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WP6 – A.6.1.1 Mapping of Policy Frameworks Palestine Report Business Women Forum-Palestine

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Introduction and Methodology

This report is the result of the activities relating to the project Output 6.1 (A.6.1.1 - Mapping of Policy Frameworks), implemented within Work Package number 6 WP6 (Raising awareness of public authorities to create supportive environment for employment).

This report is therefore the result of several different actions carried out by Business Women Forum- Palestine in coordination with the WP6 leader (General Agency for Regional Development, PP7), the Project Coordinator and all the Project Partners PPs, namely: design and translation of the consultation for mapping policy frameworks related to fostering employability of youth and women; conduction of the consultation with public authorities and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs); and analysis of the feedback received complemented by desk research. This consultation and the elaboration of the report lasted for one month (20 October –20 November 2022).

The questions tackled the employment landscape in each project targeted country/region in the context of COVID-19, in addition to addressing the challenges of NEETs in accessing the labour market and the role of public institutions in combating their exclusion. The consultation also refers to the level of trust young people have in public institutions and the synergies that already exist between the government and external employment initiatives. This specific set of questions was designed by PP7 with the input and comments of all other PPs and the Project Coordinator.

BWF started the Mapping of Employment Policy activity by an information and data gathering process that attempted to outline the Palestinian economy situation; and to provide a general overview of the unemployment situation in Palestine by:

- Desk research: for stating and introducing the statistics about the macro-economic situation in Palestine from reliable databases. The desk research considered the latest data, and statics for the last 5 years, focusing on the available published data for 2021 and 2022. The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics PCBS was used as the main source for the desk research. PCBS is the official statistical system in Palestine, and it is the first point of contact for all statistics including socio-economic indicators. BWF also considered the World Bank, the Palestinian Monetary Authority PMA and WorldData.info as data references characterized as being updated and credible.
- Perceptions' exploration: by interviewing representatives of stakeholders and economic and social actors, main players in the field of employment Perception exploration was a qualitative method of data collection that helped to digest the purely numerical data and

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learn from the range of experiences, opinions, perceptions, and attitudes that exist within the players' network. This observation of the perception enabled deeper understanding of the employment framework, policy, implementation, and limitation related to socio-economic status and its correction.

BWF conducted interviews with some major organizations: ILO in Palestine; and the Palestine Policy Research Institute (MAS), Palestinian Employment Fund (PEF) and Palestine Ministry of Labour. In these interviews, BWF discussed thoroughly with the participating interviewees the consultation questions for the Mapping of the Employment Policy framework, which were prepared by the CLUSTER project partner PP6 (BWF, Palestine), the LB (Lead Beneficiary) and refined together with all project partners. The results of these interviews were generated through the dynamics of the participants with careful documentation of the important information generated during the discussion, and through capturing valuable resources like reports, webpages.

BWF also tried to reach out to other main players in the field of employment such as the National Commission for Technical and Vocational Education and Training in the Palestine and the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions and Education for Employment- Palestine. However, it was not possible to conduct these interviews as the representatives of these institutions were not available during the period of conducting this mapping exercise. Online open-ended Questionnaire: The exploratory interviews were followed by an online questionnaire where the consultation questions were entered into an online google form to map the employment policy framework. The online questionnaire was filled by 5 representatives of the following institutions: Palestinian Ministry of Labour (MoL), International Labour Organisation (ILO), Palestinian Economic Policy Research Institution (MAS), Palestinian Employment Fund (PEF), and Federation of Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture (FCCIA).

For the interviews and the completion of the questionnaire, BWF selected the stakeholders due their importance as local, national, and international organizations dealing with economic development, employment, economic documentation and analysis worldwide and on country level, as well as their mandates in the field of employment and increasing the social inclusion of youth, women and vulnerable. Generally, the interaction went smoothly. However, contacting and reaching the official representatives of the related stakeholders and main players was initially challenging due to them being busy, their responsibilities, priorities, hierarchical and bureaucratic processes. However, BWF was able to overcome this obstacle through its stakeholder management, effective network and communication and follow-up.

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Two interviews were conducted online via Zoom, one interview was conducted in person while two interviews were held by telephone.

Below is the list of the entities that participated in the consultation, either by interview or by filling out the consultation questionnaire:

Name	Organisation	Title
Mounir Kleibo	ILO	Special Representative of the ILO in Palestine
Azmi Abu Baker	MoL	Director General of the General Administration of Labour Policies
Rami Mahdawi	PEF	Executive Director
Ghada Breaka	PEF	Projects Coordinator
Nazeh Mardawi	FCCIA	Director Technical Information Department
Rabeh Morrar	MAS	Director of Research Department

By the end of the data gathering process, BWF analyzed the data inputs and formed it as shown in the following sections.

Employment Landscape

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) considers youth in Palestine as the individuals in the age group 18-29.¹ The PCBS adopted the definition of the ILO Standards ICLS-19th of unemployed, who are, i.e., persons who 1) are at least 15 years old and 2) did not work at all during the reference period, 3) were not unemployed, 4) were available for work and were actively seeking a job during the last four weeks by using one of the following methods: Reading newspaper, registering at the employment office, asking friends or relatives, or any other method.

While PCBS endorsed the definition of the discouraged jobseekers as the persons who are classified as: (1) available for work; (2) not seeking work currently; and not having sought work during the past six months.²

¹ [PCBS: The International Youth Day 12/08/2021](#)

² [PCBS: Palestinian Labour Force Survey 2021 - Annual Report](#)

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Based on the latest Labour Force Survey in 2021, the unemployment rate in Palestine was 26.4% (22.4% for males and 42.9% for females). Moreover, results revealed that unemployment was concentrated among youth aged 15-24 reaching 41.7% (37.2% for males and 64.5% for females).

In the West Bank of Palestine, the unemployment rate was 15.5% (12.4% for males and 28.9% for females), while the unemployment rate among youth aged 15-24 years was 27.8% (23.5% for males and 51.4% for females). In the Gaza Strip, the unemployment rate was 46.9% (41.9% for males and 65.0% for females), while the unemployment rate among Gaza youth aged 15-24 years was 68.9% (65.0% for males and 86.8% for females). In the West Bank, the highest unemployment rate was in the Bethlehem Governorate at 25.1%, followed by Hebron Governorate at 19.0% and Jenin Governorate at 18.6%, while the lowest unemployment rate was recorded in Jerusalem Governorate at 4.4%. According to the percentage distribution of the unemployed by years of schooling, the results indicated that 0.2% of the unemployed males did not have any education, while it was 0.1% for females. In addition, 8.9% of unemployed males have completed 1-6 years of schooling, compared to 0.3% of unemployed females. The survey results indicated that 21.2% of the unemployed males have completed 7-9 years of schooling, compared to 1.3% of the unemployed females who obtained the same years of schooling. In addition, 29.3% of unemployed males have completed 13 years of schooling or more, compared to 93.3% of females with the same years of schooling.

The table below shows the percentage distribution of Labour Force Status for individuals aged 15 years and above in Palestine by sex and age in 2021:

Percentage distribution for Individuals Aged 15 Years and Above in Palestine by Sex, Age, and of Labour Force Status 2021 ³						
Gender	Age range	Outside labour force ⁴	Inside labour force ⁵	Unemployed	Time-related Underemployed ⁶	Fully employed ⁷
	24-15	52.7	47.3	37.2	2.4	60.4
	34-25	11.2	88.8	25.3	2.5	72.2
	44-35	9.5	90.5	13.8	1.6	84.6
	54-45	18.0	82.0	11.8	1.6	86.6

³ https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/Press_En_8-8-2021-LFS-en.pdf

⁴ Economically inactive persons, or persons aged fifteen and over who are neither working nor seeking work during the reference period.

⁵ Economically active persons who are employed or who are unemployed but seeking employment.

⁶ All persons in employment who (i) wanted to work additional hours, (ii) had worked less than a specified hours threshold (working time in all jobs), and (iii) were available to work additional hours given an opportunity for more work.

⁷ Persons with full-time employment (i.e., 8hrs * 5 days a week).

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Male	55-64	43.4	56.6	12.4	1.2	86.4
	65+	84.8	15.2	6.2	0.7	93.1
	Total	31.1	68.9	22.4	2.0	75.6
Female	24-15	90.5	9.5	64.5	1.9	33.6
	34-25	71.9	28.1	56.8	1.4	41.8
	44-35	76.4	23.6	26.8	0.8	72.4
	54-45	82.5	17.5	7.8	0.6	91.6
	55-64	91.5	8.5	3.1	0.0	96.9
	65+	98.7	1.3	2.8	0.0	97.2
	Total	82.8	17.2	42.9	1.2	55.9
Both Sexes	24-15	71.2	28.8	41.7	2.3	56.0
	34-25	40.9	59.1	32.6	2.2	65.2
	44-35	42.9	57.1	16.5	1.5	82.0
	54-45	49.7	50.3	11.1	1.4	87.5
	55-64	66.9	33.1	11.3	1.1	87.6
	65+	92.2	7.8	5.9	0.6	93.5
	Total	56.6	43.4	26.4	1.9	71.7

The percentage of full employment was 71.7% in 2021. As for the West Bank, the unemployment rate for individuals aged 15 years and above was 15%, and the percentage of full employment was 82.6%. In Gaza strip, the unemployment rate for individuals aged 15 years and above was 46.9%, while the percentage of full employment was 51.2%.

On the occasion of the International Youth Day, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) issued a press release. Data indicates that out of every 100 young males and females aged 18-29 years, 18 obtained a bachelor's degree or higher. 23 out of 100 female youths obtained a bachelor's degree or higher compared to 13 male youths. On the other hand, unemployment rates constitute the biggest challenge for the youth, as these rates reached 62% among females and 33% among males, and were the highest in the Gaza Strip compared to the West Bank (65% and 24%, respectively). Also, the highest unemployment rates of among the youth aged 18-29 years were recorded among graduates, including those holding an undergraduate degree or higher (53%). Thus, the Palestinian labour market needs to focus education on technical and vocational education to meet demand, and not on non-employment sectors. These figures show that the highest unemployment rates among youth aged 18-29 years were recorded among graduates, including holders of intermediate diploma and higher.⁸

⁸ [PCBS: Demonstrating the Situation of Youth in the Palestinian Society, On the International Youth Day, 2022/08/12](#)

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As reported in the PCBS Press Report on Economic Forecasts for 2022 published on 29/12/2021, there is an insufficient number of specialized workers in the Palestinian market such as maintenance technicians for medical devices, ATM maintenance technicians, car software maintenance technicians, neurosurgeons, and vascular surgeons. This information should give the general direction for the education system and the TVET institutions in order to minimize the gap between demand and supply.

Based on the PCBS report on the performance of the Palestinian economy 2021, the Palestinian economy began to gradually recover after breaking the epidemic curve of the COVID - 19 pandemic, while it is still below its pre-pandemic levels despite the almost complete cessation of external support.⁹

However, the economic growth in Palestine is unstable and this is clearly reflected in the unsteadiness in the unemployment rate. In the Labour Force Survey 2021 - Annual Report from April 2021, the general unemployment rate in Palestine was recorded at 26.4% while in the PCBS Press Report on Economic Forecasts for 2022 published on 29/12/2021, it jumped to 27.8% although official data for 2021 show that GDP of the Palestinian economy increased by 7.1 % year- on-year due to the beginning of the recovery from COVID and the easing of the lockdown¹⁰. GDP for Q2 2022 was \$ 3,175 million for the West Bank and \$ 684 million for the Gaza Strip with an 3% increase when compared with the Q2 2021.

The below table and figure show that despite the slight increase, GDP in Q2 2022 is still below pre-pandemic levels compared to Q2 2019.

Table 1:

\$ Million / GDP	Q/ year
3,800	Q1 2018
3,788	Q2 2018
3,939	Q3 2018
4,090	Q4 2018

⁹ <https://pcbs.gov.ps/site/512/default.aspx?lang=en&ItemID=4148>

¹⁰ [The Palestine Monetary Authority Issues the 2021 Annual Report](#)

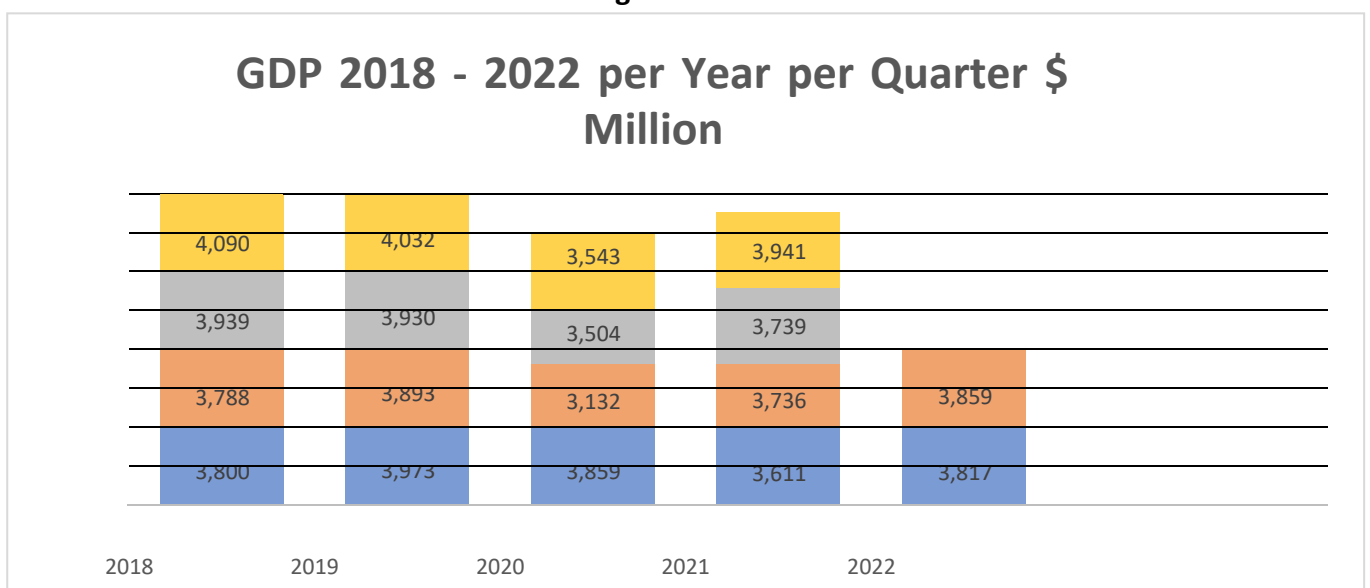
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3,973	Q1 2019
3,893	Q2 2019
3,930	Q3 2019
4,032	Q4 2019
3,859	Q1 2020
3,132	Q2 2020
3,504	Q3 2020
3,543	Q4 2020
3,611	Q1 2021
3,736	Q2 2021
3,739	Q3 2021
3,941	Q4 2021
3,817	Q1 2022
3,859	Q2 2022

Figure 1:



PCBS: Press Report, Preliminary Estimates of Quarterly National Accounts (Second Quarter 2022), 29/09/2022¹¹

¹¹ [Press Report Quarterly national account 2nd 2022.pdf](#)

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As for GDP per capita for Palestine, it was USD 765 during Q2 2022, it showed an increase of 1% compared to the parallel quarter 2021. In the West Bank, GDP per capita was USD 1,101 in Q2 2022, and it showed a decrease by 0.1% during this period compared to the parallel quarter 2021, while for the Gaza Strip was USD 317 in Q2 2022, and it showed an increase by 6% during during the same period compared to Q2 2021.

29.2% of the Palestinians were below the poverty line in 2017. That means their household consumption was below 2470 ILS which is the poverty line for households of 5 members (2 adults and 3 children). 16.8% of the Palestinians suffered deep poverty in 2017, and the deep poverty line was 1974 NIS.¹² According to the Macro Poverty Outlook Report (World Bank) the poverty rate was estimated at 29.7% in 2020 while it is estimated at 27.3% in 2021. It is projected to keep declining to reach 26.7% in 2022 and 26.1% in 2024.¹³ According to the World Bank data¹⁴, PCBS¹⁵ and Palestinian Monetary Authority¹⁶, the inflation rate in Palestine for 2021 increased by 1.2 % (1.4% in the WB and 0.3% in Gaza). In the first nine month of 2022 the Palestinian Consumer Price Index CPI increased by 3.57% compared to the same period of the previous year.

According to the summary provided by WorldData.info, the inflation rate for consumer prices in Palestine ranged between -0.7% and 9.9% over the past 24 years. During observation period from 1997 to 2021, the price increase was 105.90%. An item that cost 100 shekels in 1997 costs 205.90 shekels at the beginning of 2022.¹⁷

From the point of view of all the respondents and interview partners, it is confirmed that there are a lot of studies and descriptive papers on the economy landscape in Palestine, so there is a theoretical surplus on the reality of the Palestinian economy, policies, procedures, and employment situation. Even at the level of official statistics, there is a huge database available by the PCBS, however, the ability to build solid strategies and implementation monitoring system based on the proper analyzing of such data is truly missing.

A major weakness when diagnosing the reality of Palestinian employment landscape is the absence of a unified national strategy for employment that prioritizes social inclusion. There are a lot of efforts made by the institutions of the United Nations, in particular the ILO. Since 2019, the ILO has been preparing a National Employment Strategy 2021- 2025 involving all traditional and non-

¹² [PCBS: The Palestinian Expenditure and Consumption Survey \(October 2016 – September 2017\)..](#)

¹³ [MPO April 2021](#)

¹⁴ [World Bank Document.pdf](#)

¹⁵ <https://pcbs.gov.ps/site/512>

¹⁶ <https://www.pma.ps/en/Media/Press-Releases/the-palestine-monetary-authority-issues-the-2021-annual-report>.

¹⁷ <https://www.worlddata.info/asia/palestine/inflation-rates.php>

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traditional partners. The strategy was released in March 2021 at a social dialogue conference¹⁸ and it aims at improving the labour market and boost employment. The new strategy is supposed to be presented and promoted to the international community in Amman in March 2023 to gain the international support to put it in practice through donation and technical support.

Many studies have been carried out by the ILO about employment and COVID-19 and its impact. The most important result of these studies is the National Employment Strategy 2021- 2025, which is comprehensive and takes into account Palestinian surveys, statistics and analyzes from United Nations organisations.

Putting the National Employment Strategy 2021- 2025 in practice in the coming period might have a significant impact in responding to the needs of the Palestinian market and filling its current gaps. However, at the time being and until activating the new strategy implementation, the Palestinian labour market is affected by the huge number of academic graduates and the absence of the supply of some technicalities and specialties, adding on top the special circumstance of the Palestinian economy that is suffering from many restrictions by Israeli forces, system vulnerability, and significant regional differences in economic activity between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The Palestinian economy began to recover from the COVID -19 pandemic, but despite the easing of the COVID-19 restrictions and procedures, the unemployment rates increased in 2021 (26.4%) compared to 2020 (25.9%). Likewise, in the first half of 2022, it decreased slightly, but it is still around 25%. This also applies to the unemployment rates for women. Unemployment among women increased from 40.1 % in 2020 to 42.9 % in 2021.

As a conclusion, the recovery is slow. Even though the market began to absorb more labour, the interventions of Israeli forces created an imbalance in the Palestinian labour sector and increased the labour costs and damaged many major sectors. The Israeli market attracted Palestinian skilled workers, especially from tourism, construction, information technology, agriculture and the handicraft sectors, where the number of workers in Israel increased to more than 200,000 workers, according to Israeli sources. This reflects the low level of economic rights in the Palestinian laws and policies, as well as the absence of economic incentives in Palestinian labour market, such as minimum wages. This situation is further exacerbated by the Israeli policy of control, deepening of dependency and imposition of economic peace, not free market forces.

By observing the supply and demand in the Palestinian labour market, it is obvious that both the private and public sectors are unable to absorb the labour that enters annually, especially from the

¹⁸ <https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/how-the-ilo-works/ilo-director-general/statements-and-speeches>

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category of university graduates, given the stiffing of the academic educational system to simulate the required change on the ground. This gap also is multiplied due to the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the shift to digitization in many areas, taking into account the relative delay in keeping pace with the technological revolution at the level of Palestine.

Policy Framework and Responses

The biggest problem is the absence of a monitoring system over the application of the economic and labour laws. However, there are many shortcomings in the Palestinian legal systems. A main constraint is that the Palestinian labour law has not been reviewed since its adoption in 2000, which means that there is a time gap of 22 years. So, there are many topics in this law that need to be revised such as the determination procedures of the minimum wage, occupational health and safety, accident insurance, employment of women, inspection, inclusion of people with disabilities, abolition of child labour, social security for workers and other topics that need to be updated in order to bridge the time gap and to reach a modern, comprehensive and fair legal system for all.

The Palestinian labour law No. 7 for the year 2000 is loose, where a lot of topics are stated in a generic frame with the possibility for different explanations. A few years ago, an amendment to the law was started with the efforts of the ILO, and a first amended version was reached, but until today, the amended version of the law has not been agreed upon, and still not submitted and approved due to the absence of the Palestinian Legislative Council. This delay in amending the law comes also due to the concerns of representatives of the private sector on some of the listed amendments.

One of the real loopholes in the labour law is the lack of indication of the competent courts in labour cases, and the absence of economic courts at all. The absence of labour courts has caused the existence of many unexamined cases and the long-term disputes between parties in labour cases. Despite the agreement in 2021 between the Ministry of Labour and the Supreme Judicial Council to allocate a certain number of judges to consider labour cases in the court complexes in all governorates. However, the number of judges allocated is never enough and does not compensate for the presence of dedicated courts.

With regard to women's work, there is only one chapter in the law regarding the regulation of women's work. This section consists of seven main articles, all of which are general. For example, Article 102 "The facility must provide amenities for women workers". There is no mention or detail about such amenities which leaves space for interpretations that depend on viewpoints and do not achieve the purpose of this legal article. As for maternity leave, according to Palestinian law, this leave is limited to 10 weeks in total before and after childbirth. When comparing this leave with

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many other countries in the world, we see the importance of reviewing this article in order to match with the worldwide standards. It is also worth to mention that there is no article related to parental leave in the Palestine Labour Law.

Among the other limitation in the Palestine law, we can summarize the following points:

- The law excludes the domestic (Homebased) and agricultural workers.
- Lack of detail on the conditions of health and safety at work in general and for women in particular.
- Limited annual leave and sick leave.

Based on the Q2 2022 PCBS press release ¹⁹ about two third (65%) of the wage earners in the private sector were hired without any employment contract, and only 24% of wage earners receive a contribution to a pension fund/end of service compensation. Moreover, only 47% of female wage earners receive a paid maternity leave. These figures raise doubts about the efficiency of the inspection department and the monitoring process within the Ministry of Labour, as well as the extent of penalties imposed for violators of the labour law. On the other hand, it reflects the extent of legal illiteracy among workers and employees regarding to the labour law and other relevant laws and the role of the Ministry in legal awareness.

At the end we can say that the current Palestinian law does not include any kind of bias. Including gender bias. However, there is absence of a monitoring system that guarantees the application of the law to both genders in the workplace in a way that prevents economically based violence such as wage inequality or non-compliance with paid maternity leave.

Another challenge in the Palestinian legalization system for social inclusion in general which affects both men and women both at the same level is the solidification of the Social Security Law for private sector workers by the Palestinian President since 2019.²⁰ The law faced criticism, such as 1) Weakness in the institutionalization of the Social Security Administration; the absence of an organisational structure; the absence of financial and administrative systems for the Social Security Administration functions 2) The membership of the Board of Directors of the Social Security Administration; the failure to include individuals of recognized integrity, competence, professionalism and independence on the Board of Directors; lack of guarantee of real and effective representation of women in the membership of the Board of Directors 3) Observations related to the need to adhere to the principles of governance, disclosure and transparency, and the urgent

¹⁹ https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/Press_En_LFSQ022022E.pdf

²⁰ <https://maqam.najah.edu/legislation/237/>

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need to make fundamental legal amendments in order to ensure the governance and transparency of the vital “investment sector” in social security as a whole²¹. Despite the relevance of these criticisms, the solidification in the view of the ILO and a number of economic researchers, is considered harmful to all workers in the private sector. It was a priority to pass the law and make amendments to it instead of freezing it until further notice.

It is worth noting that despite the existence of above-mentioned shortcomings among others in the legal system related to employment in general and the integration of women and NEETs in particular, the paradox is that the largest number of respondents believes that the exclusion of women and NEETs from the labour market is not related to the inadequacy of the legal systems in force. Rather, the issue lies in the absence of real and effective developmental policies that lead to the absorption of new entrants to the labour market, especially youth and women, due to two main factors, which are 1) the continued control of Israel over Palestinian economic aspects, in addition to 2) the social restrictions resulting from customs and collective awareness, such as the misconception about participation of women in the labour market or in technical and vocational education.

The feedback from the entities who participated in this consultation shaded the light on the roles of some main actors in combating the labour market exclusion of youth and women in the current timeframe. For example, the role of the Ministry of Labour, the ILO, the Federation of Trade Union and Federation of Chambers of Commerce, Industries and Trade in developing the National Employment Strategy 2021- 2025, where they reflected the importance of integrating women, people with disabilities, elderly, and integrating Gaza and the West Bank alike. From the Ministry of Labour’s view, the National Strategy for Employment 2021- 2025, which was developed under the leadership of the Ministry, is of great importance, as it would set up financing programmes to create new employment opportunities for youth and women through the Palestinian Fund for Employment.

There is a significant role of the ILO in activating and strengthening the socio-economic dialogue, which is vital for reducing the gap between the employment poles including employers, workers and trade unions, government and civil society. ILO also seeks to enhance the representation of women among the partners influencing the dynamics of the employment dialogue by insisting that women be represented by at least 30%. The ILO consistently demands to create a comprehensive democratic system as part of its mandate by insisting on activating the role of the Economic and Social Council and on conducting regular and democratic elections in the General Federation of Trade Union and Federation of Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture. The ILO pays

²¹ <http://www.rosalux.ps/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Rosa-Luxemburg-Articles-English-Firas-Jaber-Paper.pdf>

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special attention to people with disabilities and is working to promote the acceptance of the law of integrating people with special needs into the labour market. Work is being done on all these axes related to social inclusion within the framework of ILO Decent Work Programme that the organisation is implementing in Palestine under its planning and supervision since 2013.

In general, it can be said that most institutions, including the EEF, Chambers of Commerce, Industries and Agriculture, and MAS provide interventions that fall within the scope of implementing programmes to integrate the youth and women into labour market. Most of these programmes can be classified in the following main categories:

1. Capacity building programmes
 - Providing trainings for youth and women on various topics such as 21st century skills, entrepreneurship, small business development, technical and on-the-job trainings to increase their employability skills.
 - Providing seed capital, grants and other financing opportunities include zero interest loans to entrepreneurs.
2. Implementing temporary employment programmes and traineeships.

Despite the large numbers of these programmes, unfortunately, there is no tracking of their impact on unemployment rates, and there is an absence of structured monitoring and evaluation that looks at the long-term impact of such interventions and programmes.

Main Challenges

Based on the feedback received from the questionnaire respondents and the discussion with the interviewees the following points summarize the main challenges that NEETs and women face in finding employment:

1. Lack of readiness among NEETs and women (education, experience, entrepreneurial and operational skills) to adapt to the requirements and needs of the labour market, as a result of:
 - Failure of related authorities such as the Ministry of Education or the Education and Vocational Training Department in the Ministry of Labour to adapt the educational to market needs and trends;
 - Lack of public awareness about future trends related to emerging and disappearing jobs and choosing training priorities based on societal patterns;
 - The misconception of what vocational training and TVET institutions are;
 - The quality and the effectiveness of TVET institutions;

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- Loss of motivation: limited job opportunities or staying unemployed for a long period of time creates a situation of absence of hope for youth and women and this make them lose the motivation and accordingly they are not interested to improve their capacities and look for opportunities;
 - Lack of seriousness to make the necessary efforts to access the labour market or to keep up with changes and developments (mainly in innovation and technology) in the labour market among some NEETs and women (as is the case at the level of institutions and government alike).
2. Limited support structures on the level of legislation, institutions, and programmes:
- Absence of a working environment that is inclusive for NEETs, especially women;
 - Lack of real communication and trust between educational institutions and the private sector;
 - The absence of integrated, long-term training programmes funded by government agencies or even donor countries, as most of the existing programmes are short-term programmes and do not guarantee a long-term impact;
 - The absence of work-integrated learning programmes such as internships and external placements in the private sector to accommodate new graduates or unemployed youth;
 - Problems in access to finance, such as lack of funding, absence of zero interest loans; difficult financing conditions for startups and SMEs;
 - Implementation gaps of the employment strategies and policies.
3. Political: The control of the Israeli economy over the foundations of the Palestinian economy, which led to:
- The fragility of the Palestinian economy and the lack of real development, which leads to a lack of opportunities and to the inability of the private and public sectors to absorb the new workers into the labour market;
 - An influx of young people into the Israeli labour market where their labour rights are not fully respected. As the absorption of Palestinian labour into the Israeli market also depends on Israeli agendas and is often a means of political pressure.
4. Limited exposure and access to capacity building and work opportunities, information, resources due to location, mobility and gender factors:
- The presence in marginalized areas can pose a challenge to accessing the labour market; Geographical distribution of jobs, training and opportunities which are in many cases concentrated in specific geographical areas. This deprives a large group of NEETs

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mainly of women, from accessing these opportunities, or at least creates additional obstacles related to mobility, movement and residence;

- Limited access to internet infrastructure and technology illiteracy, which reduces access to opportunities and information;
- Stereotypical roles and social challenges related to women's participation in the labour market.

There is almost unanimity among the respondents that there is a lack of trust among youth and women in institutions, mainly the public institutions. Despite the presence of international and non-governmental organisations and professional organisations which work on bridging the trust gap. This lack of confidence and trust refer to the following main reasons:

- There is a view that these institutions pursue special interests and work with non-inclusive agendas;
- The government does not have sustainable development budgets for social inclusion. It did not win the trust of the people with regard to good governance and strategic planning;
- The inability of the public sector to restructure and reform the worn-out educational system; The education system needs to be reformed to guarantee the compatibility between the current and future needs of the market and the available specializations. However, there is no continuous effort to achieve such reform. To highlight for example higher education, the education institutions such as universities themselves are unable to bear the consequences of such educational reform, since reforming means the the elimination of many fields of study, which in turn will affect the financial capacity and sustainability of these educational institutions, as there is no governmental support for such a transformative phase;
- Absence of representation of youth and women from vital institutions which directly influences the socio-economic dialogue of employment. For example, there is no representation of women at all in the Board of Directors of the Federation of Palestinian Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture. In other words, this means the exclusion of women from the formulation of labour frameworks that create an inclusive economy;
- Economic dependency and Israeli control over the Palestinian economy, including freedom of movement, restrictions on trade, and industry that create limitations to real development.

The absence of an integrated approach in accessing the labour market through public authorities as well as labour market agencies or professional organisations that promote trust among young

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people. For example, the absence of an integrated approach to reach women and NEETs in the most vulnerable geographical areas.

The active collaboration and dialogue are considered as one of the most important factors in improving employment opportunities for women and NEETs. However, the entities participating in this consultation see that the collaboration between government agencies and other external actors encounters many challenges, such as:

- There are many actors, but there is no integration, participation, and transparency in the circulation of information, planning and implementation, although there are many coordinating committees at the level of donor countries and institutions, as well as the Palestinian Authority.
- Work according to the donor's community' agendas, some of which are connected to political agendas and in many cases don't match or fit into the national agendas;
- The absence of a legislative council for follow-up, accountability and control, and lack of real follow-up, auditing and monitoring strategies at the level of programme implementation;
- Deducting of part of the support from the donors to their cadres under follow-up and management.

Approaches Going Forward

Towards achieving a more reliable and social inclusive economy and a healthy integration of Youth, NEETs and women into the labour market. A high level of collaboration between public institutions, the donors' community, private sector, youth and civil society organisations should take place. Below are some suggestions to improve the collaboration and the dialogue between the relevant parties:

- Activate the performance and the role of the UN Economic and Social Council in Palestine as well as stimulate the performance of the Development Coordinating Committees, mainly the Local Aid Coordination Committee (LACC) which was established in 1994 based the decision of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC), where the establishment of the LACC aimed at accelerating the development efforts, increasing the efficiency of decision making processes to maximize the pace of development implementation in Palestine and ensuring the greatest possible degree of cooperation through having appropriate mechanisms for coordination between the Palestinian Authority, donor governments and institutions. This includes raise

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performance of the 12 Sector Working Groups, one of which is directly addressing employment creation.²²

- Enhance the representation of youth and women in the institutions that play a role in employment mapping to ensure the transmission of women and NEETs' voices.
- Empower women and NEETs who are working in the informal economy, provide them with incentives and facilitation so that they are visible.
- Raise discussion and public awareness on the impact of technology on the quality and quantity of jobs.
- Create a dialogue committee between educational institutions, the private sector and government agencies related to education and employment in order to bridge the gap between private sector needs, education specialisation and methodologies.
- Find a structure to implement the strategies, policies and procedures related to employment at the government level in a manner based on a clear and specific implementation and monitoring system. To ensure that these policies or the method of dealing with it are not changed with every ministerial change to have an objective formula that is subject to follow-up, measurement and improvement.
- Create dialogue channels between the West Bank and Gaza to minimize significant regional disparity and the gap in economic activity. There is no way to have solid improvement on the economic indicators without improving the economic performance in both in West Bank and Gaza alike.

²² <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-209393/>

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