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Organization of the
United Nations

GENDER, WATER AND AGRICULTURE

ASSESSING THE NEXUS IN PALESTINE



**GENDER, WATER AND
AGRICULTURE**
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CONTENTS

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS	V
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	VI
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	VII
INTRODUCTION	1
i. Background, objective and rationale of the assessment	1
ii. Methodology	3
iii. Report structure	8
ASSESSMENT	9
1. Country context and socioeconomic characteristics	9
Political situation	9
Economic situation	10
Palestinian labour force	11
Women's paid and informal work	13
Education and access to information	14
Health	16
Protection – Gender-based violence	17
2. Overview of the agriculture and water sectors	19
Gender roles in agriculture sector	20
Water and access to water resources	22
The legal and policy framework for water from a gender perspective	24
Women's access to, and control over, land and water resources	30
3. Results of primary and secondary data collection	32
3.1. Gender and agriculture – roles and responsibilities	32
3.2. Gender access to, and control over, agriculture and water resources	32
3.3. Gender access to, and control over, information	34
3.4. Water governance	35
3.5. Laws and procedures	36
3.6. Leadership and policies	37
3.7. Planning	38
3.8. Monitoring and follow-up	40
3.9. Human resources in organizations working in the water sector and community capacity development	41
3.10. Challenges facing local communities in accessing water	42
Political challenges	42
Mismanagement of water resources	43
Social factors	43
Coordination between institutions working in the rural development sector	43

3.11. Gender roles in the management of productive water	44
3.12. Gender roles in the management of domestic water	49
CONCLUSIONS	50
RECOMMENDATIONS	52
REFERENCES	54
ANNEXES	57

TABLES

Table 1: <i>Focus group discussion (FGD) participants by area and gender</i>	4
Table 2: <i>List of organizations interviewed</i>	5
Table 3: <i>General information on the field research areas</i>	6
Table 4: <i>Average daily wage (in NIS13) based on gender in the Palestinian market (2019)</i>	13
Table 5: <i>Percentage distribution of the Palestinian population (15 years and above) by educational attainment and sex (2017)</i>	14
Table 6: <i>Field of study (disaggregated by gender) (2019)</i>	15
Table 7: <i>Distribution of workers in the agriculture sector by type of work and gender (2018)</i>	20
Table 8: <i>General facts on water in Palestine</i>	23
Table 9: <i>National plans and UNDAF framework</i>	27
Table 10: <i>National plans and UNDAF framework</i>	27
Table 11: <i>Gender access to, and control over, land</i>	33
Table 12: <i>Is the land registered in your name (proof of ownership)?</i>	33
Table 13: <i>Responsibility for the payment of water bills</i>	34
Table 14: <i>Local knowledge of water resources amongst female and male key informants</i>	35
Table 15: <i>Membership in water associations by gender</i>	37
Table 16: <i>Types of programmes implemented by government institutions, international organizations, NGOs and local partners</i>	39
Table 17: <i>Trainings on water management</i>	42
Table 18: <i>Your partner can access water sources more easily</i>	44
Table 19: <i>Land ownership</i>	44
Table 20: <i>Shares for both women and men in lands that include wells in the study areas</i>	45
Table 21: <i>Participation in decision-making regarding water use in the community by gender</i>	46
Table 22: <i>Gender roles in agricultural production and irrigation</i>	47

FIGURES

Figure 1: <i>Labour participation in the economic sectors in Palestine (2019)</i>	12
Figure 2: <i>Palestinian population by age group and percentage (2018)</i>	16
Figure 3: <i>Humanitarian aid flows to Palestine 2019 by sector (part of the 2018–2020 HRP)</i>	26

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
ESCWA	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FGD	focus group discussion
GBV	Gender-based violence
GDP	Gross domestic product
JOD	Jordanian dinar
KII	key informant interview
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MENA	Near East and North Africa
NIS	new Israeli shekel
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
oPt	Occupied Palestinian territory
PA	Palestinian Authority
PCBS	Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
PWA	Palestinian Water Authority
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
USD	United States dollar
VAT	Value added tax
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene
WHO	World Health Organization

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The field data was collected by Luna Erekat, Ibrahim Rabah and Ayman Mahasneh.

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The report was edited by Ros Young and designed by Gasser Darwish.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Gender inequality in Palestine has contributed to the marginalization of women from access and control over available resources including water. This inequality has been entrenched through legal, political and social systems. Palestine's Gender-Responsive Water Assessment was carried out in the West Bank in 2021 by the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in partnership with the Palestinian Authority (PA)- Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) as part of the "Implementing the 2030 Agenda for Water Efficiency, Productivity and Water Sustainability in NENA [North East and North Africa] Countries (GCP/RNE/009/SWE)" project. The project had recommended gender-responsive water assessments to evaluate the relative situation of women and men in different communities regarding water access, governance and use in the countries targeted by the interventions.

The aim of the assessment was to outline areas where future investments and programme interventions in water and agriculture would be needed to support progress towards gender equality and sustainable water resource management in a synergistic way. In addition to a review of the existing literature, the study gathered information at the field level, assessing five local communities in the northern West Bank.

Main findings

- Women's employment in Palestine is mainly concentrated in the informal sector, especially in the agricultural sector where women tend to carry out unpaid work on family farms. Eighty-four percent of women now work in family agriculture, compared to just 14 percent of men. Women's unpaid agricultural work contributes to increasing profits for the family, but women themselves are deprived of the ownership and control over the financial returns for this work.
- Stereotyped gender roles are deeply entrenched in Palestinian society, including in the agricultural and water sectors. The assessment found that women are primarily responsible for managing domestic water and small-scale agriculture land, while the irrigation of productive agriculture and large-scale livestock rearing is largely the responsibility of men. This situation is an extension of the existing division between the private sphere of the family and the public sphere of society. Implemented laws, specifically the Personal Status Law, have entrenched and reinforced this division through maintaining the subordination of women, including in the agricultural and water sectors.
- Water governance is not gender sensitive. The absence of women's representation at the higher levels of water management deprives them from participating in decision-making and in water resource management. The Palestinian Water Authority (PWA) lacks a gender department, despite the important role it could play in identifying gender needs and directing gender-responsive plans. National policies refer to some interventions directed towards women in the agricultural sector, but there is a gap between policies and actual implementation. The water sector also lacks gender-based indicators, which are essential in the planning and monitoring process to ensure equitable distribution and access to water resources.
- An understanding of gender issues in relation to the water sector vary between governmental and non-governmental institutions, with employees in non-governmental institutions more aware of its importance than those in governmental institutions. However, the assessment results show that employees' perceptions of gender roles are limited overall, and programme interventions tend to reinforce traditional gender stereotypes. Women's empowerment in the water sector is still limited and not well addressed. The assessment found there is a difference in the quality of water training provided to women and men in local communities. Capacity building for men focuses on using technology, rehabilitating wells and maintaining water pipes, while women are limited to managing and marketing small-scale agricultural projects and household water management, complementing their domestic reproductive role.

- Women and men's access to water sources is different. The majority of female and male informants reported that men have more access to water resources.
- The inequity in water distribution is on two levels: between the poor water resourced small-scale family plots and large productive farms with wells; and the gender discrimination by water suppliers in terms of the time slots women are given to collect water supplies, which are often in the evenings when women have more domestic responsibilities and when it is socially difficult for them to make use of the time slots.
- Most women surveyed did not have any land registered to their name. The general perception amongst the women and men interviewed was that land ownership applied to all family members, including the wells on the land, even if the land was registered in the name of a man in the family. The assessment found that the majority of women who received land in their inheritance were given unproductive waste land, far from water sources and unsuitable for agriculture, increasing the obstacles to women's equitable access to water resources and contributing to their long-term poverty.
- Ensuring sufficient and sustainable water supplies in the future for all Palestinians is a major challenge because of Israel's occupation policies in Palestine, Palestinian population growth, the impact of climate change on the environment and poor water infrastructure.

Main recommendations

Policies and law

- Ensure gender is mainstreamed in all national Palestinian Government ministries and institutions and in the national strategies of every Palestinian ministry, not relegated as a marginal issue in gender units.
- Ensure greater participation of women in decision-making in the agricultural and water sectors that will benefit families and whole communities in Palestine in the long-term.
- Amend the criteria for joining the water user associations from a gender perspective. Membership should not be limited to the issue of land ownership, as this can exclude women from participation.

Capacity development

- Build technical and managerial skills for women as professionals and technicians in the water sector by developing their competencies and expertise.
- Develop non-traditional training programmes in water and agriculture for young women and men suited to their specific needs and skills level around knowledge and technology. This is also of importance as young people constitute over half of the Palestinian population.

Enhanced networking and cooperation

- Link the MoA, Environmental Quality Authority (EQA) and the PWA with universities and technical and vocational education and training institutions to integrate the issue of water and agriculture into their curricula and encourage more participation of women and youth in these programmes.
- Request that the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Cluster develops guidelines for productive water programmes from a gender perspective.

INTRODUCTION

i. Background, objective and rationale of the assessment

Access to water is fundamental to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to which countries, including Palestine, have committed to, notably SDG 6: "Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all". Water has a value and importance far beyond its price. It supports us, our households and societies, our health, culture, education, and economics as well as sustaining and preserving the natural environment. Underestimating the true value of water risks mismanaging this finite and irreplaceable resource.

The agricultural sector in Palestine is based on plant and livestock production activities. According to the Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture, the components of plant agriculture are: natural vegetation, including trees, forest shrubs, forests and medicinal herbaceous plants; field and fodder crops; fruit trees and vegetables; and ornamental plants and flowers. Agriculture depends on three types of irrigation: rainfed, irrigated and mixed (supplementary irrigation), and all three can be found in the traditional, semi-intensive or intensive agricultural systems in Palestine. Livestock production includes rearing domestic farm animals and producing commodities such as milk and cheese (MoA, 2021).

The agricultural sector in Palestine faces many challenges:

- The Israeli occupation and its policies of land confiscation and control over the West Bank's natural resources, including shared water resources. Israel exploits more than 83 percent of the water resources from the total area of historic Palestine (pre-1948 borders) (PCBS, 2020).
- Environmental degradation through the dumping of waste in the West Bank, including toxic chemical waste from Israeli settlements.
- Economic obstacles due to the fragmentation of agricultural holdings and the trend towards urban agriculture, which reduces production and agricultural returns, and contributing to farmers abandoning their farms to work in other sectors.
- The lack of investment in the agricultural sector due to the instability of the security situation and the absence of a transparent Palestinian agricultural financing system.
- The encroachment of urban development on agricultural land and increasing water shortages and mismanagement of water resources.

Although agriculture is the main sector for women's employment in rural areas and has a large workforce of women, gender inequality is entrenched in this sector. While women are a major contributor to agricultural production, their work is largely unpaid as it lies within the family domain. Despite women working in all the main stages of agricultural production, from preparing the land, planting, harvesting, sorting and preparing produce for sale, they are excluded from liaising with merchants, that being socially restricted to men. This is due to the patriarchal cultural that restricts both women's movement and the freedom of decision-making and control over resources.

Developing the agricultural sector and maintaining sustainable development is dependent on sustainable water resources. In Palestine, despite efforts being made to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, water shortages have become chronic. Although the majority of Palestine's water sources lie in the West Bank's Area C, Israel's 1967 occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip has ensured that the control and much of the usage of shared aquifers and groundwater sources remains with Israel. Unfortunately, Palestinians are routinely denied licenses for the rehabilitation of existing wells or the digging of new ones. Deteriorating infrastructure and poor water management at the local level have exacerbated the problem. Due to old and leaking water networks and a lack of local programmes to promote repairs and the better use of existing supplies, including wastewater purification, 30 to 50 percent of available water is currently being lost (CESR, 2002).

Lack of fresh, safe water adversely affects the daily lives of all Palestinian citizens. An increase in population density by 2050 will inevitably be accompanied by an increase in water demand and consumption and is one of the biggest challenges facing Palestine in the coming years (UNFPA, 2017). Any development and humanitarian policies need to better understand the challenges in the water sector and respond urgently to develop alternative solutions to ensure that everyone has equal access to safe water.

In societies where pronounced gender inequalities exist, women and marginalized groups, especially the elderly and persons with disabilities, are the most vulnerable to exclusion and marginalization. In Palestine, women are excluded from decision-making processes, despite their key role in society, due to deeply-rooted gender-based discrimination. Elderly people are excluded from national policies and lack any interventions to secure their livelihood, which makes them dependent on family members for support. People with disabilities suffer from societal and family discrimination and the lack of services limits their full participation in society. Looking at the water issue in Palestine through a gender lens provides a better analysis of the structural inequalities that can prevent marginalized groups from accessing this life resource. Opinions vary on the value of water based on the different experiences and roles of societal groups and this contributes to determining who controls and benefits from water resources and who has influence in guiding policies and decision-making (UNESCO, 2021).

This gender-responsive water assessment was conducted by FAO and the Palestinian MoA and funded by SIDA as part of the GCP/RNE/009/SWE project "Implementing the 2030 Agenda for water efficiency/productivity and water sustainability in NENA Countries." Its aim has been to assess the relative situation of women and men in different communities in Palestine regarding water access, governance and use. This is in order to ensure that water resources are sustainable, access is inclusive and that women and men are benefitting equitably from this resource.

The project provides support to countries in four major work streams:

1. Establish a robust water accounting system providing the evidence base for full water rights and for monitoring progress in the achievement of the targets while assessing the institutional effectiveness to govern water resources.
2. Implement a series of interventions to increase water efficiency and productivity in selected farming systems of the countries to help in achieving SDG target 6.4.
3. Ensure that higher efficiency/productivity achievements for the 2030 timeline are attained within "safe operational boundaries of water use" and define the conditions for "water sustainability" for sustainable, socially equitable and human-rights based development.
4. Communication strategy and results dissemination.

Gender equality is set at the heart of the GCP/RNE/009/SWE project's vision to enhance people's equitable access to water resources, and hence achieve food security and rural development and eventually end hunger. As part of the programme's Water Productivity output, country offices are required to undertake gender-responsive water assessments to assess the relative situation of women and men in different communities regarding water access, governance and use in order to ensure that water resources are managed in a way that is sustainable and inclusive in the projects areas and that women and men are benefitting equitably from these resources.

The aim of the assessment was to outline areas where future investments and programme interventions in water and agriculture are needed, in order to support progress towards gender equality and equity at the community level.

Based on the FAO Regional Methodological Note on Gender-Responsive Water Assessments, the study addresses the following areas:

- Women and men's different access and control over productive water resources;
- Women and men's different access and control over non-productive water resources;
- Women and men's opportunities and challenges in accessing water and food related services and resources;
- Women and men's decision-making capacities over household and community water resources;
- Women and men's paid and unpaid productive, reproductive and community work; and
- Women and men's priorities and expectations with regards to water projects and interventions.

The assessment survey targeted five rural areas in the West Bank. Al-Jiftlik (Jericho Governorate), An Nassariya (Nablus Governorate), Tammoun and Al-Bkai'a (Tubas Governorate), Illar (Tulkarm Governorate) and Falamyia (Qalqilya Governorate). The assessment areas were identified in consultation with MoA and FAO and reflect their needs in developing programmes and projects on gender and agriculture in those selected areas. Hence the assessment, the first in Palestine focusing solely on gender and water, identifies important indicators which could be further developed to provide more in-depth studies on gender and water in the future.

ii. Methodology

The assessment, which was carried out from 25 May to 30 July 2021, included field data collection in the five target areas. The assessment used a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches and utilized secondary data through a comprehensive desk review of existing documentation and quantitative datasets. A participatory approach was applied in order to ensure inclusiveness and the full participation of partners, stakeholders and beneficiaries. Key informants were identified in consultation with FAO and the Palestinian MoA.

Secondary data

A desk review of secondary data on water and agriculture in Palestine focused on:
Relevant SIDA project documents and reports;

- Country gender assessments;
- National strategies and documents on water and agriculture;
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) periodic reports and CEDAW Committee's Concluding Observations;
- United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) documents; and
- FAO country gender analysis and project-related documents on gender and water, national studies on women ownership and gender, reports on water and available statistics.

Primary data

The desk review was complemented by qualitative and quantitative primary data collection in the five target areas. Qualitative data was gathered in two ways. Firstly, through holding ten focus group discussions (FGDs), two in each area, with the participation of 24 female farmers and 31 male farmers over 18 years old (see Table 1), and secondly, through holding 29 semi-structured interviews with key informants (main stakeholders and duty bearers) from 17 organizations involved in the water and agricultural sectors and women's rights (see Table 2). The interview questionnaire was developed based on the results of the desk review.

Quantitative data collection was carried out using a closed-ended survey among female and male farmers in the five target areas and 60 questionnaires were completed (36 male and 24 female interlocutors completed the questionnaire).

Table 1: Focus group discussion (FGD) participants by area and gender

Area	Governorate	Women	Men	Total
1. Al-Jiftlik	Jericho	3	5	8
2. An Nassariya	Nablus	5	5	10
3. Tammoun and Al-Bkai'a	Tubas	5	8	13
4. Illar	Tulkarm	3	7	10
5. Falamyia	Qalqilya	8	6	14
Total		24	31	55

Source: FAO. 2023. *Gender, water and agriculture – Assessing the nexus in Palestine*. Cairo.

Table 2: *List of organizations interviewed*

Name of organization	Women	Men	No. of informants
Ministry of Agriculture (MoA)	3	2	5
Palestinian Water Authority (PWA)	2	-	2
Environmental Quality Authority	-	1	1
Ministry of Women's Affairs	2	2	4
Palestinian Hydrology Group (PHG)	-	1	1
Union of Agricultural Work Committees (UAWC)	-	1	1
Economic and Social Development Centre of Palestine	-	1	1
Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committees (PARC)	-	1	1
The Applied Research Institute-Jerusalem (ARIJ)	1	-	1
MA'AN Development Centre	1	2	3
Farmers field schools	-	1	1
Water user associations	-	1	1
Palestinian National Economic Empowerment Institution	1	1	2
UN Women	1	-	1
OXFAM	-	1	1
FAO	1	1	2
Office of the Quartet	1	-	1
Total	13	16	29

Source: FAO. 2023. *Gender, water and agriculture – Assessing the nexus in Palestine*. Cairo.

Data analysis

The information gathered was triangulated by comparing patterns of responses across data sources and data collection approaches in order to substantiate the findings and develop the conclusions and recommendations.

Data from FGDs and individual interviews was coded, classified and given weight, based on when statements were being frequently repeated by individuals in all FGDs. The links between qualitative and quantitative data were made by analysing quantitative data through the statistical analysis software SPSS. The quantitative results confirmed the percentage on results from the FGDs and the desk review.

Table 3: General information on the field research areas

Name	Location	Total area	Population	% of women/men
1. Al-Jiftlik (Jericho Governorate)	Area C (33 km north of Jericho in the Jordan Valley)	185 sq km	3 714 (2007) 3 306 (2021)	50% women / 50% men (2007) No data available for 2021

The village is mainly dependent on agriculture. Its name derives from the Turkish word *chiflik*, the term for "land tenure" in the late Ottoman empire.

There are two types of land ownership:

- Landowners who own large areas of agricultural land and families from outside the village who own large areas of land for agricultural investment, especially for palm cultivation or medicinal herbs. These depend on wage labourers or on quotas with farmers either from inside or outside the village.
- Small-scale farmers who own and cultivate their own lands and depend on their families for agricultural labour.

The reliance on artesian wells has led to a decrease in the quantities of water produced by those wells as well as leading to a high percentage of salinity in the extracted water. This has led to less diversity in the types of crops cultivated, the destruction of the citrus orchards that once made Al-Jiftlik famous, and a reduction in grape cultivation. As a result, there has been a rapid shift towards the cultivation of palm trees which are more tolerant of saline conditions.

2. An Nassariya (Nablus Governorate)	Areas A and B (14 km east of Nablus)	8,203 sq km	1 561 (2007) 2 022 (2021)	788 women / 773 men (2007) No data available for 2021
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The village is 50 percent dependent on agriculture and 50 percent on paid work elsewhere, with 16 percent of the workforce work inside Israel, 12 percent work in the Palestinian public sector, 11 percent in the service sector, 10 percent in trade and 1 percent in manufacturing. The village obtains its water from 11 private wells that provide water for agriculture. All residential homes are connected to the public water network, built in 1982.

The average water supply per person per day is about 159 litres, but due to water losses in the network, which amount to 32 percent of output, the actual consumption is 108 litres per person per day. There is also a public water tank.

3a. Tammoun (Tubas Governorate)	Area A and B (5 km south of Tubas)	81 sq km	7 640 (1997) 14 191 (2021)	3 869 women and 3 771 men (1997) No data available for 2021
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Tammoun has 25 sq km for agricultural use; 5 sq km are "built up" areas, 20 sq km is classified as forests and 15 sq km has been confiscated by Israel. The area is located beside the Jordan River, 350 metres above sea level. Because of its strategic location, the Israeli occupation authorities closed off 55 percent of the agricultural lands that were used for grain cultivation and herding. The farmers are dependent on rainwater harvesting and practice irrigation for the growing of vegetables in greenhouses using polluted water from the Wadi Fara'a stream.

3b. Al-Bkai'a (Khirbat 'Atuf, Alhadidiya, AL-Humsa) (Tubas Governorate)	Area C (25km southeast of Tubas)	29.25 sq km	Khirbat 'Atuf 234 Alhadidiya 198 AL-Humsa (not available)	No data available for 2021
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Al-Bkai'a area in the northern Jordan Valley has some of the most fertile agricultural land in the West Bank where mainly Bedouin communities are engaged in sheep herding and agriculture. The area has 28.65 sq km of agricultural land and 95 percent of the population depends on agriculture. An estimated 5 percent work inside Israel. Large areas of grazing land have been confiscated by the Israeli occupation authorities for military training purposes ('Firing Zones') and the area permitted for grazing has been reduced from 20 000 dunams to only 5 000 dunams.

4. Illar (Tulkarm Governorate)	Areas A and B (17 km north of Tulkarm)	14 sq km	7 939 (2021)	No data available for 2021
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The area is dependent on agriculture; mainly olive trees and the irrigation of home gardens. Illar municipality does not have its own water source and depends on purchasing supplies from Zeita town, which are then distributed through a water network over a 24-hour period making supplies more costly for residents.

5. Falamyia (Qalqilya Governorate)	Areas B and C 5 km northeast of Qalqilya	2.38 sq km	819 (2021)	No data available for 2021
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Most of the area is agricultural land: 97.2 percent in Area C and only 2.8 percent in Area B. Located between Tulkarm and Qalqilya governorates Falamyia lands are historically (pre-1948) linked with the Palestinian (Arab Israeli) towns of Tira and Taybeh inside the Green Line in Israel. The area has been severely affected by the construction of the West Bank Barrier and more than 5 000 citrus and olive trees and greenhouses now lie on the Israeli side of the Barrier. Farmers can only access their land using agricultural permits issued by the Israeli authorities that allows them to pass through Israeli regulated "agricultural gates". Land has also been confiscated for illegal settlement construction. Falamyia is rich in groundwater sources with its four groundwater wells, which also irrigate part of the land on the Israeli side of the Barrier.

iii. Report structure

The report consists of four sections. Section one reviews the country context – political, economic, social, education and health – in Palestine. Section two provides an overview of the agriculture and water sectors based on quantitative and qualitative research studies and reports as well as the legal framework and national policies related to water and gender. Section three presents the results of primary and secondary data collection covering the six main questions on gender gaps in water management, access to water resources, benefits, decision-making in the water sector, and expectations. Section four presents recommendations that aim to help FAO partners in decision-making for their future plans and programmes.

1. Country context and socioeconomic characteristics

Palestine obtained the status of a non-member observer state in the United Nations in accordance with United Nations General Assembly resolution 67/19 (2012), giving it the right to apply for membership in United Nations specialized international agencies and to sign up to international conventions and treaties. Between 2014 and 2019, Palestine acceded to 98 international conventions, including the two covenants on political and civil rights, economic, social and cultural rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), in addition to the four Geneva Conventions and the Hague Convention. Palestine has also ratified climate agreements and committed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Under these commitments, Palestine aims to develop state-building by adopting laws and procedures to reach sustainable development even though it is still under Israeli occupation. According to the latest Human Development Report, Palestine's Human Development Index (HDI)³ value for 2019 was 0.708, which puts the country in the high human development category and positions it at 115 out of 189 countries and territories (UNDP, 2020).

Since the establishment of the PA, Palestine has seen significant improvements in education and health, but despite this, gender inequality still exists. Based on the Human Development Report (UNDP, 2020, p. 5), the Gender Development Index (GDI) value in Palestine was 0.870, which places it in the fifth classification when compared to other countries that were measured. This is due to the traditional patriarchal culture that dominates legislation and societal attitudes that discriminate against women and girls.

Political situation

The Oslo Accords (I and II), signed in 1993 and 1995 between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Government of Israel, stipulated Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho and the temporary division of the West Bank into areas A, B and C with a staged Israeli occupation withdrawal from these areas prior to the establishment of Palestine. However, in Area B, which makes up 22 percent of the West Bank, Israel still maintains joint law enforcement powers with the PA and has full security and administrative control over Area C, containing 60 percent of the West Bank. Most of the West Bank's Palestinian population lives in Areas A and B. However, Area C is the most important in terms of natural resources, including water and agricultural land, particularly in the Jordan Valley, which are essential for Palestine's long-term economic recovery.

From 2017, there has been an increase in Israeli confiscation of Palestinian lands in the West Bank in order to establish Israeli outposts and settlements and expand existing settlements, despite the settlements being illegal under international law. More Palestinian homes have been demolished in the process, which have displaced hundreds of Palestinian families. Israel has continued its policies of collective penalties to prevent or restrict the PA from providing basic services such as education, health, improved housing and new job opportunities, especially in Area C. Israeli settlement expansion has been accompanied by a number of new legislative and policy measures to expand the scope of Israel's judiciary control over Area C.⁴

³ The Human Development Index (HDI) is a summary measure of average achievement in key dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable and having a decent standard of living.

⁴ On 6 February 2017, the Israeli parliament (Knesset) enacted the Settlement Regulation Law in Judea and Samaria (West Bank) 5777-2017, which allows Israel to retroactively "legalize" settlements that were built "illegally" (from Israel's perspective) on private Palestinian lands. Laws were also drawn up aimed at tightening Israeli control over East Jerusalem.

Continuous Israeli invasions into the West Bank and Gaza Strip after 1995 have contributed to undermining the new PA that was established through the Oslo Agreement, preventing the establishment of a Palestinian state with national sovereignty on its own land. Israeli occupation policies have led to the increasing fragmentation of the West Bank and the separation between the West Bank, including East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip. The construction of the separation wall or Barrier, which began in 2002, has strengthened Israeli control over shared water sources, most of which lie inside the West Bank, and Palestinian agricultural land continues to be confiscated.

International donor countries have continued to finance the national plans of the Ramallah-based PA and most of them have boycotted and withdrawn funding for the authority in Gaza. Donor support has been given to plans for government reform in the West Bank to build and develop institutions, while Gaza remains largely dependent on humanitarian aid programmes, notably those provided by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), and survives on a subsistence economy. In 2018, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 reported that "safe drinking water has almost disappeared, the economy is cratering and the state of unlivability is upon us" (UN, 2018). The latest Israeli–Gaza conflict in May 2021 resulted in further destruction to civilian residential areas, health facilities, schools and infrastructure and has left thousands homeless.

The division between the West Bank and Gaza Strip has weakened the ability of Palestinian society to respond to internal political conflict and to better face challenges and adapt. Fragmentation has also weakened the quality of life, undermined family reunification and networks of interaction between Palestinians and has also negatively affected Palestinian women. For example, limited amendments to some laws, such as raising the marriage age to 18 years, was issued by the PA in Ramallah and is implemented in the West Bank but not in Gaza. Two Personal Status laws (Egyptian in the Gaza Strip and Jordanian in the West Bank) are used, both based on Islamic Sharia law.

Economic situation

Israel as an occupying power pursues a *fait accompli* status for the Palestinian territories where Palestinians have little choice but to accept whatever changes have been decided and made. Following the signing of the Oslo I Accords (1993) and the Paris Economic Protocol (1994), which defined and regulated relations between the Palestinian and Israeli economies, the Palestinian economy weakened further, becoming more dependent and unable to compete with Israel, being geared towards serving the Israeli economy.

Israel has continued to tighten its authority over all borders and crossings points, enabling it to control the movement of Palestinian workers and all imports and exports, including food, manufactured goods, raw materials and humanitarian supplies. In addition, the financial arrangements resulting from the Paris Economic Protocol enabled the Israeli occupation authorities to control the PA's financial resources⁷ This has resulted in a financial crisis that has affected economic growth and investment rates in Palestine, resulting in a deteriorating socioeconomic situation with poverty rates reaching 29 percent for men and 30 percent for women (PCBS, 2019).⁸

⁷ Israel collects value-added tax (VAT) on Palestinian imports from Israel, managing the customs clearance operations for Palestinian imports that pass through Israeli ports, and collecting customs duties and VAT on these imports (clearance revenues), before transferring those revenues to the PA after deducting 3 percent every month as a collection fee. (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics [PCBS], 2019g). Since March 2019, the PA has not been able to collect the tax revenues held by Israel (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics [PCBS], 2019g) causing a budget deficit, while Israel began deducting USD 11.5 million a month (equivalent to USD 138 million annually) from Palestinian clearance revenues. See: <https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/79060>

The Palestinian economy has, to date, been largely able to survive as a result of foreign remittance flows. However, these began to decline significantly in 2018 due to a decrease in bilateral donor aid, which has exacerbated the economic crisis. The economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has further contributed to the decline. The economy recorded a sharp decline of 12 percent during 2020 and most economic activities decreasing per capita GDP by about 20 percent (PCBS, 2020)⁹, which has caused mass unemployment and further increased poverty levels. There have also been environmental losses due to an increase in Israeli land confiscations in the West Bank (PCBS, 2020).

The Israeli occupation has the effect of distorting the structure of the Palestinian economy by paralysing its productive sectors, including agriculture, construction and manufacturing, leaving them unable to contribute to the Palestinian GDP and to expand the labour force. Internal trade – retail and wholesale trade of goods, including trade with Israel – dominates the economy. National accounts data issued by PCBS in 2018 show that the contribution of internal trade reached 22 percent of the total GDP, or USD 3.6 billion. This dependency on internal trade has contributed to the shift away from productive sectors such as agriculture and industry towards services, trade and construction (Shaqqi, 2021). The Palestinian economy has thus become primarily a service economy. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD, 2020b) indicated that the public sector had expanded at the expense of the private sector, growing from 19 percent to 30 percent.

Palestinian labour force

The Palestinian labour force has been severely affected by the unstable political and economic situation in terms of job retention, and unemployment rates have soared. As a result of dependency on the Israeli economy and the dominance of the service sector, government employment in the public sector has reached 20.7 percent. About 13.2 percent of Palestine's work force are employed formally¹¹ inside Israel and in illegal Israeli settlements, and 65.9 percent work in the private sector inside the West Bank and Gaza Strip (PCBS, 2020).

Although the majority of the labour force is employed in the private sector, this sector is characterized by low investment and low-productivity activities, high numbers of mainly family-owned micro- and medium-sized businesses, often operating in the informal economy, and has seen an increase in self-employment activities. Together, these factors have limited the opportunities for job creation (PCBS, 2019c) and the gender gap in employment is particularly prominent. In 2020, only 16.1 percent of women participated in the labour force, compared to 65.1 percent of men (PCBS, 2020e).

The political situation in Palestine has had a direct impact on unemployment rates, which reached 25.3 percent in 2019. There are variations based on gender, age and geographical area. Unemployment amongst the 15 to 24 age group was 21.3 percent for males and 41.2 percent for females (PCBS, 2019c). Unemployment rates increased for women who had finished more than 13 years of education compared to the rates amongst men. The number of unemployed women who had more than 13 years of education increased by 47.2 percent compared to women who had 10–12 years of education (23.4 percent) and for those with 7–9 years of education (15.4 percent).

⁹ For more information see Economic Monitoring Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (English). Washington, DC: World Bank Group. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/410061568815090051/Economic-Monitoring-Report-to-the-Ad-Hoc-Liaison-Committee>

¹¹ There are two types of Palestinian migrant workers in Israel: those who obtain Israeli work permits and those who work without. Those without permits are vulnerable to exploitation due to the absence of a protective legal framework.

Despite the higher percentage of females enrolled in higher education than males, their enrollment rate in the workforce is lower than that of males. This is due to several factors (World Bank, 2019e):

- Legislation and regulations that limit women's choices in careers and occupations;
- The absence of regulations for better access to comprehensive, affordable and high-quality child care that could free up the time women need to work and compete in the job market;
- Employer-paid maternity benefits, with no mandated paternal benefits, that may unintentionally raise the costs incurred by firms and thus discourage them from hiring women;
- The absence of workforce protection provisions that safeguard against implicit and explicit forms of discrimination, especially in small and more traditional workplaces;
- The absence of measures to protect against sexual harassment in the workplace, such as legislation and criminal penalties;
- The Labour Law that restricts female employment for night shifts, for example, in hotels;
- Possible discrimination in the private sector that prevents skilled women from accessing jobs or restricts their ability to rise to senior managerial positions through wage discrimination, and the biases and prejudices against women in the workforce that may promote vertical segregation;
- Lack of personal safety for women commuting to and from work due to Israeli occupation movement restrictions (checkpoints, the Barrier); and
- Perceptions of what is considered socially appropriate for women in the public sphere and what is viewed as compatible with household and family responsibilities.

When looking at the distribution of the female workforce based on economic activity, the results of the PCBS survey (2018) showed that of the 35.1 percent of workers employed in services¹², 73.6 percent were women. Of the 21.7 percent of workers who worked in trade, restaurants and hotels, women represented around half the workforce at 11 percent (PCBS, 2018b).

Figure 1: Labour participation in the economic sectors in Palestine (2019)



Source: PCBS, 2019. *Palestinian Labour Force Survey - Annual Report 2018*.

continuation of the cycle of gender inequality. The average daily wage for women was 98.6 new Israeli shekels (NIS) compared to NIS 134.4 for men (see Table 4).

¹² PCBS defines "services" as activities falling under accommodation and food, real estate and rental, professional, scientific and technical, administrative and support services, education, health and social work, and arts, entertainment and leisure.

Table 4: Average daily wage (in NIS13) based on gender in the Palestinian market (2019)

Sector	Total	Women	Men
Agriculture, hunting, forestry and fishing	89.6	76.7	90.0
Transportation, storage and communication	115.2	61.8	119.0
Mining, quarrying and manufacturing	212.4	-	212.4
Construction	96.2	69.9	98.2
Trade, restaurants and hotels	91.7	91.3	91.8
Services and other branches	128.6	103.7	118.8

Source: PCBS, 2019. *Palestinian Labour Force Survey - Annual Report 2018*.

Women's paid and informal work

Women's participation in the Palestinian economy is limited and constrained by social barriers and stereotyped perceptions that reinforce and perpetuate their traditional role in society. The gender gap in key sectors remains an impediment to women's participation in the economy and the labour market. Women are over-represented in the service sector, being 63.6 percent of the total workforce, and seen as complementary to their domestic reproductive and care roles.

Discriminatory perceptions and practices hamper women's equal access to economic opportunities, employment and income. Women's employment is affected by their reproductive health needs, level of education, freedom of movement, patriarchal norms and traditions and discriminatory national legislation. There is limited mainstreaming of gender equality in private and public institutions and a lack of fair laws protecting women's rights in the workplace, such as pay equity, maternity leave and access to social security (FAO, 2020).

Women's unpaid care work within the family include taking care of children, the elderly and the sick, washing, cooking, shopping, cleaning and helping other families with household chores. Most work opportunities for women in urban areas are in the informal sector, such as in kindergartens and small businesses due to there currently being no other alternatives for income generation (UN Women, 2020). The burden on rural women is substantially more, as their work extends to agriculture, poultry farming, sheep rearing, dairy and cheese processing, household water management, and maintaining health and household hygiene.

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the discrimination and marginalization of working women has worsened in both the formal and informal sectors of the economy. Despite the higher percentage of women enrolled in higher education than men, women face a double challenge due to the lack of available jobs and a discriminatory culture. They make up only 12 percent of the workforce in the West Bank and 9 percent in the Gaza Strip (PCBS, 2020). Some 68 percent of women have reported an increase in unpaid care work after COVID-19 isolation measures were introduced in 2020 (PCBS, 2020).¹⁵ The UN Women study (2020) indicated that when both male and female partners work from home remotely, men's paid work is given a higher priority. The same study indicated that most women worked in the informal sector in small businesses which have been severely affected by the pandemic. More women (76 percent) lost their income compared to men (65 percent) and 25 percent of Palestinian women working in the private sector either do not have contracts or lack salary protection (UN Women, 2020).

¹⁵ UN Women conducted a survey on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on small, micro and medium enterprises run by women in Palestine. The sample consisted of 301 women and although small it gives an insight into the impact of government COVID-19 restrictions on working women.

Education and access to information

The 2017 population census data indicated that illiteracy among Palestinians aged 15 years and over had decreased to 3.3 percent of the total population (see Table 5). Despite this decrease there is a gender gap in illiteracy rates, with males at 1.7 percent, and females at 5 percent. The illiteracy rate increased amongst people with disabilities, reaching 32 percent with an increased gap between the sexes (males 20 percent, females 46 percent). Illiteracy rates were higher in rural communities (4.8 percent), followed by refugee camps (3.3 percent) and then urban communities (3.1 percent).

Table 5: *Percentage distribution of the Palestinian population (15 years and above) by educational attainment and sex (2017)*

Educational Attainment	% Women	% Men	Average %
Illiterate	5.0	1.7	3.3
Can read and write	4.8	5.3	5.1
Preparatory level	31.2	35.7	33.4
Elementary level	9.9	13.4	11.7
Secondary level	24.8	22.0	23.4
Associate diploma	5.9	5.7	5.8
Bachelor degree and above	18.4	16.2	17.3
Total	100%	100%	100%

Source: PCBS. 2018. *Establishments Report- Population, Housing and Establishments Census 2017*.

In the 2017/2018 school year, the drop-out rate for elementary schoolchildren averaged 0.5 percent (0.6 percent for boys and 0.3 percent for girls), while the secondary school average drop-out rate was 2.3 percent (2.7 percent for boys and 2 percent for girls) (PCBS, 2020). There is a difference in the causes of drop-out between boys and girls. Most boys drop out of school to find paid work to help support their families due to the deteriorating economic situation, while girls drop out due to early marriages, again largely due to the family's economic situation.

There is a discrepancy in education enrollment rates based on disability. Data from PCBS indicates that out of the 2.1 percent of the population population with disabilities, 46 percent of children aged 6–17 years were not enrolled in school in 2017 (boys 1.3 percent compared to 0.9 percent for girls).

Enrollment in vocational education is still low as society considers it a gateway for those who do not succeed academically. Only 3 percent of all Grade 12 (final year) school students enrolled in vocational education.

Table 6: Field of study (disaggregated by gender) (2019)

Sex	Home Economics	Hotel Mgt	Sharia law	Industry	Agriculture	Entrepreneurs	Technology	Art	Science	Total
Men	0	59	420	1 520	114	2 196	409	341 17	719 8	30 751
Women	171	19	403	198	16	2 072	418	189 26	510 10	39 996
Total	171	78	823	1 718	130	4 241	827	530 43	229 19	70 747

Source: PCBS, 2019. *Women and men in Palestine. Issues and statistics.*

The difference in occupations by gender is closely associated with differences in higher education fields of study (see Table 6). Women tend to choose subjects geared towards public sector employment and focus on the social sciences and humanities. This difference may partly reflect genuine differences in preferences, but it also may be a response to the types of occupations that are available to women. These differences in specializations affected the search for job opportunities open to women and the quality of employment once found (World Bank, 2018b).

Regarding access to information, the ICT household survey data for 2019 indicated that 33 percent of households in Palestine had a computer (desktop, laptop or tablet), and the percentage of individuals (10 years and over) who used a computer from any location reached 26 per cent. The results also showed that the percentage of families with children between 10 and 17 years old who were currently enrolled in education and had a computer reached 44 percent, while the percentage of families with members between 18 and 24 years old who were currently enrolled in education and had a computer reached 60 percent (PCBS, 2019).

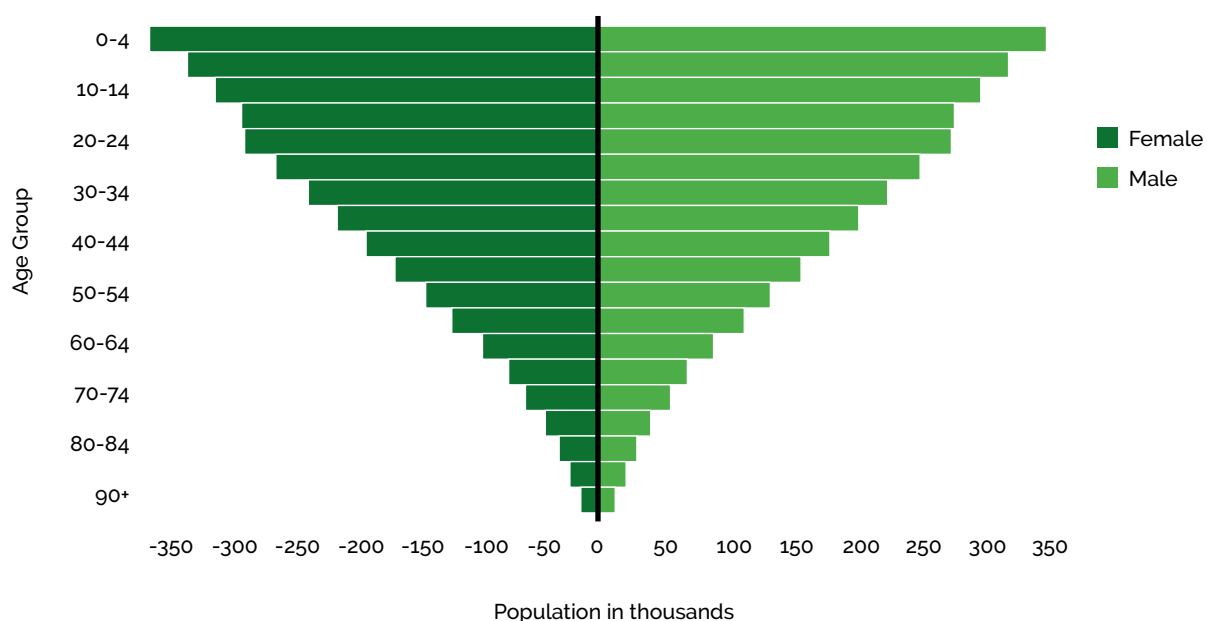
The survey also showed that a large percent of Palestinian families had access to the internet at home (urban: 80 percent, rural: 81 percent, Palestine refugee camps: 75 percent). There was a small gap in internet usage between women, at 84 percent, and men, at 88 percent (PCBS, 2019).

Health

The Population, Housing and Establishment Census (2017) highlighted that the total population of Palestine in 2017 was 4 780 978 people compared to 3 767 549 people in 2007; an increase of 26 percent. The estimated annual population growth rate was 2.8 percent.

By 2017, the majority of the population were living in urban areas (77.1 percent) while only 14.6 percent were living in rural areas, together with a further 8.3 percent living in refugee camps (PCBS, 2018a). The population pyramid (Figure 2) shows that Palestinian society has a relatively young population: 0 to 17 years: 47 percent; 18 to 29 years: 24 percent; 30 to 59 years: 23.8 percent; and 60+ years: 5.2 percent (PCBS, 2018a). With regards to the composition of population by gender, the 2017 Census shows a ratio of 103.3 to 100 between males and females (males 50.9 percent, females 49.1 percent).

Figure 2: Palestinian population by age group and percentage (2018)



Source: PCBS. 2019a. *Palestinian Labour Force Survey - Annual Report 2018*.

The average family size is 5.1 persons per household, being 4.8 in the West Bank and 5.6 in Gaza. PCBS and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), predicts that the Palestinian population will reach 6.9 million by 2030 and by 2050 is expected to almost double, reaching 9.5 million (UNFPA, 2016). Palestine’s population growth has implications on future access to available safe water resources and implies an increase in future water consumption, which will increasingly become a major problem in light of the current water crisis in Palestine.

The challenges facing the agricultural sector, including water shortages, affect the food security for the whole population. Based on WFP data, food insecurity in Palestine affects nearly a third of the population – about 1.7 million people – and is driven by high poverty and unemployment rates (WFP, 2021). As for nutritional status, the PMIC 2020 survey showed an increase in malnutrition for children under five years old, with moderate and severe stunting reaching 8.7 percent, underweight reaching 2.1 percent and wasting reaching 1.3 percent (PCBS, 2020).

There is a close relationship between the quality of available safe water in Palestine and public health. Inadequate water treatment processes, wastewater seepage into the groundwater, toxic waste from industries in Israeli settlements polluting water sources and increasing salination of the groundwater all pose serious health threats to Palestinian communities.²⁰

Wastewater and sewage disposal methods in the West Bank contribute to drinking water pollution. Only 32.6 percent of Palestinian households in the West Bank are connected to sewerage networks; 62.6 percent are connected to home cesspits. When the cesspits are full, they are drained and the waste is disposed of on agricultural lands and in valleys and wadis (seasonal water courses). In addition, home sump pits can contribute to the pollution of rain-fed cisterns, especially if they are situated less than 15 metres apart, as is the case in 30.2 percent of homes that have both sump pits and cisterns (Journal Health Mediterranean, 2009). Access to health services in the West Bank is restricted by Israeli checkpoints and the Barrier. Palestinians living in remote rural areas in Area C face particular difficulties in accessing health facilities.

A World Bank report showed that around 29 percent of Palestinians were living in poverty with 2.5 million being food insecure (WFP, 2018). Women-headed households, persons with disabilities and the elderly are more vulnerable to falling into poverty, having a negative impact on individual, family and community health as a whole. The Humanitarian Needs Overview 2021 identified the most vulnerable groups as people living in poor or women-headed households, Palestine refugees living in refugee camps, displaced people, children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and small-scale farmers, herders and fisher folk (OCHA, December 2020).

Protection – Gender-based violence

Gender inequality runs deep in Palestinian society. Women and girls are seen as vulnerable, as dependents and financial burdens on the family.²² They also represent the “honour” of the family and community and so need to be protected. This traditional patriarchal culture gives men privileges and power over the lives of women and girls. It denies women and girls their right to self-determination and the right to life on the basis of equality and social justice. Moreover, gender role divisions have led to a culture that accepts femicide under the pretext of “honour” killing. Lockdown measures to contain the spread of COVID-19 exacerbated the existing economic crisis with a further increase in unemployment and poverty and has led to women being isolated at home and more vulnerable to violence and abuse by their partners and family (General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW), 2020).

PCBS conducted three surveys on gender-based violence (GBV) in Palestine in 2005, 2011 and 2019. All surveys indicated that domestic violence is the most prevalent form of violence (excluding Israeli occupation-related violence), that women and girls are the most affected by domestic violence and the aggressor or perpetrator in most cases is their husband or brother. According to the 2019 survey, there was a slight decrease in the rate of violence against women compared to previous years. The percentage of married women aged 18–64 who experienced psychological abuse in 2019 was 56.6 percent compared to 58.6 percent in 2011 and 61.7 percent in 2005. Eighteen percent of married women experienced physical violence or abuse in 2019 compared to 23.5 percent in 2011 and 52.6 percent in 2005. The percentage of women who experienced sexual violence or abuse was estimated at 9 percent in 2019, compared to 12 percent in 2011 and 11 percent in 2005. Social violence against women decreased significantly from 55 percent in 2011 to 32.5 percent in 2019. Similarly, the percentage of economic violence²³ saw a decrease from 55 percent in 2011 to 41 percent in 2019. However, 35 women have been murdered in “honour” killings in 2019–2020 (GUPW, 2020).

²² See Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC), 2017. Women's needs and perceptions in the Palestinian Society.

²³ Economic violence is a form of violence which is perpetrated by husbands against their wives and can involve asking or demanding how she spends money, disposing of her property and inheritance without her consent, preventing her from working, forcing her to resign from work, etc.

There has been an increase in on-line cyber abuse. Data shows that many women and girls are subject to threats, extortion and harassment through social media. According to the Violence Survey in the Palestinian Society 2019 (PCBS, 2019), 8 percent of married women aged 18-64 have experienced some form of cyber violence, harassment or abuse by other social media users. The rate of cyber violence against girls was 10 percent compared to 8 percent for boys.

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic the PA declared a state of emergency for 30 days on 4 March 2020, and extended the lockdowns twice for 90 days up to June 2021. Measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19, in line with World Health Organization (WHO) recommendations, included closures and stay-at-home orders to protect people from contracting the virus. A pilot study conducted by the Ministry of Women's Affairs on the impact of COVID-19 on violence against women indicated that psychological violence affected the highest number, with 55 percent of women reporting that they had experienced it, followed by 54 percent experiencing economic violence, mainly due to work lay-offs especially in the private sector, and 27 percent experiencing social violence.²⁴ Despite the fact that domestic violence is the main form of violence against women and girls, the study found that 47 percent of women still turned to their families to seek protection during the pandemic, possibly due to a lack of alternatives.²⁵ These findings were confirmed by a similar study undertaken by UNFPA (UNFPA, 2016).

The Ministry of Women's Affairs study also indicated that 88 percent of women with disabilities have experienced various types of economic, social, physical, psychological and verbal violence and abuse during the pandemic. The increasing burden on women, as the first and usually sole provider of unpaid family care, has contributed to the neglect and marginalization of family members with disabilities, where women carers are overburdened and unable or unwilling to provide support. In the absence of government social support measures, violence and abuse against persons with disabilities have increased (GUPW, 2020).

²⁴ Social violence, which often comes under domestic violence and abuse, is perpetrated to deprive and deny a person, usually a woman or girl, of social relations with others and their participation in events and can involve isolating the person at home.

²⁵ With movement restrictions and the closure of legal organizations women were left with no alternatives but to seek protection from the family.

2. Overview of the agriculture and water sectors

The West Bank and Gaza Strip area of Palestine, within the 1967 borders, has an area of 6.025 million dunums or 6 220 km², 5 660 sq km of which is in the West Bank and 365 sq km in the Gaza Strip (PCBS, 2018a). Agricultural land makes up around 1.2 million dunums or 20 percent of the area, of which 90 percent is in the West Bank and 10 percent in the Gaza Strip. Some 62.9 percent of all agricultural land is in Area C, and is therefore under full Israeli security and administrative control, while 18.8 percent is in Area B and 18.3 percent is in Area A (FAO, 2019).

Rain-fed cultivation patterns predominate and cover 81 percent of agricultural land, while irrigated areas cover 19 percent, mainly in the Gaza Strip, the Jordan Valley (Area C) and the low-lying western areas of the West Bank, where the Barrier now exists. The remaining areas consist of higher altitude land that could be suitable for cultivation, land that needs reclamation work, land that has been used for urban and industrial expansion and land that has been confiscated by the Israeli occupation authorities for purposes other than building the Barrier and establishing settler bypass roads (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), 2019). Pastureland covers approximately 2.02 million dunams, although the area for grazing activities is no more than 621 000 dunams. This small area experiences low rainfall of around 100–250 mm per year, and over grazing by pastoralists is contributing to environmental degradation (ESCWA, 2019).

Lands classified as forest cover 320 000 dunums in 48 nature reserves in the West Bank. The PA have gained only 17 reserves from Israel, on the eastern slopes and in the Jordan Valley (ESCWA, 2019).

There are 111 310 agricultural holdings in Palestine; 81.7 percent in the West Bank and 18.3 percent in the Gaza Strip. These are characterized as small household holdings with an average size of 18.6 dunums. 88 percent are owned outright by the household, but some are either fully or partially rented out. Approximately 70 percent of the holdings are involved in crop cultivation, only 7.6 percent are livestock holdings, and the remainder practice mixed farming (MoA, 2020).

The agricultural sector has experienced significant losses during the COVID-19 pandemic due to the lockdowns, closure of local markets and movement restrictions between villages, towns and cities and between governorates. The accumulation of unsold agricultural produce and the decrease in demand for milk from dairy factories have also contributed to the financial crisis facing farmers.

Although agriculture is considered one of the most important economic sectors and is intertwined with Palestine's historic social, cultural and national identity, it has been unable to develop and expand due to Israeli occupation policies. The agricultural sector's contribution to the GDP has steadily declined from 30 percent in 1970 to 18 percent in 1987, 11 percent in 2003 and only 7.36 percent in 2019.²⁶

This is the result of land loss, poor financial returns from agriculture production, a predominately male rural workforce becoming labourers inside Israel and in Israeli settlements, population movement into Palestinian urban areas (in the West Bank), and the growth of alternative economic opportunities in the private or public sectors. It is also the result of the limitations established by the Paris Protocol which assumed incorrectly that the two parties were equal in the negotiating process (FAO, 2019). Palestine is a state under occupation. It does not have sovereignty over its border crossings and therefore is unable to freely export and import, no longer has its own currency and has no control over its natural resources. The Paris Protocol also did not account for the differences in income and standard of living between the two parties, which led to losses for the Palestinian economy that the PA was unable to contain.

According to PCBS (2019),²⁷ the number of workers in the agricultural sector was 51 500 in 2018, consisting of 37 000 in the West Bank and 14 500 in the Gaza Strip. This compares to 82 700 workers in 2013, consisting of 59 900 in the West Bank and 22 800 in the Gaza Strip and represents a decline in the West Bank and an increase in Gaza, as a result of need in response to the Israeli blockade.

Gender roles in agriculture sector

There has been an increase in home gardens and micro-farming carried out by women, mainly as unpaid work for home consumption, although some produce is still sold by village women in street markets in the West Bank.

Table 7: Distribution of workers in the agriculture sector by type of work and gender (2018)

Type	% West Bank			% Gaza Strip		
	All	Females	Males	All	Females	Males
Employer	6	0	8	7	3	7
Self-employed	40	13	48	20	28	19
Waged worker	21	3	26	58	23	62
Works for the family	33	84	18	15	47	12

Source: National Agriculture Sector Strategy Update (2020). "Resilient and Sustainable Agriculture 2021-2023"

²⁶ See Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC), 2017. Women's needs and perceptions in the Palestinian Society.

²⁷ Economic violence is a form of violence which is perpetrated by husbands against their wives and can involve asking or demanding how she spends money, disposing of her property and inheritance without her consent, preventing her from working, forcing her to resign from work, etc.

An FAO study (2021) found that women work in all stages of the production chain except in the marketing and selling of produce, which remains in the domain of male competence and control. This is mainly due to a patriarchal culture that limits women's movement in the public sphere and puts obstacles in the way of women's control and ownership. This is reinforced by legislation, such as the Personal Status Law, and penalties that reinforce the subordination of women.

Women prefer working in their home and community on income-generating projects, which is why many turn to the home food industry for the purpose of selling produce. The obstacles to women's freedom of movement in the rural areas, especially in Area C, have increased due to the Barrier, Israeli military checkpoints, settler violence and the security situation in general, as well as the chronic lack of public transport. All these factors impact on women's choices in work, housing or participation in social activities (Eguiguren and Saadeh, 2014).

Small farmers working in home gardens or in micro-agricultural projects face many problems (FAO, 2019):

- Despite the many regulations in the Agriculture Law (2003) that support small-scale farming, such as the establishment of the Palestinian Agricultural Disaster Risk Reduction and Insurance Fund (PADRRIF), an agricultural insurance system, agricultural loan bank and central laboratories, the law prohibits severe fragmentation and division of the land and limits construction on agricultural land, although law enforcement is not in place. The Agriculture Law stipulates that no action may be taken on the structural division of lands for holdings that are less than 5 dunums in size, despite the wishes of landowners. Land fragmentation mainly takes place for the following reasons: inheritance, where farmers tend to hand over land of similar quality and size to their children; economic gains, when agriculture is no longer considered a good source of income for the farmer, together with the land's high monetary value encouraging landowners to sell their holdings; the relatively high cost of agricultural production, forcing farmers to sell part of their land to finance production on the remaining area; and many farmers leaving their villages to seek employment opportunities elsewhere (Marzin, Uwaidat and Sourrisseau, 2019).
- Limited or no access to updated marketing data, which has led to a reliance on growing a few traditional crops that the farmers are guaranteed to sell, based on the demand of private companies regardless of new market trends, requirements and opportunities.
- The inability to compete with Israeli and foreign markets due to Israel's policy of restricting and controlling the movement of people, goods and services between the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and foreign trade between the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) and the outside world. This has led to an increase in the cost of agricultural production and marketing for Palestinians and a decrease in the local market prices for produce. Small unorganized farmers are unable to export their produce without intermediaries due to their inability to access markets, which requires high capital investments to distribute and sell the produce in relation to the size of the market.
- The West Bank is an open market for year-round Israeli agricultural produce due to lack of market controls, Israeli restrictions on the Palestinian agricultural sector and limited PA financial support systems for the farmers.
- Farmers' cooperatives play a weak role with ineffective extension and agricultural support policies.

- Lack of water resources.
- Lack of up-to-date machinery.
- The poor quality and high price of agricultural inputs.
- Inaccessible or unavailable pasture lands; poor quality sheep and goat breeds; weak agricultural extension services.

In relation to livestock, data (PCBS, 2016) indicated that 10 percent of families in Palestine raise domestic animals (8.8 percent of families in the West Bank and 12.3 percent in the Gaza Strip). Khan Yunis Governorate in the Gaza Strip had the highest at 20.4 percent and Jericho and Al Aghwar Governorate in the West Bank had the lowest at 3.4 percent.

An FAO study (2019) reported that livestock farming in the West Bank was carried out mainly by women, especially in Bedouin communities that depended on the rearing of sheep and goats. However, men dominated the marketing and manage relations with merchants and negotiate prices. The same study also indicated that male shepherds with large herds that produce sizeable quantities of milk had direct relations with dairy merchants whose services facilitated the milk sales. In contrast, women's production, especially in women-headed households, was limited and often solely for family consumption.

Both men and women herders face significant obstacles in obtaining the inputs they need for the successful production of sheep and goats' milk. Pastoralists use two types of grazing: zero-grazing (intensive production) and semi-grazing (semi-intensive production) (FAO, 2019). The majority of small pastoralists in rural areas prefer herding (intensive production) over semi-grazing. However, feed is increasingly difficult to obtain, as prices are rising globally and pastoralists believe that cheaper local types of feed are not of good quality. Meanwhile, access to traditional grazing lands is becoming increasingly difficult in the West Bank as a result of Israeli land confiscations for more settlement construction and the imposed movement restrictions.

In addition, it is difficult for shepherds to access water and electricity, especially in Area C. Water scarcity has meant that water supplies often have to be pumped in from other areas or brought in by trucks, both at a high cost, while grid electricity supplies for Bedouin communities is almost non-existent, with communities usually relying on generators. The absence of these essential resources makes production more difficult and expensive (FAO, 2019).

Water and access to water resources

There are four groundwater aquifers in Palestine located either partially or wholly in the West Bank and Gaza Strip which provide the main source of water supplies for Palestinians. However, there is a scarcity of safe water supplies due to a combination of factors: Israeli occupation policies; Israel's inequitable use of shared water resources; poor Palestinian infrastructure; and unregulated local service providers. A recent World Bank study reported that the "West Bank has benefit to less of its own internal water resources today than was agreed internationally more than two decades ago under the 1995 Oslo Accords, while the population has grown considerably and demand for water has risen" (World Bank, 2018d).

All surface and groundwater resources in Palestine are either shared with Israel or the neighbouring countries of Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. The surface waters include the Jordan River and a number of non-perennial streams or wadis. The historical flow of the Jordan River was about 1400 million m³ per year. However, the river's natural flow was significantly altered following Israel's construction of a series of dams and diversion projects along the river and its tributaries in Israel, Jordan, and the occupied Golan Heights in Syria. Israel diverts about 400 million m³ annually from Lake Tiberias (Sea of Galilee). Most of this water is transported through Israel's National Water Carrier for use in Israel's densely populated coastal plain and for agricultural settlements in the Negev Desert in the south.

On 19 November 1967, the Israeli military authorities issued Military Order No. 158 (Amendment to Water Law 31, 1953), which stated that “No person is allowed to establish or own or administer a water institution (any construction that is used to extract either surface or subterranean water resources or a processing plant) without a new official permit.” (Jerusalem Media and Communication Centre, 1993; Amnesty International, 2017). Since then, Palestinian projects to extract water from any new source or to develop new infrastructure have required prior permits from Israel, which are extremely difficult, if not impossible, to obtain. Meanwhile Israel has continued to drill deep wells along the Green Line (pre-1967 border/1949 Armistice line) and inside the West Bank. Not only does Israel divert many of the groundwater resources into Israel and Israeli settlements, but it also places restrictions on Palestinian farmers in Area C, and hinders their access to the water in the Jordan Valley by closing off agricultural areas adjacent to the river (PWA, 2018).

In 2002, Israel began the construction of the Barrier over some of the West Bank's most productive water wells and some of its most fertile land where intensive farming was made possible because water for irrigation was accessible. The Barrier construction resulted in the destruction of tens of thousands of olive trees and other fruit trees together with hundreds of acres of irrigated land, greenhouses, water wells and networks and agricultural roads (Al Ajarma, Arafah, Faisal and Qdemat, 2019).³²

According to the WASH Cluster, an estimated 1.6 million Palestinians across the oPt are suffering from insufficient access to WASH services with women, children and the elderly most affected.

“Nearly 187 000 Palestinians, of whom 85 percent live in the West Bank, are either not connected to piped water services, or are very poorly supplied; consequently, they consume less than 35 litres of water per day per capita.” (OCHA, 2021). This is well below the optimal 100 litres per person per day recommended by WHO (Humanitarian Programme Cycle, 2021).

Table 8: *General facts on water in Palestine*

General facts on water in Palestine
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the oPt, 99.8 percent of Palestinian households receive improved drinking water from the following sources: through a water network piped into residences; from protected dug wells and protected springs; rainwater harvesting; bottled water; and public taps (99.9 percent in the West Bank and 99.6 percent in the Gaza Strip). • More than 97 percent of the water pumped from the coastal aquifer in the Gaza Strip does not meet WHO water quality standards (PCBS and PWA, 2019). • Most Palestinian communities in Area C in the Jordan Valley are not connected to a water network and/or face obstacles in rehabilitating existing water connections and constructing or repairing water cisterns (OCHA, 2021). • In Area C alone there are 125 unconnected communities/residential areas that rely entirely on rainwater harvesting and/or water trucking. The price of water trucking is over ILS 30 per m³ compared to an average of ILS 7 for piped water in other areas in the West Bank (Birzeit University, 2019). • The average Palestinian per capita consumption of water is 73 litres per day, which is lower than the 100 litres per day per capita consumption rate recommended by WHO. In many herding communities in the West Bank the average water consumption per capita per day is only 20 litres. In comparison, the average Israeli per capita consumption is about 300 litres per day (OCHA, 2021).

³² The Study on The Impact of the Wall on Water Access and Human Migration in Palestine field research was conducted in 2019. The actual publication date is not indicated.

- Due to Israeli access restrictions, poor infrastructure and the risk of confiscation, the average water price for 36 percent of Area C communities in the Jordan Valley ranges from two to four times the West Bank average (ILS 5 or USD 1.50 per m³). Water is even more expensive for 31 percent of communities, reaching up to eight times the average price. Water consumption for these communities drops to less than 50 litres per person per day (OCHA, 2021).
- All Israeli households in illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank are connected to network water supplies. These households have access to permanent and unlimited water supplies at affordable prices (ILS 9 or USD 2.8 per m³ for drinking and ILS 2.8 or USD 0.9 per m³ for agricultural use) (OCHA, 2021).
- The disparity in water resource allocation for Palestinians is evidenced in direct higher costs and indirect economic losses such as lost agricultural production, as well as in health problems due to poor water quality (ARIJ, 2012).
- The poor condition and performance of the water sector is reflected in the limited irrigated agricultural areas available to Palestinians; only 12 percent in the West Bank compared to 77 percent in the Gaza Strip and 59 percent in Israel (ESCWA, 2019).
- The estimated use of water for agricultural purposes does not exceed 150 million m³ annually (60 million m³ in the West Bank, 90 million m³ in the Gaza Strip) or 45 percent of the total water consumption, which directly affects the development of irrigated agriculture (ESCWA, 2019).
- Of the 83 million m³ of water available in Palestine, 22 percent is purchased from Mekorot, the Israeli state-owned water company, which has been digging wells and extracting water from springs in the West Bank to supply Israeli residents with water for domestic, agricultural and industrial purposes, including those living in illegal settlements in the West Bank (Amnesty International, 2017).
- A Joint Water Committee (JWC), established under Article 40 of the Oslo II Agreement, is mandated to deal with all water and sewage-related issues in the West Bank. In reality, the JWC does not function as a "joint" water resource management institution and discriminates against Palestinians (Selby, 2005).
- Water resources are being affected by climate change as fresh water, both surface and groundwater, has become scarcer due to the decrease in rainfall and higher evaporation rates, impacting the recharge of groundwater reserves. Some springs have become noticeably dry. Costs for extracting water are increasing (PCBS, 2020).

The legal and policy framework for water from a gender perspective

The assessment examined the laws³⁴ related to water and property in Palestine; the Agricultural Law, Water Authority Law, Property Law and Personal Status Law. These were reviewed and analysed to examine the extent of inheritance regulations and their impact on women.

³⁴ Palestine has several legislative systems that are still in operation today due to its unique historical colonial legacy: Ottoman laws, British Mandate laws, Jordanian and Egyptian laws and Israeli occupation military laws. This has resulted in a fragmentation of the legislative system, including between the West Bank and Gaza Strip. To date, many prevailing laws, including land laws, the Personal Status Law and the Penal Code are derived from either Jordanian, Egyptian or Ottoman legislation. Despite the establishment of the PA in 1994 and the founding of the Palestinian Legislative Council, the legislative process remains distorted. The current political division between the West Bank and Gaza Strip has led to a further fragmentation of the laws as the legal amendments adopted in the West Bank are not applicable in the Gaza Strip (for example, raising the age of marriage to 18 in the West Bank).

Current laws, like the Personal Status Law, that covers the private sphere, or those covering the public sphere, such as the Agricultural Law, Water Law, and Penalty Code, the legislation on labour, the environment and others, all deal with the issue of gender using a blind lens, assuming that everyone has the same opportunities to access and enjoy rights. However, Palestinian patriarchal culture is reinforced by current national laws and policies, most importantly by the Personal Status Law which applies to both Muslims and Christians, whereby women are subordinate to men. By depriving them of their basic rights, the status of women in the public sphere is negatively affected, contributing to the increasing marginalization of women and girls (see Annex 1).

Palestinian Basic Law, which explicitly proclaims equality for all groups in society without discrimination, has been ratified and is the basis of any and all domestic legislation. However, the laws that were updated, such as the People with Disability Law, the Social Security draft law, and amended articles in the Penal Code were not derived from the Basic Law, indicating that the legislative process in Palestine is sectoral. That is, when institutions working in a particular sector develop amendments or draft laws, those amendments are not being associated with other relevant laws that might directly affect equality in law and before the law. Further, the application of amendments from a gender perspective has been limited to the Personal Status Law and the Penal Code, whereas laws regulating the water, agriculture and economy sectors have been marginalized and not approached through a gender lens. Palestinian Labour Law has adopted a gender perspective in its analysis and the implementation of amendments, yet it still needs to apply measures to promote protection against violence in the workplace.

When women's right to ownership are examined under Palestinian law, it shows that the legislation addresses the rights of all individuals to ownership through a neutral approach. Various articles of the laws generally focus on the individual in society, giving women the right to own property without requesting anyone's consent. Despite this, the Inheritance Law, which derives its provisions from Islamic Sharia law, discriminates in the shares that heirs are able to inherit on the basis of gender.

After Palestine announced its commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015, two national plans – Putting Citizens First (2017–2022) and the National Development Plan (2021–2023) – were developed in line with the 2030 Agenda “Leaving no one behind”. The national plans stressed the need to reach all societal groups and to empower and promote *alsumud*³⁵ amongst the Palestinian population. The PA gave priority to people living in marginalized areas, especially in Area C.

Sectoral and cross-sectoral plans covering gender, youth and the environment were incorporated into these national plans, indicating the PA's awareness of their importance. However, due to a limited understanding of gender and a lack of political will to challenge patriarchal culture and norms, gender was dealt with as a women's issue and not applied in the broader context of being relevant to the whole of society. This approach was reflected in the national goals and interventions, contributing to the persistence of gender inequality in all sectors.

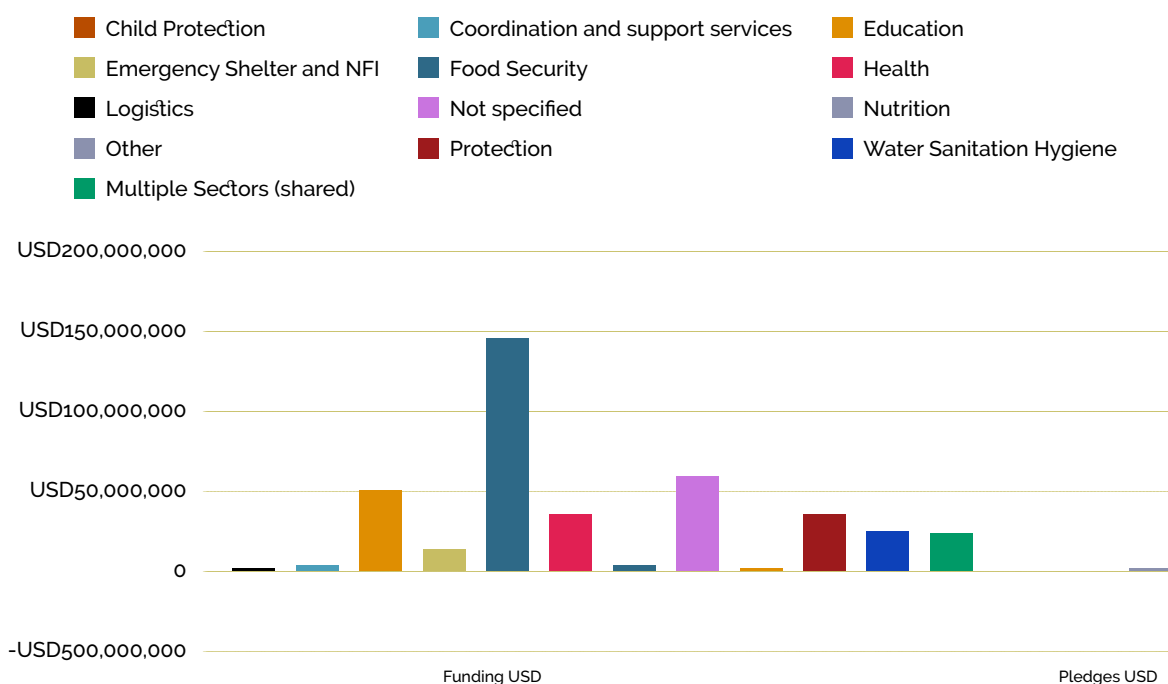
³⁵ *Alsumud* translated into English means “standing together” or “steadfastness”, a popular Palestinian national slogan.

Gender was introduced in the national plans based on two approaches. A gender-neutral approach, which assumes that all citizens are equal, and gender mainstreaming, which is a strategy for promoting gender equality. But the gender-neutral interventions related to the economy, resilience and politics do not so far take into account the discrimination women face, while gender mainstreaming remains limited to the access to justice and protection from violence and the rights of people with disabilities in being able to access services. These approaches are unfortunately having a negative impact on development policies. For example, violence against women comes under the Ministry of Social Development and the Ministry of Women's Affairs and has not been integrated into economic or local government policies or the Ministry of Labour. If development is to be sustainable, gender disparities in employment, family life, health, education, the environment, public life and decision-making bodies are core elements to address.

However, sustainable development plans require relative political and economic stability. In the Palestinian context it is extremely difficult to achieve the 2030 Agenda SDGs while Palestine remains under an Israeli military occupation that controls the exploitation of natural resources and where the economy is dependent on Israel. Palestine has also become dependent on external donor funding with the majority of development and humanitarian programmes being funded by donor governments and implemented through government institutions, NGOs and UN funds and agencies. As humanitarian needs are rising globally, this type of international support is an unstable resource and unsuitable for a long-term process in achieving sustainable development.

Substantial external support is directed to the water sector, amounting to nearly USD 21 million in 2019, mainly for projects in Area C. However, the impact of this funding is still limited due to the politicization of the water issue in the context of the Israeli occupation.

Figure 3: Humanitarian aid flows to Palestine 2019 by sector (part of the 2018–2020 HRP)



Source: OCHA Services. Financial Tracking Services. Occupied Palestinian Territory 2019. Accessed online: <https://fts.unocha.org/countries/171/sectors/2019>

Developing programmes funded by external donors depends, in the first phase, on the national priorities set out in the national plan. For example, UNDAF 2018-2022 focuses on four axes in line with the national agenda.

Table 9: National plans and UNDAF framework

National Development Plan 2021–2023	National Plan 2017–2022	UNDAF 2018–2022
1. Ending the occupation	1. Path to independence	1. Supporting Palestine's path to independence
2. Excellent public service provision	2. Government reform	2. Supporting equal access to accountable, effective and responsive democratic governance for all Palestinians
3. Sustainable development	3. Sustainable development	3. Leaving No One Behind: Supporting sustainable and inclusive economic development
		4. Leaving No One Behind: Social development and protection

Source: FAO. 2023. *Gender, water and agriculture – Assessing the nexus in Palestine*. Cairo.

Table 10: National plans and UNDAF framework

National Plan “Putting Citizens First” (2017–2022) and National Development Plan (2021–2023)	Gender was addressed in the third pillar, “Sustainable Development”, with clear interventions. The second priority was clearly targeted at social justice and the rule of law by promoting gender equality and empowering women. Other sectors focused on citizens in general in terms of poverty, support for the agricultural sector and the advancement of rural societies, resilience, enhancing local government and NGOs and international mobilization.
Strategic Plan and Action Plan for the Palestinian National Water Sector (2017–2022)	The strategic plan differentiates its water services based on the beneficiary category of domestic, commercial, industrial or agricultural. In dealing with domestic or household use, the plan targets the family as a single unit. A positive aspect is that it gives importance to the necessity of taking geographical distribution into account to ensure that everyone has equal access to safe water sources.

<p>National Agricultural Sector Strategy Update “Resilient and Sustainable Agriculture” (2021–2023)</p>	<p>The agricultural sector vision, “Sustainable agriculture, capable of competing locally and globally”, contributes to strengthening food security, increasing agricultural production, enhancing the resilience of Palestinian citizens to strengthen bonds with their land and promoting resource sovereignty to support the building of an independent Palestinian state. To achieve this vision, the plan’s first goal is from a gender perspective in which it addresses the importance of strengthening resilience and empowering women and men. The other goals are more general and target all groups. The strategy aims to enhance self-reliance, improve produce quality and increase production through improving agricultural tools, raising awareness of modern methods in agriculture, encouraging investment in the agricultural sector, establishing financial privileges for farmers, such as loans and grants, strengthening small agricultural projects, especially for women and youth, strengthening governance in the agricultural sector, and promoting sustainable and inclusive agri-food value chains development.</p>
<p>National Cross-Sectoral Strategy to Promote Gender Equality, Equity and Empowerment of Women (2017–2022)</p>	<p>The strategy’s vision is of a “Palestinian society in which men, women, girls and boys enjoy citizenship rights and equal opportunities, in the public and private spheres”. In general, the strategy focuses at the legislative level through either amending legislation that contributes to achieving equality or strengthening legal articles that lead to the same goal, such as on the issue of inheritance. It also focuses on creating effective mechanisms to hold violators of women’s rights to inheritance accountable, protection from GBV, the promotion of women’s leadership, especially in decision-making at senior levels, and economic empowerment.</p>
<p>Second National Plan: Women, Peace and Security in Palestine (2020–2024)</p>	<p>The plan focuses on four pillars:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enhancing participation in decision-making; 2. protection; 3. empowerment of women and girls; and 4. accountability. <p>Priority is given to improving the quality of government services, especially in marginalized areas near the Barrier in the West Bank. Although it does not refer to women’s role in controlling and benefiting from resources, including water, which is a key issue in the negotiation process with Israel and third parties, the plan contributes to strengthening the leadership capabilities of women and girls in Palestinian society, especially the most vulnerable, and intersects with the role of women in water and agriculture.</p>

<p>Cross-Sectoral Environment Strategy (2020–2023)</p>	<p>The strategy addresses the importance of preserving water sources and its quality, improving wastewater management and how to optimally utilize it in agriculture in line with environmental safety, in addition to improving sanitation and ensuring an increase in the number of households connected to the public sewerage network. The strategy adopts the family as the core unit of the planning process. It assumes that access to services is guaranteed for everyone.</p>
<p>Gender strategy in the environment sector focusing on water and solid waste management (2013–2017)</p>	<p>The strategy focused on integrating gender into policies related to the environment, empowering women cadres and professionals working in the water sector and solid waste management, enhancing the role of women in community participation and raising community awareness of the importance of women's role in the water and waste management sector. The strategy has not been updated.</p>

Source: FAO. 2023. *Gender, water and agriculture – Assessing the nexus in Palestine*. Cairo.

Women's access to, and control over, land and water resources

The Palestinian Land and Water Settlement Authority Law does not contain specific laws that promote women in their own right to own and control land or property. Rather, there are general provisions that apply to all citizens. There are no legal texts preventing women from owning property. However, in reality, inequality and discrimination against women by the traditional patriarchal culture severely limits women from exercising their rights to land and property.

Inheritance rights come under the Personal Status Law, which is based on provisions in Islamic Sharia law. The law sets out clear rules on inheritance rights and differentiates between women and men based on the premise that men are the main breadwinners and are an extension and perpetuation of the family. Therefore, preserving the family heritage, especially with regards to land, is a male issue. The transfer of a woman after marriage to another family would mean the transfer of the land to another family, if the woman owned or inherited it, which is considered unacceptable by the majority of Palestinian society. Palestinian law also allows the sale of inheritance land shares between heirs (referred to as "exiting" from the inheritance).

Women themselves often lack sufficient awareness and knowledge about inheritance laws and regulations and the procedures they need to follow in order to claim their rights to land and property. Some women do not claim their inheritance for fear of becoming estranged from their families and the social isolation that they would face if they succeeded. There is also the belief that this would lead to the disintegration of the family fabric and the spread of hatred and conflict. Abuse and violence can occur when male family members resort to "shaming" women and carry out fraud in order to steal a woman's inheritance, including the payment of small symbolic sums to the woman in exchange for her waiving her rights to the inheritance. According to reports from women's organizations on femicide in Palestinian society, women can also be subject to death threats, or worse, with cases of family "honour" killings, in which it has later become clear that the motive behind the woman's murder was inheritance.

Few studies have addressed the issue of ownership and inheritance based on gender and there are no studies that specifically address the issue of women's control over water resources. The latest study on women's ownership of land and resources by the Working Women Association (WWA) 2020 showed that the percentage of women's ownership is still low compared to that of men. In most cases, if the asset is jointly owned, it is the man who makes the decision on its use and disposal. The survey results indicated that among those who owned agricultural lands, 76.3 percent of the reported plots were completely owned by men, 7.3 percent jointly owned by women and their husbands, 15 percent owned by the wife alone, and 1.3 percent owned by other female family members.

Regarding the ownership of non-motorized agricultural equipment, 5 percent was owned by women, 5 percent was shared between women and other male or female family members, 20 percent shared by the wife, and 70 percent solely owned by the husband. The gender gap is even more pronounced when it comes to the most valuable mechanical agricultural equipment such as tractors and irrigation systems, with men owning 93.2 percent and only 3.4 percent being jointly owned by both husband and wife and 3.4 percent owned by women only.

The overall results of the WWA study found that up to 15 percent of the respondents had a plot of agricultural, arid or investment land registered in their name. This suggests that 85 percent of women who were interviewed did not have land registered in their name. Nine percent reported they were partners in common land registered with their husbands and 1 percent were partners in common land registered in the names of a number of family members. Only 5.5 percent reported that their home was registered in their name, while 94.5 percent reported that the home was registered in the name of the husband or another male relative in the extended family. Three percent stated that the home was jointly owned with a spouse or another male family member, and 3.4 percent reported sharing home ownership with other female and male family members.

The same study indicated that only 10.5 percent of the women interviewed reported that they exclusively owned livestock or poultry and 5 percent jointly owned livestock or poultry with their husbands. The remaining 84.5 percent reported that their livestock or poultry was wholly owned by a male family member or that the majority was owned by the husband.

A study by the Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC, 2014) highlighted the main challenges Palestinian women face in claiming and obtaining their inheritance and property:

- social obstacles resulting from the patriarchal culture and the perception of shame that prevents women from claiming their right to inheritance and being forced to give it up in most cases;
- fear of loss of family support, their primary protector, and of being isolated by the family or being harmed by them;
- legal obstacles, represented by the absence of explicit provisions criminalizing cases of fraud and coercion practiced against women to deprive them of their inheritance; the absence of legal deterrence and of severe penalties for those who deprive women of their inheritance; the lack of legal texts requiring women to obtain their right to inherit by the force of law; and
- judicial obstacles represented in the length of court procedures regarding inheritance issues; complicated legal procedures in the process of determining inheritance; identifying property and shares; high legal fees that women cannot afford.

3. Results of primary and secondary data collection

3.1. Gender and agriculture – roles and responsibilities

The results of the assessment indicate that there is a gender-based division between women and men in the agricultural sector. Focus group participants emphasized that women have two roles, which are to support the family and participate in agricultural work. Women participate in all the agricultural stages of production, especially in home farming or agri-medium enterprises. The majority of women and men indicated that women's participation includes preparing the fields, planting and harvesting. Some women reported that they also market and sell their produce, mainly on street stalls, but the majority indicated that the men in the family are responsible for the marketing and control the income gained. Women in the FDGs indicated that they engage in dairy production to make cheese and milk, in addition to preparing medicinal herbs, picking thyme, making soap, etc. Women are also responsible for their family's food security through what they produce.

Women informants indicated that their first responsibility is to support the family and maintain the home in terms of providing daily care, cooking, cleaning and teaching, all of which is unpaid work. All the women emphasized the burden they face due to the scarcity of water resources and poor agricultural production, which contributes to the increasing stress on them to manage the household on limited resources. On the other hand, men emphasized the important role that women play in terms of managing household affairs, in addition to their agricultural work, which they considered supportive. While they made it clear that domestic work is primarily a task for women, the results showed that men were appreciative of women's agricultural work and its importance in the sustainability of the family.

Gender-based differences are evident in the manufacturing process and the tools used. Men tend to use modern agricultural technology, for example, in the food processing industry, or while working on large commercial farms, while women are associated with more traditional craft technology, for example in cheese making. This places an added burden on women in terms of the time spent on domestic and productive work, according to women in the focus groups.

3.2. Gender access to, and control over, agriculture and water resources

Results from the focus groups highlight the gender gap in land ownership, between 19.2 percent of women and 49.2 percent of men.

Table 11: Gender access to, and control over, land

	%Women	%Men
Own	19.2%	49.2%
Does not own	80.8%	50.8%
Total	100%	100%

Source: FAO. 2023. *Gender, water and agriculture – Assessing the nexus in Palestine*. Cairo.

According to the FGDs, women are often deprived of an inheritance through the process of relinquishing land to men in the family. The reasons given for this differed between men and women. The majority of men claimed that the land represented a continuation of the family name and therefore when women are married and move to their husband's family their land would be transferred to a new and different family. They also claimed that women were usually supported financially by men and therefore did not need to own land; since land comes under family ownership they considered there was no difference between family members. On the other hand, women reported that the culture discriminated against them, with women usually having to give up their share of inherited land to their brothers. They emphasized that it was important that they owned land to be able to support themselves financially, especially in the context of the economic crisis and high unemployment.

When women were asked if the land was registered in their name, 13.7 percent of the 19.2 percent who claimed they owned land said the land was registered in their name, while 86.3 percent claimed that it was not registered in their name. This could be due to the understanding that any property belongs to the family as a whole.

Table 12: Is the land registered in your name (proof of ownership)?

	%Women	%Men
Registered	13.7%	35.3%
Not registered	86.3%	64.7%
Total	100%	100%

Source: FAO. 2023. *Gender, water and agriculture – Assessing the nexus in Palestine*. Cairo.

The percentage of men who reported that land was not registered in their name was higher than those who reported that land was registered in their name. There are two possible explanations for this. Either the land was registered to their families and had not yet been divided up, or that the land was common land, as is the case in Al-Jiftlik and An Nassariya.

The political challenges facing the water sector, especially in the Jordan Valley and Area C, have led to an increase in the cost of water. Several factors can account for this, the most important being the lack of infrastructure and rehabilitation, which affects water quantity and quality. In addition, the Israeli occupation authorities have destroyed Palestinian water infrastructure and confiscated equipment in these areas. The mismanagement of water supplies by local Palestinian authorities and communities has also contributed to an increase in water losses. All institutions, whether governmental or non-governmental, have reported the lack of financial resources needed to improve the quality of services. Higher costs impact on everyone, but women and marginalized groups (Bedouins and herders) are the most affected, especially in women-headed households, families on low incomes and those living in abject poverty. Based on PWA, in theory, the Tariff Law takes marginalized groups into account, but there is an absence of procedures and standards that clarify how to reduce the cost of water for marginalized groups and so this is not implemented. Costs are more than double in areas that buy water from Mekorot, the Israeli national water company, where the Israeli tariff is three times its original price.

The high cost of water deprives women and marginalized groups from obtaining adequate quantities of water. In cases of domestic violence and economic or social abuse, women's right to water is violated if the abuser, usually the husband or a male relative, refuses to cover the costs.

In Palestinian society, although women are responsible for managing the home's water resources, the men control household finances, including the payment of water bills; all FGDs agreed this is the responsibility of the men.

“At home we are responsible for water management in the house and when the bill comes, if it is high, our husbands start screaming and fighting us”. (FGD – Women – Illar)

Table 13: Responsibility for the payment of water bills

	Sex		Average Total %
	% Male	% Female	
Myself	93.1	25	68.9
Husband/wife	-	62.5	22.2
Father	3.4	-	2.2
Others	3.4	12.5	6.7
Total	99.9%	100%	100%

Source: FAO. 2023. *Gender, water and agriculture – Assessing the nexus in Palestine*. Cairo.

3.3. Gender access to, and control over, information

The absence of women in the public sphere has contributed to the lack of information available to them about the training programmes on offer. Women informants reported that most organizations rely on local councils to announce these trainings in public places such as mosques and shops, which are more frequented by men than women and this has contributed to many women not receiving the information. On the other hand, the growing use of social media is now contributing to more women being included in information sharing.

Informants in the men's focus groups understood the necessity of access to information and that participation in training programmes leads to the raising of individual skills and knowledge and, importantly, the development of the agricultural sector:

“Of course, women have little information in this field (agriculture and water) and therefore men are superior to them” (FGD – male farmers – An Nassariya)

Access to information is critical for accessing resources. Based on the research results, the most important challenge facing the agricultural sector is water. Research results in all FGDs showed that women and men have information about local water sources. However, knowledge varied between regions. In Illar, Al-Bkai'a and Tammoun women had less information than men (see Table 16).

Table 14: Local knowledge of water resources amongst female and male key informants

Area	Water resources mentioned by KIIs	
	Men	Women
An Nassariya	Groundwater wells, including nine owned by individuals for irrigation and domestic usage	All rainwater is collected on roofs of greenhouses and homes, streams in wadis (in collecting wells) and 18 licenced groundwater wells from pre-1967. There are “illegal” wells that do not conform to MoA requirements, which collect surface water and are maybe contaminated by farmers' iron pools, 90 percent of which are supported by the Ministry
Falama	Rain water is not properly utilized Groundwater is heavily consumed	Groundwater and some rainwater collection
Al-Bkai'a and Tammoun	Groundwater wells in the Atouf area (shallow, up to 300 metres deep) There are groundwater wells and it decrease from “90 cups” to “30 cups” depending on the amount of rain and areas under cultivation	Wells and Unified Services Council for drinking water
Al-Jiftlik	Groundwater wells and water from spring (Ain Shibli) owned under the Tabu register by farmers, being more productive than Ain Al-Bathan water	Groundwater wells and Mekorot water for households Piped water from spring (Ain Shibli); rainwater
Illar	Five groundwater wells (150–230 metres deep), four in Illar and the fifth is shared with Attil (Tulkarm). No rainwater collection	Chlorinated municipal water supplies

Source: FAO. 2023. *Gender, water and agriculture – Assessing the nexus in Palestine*. Cairo.

3.4. Water governance

The assessment questionnaire was designed for both key informant interviews (KII) and FGDs to measure five central axes in water governance from a gender perspective. These are:

1. laws and procedures;
2. leadership and policies;
3. planning;
4. monitoring and follow-up; and
5. human resources in organizations working in the water sector and community capacity development.

Based on the results of the research, the five axes varied depending on the region, the social and cultural context of the area, and the presence and diversity of water sources.

3.5. Laws and procedures

The review of water sector laws concluded that they adopt a gender-neutral approach. The legal articles are based on the presumption that water is a basic human right and all individuals in the community should benefit from water, with an emphasis on ensuring equitable distribution. The division in the law between different levels of water use in the agricultural, industrial and domestic sectors is considered a good starting point for ensuring equitable distribution. However, the concept of equitable distribution remains loose as it is limited to the type of sector, usage and geographical area.

The water issue was considered as a family and community issue and not an individual one by the majority of KII. Despite the importance placed on gender in development sectors such as health, education and protection, the issue of water and the political obstacles facing the sector were seen as a general issue that affects everyone in the same way, with no gender differences.

“In marginalized areas we take into account all women and men. We do not focus on the issue of gender. I do not find it a big problem. We focus on a specific area with water scarcity and we study the needs of the target population.” (KII – Female employee – MoA, Ramallah)

Social and economic realities have been taken into consideration in determining PWA tariffs, but PWA's limited interventions do not contribute to everyone benefitting from an equitable distribution of water. The results of the research showed that gender-based inequality in Palestinian society contributes to the exclusion of women as well as marginalized groups such as people with disabilities, and the elderly, and therefore a neutral approach is not effective.

“The legal framework does not protect or address marginalized groups, which leads to a failure to provide protection for them in the event of deprivation or exclusion from access to water sources. In the Water Authority, the legal department needs to enhance knowledge of this aspect from a gender perspective in order to effect change.” (KII – employee – PWA, Ramallah)

Weak societal and institutional awareness about water and gender contributed to the absence of work to amend the laws from a gender perspective. This is reflected in the absence of a role for legal departments in government institutions when analysing laws from a gender perspective. Laws related to water have not been formulated from a gender perspective since the goal is that everyone should benefit from access to water, especially in marginalized areas. The majority of informants said that the integration of gender should be in the planning and implementation phases of agricultural and water projects and not in the legal aspect.

Gender issues are still only associated with women. This is an indication of the absence of an appropriate environment in government institutions for gender inclusion, which has led to its compartmentalization in gender units in some ministries.

International organizations and NGOs were found to have a higher awareness of the importance of gender than government institutions. When asked about the gender disparities in access, utilization and decision-making in the water sector, the majority of those interviewed were able to analyse the reality through a gender lens. However, the majority also stated that the water issue is a societal and political issue and when working in this sector the focus is on local communities.

3.6. Leadership and policies

Based on the literature review and research findings, there are three levels of leadership in the water sector:

1. governmental, through the Water Sector Regulatory Council (WSRC), as stipulated in the Water Law;
2. ministries, institutions and NGOs; and
3. the local community.

On the first level, the WSRC board consists of 11 members, ten men and one woman. The female member on the Council's board represents the PWA from their legal department and does not have a background in gender and women's rights in relation to the water issue. The Council's Executive Director is male. Based on the interview results, it was found that the Council had not undergone training on gender and there was no awareness of the issue.

At the second level, the data showed that there is a gap in representation between women in decision-making positions compared to men, which widened in favour of men in more senior positions. In the MoA, the results showed that there are three women and 17 men in the highest category of decision-making; in the first category (A and B)³⁹ there are 31 women and 114 men. In PWA's first category of decision-making there are nine men and one woman. Amongst the NGOs that were interviewed, all the organizations are headed by men. No gender-disaggregated data was available on the rest of their staffing.

At the third level, 11 water user associations have been established involving members of the local communities, including two to three women members in each association, according to MoA data. However, this was contradicted by all male and female FGD participants, who commented on the absence of women in their associations and, indicated that they did not know of any WUA that had women members, probably because they were out of the study areas. Their absence could be due to the membership criteria that stipulates ownership of land, ownership of a well, or the leasing of land. Women are rarely landowners or tenants in their own right. Women's landownership is discussed in detail in Section 2.3.

Table 15: Membership in water associations by gender

Member	Gender	
	% men	% women
Yes	14.7	-
No	85.3	100
Total	100%	100%

Source: FAO. 2023. *Gender, water and agriculture – Assessing the nexus in Palestine*. Cairo.

The FGDs for men and women also raised the absence of women's representation in municipal and special meetings that discuss water issues in the local community. The men indicated that productive water is the responsibility of men. Strict gender roles have led to the exclusion of women from decision-making positions in the water sector.

“We do not have water associations and even if the council holds a meeting regarding the issue, women are not invited”. (FGD – women farmers – Al-Bkai'a)

Despite the general lack of awareness of the relationship between gender and water among women and men in decision-making positions, the presence of women at the technical level as

³⁹ The Ministry of Agriculture uses a classification of staff: from A, at director level, to C, with sub categories for each category.

agricultural engineers, contributed to highlighting some issues that are considered important for women. For example, due to the concentration of women in this sector, the MoA has targeted women in awareness programmes in rural development. Subjects have included: inheritance; the role of women in increasing agricultural production capacity in line with the amount of available water; water as a mechanism for income generating activities; and developing the resilience of families in vulnerable areas.

3.7. Planning

The results of the interviews and FDGs showed that the majority of external actors rely on three stages in water sector programme planning:

- needs assessments;
- formulation of objectives and interventions; and
- implementation.

Societal needs assessments are based on two main sources; that of councils and municipalities, and direct contact with communities by field researchers from implementing organizations. Regardless of the source, all the key informants agreed that this is a necessary first stage in order to identify the actual needs of local communities and to plan direct interventions. Having representation of different groups from local communities in special needs assessment meetings is considered necessary in order to reflect the differences between areas.

The survey results show that in conducting a needs assessment, the family and the local community in general are consulted, emphasizing the awareness that women should be represented in meetings to identify needs. The majority of informants indicated that women's participation is linked to the nature of the project itself, such as the optimal use of domestic water or home farming, and the conditions set by donors.

“Examination of the need depends on the nature of the area and the project, which determines the groups. We do not target a direct gender. It may be an area where women are involved in a specific cultivation more than men, so work is done with them.” (KII – employee – farmers field schools)

Women's participation in needs identification depends on the type of programme. For example, if the programme is for the irrigation of home gardens the needs assessment focuses on women. If it covers a general issue related to water networks, whether for crops or sanitation, all members of the community are involved.

In light of the poor institutional understanding of the link between gender and water, the presence of women in the needs assessment stage does not necessarily mean that their needs are reflected in the programme planning document. Needs assessment questions and the awareness of the field researchers or employees both play a role in how the results are presented.

There is a gap in awareness between men and women employees on holding meetings about gender and its importance in the water sector. When conducting needs assessments, the results showed that the majority of informants focused on the types of interventions and did not expand the questions to include how to reach all groups and how the interventions could benefit all groups. For example, if the project is on the rehabilitation of wells, water pipes, pumps for wells, or the rehabilitation of irrigation networks – all of which are technical – the needs assessment will be directed to the community in general. The assessment does not take gender differences into account in a social and economic context. In marginalized areas close to Israeli settlements, such as in the Jordan Valley and Area C, the focus is on determining the general need in terms of water and community resilience.

Table 16: *Types of programmes implemented by government institutions, international organizations, NGOs and local partners*

Type of Programme	Target Group (local partners)		
	General Community	Women	Men
Improving access to drinking water in Area C			
Improving access to agricultural water			
Extending water lines, replacing old lines, building water pumping stations, or building tanks to improve water distribution and management			
Rehabilitation of old lines, rehabilitation of agricultural wells, and construction of reservoirs			
Concrete agricultural ponds and construction of earthen ponds			
Rehabilitation of groundwater wells			
Irrigation water salinity reduction projects			
Improving sanitary facilities in the home		√	
Home purification plants to treat water for irrigation of home gardens		√	
Building agricultural roads and building chains			
Restoration of ancient Roman wells and springs			
Food production (medium and small scale)		Women's organizations	

Source: FAO. 2023. *Gender, water and agriculture – Assessing the nexus in Palestine*. Cairo.

In light of the water scarcity in these areas, policies and interventions were addressed in the national strategy (2017–2022), the revised strategy (2023–2025) and in the strategic plans of the main partners; the MoA, PWA and the MoE. Gender integration was limited to one goal in the MoA plan, which focused on empowering female and male farmers in marginalized areas.

The identification of needs by local councils and municipalities, which are mainly adopted by government institutions such as the PWA, increases the possibility of further marginalizing already marginalized groups in the local community and varies from one region to another based on the sociocultural situation.



The results show that patriarchal ideology is more prevalent in more conservative areas and women, girls and persons with disabilities are more marginalized, in particular by the local councils. This leads to the absence of different needs being reflected in the programme planning and consequently in its implementation, which impacts on the results.

“We have a large percentage of women farmers, but they are not decision-makers. All are under the authority of their man. The majority do not participate in community activities or meetings.” (FGD – women – An Nassariya)

“Some communities are more conservatives than others. We can’t enforce things on them. We try to have female researchers with us in order to reach women. It all depends on the nature of the community.” (KII – male – MoA)

The results revealed that organizations’ interventions in the water sector are based on a stereotyped gender division of roles. With regards to domestic water use, women are the target group as they bear the greatest burden of managing household hygiene, the health of family members, especially infants and children, and the provision of safe drinking water. These tasks are considered part of women’s reproductive role while productive water is a community matter left up to men with women usually being excluded from the public sphere.

Based on the research, a new awareness of gender and water results from rural development and economic empowerment programmes for women in rural areas. It highlights the importance of women in the productive water chain necessary for the agricultural production chain. The planning process is related to an understanding of the social relations within the family and local community and where development goals are set that can contribute to reducing gender inequality in order to reach real sustainable development.

3.8. Monitoring and follow-up

The monitoring and follow-up phase is a major part of the programme cycle as it constitutes the transitional phase for ensuring programme implementation, reprogramming or building new programmes. Most of the institutions indicated that there are qualified people available to carry out evaluations and follow-up. However, the majority of governmental organizations and NGOs lack data disaggregated by sex and age, particularly in the water sector. This is due to interventions targeting the community as a whole; therefore the statistical figure just indicates the percentage of people benefitting from the service, whether in irrigation, the rehabilitation of wells, or water and sanitation. The absence of data disaggregated by sex contributes to reaffirming the belief that everyone has the same access to water sources and that there are no differences between women and men in water utilization.

“The existing data is not classified on the basis of gender. The target is the family unit because the goal is to reach everyone.” (KII – Male employee – Ma’an Development Center)

Therefore, the absence of disaggregated indicators based on sex perpetuates the existing situation, leads to the absence of gender mainstreaming in the next programme cycle and maintains divisions based on gender.

3.9. Human resources in organizations working in the water sector and community capacity development

The results of individual interviews with key informants showed a disparity inside organizations in terms of understanding gender issues. In government institutions, especially in the PWA, MoA and the Environment Equality Authority, staff in all departments lack knowledge of gender and its importance in achieving the vision and objectives of these institutions. Knowledge of the concept of gender was confined to the gender unit, where one existed, or to the staff member tasked with following up on gender. Most of the interviews conducted in government institutions highlighted the gap between theory and practice.

The majority of male and female employees were aware of the burdens placed on women and the multiple roles that women play, but this was not reflected in their work in the institution. Nor was any importance given to a gender framework.

In development NGOs, the results showed that most staff find it necessary to start programme planning from a gender perspective and understand the importance of building indicators based on sex because of gender inequality in Palestinian society. However, they also consider the water sector as a community issue and that everyone has the right to equal access to water. Technicians from government institutions and NGOs, such as female and male engineers in the agriculture and water sectors, are an important source for identifying gender needs as they are usually in direct contact with local communities. Although institutions indicated that the focus in the water sector is on family and community units, in the awareness-raising and training sessions, staff understood the importance of having a female engineer present to communicate with women, especially in more conservative communities.

Knowledge of gender issues varied between government and NGO staff with NGOs conducting more staff trainings on gender. In the NGOs that were interviewed, staff had received many gender-specific trainings which opened the way to start linking water access and the disparities between women and men. However, there was little evidence for gender-sensitive interventions at the implementation level.

There is a need for focused training on gender and water in development and humanitarian contexts. Based on the interviews, they think that this subject is new in Palestine and nobody thought about the differences in this sector as it is a public issue. The link is not as clear as violence against women or gaps in wages based on gender. (KII – Female – UN Women, Palestine Office)

This ambiguity is reflected in the link between water and gender in community-based training and capacity building programmes where training focuses on the optimal use of water, modern and organic agriculture and small projects in agricultural production.

This assessment study revealed three kinds of trainings for different groups in the target communities: one for all men and women, one targeting women and one targeting female and male youth. The types of training provided are based on programme needs.

Table 17: Trainings on water management

Types of Training	Women and Men	Men	Women	Youth (F, M)
Good water management, type and timing of cultivation	√			
Marketing agriculture products	√			√
Marketing agriculture products for small scale projects			√	√
Traditional Irrigation and irrigation methods	√			
Modern irrigation methods		√		
Irrigation network maintenance		√		
Increasing knowledge and awareness on water and its types (springs – their division, distribution and reuse)				√
Repair and maintenance of water pumps and generators		√		

Source: FAO. 2023. *Gender, water and agriculture – Assessing the nexus in Palestine*. Cairo.

Table 17 illustrates that training on water management is based on gender divisions. Training related to the use and maintenance of agricultural machinery and irrigation networks target men. Only one training on marketing products for small scale projects targets women. Training offered to youth also focuses on marketing. The results of the research indicated that elderly Palestinians are the least interested in enrolling in agricultural or water training because of their life-long work experience while agricultural engineers learn from trainings. It was reported that more young men and women are now interested in working in agriculture in light of the high rate of youth unemployment and the limited availability of jobs.

Mostly young men and women are more interested in training and have less knowledge, while adults are practical experts and have less interest in having more knowledge than a trained engineer. Young men and women love to learn. As a result of high unemployment among graduates, 120,000 unemployed graduates two years ago (Gaza and West Bank), all of them, youth [young men] and girls, compete for opportunities in the areas they graduated in. (KII – Male – Economic and Social Development Centre-Ramallah)

3.10. Challenges facing local communities in accessing water

Based on the data results, the water challenges facing local communities can be divided into: political challenges; mismanagement of water resources; social factors; and coordination between institutions working in the rural development sector.

Political challenges

The water issue in Palestine is primarily a political issue. All key informants, whether in KIIs or FGDs, reported that the occupation is a major obstacle to Palestinians accessing and enjoying their right to water, both in terms of quantity and quality.

“We work in Area C and areas adjacent to the wall, for example, in Qalqilya and Tulkarm. We face obstructions by Israeli settlers and the occupation forces who sometimes confiscate the work equipment we need to reach inaccessible lands” (KII – Male employee – FAO, Palestine office)

Israeli restrictions are reflected in donors' conditions for funding water projects where, for example, the donor may require approval first from the Israeli–Palestinian Joint Water Committee (JWC) for the construction of new wells. This approval is dependent on the prevailing political situation and whether negotiation channels between Israel and the PA are open or not.

“Approval from the occupation is a hindrance. We dug a well in Donna for all to benefit and the local community was kind enough to participate. Some donors require us to obtain a license from the Joint Committee, and here there are obstacles.” (KII – Male employee – MoA)

Mismanagement of water resources

Water management is operated by public water utilities and municipal and village councils both own and operate the water supplies. Water mismanagement was discovered in both government institutions and water distributors in the private sector.

There is a lack of PA programmes to reduce the percentage of water losses, increase water treatment projects and encourage rainwater collection. Urban expansion at the expense of agricultural lands has affected the availability of productive wells. The data also indicates a problematic relationship with the owners of wells and their monopoly on water, its distribution and price.

Many KIIs pointed to the inequality in distribution between large farmers and small farmers, and women reported that they are more vulnerable to exploitation by water distributors.

“Because of the high prices of water set by the owners of wells, which greatly impacts farms, well owners and large farmers receive more support from the MoA than do small farmers.” (KII – Male employee – An Nassariya)

“There is no equality. Water reaches the ones nearest easily and those living at a distance suffer more.” (FGD – Women – Al-Jiftlik)

Social factors

All key informants agreed that conservative societies are less receptive to women's participation in activities and programmes. Interviewed institutions reported that they segregate work between men and women to allow women to be employed in field work. This requires double efforts to ensure the success of the project. Sometimes women are absent from attending workshops because they are busy with their domestic and agricultural work.

Some participants in the FGDs pointed out that some people resort to stealing water or destroying water networks due to internal local disputes, which affects access to water sources for the whole community.

Coordination between institutions working in the rural development sector

The results indicated that the lack of coordination between organizations leads to an increased burden on local communities, especially when it comes to training workshops. Some communities receive the same training from more than one organization, which leads to a decrease in interest to enrol in these courses by the local community. Sometimes the same family benefits from interventions from more than one organization at the expense of other families.

3.11. Gender roles in the management of productive water

The agriculture sector, despite now being small, still represents the backbone of Palestinian society, whether through embodying Palestinian identity, preserving the land, or ensuring economic returns. Women make up a large proportion of home farmers and workers in small agricultural enterprises.

Table 18: *Your partner can access water sources more easily*

	Gender		Average %
	% Men	% Women	
Don't Agree	22.6	27.8	24.5
Maybe	41.9	33.3	38.8
Agree	35.5	38.9	36.7
Total	100%	100%	100%

Source: FAO. 2023. *Gender, water and agriculture – Assessing the nexus in Palestine*. Cairo.

Based on the research results, women are involved in the entire process of the agricultural production chain, starting from preparing the land, planting and harvesting through to manufacturing agricultural produce, while the men are responsible for the marketing and selling. This means that women have a major role in agriculture that is reliant on irrigation systems and, according to the survey interlocutors, it is their responsibility to irrigate the crops using traditional techniques. However, the economic returns from this productive use of water largely benefits men because they control the household's financial resources.

Although all the key informants discussed the divisions between domestic and productive water, the two areas of usage do overlap. The rehabilitation of irrigation networks, wells and sewerage networks all contribute to improving the situation for women working in agriculture. Assessing needs based on gender should not be limited to the type of project or programme but should apply to all productive agricultural programmes to take the different tasks performed by women and men into account.

Access and use of productive water is determined by land ownership and many of the interventions taken by institutions or government ministries are based on who owns the land, usually men in the extended family. Ownership of wells is also determined by who owns the land where wells are located, depriving the majority of rural women from equitable shares in water resources.

Table 19: *Land ownership*

Area	Type of Ownership	Owned by Women	Owned by Men
An Nassariya	Mostly common land Rents are guaranteed for 50 years under Jordanian law and documented by the notary public	10% or less	Majority of land is owned or rented in the man's name
Falamya	Inherited and sometimes purchased	Registration in the Tabu helped increase the percentage, but it is still low, according to KIIs	Majority of land is owned or rented in the man's name
Al-Bkai'a and Tammoun	10–20% of the land is owned through inheritance Long-term warranty, either verbal or written	10% or less	Majority of land is owned or rented in the man's name

Area	Type of Ownership	Owned by Women	Owned by Men
Al-Jiftlik	Mainly common land Less than 5 percent inherited The majority of land is owned by wealthy families Land is leased for palm cultivation		Majority of land is owned or rented in the man's name
Illar	Inherited Most land is rented under guarantee between 1–30 years, the majority without contracts	Some have land but under the name of the men in the family	Majority of land is owned or rented in the man's name

Source: FAO. 2023. *Gender, water and agriculture – Assessing the nexus in Palestine*. Cairo.

Based on PWA data on the registration of wells, Table 20 shows that the low percentage of women owning land is also reflected in their ownership of wells.

Table 20: Shares for both women and men in lands that include wells in the study areas

Number of shares in the land	Percentage owning wells							
	Al-Jiftlik		Al-Bkai'a and Tammoun		An Nassariya		Falameya	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
0–0.90	2.7	6.3	0.3	1.4	1.7	5	1.4	1.5
1–3	2	3	2	2	-	8	-	2
4–5	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	28
6–7	6	18	-	-	-	-	-	6
7+	-	62	-	11	-	63	-	43
Totals	10.7%	89.3%	0.5%	14.4%	1.7%	80%	1.4%	80.5%

Source: PWA well registration data (2021).

The article on inheritance in the Personal Status Law allows a woman to own property, although not equal to what males in her family will receive. Other civil laws do not address the unequal division of property based on gender. Patriarchal culture still puts pressure on women to give up their inheritance rights, especially when it comes to fertile land.

“Women usually inherit lands far from irrigation sources. In cases where women inherit, male relatives have the right to dispose of it.” (FGD – Men – Illar)

One of the conditions for affiliation to the Water Users Association is owning or renting agricultural land, which includes a well. In order to obtain a license to rehabilitate a well or dig a new well, a land ownership license is first submitted to the PWA. These restrictions limit women's participation in decision-making regarding the use and distribution of local water resources.

Table 21: Participation in decision-making regarding water use in the community by gender

	% Men	% Women	Average %
Yes	44.8	11.1	31.9
No	55.2	88.9	68.1
Total	100%	100%	100%

Source: field research

The majority of women in the FGDs explained that when they obtain their land inheritance, they are given remote and barren lands that are not suitable for agriculture and do not have wells. This point was also emphasized by some men in the FGDs. Women who inherit such lands also face higher costs for water due to old and dilapidated water infrastructure.

“It [the well] is far away and there are old water pumps and pipes. The water takes a long time to reach the surface, more than 15 minutes”. (FGD – Women – An Nassariya)

This is an additional burden on women, especially for single women, often widowed, divorced or abandoned, who support their families. They are often unable to cover the financial costs to obtain adequate water supplies for irrigation in order to increase agricultural production and gain financially.

“Of course, the risk is high and you cannot bear the losses”. (FGD – Women – Al-Bkai’a)

The amounts of productive water provided for farming is determined by the local municipality or council based on the area of agricultural land that is farmed. In reality this means that small farm holdings, the majority of which are owned and run by women, are denied access to the quantities of water they need for more productive outcomes. The data from the FGDs show that the majority of women in the survey areas own or rent land of 2–3 dunums compared to men whose holdings reach up to 20 dunums, as is the case in Al-Bkai’a area. The distribution of water, as the women informants pointed out, is not a fair distribution because the crops they grow, such as cucumbers and tomatoes, (staples of the Palestinian diet) require more water. Many women expressed their reluctance to now grow these vegetables even though they are considered essential for the family and the local markets.

It is also more difficult for women to irrigate than for men because the usually male well owners would often limit the women's time slots for pumping water to the evening. Women FGDs reported that the times allocated were not appropriate but this practice has not so far changed, despite their demands.

“There is injustice and the well owner knows that she is a woman, so he gives her inappropriate times – after suhoor during Ramadan, at breakfast time, after sunset on normal days”. (FGD – Women – An Nassariya)

Table 22: Gender roles in agricultural production and irrigation

Person responsible for irrigation and follow-up	Assistant for irrigation	Type of crops	Method of irrigation	Type of livestock and poultry	Water source
Al-Bkai'a and Tammoun					
Men	Women	Vegetables such as cucumbers, carrots, potatoes	Drip and sprinklers	Sheep (cows are very rare)	Well
Men	Women	Grapes	Sprinklers		
Men	Women	Lettuce and herbs such as parsley	Drip		
Men	-	Wheat, barley and arugula	Rainfed		
Al-Jiftlik					
Women and men	-	Zucchini, eggplants, cucumbers, peppers, cauliflowers, beans and corn	Drip	Sheep	Drinking water tanks or purchased
Men	-	Dates	Drip		
Men	-	Grapes	Rainfed		
Majority men and some women	-	Prickly pears	No irrigation needed		
Women	-			Chickens	Domestic water
Illar					
Women	-	Zucchini (hanging)	Drip	Pigeons	
Women	-	Ginger	Drip		
Women	-	Summer beans	Drip		
Men	Women	Cucumbers	Drip	Cows and calves	Well
Men	Women	Tomatoes	Drip		
Men	Women	Cauliflowers			
Men	Women	Coriander, rocket, radishes, parsley, molokhia			
Men	Women	Wheat and barley, some lemons	Rainfed		
Men	-	Pineapples			
An Nassariya					
Men	Women	Grapes	Drip	Sheep and commercial cows	Municipality
Men	Women	Citrus fruits	Drip		
Men	Women	Olives	Rainfed		

Person responsible for irrigation and follow-up	Assistant for irrigation	Type of crops	Method of irrigation	Type of livestock and poultry	Water source
Men	Women	Wheat and barley	Rainfed		
Men and one of the women contributes 30% as a tenant	Women	Cucumbers and vegetables	Drip, sprinklers		
Women	-	Lettuce and herbs such as parsley	Drip		
Men	-			Sheep and cows for family use	Domestic water
Falamya					
Men	Women	Cucumbers, tomatoes	Irrigated		
Men	Women	Citrus	Irrigated		
Men	Women	Guava	Irrigated		
Men	Women	Mangos	Irrigated		
Men	Women	Avocados	Irrigated		
Men	Women	Thyme	Irrigated		
Men	Women	Olives	Complementary irrigation		
Women	-	Sage		Sheep and cows	Domestic water
Women	-	Dragon fruit			

Source: FAO. 2023. *Gender, water and agriculture – Assessing the nexus in Palestine*. Cairo.

Data results indicate that the responsibility for providing water for livestock depends on the number of animals and end use. If the number of livestock is small and intended for home production or small-scale food processing, then supplying livestock with water is the responsibility of women. In the case of large flocks and herds, mainly reared for commercial trade, providing water is the responsibility of men.

“The responsibility of raising livestock goes to the women, but if the livestock is large in numbers and there is a large trade in it, we will do it”. (FGD – Men – An Nassariya)

3.12. Gender roles in the management of domestic water

The assessment's research results show that providing domestic water is primarily the responsibility of women. All the data from the male and female FGDs indicated that the provision of water for household cleanliness, children's hygiene and of safe water for drinking and cooking are women's responsibility. Paying for domestic water is a man's duty except in cases where the family is headed by a woman.

Marginalized areas such as Al-Jiftlik suffer from water scarcity and in many cases water for agriculture is prioritised at the expense of domestic water. Women reported that they resort to diverting water from domestic wells to irrigate household crops rather than for the intended use for drinking water and household needs.

According to the oPt Humanitarian Needs Overview 2021, 1.5 million Palestinians living in vulnerable areas, such as Area C and the Jordan Valley have inadequate hygiene conditions, and limited access to safe drinking and domestic water services. They have also had limited access to WASH services since the outbreak of COVID-19. Women and marginalized groups were more affected, with 51 percent of women, 68 percent of children, and 5.8 percent of people with disabilities. The same report stated that:

The COVID-19 outbreak and its associated lockdowns, compounded by the growing PA budget deficit and suspension of salaries for government employees, has led to the erosion of WASH coping mechanisms on the part of vulnerable households. These factors have also resulted in the adoption of negative practices, such as reducing water consumption, consuming water from unsafe sources, and dumping wastewater and solid waste in the open. (OCHA, 2021).

CONCLUSIONS

The nexus between water and gender in Palestine is one of most marginalized subjects in terms of studies, interventions and statistics. Water is generally considered a family and community issue and gender, in relation to access to water, is rarely addressed, despite its importance. Gender equality and sustainable water management are two of the main issues at the core of the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030.

Gender-based inequality in Palestinian society is one of the major obstacles affecting the work of all institutions in all sectors and increasingly in the water sector. Inequality in the water sector has increased in light of the lived political reality and the political and economic conflict over shared water resources. Israel's control over the largest proportion of water in the Palestinian West Bank has led to the water issue becoming a national political issue.

The water sector is dominated by men. Despite women being the main providers and water managers in their homes and the guardians of household hygiene, they are excluded from decision-making in the water sector, both at the national institutional level and at the community level. Securing water for both productive and domestic usage is critical to achieving food security and improving rural conditions. Here, women play a major role in reducing food insecurity through their knowledge of agricultural production, including traditional methods, local biodiversity and local water resources. However, women also are excluded from benefiting from new agricultural water management initiatives and on best practices for natural resource allocation. Women in the water sector are considered as service recipients, not decision-makers.

Women's limited access to water is due to social norms that control their freedom of movement and their right to land ownership and therefore control over resources, including water wells. These factors lead to insecure access to land amongst poor, mainly women farmers, and deprives them from securing their rights to equitable access to water sources. Land ownership would also facilitate women's access to other resources, such as financial services, enabling them to invest in their farming and offering the potential to improve livelihoods and reduce water wastage.

The Palestinian Authority's approach in the water sector is gender-neutral. Thus, the majority of national interventions revolve around protecting existing water resources and ensuring that Palestinian communities benefit from the right to water, but without taking into consideration gender disparities in access and rights to water. This is reflected in the national water strategies, laws and interventions that follow a gender-neutral approach.

Most gender trainings and gender awareness-raising have been carried out by NGOs, especially women's organizations, which have contributed to a better understanding of gender issues in the context of development and humanitarian aid. However, gender knowledge is still fragmented, with a limited vision and has not significantly impacted the water sector. The assessment revealed that there is gender awareness in the area of domestic water use due to it being related to women's reproductive role. Awareness-raising interventions related to WASH have been directed mainly at women to ensure better health for the whole family, especially in Area C where there is a water scarcity and lack of developed infrastructure to ensure equitable water access for all.

The gender-based division in water resources has been made more prominent in the area of productive water. Allocation of water varies based on land size and agricultural use, whether for the purpose of trade, home farming or small-scale agricultural projects. The issue of irrigation and training in irrigation technology has been linked to men as they play the main role in commercial agriculture as well as small agricultural projects. Despite the fact that women perform the majority of tasks in the agricultural production chain, men are responsible for determining the use of irrigation. A key indication of the water-gender relationship is women's overburdened role as domestic water providers while having less access to water resources in general.

Attitudes in governmental and non-governmental institutions in the water sector still fluctuate between neutrality and equity as a means of bridging the gender gap resulting from inequality. This fluctuation is reflected in the concept of empowerment, both for women and youth, in institutional visions. The approach to empowerment is based on gender calls for understanding the inequality between men and women, as well as their roles within the family and the historical origins of female subordination. Its approach focuses on the fact that women's experience depends on their culture, ethnic, religious, or social background and economic status. Although real empowerment focuses on the importance of women's enjoyment of greater power and active participation at all levels, this has not been adopted in an institutional understanding of the relationship between water and gender. Thus, this gap in attitudes has led to the continuation of the theory of women as a passive beneficiary of development. It has also led to the marginalization of women in decision-making processes and leadership at all levels, especially in the water sector, despite water being considered a critical national political issue.

Gender inclusion requires a clear understanding of gender-based differences, the different practical needs that flow from this and how these are reflected in the programme planning process. This requires re-planning from a comprehensive gender lens and developing statistical data for development indicators to accurately address needs and provide the necessary resources to achieve equitable goals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- This exploratory assessment of water and gender has highlighted many issues that need to be taken seriously in order to move forward. The main recommendations to start this process are as follows:

1. Policies and procedures for the water sector from a gender perspective

- Carry out a review of the Water Law from a gender perspective in order to develop executive procedures based on gender. It is difficult to work on amending the existing law in the current political context. However, it is feasible to amend procedures, including those for drilling wells and the costs.
- Amend the criteria for joining the water user associations from a gender perspective. Do not limit membership to the issue of land ownership that contributes to excluding women from participation.
- Include gender as an essential component in the general plans of ministries, ensuring that it is cross-sectoral in all the objectives and not limited to the gender unit.
- Establish fixed standards for mainstreaming gender into the strategic plans in the water sector to ensure that the actual needs of all groups are taken into account.

2. Ownership and leadership

- Conduct in-depth research to assess the success of promoting women to leadership positions and work to replicate successful practices.
- Build technical and administrative skills for women as professionals and technicians in the water sector by developing their competencies and expertise.
- Support NGOs in the continuation of their work on gender mainstreaming and develop gender awareness for all water-related institutions.
- Link the MoA, the Environment Quality Authority and the PWA with universities and technical and vocational education and training institutions in order to integrate the issue of water and agriculture into their curricula and to encourage more participation of women and youth in these programmes.
- Enable more women to participate in the Palestinian negotiations team on water policy.
- Increase women's understanding of their inherited rights to land ownership and related immovable assets through increasing education programmes about the different types of lands and their importance. Link the land issue to water. Increase women's understanding of the implications of "exiting" from their inheritance rights and the long-term impact this can have on society as a whole, with a focus on promoting self-reliance and ownership as a step towards empowering women.
- Adopt quotas in all water programmes to ensure that women and all marginalized groups are represented in programme planning and implementation.

3. Training and awareness

- Develop programmes to improve technical knowledge of the water sector, management skills and confidence in making decisions. This requires short and long-term investments from institutions, whether governmental or non-governmental. These programmes should be standardized in terms of type and quantity of information for both sexes.
- Construct training programmes for young men and women based on their needs and skills level. Young people tend to seek, and need, more technological knowledge and they constitute over half the Palestinian population.

- Conduct continuous practical training programmes in the MoA, the Environment Equality Authority and the PWA on gender and its role in empowering communities. These trainings should include all departments and consistent with the tasks of each department.
- Develop community awareness programmes in rural areas on gender and water and work on developing training manuals on the subject.

4. Gender-responsive budget

- Activate the National Gender Responsive Budget Committee and develop its terms of reference and indicators.
- Activate the follow-up and control system in the Ministry of Women's Affairs on the gender-responsive budget, especially in the first phase and in coordination with the MoA, the Environment Equality Authority and the PWA.
- Encourage donors to provide financial and technical assistance to support implementing the gender-responsive budget in the three ministries and not limit the water issue to the WASH sector.
- Request the WASH Cluster develops guidelines for productive water programmes from a gender perspective.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1: Laws in the water sector from a gender perspective

Law	Article	Analysis / Examination
<p>Decree Law No. 14 (2014) relating to the Water Law.</p>	<p>Article 3 – Ownership: All water resources in Palestine shall be considered public property and the Authority has the power to manage these resources in a manner that ensures justice and efficiency in distribution.</p> <p>Article 5 – The Right to Water Access: 1. Every person has the right to obtain his/her needs of suitable quality drinking water at specific prices set in accordance with the tariff regulations issued by the Cabinet of Ministers. 2. Water service providers shall take the necessary measures to ensure this right and prepare the plans required for the development of services in this regard, in accordance with the General Water Policy.</p> <p>Article 6 – Water Uses: 1. Water shall be used for the following purposes: a) Domestic and residential; b) Agriculture and irrigation; c) Industrial; d) Tourism; e) Trade and commerce; f) Conservation of water-dependent ecosystems and aquatic habitats. 2. The required license shall be obtained prior to shifting the right of use from one purpose to another. 3. The Authority shall determine, in cooperation with other official and relevant authorities, and within the framework of the annual water budget, the amounts and means of water utilization for the various sectors and regions, provided that domestic uses shall have absolute priority over all other uses in determining the allocation of available water resources.</p> <p>Article 8 – Responsibilities of the Authority: Article 8. Supervising the organization of awareness raising campaigns in the sphere of water and wastewater and promoting the use of water saving fixtures, in coordination and cooperation with the relevant authorities.</p> <p>Article 17 – Establishment of the Council: 1. A Council named "The Water Sector Regulatory Council" shall be established by a decision of the Cabinet of Ministers and shall be regulated pursuant to this law. The Council enjoys a legal personality and is financially and administratively independent. 2. The main headquarters of the Council shall be in Jerusalem and its temporary headquarters in any other place in Palestine; The Council's Board of Directors may decide to open branches in all governorates.</p> <p>Article 35 – Unified Price: The Council shall set, in line with government policy, a unified price for the provision of bulk water supplies to service providers in all areas of Palestine, pursuant to a regulation issued by the Cabinet of Ministers.</p>	<p>The law focuses on the right to water for all. It adopts a gender-neutral approach, considering that all individuals have the right to access water resources. The Articles discussed here emphasize that accessing equitable and efficient water distribution is consistent with the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030. However, when examining the law within the current sociopolitical reality in Palestine, women face further hardships in their communities that hinder their movement and impede their ability to be decision-makers. The scarcity of water has increased women's workload since they are responsible for securing water for their children, for domestic use and for home farming and herding.</p> <p>Although the law takes domestic needs into consideration, local communities in Area C suffer from acute water shortages because of Israeli land confiscations and inequitable use of the shared water resources. Women are primarily responsible for balancing the use of water for domestic purposes and providing water for livestock and they struggle to fulfill duty of care for their families (Eguirgin and Saadeh, 2014).</p> <p>Article 17, regarding the establishment of a Water Sector Regulatory Council, is seen as a necessity and a vital tool to enhance the sector. Yet, it falls short due to the absence of women in the decision-making process. Women's participation in the council is a vital mechanism to ensure women's representation and to guarantee their needs are taken into consideration at the decision-making level in the water sector.</p>

Law	Article	Analysis / Examination
<p data-bbox="236 663 360 741">Agricultural Law No. 2 (2003)</p>	<p data-bbox="411 282 938 331">Article 3 – Each of the following shall be established under this Law:</p> <ol data-bbox="411 333 938 640" style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Farmers' Compensation Fund for Natural Disasters. 2. Palestinian Genetic Bank for Seeds and propagation material. 3. Agricultural Lending Bank. 4. Palestinian National Centre for Agricultural Research. 5. Creating an Advisory Agricultural Council to regulate by law the Farmers' Compensation Fund for Natural Disasters and the Agricultural Lending Bank. Other issues are to be regulated by a system prepared by the MoA and promulgated by the Council of Ministers. <p data-bbox="411 663 616 689">Article 4 – Register:</p> <p data-bbox="411 692 938 842">The MoA, in coordination with PCBS, establishes a register listing the data of all agricultural holdings and the names of the holders. The relevant authority in the Ministry is responsible for establishing such data, shall prepare the agricultural possession card and shall record the data of each holder.</p> <p data-bbox="411 864 655 891">Article 7 – Registration:</p> <p data-bbox="411 893 938 1122">The Minister, in coordination with PCBS and other relevant bodies, shall issue instructions and decisions to determine the model of the agricultural possession card and the records and all the papers that are required. In addition to the methods of registration, it sets out the rules of proof of change in any data, the methods of contesting possession data and how adjudicators are constituted in accordance with the law.</p>	<p data-bbox="975 282 1369 790">Agricultural Law No. 2 (2003) focuses on the individual without giving privileges to marginalized groups. The effective application of the law poses challenges for women who are chief actors in the informal agricultural sector and are more vulnerable to abuse due to the scarcity of financial resources needed for agriculture development. Women are also disadvantaged due to having limited access to information related to agricultural technology so that they can increase production and incomes and better provide for their families. According to an FAO study on gender in agricultural development, women play a vital role and are involved throughout the production chain until the later stages when men take control of marketing and sales.</p> <p data-bbox="975 813 1369 1122">Although Article 3 grants privileges to farmers to develop the agricultural sector, studies do not provide assessments of the granted privileges from a gender perspective. The majority of studies highlight that information on production projects are disseminated through local councils and in mosques. Consequently, information is usually more accessible to men in the public sphere in local communities than to women.</p>
<p data-bbox="236 1424 368 1626">Law No. 14 (2018) relating to amendments to Agriculture Law No.2 (2003) and its amendments</p>	<p data-bbox="411 1290 938 1395">Specialized agricultural councils shall be established to regulate the agricultural sector by decisions of the Council of Ministers; operations are to be regulated by law.</p> <p data-bbox="411 1417 520 1444">Article 10:</p> <p data-bbox="411 1447 938 1552">The Ministry shall establish and circulate the standard specifications for agricultural livestock and plant products, both imported and produced locally, in accordance with the provisions of the Law.</p> <p data-bbox="411 1574 520 1601">Article 17:</p> <ol data-bbox="411 1603 938 1753" style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Ministry may, with the approval of the Minister, distribute free of charge any amount of forest or pastoral grasses for any type of cultivation if proven to be for the public good. 2. Forest, pastoral and productive seedlings in the Ministry's nurseries are exempt from any fees. 	<p data-bbox="975 1155 1369 1350">These Articles are key entry points for a better participation of all groups in the water management process. The problem is in the circulation of the related resolutions, which will in turn affect the representation of marginalized groups in the local councils.</p> <p data-bbox="975 1373 1369 1686">Although Article 10 establishes standard specifications that are important to ensure quality of production, it still poses obstacles for women by limiting their potential. The majority of women rely on small-scale home gardening and farming and apply poor agricultural methods due to a lack of awareness, knowledge and the necessary skills training. At the same time, women work in a highly competitive local market.</p> <p data-bbox="975 1709 1369 1888">With regards to Article 17 on the distribution of seedlings, there is a lack of awareness on these decisions and the absence of a procedures manual that could identify and support women and marginalized groups in benefitting from new developments.</p>

Law	Article	Analysis / Examination
Law No. 81 (2019) on restructuring the Board of Directors of the Water Sector Regulatory Council	<p>Article 1 – Restructuring the Board of Directors of the Water Sector Regulatory Council, as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Chairman of the Board 2. Four ministerial members: Deputy Minister of Local Government, Deputy Minister of Finance, Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Deputy Chairman of Water Authority 3. Two ordinary members <p>At the time of the assessment, all Board members were male.</p>	<p>Article 1 highlights the absence of women's representation in the management and decision-making processes in the water sector. It is also an indication that this sector's perspective and vision is not gender sensitive. This reflects societal attitudes that women's representation in decision-making bodies should be limited to institutions working on women rights and women's affairs, such as the Ministry of Women's Affairs.</p>
Uniform Tariff System for Water and Sanitation No. 4 (2021)	<p>Article 16: Progressive tariff categories in domestic water use:</p> <p>Category A prices are determined according to minimum consumption in proportion to socio-economic status, with the price of water consumption being less than the unit value of the water returns from the tariff rate.</p>	<p>Article 16 is considered responsive to population needs based on gender. It is expected to decrease the burden placed on the most vulnerable groups in society.</p>
Cabinet Resolution No.8 (2020) on the system of licensing, drilling and rehabilitation of wells, extracting groundwater and contracting the drilling of wells	<p>Article 7 – Drilling License:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Authority shall grant the drilling license in the name of the landowner on which the well is located, unless the landowner or partners agree otherwise in writing. 2. If the land on which the well is to be drilled is commonly owned, then a written consent of the partners to dig the well is required. In such cases, the Authority issues the license in the name of the owner of the largest share of the land and his/her partners, unless the landowner or partners agree otherwise in writing. <p>Article 25 – Permit fees for drilling and rehabilitation of wells and drilling of replacement wells:</p> <p>The Authority sets the fees (in Jordanian Dinars – JOD – or an equivalent value in a legally traded currency) for permits to drill and rehabilitate wells and to drill replacement wells as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Application fees: JOD 50 2. New or a replacement well drilling license fee: JOD 1500 3. Well rehabilitation license fee: JOD 500 4. Fees for photography of wells: JOD 500 	<p>Despite of the importance of Article 17, it still eliminates women who, in general, do not own land. Consequently, they are sidelined in the process of owning and controlling water resources despite women being responsible for the use and distribution of water in the household.</p> <p>Article 25 specifies fees for acquiring a drilling license and this is seen as a key impediment to women who are in possession of land, because of the high cost, which women in general cannot afford. By presenting such an obstacle, it makes it difficult for women to own and control water resources.</p>

Law	Article	Analysis / Examination
<p>Personal Status Law (1976), the Jordanian Personal Status Law that is applied in the West Bank.</p>	<p>Article 180 – Sharing by “Brothers German” (brothers from same mother and father) of their shares with Uterine Brothers (half-brothers of same mother but different fathers): Article 181⁷⁸ – Al-Radd [Surplus Redistribution] to one of the spouses. Article 182⁷⁹ – The Obligatory Bequest: The three articles deal with the distribution of inheritance ratios among the heirs. The woman receives her share of the inheritance, but the distribution varies based on the woman’s status. There are a number of variables on which inheritance is based. Among these are the location and nature of immovable property in villages and cities, the degree of the woman’s kinship, and her marital status, as well as the presence or absence of other heirs who blindfold or block women from her heirs, such as the presence of daughters without male brothers or a widow without children, the presence of other wives who have children and compete for heirs. The philosophy of inheritance is based on the fact that the main breadwinner is the man. The Koranic verse used in the case of sharing the inheritance is that the male’s share is equal to the share of two females. The inheritance law is complex and contains many details, but in general the law gives women the right to own property, even if it is in unequal shares.</p>	<p>The Personal Status Law (1976) allows for the sale and waiver of inheritance shares among heirs in exchange for financial compensation or according to an agreement among the inheritors for the removal of heirs from some estates, known as “Mutual Withdrawal”.</p> <p>Women often give up their rightful inheritance through fear of becoming estranged from their families or worse. In many cases, women are abused or killed under the pretext of “honour” if they claim their inheritance. If the inherited land is agricultural and a source of income for the family, women can face even more difficulties in claiming their share of the entitled land.</p> <p>In addition, women face legal impediments due to the absence of explicit provision that criminalizes the denial of their inheritance by fraud or coercion. The lengthy and complex judicial court procedures for inheritance settlements related to bequest and property division, in addition to the high cost, forces women in many cases to waive their right to inheritance.</p>



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