

**Educazione, formazione e cooperazione:
scambi e progetti con la Palestina**

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Major Problems Related to Women In Development

The Palestinian society was not identified as an independent political and social entity until recently. In 1967 both West Bank and Gaza were respectively isolated under the Jordanian and the Egyptian administration. Signing agreements between the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Israeli government have led to the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) in the West Bank and Gaza.

Several demographic, geographic and topographic diversities mark both the West Bank and Gaza. These diversities can be summarized as follows:

The area of the West Bank is much larger (5651 km²) than that of Gaza (365 km²). The population density in the West Bank is 284 people/1km², while the population density in Gaza is 2415. The percentage of refugee population to the total population in Gaza is 63 %. This percentage is 18% in the West Bank. In addition to that, 62% of the West Bank population live in agricultural areas, while 20% of Gaza population live in the agricultural land. Approximately 1.5 million people in the West Bank are divided among 11 cities, 22 refugee camps and 430 villages. The one million population of Gaza is divided among 5 cities, 8 refugee camps and 9 villages.

According to the results of the census conducted by the PCBS in 1997, females constitute 49.2% of the Palestinian population. 45.9% of females under 15 years of age, 43.1% of females are (15-49) years of age and 10% are over 50 years.

The West Bank and Gaza economy is described as service oriented economy. In 1991, agriculture represented 30% from the national income, 8% from industry, 12 % from construction and 50% from services. A major character of the West Bank and Gaza economy is its high dependence on the Israeli economy. Until the recent closures imposed on the PNA controlled areas, almost one third of the West Bank and Gaza labor force worked in Israel and 90% of the trade was and is with Israel.

As a consequence of the occupation as well as the unusual political and economic situation of the PNA, several factors have negatively affected women's development in Palestine:

Confiscation of agricultural land and water resources: Due to land confiscation and closures on large areas of agricultural land in the occupied territories, a large sector of women was prevented to participate in the agricultural labor sector. The agricultural labor market represents a major income source for women in the West Bank. This measure have indeed affected the family income source in general with a particular emphasis on women as the first disadvantaged category in the West Bank and Gaza population from the low income of the family.

Dual responsibilities of women due to occupational arrest: The circumstances of occupation have enforced inhuman deterioration as it added more burdens on the mother and family in the West Bank and Gaza due to the presence of thousands of husbands and sons in jail or abroad to generate income. The occupation have imposed sever economic complications represented by less labor opportunities and a weak national economy which is highly dependent on the occupation economy. This weakens the family and its income, time and efforts in legal issues and visiting

prisons. Add to that the negative psychological effects that negatively affect the quality and quantity of production.

Illiteracy: Despite the gradual and continuous increase of the literacy levels of women in the West Bank and Gaza above the age of 15, the illiteracy rate among women is 23% and for men is 8.5%. School dropout of young women, due to early marriage and severe economic conditions, is the major cause of this high percentage despite the compulsory basic education laws. The legal measures of this law are neither implemented nor applied. Most of women school dropouts get married at a young age. This leads to unhealthy mothers raising the percentages of abortions and child under growth. Both school and non-school factors determine the rates of young school dropouts. School factors include: education cycle, grade level, class size, supervising authority, school infrastructure the formal hidden curriculum. The hidden curriculum is defined as the unconscious ways in which educational structures in the classroom reproduce the wider gender assumptions existing in the society.

Low percentage of women in technical and vocational fields: Women represent a considerably low percentage in university programs such as science, engineering, and technology. Only 6% of the engineering graduates are females and 15% of the law graduates are female. In contrast, females represent 100% of domestic science graduates. Among the academic staff of the universities in Palestine women represent 10% from a total of 1408 Ph.D. and Master graduates specializing mainly in social sciences and humanities. On the contrary male faculty members specialize mainly in agricultural sciences, engineering and natural sciences.

The importance of women enrolment in highly specialized professions would necessarily provide them with higher income source, as well as a leadership position that positively affects their decision making on the state level.

Wage discrimination: The pay differentials between men and women of same occupation show clear discrimination in favor of male wages-with every occupation showing greater male than female wage. When daily wages of all employed males versus females in the West Bank are averaged, employed women are earning at levels equivalent to only 66.2% of male wages. In Gaza, the average wage gap between males and females is lower: female wages levels are equivalent to 81.3% of that of males. This is partly due to the fact that overall wage levels are lower than in the West Bank.

Low percentage of women employed in municipalities and local councils: The percentage of women employed in municipalities of both West Bank and Gaza is less than 4%. Women did not participate in more than 75% of projects implemented by the municipalities. The participation of women in other projects was mainly suggested by the funding institutions.

Deprivation from legislative as well as legal rights of ownership and inheritance: This leads to totally dependent women and does indeed deprive them from acquiring policy and decision making positions.

The wide gap between theory and practice in women's involvement in

the importance of women's involvement in development, yet when it comes to actual implementation women are excluded from participation or sharing the outcomes of development. The Palestinian legislative council (PLC) only has 4 women representatives out of 88.

Childcare services: These services are considered minimal in both governmental and non-governmental sectors. The reproductive role assigned to women in both the West Bank and Gaza societies in addition to the lack of adequate childcare services does indeed impose a burden on the West Bank and Gaza working mothers. This usually leads to less affectivity, production and participation of working mothers in the process of development.

The fact that a much greater number of never married women are in the labor force (as compared to the low number of never married men) suggests, however, that the dominant factor might be the latter: employment policies that are unsupportive of mother hood.

High fertility rates: The Total Fertility Rate (TFR) for the West Bank and Gaza excluding East Jerusalem, at 6.24: 6.24 being the average number of children born alive to a woman during her life time in prevailing fertility conditions. Sizable regional variations were found between the West Bank and Gaza Strip, with the TFR for the West Bank at 5.61 and the TFR for Gaza at 7.44. Gaza thus has one of the highest fertility rates in the world.

The West Bank and Gaza demographic picture deviates from the classical model of demographic transition used to explain population changes. Specific cultural institutions and practices in society can explain this deviation, due to the value of large families. High insecure conditions may also favor a burst of natality as an investment in social security and the survival of the younger generation.

Education Sector

Despite the inappropriate political and social circumstances, the chances of education for Palestinians in West Bank and Gaza have increased. This is clear from both the percentages of literacy and the statistics of enrolment among the Palestinian population, which reflects the value of education within the Palestinian society. Palestinians under occupation have visualized education as a major means of social and economic flexibility.

Basic Primary Education: This education is designed to include children at the ages 6 through 15(i.e. 1st grade through 10th). Variable laws and policies of education are practiced in both Gaza and the West Bank. In the West Bank, Jordanian law of education number 27 is effective. Several British and Egyptian laws govern the education system in Gaza. The MOE have recently unified the education policies. Yet, Egyptian curriculum is adapted in Gaza, while the Jordanian curriculum is adapted in the West Bank.

Before 1994, the basic education was composed of two educational stages covering a total of 9 educational years: 6 primary educational years and 3 intermediate

educational years. Upon the establishment of the Palestinian Ministry of Education, the two stages were combined to formulate basic education that was extended into 10 educational years in both Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Basic education in Palestine is compulsory and totally excluded from tuition in the UNRWA school systems. In the governmental schools, school tuition is 60 NIS and 80 NIS for secondary school systems. Private education schools require a full payment of all fees and tuition.

Basic education students in Gaza Strip concluded their 9th grade education with an Examination which was cancelled upon the arrival of the PNA. The students of the tenth grade are moved into the secondary education to either science or literature or vocational education programs according to their grades and availability of space.

Secondary Education: This is comprised of two years for students age 16-17. The UNRWA schools offer nine years of Basic education and therefore the students have to transfer to governmental or private schools. The secondary education is divided into two programs; academic program that allows the students to choose between science or literature studies, and a vocational program which includes specialties such as manufacturing, commerce, agriculture and nursing.

Towards the end of the secondary education, the students are to take the General Secondary Certificate Examination (GSCE) known as Tawjihi. During the occupation period, the Egyptian administration in Gaza Strip and the Jordanian education authorities in West Bank supervised the high school diploma examination.

There are two kinds of secondary school programs: academic and vocational. The academic program is composed of science and literature while the vocational is composed of commerce, industrial, agricultural and nursing.

Upon the conclusion of secondary school, Students are obliged to complete a General Secondary Certificate Examination. In the past, i.e. under the occupation, the Egyptian administration controlled this examination in Gaza Strip while the Ministry of Education in Jordan governed it in the West Bank. Currently, this examination is completely responsible for administering the General Secondary Certificate Examination (GSCE) as well as issuing a certified Certificate that is recognized by several countries and universities.

UNRWA School System: UNRWA school system offers educational services for students until the 9th grade. Students who successfully complete the 9th grade are transferred into governmental school systems. UNRWA school systems apply the Egyptian curricula in Gaza Strip and the Jordanian curricula in the West Bank along with the school textbooks, educational plans, the education period, rules of examinations and holidays.

UNRWA also governs the vocational training centers in both Gaza Strip and the West Bank. These centers provide training programs in Mechanics, metals, electricity and construction for two years upon the completion of the basic education. These centers offer the students diplomas in specialized professions and therefore are not required to take the high school diploma examination.

Technical and Vocational Training Centers: The lack of coordination between education and development in Palestine is a major obstacle in Palestine. Vocational as well as technical training centers were totally ignored during the years of occupation. Vocational education is still considered as an irrelevant means of education in both the West Bank and Gaza. There are 24 vocational education schools in both the West bank and Gaza. 33.3% of these schools are financed by the private sector, while the rest are financed by the government. The Ministry of Education has developed the industrial vocational education sector in fields such as construction maintenance. Modern equipment has been added to laboratories of electronic industries and computer maintenance. 12 schools in the West Bank and Gaza provide the commerce vocational education sector. This sector provides education in accounting, office management, computer programming, statistics and communication skills. The agricultural vocational education is present only in two schools, one in the West Bank and the other in Gaza. Animal and plant production has been recently introduced to this sector.

The total percentage of vocational education students does not exceed 3.3% of the total number of secondary school students. Female students represent 1.4% out of this percentage. It can be said that vocational education does not exist in Gaza, since only 172 students were enrolled in this sector in the year 1999/1998.

Higher Education: There are 8 universities in Gaza Strip and the West Bank. These universities offer 4 years and a above programs. Two of these universities offer graduate education programs.

Of the total 46,176 students enrolled in eight universities and three colleges offering four-year degrees, 42% are female. The proportion of female students is lower in Gaza Strip as compared to the West Bank by 6.2%.

The 17 community colleges in Gaza Strip and the West Bank have a total of 4,599 students, of whom 51% are female.

At the Palestinian community colleges, females comprise the overwhelming majority of academic, social work, and para-medical graduates. In contrast, only 5.7% of engineering graduates were female. Female representation among computer science graduates is considerably higher at 44% of the total. Among finance and administration graduates, there is a slight majority of females.

Similarly, female university students comprise more than half of the total number of students enrolled in fields such as education, the humanities, medical sciences and health-related studies. They comprise only 6.35 of students in architecture and town planning, about 15% in both agriculture and law, and roughly 25% of the students in business administration, engineering, and trade, crafts and industrial programs,

Impact on Education by Religion and Culture: Religion-based factors determining literacy are no longer significant, although rates continue to be slightly higher among the Christian population. The gender gap between the Christian and Muslim women 45 years or older.

The social and the economic structures under the Israeli occupation have strengthened the gender role division within the Palestinian society, particularly the reproductive role of women. The Palestinian economy largely depended on men labor in Israel and in the Gulf countries. The privet versus public sphere in the education system in Palestine is clear particularly when it comes to the decision making of school enrolment by the parents.

Non-economic, non-school factors such as domestic demands of the household, and social attitudes regarding the purpose of schooling for men and women may be contributing factors to the gender differential.

Literacy Education (adult education): Figure 1 shows an improvement in the literacy rates among Palestinians in the last few decades. The gender literacy gap in Palestine is 84%. The literacy rate for the West Bank males is slightly higher than for the Gaza strip males, while for females, literacy is higher in Gaza Strip than in the West bank. Given that more than half of the West Bank households are located in the villages, the low literacy rate among West Bank females is most likely due to low female school attendance in the rural areas.

Urban residents are the most literate among the population, followed by the camp and the village residents. The literacy gender gap as a percent of male literacy, narrows in urban areas, and is widest in villages.

The high literacy levels indicate the value education has assumed for the society as a whole, as well as the universalization of compulsory education all over the region, and the positive intervention of UNRWA schools. As a community under siege in political and economic terms, many aspects of daily life were beyond an individual's control. Schooling remained a mechanism whereby Palestinian could reclaim some mastery over their lives at least of affecting their social and economic mobility. As such, education was perceived by the society as a refuge and a resource and a resource and, in the process, schooling began to be recognized as a basic right, rather than a privilege.

Training and Assignment of Women Teachers(the number of schools and teachers):

The proportion of female teaching staff decreases at higher levels of the educational system. As the pre-school level, all but five teachers are female out of a total of 2,377 preschool teachers in 1996-1997. While, females comprise almost half of teachers at the basic level, their shares diminishes at the secondary and tertiary levels of education.

Women account for 28% of secondary school teachers. Moreover, public secondary schools are sex-segregated. While male teachers can teach female secondary students, female teachers can not teach male students. The reasons underlying this discriminatory practices are unclear but may be due to the assumption that male secondary students require a male authority figure to better control the class, as well as limited opportunities for female teachers to qualify for secondary school teaching.

was 37052 hours adding a total number of 9520 days. 1062 training courses were conducted in the West bank and 157 in Gaza.