



IN SUPPORT OF PALESTINIAN WOMEN

Research Report

Janet M. Powers

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Introduction

If we consider the number of Palestinian citizens in Israel and the Occupied Territories (3.3 million) and the number of NGO's currently serving them (approximately 2000 in Gaza and the West Bank alone), we realize that an extraordinary level of assistance is being directed to the Palestinian population. NGO's serving Palestinians cover a wide spectrum of concerns: women, development, health, environment, education, agriculture, human rights, conflict resolution, youth and children, senior citizens, disabilities, and trauma rehabilitation. Although most of these organizations were founded by Palestinians, others are sponsored by international NGO's, UN agencies, and individual governments, their support having originated in the wake of the Oslo Accords. From 1994 to March 2000, assistance amounting to \$14,226,000¹ was given to the Palestinian women's sector by nine donor countries and the UNDP.

In preparing this study, the focus has been specifically upon institutions which serve Palestinian women, which are also remarkably numerous. Perhaps 80% of Palestinian NGO's have some programs serving Palestinian women, with most of these located in Gaza, Jerusalem, or Ramallah. Moreover, a strong network of women's organizations exists in connection with the PLO and with each of the major Palestinian political parties. Politically-affiliated women's centers and associations carry on a wide variety of activities in the smaller towns and villages of the West Bank and Gaza, often in partnership with NGO's or UN agencies, which have their own specific programs to build the capacity of Palestinian women and serve their immediate needs.

This survey is the outcome of contact, either by personal interview, hand-delivered questionnaire (cf. Appendix 1), e-mailed questionnaire, or website, addressed to virtually every organization in the Occupied Territories which devotes *more than 50%* of its program budget to activities for women. Major interviews were conducted in Ramallah, Jerusalem, and Haifa. Three fieldworkers (cf. Appendix 2) assisted in distributing questionnaires in Jericho, Bethlehem, Hebron, Nablus, and Gaza. Many questionnaires, especially those from rural areas, were returned in Arabic and translated by native speakers. In addition, several interviews were conducted in the northern triangle area of Israel with organizations that serve Arab women successfully and/or jointly with Jewish women. Information is also included concerning some organizations which conduct programs for Palestinian women in Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria (cf. Appendix 5).

Our research was conducted in May and June 2003, at a time when peace negotiations were being carried out in an effort to ease tensions between Israelis and Palestinians. Although some small steps toward that goal had been achieved during the research period, all of the checkpoints and Israeli army controls were still in place, and assassinations were taking place daily in Gaza. On repeated occasions, a fieldworker was denied entrance to the cities of Nablus and Hebron, and research was halted or delayed by checkpoints and closures. The impossibility of entering Gaza made it necessary to depend on a local fieldworker for contacts there. Of the women's organizations and NGO's contacted in both the West Bank and Gaza, nearly all cited as the main obstacle to their work the Israeli Occupation, which caused damage to property and computer data in some cases, and

¹ "Women in Development and Trends in International Assistance." *Gender and Development* 1 (2000). Ramallah: Directorate of Gender Planning and Development, Palestinian Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation., p. 11.

in most others prevented women from meeting or holding workshops.

This scenario is very different from what occurred during the first Intifada (1987-1991), when women actively participated in resistance and became empowered to start cooperatives, plant gardens, begin sewing workshops, and create an alternative education system. Women who began to find a political voice through their participation in the Intifada began to assert their human rights, often to the surprise of men. Inevitably, women began to question authority, both at home and in the community, posing a challenge to the patrilineal family complex. However, the resurgence of political Islam that emerged during this period has tended to counter the perceived threat of female independence, among other objectives.

Further, it should be noted that oppression of Palestinian men under Israeli occupation is a major factor in the day-to-day experience of Palestinian women. Because Palestinian men are barred from meaningful employment and positions of power, this oppression is transferred to women. As the Palestinian male, the authority figure in the house, has lost much of his power base, due to the Occupation, a psychological backlash against women has occurred.² The escalation of violence on both sides during the Al-Aqsa Intifada/ Israeli Re-Occupation has made it far too dangerous for men, women, or young people to resist soldiers in the streets in same way that they did during the first Intifada (1987-1991). Instead, anger and hatred have frequently been turned inward, resulting in abuse of women and other family members.

Palestinian women have traditionally been conditioned to regulate their own behavior, to do what is expected of them by a patriarchal society. They understand that community gossip and whispered accusations can be very dangerous, not only to their marriage prospects, but to their very lives. Risk-taking for personal reasons seems especially foolhardy during a period of severe political and family constraint. In most women's minds, moreover, the liberation struggle takes precedence over everything else. Thus, women reinforce their own oppression, out of fear and out of loyalty to the national cause. Maintaining the status quo seems to be the best protection against the threat of violence and family disintegration. It is unlikely that this mindset will change substantially until the Israeli government withdraws its Occupation forces.

However, under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority, the **Women's Affairs Technical Committee**³, through committed lobbying and campaigning, has succeeded in achieving some important rights for women: 1) they no longer need to have permission of a male guardian to obtain a travel document; 2) women can keep their maiden names after marriage; 3) women are not required to have a chaperone when taking driving lessons; 4) women can open bank accounts in their children's names (previously a right only for men); 5) widows can make passports for their children without requiring their in-laws' permission; 6) thirteen women have been appointed to local councils; 7) women employees get 3-months maternity leave and one hour of post-natal nursing daily; 8) more women hold decision-making posts in government. WATC continues to lobby for increasing the legal marriage age to 18 and promoting a quota of 30% of seats for women on legislative and municipal councils.

² Suha Sabbah, former director of the Institute for Arab Women's Studies, quoted by Saliba Sarsar, "The Empowerment of Palestinian Women in the West Bank and Gaza Strip," in Datta and Kornberg (2002), *Women In Developing Countries: Assessing Strategies for Empowerment*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 152.

³ WATC consists of representatives of women's political organizations affiliated with the main parties as well as key women from the NGO and feminist community.

At the same time, women in the Palestinian Territories have attained a relatively high literacy (86.4%) but not so high educational level⁴. Although the extreme violence of the Israeli Re-Occupation has resulted in earlier marriages, more women dropping out of school before finishing the Tawjihi Exam⁵, and increased patriarchal control, the potential of Palestinian women for becoming active citizens and wage earners is very great. One of the surprising developments of life under Israeli occupation has been a healthy decentralization of women's organizational networks due to the difficulty of traveling between population centers. As a result, women in smaller towns and rural areas have had to do more decision-making on their own in order to keep programs such as kindergartens, food production, and sewing factories running. In the process, rural women have become more independent and more aware of their own capabilities. *A major need, at this point, is to build on their new sensibility and to design programs that will answer community needs by developing better skills for more women in smaller population centers.*

⁴ 10.5% never attended school; 2.5% hold the B.A/B.Sc. degree; 4% hold an Associate degree; 12.2% hold a General Secondary certificate; 22.2% hold a Preparatory certificate; 25.4% hold a primary certificate; 33% have not completed any stage of education.

⁵ After the ninth school year, students choose a stream along which to complete the required 12 years of schooling, which end with the *Tawjihi* (matriculation) exam; passing it is a condition for university or college enrollment.

Women's Charitable Organizations

Following the 1948 *Nakba* (disaster), wealthier Palestinians began to form charitable societies to address new fundamental needs. Some charitable organizations, however, were founded as early as 1925 in order to provide services for the handicapped, orphans, the elderly, and the poor. The General Union of Charitable Societies came into existence in Jerusalem in the 1950's. A number of charitable organizations are run by religious institutions. These and secular organizations continue to receive the blessing and support of society without any issues of political factionalism. Although some charitable organizations have male directors and include both men and women on their boards, others are run solely by women and serve the needs of women. Initially, members were those who held status as a result of family connections or their husband's profession, but broadly diverse involvement has come about with the uprooting of families, increasingly higher levels of education for women, and egalitarian unity in the face of crisis.

In general, women's charitable organizations carry on two types of traditional activities: 1) **servicing disadvantaged community members** and 2) **preserving Palestinian culture**, thus continuing programs founded prior to the first Intifada. Some also offer trauma counseling, vocational training, and programs dealing with family health, all of which serve vital ongoing needs in their respective communities. A few, with farsighted directors and sufficient funding, have instituted micro-credit programs, thus addressing the potential of Palestinian women to develop home-based business projects beyond those sponsored by various charitable societies. Most **Arab Women's Union Societies** resemble charitable societies insofar as they carry on traditional programs which serve women and children, preserve Palestinian culture, meet the needs of handicapped individuals, and offer economic relief to passive recipients.

As-Saraya Center for Community Services (1990), a forward-looking charitable organization, occupies a renovated building in the Old City and offers services to women and children of the immediate vicinity and suburbs of Arab Jerusalem. The Saraya provides 9-month training courses to women in sewing, weaving, hairdressing, and computer applications and also sponsors a revolving loan fund for its graduates. For children of school age, it offers a cultural program through its library, as well as summer camps, films, field trips, and computer training.

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Perhaps the model organization of this type is **In-ash El-Usrah** (Reviving the Family) **Society** (1965), with offices in Ramallah (Al-Bireh). Their vocational training programs include secretarial and nursing education, embroidery and hairdressing courses, childhood education and computer skills. In addition, this charitable society runs a bakery, a museum of Palestinian culture, a library, and a kindergarten. Although at first glance, its program activities might seem to be spread too thinly, In-ash El-Usrah has, with considerable skill, transformed itself into a highly successful NGO. They have instituted a micro-credit project, and their vocational offerings, while partially traditional,

reflect a realistic awareness of a changing world.

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An-Nadha Women's Society (Ramallah, 1925) - mentally retarded, toy production, embroidery

Arab Women's Society (Jerusalem, 1929) - vocational skills, singing group, kindergarten, relief to poor

Arab Women's Union (Al-Bireh, 1956) - old age home, clinic, physio-therapy, library

Arab Women's Union (Beit Sahour, 1956) - handicap rehab, guest house, day care

Arab Women's Union (Bethlehem, 1947) - folklore museum, relief, food production

Arab Women's Union (Jerusalem) - orphanage, vocational training

Arab Women's Union Society (Nablus, 1945) - primary girls' school, vocational skills

Arab Women's Union (Ramallah, 1939) - old age home, sewing, children's library

Arab Women's Union Society (Ramallah, 1956) - old age home, clinics, physiotherapy

Arab Women's Union Society (Tulkarem, 1958) - health ed., kindergarten, knitting, English, rehabilitation

Arab Women Welfare Society (Jerusalem, 1994) - vocational skills, sports, health ed.

Charitable Cultural Society (Nablus, 1945) - folklore & fashion exhibit, weaving, pre-school, sewing, food processing, dormitory for college students

Charitable Society of Jericho (1963) - education, culture, social work

Charitable Society of Halhoul (1964) - health, culture, social work

Child Care & Maternal Guidance Society (Nablus, 1956) - sewing, hairdressing, weaving, kindergartens, health ed.

Center for Women's Activities: (Jericho, 1956) - health, agriculture, skills, micro-credit

Dar El-Tifl Al-Arabi: (Jerusalem, 1948) - orphanage, folklore museum

Family Revival Association (Gaza, 1995) - embroidery, health & first aid, literacy, vocational training

Hebron-France Cultural Association (Hebron) community health, counseling

Palestinian Center for Women's Programs (Hebron, 1953) - vocational skills, social work

Sur Baher Women's Charitable Committee (Sur Baher, 1983) - sewing, weaving, typing, hairdressing, kindergarten

Women's Charitable Society of Hebron (1956) - literacy, clinic, a chorale, martial arts for women, science education.

Women's Political Organizations

General Union of Palestinian Women: the PLO/PNA Network for Women

Modeled on older organizations such as the Arab Women's Union Society, the GUPW became a major feature of Palestinian life both inside and outside the Occupied Territories even before the 1967 War. GUPW, Palestine is a grass roots organization, established in 1965, that is open to all Palestinian women and as such represents Palestinian women in various forums and conferences. *It identifies itself as the official representative body for Palestinian women around the world and as an umbrella organization for women's organizations in Palestine.* The GUPW has branches wherever there is a sizable Palestinian community, including 10 in the West Bank and 7 in Gaza. Their main concern is with Palestinian women's rights and Palestinian national rights. The branch in Hebron reported that their programs were paralyzed because the Palestinian Authority had not paid the rent for the last two years. In many other instances, programs have been seriously weakened by restrictions and physical damage imposed by the Israeli army, as in Nablus. *The General Union of Arab Women, however, offers the potential of an existing network throughout the West Bank with built-in ties to the Palestinian Authority.*

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Organizations Affiliated with Political Parties

One of the more surprising features of Palestinian political life is the active role played by the respective women's organizations attached to each of the major political parties.

Further, each of the parties has several outstanding women whose roles in the nationalist struggle have won them major positions in the ministries of the Palestinian National Authority. In addition to their government positions, these women continue to occupy major offices within the women's arms of their respective political parties. In addition, many of them sit on the Women's Technical Affairs Committee. A typical day in the lives of such women involves time spent doing administrative work in their government offices followed by several more hours of meetings, letter-signing, and decision-making at their political organization offices. In going home each evening, they then face the same issues as every other Palestinian: waiting long hours at two checkpoints to return to Jerusalem or walking several kilometers at Surda to return to Bir Zeit or other villages near Ramallah. These able women are articulate veterans of the struggle for a Palestinian state, and yet they are also compassionate human beings who share the plight of their people and are well attuned to needs and issues of Palestinian women.

Because each of the major political parties commands a substantial network of women's centers in smaller population centers, their women's organizations are able to deliver a number of significant programs to women beyond Ramallah, Jerusalem, or Gaza City. Although political organizing has been a central focus of these programs, each of the centers goes much further in delivering other needed services to women. The extent to which women are receiving assistance is impressive, although we should note three significant facts: 1) *Some of the parties seem to be more capable and*

attentive to women's current needs than others; 2) Decentralization, due to restrictions on mobility, has been a major factor in empowering women in smaller population centers to carry on programs that were formerly administered largely from Ramallah; and 3) The possibility of Palestinian elections in 2003 has brought into play a number of programs on civic education for women in all of these organizations. Because the women's political organizations do not bear names recognizably related to their particular parties, we will examine each one separately and identify its respective affiliation.

1. Association of Women's Committees for Social Work (1981)

Al-Fatah: Arafat's power base - pragmatic regarding a peace settlement

The women with whom I spoke were quick to assert that their party does not control the Association of Women's Committees. The organization began its work with local women by holding meetings and activities for them and providing kindergartens (serving ages 3-5). Today it oversees 128 kindergartens and 3 nursery schools. Other services offered for women include training in health, nutrition, and women's rights. During the first Intifada, many activities were sponsored: planting gardens, preserving food, selling food products in markets, and developing small cooperatives. Women were trained to do needlework for sale in bazaars. Because schools were closed for long periods, women taught children in their own homes and in local libraries. During this period, women became strong and gained leadership skills. Even after the Palestinian Authority was established, the kindergartens and the training centers continued to operate.

Unfortunately, during the second Intifada, life has become more dangerous for everyone, and the work of the Women's Committees has virtually stopped because of curfews and closures. The Association, however, keeps a close watch on the development of Palestinian family law and informs local women about their rights. "*Palestinian women do not want to lose everything, as Algerian women did, after their revolution*" (this negative example is frequently cited).

The central office of the Union of Women's Committees for Social Work office is located in Ramallah, under the direction of President Rahiba Diab, who holds a major post in the Palestinian Authority as General Director of the Ministry of Youth and Sports. The central office oversees kindergartens, sewing projects, agricultural cooperatives, food production (pickling, juices, chicken & egg production), and women's rights education. A well-organized network of Women's Committees and programs exists under the umbrella of this party-affiliated organization, which receives funding from A.I.CO.S (Italy). Local Women's Committees for Social work: **Bethlehem**, **Gaza** - kindergarten, health, sewing & cultural courses; **Hebron** - food production, embroidery, micro-credit, women's rights, civic education; **Jenin** - counseling center, women's rights; **Nablus** - kindergarten, sewing, computer training, first aid; **Tafouh**.

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2. Palestinian Federation of Women's Action (PFWA) (1978/1993)

Palestinian Democratic Union (FIDA): support Oslo Accords, non-violence, civil society

The FIDA party was formed when the Democratic Front split (1993), after the Madrid Peace Talks, due to differing views of non-violence and conflict. The Federation has been trying to build

institutions and establish local organizations whose women members can assume a role in the civil society. In some areas, the party has associations (Nablus, Ramallah, Gaza), and in others committees who sponsor activities (Hebron, Jenin, Tulkarem). Before the second Intifada, a Women's Council organized activities for all of the areas, which is now difficult. As local associations and committees become more independent, they are able to decide for themselves the details of implementation. Major changes in general policies have been made to meet the needs of women during the Aqsa Intifada: a) psychological support programs were instituted for mothers, children, and widows; b) puppet theaters have been introduced as a form of trauma therapy for women and children (puppet-making, music, story writing); c) family-to-family support programs, involving Palestinians in *Diaspora*, during the first Intifada, have been revived. Women have learned that they can cope with unemployment, decreased income, and violence by working together in groups, examining their needs, and planning mutual support projects. The PFWA is the implementing group for a UNDP micro-loan and savings project, **Establishing a Local Fund for Small Loans**, in 3 West Bank villages; three more will be started in **Jenin Camp**, with funding from Women in Black (Italy). Typical businesses begun with small loans include agricultural products, falafel making, bottled gas, and grocery sales. *Small business programs for women at the grass roots are desperately needed now.*

In **Gaza (Khan Younis)**, as part of the Women of the Future project, a computer center offers training for women, who also manage the office. The program in **Ramallah** includes an education unit, which offers camps for young people year-round, a drama group, and science education. A family support group includes distribution of food aid, a handicraft production unit, storytelling for children and training. Micro-loan projects are encouraged. A youth program, funded by the American Consulate, involves girls aged 14-18 from 8 schools who receive leadership training and learn to organize and manage a campaign against school dropouts. A youth leadership program in **Hebron** involves university students and receives assistance from the Women's Technical Committee. More than 40 women in **Bethlehem, Hebron, Ramallah, and Nablus** have produced handicrafts to fulfill contracts with Palestinian women in Holland. In cooperation with the Red Crescent society, first aid training was offered to rural women, including handling emergencies, public health awareness, and locations of doctors and nurses reachable by telephone. *The experience of the second Intifada has demonstrated the importance of sharing information and suggests that new ways of delivering information to women, including television and the Internet, need to be created.* More than 20-30 women serve as coordinators in villages, and sometimes work with 2-3 villages. Under curfew, they have continued their activities, mostly by telephone. Local women, however, have been able to maintain nurseries, kindergartens, clinics, and facilities for the elderly. *Such projects need to be extended to more villages, with cooperation from village councils to build facilities and training women to run them provided by the Women's Action Committees. Here is an existing network with a forward-looking program, and also the extension of it into rural areas, in cooperation with the UNDP and the Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committees (PARC).* The Director, Siham Barghouti, occupies an office with the UNDP Program in Ramallah. The President, Zahira Kamal, heads the office of Gender and Development at the Palestinian Ministry of Planning.

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3. Palestinian Federation of Women's Action Committees (PFWAC) (1978)

Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine: pragmatic, civil society, oppose Oslo Accords

This group, affiliated with the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, also sponsors kindergartens and production projects, including brass, pastry, baby food, toys, and dried fruits/vegetables.

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4. Palestinian Working Women Society (PWWS) (1981)

Palestine People's Party, other leftist factions: Marxists advocating a two-state, two-capital solution

The leader of this group, Amal Khreisheh, has recently split from the PPP and therefore from the earlier PWWSD. Women in these groups have been severely impacted by checkpoint closures, imprisonment, and the difficulty of maintaining family security. Ongoing projects include embroidery, second-hand clothes, saving and lending, a restaurant, and, more recently, civic education. Emergency projects adopted after 2000 include job creation, fees for students, food baskets and first aid kits, and small income-generating projects such as shops in the home. An adoption project involves Palestinian families abroad supporting a child, student, or family in Palestine. The PWWS also produce articles, radio spots, and video clips on women's issues and maintains an emergency hot-line to combat violence against women. Individual, group, and telephone counseling are made readily available. A monthly newspaper is distributed to the 89 women's groups associated with this organization, including some among the Bedouin. Women are organized informally, particularly around agricultural issues. Centers and projects exist as follows: **Bethlehem** - community center; **Gaza** - human rights for fish-peeling workers; **Jenin**; **Nablus** - library; **Tulkarem** - community center

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5. Union (a.k.a. Society) of Palestinian Women's Committees (UPWC) (1980)

Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine: pragmatic, civil society, oppose Oslo Accords

Civic education has been a major concern of this association, in part because educating women about democratic participation assists in getting out the vote for the affiliated political party. Thus, this society has begun preparing for the next Palestinian elections. These women are also concerned about the family law code that is under development by the Palestinian authority, and they maintain a committee to monitor and submit proposals for draft legislation. In addition, they provide leadership training for young women and run 24 kindergartens in disadvantaged or neglected areas. Various local groups also support needy families and run income-generating projects. They have implemented computer training programs, capacity-building workshops, and offered advocacy training for women in rural areas. Emergency projects include support for needy families. Local branches of the Union of Palestinian Women's Committees exist as follows: **Al-Bireh** - restaurant, cafeteria, sewing factory, computer center; **Gaza** - kindergarten, summer camp for women & youth leaders, health ed., rural development training, women's rights; **Hebron**-embroidery; **Jenin**; **Jerusalem**; **Nablus**; **Qalqilya**; **Tulkarem**

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6. Union of Women's Struggle Committees

Palestinian Popular Struggle Front: anti-PLO faction, leftist-Ba'ath orientation

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Women's Affairs Technical Committee (WATC) (1992)

As the various technical committees were formed during preparations for Israeli-Palestinian negotiations in 1992, cooperation developed between three political women's committees and independent female professionals. Because there was little representation of women within the technical committees and no one to address specific needs and issues of women, the Women's Affairs Technical Committee was formed. Today, it consists of a coalition of women affiliated with six main political parties as well as independent professional women and representatives of key women's studies centers and human rights organizations. WATC aims at bringing women's issues to the forefront in all spheres of Palestinian life and works to achieve equality between men and women through a wide range of programs. *This committee already functions very much as an umbrella organization for the main organizations delivering services to Palestinian women. Various women's political organizations and NGO's are implementing many of the programs described below. However, there is uneasiness with the General Union of Palestinian Women which is truly the umbrella organization. A key to the main players in support of Palestinian women is representation on the WATC*

Board of Directors.

- a. **Advocacy for Women's Rights** monitors all kinds of discrimination against women and is coordinated with various women's organizations to facilitate lobbying for changes in laws and practices. WATC considers the present period, during which many new laws are being drafted, to be a crucial time for lobbying the PLC and the civil administration regarding gender-sensitive legislation.
- b. **The Campaigning Program** has three components: i). **Sanabel/Campaigning with Rural Women** aims at supporting rural women in their local communities, raising their awareness about rights and issues, and encouraging them to plan for achievement of strategic gender needs; ii). **Advocacy with Young Women Leaders** aims at establishing a large group of young women leaders in the West Bank and Gaza Strip through empowering them: increasing their participation in local communities, integrating them into local institutions, and offering skills training to develop self-esteem and self-assertiveness; iii). **Community Awareness for Education** covers transportation expenses and offers loans to female students who are continuing secondary and university studies.
- c. **The Media Program** also has three parts: i) **Written Media** debates the current situation of Palestinian women and suggests positions that women should take; ii). **Audio Media** promotes gender equality and enables women to voice their concerns and problems through a radio program, "With Women"; iii) **Visual Media** uses TV as a means of influence in favor of

women's issues (eg. presenting a 5-minute TV report about the negative impact of early marriage combined with real stories).

- d. **Women of the Future: Empowering Women via Internet Centers** seeks to remedy the isolation of Palestinian women in rural areas stemming from both the current political situation and traditional social patterns. By empowering women through access to modern techniques of communication, the project also addresses issues of employment opportunities and political engagement. The six centers, each of which is under the aegis of a different women's political organization, are located in remote areas, but are expected to become self-sufficient financially through their own income generation. This project has been funded by the Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung Foundation (affiliated with the German Social Democratic Party and the Labor Unions of Germany).
- e. **Gender Mainstreaming** has two components: i) **Community-Led Village Service Revitalization Project (VRP)**, funded by USAID and led by Catholic Relief Services in cooperation with the Palestinian Hydrology Group and ii) the Union of Agricultural Work Committees, provides a rapid, integrated approach to mobilizing the community and addressing short-term needs for 24 villages in the Hebron and Jenin governates.

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The Palestinian Ministries

1. Ministry of Agriculture

This ministry follows a practice of gender mainstreaming.

2. Ministry of Education

Lucia Hijazi, Consultant to Director General

All sectors and sub-sectors of this ministry follow a policy of mainstreaming women's issues, with few special projects for women. Concerns about images of women in school textbooks, however, suggest the perpetuation of traditional stereotypes.⁶ The number of male and female teachers is roughly equal, as is the number of university students. Although as a rule, boys' and girls' schools have been separated by gender, an emergency program enacted during the second Intifada permits women teachers to teach in boys' schools.⁷ Teacher training is carried out in conjunction with the

⁶ "Findings of a Study Prepared by Dr. Tafida Jirbawi on Women's Image within Palestinian Schoolbooks." *Gender and Development* 5-6 (2003). Ramallah: Directorate of Gender Planning and Development, Palestinian Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation.

⁷ The UNRWA Men's Teacher Training Center also has 20% women students in their 4-year program (those who scored 80% -85% on the Tawjihi exam) preparing to teach Arabic, lower elementary school, mathematics and computer, vocational education, and physical education. In their 2-year program, women prepare to teach banking, marketing and business administration. A separate Women's Training Center prepares women teachers in other subjects.

UK, who sent consultants to work for 2 years with heads of divisions; directorates go there for 3-week courses. Finland is handling training in assessment and evaluation. *On achievement tests, girls score higher than boys do in all subjects except mathematics. Because girls in rural areas tend to drop out of school before finishing the Tawjihi examination in the last year of high school, a new ministry policy encourages the construction of girls' schools at the secondary level in villages; five or six have been completed.* There are also ministry-sponsored literacy programs for older women illiterates, including women refugees and those who left school and married early. In addition, new programs are being implemented for young married women to encourage them not to drop out but rather to finish their degrees. This ministry is also constructing a day-care center in Ramallah for children of its employees; it is intended as a model for other ministries, schools, and regions.

3. Ministry of Health

Wijdan Aweidah Siam, General Director of WHDD

The EU and UNFPA have funded programs in support of women's health, although the EU has recently cut off funding. The women's health directorate uses creative one-minute TV spots to get across the message that the Qur'an does not forbid use of contraceptives and to pose questions about reproductive health (with rewards for called-in answers). Many clinics show videos in their waiting rooms to explain the use of condoms. Radio spots about nutrition and health are available to women who spend long hours in the kitchen. TV spots also stress the importance of not giving preferential treatment to boys when serving food. *The use of media to raise women's consciousness is surely a strategy worth pursuing in other aspects of women's lives.*

Ministry-sponsored awareness training through schools, lectures, and meetings stresses the importance of women's health and adequate medical care during pregnancy. Special training sessions are held for midwives and also for doctors, to teach them that reproductive health covers the entire life cycle of a woman. Doctors have been sent abroad for training in pap smear, mammography, cytology, radiology, and sexually-transmitted diseases. Equipment and examination rooms, however, are expensive and still need to be funded. *To increase the number of female doctors, scholarships are needed for girls who have finished secondary school but want to study medicine abroad. Talented girls also need support to study midwifery and nursing at the Ministry of Health Nursing School.* With its pragmatic approach, the Women's Health directorate has accomplished a great deal even in the face of curfews and checkpoint closures. Among their emergency programs: gynecology by telephone in order to insure safe deliveries along with delivery kits and trained personnel in every village. *HIV/AIDS awareness training is offered in villages in conjunction with community lunches attended by both men and women.*

4. Ministry of Labour

Kawathar Mughrabi, Women's Department

This ministry follows a policy of gender mainstreaming but does offer some vocational training programs specifically for women.

5. Ministry of Planning

Zahira Kamal, Director of Gender & Development

Through its directorate of Gender and Development, this ministry offers an overall view of gender issues in the various ministries of the Palestinian Authority. Of the 21 ministries, only six have women's directorates, and those have limited staff: a good approach, which needs to be better funded. Certain ministries (Agriculture, Labour, Education, and Local Government) have attempted gender mainstreaming. Agriculture and Education have been the most successful, but success

depends on who is responsible for implementing the policy. *The Social Affairs Ministry has the biggest percentage of women stakeholders, but very little budget money has been available to them. Moreover, they have been slow to take the initiative in writing proposals for funding and encouraging staff to participate in trainings. Ministries need to learn to network with those who have program budgets and develop shared projects.*

The Women's Declaration (1994), accepted by consensus after 3 drafts by women from all major political parties, has not been taken seriously by the Palestinian Authority. Due to the Reoccupation, there has been little time to follow up, although women have been lobbying for equity even as family, criminal, civil status and social security laws are being drafted. *Many women look to the Tunisian legal model as one that they hope the new Palestinian state will emulate.* **The National Strategy for the Advancement of Palestinian Women (1996)** (cf. Appendix 3) represents a useful long-range approach, but it is not an action plan. In 2000/2001, women began working on Emergency Plans to deal with 66% of families under the poverty line (70% unemployed, 80% in Gaza). *Because so many men have died or been imprisoned, more women must serve as breadwinners and therefore are in need of vocational skills training.*⁸ Ten donor countries (UK, Norway, Italy, Canada, Spain, Australia, Belgium, Ireland, USA, Netherlands) are funding special projects for women. UN agencies offer major projects for Palestinian women include UNDP, UNIFEM, UNITAR, UNFPA, UNICEF and UNRWA. In addition, Tunisia sponsored an exchange for women from several ministries, and Jordanian institutes offered management training for women.

6. Social Affairs

Khawla Mansour, Women's Directorate

Three main projects are underway in this ministry, which is starting over after destruction of its building and killing of 3 social workers by the Israeli military.

The **Empowering Women Project**, funded by a Canadian NGO, and centered in Gaza, Nablus, and Jabaliya (camp & town), consists of 3 phases: a. study (completed); b. survey (with Palestinian Statistics Bureau, held up due to Reoccupation); c. mandates for human and economic resources. Two centers will be developed in each location, one community-oriented and the other for vocational training. Management information systems will be a key component. A World Bank-funded project to stop young people from dropping out of school consists of developing 20 **Local Focal Centers** for vocational training. The curricula, not yet constructed, will depend on the needs articulated by women in specific local areas. This project, an Inter-Ministerial effort with Labor and Education, is an attempt to shift peoples' thinking from relief to development. Four directorates in this Ministry focus on Awareness, Counseling & Protection,⁹ Empowerment and Training, Statistical Information. Under each, an officer deals with Women's Issues. *Yet the needs for shelters and family gender training are much bigger. A "Men to Men: Towards a Better Family" Program has reached over 7000 men. Training on economic empowerment is particularly needed, specifically the role of micro-loan projects in Islamic cultures and how to bridge the gap between urban and rural women.*

⁸ Of all Palestinian families in the West Bank and Gaza, 9.8 % are headed by women. At the same time, women's participation in the labor force continues to decline (10.4 % in 2002).

⁹ The Ministry has established two women's shelters (one for girls under 18 and another for older women) in the West Bank with the help of an Italian NGO. The need is acute due to the Islamic practice of multiple wives and the desperate crowding of extended families.

7. Youth and Sports Ministry

Rehiba Diab: General Director, Ministry of Youth and Sports

Gender mainstreaming is the main approach of this ministry, with very few separate programs. A UNICEF project involves summer day camps (one and a half months) in various locations (cities, camps, villages) with 50/50 attendance for young people aged 7-12, 12-18, and 18-25. The program includes writing, painting, workshops, political discussion, singing, and dancing, some in partnership with the Education Ministry. Some camps are also held outside Palestine: Kuwait, Italy, Algeria. Leadership Training is provided for young people who serve as staff. *These camps represent a crucial program, which needs to be continued.* The Ministry aims at empowerment by sponsoring clubs for women in the villages. In some areas, men and women belong to the same clubs; Christians and Muslims also work together. Most sports halls have been closed for the last two years, and there are few playing fields. The Israelis prevent Palestinian youth from coming together for purposes of playing sports. However, Palestinians enter the Olympics in weight lifting and swimming, and play football in the Arab Sports League. Women are encouraged to participate in tennis, volleyball, swimming, and horseback riding.

Inter-Ministerial Committee for the Advancement of Women

The Inter-Ministerial Committee came into existence after the Beijing Conference (1994) to encourage cooperation on women's issues between Ministries, offer training for Ministry officers, and present gender-awareness workshops. Several gender-training courses for the advancement of women have been offered. The Ministries send representatives to learn about planning projects, evaluating projects, writing reports, and drafting grant proposals (some ministries have women's directorates, while others have only women's committees). Although there is tension between this organization and the General Union of Palestinian Women, both have been mandated by the PLO to work at developing the capacity of Palestinian women at all levels.

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Non-Governmental Organizations

Al-Khansa'a Woman Association (1997)

A purely Islamic women's association, modeled on Qur'anic prescriptions for women, this group provides both traditional and forward-looking programs for Muslim women in Al-Beireh (Ramallah). Their income-generating activities include food production, a cafeteria, embroidery production, and flower arranging. Ongoing projects include vocational training (computers), educational activities (eg. discussion on cloning and Islamic values), summer camps for children, field trips, monetary and food relief for needy families, and sponsorship of orphans. They have recently opened a Women's Center where women can learn computer skills, Hebrew, arts and crafts, and academic subjects. Their Islamic Arts Festival was well received. Al-Khansa'a stresses awareness of women's rights, as well as women's participation in decision-making. Well run, this organization is a useful channel for reaching urban Muslim women.

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ANERA - American Near East Refugee Aid

In collaboration with PARC 's Rural Women's Development Society, consisting of 68 clubs, this agency is engaged in a two-year project (funded by USAID) for creation of job opportunities. The program has three facets:

- a. **Tawjihi Classes for Rural Women** enable drop-outs who have not completed their last year of secondary school to study relevant information and prepare for the exam, thus improving their job prospects;
- b. **House Gardens** include new agricultural projects (seedlings, poultry, beehives, rain-catching cisterns) planned for 48 villages;
- c. **Income-generation Activities** encourage women to prepare traditional foods as mainstays as well as surplus for sale (foodstuffs, goat cheese, olives, jams, pickles).

Lectures on women's empowerment are part of all three programs. A cooperation agreement has been signed with the EU International Fund for Agricultural Development to focus on the impact of the separation wall/fence on women in agricultural communities. Projects will include technology, education, women's credit and savings societies, interest-free loans, and expansion of existing women's club programs. ANERA is a truly grass-roots operation, with very good women's connections in villages. Offices in Nablus, Gaza, Halhul, and Jerusalem, and satellite people in the far north and Jericho, provide good hands-on coverage.

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Gaza Community Mental Health Programme (1990)

Organized to deliver comprehensive community mental health, GCMHP has a special project dealing with female victims of violence: the Women's Empowerment Project provides counseling, therapy, vocational training, public awareness lectures, and leadership training. The Crisis Intervention Project provides free telephone counseling. Of 15 GCMHP research papers published in international journals one is on "Mental Health of Palestinian Women." The Documentation and Public Awareness Unit produces documentary films on psychosocial issues, including "Violence Against Women," which serves as an effective gender awareness tool.

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Jerusalem Center for Women (1994)

With a staff of only four full-time women but occasional work of international volunteers, many part-time workers and volunteers, this organization accomplishes a great deal on behalf of Palestinian women in and around Jerusalem. Eight major projects are ongoing at the moment:

- a. **Training in Democracy and Human Rights** prepares women (in refugee camps, university, YWCA) for living in a civil society and participating in elections;
- b. **Sharing and Dealing with Loss** is a voice therapy project conducted by a psychologist and a social worker for mothers of prisoners and mothers of martyrs;
- c. Three **Women in War** programs, for teenagers, women, and mothers of martyrs, allow each group to theorize about how war is affecting them personally;
- d. **Human Resources** is a 3-4 month course (for women working in both the public and private sectors) dealing with time management, facilitation of meetings, project implementation and evaluation, leadership skills;
- e. **Conference Participation** trains women activists in how to attend local and international conference as individuals or organizational representatives and covers such things as history of the conflict, standing before a camera, and preparing statements;
- f. **Public Presentations and Communications** trains women activists in public relations skills such as speechmaking, camera behavior, writing news articles, and becoming trainers of trainers;
- g. **Grassroots to Decision-Making** is an advanced approach to Democracy and Human Rights, coupled with leadership skills, geared especially for university students, teen-age girls, and women from isolated communities;
- h. **Advocat** offers support for women detainees in Israeli prisons, visiting them, collecting data about them, and publishing their stories in newspapers and on the Internet. JCW is one half of **The Jerusalem Link**, which maintains an ongoing peace-building dialogue with Bat Shalom, and is represented on the Women's Affairs Technical Committee. This urban organization has excellent leadership, capable staff, and a superb training program for activists and urban Palestinian women.

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Ma'an Development Center (1989)

Ma'an began in Jerusalem with the idea of food processing (jams, pickles) to move Palestinians away from dependence on the Israeli market, a program which the Australian Peoples for Health, Education, and Development Abroad continues to fund. The Center has three divisions:

1. **Community Development**, in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture, involves sustainable agricultural development coupled with food security, and the development of community-based organizations;
2. **Training and Development** includes institution-building and organizational development for NGO's, government, and grassroots groups;
3. **Research and Information** collects data and has published 75 studies.

Specific programs for women include:

- a. **Village Service**, funded by USAID, offers agricultural (organic farming) assistance to clusters of villages (60% of beneficiaries are women);
- b. **Empowering Rural Adolescent Palestinian Girls**, a program funded by UNICEF for 3 villages, offers workshops and activities in each school; *this program needs to be expanded to other villages*;
- c. **Home Gardens** targets women by establishing and training women's committees or working with those already existing.

Women's committees don't exist in villages in more marginalized areas (Gaza, Jenin, Salfit, Hebron, Bethelam, Tulkaram, Qalquilya). Other villages have had far too many training programs. A good approach would be to create focus groups to find out what women want and need. This organization has an office in Gaza as well as the Khiza'a Permaculture Center there. In rural areas, it has excellent local field coordinators who are welcome in village homes and successful at encouraging womens' and girls' activities.

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Mashriqiyat (1998)

Having grown out of a Model Parliament focused on personal status law, this rights-based development organization engages in legal research, advocacy, and community education to address laws that discriminate against women. *They acknowledge more than one understanding of Islam and do not believe that a secular law is possible yet (unlike women's organizations in the West Bank). Moreover, these women do not approve of the Tunisian personal status code, which provides equality before the law and bans polygamy, but is easily attacked by Islamists as a secular law.* Mashriqiyat's legal position is based on constitutionality, human rights (CEDAW), and progressive views of Islam. The group has campaigned against the practice of *beit al ta'a* (forcing women back to their homes). With a highly-focused cause, this organization is one of the few doing the sort of work that is necessary before women's rights become acceptable in a conservative Muslim society.

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Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committees (PARC) (1983)

PARC has the best rural involvement of any Palestinian NGO, as it reaches 248 villages and networks with other NGO's on village projects (cf. ANERA). Its real success story is the Rural Women's Development Society, a semi-independent organization developed to build women's capacity in 152 villages in the West Bank and Gaza. By creating women's clubs which function as community-building organizations, PARC is also able to assess and provide the types of programs

requested by women in rural areas; 68 such clubs are currently functioning.

Five types of programs are currently sponsored by the Rural Women's Development Society:

- a. **Income-generating projects - house gardens** (seeds, stone terraces, cisterns, goats, fruit tree seedlings) and **block grants** (based on local needs assessment);
- b. **Food security** (enhancing food entitlement, access to productive resources);
- c. **Raising rural women's educational level** (Tawjihi classes, literacy, keeping girls in school);
- d. **Advocacy, lobbying & networking** (completing secondary education, reconsidering the value of women's agricultural work and calculating it in the GDP, quotas for women in village councils and parliament);
- e. **Capacity-building program for 10,984 women members** (regular agricultural extension services; awareness-raising, training of trainers, creating women leaders).

One crucial need emerging from PARC's local need-assessment work is a request for agricultural extension services, including women agronomists and social workers. Although PARC has 14 women agronomists and social workers on its staff, many more are needed. PARC has subsidiary offices in Bethlehem, Gaza, Hebron, Jenin, Jericho, Nablus, Ramallah, Al-Ram, Tulkarem.

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Palestinian Businesswomen's Association (1997)

This Canadian-supported NGO has as its mission supporting and empowering Palestinian women through encouraging their role in economic activities. Approximately 1200-1500 poor to middle-class women are served through two programs: **Micro-Lending** (groups and individuals) and **Small Lending** (individuals). The demand for assistance from women entrepreneurs continues to increase. Branches of the organization serve the following refugee camps: Jenin, Beit Hanoun, Jabalia, Deir el-Balah, and Nuseirat.

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Panorama: The Palestinian Center for the Dissemination of Democracy and Community Development (1991)

Panorama is a community-based, non-political organization intended to assist democratic transformation, especially within marginalized groups such as youth, women, and children. The **Palestine Youth Network** (1997) is one of the major achievements of its Youth Development Unit. Workshops and training courses focusing on civil rights, transparency, accountability, conflict

resolution, leadership, women's rights, pluralism, voluntary work, and civil-society building are programs of the **Democracy Development and Civic Education Unit**. Other units include the **Community Development Center, Cultural Research and Studies Center, Politics and Peace Affairs Unit, and Mediterranean Cooperation..** This NGO also produces publications and training manuals dealing with issues related to citizenship and good governance. Urban-based women are 60-70% of Panorama's civic education and human rights target group.

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Save the Children Federation (SCF)

With offices in Jerusalem, Gaza, Halhoul, and Nablus, SCF focuses on community-based development specifically for women and youth. Of the five program areas, which the international organization pursues, **HIV/AIDS, Exploitation and Abuse, Conflict and Disaster, Education, and Child Rights**, the program in the Palestinian territories emphasizes the **Every Mother/Every Child** Campaign as part of its program in conflict areas. Emergency health services, maternal and child health care, water supplies and sanitation, and income-generating activities (including micro-finance and employment-generation) are specific ongoing programs; women are encouraged to plan and develop programs to help their specific communities. SCF is well organized and effective.

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Terre des Hommes (1973)

This organization focuses on preventive, curative and educational programs in the fields of nutrition, mother and child health, and psychological support, with approximately 5000 disadvantaged women served. In addition to mother and child health services in the West Bank and Gaza, psychological support programs in the West Bank provide group and individual counseling to help mothers deal with crisis situations.

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Union of Palestinian Medical Relief Committees (UPMRC) (1979)

The UPMRC runs 25 community health centers in towns and villages for the delivery of preventive and curative care, **gender awareness, women's health program**, discussion and support groups, first aid and emergency training, science education, **family planning**, and **community mobilization**. Through their **Small Community Projects Program**, which creates job opportunities in the West Bank and Gaza *following a principle of community-led development*, UPMRC has built an extensive network of community contacts and is able to address sensitive issues, such as early marriage and disabilities related to cousin marriage. Assistance, based on local partner requests, involves administrative and management training for community leaders; 160 computers have been placed in local communities. Youth Clubs, which are not gender-segregated, also introduce computer skills, life skills, and environmental education to village young people; Youth Centers have been established in Nablus and Ramallah.

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Women Affairs Center -Gaza (1997)

A training and research center, the WAC also offers video and writing courses and maintains a library of books and films on gender issues. *They also offer library classification training for local NGO's*. The center issues booklets about women's concerns in an attempt to sensitize women to the basic human, political economic, and reproductive rights to which they are entitled. The staff networks with women's organizations in Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon to diminish their isolation in Gaza.

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Women in Black (Donne in Nero) (Italy)

Partnering with three Palestinian NGO's, the **Women of Jenin Project** is threefold:

- 1) Funding needy women students (screened by the Women's Studies Center);
- 2) Material assistance and savings and loans projects (camp and city, channeled through the Women's Union;
- 3) Computer training center for village women (in partnership with centers run by the Union of

Palestinian Medical Relief Committees).

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Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counseling

The Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counseling focuses on discrimination of all sorts against women, but particularly on attacks by Israeli settlers, Islamic extremists, and the Israeli Army. Headed by a courageous and capable director, WCLAC employs 23 full-time social workers and lawyers who define themselves as human rights activists and gender specialists. Discrimination against women is the focal point of the organization, and it has had some success in working with Islamic religious authorities to restrict unilateral divorce. WCLAC supports an abuse hotline and shelters in the West Bank and Gaza. This NGO is implementing a UNIFEM Project, **Helping Women of Sexual Abuse in the Jordanian and Palestinian Societies**. With an Israeli counterpart, the director has testified before the UN Security Council to ask that Women's Commissions be established on both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to pursue Security Council mandates. WCLAC, which has a branch office in Hebron, is a key women's NGO represented on the Women's Affairs Technical Committee.

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YWCA

Branches of the YWCA exist in Jerusalem and Jericho; both actively promote women's rights and offer vocational training, handicraft production and pre-school programs.

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YWMA (1979, 1981)

Branches of the YWMA currently exist in Jerusalem and Gaza. They offer vocational and computer training, as well as Islamic awareness. The Jerusalem center also runs a girls' school, a library, and handicraft production.

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Women's Studies Centers and Research Institutes

Bir Zeit University Institute of Women's Studies

The significant projects of this key women's center fall into the areas of teaching, research, and community outreach. The faculty associated with the Center teach Women's Studies at the B.A. level and also staff a Women's Studies Program at the M.A. level: Gender, Law & Development (funded by DIFID). Their research includes reports on the status of women in the areas of economics, labor, politics, health, and local support. A major research project is *Inside the Palestinian Household*, in two volumes, which surveys 19 communities in the West Bank and Gaza (rural, urban, camps) and reports on migration, urbanization, labor, ethnography, as well as how people managed with the Intifada and the Re-Occupation. In-depth interviews covering seven households will be published separately with all household members telling their own stories. Three other smaller research studies, *How Communities Are Constructed and Reconstructed*, *Women's Movement*, and *Checkpoints*, employ oral interviews by graduates to study the period between the two Intifadas, as well as current conditions. Other significant publications include *Vocational Training and Technical Education for Women* and *The Status of Women's Education*. Funding has been received from the Ford Foundation and IDRC for research projects. Results of research are used in training and teaching and are made available to other NGO's. Community outreach has been very limited during the last two years, but normally involves training and workshops in the areas of reproduction, health, laws, and gender profiling. The Hala Attala Fund helps girls finish their education by offering financial assistance. The Center is represented on the Women's Affairs Technical Committee and engages in cooperative projects with WCLAC.

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Bisan Center for Research and Development (1990)

With funding from AUSTCARE, Bisan has founded 22 community centers in the West Bank, which offer vocational training and a platform for community development research. In addition to publishing studies, Bisan has coordinated with the Ministry of Health to organize a policy workshop on Women's Issues and Health Policy, as well as to carry on a **Policy Dialogue Project**. Their **Legislative Unit** lobbies for effective legislation regarding disability law, health insurance law, family law, civil status law, and NGO law. They also run a **Center for Small Scale Enterprise and**

Development in Nablus, which offices services to women. Bisan has published a study on Wife Abuse and Battering in the West Bank and Gaza.

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Health, Development, Information and Policy Institute (1989)

Created with the aim of conceiving policies and producing research, HDIP is devoted to advocating appropriate health and development policies. The Institute enhances cooperation and coordination between various health care providers, particularly that between Palestinian NGO's and the Palestinian Authority. In addition, HDIP provides information services, evaluations, and training in the areas of health and development policy, and systems management. *Training programs include general management skills, rapid appraisal and research, and computer software programs.* The majority of projects have a gendered approach/dimension, including research on women's health, women in local council elections, and training in civil society empowerment.

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Women's Studies Centre (1989)

Although this center has conducted and published gender studies and action-oriented studies, their primary role is as a **resource center** for schools and NGO's located in Jerusalem (including JCW and WCLAC who have offices in the same building.) The Centre's **Media Production Unit** makes high-quality videos and TV spots. The **Local Media Monitoring Unit** tracks negative and stereotypical images of women. In addition to a program for emerging writers, the Centre also offers **Training for Trainers in Advocacy and Lobbying** and for **Researchers on Action Research**. Published studies include *Gender Planning, Vocational Education, and Technical Training in Palestine; Policy Implications for Reproductive Health Care Delivery in the Rural West Bank; Misconceptions about Sexuality and Sexual Behavior in Palestinian Society; Workers in the Textile Industry*. The Centre partners with Save the Children in **integrating gender into rural development projects** by forming **young men and women's clubs**, which focus on youth leadership, gender awareness, principles of democracy, and human rights. The Centre has a good track record in screening women students for scholarship funds, checking on student status, and not making it possible for the students to rely totally on funding. Because the Centre adopts a progressive feminist discourse calling for separation between religion and the state, it tends to assume a confrontational stance toward both traditional women's organizations and Islamists.

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NGO's in the Northern Israel Triangle Area¹⁰

Either because they coordinate with Jewish feminists or because they are influenced by women's concerns in the larger society, Arab women's groups in Israel are able to work more openly to meet the needs of women in crisis.

Al-Tufula Center (Childhood Care and Women's Rights Center) (1984)

In a house in Nazareth built expressly for women and children, this center trains women to work with young children and offers other types of vocational and gender awareness training. They also run a women's café, which functions as an income-generating project, while providing training in food preparation and presentation. Center activists also devote attention to the issue of trafficking in women, which is endemic in Israel.

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Al-Zahra

An organization for Arab women in Israel that offers workshops in empowerment for women and girls, promotes co-existence between Arab and Jewish women, trains women in management and economic empowerment, and builds networks among women from Arab villages. Trips, seminars, and leadership training are also sponsored.

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Association of Women against Violence

The rape crisis center in Nazareth, specifically for Arab women, is affiliated with WAV, an

¹⁰ It is important to note that 84% of Israeli Palestinians live in the Galilee or the Triangle area, as it is locally described, comprising the area between the cities of Nazareth, Umm Al-Fahm, and Haifa.

organization which establishes and maintains crisis centers for victims of domestic and sexual violence, as well as shelters and halfway houses for battered women and their children and for young women in distress. WAV also designs and implements projects that raise awareness toward the issue of violence against women in the Palestinian community and trains Arab women to become community activists and leaders.

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El Assiwar (Chains) (1998)

An Arab feminist center located in Haifa, Assiwar is a Palestinian organization for women victims of rape, domestic violence, and crimes of honor. This group separated from the rape crisis center associated with the Haifa Women's Coalition in the belief that the needs of Arab victims are different from those of Jewish women. In addition to maintaining a rape crisis hotline for Arab women, lecturing in schools and working with the courts and police, Assiwar meets with Knesset members and Islamic judges. Because women murdered by relatives other than their husbands are not counted in national statistics as victims of honor crimes, the women of Assiwar believe it is essential to track their stories and publish them. The El Badil project (**Say No To Honor Killings**) is an effort to transform societal attitudes and to change the treatment of women in Sha'ari courts. Assiwar also networks with Adalah, a human rights organization offering legal support for minorities in Israel.

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Haifa Women's Coalition (4 independent organizations under one roof)

This healthy example of Arab-Jewish co-existence, the only multi-service women's center serving Palestinian and Druze women in northern Israel, represents a possible model for services to women in the Palestinian Territories.

47 Hillel Street,

Haifa, 33727

Israel

Battered Women's Hotline (1997)

This highly effective national hotline includes 11 staff members and 65 volunteers, including Arab women, who also do community outreach. With a national crisis phone number receiving 500,000 calls a year, women volunteers handle crises situations in five languages: Hebrew, Arabic, Amharic, English, and Russian. Since 1997, funding has come from the Welfare Ministry. In addition to crisis

counseling, Hotline volunteers accompany women victims to courts, police, hospitals, and social workers, and also offer legal aid representation in courts. The Ayelot Project, involving 13 volunteers in Haifa, assigns a "professional friend" for 6-12 months to women who are leaving shelters and need support as well as help with bureaucratic hurdles. Women's groups in other areas, such as Akko, Tiberias, Nazareth, Tamra, and Daliyat-al-Karmel, are being trained through lectures and workshop concerning women's rights and issues of domestic violence. In 2002, two new laws were passed to protect victims: 1) they must be told of rights and options; 2) any woman leaving a shelter and beginning an independent life outside the cycle of violence receives a one-time grant of 4000 NIS.

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Isha l'Isha (Woman to Woman) (1983)

A joint Jewish-Arab organization dedicated to empowering women and creating solidarity, Isha l'Isha has implemented the following programs: a **National Hotline for Battered Women** (now an independent entity, under contract to the Israeli Welfare Ministry, and part of the Haifa Women's Coalition); **Health Project for Elderly Women; Empowerment Groups for New Immigrants** (Russian and Ethiopian), and **Empowerment Groups for Lesbian Women and Girls**. Ongoing programs include the **Anti-Trafficking Project** (former Soviet women in Northern Israel); **Women in a Democratic Society Courses** (Jewish and Arab); **1325 Campaign** (re: UN Resolution 1325 /Women in Peace Negotiations); and **Economic Empowerment**. In addition, these women are involved in joint programs: the **Year of the Working Woman** and **ICAR** (international coalition for women who can't get divorced due to religious marriage). They also nurture a community of feminist lesbians and maintain both a resource center and library. Although this is a model organization for Arab and Jewish women working together, they are concerned about growing tension in the larger society. The women of Isha l'Isha see themselves as an incubating organization for Arab women's organizations, a place to identify basic needs, expand identity, and gain leadership skills.

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Kayan (Being) (1998)

This group of Arab feminists from Haifa and the Galilee are working to bring feminism and feminist values to the Palestinian social agenda, and also to create a Palestinian feminist framework. Since the mid-1980's, they have worked together with Jewish women to develop services that will answer the needs of Palestinian women and girls in distress (hotline, rape crisis center, shelters). They formed an independent organization to respond to their own society's need to raise new issues about women's status in society. Their projects include **Empowerment Centers for Women and Girls, Gender Education Workshops** in high schools, **conferences and study days, leadership training courses**, as well as an **Arabic resource library** and an **Arabic feminist magazine**. Kayan has initiated a path-breaking national project which grew out of Arab women's awareness workshops: support for hundreds of women child-care workers in northern Israel who haven't received legitimate

payment from local authorities, despite the latter having obtained it from the Israeli government. Problem communities were identified, and Kayan is offering a platform for the organization of a National Labor Union of Child Care Workers. *They are also developing a training module to encourage Palestinian women to initiate programs for themselves (eg. to develop a transport system for women, involving taxis and women drivers).* The goal is to reach 35-40 villages over a 5-year period. They also employ a Gender Education Coordinator who works with 12-19 year old girls at risk in Umm El Fahm through a Girls' Club, the first such group in the Triangle area. Kayan is a model Arab women's organization, which gains strength from its independent participation in the Haifa Women's Coalition.

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Rape Crisis Center

This local organization is affiliated with a 24-hour national hotline; women who call this number reach one of the 10 centers nearest to them. Although phones are answered in Hebrew, Russian, and Amharic (with a separate center in Nazareth serving Arab women), approximately 80 Arab women call this number per month because some feel anonymous and protected if they are speaking with a Jewish woman. The center offers ongoing emotional support for girls and women, many of whom are victims of incest. Each affiliated rape center is an independent NGO which works at local advocacy and relations with local courts and police, maintains its own board of directors, and does its own fund-raising. Money from the government is channeled through the National Coalition of Rape Crisis Centers in West Jerusalem. Centers are located at Nazareth, Haifa, Tel Aviv, Rananna, Eilat, Beersheba, Kiryat Shmona, Jerusalem; also one for ultra-Orthodox women. Most calls from Arab women come to centers at Haifa and Beersheba.

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United Nations Agencies

ILO (International Labor Organization)

Gender mainstreaming at the Ministry of Labour has been a major thrust of the ILO; a gender analysis of activities in each department in the Ministry was conducted and an action plan completed. Following a needs assessment study and training of trainers, a national strategy for women's entrepreneurship was developed for all national governmental, non-governmental, and private sector stakeholders. The National Strategy has been sidelined in favor of a Palestine Emergency Programme, which optimizes employment opportunities for all sectors of the population,

and facilitates short-term skill development in non-traditional sectors and income generation specifically for women.

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Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

Osman Hassan

The OHCHR helped to establish women's units at the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights in Gaza (1997) and at the Palestinian Society for the Protection of Human Rights and the Environment (LAW) in Ramallah (1997). They also aided six NGO's through the ACT Project (Assisting Communities Together) in 2002, 3 in the West Bank (Teachers Creativity Centre, PALARA, and Al-Amari Youth Activities) and 3 in the Gaza Strip (National Center for Community Rehabilitation, Dier Al-Balah Activity Centre, and Massfat.) OHCHR and UNDP will re-launch the ACT projects for 2003-2004.

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UNICEF

Although UNICEF's programs primarily target children, several deal with mothers as well, in an effort to reduce maternal mortality, address gender-based disadvantages in the life cycle of women and girls, and promote women's rights. The **Better Parenting Initiative** is a major channel for mainstreaming gender equality by increasing the involvement of both parents in raising children. The **Child-Friendly Community Initiative** stresses improvement of services at the community level for children and women. During the current crisis, UNICEF provides emergency humanitarian assistance to Palestinian children, including health assistance, learning opportunities, psycho-social counseling, and opportunities for peaceful participation and expression.

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UNIFEM

Alia Ya-Yassin, Specialist, Governance Project

A **WID Facilitation Initiative**, funded by the Netherlands, to collect and disseminate information regarding WID/GAD projects has been transferred to national partners: the Directorate of Gender Planning and Development, the General Union of Palestinian Women, and the Inter-Ministerial

Committee. The **National Strategy for the Advancement of Palestinian Women**, a project funded by the EU as the first phase of a Post-Beijing Initiative, and as a gender mainstreaming project at the national level in phase two, involved the Inter-Ministerial Committee and the GUPW but has since stalled. **Development of Women's Entrepreneurship** aims at increasing women's participation in the private sector, including vocational training and financial workshops in cooperation with AGFUND and the Ministry of Social Affairs in the northern West Bank. The Palestinian Territories are among six countries participating in the **Regional Women's Human Rights Programme in the Context of CEDAW**, which focuses on training for tackling issues related to legislation, religion, and the status of women. The **Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence Against Women** supports a follow-up study to research conducted by WCLAC on domestic violence and femicide; the new study will tackle the topics of sexual abuse, disclosure, and gender awareness in the criminal justice system.

This UNIFEM representative spoke enthusiastically of the need to decentralize women's programs by establishing a women's center in every village. She suggested that such a project might well involve a partnership with UNDP or a local organization with good rural connections. The first step, however, should be assessing priorities and needs and finding out what organizations are active in local areas. Likely needs relate to economic security, counseling, research, and specialized gender training.

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UNDP

The **UNDP Programme of Assistance to Palestinian People (PAPP)**, which aims at ensuring equal participation of men and women in the development process, offers a number of ongoing projects for Palestinian women, including a. **Follow-up on the Beijing Platform** (Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women, Women and Media, and Women and Armed Conflict); b. **Capacity Building for the Women's Unit at the Palestinian Legislative Council**; c. **Women's Design and Marketing Center for Palestinian Handicrafts**; d. **Social Development Forum**; e. **Poverty Alleviation Project** (income-generating activities and job opportunities); f. **Community Based Youth Participation and Development Project**. The **Status of Palestinian Women: Gap Analysis Report**, which measures the status of women against CEDAW standards, was completed in 2001. With the PFWA as implementing group, UNDP is also funding a project entitled **Establishing a Local Fund for Small Loans** to help women face the severe problems of male unemployment and decreased family incomes.

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UNFPA

Programs under the category of **Reproductive Health** include integration of this concept into the primary health care system, incorporating gender concepts in school curricula and adult education programs, strengthening multi-faceted Women's Centers in Jabaliya and El Bureij refugee camps and Hebron, and launching a health education program in Jenin. **Population and Development Strategies** include specialized surveys on housing, women and health, education and the labor force. **Advocacy** efforts dealing with gender equity and reproductive health focus on youth and adolescents, decision-makers, and media professionals.

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UNRWA

Hanan Jayyouthi, Women's Programme Officer

Virtually all of the refugee camps in the West Bank (except Bethlehem and Hebron), Gaza Strip, Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon have multi-purpose Women's Programme Centres (a total of 70), which serve as a focal point for UNRWA's work with women. The centers are open to all women and are run by the women themselves, who are organized in committees but receive help with managerial skills. Nearly 18, 000 women are offered a wide variety of services, including **Vocational Training, Savings and Credit Groups, Community Banking Programs, Income-Generating Projects** (cafeterias, embroidery and sewing production units, exhibitions and bazaars, hairdressing and beauty salons, photocopying services, renting halls and machines), **Counseling and Guidance Services, Civic Education, Library Services, Legal Literacy Courses, Legal Advice Bureaus, Community Services** (care for aged and orphans, celebrations, film shows, summer camps, trips), **Nurseries and Kindergartens, and Physical Fitness Activities**. Rising demand for services is limited by lack of space and equipment, low number of staff, and the instability of the income-generating projects. Due to low budget and political conditions, the Women's Programme is struggling to deliver high-quality services. Funding partners, who are helping to support individual projects, include the UNDP, Canada Fund, Australia Fund, Italians (ARCHE), SIDA, and Save the Children. Program partners include the Bir Zeit Development Institute, Bir Zeit Continuing Education Program, WCLAC, PWWS, Bisan Institute, and Save the Children. *Three needs have been expressed by Women's Center Staff: 1) soft microloan projects or grants¹¹; 2) joint gender awareness training involving both men and women, young women and young men; and 3) specialized activities for those who show outstanding leadership skills, such as training in facilitation, which would create a role for women in the general administration of the camps (at present, only 1% women serve on boards of camps).*

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¹¹ According to Jayyouthi, the Grameen Bank concept works in Lebanon but not in the Palestinian Territories where expenses are much greater and market needs are unstable.

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UN VOLUNTEERS (UNV)

Fieldworkers and specialists, integrated into the UNDP Office, have attempted to implement three programs: **Empowering Young Women in the Palestinian Territories**, which fosters social development of school-age girls from rural and under-privileged areas; **Choose a Future**, which raises awareness about women's rights and gender issues among young women students in Jerusalem and Ramallah; and **Ministry of Planning**, where a gender specialist was assigned to develop capacity-building projects.

The Israeli Re-Occupation has delayed the continuation of these projects.

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Conclusions

The vast number of programs currently being undertaken in support of Palestinian women by charitable organizations, NGO's, and women's political organizations at first would seem to discourage any further projects intended to empower Palestinian women. However, in surveying the character and range of organizations serving the needs of Palestinian women, certain gaps become apparent. First of all, women in larger towns and cities receive a great many services, whereas those in villages do not. Second, UNRWA continues to provide excellent services in the camps, but its resources and personnel are stretched far too thin as UN budgets dwindle and camp populations expand.¹² Third, many village women have received gender awareness training, which did not involve their families, and thus intensified women's misery and sense of powerlessness. Fourth, the overwhelming need at the moment is for some sort of economic empowerment, which will allow women to contribute to family income. Fifth, statistics on women's education are discouraging and reflect the need to change family attitudes as well as to fund scholarships for academically able young women. Sixth, Palestinian society and its governance structure are still in denial concerning the need for shelters, battered women's hotlines, and rape crisis assistance. Finally, patriarchal attitudes, endemic to Arab society, will continue to be firmly entrenched as long as Palestinians suffer under Israeli occupation.

Certain advantages also need to be noted. First, the triple positioning of key women in the Palestinian Authority ministries, the women's political organizations, and the Women's Technical Affairs Committee means that there is a highly organized group of talented women leaders who are already pushing hard for a women's rights agenda at the national level. Second, both women's political organizations and some NGO's have extensive rural networks, through which rural women have learned about the National Strategy for the Advancement of Women. Third, a key aspect of such rural networks is the existence of women's centers in many towns and villages, although certainly not all. Fourth, necessity has resulted in unanticipated empowerment of the rural women who run these centers; they have learned by doing what had to be done. Fifth, the Women's Affairs Technical Committee already functions as an effective umbrella organization, with a much more forward-looking vision than that of the General Union of Palestinian Women. Sixth, the women's political organizations have already begun programs of civic education and training in democracy in anticipation of Palestinian national elections being held in the near future. Seventh, two types of empowering economic relief projects are beginning to be implemented: saving and lending projects and micro-loan projects, sometimes in combination. Eighth, computer centers are proving very successful as a combined form of vocational training, income generation, and service to rural communities. Finally, shelters and hotlines are beginning to emerge quietly in the West Bank and Gaza, although information about them circulates via the grapevine, and women who make use of them have need of legal assistance.

The question of what sort of women's project might be supported by UNESCO is problematic. Many individuals believe that there is simply no room for another program serving Palestinian women. Others think that some sort of centralized effort could pull together existing programs and build

¹² The birth rate in refugee camps is slightly but not significantly less than the mean in the Palestinian Territories: 6.57 children per family.

capacity more evenly among women in the Palestinian Territories. Although emergency conditions still prevail, as closures, curfews, and invasions occur daily, it is important to look ahead to a time of peaceful co-existence when Palestinian society can begin to emerge from its current state of siege. Looking forward, three main issues emerge:

- 1) A need to encourage and facilitate women's education;
- 2) A need to provide comprehensive societal gender awareness training, jointly presented to men and women, boys and girls, through schools, electronic media, and awareness-raising workshops; and
- 3) Computer centers, or similar multi-purpose projects which empower women, need to be extended to more communities.

A number of networks already exist whereby these three issues are beginning to be addressed. The question remains, however, of how such a triple approach might be implemented more widely.

Three Possible Models

A brief look at potential models for Phase 2 of the Support to Palestinian Women Project:

1. Central UNESCO Women's Observation Center

A new women's research and monitoring program could be initiated, on the model of that in Tunis, La Chaire UNESCO de la condition de la femme, to gather the work of existing women's support programs under a single agency. It would contain **a documentation center and promote studies and research on the status of women in Palestinian society**. Ideally, such a center would build a bridge between more traditional women's societies and those with a more feminist agenda. A UNESCO-sponsored center would lend both visibility and credibility to women's rights in a society where they are not taken seriously by many and strongly opposed by others. **The sharing of resources and infrastructure with key women's organizations** would be a feature of the UNESCO women's center, and would effectively avoid duplication of services and overhead expenses. Such a center would be responsible for designing and implementing a **family gender awareness training** program, which could be jointly presented to men and women in refugee camps, villages, and urban communities through electronic media, workshops, and school curricula. Similarly, a campaign to encourage women to complete their secondary education and go on to higher education could be waged from the UNESCO center through various media, following examples set by the PA Health Ministry and the WATC.

2. Gender Awareness and Media Training Grants to Existing Organizations

Certain NGO's have been very successful in the competition for international funding, largely because they know how to write grant proposals and have established good track records in implementing their programs and following through with reports. Following a model that most institutes and organizations are thoroughly familiar with, UNESCO could make available to the Palestinian NGO community grants for 1) **family gender awareness training**, to be delivered to rural and urban areas by selected providers via existing NGO networks; and 2) **media training**, which would encourage the further development of computer centers, teach women how to make videos of weddings and family celebrations, and train them in VCR maintenance. Both types of training would advance the status of women and, in the case of media training, provide them with marketable skills. It is likely that, once trained, women will begin to make their own videos dealing with local concerns, need for education, and women's issues. This model would require very little

central coordination of existing organizations but would allow women in selected communities access to new kinds of information.

3. A UNESCO Information Center in Every Village

A handful of NGO's have focused their work on communities cut off from larger population centers, both because of the Occupation and because of geographical isolation. Some of these organizations have excellent rural networks with clubs for women and youth. Similarly, women's political organizations have extensive committee coverage in smaller population centers, as well as women's centers in neighboring cities and towns. Making use of these networks to extend the coverage of centers to every village, UNESCO could develop and deliver, with organizational help, a three-part program emphasizing 1) **family gender awareness training**, which in turn would be coupled with a focus on 2) **women's continuing education**, including *tawjihi* classes, and linked with 3) **village information centers** featuring workshops training women to run businesses such as VCR rentals, libraries, videography, and computer centers. A project of this type would increase family income, upgrade women's skills, offer women access to new types of information, and put them in the forefront of its delivery to their communities. Extending the information world to rural women is the intent, but local women would choose what sort of information center is best for them. **Rationale:** putting desired skills into the hands of marginalized women will automatically raise their status in their families and communities.

Recommendations

On the basis of my investigations in the Palestinian Territories and northern Triangle region of Israel, I am astounded at the degree to which Palestinian women have been observed, studied, trained, assisted, and monitored in the ten years since the Oslo Accords. Many significant studies of their economic and health needs, participation in politics, educational patterns, participation in the labor market, and family behavior already exist. Although a central women's research and monitoring program would lend visibility to a unified women's rights effort in the Palestinian Territories, two significant arguments loom large against it. Primarily, it would duplicate the effective efforts of existing organizations such as the Women's Affairs Technical Committee, the Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counseling, the Women's Studies Center, Bir Zeit Institute of Women's Studies, Mashriqiyat, and the Women's Affairs Center. These organizations carry out and publish excellent research, monitor the ongoing status of women and conduct a spectrum of training programs. Furthermore, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics founded a gender statistics program in 1996 and is committed to publishing all statistics according to gender. Insofar as the status of Palestinian women seems to be regressing, it must be attributed, not to a lack of research, training, and documentation, but rather to the continuing Israeli Occupation and the rise of political Islam.

Also problematical is the question of where a UNESCO center would be situated. The separation of the Palestinian Territories into distinct areas, based on two different legal backgrounds in *shari'a* law

(Egyptian in Gaza and Jordanian in the West Bank),¹³ makes it difficult to locate a single center that would effectively serve women in both regions with a single women's rights program. Indeed, the population density of Gaza City and the stronger presence of political Islam there also create a cultural ethos quite different from that of the West Bank. Although efforts are being made to draft a gender-sensitive Palestinian personal law, we do not yet find consensus between Palestinian women on the issue of Islamic vs. secular personal status law. A centralized program attempting to deliver gender and development training would run head-on into these issues. Moreover, UN agencies and NGO's that serve both areas usually develop offices in each, which necessitates greater expenditure. For these reasons, I do not recommend the creation of a single UNESCO observation center in the Palestinian Territories.

Although a program of grants to existing organizations would put funds into the hands of NGO's with proven track records, it would have the effect of making prosperous NGO's more prosperous and enhancing the programs that they already deliver. Whereas UNESCO grants to organizations that can deliver training modules dealing with family gender awareness and media expertise would have the advantage of requiring little hands-on administration, the resulting programs would reach essentially the same audiences already targeted by those NGO's. Even in the case of those exceptional organizations that understand the needs and sensibilities of village women, new training efforts would not reach the women whose needs are greatest and whose abilities have not been tapped. Therefore, I do not advocate a program of grants to existing organizations.

The most effective work currently being done with Palestinian women is that by UN agencies and NGO's who are able to reach deep into camps and villages with programs which address women's multiple needs. A key aspect of such programs is community-led development, in which women themselves choose programs appropriate to their needs in local areas. At this point in time, it makes sense to develop a program that will not antagonize a conservative society but rather bring to it certain kinds of information that are desired by the community. Based on my experience with a highly successful health program in India, in which health and medical information were put into the hands of illiterate untouchable women,¹⁴ I suggest that the best assistance for women would be the development of UNESCO information centers accompanied by training in the use and maintenance of equipment, as well as knowledge of how to run a small business. Six computer centers of this type have been successfully initiated through WATC's Women of the Future Program. Such a program needs to be expanded to encompass other kinds of information centers and extended to other areas.

The Directorate of Gender Planning and Development, has published a list of Needs from a Gender Perspective,¹⁵ divided into Practical Gender Needs (short-term daily needs) and Strategic Gender Needs (transforming women's social status) (cf. Appendix 6). At least two of the stated Strategic Gender Needs support the idea of an Information Center in Every Village:

- 1) "Offering equal work opportunities for men and women, as well as offering necessary training for women to gain access to job opportunities in the formal labor force, get promoted and reach decision-making positions" and

¹³ Family law is under the jurisdiction of the Islamic *shari'a* (97%) and Christian courts (3%). In the West Bank, the 1976 Jordanian Personal Status Law applies, and in Gaza, the 1954 Egyptian Family Status Law.

¹⁴ Jamkhed Comprehensive Rural Health Project in Maharashtra directed by Drs. Raj and Maybelle Arole.

¹⁵ "Needs from a Gender Perspective." *Gender and Development* 3-4 (2002). Ramallah: Directorate of Gender Planning and Development, Palestinian Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, p. 18.

- 2) "Encouraging women to gain access to all forms of knowledge, including industrial technology, agricultural extension services, and legal literacy."

As suggested, when women become trained in the use and delivery of information technology, their lives will be transformed in other ways. As women gain status and access to information sources, their families will show them greater respect. Among the women themselves, a demand for further education will emerge. As issues of family authority surface, family gender training can be made available on an as-needed basis, when women begin to ask for it (as they already have in the refugee camps). The virtue of such a program is that, in addition to meeting women's strategic needs, it acknowledges the ways in which communities differ in size, needs, conservatism, religiosity, and women's experience.

Although the logistics of putting a woman's information center in every village might seem formidable, the task would not be so difficult in the Palestinian territories where a number of ready-made networks reaching into smaller population centers already exist. Such networks have been identified in connection with the General Union of Palestinian Women, the Arab Women's Societies, and the women's political organizations. Programs reaching even further into villages have been developed by ANERA, Bisan Institute, PARC, Ma'an Development Center, and UPMRC, among others. UNRWA and the UNDP have good coverage of refugee camps and rural areas. Perhaps most impressive is the fact that many of these organizations, NGO's, and agencies already partner with each other and would be open to sharing existing clubs, committees, and centers with a UNESCO effort. Finally, we have the model of the Women's Technical Committee, which represents six women's political organizations, as well as key NGO's and West Bank women's centers, and has successfully shown, with assistance of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, how women can run computer centers in rural areas.¹⁶ Because many WATC board members are highly placed in the Palestinian Authority, the government might be more easily persuaded to adopt the Information Center in Every Village program.

The Implementation Phase of the mandated Support to Palestinian Women project would need to be carried out in several stages. The first would be a **Survey** of existing centers, committees, and clubs; of their affiliations; of the facilities available to them; and of their role in each community. Women themselves could carry out this survey, although some statistics may be readily available through UNDP, UPMRC, or HDIP. **Analysis** of data will identify villages lacking in women's organizations or community centers and also cases of overlap.¹⁷ The next stage would be **Mapping**, in which women delineate organizational networks and compare maps for coverage, duplication, and partnering possibilities. If women have helped to carry out the survey, they will be eager for the **Decision-Making** stage: learning how to identify local needs, explore options, and make choices. They would be assisted in this process by field workers from organizations already working in their local areas, and by local women trained in facilitation and community-building. **Applications** (of a clear and simple type) would then be invited from communities that do not already have some sort of information or media center established through prior development programs. In some cases, existing programs might be eligible for augmentation. **Screening, Program Approval and Allotment of Funds** would follow, under the aegis of the supervising organization. **Equipment and Training in Use and Maintenance** would be purchased from and delivered by Palestinian

¹⁶ Women of the Future Program

¹⁷ Although towns could support more than one women's center, villages could not, perhaps necessitating cooperative ventures in some locations.

businesses and organizations. Other sorts of training, including **Small Business Skills**, *Tawjihi* classes, and **Family Gender Awareness**, could be offered locally through UNESCO-sponsored **Training of Trainers** programs, provided by participating NGO's.

This project depends entirely on the idea of community-led development: that UNESCO support for Palestinian women should involve the women themselves from the outset of the second phase. Women at all levels will be involved in the survey, a technique which has worked well with the Participatory Poverty Assessment conducted in 2002 by the Human Development and Institution Building Directorate (HDIBD) at the Ministry of Planning, in cooperation with UNDP. Local women will further be involved in analysis of data and mapping the possibilities for networking, as well as undertaking a decision-making process in each locality. They would also be mentored in preparation of a simple application for funding appropriate to their preferred type of information center. Although screening, program approval, and allotment of funds would probably occur at the level of the supervising organization, it would be responsive to the needs expressed and decisions made by grass-roots women.

Certainly key to this project is the idea that *local* woman leaders will be trained, via Training for Trainers courses, to deliver family gender awareness training and techniques for running small businesses. One possible program is "Men to Men: Towards a Better Family," which has been introduced by the P.A. Social Affairs Ministry. Other excellent training materials are available from the Sisterhood is Global Institute in Jordan. *Tawjihi* classes could be offered by trained local teachers, as are currently conducted by PARC and ANERA. A project of this type will not only improve women's economic situation but also open new windows to help counter the depression, discouragement, and post-traumatic stress syndrome evident among so many women in the West Bank and Gaza. We should also recognize the fact that the recommended project reflects several of the major concerns of UNESCO: information sharing, education, and applied science.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS AND NGO'S HAVING PROGRAMS DEDICATED TO WOMEN

NOTE: If there is a question which you don't want to answer, please feel free to leave it blank. If you need more space, please continue on a separate page. Try to make your answers as brief as possible. Thank you!

1. Name of organization _____ Year est. _____

2. Main office _____

Branches: _____

Telephone: _____ FAX: _____ E-Mail: _____ Website: _____

3. Director: _____ Do you have an accountant? _____

4. What is your mission? _____

5. What are your objectives? _____

6. What percentage of your budget is devoted to women's issues? _____

7. How many women do you serve? _____ Target population? _____

8. In past year, number of: Workshops _____ Training courses _____ Conferences _____

9. Number of: Members _____ Board Members _____ Staff _____ Volunteers _____

10. How often do you hold meetings? Board _____ Staff _____ Members _____

11. How often do you publish? Brochure _____ Reports _____ Newsletter _____

12. What research have you conducted?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

13. Titles of Published Research Studies

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

14. Is your work based on Programs? _____ Grants? _____ Short-Term Contracts? _____

15. How many programs do you have? _____ How long is each program? _____

16. Titles of ongoing programs and brief description of each:

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____

17. How do you monitor your programs? _____

18. How do you evaluate your programs? _____

19. Implemented programs:

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

20. Do you network with other organizations? _____ Number of joint programs _____

21. Titles of joint programs not already mentioned:

- a. _____
- b. _____

22. Are you a member of PNGO? _____ Regional or international associations? _____

23. Are you open to accountability? _____

24. Do you publish your budget every year? _____

25. How are decisions made? _____

26. Office and Staff:

- a. Is your office _____ owned? _____ rented?
- b. How do you hire your staff? _____
- c. Basis: Yearly contracts? _____ Salaries? _____ Per hour? _____
- d. How do you upgrade your staff? _____
- e. Does your staff have health insurance? _____ Job security? _____

27. What obstacles do you face? _____

Appendix 2

FIELDWORKERS

1. Muneera Elayyan
Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
2. Mourad Jadallah
B.A. Graduate, Muhammad V. College, Rabat, Morocco
3. Maisoon Fifel
Affiliate, Bir Zeit Institute of Public Health, based in Gaza

CONSULTANTS

1. Dr. Mohammad Jadallah
Palestinian Medical Association
2. Constanza Farina
UNESCO, Ramallah
3. Lamis Abu-Nahleh
Bir Zeit Women's Studies Institute

Appendix 3

The goals of the National Strategy for the Advancement of the Palestinian Woman have been defined in the following domains:

1. The Political Domain

- a. struggle against the occupation**
- b. achieving national independence**
- c. improving ways in which women participate in the national struggle**
- d. special support for women in Jerusalem**

2. The Economic Domain

- a. providing rehabilitation, training, and opportunities for investment**
- b. monitoring laws to ensure that they are not discriminatory to women**
- c. support for rural women and mechanisms to attain loans**
- d. conducting research on poverty and gender**

3. Women and Law

- a. protection of women and securing their rights**
- b. focus on Penal Code: punishment for rape and incest**
- c. focus on Personal Status Laws**
- d. legal awareness for women**

4. Women and Media

- a. balance struck between national struggle and social issues**
- b. support for female professionals reaching decision-making positions**
- c. raising women's qualifications in various media fields**

5. The Social Domain

- a. emphasis on women's health initiatives and preventive care awareness**
- b. education programs to eliminate illiteracy, school dropouts, inequities**
- c. eradicating discrimination against the girl child in all aspects of society**

6. Women and Environment

- a. training women in environmental programs**
- b. media programs on environment**
- c. deliver cooking, heating gas through pipelines, not cylinders**

Source: Inter-Ministerial Committee for the Advancement of Women (2002). *The Status of the Palestinian Women: Five Years After Beijing 1995-2000*. Ramallah: Palestinian National Authority.

APPENDIX 4

Palestinian Map Available at <http://www.poica.org/miscell/pal-map/pal-map.htm>



APPENDIX 5

Programs in Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria

This list is by no means comprehensive, and in some cases not much information was readily available. However, key organizations are described and others mentioned.

Jordan

Arab Women Media Center

Tel: 962-6-464-8889

E-mail: awmc@accessme.com.jo

Website: <http://www.ayamm.org>

Human Rights Forum for Women's Rights

P.O. Box 921687,

Amman

Jordanian National Committee for Women

P.O. Box 548,

Amman, 11183

Jordanian Women's Union

P.O. Box 960723,

Amman

Microfund for Women in Jordan

This consultative group is specifically aimed at providing credit for Palestinian refugees with the assistance of 29 donor agencies and the World Bank. They also offer training, strategic advice, and technical assistance. Publications include reports on projects, technical agendas, and working group papers.

Tel: 33-1-5324-3131

Website: <http://www.cgap.org>

Princess Basma Women's Resource Center (1996)

This resource center gathers and analyzes information; publishes studies and research reports; maintains an information bank; and holds seminars, workshops, and training programs. Its **Media Unit** is funded by the EU. Ongoing programs include **Women in Decision-Making; Women in Development** (training and awareness); **Policy Project ; Electoral Training.**

Dir: Farah Daghistani

E-mail: pbwrc@amra.nic.gov.jo

Website: <http://www.nic.gov.jo/jmaw>

Sisterhood is Global Institute- Jordan

This organization has produced excellent publications: **1. *Claiming Our Rights: Manual for Women Human Rights Education in Muslim Countries***; **2. *Safe and Secure: Eliminating Violence Against Women and Girls in Muslim Countries***; **3. *In Our Own Words: A Guide for Human Rights Education Facilitators*** (participatory education methodology, available in Arabic & English); **4. *Prose, Politics, & Power: Conversations with Muslim Women Leaders (Video)***.

5 Nadim Al-Mallah Street, Jebel El-Lweib-deh,
Amman 11115
Tel: 962-6-5690-770

UNIFEM - Jordan

Programs include **Arab Human Rights Programme in the Context of CEDAW**; **Empowering Women Migrant Workers in Jordan**; and **Helping Women of Sexual Abuse in the Jordanian and Palestinian Societies: Strategies to Aid Disclosure and Promote Greater Awareness within the Criminal Justice System**. The latter program is implemented by the Jordanian Women's Union.

Western Asia Regional Office

P.O. Box 830896,

Amman, 11183

Tel: 962-6-619-727/8

E-mail: unifem@nets.com.jo - amman@unifem.org.jo

Website: <http://www.unifem.undp.org>

Lebanon

Arab Women's Court

This group documents, reports, and condemns all acts of violence against women in Arab countries in order to raise public awareness and exert pressure on governments and NGO's, as well as to seek changes in existing laws and work toward creating new ones.

P.O. Box 14/5745

Beirut

E-mail: awcourt@dm.net.lb

Website: <http://www.arabwomencourt.org>

Association Najdeh (1978)

This key organization empowers Palestinian refugee women through a variety of highly effective programs: **vocational training** (10 centers in 8 camps, jointly with Interrives and American Friends Service Committee); **Al Badia Embroidery Workshop** (all camps), **microcredit program** (funded by SIDI and Handicap International), **scholarships, literacy program** (with EPEP); **7 preschool programs** (support working women); **counseling** (with Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children) **and awareness for communities re: violence against women** (with Aysha, Arab Women's Network); **financial assistance for medical care** (with network of local NGO's) ; **youth clubs** (with Enfant Refuges du Monde and the General Union of Palestinian Women); **workshops on reproductive health issues** (all camps). Published research includes 1. *Palestinian Women in Lebanon: Health, Work Opportunities and Attitudes* (1996); 2. *Domestic Violence Among Some Palestinian Refugee Communities in Lebanon* (2000); 3. *Base-line Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices*

KAP Survey on Family Relations with a Focus on Domestic Violence among Najdeh Beneficiaries (2001). Staff members are women from the Palestinian refugee community.

Dir: Haifa Jammal
Afeef Al-Tebi Street
Al-Ameen Bldg, 3rd floor
Beirut, Lebanon
Tel: 961-1-302-079
FAX: 961-1-703-358
E-mail: association@najdeh.org.lb
Website: albadia@cyberia.net.lb

AUSTCARE

The Australian Embassy funds Australian NGO's working with Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, including the following projects: **vocational training, pre-school education, cottage industry training program, computer training, small grants to local NGO's, nursing training.** In partnership with the Women's Humanitarian Organization (NGO operated by Palestinian women in Lebanon), AUSTCARE has funded women's empowerment workshops on parenting, legal and social issues; supported); and are currently assessing the organizational needs of women's health organizations.

Council of Lebanese Women

P.O. Box 14/5640 Beirut, Lebanon

Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World (1973)

Activities fall into four areas: Academic (research, courses, conferences, seminars); Sponsored Research (women and environment, labor force, media, education, literature); Documentation Center (books, periodicals, unpublished material in French, Arabic, English); Action Programs (income-generating projects, rural development, Basic Living Skills); Publications (English and Arabic on many topics).

Dir: Mona Khalaf
Beirut University College
P.O. Box 13/5053
Beirut, Lebanon
E-mail: iwsaw@lau.edu.lb
Website: <http://20%www.lau.edu.lb/centers-institute/iwsaw.html>

League of Lebanese Women's Rights (1947)

Permanent Arab Court to Resist Violence Against Women

Dir. Wata Mousseitbe
P.O. Box 14/5140
Beirut, Lebanon
Tel/FAX: 961-1-817-820
E-mail: llwr@t-net.com.lb

National Committee for Follow-up of Women (1993)

In preparing for the Beijing Conference and following up on the implementation of the Declaration, this organization has implemented three programs: **National Women's Strategy** (1996); **Pact for Elimination of All Types of Discrimination Against Women** (1998); **Progress re: CEDAW** (1999); **Lebanese Women Today** (2000).

P.O. Box 13/6576 - Beirut, Lebanon

Tel: 961-1-36-01-35

Fax: 961-1-35-62-38

E-mail: info@cfuwi.org

Website: <http://www.cfuwi.org>

Popular Aid for Relief and Development

Dir: Rita Hamden

P.O. Box 14/5149 Beirut, Lebanon

Tel: 961-7-725-277 (Sidon)

YWCA

Programs, open to all women, include vocational training, literacy classes, and protective legislation for women working in industry.

Tel: 961-1-369-635

Fax: 961-1-374-198

E-mail: info@lebanonywca.org

Syria

General Union of Syrian Women (1967)

UNIFEM

Programs include **CEDAW Capacity Building** (public awareness of women's rights) and **Making the Community More Sensitive Toward Women's Legal Rights and Violence Against Women**.

Cf. Contact information for Jordan (regional office)

Appendix 6

Gender & Development Needs from a Gender Perspective

Since men and women have different social roles, then it is logical to assume that they have developed different needs related to those roles and the social standing stemming from their gender characteristics. In other words, men and women have gender needs intrinsically linked to the gender roles determined for them within their society. We can also distinguish between Practical Gender Needs and Strategic Gender Needs.

Practical Gender Needs (PGNs) - refer to the realization of tasks assigned to women and men according to gender division of labour. It addresses short-term daily needs

Tackling PGNs

- Ensuring income for women through small loans for traditional enterprises.
- Decreasing women's workload by providing nearby water pumps, wheat mills or simple domestic ovens.
- Improving health through the provision of services.
- Primary health care, family planning services, health education and provision of clean water.
- Offering elementary education opportunities.

such as food, water and energy needs. Meeting these needs is generally associated with women's responsibilities.

Strategic Gender Needs (SGNs) - refer to the change in women's social status, which would mean a change from the prevailing image of their dependence on men. Whereas PGNs deals with gender roles existing at the present time, SGNs moves beyond the present roles and aim to change them in order to achieve greater equity and justice among men and women.

Following are examples of dealing with women's PGNs and SGNs:

Tackling SGNs

- Guaranteeing production tools/ mechanisms, land ownership, shelter, capital/ assets and loans.
- Creating an environment that allows women free choices in reproductive health.
- Offering equal work opportunities for men and women, as well as offering necessary training for women to gain access to job opportunities in the formal labor force, get promoted and reach decision-making positions.
- Encouraging women to gain access to all forms of knowledge, including industrial technology, agricultural extension services and legal literacy.
- Drafting and enforcing legislation that ensures equality and justice for women.
- Encouraging women's participation in political life.
- Encouraging women's work in civil society organizations, especially those concerned with women's rights and empowerment in the economic, social and political spheres.