



# **Palestinian Women's Participation in Local Government**

## **Evaluating Experiences and Future Implications**

**July 2016**

**To every Palestinian woman fighting for freedom, justice and equality  
this research is affectionately dedicated**

The Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development publishes this research on the participation of Palestinian women in local governance in order to shed some light on their experience in political participation; distill lessons learned; deepen their participation in public spaces and activate their role in local government. To that end, PWWSD relies on its own cumulative experience and initiatives with women through shadow councils and capacity building in the fields of campaigning, advocacy and lobbying; aiming for significant transformation towards the implementation of gender equality in the field of political participation, which correlates with the enhancement of democracy as an incubator for gender equality.

**PWWSD President  
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# Chapter One: Background and Methodology

## Introduction

Palestinian women play multiple roles and their status is affected by complex internal and external factors. Women continuously contribute to the national struggle, and to seeking the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. They also participate in the development process and in guaranteeing equality and justice in rights and duties. In this context, women have reached significant achievements in the fields of education and health as well as in societal and political participation. Women have also managed to achieve higher levels of participation in many public national councils and bodies such as the Palestinian Legislative Council, Palestinian National Council, and Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization. In addition, many women hold senior positions in Palestinian National Authority (PNA) institutions, such as ministers, governors, judges, and ambassadors.

One field that has shown notable progress is Palestinian women's participation in local government, where the National Development Plan (2014-2016) emphasized the need to strengthen local government and women's participation in it. This, in addition to the Cross-Sectoral National Gender Strategy: Promoting Gender Equality and Equity (2011-2016) which aimed at strengthening women's participation in national and local decision-making positions. The Strategic Framework for The Ministry of Local Government (2010-2014) also stressed the need to consider gender when preparing and implementing the ministry's general strategic plan as well as the need to empower local bodies to hold active institutional powers and encouraging them to collaborate with private and public sectors as well as civil society organizations (CSOs) to achieve sustainable development. This aims to achieve stronger democracy, transparency, and participation in local government<sup>(1)</sup>. The law also allocates a 20% quota of local council seats for women, which has contributed to strengthening their role in local government candidacy and membership.

The latest local elections in the West Bank (2012) resulted in bringing in 738 women out of 3505 as participating member of local council (about 21%), where women formed 20% of elected members and 22% of members selected by acclamation. Additionally, 42.71% of voters were women<sup>(2)</sup>. Moreover, women joined many technical committees and capacity-building programs organized by the Ministry of Local Government as well as local and international institutions. In this context, it has become necessary to evaluate previous years, and to extrapolate lessons learned from this

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(1) Ministry of Local Government, Strategic Framework for Ministry of Local Government, 2010-2014 [http://www.molg.pna.ps/studies/strategic\\_plan.pdf](http://www.molg.pna.ps/studies/strategic_plan.pdf)

(2) Central Elections Commission – Palestine, 2012 Local Elections Report, September 30, 2013 <https://www.elections.ps/ar/tabid/1044/language/en-US/Default.aspx>



rich and cumulative experience in order to plan more efficiently and improve performance in this field.

This report provides the results of a study conducted by Arab World for Research and Development (AWRAD) on behalf of the Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development (PWWSD), supported by the Strengthening Women in Decision Making in the Middle East Programme implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). A qualified team of researchers conducted the study, using multiple research methods, including conducting a field survey with a representative sample of the West Bank population in addition to utilizing in-depth interviews with knowledgeable experts who have a direct connection to topic of study as well as holding intensive deliberation workshops with experts on women's issues, women's institutions, and local councils. A field research was also conducted between February 7 to March 3, 2016. This report provides a brief legal and historical context on the topic of women's participation in local government and analyzes the surrounding environment influencing the nature of this participation. It then presents survey results on the most significant topics of women's participation using the outcomes of in-depth interviews and intensive workshops, which give valuable additions to the analysis. It also analyzes the experiences of councilwomen and evaluates a number of initiatives supporting women in local government in addition to providing a number of lessons learned from these initiatives. The report then concludes with suggested recommendations for strengthening women's participation in local government.

## Objectives

This study aims to highlight and analyze the reality of Palestinian women's participation in local council work in Palestine as well as evaluating the practices serving to increase their active participation and motivating women's institutions to develop and raise their level of participation. In general, the study aims to:

- Contribute to the improvement of local government policies and the performance of CSOs working to improve and strengthen women's participation in local government.
- Contribute to raising the awareness of community and political parties of the importance of women's political participation.
- Contribute to the encouragement women to participate in local government, by highlighting the most significant achievements and challenges.
- Provide suggestions and recommendations on mechanisms to increase women's participation in local government through the democratic process and elections.

### **The research objectives of this study are to:**

- Provide a legal and historical background on women's participation in politics in general and local government in particular.
- Measure and analyze community attitudes towards women's participation in local government, especially after two rounds of local elections.
- Evaluate women's experiences in local government, particularly in local councils.

- Analyze initiatives and projects aiming to support and integrate women in local government, evaluate their experience, and highlight the lessons learned for more efficient future planning.
- Evaluate the gaps affecting women's status in local government and barriers facing female candidates for local council membership.
- Provide recommendations and outcomes related to developing women's participation in local government<sup>(3)</sup>.

### Methodology

This study adopts a participatory, comprehensive and objective research approach. It also integrates quantitative and qualitative research methods and tools. Some of these tools are as follows:

**A. Literature Review:** the AWRAD team reviewed the available literature on women's participation in the work of all local governing bodies. The main focus was on reviewing the documents and reports published by the Ministry of Local Government and data from the Central Elections Commission (CEC) on women's participation in the work of all local councils. A review was also conducted of the reports and studies published by local, regional and global institutions and research centers. (See list of references in Appendix 1)

**B. Quantitative Data:** a field survey was conducted to poll citizens on women's participation in local councils through

a representative sample of Palestinian cities, towns and villages in the West Bank. The following section summarizes the field survey methodology:

#### • Survey

The survey was designed based on the agreed-upon research principles and following in-depth deliberation with PWWSD experts. The survey design reflected several themes, including the reality of Palestinian women's participation, performance evaluation of local councils, levels of women's participation in local elections as well as the influences of quotas, women's institutions, political parties, and other institutions related to women's status and local government. (For survey questions and field study results, see Appendix 2)

#### • Sample

The survey targeted male and female citizens of the West Bank above 18 years of age. The sample consisted of 784 citizens with equal numbers of women and men. The survey was conducted in 45 locations representative of local councils, with a varied population from the northern, central, and southern areas of the West Bank. The sample locations were selected randomly to be representative of all Palestinian villages, towns, and cities. This was done using the lists available at the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics and the Central Elections Commission. Appendix 3 shows that the sample had a distribution representative of all social segments.

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(3) This study comes as a continuation and update of a study by PWWSD: Women in Local Councils – Reality and Challenges, 2009, prepared by Waseem Abu-Fasha

## • Field Work

Field work for this survey started on February 7, 2016 and concluded on March 3, 2016. The research was conducted by 35 individuals including field researchers, supervisors and data entry specialists. Prior to starting the field work, an intensive training program was implemented in a one-day workshop. To guarantee the highest level of quality and professionalism in the field work, AWDAR used many methods including assigning supervisors to each team in every geographic location. Supervisors also conducted supervisory visits following the conclusion of a study sample. In general, the field work went smoothly and without any obstacles.

## • Data Entry, Organization, and Analysis

The data was fully processed by the Data Entry and Statistics team at AWRAD. The team created a codebook for the interviews, and the coding process followed the international criteria adopted by AWRAD center. Data entry took place at the center and was performed by only 2 individuals to guarantee confidentiality and quality. Then a review was conducted of all data correction papers and the research team checked all information collected from the interviews. This was followed by an additional series of tests using a program for checking data, where each survey was reviewed to ensure internal data consistency. Finally, SPSS software was used for data tabulation and analysis.

**C. Qualitative Data:** to supplement quantitative data and form a deeper analysis, qualitative data was collected through a number of research tools:

- **In-Depth Interviews:** 14 interviews were conducted with a diverse group of experts on the topics of women's issues and local government. The group represented relevant parties, such as the Ministry of Local Government, Central Elections Commission, local councilwomen and chairpersons as well as representatives of local CSOs and international institutions supporting local government. A special guidebook was used to procure the needed information. (For the list of interviews, see Appendix 4)
- **Focus Groups:** AWRAD organized 3 intensive workshops in the West Bank, targeting 45 representatives of local bodies of CSOs, youth organizations, and women's institutions. One workshop targeted young men and women who are members of youth councils in Tulkarim. The second workshop targeted shadow council members and feminist activists in the Ramallah and Al-Bireh governorate. The third workshop targeted local councilwomen and representatives in the southern West Bank. (See Appendix 5 for a list of workshops, and Appendix 6 for a list of guiding questions for interviews and workshops)
- **Study Review:** The study was reviewed by a group of experts and representatives of relevant institutions who provided in-depth comments on it. Changes were made to the study based on the participants' notes. (A list of changes can be viewed in the appendices)

In general, the research process went smoothly and without major obstacles with one exception, and that was the difficulty of procuring accurate and comprehensive information on the different programs and initiatives available, which was needed to analyze these programs and to conceptualize their future development.

## Chapter Two: Background and Context Analysis of Women's Participation in Local Government

### Introduction

Studying women's participation in local government cannot be separated from social, cultural, historical, and legal factors. It also cannot be separated from the national liberation context specific to the question of Palestine. The establishment of the PNA had an impact on the institutionalization of women's rights, and on the process of developing national laws and strategies consistent with the Palestinian Basic Law, in line with international legislative frameworks and conventions on the one hand, and having to adapt to the relative decline in the role of civil society in sociopolitical development on the other. This section highlights the political and historical context of Palestinian women's participation in political life in general and local government in particular. It then discusses the factors affecting women's participation, be it positively or negatively, including the limited nature of the democratic and electoral process as well as the social and legal limitations related to national policies and plans<sup>(4)</sup>.

### Political and Historical Context of Palestinian Women's Participation

Palestinian women's participation in political work goes back to the late 1800s. Later on, this work continued with women holding political conferences, founding charities, and joining demonstrations against Jewish immigration and the British Mandate. This was later followed with the forming of women's unions whose constitutions affirmed women's right to political work<sup>(5)</sup>. Women also made major contributions to the 1936-1939 revolution. Following the 1948 Nakba, the unstable Palestinian situation exacerbated the challenges facing women. However, they continued to be politically active by establishing charities to support orphans, displaced people, and refugees. The major focus of these women's groups was on health and education services for women and families and raising the level of education of girls<sup>(6)</sup>. The feminist movement continued its social and humanitarian struggle by providing services to Palestinian families in refugee camps in Palestine and abroad. After the formation of the General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW) along with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1964, women joined all PLO institutions, and

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(4) For an overview of political participation and women, see a study conducted on behalf of PWWSD: Strengthening Women's Political Participation in Palestine, A Baseline Research Study, January 2016.

(5) Abeer Haidar, 2013, Link: <http://bit.ly/1Nm59OB>

(6) Islah Jad, 2000, p. 55

participated directly in the Palestinian revolution<sup>(7)</sup>.

Women's participation in PLO institutions manifested itself most significantly in the first National Council, held on May 29, 1964 in which 10 women represented Palestinian women's committees in Jordan, and 11 women represented Gaza and other Palestinian communities in the Arab world. A total of 21 women out of 422 members were invited to participate in the first National Council<sup>(8)</sup>. Palestinian women's participation was not limited to politics only; they were also heavily involved in labor and trade unions<sup>(9)</sup>.

Women's participation and representation experienced progress and decline throughout history. The start of the first Intifada in 1987 contributed to strengthening women's political roles, where they actively joined demonstrations, confrontations with Israeli armed forces, distribution of leaflets and publications, in addition to visiting the families of those killed in the confrontations, the wounded and detainees. Women also established grassroots and community institutions and frameworks. As a result, unified efforts emerged at the time by the feminist wings of political parties along with the Supreme Council for Women. However, the relationship between the feminist movement and political parties remained conflicted basically because of the parties' irresponsiveness to feminist demands to incorporate women into their agendas and organizational structures. Following the establishment of the PNA, a stronger focus on social development issues and demands emerged, which contributed to the de-

velopment of existing women's centers and institutions and the establishment of new ones, focusing on societal issues including violence, job equality, raising awareness regarding women's social and legislative issues, as well as political participation and decision-making<sup>(10)</sup>. In the 1990s, the women's movement was involved in and affected by the impact of the Oslo Accords and the challenges that arose as a result of the agreement. Despite the low representation of women in the Oslo preparatory phase, it is worth noting that "women's awareness was a savior for the feminist movement. It opened new opportunities and programs, and focused on legislation, media, development, employment, education, culture, and health."<sup>(11)</sup>

### **Establishment of the National Authority and Utilizing International Frameworks**

The PNA was established following the Oslo Accords of 1993. Among the first PLO and PNA priorities was establishing institutions in order to make progress in the development process, which aimed at establishing an independent Palestinian state. This establishment phase developed and accelerated and the institutionalization of women's issues started to become a part of PNA policy. Women also began to join the legislative council, with representation rising from 4% in 1996 to 13.7% in 2006 after instituting the quota system. Additionally, ministries and government bodies began establishing women's departments (later called "gender units") and the Ministry of Women's Affairs. Many international agreements were signed including the Convention on the Elimination of

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(7) Encyclopedia Palestina, Link: <http://bit.ly/1YIIMVu>

(8) Baker Abu-Baker. Link: <http://bit.ly/1WfbuNA>

(9) Previous reference

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(10) *Islah Jad*, 2000, p. 55

(11) Previous reference

all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 2009, which now constitutes a pivotal reference for legislating equal rights for women and men. Additionally, the strategies of the PNA, declared in many of its documents, affirms the continuous institutionalization of human rights, basic freedoms, citizenship rights and legal protection without discrimination, under an independent and active justice system and a professional national security establishment, in addition to strengthening governmental and community institutions and developing their capacity to provide community services efficiently, supporting societal participation, decentralized decision-making, and public accountability<sup>(12)</sup>.

The Cross-Sectoral National Gender Strategy: Promoting Gender Equality and Equity (2011-2016) was published by the Ministry of Women's Affairs to affirm the PNA's commitment to implementing the principles of justice, respect for human rights, and actively combating all forms of gender discrimination. This strategy constitutes a tool for fulfilling the real needs of Palestinian women, and removing the barriers preventing them from holding an equal position in society<sup>(13)</sup>.

## **Palestinian Legislation and International Conventions**

The principle of equal opportunity and gender equality was addressed in many local and international laws and conventions. Article 9 of the 2003 Amended Palestinian Basic Law states "Palestinians shall be equal before the

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(12) National Development Plan 2014-2016. Link: <http://bit.ly/1VHWoRz>

(13) Cross-Sectoral National Gender Strategy: Promoting Gender Equality and Equity, Ministry of Women's Affairs.

law and the judiciary without distinction based upon race, sex, color, religion, political views or disability."<sup>(14)</sup>The law affirms the following rights:

1. To form, establish and join political parties in accordance with the law.
2. To form and establish unions, associations, societies, clubs and popular institutions in accordance with the law.
3. To vote, to nominate candidates and to run as candidates for election in order to elect representatives through public balloting in accordance with the law<sup>(15)</sup>.

In April 2014, president Mahmoud Abbas signed CEDAW (1979), which calls for the elimination of all violence against women, and calls upon party states to take temporary measures aiming to expedite real equality between men and women, eliminating discrimination against women in political and public life<sup>(16)</sup>.

## **Developments in Local Government**

The aforementioned developments coincided with the establishment of the Ministry of Local Government, which aimed to change the reality of local governing bodies. The Strategic Framework for The Ministry of Local Government (2010-2014) was created based on the ministry's vision for building a sensible local government system able to achieve sustainable development with active community participation. Among the strategy's objectives was provid-

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(14) 2003 Amended Palestinian Basic Law: <http://bit.ly/1QGuKkZ>

(15) The Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights, 2005. Link: <http://bit.ly/1NI4iOI>

(16) CEDAW, 1979: <http://bit.ly/1bjVxun>

ing a suitable work environment that considers gender needs<sup>(17)</sup>. The gender unit also formulated its message aiming to increase women's participation in local councils, working on strengthening women's participation, integrating gender issues in ministry policies and plans and bridging the gender gap in all local government domains.

Despite the ministry's approach, developments were slow and remained, in many cases, unfinished. On many occasions, the ministry replaced both elected and appointed local councils with new members from powerful families or with political influence<sup>(18)</sup>. However, the Palestinian legislature later corrected these practices and reinstated elections as the democratic approach for appointing officials.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Local Government was assigned the task of developing and discussing the "1996 Palestinian Local Council Law Project" in the legislative council, in cooperation with jurists, local council members and chairpersons, representatives of the Ministry of Local Government and civil society activists. The final draft of the law was formulated on December 16, 1996.<sup>(19)</sup> This law allowed men and women to vote and run for office. A year later, the "Palestinian Local Council Law Project" was ratified in December of 1997<sup>(20)</sup>. In reviewing this law, it was found to broaden the authority and duties of local governing bodies in many aspects of public life in Palestine.

In 1998, the Minister of Local Government issued and circulated a letter requiring the appointment of at least one woman in each local and municipal council. However, the letter was not binding so council members and chairmen largely disregarded it. Overall, 61 women were appointed out of 3739 members with a percentage of (1.6%), all in the West Bank as the Gaza Strip municipalities completely ignored the ministerial letter<sup>(21)</sup>.

### Amendments to Election Law

Law No. 5 of 1996 was amended three times. The first amendment came on November 30, 2004 to state that the council chairperson shall be elected by its members, and it allocated a minimum of two seats for women in each local council. Following this amendment, elections were held in two rounds. The first round was held on December 23, 2004 in the West Bank and on January 27, 2005 in the Gaza Strip. 100 women ran for office in this round. The second round was held on May 5, 2005 in the West Bank and Gaza Strip using the simple majority system (districts). On August 15, 2005,

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(17) Strategic Framework for the Ministry of Local Government 2010-2014. Link: <http://bit.ly/22Q7a7F>

(18) Raed Farid Muqbel. 2010 p 41. Link: <http://bit.ly/1qYrQP8>

(19) Kamal Ibrahim Alawna, 2009. Link: <http://bit.ly/1Xl6wrv>

(20) Previous reference

(21) Reema Katana Nazzal, 2006. Link: <http://bit.ly/22N8FTS>



Law No. 10 of 2005 was ratified, and it switched to the proportional representation system (electoral slates). It employed an affirmative action strategy, allocating guaranteed seats for women in local councils, where article 17 of Law No. 10 of 2005 stated that women's representation in local councils shall be no less than 20%:

- a. One woman shall be among the first three names.
- b. One woman shall be among the next four names.
- c. One woman shall be among the remaining names.

The third amendment came on August 19, 2005, which reconsidered women's quota, allocating at least 2 seats for women in local councils, instead of 20%. Where article 17 of amended Local Council Election Law No. 12 of 2005 states the following:

1. In the local council in which the number of seats does not exceed 13, women's representation should be no less than two seats:
  - a. One woman shall be among the first five names
  - b. One woman shall be among the next five names
2. In the local council in which the number of seats exceeds 13, a seat shall be allocated for women among the five names that follow paragraph 1 (b) mentioned above;
3. Local councils in which the number of voters is less than 1000 according to the final tabulation of voters are excluded from provisions in paragraph 1 mentioned above. In such a case, the option of selecting seats allocated for women among the candidates shall be left to the electoral slates.
4. If a seat allocated for a woman in the local council becomes vacant, the woman that follows in the sequence of seats allocated for women on the same list to which she belongs shall replace her.

Legal and legislative development is an extremely important part of democratization and ensuring representation of different groups. In this context, the absence of an active role by the legislative council negatively impacts feminist demands and obstructs any achievements in the pursuit of change and equality.

## 2004-2005 Local Elections

The PNA's decision to hold local elections on May 10, 2004 constituted a historic turning point in Palestinian democracy, despite Palestinian society's varied perceptions towards women's political participation<sup>(22)</sup>. In looking at women's representation in these elections, it was found that the first and second rounds were based on a majority system and with a 2-seat quota for women (about 15% of allocated seats). As for the third and fourth rounds of elections, they were held based on a new proportional representation system, and with a change to women's quota, where 3 seats were allocated in councils exceeding 13 members.

According to data from the Higher Committee for Local Elections, 51 women ran for office in the 2004 local elections. However, after instating women's quota (20% of council members or 2 members in each council) the number of female candidates rose to about 150 women in the West Bank and 82 women in the Gaza Strip<sup>(23)</sup>. Overall, out of 2732 members, 537 were women (reaching 19.6%) in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, including 135 competing women candidates and 402 women appointed by the quota system. This indicates that the quota system also encouraged women to run for office<sup>(24)</sup>.

It appears that legislative developments in women's participation in local government had a major impact on female voter turnout. Data from the Central Elections Commission shows almost equal percentages of male and female voters in the four rounds of the 2004-2005 local elections, as follows:

- First round: (52.5%) male voters, (47.5%) female voters
- Second round: (51.5%) male, (48.5%) female
- Third round: remained the same with (51.6%) male, (48.4%) female
- Fourth round: saw a wider gap with (53.5%) male, (46.5%) female<sup>(25)</sup>

The table below shows the four rounds of the 2004-2005 local elections, the number of male and female winners, the allocated quota, and competing female candidates for each round, according to data from the Central Elections Commission.

(22) Kamal Ibrahim Alawna, 2009. Link: <http://bit.ly/1Xl6wrv>

(23) Reema Katana Nazzal, 2006. Link: <http://bit.ly/22N8FTS>

(24) Imad Mousa, 2015. Link: <http://bit.ly/1rnya33>

(25) Central Elections Commission Report, 2004-2005. Link: <http://bit.ly/1SsYMIl>

**Table (1): 2004-2005 Local Election Results**

Round	Winners	Female	Male	Quota	Competing
1st	424	73	351	34	39
2nd	864	167	697	71	96
3rd	1014	209	805	209	0
4th	430	88	342	88	0
Total	2732	537	2195	402	135

## 2012 Local Elections

On May 14, 2012, president Mahmoud Abbas issued a presidential decree entitled “Decision by Law” on amending Local Council Election Law No. 10 of 2005. This was in preparation for holding local elections across the country in the following period. The Minister of Local Government declared at the time that amending local election law came to help the government make a decision that would expedite holding the elections. The amendment allowed holding elections in rounds if not possible to do so in one day, as the original law stated before the amendment<sup>(26)</sup>. The 2012 elections were held only in the West Bank, unlike 2004-2005, but both were held in four rounds.

After the first and second complementary local elections, the number of electoral slates accepted by the elections commission reached 673; after rejecting 33 lists and the withdrawal of 44 lists, the total number of lists ended up with 651 slates running in the elections from all political affiliations in addition to independents.

In terms of women’s representation in the West Bank, the implementation of the quota system helped women reach local council positions. However, the increase cannot be considered a proportional breakthrough as men’s participation in elections remained higher than women’s. Voter turnout consisted of 43% women and 57% men. Compared to the 2004-2005 local elections, data shows a rise in candidacy rates, from 19% in 2004 to 24% in 2012, while the number of councilwomen in the West Bank increased to 21%.

The democratic process was clearly affected in these elections, where acclamation was implemented in 61% of local councils by agreeing on a unified list or by absence of competition, and 4.5% of councils in the West Bank did not hold

(26) News Article “Presidential Decree on Amending Local Election Law”, Date: May 17, 2012. Link: <http://bit.ly/26eQRFP>

elections<sup>(27)</sup>. The number of women selected by acclamation stood at 467 women out of 2124 members (nearly 22%).

In the city of Hebron and the village of Safa, all-woman electoral lists ran for election. However, neither of them gained enough votes to advance. There was also a decline in women chairing local councils, where only one woman won mayoral office (Bethlehem Municipality), when previously 3 women had chaired municipal councils in the municipalities of Ramallah, BaniZeid Al-Gharbia, and Abwein<sup>(28)</sup>.

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(27) Central Elections Commission, 2012; Link: <http://bit.ly/1rnq9Lu>

(28) Miftah, 2013. <http://bit.ly/26gbJfP>

## Chapter Three: Analyzing Public Opinion (Opportunities and Barriers)

### Introduction

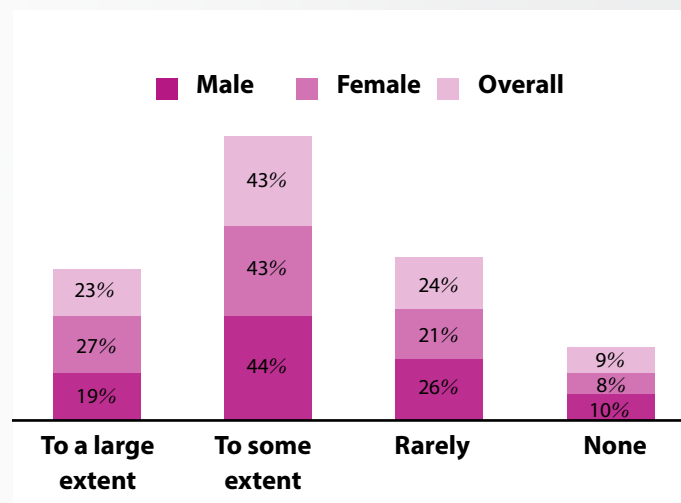
This section provides an analysis of the field study results, both quantitative and qualitative, on societal perspectives and the experiences of local councilwomen. This is done by trying to answer the research questions on opportunities and challenges, evaluating women's participation in the latest local elections, evaluating women's role in local government, evaluating the performance of local councils and councilwomen, reviewing women's experiences in councils, studying attitudes towards women holding leading positions in local councils, evaluating the role of the Ministry of Local Government as well as governmental and non-governmental institutions in developing women's participation, reviewing the policies and programs aiming to strengthen women's participation, determining the gaps, barriers, and challenges affecting women's participation, and studying the main initiatives for developing their participation in local government. Results are categorized as follows:

### Limited and Unequal Opportunities to Join Local Councils

Despite the major progress regarding women's participation in local governing bodies, the survey results show that there is still a widespread belief that women's opportunities are not equal to men's. One third of male and female survey respondents believe that women do not have enough freedom to join local councils, while 67% of respondents believe that women have the freedom to join. As the figure below shows, more women felt this freedom than men, with 70% of women believing so (27%

to a large extent, 43% to some extent), and 63% of men (19% to a large extent, 44% to some extent).

**Figure (1): Percentage of those who believe women have the freedom to join local councils, by gender**

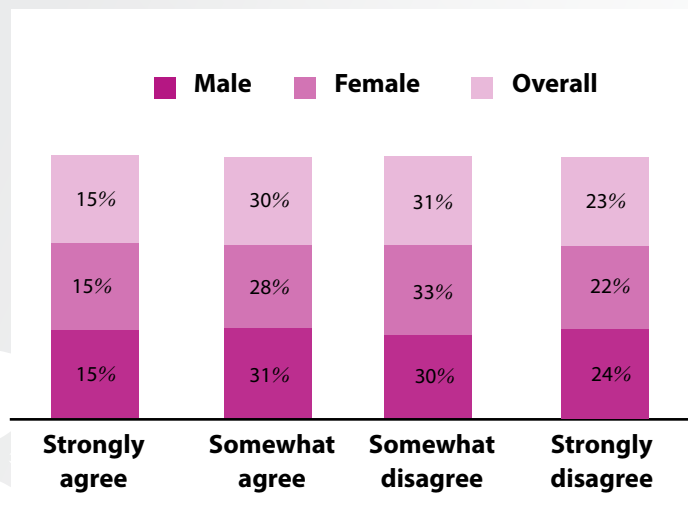


When estimating the level of freedom women have to join local councils, interview and workshop results confirm a difference between women's and men's perception. According to an activist at a women's institution, "women face a number of cultural and social barriers when practicing their freedoms in public life." Other researchers on gender and elections saw that the negative perception "stems from religion, culture and customs that keep women locked up at home in most cases." Family and reproductive burdens limit women's freedom of movement, according to one

councilwoman, who says, "I sometimes just need to rest, after intense pressures and resistance to me joining the council. I cannot abandon my children and my home. So I have to compromise on my role outside the home, especially that my husband sometimes makes it difficult for me to move freely."

Data also shows that there is widespread skepticism as to whether women and men have actual equal opportunities. It shows a widespread belief (55%) that the opportunities available to women are not equal to men's regarding candidacy for local council membership. 30% believe that opportunities are somewhat equal, while 15% believe that opportunities are largely equal. There is not much difference between men and women's perception of available opportunities.

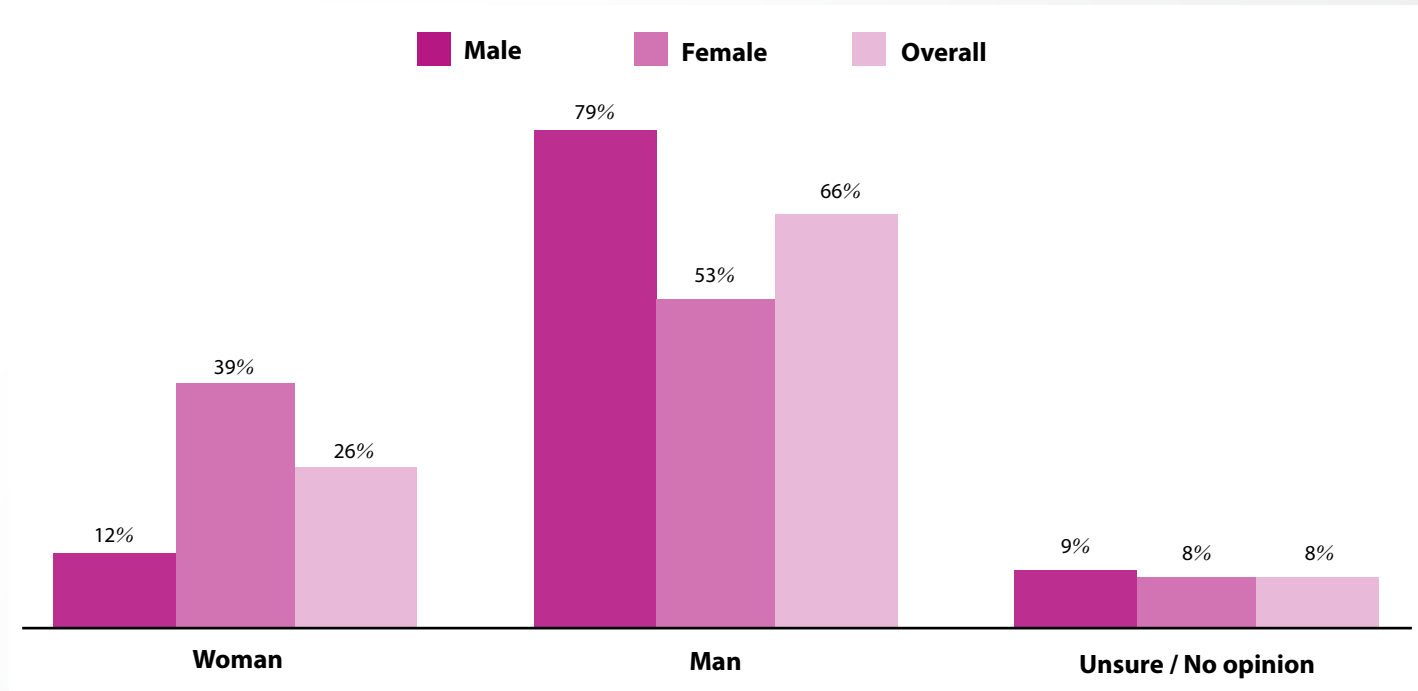
**Figure (2) Percentage of those who believe that men and women have equal opportunities to run for local council membership, by gender**



Therefore, the belief that actual equal opportunities are absent requires the implementation of the quota system in order to increase women's shares. According to an official in an electoral institution, "running in all-woman electoral lists will not succeed because many people will not vote for a woman out of principle. No one says they won't vote for a man because he's a man, but there's a majority that won't vote for a woman because she's a woman, or they set impossible conditions to find justification for not voting for women." One youth council activist says that "there wasn't much chance for women to win without the law forcing local political bodies to integrate women in their lists." Although a number of women exceeding the allocated percentage have won open elections, and without quotas in previous rounds, the quota system has increased women's chances. It has left no place for doubt, except in a few locations where women were forcibly excluded from joining in a number of towns in which acclamation was used to select the lists without voting.

It is not unusual that we have yet to reach equal opportunity at a time when women are still perceived in a discriminatory manner because of their gender. The majority still prefers to see men in political positions even when equally qualified. When asked to choose between a man and a woman with equal qualifications for local council membership, two thirds of respondents stated that they would choose a man, and one fourth of them said they would choose a woman. In this context, a huge gap between women and men was also noted, where 79% of men and 53% of women would choose a man (a gender gap of about 26%), whereas 12% of men and 39% of women would prefer a councilwoman.

**Figure (3): Preference of men over women for local council membership, by gender**



The societal attitude towards women’s political participation still devalues their role and ability to hold local council positions. Sometimes, even women themselves agree with this widespread notion towards women’s societal role. Discrimination against women is not limited to preferring men over equally qualified women, it is also reflected in the opinion of about half of the respondents who are against women chairing local councils. The gender gap is very clear here, where 57% of women support a woman chairing a local council (with 40% against), while 40% of men support local council chairwomen (with 55% against).

Discrimination against women is a multidimensional phenomenon, socially, culturally, economically, and politically. Results clearly show that there is a complex web of factors suffocating women, and when they break free from one, another emerges. In addition to the discrimination indicators mentioned in the previous sections, survey results also show the impact of the surrounding environment on women’s participation in local government.

## Social Factors

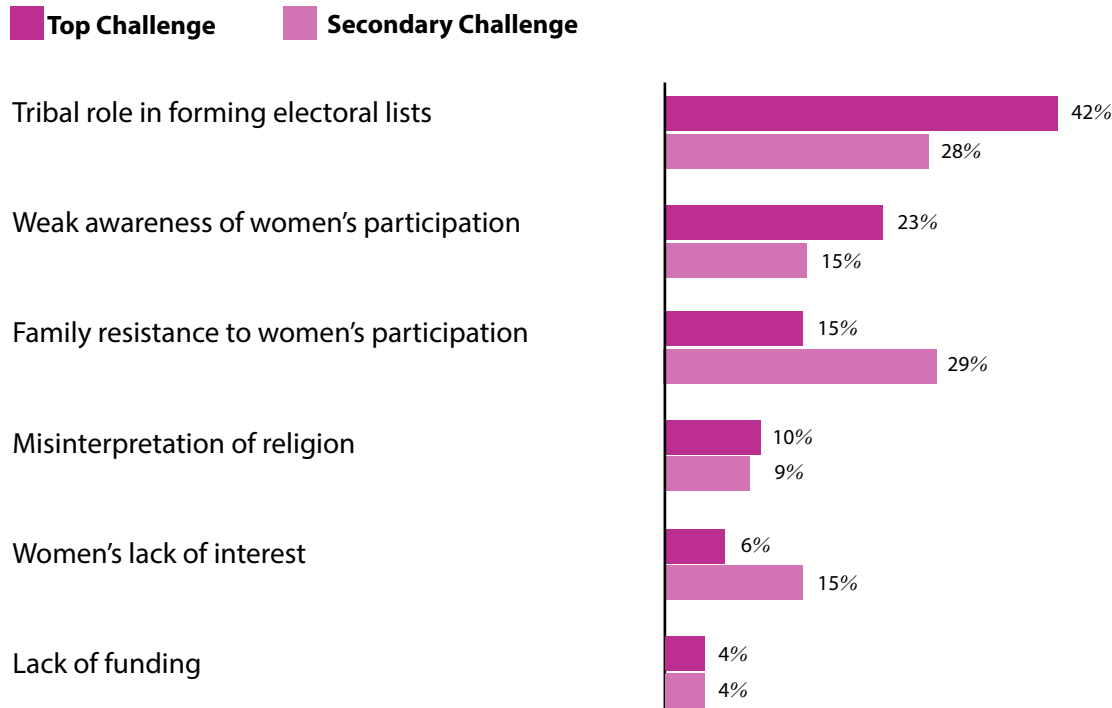
55% of respondents confirm that society discriminates against women, and another 27% somewhat agree with that as well, while 17% do not acknowledge any discrimination. More women acknowledge this discrimination however, with 61% of women and 50% of men agreeing with the statement. In addition, 45% of respondents agreed that men still do not take women in local councils seriously, with 26% of others somewhat agreeing as well.

Some see discrimination in terms of women receiving education and life experience. Despite higher education rates being nearly the same among men and women, 54% of respondents see that "limited education for women" is an important factor in hindering women's participation. Here, "education" may broadly refer to societal and public experience, where 60% see that "lack of experience in public affairs among women" is an important factor limiting their participation. Some also believe that women lack the skills needed to participate in local councils. It is worth noting here that talking about women's attitudes, experiences and awareness may not differ greatly from men and their perception of themselves in local councils. We also need to be aware that there are double standards and impossible demands on women when evaluating their capabilities, experience and what they have to offer for local council membership.

In general, respondents see that family biases are the most important factor limiting women's ability to participate, adding to that low societal awareness of women's participation, misinterpretation of religion and Sharia, women's lack of interest in participation, and lack of funding, as shown in the figure below:



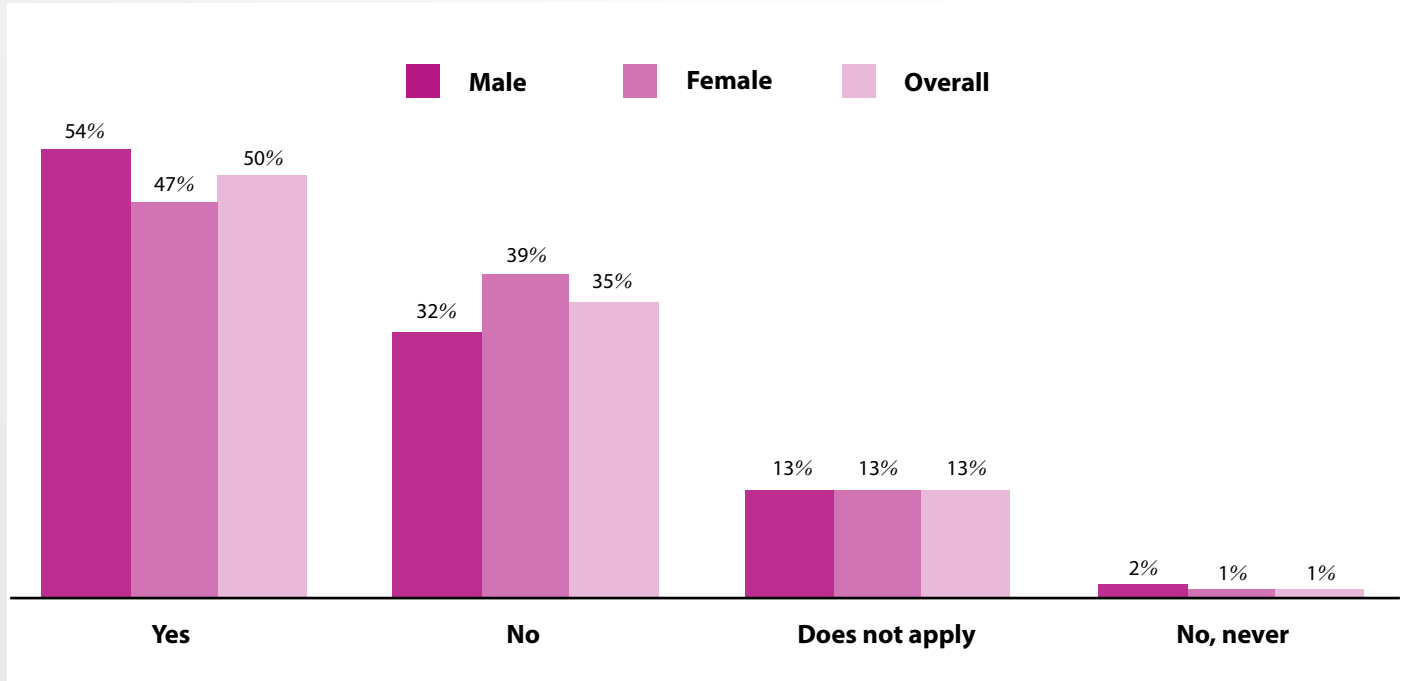
**Figure (4): Main factors limiting women’s participation**



### Participation in local elections

50% of respondents stated that they voted in the local elections of 2012, while 37% stated that they did not vote. 13% of respondents could not vote due to age ineligibility, or because elections were not held in their area, or council members were selected by acclamation. Survey results reflected the gender gap regarding active participation in local elections at the time, where 54% of men and 47% of women stated that they voted, while 33% of men and 40% of women stated that they did not vote.

**Figure (5): Percentage of those who indicated participation in the latest local elections, by gender**



In general, we cannot separate the level of voter turnout from the overall political, institutional, social, cultural, and legal factors. The following chapter explains this in more details, as it explores women’s experiences in local government.

## Chapter Four: Women's Experiences in Local Councils

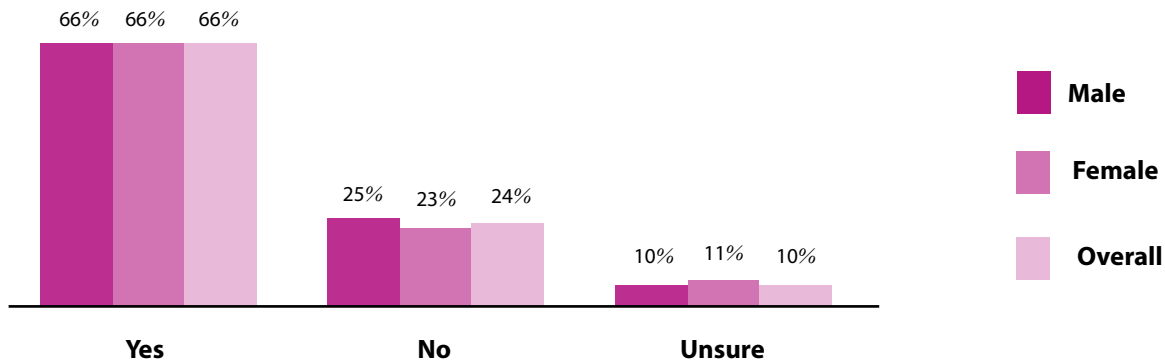
### Introduction

Women holding local council positions still face a complex reality with opportunities and barriers. Awareness of women's representation, roles, and performance remains partial. At the same time, women face familial and institutional difficulties when practicing their duties as active council members. This chapter provides an analysis of a number of issues related to women's experiences in local councils, in terms of awareness and valuation as well as the challenges they face.

### Awareness of Women's Representation

After many years of women's presence in local councils, it became clear that more than one third of survey respondents were unaware or unsure whether women were represented in local councils, while two thirds were aware of this fact. Among those who knew of women's representation in their local councils, 38% said they knew the councilwomen, while 49% said they somewhat knew them, and 13% said they did not know them. These percentages mean that one fourth of respondents generally knew councilwomen in their areas. This raises the question of whether community members are generally able to value women's roles in local government and their willingness to support them in the future. More women than men knew the councilwomen, with percentages of (42%) and (33%) respectively.

**Figure (6): Percentage of those who are aware of women's representation in local councils, by gender**

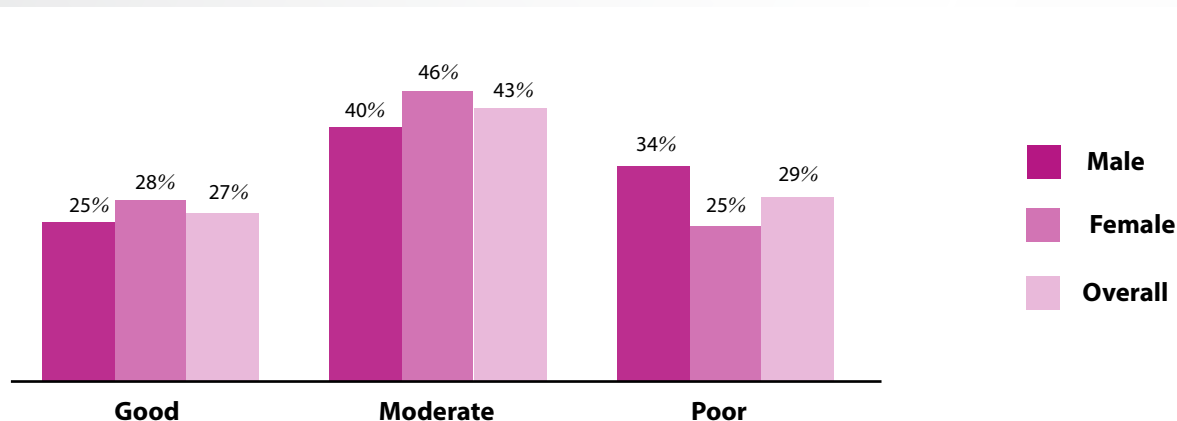


The reasons behind the lack of awareness of women's representation in local councils varied. One feminist activist said that councilwomen in her town were "inactive, as they consider their role finished as soon as they are members. This indicates that some of them were forced to join," while a youth activist stated that "most councilwomen have jobs and rarely have the time to conduct tours." The director of one municipality explained that discrimination against women contributes to their exclusion from the community because "councilwomen rarely show up to public activities and events, and the chairperson usually ends up speaking for the municipality." A gender researcher confirmed that "there is not much difference between councilmen and councilwomen as most of them are inactive. Also, the early resignation of many councilmen and councilwomen makes it easy for the community to forget them."

### Performance Evaluation of Local Councils and Members

The community's evaluation of the performance of local councils and council members will influence their chances of running and winning in the upcoming elections. Results generally show that local council evaluations range from "moderate" to "poor". 27% of respondents evaluated them positively, while 43% leaned towards moderate, and 29% gave them a poor evaluation. Women tend to give more positive evaluations than men, where 74% of women and 66% of men gave a positive or moderate evaluation of their local council.

**Figure (7): Performance evaluation of local councils by gender**



When evaluating a councilmember’s performance individually, three trends surface:

- Firstly, no more than one fifth of all respondents knew how to evaluate the performance of councilwomen, while only 4% said the same when evaluating men. This result confirms the low awareness of women’s representation in local councils, and therefore, these respondents were unable to judge their performance.
- Secondly, results show more negative evaluations of councilwomen, where one fourth of respondents evaluated councilwomen negatively, and only one fifth evaluated councilmen negatively.
- Thirdly, men seemed to give more negative evaluations to council members in general, where one third of males evaluated councilwomen negatively, while only one fourth of females evaluated councilwomen negatively. In addition, one fourth of males evaluated councilmen negatively, while only 16% of the females evaluated councilmen negatively. These results are consistent with most past surveys, where women tend to be more positive than men in similar situations. This may be the result of several factors: Firstly, women feel the effect of positive changes more significantly than men, which reflects the historical and continuous discrimination they face and their inability to gain equal rights. Secondly, women are able to sense positive changes in local government as the work of these councils affects them directly in domestic and reproductive roles that women still mostly perform on their own. Thirdly, groups that are more active in public spaces tend to expect bigger achievements, resulting in harsher criticism of all institutional performance. Despite public participation and higher expectations still being skewed towards men, women show more positivity most of the time.

**Table (2): Performance evaluation of local council members, by gender**

	Councilwomen Evaluation			Councilmen Evaluation		
	Male	Female	Overall	Male	Female	Overall
Good	12.0%	18.8%	15.4%	28.6%	31.2%	29.9%
Moderate	34.5%	35.8%	35.2%	43.5%	47.7%	45.6%
Poor	32.5%	25.1%	28.8%	25.1%	15.5%	20.3%
Unsure	21.0%	20.3%	20.6%	2.8%	5.6%	4.2%

In general, these results present two interconnected variables, the actual performance of councilwomen and society’s view of their performance as well as the councilwomen’s limited ability to show their achievements in the surrounding

environment. It is clear that the performance of councilwomen is connected to several factors: First is the overall performance of council members, as there is an overall dissatisfaction with local council performance in general. According to one workshop participant, "the councils with their male and female council members have not offered much to the community as their role keeps leaning more and more towards traditional and non-developmental services." Additionally, the resignation of councilmen and women from many councils lead to appointing an interim committee of mostly men, which carried out minimal local council tasks. At the same time, all the barriers gleaned from women's experiences, which will be mentioned in more detail later, made it difficult for women to perform their tasks as active members. One councilwoman confirmed that "all the direct and indirect barriers placed in my way, and other councilwomen's, made it difficult for us to fulfill our duties. The inferior treatment by some councilmen, direct discrimination and exclusion of women as well as attempts to force us to leave and considering us an unwanted burden, puts us in a difficult situation. We can either fight continuous battles that many of us are not prepared to do because of our other commitments and domestic roles, with no support from the ministry, or we can give up and leave. Some of us chose confrontation while many others decided to step down and avoid the conflicts." Some people explained poor performance with women's lack of experience in public affairs, as shown below in interviews and workshops:

- "The village councilwomen here have no support, and no ability to hustle and push back, because they lack experience." – feminist activist
- "Unfortunately, inexperienced women are nominated in local government because they are easily controlled" – manager at a municipality

Despite that, it is worth noting that unprecedented achievements and stellar performance have been exhibited by councilwomen in many cases, which are mentioned in different parts on this report. Councilwomen themselves attested to this in their testimonies, some of which are listed below:

- "All the projects now come from me, and I conduct many medical activities and arrange discounts for eye hospitals, as well as discounts for patients with osteoporosis, by coordinating with the specialists." – local councilwoman
- "I invited the council members to meet to discuss changing the water tanks at the boys' school because they were unsanitary, and fixing the glass panels of the girls' school. Work started on fixing both problems the following day." – local councilwoman
- "We fulfill many people's needs, instead of waiting for councilmen to bring something to the table. We actually feel that this creates competition with the men, and we think it has enhanced the council's performance." – local councilwoman

## Main Barriers and Gaps

Women's experiences in local governing bodies reflect the challenges as well as the opportunities to develop solutions, leading to equality and equity. In evaluating women's experiences in local councils, we uncovered the following main barriers:

**Taking women seriously:** The results above show clear gender division on how seriously men treat the contributions of women, which is also applicable within local councils. Only 13% of respondents feel that the opinions of councilwomen are heard by councilmen, while 43% feel that they are somewhat heard and 28% feel that they are not heard in local councils. 15% did not know whether they are or are not heard. This conduct comes with societal and cultural barriers, according to councilwomen:

- Patriarchal treatment of women in that both their families and their parties assume that they know councilwomen's opinions, and assume that they can voice women's opinions in their absence.
- Inferior treatment towards women when they express their opinions, in some cases.
- Men trying to exclude women by selecting councilmen to represent the council and delegating men for external trainings and meetings.
- Considering women obligatory ornamentation used to impress external delegations and officials.
- Viewing women's quota a necessary evil and therefore selecting unqualified women in electoral lists.

**Organizational barriers:** half of the respondents feel that council meetings are held at times unsuitable for women in view of their social and domestic roles, while 24% somewhat agree with that, and 22% feel that meetings do consider women's other responsibilities and the suitable times for them. Regardless of the percentage representing a wider audience, women's experiences documented through interviews and workshops confirm that a number of internal barriers in council work make women's achievements less valuable than they can be in more accommodating conditions. Some of these internal barriers, which cannot be generalized for all councils, are widespread enough to be worth addressing:

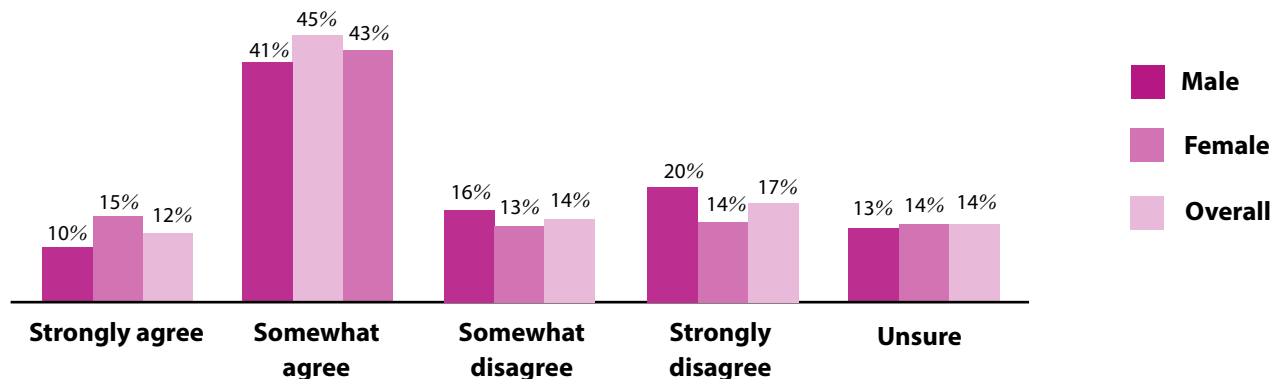
- Timing of meetings (days and hours).
- Method of announcing meetings, especially emergency meetings, where many councilwomen noticed they are never invited in time, if at all.
- Meeting without the presence or notification of women and making major decisions without them. One councilwoman says, "They met without my knowledge, and sent me a budget paper to sign. I refused and demanded holding a new meeting." Another councilwoman explained, "[the councilmen] asked me to send my husband to meetings to make it easier for everyone."

**Role of the Ministry of Local Government:** the challenges facing women when fulfilling their roles in local councils are not limited to the environment in the council alone, but extend to all levels of local government. Councilwomen listed the following issues they felt are worth addressing:

- Varied levels of seriousness in implementing ministry strategies towards equality, depending on ministry leadership and staff.
- Centralized decision-making in the ministry, and not empowering directorates enough to work with councilwomen, in addition to varied levels of seriousness in dealing with councilwomen depending on the directors in each location and their views, since directorates have a clear role in supporting and supervising women.
- The sense of ambiguity in the relationship with the Ministry of Local Government, not knowing whether the ministry will support them if needed, and with many councilwomen ignorant of their rights and duties.
- Many councilwomen feel they have no representation in the ministry because the gender unit has limited human resources and limited ability to reach all councilwomen or dealing with their need for support and capacity building. Additionally, the ministry does not regularly offer counseling or informational or legal support to councilwomen.

**Perception of women's membership and influence:** despite the barriers, it is worth noting the influence of women on the work of local councils. When asked about councilwomen's influence on local council programs and projects, 55% of respondents believe that councilwomen (largely or somewhat) have influence on programs and projects, while 31% believe that they do not. Women's positive evaluation of councilwomen's contributions was higher (60%) than men's positive evaluation of councilwomen (51%).

**Figure (8): Perception of councilwomen's influence on local programs and projects, by gender**





Qualitative results (with councilwomen and community activists) mostly match the quantitative data in terms of barriers facing councilwomen:

- **Limiting councilwomen to women's issues:** "Women's participation was limited to following up with some institutions in the field of strengthening women's roles, but then the councilwomen were unable to continue." – village council chairman
- **Participation ending with elections:** "The women in my town are required to actively participate in voting and running for quota positions, but after that they don't do anything" – youth activist. A municipality official attests to this adding, "There's a bitter reality for women's participation in our council; they did not attend any sessions after the first two months of membership in 2013. There's an absence of women in the council."
- **Limiting women to specific committees:** "Women's municipal participation is limited to social and cultural committees, and it's a limited participation because they have other responsibilities." – Municipal employee.
- **Encouraging women's participation for show:** "To this day, participation of local councilwomen remains mostly for show, especially in front of sponsors. They are not expected to be active in the council." – feminist activist
- **Appointing excludes women:** "The resignation of many local councils resulted in the appointment of interim committees that excluded women, and operated with no accountability. They are appointed by governmental bodies instead of elected by the people, resulting in the absence of elected women and men for years." – Municipal councilwoman

**Shortsighted vision for women's work in local councils:** divided opinions exist even on employing women in local councils – here, we are speaking about female employees in local governing bodies, not councilwomen - where 44% support employing women to work in local councils, while 43% support employing them in some positions, and 13% are completely against the idea. In terms of gender, 54% of women and 34% of men support employing women in local councils. The main source of resistance to women's role in local councils stems from the traditional view of women's roles. A manager at one municipality says, "It's better for a woman to stay at home and care for her family. If a woman is single and doesn't have to take care of her family, it becomes easier." Some still feel that municipal work is irrelevant to women, and see it as an unreasonable stretch. One youth council activist says, "The municipality is a difficult and complex place with many demands and late meetings that women are unable to attend."

Respondents were split on the connection between employing women in councils and the facilitation of access to services for all societal segments. 46% felt that employing women in local councils will facilitate access to services for

all societal segments, while 42% did not believe there would be a difference, and 9% believed that it would have a negative impact. In terms of gender, results show 55% of women and 36% of men considered employing women in councils a way to strengthen women's awareness and understanding of local government and increase society's acceptance of women in local and municipal work.

**Role of political parties:** public opinion polls show a qualitative and quantitative decline in the influence of political parties on the reality of Palestinians, both in terms of ending the occupation and on internal affairs. Political parties also have varied views of women. Some see them as weak followers useful only in the voting process; other moderate parties see that the role of women in the national struggle gives them legitimacy to gain their rights in line with the Basic Law; while other smaller less influential parties are adopting more progressive agendas towards women's rights. In general, women's representation in decision making in political parties remains limited. Even though a small party (the Palestinian Democratic Union FIDA) adopted a policy of parity and appointed a woman Deputy Secretary General, the actual role of women in political parties remains limited on all levels. Furthermore, while political parties do pay attention to local government prior to elections, they do not play an actual role in local councils and the daily life of the community. As one municipal director puts it, "Political parties place their representatives in municipalities, then disappear and take no responsibility in any of the difficult issues we face."

Additionally, parties mostly view women as a voting capital for election and encourage them to vote so the party can win. This frustrates many women; as one youth council

member puts it, "Political parties want us to raise our voices on the day of election, and keep quiet for the rest of the year." One local councilwoman notes the limited role of parties in terms of nominating women, stating, "They asked me to run and pressured me to put my name on their slate. After winning, none of them supported me, and I feel like they used me to win a seat then abandoned me." Although leaders of various parties agree to a 30% representation for women, they have not taken any real steps to ensure that percentage. A feminist activist expresses this contradiction saying, "We worked with them many times on Codes of Honor, and they agreed to all demands and announced this publicly; but in practice, they constantly find excuses to evade the agreed upon 30% representation." Generally, the role of a political party remains important in local elections, along with what comes of whatever issues arise in dealing with complex political and societal factors, in addition to the resources available in political parties needed in election campaigns. One youth council activist calls for continuing to work with political parties in spite of the difficulties saying, "We cannot cast parties aside since they have the needed financial and human resources as well as influence on families and different segments of society."

In general, the aforementioned factors form a network of barriers preventing real equality. For this reason, many programs and initiatives were designed and implemented to overcome these barriers, and to provide a supportive environment for women in local government.

## Chapter Five: Evaluating Initiatives Working with Local Councilwomen

### Introduction

This chapter provides an analysis of the initiatives implemented in previous years to support women in local government, mainly those aimed at local councilwomen. A few initiatives will be studied as examples. However, the study does not provide individual evaluations for each initiative as this is beyond its scope, but does provide an analysis of the experiences and common factors of success and failure. There were virtually no accurate records and evaluation indicators for these programs and trainings in particular, which prevented us from examining their influence and effectiveness in developing women's status and achieving gender equality. In several cases, many achievements are simply input variables (i.e. policies, plans, and training programs) partially implemented, with unclear impact on women's status. It was also difficult to know the individual factors for councilwomen themselves because of a multitude of intersecting variables. In most cases, these were personal factors related to the individuals, their family, or their political affiliation, among other factors.

### National Campaign for Developing Women's Political Participation

No developments would have been achieved in women's participation in local government if it were not for the continuous struggle and efforts of civil society in general and women's unions and institutions in particular. Since the establishment of the PNA, women's and human rights institutions moved quickly in activating their role in strengthening women's participation in political life in general and local government in particular. For instance, the Women's Affairs Technical Committee (WATC) created programs early on that allowed women to discuss local government. This was done through research conducted by the committee entitled "Palestinian Women and Local Councils: Development and Elections - 1995"<sup>(29)</sup>. These programs paved the way for many intellectual, educational and national initiatives and activities aiming to change women's status in local government. After much discussion with the legislative council, women's institutions, frameworks, and civil society organizations began trying to secure a larger and more active role for women in the planned elections of 2004-2005. These institutions demanded a 20% quota of parliamentary seats for women, and 30% of political party slates, in addition to launching awareness campaigns for women on different electoral systems. For this purpose, women and human rights institutions joined the General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW) in launching the "**National Campaign for Developing Women's Political Participation**", with the main objective of including women's quota in election law. The campaign worked on issuing a memorandum demanding quota for women and amendment of the electoral system. It formed lobbying groups for legislative council members

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(29) Nader Izzat Saeed, 1995.

to gain their votes for women's quota. With painstaking lobbying efforts and some setbacks, the campaign continued its activities and issued many statements made by women's institutions and frameworks. Work continued until a legislative council session was held on December 1, 2004 to reopen voting on the previous decision to cancel women's quota. The council voted to allocate more than 20% of seats for women. The article to be added to the law stated that "women's participation in local or municipal councils shall be no less than two seats, wherever women are nominated."

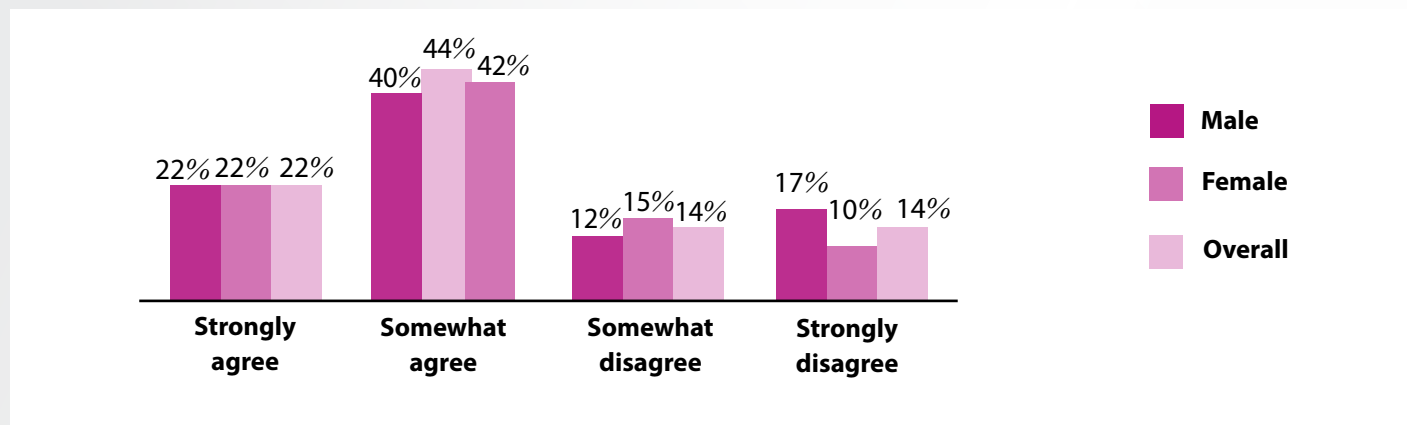
Work did not stop when the campaign ended; efforts continued towards preparing women to run for office and strengthening their roles as local council members.

### Evaluating Institution Policies and Roles

Societal challenges are accompanied by policy and institutional challenges since eliminating discrimination requires the efforts of all relevant institutions. When evaluating the role of these institutions, results show the following:

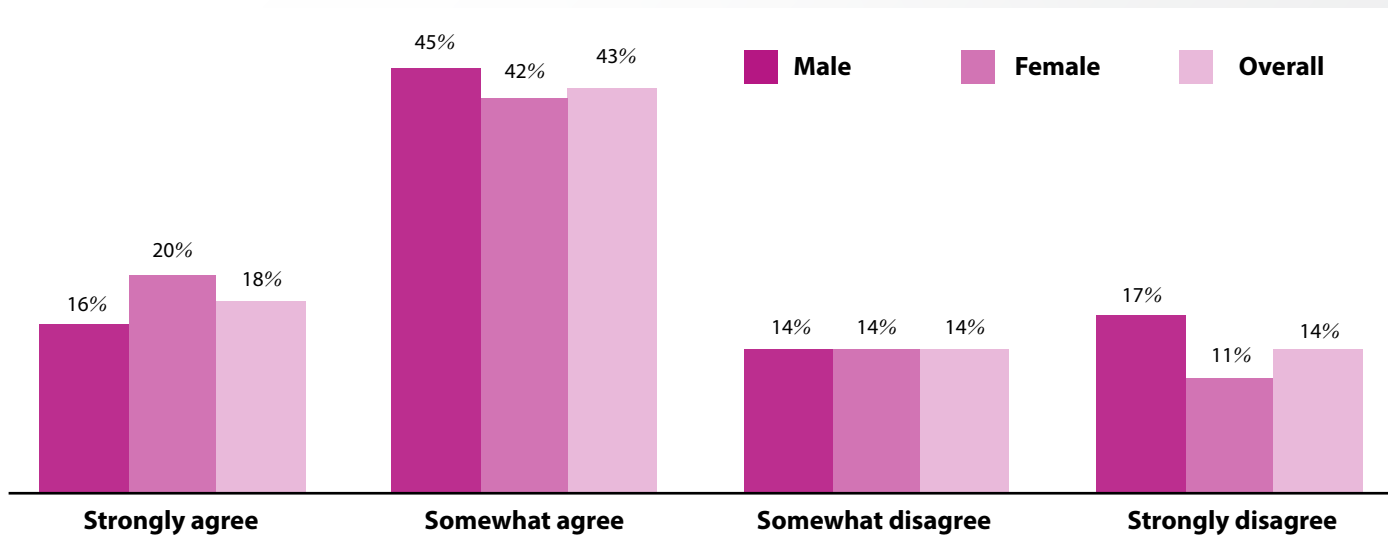
22% of respondents agree that the government backs policies and programs that support women in local governing bodies, while 42% somewhat agree, and 27% of respondents disagree.

**Figure (9): Perception that governmental policies and programs support women in local councils by gender**



As for the role of the Ministry of Local Government, 18% of respondents believe that it contributes positively to strengthening the image of women in local governing bodies, while 43% somewhat agree that it does, and 28% of respondents disagree with that statement.

**Figure (10): Evaluating the Ministry of Local Government’s contribution to improving women’s image in local councils, by gender**

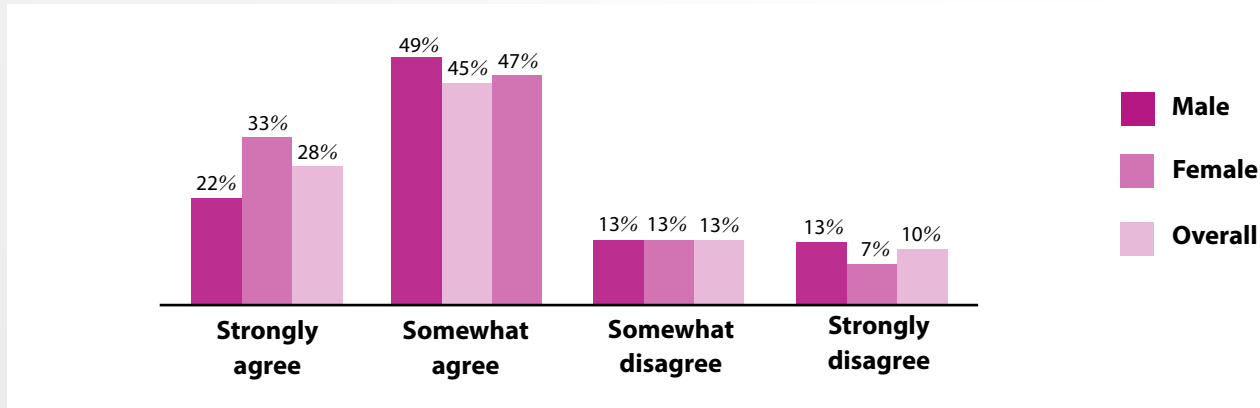


However, the media received more positive evaluations than the Ministry of Local Government, where 28% of respondents believe that the media contributes to fostering a positive image of women in local councils, while 47% somewhat agree that it does, and 23% of respondents disagree with that statement.

We cannot separate the Ministry of Local Government’s role from the role of the Ministry of Women’s Affairs, which operates on a legal policy-oriented level. Despite some general success in this area, the influence of the Ministry of Women’s Affairs on achieving equality remains limited to training and awareness. The Ministry does not go far enough in terms of fundamental changes to policy or in enforcing already existing policies. It also does not ensure that other ministries implement any policies or programs that foster a supportive environment for women in local government.

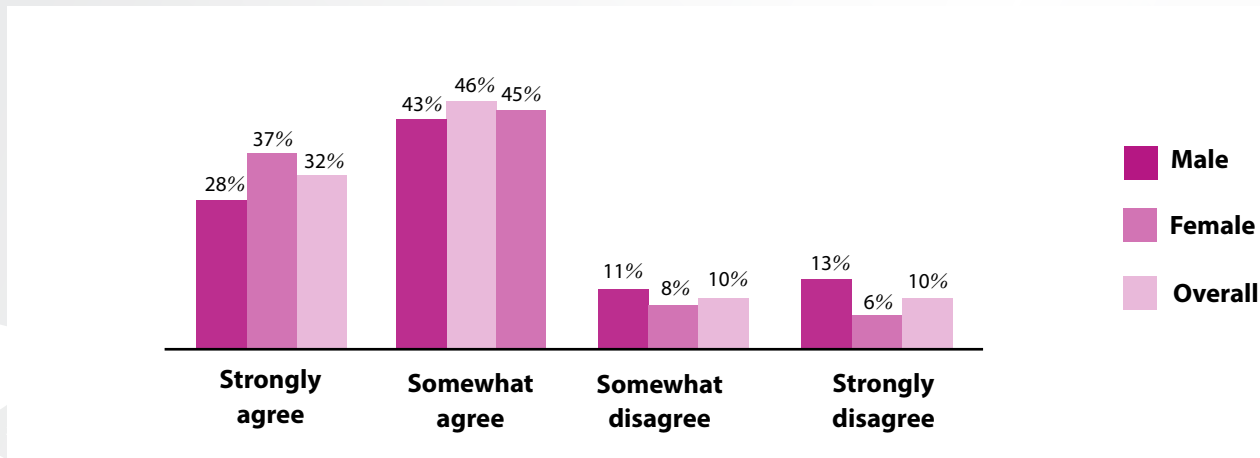
It is worth noting that the “Municipal Development and Lending Fund” supports women in local government through trainings and policies, particularly in the planning stage, where it recently stipulated that planned projects need to have a ratio of 30% benefiting women, and that the fund will refuse to continue accepting projects in the absence of women.

**Figure (11): Perception of the media's contribution to improving women's image in local councils by gender**



As for women's institutions, 32% of respondents believe that they contribute to increasing women's participation in local councils, while 45% somewhat agree that women's institutions do, and 19% disagree with that statement. The figure below shows that men are more critical of women's institutions than women are.

**Figure (12): Perception of women's institutions' contribution to improving women's participation in local councils by gender**



## Qualitative Views on the Role of Women's institutions

- "The role of women's intuitions is limited to awareness and education." – local councilwoman
- "Neither women institutions or political parties ever asked me about any barriers I was facing in my work." – feminist activist
- "The Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development has been working with women for 5-6 years through village shadow councils, and they prepare women through quantitative and qualitative courses" – feminist activist
- "Institutions only seriously work with women prior to elections, otherwise they don't do much to prepare this new generation of young men and women." – official at Central Elections Commission

## Gender and Local Government Forum

The idea for establishing a gender forum in the local government sector came following the 2005 elections with the aim to build on previous achievements. The forum consists of 24 organizations, including ministries, CSOs, and activists (Ministry of Local Government, Ministry of Women's Affairs, General Union of Palestinian Women, Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy (Miftah), Palestinian Women Development Society (Najdah), Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development, Municipal Development and Lending Fund, Women's Action Society, Women's Affairs Technical

Committee, Rural Women's Development Society, Social and Economic Policies Monitor (Marsad), among other influential figures). GIZ is one of the main sponsors of the forum. The goal in creating this forum was for it to be an active mechanism for coordination and organization between governmental CSOs in the field of gender and local government. For that purpose, the forum held many meetings under the umbrella of the Ministry of Local Government and its gender unit. The forum was able to set in motion mechanisms for information exchange and joint planning between institutions. It put forward the Strategic Plan for the Gender and Local Government Forum 2014-2016, which determined strategic goals in this field, the required activities and sub-activities, the institutions involved, and success benchmarks.

The forum bylaws were also prepared to determine goals and mechanisms. Additionally, the forum along with the Ministry of Local Government contributed preparing the Report on the Achievements and Plans of Institutions Working on Women's Participation in Local Government (2014). It appears that 2014 was a productive year for the forum, as mentioned above. Comparably, the forum has recently experienced stagnation, with a smaller number of meetings, reports, and joint projects. Additionally, it was generally difficult to relate the forum's recommendations to institutions actually implementing these goals and activities except partly and with the support of international institutions. As with all coordination bodies, the following issues should be considered to guarantee the success and sustainability of such a forum:

- The forum still depends on international funding, as the Ministry of Local Government has not allocated a budget

for it. Allocating a budget to allow the forum to continue its coordination activities would be an indicator of governmental commitment. So, the call to keep the forum under the ministerial umbrella, as it currently is, is not consistent with the reality of its operation.

- It is necessary to mention the possibility of special interests for member institutions in the forum, which raises the question of whether the forum's current structure allows for conflict of interests, and to ask whether the suggested activities actually benefit women or just the institutions and sponsors themselves who have influence on which projects the forum coordinates as well as the ministry's work with CSOs, which can cause conflict between the principles and policies of the ministry and institutions. Even with a written agreement on the forum's principles, there is major benefit to negotiating and coordinating to achieve a wider range of influence. However, some cases require CSOs to be on the outside to play an opposing role to policies and decisions that are inconsistent with the pursuit of equality.
- Although the forum falls under the ministry's authority, there has been a decline in the ministry's role, leading to a halt in operation. Therefore, there needs to be a clear and realistic understanding regarding forum leadership, management, and internal decision-making.
- The critical issue remains in determining the forum's actual role on the ground, which is reflected in all the issues above. On the one hand, it discusses policies and provides general guidance for institutions, and on the other, it coordinates between specific institutions, sets plans, and coordinates with sponsors. These roles create

a contradiction, ambiguous points of reference, and unclear roles. It is hence necessary to put forward a neutral national mechanism above institutional and individual interests such as a national council for advancing the participation of women in local government. This body should seek to discuss policies, provide general guidance, and determine priorities. Additionally, it should include influential figures that are sensitive to gender issues and with extensive expertise, plus another coordination mechanism for the exchange of information and expertise among civil institutions, represented by membership in the aforementioned council.

### Local Councilwomen Networks

In 2013-2014, 11 female council member networks were established in the 11 governorates of the West Bank. In addition, one national network was founded. The networks describe themselves on its Facebook page as aiming to exchange knowledge and benefit from other councilwomen, to discuss local government work, to support other councilwomen and try to solve their problems, and to bridge the gap between councilwomen and the Ministry of Local Government through direct communication. Their profile page also indicates that most activities are within a specific municipality, and that they conduct visits, and hold courses and seminars that local council members have joined. Related institutions also use this page to advertise their activities. It also reveals that their activities have dwindled in recent months, where the period between each post ranges from 4 days to 2 weeks.

In general, the existence and performance of these networks in governorates remains in question. Although some



networks are managing to connect with councilwomen on a personal level and are strengthening their relationships and solidarity, there are no indicators with which their impact can be evaluated. At the same time, councilwomen in some governorates prepared a list of needs and work plans to be presented to the Minister of Local Government. However, most of these networks barely make it to the implementation phase, and rarely last very long because they lack the basic elements for success. Some networks remain in a small number of governorates, but concern prevails over their role, influence, and sustainability. Again, even though these networks are the responsibility of the ministry, their role has substantially declined in recent years. Additionally, the ministry appointed gender coordinators in directorates as network coordinators, which makes one question the independence of these networks and how councilwomen feel about their own ability to freely express the concerns and demands of the communities they represent.

Furthermore, because women's membership in these networks is connected to their association with their local councils, changes will occur with the coming elections (October 8, 2016), making it essential to benefit from the expertise of qualified councilwomen in the next stage. The political will of the Ministry to adopt these networks constitutes a major step towards their revival. Networks should be viewed as a tool for strengthening decentralized democracy, which requires tools and decisions that enable them to work freely, to protect their members, and to work with civil society.

## Training and Capacity-Building

Many institutions, including the Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development, Women's Affairs Technical Committee, and Miftah work with women in local government to support their leadership in local councils. This is done through training workshops that meet the needs of councilwomen. Other institutions have worked on bolstering the political participation of women, and improving communication between local council members and decision-makers in the Ministry of Local Government. Women have undoubtedly benefited from these workshops on several levels, of which they noted the following:

**Self-Confidence:** a number of councilwomen expressed gaining increased self-confidence and leadership skills as a result of the training and the wealth of experiences and expertise they gain when meeting other councilwomen.

**Technical Skills:** a number of councilwomen expressed benefiting from legal and strategic training and developing their skills in implementing activities and projects.

**Ability to join specialized committees:** a number of councilwomen said that the training they received helped them in budgeting and urban planning, which enabled them to join specialized committees that had previously been limited to men.

On the other hand, some councilwomen criticized training and capacity-building programs in terms of quantity, quality, and continuity. They saw that some of these training sessions, while important, did not progress cumulatively in a reliable and steady manner. According to one councilwoman, “the various training I received was a nice opportunity to raise my skill level, but I didn’t utilize most of what I learned as a councilmember.” According to an official at the Ministry of Local Government, this is partly caused by “scattered efforts by sponsors, and their refusal to work on a single long-term program.” Some noted that councilwomen did not have the ability to promote and raise awareness of their achievements. According to one councilwoman, “I do a lot personally. There are constant achievements, but I shy away from boasting about them.” Another councilwoman said that “there’s not enough media training for women, and their underutilization of social media leads to the disregard and burial of their achievements.”

### Shadow Councils in Local Government

Shadow councils came as an extension of the feminist struggle to empower and represent women in all positions. This initiative by the Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development started early integration of women in the appointed committees for local governing bodies, preparing for democratic elections and training women to participate. Today, there are 70 shadow councils in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. These councils constitute a framework for enhancing knowledge and raising women’s awareness of their rights as well as linking feminist struggles to democratization. Shadow councils supervise the work of local councils and any violations of the rights of elected councilwomen; they also intervening to reverse or amend decisions and policies inconsistent with gender concerns, in addition to supporting more women in running for office, and increasing communication between women in the community and councilwomen. Shadow councils have also worked to bridge the developmental gaps ignored by local councils. For this purpose, they established maternal care and child care centers in some locations, formed a school council for mothers, and provided a girls’ school bus.

Shadow councils adopt a community-based approach and operate in locations close to women and councilwomen, and focus on empowerment and development from a gender perspective. This approach has faced some community resistance however, where some shadow councils could not be formed due to opposition by the local council or members of the community. Many shadow council activists have also run for local council and attained various positions. Generally, it remains unclear how working on a local community level is reflected in national policies, plans, and legislation, where the most critical decisions affecting women’s lives are made.

## Gender Audit

The reports required for a gender audit have been finalized in five local councils in the West Bank (Hebron, Bethlehem, Birzeit, Al-Jiftlik, and Al-Muttahida Joint Municipality). The audit calls for developing a training approach on gender issues for program managers, decision-makers, and workers as well as support and technical staff. It also calls for developing and adopting an approach based on broad participation for creating a comprehensive and fair development plan. The audit emphasized the need to develop evaluation standards and indicators for all programs and projects, and the need to bridge the gaps in all local council work. The audit is a process that brings awareness and change, which evidenced in many targeted councils. However, implementing recommendations is what brings the biggest change to local councils, not only for achieving social equality and justice, but also, on a developmental level, turning equality and justice into a way of life in the local community.

## Supporting Women through Projects

The Local Councilwomen Initiative Fund “My Project” (also referred to as the Women Members Fund) was an idea for empowering women to hold suitable positions in local councils by giving them the opportunity to reach real achievements in the local community and leading the process of implementing initiatives. This serves to raise their position and influence in local government and gives them the skills needed for it. The fund managed to support 21 initiatives with a total of €170,000 (about 25,000-80,000 shekels per initiative). This experimental effort bolstered the status of councilwomen in their councils and highlighted their achievements in their local communities. It is worth noting that work on these initiatives will continue by the Ministry of Local Government and GIZ, and more women will benefit from this fund. This experiment was also extended to nearby countries (Jordan and Lebanon). The developmental lessons learned from this ongoing experiment include:

1. The need to finish work on incomplete projects.
2. Allocating more budgets for projects.
3. Working with councilwomen to come up with more creative ideas that serve the social segments in need.
4. Developing a selection mechanism with comprehensive and objective standards.
5. Assigning roles to all relevant parties to facilitate implementation and guarantee transparency.
6. Developing technical support mechanisms with monitoring and supervision indicators to ensure project quality and guarantee their influence and sustainability.

We expect that international institutions (such as the UN Development Fund for Women) will support similar initiatives to “My Project” in order to expand the circle of influence by learning from previous experiences.

### Targeting Area C

The Roles for Social Change Association (Adwar) works with Bedouin communities in Area C of the West Bank in order to increase Bedouin women's political and societal participation. The project aims to enrich the principles of governance and women's political participation for women in Area C to the south of Yatta, Hebron. It also seeks to highlight the political reality of women in the Hebron governorate in terms of holding public office and decision-making positions, in addition to strengthening the political participation of Bedouin women in marginalized areas, and developing networking and cooperation mechanisms with local councils and the Ministry of Local Government. Additionally, the project aims to raise awareness for Area C communities on the importance the role of women in political participation with men and to combat the stereotypical image of women. Initiatives like this one revive attention to Area C and its inhabitants who are marginalized on all levels. Although these projects remain experimental and limited in scope, it is critical to evaluate these trials and expand them incrementally to all areas by prioritizing them in the agendas of governmental, non-governmental, and international institutions.

### Media

In Palestine, there have been many excellent platforms promoting and supporting feminist discourse, including a radio station specifically for feminist and societal issues

(Nissa' FM), a newspaper (Women's Voice), a radio program (Against the Silence) supervised by the Women's Affairs Technical Committee, and a radio program (In Women's Eyes) supervised by the Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development. These initiatives have contributed to the discussion and awareness of gender issues and equality in political participation and local government. Some institutions have also conducted training sessions and presented radio and TV programs for enhancing women's capacities and highlighting the roles of local councilwomen. The radio program “Her Voice in Local Government” was produced in order to strengthen and empower councilwomen in the media by teaching them to express their opinions and to present their issues and thoughts on any topic related to women and local councilwomen. The program included radio interviews with councilwomen and was broadcast on Nissa' FM. It focused on the achievements of councilwomen and the importance of their presence in local councils, to amplify the voices of women in the local community and to alter their stereotypical image in addition to boosting the capacities of other councilwomen through the program. Tens of councilwomen were interviewed as they discussed critical issues concerning women and local councils in general. Despite this crucial media exposure, it was not sustained and ended after six months. This shows the need for sustainable programs adopted by national media outlets regardless of funding. Additionally, hosting the program on Nissa' FM might suggest that these kinds of programs are only important for women because they have not been adopted by widespread media outlets with broad national reach.

## Conclusions on Initiatives Working with Local Councilwomen

A critical reading of all these initiatives, of which some examples have been provided, leads to the following conclusions:

1. The major focus was on local councilwomen who already showed interest in joining these initiatives and ignored many councilwomen who showed no interest, when they are probably the ones who need the most attention. Meaning that it is important to examine the situation of these councilwomen to find the reasons behind their disinterest, such as being unable to balance municipal work and domestic work in addition to family and societal factors preventing them from participating, which have been mentioned in detail earlier in this report.
2. Most initiatives focused on women; and while this is important in pursuing community work equality, the absence of men from training and awareness workshops may limit the exposure of the challenges councilwomen and female participants face, thus preventing the issues from being placed in a wider and more comprehensive societal context.
3. There were many initiatives that seemed experimental in nature but were not turned into broad national initiatives, so they did not achieve social, legal, and environmental changes that allow all women to work in supportive environments.
4. Many scattered efforts were made by various organizations as each sponsor works without coordinating with other parties. Local institutions also work on temporary

and disconnected projects. This constitutes a waste of resources and results in only partial and unsustainable impact.

5. Despite observing a number of notable successes by women participating in training sessions and as influential local council members, there was not enough evidence to support the long-term impact of these initiatives in terms of their transformative power to strengthen women's political and societal status, which might have been achieved either by turning local councilwomen into community leaders holding higher positions, by having them compete for positions with broader geographical reach, or through running for public office on the governorate or national level.
6. Despite celebrating many significant and exemplary successes by women, a large number of councilwomen expressed their unwillingness to continue in local government. In fact, their experience in local government discouraged them from continuing. Some already resigned or are frequently absent, and many of them will not be competing in the upcoming elections.
7. The ideas and goals of the aforementioned initiatives are important. However, the inability to institutionalize them as an essential part of the local government system will make many of them end as soon as funding ends. Their impact will be limited to small groups of participating councilwomen and exclude many others. It is also worth noting that new generations of local women leaders need to be targeted in order to strengthen women's presence in local government and to sustain the effect of programs and initiatives.

8. The most important part of these initiatives is creating legal and societal policy changes by demanding a higher level of coordination between governmental and non-governmental parties. Institutional and individual competition does not serve this purpose. We need unified efforts, which take political commitment and rational logical leadership that is capable, empowering, and inspiring.

## Chapter Six: Future Directions and Recommendations for Development

### Introduction

This chapter provides a number of future directions and recommendations for integrating gender in local government in order to achieve equality. These recommendations constitute a framework that takes into consideration existing barriers, gaps, opportunities and possibilities; they are also consistent with the recommendations of the Strategic Plan for the Gender and Local Government Forum as well as recommendations by the Ministry of Local Government, partner institutions and participants in survey workshops and interviews.

### Legal Policies and Amendments

Policies and laws constitute the framework governing the community and its political leadership. In this context, we provide the following recommendations:

1. Building political will, conviction, and commitment to bring equality and instituting women's rights at the highest level of decision-making; this will also correlate with international agreements such as CEDAW, signed by the PNA, as well as the Palestinian Basic Law.
2. Continuing to develop a policy framework combining the vision and goals of the PNA with those of CSOs to develop women's participation in local government.
3. Working to empower the gender unit in the Ministry of Local Government until it is able to fully perform the many tasks assigned to it, and working to integrate gender in all aspects of local community work. There is also a need to work with ministry directorates in all governorates to enable them to serve councilwomen and female candidates and to monitor the performance of local councils regarding the implementation of the gender audit recommendations listed below.
4. Reconsidering the implementation of the quota system in terms of effectiveness as the sole and temporary way for guaranteeing fair representation for women, and not relying on it as the only factor for bringing social and cultural change. It must be accompanied by efforts for social and cultural change through continuous intensive programs in order to bring the desired change. This requires an analytical study following the results of the upcoming elections (October 2016).
5. Having the strategic objective of continuing to work on achieving parity in local councils until it becomes the norm

since 68% of Palestinians support raising women's quota above 20%. Demanding parity would not be too unusual as it has been implemented in other Arab nations such as Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria.

6. Creating a clear framework agreed upon by relevant institutions to reach the required legal amendments. This program should consider data that already indicates widespread support for the demands of many democratic and feminist movements, as reflected in the following: 88% support amending local election law to raise women's quota from 20% to 30%.

- 73% support preventing first-degree relatives from being on the same electoral slate.

- 84% support using the open list system, where voters can elect candidates from multiple electoral slates.

- 44% support lowering the age of candidacy from 25 to 21, while 49% do not.<sup>(30)</sup>

7. To achieve these demands, it is necessary to reestablish networking between women and human rights institutions so they can present their demands through a strong and influential lobby.

8. Continuing to work with political parties on implementing vertical and horizontal parity in their national and local slates in the long run.

9. Continuing to work on cultural change by developing the school curriculum and other dominant cultural compo-

nents that are the result of intersecting influences coming from religious, familial, and governmental institutions, and to also develop media, educational, and awareness campaigns.

10. Establishing a national mechanism for technical and strategic support for women who are interested in local government, or an incubator, that provides guidance and technical services to women and which supports them in reaching agreed upon goals.

11. Establishing an independent national mechanism for facilitating complaints regarding infringements experienced by local councilwomen and female council employees, with the participation of civil society organizations. This mechanism can be integrated in an already established framework, such as the Independent Commission for Human Rights.

## Implementing Gender Audit Recommendations

Continuing to conduct gender audits on a local council level and implementing the recommendation of the audit conducted by the ministry in cooperation with GIZ. For that purpose, it would be prudent to start with a small number of larger councils and implement the audit there; after which experiences and lessons learned would be extracted and assessed, which would serve in continuing the implementation of recommendations in all councils.

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(30) Arab World for Research and Development (AWRAD), 2016; Link: [www.awrad.org](http://www.awrad.org)



## **Main Gender Audit Recommendations**

This audit was conducted by the gender unit and resulted in the recommendations below for developing gender-sensitivity and integrating gender in local councils:

- 1.** Developing work plans inside local councils seeking to raise awareness and build capacities of council members and staff on the topic of integrating gender in audited local councils.
- 2.** Creating units or special files to monitor the integration of gender.
- 3.** Increasing the societal participation of all groups, particularly women in addition to adopting a participatory planning approach and integrating gender in the planning stages of programs, projects, and budgets.
- 4.** Developing standards and indicators for the integration of gender in program and project implementation and using them in evaluation, impact measurement, and accountability; also establishing gender databases and building the capacities of employees to analyze this data from a gender perspective as well as utilizing them in the work of all units.
- 5.** Working on improving the organizational culture of local councils towards gender issues and enhancing the overall image and language used in all the publications of audited local councils in order to help establish an environment supportive of women's issues, and to strengthen women's participation as real partners with full rights and duties.
- 6.** Initiating measures for the formation of partnerships with institutions working to increase gender integration on local, national, and international levels.
- 7.** Adopting procedures and policies that are responsive to gender issues, such as increasing the number of women workers, equal opportunity for promotions, scholarships, and flexible vacation days.
- 8.** Developing and disseminating special policies on sexual harassment.
- 9.** Institutionalizing practices that are supportive of gender issues in all internal systems and mechanisms.

## Working on Qualitative and Quantitative Development for Employing Women in Local Councils

Hiring female employees in local councils is an essential cornerstone for strengthening gender equality and social justice. Employing women will also expand the scope of development and the influence of local community work and in setting the needed priorities. Women's presence will facilitate access to services for all segments of society, strengthen women's understanding of the local government sector, and increase societal acceptance of women making decisions in local community work.

Supporting female employees in local councils requires a number of procedures:

1. Reviewing local council law in order to ensure women have legal rights equal to men, taking into consideration the practical and strategic needs of women.
2. Supporting female professionals through training and capacity building.
3. Designing and implementing training programs on a professional and specialized level for these employees.

## Community Awareness and Preparing a New Generation of Activists

1. Raising awareness of women's role in local councils by publishing and circulating success stories to be exemplary, not exceptional. This will support women who have accomplished definitive achievements in their councils in terms of community awareness.

2. Preparing a new generation of women to run for office in the upcoming elections by focusing on ambitious young women interested in competing, and by working with all political and independent parties to nominate women, then empowering and encouraging them to compete by talking to and benefiting from the experiences of successful councilwomen (woman-to-woman).

3. Developing the role of media in strengthening women's issues, and highlighting the challenges and infringements they experience.

Continue lobbying political parties to commit to the Code of Honor (2012) and the recommendations of the Central Council to increase women's participation (2012), and to also commit to the gender pact, prepared by the Gender forum and signed by tens of councils in various stages, which seeks to achieve equality in local councils.

## Preparing the Local Environment for More Gender-Sensitive Local Councils

1. Ensuring maximum benefit for women from local council services and projects by integrating gender analysis during the initial designing phase, and evaluating existing ones to guarantee equal opportunity for participation and benefit, as well as the level of benefit from their outcomes in terms of employment, training, or income. These projects and services must also be evaluated from a gender perspective and from women's point of view.

2. Seeking to ensure the implementation of societal participation principles and indicators (available at the Ministry of Local Government) in every-day reality, and ensuring the integration of women in the community planning

process as well as integrating their vision in any future plans so women can design the future of their community.

### **Work Environment for Local Councilwomen**

1. Activating the role of local government and CSOs (such as shadow councils) in observing the violations women face in village and municipal councils, following-up with their solutions, and regularly supervising their work from a gender perspective, and ensuring governmental accountability in fostering social support for women to strengthen their role in public life.

2. Solidifying women's participation in all local council committees, particularly male-dominated ones, such as finance, budgeting, engineering, and planning committees.

3. The need to continue training and capacity building programs for councilwomen so they can fully participate in local council work, with the necessary focus on actual professional, technical, and legal needs.

4. Continuing to empower councilwomen and expanding support for them in council projects and programs, with the necessary focus on managing and monitoring these projects by stressing the role of councilwomen as official representatives of their local councils, not simply as employees in the project.

5. Reevaluating the Gender and Local Government Forum, and determining the best roles, tasks, and duties for all parties involved. This study suggests forming a network of institutions to be hosted regularly by member institutions in order to achieve a high level of independence and efficiency.

6. Forming a group of local councilmen who are supportive of women in local councils and targeting them with workshops and specific training and activities related to equality in local government.

7. Creating a website to support councilwomen and female employees in local governing bodies to serve as a mechanism for providing information by the Ministry and relevant institutions as well as exchanging experiences locally and internationally.

### **Upcoming Local Elections**

For the short term, work continues to raise women's electoral representation from 20% to 30%, seeking parity for the long term. The General Union of Palestinian Women is leading institution engaging political parties to achieve this. Additionally, the feminist movement continues to demand a number of reforms in election law and raising the women's quota. These demands include the following:

1. Lowering the age of candidacy for local councils from 25 to 21.

2. Preventing first-degree relatives from being on the same electoral slate.

3. Using the "open list system", where voters can elect candidates from different slates as opposed to the current system, where voters have to vote for the full slate.

Most of the demands above gained the support of the majority of surveyed women, with the exception of lowering the age of candidacy, where women were split on

this issue<sup>(31)</sup>. This widespread support enables the feminist movement to lobby and pressure decision-makers even more. Responding to pre-election (October 2016) demands requires agreement on a clear work program, in coordination with relevant institutions working on the following:

1. A broad campaign encouraging women to vote in elections and increasing their voter turnout.
2. Creating a specific program to work with local women and human rights institutions to find women interested in public work, and in local councils in particular, then working with them and encouraging them to run for office.
3. Designing a training program for female candidates as well as establishing a continuous and widely-available mechanism providing them with support and guidance.
4. Working with political parties, families, and community decision-makers to ensure larger representation, seeking to reach the 30% demand. This would be done by placing women in top positions on their slates, and distributing this task among various institutions in their areas.
5. Selecting a number of local communities (about 30) from which it would be possible to nominate women to lead their lists. This could be done by analyzing the social and cultural situation in these communities based on the availability of willing and qualified women, and including men and institutions supportive of women chairing local councils. This could also be done in coordination with the Ministry of Local Government and political parties.

6. Forming field teams of young women and men volunteering to work with female candidates, and also working to empower a number of young women to run for office.

## Conclusion

Striving to strengthen women's rights from a gender perspective requires adopting a comprehensive, developmental, and democratic framework. Linking women's participation with public democratization contributes to fostering an environment supportive of active participation by all citizens, while considering the special challenges facing each group. Promoting the electoral participation of women is an essential part of the development process affecting all citizens in their economic, educational, and health needs. This approach could transform the demands of women into community-wide demands.

Successful work requires alliances between feminist movements and powers in civil society, political parties, and human rights organizations. It also requires organizing, coordinating, and leading institutional efforts in this field. In fact, working to reach equality does not stop with a campaign; it continues even after women successfully become members or chairpersons of their local councils. Programs and projects supporting councilwomen need to be continuous in order to increase their chances for having influential roles in their communities. There is also a need to form coordination bodies on a national level as well as ones that exchange experiences and knowledge between councilwomen. In general, programs and projects need to contribute to long term social, cultural and legal change.

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(31) Arab World for Research and Development (AWRAD), 2016 Link: [www.awrad.org](http://www.awrad.org)

# Appendices

## Appendix (1): List of References

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## Appendix (2): Survey Questions and Field Study Results

1. How much do you feel that women have the freedom to join local/municipal councils?

	Male	Female	Overall
To a large extent	19.4%	27.2%	23.3%
To some extent	43.7%	43.1%	43.4%
Rarely	26.1%	21.1%	23.6%
None	10.0%	8.1%	9.0%
Unsure / no opinion	0.8%	0.5%	0.6%

2. Do you feel that men and women have equal opportunities to run for local council membership?

	Male	Female	Overall
Strongly agree	14.6%	14.7%	14.7%
Somewhat agree	31.3%	28.4%	29.8%
Somewhat disagree	30.0%	32.7%	31.4%
Strongly disagree	23.8%	22.3%	23.1%
Unsure / No opinion	0.3%	1.8%	1.0%

3. If a man and a woman with equal qualifications ran for local council, who would you elect?

	Male	Female	Overall
Woman	12.0%	39.3%	25.7%
Man	79.3%	52.5%	65.9%
Unsure / No opinion	8.7%	8.1%	8.4%

4. Did you vote in your town's last local elections?

	Male	Female	Overall
Yes	53.7%	47.2%	50.4%
No	31.7%	38.8%	35.3%
Does not apply (below voting age at the time / no elections held)	13.0%	12.9%	13.0%
No, never	1.5%	1.0%	1.3%

5. In general, do you think women's institutions contribute positively in improving women's participation in local councils?

	Male	Female	Overall
Strongly agree	27.9%	36.5%	32.2%
Somewhat agree	42.7%	46.2%	44.5%
Somewhat disagree	11.3%	8.4%	9.8%
Strongly disagree	13.3%	6.3%	9.8%
Unsure / No opinion	4.9%	2.5%	3.7%

6. In your opinion, do the media contribute positively to improving the image of women in local councils?

	Male	Female	Overall
Strongly agree	21.7%	33.2%	27.5%
Somewhat agree	48.8%	44.7%	46.8%
Somewhat disagree	13.0%	12.7%	12.9%
Strongly disagree	12.5%	6.9%	9.7%
Unsure / No opinion	3.8%	2.5%	3.2%



7. Do you think the Ministry of Local Government contributes positively to improving the image of women in local councils?

	Male	Female	Overall
Strongly agree	16.1%	20.3%	18.2%
Somewhat agree	44.8%	41.9%	43.3%
Somewhat disagree	13.6%	14.0%	13.8%
Strongly disagree	17.1%	11.2%	14.1%
Unsure / No opinion	8.4%	12.7%	10.6%

8. Do you think that governmental policies and programs support women in local councils?

	Male	Female	Overall
Strongly agree	22.3%	22.3%	22.3%
Somewhat agree	39.6%	44.2%	41.9%
Somewhat disagree	12.0%	15.2%	13.6%
Strongly disagree	17.1%	10.2%	13.6%
Unsure / No opinion	9.0%	8.1%	8.5%

## Section Two: Women's Representation in Local Councils

9. Do you know if there are any councilwomen in your local council (elected or appointed)?

	Male	Female	Overall
Yes	65.5%	65.7%	65.6%
No	24.8%	23.4%	24.1%
Unsure	9.7%	10.9%	10.3%

10. If you answered "Yes", how well do you know your local councilwomen?

	Male	Female	Overall
Well	33.3%	42.1%	37.7%
Moderately	52.2%	46.3%	49.2%
Not at all	14.5%	11.6%	13.0%

11. What is your evaluation of your local council's performance?

	Male	Female	Overall
Good	25.3%	28.4%	26.9%
Moderate	40.2%	45.7%	42.9%
Poor	34.0%	24.6%	29.3%
Unsure	0.5%	1.3%	0.9%

12. What is your evaluation of your local councilwomen's performance?

	Male	Female	Overall
Good	12.0%	18.8%	15.4%
Moderate	34.5%	35.8%	35.2%
Poor	32.5%	25.1%	28.8%
Unsure	21.0%	20.3%	20.6%

13. Do you agree or disagree with a woman chairing a local/municipal council?

	Male	Female	Overall
Agree	40.4%	57.1%	48.8%
Disagree	54.7%	39.5%	47.1%
Unsure	4.9%	3.3%	4.1%

14. What is your evaluation of your councilmen's performance?

	Male	Female	Overall
Good	28.6%	31.2%	29.9%
Moderate	43.5%	47.7%	45.6%
Poor	25.1%	15.5%	20.3%
Unsure	2.8%	5.6%	4.2%

15. In your opinion, which of the following issues cause a real barrier affecting women's participation in local councils? To what degree?

		Male	Female	Overall
<b>Limited education for women</b>	Yes	53.2%	55.1%	54.1%
	Somewhat	18.4%	19.0%	18.7%
	No	28.1%	25.9%	27.0%
	Unsure	0.3%		0.1%
<b>Lack of experience in public affairs among women</b>	Yes	61.6%	58.1%	59.9%
	Somewhat	23.3%	22.8%	23.1%
	No	14.3%	18.5%	16.4%
	Unsure	0.8%	0.5%	0.6%
<b>Women do not have enough awareness of their role in society</b>	Yes	47.1%	43.9%	45.5%
	Somewhat	27.9%	23.6%	25.7%
	No	22.8%	30.5%	26.6%
	Unsure	2.3%	2.0%	2.2%
<b>Men do not take women in local councils seriously</b>	Yes	41.7%	48.0%	44.8%
	Somewhat	29.7%	22.6%	26.1%
	No	22.8%	21.3%	22.0%
	Unsure	5.9%	7.9%	6.9%

<b>Women lack the skills needed to participate in local councils</b>	Yes	41.9%	32.3%	37.1%
	Somewhat	26.6%	22.6%	24.6%
	No	27.6%	40.5%	34.1%
	Unsure	3.8%	4.6%	4.2%
<b>Council meetings are held at times unsuitable for women, considering their social and domestic roles</b>	Yes	50.9%	47.5%	49.2%
	Somewhat	22.8%	24.6%	23.7%
	No	20.5%	22.6%	21.5%
	Unsure	5.9%	5.3%	5.6%
<b>Society discriminates against women</b>	Yes	49.6%	60.7%	55.2%
	Somewhat	30.2%	24.4%	27.3%
	No	19.7%	14.2%	16.9%
	Unsure	0.5%	0.8%	0.6%

16. How do you feel about employing women in local councils?

	Male	Female	Overall
Agree	34.0%	53.8%	43.9%
Agree, in some positions	47.3%	37.8%	42.5%
Disagree	18.2%	8.4%	13.2%
Unsure	0.5%		0.3%

17. Do you think that employing women in local councils will facilitate access to services for all societal segments?

	Male	Female	Overall
It will positively affect it	35.8%	55.3%	45.6%
No effect	49.6%	35.0%	42.3%
It will negatively affect it	11.5%	6.6%	9.0%
Unsure	3.1%	3.0%	3.1%

18. Do you think that women's representation in local councils should be raised from the current 20%?

	Male	Female	Overall
Yes	31.5%	53.3%	42.4%
Somewhat	27.4%	25.1%	26.2%
No	36.3%	17.0%	26.6%
Unsure / No opinion	4.9%	4.6%	4.7%

19. How much do you feel that the opinions of your local councilwomen are heard by councilmen?

	Male	Female	Overall
Strongly heard	11.0%	15.5%	13.2%
Somewhat heard	41.7%	45.2%	43.4%
Somewhat unheard	16.6%	12.4%	14.5%
Strongly unheard	16.4%	10.9%	13.6%
Unsure / No opinion	14.3%	16.0%	15.2%

20. How much do you feel that your councilwomen have influence on local programs and project?

	Male	Female	Overall
Strong influence	9.7%	15.0%	12.4%
Some influence	40.9%	44.7%	42.8%
Little influence	16.4%	12.7%	14.5%
No influence	19.9%	13.7%	16.8%
Unsure / No opinion	13.0%	14.0%	13.5%

21. What are the two main challenges affecting women's local council participation today?

**Top Challenge**

	Male	Female	Overall
Low awareness of women's participation	22.0%	23.9%	22.9%
Lack of funding	2.8%	5.3%	4.1%
Misinterpretation of religion	12.5%	7.6%	10.1%
Family biases in creating electoral lists	43.7%	39.3%	41.5%
Family rejection of women's participation	14.3%	15.7%	15.0%
Women's lack of interest	4.6%	7.9%	6.2%
Unsure / No opinion		0.3%	0.1%

**Secondary Challenge**

<b>Overall</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	
14.8%	16.5%	13.0%	<b>Low awareness of women's participation</b>
3.7%	4.1%	3.3%	<b>Lack of funding</b>
9.0%	10.4%	7.7%	<b>Misinterpretation of religion</b>
28.2%	28.2%	28.1%	<b>Family biases in creating electoral lists</b>
29.2%	26.6%	31.7%	<b>Family rejection of women's participation</b>
14.5%	13.2%	15.9%	<b>Women's lack of interest</b>
0.6%	1.0%	0.3%	<b>Unsure / No opinion</b>



### Appendix (3): Sample Distribution

<b>Governorate</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>%</b>
Jenin	10.8	18-30	44.1
Tulkarim	6.8	31-40	21.3
Qalqilya	2.4	Above 40	34.6
Nablus	15.7	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>%</b>
Salfit	2.3	Worker	13.9
Tubas	2.2	Employee	17.6
Ramallah and Al-Bireh	15.5	Farmer	0.5
Jerusalem	15.2	Merchant	9.3
Jericho	2.3	Specialized	2.2
Bethlehem	6.8	Vocational	7.4
Hebron	20.1	Student	6.6
<b>Education Level</b>	<b>%</b>	Housewife	31.9
No formal education - illiterate	1.3	Unemployed	9.1
Able to read/write - literate	1.4	Retired	1.5
Elementary school	7.9	<b>Sector</b>	<b>%</b>
Middle school	29.4	Governmental	16.4
High school	27.5	Private	80.9
Vocational training	3.3	Non-governmental	1.3

## Palestinian Women's Participation in Local Government

University graduate	26.2	Other	1.5
Postgraduate	2.9	<b>Employment</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Civil Status</b>	<b>%</b>	Full-Time	40.4
Single	27.0	Part-Time	10.1
Married	68.4	None	49.5
Other (Divorced / Widow)	4.6	<b>Income</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Gender</b>	<b>%</b>	Above average	16.4
Male	49.8	Average	66.9
Female	50.2	Low	16.8

## Appendix (4): List of Interviews

- Hisham Kuheil, Central Elections Commission
- Hanan Maseeh, Ministry of Local Government
- Fatima Radaydeh, Ministry of Women's Affairs
- Jihar Srour, Al-Bireh Municipality councilwoman
- Amal Khreisheh, Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development
- Maali Barqawi, Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development
- Lamees Shueibi, Miftah
- Layali Zahran, Women's Affairs Technical Committee
- Hiba Tijani, GIZ
- Hanan Kaoud, UN Women
- Reema Nazzal, General Union of Palestinian Women
- Aref Jaffal, Marsad
- Khalil Farhan, Ar-Ram Municipality
- Ehab Tamimi, Dayr Nidham Village Council

## Appendix (5): List of Workshops Participants

<b>Workshop (1): local councilwomen and women in shadow councils (Ramallah)</b>	
Participant	From
Samia Tamimi	NabiSalih
Sumaya Arar	QrawaBaniZaid
Mariam Jaser Abdul-Majeed	QrawaBani Zaid
Kayan Arar	QrawaBani Zaid
Faten Shaker	Abu Shukheidim
Rihab Othman	Abu Shukheidim
Wafaa Qundah	Abu Shukheidim
Fidaa Abdur-Raziq	Deir as-Sudan
Sireen Naji Ali	Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development
Afaf Qundah	Abu Shukheidim
Iqbal Omar	Deir as-Sudan
Salma Shaker	QrawaBaniZaid
Basima Jaafar	QrawaBaniZaid
Asmaa Abu-Rahmeh	Bil'in
Yasmeen Rushdi	Deir as-Sudan
Jameela Abu-Halawa	Kheribtha

Najla Nafe	Ni'lin
Amna Al-Khawaja	Ni'lin
Shahla Hammad	Silwad
Samaher Abu-Rashha	Bil'in
Amani Theeb	Bil'in
Rayya Saleem	Kheribt BaniHareth
Leena Abdul-Qader	Deir as-Sudan
Ghada Mohammad	Deir as-Sudan
Nema Assaf	Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development
<b>Workshop (2): Local councilwomen in Bethlehem governorate</b>	
Participant	From
Zeinab Taqatqa	Nahda for Women and Child Development
Yusra Deriya	Women's Committee
Kawthar Salah	Al-Khader Municipality
Rabeeh Alissa	Al-Dawha Municipality
Muna Abdur-Rahman	Joret Al-Shamaa
Muna lbyat	Hundaza Village Council

Wujdan Al-Izza	Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development / councilwoman
Amal Mohammad	Husan
<b>Workshop (3): Youth councils in Tulkarim governorate</b>	
Participant	From
Ahmad Aref Barakat	Anabta Local Council
Asmaa Sabubi	Anabta Local Council
Bayan Az-Zayed	Anabta Local Council
Yazan Qashou	Illar Youth Council
Majd Shadeed	Illar Youth Council
Faten Fayeq	Illar Youth Council
Hanadi Rajab	Kafr al-Labad
Rashad Rajab	Kafr al-Labad
Qutayba Abdul-Munem	Kafr al-Labad
Tahen Al-Khateeb	Illar

### Participants in the study review

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Institution</b>
1	Samar Hawwash	Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development / Nablus
2	Nancy Al-Masri	Municipal Development and Lending Fund
3	Amal Khreisheh	Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development / Ramallah
4	Reham Helsi	Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development / Ramallah
5	Fatima	Ministry of Women's Affairs / Ramallah
6	Samya	General Union of Palestinian Women
7	Sawsan Shunnar	Association of Women's Action for Training and Rehabilitation
8	Muna	General Union of Palestinian Women
9	Hiba Tijani	GIZ
10	Reema Nazzal	Writer
11	Razan	Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development / Ramallah
12	Jumana Abdo	Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development / Ramallah
13	Lamees	Miftah
14	Maali Barqawi	Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development / Tulkarim

## Appendix (6): Guiding Questions for Workshops

### Study Objectives:

- Evaluating the policies of the Ministry of Local Government and the performance of CSOs related to developing and improving women's participation in local government.
- Providing suggestions and recommendations on how to increase women's participation in local government through the democratic process and elections.
- Contributing to the awareness of community and political parties on the importance of women's political participation.
- Contributing to the encouragement of women to participate in local government, by highlighting success stories and challenges.

Listed below are the main topics of discussion to be addressed in workshops and interviews: (customized to each group/interview)

### Section One: Women's Representation in

#### Local Councils

- What are the actual roles of women and men in local council membership?
- What type of participation and achievements do councilwomen have?
- What are the weaknesses and gaps in women's local council participation?
- What are the positive and negative effects of increasing women's participation in local councils, and the impact on the community and families in your area? What is the level of contribution by councilwomen to the development of local council services and programs?
- In general, what is your evaluation of your local councilwomen, or any councilwomen that you know? Does their contribution benefit the community? Does it reflect women's needs? Has it improved the local council's performance? Would you like to mention anything else regarding women's roles?
- In general, what is the difference between the current local council that includes women, and previous councils that

did not include women? Has this council offered anything new for you, your family, or your community?

- What are the main challenges facing women's participation in local council decision-making?
- What are the available opportunities for strengthening women's participation in local council decision-making?
- What is the role of women's quota in integrating women in local councils? Is this a positive or negative role?
- In the context of the 2004-2005 local elections and the 2011-2012 local elections, what is your evaluation of political party and family perceptions of the quota system and electoral system, and their impact on women's participation in local government?

### **Section Two: Evaluating the Roles of Institutions in Developing Women's Local Government Participation**

- How do you evaluate the role of the Ministry of Local Government in strengthening women's participation in local council decision-making?
- Do ministry policies have an impact on strengthening women's role in local government?
- How do you evaluate the role of non-governmental institutions in strengthening women's local council decision-making? What are the different initiatives implemented by institutions to integrate women in local councils? (Mentioning networks, women's shadow councils, and youth councils)

- How do you evaluate the role of political parties and the feminist movement in strengthening women's local council participation (in the context of the 2005 and 2012 local elections)?

### **Section Three: Recommendations**

- What are your recommendations for quantitatively and qualitatively improving participation of women in local council (as members and staff)? How can women be empowered to become more effective and influential in local council decision-making?
- What are the empowerment and training needs to achieve that?
- In terms of benefiting from training opportunities, what are the challenges facing women in achieving that? Do councilwomen and female candidates have special training needs?
- What can the council, local community and partners do to encourage women to run for local office?
- What are the roles of the Ministry of Local Government and the local council in strengthening the role of women in local council?
- In your opinion, what can civil society, political parties, and sponsors do to help in this context?

