



LABOR AND ECONOMY

**PALESTINIAN
WOMEN:
A STATUS REPORT**

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Labor and Economy

Gender Segmentation in Palestinian Economic Life

Rema Hammami

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About the author: Rema Hammami is an Assistant Professor in the Women's Studies Program and teaches anthropology in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Birzeit University.

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INTRODUCTION

PALESTINIAN WOMEN: A STATUS REPORT is published by the Women's Studies Program at Birzeit University in separate English and Arabic editions. This ten chapter report is an attempt to build a comprehensive picture of the current challenges facing Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in building a society based on gender equality. The guiding assumption is that such equality is necessary for both sustainable development and democratization. This report is very much a product of its time. On the one hand, it has been greatly influenced by the conceptual revolution in women's studies which puts gender relations, asymmetries and gaps at the center of analysis. On the other, the report is an attempt to respond to the new complexity of the current situation in Palestine, which offers new opportunities for intervention in public policy alongside the continued efforts of grassroots organizations and activities towards bringing about positive change in women's lives.

Eight of the chapters address the situation of women in specific sectors of contemporary life in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. A further two provide context and concepts for examining the main features and trends in this society, and the key issues in gender and development that can be brought to bear to understand Palestinian reality. The sectoral chapters have a threefold task. The first is to delineate gender gaps by analyzing women's differential access and/or integration in each sector. The second is to analyze how women's socially assigned roles and responsibilities may act to exclude women or place unequal burdens on them. Finally, the chapters aim to explore linkages between, and possible determinants of, these processes. Various chapters show the linkage between high fertility rates, gender gaps in secondary education, early marriage, and the absence of labor opportunities and social protection. Others identify assumptions about gender roles and their impact on women and men's access to social security and assistance, or delineate the relationship between access to capital and achieving political power.

In terms of key gender indicators, the Report points out that the situation in Palestine shows some sharp contradictions. Positive indicators for women, such as rising educational levels and political participation, exist alongside negative indicators of their low labor force participation and persistent high fertility. To understand these seemingly contradictory indicators requires an integrated framework that examines the specific constraints, resources and opportunities that shape the lives of women and men. Instead of the common assumption that Palestinian women's lives are largely determined by culture, the report attempts to show that gender asymmetry is produced across a number of different but interacting realms of life: the family and household, economy, politics, and society.

While there are many commonalities between gender relations in Palestine and those in other Middle Eastern societies, the history of both military occupation and resistances to it stamp all areas of life in the West Bank and Gaza and must be taken into account. As such, gender as a basis of social organization is examined in relation to other dynamics - national/political, economic, and social - that shape the fates and futures of Palestinian women and men in their different socio-economic and political settings. In turn, the new reality of Palestine in transition has introduced changes in political, economic and social life that require fresh analysis and has made the task of understanding where change is needed more urgent, in order to create a democratic society of equal citizens.

Although the focus of this report is Palestinian women in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, a work comparing the commonalities and differences between Palestinian women across their various territorial contexts is yet to be written. A project comparing the situation of women in the West Bank

and Gaza, in refugee camps in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan, inside Israel, or in the far-flung Palestinian diaspora would be extremely important in illuminating the role of gender in structuring the Palestinian nation. Such a project is beyond the scope of this report but it is hoped that it may serve as a catalyst to other researchers.

Understanding the status, roles, economic and social participation and life circumstances of women in the West Bank and Gaza, is in itself a daunting task. This is both due to data gaps and inconsistencies and the historic lack of gender-informed research and scholarship, a gap which is just beginning to be addressed by gender-aware researchers and research centers. The report brings together the large but uneven range of existing research, data and policy documents on Palestine and Palestinian women. The Women's Studies Program was also fortunate to be able to draw upon new research and upon the new data generated by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. As such, the status report may also be useful in identifying areas for further investigation and research.

This status report is the final publication in the first phase of the Palestinian Women in Society project. In the second phase, researchers in the Program will be investigating gender and social policy in several aspects, including gender and public provisions for social security, gender and family and kin-based social support systems., and gender and educational reform

In many ways, the making of this report was a collaborative effort, as each chapter was the subject of in-depth discussions by all members of the Women's Studies Program, where changes and new material were introduced. Each chapter, however, has an individual author who is acknowledged. As with many projects, the less acknowledged work of discussion and debate, and research and editorial assistance, were equally vital to the project.

The chapters and authors are as follows:

1. Palestinian Society -- Lisa Taraki
2. Population and Fertility -- Rita Giacaman
3. Family -- Rema Hammami
4. Labor and Economy -- Rema Hammami
5. Social Support -- Penny Johnson
6. Education -- Mona Ghali
7. Politics -- Islah Jad
8. Law -- Penny Johnson
9. Health -- Rita Giacaman
10. Gender and Development -- Eileen Kuttab

This edition is considered by the Women's Studies Program as a "discussion edition" to be developed and modified through the process of debate among women's movement activists, researchers, developmental practitioners and policy makers. The chapters have, wherever possible, tried to identify practical implications for positive change in order to promote the building of shared strategies.

- *Women's Studies Program*
Birzeit University

LABOR AND ECONOMY

Gender Segmentation in Palestinian Economic Life

Rema Hammami

It is a common statement in research literature and public discourse that Palestinian women have very low labor force participation. Local norms and traditions opposing women engaging in work outside the home are usually evoked to explain this situation.¹ In this view, economic activity contradicts women's main socially prescribed roles as child-bearers and care-givers. As such, culture is seen as the main obstacle to women's integration into economic life in Palestine. The logical outcome of this view is that integrating women into economic activity can be achieved primarily through changing attitudes, particularly changing women's own conservatism.

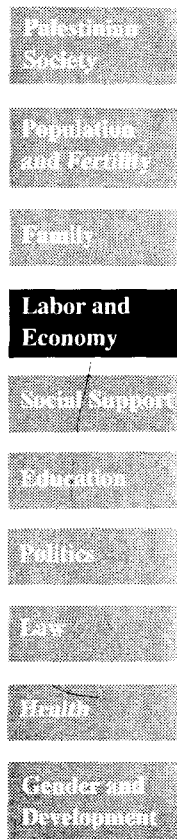
It is not difficult to identify data that supports the finding of low labor force participation. Standard laborforce surveys show that Palestinian women's participation in the formal labor force is extremely low, at approximately 10% in recent years, compared to a regional average of 25% and an average for developing countries of 39% (UNDP 1996,38). Attitudinal surveys show the majority of men claiming that it is preferable that women not work outside the home.² Finally, high fertility rates provide added support to the notion that women are too busy fulfilling their social role as child-bearers to be engaged in economic activity.

The data seems conclusive and everyday experience tends to suggest that there are norms mitigating against women's work outside the home in Palestine. However, as this chapter will argue, this dominant view is actually the product of both a lack of data on certain economic sectors, and more profoundly, the outcome of a specific conceptualization of labor participation -- one that ignores the types of economic activities in which women tend to engage in economic contexts like Palestine. The dependent nature of the Palestinian economy has restricted opportunities for the population as a whole, but has had a differential impact on male and female economic opportunities. As such, any attempt to understand, Palestinian women's economic behavior must be embedded in an analysis of how economic structures both shape and reproduce gender asymmetries in the wider society.

Gender informed scholarship on women in developing economies has shown that standard measures tend to exclude most women's labor activities from being counted, despite the fact that they are often pivotal in contributing to family well-being and survival. This is certainly the case in Palestine where non-standard studies have shown that, while women make up only 10% of the formal labor force, the majority of women outside the labor force spend more than 50 hours per week on housework and income-generating activities in the home (Heiberg and Ovansen 1993, 211).

¹ A recent example of such a view can be found in Lina Hamardee-Banarjee et. al, *At the Crossroads: Challenges and Choices for Palestinian Women in the West Bank and Gaza Strip*. UNDP, New York 1993 (pp.66-67).

² The first FAFO household survey found that only 43% of males over 15 years old supported women working outside the home, compared to 78% of women (Heiberg and Ovansen 1993, 251).



This chapter attempts to redress the dominant view of Palestinian women's limited participation in economic activities, as well as to provide an alternative to a purely cultural explanation for women's patterns of work. The approach taken is both to critique the existing data and to provide an alternative conceptual framework for understanding the extent, and particular ways that women are engaged in economic life. As other chapters in this report make clear, all aspects of social life are patterned by gender assumptions and asymmetries. In terms of addressing the gendered nature of economic life in Palestine, however, an immediate obstacle is the ways in which labor force participation is calculated. There is much evidence that more women are economically active than the standard labor force participation rates imply. However, by simply focussing on labor participation rates within the conventional survey frameworks, it is not possible to uncover the "missing" economically active women.

In order to do so, this chapter will raise a number of questions. Does the existing data accurately reflect women's economic contribution in Palestinian society or does it only reflect a small part of women's economic activities? If women are only marginally active in formal labor activity is this due to problems of tradition or absence of opportunity? In what types of labor activities are women more active and why? And finally, what are the implications of these findings for both the prospects of gender equity and sustainable development in Palestine? The main aim of the chapter is to see how gender is an organizing category in the Palestinian economy. The chapter then goes on to analyze the various problems of women within the labor force itself. What are the types of jobs and employment levels which provide access to women? What types of discrimination and obstacles do women encounter within the various sectors of the economy? Finally, the chapter will attempt to understand what types of policy measures are appropriate for a more equitable integration of women into the economy and to what extent the issue of high fertility rates should be addressed.

The Context: Trends in the Palestinian Economy

As noted in the introductory chapter on Palestinian society, although the West Bank and Gaza economies have been largely shaped by the Israeli occupation, they nevertheless share certain commonalities with other economies in the region.³ Prime among these is the fact that productive sectors are small compared to trade. This imbalance between the productive and trade sectors is one of the most basic causes for the inability of many Arab economies to absorb their labor force, the outcome being a dependency on exporting labor. The problem of absorbing the labor force is worsened by a general decline in the role of the agricultural sector, and by high fertility rates in relation to the growth and availability of jobs (World Bank: 1995).

While Palestine's economy clearly fits this overall regional pattern, Israel has played a formidable and ongoing role in determining the shape and intensity of these features, as well as in precluding attempts to positively change them. Prolonged occupation brought to bear on the Palestinian economy a host of pressures which impeded its development. The steady decline in the role of agriculture since 1967 proceeded within the context of an active Israeli policy to obstruct the development of the industrial sector. Instead, while traditional

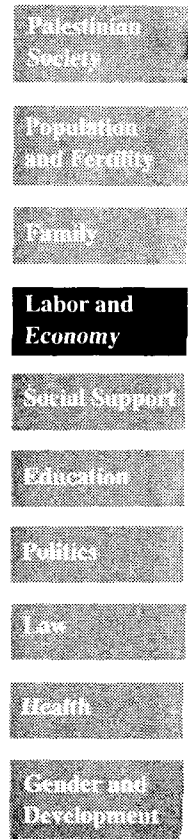
³ The commonality is particularly true vis a vis non-oil producing nations in the region.

Palestinian employment sectors were undermined, the labor force was re-oriented to serve the more labor-intensive areas of the Israeli economy. Productive sectors were also re-aligned in ways congruent with Israeli production and consumption needs, while Israeli control of trade channels also ensured their domination of Palestinian domestic and international trade.

By the end of the 1980s, the effects of these policies could be seen in the strong imbalances in various sectors of the Palestinian economy. Palestinian manufacturing accounted for only 6% of GDP and absorbed only 17% of the labor force (UNCTAD 1993, 13) and Palestine's trade deficit with Israel was enormous with twice as much imported from Israel as was exported to it (UNCTAD 1993, 14). Simultaneously, the role of Palestinian agriculture had declined dramatically, providing only 26% of the West Bank's GDP and 19% of Gaza's GDP and absorbing only 16% of the former's labor force and 11% of the latter's (UNCTAD 1993, 9, 10). The primary dependence on the Israeli labor market to absorb the labor force is attested to by the fact that by 1987, more than 42% of the West Bank and Gaza labor force were working in Israel, accounting for over 30% of Palestine's GNP (UNCTAD 1993, 40, 19). Despite the negative implications for Palestinian economic development, the Israeli market's ability to absorb Palestinian labor offset large-scale unemployment despite the population's youth and high birthrates.⁴

This overall situation changed dramatically in 1992. While the basic structural imbalances have remained, the Palestinian economy has undergone an intermittent but nearly continuous series of shocks since the Gulf War brought about the closure of Israel to Palestinian labor and goods. Simultaneously, continued macro-control of the Palestinian economy (through control of external trade and financial measures) makes the creation of sustainable job alternatives in the immediate future a near impossibility. The effects of the closure are summed up by the massive drop in GNP that has taken place between 1992 and 1996 and the massive rise in unemployment rates. Real per capita GNP, a measure of income generated per person has declined 39% over this period, while the unemployment rate has risen to 39% in Gaza and 24% in the Gaza Strip in mid-1996 (UNSCO 1996, i-ii). Loss of employment opportunities in Israel has been exacerbated by the fact that the Palestinian labor force continues to grow at an annual rate of six percent which means that on a monthly basis approximately 4,600 persons enter the labor force seeking new jobs (UNSCO 1996, ii, 11).

Women's labor activities cannot be understood separate from this larger context of the structure of the Palestinian economy and the more recent crises it has undergone. The legacy of a work force geared to meet specific sectors of the Israeli labor market (especially in the construction and industrial sectors) and the co-terminus obstacles put on Palestinian manufacturing have had very specific implications for the integration of women into wage work. The declining role of agriculture has meant the agriculture sector's growing reliance on marginal and underpaid or non-paid labor -- again, of great significance for women. Recently, massive male joblessness, added to the lack of employment opportunities in the formal sector, has had a dramatic impact on women in the formal labor force and outside it,



⁴ The Israeli CBS assessed Palestinian unemployment figures at a mere one to five percent during the first twenty-five years of occupation, an assessment similar to Ovensen's figure of a seven percent employment rate in the 1992 FAFO survey (Heiberg and Ovensen 1993, 188). However, Ovensen did find substantial numbers of under-employed and under-utilized workers, especially among those with higher education (Heiberg and Ovensen 1993, 192-194).

and may narrow the ability of new generations of women to enter formal labor force activity for the first time.

Women and Standard Labor Force Surveys (LFS)

Using standard labor force survey methods based on the International Labor Organization's (ILO) LFS framework, the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics has shown extremely low labor force participation rates among women in the West Bank and Gaza throughout the Occupation. Labor force participation rates refer to the percentage of a population fifteen years and older who are considered to be in the formal labor force. As such, the following table represents the percentage of the Palestinian female population 15 years and older who were considered economically active according to the ILO framework.

Table 1: Female Labor Force Participation Rates by Region Selected Years, 1968-1995

Year	Gaza	West Bank	East Jerusalem	Total
1968	6.4	8.6	-	-
1972	4.0	11	-	8.2
1976	4.4	13	-	9.4
1980	4.4	12	-	9.3
1984	3.4	11	8.1	8.2
1988	2.4	10	7.9	7.3
1993	1.8	9.5	-	6.2
1995*	7.6	12.8	-	11.2

* 1995 is based on the findings of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics

According to the above results, while the percentage of women in the labor force has remained quite low, between 1968 and 1993 their participation actually declined. The situation in Gaza shows the most decline while the situation in the West Bank tends to show stagnation. However, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) labor survey in 1995 found significantly higher numbers of women in the labor force in Gaza and the West Bank than Israeli statistics showed in the previous survey year. In Gaza, the PCBS found almost five times as many women active in the labor force and also registered a one-third increase in the West Bank. The reasons for the dramatic increase are probably due to a combination of two factors; a relative increase in employment opportunities for women in Gaza with the coming of the Palestinian Authority, and the probability that the PCBS was more accurately able to collect data at the field work level than their Israeli counterparts were able to in the past -- especially in Gaza and during the intifada.

The following table looks at the current labor force status of men and women fifteen years of age and above in Palestine and is useful in understanding how the LFS framework analyzes labor force activity.

Table 2: Population in West Bank and Gaza 15 years+ by Sex and Labor Force Status (1995)

SEX	Not in Labor Force	In Labor Force			Total
		Full Employed	Under-employed	Unemployed	
Male	33.1	58.8	22.9	18.3	66.9
Female	88.8	71.7	10.4	17.8	11.2

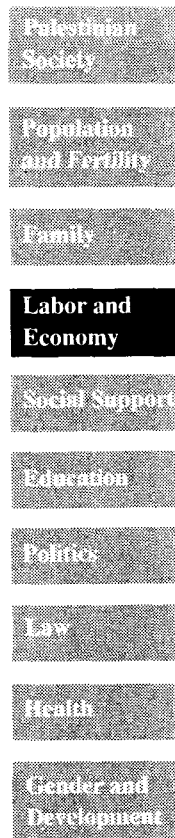
Source: (PCBS April 1996, 47)

According to Table 2, 89% of the working age female population in 1995 were outside the labor force altogether while 33% of the male population were. The right side of the table shows that 11% of women of working age were considered in the formal labor force while 67% of males were. Of women within the labor force a comparatively higher percentage (71.7%) were fully employed in comparison to their male counterparts (58.8%). However, in terms of unemployment male and female rates were similar, at about 18%.

In terms of providing a standard measure through which Palestine's formal employment situation can be compared internationally, the standard labor force participation survey framework is useful and should not be rejected. However, it clearly has very narrow definitions of work which tend to exclude the labor activities of most women: activities which tend to be intermittent, informal, unpaid and often not recognized as constituting work by the women themselves. In these standard measures, one is considered to be part of the labor force if one of the following requirements are met:

1. If the individual worked for one hour or more during the survey week in a paid job or business or for non-pay in a family business or farm.
2. If the individual was absent from the a regular work place during the survey week due to illness, holiday or strike.
3. If the individual does not meet the criteria of 1 or 2, he/she actively sought work during the reference week.

Only if the person being surveyed fulfilled one of these three categories would they be counted in the labor force, otherwise he/she is considered outside the labor force altogether. The framework is problematic not only because it does not include housework within its categorization. Although it attempts to capture some work forms that take place in the home, it only recognizes those forms when they are part of a formal family business or farm, not when women are self-employed in non-formal service or production work. Even in the case of women working in a formal family business, the most common obstacle is under-reporting; women and their spouses often do not consider female "help" on the family farm or business as "work" and thus do not report it as such. Another problem is the narrow time



criteria necessary to be counted as working. Much informal sector work, especially by women, is intermittent or seasonal. Measuring labor force participation based solely on activity in the week previous to the survey results in many women who take up forms of labor and production only when informal activities are available, or when family economic conditions necessitate it, end up being counted outside the labor force. Finally, women like men, who want paid labor but have given up hope of finding work, fall outside the formal labor force framework altogether -- a situation that is common among young, educated females in Palestinian society.

A Gendered Labor Market

Due to the limitations of the LFS framework in capturing the variety of female labor activities, especially in third world contexts, gender-aware economists have developed a number of different approaches that seek to uncover the range and magnitude of women's labor activities and their structuration within national economies. One alternative is to look at the economy in terms of its labor markets and how they differentially utilize male and female labor -- an approach referred to as labor market segmentation analysis (Beneira 1987, Kabeer 1994, Rees 1992, MacEwen Scott 1994). This approach is based on the idea that the organization of economies structure labor opportunities for the whole population, but also differentially provides employment to various members of that population. Economies segment labor activity based on a variety of social factors such as age, status, education, race/ethnicity, and gender. This type of analysis therefor, sees social differences as fundamental to the way that economies are organized and operate, rather than perceiving economies as somehow independent of the various social cleavages that exist in a society.⁵

Labor markets are spheres of the economy that are distinguished by their labor processes and relations. This includes the work relations and circumstances under which people work, as well as their qualitative experience of work. In simple terms, it means asking who gets hired for what job, in what sector, at what status level and why?

The following table re-divides the Palestinian economy according to gendered labor markets -- spheres of the economy conceptualized according to how they organize and utilize male and female labor. The table describes each labor market and whether it is covered in standard labor force surveys or not and then assess both sources and quality of data on women within each labor market. In terms of labor relations, each market represents a different set of labor practices and worker-employee relations. For instance, one might compare a woman who works for her family in seasonal agriculture and does not directly receive wages to a woman who works for a non-family employer in a sustained way and receives a monthly wage. Both women are economically active, but the first is less likely to be considered employed or experience her labor activity as employment. In terms of labor relations, the important dimensions include the regularity of the work (is the activity constant, intermittent or arbitrary?); the site at which it takes place (is it a work-site clearly separate from the sphere of the home?); and the form that wage compensation takes place (a monthly check, a few coins a day, or indirectly as betterment of overall family livelihood).

⁵ This type of analysis was initially developed to analyze the way that race operated to segment black Americans in lower paying, lower status jobs in the American economy. See Hartmann 1987.

In some spheres women clearly perceive themselves and are perceived as "employed"; in others they do not necessarily see themselves as "employed" but are counted as so in national statistics. In still others, women consider themselves working but are not defined as such by the society or in statistical measures.

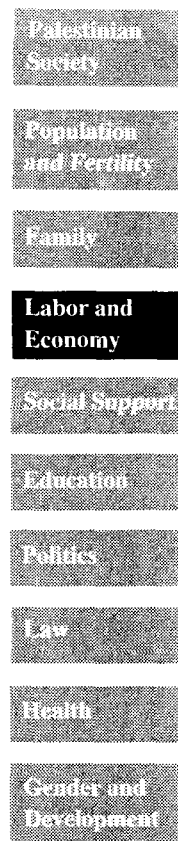
Table 3: Labor Markets, Data Sources, Data Quality on Women

Non-Agricultural Economy	Agricultural Economy	Wage Labor in Israel	Informal Economy	Domestic Economy
Includes: local manufacture, industry, services, public sector (health, education etc.) mercantile & trade	Includes: all agricultural production on Palestinian owned or rented land	Includes: all wage work in Israel or on settlements	Includes: non-registered street or home-based trade, as well as self-employed individual small scale production (usually of clothing or foodstuffs)	Includes: home-based labor activities -- usually for consumption rather than exchange
Data: Covered by standard labor force surveys, also covered in PCBS 1994 Census of Establishments	Data: Covered in standard labor force surveys.	Data: Covered in standard labor force surveys.	Data: Not covered in standard labor force surveys. One survey exists but does not cover entire population (FAFO 1994) and few micro-level studies exist.	Data: Not covered in standard labor force surveys. One survey exists but not of entire population (FAFO 1994). Few micro-level studies.
Quality of data on women: Most accurate. Census of Establishments provides better data than standard labor force surveys.	Quality of data on women: PCBS 1995 and 1996 accurate	Quality of data on women: Limited Israel CBS never disaggregated by sex.	Quality of data on women: Within micro-studies, good focus on women.	Quality of data on women: Within the limited data, good focus on women.

Five Gendered Labor Markets

Given this overall conceptualization, we can divide the Palestinian economy into five labor market spheres according to female labor opportunities: the national agricultural sector, the national non-agricultural sector⁶, the Israeli labor market, the informal economy, and the domestic economy. The first four encompass all the opportunities for wage work or employment for Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza. The additional market, domestic economy, is an area of predominantly female labor activity which is usually not

⁶ "Industrial" is used by the PCBS for this sphere but it can be somewhat misleading, since this sector covers also non-industrial business establishments such as the public sector and trade. Industrial refers to the fact that these activities are listed under the "International Standard Industrial Classification of all Economic Activities"(ISIC). See (PCBS April 1996, 12).



considered economic and is ignored altogether by conventional economists.⁷ Because most women's productive lives in Palestine are actually centered around domestic production, it is extremely important to understand this sphere and how it interconnects with other economic and non-economic dimensions of life and family survival.

Agricultural Labor

The national agricultural sector includes all agricultural production which is based on Palestinian owned or rented land. Labor in this sector is classified in formal labor statistics, although the seasonality of much agricultural production means that it is often underestimated. Although standard labor surveys attempt to measure women's labor contribution in this sector, women are often classified as non-paid family labor. Due to the fact that women frequently don't receive a wage for working in agriculture and because of the seasonality and family-based nature of the work, women working in agriculture often do not consider themselves working despite the importance of their labor contribution.

Non-Agricultural Labor

The national non-agricultural sector includes all businesses, trade, services, petty and large industry, as well as government and public services such as health and education. Basically, it includes the Palestinian formal public and private economic sectors excluding agriculture. It is labor in this sector which is the main focus of formal labor surveys and which national labor statistics are best able to measure. In terms of women, standard labor surveys are at their most accurate here. This is due to the fact that women in this sector are working in sustained and public sites, for a regular wage or income. As such, women working in this sphere both recognize themselves as being employed, and are recognized as such by the wider society.

Wage Labor In Israel

While labor migration is a common occurrence in most third world countries, Palestine is unusual in that labor migration does not usually involve a change of residence -- i.e. workers remain living in Palestine and go to work in another national economy on a daily basis. Although wage labor in Israel (or in settlements) is treated in standard labor surveys, its often casual and intermittent nature has resulted in it being under-estimated in labor statistics. This is especially the case for women -- who have historically worked in Israel without registering with the labor offices, but instead work as day laborers on a casual pay-per-job basis. While there are relatively good estimates of the number of male workers in Israel, there is an almost total absence of data on women working there. Although women work in public sites in Israel, the strong social taboo against it means that women (although often having strong identities as workers), are usually clandestine about their work vis a vis the wider society.

⁷ Because of Palestinian nationalist calls for economic self-reliance during the intifada, "home economy" became a popular concept locally. However, little attempt was made to understand what it meant and how it was tied to the gender division of labor society. Now with macro-economic, free market models dominating the debates about economic development in Palestine, the domestic economy issue has become unfashionable.

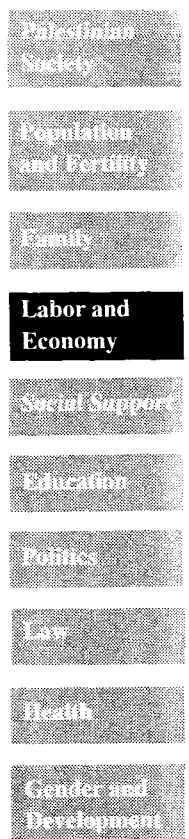
Labor in the Informal Sector

The informal sector is both the least understood and least measured labor market sphere. Definitions differ, but it is usually considered those areas of economic activity in which poor people are self-employed in marginal income generating activities in which the main goal is predominantly poverty alleviation. Examples of informal labor activity would include street peddling, home-based manufacture of prepared foods or clothing items, or home-based hairdressing and baby-sitting. In Palestine, Israeli tax and other pressure on Palestinian economic activity at certain times pushed larger sectors of the formal economy into the informal economy -- an obvious example is merchants being turned into peddlers due to tax closures of their establishments. Standard labor force surveys do not measure these types of economic activities and there is a near absence of data. In terms of women, it is often suggested that because they have very low representation in the standard labor force (the first three spheres), they are probably very active in the informal labor force.

However, due to the problems of definition (where it seems that anything that doesn't fit into "formal" is thrown into this category), it is difficult to assess. In general, we find that some women in this sector perceive of themselves as temporary workers who will or would stop their activities if a male wage earner could provide, while others perceive of themselves as workers who are simply unable to get a formal job. Some work in public but not necessarily sustained ways (peddlers), depending on the market or their capital, while some work in private (hairdressing in the home) on a continual basis. As such, this sphere represents a grey area in terms of women's self-definition and in terms of the labor relations that define women's experiences.

Labor and the Domestic Economy

The final sphere, the domestic economy, includes labor activities that are usually ignored as housework. Cooking, cleaning, housework and caring for children and the elderly are the conventional tasks associated with female domestic labor and are often defined as economically reproductive, rather than productive. That is to say they are tasks that "reproduce" the labor force (male workers and future workers) as opposed to directly producing income. Significantly, these tasks often substitute for paid public services (health-care, elderly assistance). While non-paid reproductive labor is pivotal to family survival (especially among poorer households) and the survival of society, the focus in this analysis is on the more quantifiable aspects of domestic economy: the direct or indirect income generating activities of women in poor households. These types of income generating activities are usually extension of goods and services produced for consumption in the household rather than organized as separate income generating activities. As such, domestic economy refers to activities on the margins of the informal sector which are usually undertaken to generate supplementary income (often in economic crisis situations), in a non-sustained and per-need basis. Such activities would include the production of one-off clothing items, the sale or barter of surplus food production (either agricultural products, or home-prepared foods), or barter of in-kind goods (UNRWA rations is one important local example). While these types of activities seem extremely marginal economically -- their



prevalence and importance among distressed households has been well documented especially for refugee households.⁸

Female Labor Participation in Five Labor Markets

Table 3 above makes clear that standard labor force surveys only include the first three labor markets in their calculations of labor force participation rates; labor in the informal sector and domestic sphere are not counted. The table also makes the point that while wage labor in Israel and agriculture are included in the LFS framework, both Israeli and Palestinian CBS data on women in these spheres have tended to be partial or incomplete.

The following table brings together data from various sources on the extent of women's participation in the five labor markets covering various periods in the 1990s.

Table 4: Females as percentage of total employment in five labor markets

National Agricultural		National Non-agricultural		Wage Labor in Israel		Informal Economy		Domestic Economy	
W.Bank	Gaza	W.Bank	Gaza	W.Bank	Gaza	W.Bank	Gaza	W.Bank	Gaza
39.4	20	18	12	3.6	.6	55.6	60.6	83.6	85.7
Source: PCBS April 1996		PCBS 1994		PCBS April ⁹ 1996		Ovensen 1994 ¹⁰		Ovensen 1994	

* 9, ** 10

The above figures refer to women as percentages of the total employed in these various labor market spheres, as opposed to representing the percentage of employed female manpower. It remains clear, however, that formal labor participation surveys, while being statistically valid, nevertheless misrepresent the magnitude of Palestinian women's economic activities by only providing a part of the overall picture. Even if women's participation in the informal sector was factored into labor force statistics, one would find a sharp rise in overall rates of women as a percentage of the labor force.

⁸ For examples and discussion see Erica Lang and Itimad Muhanna, *A Study of Women and Work in Shatti Refugee Camp*, (Jerusalem: Arab Thought Forum, 1992). Also see FAFO 1994.

⁹ In 1992, Heiberg and Ovensen found the following; women in Gaza made up 2% of the Gazan labor force working in Israel while women in West Bank made up 8%. In 1994, Ovensen found that women in Gaza made up 2% of the labor force working in Israel while in the West Bank camps they comprised 7%.

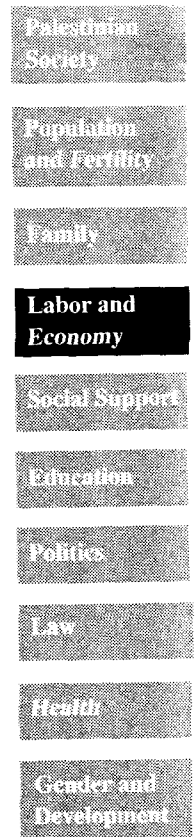
¹⁰ The figures on participation in the formal and domestic spheres are derived from data in the 1994 FAFO survey entitled "Responding to Change: Trends in Palestinian Household Economy". However, there are a number of constraints in using them. Firstly, the data for the West Bank only covers the refugee camp population. Secondly, the survey treats household income generating activities, which are divided into food-processing and other household production -- the latter category includes growing vegetables/fruits/herbs, raising poultry and other animals, fishing, producing crafts, and conducting services or trade from a mobile installation on the street (Ovensen 1994, 62-64). In the table, "other household production" is treated as representing informal economic activities and food processing as representing domestic economy -- although clearly the line separating the two is somewhat arbitrary.

However, the table points out that, while we may conclude that women are much more economically active than either ICBS or PCBS labor surveys claim, there is also clear gender segmentation across these labor markets. Most crucially, women are highly segregated from wage work in Israel -- historically one of the main forms of employment for the labor force as a whole. While the percent of females employed in Israel indicated above is probably somewhat lower than the norm, it is unlikely that it represents a massive drop relative to male employment in Israel. Instead, it most likely represents a sharper statement of an asymmetry that existed prior to the overall downturn of labor opportunities in Israel for Palestinian workers as a whole. As such, if wage work in Israel was excluded from calculations, women's participation rates in the labor force would appear much higher, at around approximately 20% of the overall labor force. However, even excluding wage work in Israel we find that there is still strong gender segmentation in the remaining labor markets -- especially for Gazan women who, for instance, constitute only 12% of the non-agricultural employed.

Finally, the data does bear out the hypothesis that women tend to be concentrated in the non-formal sectors of the economy -- the informal and domestic spheres. While their participation in the other sectors is higher than previously assumed, women overall appear to be concentrated in the latter two non-formal spheres. Significantly, Gazan women appear as relatively more active in the informal sphere than their West Bank counterparts (the former constituting 62.5% of informal economy workers, while the latter 55.5%). This tends to suggest that there is a relationship between opportunities for employment across these markets -- that women "excluded" from formal sectors find or create employment for themselves in the non-formal sectors.

Access and Opportunity: Exclusion or Choice

What are the pre-requisites for women to find employment in the various labor markets of the Palestinian economy? The treatment of female labor force participation in the standard survey framework conceptualizes women as a unified category who are simply employed, unemployed or outside of the labor force. As such, women's labor force participation is implied to be a matter of choice -- some women choose to engage in the labor force while the vast majority do not. However, for the vast majority (male and female alike) labor activity is not a matter of choice but of need. How that need to get access to income is met, however, is mediated by a range of factors which differ for various categories of men and women. On the one side are the social, educational and demographic circumstances of the individual seeking employment, and on the other are the various demands and requirements of various employment categories and economic sectors. An additional factor is the relation between labor supply and demand which delimit the overall availability of employment, as well as limiting opportunities for specific types of employment and access to specific occupational statuses. The first dimension may be considered material circumstances; the second, occupational requirements; and the third, labor supply.¹¹



¹¹ This conceptualization is loosely based on the framework developed by Teresa Rees in her study, *Women and the Labor Market*. Routledge: London and New York 1992.

Gender difference and asymmetry operate across these three dimensions and help determine an individual's access to particular types of employment. The job seeker's social, demographic and to a lesser extent, educational circumstances, are centrally determined by gender. Employment opportunities, economic sectors and statuses are almost always "gendered" -- with male and female labor differentially organized throughout most areas of the economy. And finally, over-supply of labor (or lack of jobs) is usually at the expense of women's employment or results in males moving into sectors once considered "female".

As noted in the chapter on the family and household, the family is not only a primary force of social organization but also plays a fundamental role in mediating the economic circumstances of individuals. This complex function is often understood in policy terms simply as the need to support the "family wage". The notion of family wage is not specific to Palestine but is an underlying assumption in employment and social welfare policy worldwide. It is based on a normative perception of families as nuclear units dependent economically on a male breadwinner. The notion of family wage plays a central role in justifying differential access and opportunity for males and females across the three dimensions of material circumstances, occupational requirements and labor supply. The notion that families are fundamentally dependent on a male breadwinner shapes life opportunities for males and females early on. Families' differential investment in education for girls and boys, as well as female early marriage are linked to the notion of family wage. Pay differentials, hiring preferences, and the calculation of job benefits are all influenced by the assumption that males are primary breadwinners while females are only supplementing family income. Finally, when labor opportunities shrink for the society as a whole, job creation alternatives are usually developed with the jobless "male breadwinner" as the target beneficiary. Family ideology also operates in more subtle ways in shaping life opportunities for male and female, as well as in determining their differential relationship to the economy; issues which will be explored in the next section.

The following section will focus on the educational, social and demographic differences that are associated with women working in particular labor markets in Palestine. Additionally, this section will look at the ways in which female labor is organized and utilized within various labor markets and their component sectors -- under what circumstances and for what type of benefits do women work within specific sectors? Finally, through an analysis of gender ratios in various sub-sectors, the section will explore how trends in labor supply differentially affect men and women in the Palestinian economy.

The Israeli Labor Market

At the beginning of the occupation, Israel opened special labor offices to encourage women from the occupied territories to register for work in Israel (Simhe 1984, 6). During that period, it claimed that one positive outcome of Israeli "administration" of the occupied territories was that the provision of substantial employment opportunities for Palestinian women. However, in the only three years in which the ICBS provided gender disaggregated data on Palestinian workers in Israel, women never accounted for more than three percent of the total.¹² It is difficult to ascertain whether these figures are accurate. The absence of these women from the Israeli statistical abstracts is symbolic of the larger silence on the issue

¹² The three years and women as percentage of workers in Israel were: 1975 (1.5%), 1977 (2.8%), and 1981 (3.1%). The data is from Semyonov and Lewin-Epstein 1989, 10.

within Palestinian society. However, in the early 1970s there is evidence that more than 6,000 women from Gaza alone applied to work in Israel (Samed 1976, 26).

During this earlier period when Israel had a labor shortage Palestinian women were employed as factory workers (predominantly in the food industry), and in the service industry (hospital and hotel cleaners) (Hammami 1994, Moors 1995). But by the early 1980s many of these jobs had been turned over to Israelis and Palestinian women tended to be concentrated in agricultural wage labor -- considered the most poorly paid and insecure labor sectors for workers in Israel. Currently, according to the PCBS statistics of September - October 1995, women made up 4% of the Palestinian labor force working in Israel.¹³ The majority of them (69.3%) were in the 45+ age groups, had zero years of education (62%), and were employed predominantly in seasonal agriculture (42%).¹⁴ In 1995 women represented 6% of the agricultural workers from Gaza working in Israel (PCBS April 1996, 83). In comparison, the majority of males working in Israel were and continue to be concentrated in the construction industry (55% of male workers), tend to have 7-12 years of education and are predominantly under 45 years of age.¹⁵

From ethnographic accounts, women who work in Israel are usually without any form of male breadwinner, and are usually divorced or widowed or have an ailing spouse -- in other words, female heads of households (Rockwell 1984, 27; Malki and Shalabi 1993, 163; Moors 1992, 183; Hammami 1994). In both Gaza and the West Bank they tend to be from refugee camps and to a lesser extent from West Bank border villages.¹⁶ They are usually women in extremely difficult social and economic situations.¹⁷ As such, women who work in Israel tend to be older females with little education but more importantly, with no male breadwinner. The latter status suggests not only a particular economic incentive which motivates women to work in Israel -- but perhaps more important, a social status which "allows" them to work in Israel. Cultural inhibitions towards women's wage labor seem most apparent in attitudes towards women working in the Israeli labor market. The ethnographic literature reveals a strong social taboo against it, which is mitigated only by socially acknowledged need -- i.e. when women have no male breadwinner. However, even this powerful social justification did not prove strong enough during the intifada, when many women who had worked in Israel, found social sanctions too strong and thus

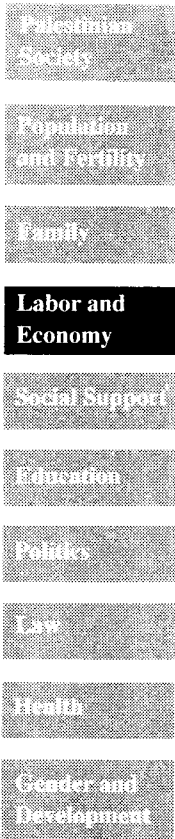
¹³ A year later, in the PCBS July - October 1996 labor force survey, women had dropped to less than 2% of the West Bank/ Gaza labor force working in Israel (PCBS January 1997, 61).

¹⁴ These percentages are calculated from tables in PCBS labor survey 1, (April 1996, 53, 55) and survey 3, (January 1997, 64).

¹⁵ Due to organization of the data, it is only possible to outline these general trends from PCBS 1 (April 1996, 53, 55).

¹⁶ Both the Malki and Shalabi study (1993) as well as the Giacaman and Tamari study (re-published 1997) on rural villages found substantial numbers of village women working in seasonal agriculture on nearby Israeli settlements. Women were usually working under the aegis of a village contractor, who mediated the problematic social circumstances, as well as taking a large cut from the women's wage.

¹⁷ A study done in the early 1990s, based on a sample of 20 Gazan women who worked in Israel, found only one woman with a spouse able to support her. Seven were divorced, seven were widows, two were unmarried and, out of the three who were married, only one had a working husband -- the other two husbands were too old or too sick to work. All of them were refugees and their ages ranged from 28 to 64, with the majority of them in their forties (Hammami 1994).



attempted to find local alternatives.¹⁸

Work in Israel appears as the most anomalous labor market in terms of gender. While it was the largest labor market for males throughout the 1970s and 1980s, it was the smallest in terms of females. While the social sanctions against women working there seem to have played an important role, the fact that labor opportunities for women in Israel were of the lowest occupational status and with the lowest pay (agriculture) may also have mitigated against women's greater integration. Ultimately, the most prominent role of work in Israel vis a vis female wage labor was its impact on labor markets in the West Bank and Gaza, an issue that will be discussed in the following sections.

Finally, the fact that the Israel labor market has been perceived as "male", has led to post-closure job-replacement strategies that are designed solely in terms of male workers. No consideration has been given to the actual or potential numbers of women who have lost work in this sector.¹⁹

The Agricultural Labor Market

Women comprise a substantial proportion of the agricultural labor force, but are largely unpaid and unrecognized. According to PCBS, women were 36.9% of the agricultural workers in the West Bank and Gaza in mid-1996. With greater agricultural production taking place in the West Bank than Gaza, women were 40.2% of agricultural workers in the former and 12.1% in the latter area during the same period. However, due to the seasonal nature of agricultural production, PCBS has found significant variation in these numbers according to the year and season in which various surveys were conducted.

Table 5: Women as a Percentage of Total Agricultural Workers in Three PCBS Labor Force Survey Periods

PCBS Survey Round	Survey Period	Total	West Bank	Gaza
Round I	9-10 1995	34.7%	38%	19.9%
Round II	4-5 1996	29.4%	31.1%	18.9%
Round III	7-10 1996	36.9%	40.2%	12.2%

While the above data reveals a high proportion of female involvement in the agricultural labor market, the overall proportion is lower than the findings of various micro-studies at the village level. In a survey of three West Bank villages in 1989, women in 92% of the families surveyed participated in agricultural production, (Malki and Shalabi 1993, 156) while a more

¹⁸ Malki found that, while in the 1970s approximately 70 women from the West Bank Village of Kharbatha, and 40 from Kufr Malik worked in Israel or on settlements, these numbers declined dramatically in the intifada (Malki and Shalabi 1993, 163).

¹⁹ It could be argued, however, that current providers of social security potentially cover these women since both UNRWA and the Ministry of Social Welfare give priority to female headed-households. See the chapter on Social Support in *Palestinian Women: A Status Report*.

recent unpublished survey by the Women's Affairs Center, Gaza, of women in three Gazan villages found 27% of them engaged in agricultural production. The disparity in the proportions found in micro-studies in comparison to large scale surveys is most likely due to under-reporting. Under-reporting is common since female agricultural labor is usually unpaid, and often considered an extension of women's household duties. A much greater proportion of men are wage workers in agriculture, predominantly from camp and urban contexts working either in Israel or on Israeli settlements.

Thus, although men form the majority of the agricultural labor force, agriculture is the second largest market for female labor -- accounting for 28.5% of women in the labor force, and only 14.6% of the men. When looked at historically, it becomes clear that since the beginning of the occupation, men have been moving out of local agriculture into other sectors (most predominantly wage labor in Israel), while women's involvement in this sector has declined much less dramatically. Table 6 below shows that while 32% of the male work force were engaged in agriculture in the early 1970s, by the late 1980s this had declined to 18%. In comparison 57% of women in the labor force were involved in agriculture in 1970, declining to 30% by 1989. The difference is due to the lack in growth of alternatives labor markets for women during the same period.

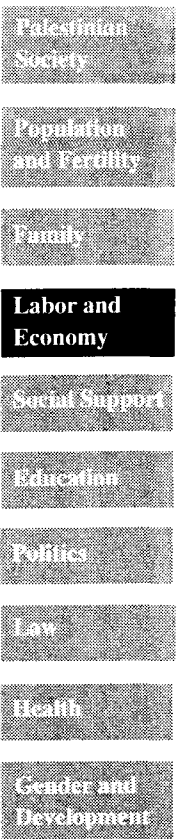
Table 6: Percent of Male versus Female Labor Force Engaged in Agriculture, 1970 - 1984

1970		1975		1980		1985		1989	
male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female
32.4	57.4	21.4	51.7	18	55.1	18.5	45.9	17.7	45.3

Source: Semyonov 1994, 143.

This table also attests to a pattern described by a number of researchers: as rural males became integrated into the Israeli labor market, rural females remained working on the family farm, often taking on the greater amount of agricultural tasks. This occurred without any substantive change in the gender division of resources, capital or decision-making. Instead, many agricultural tasks became re-defined as extensions of housework. The relationship is summed up by the observation that instead of women going out to work in the fields, the opposite occurred: the fields entered the house and became yet another responsibility of women (Malki and Shalabi 1993, 157).

Researchers have also noted that technological innovation (such as the introduction of drip irrigation and greenhouses) has also increased women's agricultural workload, again without a corresponding re-division of resources or power (Giacaman and Tamari 1997, 57). Various studies note the dominance of women in agricultural tasks which are labor intensive, physically demanding and non-mechanized (such as hoeing, weeding, sowing seeds, and harvesting)(Giacaman and Tamari 1997, 57; Malki and Shalabi 1993, 159; Ramsis 1997, 11). Moreover, women's activities are concentrated in routine productive tasks that do not relate to the market or control over economic resources, rather than market-related jobs such as the buying of agricultural in-puts and the sale of agricultural products. Women's marketing activities are limited to the local peddling of surplus product as they are



perceived as not having the knowledge necessary to deal with merchants (Malki and Shalabi 1993, 162).

Women working in agriculture overwhelmingly work as non-paid family labor, representing 60% of the total number of workers in that category. As Table 7 below shows, in agriculture women are under-represented as employers (13%); the self-employed (8%); and even less so as employees (5%).

Table 7: Male versus Female Employment Status in Agriculture

Occupation	Employment status									
	Total		unpaid family		employee		self-employed		employer	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
skilled agric./ fishery	65.6	34.6	41.9	58.1	95.4	4.6	92.1	7.9	87.0	13.0

Source: Calculated from PCBS April 1996 (Draft Publication)

Women's access to employment in this sector is thus overwhelmingly contingent on whether a spouse or parent are engaged in agriculture either as smallholders or as share-croppers. According to one survey, only 8% of Palestinian women claimed to have inherited land (Heiberg and Ovensen 1993, 295). Thus it is not surprising to find only 7.9% of women consider themselves self-employed in agriculture -- i.e. they receive monetary compensation through the sale of agricultural goods. The 9% of women classified as "employers", are probably women who do not necessarily own agricultural land themselves, but have a greater amount of authority in organizing family production (predominantly older women).

While the situation of women working in family agriculture is one of hard work with no direct material compensation; the situation of women working as wage laborers in agriculture is comparatively worse; especially in relation to male counterparts. The average daily wage for women agricultural laborers is 27 NIS compared to a male wage of 34 NIS (Ramsis 1997, 9).

Given the family-based nature of farming in Palestine, it may seem "natural" that women largely work without wages, simply in order to help their families. Given these circumstances, the obvious problem could be perceived as women's lack of "choice": whether they choose to help a spouse or family. However, choice is an extremely problematic notion when people perceive certain social relations and responsibilities as "natural" or given. Instead, the issue of recognition and compensation for women's responsibility in agriculture is a critical issue for gender equity.

This lack of recognition of the critical importance of women to agricultural production is reflected not only in their lack of wages, but also in their absence from agricultural cooperatives and agricultural training colleges.²⁰ Women's lack of compensation also has implications for the agricultural sector as a whole: overall wages in this sector are kept low

²⁰ Ramsis found only two female members in the West Bank agricultural cooperatives she surveyed. Females make up less than 15% of students at the Kedourie Agricultural College (Ramsis 1997, 3).

for all agricultural workers and it remains the sector with lowest wage scale in the economy. An agricultural worker in Israel or on settlements makes close to half the wage of all other occupations (PCBS April 1996,73). The social costs of women's lack of rights and resources in agriculture are perhaps even higher. Agriculture is the labor sector in which ones finds the highest rate of workers with no education; 41% of the labor force with no education are employed in agriculture (PCBS April 1996, 74). Rural women have the highest illiteracy rates of the whole population, although illiterates tend to be among older age categories of women. More significantly, educational achievement rates of women are lower in rural areas -- especially among women in agriculture. Finally, the highest incidence of cousin marriage is found in rural areas, as well as persistent high fertility rates of 6.39, only slightly less than those found in refugee camps.

The National Non-Agricultural Sphere:

This sphere includes labor in all business establishments in both the conventional public and private sectors excluding agriculture. It is composed of four main types of economic activity based in the West Bank and Gaza: industry (including manufacture), services, trade, and construction. Only formal, registered work-places are included in this sphere, although non-paid (family) workers are included alongside paid employees.²¹

According to the PCBS Census of Establishments, women make up 16% of the employees in the national non-agricultural sphere (PCBS August, 1995). There are regional asymmetries in this sphere, with women comprising 18% of employees in the West Bank and only 12% in Gaza. There are also stark patterns of gender segmentation and concentration across and within various sub-sectors. Segmentation refers to the separation of the sexes across occupations; labor concentration refers to the dominance of one sex within an occupation or sector. The following table represents the sex composition of employees in the four main economic activities in this sphere.

Table 8: Employment in Main Economic Activities of National Industrial Sphere by Sex, Distribution of Employed Females

Economic Activity	Male	Female	Female Distribution*
Industry/ manufacture	88.6	11.4	27.5
Services	60.7	39.3	55
Trade (wholesale/retail)	93.9	6.1	16.8
Construction	97.6	2.2	0.5

Source: Calculations based on (PCBS December 1996, pp. 42,44,46,48,50,52)

* "Female distribution" refers to distribution of employed females across the four sectors.

²¹ Due to the Occupation, many smaller family-owned businesses were unregistered even though they would be regularly included in this sector. A stated aim of the PCBS Census of Establishments was to help in the registration of all such establishments in Palestine.



While women are not the majority of employees in any single area, they are predominantly found in services where they account for 39.3% of employees in that sector, and 55% of all women employed in the national non-agricultural sphere. Industry is the second largest employer of women in this sphere, accounting for 27.5% of employed women. However, women make up a much smaller percentage of total employees in industry at only 11.4%. Finally, women's presence in trade is minimal (6% of total employed) and they are virtually absent from construction, accounting for only 2.4% of workers in that category.

When women employees are found grouped in specific areas of economic activity, this generally means that such activities are accessible to them. Accessibility to women may be due to a range of factors which may have positive or negative underpinnings. In positive terms, accessibility may be due to employer policies that encourage the integration of women, or that provide supports and benefits that allow women to meet their domestic responsibilities while working outside the home. On the negative side, accessibility may be due to an employer preference for female workers who can be paid less than males or who are non-unionized and therefore easier to control.

Assumptions about the "natural" abilities of each gender can also play a pivotal role in providing or denying access to certain types of work according to gender. Heavy manual work or work with heavy machinery are assumed to be more appropriate for males. Work that involves caring, nurturing or careful handwork is usually considered appropriate for females. Within a single workplace one can often find these assumptions at play in assigning different tasks to males and females. Although such distinctions can be found world-wide, on a practical level they are never fixed. In Palestine's recent past, carrying heavy loads was seen as women's work among the peasantry, while goldsmithing, a craft involving careful hands, was considered male. In the modern period, nursing in Palestine has lost its association as a women's occupation.

Changes in labor supply often play a crucial role in breaking down assumptions about appropriate male and female work. The most dramatic example is the effect war has on bringing women into civilian jobs that were formerly male domains (such as transport, heavy industry, and construction). Male labor migration often results in women taking up male tasks in agriculture (a local example being plowing). Changes in labor supply can also undermine women's employment. When employment opportunities recede for men, assumptions about the inappropriateness of their working in female-designated occupations become irrelevant. Large numbers of men moving into once "female" occupations is a common occurrence in stagnating economies, or economies in crisis. Moreover, due to the dominant belief that males are the main breadwinners, responsible for the "family wage", employers often give them priority over females.

The following sections analyze the gender composition of selected sectors within the four main areas of the national non-agricultural sphere. The tables in each section provide data (in raw numbers and percentages) on the gender distribution of each sub-sector as well as the sex ratio.

Industry/ Manufacture:

Women account for 27.5% of all employees in industrial and manufacturing activities based in the West Bank and Gaza. In the West Bank, women account for 15% of those employed in manufacturing compared to only 3.8% in Gaza. The asymmetry between the two regions is due to women's dominance in apparel manufacture in the West Bank, where they account for more than half (57.8%) of those employed compared to only 6% of those in Gaza.

Table 9: Males and Females Employed in Selected Sectors of Industry/Manufacture, by Region.

SECTOR	WEST BANK				GAZA				BOTH
	RAW NUMBER		PERCENT		RAW NUMBER		PERCENT		RATIO
SEX	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F:M
mining/ quarry	1	2,144	0	100	-	3	0	100	1:2,147
food/ beverage	356	6,170	5.4	94.6	17	1,821	0.1	99.9	1:21
textiles	227	1,052	17.7	82.3	16	505	3	97	1:6
apparel	4,452	3,239	57.8	42.2	298	4,469	6.2	93.8	1:2
wood/ wood products	15	1296	1.1	98.9	0	124	0	100	1:94
rubber/ plastic	19	762	2.4	97.6	0	250	0	100	1:53
leather	134	2,893	4.4	95.6	7	176	3.8	96.2	1:22
chemical product	305	927	24.3%	74.7%	27	124	17.8%	82.2%	1:3
subtotal manufacture	5,731	32,127	15.1	84.9	402	14,473	2.7	97.3	1:8
electric and water	38	1,656	2.2	97.8	-	504	0	100	1:57

Source: Calculations based on PCBS 1994 The Establishment Census (August 1995)

Palestinian
Society

Population
and Fertility

Family

**Labor and
Economy**

Social Support

Education

Politics

Law

Health

Gender and
Development

The only other manufacturing sector with significant numbers of women is in the textile industry where women account for 17.7% of those employed in the West Bank. Once again, women in Gaza have a much smaller presence, comprising only 3% of workers in textiles. Overall, women's presence in industry and manufacture is extremely low for both regions, although they fare relatively better in manufacture than in heavy industry and infrastructure. The sex ratios in manufacturing show significant asymmetry with an average one woman for every eight males employed. In the heavy industry sectors, sex ratios are extremely asymmetrical with, for instance, 2,147 men for every woman engaged in quarrying.

The regional difference between the numbers of women in clothing and other manufacture in the West Bank versus Gaza might be due to the impact of labor supply on the sex composition of those sectors in Gaza. While comparative statistical data for the 1980s does not exist on the clothing industry in Gaza, a number of micro-surveys from the period suggest that this industry in Gaza had also once been dominated by female labor. In a survey of women workers in local industry undertaken in Gaza in 1980, it was found that women constituted the majority of workers in local sewing and conversion industries (Rockwell 1985, 120). In the same study, official estimates put the number of women factory workers at 1,112, but claimed there were potentially two to three times as many (Rockwell 1985, 134). Ten years later in a similar survey conducted in 1990, it was found that "...most factories in Gaza employed five to six women", the majority (87%) of which specialized in sewing and textiles (Hindiyeh-Mani 1996, 4, 5). However, in the 1990 study only 54 factories were found employing women in Gaza, in comparison to 243 in 1980 (Rockwell 1990, 134; Hindiyeh-Mani 1996, 4).²² What the data suggests is that protracted closure of Israeli labor markets to Gaza men, which began affecting young men in 1989, has ultimately led to a process in which males have displaced female workers from significant areas of local industry. A similar process seems to be underway in the West Bank, but due to the greater range of male labor alternatives there, is far less complete.

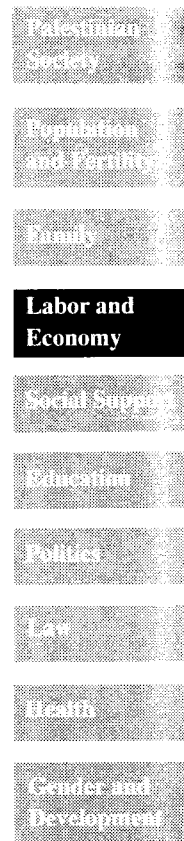
Services

The service sector is not only the largest employer of female labor in the national non-agricultural sphere, it is also the largest employer of women in the formal economy as a whole. Fifty-five percent of women working in the national non-agricultural labor market are working in services.

²² The small number of Gaza factories identified in the 1990 study may be due to sampling problems. In the 1994 PCBS Census of Establishments, 705 factory/workshops engaged in the manufacture of clothing, alone, were counted in Gaza. While the political stability engendered by the Israeli-Palestinian agreements may account for a certain growth in clothing manufacture, given the larger economic constraints produced by the new situation, it is unlikely that such massive growth did indeed occur.

Table 10: Economic Activity: Service, Selected Sectors

SECTOR	WEST BANK				GAZA				BOTH
	RAW NUMBER		PERCENT		RAW NUMBER		PERCENT		RATIO
Sex	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F:M
transport, communications	139	2,053	6.3	93.7	23	1,425	1.5	98.5	1:21
financial mediation	493	1,416	25.8	74.2	178	1,248	24.9	74.1	1:3
real estate/ rent	723	3,734	16.4	83.6	208	1,877	9.9	90.1	1:6
education	9,978	12,046	45.3	44.7	3,574	5,195	40.7	59.3	1:1.3
health/ social work	5,200	6,233	45.4	44.6	1,704	4,356	28.1	71.9	1:1.5
membership organizations	371	2,344	13.6	86.4	41	543	7.0	93.0	1:7
recreation, sports, culture	162	1,019	13.7	86.3	43	526	7.5	92.5	1:8
other personal/ social service	940	4,735	16.5	83.5	115	531	17.8	82.2	1:5
hotels/ restaurants	275	4,545	5.7	94.3	23	1,002	0.2	99.8	1:19
public administration/ social security	370	4,610	7.4	92.6	409	3,861	9.5	90.5	1:11



However, only two sectors account for the high number of women employed in services; education and health/social work. These two sectors alone employ 40% of women in all areas of the national non-farm economy. Education is the only sector in which there is an almost equal sex ratio of female to male employees (one female for every one and a third males employed). Despite the almost symmetrical sex ratios in health/social work (one female for every one and half males employed) there is a relatively strong regional imbalance in female employment in these sectors. In the West Bank, women make up 45.4% of the health and social workers, while in Gaza, they constitute only 28%. This may suggest another example of the impact of labor supply problems in Gaza, with males displacing females from especially the health sector. While West Bank women working in health constitute 43.9% of employees in hospital activities and 39.4% of employees in medical practices, their Gaza counterparts are only 27.9% of employees in the former and 25.2% in the latter.²³ In terms of social work, women are 41% of social workers in Gaza, and 57.5% of social workers in the West Bank. Clearly, women are segregated from most other sectors and "crowded" into these two activities. The pattern is even stronger in Gaza, where education constitutes the single main employer of all women in the national non-agricultural labor market. On the positive side, women in these two sectors are predominantly in professional or semi-professional occupations such as teachers, nurses and social workers. In health, a substantial number of them are also tertiary staff such as hospital cleaners or secretaries in private practices. The education sector also shows a greater disparity between female employment at the school level than at the college and university levels.

Table 11: Percentage of Male to Female Teaching Staff in Three Educational Levels (Both Regions) 1995/1996

Educational Level	Male	Female	Total
All school cycles	53.9%	46.1%	100%
Community College	82.5%	17.5%	100%
University	87.5%	12.5%	100%
Total employees in Education	55.9%	44.1%	100%

Although the above table does not include pre-school education teachers as a separate category, the overwhelming dominance of women in early childhood education is well-known, as well as assumed to be the local norm.²⁴ As such, a very clear pattern emerges in

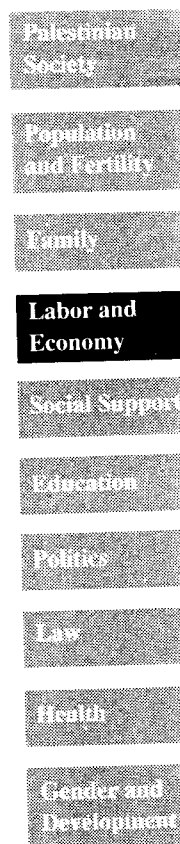
²³ These are the two main areas in which women are employed in the health sector. As sub-sectors they are not listed in the table.

²⁴ The lack of data on the sex of pre-school education teachers is due to the fact that it is so overwhelmingly assumed to be a female sector. The PCBS census of pre-school and day-care centers, which is comprehensive in every way, nowhere mentions the sex of workers engaged in these centers (see PCBS May 1996). The total numbers employed in education at the bottom of the table does include pre-school teachers.

which women predominate as teachers at the bottom rungs of the educational system, are almost equal to male employment in the various school cycles, but decline dramatically as teaching staff in higher education. This is despite the fact that the student body in higher education shows symmetrical sex ratios (females were 52% of community college students, and 43% of university students in the 1995/1996 academic year). Sex segregation in education does not seem to be the principle that determines the overall pattern of teacher sex ratios. Instead, assumptions about natural roles and abilities of males versus females seem to be determinant. Pre-school education is assumed to be the "natural" role of women, since caring for small children is an extension of their roles as mothers. Perhaps similar assumptions apply to women's role as school teachers, although the sex segregation of schools probably played the most dominant role historically in justifying women's employment in teaching. Neither pre-school nor school teaching are perceived as high skill or status occupations -- as reflected in their very low salary scales. This low status may be a product of the high numbers of women employed in education. In contrast, higher education dominated by male teachers is perceived as a high status and skill occupation -- also reflected in the relatively higher wage compensation.

Within the service sector as a whole, a second group of activities shows relatively high numbers of female employment. In descending order of female employment these are; "financial mediation" (20.1% female), "other personal/social service" (16.6% female), and "real estate/ renting/ business activities" (14.3% female). "Financial mediation" includes banks, money changers and insurance companies. "Other personal/ social service" predominantly involves personal care activities (such as hairdressing, beauty centers, and laundry services). "Real estate rent and business" includes computer activities, legal and accounting services, research and developmental activities, engineering and architectural firms.²⁵ In the West Bank, two thirds of women working in financial intermediation are working in insurance companies, while in Gaza the majority are working in banks. In the category of personal/social services, the vast majority of females are listed as working in hairdressing and beauty care, although in both areas they are the minority of employees in this activity. Women are 28.6% of hair and beauty technicians in the West Bank, and 17.8% in Gaza.

Two other categories in the service sector deserve mention because of their importance; public administration/ social security and hotels/restaurants. Women's employment is low in public administration with an overall sex ratio of one female to ten males. In the West Bank, the majority of women working in this sector work in "the regulation of health-care", while the majority in Gaza work in "the regulation of business agencies". Overall, this compares negatively with the situation in other Middle Eastern countries, in which women constitute a substantial portion of support staff in government bureaucracies. Since the above data is based on a census carried out in 1994, when the PNA bureaucracy was still in the initial stages of formation, it is likely that the data reflects the situation under the Israeli Civil Administration. Whether the situation has changed under the PNA can only be ascertained after new survey data is produced. In terms of the hotel/ restaurant sector, the extremely low presence of women is striking. In the West Bank women are less than 6% of employees in this sector and in Gaza, less than 1%. In both West Bank and Gaza women are less than 3%



²⁵ The component activity of each of these categories is described in detail in the PCBS Establishment Census. (See PCBS May 1995, 18).

of restaurant employees and 5.4% of hotel employees in the former, and 1.5% in the latter area. Without going into detail, this suggests a strong obstacle to women's integration into tourism -- an industry that has been posited as a main focus of national economic development.

Trade

Internal trade employs more individuals than any other single activity in the national non-agricultural sphere.²⁶ Simultaneously, out of the four main economic activities (services, industry/manufacture, construction, and trade) it has the second lowest level of female employment. The majority of such establishments are small family-owned and run businesses, more than 95% of them employing less than five persons.²⁷ The following table represents the employment data on males and females in trade.

**Table 12: Economic Activity, Trade
(selected sectors)**

SECTOR	WEST BANK				GAZA				BOTH
	RAW NUMBER		PERCENT		RAW NUMBER		PERCENT		RATIO
SEX	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F:M
wholesale other household goods	105	676	13.4	86.5	8	432	1.8	98.2	1:9.8
wholesale clothing/ footwear	8	230	3.3	96.7	2	215	0.9	99.1	2:44.5
total wholesale trade*	196	5,928	3.2	96.8	26	3,579	0.7	99.3	1:43
retail in stores with food	1,132	9,847	10.3	89.7	509	3,996	11.2	89.9	1:8.4
retail clothing/ footwear	549	4,164	11.6	88.4	95	1,399	6.3	93.7	1:5.5
total retail trade*	2,359	27,605	7.8	92.2	784	11,088	6.6	93.4	1:12

* totals include all sectors - including those not shown in table.

²⁶ See (PCBS May 1995, 58).

²⁷ Calculated from PCBS May 1995, 45.

Women have a relatively greater presence in retail than wholesale trade with a 1:12 sex ratio in the former compared to a 1:43 sex ratio in the latter. Moreover, regional differences are minimal with women constituting 7.8% of those engaged in retail trade in the West Bank and 6.6% in Gaza. In terms of wholesale trade, women constitute 3.2% in West Bank and less than 1% in Gaza -- representing one of the most male dominated sectors throughout the national non-agricultural sphere along with quarrying, and electricity and water.

The few women working in retail trade are predominantly working in shops that do not specialize in food but sell it along with other goods. This can be assumed to mean corner grocery shops, that are usually attached to the family home. To a much lesser extent, they are working in shops selling clothing items related to women and children. In terms of the wholesale trade the vast majority of women are selling "other household items". According to the data, the numbers of women working as unpaid family labor in retail trade is minimal compared to males. Trade as a whole is a traditional sector, with a long historical legacy and strongly evolved culture which is male dominated. The networks which support tradesmen such as those with suppliers, money-changers, customers, and other tradesmen, are not simply economic relationships but are also social relationships which have often evolved across generations. These networks operate as informal regulatory systems to ensure access to credit and re-payment of debt in a system which is highly dependent on taking goods on consignment. Women's lack of capital resources necessary to operate a trade is thus only one obstacle. The difficulty of gaining access to these networks which are so fundamental to traditional forms of mercantilism are probably more important. Until recently, the idea of women as bad credit risks has been reported as institutional practice in Gaza, with women reporting difficulties in opening bank accounts and registering businesses in their own name.

Construction

The fourth main economic activity in the national non-agricultural sphere, construction, rates as the worst overall in terms of female employment.

Table 13: Economic Activity, Construction

SECTOR	WEST BANK				GAZA				BOTH
	RAW NUMBER		PERCENT		RAW NUMBER		PERCENT		Ratio
SEX	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F:M
construction	98	1,640	5.6	94.4	24	1,248	1.8	98.2	1:24

Distortion
Society

Population
and Fertility

Family

**Labor and
Economy**

Social Support

Education

Politics

Law

Health

Gender and
Development

The construction sector (as a category within the national non-agricultural sphere) only includes construction activity taking place in the West Bank and Gaza under the auspices of Palestinian contractors. The above data is based on a census carried out in 1994, a period which was at the beginning of the local building boom ushered in by Oslo. Thus it is likely that the overall numbers of employed are significantly higher in 1996. That women make up only 5.6% percent of those involved in construction in the West Bank and 1.8% in Gaza is not surprising given the overall absence of women from activities which involve heavy physical labor. Obviously, these few women are actually working as support staff in contracting companies rather than as construction workers.

Occupational Status

Occupational status refers to the hierarchical arrangement of various occupations based on level of skill, prestige, and to a lesser extent, pay. Higher statuses are usually associated with both higher levels of education and skill, although the issue of skill is highly debatable. Gender segregation and concentration is also apparent in the way that women are distributed across occupational statuses; women are absent from most statuses and concentrated within a few. The following data set is derived from the first PCBS labor force survey.²⁸ As such it treats not only the national non-agricultural labor market but also includes wage labor in Israel and agriculture.

Table 14: Occupational Status of Formal Labor Force by Sex and Region

occupation	West Bank		Gaza	
	males	females	males	females
legislators, senior officials, managers	84.9	15.1	90.5	9.5
professionals, technicals, clerks	64.8	36.2	77.2	32.8
service, shop and market workers	89.5	10.5	92.7	7.3
skilled agricultural and fishery	62.4	37.6	80.2	19.8
craft and related trades	92.5	7.5	93.9	6.1
plant and machine operator and assemblers	99.2	.8	100	00
elementary occupations	92.8	7.2	96.9	3.1

What is clear from the above table is that women are concentrated in two occupational statuses/ areas: the professionals/clerks/ technical assistants and in the agricultural sector.

²⁸ PCBS, April 1996.

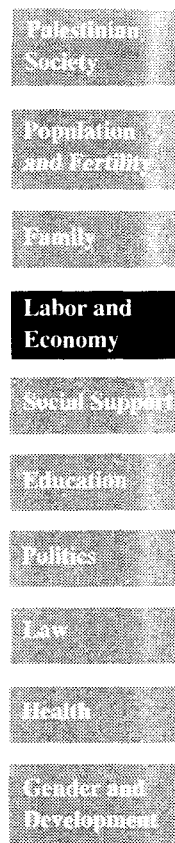
The former status is quite high on the occupational ladder, while the latter is quite low. Perhaps more importantly, women are little represented at the top of the occupational hierarchy (in management) and are also very little represented at the bottom when these low-level occupations are not related to agriculture (elementary occupations and craft, plant and machine operators). The overall data suggests a similar pattern of gender segmentation and concentration as was found in the last section on women in the various sectors of the non-agricultural sphere. Significantly, however, women are not simply at the lower rungs but are highly represented in the intermediate category of professionals, technicals and clerks. What this means is that women are highly represented in categories such as teachers, nurses, administrative assistants, and secretaries, but not as doctors, managers, school principals or ministry officials.

Although women are not downgraded to the lower employment statuses, there is a clear pattern of gender-based wage discrimination in the national non-agricultural and agricultural labor markets. Gender-based wage discrimination has two dimensions: male and female may get differential wages for the same type of work, and female concentrated sectors may have low pay scales regardless of skill and education involved. In a survey of 316 establishments, the PCBS found that the average wage level for male employees in October 1994 was JD 294 per/ month, while for women the average wage level was only JD 264 (PCBS Dec. 1995, 11). Male wage workers were also more likely to have full-time work than females; the former working an average of 163 work hours per month compared to only 150 work hours on average per/ month among women.

Table 15: Wage Differentials by Sex and Occupational Status Among Formal Labor Force

Occupation	Average monthly wages (JD) Female	Average Monthly wages (JD) Male	Wage differential (JD)
legislators, senior officials, managers	348	575	227
professionals	282	308	26
technicians/ associate professionals	230	297	67
clerks	220	270	50
service, shop, market workers	213	261	48
skilled agriculture, fishing and craft	163	307	144
plant, machine operators and assembly	183	251	68
elementary occupations (unskilled)	192	206	14
TOTAL	264	294	30

Source: PCBS Dec. 1995, 27.



The greatest wage discrimination takes place among the most elite professions (senior officials and managers) where the wage differential is on average JD 227 per/month between men and women; the most unskilled professions show the least amount of wage discrimination (JD 14) but also represent the lowest wage levels for men. Among professionals (doctors, lawyers, professors etc.) the situation is also relatively equal. Agriculture (skilled agriculture, fishing and crafts) shows the second greatest disparity in wages with men making almost twice as much as women (144 JD differential). This is due to the fact that women predominantly work as unpaid family labor in this sector, while men are either employed in Israeli agriculture, or are self-employed landowners.

The overall average of wage discrimination between males and females does not seem to be extremely high at JD 30 per/month or 360 JD annually. However, analyzed from a different perspective, wage discrimination patterns show that women are regularly paid at male rates one to two occupational statuses lower than their own. If wage levels of females are organized according to the closest male wage rate across various occupations we find the following equivalents:

Female legislators, managers = Male professionals
Female professionals = Male clerks
Female associate professionals = Male plant, machine operators
Female Clerks = Male elementary occupations (unskilled)
OR
Male service, shop market = Female professional
Male agriculture/ fisheries = Female professional
Male plant/ machine operator = Female associate professionals
Male elementary occupations (unskilled) = Female shop, market workers

In occupational statuses occupied by females that require at least a post-high school course, equivalent male occupations according to salary are predominately semi-skilled or unskilled. In terms of semi and unskilled occupational statuses occupied by females, the only equivalent possible to make is that women shop, service and market workers make slightly more than males in elementary occupations. The opposite is also true, male-held occupations that are semi-skilled or unskilled have pay equivalents of female-held occupations requiring post-graduate education.

A number of occupations with high female concentration tend to show downgraded salary scales for both sexes. Males in the two female concentrated categories of "technicians/ associate professionals" and "clerks" have wage levels similar to male service, shop and market workers. Males working in these categories make less than males working in skilled agriculture, craft and fishing. Although these occupations may have a higher social status, they may be economically de-valued because they are considered "female occupations".

Education and Access

What are the prerequisites for women to gain entry into the national non-agricultural labor market? In the West Bank 39% of females in the labor force have a post-secondary education and in Gaza 57% of female labor force participants do -- suggesting a strong correlation between higher education and women's access to formal employment. No such correlation

seems to exist between educational achievement and male access to employment. Only 17% of male labor force participants in the West Bank and 28% of those in Gaza have post secondary degrees. Further, the distribution of males in the labor force across various levels of education is quite even.

Table 16: Male and Female Employed (Formal Labor Force) by Years of School Completed

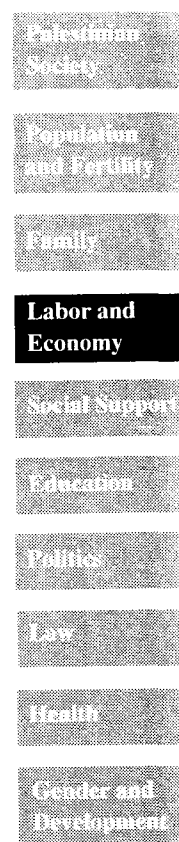
Years of School	West Bank		Gaza	
	male	female	male	female
none	3.2	15.2	3.7	9.4
1-6 primary	23.3	17.1	23.6	6.9
7-9 intermediate	29.1	13.8	20.3	3.3
10-12 secondary	27.7	15.3	24.5	23.3
13+ tertiary	17.1	38.6	28.0	57.1
Total	100	100	100	100

Source: PCBS, May 1995.

Logically, the predominance of women in education, health and social services results in the higher educational profile of female labor force participants. Given the context of the limited number of economic sectors accessible to women, however, these higher levels of educational achievement are actually a negative indicator. Concentrations of women within various sectors of the economy and their segregation from other areas is not a matter of women's occupational choice. As pointed out earlier, female-concentrated sectors reflect a demand for, or at least an accessibility to, women workers. Concurrently, the absence of females from various sectors reflects their inaccessibility. In this context, post-secondary educational achievement is in fact a prerequisite that substantially increases a women's chance to gain employment. As such, the many women who face obstacles in getting access to higher education will also tend to face greater obstacles in getting access to wage labor, especially in comparison to male counterparts with various educational achievement levels.

Higher educational achievement is by no means a guarantee of female entry into employment. The few occupational sectors that employ women (which demand relatively high educational qualifications) are unable to absorb the numbers of females seeking employment. The majority of women listed as un-employed (62.3%) have 13+ years of education, compared to only 19.3% of unemployed males (PCBS January 1997, 96). These women are probably new graduates who beyond a certain period of joblessness will probably fall out of the labor force altogether, to be replaced by the next year of new female graduates seeking work.

The other pattern of educational achievement found among women in the labor force provides a case where labor force participation negatively affects female education. In the West Bank 31% of women employed have zero to primary levels of education, while for Gaza the number of women in this category is only 15%. These women are predominantly working in agriculture where as noted earlier, it is the family that determines women's participation in this sphere. As such, families' need for women's labor in agriculture acts to



diminish female educational achievement. Thus, agriculture is not a case where women with low educational levels find employment, but the opposite -- women's employment by families in this sphere leads to their low educational achievement.

The Informal Economy

The results of the 1993 FAFO/FALCOT survey showed that women constituted 60.6% of all individuals engaged in informal sector work in the Gaza Strip and 55.6% of those in West Bank refugee camps.²⁹ In other words, the survey found that overall women were more than half of informal sector workers in Palestine. While, as mentioned earlier, this data needs to be used carefully, the findings suggest that in terms of women's dominance in the informal sector, the trend in Palestine is congruent with the situation in other developing economies.

Economic theorists originated the concept of informal economy in the 1960s in an attempt to explain what happened when urban manufacturing sectors became unable to absorb labor surpluses produced by rural-urban migration patterns in the third world. Labor surplus resulted in widespread patterns of under-employment which led poor migrants to depend on economic survival strategies based on urban subsistence activities such as street trading and personal services. (Macewan Scott 1994, 16). One of the underlying assumptions of informal sector analysts was the segmented or exclusionary nature of the formal labor markets resulting in self-employment strategies by marginal or under-utilized workers. Overall, economists have come to distinguish formal and informal labor markets based on the following distinguishing characteristics:

Formal: Large scale enterprises based on waged or salaried labor. Higher levels of technology plus higher skill levels of the workforce. Entry barriers include educational or skill credentials, as well as union membership. Labor is covered by protective legislation which assures minimum wage levels and job security. One result of the legal status of such enterprises is their taxation.

Informal: Small scale enterprises (often outside the purvey of the tax authorities) where workers are mainly self-employed, unpaid family helpers, apprentices, or servants. Technological level is low or non-existent. No entrance barriers in form of education/skills, unions. Low capital in-put, but also low income. Lack of protective legislation and job stability/ security.(Macewan Scott 1994, 17).

Many economists have adopted a simple cut-off point of employment size to distinguish between formal and informal sectors with the latter defined as enterprises employing less than five workers (MacEwan Scott 1994, 48). If this categorization was used for Palestine, 87% of all establishments listed in the Census of Establishments (the national non-agricultural sphere) would fall under "informal"(PCBS August 1995, 21). This points to the distorted nature of enterprise development in Palestine, due primarily to the severe constraints put on Palestinian business under the Israeli Occupation. By such international definitions, the majority of Palestinian businesses would be considered informal. As such the definition adopted here is of activities that fall outside the Census of Establishments, are

²⁹ These figures were calculated from Ovansen 1994, 62.

predominantly home or street based, and almost exclusively employ family members.³⁰ In simple terms, this predominantly means un-registered businesses.

Over the past decade, a number of studies have looked at the specific ways in which gender roles and assumptions operate to segment women into the informal sector, as well as segment them in particular activities within it (McEwan Scott 1994, 29). Two main findings in the international literature are the disproportionate concentration of women within the informal sector, and that their informal activities tend to complement their domestic roles.

Ironically, the few studies that focus on the informal sector in the West Bank and Gaza concentrate exclusively on women -- with the result that there is no data on men in this sphere. Examples of informal labor activity that have been documented for Palestinian women include street peddling, home-based manufacture of prepared foods and one-off clothing items, home-based hairdressing and piece work for garment subcontractors. The following table brings together data on women in four informal labor activities from a number of micro-studies and shows their demographic characteristics.

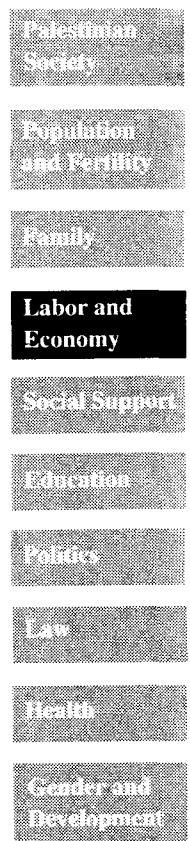
Table 17: Women in the Informal Economy

Modal Demographic Characteristics	Street Peddlers (Gaza)	Home-based Vegetable Cleaners (Nablus Region)	Home-based Seamstresses (Ramallah area)	Home-based Hairdressers (Nablus Region)
AGE	40-plus	40-plus	20-30 /some 40-plus	20-29/ 30-39
EDUCATION	0 years	four years	6 years	6 years
MARITAL STATUS	married/widowed	married	married	married
FAMILY TYPE	couple with children/ female-headed	couple with children	couple with children	couple with children
FAMILY SIZE	3-18 (range)	5-10 (7.4 av) members	5-10	3-12
PLACE OF RESIDENCE	camp	urban	urban/rural/camp	urban/ village

Source: The above data is from various studies in *Self-Employed Women in the Informal Economy of the Occupied Palestinian Territories*, Women's Affairs/ Nablus et.al 1994.

Two of the most significant demographic factors shared by women across these four activities are their older ages in comparison to women in the national non-agricultural sphere and the dominance of married women with children. These findings are borne out by the 1993 FALCOT survey which also found the majority of women engaged in informal sector activity to be in the middle age and older age groups (Ovensen 1994, 79, 82). However, in the micro-studies two age ranges are dominant; the first group are women over forty engaged

³⁰ This working definition would include home-based workers for subcontractors, but not subcontracting workshops themselves.



in peddling and vegetable cleaning; the others are women in their twenties and thirties, working in the more skilled sectors of home-based hairdressing and seamstressing.

Educational achievement levels are comparatively low among women in the informal sector, ranging from zero years among peddlers and food cleaners to completion of some secondary school among home-based hairdressers and seamstresses. Predominantly, women in all four activities outlined in the table have no more than six years of education.

The low educational levels of informal workers is extremely significant given the fact that high educational achievement is a pre-requisite for female entry into most areas of the national non-agricultural sphere. Significantly, women in more skilled informal sector work (seamstressing and hairdressing) were often graduates of training courses provided by charitable societies.

Besides comparatively low educational achievement, the greatest common denominator among women in the informal sector is being married with children. Only in peddling was there a substantial number of female heads of households, in all other activities women were working to supplement a spouse's income. Many home-based workers claimed that it allowed them to make income concurrently with fulfilling childcare and housework responsibilities. As such, for many women the informal sector offers flexibility -- especially when they have young children. The case of home-based seamstresses is suggestive of this relationship; mostly in their twenties, many claimed to have switched from sewing subcontracting workshops to home-based work following marriage.

For women with higher skills (such as the hairdressers and seamstresses), the informal sector may also be an alternative when formal opportunities are closed or are too exploitive. Many hairdressers claimed that they were unable to find work in salons or had left salons because the work circumstances were extremely poor. The issue of poor wages and exploitation was cited by the majority of seamstresses for why they had left sewing workshops and preferred to do home-based work. Finally, given the age ranges of women in peddling and vegetable cleaning (40-plus) it seems that the informal sector may also play a role of a "second career" option for women in the post-childbearing age. Once children have reached a certain age, the informal sector offers women one of the few opportunities to re-enter the labor force.

Informal sector work for women is marked (regardless of activity) by instability and extremely low wages. Women in all four activities covered in this section complained of the seasonal and erratic nature of their work. Those dependent on merchants and subcontractors (home-based seamstresses and vegetable cleaners) worked when there was an order. Peddlers and hairdressers were at the mercy of markets. The former, predominantly selling women and children's clothing, did well during holidays (*Eid al Adha* and *Eid al Fitr*), while the latter were dependent on the wedding season.

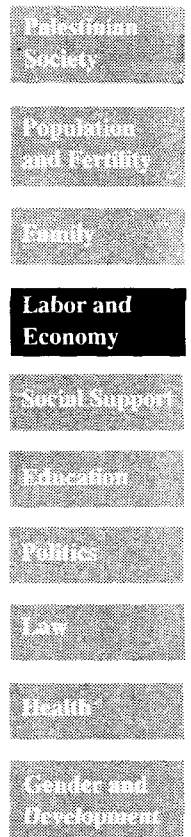
In 1994, women peddlers in the Gaza Strip made an average of 20 to 50 NIS per/day depending on their stock. This would average out to between 500 to 1250 NIS monthly (\$160 to \$300 at the 1994 exchange rate). Similarly, home-based seamstresses averaged 500 to 1200NIS per/month. No information is available on hairdressers and vegetable cleaners although many in the former group claimed that only in the summer wedding season did they make any significant income at all.

Female Unemployment

In 1993, female unemployment rates were higher than male rates in both the West Bank and Gaza. At that time the female rates were 18% in Gaza and 21% in the West Bank camps, compared to male rates of 12% in Gaza and 3% in West Bank camps (Ovensen 1994, 30). Three years later, in mid-1996, male and female unemployment rates had become symmetrical: 21.9% for males as opposed to 21.4% for females (PCBS January 1997, 51).³¹ The doubling in male unemployment between the two periods is predominantly a result of the loss of work in Israel due to the closure. In contrast, female unemployment remained consistently high regardless of the closure, suggesting that female unemployment (unlike male) is the product of a longstanding structural problem in the labor markets available to women.

Since individuals are only counted as "unemployed" in standard labor force surveys if they claim to have actively looked for employment during the week preceding the survey interview, these rates reflect only people who have yet to give up hope of finding employment. In both the 1993 and 1996 surveys, the majority of unemployed women held 13-plus years of education, in contrast to male counterparts in which this high educational group had the lowest overall unemployment level. However, what is common to male and female unemployment is age; almost half of unemployed males and females are in the age category of 15 to 24 years old.³²

This suggests that rather than loss of employment, females are predominantly new graduates unable to find first-time employment. This may also be the case for males, but the difference seems to be that males are able to overcome initial obstacles, while many women do not and simply drop-out. One cycle of labor-force entry and exit for females has already been documented by PCBS figures for the 1995-1996 periods. The following table shows the relationship between entry into the labor-force, laborforce drop-outs and unemployment across the first three PCBS labor surveys.



³¹ Similar figures were found in Spring 1996 of 21.9% male unemployment compared to 21.4% female. (PCBS August 1996, 53)

³² In the age category 15 to 24 we find 48% of unemployed West Bank males and 44.4% of Gaza males. Similarly, 57% of West bank females and 51% of Gazan females are between 15 and 24 years of age. Calculations based on (PCBS August 1996, 54).

Table 18: Labor Force Entry, Drop-outs and Unemployment

	PCBS I July 1995		PCBS II April/ May 1996		PCBS III July/ October 1996	
	Absolute #	Rate	Absolute #	Rate	Absolute #	Rate
Male Labor Force Participation	411,565	69.58%	444,624	72.87%	450,709	72.70%
Male Unemployment	80,153	19.48%	137,601	30.95%	103,452	22.95%
Female Labor Force Participation	69,056	11.46%	80,051	12.92%	74,482	11.85%
Female Unemployment	12,877	18.65%	19,181	23.96%	18,144	24.36%

Source: (UNSCO April 1 1997, 30)

The second period of study shows that large numbers of males and females entered the labor force in the period April/May 1996. The female labor force grew by almost 11,000 while the male labor force grew by 33,000 in a period of less than a year (July 1995 to April/May 1996). However, large numbers of men and women were recorded as unemployed, suggesting that many were first time labor market entrants just out of school -- or anticipating looking for work in the coming weeks.

Two to four months later, in the third study period, 5,569 women had left the labor force altogether, while the male labor force continued to increase by an additional 6,000. In this third period, even with increased male entry into the labor force, male unemployment dropped dramatically from a rate of 30.9% in April/May 1996 when there was a huge influx of new entrants, to 22.9% in the July through October 1996 period. Significantly, women's unemployment rates stayed constant -- at 23.9% unemployment in the period of 11,000 new entrants to the labor force, and 24.3% in the final documented period when 5,500 women had dropped out of the labor force. Thus, various labor markets were able to absorb a much greater proportion of male labor force entrants relative to female entrants in the same period. The difference is predominantly due to men's access to the Israeli labor market which was opened up during this last period and to a lesser extent employment in the various sectors of the PNA. In comparison female labor force entrants were limited to competing for positions within the existing gender-concentrated sectors in the economy -- sectors which had no significant growth in demand for labor during this period.

However, unlike men, young women unable to find paid work do have an alternative -- marriage. Thus the most likely scenario concerning these 5,500 female labor force drop-outs is that, following a period of joblessness, many of them with the support of their families contracted marriages. Given what we know about the demographic characteristics of female labor force participants, it is highly unlikely that they will be returning to the labor force.

Female Labor Force Activity and Fertility

The source of much female joblessness has been shown to be structural -- that is due to the limited labor opportunities available to women. However, unemployment only covers those men and women who are counted as members of the labor force, which for women remains very low at 11% in 1996. The 89% of women outside the labor force are not considered unemployed but simply engaged in activities that preclude labor force activity such as homemaking or study. Not surprisingly, "homemaking" ranking as by far the major reason cited for women's non-participation in the labor force.

A main assumption of the literature on women's labor force participation in Palestine is that a linkage exists between fertility behavior and labor force participation. The specific argument put forth is that women's young age at marriage and their high fertility preclude access to the labor force. While there is clearly a relationship between the two, the issue of causal nature of that relationship is much more complex.

Evidence of this can be found in the PCBS Demographic Survey, rather than in their labor force studies. In the fertility survey, "ever married" women were asked to self report whether they were working or not -- descriptive categories which are not as rigorous as the LFS framework -- but nevertheless useful for looking at the way work affects fertility.

While the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) for all "housewives" was found to be 7.30, the total fertility rate for "working women" was dramatically lower at 2.85.³³ The fact that many working women tend to be more highly educated cannot account for the difference -- the TFR of women with 13+ years of education (regardless of working or not) is 4.72 -- less than housewives but higher than working women.

Thus, statistically, it is clear that married women in the labor force have significantly lower fertility rates than non-working married women and that this is in some way connected to their working. Simultaneously, the other important characteristic of female labor force participants is the high rate who are unmarried compared to male labor force participants.

In the West Bank 40.7% of women in the laborforce are "never married" compared to only 32.4% of males; in Gaza, 35.9% of female labor force participants are "never married" compared to only 25.1% of male participants (PCBS April May 1996, 60). Moreover, a significant number of women are widowed, divorced or separated (9.1% of women in both areas compared to only 0.7% of males). Overall then, male laborforce participants are much more likely to be married (69%) compared to females (51.3%), with the pattern much stronger in Gaza (74.3% of males compared to 55.4% of females) than in the West Bank (66.9% of males versus 50.1% of females) (PCBS April May 1996, 60).

It is also more likely that unmarried women in the labor force will remain unmarried in comparison to male counterparts. Eighty percent of unmarried male labor force participants are in the youngest age group (15 to 24), while a significant number of unmarried female labor force participants are over 25 years of age (63%). Given the current average age at marriage -- it is likely that many of these women will remain unmarried.

³³ This is based on unpublished data from PCBS. *The Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip* (Preliminary Report, March 1996). My thanks to Dr. Marwan Khawaja for providing the data.

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Thus, on the one hand, it seems that the structure of formal female labor markets shows a preference for unmarried women; or at the very least are not child-friendly. On the other, there are real reduced rates of fertility among women in the labor force compared to female non-participants. The relationship seems to be that, when women do not enter waged work (through choice or lack of access), the result is higher fertility levels. The reasons are probably multiple; motherhood becomes their prime role and identity; there is more flexibility in time that can be spent on child-rearing, and so forth. The lowered rates of fertility among working women are probably also due to multiple factors. On the negative side, the inflexibility of working hours and lack of adequate support systems probably makes the cost of having many children too high; on the positive side is the fact that working women may have greater decisionmaking power within the family that allows them to choose to limit their fertility. Either way, it is clear that greater access to work clearly would play a role in reducing the very high fertility rates in Palestinian society.

Conclusions and Preliminary Recommendations

A fundamental conclusion of this paper is that more women in Palestine are economically active than standard labor force measures are able to represent. However, the low formal labor force participation rates for Palestinian women attest to the fact that women tend to be segregated into marginalized sectors of the economy (the informal and domestic spheres). This low level of formal labor activity is primarily due to the structural limitations of the economy rather than to ideological or cultural inhibitions. Palestinian labor markets are highly gender segmented, offering women access to an extraordinarily limited number of sectors. These few sectors are in non-growth areas of the economy, and are unable to absorb new female labor market entrants -- leading to a persistently high rate of female unemployment over the last five years. Additionally, the number of sectors of formal labor markets available to women actually seem to be narrowing -- with women being displaced from areas of manufacture which were once female-concentrated as males are affected by loss of work in Israel.

The dominance of high education among women in the formal labor force is a negative indicator, reflecting the limited job opportunities for women outside the service sector in the national non-agricultural economy. Women with low educational qualifications can be found working in agriculture, conditional on their families owning land and usually in a situation in which their work is unpaid. Women seeking paid work who have low educational qualifications and who are from non-agricultural backgrounds tend to be pushed into the informal sector. The informal sector is the only Palestinian labor market which seems to be female dominated -- attesting to its extreme marginality in terms of income, status and security.

Wage labor in Israel, which is so pivotal in absorbing large parts of the male labor force, (especially those with lower educational qualifications) provides few opportunities to women. Women working in Israel are concentrated in the least paid and most unstable sector -- agriculture. In comparison, males are concentrated in construction and the service sector. While the absence of women from work in Israel may be due to ideological factors (social norms precluding it), the fact that greater numbers of women in the 1970s and early 80s were found working in Israel also occurred at a time when women were found in other sectors of the Israeli economy (services and manufacture).

Women suffer from wage discrimination throughout all labor markets. Significant pay differentials exist between males and females doing similar work at all status levels and sectors of employment. There is also evidence that female-concentrated occupations (such as teachers), seem to reduce wage levels for men in those areas. The notion of a "family wage" in which it is assumed that female wages only supplement that of a male breadwinner appears to be a common assumption that deflates women's wages throughout the economy and also shows up in policies excluding female employees from health insurance and family benefits. Women's involvement in labor unions is low, estimated at only 8% of total members.

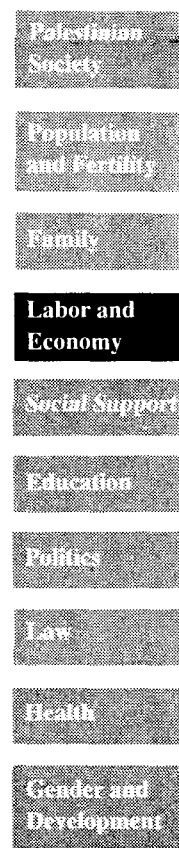
As important as wage discrimination is the fact that women in many sectors of the economy work under extremely poor and unfair conditions. Evidence of this is found especially among women in manufacturing and lower level service sectors. In some cases, it seemed that women preferred the instability of the informal sector over employment in workshops due to the level of exploitation in the latter.

There is clear evidence of a linkage between female labor force participation and lowered fertility. The causal factors might be positive (women having more decisionmaking power within the family and choosing to reduce fertility) or negatively, that the structure of work does not provide enough support (in terms of leave, flexible working hours, and other matters) for working mothers. 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 motherhood.

What this paper suggests in terms of policies is the importance of understanding women's situation in separate and specific areas of the economy. The needs and obstacles facing women in manufacturing are different than, for instance, those of women in agriculture or the informal sector. Thus, dis-aggregating the situation of women in the different economic spheres and their subsectors must be a first step.

For women in a number of areas of the economy, one of the important missing resources is access to credit and financial networks. Self-employed women in agriculture, the informal sector, or small manufacturing and service could benefit greatly from cheap sources of credit. Greater access to markets is also needed by self-employed women in these sectors. The marginalization of women from commercial and agricultural unions also plays a role in limiting their ability to get informational and material support and resources. Integrating women into these networks or developing women's own credit commercial and agricultural unions specific to their needs may be important in providing support necessary for developing and widening their activities. Additionally, in agriculture, one important mechanism for women to gain greater economic rights and well-being would be through legislation that supports or promotes women taking their inheritance rights in land. In the current system, women are unpaid workers on family land -- with few rights to the fruits of their labor. Rural women's decisionmaking power could be greatly enhanced in a system in which they too have access to family property.

For women wage workers and employees at various occupational levels, issues of working hours and childcare support seem to very important needs. There is a clear lack of part-time working hours, and lack of flexibility in working hours throughout the service and



manufacturing sectors of the economy. In a society which is strongly committed to children, there needs to be much greater flexibility given to working mothers. As such, provision of part-time work, or job-sharing schemes that allow working mothers to fulfill dual roles as care-givers and income providers is a must. Moreover, in larger establishments (schools, hospitals, universities, and larger factories) on-site daycare would greatly benefit working mothers -- and probably impact positively on their work performance.

Simultaneously, legislation in terms of pay equity, promotion policies, maternity leave and child-care provision would be important as a starting point to redress women's obstacles and inequality within, for instance, the industrial and service sectors. But macro-level policies, while important, will only have limited impact in a situation where the economy as a whole is extremely undeveloped, unstable and incapable of absorbing its male labor force -- a situation in which most forms of progressive labor legislation may be looked upon as a luxury.

This raises the larger problem of how to integrate more women into economic life. The importance of women's access to paid work is not simply an issue of rights -- it has a crucially important developmental role. The great demographic imbalance in Palestinian society between the ratio of producers of income to consumers of income does not bode well for the society's ability to invest in long term sustainable development. The marginalization of women from wage work is one of the critical causes of this imbalance. Thus integrating greater numbers of women into economic life over the long run would be the critical factor necessary to bring about positive change.

Thus, a commitment needs to be made -- but it is a longterm process. One way to start is by focussing on job creation strategies for women who clearly want work but are unable to find it within the limited segmented sectors of the national non-agricultural sphere. Clearly, each year large numbers of female university and community college graduates are unable to find work -- as attested to in the high rates of unemployed females who are predominantly highly educated. Programs that focus first on re-training and then job placement for these work seekers would play an extremely important role of getting more women into wage work at a crucial period in their life cycle. It would also consolidate the importance of women's higher education, a social gain that seems to be under threat. Another social group to focus on is re-training women post-child bearing years to re-enter the labor force. As we have seen women of various educational levels post-40 years old often want to supplement family income -- and usually are forced to enter the informal sector to do so. Providing the necessary support to this demographic group could bring many women into wage work or self-employment and have a very positive impact on family income and well-being.

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WOMEN'S STUDIES PROGRAM AT BIRZEIT UNIVERSITY

*Teaching * Research * Gender Intervention*

The launching of Women's Studies at Birzeit University comes at a critical time, as Palestinian women, as well as Palestinian society as a whole, seek to address a complex range of social, economic and political issues. Understanding gender relations in Palestinian society, analyzing and debating key social issues facing society, and developing effective gender-aware policies require a comprehensive and sustained initiative. The Women's Studies Program at Birzeit University aims to contribute to this effort through an innovative teaching program, systematic and directed research on gender relations in Palestinian and Arab society, and an active gender intervention program.

Teaching: Women's Studies is a Program within Birzeit University's Faculty of Arts; the Program currently offers a minor in Women's Studies. Teaching began in the 1994-1995 academic year. The Program has developed an interdisciplinary core curriculum of eleven courses, among them Introduction to Women's Studies, Women and Development, Women and the Law, Women in Arab Society, the History of Women's Movements, Gender and Discourse, and Women and the Family.

Research: The Women's Studies Program aims to conduct and facilitate research on Palestinian women, both through instituting its own research projects and through collecting archival materials and offering services to other researchers. In September 1994, the Program launched an extensive collaborative research project on "Palestinian Women in Society," which produced four working papers on feminist scholarship in the Middle East, gender and public policy in Palestine, gender and development, and gender and vocational education in Palestine, as well as **Palestinian Women: A Status Report**. The second phase of this project will investigate several aspects of gender and social policy in Palestine.

Gender Intervention: In addition to its scholarly and academic objectives, the Women's Studies Program aims to develop avenues to empower Palestinian women through a gender intervention program in conjunction with the expanding network of Palestinian women's institutions, as well as to contribute to gender-informed public and institutional policies that recognize and secure the economic, social and political rights of all citizens. Current plans include gender planning training in selected key institutions and locales, and utilizing seminars and workshops to promote gender-aware policy objectives.

For more information please contact: Women's Studies Program, Birzeit University, POB 14, Birzeit, West Bank, Palestine. Telephone and Fax: 972-2-9982959. E-mail: ws@ws.birzeit.edu

PALESTINIAN WOMEN: A STATUS REPORT is published by the Women's Studies Program at Birzeit University in separate English and Arabic editions. This ten chapter report is an attempt to build a comprehensive picture of the current challenges facing Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in building a society based on gender equality. The guiding assumption is that such equality is necessary for both sustainable development and democratization. Eight of the chapters address the situation of women in specific sectors of contemporary life in Palestine. A further two provide context and conceptual frameworks for examining the main features and trends in this society, and the key issues in gender and development that can be brought to bear to understand Palestinian reality. The report utilizes existing research, data and policy documents on Palestine to try to understand how gender roles and relations and gender asymmetries in Palestinian society structure the lives and opportunities of women and men and either obstruct or allow healthy, equitable and sustainable human development.

In Palestine, positive indicators for women, such as rising educational levels and political participation, exist alongside negative indicators of unusually low labor force participation and persistent high fertility. To understand these seemingly contradictory indicators, an integrated framework is required that examines the specific constraints, resources and opportunities that shape the lives of women and men. Chapters explore the linkage among high fertility rates, gender gaps in secondary education, early marriage, and the absence of labor opportunities and social protection. Other chapters identify assumptions about gender roles and their impact on women and men's access to social security or delineate the relationship between access to capital and achieving political power.

The chapters and authors are as follows:

1. Palestinian Society --- Lisa Taraki
2. Population and Fertility -- Rita Giacaman
3. Family -- Rema Hammami
4. Labor and Economy -- Rema Hammami
5. Social Support -- Penny Johnson
6. Education -- Mona Ghali
7. Politics -- Islah Jad
8. Law -- Penny Johnson
9. Health -- Rita Giacaman
10. Gender and Development -- Eileen Kuttub

The Women's Studies Program welcomes comments and criticism on these chapters; a primary objective in publishing Palestinian Women: A Status Report is to open up these critical issues for women and Palestinian society as a whole to debate and intervention.

Women's Studies Program
Birzeit University
Palestine



PALESTINIAN WOMEN: A STATUS REPORT

