

Way Forward: Priorities for Empowering Women to Actively Participate in Political Life and Decision-making

- Taking appropriate measures to ensure an increase in women's representation in decision-making positions, namely, setting a women's quota at 30%.
- Conducting political and social outreach and national awareness campaigns in schools, communities and refugee camps on the importance of changing the stereotypical view of women's and men's roles in the family and society to allow for more opportunities for political participation among women, especially in political parties, public institutions and various trade unions.
- Promoting the use of UN Resolution No. 1325 as a basic mechanism for protecting women's rights, especially those suffering from discriminatory Israeli laws on reunification, female prisoners, women whose houses were or are threatened to be demolished, in addition to provision of consultancy, legal and social services to those women.
- Implementing programs for women's capacity building and empowerment in active participation in decision-making positions.
- Allowing for equal opportunities for women in accessing social and cultural activities since these play a major role in building up the social capital of individuals and groups.
- Supporting female participation in student councils in universities and colleges as the first incubator for political training of young leaderships.



Theatre play at a university to raise awareness on political participation. Source: Mouhssine Ennaimi/UN Women



Information provided in this publication mainly depends on a report prepared by the Institute of Women Studies/ Birzeit University with a mandate by UN Women in partnership with the Ministry of Women Affairs and the Ministry of Planning and Administrative Development, the Report on Review of the Cross-Sectoral National Gender Strategy, and the results of the workshops conducted within the frame of drawing up the upcoming strategy for gender.



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WOMEN, POLITICAL PARTICIPATION & DECISION-MAKING

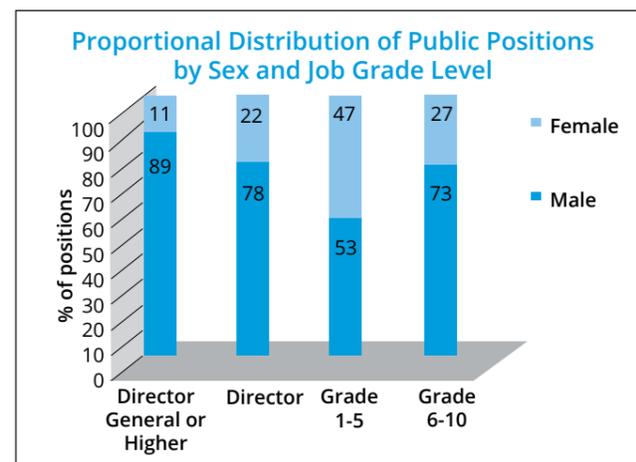
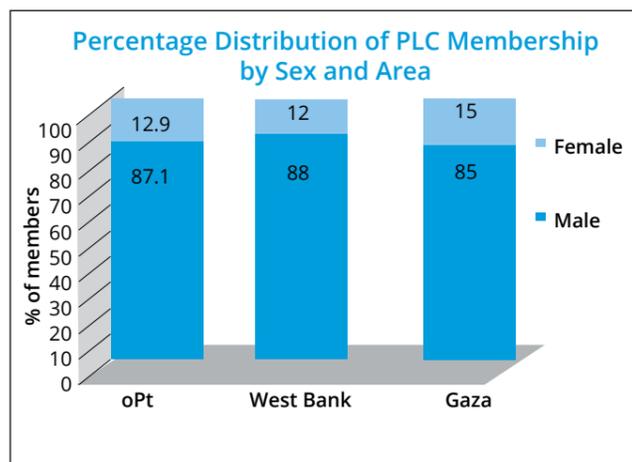


Several international instruments emphasize the right of women to political participation and access to decision-making positions. The Basic Law of Palestine, as well as other legislation, also emphasizes women's right to political participation. Women's participation in political life is important because it realizes democracy in society, contributes to higher development rates, and embodies complete citizenship rights for women. Women's participation in political life depends upon social, political and cultural factors and, in the Palestinian case, the Israeli occupation, which hinders political practice for men and women. The creation of an environment that encourages women's participation in political life requires overcoming economic, political and socio-cultural structural obstacles.

Trends

- Article (4) of the Law on Public Legislative Elections of 2005 guarantees the representation of women in electoral lists, while Article (17) of the Palestinian Law on Local Council Elections guarantees that women hold 20% of the seats in local bodies.
- There are only three women ministers out of 24 seats in the current Palestinian cabinet.
- In the legislative elections of 2006, women won 12.9% of the seats on the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), 12% of the seats in the West Bank and 15% of the seats in Gaza. The percentage of female candidates was 11.2% (4.3% among local candidates, and 16.9% among candidates running on national political lists). Forty-six per cent of voters were women.
- In 2004-05 local council elections, 30% of candidates were women, and they won only 18% of the seats. In the local elections of 2012, which were held in the West Bank only, women won 20.6% of the seats.
- Refugee camp residents make up 9.3% of the population in the occupied Palestinian territory and do not participate in local council elections. Most camps are run by committees that have no female representation, and to which the quota regime does not apply.
- Women occupy 40.5% of public positions, most of them in medium level versus top positions.

- Women make up 4.3% of Palestinian ambassadors and 11.3% of judges (12% in the West Bank and 10% in Gaza Strip). Two women were appointed to the position of Sharia judge in 2013.
- Despite that a woman has risen in the ranks to head a Palestinian political party for the first time, female representation in party leadership remains low. On average, women make up an average of 16.25% of the top leadership in the political factions of Fatah, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and FIDA.
- Women hold 8% of the seats in the Palestinian National Council, 10 women are members of the Central Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, and one woman sits on its Executive Committee.
- Despite the importance of university student councils as an incubator of political leadership and political training, female participation in the student councils in Palestinian universities and institutes averages 26.8%.
- Palestinian women, in particular prisoners, residents of Jerusalem and the areas adjacent to the barrier, as well as areas classified as "C", are subject to systematic violations by the Israeli occupation and the settlers of the basic rights thereof as guaranteed by international conventions and customs.



Review Report on the National Cross-Sectoral Strategy for Promoting Gender Equality 2011-2013

The National Cross-Sectoral Strategy for Promoting Gender Equality 2011-2013 adopted women's empowerment for active participation in political life and decision-making. To achieve this goal, the strategy defined three policies and six political interventions that together formed a framework for promoting the political participation of women. The review report shows that accomplishments were modest and that half of the proposed political interventions were not executed. Two interventions were partially executed, with one intervention unexecuted.

Policy	Intervention	Executed	Partially executed	Not executed
■ Taking legal measures and necessary actions to increase women's participation in the political field	Amendments to the Law on Political Parties, Law on Elections, Law on Trade and Labour Unions, and Law on Association, from a gender perspective			X
	Selection of an electoral system that facilitates and support women candidates access to leadership positions		X	
	Facilitation of participation of female university students in student unions		X	
■ Taking appropriate measures to correct the cultural and social legacy regarding women's role in the society	Drafting, preparing and executing a media strategy to face adverse cultural and social traditions towards women's issues and roles in the society			X
	Modification of the school curricula to reflect the role and importance of women's participation in the political field			X
■ Taking appropriate measures to develop the capacities and skills of women	Execution of women's training programs to increase their potential in leadership and political participation	X		

Progress in executing the proposed interventions was linked to factors such as the over-ambition of some of the proposed interventions, inactivity of the Legislative Council, inability to place laws proposed for amendment on the agendas and priorities of the legislative plan, as well as limited follow-up by the Ministry of Women's Affairs. At the same time, the proposed interventions are still priorities to work on in the coming stage, particularly the development of a legal environment supporting the participation of women in political life and raising society's awareness of the importance of women's participation in political life and decision-making as a human right.