for female (and male) students who suffer from learning disabilities, and also for curricula suitable to their potential. This will ease pressures resulting from promotion and failure systems in inappropriate academic environments, and keep students in schools, giving them the opportunity for more learning and acquiring skills through contact with their peers.

Schools play an important role in handling the specialization in the two academic sections (science and arts) by pushing the female student to choose one of the branches. It is noticeable that the ratio of females in the science section is lower compared with their ratio in the arts section and their proportion to males (see table 10)<sup>(3)</sup>. Teachers must make science sector equally accessible to female students.

Female students must have the possibility of continuing their university education in the fields of natural science and technology. But in many schools, female students are forced to join the arts section because it is the only available section in the school. Also, sometimes the school administration tries to force female students to join the arts section, fearing that the section would be closed in the school if the number of female students falls too low.

**Table 10**  
Distribution of secondary level students in the West Bank in the arts and science streams according to gender

District	Arts Stream		Science Stream	
	% Male	% Female	% Male	% Female
Jenin	59.8%	40.2%	83.8%	16.2%
Nablus	46.7%	53.3%	62.8%	37.2%
Tulkarem	49.9%	50.1%	68.3%	31.7%
Ramallah	53.3%	46.5%	61.9%	38.2%
Bethlehem	48.1%	51.9%	63%	37.0%
Hebron	56.7%	43.3%	72.6%	27.4%

Source: Mohammed Abdul-Fatteh Shaken



It is important to have an academic advisor in every secondary school, and to devote two weekly periods for the secondary classes to explain the various specializations in both the science and arts sections. This way female students formulate a clear perception of the nature of each specialization and make reasoned choices. This experiment has succeeded at the Friends Schools, where an academic advisor carries out this task. It should also be noted that, given the particular pressures of Palestinian society, and the tendency to gender segregation, that guidance in girls schools is very important on all levels.

Currently, there is some health supervision by the education and health departments, but this is insufficient since health inspectors visit schools once a year. It is therefore necessary that there be a full-time female health educator in girls schools; she should both monitor the health of female students and provide information on women's health. It is necessary for schools to set aside at least two weekly classes to discuss issues of women's health and sexuality.

Other restrictions in schools hindering the developmental process include the fact that the school days, are short, the curricula are confined to academic subjects, and there is a lack of extra-curricular activities. It would be helpful to extend the school day by one hour to give the opportunity to female students to participate in extra-curricular activities. Of course this requires that schools be provided with the necessary equipment and staff to supervise cultural, sports, and library activities.

Co-education is a new phenomenon in Palestinian society, especially in public schools. The education departments in many districts have started enrolling girls in the elementary and secondary levels at boys schools in the villages. This measure was taken as a result of the Israeli civil administration's negligence in adding new classrooms in girls schools or building new schools for them. This lack of resources has contributed to the reduction in the number of girls pursuing their secondary education in rural areas as a result of the parents' refusal, not because they are against their daughters' education, but because of their opposition to their daughters studying in mixed schools.

There are two views regarding co-education. The view supporting co-education is divided into two groups of people: one of which supports co-education only starting from the preparatory level to adolescence. Zeinab Habash confirms:

*"UNRWA's experience in co-education at the preparatory and elementary stages was a success. When co-education is at the secondary level, some problems may occur since this is a period of adolescence in which certain relations may develop between the sexes. Given the Islamic view of this matter, certain limits must be clearly and adequately drawn. In co-education, the necessity to have a social worker in school arises since the school environment harbors different kinds of students who are in need of advisors to assist them in handling and solving problems".*

The other view, as stated by Khalil Mahshi, confirms the need to have co-education at all levels. This view is based on the successful experience of the Friends Schools. The view opposing co-education, reiterated by Lamis Al-Alami, states that biological difference make it inappropriate for male and female students to be educated together.

Female students have limited enthusiasm for vocational education. This is due to the existing cultural and social norms that divide work according to gender, thus limiting girls' vocational education to subjects that are considered an extension of young women's domestic responsibilities. Thus many female students detest such trades as embroidery and sewing and consequently only a few of them pursue vocational training (see table 11).

**Table 11**  
**Number of vocational schools and student enrollment for the year 1985/1986**  
**in the Occupied Palestinian Territory**

School	District	Establishment	Type	No. of books in the library	No. of educational and administrative staff	No. of students		
						Male	Female	Total
Al-Aroub Secondary	Hebron	1964	Government	7000	12	53	-	53
Secondary Vocational Training	Bethlehem	1948	Society	4000	25	157	-	157
Al-Amal Commercial Secondary School	Beth-Jalal	1961	Society	3400	10	46	11	57
YMCA Vocational Training Center	Jericho	1984	Society	None	32	74	-	74
Vocational Training Center	Jericho	1950	Society	None	22	110	-	110
	Jericho	1952	Society	3000	13	137	-	137
Dir Bibwan Vocational Training School	Ramallah	1967	Government	Non	16	158	-	158
Nablus Vocational Training School	Nablus	1961	Government	3500	34	438	-	438
Tulkarem Vocational Training School	Tulkarem	1976	Government	1000	19	219	-	219
UNRWA Vocational Training School	Gaza	1954	UNRWA	2000	76	560	-	560
Secondary Vocational School	Gaza	1960	Government	500	8	48	-	48
Orphan's Secondary Vocational School	Jerusalem	1922	Waqf	5000	45	161	-	161
International Lutheran Federation Vocational Home	Jerusalem	1948	Lutheran Union	1000	17	130	-	130
	Jerusalem	1962	Government	3600	40	183	-	183
	Jerusalem	1965	Society	4000	32	292	-	292
	Jerusalem	1938	Government	25000	85	-	207	207

Dr. Mahshi argues that the rate of preference for technical education will increase in the future once modern educational policies are developed. There is a Jordanian curriculum that encourages vocational training but has not been implemented except by the Friends Schools. About the experience of the Friends schools in this experiment, Dr. Mahshi said:

*"We allocate two classes for vocational education every week. Both male and female students attend classes in carpentry, electricity, metal work ... home economics are also attended by both genders since the program is unified and does not divide male from female students. We did not notice any opposition from any student in regard to this policy; there are distinguished male students in home economics and distinguished female students in carpentry and electricity".*

If not appropriately introduced, vocational education will not appeal to female students. There must be comprehensive social awareness of the importance of vocational education for female students to enroll. As Lamis Al-Alami stated:

*"The national economy requires prior planning, and the market requires all types of specializations so that all female graduates can find jobs. Vocational colleges and centers must coordinate amongst themselves to avoid duplication in training and also to ensure that training of other required skills is not neglected. There is also a need for a comprehensive social awareness of the importance of vocational training since our society's structural base is inverted: we have a large number of college graduates and very few skilled laborers. Accordingly, our society's view of vocational training must be changed".*

There is also a need for vocational training for women married at an early age or who left school early and were not provided with the opportunity to continue their education, and who have later needed a profession. The Authority must assist these women and open special evening classes in secondary and vocational schools at levels consistent with these women's capabilities.

Vocational education must become part of formal education and expand beyond home economics for females and carpentry and electricity for males. There must be common curricula for both

genders, and female students must sit for the general secondary examination (vocational branch) so that they will have the opportunity to pursue their higher education in this area.

There must be more vocational schools and colleges for girls and these must offer courses and have equipment and tools which allow them to offer practical training. Training of vocational teachers for girls is also important. The existing training process is not very effective because training colleges maintain traditional ideas. Accordingly, there is an urgent need for new educational methods based on a unified educational philosophy and curriculum.

Educational standards in girls schools must be ameliorated. There should be no more than 25 students in each class. Every school should also have a library open to female students, and they should have access to laboratories. Health standards should include sufficient lighting, large windows, sufficient number of bathrooms, and supervision over cleanliness of the school and kitchen.

Major social change is also necessary, alongside these technical and physical changes. If the religious, social and sexual obstacles to women's' development are removed, they can better improve their own social and economic situation. There must be a series of educational programs on the importance of educating girls, to alter son bias, and on the particular problems young women face in pursuing their education.

## **2. Health**

On the subject of health, all of those interviewed for this report (4) stressed that improving women's health helps overall social and economic development, and that special attention must be paid to women's health. This should not be limited to medical technology, but should include:

- 1) The relationship between women and their health care providers.
- 2) Health information for women.
- 3) Continuous health care.

Dr. Hind Abu Saud Khattab (5), who has studied the relationship of these factors and their effects on women's health, found that women do not place high priority on their own health. She also found that the status of women in the family hierarchy

affects women's health-related behavior. She argues that the culture of silence that surrounds women in Palestinian society makes women believe the conditions in which they live are inescapable. Besides this, women lack awareness regarding their health, and health care workers lack information on women's living conditions.

The strategic requirement to improve women's health involves raising the level of health awareness in society. Men and women must be made aware of the prevailing concepts and attitudes of society toward women, and encouraged to broaden their views. Rights, such as the right of women to economic independence, the right to emancipation from all forms of prejudice, and the right to freedom of thought and political affiliation, must, as a starting point, be recognized in Palestinian society.

Women's rights to choose marriage, choose their own life partner, and choose whether to have children must be affirmed. The legal age for marriage should be set at 18 years. Women must have legal protection from physical and emotional abuse; and access to support services. At the pre-adolescent stage, girls have the right to freedom from physical assault (including female circumcision), to healthy food and basic health care. Women must be protected from early marriage by tightening supervision to make sure laws are followed and punishments are enforced.

Women's reproductive rights must also be affirmed. These include the right to choice and to contraception. Women should have the option to extend maternity leave to one year without pay without losing their jobs. Men should be free to take paternity leave with half-pay.

Women's health awareness must also be improved. Health education should be a basic requirement in the curricula of schools, and pregnant women must be encouraged to visit prenatal clinics. Women must know their rights to family planning, and be provided the information to make reasoned and safe choices about contraceptives. Seminars, lectures and workshops should be held for men to explain the position of Islam on family planning.

Women have the right to comprehensive health insurance which includes their children. Coverage should include preventive health programs for women in different stages of their life, including pregnancy. The insurance should also cover treatment in clinics, health centers and hospitals, to encourage women to give

birth in hospitals. For instance, delivery costs 650 NIS in Augusta Victoria Hospital in Jerusalem (according to Dr. Adwan Barghouti) for West Bank women and 900 NIS for Jerusalem women. At Al-Ittihad Hospital in Nablus, a Caesarian operation costs 900 NIS and curettage costs 250-300 NIS. This high cost is prohibitive and decreases the number of women who give birth in hospitals.

Contraceptives must be included in health insurance. For instance, a diaphragm costs 170 NIS, a substantial amount by the income standards of many Palestinian women. Family Planning Association branches should be opened in each village, and should be given enough financial support to cover treatment, consultation, and contraceptives for all women free of charge.

There is a persistent need to provide special clinics for women in all villages, camps, and neighborhoods, clinics which are run by female doctors. Most clinics currently in operation are not specialized in women's particular needs. The lack of monitoring and equipment has rendered the clinics almost useless. Clinics should be equipped with the basic medical apparatus and the special equipment needed to examine women, in addition to medicines and immunizations for pregnant mothers and children. They should have ambulances, and be open to women throughout the week, and at a night.

All hospitals must have delivery rooms equipped with the necessary equipment, including incubators. Hospitals should have equipment to screen for breast and ovarian cancer. Clinics should have the equipment to examine pregnant women and their fetuses, such as ultrasound machines, and fetal hearbeat monitors. The number of hospital beds must be augmented to be able to absorb the greatest number of delivering women, and the price of childbirth in hospitals must be reduced.

More women must be encouraged to enter medical professions so that more women will have option of seeing a female practitioner. This requires providing medical colleges in local universities: while men are often given access to study abroad, in most cases this opportunity is not made available to women, due to social traditions, and limited economic resources.

There is an urgent need for research into the status of women's health in the OPT, which will facilitate the provision of better education and services. There is also a need for training in midwifery, counseling and health education.

## **REQUIREMENTS FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Palestinian planning must integrate women in the development process, beginning with educational, training, and employment rights. Moreover, there must be equal opportunities in all sectors: trade, industry, agriculture, services, and others. The informal economy, where much of women's work is concentrated, must be integrated into the national economy.

In order to integrate women in the economic development process, social consciousness and a change of prevailing social understanding regarding women's work is needed. Employment is an economic right; but women's work is still viewed as a service, and not productively valued. In addition, the prevailing division of labor is based on gender, which reinforces this view and directs women's work to the traditional realms which are an extension of women's reproductive labor. The entire society, and specifically men, must be made aware of the importance of integrating women in the developmental production process, and considering this as part of the economic planning process.

In addition, the strengthening of the role of women in the production process requires the solidarity and support of women themselves, and the need for coordination amongst women's institutions, to strive for a united policy. Institutions supporting working women, such as nurseries and children's clubs, are needed to reduce the psychological and physical pressure on working women.

Women's reproductive labor must also be recognized and valued for its economic value and its role in maintaining households and workers.

There is a need for women's research and training centers and better relationships and coordination efforts amongst them. The economic role of women, be it formal or informal, requires further study, specifically in the areas of income projects and the needs and problems of women's training in various fields.

In this respect, Dr. Hind Salman notes: "Before we start the training process we have to answer the following questions: What kinds of training are required for women? And what are the priorities of official training?"

The types of training which are required include advanced skills development for professional women, and administrative



training for those women holding administrative positions, whether in large institutions or on the level of small projects. There must also be training for women who wish to establish small income-generating projects, who will need programs and training that will assist them to start small projects or develop existing ones. This should include managerial, marketing, public relations, and project supervision training.

Women also require technical training. There is a need for non-traditional vocational training programs for women who were cut off from education and work due to marriage and child rearing, and who desire to return to work. This requires a market needs study, upon which a training program can be formulated. Also in this realm, there is a need for preparing special training programs for isolated areas that do not have projects for women.

In terms of the role of women in the commercial, investment, and marketing sectors, the most urgent need is credit. An efficient loans system is required by women who wish to establish individual or collective production projects, and to encourage them to invest. Access to this kind of funding will allow women to improve their economic status and their decision-making skills and autonomy. In essence, women need to make the transition from reliance on grants and aid to income generation, in both local and foreign markets.

Women lack access to capital to fund projects, through financial institutions and loans. For instance, women cannot buy large quantities of raw materials at lower cost prices; they are obliged to buy production materials at proportionally high prices because they lack access to credit.

In the informal economy, women's labor is invisible and is not included in the national income. It should be incorporated within the labor law, or, as 'Izat Abed Al-Hadi says, the government should provide services for these women in order to be able to pay taxes in return for these services. This area requires further study of women's needs.<sup>(7)</sup>

Women working in the informal economy, whether in agricultural projects or household economy projects, face several problems, including marketing. The lack of availability of a marketing place, the lack of suitable distribution channels, and the small scale of production, mean women must sell products for low prices. The problems facing women in the market are rooted in the

inferior view of the women in most commercial business; they are exploited by traders because of inexperience in commercial matters.

Women also face obstacles in social traditions; for example, their husbands may not allow them to leave the house to sell their products. There is a serious lack of support services such as childcare.

Due to the sexual divisions which persist in education, women have little access to technical training, in skills or quality assurance. They are unfamiliar with how to incorporate technology into their productive labor. Food production, for example, is primitive. Women are rarely trained in accounting, bookkeeping, and pricing.

Despite the lack of research, it can be said that Palestinian women working in the informal economy have identified these needs:

-- Requirements in the field of technical and administrative training include a series of training courses in various administrative, financial, technical, and marketing fields. This should assist small projects in becoming successful commercial and economical projects. The technical training should include all stages related to production, methods of quality monitoring, and trips abroad for the purpose of training, given the lack of specialized education facilities locally. Also, the economic parties interested in development should establish consultancy and guidance centers, particularly in rural areas, to direct women to raw material resources and on how to obtain them in large amounts and reasonable and suitable prices. This should assist them in lowering their costs. In addition, women need access to modern equipment for use in agricultural and industrial projects.

-- Funding, such as long-term loans that are sufficient for establishing new projects, and expanding and establishing new projects, is required. Dr. Hind Salman's paper<sup>(8)</sup> on development-concerned groups identified development possibilities, and a need for a directory showing the names, professions, and local and international development agencies in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, to increase women's access to assistance.

Loans are needed for: upgrading equipment used by small productive projects (eg handicrafts production) and increasing access to time-saving technology; buying raw materials wholesale; expanding facilities for industry growth.

The PNA has to expand its definition of work to include household work and reproductive labor, and expand social security to include the rights and earnings of women and the special needs of working women. Labor law should take into consideration the special needs of women, particularly of women of child-bearing age, including maternity leave.

Even though the law itself is insufficient to create the required social change, the change of existing laws is very important in order to nullify all forms of discrimination against women. Changing the work-relations laws in a way that serves women, by eliminating all forms of discrimination and exploitation, requires the greater research into the reality of working women's relationship vis-a-vis labor law, wages, and leave.

Their rights, which must be specified, include the right to salary increase, better working conditions, and working-hours limit. There must be a legal authority that will penalize employers who oppress and exploit women.

## **DEVELOPMENT REQUIREMENTS IN CONSTITUTIONAL AND POLITICAL LIFE**

Women must be integrated into all levels of political life. A clear strategy is needed to increase the presence of women in decision-making bodies and the PNA. Dr. Ruqayah Al-Musadeq says<sup>(9)</sup>, *"Equality between man and woman in political rights is a gain that should not be undermined, but the positive aspects that it includes are not free of negative aspects, for political rights blend with the right to vote. The horizons opened by the constitution to women in the field of political work collide with laws that determine her inferiority in the fields of economic and social life."*

The presence of women in decision-making positions, and in an equal representation with men in all state institutions and systems, could help to create change in legislation in fields that concern women in particular--like maternity leave and nurseries.

In order for Palestinian woman to achieve all of this, there needs to be a fundamental change in the inherited, political laws in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, from election laws, voting and naturalization, to public offices of the state. In other words, the Palestinian Authority has to reexamine the laws mentioned in the National Authority's Basic Law of the Interim Period. For instance,

Article 107 of this law states that *"Laws, regulations and decisions in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank before the coming into effect of this Basic Law shall remain in force to the extent that they do not conflict with the provisions of this law, until they are amended, repealed or replaced in pursuance of this or any other law."* This Article creates fear that those inherited and distorted laws which affect the status of women (discussed earlier) will remain in force in the Palestinian system, which will create an obstacle to women's development.

The intention to continue to apply these laws was evident in the formulation of the National Authority Council, in addition to the higher councils and the technical committees. Women's role therein remains distorted and does not reflect actual representation. Therefore, a phrase should be added to Article 107 changing or nullifying all articles that include only men or any article that discriminates against women. Thus, women's rights to election and naturalization laws and state public positions should be stated. Henceforth, through law and legislation, women could achieve their right to total integration in political life.

A united women's commission should be created, unhindered by ideologies and political factionalism, be it a supporter or not of the Palestinian Authority. The commission's task would be to formulate a strategy for achieving women's rights and capable of annulling all forms of discrimination against women in all fields and at all levels. The strategic demands should include equal opportunity in political and constitutional life, such as the right to elections and nomination on the bases of representation that reflects the number of women voters.

Women constitute half of the society; thus, they have the right to equal representation in parliament and all other legislative and judicial state systems. In addition to holding public positions, government participation should not be limited to one administrative system only, like the ministry of women's affairs, or the appointment of a female minister to one of the ministries that otherwise consists in its entirety of men. What is needed is participation in all ministries and governmental systems.

The strategic program is not sufficient if it is not accompanied by mechanisms and activities to implement it within official and non-official institutions. There must be a national committee for Palestinian women's issues, consisting of women and men from all

national political factions, who are interested in this issue, and whose tasks would be publicizing women's demands and working to achieve them.

Inevitably, the political participation of Palestinian women will continue to be done through factions. These must work to make their internal structures more responsive to the needs of women, and to increase the access of women from all areas and income levels to decision-making positions.

---

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### PART TWO

1. Those interviewed in the field of education are:

Janet Nicola, principal of Ramallah Secondary Girls School, Ramallah.

Dr. Khalil Mahshi, principal of Friends Schools, Ramallah.

Zaynab Habbash, advisor of English language in UNRWA schools.

Samira Olaibo, principal of Jalazon Preparatory School, Ramallah.

Dr. Fathiya Nasru, Education Department at Birzeit University.

Farida Al-'Amad, Vice President of the Society of Family Revival, Al-Birah.

Lamees Al-'Alami, president of UNRWA's Al-Tirah Women Community College.

Rev. Nazeeh Nicola 'Aqel, teacher at Roman Orthodox School.

Waseem Al-Kurdi, teacher at Friends School.

Waffa' Sa'adeh, social supervisor in Al-Tirah Women Community College.

Six female teachers from various schools in Jerusalem, Ramallah, and Nablus.

Ten female students from public, private, and UNRWA schools in Jerusalem, Ramallah, and Nablus.

2. Nasru, Fathiyeh. "Preliminary Vision of a Palestinian Education System", Center for Research and Documentation of Palestinian Society, Birzeit University, November 1993.

3. Zaru, Salah. "Education under Occupation: 1967-1987", pp 334, University Graduates Association, Research Center, Hebron, 1988.

4. Those interviewed in the field of health are:

Dima 'Iwaidah, administrative staff at The Family Planning and Protection Society in Jerusalem.

Dr. Sa'adeh Jaber, general physician at The Holy Family Hospital in Bethlehem.

Dr. Salwa Al-Najjab, gynecologist in the Women's Health Program at Medical Relief Committees.

Dr. 'Idwan Al-Barghouthi, general physician at Al-Mutala' Hospital in Jerusalem.

Dr. Kifa Zainah, general surgeon, pediatrician and infertility.

Dr. Hiyam Al-Shareef, pediatrician, private clinic in Ramallah.

A physician at Al-Itihad Women's Hospital in Nablus.

Six nurses in clinics and hospitals, from the areas of Nablus, Jerusalem, and Ramallah.

- Ten women in village clinics and hospital clinics.
5. Taken from Dr. Al-Najjab, Salwa, "Annual Report of Women's Health Program in The Union of Medical Relief Committees", pp 14, Jerusalem, 1994.
  6. Those interviewed in the field of economics are:  
 Dr. Hind Salman, Business Administration, Bethlehem University.  
 Khadijah Farhan, director of the Cooperative Society of Qalandya in Jerusalem.  
 'Izzat Abed Al-Hadi, director of Bissan Center for Research and Development in Ramallah.  
 'Odeh Al-Shami, director of Loan Project at UNRWA in Jerusalem.  
 Sameer Baydoun, lecturer in the Faculty of Commerce at Birzeit University.  
 I'tidal Al-Jareeri, social worker at the Agricultural Relief.  
 Fayzeh Al-Muhtaseb, social worker at The Family Planning and Protection Society.  
 Ghadeer, unionist, Union of Health Services and Institutions, Ramallah.  
 Fareedeh Al-'Amad, administrator of the Industrial Factory, member of the cultural committee, vice president of Family Revival Society. The meeting was also attended by Maherah Al-Dajjani, executive committee member of Rural Areas Revival; Fayzeh Tahboub, Frozen Vegetables Factory; and Fardous Al-Taji, member of Rural Areas Revival Committee.  
 A woman who started a poultry project in the village of Beit Sureek.  
 A woman starting poultry and sheep projects in the village of Beit Sureek.
  7. The small studies mentioned are:  
 An unpublished report on Loan Requirements in Household Economy Projects, prepared by the Women's Program at Bissan Center for Research and Development, September 1993.  
 An unpublished study on Loan Requirements for Small Agricultural Projects, prepared by the Women's Unit of the Technical Consultancies Unit at the Agricultural Relief Committees, September 1993.  
 An unpublished study on Loan Requirements for Working Women in Household Tailoring, prepared by 'Affaf Ghazawneh, Women's Studies Center, Jerusalem, June 1994.
  8. Salman, Hind. "The Contribution of Palestinian Women in Economic Activities in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip", a paper presented at the symposium on Working Force in the Palestinian Occupied Territory in 3-4.2.1994.
  9. Dr. Al-Mussadeq, Ruqayah. "Women and Politics: Political Representation in Al-Maghreb", pp 17, Dar Tubqal Publishing, 1990.

---

## CONCLUSION

Development is a process of change towards the better, which in societal terms means on all levels: political, economic, educational and social. To reach basic and constant development, change has to appear in all these related sectors.

In the late 1970's a breakthrough took place in the women's movement, with the realization that it was necessary for women's organizations to mobilize refugee and village women and to expand from town and urban centers into the until-then-neglected sector of Palestinian society. The attempt to do so came from a clear nationalistic point of view aiming to bring more women into the struggle against Israeli occupation. This took place after the hope of getting help from the Arab world was lost and after the realization of the importance of grass root movements inside the country. The realization of the miserable conditions of village and refugee camp women - i.e., high illiteracy, poor health conditions, absence of any knowledge of legal rights and existing laws - necessitated treatment of the whole matter of gender relations and realities, which in turn led to setting up an agenda in order to deal with these issues.



The realization of the needs of this class of women - that had up till then been overlooked by the charitable societies and dominated by the views of middle class women who were centralized in urban centers - brought to light the complexity of the status of all women in Palestinian society. Active women have realized that there are three main factors that oppress Palestinian women: national, class and gender issues. Once these considerations were poured into the women's agenda, demands rose for simultaneous improvements for women on the economic, political, social and cultural levels.

Yet the national struggle has remained the foremost aim of the feminist movement, sometimes even at the expense of gender issues, forming a gap between theory and practice.

This means that each attempt to change the status of women and to concentrate on these issues failed before the overall demands of Palestinian society. And although the national struggle did not automatically brought about changes and gains in the rights and status of women, it has given a great deal of Palestinian women experience and self-consciousness that has triggered their awareness to express their needs and fight for equality in their rights and duties in Palestinian society.

Now in the 1990's and with the new political circumstances and the developed awareness of the women's movement, a further step is demanded on the way to equality and non-discrimination of women in a future Palestinian society. This report thus offers solutions and ideas both for a short- and long-term approach. Three factors are seen as the main obstacles in the development of women in all sectors of society: Israeli occupation, legislation, and traditional understandings of society.

The report is based on research and interviews with people who supposedly will determine and direct the process in a future Palestinian state. The common view of all can be summarized in that the women's movement and it's institutions should adopt the role of tracing the requirements for development of women and to impose the women's agenda on the authorities in power. The basis for reaching equal development, and for full integration of women in that process, demands the following:

Acknowledgement of a principal policy on the rights of women, to add it to the constitution of the future Palestinian state, thus assuring the construction of a democratic society with equal opportunities for both sexes at all facets of life.

The future Palestinian state must be committed to the Palestinian Declaration of Independence and to all principles regarding human rights, especially the 1979 Declaration of Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women. A commitment to the right of women to hold official positions in the legislative, judicial and executive branches.

Committees of female and male lawyers should be elected to study the laws, rights and status of women in them. They should work towards changing the existing laws to reach complete rights for women. This process should be backed by the women's movement, profiting from its knowledge and experience. It is then the authority's duty to add to or to change the laws accordingly.

The idea of having an independent political women's party, dealing exclusively with gender topics as well as providing representation in all ministries and governmental institutions is seen as a major step towards equality and self-realization.

The report also suggests that a survey should be conducted. The survey should focus on the nature of development in the social, economic, educational and political sectors, considering all social classes and geographic distributions: peasant women and their demands, working women, students and housewives being the biggest sector.

The recommendations of the report go beyond the idea of making the position of women in society easier. For instance, nurseries and kindergartens can be made available to the children of working mothers. But that does not change the idea of having child care and housework as an exclusively female duty. The report goes beyond, by attempting to offer ideas for basic changes, by posing issues such as men doing parenting and house work.

A further sticky point is the position of women vis-a-vis Islamic Law, *Shari'a*. The clarification of customary law and its influence upon the *Shari'a* by using "ijtihad" can help to strengthen the position of women.

Suggestions and ideas of how to go about this can be taken from countries that have gone through similar experiences.

Working demands are specifically related to women and motherhood, since most working women are also in the period of childbearing. Strengthening the position of these women, through fully paid post-maternity leave, insurance benefits and a year off with no payment without losing the job, will lead to role changes and will in the long run influence the status of women.

Health demands stress again the importance of protecting mothers in society, as Palestinian society sees child-bearing as a national duty. There must be protection from overburdening wives and mothers. The different suggestions keep in mind that Palestinian society is a complex society, and this demands flexibility in approach, since there is a great disparity between town, country and refugee camp women, and between different subgroups within these geographical and political divisions, in their attitudes and positions in society. To give each its needs and to cover its demands requires a complex agenda.

Great importance is given to education, with suggestions that should change the whole traditional way of teaching in schools, from that of learning by heart and obeying, to understanding and bearing responsibility, making sure the student and human being come first. By making school mandatory, the chance of integrating the concept of equality into the earliest stages of development increases. There is a constant correlation between women's education and smaller families. Generally speaking, improved education for women and girls contributes to their ability to make decisions about their own lives, delay marriage age, and stimulate the desire to give space to other aspects in life, raising the opportunities on a social and economic scale. The suggestions of having co-ed schools at all levels, introducing a law to guarantee the right of married girls to continue their studies, and punishing parents if they do not allow their daughters to go to school demands a massive diplomatic offensive on the part of the women's movement on all levels, including the mass media, propaganda, parental gatherings and workshops.

The success of the women's movement will depend on how clearly women are able to combine theory and practice and how much their concrete programs will help in the progress towards fulfilling the different and complex needs of their fellow sisters, all the time keeping a well-balanced strategy between cultural and traditional demands and the need for development.

In the last two decades the rise in women's movements all over the world has led to a better awareness of gender issues and to further development towards a more holistic view of society. This led to a greater awareness toward the inequities and discrimination towards women and to the understanding that the status of women in society is a key factor in the ability of society to reach sustainable development. Contacts to these woman's organizations in different countries, coming together with them, exchanging ideas and experiences and supporting each other in their struggle for freedom, non-discrimination and deeper understanding should not to be underestimated as a form of mental or psychological support.

Concerning the Palestinian women's movement, a two-edged strategy is needed, in order to have a strong and adequate representation in all future ministries and institutions of the Palestinian Authority on the one side, and a deep grass-rooted connection to women, their their daily needs and demands.

If a democratic Palestinian society is to be formed, women - who form half the society - must not only have equal rights, but beyond that, their rhythm and attitude as well as understanding of life on all levels, must be respected and seen as an enrichment that could help find a harmonious existence in the community and its environment, thus leading to a higher quality of life for both women and men.





