



Economic empowerment of women in Palestine: reflections from a feminist perspective

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Introduction

Palestinian women face countless obstacles to live a life free of violence and secure their rights, including in the economic sphere. The prolonged Israeli occupation and its policies of dispossession, discrimination and segregation (labelled as apartheid) converge with the dominant patriarchal system in Palestinian society, strengthening structures of discrimination and injustice that threaten gender equality and Palestinian women's economic development. Given this situation, various initiatives try to promote women's economic empowerment as essential for exercising their freedoms and rights. But what empowerment are we talking about? This report stresses the importance of considering economic empowerment from a feminist perspective. Why is this approach significant? What keys does it provide to analyse the situation and challenges faced by Palestinian women? What agendas and initiatives are being promoted by feminist economic empowerment in Palestine?

After briefly analysing the concept of feminist economic empowerment, this report provides an overview of the gaps and obstacles characteristic of Palestinian women's economic situation, paying special attention to the care and support economy. It then discusses the role of social norms that limit women's economic empowerment, the links between economic empowerment and gender violence and some of the main economic rights that Palestinian feminist organisations are collectively demanding. Finally, it explains the challenges of addressing Palestinian women's economic empowerment in a context of occupation and the links established with resistance to the occupation and patriarchal domination. The report combines this analysis with descriptions of some experiences of Palestinian feminist organisations in promoting initiatives for women's economic empowerment, including the testimonials of some of these empowered women.

1. Feminist economic empowerment

The origin and development of the concept of “empowerment” is closely linked with the work of feminist theorists and scholars. Though it can be applied to various groups in vulnerable situations, the term has especially been used in relation to women and has played a special role in the gender and development agendas.¹ In the 1980s, the DAWN network of southern activists and researchers² raised the concept at the Third World Conference on Women held in Nairobi (1985) to name the process by which women access material and symbolic resources and build their capacities and leadership at multiple levels. From this feminist approach, the idea of empowerment entails a radical transformation of the structures and processes that determine and reproduce women’s subordinate position from a gender perspective.

The feminist perspective also asserts that empowerment has both an individual and a collective dimension.³ Reflections on the concept have identified various aspects of women’s empowerment. Firstly, from a subjective perspective, the importance of self-awareness and self-confidence has been highlighted as key to the change process. This is known as “power within”. Secondly, analysts have stressed the importance of material, human and social resources that determine women’s ability to control key aspects of their lives (known as “power to”). Lastly, focus has been placed on the need for women to take collective action to become aware of the structural and institutionalised nature of the discrimination they face and to address it together (known as “power with”).⁴

Therefore, empowerment implies an acquisition of power at the individual and collective level and is also associated with the ability to decide.⁵ As the academic Naila Kabeer puts it, “empowerment refers to the expansion of people’s abilities to make strategic

decisions in their lives in a context in which these abilities had previously been denied to them”.⁶ It is also important to emphasise that empowerment is understood simultaneously as a goal to be achieved and as a process. According to feminist analysts, this process is long-term, moving “from the inside out” and “from the bottom up”. In other words, it begins in the personal sphere, from a positive self-image and confidence in one’s own abilities, then continues in close relationships through skills to negotiate and influence family relationships. It also includes a collective dimension that involves women in building organisations to achieve social and political changes.⁷ The idea of empowerment had been adopted and consolidated at the institutional level, especially starting with the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995), whose final declaration includes around 30

references to the concept and recognises it as a key strategy for making progress in development, gender equality and peace.⁸

The idea of women’s empowerment has included an economic dimension from the outset. This has acquired special visibility at the institutional level and international development policies.⁹ The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action refers to the importance of promoting women’s

economic independence, including employment and equal access to productive resources, opportunities and public services. It also stresses the importance of combating the structural causes of poverty, which especially affect women.¹¹ Other international commitments also recognise the importance of women’s economic empowerment, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the International Labour Organisation’s (ILO) agreements on gender equality.¹¹ The commitment to the economic empowerment of women is also connected with several of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030¹²

The origin and development of the concept of “empowerment” is closely linked with the work of feminist theorists and scholars

1. Naila Kabeer, *Women’s economic empowerment and inclusive growth: labour markets and enterprise development*, SOAS, 2012, p. 5.

2. DAWN: Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era.

3. Clara Murguialday, Karlos Pérez de Armiño and Marlen Eizagirre, “Empoderamiento”, *Diccionario de Acción Humanitaria, HEGOA*, Universidad del País Vasco. (online, viewed on 19 December 2022)

4. Ibid; Naila Kabeer (2012), p. 6.

5. Sophie Charlier and Lisette Caubergs, *The Women Empowerment Approach: a Methodological Guide*, Commission on Women and Development, Brussels, June 2007, p. 10.

6. Naila Kabeer, “Resources, Agency and Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women’s Empowerment”, *Discussing Women’s Empowerment. Theory and Practice*, Sida Studies, 2001, p. 19.

7. Clara Murguialday, *Empoderamiento de las mujeres: conceptualización y estrategias*, Vitoria Gasteiz, 2006, pp. 12.

8. In paragraph 13, the [Beijing declaration](#) says that “women’s empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace”.

9. Naila Kabeer (2012), *op. cit.*, p. 7.

10. In paragraph 26, the [Beijing declaration](#) aims to “promote women’s economic independence, including employment, and eradicate the persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women by addressing the structural causes of poverty through changes in economic structures, ensuring equal access for all women, including those in rural areas, as vital development agents, to productive resources, opportunities and public services”.

11. UN Women, [In brief: Economic empowerment of women](#), Thematic brief, UN Women.

12. The promotion of women’s economic empowerment connects with the achievement of SDG 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere; SDG 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture; SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all; SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls; SDG 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all; SDG 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation; and SDG 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries. Elise Young, *Boost Women’s Economic Empowerment: Facts, Solutions, Case Studies and Calls to Action*, Policy Brief, November 2019.

and the United Nations Secretary-General appointed a High Level Panel to reflect on how to remove obstacles in this area in 2016. Institutions like the World Bank and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), cooperation agencies and donors have also incorporated the concept of economic empowerment into their language and policies. Women's economic empowerment is usually mentioned as a prerequisite for sustainable development and inclusive growth.

There is no universally accepted definition of what women's economic empowerment means. Approaches to the concept differ in the extent to which economic empowerment is considered an end in itself or a means to achieve other development goals; whether they address empowerment solely in economic terms or whether they include other spheres important to women's lives; and with regard to the role they attribute to market forces in achieving women's economic empowerment.¹³ In general terms, the idea of women's economic empowerment has tended to equate or limit women's access to productive resources, including paid work. The approach taken by the prevailing institutional discourse and the type of indicators designed for monitoring it has resulted in a practice in which economic empowerment is reduced to women's ability to take care of themselves individually.¹⁴ This individual-based approach fits in with the dominant neoliberal economic model rather than challenging the patriarchal and neoliberal structures that perpetuate and aggravate inequalities.

Given these developments, feminist critics have urged the recovery of the original meaning of the term, which implies structural changes to reduce social, economic and political barriers for women.¹⁵ As Ugandan feminist and former OXFAM International director Winnie Byanyima so illustratively put it, "I refuse to accept the idea that we can simply shoehorn women into a global economy that is exploiting them and then celebrate it as women's economic empowerment".¹⁶ Therefore, from a feminist perspective, women's economic empowerment goes beyond taking advantage of existing economic opportunities and involves paying attention to power dynamics and gender inequalities that violate women's rights while addressing the root causes of these systemic inequalities. Along these lines, activists and academics have demanded that the concept of empowerment generally be endowed with meanings consistent with the aspirations of those who have promoted it, arguing

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that the term only makes sense if it proposes a social transformation in line with feminist conceptions. Feminist critics have also warned that the dominant discourse on the idea of empowerment has tended to subordinate it to the achievement of global development goals. This approach conflicts with demands that the empowerment of women is justified in its own right, that it is a human rights issue and that it should not necessarily be linked to other purposes classified as more significant or far-reaching.¹⁷

Feminist perspectives have argued that economic and gender inequality are inextricably related and have stressed the importance of applying an intersectional perspective that recognises that women are not a homogeneous group. In other words, gender inequalities interact with many other forms of inequality and discrimination based on ethnicity, class, age and other factors, which usually exacerbate vulnerabilities and injustice.¹⁸ Faced with dominant approaches that focus mainly on women's access to economic opportunities, facilitating their access to employment, training and credit, the feminist perspective advocates a comprehensive approach that also pays attention to areas of women's economic empowerment that are usually neglected. These include discriminatory social norms, laws and policies that limit

Box 1: Principles of a feminist approach to women's economic empowerment

A feminist approach to women's economic empowerment that permeates the design and implementation of policies and projects should:

- Address the structural and social causes of economic and gender inequalities from a holistic perspective.
- Consider women's economic empowerment of women as an end in itself, from a perspective that puts dignity and human rights front and centre.
- Help to build women's agency and decision-making.
- Promote and invest in feminist collective organisation.
- Incorporate an intersectional analysis.
- Ensure data collection and accountability.

Source: OXFAM, A feminist approach to women's economic empowerment, 2019.

13. Naila Kabber (2012), op. cit., p. 8.

14. Sophie Charlier and Lisette Caubergs (2009), op. cit., pp. 9.

15. OXFAM Canada, *A feminist approach to women's economic empowerment*, Feminist and Foreign Policy Series, January 2019, p. 5.

16. Ibid, p. 4.

17. Clara Murguialday (2006), pp. 3-4; OXFAM Canada (2019), p. 10.

18. Naila Kabber (2012), op. cit., p. 6, and OXFAM Canada (2019), p. 1.

women's economic participation and that reinforce gender stereotypes; women's economic and labour rights that give them access to decent work; women's role in the care economy; the interrelationships between gender violence and women's economic empowerment; and the importance of women's collective organisation for defending and promoting their rights. We will discuss all these issues below regarding the experience of Palestinian women and highlight some related initiatives promoted by Palestinian feminist organisations.

2. Gaps and obstacles: the economic reality of Palestinian women and the burden of care

Palestinian women face countless obstacles to living a life free of violence and securing their rights, including in the economic sphere. The prolonged Israeli occupation and its policies of dispossession, discrimination and apartheid converge with a dominant patriarchal system in Palestinian society, reinforcing structures of discrimination and injustice that threaten gender equality and the economic development of Palestinian women. Studies and statistical reports illustrate the existing gaps. According to data from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), there is a notable difference in Palestinian men and women's levels of participation in the labour force. Men's participation is four times higher than women's, which remains below 20%. After falling in a downward trend to 17.7% in 2015 to 16.1% in 2020,¹⁹ it has experienced a slight rebound in recent years, rising to 17% in 2021 and 18.6% in 2022²⁰ (see graph 1). These data refer to the formal economy, but many Palestinian women work in informal sectors like agriculture and family businesses. Most are therefore not registered as part of the labour force. Estimates suggest that women's participation in the informal economy may hover around 25%-35%.²¹ According to calculations made by official organisations, 25% of the women hired in the private sector worked without an employment contract and almost 30% earned below minimum wage. In 2022, the unemployment rate for

Work-related and economic opportunities for Palestinian women are shaped by the obstacles and consequences of Israeli occupation policies and by the influence of social norms and traditional thinking dominant in Palestinian society

women participating in the labour force was double that of men: 40% compared to 20%.²²

The challenges for gender equality are clear if data in other areas are considered. Palestinian women account for 47% of all public employees (mainly in the health and education sectors), but there are substantial differences regarding who holds leadership positions. Only 14% of general management positions or higher are held by women, compared to 86% of men.²³ Moreover, Palestinian women's economic participation remains low despite the progress made in education and training levels. Thus, for example, the unemployment rate for people with higher education between 19 and 29 years old was 53%, but the proportion was much higher for women (66%) than for men (39%). Official Palestinian statistical studies confirm that labour force participation is higher among people with higher education (13 years of education or more) and acknowledge that education alone does not seem to be enough to increase women's rate of participation.²⁴

Work-related and economic opportunities for Palestinian women are shaped by the obstacles and consequences of Israeli occupation policies and by the influence of social norms and traditional thinking dominant in Palestinian society regarding the role that women should play in the division of labour and in taking care of the family and the home. Some surveys have found that the vast majority of Palestinian men (80%), but also a significant percentage of Palestinian women (60%), think that the most important role for women is that of a homemaker.²⁵ The fact that domestic and care work is considered the responsibility of women affects their involvement in activities that could generate income.

Recent research on the care economy has exposed wide gaps that shape women's opportunities for economic development. From a feminist perspective, it is crucial to take this variable into account because the amount of time dedicated to care work is negatively correlated with women's participation in the labour force. In fact, studies suggest that unpaid care work is the main obstacle to gender equality and women's participation in the labour market²⁶ and the SDGs have specifically indicated the need to acknowledge its value.²⁷

19. PCBS, Women and Men in Palestine. Issues and Statistics, October 2021, p. 43.

20. PCBS, *Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow*, (online), 8 March 2022, and *Results of the Labour Force Survey*, 15 February 2023.

21. PCBS (2021) op. cit., p. 44; interview with Amal Abusour, WCLAC, Ramallah, 6 October 2022.

22. PCBS (2023), op. cit.

23. PCBS (2022), op.cit.

24. PCBS (2021), op.cit., p.45.

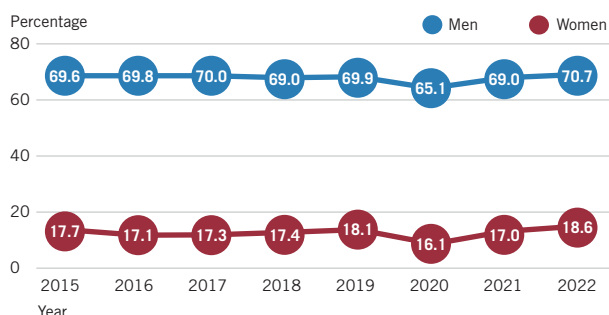
25. Eileen Kuttub i Brian Heilman, *Understanding Masculinities. International Men and Gender Equality Survey – Middle East and North Africa (IMAGES MENA)- Palestine*, UN Women, Institute of Women's Studies Birzeit University i PROMUNDO, 2017.

26. International Labour Organization, *Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work*, Ginebra: OIT, 2018.

27. En el marc de l'ODS 5 "Assolir la igualtat de gènere i empoderar totes les dones i nenes", l'objectiu 5.4 planteja la necessitat de reconèixer el treball de cures no remunerat a través de la provisió de serveis públics, infraestructures i polítiques de protecció social.

Graph 1. Participation of women and men in the labour force in Palestine

Percentage of women and men (15 years old and above) that participated in the labour force between 2015 and 2022



Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), *Women and Men in Palestine. Issues and Statistics*, October 2021, *Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow*, 8 March 2022 and Results of the Labour Force Survey, 2022, 15 February 2023.

Unpaid care work receives little recognition and is undervalued. It is mainly carried out by women and includes domestic tasks like cleaning, cooking and caring for people, especially children and the elderly, which are performed in homes and communities. Though attempts have been made to quantify the value of care work,²⁸ analyses find that the figures do not reflect its real psychological, emotional and educational benefits for families and, by extension, for communities and countries.²⁹ Globally, ILO data confirm that women shoulder a greater burden of domestic and care work, multiplying the time spent by men by 2.5. In the countries of the Arab region, the gender gap in care work is the widest in the world. In occupied Palestinian territory, the ratio of women to men devoted to unpaid care work is 7:1.³⁰ According to a study conducted by the Arab World Research for Development (AWRAD) and Alianza por la Solidaridad (APS), Palestinian women spent 6.7 hours per day doing unpaid care work in 2021. This figure had increased compared to the five hours reported in a PCBS study on time use in 2012-2013. The rise is partly attributed to additional burdens from the impact of COVID-19. Men's involvement in care work in occupied Palestinian territory rose from 43 minutes to 1.6 hours a day.

This same study found that men reported a total of 6.2 hours of official work per day, compared to 3.07 hours for women. Women participated mostly in activities that

generate unofficial income, with a daily average of 2.9 hours of work spent in cooperatives, in making products at home or in their family's livestock-raising and/or farming activity, compared to an average of 1.46 hours a day for men. Considering the relationship between jobs of all types (official, informal and care), the AWRAD and APS study found that Palestinian women work many more hours than men, at a ratio of 1.4:1, and that more than 53% of the work done by women is unpaid.³¹ The dynamics of care work in Palestine are influenced both by the patriarchal system and by the impact of occupation policies, which have turned many Palestinian women into the sole caregivers for their families because their husbands were wounded or killed or because their husbands are prisoners in Israeli jails.³²

3. Challenge of social norms and new benchmarks

Feminist analysts remind us that social norms determine the economic spaces occupied by men and women based on what is considered appropriate for their gender. The norms create biases against women and limit their participation in economic activities. They also influence what is considered work and the value assigned to it. The experiences of Palestinian organisations that promote training activities and women's economic empowerment show the many obstacles in challenging these social norms. These initiatives often meet with resistance linked to the idea that the right to work is a right for men, rather than a human right;³³ to the perception that women should focus on reproductive, rather than productive work; to discriminatory practices because employers anticipate more work-life balance problems for women; to criticism and/or impediments coming from the family and/or community environment for women's alleged transgression of certain behaviours expected of them related to responsibilities of caring for children, working in mixed environments or travelling outside the home and/or area of residence alone; and misgivings about women's access to working environments considered properly masculine (see Box 2: Empowering young female university graduates in Nablus).

Organisations that promote economic empowerment use training frameworks to spread information about human rights and gender equality and thereby promote women's

28. In 2010, a UN study estimated that the monetary value of unpaid work performed by women may represent between 10% and 39% of the GDP.

29. Nader Said-Foqahaa and Mariam Barghouti, *Diagnóstico de género del Trabajo de Economía de los cuidados en el Territorio Palestino Ocupado y Jordania*, Alianza por la Solidaridad and AWRAD, 2022, p. 21.

30. Nader Said-Foqahaa and Mariam Barghouti (2022), p. 22.

31. *Ibid*, p. 6.

32. *Ibid*, p. 6.

33. Article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights establishes that: 1) Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment; 2) Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work; 3) Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection; 4) Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

Box 2. Empowering young female university graduates in Nablus

Women's Studies Centre (WSC) has been working since 1989 to promote the empowerment of Palestinian women and feminist critical thought to defend women's rights. As part of its mission to foster gender equality, WSC has been developing various initiatives aimed at improving Palestinian women's economic independence based on the conviction that it is one of the most important factors in improving their quality of life and that of their families, at promoting their participation in decision-making, improving women's equality and dignity and reducing gender gaps. Since 2018, one of its programmes has focused on enhancing the capacities of female graduates of higher education institutions to facilitate their entry into the labour market in Nablus. Beyond the widespread problems and gaps facing Palestinian female graduates seeking a job, the project is based on WSC's analysis that clearly shows how the influence of the occupation and dominant patriarchal social norms impose additional restrictions on women.

WSC's previous analysis highlighted several issues: 1) a significant increase in the number of graduates without parallel growth in labour market opportunities; 2) a high number of women choosing to study in an institution considered more "acceptable" for their families for economic and social reasons, even though it is perceived as being of lower quality than other higher education centres; 3) the limitation of young women's movement by social restrictions, especially in rural areas, which makes them look for job opportunities in places close to home (unlike men); 4) the fact that most Palestinian women are raised to be "housewives" and focus on a reproductive social role rather than a productive one, which prompts society to view employment as a right for men rather than as a human right; 5) the fact that many businessmen, especially in the private sector, prefer to hire men, assuming that women will have more problems in striking a work-life balance; and 6) the perception that some jobs belong to men, which in practice restricts the possibilities of training and employment for women to areas that are socially accepted according to stereotypes.

To deal with this situation, WSC promoted a specific plan for female higher education graduates to boost their skills, competence and confidence in participating in the labour market and to help them to join it through paid internships that are partially funded by WSC. The programme prioritised unemployed women trained in the social sciences or similar fields and especially vulnerable women (survivors of sexist violence against

women, refugees (who have higher unemployment rates), women with more than three dependents, widows, injured women, former prisoners and other criteria). The programme has very high levels of job placement. Since 2018, a total of 114 Palestinian women have participated in the training, of which 106 (93%) subsequently found work, most of them full-time, although in some cases part-time.

Testimonials from participants in WSC's empowerment programme confirm the diagnosis of the existing barriers, but they also show Palestinian women's determination and persistence in overcoming obstacles, getting trained and accessing the labour market.* Though many have received support from their families, others have had to persuade those around them about their interest and abilities to continue studying for a university degree and/or they have had to challenge the community's prejudices and criticism. This social questioning touches on gender issues due to alleged breaches of the expected roles in terms of care (criticism for leaving children at home while they work) or for breaking traditional conventions (the idea that women cannot work with men or that they cannot travel alone).

The experiences of participants in the programme and of women in their environment also confirm that the challenges do not stop with access to employment. Palestinian women still face the challenge of getting a stable job with a decent wage, since the conditions are often precarious and/or unstable (salaries below minimum wage, contracts that are constantly renewed or that are terminated when stabilisation is due). Other problems they encounter include bad practices by employers (sexism in job interviews, policies that disadvantage pregnant women, workplace harassment, nepotism in the public and private sectors) and a lack of accessible services that promote work-life balance (day care centres). Added to this are the conditions imposed by the Israeli occupation and its segregation policies. Palestinian women living on the outskirts of Nablus and in areas close to Israeli settlements cite the difficulties and uncertainties of travelling to their jobs through military checkpoints, road blockades and threats and intimidation from settlers.

WSC's feminist approach is committed to a stable and continuous support process, assuming that not all participants in the programme will be able to get a job after completing the internship. Those who cannot find a job are involved in activities to raise awareness in the community on issues related to women's rights, the

eradication of sexist violence against women and the importance of economic independence. All the women who participate in the WSC programme receive specific training on preventing and coping with sexist violence against women, since the work areas in which they will be carried out are spaces where they will foreseeably be able to detect and monitor cases. One former student of this initiative has permanently joined the WSC team.

* Group interview with five participants in the WSC programme (2021-22 edition), all under 30 years old and employed after completing one or two internship cycles. Nablus, 3 October 2022.

TESTIMONIALS

“**My husband advises me to quit my job because I don't get paid much. But I keep going because it's not just about the money. I'm also building my career. (J)**

“**You don't only need to take your family's support into account, but also the support of the community. Working women receive a lot of criticism for leaving their children behind. Travelling alone is equivalent to committing a crime! (...) Now that I am empowered, I know that I am on the right path. (H)**

“**Now we can defend ourselves and ask for more. Women want to work to be independent. (HH)**

awareness. Faced with obstacles and conditions, some organisations promote initiatives that do not generate as much resistance, especially in very conservative and restrictive environments. This approach offers an alternative to women in especially vulnerable situations and even the socially isolated. Thus, for example, the Yalo organisation promoted a project especially aimed at divorced and single women who still live with their parents so that they could work in healthy canteens in schools in Nablus, which gave them the opportunity to be in contact with other women. In other cases, activities are promoted that allow women to work from their own homes, at least initially. Organisations are often involved in the arduous task of raising awareness among people in the community, as attested by Shojoon Siam from the Askar Women's Centre, in the Askar refugee camp (Nablus): “It took us three years to convince a man who did not let three of his single sisters leave the house and they were already ‘older’ [40-50 years]. Now they receive training at our centre and have their own income”.

Palestinian feminist organisations work to promote changes in social norms that sustain discriminatory attitudes, involving various actors, including men, under the assumption that to change mentalities it is not possible to work only with women. Thus, for example, the Women's Studies Centre carries out activities that raise awareness about women's rights and the importance of economic empowerment; at an institutional level (for example, at Nablus City Council), it advocates

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mainstreaming the gender perspective. It also works in education through approaches to review the gender roles projected in these spaces. Organisations such as the Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC) are also involved in different types of advocacy efforts and have been conducting awareness-raising activities, especially with young men. Along these lines, WCLAC works with recently graduated volunteers to raise awareness about women's human rights. It also works with professional hubs (such as groups of journalists and lawyers) to involve them in feminist discourse and to give them guidelines to embrace a conscious approach to gender discrimination in their fields of work.

It must be understood that the economic empowerment of women not only challenges and subverts existing norms and gender roles, but it also helps to create new benchmarks. “When a woman feels empowered, she can also become an example for other women in her community and promote social change”, says the WCLAC's Amal Abusrour, who cites the example of women who lead projects or businesses “that not only contribute economically, but that also change perceptions towards women, challenging stereotypes that view them as lacking the courage or ability to launch their own businesses. This is because being a businesswoman means being in contact with other men, travelling, getting involved in commercial activities and spending most of her time in the public sphere, which clashes with beliefs that women should be in the private sphere”.³⁴ Along these lines, Abusrour

34. Interview with Amal Abusrour, WCLAC, Ramallah, 6 October 2022.

highlights the correlation between women's economic empowerment and their greater role in decision-making in the public sphere: "Economically empowered women will be more capable of participating in decision-making, not only in the household, also in the community and at the national and government level. Economically empowered women are better able to get involved if they want to join political parties and run in elections".

4. Economic empowerment and gender violence

Various studies have paid attention to the interrelationship between gender violence and women's economic security. In general terms, women are more exposed to gender violence when they have lower levels of education or when they are part of groups that tend to be economically marginalised, such as rural women, domestic workers, migrants and low-skilled women. Studies suggest that women who suffer from violence from their partners tend to be employed in casual or part-time jobs to a greater extent and earn less than half the income of women who do not suffer from it. Indeed, women with access to employment and greater control over their income, bank accounts and other financial services are *a priori* more likely to leave abusive situations in both their personal and working relationships.³⁵

Some studies have specifically paid attention to the links between women's economic empowerment and gender-based violence and their results underscore the need for complex, contextual and intersectional perspectives. This is because women's economic empowerment does not always reduce the risk of gender violence. Of course, women's economic empowerment poses a challenge to the status quo and seeks to transform power relations. In some cases, the risk may be increased if men decide to use violence to gain control over the income earned by women to express their frustration over changing roles at home or if suspicion about women's greater activity and economic status is growing in the community. Indeed, women's economic empowerment can reduce the risk of gender-based violence against them if it allows them to increase their bargaining power at home, including in gender relations, if it makes it easier for them to leave violent relationships, if it reduces family poverty levels or if it helps to change attitudes and gender relations in the community.³⁶

Many Palestinian organisations advocate women's economic empowerment as a key strategy to address

gender-based violence. This is even more true in a context in which gender violence against women is increasing and social actors with agendas openly opposed to gender equality are becoming more visible, especially after the pandemic.³⁷ "The correlation between gender violence and economic empowerment is very important. We know that the most vulnerable women are financially dependent on their husbands to support them. A financially independent woman can decide to break the cycle of violence if she knows that she will be able to support herself and her family. We believe that the more economically empowered women are, the more capable they will be of breaking cycles of violence".³⁸ Based on this conviction, many organisations that work for the rights of Palestinian women carry out projects to strengthen women's economic independence and/or work to change the social and legal norms that shape their entry into the world of work, access to decent work and their financial security in general.

Some initiatives try to specifically support survivors of gender-based violence. This is the case of the programmes promoted by Family Defence Society (FDS) in Nablus. The FDS provides professional training for women in vulnerable situations and is especially aimed at those who face sexist violence. It also manages a psychological and social care hotline and a temporary shelter (the first of its kind in Palestine) for survivors of sexist violence against women. Its experience provides an illustrative example of the stigma surrounding this kind of violence and the influence of gender stereotypes in Palestinian society. Participants in the training acknowledge the reluctance they had to overcome (their own reluctance and that of the people around them) because of FDS' reputation among some parts of Palestinian society and because of the place where the courses are taught, since it is the same building that hosts the shelter. They say that there is a perception that FDS tries to empower women, but "not in a good way". Instead, there is a belief that FDS aims to distance women from the traditional values of Palestinian society. The organisation is criticised for the assistance it provides to women involved in adultery cases, for example. Despite these conditions, dozens of women have participated in the training programme. Though challenges in bringing them into the working world remain, the programme is considered decisive for boosting their self-esteem and confidence (see Box 3: Self-esteem and confidence: the importance of "power within").

Women are not only exposed to violence in the domestic and family environment, but also in their trips to work and in the workplace. This is why organisations

35. OXFAM (2018), op.cit., p. 24.

36. Mara Bolis and Christine Hughes, Women's economic empowerment and domestic violence. Links and lessons for practitioners working with intersectional approaches, OXFAM International Series, 2015, p. 5.

37. For further information, see Pamela Urrutia, *Challenges of feminist struggles in Palestine in a post-pandemic context*, Escola de Cultura de Pau and Associació Hèlia, July 2022.

38. Interview with Amal Abusrour, WCLAC, Ramallah, 6 October 2022.

Box 3. Self-esteem and confidence: the importance of “power within”

The main purpose of Family Defence Society (FDS), an NGO created in Nablus in 1994, is to protect female survivors of gender violence and their sons and daughters and to raise awareness about women’s rights to help to eradicate sexist violence against women in Palestinian society. Since 2015, FDS has provided professional training aimed especially at women faced with situations of sexist violence against women. The courses cover various topics, including video and photography, mobile phone repair and personal care and beauty (the latter is officially recognised by the Ministry of Labour). Participants in these training courses report the challenges they had to overcome to get involved in this initiative and the programme’s success in boosting their self-confidence.*

Many have had to deal with the reluctance and obstacles imposed by family members and/or controlling husbands, who are resistant to letting them leave their homes to participate in the training courses. Others recognised that they were in especially vulnerable situations due to economic precariousness and gender violence committed by their partners and relatives and tried to overcome emotionally difficult situations due to widowhood, divorce, fights for custody of their children and mental health problems. Part of the misgivings of the environment (and in some cases the women’s own reluctance) to participate in the programme has to do with the stigma attached to FDS among conservative groups in Palestinian society because of the rest of the activities it carries out in support of women survivors of sexist violence. Nevertheless, beyond the content of the training, the participants interviewed for this report unanimously agreed on the positive impact that access to FDS has had for them and the cultivation of a safe environment where they have gained confidence and self-esteem. The testimonials of these women, mostly survivors of violence, underscore the importance of the FDS programme in improving their mental health, gaining a feeling of independence and being able to express themselves and defend their points of view. This is empowerment from the dimension of “power within”. They all also agree on the desire to maintain this network of relationships after finishing the programme, though they intend to continue at FDS if they are offered the possibility of further training.

One of the challenges of the FDS programme is to continue supporting the professional training students as they join the labour force. The programme participants cite various problems in getting jobs due to persisting stereotypes and glass ceilings (for example, in the male-dominated field of mobile phone repair), the need to acquire more practical experience and the lack of resources to start a business on their own. The possibility of pursuing some economic activity through

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“My family supported me, but my husband tried to prevent me from participating. He didn’t want me to leave the house. He wanted me to always be surrounded by family. But I managed to persuade him by explaining that it would be good for me and for my development. The fact that the training was free was key. I insisted that I could open a beauty centre, which would earn more money for the family. And in the end he agreed. (F)

“My family did not want me to leave the house, but they saw that my mental health improved when I came here. I feel safe here (...) Now I have set up a hair salon in my home, but I don’t have any clients yet. (Divorced, two children, fighting for custody) (Z)

“My family supported me, but they did not want people to know that I was taking the course at FDS because of the other activities that it has carried out. It is a place for women who have “issues” and they are worried about what people will say about me. (S)

“After becoming a widow, I have had “issues” with my in-laws. I could not leave. They totally controlled me. They wanted to order me around and didn’t support me. They didn’t even help me when my husband was sick (...) I really appreciate the mental support I’ve received here. I wasn’t like this before. I couldn’t even talk to other people. Now I can express myself (...) Before, I would break down very easily. I would collapse. Here I feel that I have found another life, a supportive environment that I did not have before. (N)

“My in-laws are very controlling. I don’t live in Nablus, so I just tell them that I am going to the city. I feel like this place is a safe space and I feel more independent. (A)

“Before, I was obedient. I didn’t reply or say no. Now I feel entitled to speak and give my opinion. (F)

* Group interview with seven participants in recent courses offered by FDS (three in hairdressing training, two in photography and two in mobile phone repair). Nablus, 2 October 2022.

more collaborative formats, such as cooperatives, is occasionally shaped and limited because they are women who live far from each other and who each day

must overcome the restrictions imposed by the Israeli occupation and/or by social norms that limit their freedom of movement.

committed to defending women's rights in Palestine have also been working to make these situations visible and to get legislation passed that criminalises sexual harassment. Palestinian NGOs say that the phenomenon is habitually ignored or denied and that there is little official (or unofficial) information about its scope, prevalence and psychological, social and economic impacts on women.³⁹

A recent WCLAC study confirmed the importance of addressing sexual harassment in the workplace from a human rights and feminist perspective based on principles of justice and gender equality, since it is an invisible phenomenon.⁴⁰ Testimonials from survivors tell how some were forced to file lawsuits and in other cases to leave their jobs. The lack of consensus on the meaning and scope of sexual harassment makes it difficult to approach it at multiple levels. Thus, recommendations aim to work at the community level to create awareness about sexual harassment as a crime and violation of women's rights and change the perception and stigma of women who suffer from it, so that they are not blamed but rather recognised as victims. Likewise, measures are proposed to facilitate complaints and a series of regulatory changes. In its local and international advocacy work, the Palestinian network Al-Muntada, a coalition that brings together 17 women's and human rights organisations in the fight against violence against women, has demanded that the crime of sexual harassment receive specific legal recognition in Palestinian law with clear and deterrent penalties for offenders.⁴¹ The Penal Code currently in force in Palestine does not address the crime of harassment independently and the labour law and the law that regulates public service do not contain provisions for the issue either. Palestinian analysts and activists say that it is essential to move forward on issues like this from a feminist perspective, since they also shape women's economic empowerment and participation in the labour market.

Networks like Al-Muntada say that national legislation must be enacted that includes a comprehensive definition of discrimination against women

5. Economic rights: demands of Palestinian women

As previously discussed, from a feminist perspective, women's economic empowerment not only has an individual dimension, but also a significant collective one. It is key to recognise and become aware of the predominant structure that discriminates against women and collective action to promote change. Along these lines, women's rights activists argue that "women's economic empowerment cannot be approached in isolation because it also has

to do with women's ability to access social, economic, cultural and inheritance rights... We must talk about women's economic empowerment from a holistic point of view".⁴² Therefore, the transformations are not limited to individual changes or to changes in prevailing norms at the family, community and social levels. They also require institutional and legal changes, and even more so considering that the Palestinian legal and judicial system upholds many clauses in force that discriminate against women and does not fully guarantee their rights, despite the Palestinian authorities' commitments to related international frameworks.⁴³

Many Palestinian organisations that defend and promote women's rights demand the effective application of the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the adaptation of Palestinian law to the provisions of this international treaty. They also insist that it be granted due legal recognition, because although Palestine signed the Convention in 2014, the text has not yet been published in the Palestinian Official Gazette. The optional CEDAW protocol that Palestine signed in 2019 has not yet been published there either.⁴⁴ Along these lines, groups like Al-Muntada say that national legislation must be enacted that includes a comprehensive definition of discrimination against women and addresses the reasons for the direct and indirect discrimination

39. WCLAC and Al-Muntada, Joint Submission Report on the State of Palestine, Pre-Sessional Working Group of the CEDAW Committee, 3 October 2022, p. 5.

40. Nabil Dowaiikat, Sexual harassment against women in the workplace from women's perspective. Between the absence of legal text and traditional denial, Qualitative analytical study, WCLAC, 2021 (publication in Arabic, summary available in English).

41. WCLAC i Al-Muntada (2022), op.cit., p. 5.

42. Interview with Amal Abusrour, WCLAC, Ramallah, October 2022.

43. Mariam Barghouti (2020), op. cit, p. 14.

44. For further information, see also Pamela Urrutia, *Challenges of feminist struggles in Palestine in a post-pandemic context*, Escola de Cultura de Pau and Associació Hèlia, July 2022.

affecting them in public and in private. The idea is to have a specific law that criminalises discrimination, a multilevel phenomenon that encompasses legal, social and economic aspects. The international committee to monitor the implementation of CEDAW made related recommendations to the Palestinian authorities in 2018. However, Palestinian NGOs have warned of setbacks in this area, since no progress has been observed in compliance with this and other recommendations made by the CEDAW International Committee and because the latest versions of draft bills that have been under discussion for years, such as the Family Protection Bill, have removed articles related to discrimination against women and penalties for this type of discrimination.⁴⁵

Palestinian women have taken collective action for their economic rights in other spheres as well. For example, there is a committee of organisations that works to establish a minimum wage for men and women that guarantees the same salary for the same work. As the participants in some of WSC's empowerment programmes remember, the challenges do not end when women access the labour market. In general and for many Palestinian women in particular, the challenge of getting a stable job with a decent wage persists, since wages are often below the minimum and contracts are constantly renewed or are terminated when stabilisation is due. Palestinian working women and activists also stress the need to eradicate bad practices such as sexism in interviews, workplace harassment and nepotism in hiring. They also call for the implementation of work-life balance services and compliance with the rights of pregnant women.⁴⁶ Although labour legislation recognises some rights of pregnant women, such as a 10-week leave without their employer being able to rescind their contract, a ban on making them work overtime during their pregnancy and the first six months after childbirth, a total of one hour per day to breastfeed their babies and others, research indicates that there is no evidence that all companies comply with these provisions and that there are no mechanisms in place to monitor them and ensure their compliance.⁴⁷ Thus, for example, according to statistical data, in 20920 only 60% of salaried Palestinian women received paid maternity leave.⁴⁸ In their recommendations

Palestinian working women and activists also stress the need to eradicate bad practices such as sexism in interviews, workplace harassment and nepotism in hiring. They also call for the implementation of work-life balance services and compliance with the rights of pregnant women

to the CEDAW International Committee, Palestinian organisations also made a series of suggestions to improve the draft bill on public service from a gender-sensitive perspective that avoids discrimination and boosts female participation at all levels. Forty-seven per cent of the 85,000 public employees are women, who mainly work in the health and education sectors.⁴⁸

Palestinian feminist organisations have also been promoting awareness for years and continue to press for legal changes in situations of inequality and discrimination and specific violations that affect the economic rights and empowerment of Palestinian women. The previous section covered the lack of protection and guarantees regarding sexual harassment in the workplace, but there are many other aspects. For example, various NGOs have cited shortcomings in the legal frameworks regulating divorce, asserting that women are assigned minimum alimony to support their sons and daughters, which leads to greater vulnerability, poverty and dependency on male relatives.⁵⁰ They have also drawn attention to problems arising from the lack of regulation of the wealth created jointly after marriage. There are no legal provisions allowing married women to maintain and protect the right to their contributions to family property. "Most of the time, housework is not considered work. But in the case of working women, there is nothing written between husbands and wives about their contribution to family life, such as if they buy property, land or a car. Women often ask for a loan in their name, but in divorce and/or if a woman's husband marries someone else, the woman may be left with nothing, because there is nothing registered in her name. Nevertheless, she may be required to continue paying the debt because the loan was taken out in her name, even if the man is living on the property with his second wife. She cannot prove that she contributed to the purchase of that property due to the lack of a law in this regard".⁵¹ This is why Palestinian NGOs have included a related recommendation in their report to the CEDAW International Committee, so that this issue is regulated based on principles of equality.⁵²

Other efforts have also focused on guarantees for Palestinian women's access to and control of resources.

45. WCLAC and al-Muntada (2022), op. cit., pp. 3-4.

46. Collective interview with five participants in the Women's Studies Centre's empowerment programme for young university graduates, Nablus, October 2022.

47. Nader Said-Foqahaa and Mariam Barghouti (2020), op. cit., p. 14.

48. Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, *The Labour Force Survey Results 2020*, PCBS, 23 February 2021.

49. WCLAC and Al-Muntada (2022), op. cit., p. 9.

50. Interview with Amal Abusrour, WCLAC, Ramallah, October 2022.

51. Ibid.

52. WCLAC and Al-Muntada (2022), op. cit., p. 7. See also WCLAC, *The Wife's Right in Joint Property after Marriage in Palestine*, Ramallah, 2019.

“If we refer to the statistics, less than 3% of women own land and only 7% have assets/real estate property. How can a woman empower herself without having assets? So it is an important issue”, WCLAC says. Other studies show similar figures: only 5% of women own land and 7.7% own the houses in which they live. According to an OECD study in 2019, Palestinian women’s access to productive and financial resources was highly restricted.⁵³ In this context, Palestinian feminist organisations have called for the establishment of a specific law on inheritance and women’s rights, based on the conviction that it would support women’s economic empowerment and social status and reduce economic and social violence. Research on inheritance, which has thus far mainly been regulated by *sharia* (Islamic law) has shown that, like other legally recognised women’s rights, inheritance rights are restricted in practice for women by social norms and limitations imposed by customs and traditions. Due to the patriarchal culture prevalent in Palestinian society, women face many different challenges in claiming their rightful estate after the death of a family member. A sense of shame often prevents women from claiming their inheritance rights or prompts them to waive them. Sometimes this is because they want to avoid tension that causes divisions in their families, but they may also fear attacks that have even led to women getting murdered. There are no legal provisions criminalising fraudulent practices and the intimidation of women related to inheritance and no penalties for male relatives who deprive women of their inheritance rights. Activists have also drawn attention to the obstacles posed by lengthy and costly legal proceedings in cases involving inheritance issues.⁵⁴ In this regard, WCLAC has been doing advocacy work in recent years for the creation of an inheritance department at the Ministry of Justice that would assume responsibility for organising this issue and supporting people, especially women, who do not have enough financial resources to start the legal proceedings that would give them access to their inheritance. “Women are often approached by their male relatives during the mourning period, at times when they are sad and feel vulnerable. They ask them to give up their inheritances in exchange for their company and support. In a patriarchal society and at a time when women have lost their fathers, brothers or husbands, many women accept”.⁵⁵ For almost a decade, as a result of pressure from feminist organisations, there has been

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a rule that nobody may renounce their inheritance until three months after their relative’s death.⁵⁶

Regarding women’s access to land and other productive resources, the Palestinian Working Women Society for Development (PWWSD) has conducted research that is particularly useful for visualising the combined consequences of patriarchy and Israeli occupation and apartheid policies and how they are strengthened to deprive or violate the rights of Palestinian women. A study published by the PWWSD in 2020 confirmed that the vast majority of land and productive resources are held by men. Indeed, 76.3% of Palestinian-owned agricultural land is wholly owned by men, 7.3% is owned jointly by women and their husbands, 15% is owned only by the wife and 1.3% belongs to another female family member. The gender gap is wider for ownership of valuable mechanised farm equipment (such as tractors and irrigation systems). In this case, 93% is owned only by men, 3.4% is shared between husband and wife and only 3.4% is owned by women. According to the study, women report greater access to land than their ability to control how to manage it. The PWWSD states that the prolonged Israeli occupation combined with the dominant patriarchal system ends up producing and reinforcing structures that impede progress towards effective gender equality. In this regard, it especially highlights the impact of Israeli policies such as land expropriation, the control of land and other natural resources and the building of settlements, all practices illegal under international law.⁵⁷

Feminist organisations like the PWWSD have been developing initiatives aimed at empowering women economically for decades and have especially supported income-generating projects, cooperatives and unions. They provide direct support for building the capacities of these organisations, including those that work directly with women in rural areas. Supporting the development of cooperatives is also one of the hallmarks of the Union for Palestinian Women’s Committees (UPWC), declared a terrorist organisation by Israel in 2021. Created in 1980, the UPWC pursues its economic empowerment activities by forming cooperatives and promoting collective organisation from a perspective they consider more sustainable and that also seeks the social and political empowerment of Palestinian women. Work with

53. OECD, SIGI 2019 Global Report: Transforming challenges into opportunities, Social Institutions and Gender Index, OECD: Paris, 2019.

54. WCLAC, *Palestinian Women and Inheritance*, Executive Summary, 2014, p. 2.

55. Interview with Amal Abusrour, WCLAC, Ramallah, October 2022.

56. Ibid.

57. Palestinian Working Women Society for Development (PWWSD), In-depth Assessment of Women’s Access to and Ownership of Land and Productive Resources in the occupied Palestinian territory, April 2020.

cooperatives runs parallel to campaigns to buy locally and boycott Israeli products, as well as the UPWC's work on promoting women's political participation, including in unions, and on networking on platforms seeking progress on minimum wage and labour rights. As Palestinian scholar Eileen Kuttab says, "Cooperative work exposes women to public life. It allows them to establish relationships of solidarity, understanding and collaboration and to act jointly to change the gender dynamics in their families, as well as to become politically involved in community issues and concerns. This empowerment process is part of their survival and resistance to life under occupation, on the one hand, and of the development of their political, social and economic spaces on the other".⁵⁸

6. Empowerment in a context of occupation and apartheid?

Some Palestinians have criticised the implementation of the idea of empowerment in Palestine and have vindicated the original meaning of the concept, with all its emancipatory overtones and transformation of social, political and economic structures, to deal with the situation imposed by the Israeli occupation and apartheid policies. Generally, people have questioned that some projects in Palestine have incorporated the idea of empowerment instrumentally, as an objective for development, ignoring or leaving out the need to confront the structural system of power that shapes Palestinian lives and human development. In this sense, they recall that the unique situation in Palestine is a consequence of decades of occupation, the absence of a real independent state, spatial segregation, mobility restrictions and other factors that have become more acute since the Oslo agreements were signed.⁵⁹ Authors like Adam Hanieh also recall that

"Cooperative work exposes women to public life. It allows them to establish relationships of solidarity, understanding and collaboration and to act jointly to change the gender dynamics in their families, as well as to become politically involved in community issues and concerns" (Eileen Kuttab)

one of the most important forms of control that Israel exercises is through the economic system developed under the settlement framework, which has made the Palestinian economy deeply dependent on Israel (in addition to international aid). According to these critics, development and empowerment issues should not be addressed as technocratic and apolitical matters, but as areas directly connected to the resistance to normalise or legitimise Israeli and neoliberal policies (which, among other impacts, have accentuated inequalities in Palestinian society).⁶⁰

From a critical perspective, some question that some Palestinian organisations have "accommodated" the assimilation of rather reformist ideas of empowerment and focus on the individual, rather than on its transformative dimension.⁶¹ Eileen Kuttab has said that competition for funding between different organisations and fears about their continuity may have led some to adjust to the more dominant use of the concept overall worldwide.⁶² Based on a paper on the meaning of empowerment among women's organisations in Palestine, Kuttab concludes that Palestinian organisations have a clear understanding of the term and use it flexibly. Palestinian academics argue that empowerment must be linked to daily resistance against the occupation and to conceive it as an integral part of a process that connects national resistance with economic and social independence. Indicating the shortcomings of "neoliberal empowerment", Kuttab adds: "Women don't just want access to resources. They want to control them. They don't just want to participate in decision-making through quotas. They want equal rights as full citizens. They don't just want to work at any job. They want a decent job. This is how women become empowered and this type of empowerment cannot happen under colonial occupation or patriarchal domination".

58. Eileen Kuttab, "Empowerment as Resistance: Conceptualizing Palestinian women's empowerment", *Development*, 2010, Vol.53(2), p. 251.

59. *Ibid.*, p. 248.

60. Adam Hanieh, *Development as Struggle: Confronting the Reality of Power in Palestine*, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. XLV, No. 4, Summer 2016, pp. 32-47.

61. Eileen Kuttab (2010), *op .cit.*, p. 247.

62. *Ibid.*, p. 251.

Final thoughts

Palestinian women face a series of injustices, discrimination and inequalities as a result of the occupation and apartheid policies imposed by Israel and the dominant patriarchal structure in Palestinian society, with additional economic effects. Given this situation, feminist economic empowerment initiatives are especially important for promoting profound transformations and for highlighting the power dynamics and gender inequalities that violate women's rights. Many Palestinian organisations have been promoting initiatives to boost feminist economic empowerment from different perspectives and with varying focuses, according to their fields of action. Their work demonstrates a commitment that goes beyond promoting the participation of Palestinian women in the workforce. As demonstrated by some of the experiences analysed, there is a deep calling and conviction about the need to raise awareness about women's rights,

transform the social norms and stereotypes that affect and shape their economic independence and use economic empowerment to tackle challenges related to gender violence. Collective work is also seen as important to institutional and regulatory changes to avoid discrimination, promote decent work, guarantee access to and control of resources and other issues. The testimonies of participants in economic empowerment initiatives demonstrate the importance of conceiving them as a long-term process and the significance and interrelationship of its triple dimension: the personal boost in self-esteem and confidence; access to material, human and social resources that determine women's abilities to control key aspects of their lives; and collective action to challenge structural and institutionalised discrimination. The feminist economic empowerment of Palestinian women thereby contributes to resistance to the Israeli occupation of Palestine and to the patriarchal domination present in current Palestinian society.