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**Enhancement of the Business Environment in the
Southern Mediterranean**

**Women's entrepreneurship & SME development
in Palestine**

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

BDS	Business Development Services
BWF	Business Women Forum
FPCCIA	Federation of Palestinian Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture
GEM	Global Entrepreneurship Monitor
MAS	Palestine Economic Policy Research Centre
MFI	Micro Finance Institute
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PCBS	Palestine Central Bureau of Statistics
PMA	Palestine Monetary Authority
SBA	Small Business Act
VC	Venture Capital

1. Introduction

Women's participation in the economic activity is globally under-represented. Increasing their participation in the economic activity by enhancing their entrepreneurial activity, is one of the key channels to achieve a more robust, inclusive and sustainable growth. Women participation in the economic activity is remarkably low in Palestine. According to the Palestine Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), in 2016, the female participation rate in the labour force was 19.1%, one of the lowest in the Southern Mediterranean region ¹(MED) and female unemployment was one of the highest (39.2%). It should be noted that women unemployment rate in Palestine, was the highest among women with 13 years of schooling and above, which counts at 48.0%. Services and agriculture sectors comprise the main job absorbers of women, accounting for 62.9% and 13.1% of the total number of employed women respectively. In addition, female entrepreneurship in Palestine in 2012 was among the worst in the world and more than half of female entrepreneurial activities were in low-value; consumer-oriented activities.

This report aims at identifying main obstacles and challenges faced by Palestinian women entrepreneurs to initiate or develop their business, and to identify success stories that could be used as models for good practices. This, in turn, will help local authorities represented by the SBA Coordinator and the members of the Working Group on "Women Entrepreneurships" to enhance the policy framework for women entrepreneurship. It will help as well grassroots women and/or entrepreneurs' associations become vocal in advocating specific public policies for supporting women's entrepreneurship in Palestine.

The analysis is based on a combination of primary data, collected through face-to-face interviews; and complementary information from academic papers; national reports and data from the Palestine Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS). With regards to the primary data, in Palestine, the size of the sample is composed of 25 women entrepreneurs. The main criteria for selecting the 25 women entrepreneurs are the following:

- The woman entrepreneur is not a university graduate
- The woman entrepreneur is at least majority owner of the enterprise, and a full-time manager
- The enterprise must be an operating business at the time of the interview
- The woman entrepreneur is entrepreneur by necessity

¹ This region is composed of the following countries: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, and Tunisia,

Taking this into consideration, the following sub-criteria were applied for the selection of women to interview:

- Age (a sample with various ages is desirable)
- Rural-urban variety
- Size of the business (a sample with different sizes is desirable)
- A woman entrepreneur who also is the head of the household (divorced, widow, etc.) is a desirable candidate.

Additional evidence was gathered through semi-structured interviews with the Ministry of National Economy, Business Women Forum, Federation of Palestinian Chambers of Commerce, Industry, and Agriculture, FATEN for Credit and Development, and academics teaching entrepreneurship from Birzeit University. Based on the survey's results and these discussions, recommendations are formulated for Palestine on ways to enhance the situation with regard to the promotion of women entrepreneurship.

After the introduction, an overview of the social characteristics of women in Palestine is discussed (Section 2), Section 3 describes the business environment in Palestine and present the status and challenges faced by female entrepreneurs. Section 4 discusses the government policies to support women's entrepreneurship development and Section 5 complements it by describing the ecosystem in support to women entrepreneurs. Section 6 present the results of the survey and section conclude the paper by identifying the best practices observed and by formulating policy recommendations to enhance the situation of women entrepreneurs.

2. Women in Palestine: A Social Portrait

Women make up almost half of the Palestinian population - 2.30 million or 49.2% of the total 4.7 million Palestinians- living in the West Bank (WB) and Gaza Strip (PCBS, 2016). Palestine observed an improvement in life expectancy since the beginning of the last two decades. Life expectancy has increased about 5-8 years during the last two decades. In particular, it increased for both males and females from 67.0 years in 1992 to 72.1 years for males and 27.2 years for females in mid of the year 2016 (PCBS, 2016).

More than half of the women in Palestine (56.1%), in 2016, aged 15 years and above are married, whereas 33.8% had never been married. Additionally, 5.8% are widowed, 1.7% divorced, 2.5% engaged for the first time, and 0.1% are separated (PCBS, 2016). About fifth of the married women aged 20-24 years gave birth before the age of 18. This share is higher

in Gaza Strip compared to the West Bank (25.1% and 19.6%, respectively). Early motherhood is three times higher for women with basic education level in comparison to those with higher education.

The total fertility rate for women in reproductive age (15-49 years) in Palestine for the period 2011-2013 was 4.1 births per woman, while the adolescent fertility rate in the age group (15-19 years) was 48 births per 1000 women.

PCBS indicated in 2011 that female-headed households are poorer than male-headed households in the West Bank (PCBS, 2013). The proportion of poor households headed by women was higher in Gaza Strip at 29.7% compared to 22.5% in the West Bank. Women often rise to the challenge of coping with harsh changes and exceptionally tough situations, including taking charge of the family and all its matters in a male-dominated society in the absence of a husband or father due to detention, deportation, divorce or death.

The poverty line by national standards for Palestine, as set by PCBS in 2011, is (\$637) per month for a family of two adults and three children. This line is based on the average consumption of essential food, clothing, housing, housekeeping and personal supplies, health care, education, and transportation. The PCBS recent household survey shows that 25.8% of Palestine's population live in poverty (17.8% in the West Bank and 38.8% in the Gaza Strip), with 12.9% of individuals living in "deep poverty".

3. Business Environment in Palestine

With respect to the *economic context*, analysis revealed that the Palestinian society has historical deep roots into entrepreneurship. However, over time and due to the Israeli occupation, the economic instability and the high risk involved in entrepreneurship, the society started to encourage its members to become employees rather than entrepreneurs. Today, in line with the global trend and as a result of the high unemployment rates among youth (37.4%)², the parents, society and government started to shift their preferences again towards the entrepreneurial activity as a possible solution to end some economic problems (PCBS, 2015).

² The unemployment share is highest among the age group 20-24 (41.7%), followed by the age group 25-29 (35.6%).

The Palestinian regulation is not particularly business friendly. Rules, regulations and procedures governing the registration process are bureaucratic, outdated and do not encourage entrepreneurship. Additionally, the government does not create enough awareness campaigns that can help individuals to know from where to start and at which governmental body they should register (Chamber of commerce, Ministry of finance or Municipality). Moreover, the Palestinian government does not apply a reduced set of regulatory obligations to the micro and small firms and treat them similar to the large companies in terms of paying taxes and following the rules and regulations (Abuznaid, 2014).

Political instability, due to unresolved conflict, has imposed major restrictions on movement and access in the Palestinian investment climate, resulting in uncertainty, risk, increased costs for businesses and investors, and the fragmentation of Palestinian economic space and markets (World Bank, 2014; ILO, 2012). Political instability constitutes an important determinant in undermining the enabling environment for the growth and evolving of entrepreneurships from micro and small enterprises to large ones. These enterprises struggle to survive, not to develop, in addition to the poor quality of services offered by these institutions. There is lack of specialised institutions capable of assisting them in complying with Palestinian and international quality standards and industrial specifications. The entrepreneurship-limited investment can also be explained by the absence of a comprehensive legal framework regulating economic transactions. Moreover, the legal framework for economic activity consists of a combination of various legal codes, including Israeli military orders, in addition to outdated Ottoman, British, Jordanian and Egyptian laws (Jabari, 2010). Furthermore, the Palestinian businesses face heavy competition from cheaper Chinese, Turkish and other products into the Palestinian market.

Outdated laws and regulations are a strong disincentive to the establishment of new entrepreneurships in Palestine. Therefore, these enterprises work in a weak legal environment and poor financing sources for starting new ventures. The difficulty to access new markets and new developed technology are also considered main barriers that face new enterprises (Atyani and Alhaj-Ali, 2009).

Because of the bureaucratic procedures involved in the entrepreneurial process in Palestine, including the direct and indirect tax payments, and the periodic licensing fees, many entrepreneurs now prefer to stay in the informal sector. In 2008, this sector according to the PCBS records reached 56.3% (53.7% in WB and 66.9% in Gaza), which is a large percentage indicating the absence of trust between the individuals and the Palestinian

government (Fallah, 2014a). A study by Fallah (2014b) indicated that the majority (about two-thirds) of informal entrepreneurs believes that there is no incentive to join the formal sector, while 26% do not know the benefits of formalisation. Furthermore, the overwhelming majority of informal entrepreneurs stated that they are not willing to join the formal sector. From one side, this status creates huge burdens on both the government and the individual (substantial government revenue losses, low level and quality of public services, informal enterprises stay small in scale, cannot borrow from financing institutions and do not protect the rights of their employees). On the other side creates cost saving that may allow informal businesses to sell at lower prices, making them more competitive with formal sector businesses.

In 2012, the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) report on Palestine found that political environment, institutional and social context, lack of financial support and government policies are the main obstacles facing young entrepreneurs. This report indicates that the middle age categories (25-44) involvement in early stage entrepreneurial activity decreased in 2012, while young entrepreneurs (18-24) involvement rate increased. As well, the report showed the ratio of necessity to opportunity. It showed that for each 100 opportunity-driven entrepreneurs, there are nearly 72 necessity-driven entrepreneurs in 2012. In the West Bank alone, 42% of the entrepreneurs are necessity-driven; while in Gaza they are in parity.

When the government fails to provide the necessary support to encourage entrepreneurship, partnership between the public and private sectors should emerge to fill the gap. However, in Palestine the analysis revealed that the private sector is dispersed and not unified (Union of Industries, Paltrade, Union of Contractors, Union of Businessmen, etc.). This condition reduces their importance in decision making at the micro level.

Female Entrepreneurship

Female entrepreneurship in Palestine in 2012 was among the worst countries in the world, ranking 58th out of 67 countries studied in early-stage entrepreneurial activity (i.e., which has been in operation for less than 42 months) and the second worst country in established-business female owners (i.e., which has been in operation for more than 42 months) (Abdullah and Hattawy, 2014). During the same time period, the average female early-stage entrepreneurial activity was 3.4% of all female adult population in Palestine concentrated among young women (18-34 years of age), compared to 16% for all male adult population. In many cases, women continue to be discouraged from working outside the home and are expected instead to focus on child rearing, housekeeping, and cooking. This stigma keeps women from entering the labour force and poses yet another barrier to ending the cycle of

poverty. Despite the low rate of female entrepreneurship in Palestine, the contribution of these activities to employment was impressive: female entrepreneurship employed 5.6% of the total Palestinian employed persons (Abdullah & Hattawy, 2014).

Although the gender gap increased in West Bank in the period 2010-2012 (GEM, 2012), women entrepreneurs increasingly run their own enterprises; however, their socio-economic contributions and entrepreneurial potential remain largely unrecognised and untapped.

Abdullah and Hattawy (2014) pointed out that Palestinian women in the northern and the southern parts of the West Bank are more active entrepreneurs than in the centre. Female early-stage entrepreneurial activity was concentrated among young women (18-34 years of age), whereas female established-business owners were generally older (35-44 years of age). Regarding the educational level, the rate of entrepreneurial activity was highest among women with Diploma and Bachelor's degrees (Abdullah & Hattawy, 2014). They are concentrated in informal, micro-size, low productivity and low-return activities. More than half of female entrepreneurial activities encompassed consumer-oriented activities (retail, social services, education and health activities), followed by manufacturing activities (Abdullah & Hattawy, 2014). UN-Women (2011) found that discriminatory legislation, cultural norms governing issues such as property-ownership and employment opportunities and the concentration of female employment in these low-value sectors contributes to the economic marginalisation of women in Palestine. These factors impede the economic empowerment of women, thus making them more vulnerable to poverty. Moreover, data from the World Bank's enterprise survey (2013) show that female entrepreneurs mainly operate in the informal sector.

Researchers interested in studying the reality and situation of female enterprises in Palestine revealed that female entrepreneurs faced many constraints in starting and expanding their business activity. One of the biggest constraint is the **lack of capital**: women need financial aid for starting and developing new firms (Qazzaz et al., 2005). Sadeq et al. (2011) indicated that 82% of the surveyed women business owners assured that the main barrier they face in their enterprises is access to capital, Jabari (2010) discuss women entrepreneurial activity is hold back by the lack of credit policies, incentive programs and lack of capital. Women are highly dependent on personal savings and mobilised fund from family or relatives, or personal credit from friends. Althalathini (2015) revealed that 85% of the women have faced problems and difficulties to get the needed financing for their projects when they started up their businesses or when they looked for financing their existing projects to expand their

firm's scope of work. Furthermore, about 26% of them assured that they do not have information about the financing institutions and the procedures that these organisations follow to acquire the needed financing for their projects.

Palestine Monetary Authority (PMA)'s experts prepared, in 2014, an analysis of the most prominent demand and supply-side obstacles and challenges that confront SME financing. In conclusion, based on this study, four main constraints facing this sector were identified as follows:

- a. The inability of banks to access information on SMEs from the Ministry of National Economy with regard to enterprise registration and authorised signers;
- b. The inability of banks to enquire about deferred checks drawn on customer accounts and presented for collection by other banks;
- c. Poor level of financial statements reporting for SMEs;
- d. Poor understanding by SME owners of the significance of preparing economic feasibility studies, including on their objectives and purpose.

A second set of constraints refer to the **lack of business services**. Jabari (2010) indicated that there are several internal problems that face women entrepreneurs such as lack of pre-entry market information, limited awareness in international marketing, lack of consultancy services and human resource development services. Lack of marketing capabilities and skills needed to enter new markets, lack of marketing and distribution skills are also barriers (see also Sadeq et al (2011)).

A poor **business environment** has a disproportionate effect on female entrepreneurship. Sadeq et al (2011) indicated that the most important barriers are the high cost of public services - mainly the cost of electricity, water, telephones; poor access to technology for business (see also Jabari, 2010), access to property and land (as reported by more than 80% of the surveyed women). Jabari (2010) mentions also the weak quality of products, lack of access to local and foreign markets³ and lack of legal framework.

A study conducted by Bethlehem Chamber of Commerce and Industry (2014) assured that business women in Palestine face many challenges such as the **Israeli regulations and policies and their arbitrary measurements that make the achievement of economic development in Palestine impossible under these circumstances**.

Finally, the unstable **political situation** poses additional barriers to female entrepreneurs (Sadeq et al, 2011).

³ In Sadeq et al (2011) only 29.8% pointed out that local and foreign competition is important barrier that face them.

Althalathini (2015) shows that the economic and political conditions in Gaza strip affect negatively the performance of women in Gaza strip, especially the negative effect of the siege that was imposed on Gaza in 2006 by Israel that prevented many goods and commodities, in particular the raw materials, to enter the Gaza Strip.

A recent study conducted by Abdullah & Hattawy (2014) referred to the obstacles which Palestinian women face in starting their own businesses including the political instability resulting from the long-standing Israeli occupation, the **conservative perceptions and attitudes prevalent in Palestinian society regarding women's work, access to finance, lack of knowledge and skills, and the limited professions and businesses available for women**. The study found out that the most important reasons driving women to close or to abandon management of their businesses were unprofitability and personal reasons (societal prejudices, male dominance, work and commitments at home, childcare, and so on).

4. Policies to Support Women's Entrepreneurship Development

Since 2009, the Palestinian Government has officially engaged with gender responsive planning and budgeting, with the adoption of a Cabinet decision in 2009 on mainstreaming gender in budgetary processes. Subsequently, in 2012, the Palestinian Cabinet passed a resolution for forming the National Committee for Gender Responsive Budgeting.

Gender mainstreaming is one of the main governing principles of the six-year Palestinian National Development Plan (2017-2022). The Ministry of Women's Affairs developed and endorsed the Cross-Sectoral National Gender Strategy 2017-2022, as well, 35 gender units have been established in ministries and security institutions to support and guide the work in ministries and relevant institutions in mainstreaming gender and women's empowerment (UN Women, 2016).

A National Committee on Women's Employment (NCWE) was created as an advisory body within the Ministry of Labour in partnership with representatives from government institutions, worker unions, employers, and civil society organisations. The NCWE was established to contribute to the elaboration and adoption of a conceptual policy framework to promote the economic participation of women, to eliminate discrimination and inequality, to provide support and assistance to the Ministry of Labour, and to work effectively to influence national policies in order to increase job opportunities for women.

Developed by the High National Committee for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and supported by UN Women, the European Union, and a number of other actors, the Ministry of Women Affairs established a comprehensive action framework in support of the Government of Palestine, civil society and women's movement's efforts to make participation of women a reality (UN Women, 2016).

Gender mainstreaming in national economic development and women employment in the private sector, are yet to be promoted actively. "The National Economic Development Plan 2017-2022", of the Ministry of National Economy, does refer to gender mainstreaming and economic participation of women. "The National Employment Strategy", of the Ministry of Labour, is concerned about the low labour participation rate of women, but still needs to set up a practical strategy to tackle these issues.

It is not that the government ignores gender issues. Both Ministries have set up and activated Gender Units. The Gender Unit in the Ministry of National Economy works mainly to incorporate gender consideration into national policies and programmes, as well as into the budget planning of the Ministry. The Ministry of Labour has played a key role in establishing the National Committee for Women's Empowerment in 2012, which aims to promote women employment and increase their labour participation. The Gender Unit of this Ministry acts as the secretariat for the Committee

5. Current Initiatives Supporting Female Entrepreneurship

Palestinian women entrepreneurs receive support from different players. Unfortunately, there is a lack of coordination between the main players. This situation reinforces redundancy of programs and limits the impact on the economy and society.

In order to provide more clarity on the forces at work, an ecosystem map (as shown below) was developed in order to identify the key players in the women entrepreneurship sector in Palestine. The ecosystem was divided into five groups: government; education and training; Business Development Services (BDS); finance; and donors.

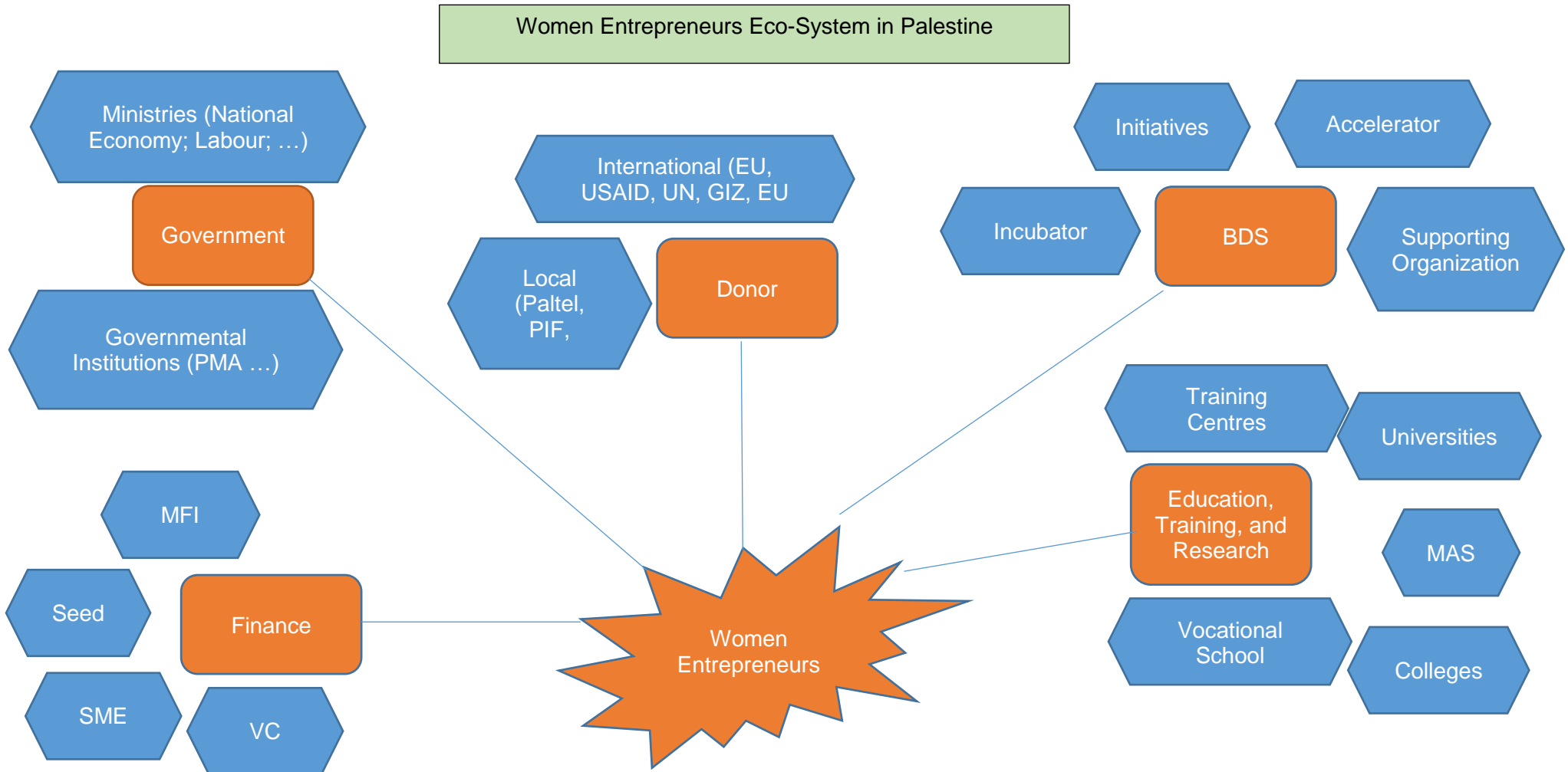
A- Government

The Palestinian ministries and institutions established gender units to provide support and information to women entrepreneurs. The Ministry of Labour, which supports women entrepreneurs through an employment program (the Employment Fund), and job creation

schemes. The problems of governmental institutions are shown by the non-existence of a national plan or strategy for dealing with small projects in general, and women's projects in particular. They are also manifested in the absence of laws and legislation that govern and define the work of governmental institutions with different parties, including loan institutions and business women's associations.

B- Education, Training, and Research

It is possible to distinguish between two types of *training institutions*. The first provides technical and vocational training. Some of them are governmental and others are managed by NGOs. They provide different types of training, although they are still weak in training women. Regarding the technical and vocational education and training (TVET), results for Palestine indicate that the number of students who enrol in vocational institutions is very low. In 2011, it was around 6.6% of all secondary school students (PCBS, 2013).



PMA	Palestine Monetary Authority	BDS	Business Development Services	PIF	Palestine Investment Fund
MFI	Micro Finance Institute	Paltel	Palestine Telecommunication group	MAS	Palestine Economic Policy Research Centre
VC	Venture Capital	BDS	Business Development Service	SME	Small Medium Sized Enterprises

TVET institutions provide training on subjects including (Executive secretary, sewing and tailoring, electrical, metal forming, carpentry, automotive, architecture/graphic design, office equipment servicing and repair, cosmetology, paving, radio and television repair and servicing, heating and air conditioning, water supply, sanitation and drainage). Moreover, the existing institutions are largely unsystematic and too small in their scope, capacity, the equipment is outdated, and in most cases, the buildings are in a bad condition. Rather than training, Palestine Economic Policy Research (MAS) developed many studies targeting women entrepreneurship.

C- Finance

In terms of *financing*, analysis revealed that the Palestinian SMEs are among the most deprived of credit in the world. This is due to constraints coming from the **demand-side** (poor level of financial statements reporting, poor understanding of the significance of preparing economic feasibility studies); the supply-side such as **banks and microfinance institutions** (absence of proper regulations and programs that understand the needs of entrepreneurs), as well as the political, social and economic **environment** (unstable political environment, high levels of unemployment and poverty, and the fact that the majority of the Palestinians are Muslims and consider paying interest forbidden). Analysis also revealed the presence of several venture capital options in Palestine. However, it was also noticed that their impact is still minor due to several reasons due to the difficulty for entrepreneurs to reach them, the double and sometimes triple bottom lines that venture capitals have to follow before they invest. In addition to the debate that the majority of raised money usually come from foreigners who have special agendas that might not be directed towards the overall benefit of the Palestinian society.

Women typically run small and informal firms in lower value-added sectors, which offer smaller returns to creditors, thus impeding their access to finance. Though microcredit can be useful in expanding financing options for the poor, especially women, **Women entrepreneurs expanding their businesses have financing needs that exceed micro-credit ceilings and hence need access to bankable product.**

In summary, it is difficult for women to access official financial services such as bank loans. It is not because there is any legal hindrance; it is rather because few women are able to provide requirements including collateral and guarantors; as to collateral, women hardly have, any assets in particular land. As to guarantors, in most cases a guarantor must be a socially and economically reliable person, and thus a man. Here, a woman would have a

very limited list of such men to ask, as the social and gender norms are such that a woman should not interact and/or meet with men outside their family and relatives.

Currently, so many microfinance schemes are being given by NGOs as well as international agencies including UNDP and UNRWA, that some reckon the market is already saturated. The microfinance industry is inadequately regulated. Interest rates, as well as gender and economic situation of the target population, vary depending on the scheme. There are programmes which do not require collateral although many do. In many programmes, a potential borrower is required to have guarantor(s) which tends to make the women's access difficult, just as in the cases of official loans. Microfinance is considerably more accessible compared to official financial services.

In Palestine, many commercial banks and microfinance institutions offer loans to large as well small businesses. The most active microfinance institutions are:

- Palestine for Credit and Development (FATEN)
- Reef Finance
- Palestinian Businesswomen's Association (ASALA)
- United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA)
- Arab centre for Agriculture Development (ACAD)

In particular, ASALA; the Palestinian Businesswomen's Association has been actively providing loans to women since its establishment in 1997. ASALA targets impoverished and excluded Palestinian women in order to empower them and put them on a track that will lead to financial independence and stability. ASALA provides Palestinian women entrepreneurs with a comprehensive package of support including guidance, counselling, training, micro, small, and Islamic financing and extensive follow up.

Compared to other financing initiatives, venture capital funds have a limited scope both in terms of number of firms reached and total amount of funding committed, as they focus on the relatively riskier segment of firms with the highest growth and innovation potential. In Palestine, there are five major venture capital funds:

- Sadara Ventures
- Abraaj Capital
- Siraj Fund Management Company
- Ibtikar Fund

D- Business Development Services (BDS)

Counselling and support centres serve as the first stop shop, principally offering diagnostic, match making, coaching and information services to entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs in Palestine, get non-financial assistance through NGOs.

There are several initiatives for counselling and providing support to women including:

1) The Federation of Palestinian Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture

The Federation of Palestinian Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture (FPCCIA), started targeting women activities. The factors behind this are that they, as a business federation, would need to increase the federation members (i.e., companies) as well as to improve their services toward the member companies, and there are women-led enterprises although the vast majority of them are informal micro enterprises. Their newly created women targeted activities include establishing gender focal points in their local offices and planning of BDS targeting women entrepreneurs.

The services of BDS include:

- Providing information in identifying financing sources
- Providing training on business plans and feasibility studies
- Providing assistance to access markets and exhibitions

2) Business Women Forum

Established in 2006, the Business Women Forum (BWF) strives to create an environment that is supportive to business women in Palestine, especially by reinforcing their role and building their capacity to increase their competencies locally and internationally.

Within the framework of its project entitled “One Stop Shop for Sustainable Businesses-OSS”, a joint regional initiative between the European Union and UN Women called “Spring Forward for Women”, and funded by the European Union, which takes into consideration the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs-F), BWF worked on empowering women Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip with technical and managerial skills and capacities needed to maintain cultural sustainable businesses. Feedback received from beneficiaries that participated in our survey indicated that this initiative was instrumental in facilitating registration procedures.

The Bank of Palestine and Business Women Forum launched a training program and “I am an Entrepreneur” contest to select the best business plan among women entrepreneurs in Palestine in 2016.

With the support of the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women, BWF established, in 2009, a Business Development Centre (BDC). The BDC primarily aims to enable business women and female entrepreneurs to develop their businesses and build up their competitive advantage, regardless of whether the businesses are officially registered. The following are examples of services provided by BDC:

- Preparing feasibility studies for projects in different sectors. This service is not only important to business women interested in starting their own business but also for female business owners interested in expanding their existing projects.
- Evaluating available local and international marketing opportunities and assisting in upgrading marketing services to members.
- Offering legal consultation services during business registration and post registration phases.
- Providing information and assistance in identifying financing sources.
- Training and skill upgrading in addition to technical support in administrative, financial, and marketing fields.
- Pre Incubation of high growth projects.

D- International Donors

There are many international players supporting women entrepreneurs in Palestine. The table below summarises the programmes and projects initiated by several donors.

Table 1: Donors support to women entrepreneurship development

Donor	Activities
American General Consulate	Hosts the annual Women's Microenterprise Bazaar. The Bazaar brings together women artists, merchants, designers, and manufacturers of goods that include traditional Palestinian embroidery, hand-made soap, jewellery, foodstuffs, ceramics, candles, and more.
GIZ	Through its Private Sector Development Programme, two interdependent components of intervention have been developed, strengthening the policy, legal and regulatory framework on the one hand, and improving competitiveness in selected localities and sectors on the other hand. Gender issues are included in this PSD programme.
UNDP	Through microfinance/micro-grants and vocational training, the programme supports livelihood projects of deprived households. Although targeting both men and women, due to consideration given to the importance of women's economic empowerment, approximately half of the projects supported are by women
UNRWA	Supports Palestinian Refugees in poverty by providing temporary jobs. Approximately 60% of the jobs target women. Since 2015, attempts have been made in creating non-conventional jobs for women including female security guards in UNRWA facilities
UN WOMEN	Gender mainstreaming, women's empowerment including political empowerment. Gender budgeting, capacity building of the government. Works on both policy and project levels.

Source: Gender Profile: Palestinian Territories Final Report, JICA, 2016.

6. Results of the Interviews

Women entrepreneurs work in many different settings. Thus, their needs, problems, and opportunities are affected by the personal characteristics as well as the working environment. The analysis is based on 25 questionnaires collected during the fourth quarter of 2016. It is relevant to note the profile of the surveyed women in terms of location, age, level of education, marital status, number of children and years in business, as shown in the below graphs.

From the survey results, discussed in details below, we can get a general portrait of female entrepreneurship:

- 1) Business activity is smaller in size; Slower in growth and less risky more linked to traditional and low-value activities;
- 2) Women are more committed to family responsibilities and start their business once their children have grown;
- 3) They rely on low initial capital owing to the lack of access to capital and the nature of their activities;
- 4) they start their business out-of-necessity and although the long hours invested in the business they rarely pay themselves a salary.

Looking at the economic part, the survey revealed that women businesses are under-performing. Thus, the economic definition of performance does not give the full picture of the great job these women are doing. The economic performance does not emphasise the social value of the women entrepreneurs, which influence their personal characteristics in addition to their positive influence on their families and communities.

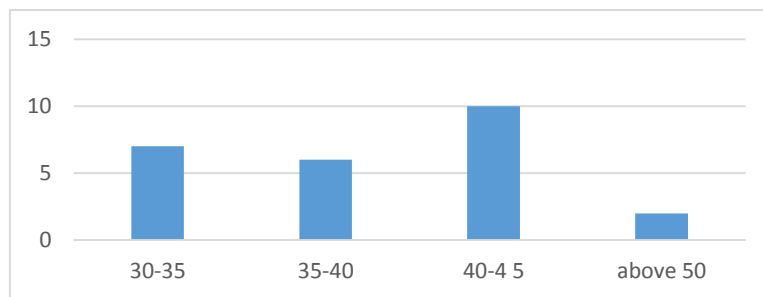
The results of the survey are detailed below.

6.1 Characteristics of Palestinian Women Entrepreneurs

➤ Age

The age of seven women is between 30-35 years old; six between 35-40; ten between 40-45; and two women entrepreneurs are above 50. The sample is a good balance as indicated by the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) that Palestine exhibits a low early-stage entrepreneurship rate.

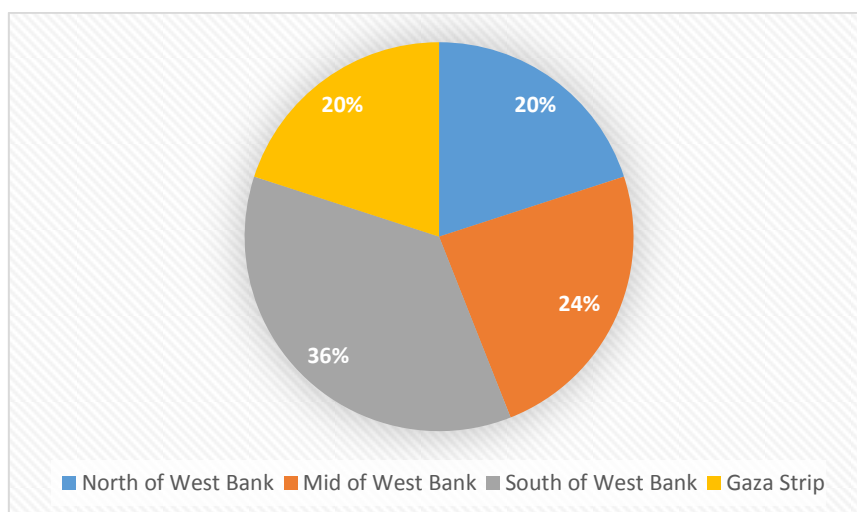
Figure 1: Age of the respondents



➤ Location

The 25 questionnaires were distributed between the West Bank and Gaza Strip. 20 respondents from the West Bank (five from the northern part; six from the mid; and nine from the southern part) and five from the Gaza Strip. Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (2016) indicates that the proportion of poor families headed by a female is higher in the Gaza Strip at 29.7% compared to 22.5% in the West Bank.

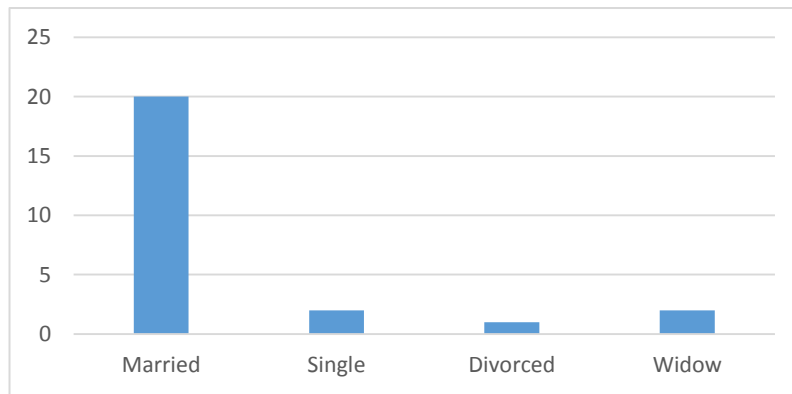
Figure 2: Business Location



➤ Marital Status

The majority of the surveyed women entrepreneurs are married (20 out of 25). Marriage represents social protection for women, and an incentive to improve their family living conditions. This fact does not reduce the importance of the role of women businesses in enabling divorces and widows to continue their lives.

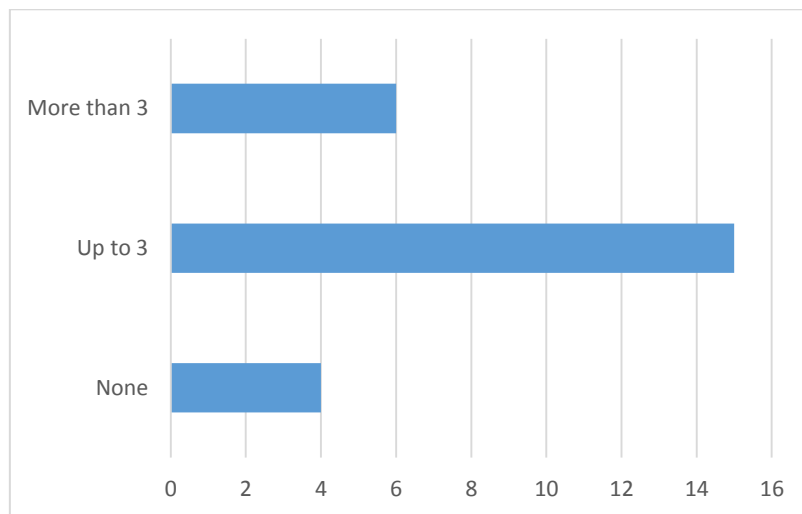
Figure 3: Marital status



➤ Number of Children

The majority of the surveyed women entrepreneurs (15 out of 25) have children, while 6 of them have more than 3 children. According to Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, the large household size has significantly higher poverty rates. So, women tend to establish a business to improve the income of their families.

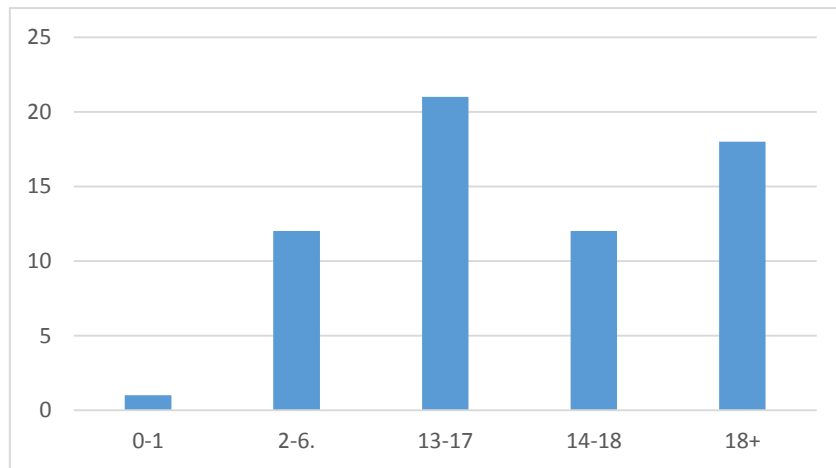
Figure 4: Number of children



➤ Children Age

Results show that 21 out of 64 children are in the age of 13-17; 18 are above 18; 12 are between the age of 14-18; and 12 are between the age of 2-6; and only of child between 0-1. Most of the participants indicated that their husbands and families were taking care of their children during their absence. Moreover, the sample's results reinforce the message that women tend to start an economic activity once their children have become more independent.

Figure 5: Children age



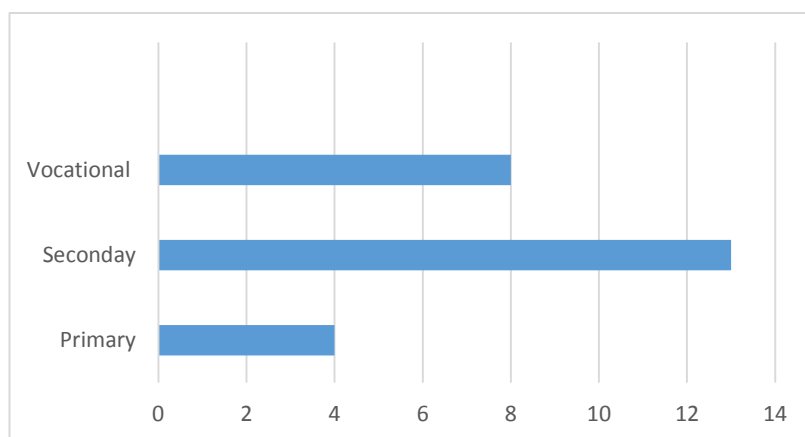
One of the participants expressed her determination to start up her own business in the following manner:

“I am a 45 years old, married and mother of four children from Hebron. My husband is a medical doctor. Early in my life I worked in a local bank, then left to open my own shop to sell chocolate and gifts. I am facing many difficulties such as strong competition and criticism. But I am determined to continue and was able to compensate for my losses. Nowadays I travel to Jordan to buy chocolate and gifts stuff and sell them locally. My small business started to expand and currently I am employing another woman”.

➤ Level of Education

We noted from the below figure that an intermediate level of education was that most commonly found in our sample. Women with bachelor’s degrees or higher were more likely to get jobs related to their specialisations.

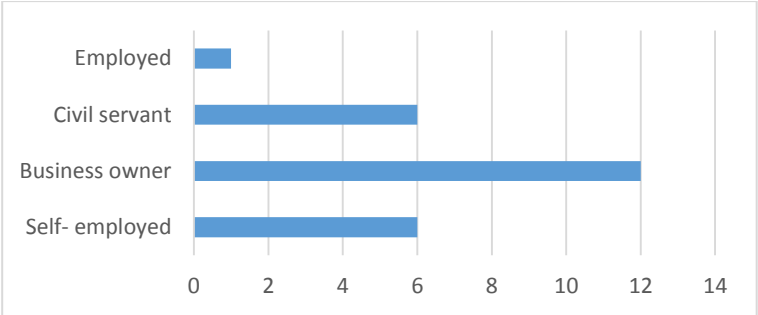
Figure 6: Education level



➤ Parents’ Profession

Results show that mothers of surveyed women entrepreneurs are out of the labour market while their fathers work in different fields. 12 are business owners; six civil servants; six self-employed and only one is employed.

Figure 7: Fathers' Profession



One participant who works in the field of drawing on glass said: *“I was born in Gaza Strip but got married in East Jerusalem. My father was a merchant thus I am familiar with the business terminologies. I had a hobby, then I enrolled in a specialised course. My ambition was always to have my own business. I started to promote my work via the social media. Now, I am known in the surroundings.”*

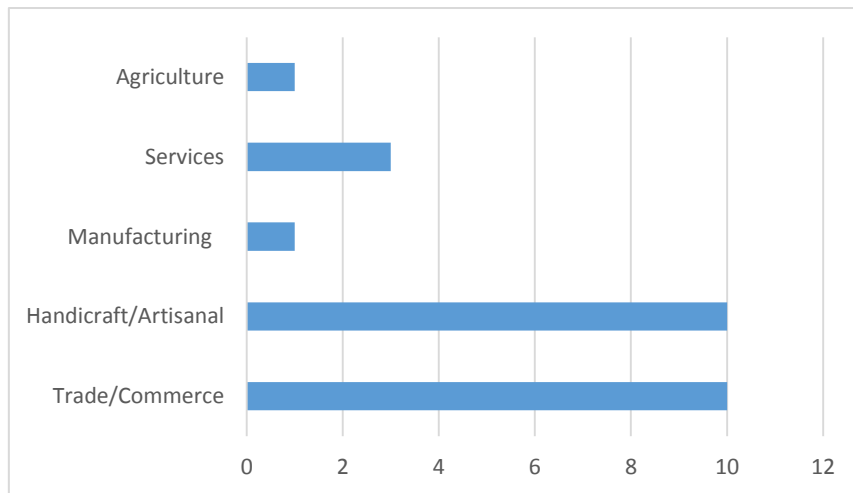
Another participant explained how she developed a business inherited from her father: *“My father owned a grocery shop and before getting married, I used to help him and sometimes replacing him when he used to go to the central market to buy goods. Four years ago, my father passed away and few months later, my husband was exposed to a work accident and couldn't work anymore. I was in need to get some money and food to feed my family. Therefore, I decided to open my father's grocery shop and my children are helping me after returning back from school”.*

6.2 Characteristics of Women Businesses

➤ Nature of Business

The majority of the surveyed women entrepreneurs (20 out of 25) are working in traditional businesses such as handcrafts/ artisanal and trade/ commerce activities. This is because the artisanal and commercial projects usually don't need a high capital and women get used to these activities since they were young; they are really comfortable in doing these jobs and so it is easier to start with what they know already.

Figure 8: Nature of the Business

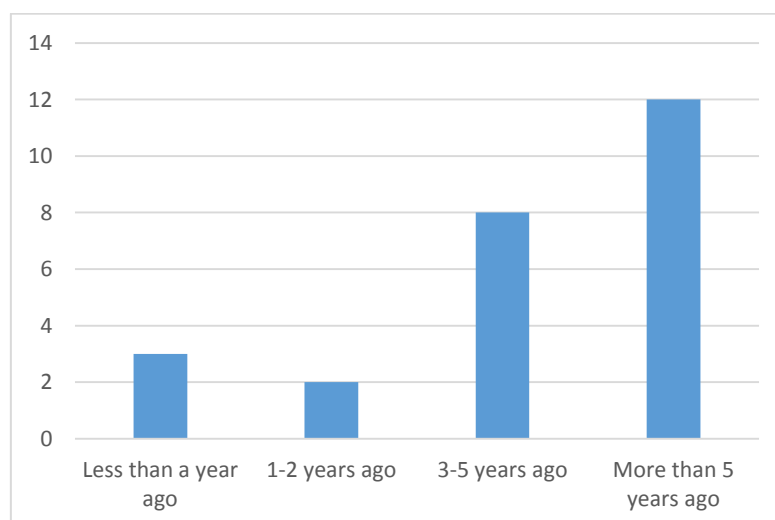


The surveyed women entrepreneurs manage their businesses and sell their products to retail individual in their own town/city; only three of them sell their products across the country and none of them have any export activities. Few women entrepreneurs sell their handcraft and heritage products to Palestinian expatriates living in the US or Europe but not on a regular basis. As most of the surveyed women entrepreneurs are small scale business; two as partnerships; and one is a limited liability company. The limited liability one is officially registered at the Ministry of National Economy and the shares are distributed between the woman entrepreneur and her husband. While the shares of partnership ones are between the woman entrepreneurs and her female friends.

➤ Years in Business

Results show that 12 women entrepreneurs started their business since more than 5 years ago (range between 7 – 16 years).

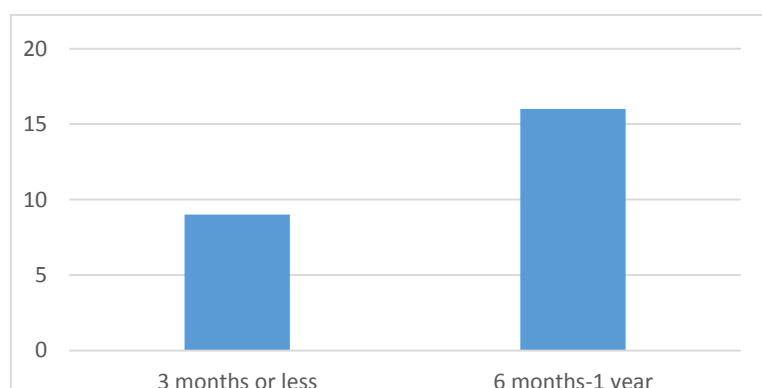
Figure 9: Number of years in business



➤ Time Needed to Start the Business

Almost half of the surveyed women entrepreneurs indicated that they needed between 6 months to one year between the date they started their effective preparation and the day of effective business while nine of them indicated for a shorter period (3 months or less). Part of the respondents are working from home while others are registering their business at the relevant bodies such as Ministry of National Economy and Chambers of Commerce. Those women mentioned that they choose their business type since they thought they are the easiest projects, as mentioned earlier, or they saw others who still have this type of projects and that they are earning money. This way of thinking indicates that there is a serious need from women who started a business for the first time to know how to choose the right project based on different criteria including their experience and market demand. These women need accurate business information as well as managerial and financial skills.

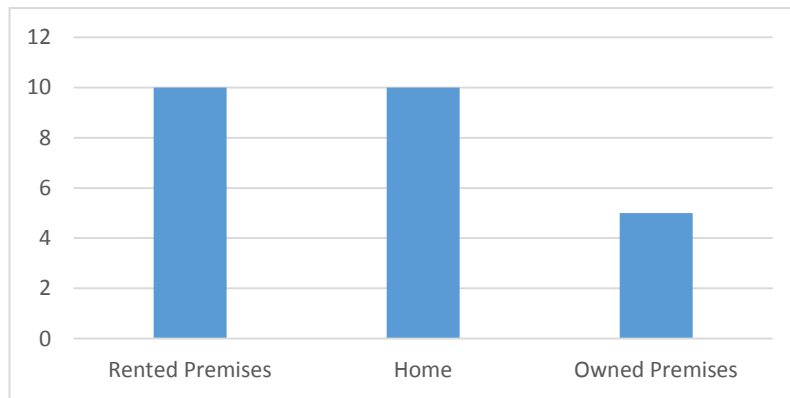
Figure 10: Time needed to start the business



➤ Business Location

Figure 11 below shows the location where the surveyed women entrepreneurs run their businesses from. Ten of them work at home; ten rent their premises while five own their own premises. Even though the majority of women entrepreneurs preferred projects close to home in order to combine project and domestic responsibilities they still require a double effort to play the two roles.

Figure 11: Business location from which women operate their business



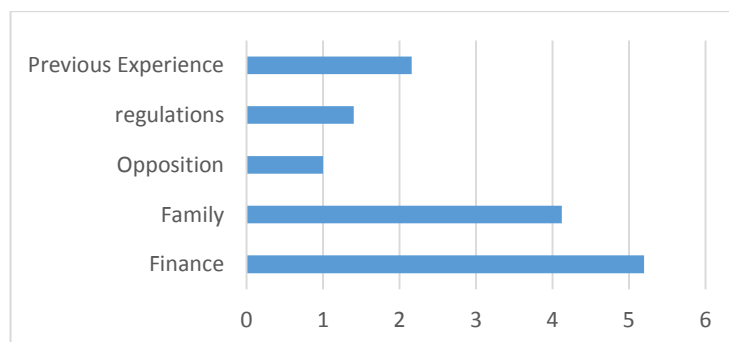
Only six of the women entrepreneurs register their businesses while others work informally. They registered their business at the Tax Department of the Ministry of National Economy. Three businesses out of these six register at the Ministry of Tourism and Antique.

➤ Cited Obstacles to Starting a Business

Female entrepreneurs encounter many problems and challenges in starting their businesses. Some of them are simply related to the nature of the business they undertake and the environment in which they function; such problems equally affect men and women. However, women tend to encounter specific problems caused by society and its traditional view of women.

Among these women-related problems, the most common constraints are access to finance and family responsibilities, followed by lack of previous managerial or business experience. Indeed, this is a recurrent issue for women entrepreneurs as several other studies showed (see section 3.1).. Another problem that women in Palestine are facing in starting a new business is the social problem and the patterned role of female associated with the composition of the Palestinian society. Educated as well as non-educated women entrepreneurs face these obstacles.

Figure 12: Challenges to start a business



Therefore, to create a successful enterprise, women need a supportive societal and financial environment, knowledge about how to start and manage business and to offer legal

environment for developing new enterprises. Sadeq et al. (2011) found out that the most recurrent and basic requirement for women to establish a new business is the **family and financial support**.

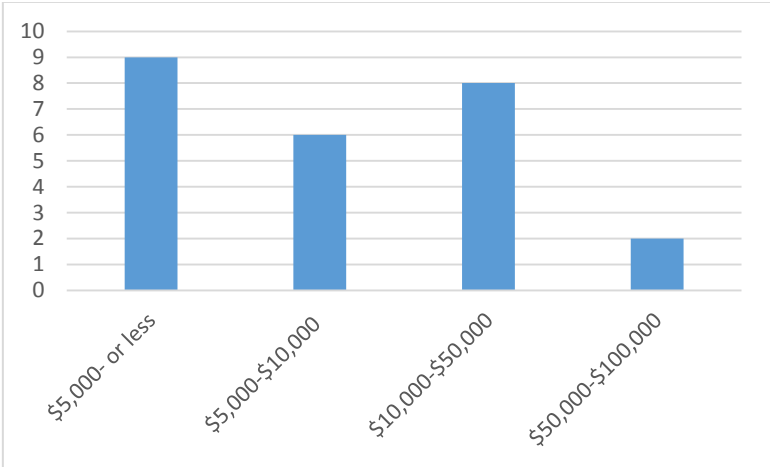
The majority of the surveyed women entrepreneurs (85%) stated that they started their businesses themselves while only four (15%) stated that they inherited the business either from their fathers, husbands or family businesses; this could indicate that these women are receiving the necessary support to develop an entrepreneurial venture.

➤ Start Up Capital

Women find it harder than men to obtain the necessary guarantees for getting funding or loans. Many commercial banks ask for highly valuable guarantees, such as immovable assets registered in the name of the person taking the loan, a thing which is not available to most women. Most surveyed women entrepreneurs started their business either with their own savings or with family money. The husband and family’s attitude could provide both moral and practical support, by providing assistance and working with their wife in the project, or through participation in obtaining the initial capital.

This has an impact on the limited amount of money women use to start their business. Nine women entrepreneurs started their effective operations with less than USD 5,000 (approximate EUR 4,730) ; six with a budget between USD 5,000-10,000 (EUR 4,730-9,455); eight started with a budget between USD 10,000-50,000 (EUR 9,460-47,300); and only two with a budget between USD 50,000-100,000 (EUR 47,300-94,600).

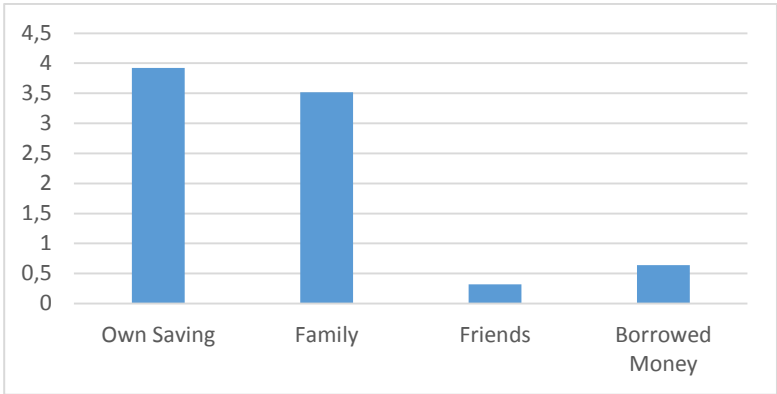
Figure 13: Capital at start



➤ Source of Initial Capital

Most of surveyed women rely on their own savings as the initial source of capital, followed by borrowing money from family. The last source is bank loans that accounted for only 8% of the financing sources that are considered low and needs to be raised since in many cases the lack of financing leads to business liquidation.

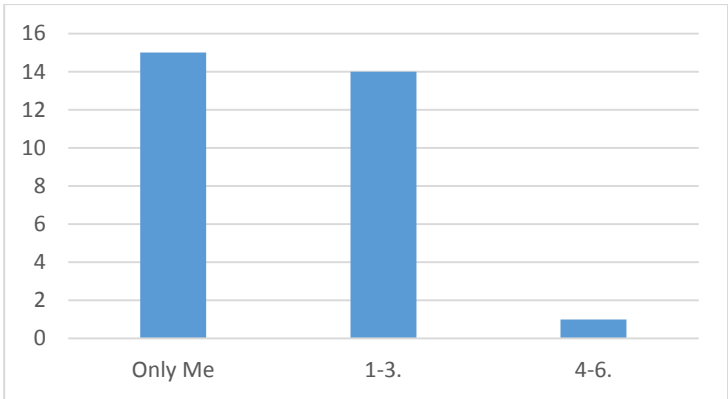
Figure 14: Source of initial capital (%)



➤ Business Size

The survey also reveals that 15 women entrepreneurs are self-employed; 14 hire 1-3 employees and only 1 hire 4-6 employees.

Figure 15: Business size



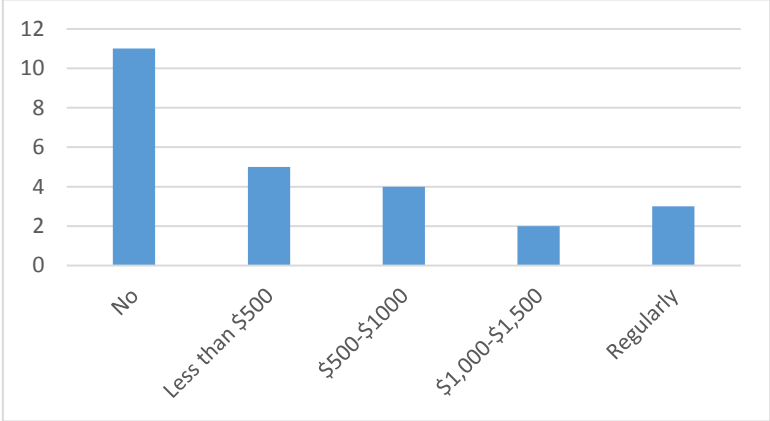
Four women entrepreneurs reported that they subcontract women working at home. As an example, a surveyed women entrepreneur, selling heritage dresses, may hire more than 200 women, working from home, on a demand-driven basis. Projects undertaken by women are usually of medium or small size and of low risk.

➤ Monthly Salary

Almost half of the surveyed women entrepreneurs do not pay themselves a monthly salary. Five pay themselves a monthly salary less than USD 500 (EUR 470); four between USD

500-1,000 (EUR 470-940); two between USD (1,000-1,500 (EUR 940-1,410)). As indicated almost half of the respondents do not separate business income and personal income.

Figure 16: Monthly salary

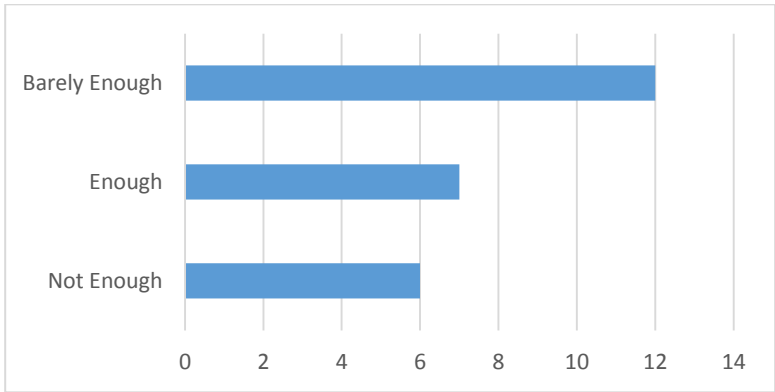


6.3 Business Performance

➤ Business profitability

Six women entrepreneurs find their business as non-profitable; while seven find it profitable. Twelve women entrepreneurs find their business profitable but does not provide income for them and their families.

Figure 17: Business profitability



Nevertheless, the majority stated that they will stay and only 2 women entrepreneurs said that they will move to another business. The first woman entrepreneur mentioned that she will move from handcraft businesses to hair dressing while the other entrepreneur mentioned that she will start looking for a salaried job.

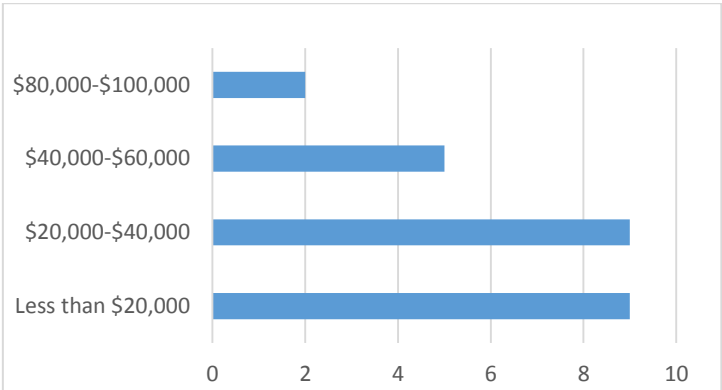
Majority of participants confined to limited investment, limited growth and small profits. In most cases one reason is due to limited markets and the weakness of the economy. But the

more important reason is gender inequality, manifested in several ways including the difficulty of obtaining resources, questions of ownership, a lack of necessary skills, limited opportunities and a limited ability to travel

➤ Annual Revenues

The majority of women entrepreneurs (eighteen) receive annual revenue of less than USD 50,000; five receive annual salary between USD (40,000-60,000) and only two receive annual revenue between USD (80,000-100,000).

Figure 18: Annual revenues



The majority (19 out of 25) stated that **cost of materials** is the most important cost element; three mentioned the rent of premises and three mentioned the wages/salaries. As well, respondents were asked about their debt. Given that they start with a low amount of capital from their own and family savings, it is not surprising that the majority (fourteen) have no debt. Only four women mentioned that they are in debt. Seven are non-in debt; and fourteen reported that they did not ask for a loan ever.

➤ Registration

Most respondents (18 out of 25) are working informally and seven registered their businesses at the Ministry of National Economy, the Ministry of Finance; as well as at the Chamber of commerce and industry. Participants working in the cultural stuff and handcrafts register their business at the Ministry of Tourism and Antique.

➤ Major Problem Encounter Businesses

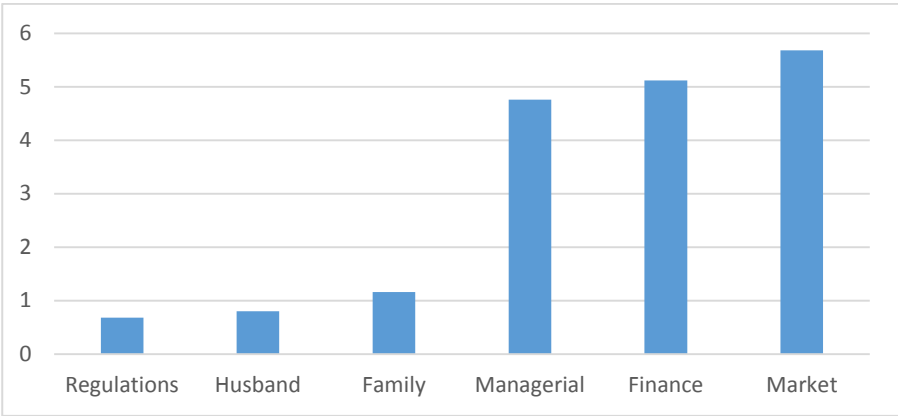
The surveyed women entrepreneurs stated market, finance and managerial challenges are the main problem encounter their businesses. The main problems for the majority of Palestinian women entrepreneurs are **access to market and access to finance**. Women said they faced difficulties when they started up their business and when they want to expand them since they don't meet the conditions of microfinance institutions (MFIs) or banks. Women mentioned that they do not have information about finance institutions and

their procedures except that they apply interest rates which are high and **forbidden in Islamic regulations**. Women said that they still need improving their managerial skills in writing business plans, project management, life skills. This reinforces the results discussed above about using own savings and family's money as the main source of capital.

Women **do not know how to market their products/ services**. Results of the field survey also indicated that women depend for local marketing on their surroundings in the village or town where they live, followed by the governorate, then Palestine. This is closely linked to the fact that many of the surveyed women work from home and don't have a shop to advertise their products.

The political and economic conditions that Gaza Strip encounters affect negatively on the performance of projects. The siege which imposed on Gaza since 2006 preventing many items to enter Gaza led to a rise in prices and difficulty in getting the business requirements and assets. Furthermore, the electricity outages increase the operational costs of some projects.

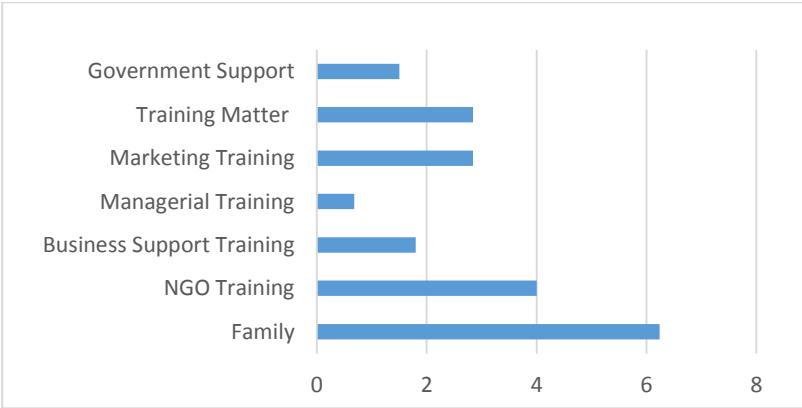
Figure 19: Major problems encountered by women to develop their business



➤ Factors of Success

Results of the survey show that the **family support** is the main factor for success, followed by training offered by the local and foreign NGOs. Family support can range from **moral support to child and household care as well as finance** (as already mentioned). This support is often essential to help women balance their time between their various responsibilities. Especially that most of them spend between 30-50 hours a week in their businesses. If we take into consideration time spent by women in caring for family and children, most businesswomen have long and tiring working hours, with a double working day.

Figure 20: Key success factors



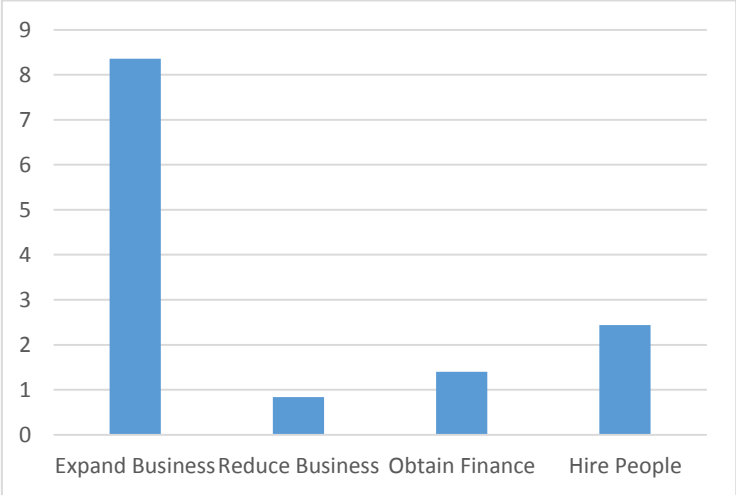
Participants stressed that their family support for the project and their acceptance of the idea was a major factor in starting and continuing it. This provided protection for the entrepreneur in the face of any pressure from their surroundings. Participants explained that such support is particularly important because of the non-acceptance of society of the idea of women direct dealing with merchants, at least in the beginning. Thus, the intervention of the family at

that stage was important. When asked about the factors that contributed to the success of their business, they mentioned the importance of social relationship and network, in terms of strengthening their reputation among family members and business actors (competitors; suppliers; customers). As a second factor they mentioned the development of personal leadership skills; access to new source of capital; and improvement in the bargaining conditions.

➤ Plans for the future

As expected, 20 surveyed women entrepreneurs plan to expand their business in the coming years, only 3 stated that they plan to reduce their work.

Figure 21: Plans for the future (%)



The respondents were asked about other options in case of business failure. Ten mentioned that they will start another business (such as catering, hairdressing, and handcrafts); seven will stay at home; five will look for salaried job; and two mentioned that they would stay unemployed. Most the respondents (20 out of 25) would not quit their businesses to be hired as salaried workers in the private or public sectors.

6.4 Business Motivation and Perception

➤ Reasons for Starting a Business

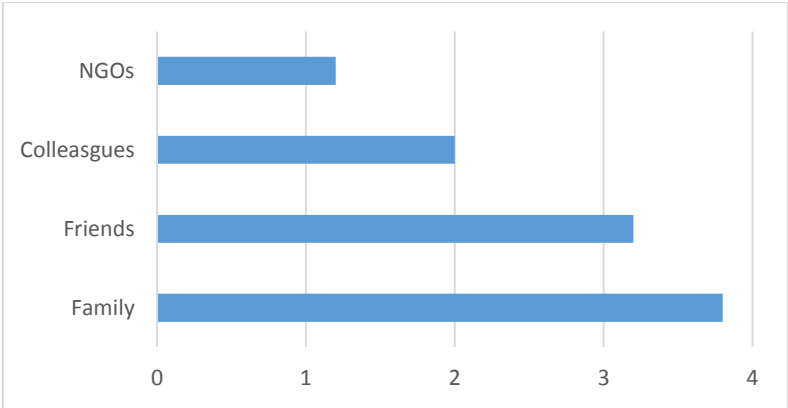
All the surveyed entrepreneurs started their business out-of-necessity and not for seizing an opportunity: almost two-third (16 out of 25) were unemployed; three of them started their business because they did not get salaried jobs and 2 two started their businesses because their wages in their previous jobs were hardly enough. Prior starting their current businesses, the survey showed that fifteen women were housewife, at home or student; two

were public employees; five were private sector employees; and three were unemployed. The women were asked why they started a business in the first place. The most common reason was to improve the household income. the results of the survey showed that women entrepreneurs are mostly driven by necessity due to their economic situation, as well as to the high level of poverty in Palestine.

➤ Encouragement

The respondents refer to their family as the main actor to encourage them to start up their business, followed by their friend, colleagues and finally NGOs. The husband and family’s attitude could provide both moral and practical support, by providing assistance and working with their wife in the project, or through participation in obtaining the initial capital.

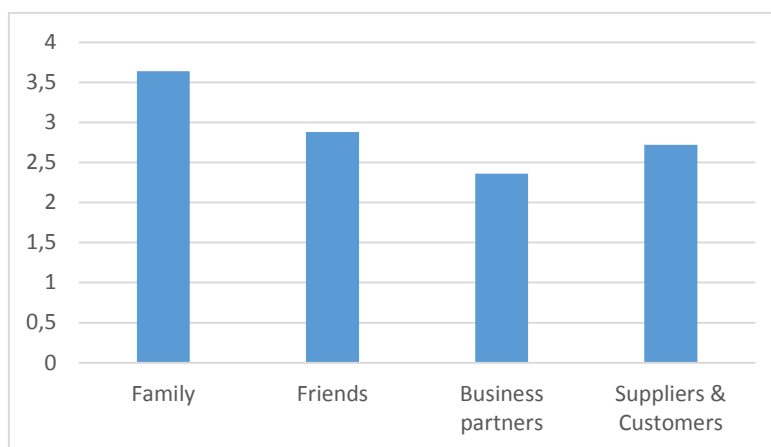
Figure 22: Key actors encouraging women to start their business



➤ Seriousness

The surveyed entrepreneurs indicate that family, friends, suppliers & customers, as well as business partners took seriously their initiatives despite the fact that entrepreneurship is considered in Palestine as a men’s domain. It is worth noting that none of the surveyed women mentioned that the administration of bankers are taking seriously their initiative.

Figure 23: Key actors taking seriously women entrepreneurs



➤ Cooperation/Partnership/Networking

Almost all women entrepreneurs expressed their interests to cooperate or to network with other women entrepreneurs to exchange ideas, experiences, thoughts, and even to partner with them. Only one entrepreneur prefers to work alone because the other entrepreneurs might steal her designs and ideas.

6.5 Social and other Assistance

There are many institutions providing assistance to Palestinian women entrepreneurs as can be seen in the mapping of the ecosystem (See section 5 above).

Among the non-financial services mainly received by the surveyed women, we can mention:

- Management skills (15 respondents)
- Marketing skills (10 respondents)
- Legal advice (8 respondents)
- Choosing the business location (7 respondents)
- Area of business (7 respondents)
- Human resources management (5 respondents)

As well, the respondents were asked from whom they received the support. The highest rank is the family (20 respondents); followed by development organisation (12 responses); then business development support programs (10 responses); then business partners (5 responses). Government assistance (1 response) comes at the last. Many surveyed women entrepreneurs appreciated the training received at the Business Women Forum Association and the Chamber of commerce and industry.

Women's training possibilities are confined to traditional areas, such as sewing, textiles, secretarial skills and cosmetics. As discussed above, in section 45, it is possible to distinguish between two types of training institutions. The first provides technical and vocational training through different type of courses, although women participation is still low. The other type of training concentrates on the skills involved in launching and managing a project. They provide administrative and financial skills to build their self-confidence, and provide consultancy and administrative services to the private sector in the fields of administration, economic feasibility studies and marketing.

7. Good practices and Policy Recommendations

No research studies have focused on policies targeting the informal sector run by non-graduate female entrepreneurs in Palestine. Enabling and gender responsive policies, targeted support are crucial in stimulating women start and develop their businesses. This would ultimately contribute to generating decent and productive work, achieving gender equality, reducing poverty and ensuring stronger economies and societies.

7.1 Good Practices

There are a few good practices to promote women entrepreneurship in Palestine. Below are some examples which, however, need to be scaled up to help more women develop their businesses.

A- Government:

- The Ministry of National Economy (MoNE) started, in 2014, to integrate the gender dimension in all statistics used by the Ministry. The main objective of this initiative is to get accurate information about the women businesses (i.e. formal/informal; type of business; location; export/import activities; capital) which will help better planning and enhancing gender policies accordingly. This will also help the Ministry of National Economy to develop a national policy targeting women entrepreneurs based on accurate data.

B- Private initiatives in the domain of access to finance:

- A cooperation agreement was signed between the Bank of Palestine and the Federation of Palestine Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture to promote awareness to women entrepreneurs about the importance of registering at the chambers of commerce and to enhance their knowledge about financial and non-financial advisory services provided by the Bank to businesses.

- Bank of Palestine launched an exclusive program to support Palestinian women under the title "Felestineyeh", which aims to empower Palestinian women in all economic and social aspects. The program includes the provision of banking products dedicated to women, in addition to awareness workshops conducted in various governorates in collaboration with several local institutions and federations.

C- Active women associations:

- This initiative of BWF in establishing a shop in its premises to sell women's products. BWF help these women entrepreneurs to present their products at no cost while the BWF staff will sell the products on their behalf for minimum fees.

Business women Group - ROZANA was established in 2013. The group comprises 50 women from various cooperatives in Hebron. It aims to trigger social and economic changes in the targeted area by supporting women through improving micro projects and by providing services as follows:

- Consultation and preparation of feasibility study for the projects.
 - Networking with other related associations and improve national and international cooperation.
 - Capacity building to develop the businesswomen capacities about projects management, accounting, marketing, packaging and pricing
 - Seeking financial resources for women projects.
- Two young women entrepreneurs from rural areas in Jenin funded Al Thimar Company with the objective of contributing to the socio economic development of the area by providing women channels to market their products. There are currently 58 women working with this company. Al Thimar buys directly selected products based on market demand immediately in payments and places them into the local market through their agents. They provide products to shops and supermarkets in Ramallah, Bethlehem, Tulkarem and Hebron. The prices are agreed in a transparent manner between the company and the women associations and or cooperatives by calculating the costs on both sides. The company works with associations and cooperatives that show consistent work and willingness to improve.

7.2 Policy Recommendations

The policy recommendations emphasise the importance of building a dynamic women entrepreneurship ecosystem. The policy recommendations are addressed at three levels: national Government; local governments; NGOs.

A- National Government

- Designing an integrated policy framework for supporting women's entrepreneurship development in consultation with key stakeholders. Adopting an Action Plan for implementing the policy framework as well as a mechanism to co-ordinate actions by key stakeholders and monitor implementation. That could be achieved by:
 - Promoting decentralisations among governmental district offices.
 - Providing information and promoting exhibitions for women businesses.
 - Creating awareness campaigns targeting women that can help individuals properly understand the procedures and which governmental body they should approach when they want to register or when facing any difficulties. Another way is to add a special department in each governmental institution specialized in providing the necessary support, guidance and training whenever needed.
 - Applying a reduced set of regulatory obligations such as reducing record keeping obligations or simplifying the procedures and requirements for female small businesses can be followed. Encouraging the entrepreneurial behaviour through granting privileges to the SMEs who formally register including (lower fees, shorter periods for applications processing and training support).
 - Making business registration processes more transparent and accessible and pay special attention to women entrepreneurs, including those operating in the informal sector. Specific actions could include identification of registration requirements and processes that have an adverse effect on women entrepreneurs and development of gender-sensitive procedures.
 - Sensitizing local financial institutions to deal with women businesses.
- Carrying out research to improve understanding of the importance of public-private sector dialogue and the role of chambers of commerce and industry, sector associations, employers' organisations, and businesswomen's associations in addressing women's entrepreneurship development.
- Increasing the awareness of parents and society about the importance of the technical and vocational training for women in reducing the unemployment and poverty rates by giving examples and statistics from around the world. At the same time, working on changing the old mind-set that is linked with this type of education through conducting continuous workshops and public awareness campaigns involving influential key persons. Allocating annual budget towards renovating and upgrading the old TVET institutions which will help in enhancing their quality and capacity and creating gender-sensitive vocational programs.
- Introducing entrepreneurship, innovation and leadership subjects to the female in the educational system from primary school level. This will help female students to think

outside the box and nurture unconventional talents and skills. Designing and developing entrepreneurial training programs help the students become more sensitive to entrepreneurial opportunities (increase their alertness). Promoting women businesses working in clusters, and cooperatives.

B- Local Governments

- Easing registration procedures and providing temporary licenses to women businesses. Training local governments' staff to facilitate women businesses.
- Working closely with local NGOs and supporting women cooperatives.
- Providing information about potential markets, and finance to women businesses.
- Organizing exhibitions to promote the products/services of women businesses.

C- NGOs

- Creating an Entrepreneurs' Association. There is a need to create a representative body of women entrepreneurs which would represent their collective interests, follow up their complaints, contact training or consultancy institutions that provide advice about management, legal questions and exhibitions, and contribute to mobilization campaigns to exert pressure to amend laws or adopt new laws and enforce them.
- Supporting the existing business services providers which targeting the women businesses. There is a need to scale up the services provided by the different NGOs supporting women businesses. Improving access to on-going entrepreneurship and business management training services for women already in the labour force and for those who have an enterprise.
- Promoting good BDS practice for women from the region (to be selected on the basis of economic and developmental impacts).
- Setting up small cooperatives to lend support to businesswomen. Cooperatives play a supportive role in providing members with financial and moral support and a chance to share knowledge and experience. Local cooperatives differ from the idea of businesswomen's associations in that they focus on specific regional needs, and facilitate services for practical things such as child care or places for members to meet and share ideas.
- Combining BDS services with micro-finance delivery as a way of improving the performance and growth potential of women with micro-enterprises. Developing schemes to make financing more accessible to women with early stage enterprises that have outgrown the micro-finance thresholds and with high growth potential enterprises. This could include introduction of incentives to banks to pilot special loan

programmes for women entrepreneurs and targeted credit guarantee schemes. Providing incentives to attract venture capital investors and business angels such as tax rebates or partially guaranteeing investors' equity especially for women.

- Enhancing the public and private partnerships, through providing incentives that help in supporting female entrepreneurial behaviour development.
- Increasing opportunities for women to access new markets by: developing and delivering export readiness programmes for women entrepreneurs to help prepare them for entry into foreign markets and by creating conditions conducive to the integration of women-owned SMEs into value and supply chains and cluster initiatives.

Annexes

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Annex 2: List of main stakeholders

Public Sector:

Ministry of National Economy

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