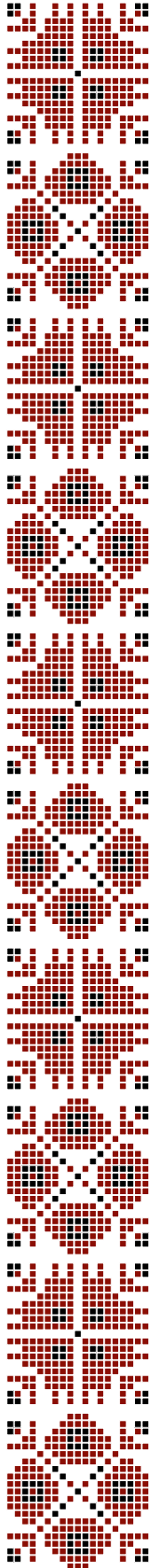


National Strategy
to Combat Violence
Against Women
2011 - 2019



Ministry of Women's Affairs
National Committee to Combat Violence against Women

Foreword by H.E. Rabiha Diab Minister of Women's Affairs



The Palestinian National Authority Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) has a special interest in the process of combating violence against women (VAW). In 2007, a national convention was held on VAW in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), resulting in the creation of a National Committee to Combat VAW in 2008. The main task assigned to this Committee was the development of national-level policies to combat VAW in the oPt. The formation of the Committee represents an important national achievement, as it shows:

- ♀ The commitment of the Palestinian National Authority to the principle of partnership and integration with non-governmental institutions in order to build a Palestinian state, as demonstrated through the inclusion of both governmental and non-governmental organizations in the membership of the National Committee to Combat VAW; and
- ♀ The Palestinian National Authority's acknowledgment of gender issues, including VAW, as fundamental issues for attention in the orientation of the government's development in the Palestinian state-building process.

This Strategy serves the important role of organizing the efforts of various parties, including the Palestinian National Authority, the civil society and the private sector, to work towards ending VAW in the oPt. It defines the roles and linkages between various stakeholders working in the field of VAW in order to ensure respect for women's human rights.

The National Strategy to Combat VAW was prepared by MoWA in cooperation with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) in the oPt. It answers the United Nations' third Millennium Development Goal (MDG), which calls for gender equality and women's empowerment in the oPt. The National Strategy to Combat VAW is considered one of the MDG-F Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Programme in the oPt.

Finally, we extend our deep appreciation to the National Committee to Combat VAW and all the partner institutions, both governmental and non-governmental, who participated in the preparation of the strategy. We also thank UN Women for contributing to developing the strategy and follow-up on its implementation.

Rabiha Diab

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Acronyms

Al-Muntada Coalition	NGO Forum to Combat Violence against Women
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CSNGS	Cross-Sectoral National Gender Strategy
DCI	Defence for Children International
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
GUPW	General Union of Palestinian Women
ICHR	Independent Commission for Human Rights
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MoEHE	Ministry of Education and Higher Education
MoH	Ministry of Health
Mol	Ministry of the Interior
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
MoL	Ministry of Labor
MoSA	Ministry of Social Affairs
MoWA	Ministry of Women's Affairs
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
oPt	occupied Palestinian territory
PCBS	Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
PLC	Palestinian Legislative Council
PNA	Palestinian National Authority
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's 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
VAW	Violence against Women
WCLAC	Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling

Introduction

This document is a strategic plan to combat violence against women (VAW) in territories under the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) for the period 2011 - 2019. A Medium-Term Plan for the years 2011 – 2013 has also been developed with partner institutions to determine the priorities for implementing the Strategy over the next three years. At the end of this period and every three years subsequent, the overall Strategy's priorities will be reassessed and a new Medium-Term Plan developed.

The goal of this Strategy is to combat VAW by promoting the principle of the rule of law based on women's rights and improving institutional mechanisms in the Palestinian society in order to protect and support abused women, and allow them to live in a society free from all forms of discrimination, based on equality, dignity, and respect for human rights. To achieve this goal, the Strategy adopts a cross-sectoral approach, as it deals with a developmental issue that not only affects women, but that also extends its influence to the social, economic, and political systems of the PNA as a whole. Hence, the implementation of the Strategy will depend on the government's commitment to ensuring that ministries adhere to the necessary procedures, as well as on the commitment of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to the Strategy's general framework. In addition, the private sector and the United Nations Relief and Work Agency (UNRWA) also have responsibilities and roles to play in the Strategy's implementation and follow-up with the National Committee to Combat VAW. UNRWA particularly bears direct responsibility for the provision of basic rights to Palestine refugee women.

The National Committee to Combat VAW,¹ was established in 2008 by the Palestinian Council of Ministries and is led by the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA). The Committee is responsible for following up and monitoring the implementation of the proposed Strategy and has a wide-ranging membership that includes a variety of governmental and non-governmental institutions represented by the NGO Forum to Combat VAW (Al-Muntada Coalition) and the General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW). The Strategy generally aims at mainstreaming the work on combating VAW into the different governmental institutions through the National Committee's endorsement of the Strategy and each ministry's adoption of its strategic goals specific to their mandate. In the following stages, each ministry must work on determining priority intervention policies from those proposed under each Strategy goal, followed by the development of work plans and appropriate indicators within this general framework.

The follow-up and evaluation procedure, considered to be a crucial component of this Strategy, requires that the National Committee forms a specialized committee in partnership with women's institutions, women-focused academia, and the Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR).² This specialized committee's main responsibility will be to monitor and follow-up on the implementation of the National Strategy to Combat VAW and measure its success in ending VAW.

The importance of this Strategy lies in its provision of a general framework to regulate the work of the many partners working on the issue of VAW. In addition, this Strategy determines the different and overlapping roles between the various parties concerned with combating VAW in order to achieve better outcomes towards ending VAW and ensuring respect for women's rights.

1 Members of the National Committee to Combat VAW are: Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA), Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA), Ministry of Justice (MoJ), Ministry of the Interior (MoI), Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE), Ministry of Health (MoH), Ministry of Labour (MoL), Ministry of Information, Ministry of Islamic Waqf and Religious Affairs, Dar Al-Fatwa, Office of the Chief Judge, President's Office Units of Governorates Affairs, General Secretariat of the General Union of Palestinian Women, and the NGO Forum to Combat VAW (Al-Muntada Coalition).

2 The Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR) was established by a Presidential Decree from the late President Yasser Arafat on 30 September 1993. The Decree was subsequently published in the Palestinian Official Gazette under number 59 of 1995. In accordance with the Decree, the duties and responsibilities of ICHR were set out as follows: "to follow-up and ensure that different Palestinian laws, by-laws and regulations, and the work of various departments, agencies and institutions of the State of Palestine and the Palestine Liberation Organization meet the requirements for safeguarding human rights". Furthermore, Article 31 of the Basic Law voted by the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) in 1997, ratified in 2002 and modified in 2003, provides that: "An independent Commission for Human Rights shall be established by law, which shall specify its formation, duties and jurisdiction. The Commission shall submit its reports to the President of the National Authority and the Palestinian Legislative Council".

This initiative is considered the first at a national level to propose a National Strategy to Combat VAW in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt). The idea for the Strategy developed from the work of women's institutions on gender-based violence in the oPt, which led to the acknowledgment of the crucial need for a comprehensive plan to combat VAW at the national level. The Strategy defines VAW as:

"All forms of physical, mental, sexual and verbal violence, social and economic deprivation, threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivations of liberty that are directed against a woman because she is a woman, whether directly or indirectly, inflicting physical, psychological, sexual, mental, social or economic harm or suffering, whether occurring in public or in private life."³

Violence is a very broad term that encompasses all forms of discrimination against women, including deprivation from the right to work, health, education and political participation, as well as family and civil rights in both the public and private spheres. As a general development issue, this Strategy addresses violence in details within the boundaries of the aforementioned definition. The Strategy should be seen as complementary to the PNA's 2011-2013 Cross-Sectoral National Gender Strategy, which includes VAW as one of its main themes.⁴ Hence, it is important to read the proposed policies and interventions in the National Strategy to Combat VAW in parallel with the Cross-Sectoral National Gender Strategy, remembering that within a holistic perspective, discrimination against women is considered to be a form of violence perpetrated against women.

This Strategy is concerned with women and children suffering from violence in all settings, wherever it may occur, and views VAW as a general cross-cutting issue that does not limit itself to a specific setting or a specific form, but rather as a consequence of discriminatory policies against women. However, in order to be more focused and to achieve the desired outcomes during the Strategy's nine-year implementation period (2011-2019), the institutions taking part in the Strategy's development have decided to place priority focus on VAW in certain contexts, namely:

- Violence against Palestinian women as a result of the Israeli occupation;
- Domestic violence and VAW within the family; and
- VAW in the workplace.

This prioritization was based on analysis of available studies and statistics on VAW in the oPt, in addition to reports of women's institutions working in the field of VAW, which demonstrated that violence within the family and domestic violence account for the largest portion of VAW in the oPt. The lack of data on violence against women outside of the household, however, does not mean that such violence does not exist. Rather, it may indicate that other forms of violence, such as VAW in the workplace in both private and public sectors, have not received the same level of institutional focus, and thus, are not represented in available statistics and case monitoring. Rather than denying women's suffering and need for protection from violence outside of the household's boundaries, such gaps point to the importance of establishing a database for improved collection and monitoring of cases of VAW in the oPt outside of the family sphere. Ultimately, any decision or legislation to be adopted in the oPt with regard to women's protection must address violence in all settings.

The discussion groups held for the purpose of developing this Strategy revealed that many women in both the formal and informal sectors of the workforce in the oPt suffer from multiple forms of violence, mostly sexual, verbal and economic. Economic violence is defined here as deprivation from vacations, low pay scales, non-payment of entitlements and insurance, etc. Discussion with the Gender Unit in the Ministry of Labour also indicated that a large

³ This definition was developed by institutions taking part in the preparation of the Strategy based on the definition of VAW in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) – Article 1 (1979), which defines it as "violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately. It includes acts that inflict physical, mental or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivations of liberty."

⁴ The 2011-2013 Cross-Sectoral National Gender Strategy (CSNGS) was developed by MoWA based on a decision from the Palestinian Council of Ministers to consider gender as a main cross-sectoral theme in the overall National Plan of the PNA for 2011-2013. In determining the themes of the Plan, VAW was considered a main theme and, as such, has been addressed in a separate strategic plan, which is also seen as part of the general framework of the CSNGS. Therefore, the CSNGS refers VAW issues to the specific VAW-related plan contained in this document.

percentage of women suffer from many violations of their labour rights and are exposed to violence in a number of different forms. However, both quantitative data and qualitative studies are lacking in the oPt on VAW in the workplace. One possible explanation for this lack of data and statistics may be that many women do not disclose their experiences with violence in the workplace out of fear of losing their jobs.

This Strategy seeks to institutionalize work on combating VAW in different governmental institutions through official endorsement of the Strategy, the adoption of its strategic goals, and the allocation of budgets for its implementation. Accordingly, the adoption of the National Strategy to Combat VAW must be complemented by a governmental commitment to take all measures necessary to facilitate its implementation. The PNA has already taken a number of decisions aiming at protecting women from violence, which demonstrates its commitment towards this goal.

In 2005, the Palestinian Council of Ministers issued a decision promoting the protection of women from violence. This decision came as a result of efforts by the Palestinian women's movement to obtain a formal PNA acknowledgment of the issue of VAW. The decision addressed the responsibilities of all ministries directly concerned with VAW as well as those who play a major role in combating it, such as the Ministry of Health (MoH), Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE), Ministry of the Interior (Mol), and Ministry of Justice (MoJ). However, no measures have yet been taken to implement the decision and follow-up and accountability by local institutions remains vague. Thus, to fully realize the goal of protecting women from violence, further work must be invested in the activation and follow-up of the PNA's decisions and integrated as part of this National Strategy.

In 2008, subsequent to a decision by the Palestinian Council of Ministers, a National Committee to Combat VAW in the oPt was formed and charged with the primary responsibility for preparing and monitoring the implementation of a National Strategy to Combat VAW. The formation of this Committee demonstrated governmental commitment to focusing on the issue of gender-based violence. In addition, the PNA President endorsed the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the UN Security Council Resolution 1325,⁵ both of which are necessary instruments for the protection of women's rights in general, and specifically their protection from violence. Moreover, the Council of Ministers issued a decision in 2009 to mainstream gender into ministerial plans under the PNA National Strategic Plan for 2010-2013. This governmental commitment was further reinforced by the Council of Ministers' decision to adopt gender-responsive budgeting in all governmental bodies.

Based on the work of governmental institutions and NGOs concerned with VAW, as well as meetings with women themselves in different locations, including women victims of violence in safe homes in the oPt, the following policies were identified as main themes in the organization of the work on combating VAW:

- Promote protection and empowerment mechanisms for women whose rights are being violated by the Israeli occupation.
- Promote a legal framework and institutional mechanisms to protect women from violence.
- Improve social protection and social support offered to women victims of violence.
- Improve health services for dealing with cases of VAW.
- Change community perceptions on VAW through the promotion of the principle of violence prevention as part of the strategic direction of institutions working on the protection of women's rights.
- Improve the system of legal protection, defence, and jurisdiction for the benefit of women victims of violence.
- Improve the system of monitoring, evaluation and follow-up of the National Strategy to Combat VAW.

Expected outcomes of this plan:

- Victims of violence obtain the protection and support necessary for their rehabilitation in the community at a national level.
- Change occurs in the attitudes of the Strategy's target groups towards more support for women's rights.
- Local laws and legislation change to reflect a view towards protecting women from violence.
- Infrastructure of community institutions concerned with women's protection from violence better serves women's rights.
- Media deals with cases of VAW in a systematic and organized manner.
- Organized work and systemic exchange of information takes place between institutions working on combating VAW.

⁵ UN Security Council Resolution 1325 calls for women's protection from violence in times of conflict and is available at: http://www.un.org/events/res_1325e.pdf.

Chapter One:

The Situation of Violence Against Women in the occupied Palestinian territory

Combating violence against women (VAW) is a developmental process which is not limited to women in isolation from broader social contexts. Violence is a cycle that does not stop with the person practicing violence or the person exposed to it. It is a behaviour that expresses a direction of thought and culture based on control. In the oPt, this control is promoted through the culture, norms and traditions which reinforce roles division between males and females. Women's role is often limited to a reproductive one, thus confining women to the private sphere, the family. Men's role, on the other hand, is often seen as a productive one in which responsibilities linked to their role as providers are attributed a monetary value and thus associated with the public sphere. This division is reflected in the prevailing laws, legislation and cultures of many Palestinian community institutions, which, in turn, contribute to the preservation of an inferior status for women, regardless of their age, social status, race or religion.

Palestinian women experience various forms of violence at two levels: at the international and national levels, on the one hand, and at the local level, on the other hand. At the international level, the Israeli occupation increases the level of violence in Palestinian society in general and affects all social groups, not women exclusively. Thus the occupation puts all members of Palestinian society, men, women, boys and girls, at risk of getting involved in cycles of violence. Yet, for women, the oppressive policies of the occupation are a double source of violence, reinforcing the violence they experience as a result of their already compromised social role and status at the internal, domestic level, where they often find themselves beyond official systems⁶ of protection in the Palestinian society, especially legal protection.

The Israeli occupation therefore contributes to increasing the marginalization of Palestinian women both directly and indirectly. The direct effect is manifested through women's exposure to all types of violence perpetrated by the occupation, such as beating, cursing, forcing women to deliver babies at checkpoints, etc. Women are also subjected to violence as females, not just Palestinians, via sexual or verbal assault at checkpoints, among others. Indirect effects of the occupation that contribute to VAW include, for example, the obstruction of the Palestinian legal system, which in turn hinders the provision of legal protection for Palestinian women, or the disabling of the Palestinian Legislative Council, hence hindering the ability and work of institutions to amend laws and legislation related to women's rights.

The second level at which women experience violence is at the internal, national level, including domestic violence, violence in the extended family and violence in community institutions. This Strategy addresses VAW at the international level, the level of the Israeli occupation, and at the national, or local level.

With regard to VAW in the general Palestinian context, there is a scarcity of data systematically or regularly collected by the parties and institutions working in this field. In addition, the data that is available from different institutions is often contradictory, creating a basic problem that must be dealt with in the future in order to allow for an accurate assessment of the magnitude of this issue in Palestinian society. A paper submitted by the coroner Dr. Ziad Al-Ashhab during preparations for the Strategy in February 2010, which included forensic medical statistics from known cases of VAW in the oPt,⁷ showed an increase in the number of cases of women exposed to violence. In

⁶ Official systems refer here to state institutions and associated legislation and legal systems.

⁷ Dr. Al-Ashhab Ziad, "How Forensic Medicine Deals with Cases of Violence against Women in Palestine", 2009. A paper submitted to the conference on how the judicial system and forensic medicine deal with cases of violence against women, February 2010.

2006, 64 cases of sexual assault were reported as compared to 85 cases in 2007, 339 cases in 2008 and 466 cases in 2009. The number of recorded murder attempts against women reported cases were 72 in 2009, ranging in nature from stabbing to poisoning, intense beating, denial of treatment following exposure to violence, burning, drowning, and falling.

With regard to qualitative data on VAW in the oPt, although many institutions have shown recent interest in conducting such studies because of their potential for depth and richness of analysis, the qualitative studies that currently exist about VAW in the Palestinian context are mostly generic and do not examine the issue in adequate depth. Furthermore, the number of such qualitative studies on VAW in the oPt does not exceed 20. Of the few in-depth studies that do exist, the focus is limited to family violence and especially violence against married women, without examining the situation of other women, such as single women, children or widows.

1. Factors leading to violence against women

In addition to the findings of focus groups held with women for the purpose of developing this Strategy, local studies on VAW⁸ have unveiled many factors that may lead to violence. In both the focus groups and studies, VAW was found to often result from the interplay of a number of socio-economic, political and cultural factors. Most available local studies and interviews with women showed that VAW is often based on social factors stemming from a male culture which promotes male power and control. As a result, women's role and status in the society has been marginalized as women's power and control to decide of their fate and make their own decisions has been taken away from them. This reality is further emphasized in local legislation and laws which treat women as absent from the official, public sphere. It is also reflected in the general absence of laws for the protection of women's rights.

Culture, norms and traditions have been shown to be the main factors behind VAW in the Palestinian society, and as such they form a general framework for explaining this violence. Patriarchal culture is an important parameter in this regard, as it shapes the general mindset from which Palestinian norms, traditions, laws, and community behaviours stem. Accordingly, the role of traditional methods of child rearing in Palestinian society is also important for consideration, as it promotes gendered role divisions among family members in favour of male dominance and power. This role division conforms males space in both the public (community, political) and private (family, home) spheres, while it restricts women to the private (family, home) sphere. This issue was discussed in clear detail by women in the focus groups, showing that Palestinian women are aware of the fact that the existing culture contributes to the increased severity of violence practiced against them. Women participants in the focus groups cited gendered role division within the family as one of the main factors contributing to VAW. For example, some women stated that they raise their children in a manner that promotes male/son power and marginalizes the daughter's role, sometimes through simple behaviours, such as requiring that the daughter serve the brother a glass of water or prepare the table for the brother. Such behaviours emphasize male power and reinforce a process of gendered role division built on the notion of marginalization of the role of women.

Local laws and legislation that completely disregard women further reinforce such situations. These laws treat women unfairly and focus on the promotion of male power in Palestinian communities.

Some local studies on VAW have examined the political and economic factors that contribute to VAW. These factors include the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory and the denial of Palestinian citizens' rights at all social, economic, and political levels, denial which increases women's suppression of their basic rights. Women focus group participants also emphasized these factors, highlighting the interplay between the occupation and violence practiced against them both internationally and locally. They indicated that the oppressive policies of the occupation, which impose checkpoints and expose men to daily insults, in turn increases the severity of violence practiced against women by their husbands and brothers. It is important to note that women often turn to such perceptions in order to justify the violence they are subjected to as a mechanism for coping with and accepting the reality they live in, leading to the continuation of the violence perpetrated by their own families. Similarly, women participants pointed out that increased unemployment rates resulting from the occupation's closure policies and

⁸ See in "Crimes of Women's Killing in Palestine In the period 2004-2006", Palestinian Non- Governmental Organization Against Violence Against Women. Also in Kevorkian, Nadera "Mapping and Analyzing the Landscape of Femicide in the Palestinian Society" Women's centre for legal Aid and Counseling, 2004.

the destruction of infrastructure at the beginning of the second intifada, along with its wider devastating impact on the Palestinian society, has contributed to increasing domestic frustrations and violence. Such examples point to the need for education and awareness-raising among Palestinian women to reject violence regardless of the factors behind it.

The increasing prevalence of violence in the Palestinian society as a result of the oppressive policies of the occupation and the various forms it uses to spread a culture of violence among all Palestinian social groups has led to an increase in stress and fear among Palestinian children. This situation has contributed to promoting a culture of violence among children that is recognizable in their violence-based approaches to play, especially in schools.

With regard to youth in the current political and socio-economic situation in the oPt, women focus group participants cited an absence of effective programmes, clubs, entertainment venues, public parks, and cultural activities for youth, especially in villages and remote areas. As a result, increased amounts of free time for youth has led male youth to spend more time in the streets or surfing the Internet, leading to increased exposure to negative influences and information that has contributed to increased or more severe practices of violence. Girls, however, especially in villages and refugee camps, stated that the long periods of free time make them feel depressed and constrain their choices, increasingly making early marriage an available consideration for escaping this reality. However, this factor should not be considered the main explanation for or analysis of the issue of early marriage in Palestinian society. In many cases of early marriage, girls are often denied their right to choose and decide their own fate by their fathers, brothers, and other male family members, who force them to marry in order to protect the dignity of the family, as well as to decrease the family's financial burden under the strain of the current political and economic context. In general, the occupation's political blockade and targeting of youth causes them to feel depressed and hopeless about their prospects for a promising future.

One of the important cultural, social, political, and economic factors that women focus group participants mentioned as leading to increased violence, but which was not addressed in in-depth studies on VAW, was the long time spent by men in cafes as a result of unemployment. Women cited that this distances men from their families and breaks their relationship with their children, increasing the burden on women, as they are effectively forced to raise their children on their own.

The findings of the in-depth interviews with women who were exposed to violence conducted as part of this Strategy's development revealed that VAW is perpetrated via different forms and by different parties, both directly and indirectly. Many women talked about the problem of husbands turning to drugs and alcohol as a factor for violence. Some mentioned that there are cases of violence against girls that never reach institutions, as they are solved internally by the family in order to preserve the family's dignity at the expense of the girls themselves. Some women participants said they did not know any names or addresses of institutions that offer protection or legal and social counselling for women. Some also stated that they were not aware of their legal rights in matters of marriage, divorce, and custody.

From reviewing and analysing the work and realities of institutions working on issues of VAW in the oPt, it is obvious that the approaches and intervention mechanisms used in both public and private institutions do not provide women with complete protection from violence. A number of factors contribute to this, including the failure of the legal frameworks applicable in the oPt to provide women with adequate legal protection, especially in the case of the Palestinian penal code, personal status law, and civil status law. Certain legal texts clearly marginalize women's status by dealing with them only as dependants rather than independent individuals with rights and responsibilities as any other citizen. Additionally, the work of institutions on cases of VAW in the oPt was found to be unsystematic in terms of follow-up, coordination with other relevant institutions, and approach in service provision. Furthermore, many of the institutions that work with women victims of violence in the oPt are not legally protected, and therefore may be under continuous threat from the family of the perpetrator of the violence. Such factors hinder the improvement of the quality of the services offered to women and thus also hinder the achievement of successfully combating VAW.

The interviews conducted as part of this Strategy's development were effective in determining the gaps in official and unofficial systems⁹ in the oPt (this will be further explained later in the document) with regard to the protection of women's rights. For example, women victims of violence in safe homes stated that they did not trust police centres because there are no special reception areas for women that would provide privacy and protect their dignity. In addition, the police and prosecutors lack specialized personnel for dealing with women victims of violence, thus discouraging women from reporting to them when they are exposed to violence.

It is impossible to list all of the different factors leading to violence which require in-depth research by stakeholders in combating VAW. Nonetheless, it is important to address VAW comprehensively, considering it as a problem that affects development processes in general, rather than dealing with one factor and dismissing others. VAW is interconnected and intersectional. As demonstrated through the women's focus group results and studies mentioned, matters that affect one right also affect other rights, making violence a vicious cycle that affects society as a whole, not just the individual.

2. Statistics and facts about violence against women in the occupied Palestinian territory

=== The Israeli occupation's violence against Palestinian women¹⁰ ===

Palestinian women are subjected to violence in multiple forms under the policies of the Israeli occupation. The occupation increases the burden on Palestinian women by destroying infrastructure and endangering their human security, further contributing to the denial of their basic rights. The oppressive policies of the Israeli occupation are mainly exercised at two levels: by the official authorities via the Israeli occupying army, and unofficial ones, often in the form of Jewish settlers in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt). Many reports have documented the tragedy and suffering of women giving birth at checkpoints, house demolitions, inspections at checkpoints, and the difficulty of accessing health centres, workplaces, schools and universities. All of these measures increase the burden of the occupation on Palestinian women and often deny them their basic rights, an outcome that institutions largely fail to reflect in their reports and documentation of VAW in the oPt.

In a press release issued by Maan News Agency in 2007, reference was made to psychological and sexual violence at Israeli military checkpoint in Beit Safafa. Cases were documented of a number of Palestinian women who reported being forced to strip naked at checkpoints under the pretext of security checks.¹¹ In another press report about this degrading policy, an article in Al-Hayat Al-Jadida newspaper on 25 May 2009 confirmed the occurrence of forced strip searches under the pretext of security checks.¹² With regard to Israeli occupation soldiers' practice of VAW, the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights has documented a testimony of a woman who talked about her experience when visiting her husband in Ashqelon Prison:¹³

"... We reached the Jalmeh checkpoint. There we went through 16 doors or so before reaching the Israeli buses that transported us to the prisons. We got to the stage before last [of these procedures]. At this stage, personal IDs and belongings are checked, but my card was taken away from me... The soldiers called the sister of one of the prisoners and made her go into one of the rooms and then asked her to take off all her clothes, and she said no. The same happened with the wife of a prisoner called Youssef, and she also refused. So they told me about what happens in the room and when it was my turn, I entered the room which was not more than three meters in length, with no windows, and a number of loud speakers and cameras. They asked me to take off my jilbab (gown) and I said no. They made me go out, and later they made all three of us go back into the same room and locked us in for about 45 minutes..."¹⁴

9 "Official system" here refers to legislation, laws, and regulations. The "unofficial system" refers to civil society organizations.

10 For more statistics on the impact of the occupation on the situation of women in the different sectors of the oPt, please refer to the 2011-2013 Cross-Sectoral National Gender Strategy.

11 Maan News Agency, "Israeli occupation soldiers at Bethlehem Crossing force Palestinian women to strip naked". See in: <http://www.maan-news.net/arb/Print.aspx?ID=68553>.

12 Al-Hayat Al-Jadida, 2009. "Who will ring the bell? Strip search at checkpoints and gates is a policy by the Israeli occupation to undermine the resilience of our women."

13 Palestinian Center for Human Rights. "Weekly Report on Israeli Violations in the oPt." 2008.

14 Ibid.

In a study issued by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (now part of UN Women) in 2009 involving 1,100 women, respondents confirmed that the prevalence of violence against them has increased, especially in the aftermath of the war on Gaza in December 2008 through January 2009.¹⁵ The following table illustrates the effect of the occupation in terms of increasing internal violence, especially domestic violence, according to community perceptions.¹⁶

Form of violence	Increase according to men	Increase according to women
Domestic violence against wife	54%	52%
Domestic violence against children	51%	49%
Killings due to internal conflict	47%	45%
Early marriage	38%	37%
Sexual harassment	28%	24%
“Honour” killing	22%	18%
Incest	22%	20%

The same study indicates that 60% of women believe that killing by the Israeli occupation has increased, compared to 64% of men who maintained the same perception.¹⁷

The occupation contributes to the overall increase in VAW in the oPt. Both official and unofficial aspects of the occupation reinforce patriarchal control over women through a range of various practices. Although there are no statistics that accurately examine the extent of sexual violence against women resulting from the occupation, largely due to the cultural sensitivity of and taboo about this subject, a number of testimonies have been documented by the Women’s Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC) which demonstrate women’s exposure to assault and harassment as a result of the occupation. One woman testified that: “A 13-year-old settler threw a rock at my shoulder. I tried to defend myself and catch him, but his sister, who was big in size, showed up. She started kicking me in the legs, hitting me with her hands, spitting on me, swearing at me and threatening me. Then other settlers started to gather, I had to run away to my uncle’s house which was close by. But they started chasing me. When I got to my uncle’s place, they were still behind me, and then they gathered around the house. Since that day, I don’t go out of the house alone. My grandfather even picks up my brothers and sisters from school now. I feel bored with the life I am living. We are deprived the ability to go out freely, we were not even able to leave the house during the Eid (holiday). I feel like I am in a prison because the house is surrounded with meshed wires and we cannot go out.”¹⁸

When looking into violence practiced by the Israeli occupation against children, Defence for Children International/Palestinian Section (DCI/PS) explains in its report on children’s rights that “Israel unleashed a 23-day military assault on the Gaza Strip, codenamed Operation Cast Lead, on 27 December 2008, killing more than 330 children, injuring hundreds of others, destroying homes, services and infrastructure, and traumatizing the entire population... Children, who make up 56 per cent of the population of Gaza, bear the brunt of suffering from these actions, and continue to suffer today, while the blockade is continuing.”¹⁹ According to this report, prior to the war on the Gaza Strip, 90 Palestinian children had been killed by the Israeli military over the course of 2008. The overwhelming majority (74) were not involved in hostilities when they were killed. During the same period, nearly 690 children were arrested, including 14 who were placed in administrative detention without charge or trial. The oPt remains a violent and unsafe environment in which to grow up, especially for vulnerable children in refugee camps, along the route of the Separation Wall, and in villages situated near Israeli settlements.²⁰

15 http://www.unifem.org/news_events/story_detail.php?StoryID=868

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.

18 Affidavit by Raja’ Taysir Mohammed Abu Aisha. Documented by the Women’s Centre for Legal Aid and Counseling, 2006.

19 Palestinian Child Day: Children face an increasingly insecure environment, at: <http://www.dci-pal.org/english/displaycfm?DocId=1103&CategoryId=1>.

20 Ibid.

== Violence within the family and domestic violence ==

A few local studies have addressed the issue of violence within the family and domestic violence in Palestinian society. Before delving into statistics, however, it is important to point out that while nuclear families constitute 84.6% of families in the oPt, the nature of prevailing social relations continues to rely on extended families, with family affairs generally not confined to the nuclear family level, but usually extended to family members at the fourth degree.

In order to provide a general picture of family and domestic violence in the oPt, statistics first issued by Bisan Center for Research and Development, although not recent, represent the first local study dealing with the issue of violence in Palestinian society. This 1995 study²¹ focused on the problem of violence within the family and domestic violence, seeking to address it through a more institutionalized approach. The study revealed that 7.4% of the girls from a total sample of 1,153, had been subjected to sexual harassment by brothers, 5.2% subjected to attempted rape by a family member, and 4.3% subjected to rape by their father. In two later surveys carried out by Bisan Center in 1998 addressing the issue of VAW, the majority of men and women surveyed considered sex to be a legitimate right of men and did not consider it rape if a wife was coerced into having sex by her husband. Statistics in both surveys indicated that 23% of female respondents had been pushed forcibly by their husbands and 33% had been slapped by their husbands.²²

In 2005, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) conducted the first statistical study on VAW in the oPt, where findings confirmed that women in Palestinian society are exposed to various forms of violence. According to the study, 23.3% of women who had ever been married reported that they had been exposed to physical violence, 61.7% to psychological violence, and 10% to sexual violence.²³

Based on statistics from the Al-Muntada Coalition, 11 cases of femicide on the pretext of "family honour" were documented in 2009, including seven in the West Bank and four in the Gaza Strip. The Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR) also documented nine such cases in the West bank and four in the Gaza Strip in 2009. In 2010, ICHR documented nine women who had been killed under the pretext of "family honour".²⁴

Palestinian Police statistics in 2009 indicate that 1,173 cases²⁵ of violence within the family and domestic violence, were reported that year, ranging from physical abuse to attempted murder, threats, rape, attempted rape and attempted suicide. The Family Protection Unit in the Bethlehem Police Department recorded 126 cases of girls fleeing their homes after being subjected to domestic violence.²⁶

Statistics from the Mehwar Centre for Women's Protection indicate that 86 cases were received in the Centre's protection department between 2007 and the end of 2008. In 2009, 50 cases were received from various locations throughout the West Bank, in addition to 12 children accompanying their mothers. Furthermore, 100 cases, all related to domestic violence, were received by the Mehwar Centre's outpatient services for the purpose of social and legal counselling from the beginning of March 2007 through the end of December 2009. Based on statistics from the Sawa Center, 4,732 women called their violence help line during 2009.²⁷

In addition, statistics from the Girls' Care Center indicate that 19 girl victims of domestic violence were received in 2009. DCI statistics reported that the organization offered counselling services to 24 female children exposed to domestic violence.²⁸

21 Haj Yahia, Muhammad Kutab (1995), Palestinian Women and Domestic Violence: Analyzing Girls opinion on Domestic Violence. Bisan Centre for Research and Development, Ramallah.

22 Haj Yahia, Muhammad (1999), Wife Abuse and Battering in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Bisan Centre for Research and Development, Ramallah.

23 PCBS (2006). Domestic Violence Survey.

24 NGO Forum to Combat Violence Against Women (Al-Muntada Coalition), Annual report 2010.

25 Palestinian police statistics (2009 Annual Report)

26 Family Protection Unit Annual Statistics.

27 Sawa – All the Women Together Today and Tomorrow, Sawa Statistical Report for 2009.

28 NGO Forum to Combat Violence Against Women (Al-Muntada Coalition), 2009, Report on Violence Against Women in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

A brief 2008 report from the organization SAWA - "All the Women Together Today and Tomorrow on the trafficking and forced prostitution of Palestinian women and girls" shows that domestic violence practiced against girls also takes other forms. One of the cases included in this report is that of a father who sold his two teenage daughters (aged 13 and 14) to two young men for the price of 1,150 Jordanian dinars.²⁹ The protection of women from forms of violence like trafficking is increasingly problematic in areas of the oPt under Israeli jurisdiction, such as East Jerusalem and Area C. Prostitution houses in the oPt are concentrated mostly in East Jerusalem, especially the old city, as well as in Israeli settlements, refugee camps and the surrounding areas West of Jerusalem.³⁰

With regard to violence within the family and domestic violence particularly in the Gaza Strip, the 2005 PCBS study on VAW indicated that 23% of women who had ever been married reported that they had been exposed to physical violence, 10% to sexual violence and 50% to psychological violence.³¹

A study on the situation and needs of divorced women in the oPt, conducted by the Center for Women's Legal Research and Consulting in 2009, revealed that the prevalence of violence against divorced women is increasing, with 88% of divorced women reporting that they have been exposed to community violence, 71% to domestic violence and 86% to violence by the Israeli occupation.³²

In a recent study published in 2009 by the Palestinian Women's Information and Media Center,³³ 67% of women reported that they have been subjected to verbal violence on a regular basis, 71% to psychological violence, 52.4% to physical violence and 14.5% to sexual violence, with 44.7% of the women reporting exposure to several forms of violence at the same time. The same study indicated that 26% of women do not feel safe in their homes because of violence and that 35.8% stressed that their resistance to violence has vanished or diminished due to other priorities. In addition, 39% of women reported being forced to drop out of school at an early age in order to get married or find a job because of poverty. It is important to note that 38.5% of women in the sample who had ever been married were married at an early age (under 18) and 31% indicated that they were divorced or threatened with divorce by their husbands. With regard to reproductive health, 22.8% of women in the same study reported that after giving birth to children, they were unable to breastfeed them; 19.3% reported giving birth to underweight babies; and 82.3% indicated that they had been subjected to risks associated with the inhalation of hazardous or poisonous gases because of their direct work in igniting firewood or gasoline or as a result of their exposure to white phosphorus radiation, which was widely used during the 2008-2009 war on the Gaza Strip.

In conclusion, **forms of violence within the family and domestic violence against women in the Palestinian society** may include:³⁴

- Physical abuse by one's husband, father, brother or a male in-law.
- Threat of killing.
- Rape by one's brother, father, uncle, father-in-law or husband.
- Fleeing home because of exposure to physical or sexual violence.
- Sexual harassment.
- Emotional apathy.
- Verbal violence.
- Neglect.
- Social division of roles in the family that favours males over females.

29 Sawa – All the Women Together Today and Tomorrow. Trafficking and Forced Prostitution of Palestinian Women and Girls: Forms of Modern Day Slavery. A Briefing Paper, June 2008.

30 Ibid.

31 PCBS (2006), Domestic Violence Survey.

32 Center for Women's Legal Research and Consulting (2009), Situation and Needs of Divorced Women in Gaza Strip. In: <http://www.cwlr.org/research/word/1266399856Research%20Women%20law.pdf>.

33 Palestinian Women's Information and Media Center (2009), Violations Suffered by Women in Gaza Strip. In: <http://www.pwic.org.ps/derasat/derasat25.html>.

34 Based on reports of various institutions working of women protection from violence.

== Violence Against Women in the workplace ==

Statistics on VAW in the workplace in the oPt, both quantitative and qualitative, are very few. Although women constitute a small proportion of the formal work sector in the oPt, accounting for 15.4% of workers in the third quarter of 2009,³⁵ they still suffer from multiple types of violence in the workplace. This was affirmed in the discussion groups held for the purpose of developing this Strategy. Working women reported being subjected to verbal violence by their direct supervisors, and in some cases, sexual harassment. However, most of the cases reported by the women participants involved experiences of economic violence in terms of salary, working hours, health conditions in the workplace, etc. In the informal sector in the oPt, women are considered outside of the labour force. In spite of attempts by PCBS to include the informal sector in its labour force statistics, a comprehensive illustration of the situation of women working in different aspects of the informal sector has yet to be achieved. For example, women working in house-keeping have not been included in the informal sector, although they constitute a high proportion of working women in the oPt. In addition, institutions working on women's rights have not provided statistics and situational analysis on women working in the informal sector, and no economic studies have been conducted to measure the contribution of women's informal work to the gross national income of the PNA. Therefore, issues relating to their rights are not reflected on the national agenda. Hence, it is important to work on increasing the visibility of the informal sector in the oPt, where women constitute a large proportion of the labour force, and to ensure that rights are secured and trade unions are active in monitoring the rights of those women.

A study published in 2009 by the Women's Information and Media Center on "Violations Suffered by Women in Gaza Strip" indicated that 32.5% of working women in the Gaza Strip are subjected to exploitation, discrimination, very long working hours and poor working conditions. Also, 68% of working women reported that they do not have complete discretion in using their wages. In a discussion group, a participant indicated that her request for maternity leave led to psychological violence from her director, who stated: "It is my fault that I chose a woman for this job. Women should stay at home after marriage because they are considered a loss for the company."³⁶ (For further information regarding the economic situation of women in the oPt, see the 2011-2013 Cross-Sectoral National Gender Strategy).

== Social and economic costs of Violence Against Women ==

Regardless of its form and severity, VAW is a violation of human rights. VAW is a public and national issue that is not only problematic for women, but also has tangible consequences for the nation, the society and immediate environment of individuals, in addition to the victim herself. However, the common view of VAW as an issue specific to women has created a gap in Palestinian national statistics and accounts for measuring the effects and costs of VAW on Palestinian society and on the government's general budget. VAW has negative social, economic and political consequences, which affect major sectors in the oPt's development. The development process is carried out through the participation of all social segments and through different approaches. Some are long-term, such as the provision of a high-quality formal or vocational education for all students (considering them the main future agents of development), while others are direct and short-term.

VAW causes negative effects that are not only limited to women and girls, but which also extend to future generations. For example, domestic violence practiced against a working woman affects the development process in that it can cause physical health and psychological consequences that may require the woman to take sick leave from work. In addition, effects of psychological violence can lessen a woman's ability to focus and decrease her productivity at work. Further burdens are placed on the government when it must provide specialized clinics and lawyers for dealing with cases of VAW.

Implications of VAW are not only limited to the woman experiencing violence, but can also influence her children, as experiences of violence in the family often lead to low school performance by children. This has developmental and economic consequences on the society as a whole, as repeating the school year creates a financial burden on the government, generates a need to provide social workers, and contributes to increased school dropout rates. This, in turn, results in additional economic consequences, as it creates a need for childcare and rehabilitation

³⁵ PCBS, See: <http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/DesktopDefault.aspx?tabID=4112&lang=ar-JO>.

³⁶ Discussion group held for the preparation of the National Strategy to Combat VAW, March 2010.

centres, requiring government allocated budgets to meet these needs. Resulting increases in unemployment and the number of homeless children also creates a burden on the government and society in the long run.

The previous examples aim at helping to identify indicators for the impact of VAW on development in the oPt. The following are some suggested indicators for measuring the economic costs of VAW:³⁷

1. Government expenses on provision of medical treatment, shelters, and protection for women victims of violence.
2. Psychological therapy that the government must provide to address the consequences of VAW on family members.
3. Costs of monitoring VAW cases.
4. Expenses made by the individual to legally follow-up VAW cases, as well as lawyer costs, etc.
5. Transportation expenses for institutions and individuals to follow-up on VAW cases.
6. Loss of income due to repeated absence from work or ineffective job performance.
7. Social expenses due to broken families.
8. Costs of training and empowering individuals on how to deal with VAW.
9. Costs of issuing legislation and laws on the protection of women from violence.

Calculating the costs of VAW is not an easy process, especially when seeking to measure the indirect and non-tangible effects of violence. It is necessary, therefore, to work at a national level to develop a mechanism for measuring the impact of VAW on the family as a whole and on society in general, as such a mechanism will be particularly useful in the later stages of the implementation of the National Strategy to Combat VAW, to help measure the economic costs for the PNA in combating VAW.

37 Orlando, Maria Beatriz and Morrison, Andrew R. The costs and impacts of gender-based violence in developing countries. Methodological considerations and new evidence. Nov. 2004. Also see Costs of Violence against Women .2006 in www.gender-budgets.org/index.php?option=com_joomdoc.

Chapter Two:

The Legal Reality of Women's Protection from Violence

The political circumstances in the oPt, circumstances which affect its legislative process, have turned the legal situation in the oPt into a major dilemma rarely faced by other societies. The present-day oPt has gone through different episodes of political and legal rule, starting with rule by the Ottoman Empire that ended in 1917 and followed by rule under the British Mandate for Palestine. While the mandate system required that the mandate country preserve the interests of the mandated territory without intervening in its internal and legal affairs, the British Mandate clearly worked to find a legal platform to facilitate the creation of a Jewish state on Palestinian land by almost completely erasing the territory's Ottoman legal heritage. Citing Article 46 of the Palestinian Constitution Order, which stipulated that "the Ottoman laws, British laws specifically made for Palestine, and the rules of the justice and fairness suitable for the Palestinian situation," the British Mandate authority cancelled and amended some of the Ottoman-era laws in order to serve its own interests. One of the most important of these laws was the penal code, which was at the centre of attention because of the political circumstances that existed at that time. The amendment of this law resulted in the issuing of a new penal code in 1936, which is still applicable in Gaza to date.³⁸

In 1948, a new historical political era began with the Israeli occupation and partition of Palestinian land. The West Bank was annexed to Jordanian rule and the Gaza Strip fell under Egyptian administration. This political division was accompanied by a division in the legal frameworks applicable to these territories. The Israeli legal system was imposed on the Palestinians residing within the 1948 borders of the Israeli state, who are considered Israeli citizens. Palestinians in the West Bank were made to follow a combination of Ottoman and Jordanian laws, while Palestinians in the Gaza Strip were made to follow a combination of Ottoman and Egyptian laws. Following the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967, military orders were added to the laws imposed on the Palestinians in both locations. The situation was even more complex for Palestinians in the city of Jerusalem. Within the framework of Israel's systematic policies aiming at Judaizing the city, Palestinian citizens in Jerusalem were made to follow a combination of Jordanian and Israeli laws. The Jordanian personal status law is still applicable for Palestinian residents of Jerusalem today. However, they are falling under Israeli laws for such matters as finances shared between a married couple, custody, and polygamy. Additionally, Palestinian residents of Jerusalem are falling under the Israeli penal code.

The expansion of the Israeli occupation to all the Palestinian land in 1967 widened the split in the Palestinian legal system. The military occupation issued Israeli Military Order 2 which vested all the powers in the hands of the military ruler, stating that all laws applied in the West Bank and Gaza Strip prior to 1967 shall remain into force. The presence of two separate legal regimes in place in the West Bank (Jordanian law) and Gaza Strip (Egyptian law) at the time led to the creation of two military administrations by the Israeli government, one for each of these areas. The military administrations at that time did not exert any effort into the unification of the legal and administrative systems between the West Bank and Gaza Strip, but rather focused all of their efforts on controlling and tightening their political authority. In 1981, the occupation authorities issued Israeli Military Order 725 in the Gaza Strip and Israeli Military Order 947 in the West Bank, marking a major transformation point in the history of the Israeli military occupation, as both orders provided for the establishment of a civil administration.³⁹

In 1994, the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967 entered in a new historical and legal era with the signing of the Oslo Accords between the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Israeli government. This resulting yet

38 Orlando, Maria Beatriz and Morrison, Andrew R. The costs and impacts of gender-based violence in developing countries. Methodological considerations and new evidence. Nov. 2004. Also see Costs of Violence against Women .2006 in www.gender-budgets.org/index.php?option=com_joomdo.

39 Ibid.

into further division of the occupied Palestinian land into different administrative and political areas, subjected to different schemes of control by both Israel and the PNA. This led the Palestinian Judiciary to lose complete geographic jurisdiction over the oPt, rendering it unable to assume its tasks and roles in due manner. The agreement signed between the two sides led to the creation of geographic areas classified as either Area A, B or C, each with a different political status and legal systems in force. Area A falls under the control of the PNA, and as such, is under Palestinian legal jurisdiction. In Area B, security issues fall under Israeli control, but administrative control is under PNA jurisdiction. Area C, however, is under complete Israeli control and supervision, both in terms of security and administration.⁴⁰

Under this divided legal reality, aggravated by the political and economic crisis prevailing through 2007, Palestinians have suffered from the absence of the rule of law. The Israeli occupation has heavily contributed to this suffering, as it has actively worked to weaken the PNA's ability to perform its duties and deliberately sought to destroy the elements necessary to strengthen and build the Palestinian society. Moreover, Israeli occupation policies have deprived and continue to deprive Palestinians, especially women, from a sense of human security. This in turn, has led to increasing violence both inside and outside of the family in the Palestinian society. Furthermore, the Israeli policy of isolating the West Bank from the Gaza Strip, in addition to the isolation of areas within the West Bank and within the Gaza Strip following the outburst of the second intifada and Israeli incursions in the oPt, has led to increased chaos in terms of security and an absence of the rule of the law. This situation has contributed to the lack of adequate protection for Palestinian citizens in the oPt, along with the Israeli State's failure to meet its responsibilities in the oPt under international agreements, specifically the Fourth Geneva Convention, which requires that Israel provides the Palestinians living in the oPt with security for their lives.

Following the second elections of the Palestinian Legislative Council in 2006, the political situation further deteriorated. The victory of the Hamas party resulted in an international boycott of the PNA. The impact of this boycott was not limited only to the PNA, but impacted the basic rights of Palestinian citizens in the oPt. The Palestinian Legislative Council became dysfunctional as members of the democratically elected PLC were arrested by the Israeli Authorities, hindering the legislative process and heavily affecting women already suffering locally from prejudice and marginalization. The non-payment of salaries to employees in the public sector after this time has also led to further decline in the economic situation of many Palestinians, increasing the burdens on women, who play a major role in responding to the family's basic needs and ensuring their sustainability.

The overall political situation prevailing after the PLC elections in 2006 led to a political separation between the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This political split has directly affected women's rights, especially with regards to legislation. The presence of two separate governments in the West Bank and Gaza Strip has led to two separate executive and legislative authorities. In addition, the inability of the Palestinian Legislative Council to function as a result of the Israeli occupation and the political separation of Gaza and the West Bank has in turn disrupted the legislative process and efforts to unify the Palestinian laws for the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

In terms of the local mechanisms available within the historico-political framework of the Palestinian society for the protection of women's rights, they can be divided into formal and non-formal mechanisms. Formal mechanisms include the legal framework and legislation: the Palestinian Basic Law, the penal code, and the formal executive framework including the police, the judiciary, and the Ministry of Social Affairs. Informal protection mechanisms consist of the tribal system, political parties and women's institutions.

1. Formal protection mechanisms: Local legislation

== The Basic Law ==

The Palestinian Basic Law is the main umbrella under which different local laws are made and with which they must be in agreement, just like the Constitutions used in other countries. The Palestinian Basic Law states in Article 9 that: "All Palestinians are equal under the law and judiciary, without discrimination on the basis of race, sex, colour, religion, political views, or disability." This means that all individuals are equal whether they are males or

females. In addition, Articles 1 and 2 of the Palestinian Basic Law state that the Palestinian society is composed of different groups of people, all of whom are under the law.⁴¹ However, the first paragraph of Article 11 of the Basic Law, which states that "personal freedom is a natural right, and shall be guaranteed and protected," does not agree with some applied local laws, where women are deprived of their personal freedom and are not granted their right of choice and self-determination. This is specifically demonstrated in the texts of local laws like the penal code and personal status law, which promote the dependency of women, considering them as objects owned by males in the family. For example, the guardianship clause in the personal status law promotes the dependency of women, considering them incapable of making decisions. There is also a clear commitment by the PNA to recognize and adopt international conventions and treaties under Article 10 of the Basic Law. However, this is not reflected in the legislative process. This contradiction between the philosophy of the Palestinian Basic Law and that of the local legislation in practice is considered a major problem in enacting and amending laws, as some community groups are excluded from attaining formal legal protection.

Although the Palestinian Basic Law endorses the freedoms and rights of each individual in the Palestinian society, a gap exists between the local cultural reality in the oPt and the legislative process based on human rights standards and international documents, gap which has resulted in the preservation of a marginalized status for women and their rights within the Palestinian legislative process.

=== Women's protection in the penal code ===

Women fall under the 1960 Jordanian penal code in the West Bank (except for Palestinian women in East Jerusalem, who fall under the Israeli penal code) and the 1936 British penal code law in the Gaza Strip. Hence, the applicable penal codes in each location are not based on the Palestinian Basic Law issued in 2003. As such, women do not have the legal protection that should be provided by the law. Rather, the law treats women as the ones responsible for crimes perpetrated against them.

As a result of the continued work of MoWA, the General Union of Palestinian Women, and women and human rights NGOs, the PNA took preventive and protective measures in support of women's rights by suspending Article 340 of the Jordanian penal code in West Bank and Article 18 of the penal code applicable in the Gaza Strip,⁴² both of which relate to so-called "honour killing." At the same time, the PNA has been working on a new national penal code, which would ensure women's rights and protect them from violence, especially from "honour" crimes. However, the new penal code has yet to be discussed or ratified and remains a draft open for discussion and negotiation. Therefore, this Strategy proposes to work on amending some articles in the currently applicable penal code to enhance women's protection, while working in parallel with the legal committee mandated to develop the new penal code in order to ensure that it considers the proposed amendments.

How the law addresses physical and sexual crimes

Physical violence crimes

Violent crimes range from simple victimization crimes, which are prosecuted following a complaint made by the victim, up to severe victimization crimes, for which criminal charges are brought by the general prosecutor without the need for a complaint from the victim, as stated in Article 334 of the 1960 Jordanian penal code applicable in the West Bank and Article 250 in the British penal code applicable in Gaza Strip. As a consequence, the legislature has made it difficult to combat such forms of violence. For instance, in the case of a simple physical victimization crime, the victim is required to bring reports from her/his employer to prove that she/he was not able to work as a result of being the victim of physical violence that led to an inability to work. This means reports must be brought from the employer to prove the inability of the victim to work. Because this requirement means that a victim must be employed to make a complaint, many women working at home (reproductive role), for a family business,

⁴¹ Article 1 states that "Palestine is part of the large Arab World, and the Palestinian People are part of the Arab Nation. Arab Unity is an objective which the Palestinian People shall work to achieve." Article 2 states that "the Palestinian People are the source of all power, which shall be exercised through the legislative, executive, and judicial authorities, based on the principle of separation of powers, and in the manner set forth in this Basic Law."

⁴² The Council of Ministers issued a decision to the effect of suspending Article 340 and Article 18, with the President signing the decision in 2011.

or otherwise employed in the informal labour sector are effectively restricted from filing a complaint of physical victimization, as they cannot provide reports from an employer. Furthermore, the applicable law considers the beating of children by their parents as a form of discipline permissible by law and customs as stated in paragraph (a) of Article 62 in the 1960 Jordanian penal code.

The legislature considers murder crimes to be the worst type of crime. Thus the punishment for murder is severe. The penalty for murder may range from 15 years of imprisonment to the death penalty, depending on whether a cause for an aggravated sentence is found. However, the legislature considers that committing this type of crime (murder) in cases of extreme anger allows the perpetrator the right to a mitigated sentence, as per Articles 97 and 98 of the 1960 Jordanian penal code applicable in the West Bank. It also allows murder in specific cases under the pretext of defending "honour". Article 96 of the 1960 Jordanian penal code states that: "The exempting excuse exempts the offender from any punishment, but when appropriate, precautionary measures may be taken with him such as a precautionary bail." According to the provisions of Article 340 of the 1960 Jordanian penal code and Article 18 in the British penal code applicable in Gaza Strip, the exempting excuse can only be used by the husband and immediate relatives, and it applies only for males, not to females.

Sexual Crimes

Sexual crimes and assault are addressed in Part Seven of the 1960 Jordanian penal code and Part Seventeen in the British penal code. These sections address crimes against morals and public manners, with Chapter One in Part Seven of the Jordanian penal code specifically addressing sexual assault crimes, including rape and indecent assault. The punishment is aggravated if the assault happens within the family by a person responsible for raising the child, a person having direct authority over the child, or by an ascendant relative. Here, ascendants include the father, grandfather and above, which means that the aggravated punishment for sexual crimes cannot apply to brothers and uncles.

As for adultery and incest crimes, both penal codes define adultery as occurring when two people have sex, of whom both or one is married, while incest occurs when two people who are family-related have sex, meaning one person is a legal or illegal descendent or ascendant, in-law, or someone who has legal or actual authority over the victim. Both crimes are considered by law as consensual crimes that happen with both parties' consent and responsibility. These crimes are dealt with as special cases whereby the complaint can only be filed by male relatives, a form of discrimination against women, as they are considered unable to file complaints for such crimes.

The philosophy behind the legal texts presented in both penal codes is based on the idea that women are owned by men. Accordingly, if the husband is taken by surprise to find his wife or a first degree female relative in a compromising situation and then kills her, he is rewarded through an excusable exemption, which decreases his sentence of imprisonment for only a number of days or up to three months. The element of surprise therefore allows murder to be dealt with as a misdemeanour rather than a felony. In such cases, the woman is ultimately the one punished. Conversely, women who murder their husbands for the same reason are only entitled to benefit from the element of surprise as an excusable factor in committing a crime in one case: if a wife finds her husband with another woman in the marital bed.

The content of the comprehensive provisions outlined in the sexual assault chapter in the 1960 Jordanian penal code should also be addressed. Article 308 states: "If a proper marriage is made between the offender who committed one of the crimes previously mentioned in this Chapter and the victim, the prosecution shall be ceased, and if a sentence was already made on this case, the implementation of the punishment in the sentence shall be put on hold." This also applies in Article 42 in the British penal code. The definition of sexual assault in both the Jordanian and British penal codes applicable in the oPt, however, remains narrow and excludes the broader concept of sexual harassment. It is therefore important that the legislature includes this concept in a clear and direct article in the penal code that criminalizes sexual harassment and aggravates the sentence if the offender is a family member.

Rape is addressed by the prevailing laws in the oPt through two traditional perspectives. The first considers the crime to be rape only if it occurs through the female genital's apparel, whereas any other assault against the woman's body is not considered rape, but rather as an incident of assault punishable by less than that of rape. From the second perspective, the text in both penal codes applicable in the oPt defines rape as "having sex with a

female other than his wife by coercion". By defining rape in relation to the marital status of the woman, wives find themselves outside of legal protection in cases of rape by their husbands. There is no recognition of marital rape in the laws currently applicable in the oPt.

In addition, both the Jordanian and the British penal codes fail to include a complete definition of violence, which is not limited to the tangible effects of sexual and physical violence, but that also extends to include psychological violence and social and economic deprivation, all of which have a devastating impact on the victim, similar to that of other types of violence. As such, it is important to add this psychological aspect to legal definitions of violence and to extend the notion of neglect to include married women, not only children.

The presence of gaps in local laws concerning women's protection also reflect the inability of the executive systems in the oPt to perform their required functions in protecting women from violence. Since the current legal framework is the main reference for the executive systems in the protection of citizens' rights, women's faith and trust in the effectiveness of the police and the judiciary are also compromised.

== The police system ==

The police's work on the protection of women is restricted by existing laws. These laws determine how the police work and how they can offer women protection. By defining which family members have the right to file a complaint with the police and how to carry out police investigations, existing laws limit the ability of the police to offer women full protection, especially in the case of honour crimes. These obstacles have been mentioned by police personnel who work on these cases. In many cases, the tribal system interferes in the police work, closing complaints with the police in favour of solving them internally. The police also refers to the tribal system when solving VAW cases. Moreover, despite the existence of Family Protection Units, which were established in 2008 by the PNA to protect women from violence, police departments in all governances continue to lack the appropriate infrastructure required for receiving abused women as well as qualified staff. There is also an insufficient number of the staff working in these units. Despite attempts by the Ministry of Interior to work on the development of existing capacities, especially family Protection Units, on how to deal with abused women, the need to work on the infrastructure of these units remains. Privacy and specialized staff are urgent necessities, as well as human resources, as a starting point.

Police stations indeed often lack the suitable space and qualified personnel for receiving the women victims of violence who may turn to them. Many of the women victims of violence interviewed during the process of developing this Strategy mentioned that, when they approached the police, the police personnel blamed them for asking for protection. They were further insulted because of the lack of confidentiality measures inside the police departments. Thus, a need exists for developing the capacity of the Palestinian police personnel in dealing with cases of VAW, including a need for training on how to deal with children and people with disabilities exposed to violence.

In light of this reality, it is important to develop the work of the police with an emphasis on their primary role in protecting women from violence. It is also important to develop the mechanisms needed to strengthen the police's role and encourage police personnel to take appropriate legal measures against VAW offenders based on a clear legal framework which supports such measures and ensures women's protection.

== The judiciary system ==

Although some judges are convinced and admit that there are many gaps in existing Palestinian laws, they continue to depend on and use these laws when issuing their rulings in VAW cases. Women are thus exposed to another type of violence caused by the laws and their inability to provide women with protection and human security.

The absence of competent and specialized courts competent in dealing with cases of VAW and the lack of confidentiality prevailing in the existing court system often causes women to keep silent about their suffering. They thus often remain prisoner of cycles of violence, especially domestic violence, rather than turning to the formal judiciary. The women's focus groups conducted during the development of this Strategy revealed that when legal protection is unavailable and the woman has no trust in the judiciary system, she often turns to her family to solve the problem, entrenching the idea that violence is a private issue to be handled outside of the legal and legislative system.

The dilemmas faced by abused women are numerous. According to PNA guidelines, it is the role of the prosecutor to deal with cases of VAW. However, women in shelters interviewed for this research stated that they had been subjected to humiliation and embarrassment by prosecutors during the interrogation process. Moreover, reports of prosecutors are considered the most important pieces of evidence by judges and therefore affect the outcomes of the judicial process and destiny of women victims of violence. Hence, it is important to note that prosecutors' beliefs and convictions on violence against women play an important role in determining the nature of the report submitted to judges.

== The Ministry of Social Affairs ==

MoSA is the main reference for providing physical and psychological protection to women exposed to violence. It is the main body supervising shelter services for women victims of violence and is also the primary body responsible for building a national referral and follow-up system for VAW victims.

Moreover, the Ministry provides the link between institutions working on the protection of women, including women's institutions, and the police and shelters when needed. Women cannot access shelters in the oPt without first acquiring a permit and report from MoSA.

Based on institutions' work and experience, a problem exists with regards to the process of following up with victims of VAW, as reported during the development of the Strategy. Mechanisms defining the roles of MoSA and other institutions are lacking. This includes insufficient numbers of social workers- creating a gap in the system, and there is no responsible body in MoSA commissioned to follow-up with cases after the end of official working hours. This means that women victims of violence often have to stay in police stations until MoSA opens the next day. This is a significant problem that must be solved, especially as interviews with women victims of violence indicate that most women who run away from their families to seek protection do so after sunset.

In general, the failure of current laws to provide women with protection, the lack of comprehensive and collective mechanisms or a code of conduct for dealing with VAW cases within all concerned institutions, in addition to the failure to institutionalize the issue of VAW within the work of the formal institutions, have encouraged intervention from other channels in the fate of women, leading to their fate being decided outside of formal protective frameworks. These other channels often include tribes, reconciliation committees, service committees, as well as political parties, all of which end up playing major roles in deciding on the fate and security of these women.

2. Local informal protection mechanisms

== Tribes and extended families ==

The legal system is not only hindered by the political situation, as the common tribal system is another obstacle and challenges it. The tribal system forms a main reference in the enforcement of order in the Palestinian society, often overriding the official law despite contradictions between them, such as in "the criminalization of certain acts. This is why we find many acts considered criminal by law, but allowed and non-criminalized by the tribal judiciary. Similarly, the tribal system may criminalize and reject acts that are allowed and legal by the law."⁴³ Thus, the tribal system is one of the main obstacles to women reaching respect for their rights and protection, especially in cases of so-called "honor crimes", which are solved in favour of the males in the family.

This informal mechanism for addressing cases of VAW is represented by the intervention of the extended family, the tribe or the *hamula*, depending on the type of violence perpetrated. In cases that include beating, usually by the husband against his wife, the nuclear or extended families of the couple intervenes and encourages the woman to keep silent about the problem. This intervention mechanism usually encourages women to keep silent and accept the violence in exchange for family privileges, which are usually in the form of family acceptance and protection, even though their sense of human security inside the family is simultaneously being violated.

In cases of femicide, also known as “honor crimes”, such as in case of a rape by a family member or suspicion of affairs, regardless of their nature, and even in cases of marriage between the followers of different religions, tribes and *hamula* would intervene to solve the problem due to the sensitivity of these situations, especially in the case of a rape by a family member. In most cases, the intervention ends in favour of the male offender. If the offender is from outside the family, the ruling could require the rapist to marry the victim or could close the issue by displacing the girl’s family from the area. If the offender is a family member, the extended family will, in most of cases, decide to kill the female victim.

== Women’s institutions ==

Women’s institutions providing specialized services for victims of VAW effectively began to emerge in the early 1990s. Many started through initiatives of women’s structures within political parties, which sought to highlight the social and economic struggle of Palestinian women in conjunction with the political struggle in the belief that political and personal rights are interconnected and interrelated.

Only five institutions in the West Bank and three in the Gaza Strip offer direct counselling and social services to women victims of violence. Although these institutions are serious attempts to provide protection to victims of VAW, they are not sufficient to address all of such cases throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip.⁴⁴ These institutions have achieved a lot with regard to highlighting VAW issues in Palestinian society, especially domestic violence, which used to be a taboo subject impossible to discuss. In addition, a significant amount of trainings on gender and women’s rights has been offered in different areas. These trainings were very important in shedding light on the issue of VAW and allowing women to talk about their experiences with violence.

These efforts have led to the formation of the Ministry of Women’s Affairs and formal recognition of the necessity for ensuring respect for women’s rights by the PNA. However, women’s institutions still face a significant problem, as they, institutionally and as individual staff members, lack legal protection from threats and dangers posed by families and even, at times, by political parties.

== Political parties ==

Many women in the focus groups held while developing this Strategy stated that political parties intervene in social problems, especially “honour” crimes. This finding was also apparent in the focus groups held with NGOs working on women’s protection from violence. Political party interventions share many of the same features as tribal interventions, in which cases of VAW are often solved in favour of the offender rather than the victimized woman.

Both formal and informal local protection mechanisms require intensive work from a variety of different institutions. There is a need to work on changing and modifying formal protection mechanisms, especially in terms of legislation. This task is being tackled by women’s and human rights institutions. There is also a need to direct efforts towards reducing the role of informal protection mechanisms, except for the role of women’s institutions, as they have an active role to play in protecting women’s rights and monitoring protective services.

⁴⁴ This conclusion is the result of different discussions held with women’s institutions. They clearly stated that the number of available institutions is not enough to meet the needs of women victims of violence, especially in the north of the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip, where shelters offering physical protection are lacking.

Chapter Three:

Methodology for the Development of the Strategy

The development of the National Strategy to Combat VAW was undertaken in full partnership with all major stakeholders in the public, private and NGO sectors, in addition to individual women from different localities. Such a participatory approach reflects the Ministry of Women's Affairs' (MoWA) belief that involving all relevant stakeholders in the development of the Strategy will best reflect the needs of all groups without discrimination, and will therefore lead to stakeholders' adoption and support of the Strategy.

1. Duration

The development of the Strategy started in early July 2009 and lasted through March 2010. In the first four months, work was mostly concentrated within MoWA, before moving ahead to involve other stakeholders. This was done in order to:

- Obtain a full picture of the situation of MoWA as the main patron, implementer and monitor of the Strategy, including identification of MoWA's strengths, in order to further reinforce them, and gaps, in order to fill them and facilitate sustainable implementation of the Strategy.
- Create a common language among MoWA personnel and define the role of each department and unit in the implementation and monitoring of the Strategy.
- Assess capacity-development needs for MoWA personnel and develop a relevant plan for staff training.

2. Ministry of Women's Affairs' partners involved in the development of the Strategy

- The public sector represented by: the National Committee to Combat Violence Against Women.
- General Union of Palestinian Women.
- NGOs: women's organizations, human rights organizations, workers' unions.
- Semi-governmental organizations: ICHR
- International agencies: UNRWA, International Labour Organization (ILO), UNFPNA, UN Women, UNDP, UNESCO, and UNICEF.
- Women's societies and cooperatives from various governorates.
- Individual women, including refugee women, from various governorates.
- Women victims of violence in shelters/safe homes.
- Women with disabilities or those caring for girls with disabilities.

3. Geographic coverage

This Strategy covers both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. In spite of difficulties encountered in working in the Gaza Strip through MoWA, communication was maintained with institutions and women, with assistance from the UN Women office in the Gaza Strip. As a result, all activities related to the development of the Strategy were carried out in the Gaza Strip in parallel with the same activities conducted in the West Bank. Women from cities, villages, towns and refugee camps from all governorates in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were involved.

4. Work mechanism

The development of the National Strategy to Combat VAW was divided into five major stages, as follows:

Stage one

Collection of information related to the Ministry of Women's Affairs using the following tools:

1. **Literature review:** This included a review of local studies and publications related to VAW, particularly those published by MoWA. In addition, MoWA plans and reports were reviewed, including those related to individual departments and units.
 2. **Individual interviews:** Based on the literature review of MoWA's work, specific questions were prepared to conduct individual interviews in order to gain an in-depth knowledge of MoWA's work. Senior management staff were selected for interviews, including the deputy minister, general directors and directors.
 3. **Questionnaire:** To identify skills of MoWA personnel, a questionnaire was developed and filled out by MoWA staff members indicating what training they possess and assessing their needs for future capacity-building.
 4. **SWOT analysis:** Several workshops were conducted with MoWA staff to analyze the situation of the Ministry in terms of its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT).
 5. **Meetings:** Several meetings were held with MoWA personnel to discuss the major issues related to VAW, focusing on two major themes: prevention and protection.
 6. **Sectoral groups:** Several groups worked on specific sectors, including VAW in education, VAW in health, VAW in employment and political VAW, with the aim of assessing issues related to VAW in the corresponding sectors and agreeing on priority actions.
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Stage two

Collection of information on public institutions and NGOs working on women's rights in general and VAW in particular, through:

1. **Individual interviews** with public institutions and NGOs to obtain a clear idea about the work being carried out to combat VAW.
2. Three **workshops** with public institutions, NGOs and the private sector⁴⁵ to analyze their work on VAW. Two days were focused on carrying out a SWOT analysis of actions taken to combat VAW in general, followed by an assessment of the role of each body working on or involved in combating VAW. A full day was devoted to analyzing how forensic medicine and the judiciary deal with women exposed to violence. Participating institutions suggested mechanisms that can be adopted by forensic medicine and the judiciary in dealing with VAW cases referred to them.

Stage three

Collection of information through focus group discussions with:

- 1. Individual women and women cooperatives** selected according to the following criteria:
 - 15 focus group discussions (FGDs) were held in the West Bank and Gaza Strip as follows: 10 FGDs in the West Bank (one per governorate), three in the Gaza Strip and two in refugee camps (at the Balata camp in the north, attended by women from both the Balata and Askar camps, as well as at the Dheisheh camp in the south, attended by women from the Arroub, Dheisheh, Aida and Azza camps). The total number of women participating in the FGDs in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip was 375 participants.
 - In each group, consideration was given to inviting women from villages, towns and refugee camps.
 - Each FGD involved women from various segments of the society, such as housewives, students, unemployed women, as well as blue-collar and white-collar workers.
 - All participants were 18 years of age or above.
 - Consideration was given to inviting women with special needs or women supporting women with disabilities.
 - With regard to working women, the public, NGO and private sectors were represented.
- 2. Women victims of violence in safe homes:** Interviews were conducted with 13 women who sought protection in safe homes. Interviewees were divided into two groups depending on the length of their stay in the safe home: a group for women who had been in a safe home for a period of one day to six months and another group for women who had been in a safe home for over six months. The idea behind this division was that the experience of women inside a safe home will vary, as well as their perceptions and responses to the different events, and consequently, the intervention policies will vary as well.
- 3. An individual interview with a VAW survivor:** A VAW survivor was interviewed as a success story of a safe home intervention and social and economic support that facilitated her successful social reintegration. The questions asked addressed her experience before and after seeking protection, as well as over the course of the intervention she experienced. The interview also assessed safe home clients' perceptions and satisfaction with the interventions of the different agencies involved and asked for suggestions and recommendations for the Strategy in order to be responsive to the women's needs and to ensure the protection of other women.
- 4. A FGD with safe home staff:** A FGD was held with safe home staff, including social workers and lawyers, in order to assess how they deal with VAW victims in the safe home and to identify major achievements and obstacles that they face in their work. The FGD also addressed the staff members' perceptions about the role of safe homes in general. The meeting sought to identify their recommendations and suggestions for improving social protection of VAW victims for incorporation into the National Strategy to Combat VAW.

Stage four

Creation of a common discourse on VAW and review of the role of the different sectors in combating VAW.

Two workshops were held with public, NGO, private and international institutions involved in the development of the Strategy from the beginning. The workshops aimed at discussing the concepts and terminology used in relation to VAW (annexed to the Strategy) in order to develop national standard definitions agreed on by all stakeholders. The second part of the workshop discussed the main themes of the Strategy, including policies, objectives and intervention mechanisms. Participants worked in small groups, each addressing a different policy in order to discuss the proposed strategic objectives under each policy, the intervention mechanisms for each strategic objective, and to suggest any required modifications that should be taken in consideration when developing the final draft of the Strategy.

Stage five

Data analysis.

Several meetings were held with MoWA staff in order to prepare the first draft of the Strategy. Staff members were trained on how to categorize data and develop themes from existing data. The MoWA staff team was divided into working groups, with each group taking a part of the data. Protection and prevention of VAW were the core themes for classification.

After the classification process and the development of the main themes of the Strategy's policies and objectives, the first draft of the Strategy was developed. The first draft was distributed to the MoWA team to read and modify. A workshop was then held with all of the institutions that participated in previous phases of the Strategy development, to view the first draft of the Strategy and propose any amendments for the Strategy's final draft.

Stage Six

Development of the final draft of the National Strategy to Combat VAW.

5. Meeting with the National Committee to Combat VAW

The Strategy was presented to the Committee and members were asked to send their comments, which were later incorporated into the Strategy. All modifications proposed by institutions involved in the development of the Strategy were taken in account and the final draft was completed.

In addition, a two-day meeting was held with the institutions working on women's protection from the public, NGO and private sectors in order to present the final draft of the Strategy, which was the outcome of all of the meetings mentioned above, and to agree on medium-term priorities for the implementation of the National Strategy to Combat VAW over the three-year period from 2011 to 2013.

Chapter Four:

Situation Analysis of the Ministry of Women's Affairs with Regard to its Work on VAW

The Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) was founded in 2003. Its mission is "the empowerment and promotion of Palestinian women's capabilities and status, contribution to the building and development of a democratic Palestinian state, and the establishment of an active civil society governed by national, cultural, civil, human and equity values".

To achieve this mission, MoWA identified its general goal as being the development of a governmental commitment towards gender issues in order to enhance women's role and guarantee their political, economic, and social rights.

== MoWA bases its work on the following references ==

- The Palestinian Declaration of Independence issued by the Palestinian National Council in 1988.
- The National Strategy for Palestinian Women published in 1997.
- The Fourth International Convention on Women in Beijing, 1995.
- The decisions of the Arab Ministerial Convention on Women in Amman, 1996.
- The International Security Council's Resolution 1325 on dealing with women in areas of armed conflict.
- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

== MoWA's goals ==

- Combat VAW.
- Increase women's participation in policy- and decision-making.
- Increase women's participation in the job market and decrease the impact of poverty on women.
- Promote and develop governmental commitment, follow-up and evaluation mechanisms in the field of gender.

1. Comprehensive analysis of the Ministry of Women's Affairs

A SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) of MoWA was carried out for the purpose of clarifying and guiding the ministry's work towards achieving its vision of empowering women in all aspects of life, including combating VAW. The SWOT methodology is based on an analysis of external and internal factors that influence the institution in achieving its goals.

The SWOT analysis of MoWA's contributes to promoting the ministry's vision and mission, which are based on the principles of social change towards achieving respect for women's rights. The process of such a social change requires positive and effective guidance and intervention by different institutions working in the field of human rights, mainly women organizations using a human rights approach.

The process of social change often leads to a sense of unease because of the changes made to a current situation and a move into a different reality. Hence, this process is often faced with rejection at first by those used to the status quo, especially when it conflicts with the interests of those in power. Unfortunately, this tendency towards rejection only increases when discussing changes regarding women's rights.

The main role of MoWA is to accompany this change through appropriate policies and legislation, and by preparing the Palestinian society to accept women's equal status. The ministry's staff team is considered the main mobilizing agent in this process of social change towards achieving respect for women's rights. Thus, MoWA's success will be viewed as an indicator of its staff's efficiency and capabilities in bringing the changes necessary to achieve the overall national mission of realizing and protecting women's rights.

== Main analysis themes ==

The sustainability of any institution, whether governmental or non-governmental, depends on three main elements: administrative and financial aspects, human resources, and its relationship with local, regional and international institutions.

- **Administrative and financial aspects**

Although MoWA's mandate is to foster women's rights at the policy level in the PNA, the results of the SWOT analysis conducted show that in its first years, MoWA's work was largely focused on the implementation level rather than on the policy level. During these two years, MoWA's efforts were directed towards implementing training programmes and raising awareness around gender issues, rather than directed towards influencing policy and legislation.

Currently, however, MoWA is directing many of its efforts on the policy level, with many of its initiatives directed towards establishing gender-sensitive policies in PNA institutions. Examples of their efforts in this regard include ministerial decisions related to the implementation of gender-sensitive budgeting, the development of the Cross-Sectoral National Gender Strategy and the suspension of Article 340 in the Jordanian penal code applicable in the West Bank and Article 18 in the British penal code applicable in the Gaza Strip.

In financial terms, MoWA is largely dependent on external funding. It is important to note that MoWA receives no more than 0.2% from the PNA's general budget towards its funding. This requires that MoWA pressures the Palestinian Council of Ministers to increase the percentage of its budget allocation in order to ensure its sustainability. Such a request is particularly relevant considering the current placement of women's issues as an important theme in the preparation of the general PNA Strategic Plan, and in light of the PNA President's endorsement of CEDAW. Furthermore, donors must be encouraged to support MoWA programmes and projects on a long-term basis, not just for short-term projects, as MoWA's efforts to create processes of social change naturally require long-term commitment before their impact can be measured.

- **Human resources**

MoWA has an important role to play in the process of social change and the protection of women as an essential group in the overall Palestinian development process. MoWA's staff is considered the main mobilizing agent for achieving this goal. As such, MoWA staff members have significant responsibilities which require certain qualifications for them to perform the tasks required to protect women's rights, whether at a legislative or executive level. The information collected in a recent needs assessment of MoWA's staff shows a wide variation in the current capacities of the ministry's staff. Therefore, the Ministry has a responsibility to set out a comprehensive plan to build its staff capacity on different levels according to the extent of each staff member's knowledge and understanding of women's rights. It is also important that MoWA's hiring process follows specific and clear criteria which prioritize knowledge and respect for women's rights.

- **Relations of the Ministry of Women's Affairs with governmental, civil society and private organizations**

The concept of social change entails a major responsibility, one that cannot be limited to a single ministry. Social change is an interconnected process that includes partnerships between institutions from different sectors.

The SWOT analysis and direct interviews conducted within MoWA showed that the relationships between the ministry and governmental institutions are stronger than those with civil society organizations, while they are nonexistent with the private sector. A review of the relationships between MoWA and governmental institutions

showed them to be inconsistent and limited to coordination on interim activities. The ministry's relationships with civil society organizations, however, were shown to vary, depending on the nature of the activity.

In general, MoWA can be seen as a governmental body with adequate and important potential and opportunity to protect women's rights. MoWA is the main governmental body for facilitating coordination and networking efforts at a strategic level among women's institutions in order to contribute to processes of social change in favour of women.

MoWA's efforts towards achieving gender equality in Palestinian society concentrate on two levels: legal equality and objective equality. At the legal level, MoWA works to lobby the PNA to adopt gender equality as a main principle in legislation and laws, so that gender equality becomes an official provision in PNA legal documents. Although important, MoWA's work in this regard is not enough, real change does not simply occur by having clear legal provisions calling for gender equality. Therefore, work is also needed to achieve objective equality for women. This requires that MoWA facilitates women's access to legal equality by lobbying the PNA to take the necessary steps that would allow women to access and benefit from the resources needed to realize their rights. An example of this would be the use of a quota system to ensure the political representation of women. Although a quota system is a mechanism that highlights discrimination against women, the adoption of such a system is a temporary and necessary measure for facilitating women's access to decision-making levels within a patriarchal culture that disapproves such a change.

2. Comprehensive analysis of the work of governmental institutions and NGOs in combating VAW

Conducting a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) to examine the work of governmental and non-governmental institutions on VAW in the oPt was a major step aimed at assessing what has already been accomplished on the ground, as well as the gaps and factors that have obstructed the achievement of intended results over the course of 20 years of work on this issue. The analysis also sought to identify factors that have helped obtain better results in some areas as opposed to others.

A general review of the work of governmental and non-governmental institutions revealed that the work undertaken to combat VAW in the oPt has primarily focused on four missions: awareness-raising, training, offering legal and social services, and lobbying and advocacy. Among these missions, many factors were found which contributed to success in some cases, while many gaps leading to failure were also identified.

=== Awareness raising ===

With regard to awareness raising, institutions working on the issue of VAW in the oPt have been successful in motivating governmental interest in the issue through their persistent work, including a number of conventions and meetings focused on combating VAW. These institutions' work has resulted in the release of the first official government statement from the Palestinian cabinet acknowledging VAW as an issue of concern in the Palestinian society. This statement was later translated into the 2005 ministerial decision on the Protection of women from violence, setting out roles for each of the ministries in contributing to this process.

On the other hand, gaps in awareness raising included weak planning and a lack of follow-up by the institutions involved. Institutions' implementation of relevant work plans has not, for the most part, included the necessary follow-up or progress assessment. While the ministerial decision was perceived as a success for women's institutions, no follow-up or proper strategic planning have been conducted to ensure the implementation of the decision, or to monitor compliance of the decision by PNA institutions.

Another gap found in institutional awareness raising was the restricted focus of activities on women only, while little attention has been paid to the role of the family structure in the Palestinian context. Although Palestinian families today are generally inclined towards the nuclear family structure, economic pressures resulting from the second intifada and the need of young couples for support from the larger family has led to an increased importance of the extended family structure in the Palestinian society. Moreover, in the general prevailing culture in Arab

societies and specifically in the Palestinian society, one's identity is often based on being a member of a group rather than an individual. Hence, prevailing social, economic, and political relationships tend to marginalize the role of individuals and instead focus on individual identity in the context of a larger group. By addressing only women in their awareness raising efforts, and thus attributing to women the largest and most essential share of responsibility in the process of change on issues related to VAW, institutions have neglected to consider the family as a whole and ways in which the family structure can be catalyzed to build support for women's empowerment. Additionally, after a long period of working to raise awareness on VAW, institutions realized the importance of addressing men in their efforts, recognizing that VAW is a public issue affecting all individuals and requiring the participation of all to properly address it. Although this fact was eventually acknowledged, it has yet to be reflected in the direction or planning processes of most institutional work on the issue. Even after its recognition, many institutions' awareness raising efforts remained focused on women only.

=== Training ===

Institutions' work to provide training on women's rights, particularly rights related to VAW, has largely focused on exposing the issue rather than on bringing actual social change, although the latter is theoretically considered a desired outcome of many training initiatives. In order to make training part of a broader social change process, the objective and duration of such trainings should be better defined. For instance, is the training meant to be a short-term effort aimed at disseminating knowledge and exchanging information, or is it meant to build sustainable capacity, thus requiring the development of a long-term detailed plan with focus on a certain target group? It is important for institutions engaging in such trainings to assess the human and financial resources required to achieve their goals, and to develop integrated plans and impact measurements through pre- and post-training assessments accordingly. Such training interventions should also include post-training follow-up to measure their outcomes, not only for the trainees, but also for the community in general.

Notably, trainings conducted by institutions thus far have not targeted groups directly involved in the provision of services and protection to women victims of violence in public institutions, such as judges, forensic medicine specialists, general prosecutors and the police. Although a few institutions have taken the initiative to contact the police and offer them training, such activities have not been built with a long-term, systematized vision.

=== Provision of social and legal counselling services ===

In the process of reviewing MoWA documents to identify mechanisms applied to combating VAW, it was found that clear and written policies on mechanisms for dealing with women victims of violence are absent. In addition, there is no clear referral system for supporting women victims of violence. Gaps in the penal code with respect to the protection of women from violence increase the inability of governmental and non-governmental institutions to support women victims of violence, especially in the absence of laws aiming at providing protection to institutions which offer counselling and legal services, as well as to specialists, social workers, and psychologists.

From the analysis, it was found that, at present, a small number of specialized institutions in the oPt do offer direct services to women and contribute to highlighting the issue of VAW in the Palestinian society. However, these institutions tend to be concentrated in the central West Bank, rather than geographically spread across different areas in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Furthermore, the types of services offered to women victims of violence who access these institutions for help are not comprehensive. They largely focus on interventions for women only and do not include integrated family-based counselling or therapy approaches.

Another issue raised by the institutions participating in the analysis was the failure to adequately reintegrate women victims of violence back into the society. This was found to be mostly due to the lack of a clear vision or mechanism for women's social reintegration, which would require empowering women socially and economically to overcome the challenges anticipated in the process of reintegration.

=== Lobbying and advocacy ===

Women's institutions have and continue to work on changing social attitudes towards women's rights through efforts to amend local laws and legislation to provide women with protection through coalitions and social mobilization

campaigns. While institutions have been able to increase the presence of women's and human rights organizations in relevant coalitions, their achievements have been modest for several reasons, including:

- Lack of staff specialized in lobbying and advocacy with the required skills to influence decision-makers.
- Failure to take the necessary steps to overcome obstacles and upgrade the work in the area of lobbying and advocacy, despite institutional awareness of such obstacles.
- Lack of a comprehensive approach to the social change process required of institutions working on women's rights, the lack of which restricts lobbying efforts to the Palestinian Legislative Council and effectively limits institutions' potential to bring about change due to a dependency on the situation of the PLC.
- Failure to develop alternative plans for working with decision-makers, making it difficult to build on previous lobbying and advocacy achievements.
- Absence of a clear mapping of legislators and decision-makers to identify their positions on social change in relation to VAW.
- Failure to systematically utilize and build on women's genuine experiences as an effective tool for lobbying and advocacy.
- Failure to use the media in a systematic, effective and consistent way.
- Lack of continuous and cooperative planning with other institutions when developing annual plans for lobbying and advocacy efforts.

Overall, and based on the perceptions of governmental and non-governmental institutions participating in the SWOT analysis, the following is a general summary of the strengths and weaknesses in their work on VAW, as well as the opportunities and threats they face:

STRENGTHS

- Official government acknowledgement of domestic violence as a problem in Palestinian society
- Formation of a National Committee to Combat VAW
- Formation of alliances and coalitions between institutions working on women's rights
- Women's institutions' long experience in combating VAW
- Specialization of some women's institutions in research, including research and studies on VAW
- Networking policies as well as mutual relationships of respect and cooperation between various institutions
- Provision of educational materials (brochures) and special references on gender-based violence
- Existence of international and local partners
- Existence of educational and awareness-raising programmes on combating VAW
- Comprehensiveness in services for responding to and combating VAW offered by institutions, combining psychological, social, legal and economic services
- Existence of institutions that work on documenting and monitoring VAW-related information and cases
- Inclusion of religious institutions in the discussion on VAW
- Interest in involving the media in combating VAW

WEAKNESSES

- Lack of a clear prioritized vision
- Lack of genuine belief and conviction in women's equality by some of the male and female staff members in women's institutions and other institutions working on women's rights
- Lack of institutional awareness on women's rights in general and VAW in particular
- Lack of unified concepts and definitions among institutions working to combat VAW
- Disagreement on references and theoretical frameworks of some institutions
- Duplication of work and lack of integration and proper coordination among women's institutions
- Lack of variety in the programmes implemented by women's institutions
- Linking the issue of VAW to certain projects' or donors' agendas rather than being a consistent, continuous programme within institutions, in addition to the tendency of donors to take the lead at the implementation level, rendering NGOs as mere implementers of donor plans and priorities

- Absence of an accurate database on cases of VAW
- Lack of specialized researchers on the subjects of VAW and gender
- Absence of either a formal or informal common plan for working on VAW within the public and NGO sectors
- Low-quality networking and weak coordination between organizations working on combating VAW (despite also being mentioned as a strength above)
- Inadequate and weak intervention mechanisms for assisting victims of VAW
- A lack of shelters for women victims of violence in the Gaza Strip, and their small number in the West Bank
- Lack of sustainable financial resources which influences the sustainability of programmes and institutions in general
- Lack of human resources specialized in VAW and women's rights in general
- Low level of legal awareness among institutions working on women's rights
- Lack of protection for institutional staff when intervening with victims of VAW
- Lack of follow-up and supervision mechanisms for staff working with victims of VAW
- Weak strategic planning on the part of institutions
- Weak institutional monitoring and evaluation systems
- Weak institutional capacities for dealing with media among institutions working to combat VAW
- Control of some larger institutions over some grassroots organizations
- Lack of communication and follow-up subsequent to the provision of services to victims of VAW
- Negative community attitudes and opinions regarding women's issues in general
- Absence of fair laws or law enforcement mechanisms for those laws that are fair to women
- Non-allocation or inadequate allocation of budgets for the issue of combating VAW at the governmental level
- Lack of accumulation and continuity in the capacity building of staff working on combating VAW
- Insufficient investment in available qualified staff members, especially at the governmental level
- Failure to translate research into specialized plans and programmes within a common framework and well-planned vision to serve women victims of violence
- Lack of systematic assessment of institutional performance
- Inadequate protection for shelters serving women victims of violence
- The trend in the work of women's institutions to adopt a relief approach rather than a human rights approach in their programming
- Existence of competition leading to deficiencies in coordination and networking at the ministerial level, within civil society organizations, and between ministries and civil society organizations
- Lack of organized, systematic coordination in working with religious institutions and religious leaders, despite their inclusion in public debate about VAW

OPPORTUNITIES

- Existence of national and regional alliances that work in combating VAW, creating more opportunities to network and expand work
- Technological development and its use in serving the cause of combating VAW
- Existence of political will within some governmental bodies, visible in the signing and adoption of decisions in support of women
- Existence of funding for women's development projects
- Revived acknowledgment of social work based on volunteerism
- The government decision to adopt gender-responsive budgeting and the opportunity to allocate resources and programmes for combating VAW
- Increased percentage of women in decision-making positions within the government, Palestinian Legislative Council, judiciary, political parties, etc

THREATS

- Political instability (the occupation, internal fighting)
- Lack of contiguity between the different geographical parts of the oPt
- Scattered efforts and nonexistence of a holistic developmental vision

- The siege and closure of the Gaza Strip and restrictions on movement in the West Bank that limit exchanges of experiences and exposure to the outer world
- The disablement of Palestinian legislative institutions, such as the PLC, hindering the ability to amend existing laws or to issue new ones
- Economic decline, elevated rates of unemployment, especially among women, and an increased number of women heads of household, all of which increase the prevalence of VAW
- Emergence of institutions working to counter the efforts and projects of women's institutions, seeking rather to reinforce discrimination and inequality
- Closing of institutions working on gender-based violence due to the ruling political regime (Gaza Strip)
- Stereotypical attitudes among decision makers and officials in Palestinian security institutions (including the police) in dealing with women's cases
- The trend in the work of women's institutions to adopt a relief approach rather than a human rights approach in their programming
- The prevailing culture, norms and traditions concerning women's issues and rights in the Palestinian society
- Withdrawal of funding from some institutions due to the political situation
- The brain drain of those working in the field of women's rights due to the lack of privileges and rights in the local institutions in which they might work
- Lack of job security within institutions working to combat VAW
- Gender-based discrimination and lack of equal opportunities with regard to employment
- Widespread failure to comply with the labour law in regards to insurance, salaries and savings for women

The overall goal behind the presentation of this SWOT analysis of the work of MoWA and other governmental and non-governmental institutions in combating VAW is to help identify gaps and strengths that can be further worked on by institutions concerned with the implementation of the Strategy. The aim is to direct efforts towards bridging and reducing the identified gaps while reinforcing known strengths in order to provide an appropriate platform for Strategy implementation.

3. General accomplishments in combating VAW by governmental and non-governmental organizations⁴⁶

- The Palestinian Declaration of Independence clearly provides for gender equality.
- CEDAW was endorsed in 2009.
- UN Security Council Resolution 1325 was adopted by the PNA.
- The PNA formally recognized VAW as a collective problem in Palestinian society through the formation of a National Committee to Combat VAW in 2008.
- A ministerial decision to combat VAW was issued by the Palestinian Council of Ministers in 2005.
- Family protection units were created in 2008 in police departments in different districts in West Bank (Bethlehem, Nablus, Ramallah).
- A ministerial decision was issued by the Palestinian cabinet to adopt gender-responsive budgeting in 2008.
- The Mehwar Centre was opened in coordination with MoSA in 2007 as the first centre in the oPt for the sheltering and protection of women from violence.
- NGOs have created coalitions and lobbying campaigns for combating VAW, which in turn, have contributed to spreading awareness of and work on the issue from the private to the public sphere, making it a social issue.
- All forms of local media outlets, including both audiovisual and print media, have addressed issues related to VAW, contributing to further exposure of the issue in Palestinian society.
- Research studies, although few in number, have been conducted on VAW, leading stakeholders to consider VAW as a national issue.

⁴⁶ Accomplishments here were addressed in general, as they will be discussed in more details when presenting the situation analysis of institutions combating VAW.

Chapter Five:

2011-2019 National Strategy to Combat VAW: Vision and Goal

1. Vision⁴⁷

Towards a Palestinian society that is free of all forms of discrimination against women, where women enjoy equal rights and opportunities to participate in the economic, political, social and cultural development and to equally benefit from its outcomes.

2. Goal

To promote the principle of the rule of law based on respect for women's rights and improving institutional mechanisms in Palestinian society in order to protect and support abused women and allow them to live in a society free from all forms of discrimination, and based on equality, dignity, and respect for human rights.

3. Geographic area where the National Strategy to Combat Violence Against Women is applicable

For the purposes of this National Strategy, it shall apply to all women living in the jurisdiction of the PNA irrespective of their political affiliation, nationality, religion, social class, etc.

4. General principles governing the Strategy

- A belief that women's rights are human rights.
- Government commitment to combating VAW.
- The use of the term "women" rather than "woman" to point to women as individuals in society in various life stages and of various social statuses and age groups, in order to avoid labelling the entire group with the characteristics of one woman with certain features, standards, class, affiliation, etc.
- Responding to the needs of all women in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip without discrimination.
- Adopting the principle of criminalizing offenders and using the philosophy of rehabilitating perpetrators of violence.
- Adopting the principle of empowerment and reintegration of women survivors of violence in society.
- Involving women themselves in the development of their vision within the National Strategy to Combat VAW.
- Involving men and boys in a central manner in the process of combating VAW.
- Promoting the role of research and documentation to provide the essential references for the process of combating VAW.
- Promoting the principle of partnership between governmental institutions, NGOs and the private sector in the process of combating VAW.
- Activating and creating mechanisms at the government level for monitoring and follow-up of the process of combating VAW.

⁴⁷ This vision is that of MoWA which was adopted by the National Committee to Combat VAW to be the vision of the Committee in combating VAW, while the goal reflects the mission that the National Committee to Combat VAW is seeking to achieve.

Complementary documents that must be read with this Strategy: the 2011-2013 Cross-Sectoral National Gender Strategy, the PNA's Palestinian Development Plan 2011-2013, the Palestinian Basic Law, the 2005 Council of Minister's decision on the protection of women from violence, the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), CEDAW recommendations, the Fourth Geneva Convention and the UN Security Council's Resolution 1325.

5. Required resources for Strategy implementation

The success of this Strategy's implementation and the development of consequent programmes and technical plans will depend on the availability of three main types of resources: financial resources, human resources, and material resources. These three types of resources have equal value and none of them should be disregarded in favour of the other or otherwise regarded as more important than the other.

- **Financial resources**

The implementation of the Strategy requires the availability of adequate financial resources. As each Ministry member of the National Committee to Combat VAW should adopt the strategic goal that corresponds to their field, the Ministries will have to develop programmes and set out work plans specific to the implementation of the Strategy. This will require the provision of the necessary financial resources. As an outcome, the mainstreaming of the combat against VAW in each ministry will lead to stabilization in financial resources.

- **Human resources**

As seen in the situation analysis of MoWA and other governmental and non-governmental institutions, availability of qualified staff with good knowledge of and faith in women's rights is a major element for successfully combating VAW. The unavailability of these main elements would lead to the implementation process of work plans proving ineffective.

- **Material resources (offices, equipment, etc)**

The availability of suitable space and equipment is another main requirement for the Strategy's implementation. For example, one of the main requirements resulting from this Strategy is the need for adequate space for the provision of counselling services in schools, equipped with suitable furniture and equipment. This is similarly applicable to health and other fields.

6. Proposed strategic goals, policies and interventions

Strategic Objective One

Promote protection and empowerment mechanisms for women subjected to violence resulting from the Israeli occupation

The activation of international mechanisms for women's protection in conflicts and under the occupation is an important basis for combating VAW. The multi-fold violence suffered by Palestinian women under the Israeli occupation further contributes to the absence of a safe environment for women in the oPt, with their human security under threat. In this regard, an international responsibility exists to protect the human security of women by taking all necessary measures to end the Israeli occupation and emphasize the right to self-determination. This in turn will provide an environment conducive to working at the national level on combating internal forms of VAW.

Policy One:

Activate international protection mechanisms for Palestinian women

Interventions:

1. Build the capacity of a professional cadre with skills in writing international reports.
2. Activate the different international committees for protecting women from violence.
3. Develop documentation mechanisms based on international standards.
4. Build the capacity of field researchers in monitoring the violations of women's rights in the oPt by Israeli official and unofficial bodies.
5. Organize the exchange of information at the local, regional and international levels.
6. Activate the role of media to shed light on Israeli violations of women's rights in the oPt.

Policy Two:

Improve the quality of the services offered to women subjected to violence resulting from the Israeli occupation

Interventions:

1. Develop sustainable programmes of psychological rehabilitation for women subjected to violence by the Israeli occupation in the oPt.
2. Develop sustainable programmes of economic and social empowerment for women subjected to violence by the Israeli occupation in the oPt, particularly women prisoners.
3. Rehabilitate women subjected to violence by the Israeli occupation in the oPt to ensure their reintegration into the society, particularly women prisoners.

Agencies responsible for implementation: MoWA, MoSA, the Ministry of Detainees Affairs, human rights and women's institutions, the Ministry of Information, UNRWA.

Strategic Objective Two

Promote a legal framework and institutional mechanisms to protect women from violence

The lack of a strong, equitable legal framework for women, an essential mechanism in providing official protection for women, contributes to strengthening the role of other unofficial bodies in intervening in cases of VAW, such as tribes and political parties. This naturally leads to an increase in violence towards women, since cases are then resolved on the basis of prevailing social norms and traditions, many of which promote the marginalization of women in the society. Protection and support for women victims of violence requires a government commitment to strengthen the principle of the rule of law in a way that is fair to women, and to provide the necessary actions to facilitate women's access to formal equality in the law and before courts.

Policy One:

Integrate the fight to combat Violence Against Women in national plans

Interventions:

1. Increase the representation and participation of women's rights activists with feminist vision in decision-making.
2. Activate the role of sectoral advisory councils⁴⁸ and ensure that women's institutions are included.
3. Integrate combating VAW into the vision and objectives of ministries that are members of the National Committee to Combat VAW.
4. Develop a monitoring system to assess the commitment to the application of gender-responsive budgeting in government institutions.
5. Activate gender units and planning units in all governmental institutions in the field of gender-based planning and implementation.

Agencies responsible for implementation: National Committee to Combat VAW, the Palestinian Council of Ministers, the Ministry of Planning, women's institutions, ICHR, the Public Control Commission and the General Union of Palestinian Women.

Policy Two:

Build administrative protocols and codes of conduct defining the roles of the multiple agencies involved in the fight to combat Violence Against Women and on how to deal with women victims of violence.

Interventions:

1. Reduce the role of tribal leaders, reconciliation committees and political parties in dealing with VAW cases.
2. Develop a unified document to define the role of official institutions, in particular security institutions, in dealing with women victims of violence.
3. Develop mechanisms to coordinate the work of governor offices, municipalities and local councils with specialized organizations in dealing with VAW cases.
4. Develop criteria to be adopted in the registration of institutions offering counselling services to women victims of violence.
5. Develop procedures for follow-up mechanisms and court decisions for cases of VAW where the perpetrators are living in Area C, East Jerusalem or land within the 1948 borders.
6. Activate complaints units in ministries.
7. Develop a code of professional ethics in dealing with partners.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Sectoral advisory councils were created to expand the base of participation in advancing the tasks included in the programme document of the government "Palestine: Ending the Occupation, Establishing the State," and express opinions and suggestions regarding public policies, plans, programmes, priorities and legislation. The Council of Ministers approved the commencement of efforts to create sectoral advisory councils for ministries and governmental institutions that include representatives from Palestinian civil society, the private sector, experts, academics, and competent public figures, to ensure partnership and shared responsibility for strengthening the competence and capacity of these institutions in the provision of basic services efficiently and effectively.

⁴⁹ Partners are: the Police, medical and health personnel, and governmental and non-governmental institutions offering direct services to women.

8. Develop a monitoring system to assess the commitment to procedures which define the role of the multiple agencies in dealing with VAW cases.

Agencies responsible for implementation: The PNA President's Office, the Palestinian Council of Ministers, the National Committee to Combat VAW, ICHR, the General Union of Palestinian Women and the Ministry of Civil Affairs.

Policy Three:

Develop and amend local laws to protect women from violence

Interventions:

1. Approve and enforce the draft family protection law.
2. Annul/amend articles in the penal code which undermine women's rights. Suggested topics:
 - Amend articles 96, 97, 98, 300, 308 and 334 in the Jordanian penal code applicable in the West Bank.
 - Amend articles 42, 153, 155, 156, 157, 159, 160, 161, 170, 182, 183 and 250 in the British penal code applicable in the Gaza Strip.
 - Add an article criminalizing sexual harassment to both penal codes.
 - Redefine rape in both penal codes.
 - Criminalize marital rape.
 - Criminalize acts of trafficking women for both the one who practices trafficking and the one who pays to obtain the service.
 - Issue a decision preventing early marriage by introducing an article in the penal code punishing those who marry a minor.
 - Intensify the penalty in the Jordanian and British penal codes for parents or any adult in the household or outside who is involved in practicing violence of all forms against children, especially those with disabilities.
 - **Approve the new unified penal code** which is based on women's rights.
3. Review and amend the labour law in accordance with women's protection from violence and approve new articles in the labour law criminalizing all forms of VAW in the workplace.
4. Amend the civil courts formation law in order to create courts specialized in family matters.
5. Issue regulations and bylaws to the effect of endorsing reports from social workers and psychologists, making them binding before the court.
6. Issue a decision opening the doors for reporting to the police departments on cases of VAW.
7. Issue a law to protect institutions working on women's protection and their staff.
8. Activate the government's decision issued in 2005 on defining the marriageable age at 18 years.
9. Issue an official decision stressing that the definition of a child as all those under the age of 18 years be adopted in all transactions and procedures.
10. Create legal procedures to restrict the role of tribal leaders and reconciliation committees in cases related to VAW.
11. Issue a decision identifying the police system as the only formal security agency that should handle VAW cases.
12. Restrict polygamy and ensure that restricting conditions are binding.
13. Issue a decision obligating VAW offenders to take part in rehabilitation programmes and community service.
14. Define psychological harm as a violation in the penal code with according penalties.

Agencies responsible for implementation: PLC, MoJ, the Palestinian Council of Ministers, the National Committee to Combat VAW, the Fatwa and Legislation Council, women's institutions and ICHR.

Strategic Objective Three

Improve social protection and social support offered to women victims of violence

In order to empower and reintegrate women victims of violence back into society, it is necessary to work on strengthening and improving the quality of services offered to them. Various gaps still exist, primarily the lack of an institutionalized approach in combating VAW within different institutions, including safe homes. This is reflected in the absence of a national referral system for VAW cases between governmental and non-governmental institutions, and the shortage of qualified and specialized personnel in dealing with VAW cases.

Policy One:

Improve the quality of services offered to women victims of violence

Interventions:

1. Conduct studies on the effectiveness of safe home services in the oPt for the protection and empowerment of women victims of violence.
2. Increase the number and develop services of safe homes and institutions offering legal and social protection services and ensure their wide geographic distribution throughout the oPt.
3. Increase the number of free help lines for women victims of violence and ensure that they are followed up by specialists.
4. Develop unified procedures for dealing with VAW cases to be adopted by all safe homes.
5. Develop mechanisms for VAW case documentation to be used by all social workers, psychological counsellors and lawyers.
6. Systematize family counselling with regard to VAW cases.
7. Provide safe shelter for women and children exposed to violence.
8. Adapt infrastructure to facilitate the mobility of persons with disabilities in institutions working on women's protection.
9. Develop disability centres based on human rights standards to be able to deal with women with mental disabilities who are victims of violence.

Policy Two:

A national referral system defining and regulating working relations between institutions offering protection to women victims of violence is in place

Interventions:

1. Define the roles of different agencies in the referral system.
2. Train service providers who deal with VAW on how to use the national referral system.
3. Integrate the national referral system into the procedures of institutions offering protection to women victims of violence and provide training on its use.
4. Develop a reference guide with names and addresses of institutions offering health, social, legal and psychological services to women victims of violence.

Policy Three:

Rehabilitate women victims and survivors of violence and reintegrate them into society

Interventions:

1. Develop policies on the re-integration of women victims of violence in the society based on women's rights standards.
2. Develop programmes to work with children subjected to violence.
3. Develop sustainable economic empowerment programmes for women victims of violence.
4. Develop special programmes for the reintegration of women survivors of violence back into the society.
5. Develop programmes for follow-up and support to women survivors of violence.

Policy Four:

Build the capacity of staff offering counselling services to women victims of violence

Interventions:

1. Develop the capacity of staff in safe homes and women's protection institutions.
2. Develop the capacity of lawyers in dealing with women victims of violence and in court pleadings in this regard.
3. Build the capacity of a specialist cadre for working with women victims of violence with disabilities.
4. Develop the capacity of a specialist cadre for working with children of women victims of violence who are subjected to violence.
5. Develop programmes offering periodic and continuing qualification requirements and capacity development trainings for staff of institutions working with women victims of violence.
6. Develop standards to be adopted in the recruitment of social counsellors.
7. Develop mechanisms of incentives and privileges for personnel working in women's protection.
8. Develop a system of monitoring and follow-up to evaluate the commitment and the quality of work of the staff offering counselling services to women victims of violence.

Agencies responsible for implementation: MoWA, MoSA, MoI, MoJ, the Department of Forensic Medicine, women's institutions offering counselling and legal services to women, the Ministry of Housing, the private sector, ICHR in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, UNRWA, the General Union of Disabled Palestinians and other disability institutions, the Palestinian Council of Ministers, the Ministry of National Economy, PCBS, the Ministry of Finance and MoH.

Strategic Objective Four

Improve health services in dealing with cases of VAW

Health institutions in the public and private sectors are often the first centres to receive cases of VAW because of direct physical harm suffered by women victims that may require urgent medical intervention. Therefore, it is important to improve the level of services offered to women by these institutions and increase women's trust in them in order to encourage women to seek their services and break the barrier of silence about their abuse.

Policy One:

Improve facilities and administrative systems in health centres to allow reception of women victims of violence

Interventions:

1. Designate special units to deal with cases of VAW in central health facilities, while giving due consideration to the rights of women with disabilities.
2. Provide the required medical equipment in health institutions receiving cases of VAW.
3. Develop procedures for obtaining building permits for health facilities that require the availability of spaces for receiving VAW cases, with consideration of the needs of women with disabilities.
4. Develop a code of ethics for dealing with cases of VAW in the health system.
5. Develop administrative procedures to enhance the ability and likelihood of women victims of violence to approach health centres.

Policy Two:

Develop the quality of the health services available to women victims of violence that approach health centres

Interventions:

1. Develop standards and mechanisms for writing medical and social reports for VAW cases (including cases of psychological, physical and sexual violence).
2. Motivate primary health care providers to acquire and apply appropriate skills for detecting cases of women victims of violence and referring them to the appropriate services.
3. Develop the capacity of medical staff working in the units that receive victims of violence.
4. Establish competent committees from institutions working with women victims of violence to participate in the development of medical reports on VAW cases, including the Department of Forensic Medicine.
5. Develop educational materials addressing the issue of VAW to be distributed to various agencies dealing with VAW cases.
6. Build a monitoring and follow-up system to assess compliance of medical staff with the procedures set for managing VAW cases.

Agencies responsible for implementation: MoH, private practice clinics, the Physicians' Association, UNRWA, complaints units within ministries, women's and other relevant institutions, MoWA and ICHR.

Strategic Objective Five

Improve the protection, jurisdiction, shari'a and defence systems to protect women from violence based on a women's rights-based approach

The first and direct responsibility for women's protection lies in the hands of law enforcement institutions. Therefore, it is necessary to define the authority of law enforcement officers in dealing with cases of VAW. It is also necessary to provide an infrastructure conducive to bridging the gap between women and the police to allow for psychological acceptance of seeking protection from law enforcement officers. To strengthen the work of law enforcement officers in cases involving VAW, it is necessary to provide laws and relevant systems to support them in performing their duties, including forensic medicine services, as forensic medicine reports represent an essential element in many judicial trials. It is also necessary to work with the judiciary on how to deal with VAW cases in courts.

Policy One:

Improve the quality of police work, forensic medicine, and general prosecution work with regard to management of VAW cases

Interventions:

1. Develop written procedures on mechanisms and a code of ethics to be used by the police, forensic medicine workers and general prosecutors in dealing with women subjected to violence.
2. Develop the infrastructure of family protection units in police departments as well as forensic and juvenile centres, ensuring confidentiality and psychological comfort for women victims of violence.
3. Establish a specialized unit within the prosecutor's office to deal with VAW cases.
4. Provide forensic medicine clinics in all governorates in the oPt.
5. Improve the capacities of police, forensic doctors, juvenile centres and general prosecutors in investigating VAW cases and dealing with women victims of violence.
6. Provide female forensic doctors as staff for work on VAW cases.
7. Provide a specialized cadre of female forensic doctors to work on VAW cases involving women with disabilities.
8. Establish/upgrade a forensic lab that maintains the pace with modern technology.
9. Provide social workers in women's institutions working with women victims of violence to accompany the victims in investigation sessions and forensic clinics.
10. Develop mechanisms for transferring women victims of violence from prisons and police departments to courts and safe homes.
11. Develop mechanisms for the documentation and monitoring of VAW cases.
12. Develop mechanisms and sustainable programmes for rehabilitating VAW perpetrators in prisons and reformatories.
13. Intensify efforts to implement maintenance rulings issued by shari'a courts.
14. Develop the procedures used in PNA women's prisons to ensure protection of women's basic rights.
15. Strengthen the role of the police in community awareness and in gaining public trust.
16. Increase the number of policewomen in the police system.

Policy Two:

Improve the performance of civil and shari'a courts in dealing with VAW cases

Interventions:

1. Increase legal prosecution of VAW cases.
2. Develop a document that delineates professional ethics in how judges and court staff should deal with cases of VAW.
3. Building the capacity of judges in civil and shari'a courts to deal with VAW cases.
4. Reinforce security personnel in courts.
5. Establish a programme for the protection of witnesses related to VAW cases.
6. Develop mechanisms to protect the rights of children subjected to violence.

7. Create a pool of specialized judges in cases of VAW.
8. Establish special courts to deal with VAW.
9. Develop mechanisms for dealing with children in courts.
10. Develop judicial procedures in the court that serve the rights of women victims of violence.
11. Reduce the proportion of protracted cases involving women victims of violence.

Agencies responsible for implementation: MoI, MoSA, MoJ, Department of Forensic Medicine, MoWA, ICHR and women's institutions in the Gaza Strip.

Strategic Objective Six

Promote the principle of violence prevention as part of the strategic direction of institutions working on the protection of women's rights

Women's protection requires concerted efforts to exert pressure for legislative amendments and social change, not only from women's and human rights institutions, but also from the different segments of the general public. In practical terms, the social change required to both combat and prevent VAW in the oPt necessitates changing the prevailing mindset regarding women's rights in Palestinian society. Thus, all parties with main roles in preventing VAW, particularly those in the fields of research, media and educational curricula, should be involved in working towards this social change.

Policy One:

Reinforce the role of research and documentation in combating Violence Against Women

Interventions:

1. Support research and studies addressing the issue of VAW based on women's experiences, including women with disabilities, and analysis of VAW perpetrators.
2. Develop research studying the socio-economic costs of VAW.
3. Build the capacity of a cadre of activist women's rights researchers, both male and female.
4. Promote the role of researchers, intellectuals and academics in sponsoring a culture of combating VAW.
5. Develop manuals on combating VAW for law schools, universities, health institutes, social workers, psychologists, law enforcement agencies and the judiciary.
6. Develop mechanisms for documenting VAW for the judiciary, law enforcement agencies, health centres and institutions working on women's protection.
7. Develop a mechanism for exchange of information and other publications on VAW with local institutions.
8. Systematize the updating and dissemination of gender-based statistical data with a special focus on VAW.

Agencies responsible for implementation: Universities, independent researchers, research institutions, PCBS, women's institutions, MoWA, UNRWA and MoEHE.

Policy Two:

Raise community awareness on the importance of combating Violence Against Women

Interventions:

1. Improve legal literacy of women on women's rights.
2. Give guidance to religious leaders, reconciliation leaders and service committees on raising community awareness about the issue of VAW.
3. Develop awareness programmes for members of political parties on women's rights and VAW.
4. Provide specialized awareness-raising activities for persons with disabilities, especially mental disabilities, on how to identify and reject VAW.
5. Increase men's awareness of VAW as a general and essential socio-economic issue.
6. Encourage men to reject and protest against VAW and to provide support to women survivors of violence in order to offer an alternative image of men's role in dealing with women's rights.
7. Encourage men to be role models for children in the household in promoting respect and love among family members.
8. Reduce the proportion of men's involvement in social problems and use of psychotropic substances.
9. Develop VAW awareness-raising programmes targeting coffee shops and popular recreation sites attended by men.

Agencies responsible for implementation: MoWA in coordination with the National Committee to Combat VAW, women's and human rights institutions, women's societies, cooperatives and trade unions, lawyers, UNRWA, the Ministry of Waqf, the Fatwa and Legislation Council and institutions involved in combating drug addiction.

Policy Three:
Promote the role of educational institutions in combating Violence Against Women

Interventions related to counselling and guidance:

1. Provide qualified school counsellors (based on students' age groups) knowledgeable on issues related to combating VAW.
2. Increase the number of counsellors in educational institutions knowledgeable on issues related to combating VAW.
3. Provide an infrastructure conducive to VAW counselling in educational institutions.

Interventions related to school curricula:

1. Introduce legal education into school curricula at the different stages.
2. Implement a mandatory syllabus in schools on VAW, its forms, and how to deal with it (to be based on students' ages).
3. Strengthen understanding of the concept of gender and increase the quality of and value attributed to civic education offered in schools based on human rights and women's rights.
4. Develop mandatory programmes for gender-based sex education that suit each age group.

Interventions related to supervision:

1. Strengthen the role of student councils and parent councils in schools.
2. Develop mechanisms for follow-up of students with their parents by school administration.
3. Provide educational guidance and supervision in the field of teachers' and supervisors' training.
4. Develop mandatory, rights-based standards for teacher recruitment.
5. Develop monitoring and accountability mechanisms for the commitment of teachers and students to human rights and women's rights.

Interventions related to educational activities:

1. Develop systematic psychological support programmes for both teachers and students.
2. Strengthen programmes that promote nonviolence in educational institutions, such as music, drawing, sports, and field trips.
3. Develop sustainable programmes for raising awareness about women's rights, particularly in institutes, colleges and universities.

Agencies responsible for implementation: MoEHE, MoWA, institutes and universities, UNRWA.

Policy Four:
Promote a healthy nonviolent environment for social relations and direct culture and arts towards promoting gender equality

Interventions:

1. Develop sustainable and meaningful recreation programmes for youth that are based on the needs of each particular area.
2. Encourage and systematize voluntary work.
3. Promote cultural exchange between the different areas in the oPt and with international experiences as well.
4. Develop programmes to encourage parenting that promotes nonviolence and equality.
5. Establish public spaces, parks, theatres and movie theatres in different areas throughout the oPt.
6. Promote equitable participation of males and females in different recreational programmes and activities.
7. Develop or highlight popular proverbs, stories, and local songs that call for promoting the status of women and redress the negative ones.
8. Develop stories for children based on human respect.
9. Develop arts such as dance, theatre and drawing that both exhibit and call for respect of human rights and women's rights in particular.

Agencies responsible for implementation: The Ministry of Youth and Sports (MoYS), MoEHE, MoWA, the Ministry of Culture, NGOs concerned with the rights of children and youth, UNRWA.

Policy Five:

Support the role of media in promoting a culture against Violence Against Women

Interventions:

1. Mainstream gender in the strategic plans of media institutions.
2. Systematize mechanisms of communication and networking between women's institutions and the media.
3. Develop systems of media reporting on VAW in newspapers and other media outlets.
4. Include and activate the media as a basic component in strategic plans of institutions working on VAW.
5. Build the capacity of male and female media professionals on gender issues.
6. Activate the role of the Media Forum for Supporting Women's Rights.
7. Involve youth in media strategic planning and programming.
8. Exchange experiences in combating VAW at the international and regional levels.
9. Activate a monitoring and accountability system for the publication of information on the issue of VAW.

Agencies responsible for implementation: The Palestinian Media Centre, MoWA, the Ministry of Information, women's institutions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, MoYS, UNRWA, educational institutions and MoEHE.

Policy Six:

Strengthen a network of relationships between the different institutions working on women's protection from violence

Interventions:

1. Develop a database on the work of institutions on VAW issues.
2. Develop a memorandum of understanding between institutions working on women's protection.
3. Systematize the exchange of information between institutions.
4. Strengthen lobbying campaigns and coalitions involved in legislative amendments in favour of women's protection.
5. Build the capacities of women's institutions and leaders involved in defending women and their rights.
6. Promote cooperation with the association of trade unions to ensure women's rights.
7. Raise awareness of institutions working with women victims of violence on the role of forensic medicine and the judiciary in dealing with VAW cases.

Agencies responsible for implementation: National Committee to Combat VAW, the NGO Forum to Combat VAW (Al-Muntada Coalition), the Amal Coalition to Combat Violence Against Women (Gaza Strip), institutions concerned with the issue of VAW, UNRWA, trade unions, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Planning.

7. Monitoring, evaluation and follow-up of the National Strategy to Combat Violence Against Women

As explained above, the aim of this Strategy is to contribute to social change towards the protection of women's rights in Palestinian society. To assess the Strategy's achievement of its objectives through the implementation of the corresponding policies and programmes, it is necessary to develop monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for the Strategy. This requires answers to the following questions:

- Are we heading in the right direction in our work on combating VAW?
- Is there a tangible change in the lives of women as a result of the adopted intervention policies?
- Are human and financial resources effective in meeting the objectives of the Strategy in order to effect the desired change?
- What are the lessons learned from our work that can be useful for future planning?
- What methods would help us improve our performance in this regard?

8. Summary vision on how the Strategy is expected to be implemented

- The Strategy is a general framework for all institutions involved in combating VAW.
- The Strategy is the basic reference for decision-makers and legislators to work on combating VAW.
- The National Committee to Combat VAW is the key body that should endorse the Strategy and coordinate with MoWA on its implementation and monitoring.
- Each ministry should adopt one of the strategic objectives addressed in the National Strategy to Combat VAW based on their area of specialization, which will strengthen the governments' commitment to combating VAW.
- Members of the National Committee to Combat VAW should agree on the selection of priority policies from the Strategy for the next five years and should identify indicators for the agreed upon policies.
- Each institution in the different governorates of the oPt, whether governmental, non-governmental or private, should develop programmes and operational plans to combat VAW in accordance with the general framework proposed in this National Strategy and in coordination with MoWA.
- A national committee for monitoring and follow-up shall be formed to include members from the National Committee to Combat VAW, MoWA, the Ministry of Planning, the Ministry of Finance, women's organizations, feminist researchers and academics, and ICHR.
- UNRWA should coordinate and network with government institutions in the National Committee to Combat VAW in order to ensure harmony and integration of the needs of refugee women and non-refugee women. Although UNRWA is the official body responsible for meeting the basic rights of Palestine refugee women, the PNA remains responsible for ensuring all women's access to basic rights in the oPt and assessing the quality of services provided to them.

The monitoring and evaluation process should follow an objective and clear methodology. Therefore, it is important to form a sub-committee from the National Committee to Combat VAW with the participation of ICHR, academic and women's rights activists, in addition to women's institutions.

Strategic Objective

Build a monitoring, follow-up and evaluation system involving both governmental and non-governmental institutions

Interventions:

1. Develop national gender indicators to assess the effectiveness of intervention policies in combating VAW.
2. Build a system to document successful local experiences in combating VAW.
3. Organize semi-annual and annual reporting on Strategy implementation.
4. Develop monitoring mechanisms for the implementation of the Strategy's budget allocations.
5. Organize the reports of ministries' complaints units on VAW cases.
6. Monitor complaints on of code of conduct violations in dealing with VAW cases.
7. Improve the performance of individual staff members and institutions in combating VAW, focusing on achievements and impact.
8. Support the principle of accountability for funds allocated to projects combating VAW.

Agencies responsible for implementation: MoWA, the National Committee to Combat VAW, ICHR, academics, independent activists on women's rights, women's institutions and UNRWA.

9. Qualitative and Quantitative Indicators

Strategic Objective One

Promote protection and empowerment mechanisms for women subjected to violence resulting from the Israeli occupation

Policy one:

Activate international protection mechanisms for Palestinian women

1. Availability of local mechanisms for the monitoring and dissemination of information on violations of Palestinian women's rights resulting from the Israeli occupation.
2. The number of international reports that address violations of Palestinian women's rights resulting from the Israeli occupation.

Policy Two:

Improve the quality of services offered to women subjected to violence resulting from the Israeli occupation

1. Number of programmes for economic, social and psychological empowerment targeting women victims of Israeli occupation violence.
2. Degree of satisfaction of women victims of Israeli occupation violence enrolled in programmes of economic, social and psychological empowerment with the quality of services provided to them.
3. The number of women who were able to overcome adversity and return to their lives after their subjection to Israeli occupation violence.
4. Number of research studies done on the quality of services and empowerment programmes for women subjected to Israeli occupation violence.
5. The types of professions of the women victims of Israeli occupation violence enrolled or previously enrolled in counselling and social services.
6. The number of women victims of Israeli occupation violence that have gained skills or qualifications to engage in the labour market.
7. The quality of programmes for the training and empowerment of women victims of Israeli occupation violence.
8. The number of private sector institutions that have positions filled by women victims of Israeli occupation violence.

Strategic Objective Two

Promote a legal framework and institutional mechanisms to protect women from violence

Policy one:

Integrate the fight to combat VAW in national plans

1. The number of national plans that include budget allocations for gender issues.
2. The number of ministries that have integrated strategic plans to combat VAW into their national plans.

Policy Two:

Build administrative protocols and codes of conduct defining the roles of the multiple agencies involved in the fight to combat VAW and on how to deal with women victims of violence

1. A document defining the roles of various actors involved in dealing with cases of violence against women is approved by the Palestinian Council of Ministers.
2. A national code of principles document for dealing with VAW is approved by the Palestinian Council of Ministers.
3. A monitoring system to measure the performance of the various parties involved in combating VAW is in place.

Policy Three:

Develop and amend local laws to protect women from violence

The number of bills, resolutions and legislative amendments based on women's rights adopted by the Palestinian National Authority.

Strategic Objective Three

Improve social protection and social support offered to women victims of violence

Policy One:

Improve the quality of services offered to women victims of violence

1. Women's satisfaction with the quality of services offered by the institutions that they approach for protection.
2. The number of shelters established for women victims of violence and based on respecting both women's rights and a human rights approach.
3. The number of services that have been developed to serve women victims of violence, including women with disabilities.

Policy Two:

Build a national referral system defining and regulating working relations between institutions offering protection to women victims of violence

The existence of a national referral system for women victims of violence adopted and effectively used by all institutions working to combat VAW.

Policy Three:

Rehabilitate women victims and survivors of violence and reintegrate them in society

1. Number of women victims of violence who were involved in reintegration programmes.
2. Number of women survivors of violence who were able to successfully reintegrate back into the society.
3. The employment rate of women survivors of violence.

Policy Four:

Build the capacity of staff offering counselling services to women victims of violence

Number of professionals who received training and support to provide counselling services for women victims of violence.

Strategic Objective Four

Improve health services in dealing with cases of VAW

Policy One:

Improve facilities and administrative systems in health centres to allow reception of women victims of violence

1. Number of health centres that have assigned special places to receive women victims of violence.
2. Number of health centres that include infrastructure for facilitating access of women with disabilities.
3. Adoption of a code of ethics for dealing with cases of VAW by the Ministry of Health.

Policy Two:

Develop the quality of health services available to women victims of violence that approach health centres

1. Number of health reports that include details on the physical and psychological impact on women as a result of exposure to violence.
2. Satisfaction of women victims of violence with the performance of healthcare professionals, providers and counsellors in health centres.
3. Existence of an accountability and monitoring system on dealing with VAW cases in health institutions.
4. Number of health personnel who have received specialized training to deal with cases of violence against women.
5. Number of trained social workers, doctors and healthcare providers capable of dealing with VAW cases in health centres and healthcare facilities.

Strategic Objective Five

Improve the protection, judicial, shari'a and defence systems to protect women from violence based on a women's rights-based approach

Policy One:

Improve the quality of police work, forensic medicine, and general prosecution work with regard to management of VAW cases

1. Number of police, including police in family protection units, prosecutors and forensic doctors who have received training on how to deal with women victims of violence.
2. Number of family protection units (police) and forensic clinics that have been established or developed in accordance with the rights of women victims of violence.
3. The satisfaction of women regarding the quality of services provided by the police system.
4. The existence of a specialized prosecution unit to deal with VAW cases.
5. Number of clinics that are related to the Department of Forensic Medicine.
6. Number of specialists with training in psychological violence against women in the Centre of Forensic Medicine.

Women's satisfaction with the performance of employees in the Department of Forensic Medicine.

Policy Two:

Improve the performance of civil and shari'a courts in dealing with Violence Against Women cases

1. Number of judges in the judiciary and shari'a courts who have received specialized training on how to deal with VAW cases.
2. Number of VAW cases that have been received by the courts and the number of decisions issued in favour of women.
3. The existence of clear procedures for the protection of witnesses in VAW cases.

Strategic Objective Six

Promote the principle of violence prevention as part of the strategic direction of institutions working on the protection of women's rights

Policy one:

Reinforce the role of research and documentation in combating VAW

1. Number of studies and reports that have been carried out on VAW and published in local and international media.
2. Number of researchers trained to undertake research on women's issues.
3. National indicators for measuring and monitoring VAW are in place.

Policy Two:

Raise community awareness on the importance of combating VAW

1. Number of awareness and education campaigns that have addressed VAW.
2. Percentage increase of the target groups' awareness about issues relating to VAW.
3. Number of awareness and education campaigns addressing VAW that have targeted men.
4. Number of articles written by men renouncing violence against women.

Policy Three:

Promote the role of educational institutions in combating VAW

Interventions related to counselling and guidance:

1. Number of social counsellors in educational institutions based on the need and number of the students per school.
2. Number of schools that allocate special rooms for counselling.

Interventions related to school curricula:

1. Number of modifications made to school curricula to increase attention on gender awareness, awareness of VAW, and legal literacy in relation to women's rights, according to age-based criteria.
2. Percentage of students who report having been exposed to violence.
3. Attitudes of students towards each other, based on respect of human rights.

Interventions related to supervision:

1. Number of teachers who were recruited based on mandatory selection and hiring standards based on respect for human rights.
2. Number of procedures taken against school faculty members who violate the code of ethics when dealing with students.
3. Number of VAW cases referred through educational institutions.

Interventions related to educational activities:

1. Number of students who participate in psychological support and social counselling programmes.
2. Number of teachers who participate in psychological support and social counselling programmes.
3. Number of schools committed to offering counselling services to school students and faculty.

Policy Four:

Promote a healthy nonviolent environment for social relations and direct culture and arts towards promoting gender equality

1. Number of entertainment programmes that promote women's rights, based on age and gender criteria.
 2. Number of public spaces, theatres and clubs for both sexes in remote areas.
 3. Number of voluntary programmes that promote non-violent social relations and environments for youth in the different governorates throughout the oPt.
 4. Number of proverbs used in cultural events and cultural publications that promote the status of women in the oPt.
 5. Number of popular stories developed that address gender equality.
 6. Number of popular songs developed that talk about women's rights.
 7. Number of popular celebrations and festivals held that include a focus on women's rights in their agenda.
-

Policy Five:

Support the role of media in promoting a culture against VAW

1. Number of newspapers and media outlets that address violence against women, including disabled women subject to violence.
 2. Number of journalists and media workers who participated in training programmes on combating violence against women.
-

Policy Six:

Strengthen a network of relationships between the different institutions working on women's protection from violence

1. A database on VAW is in place and used by all organizations working to combat VAW.
 2. Number of lobbying campaigns carried out per year on combating VAW.
 3. Number of organizations that participate in lobbying and advocacy campaigns on combating VAW.
-

Strategic Objective Seven

Build a monitoring, follow-up and evaluation system involving both governmental and non-governmental institutions

1. Indicators developed for collecting disaggregated national gender statistics.
 2. Percentage of national budget allocated for the implementation of the National Strategy to Combat VAW.
 3. Existence of a system for the documentation of successful local experiences in combating VAW.
 4. Reports on staff evaluations of those staff providing counselling and legal services to women exposed to violence.
 5. Number and type of procedures and measures taken by the PNA to combat VAW.
 6. Number of plans for combating VAW that include monitoring and evaluation mechanisms within institutions.
-

Annexes

Annex 1: List of working team members from the Ministry of Women's Affairs

National Strategy to Combat VAW Team Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ilham Sami, Director of Complaint Unit - MoWA• Amal Abu Shanab, Policy and Planning Unit - MoWA• Nesrine Amer, Media and Advocacy Department - MoWA• Tamam Hamed Barakat, Complaint Unit - MoWA• Majedah Marouf, Media at the Minister's office - MoWA• Rami Zaqout, Media and Advocacy Department - MoWA• Fadia Razem, Jerusalem Unit - MoWA• Sana Anabtawi, Director of Jerusalem Unit - MoWA• Nesrine Abu Kishek, Media at the Minister's office - MoWA• Serine Shakhshir, Policy and Planning Unit - MoWA• Lamis Al-Saifi, Policy and Planning Unit - MoWA
Supporting Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Marilyn Rabady, General Director of the Media and Advocacy Department - MoWA• Fatina Wathae'fi, General Director of Planning and Policies - MoWA• Sumood Yaseen, Director of the Internal Monitoring Department - MoWA• Nabila Rizeq, Director of the Media and Advocacy Department - MoWA• Hanna G. Nakhleh, Programme Manager MDG - Gender• Mahmoud Ataya, Social Sector Planning Directorate - Ministry of Planning and Administrative Development• Zahera Fares - Palestinian Counselling Centre

With technical support, advice and coordination provided by Luna Saadeh, Gender-based Violence Expert, UN Women.

Annex 2: Institutions taking part in the preparation of the National Strategy to Combat VAW in the West Bank

<p>Governmental institutions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Women’s Affairs • Ministry of Social Affairs • Ministry of Education and Higher Education • Ministry of Health • Energy Authority • Ministry of Culture • Ministry of Labour • Ministry of Tourism • Ministry of the Interior (Police) • Ministry of Justice • Ministry of Planning and Administrative Development • Ministry of Environment • Higher Judicial Council • Ministry of Information • Office of the Prime Minister (Gender Unit) • Palestinian Maintenance Fund • Palestine Radio • Palestine TV • Ramallah Governorate • Office of Financial and Administrative Control • Women’s Department (Nablus district)
<p>Women’s political structures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW) • Union of Women’s Committees for Social Work • Union of Women’s Work Committees • Union of Women’s Struggle Committees • Women’s Struggle Bloc

<p>NGOs and societies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR, semi-governmental agency) • NGO Forum to Combat VAW (Al-Muntada Coalition) • The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy (MIFTAH) • Women’s Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC) • Palestinian Counseling Center (PCC) • Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU) • Juzoor for Health and Social Development • Defence for Children International – Palestine Section (DCI/PS) • Mehwar Centre • Palestinian Family Planning and Protection Association (PFPPNA) • Family Protection Society • Palestinian Women’s Club (PWC) • Palestinian Center for Democracy and Conflict Resolution (PCDCR) • Union of Health Work Committees (HWC) • Mother’s School Society • Rural Women Development Society (RWDS) • Sawa – All the Women Together Today and Tomorrow • Palestinian Working Women Society for Development (PWWS) • Al-Manar Charitable Society – Jerusalem • Women’s Studies Centre (WSC) • Women’s Work Society • Palestinian Maintenance Fund (PMF)
<p>Tawasol Centres</p>	<p>Include women’s societies and institutions in all governorates under MoWA supervision and follow-up and in coordination with women’s and children’s units in governorates and the General Union of Palestinian Women.</p>
<p>International organizations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) • United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) • United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) • International Labour Organization (ILO) • United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) • United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) • Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

Annex 3: Institutions taking part in the preparation of the National Strategy to Combat VAW in the Gaza Strip

<p>Governmental institutions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Women’s Affairs
<p>NGOs and societies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Union of Palestinian Women’s Committees – Gaza • Palestinian Women’s Information and Media Center – Gaza (PWIC - Gaza) • Palestinian Youth Association for Leadership and Rights Activation (PYALARA) • Women’s Affairs Center (WAC) • Ma’an Development Center • Al-Mezan Center for Human Rights • Palestine for Credit and Development (FATEN) • Culture and Free Thought Association (CFTA) • Gaza Community Mental Health Program (GCMHP) • Women’s Affairs Technical Committee (WATC) • National Center for Community-Based Rehabilitation • Al-Widad Society for Community Rehabilitation • Canada Global Consulting and Training Centre • Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR) • Palestinian Developmental Women’s Studies Association • Center for Women’s Legal Research and Consultancy (CWLRC) • Palestinian Commission for Refugees • Al-Amal Coalition to Combat Violence against Women • Center for Mind-Body Therapy • Women’s Health Center • Cultural Association For Heritage Protection
<p>International organizations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) • United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) • Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

Annex 4: National definitions of VAW terminology

Women:

Females of all age groups, regardless of social status, legal status, race, religion, class or any other factor.

Violence against women (VAW):

Behaviour directed against women that may include all forms of physical, mental, sexual and verbal violence, social and economic deprivation, threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivations of liberty that are directed against a woman because she is a woman, whether directly or indirectly, inflicting physical, psychological, sexual, mental, social or economic harm or suffering, whether occurring in public or in private life.

Economic deprivation in the family:

Includes all acts that lead to the deprivation of resources, ownership, control and basic rights.

Social violence:

All acts practiced by the family or the community in general, which restrict women from obtaining their rights and freedoms due to cultural and social heritage.

Physical violence:

Any assault on the body that causes physical or psychological pain and harm.

Sexual violence:

Coercion in sexual behaviour through threats, victimization, intimidation, or use of physical power or sexual implications through facial expressions or verbal or physical practices.

Psychological violence:

Any behaviour that aims to intimidate, persecute and destroy the confidence and self-esteem. It takes the form of threats, intimidation, assault, home imprisonment, control, or any other behaviour that aims to deny the rights of the victim.

Sexual harassment:

A form of sexual violence that is related to sexual behaviours, including verbal, physical, or insinuated, with the purpose of infringing upon or hurting the other.⁵⁰

Rape:

The forcing of another, regardless of his/her sex, to have sexual intercourse without consent.

Verbal violence:

The use of words and phrases that lead to degrading an individual, destroying his/her confidence and causing him/her a sense of humiliation.

Threat:

A form of violence considered to be any behaviour or implication through voice tone, looks, signs, or through the use of physical power by the offender to intimidate another and make him/her feel insecure about his/her life. This form of violence is also associated with degradation of human dignity, insult, and the feeling of helplessness.⁵¹

50 MIFTAH – The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue & Democracy. Glossary of definitions and terminologies. Reproductive rights. 2006.

51 Ibid.

Women trafficking and forced prostitution:

Sexual and physical exploitation and all acts or services of recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of women, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, or of deception. Exploitation includes, at a minimum, the exploitation of prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.⁵²

Domestic violence:

Every action or omission of an act by a family member towards another member that involves physical, sexual, or psychological harm or threat of harm, or creates fear. It also includes deprivation of basic rights such as shelter, food, drink, clothes, education, freedom of mobility, self-determination, and sense of security.⁵³

Family:

A social institution that contributes to building society. Its main responsibilities include the provision of protection, safety, human security, emotional support, and empowerment between its members. Family members include the father, mother, son/daughter, brother/sister, wife/husband, grandmother/grandfather, grandson/granddaughter, aunt/uncle, nephew/niece, cousin, stepfather, stepmother, stepson/stepdaughter, mother-in-law/father-in-law, brother-in-law/sister-in-law.⁵⁴

Child:

Every person under the age of 18 years.⁵⁵

Early marriage:

The marriage of a person under 18 calendar years of age, leading to the deprivation of his/her rights.

Forced marriage:

Forcing a woman to marry, either through the use of the power vested in her guardians, temptation, or deception.

Honour crimes or femicide:

The killing of women because they are women.

Violence between married couples:

Includes all types of sexual, psychological and physical violence or deprivation of social, economic and political rights, practiced by one of the partners against the other.

Marital rape:

When the husband insults and forces the wife to perform sexual acts she does not want or feel comfortable performing, including having sexual intercourse with her without her consent or by verbally or physically assaulting her.⁵⁶

Victim:

Any person that is or was exposed to violence of any type, by a family member, people or systems outside the family framework, and is in need of social support and assistance.

Survivor:

A person who has been exposed to violence and was able to empower herself/himself or received support for self-empowerment, making her/him able to reintegrate into society.

52 This definition was developed on the basis of Sawa's definition, 2010.

53 This definition was developed according to: Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counseling. Draft law on protecting families from violence, 2008.

54 Women's Center for Social and Legal Counseling. The Family protection from violence law project, 2008.

55 The Palestinian child law, 2004.

56 Sawa – All the Women Together, 2010.

Offender/perpetrator:

A person practicing violence of any type.

Protection:

Provision of human security and physical, sexual and psychological safety for women, ensured through the application of necessary laws, procedures, orders and measures.⁵⁷

Shelter/safe home:

A temporary place to provide security, legal protection, medical, psychological and social care to women exposed to violence and to provide them with counselling, self-empowerment and economic empowerment offered by specialists in the fields of psychological, social, legal and economic counselling in order to rehabilitate them and empower them to reintegrate back into society.⁵⁸

Community service:

A court-issued sentence binding the defendant/convicted person to perform a service at a public facility in-line with his/her existing skills. The order specifies the location, number of hours and work conditions.⁵⁹

57 This definition was developed according to: Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counseling. Draft law on protecting families from violence, 2008.

58 This definition was developed on the basis of a definition from: MIFTAH – The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue & Democracy. Glossary of definitions and terminologies. Reproductive rights, 2006.

59 Women's Center for Social and Legal Counseling. The family protection from violence law project, 2008.

Annex 5: Partners' role in implementing the National Strategy to Combat VAW

This Strategy emphasizes two issues: the first is the government's commitment to the protection of women from violence, and the second is the organization of work and definition of responsibilities of the different parties involved in the Strategy's implementation. There are overlaps in the work between governmental institutions, where policies and systems necessary for combating VAW are developed, and NGOs, especially women's NGOs, which are responsible for pressuring and lobbying the government, as well as taking part in Strategy implementation with women and the community. The private sector also makes up an important part of this Strategy, as it contributes economically to the empowerment of women, especially those exposed to violence, and to the support and sustainability of institutions working for the protection of women. Semi-governmental institutions have a role represented by the Independent Commission for Human Rights, whose mandate includes the monitoring of PNA performance and ensuring its accountability. In addition, UNRWA is considered the main actor in the provision of rights for Palestine refugee women. It has the responsibility to ensure the provision of necessary measures in its educational and health institutions for the protection of women from violence. The donor community also plays an essential role in the provision of support to programmes and activities combating violence.

=== Working mechanism ===

The strategic goals in this plan were constructed in order to determine the role of each member institution in the National Committee to Combat VAW, whether governmental or non-governmental. These goals are a product of the combined efforts of all participants, as explained in the Strategy's methodology section. These efforts were instrumental in demonstrating that the issue of VAW is a central issue that influences and is influenced by all sectors of society. The success of the Strategy's work requires each governmental, civil, and semi-governmental institution to work on the adoption of the strategic goal in the strategy specific to its mandate and then discuss the proposed intervention policies within each strategic goal in order to determine priorities for the period between 2011-2019. The adoption of the strategic goals by governmental institutions, each according to its mandate, would promote the government's commitment to mainstreaming women's issues as a main theme in the vision and mission of each institution. This would ensure the provision of the budgets necessary for the Strategy's implementation, as it forms a primary, not secondary, component in the work of PNA institutions.

In order to clarify the different roles, we will present the role of the National Committee to Combat VAW as a whole in the implementation of this Strategy, followed by the separate roles of each ministry that serves as a committee member, the role of the NGO sector, and the roles of women's institutions, human rights organizations, the private sector and semi-governmental institutions.

=== Role of the Governmental Sector ===

The National Committee to Combat VAW is the governmental body nominated by the PNA to envisage and formulate a National Strategy to Combat VAW. It also lies upon the National Committee to translate this Strategy into practical endeavours to which each ministry will be committed in its area of functioning for the coming five years and to develop national monitoring and evaluation criteria.

The credibility of this Committee stems from the fact that it represents both the governmental and non-governmental sectors within one national body. This empowers the Committee and strengthens the mechanism of coordination and interaction between the two sectors, creating an important model often called for by institutions advocating women's rights and ministries working on women's protection and combating VAW.

The Strategy represents a general framework for dealing with VAW. Therefore, defining the work and narrowing it down in order to achieve the Strategy's goals within the desired timeframe requires the National Committee to first work on prioritizing the suggested policies in these plans for the upcoming five years. As such, the Committee will also have to decide on the indicators suggested here.

In the second stage following the approval of the Strategy and the adoption of its goals by all parties, the National Committee, in accordance with the decree by which the Committee was formed and in conformity with its internal regulations, should work on forming technical committees. These subcommittees will develop work plans and determine specific programmes for implementing the proposed policies and activities needed for overall Strategy implementation.

The subcommittees will consist of representatives of gender and planning units in the ministries. As stated in the Palestinian Council of Ministers' decision on their formation, gender units are responsible for mainstreaming gender in the ministries' general plans. These units are also authorized to follow up and monitor PNA performance towards the mainstreaming of gender within the PNA's National Strategic Plan and assess the extent of its implementation by individual ministries.

The technical committees will work within the sectors suggested in the National Strategy to Combat VAW, which include the following;

- Health
- Labour
- Education
- Justice
- Police
- Counselling
- Laws and legislation
- Media
- Religion

=== The working mechanism of the technical committees will include the following criteria ===

1. Technical committees will be formed according to the competence of each sector.
2. Each committee shall include representatives of governmental, civil, and private institutions, as well as UNRWA.
3. The technical committee of each sector shall be composed of six to eight members as follows: two or three representatives from the governmental sector (from ministries' gender units , planning units and legal units), two representatives from the NGO sector, giving consideration to geographical distribution, a representative from the private sector with regards to the field of specialty and giving consideration to geographical distribution, and a member from UNRWA, also with regards to the field of specialty and giving consideration to geographical distribution.
4. A person from the ICHR in each sector shall be nominated for monitoring programme development and work plans in order to contribute to building a framework for the monitoring and evaluation of the overall Strategy.
5. A person from MoWA shall be nominated in each sector.

=== The authorities of the National Committee to Combat VAW as set by the decision of the Council of Ministers ===

1. To propose, modify, and update legislation related to the protection of women from all types of violence.
2. To set out a National Strategy to Combat VAW, which will serve as a basis for a comprehensive national plan for the prevention of VAW.
3. To establish, publish and share a national database of information on VAW.
4. To establish specialized technical committees to follow up and implement the Committee's goals.
5. To ensure that provisions related to VAW in international conventions and UN documents are adopted within national legislation and measures.
6. To contribute to the promotion of regional and international cooperation in combating all types of VAW.
7. Any other tasks given to the Committee for the purpose of achieving its goals.

The committee is composed of 13 ministries and a representative of the Al-Muntada Coalition, which includes 15 human rights and women's NGOs. Committee members include:

1. Ministry of Women's Affairs
2. Ministry of Social Affairs
3. Ministry of Justice
4. Ministry of the Interior
5. Ministry of Education and Higher Education
6. Ministry of Health
7. Ministry of Labour
8. Ministry of Media
9. Dar Al-Fatwa
10. Ministry of Waqf and Religious Affairs
11. Office of Chief Judge
12. Governorates' Affairs Unit in the President's Office
13. The general secretariat of the General Union of Palestinian Women
14. The NGO Forum to Combat VAW (Al-Muntada Coalition)

=== Relationship between the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the National Committee to Combat VAW ===

MoWA is mandated by the PNA to draft policies on women's rights in general, and VAW specifically. Combating VAW was adopted as one of the main goals of the Ministry. Based on the Council of Ministers' decision to form a National Committee to Combat VAW, MoWA was given the leadership position in the Committee. Hence, the MoWA, in complete partnership with other Committee members, is expected to play a guiding and leading role in the organization of the Committee's managerial and technical work. Accordingly, the implementation of this Strategy is envisaged to be a responsibility of the National Committee to Combat VAW, under MoWA leadership, supervision and follow-up.

=== Role of the Ministry of Women's Affairs ===

1. To promote the government's commitment to combating VAW through governmental programmes and policies, as well as budgets.
2. To network and coordinate between members of the National Committee to Combat VAW.
3. To supervise and follow up with Committee members on the prioritization of policies, programmes, and work plans.
4. To technically support gender units in the ministries and governorates in order to follow up on Strategy implementation within the ministries.
5. To promote partnership with governmental and women's institutions.
6. To monitor official bodies' application of policies and programmes set out in the Strategy.
7. To build a central database on the work of governmental and non-governmental institutions in combating VAW and to agree on the mechanism of information exchange.
8. To participate in the committee conducting monitoring and follow-up of Strategy implementation.
9. To activate the complaints unit and clarify the mechanism of communication and coordination with complaints units in other ministries.

=== Role of the Ministry of Social Affairs ===

1. To promote research on VAW, the status of services offered to women exposed to violence, and women's satisfaction with the offered services.
2. To develop mechanisms of reception and referral of VAW cases to shelters.
3. To support family protection units in police departments and help women exposed to violence who approach or are referred to these units to learn about their rights, as well as to clarify the role of shelters and available alternatives.
4. To develop self and economic empowerment programmes for women in shelters.
5. To develop sustainable programme policies for reintegrating women residing in shelters back into society.

6. To activate and promote coordination with the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Women's Affairs, women's institutions working on women's protection, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, and the Ministry of Labour.
7. To activate the complaints unit and ensure communication with the complaints unit in the Ministry of Women's Affairs.

=== Role of the Ministry of Interior ===

1. To adopt the concept of combating VAW in the ministry's vision and mission, and to translate the concept into one of ministry's strategic goals.
2. To determine the official body or bodies allowed to deal with cases of VAW.
3. To provide the infrastructure required for receiving VAW cases.
4. To build the community's (especially women's) trust in the police.
5. To build a national referral system for VAW cases.
6. To provide a cadre of police, general prosecutors and detectives to deal with VAW cases.
7. To promote the role of the ministry gender units in the planning, implementation, and follow-up process for implementing the National Strategy to Combat VAW, and to activate mechanisms for communication with the Ministry of Women's Affairs.
8. To activate the complaints unit and ensure communication with the complaints unit in the Ministry of Women's Affairs.
9. To promote the principle of accountability for individuals who violate the rights of women who refer to them for protection.

=== Role of the Ministry of Justice and the Judicial Council ===

1. To provide judges specialized in dealing with VAW.
2. To provide courts with competence to deal with cases of VAW, including the ability to maintain the confidentiality and safety of the concerned women.
3. To develop mechanisms that determine how general prosecutors should deal with women victims of violence in courts.
4. To develop mechanisms that determine how to deal with the judicial police in cases involving VAW in order to maintain security in courts.
5. To train judges on how to deal with medical, social and forensic reports in VAW cases.
6. To activate the coordination and networking processes with women's institutions working on the protection of women from violence.
7. To determine referral and follow-up mechanisms for women victims of violence between courts, shelters and institutions that offer women protection.
8. To contribute to the amendment of laws and legislation that discriminate against women.
9. To adopt the concept of psychological harm in VAW cases into the penal code.

=== Role of the Ministry of Health ===

1. To adopt the concept of combating VAW into the ministry's vision and mission, and to translate the concept into one of the ministry's strategic goals.
2. To introduce special manuals and curricula on how to deal with VAW in medicine and public health schools and colleges.
3. To set out documented mechanisms that explain how to deal with VAW cases in health centres, including the reception, referral and follow-up of VAW cases.
4. To build a database on VAW cases received in health centres.
5. To include special sections in health centres for receiving VAW cases in order to maintain confidentiality and safety.
6. To train staff on the mechanisms of documenting reports of VAW in which psychological harm is included.
7. To activate its complaints unit and ensure its communication with the Ministry of Women's Affairs on VAW cases.

=== Role of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education ===

1. To adopt the concept of combating VAW into the ministry's vision and mission, and to translate the concept into one of the ministry's strategic goals.
2. To modify the national school curricula according to a gender perspective, especially for the subject matters of civic education, national education and Arabic.
3. To introduce sex education into the national school curricula, in accordance with students' ages.
4. To develop sustainable awareness raising programmes on gender and VAW within curricular and extracurricular activities in educational institutions.
5. To build the capacity of school counsellors in dealing with cases of VAW, especially domestic violence.
6. To develop VAW case referral mechanisms.
7. To provide suitable areas for counselling in educational institutions.

=== Role of Ministry of Labour ===

1. To adopt the concept of combating VAW into the ministry's vision and mission, and to translate the concept into one of the ministry's strategic goals.
2. To develop brochures and publications that define labour rights.
3. To build a database on VAW cases received by trade unions and complaints units.
4. To promote its complaints unit and activate interventions from and coordination with the complaints unit in the Ministry of Women's Affairs.
5. To promote the role of the gender unit and activate its coordination with the Ministry of Women's Affairs.
6. To promote the principle of questioning and accountability for individuals who violate women's rights.

=== Role of the Ministry of Information ===

1. To adopt the concept of combating VAW into the ministry's vision and mission, and to translate the concept into one of the ministry's strategic goals.
2. To set mechanisms that determine how to develop news reports addressing VAW.
3. To set monitoring and accountability criteria for those who violate the mechanisms set for writing news reports addressing VAW.
4. To activate coordination and networking with governmental and non-governmental institutions about media coverage and accountability with regards to VAW.
5. To train a cadre of journalists on gender issues, who eventually would empower other journalists in this regard.
6. To participate in the Strategy's follow-up and evaluation committee in order to ensure the government's commitment to Strategy implementation.

=== Role of the Ministry of Waqf and Religious Affairs and the Office of the Chief Judge ===

1. To carry out regular meetings with religious leaders of all types on the rights of women, especially on combating VAW and respect of individuals.
2. To develop monitoring and follow-up mechanisms regarding religious preachers in Friday prayers in order to call for respecting women and rejecting VAW of all types.

=== Role of gender units in ministries ===

In 2008, a ministerial decision was issued that provided for transforming women's units in ministries into gender units. The responsibilities of these units were set as follows;

1. First: Incorporate gender issues and needs into ministerial plans and policies.
2. Second: Verify and monitor programmes and policies from a gender perspective.

The third article of the decision was on the relationship between MoWA and the ministerial gender units. The article states that gender units are to be closely connected with MoWA and that MoWA is required to offer technical and managerial support necessary for the units' work.

Based on a comprehensive vision held by the PNA with regard to the need to strengthen the role of gender units in gender mainstreaming within the National Strategic Plan and consequently in the public budget, the Council of Ministers issued a decision to mainstream gender into budgeting processes. The first article of the decision stated the following:

- All governmental departments shall have a gender-responsive annual budget.
- The gender units of the governmental departments shall participate in the annual budgeting committees.

Based on the powers vested in the gender units under both decisions mentioned above, gender units are a main party in the mainstreaming of the National Strategy to Combat VAW into the strategic plans of their respective ministries. The units' role in the implementation process, therefore, will be as follows:

1. To integrate the strategic goal suggested in this Strategy for each ministry into the main strategic goals of the concerned ministry.
2. To determine priority interventions among the proposed intervention policies in this Strategy for each of the strategic goals for the upcoming five years.
3. To participate as main members of the technical committees that will emerge from the National Committee to Combat VAW, in order to develop the programmes and work plans of each ministry.
4. To participate in the national evaluation and follow-up committee, which will be formed with the purpose of following up this Strategy.
5. To pressure each ministry to allocate the necessary budget for the implementation of the Strategy's work plan.
6. To work with MoWA's gender unit to coordinate, network, and follow-up in order to ensure the organization of the integration and implementation of the Strategy and to avoid duplication by the different ministries in the implementation of programmes and activities.

=== Role of the General Union of Palestinian Women ===

The General Union of Palestinian Women has an important role in lobbying and advocacy for achieving women's rights and protecting women from VAW. The importance of the Union in this process is based on its being an assembly of women's unions in the political parties of the Palestinian Liberation Organization. This contributes to the promotion of the Union's role at an executive level. To successfully work on the Strategy's implementation, roles expected from the General Union are as follows:

1. Lobby with the Palestinian Legislative Council to amend and adopt laws for the protection of women from violence.
2. Participate in social awareness efforts, especially awareness within political parties, on how to deal with violence and respect women's rights.
3. Participate in the process of monitoring and accountability for the implementation of the National Strategy to Combat VAW.
4. Pressure the PNA to end the internal fighting.
5. Pressure political parties to adopt a women's quota system for party representation as a main, internal principle.

=== Role of NGOs ===

Human rights NGOs, especially women's organizations, are considered the basis for combating VAW. They are a tool that pressures the PNA and the Palestinian Legislative Council to protect women from violence by monitoring their commitment to the provision of such protection.

The importance of the National Committee to Combat VAW is augmented by the fact that it is a major initiative by the PNA that works on joining the efforts of women's and human rights NGOs with governmental organizations in combating VAW. This indicates commitment from the government towards coordination and networking with NGOs. NGOs participate in the National Committee through a representative from the NGO Forum to Combat VAW, which is made up of 13 human rights and women's organizations that work on the protection of women from violence. Here, coordination and networking between the two sectors, governmental and non-governmental,

is crucial for the accumulation of outcomes and sharing of information and experiences. **To activate the role of women's NGOs in the Committee, it is recommended that the membership becomes open to more than one representative from the Forum, in order to ensure the participation of the largest number of NGOs.**

The NGOs' role works at two levels: the first is through the NGO Forum to Combat VAW. This means that the Forum should delegate a representative from each member NGO to participate in the technical committees emerging from the National Committee to Combat Violence in the different sectors in accordance with the goals of the National Strategy.

The second level is through the NGOs working on the issue of VAW, but that are not members of the Forum. Their participation will be ensured by holding meetings for coordination and dialogue to come out with a work plan on which everyone agrees.

This Strategy provides a general framework for coordination and networking on the issue of VAW, which has for a long time been a demand by women's and human rights NGOs. Accordingly, there is an opportunity to adopt and determine work priorities through this unified framework, and emphasize coordination with governmental organizations in order to ensure harmonized and comprehensive work. It is expected from NGOs to participate in the monitoring and follow-up committee in order to measure the extent of all actors' commitment to the policies and programmes and their impact on the community.

As is commonly known, NGOs submit international reports that are alternatives to the main country reports. Hence, NGOs have a main role in enforcing the government's commitment to the Strategy, both on the local and international levels.

=== Role of the private sector ===

The private sector supports the sustainability of women's protection programmes by providing financial and legal protection for women. Because of their economic power and ability to contribute to the foundations of the future state, the private sector can also act as a tool to lobby the PNA for the provision of protection to women.

=== Role of semi-governmental organizations (ICHR) ===

ICHR monitors, promotes and ensures the protection of human rights in the oPt without separation of rights or derogation of their comprehensiveness. The Commission monitors the status of human rights in the oPt and the commitment to the international standards of human rights by three branches of authority: public and private agencies, and PNA legislation and agreements. In addition, the Commission monitors the compliance of the government and public authorities with its recommendations. The Commission also works on educating and raising awareness among the public and officials on human rights. Its programmes focus on the groups most vulnerable to violations of their human rights or groups in need of a system that promotes their knowledge of human rights. ICHR assists civil society organizations concerned with raising awareness of and providing education in human rights. It also receives complaints from individuals and groups whose rights have been violated and follows up and addresses these violations.

=== Role of UNRWA ===

The Palestinian refugee issue is a political concern and UNRWA is the main reference for working with Palestinian refugees. Nonetheless, Palestine refugee women are part of Palestinian society and this Strategy is also concerned with the protection of their right to self-determination and right to life.

The roles of UNRWA and the PNA intersect in the area of women's protection from violence in the implementation of this Strategy, which is also considered a general framework for UNRWA's work in the protection of women. The role required of both groups is as follows:

1. Systematize coordination and cooperation with PNA institutions with regard to work in refugee camps.
2. Develop mechanisms for UNRWA to refer women victims of violence in a way that is complementary to the national referral system.
3. Develop the quality of services for women victims of violence in UNRWA health clinics.
4. Develop mechanisms for the reception of VAW cases in UNRWA health clinics.
5. Develop mechanisms for the reception of VAW cases in UNRWA schools.
6. Include Palestine refugee youth and children in the programmes of the organizations outside of the camps.
7. Organize the coordination process with the Ministry of the Interior, especially the police, when dealing with VAW cases involving Palestine refugees.
8. Provide spaces in refugee camps for entertainment and centres for women of all age groups.
9. Provide spaces for entertainment for children and youth inside the camps.
10. Provide a healthy environment inside the camps, which includes pathological effects and wellbeing of the broad physical, psychological, social and aesthetic environment, including housing, urban development, land use and transport.
11. Activate programmes between women inside and outside the camps.
12. Activate the media's role in highlighting the role of women in the camps.
13. Develop monitoring and accountability mechanisms for combating VAW within the UNRWA system.

=== Role of funding agencies ===

- A comprehensive and long-term vision for project funding is needed, as the change process requires a long period of time.
- Programmes and projects should not be based on the needs of the donors, but rather should be built on the needs of the community.
- Funding agencies should coordinate in order to prevent overlap and repetition of work on the same issue or to the same target groups.
- A participatory approach should be applied in dealing with beneficiaries.
- The funding of issues related to combating VAW should be based on the National Strategy to Combat VAW.
- Local NGOs should be urged to plan to measure changes pre and post interventions.
- Women working at the grassroots level should participate in the programme planning process in order to accommodate their visions and genuine experiences.

