

UNITED NATIONS COUNTRY TEAM
occupied Palestinian territory

**Inputs to the
Secretary General Report
on the
Situation of and Assistance to Palestinian women**

August 2008

The present report provides inputs to the UN Secretary General report on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women, covering the period between September 2007 and end of August 2008. The UNCT has agreed, for the purpose of clarity in terms of information provided, to report jointly on the situation of Palestinian women in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) and on the assistance provided by entities of the United Nations system during the period under review. The overview of the assistance provided, and included in this joint report, addresses A) education and training B) information and communication technology C) health D) employment and entrepreneurship E) women's human rights F) violence against women G) humanitarian assistance¹ H) advocacy and information I) gender mainstreaming.

The following UN entities have contributed with their inputs to this report: the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the World Food Programme (WFP), the World Health Organization (WHO).

I. Situation of Palestinian women:

During the period under review (September 1, 2007 – August 31, 2008), despite some positive developments, the overall humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), did not improve. The level of concern is particularly high regarding the situation in the Gaza Strip, where the already fragile space for human rights and dignity has been significantly narrowed since June 2007. Except for a significant decrease in casualties following the June 19, 2007 truce, the population of Gaza saw little tangible dividend from it. Due to severe restrictions imposed by Israel on Gaza Strip², levels of imports, including fuel, remained far below actual needs³. This, combined with a total ban on exports, kept 95 percent of Gaza's local industry closed. About 76 percent of households in Gaza were reliant on aid⁴.

Freedom of movement within the West Bank has continued to be severely obstructed. In the West Bank, the humanitarian situation has been affected by a slight deterioration in internal freedom of movement, which was reflected, *inter alia*, in the increasing number of closures and obstacles to movement, from 563 in September 2007 to 610 in July 2008, the continuing restriction for Palestinians using key roads and the reduced access to areas isolated by the Barrier⁵. On several occasions during the reporting period, the IDF imposed age restrictions on the movement of Palestinians through checkpoints, some of which applied to women, as well as prolonged curfews on villages following stone throwing incidents or military operations. Approximately 57 percent of the Barrier's final route has been completed and 9 percent is under construction. Approximately 87 percent of this route runs inside the West Bank, rather than along the Green Line. When complete, the Barrier will isolate 9.8 percent of West Bank

¹ Given the oPt volatile situation, a clear-cut distinction between humanitarian and assistance is often difficult. In this report only purely humanitarian has been included under the relevant section (G).

² OCHA: Humanitarian situation update for the oPt, March 2008, retrievable at http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/oPt_Sit_Update2008_03_20.pdf, last accessed 22 August, 2008.

³ Ibidem. 10,000 liters of benzene and 100,000 liters of diesel per day allowed into Gaza. In February 2008, around 70,000 liters of petrol and 700,000 liters of diesel per week allowed by Israel to enter Gaza, covering only 27% and 30% of Gaza's estimated weekly requirements.

⁴ WFP, FAO, UNRWA, Joint Rapid Food Security Survey in the occupied Palestinian territory, May 2008. The results of the survey can be accessed at http://www.un.org/unrwa/publications/pubs08/RapidAssesmentReport_May08.pdf, last access 30 August 2008.

⁵ See OCHA, Closure Update, May 2008 and bi-weekly reports on implementation of the Access and Movement Agreement (AMA).

territory and leave approximately 35,000 Palestinians between the Barrier and the Green Line, in addition to the majority of the 250,000 Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem. Another 151,000 Palestinians will be surrounded on three or four sides by the Barrier. According to a UNOCHA-UNRWA survey conducted in 2007⁶, in the northern West Bank less than 20 percent of those who used to farm their lands in these areas before completion of the Barrier, are now granted 'visitor' permits to cross the Barrier to reach their farms and wells⁷.

Although movement restrictions affect both men and women, there is a particular impact on women. Women are generally responsible for child care, collection of food and water, and ensuring that the educational and health needs of their families are met under difficult circumstances. In addition, high rates of incarceration of men and deaths as a result of conflict related violence, among other factors, have led to a high incidence of female headed households. Women are required to travel in order to meet demands that this status places on them. Increased family and social concern over the prospect of harassment of women at checkpoints has led to curtailing women's movement.

Family relations for female prisoners. Prevention of prisoners family visits, including women's children, continued to be an Israeli practice which severely and negatively affects mothers as well as their children's psychological and physical well-being⁸, with particular reference to the women who are charged with long (sometimes life-long) sentences.

Food insecurity, poverty and malnutrition. Despite the flow of donor aid, the Palestinian economy has continued to decline, harshly affecting the Gaza Strip. The consumer price index for food having risen from March 2007 to the end of April 2008 by 14.6 percent in the West Bank and 16.3 percent in Gaza Strip (PCBS, 2008), has exacerbated the humanitarian situation both in Gaza and the West Bank, in particular regarding the poorest sectors of society. Price of wheat flour increased by 73 percent in the West Bank, and 68 percent in the Gaza Strip⁹.

Food insecurity disproportionately affects women and children. According to WHO, women and children are particularly susceptible to micronutrient deficiencies in the South Hebron area, where the community is small, scattered, poor and considered as herders. A recent UNICEF- Ard El Insan survey in Gaza, showed that malnutrition was significantly linked to insufficient meat intake (animal proteins), and low consumption of fruits, mothers education and family size and income¹⁰.

The FAO-WFP-UNRWA May 2008 food security survey has showed that 38 percent of the assessed population is food insecure¹¹ (compared to 34 percent in 2006), 14 percent is vulnerable to food insecurity, 12 percent is marginally food secure and 36 percent is food secure. The food insecurity in the Gaza Strip is more widespread, reaching 56 percent, almost double the level in the West Bank, which stands at 25 percent¹². The joint food security survey¹³ also reported higher food insecurity in households with 50% or higher prevalence of female members (41 percent vs. the national average of 38 percent). This was explained by unequal employment rates between men and women with almost equal education levels, and the lack of integration of women in the formal labor market. The survey highlighted that many parents, as copying mechanism to food insecurity, have reduced their food intake to allow for their children to eat¹⁴.

⁶ OCHA-UNRWA Survey: "The Barrier Gate and Permit Regime Four Years on: Humanitarian Impact in the Northern West Bank", November 2007, http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/OCHA_SpecialFocus_BarrierGates_2007_11.pdf, accessed on August 20, 2008.

⁷ The Humanitarian Impact of the Barrier, July 2008, Update No. 8.

⁸ A paper based on evidence from the psychosocial support groups for female prisoners' family members (including children) and released prisoners has been published, in July 2008, by the Palestinian Counseling Centre (PCC) under the UNIFEM executed project "Protection of Palestinian female prisoners in Israeli prisons and detention centres" and can be accessed at <http://www.aseerat.ps/en-main.php?id=12&cid=14>, last accessed on August 2008 (home page www.aseerat.ps).

⁹ WFP, FAO, UNRWA, Joint Rapid Food Security Assessment in the oPt, op. cit.

¹⁰ UNICEF, Ard El Insan, Rapid Nutrition Assessment, April 2008

¹¹ Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. Food insecurity exists when this is jeopardized.

¹² Household Economy Study, West Bank (UNRWA, May 2008).

¹³ WFP, FAO, UNRWA, Joint Rapid Food Security Assessment in the oPt, op. cit.

¹⁴ Idem.

According to UNRWA socio-economic studies¹⁵, poverty rates based on income levels were 57.2 percent of households at the official poverty line in 2007 (45.7 percent in the West Bank and 79.4 percent in Gaza) while deep household poverty, using the income measure, was estimated at 46.3 percent of oPt households in 2007 (34.1 percent in the West Bank and 69.9 percent in the Gaza Strip).

Women farmers. Agriculture has been a major livelihood shock absorber for Palestinians since access to Israeli labor markets was denied. Increasingly families depend on agriculture, and much of the burden of farming and herding is carried by women. Almost 90% of women in the informal economy work for the Agricultural sector¹⁶. According to FAO, women farmers are facing dwindling household incomes due to high input prices, and are having to buy food at a higher price as well. Families in the Eastern Slopes and Southern Areas of the West Bank are facing additional vulnerabilities due to the regional drought.

The lives of women and girls continue to be at serious threat. Between 1 September 2007 and 31 July 2008, a total of 40 Palestinian women were reported killed and 128 reported as injured, throughout the occupied Palestinian territory. Of these, 24 women - including at least 9 girls - were killed and 79 - including at least 19 girls - were injured as a result of the direct Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Another 11 Palestinian women, including at least 3 girls, were reported killed as a result of incidents of internal violence among Palestinians, and 10, including at least 4 girls, were reported injured. Finally, 5 women were reported killed and 39 were reported injured, including at least 3 girls, in other types of incidents, including the reckless handling of weapons. Compared to the previous reporting period (1 September 2006 - 31 July 2007) the reported figures reflect a 35% decrease in the number of women killed (40 vs. 62) and a 13% increase in the number of those injured (128 vs. 113). The decrease in casualties was particularly significant in the context of internal violence, where the number of fatalities was reduced by more than 60% (28 vs. 11)¹⁷. Although precise figures of crimes committed against women, including killing, under the guise of male / family honour are not available, UNIFEM partner organizations providing protection services for women and girls who are victims of violence have continued, during the period under scrutiny, to report such cases in Gaza Strip, West Bank and East Jerusalem. During the month of August 2008 alone, at least three women were reported killed as a consequence of so called family / male "honour" crimes.

Domestic violence against women continued to be a serious issue. The results of a UNFPA survey directly associated the increase of domestic violence rates with the rising political violence in 2007¹⁸. This finding was voiced in every focus group of Palestinian women in Gaza conducted by UNRWA in September and October 2007: rates of domestic violence have risen since the commencement of the second Intifada in September 2000, with men using women as outlets for their anger, frustration and powerlessness¹⁹. UNRWA qualitative study based on focus group discussions conducted with women in Gaza confirmed statistical studies showing that rates of domestic violence have risen in direct correlation with the political violence of 2007. Poverty, low education levels, decision-making power lying with men, violent childhoods, conflict in the community, drug abuse and lack of access to divorce are all seen by refugee women as corollaries to domestic violence. Female headed households who constitute 7.9% of the total households in oPt (8.0% in the West Bank and 7.7% in Gaza Strip) are usually with little or no regular income²⁰ (PCBS, 2007). UNFPA agreed that all of this has led to increasing levels of stress and incidence of domestic and gender-based violence. Furthermore, PAFAM study revealed that 4.1% of women believed a husband is justified in beating his wife if she goes out without telling him.

¹⁵ UNRWA, Prolonged Crisis in the occupied Palestinian territory: Socio-Economic Developments in 2007 (Report n.3), July 2008, the document can be accessed at [http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWFiles2008.nsf/FilesByRWDocUnidFilename/EGUA-7GUQ4B-full_report.pdf/\\$File/full_report.pdf](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWFiles2008.nsf/FilesByRWDocUnidFilename/EGUA-7GUQ4B-full_report.pdf/$File/full_report.pdf), last accessed 30 August 2008.

¹⁶ ARIJ 2007. A Review of the Palestinian Agricultural Sector.

¹⁷ OCHA, Protection of Civilians Database.

¹⁸ UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), *Situation and Assistance to Palestinian Women: Report of the Secretary-General*, Fifty-first Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, 26 February to 9 March 2007.

¹⁹ Focus groups were conducted by the UNRWA Operations Support Office Gaza with Palestinian women across the Gaza Strip during September and October 2007. Small groups of women (ranging from five to twenty) were brought together to discuss their issues, needs and wishes. The focus groups involved women's organizations, cultural (arts, music etc), youth, developmental, workers' and employers' organizations. In this way, rural women, young women, women with disabilities, women in wage employment, self-employed women and women engaged in the "care economy" were canvassed. Each focus group considered the current situation for women in Gaza, their needs, and the changes they would like to see take place.

²⁰ PCBS, 2007.

"I got married at an early age and had my first baby without delay. Now I have ten children: five daughters and five sons. Although I used to be good at school, my marriage has deprived me from completing my school education. Thank God, I used to be doing well in my social and marital life and used to be happy. When I had my tenth baby, I suffered from postpartum depression and was unable to care for my husband, family and children. Despite my previous happiness and my husband's love, he did not tolerate the situation and, four months later, under pressure from his relatives, he married a second wife who could take care of the family and the children.

Although I recovered after visiting a specialist, one month after he got married, I came to face this painful reality. Another wife was sharing my husband with me and denying me happiness as a wife. My husband has changed and has become disoriented and sad. He felt regret but it was too late. Our life became miserable because his second wife refused to live within our family calmly and peacefully and she struggled to completely take over my husband and my house. My husband is under all that pressure.

I think that the main reason behind the second marriage of my husband is our lack of knowledge about postpartum depression and the delay in seeking treatment since the beginning of it. I was late in visiting the specialist and recovered one month after I visited the doctor and started the right therapy. If my husband had tolerated the situation, our life and happiness could have been saved from being lost amidst an atmosphere filled with envy, wickedness and pressures."

From the "Stories in a Box"(2007)

Stories collected by UNIFEM directly from women in the UNIFEM-supported Sabaya Centres.

Trafficking and Prostitution. The lack of official information and resources available makes it difficult to provide accurate statistical data regarding women and girl victims of trafficking for sexual purposes and/or forced prostitution in and out the oPt. Nonetheless, recent field research commissioned by the United Nations and conducted from the second half of 2007 until the first half of 2008 showed that these offences do exist from Israel to the oPt, as well as from the oPt into Israel and within the oPt itself. Results of the field research will be published by the end of 2008. The United Nations will continue to monitor.

Women's health is particularly at risk due to Israel's closure policies. According to WHO, there have been growing indications of deterioration in the quality and availability of health services in Gaza. As a result of continued fuel shortages and periodic power cuts, health facilities needed to operate emergency generators and to reduce health service provision to emergency interventions and life saving services. The number of patients attending the outpatient services and Ministry of Health (MoH) Primary Health Care facilities substantially dropped, elective surgical interventions have been cancelled and fewer patients were admitted to hospital. Staff absences have been running at a high level and drugs shortage has affected the health care system. While efforts, throughout the period, have continued in order to strengthen PA healthcare delivery in both the West Bank and Gaza, closure restrictions have continued to undermine Palestinian access to hospitals and clinics, particularly affecting pregnant women. In Gaza, patients required permits to access urgent care not available inside the strip. According to WHO, since June 2007, with the general deterioration of service delivery inside Gaza, the number of requests for medical permits to leave the Strip has doubled. The Palestinian Public perception Survey conducted in 2007 by the Palestinian

Research Unit at the IUED (Graduate Institute of Developing Studies at the University of Geneva) revealed that 8.8% of respondents sought health care but were unable to gain access. Nearly 20% of the surveyed population reported a delay of two hours before getting the health care sought. Of all the population at risk, pregnant women are at the greatest risk due to limited access to health care services, including emergency health care services especially at night time. Closures continue to result in childbirths at checkpoints and barriers, often in unattended deliveries on the roadside (specific case reported later in this report), jeopardizing the health of the mother and newborn child. Access to post-natal services is hindered as well due to the imposed movement restrictions.

Delivery at a checkpoint: Samira's story

In many ways, Samira is a typical expecting mother. She is excited about her baby and busy planning for the new arrival. What is not typical is Samira's situation. As a Palestinian living in an area of the West Bank restricted by a nine-meter tall Separation Barrier and in a village isolated by one of the hundreds of blockades imposed by the Israeli government, Samira is anxious about how to get to a maternity facility when she goes into labor. Finally, the long awaited moment for Samira arrived. At midnight, similar to other married, pregnant women in the world, she woke her husband up and asked him to take her to the hospital. Anxiously, the husband woke up his daughter, Miriam, to help her mother and accompany them.

They managed to leave the house quickly on what should have been an equally quick ride to the hospital only a few kilometers away. However, after leaving their home in Azoun Ama village in the northern West Bank, they arrived to an Israeli military checkpoint, at the only exit to town. There, the soldiers did not allow them to pass despite the fact that they knew there was a pregnant woman in the car who was about to deliver a baby. The husband tried to convince the soldiers at the checkpoint to allow his family to pass. After two and half hours of grueling argument, the family was not only denied passage but the soldiers also threatened to shoot the family if they didn't turn back.

Hopelessly, the family started the way back home while Samira's situation was worsening and everybody in the car was praying for her safety. The moment had come, with Miriam observing her mother's condition in concern, holding her hand and trying to give her hope while they waited. But babies wait for no one and this one decided to come into the world in the back seat of his father's car. Fortunately, Miriam had been a participant in a number of workshops conducted by UNFPA on birthing and delivery to help pregnant women in moments like these. With little space in the backseat of her family's car, Miriam played the role of a midwife. Luckily there were no other complications and, Samira gave safely birth to a healthy baby boy.

A story collected by UNFPA in October, 2007. This is a project implemented by PMRS and funded by UNFPA.

WHO reports growing concern for the sea water pollution from the effluence of untreated sewage in Gaza²¹. Four out of the thirteen areas tested in March 2008 were found to be polluted with human and animal faeces (*Faecal Coliform* and *Faecal Streptococcus*). Other three areas were polluted with human faeces. In one area bacteria that causes human infections (*Pseudomonas Aeruginosa*, *Faecal Streptococcus*) were detected. Irregular electricity supply coupled with broken equipment and lack of spare parts have made it impossible for Gaza Water Authorities to properly operate available treatment plants. Women's concern for water pollution is growing²², in particular among pregnant women afraid that the pollution might affect the wellbeing of the fetus as well as among mothers who have no other option to resort to, during warm season, but to bring their children to bath in the visibly polluted sea.

²¹ The Sanitation authorities in Gaza Strip have been pumping a daily 60,000 cubic meters of sewage (20,000 cubic meters of raw sewage and 40,000 cubic meters of partially treated sewage) into the Mediterranean Sea since 24 January 2008.

²² Evidence collected by UNIFEM in field work with women.

Access to health care services in connection with confinement: women from the oPt prisoners/detainees in Israeli prisons, including pregnant women. As of end July 2008, 77 Palestinian female security prisoners are held in Israeli prisons and detention centres and two infants are still remaining with their mothers in prison²³. Approximately 25% of Palestinian female prisoners suffer from treatable illnesses including excessive weight loss, general weakness, anemia and iron deficiency due to poor quality food and the lack of essential nutrients²⁴. Harsh conditions combined with stress, poor diet and isolation from families contribute to menstruation problems²⁵. According to the reports of the lawyers and the doctors visiting female prisoners in the period from November 2007 until August 2008, many women suffer from rheumatism and dermatological problems due to the moisture infiltrating their cells in the winter. In the summer in turn, poor ventilation, lack of fresh air and the prevalence of cockroaches and other bugs also contribute to skin ailments²⁶. According to lawyers' visits reports, also, some women prisoners suffering from treatable diseases have little or no access to medical attention. The lack of adequate staff including female doctors to meet gender-specific physical and mental health needs can result in long delays in obtaining medical attention, as well as refusal from prisoners and detainees to accept doctors' visits and treatments.²⁷ As of August 2008, there are no specialized gynecological services available in Israeli prisons and detention centres despite women prisoners continuing requests. As a result of the pressure exerted by lawyers, the first visit of an external gynecologist took place in mid-June 2008.

Transfer of pregnant women to the hospital is usually carried out under strict military and security supervision with hands and feet shackled with metal chains, and without being accompanied by relatives. The prisoners are also often chained to their beds until they enter delivery rooms and after giving birth they are chained once again to their beds. From 2003 until 2008, 4 cases of women giving birth in jail under very difficult conditions have occurred, the most recent case being that of a woman from Gaza, in her early forties, who gave birth in January 2008. She is currently being held in prison with her newborn baby²⁸.

In terms of **access to specialized medical treatment**, from October 2007 through July 2008, WHO registered 51 patients who died while waiting to exit the Gaza Strip to access specialized medical treatment otherwise not available inside Gaza. **27 (53 %) of these patients were women.** The table in attachment to this report (Annex 1) shows women patients who died in the Gaza Strip after lack of timely access to referral health services outside Gaza (Period covered: October 2007 - July 2008).

A total of 47 cases of delay or denial of access to PRCC ambulances through West Bank check points while transporting women were reported in the period from 1 January to 24 June, 2008²⁹ (Annex 2).

Incident report

Relief Web reported that on 27 July, the IDF closed the Beit Kahil Bridge with an earth mound for one day, effectively cutting off the population of Beit Kahil, Tarqumiya, and Idhna (with a combined population of 60,000) from Hebron City. As a result, a 24-year-old woman from the town of Tarqumiya had to give birth in a car while waiting for an ambulance to take her to the hospital. (Source: <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900SID/EDIS-7H7M5E?OpenDocument>, accessed on August 20, 2008)

Unemployment. The right to work, to free choice of employment and to just and favourable conditions of work in the oPt continued to be seriously affected by the occupation. The ILO through its annual report of

²³ Figures provided by Mandela Institute for Human Rights within the UNIFEM executed project "Protection of Female prisoners and detainees in Israeli prisons and detention centres". Information are also accessible in the project web site www.aseerat.ps, last accessed August 20, 2008. Female prisoners are kept in three different prisons, namely Telmond (Sharon), Neve Tirza (Ramleh) and Al-Jalameh (Kishon), the vast majority – 93 % - being currently held in Telmond. In contravention to international humanitarian law (IHL), article 76 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, all three facilities are located outside 1967 occupied Palestinian territory. The violation of this specific rule also adds an extra burden and further complications on family visits and access to lawyers.

²⁴ Fact sheet "Medical Neglect of Palestinian Women in Israeli Prisons" published by Addameer Prisoners Support and Human Rights Association, Mandela Institute for Human Rights and Palestinian Counseling Center (PCC), June 2008, within the "Protection of Palestinian female prisoners and detainees in Israeli prisons" project supported. Fact sheet retrievable at http://www.aseerat.ps/files/FactSheetJune2008_-_Medical_Neglect.pdf, last accessed on 30 August 2008, web site home page www.aseerat.ps.

²⁵ Idem.

²⁶ Idem.

²⁷ Idem.

²⁸ Idem.

²⁹ Data courtesy of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society.

the Director General on the situation of workers in the Occupied Arab Territories³⁰ has expressed its concern that closures and permit requirements continue to limit the equal opportunities of Palestinian men and women to look for jobs, to exercise their occupation and run business in an economically sustainable manner, and to participate in the education and training to which they aspire³¹. Women's right to work was affected by the long distances to workplaces, difficulties and delays at crossings, uncertainties as to the granting or renewal of permits. All these difficulties discourage women workers from seeking employment and negatively affect their life as families, worried about their security, tend to prevent women from traveling outside the area of residence for study or working purposes.

The participation rate of women in the labour market is very low, standing at 14.4 per cent. The participation rate in villages is the highest compared to other types of communities, which reflects the high rates of women working in agriculture³².

Women informal workers. Women informal workers account for almost 60 per cent of women workers³³. This acknowledges that most unpaid care activities are primarily carried out by women and unaccounted for in official labour force statistics and national accounts. This type of employment particularly affects women working from home without entitlements to social protection, paid maternity leave, paid sick leave, health insurance and family allowances. The rate of women engaged in informal employment or self-employment increased due to the conflict and the Gaza Strip closure, as refugee women convened by UNRWA for focus groups had reported that they frequently supplement, or provide, the family income in addition to maintaining their roles as managers of the household and in raising children.³⁴

UNRWA reported that refugee women continued to focus on "small projects", mainly micro-enterprises that can be undertaken either within the home or close to home. The challenges associated with these endeavors are compounded by Israeli closures which restrict the import of supplies to Gaza. Refugee women are also encountering other challenges, including limited or no business skills, particularly in the area of marketing, as well as lack of access to capital and assets that are needed to either start a business or obtain financial assistance.

A critical issue affecting women remains the existing gap between studies, training and the labour market. More than three fourths of unemployed women had completed over 13 years of schooling while 85.2 per cent of unemployed men have completed less than 13 years of schooling³⁵. On average, women in Palestine earn 70% of what men earn on a monthly basis³⁶.

Women and Girls and Education. The right to education and to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in the oPt continued to be seriously affected by the occupation. Although the 2007/2008 Academic Year was the first year Palestinian girls surpassed boys in primary and secondary enrollment combined (548,781 females versus 548,314 males)³⁷, at the secondary level female dropout rate continued to outnumber the male dropout rate (3.8% versus 3%)³⁸. The most common reason given for girls leaving school are early marriage (with the median age of marriage for females at 19 years³⁹), the economic situation and access problems, with parents more likely to remove daughters from school as a result of travel restrictions.

According to UNICEF, education quality remains a major challenge with standards plummeting in Math and Arabic. UNRWA semester exams in Gaza in January 2008 found 50%-60% failure rates in mathematics and a 40% failure rate in Arabic⁴⁰. As for higher education, female prisoners detained in

³⁰ West Bank including East Jerusalem, Gaza Strip and Golan.

³¹ ILO DG Report, The Situation of Workers of the Occupied Arab Territories, ILC, 97th session, 2008, accessible at http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_092729.pdf, last accessed on August 30, 2008.

³² ILO "Unprotected employment in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. A gender equality and workers rights perspective", June 2008, last accessed on August 20, 2008, at http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/-gender/documents/publication/wcms_097715.pdf.

³³ Ibidem.

³⁴ Results from interviews with Palestinian women in the Gaza Strip undertaken by UNRWA in September and October 2007.

³⁵ Ibidem

³⁶ Information provided by UNESCO/PWRDC from the Palestinian Bureau of Statistics "average weekly work hours, monthly work days and daily wage in NIS for Wage Employees Working in All sectors".

³⁷ Palestinian Bureau of Statistics 'Palestine in Figures' page 23.

³⁸ Ibidem, page 25.

³⁹ Palestinian Bureau of Statistics 'Palestinian Family Health Survey, 2006-2007. page 201.

⁴⁰ United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), 2008

Israeli prisons are only allowed to be enrolled in the *Open University of Israel*, which entails studying by correspondence in a language, Hebrew, that the majority of the prisoners are not proficient in.

"I am an ordinary girl, similar to others, but I was different in that I used to confront and overcome my problems. I also used to help my friends overcome their problems. But the circumstances of my life have taken me to a deadlock, where I am looking for somebody to help me overcome the problem I am currently facing, the problem that has lowered my status in comparison to other girls, to whom I used to think I am equal.

I used to feel tenderness from my parents and my father used to give me freedom to make my choices. He gave me the freedom to pursue education. I have achieved a high score in school because I had an ambition to complete school and enroll in a university abroad. My father allowed me to study in Jordan. I went there and was accepted in a Jordanian university, thanks God. But the tragedy happened later...When I came back home to visit my family, my aunt's husband asked to marry me to his son. At the beginning, I refused because I wanted to complete my education. But my aunt's husband insisted and exerted pressure on my father, forcing me to agree. After a while, our marriage was registered and my aunt's husband decided to arrange for the wedding. Since the wedding, I have been living under a great pressure by the family.

You may wonder what ever happened with my study. It was the time of exams and my father told my father-in-law that I need to go to Jordan in order to sit to the exams. To ensure that my father-in-law would not object the idea, he suggested that I go to Jordan in the company of my husband. Nevertheless, my father-in-law objected and said his son will not go to Jordan. My father made another suggestion that he would accompany me. Once again, my father-in-law objected saying that no woman in our family would leave her home in order to get education. Since that time, my in-laws started to humiliate me and force me to carry out tiring and humiliating chores to the extent that I, the educated woman, was forced to clean the sheep barn."

From the "Stories in a Box" - (2007)

Stories collected by UNIFEM directly from women in the UNIFEM-supported Sabaya Centres.

Women and Leadership. In early 2008, only 15% of women were in decision-making positions (MoWA)⁴¹. Within all ministries, women comprise less than one third of all staff. Additionally, women account for 11.2%⁴² of all judges, 12.1%⁴³ of all prosecutors, and 11% of all lawyers. Percentage of elected women in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (WBGs) in the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) is 12.9%⁴⁴ and percentage of elected women (WBGs) in the local councils is 17%⁴⁵. As UNESCO/PWRDC reports, within the Palestinian Cabinet there are 3 women Ministers holding six files.

Right to leisure and cultural life. UNICEF indicated that, as during the previous reporting period, young Palestinian girls had few opportunities for development, recreation and participation, considering the few available safe spaces for them to go. According to UNICEF, conditions have not changed for the 300 youth

⁴¹ Palestinian Bureau of Statistics 'Women and Men in Palestine issues and statistics', 2007 p.49

⁴² Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Press release, March 6, 2008

⁴³ Ibidem.

⁴⁴ Ibidem.

⁴⁵ General Union of Palestinian women, June 2008

clubs across oPt lacking funding and poorly managed and equipped. Females' adolescence is often compromised by household demands or pressure to marry early.

2. Assistance to Palestinian women.

The present section focuses on the assistance provided to Palestinian women by entities of the United Nations system. Nine areas of support have been identified: A. education and training B. information and communications technology C. health D. employment and entrepreneurship E. women's human rights F. violence against women G. humanitarian assistance H. advocacy and information I. and gender mainstreaming.

A. Education and Training

Several United Nations entities focused on initiatives to improve the access of women and girls to education and training opportunities.

UNICEF has continued working with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) and NGOs to improve education quality and student performance. Support provided in the reporting period has included: provision of remedial classes in Math and Arabic and recreational activities (sports, music, art and drama) for 3,400 low-performing students in 90 schools (60 in the West Bank and 30 in Gaza) for one month in the summer; activation of 50 libraries to promote reading; training for facilitators and animators on story telling; supplies such as stationary and books; production of 68,688 student profiles covering first graders in order to strengthen the national education management information system; development, print and distribution of 30,000 copies of an early childhood development booklet to raise awareness among teachers and caregivers. In the 2007/2008 academic year, a total of 241,183 girls were enrolled in UNRWA elementary, preparatory and secondary schools, amounting to 50.07 percent of pupils. The drop out rate for girls were 0.96 percent, while 69.8 percent of students, benefiting from UNRWA administered scholarships were girls. In Gaza Strip, 143,386 students benefited from school-feeding, 55,046 of them being girls. The fact that the majority of the beneficiaries from the school feeding were boys can be explained by the fact that the initiative only targeted the schools most affected by poverty and low performance.

Within the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) framework and following the formulation of a Task Team for UNGEI in the oPt, with the participation of UNESCO, UNICEF, UNIFEM, and UNFPA, in 2007 UNESCO has commissioned a study on "scaling up" girls education. The study was done in 2007 and finalized on December 2007. As follow-up to the recommendations of this study, several meetings were held with the MoEHE and a priority area for UNESCO's support were identified in the establishment of a *Vocational Guidance and Counseling System* within the Palestinian education system, considering that women's enrolment in technical and vocational education is very low and critical in women's access to the labor market. Within UNGEI, UNICEF supported the finalization of the five-year education plan addressing the importance of gender equity and quality, thus ensuring not only that more girls and boys go to school, but also that once in school, girls and boys both receive a good-quality and gender-equitable education.

In terms of vocational training, a number of initiative have been implemented and are in pipeline. UNRWA's Department of Education has continued to make a special effort to help Palestine refugee women acquire professional skills. During the period under review, a total of 2,109 girls benefited from Technical and Vocational Training, making up 36.3 percent of the enrolled students. UNRWA has run a *Small and Micro Enterprise Training* (SMET) programme providing short-term training, customized for the needs of micro-entrepreneurs and small business owners in the Gaza Strip. The 563 courses, conducted during the reporting period, has targeted over 11,000 participants, 20 percent of which were women. The Saudi Committee for the Palestinian People Relief has pledged to UN-Habitat 1.59 million USD for the *Establishment of a Technical and Vocational Training Center (TVTC) for Underprivileged Women in Hebron, West Bank*. The two-year project aims at empowering underprivileged women and their families to improve their economic conditions and enhance their living conditions through the establishment of a technical and vocational training center and provision of training opportunities and services for poor women.

One of the UNDP projects in Gaza Strip, addressing the need to improve the education of women never before registered in school or drop outs as well as of female students with weak study records, have organized and held remedial classes, literacy, English and computer courses, with a total of 3,925 women

beneficiaries in Gaza. Within the *academic counselling* project, UNIFEM employed 6 young women, who through the project received training as academic facilitators, to offer academic guidance to young girls in schools and raise their awareness of the importance of education and encourage the participation of young women in the Palestinian community at large, while encouraging drop out women to continue their education. An academic counselling manual, with a gender perspective, was produced and endorsed by MoEHE to be used by facilitators in their counselling work. UNIFEM supported legal literacy sessions about Palestinian legislation system, local and internal laws that concern women the most. About 1,500 women have attended the sessions which were conceived also as a venue for individual legal advice, whenever requested, including to file legal suits without financial burden.

UNDP, through the Emergency Support to Civil Society project, supported *civic education for women in the marginalized rural areas of Khan Younis*, and 60 women in Khan Younis received training on civic education, women's integration into governance structures and positions of authority, increased political leverage through profit-earning activities, and fighting social violence against women

During 2008, UNICEF has supported after-school learning and recreational activities for 68,000 adolescents (50% girls). These activities are run in 68 adolescent-friendly spaces (58 youth clubs and 10 secondary schools) that are equipped by UNICEF with computers, library books, sports and music equipment. The structured sessions are facilitated by 340 trained teachers (50% female) and include language, math, sports, drama and life skills sessions for adolescents who are either school dropouts, or who are 2-3 grade levels below their peers. In 2008, UNICEF has also trained 350 adolescents half of whom are female on action research covering topics that impact their lives – violence, poverty, environmental issues and participation in their communities. As for UNRWA schools, 53 percent of the Agency's more than 18,000 teaching staff were women, approximately 50 percent of the participants in UNRWA's pre-service teacher training courses. 49 percent (445 persons) of the education staff that has benefited from professional training opportunities during the period were female.

UNESCO, through its *Special Project "Palestinian Women's Research and Documentation Center"* (PWRDC) in Ramallah has continued to support the development of the human and institutional capacities of governmental and non-governmental organizations related to women's right. At the research level, the UNESCO/PWRDC commissioned a paper entitled "*Listening to Girls' Stories: Girls' Education in Conflict*"⁴⁶ and also produced a fact sheet on Palestinian women and education⁴⁷. Research on women's health indicators and women's empowerment indicators is being developed. The capacity of 28 persons from the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) legal department on analyzing laws from a gender perspective was built through trainings conducted by the UNESCO/PWRDC. Qualitative and quantitative research methods were taught from a gender-sensitive perspective to 42 trainees from studies departments in the PNA. At the junior research level, 12 young researchers were given the opportunity to improve their skills in the "Award for Youth Researchers" contest.

During the period under review, UNIFEM has entered into inter-Agency agreement with UNESCO for the implementation, through the PWRDC, of the "CEDAW Stories" project in order to collection one hundred stories of discrimination against women directly narrated by the women themselves (reference to paragraph E under this section, "Women Human Rights"). Under this UNIFEM project, the PWRDC has trained, at the beginning of 2008, 26 women from the West Bank and 16 women from the Gaza Strip in oral histories collection methods and women human rights and human rights-based approach, thus allowing them to become field researchers under the same project

Within UNESCO's "*Architectural Competition for the Design of Public Spaces and Urban Facilities in the Old City of Nablus*", 16 young women architects were associated with professionals to develop their design concepts into executive designs. Four junior women architects also benefited from an 18-month "learning by doing" training associated with local and international professionals within the framework of the "*Bethlehem Area Conservation and Management Plan*".

UNESCO, in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture, has trained 25 Palestinian women to better utilize their skills in traditional crafts namely embroidery and straw making. The programme aimed at fostering Palestinian crafts from design to marketing .

⁴⁶ UNESCO's expected date of publication is last quarter of 2008.

⁴⁷ UNESCO's expected date of publication is last quarter of 2008.

B. Information and Communication technology

Efforts were made to increase women's equal access to and benefits from information and communication technologies. In 2008, UNESCO has started a project, "*Women Taking the Lead*", in cooperation with AMIN Media Network to support a training and career development program for 15 women journalists and 30 media managers in Gaza and West Bank, to promote and build capacity of mid-career and newly graduated women journalists' participation and decision making roles in media and in news rooms.

In 2007, UNESCO supported a project "Giving Women a Voice" to build capacity and campaigning skills of 20 young women community leaders in Hebron and surrounding rural area in the Southern West Bank by providing the trainees with workshops on television, radio, photojournalism and public relations in cooperation with a Community Multimedia Center in Hebron.

UNESCO supported *Filistin Ashabab* an apolitical Palestinian magazine, in giving the opportunity to young people, women in particular, to express themselves addressing various cultural expressions thus fostering intercultural dialogue through the promotion of cultural diversity.

C. Health

WHO, through the *Nutrition Surveillance System (NSS)*, has monitored women's health and nutritional status, focusing on prevalence of anemia and obesity. By identifying the magnitude of these two indicators, specific programs are implemented, targeting specifically women of childbearing age. Beside training of health providers and strengthening the NSS, activities and interventions include awareness raising among women on the benefits of iron and folic acid supplementation as well as breast and complementary feeding for children. WHO has continued to provide support to the MoH in the food fortification program. The measurements of micronutrient levels in blood samples among women and children will constitute a major part of future program activities, aiming to monitor and evaluate the impact of the fortification program on the nutritional status of women and accordingly improve prevention strategies for women and children. Through UNRWA, approximately 90,000 women have received antenatal care in UNRWA's five fields of operation. More than 24,000 new female patients sought family planning guidance and the total number of beneficiaries across UNRWA's fields of operations was almost 500,000. In addition, 112,256 pregnant women and nursing mothers benefited from UNRWA's food aid programme, and 56,587 women were assisted to hospitalization, making up 63.6 percent of admitted patients.

WHO is providing technical support, in terms of social case reimbursement, network strengthening and quality improvement, to all six East Jerusalem hospitals, the largest and most specialized hospitals in the oPt providing obstetric care for Palestinian women. UNFPA has provided support to 39 MoH and 2 NGO clinics aiming to strengthen the integration of reproductive health in primary health care. UNFPA efforts have also moved toward encouraging the integration of gender based violence as part of the counseling services offered in Primary Health Care facilities with reproductive health services.

UNFPA has continued the *Emergency Obstetric Care* program to ensure safe delivery of women in isolated areas of the West Bank and Gaza. Through the program, qualified staff (physicians, nurses, midwives) has been retrained, during the period under review, as emergency staff in provision of obstetric care. Support teams constituted by groups of volunteer women from the community were trained by Palestinian Medical Relief Society on counseling and health education that proved vital to accessing safe delivery services. Training and capacity building for health care providers on infection control and prevention and referral was conducted.

Through four UNFPA-supported Women's Health Centers, one of which in the Old City of Jerusalem, clinical, psychosocial, legal advice, outreach, physiotherapy, gymnastics, and health education have been provided to women living in the most populated and underprivileged areas of the oPt. The Centers implement activities that improve awareness such as psychodrama therapy and discussion groups, in addition to producing awareness materials for outreach and center use. Given the high proportion of youth in Palestine and the lack of adequate facilities and resources to address their reproductive health needs, UNFPA-supported centres have focused, during the reporting period, on "young women in crisis". Dignity/

hygiene kits⁴⁸ were also distributed to marginalized women in the communities who have been hit by repeated crisis and/ or in conjunction with exposure to gender-based violence.

Through its monitoring and coordination activities, WHO devoted special attention to movement restrictions often affecting women's capacity to access health services. Special focus has been given to seam Zone areas⁴⁹ in the West Bank where tremendous difficulties are faced by pregnant women, including those in labour, to access health services. Recommendations are sent by WHO to MoH in order to facilitate access for pregnant women to health facilities in these areas and to document all cases of deliveries at checkpoints. WHO has facilitated health coordination meetings at district level where challenges faced by health care providers are raised and solutions formulated, paying specific attention to women and girls' needs, specifically, the need to provide more preventive medicine services, such as mammography tests, to increase awareness among women to issues related to home accidents and the provision of first aid to children.

WHO has been working to the reorganization / upgrading of mental health services and to the ongoing reorientation of the system toward a Community Mental Health approach, which, according to the Organization, will be of great benefit to women – whether they are mental health workers, clients or family members of the mentally ill. Currently, the majority of psychologists and social workers working within the mental health system are women, and their working conditions are generally substandard. Mentally ill women continue to suffer from stigma in the community, negatively affecting their social status, resulting in limited participation in community activities and reduced chances for a successful professional career and satisfactory social and personal relationships. In families of mentally ill, it is usually the mother who bears the brunt of the care and the stigma surrounding her ill child, usually without appropriate community support. UNRWA's Community Mental Health Programme in the West Bank and Gaza Strip has provided essential psychosocial support for Palestine refugees living in situations of protracted violence and armed conflict. The programme has been specifically designed to ensure that it includes the needs of women and girl children. During the reporting period 6,321 women benefited from counselling through the programme. UNIFEM continued providing rural women in marginalized areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip with legal and psycho-social group counselling sessions, individual consultations and specialized treatment. Almost 7,000 people from targeted communities are now more aware of mental health concepts and issues, 115 women leaders (community animators) were trained to act as useful resource on mental health issues in their villages and organize activities in their communities; while 150 women accessed one-to-one psychosocial consultation/counseling and 1,200 women benefited from group psychological counseling sessions.

UNICEF has supported MoH procuring vaccines and related supplies for 117,000 children (under-five) and more than 100,000 women of childbearing age. UNRWA has sustained full immunization coverage of women and children against vaccine-preventable diseases. Those services were supported by school health services, through the provision of preconception folic acid, iron and folic acid supplementation for women throughout pregnancy, as well as by health education programmes on the prevention of tobacco use and prevention of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases. All staff in UNRWA Headquarters, 40 percent of them women, received HIV/AIDS training. WHO has assisted UNFPA in providing clearance of medicines and equipment for providing services for the female population of childbearing age.

Two 40 cubic meter walk-in cold rooms, two vaccine transporting vehicles and, for Gaza Strip, a 10,000 cubic meter fuel storage tank have been provided by UNICEF. In terms of medical supplies, UNICEF has pre-positioned with MoH and Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS) 452 first aid kits, 13 emergency health kits, 10 midwifery kits, 16 obstetric surgical kits and 60 resuscitation kits. UNICEF has carried out a rapid nutrition survey in three Gaza districts targeting also women with children.

To respond to the sewage system problem in Gaza, UNICEF has worked with the Palestinian Water Authority and the Coastal Municipal Water Utility (CMWU) to clean and restore nine sewage pump stations damaged as a result of incursions in Gaza; to construct two water wells in disadvantaged communities in the middle and south of Gaza, serving about 40,000 people; to tanker water to 120 schools, reaching 220,000 students and teachers; to construct 10 sanitary units at Farabi Girls Primary School in Gaza, for 1,700 poor students; to raise awareness on personal hygiene and environmental sanitation in schools and selected vulnerable

⁴⁸ The dignity / hygiene kits contain 15 items (soap, shampoo, etc.) needed by women in order to maintain their personal hygiene

⁴⁹ Seam zones are the West Bank enclaves areas caught between the Barrier built by Israel, on the East side, and Israel and the Green Line on the West side, such as, in this case, such as South Hebron, Barta' Al Sharqiyya in Jenin and Azzoon Atmeh in Qalqiliya (West Bank).

communities; to pre-position supplies including water pumps, spare parts and fuel essential to run the water pumps.

UNDP has targeted 500 women with activities, such as workshops, home-based counseling, and counseling sessions in the organization, aiming to provide psychosocial support. At the same time, 5 female counselors were employed for 4 months to conduct counseling services and train other women on different topics including conflict resolution, self confidence and communication skills. UNDP also conducted health awareness sessions and free medical days for 6,270 women and men, as well as social, psychological and legal awareness sessions for 12,620 women to help them coping with troubles and stress.

D. Employment and entrepreneurship

The Saudi Committee for the Palestinian People Relief has pledged to UN-Habitat 6.3 million USD for the project *Establishment of a Housing and Income Generating Programme for Poor Women in Hebron, West Bank*. This three-year project aims at improving the living conditions of poor women and their families through the construction of one hundred housing units and the establishment of small-scale enterprise activities for generating income in Hebron. Creating self-reliance, creating sources of income for poor women and their families to meet their basic requirements and improving living conditions and smoothing the transition from welfare to work are the expected outcomes. UN-Habitat has, during the reporting period, completed the design and tender documents for the construction and infrastructure works, staffing and research studies.

In January 2007 the regional (Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, West Bank and Gaza Strip, and Yemen) initiative *Gender Equality and Workers' Rights in the Informal Economies of Arab States* was launched by the ILO and the Center for Arab Women Training and Research (CAWTAR) in order to: (a) develop a better understanding of informality and informalization of employment in the region through a gender equality and workers' rights perspective; (b) contribute to a more favorable policy and institutional environment in providing better legal and social coverage for the working poor, especially women; (c) mainstream Arab States into the global discussion on informal employment; and (d) establish use of sex disaggregated data and inclusion of gender responsive indicators in household and labour force surveys in order to improve the understanding on high rates of economic inactivity of women in the region.

Within this initiative, the study *"Unprotected Employment in the West Bank and Gaza Strip: A Gender Equality and Workers' Rights Perspective"* was developed and published in Arabic and English. In this study, the concept of informal employment is used to refer to the characteristics of the job rather than the characteristics of the economic unit, and explicitly relates to social protection and entitlements. A gender equality and workers' rights perspective is applied to the analysis of informal employment in the Palestinian context. The final case study was presented during a Regional Expert Group Meeting on gender equality and workers' rights in the informal economies of Arab States held in Tunis in July 2008. A number of papers were presented and discussed by the participants. From West Bank and Gaza Strip participants included: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Federation of Palestinian Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture, Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions and the Ministry of Labour. Further discussion and dissemination is planned in the last quarter of 2008 in Ramallah.

ILO Regional Office (Beirut), jointly with the Palestinian Riyada Consulting and Training, has developed a paper titled *"Situation and Institutional Assessment of Business Women in the oPt"*. The study examines the opportunities and constraints facing women-owned businesses in oPt today, and assesses the level of involvement of women in the predominant institutions relating to the private sector, including the chambers of commerce and industry as well as a range of other associations and business development service providers. The paper will be published both Arabic and English and its findings and recommendations will be presented and discussed during workshops planned in the last months of 2008 in four different locations in the West Bank.

Four Palestinians representatives of NGOs, Business Women Associations and Training Centres participated to a regional training of trainers on *Gender and Entrepreneurship Together (GET)* conducted by ILO in March 2008 in Amman. *GET Ahead* is an ILO gender training package that is aimed at assisting ILO partner organizations to promote enterprise development among poor women who want to start or are already engaged in small-scale business, capacity assessment for mainstreaming gender equality considerations into labour market institutions.

UNDP, through its *Emergency Support to Civil Society* project has provided training to 1,043 poor housewives from Khan Younis and Rafah areas (Gaza Strip) on skills of recycling household's solid waste and manufacturing home decorations. As a result of that, a number of women have established their own home-based small business projects, to produce home decorations and accessories for their household's consumptions and for income generation.

UNDP through its *Emergency Support to Civil Society* project supported enhancing the participation of women in the community through supporting them with income generation projects. Within the project, UNDP has conducted capacity building training for 5 women's organizations in the Gaza Strip and trained 30 women on how to start and manage their own business. Small grants and in-kind support (equipment, raw material etc.) have been provided for 12 income generation projects. UNIFEM has worked on advancing economic security for 250 poor women in districts of Hebron and Qalqilia (West Bank) by training them on managerial and technical skills to be able to process local surplus of fruits and vegetables into healthy marketable products. Ten community-based organizations will be equipped, in the last quarter of 2008, with specialized equipment and tools needed for the production process. The project, implemented in cooperation with MoEHE, will be linked later on to the school feeding project through introducing the nutritional products processed by women into the school canteens run as well by the women CBOs to improve the school children's nutritional intake.

Through the Employment Generation Programme (EGP), UNDP has aimed at creating employment opportunities through small scale infrastructure works meeting the priority needs of local communities. Out of 114 projects, 48 have benefited women or young girls either directly or indirectly. In particular, 11 women centers for the provision of services geared to developing women's skills and livelihood have been funded. Up to date, 18 women have benefited from permanent jobs created in these women centers while 471 women can be classified as members of the centers. During the reporting period, three kindergartens, serving approximately 156 children, have been constructed and are run by either women centers or local councils, creating, up to present, 6 permanent jobs for women, either as teachers or administrators. As a result of the creation of kindergartens, women have been enabled to either work, continue their education or participate in community initiatives. The vocational training centers and continuing education centers built through UNDP and KfW have become venues where women have acquired, among the others, fashion design, computer and secretary skills.

Under KfW I, the Qbeiba Nursing school was constructed and a bachelors programme was developed in coordination with Bethlehem University: about 20 students, all of whom females except for four men, enrolled in the first class.

Within two women centers in Jabalia and Nuseirat in the Gaza Strip, UNDP supported an economic unit composed of different production sub-units (including food processing, flower arrangements, embroidery, and wax productions) to support low income women through the provision of vocational training opportunities. Through the economic units 18 women had access to small grants for the establish of their own small businesses. Furthermore, through hand craft units 190 women increased their income.

Within the *Deprived Families Economic Empowerment* (DEEP) programme, UNDP developed the human capitals of women beneficiaries by providing them with tailored vocational training courses, knowledge and know how to run their own businesses, enrolled them in business activities and provided them with assets such as livestock, home gardens and green houses to produce goods either for their daily consumption or for accessing the local market.

In May 2008, FAO finalized the implementation of the women empowerment project "*Support to household food security and income generation through bio-intensive backyard agricultural production and cottage industry*", carried out in Yatta, Salfit and the Gaza Strip. The project faced implementation constraints due to the siege-like closure of Gaza, as FAO was unable to bring in key inputs such as irrigation equipment. The "Emergency support and employment generation for female headed households through backyard farming and cottage industry in the West Bank and Gaza Strip", started by FAO in April 2008 and ongoing as of end of August 2008, targets East Jerusalem, Hebron, Jenin and Gaza and includes 500 women have received beehives and rabbits for small income generation and household consumption and will receive training in food processing.

In August 2008 the FAO Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools scheme was launched, to build livelihood and entrepreneurship skills of youth. The project liaises with 16 women societies all over oPt. The women societies will participate through the provision of fresh foods for the students.

In July 2008, FAO organized, in Ramallah, a national exhibition for women's associations which allowed them to market their crafts and agricultural/food produce and to enhance the visibility of these organizations. A parallel event is scheduled in Gaza Strip in October 2008.

UNRWA has continued to progressively mobilize most of its microfinance resources to the poorest sector of the business community, including women, youth and informal enterprises. As women micro-entrepreneurs are among the poorest members of the community, credit to these women constitutes a fundamental source of capital that is enabling them to meet the needs of their families for food, clothing, healthcare and education. During the reporting period, UNRWA disbursed over 2030 new solidarity group loans valued at almost USD 900.000 to women micro-entrepreneurs in the Gaza Strip and Out of UNRWA's portfolio of over 15,220 loans for the oPt, Jordan and Syria, of over USD13,707.551, 13.3 percent covered women clients, 29.9 percent of which in Gaza and 7.5 percent in West Bank.

Within UNRWA's *Job Creation* programme, operating in the West Bank and Gaza and consisting in projects to provide employment opportunities, out of the total direct beneficiaries, 30 percent were women. Women were recruited as skilled and unskilled labourers and job categories include teachers, doctors, nurses, physiotherapy, field work, admin jobs and data entry, site engineers, school cleaners and agricultural laborers.

E. Women's human rights

In UNRWA's Gaza Field Office a wide-reaching women's empowerment initiative was launched, focusing on achieving equality and equity in regard to status, options and opportunities for women and men across the Gaza Strip. Adopting a participatory approach directly responding to the self-identified needs of Palestinian women, the "*Equality in Action*" initiative has involved a range of projects covering the labour market, domestic violence, social and recreational activities, and freedom of expression that counter inequitable and oppressive gender based practices where they exist.

Under the UNIFEM "CEDAW Stories" project (reference to section A "Education and Training), the UNESCO/PWRDC, in cooperation with the "Center for Women's Legal Research and Consulting" in Gaza Strip, has started collecting, through the use of direct interviews, stories of discrimination against women. Out of the 100 stories expected from the project, a total of about forty stories from Gaza Strip and thirty from the West Bank have been collected up to the end of August 2008. Stories of daily life discrimination refer to, in particular but are not limited to, violence against women and neglected rights of education, employment, health assistance and equality inside marriage.

Due to the political split occurred in the oPt since June 2007, the World Programme for Human Rights Education Plan of Action 2005-07, started in 2006 by OHCHR in cooperation with UNESCO and indicated in the previous report (September 2006 – August 2007), could not be fully implemented.

UNRWA, through its 65 Women Programme Centres (WPCs), in which activities include awareness raising, occupational training programmes, kindergartens and nurseries, has supported evening classes and continued learning for 2,345 women, awareness sessions on women's rights and the CEDAW 11,952 women and youth-related activities for 19,529 girls.

On the occasion of the International Women's Day 2008, OHCHR in cooperation with the Palestinian Working Women Society for Development (PWWS) organized an open day targeting 30 men and women and focusing on realities and challenges faced by women, best practices of legal investigations into violence against women and girls and ways to access UN mechanisms for the protection of women's rights. OHCHR, in partnership with "Stars of Hope Society for Empowerment of Women with Disability", organized a public event under the banner "Try the Wheelchair". Among the participants, some key deputy ministers, heads of Palestinian civil society organizations and private companies. The activity gave the participants a chance to understand the reality of Palestinian women living with disabilities. UNDP, in the effort to protect people with disabilities rights, has created special activities and advocated for deaf rights in Rafah Governorate, through the establishment of a special club for deaf (male and female), the implementation of club's activities (computer, art, handcraft and sport) for 200 deaf (male and female) people, the improvement of sign language for 100 persons (50 deaf and 50 teachers and interested people) and the development of new skills in general education for 34 deaf (male and female).

In November 2007, OHCHR oPt, implemented a three-day campaign in Salfit, Qalqilia and Jericho districts (West Bank) to celebrate the International Day for the Elimination of violence against women. The aim of the campaign was to enforce the protection and respect for the rights of Palestinian women.

In the aftermath of the June 2007 clashes, UNICEF and its partners received reports that adolescent girls and women were being turned away from youth clubs. The local management committees and field coordinators of UNICEF-funded centres have since invested considerable efforts, including visiting families, talking to parents, and establishing separate activities for girls and boys, to mitigate this trend. While reports of restricted female access to youth centres have continued, girls' participation at UNICEF-supported centres has been more than 50% and this trend is expected to continue.

UNIFEM has continued to execute the *Youth Rights Monitor* project, implemented by a local NGO specialized on media and youth. The project, targeting young people between the ages of 14 and 25 years old, has continued, in its second and last year of implementation, to institutionalize the participation of Palestinian youth in the national public policy dialogue and debate, with a special focus on youth rights. A cadre of 98 youth (50 females and 48 males) role-model-activists well aware of their rights and responsibilities was formed and started to create similar awareness among their peers and younger beneficiaries. Project activities and workshops, including on CEDAW and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), have been held in more than 80 community centers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Information related to the situation of legislation and implementation of youth-rights (including women's rights) have been collected, monitored and disseminated to advocate among decision and policy makers. Activities, in particular in the field of media and advocacy, have taken place with regard to youth rights and women/young women human rights and gender issues, including TV episodes produced and broadcasted on the Palestine TV, on issues related to women and labor force and violence against women and a report on early marriage.

F. Violence against women

OHCHR oPt was identified by HQ Women's Rights and Gender Unit to design a strategy to combat violence against women (VAW). The OHCHR oPt strategy may become a model for replication in other Countries of the Arab Region. The project is at its initial stages and will be developed throughout 2009. In December 2007, OHCHR oPt organized a one-week study tour for 14 representatives of Palestinian local NGOs from the West Bank hosted by OHCHR's Women's Rights and Gender Unit in Geneva. The participants interacted with departments of Office with the main objective to enhance their NGOs' interaction with the United Nations human rights mechanisms and to design strategies to combat violence against women. Follow up workshops took place in Ramallah Office upon return.

In its efforts to contribute to a protective environment for Palestinian children, UNICEF has supported the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) and partner NGOs in activities aiming to reduce stress, mitigate the impact of violence and to strengthen coping mechanisms of children and caregivers. In 2008, UNFPA started a project, in cooperation with MoSA, to strengthen the ministry's vocational trainings to young women and to enhance the capacity of the ministry's staff in the area of protection and prevention of gender based violence.

UNIFEM in partnership and cooperation with UNICEF, has worked on building the capacity of UNICEF's crisis intervention teams in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The purpose of the cooperation through the crisis intervention teams was to increase their ability to deal more effectively with women approaching them for psychosocial assistance. The joint initiative aimed as well to build systematic referral systems amongst all the organizations involved. Throughout the cooperation, five teams were formed and trained in Gaza Strip while 170 members of the existing active teams in West Bank received intensive training to be more aware of women issues and needs during crisis interventions. Through the psychosocial teams, UNICEF has provided 60,324 children in Gaza and 33,010 children in West Bank psychosocial assistance from the emergency home and hospital visits following violent events, benefiting caregivers as well (13,275 in Gaza and 33,020 in the West Bank); psychosocial services for children and caregivers from temporary satellite units in the community, in schools or from one of five socio-legal defense centers that also provide families and children with legal, and social support including through calls received via a toll-free helpline, where majority of the callers are mothers; training for caregivers on children in distress reaching (13,275 caregivers in Gaza and 33,020 in the West Bank); awareness raising on child rights and mine risk education including small arms and light weapons reaching more than 200,000 children (September 2007 till June 2008); reporting and advocacy within the 1612 working group on children in

conflict; and support to MoSA in establishing a national child care and protection protocol towards building a child protection system.

In terms of networking to combat gender based violence, UNFPA supported the initiation of three coalitions of NGOs, two in the West Bank and one in Gaza Strip. Through this initiative, UNFPA provided training for women's NGOs in isolated areas in order to strengthen their ability to work with women and small grassroots groups at the community level on how to raise awareness on rights to protection from gender based violence and other forms of violence against women.

UNIFEM supported and upgraded three existing toll-free help lines (two in the Gaza Strip and one in the West Bank, run by three different NGOs) for women and children victims of violence. The toll-free help lines, through UNIFEM support, expanded the working hours (including the afternoon / evening shift) and the number of phone counselors. Throughout the project, the awareness of over 9300 women on VAW, how to benefit from the toll-free line services and prevailing psychosocial problems, was raised during more than 300 sessions carried out in all governorates of the Gaza Strip. Counseling and mediation services have been provided through house visits and psychosocial counseling focal points, which reached the most marginalized communities in Gaza Strip. Referral among organizations participating was applied according to the needs of the cases. An extensive media campaign was conducted to inform the population about the existing available services.

To advance women's access to justice, UNDP supported, in a partnership with CSOs, a legal and social defense crew composed of well-trained lawyers to advocate for women's rights and defend individual cases of women exposed to violence. In doing so, 20 female lawyers have been trained and mobilized to defend women's rights and are advocating in individual cases of women exposed to violence; an awareness and media campaign through radio programmes aimed to combat violence against women has been conducted. 1,200 women and men have been educated on women's rights and non-violence.

During the reporting period, 11,234 number of refugee women attended awareness raising sessions on domestic violence in UNRWA's Women Programme Centres. UNFPA, in cooperation with Nablus municipality, continued to provide psychosocial counseling and support to women while also creating community-based initiatives that enable women to protect themselves from GBV as well as access services to deal with crisis in the humanitarian context, and build the institutional capacity of local NGOs to coalition for advocacy and improved access to services, particularly psychosocial. The project was also expanded during 2008 to include Jenin Municipality.

UNIFEM continued to screen the documentary (*Maria's Grotto*) on so called "honour crimes", financially supported in its realization during the previous reporting period. The documentary was screened in women's centres across the West Bank and Gaza Strip, targeting about 600 women. Few screenings involved men and women together. The screening and the ensuing discussion was facilitated by professionals in the field of combating violence against women.

Understanding of UN Resolution 1325 was improved among NGOs and governmental organizations' staff working on issues related to gender based violence, through training and workshops conducted by UNFPA. In order to systematize the approach and link partners at the policy, programmatic and grassroots levels, a framework, inclusive of the application of the General Assembly Resolution on Palestinian women, for UNFPA activities operationalizing UN Security Council Resolution 1325 was developed.

In the last quarter of 2007 and until first quarter of 2008, a field research, supported by UNIFEM and implemented by a local NGO working on violence against women, was conducted in the oPt, including East Jerusalem, on forced prostitution and cases of women's trafficking. The findings of the field research led to the draft of a briefing paper which will be made public by the NGO in the last quarter of 2008.

G. Humanitarian assistance

UNRWA, through the *Emergency Appeal* programme, provided in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, food aid, emergency employment, repair and reconstruction of conflict damaged infrastructure, in kind and cash assistance, and mobile health clinics for most vulnerable refugees. 265 female-headed households have benefited from shelter reconstruction or rehabilitation. 11 percent of the refugees who participated in infrastructural self-help projects were women. Food parcels have been distributed to over 230,000 refugee families (up to 70,000 in the West Bank up and 160,000 in Gaza). During the reporting period, the distribution plan (number of beneficiaries and level of assistance) was revised several times in light of the large variations of commodities costs and political issues within the recipient community.

UNRWA has continued to assist special hardship case families, 30,132 of which (45 percent) were families headed by women. The Agency's special hardship assistance provided these families with a critical safety net in the form of food support, selective cash assistance and preferential access to UNRWA vocational training centres, where pupils could learn skills to help lift their families out of poverty.

Under the *Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation* (PRRO) launched in September 2007, WFP has worked in partnership with MoSA to cover the food needs of destitute people such as female-headed households, orphans, chronically ill, disabled and the elderly. Among them, widows, divorced and separated women have been assisted, along with elderly single women. The assistance is implemented through: 1) targeted general distribution to households registered under the ministry's special hardship programme, and 2) institutional feeding for individuals in homes for the elderly, orphanages and hospitals. This emergency programme is designed to maintain nutrition rates amongst the most vulnerable groups. Under the general distribution, 57 percent (15,000) of the beneficiaries in the West Bank and 55 percent (47,000) in Gaza were women, the majority of them head of their families, without any breadwinners or with disabled or chronically ill members.

WFP institutional feeding programme has supported women residing in institutions, such as orphanages, hospitals and elderly homes. Six out of 43 charity institutions supported are mother and child care centres. 2,400 women in Gaza, 45 percent of the beneficiaries, and 5,100 in the West Bank, 46.4 percent, benefited from this type of assistance.

Food For Training and Food For Work (FFT/FFW) WFP programmes focus on preserving agricultural and fishery assets to promote self-reliance and restore livelihoods of poor farmers and fishermen, also through the development of marketable skills and the production of consumer products to support diversification of livelihoods. FFT has involved 9,200 women (100% of beneficiaries) in home gardening, handicrafts, food processing, animal raising, beekeeping, agricultural awareness, soap making, embroidery. A specific FFT programme on life skills involved 8,400 women (100% of beneficiaries) and was implemented with the aim of improving nutritional and health behaviours in relation to the causes of key micronutrient deficiencies, exclusive breast feeding during babies' first six months of life, appropriate complementary feeding and understanding of the causes and management of obesity, especially in school age children.

WFP introduced a school feeding project in the most food-insecure areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip to encourage parents to keep children in school and provide employment opportunities to the community, through a cash-for-work scheme. The nutritious biscuits and pastries are prepared by local bakeries and women centres and provided to pre-school and primary schoolchildren to eliminate short-term hunger. 100% of beneficiaries are women (2,000) and they receive from WFP part of the food commodities necessary for the food preparation and cash for salaries. Within the same school feeding project, UNIFEM worked on training and strengthening the managerial capacity of the 28 community-based women organizations involved in the production process of this project. 80 rural women have been empowered and equipped to run school canteens on their own, for the 2008 - 2009 school year.

In Gaza Strip, UNIFEM piloted a school feeding initiative targeting 450 kids in kindergartens in Nusseirat refugee camp, through supporting, for a period of two months and half, Nusseirat women's programme center. 12 women have worked in this project producing 29,700 snacks.

Throughout the period under review, UNIFEM has provided support to Palestinian female prisoners and detainees in the Israeli Prisons for the protection of their human rights. Family members of female prisoners, in particular daughters and sons, brothers and sisters have also directly benefited from this project implemented by three local NGOs. Legal and social support, in particular connecting the prisoners with their family members unable to visit them, has been provided through monthly lawyers' visits to the prisoners; psychosocial support has been given through individual and group counseling to the female prisoners' family members and to the former prisoners for their reintegration in the society; advocacy and media campaign has been conducted to raise the awareness of the general public, as well as of key individuals, institutions and organizations, at the international level, on the conditions of female prisoners in Israeli prisons and detention centres. Through the project health aid component, 28 permits for external doctors to enter prisons and examine female prisoners in need of specialized, otherwise unavailable inside prison, medical care were obtained (orthopedist, dentist, gynecologist and psychiatrist).

H. Advocacy and information

UNIFEM, in consultation with OHCHR, has realized a DVD (Arabic with English subtitles) “Women Capable of Making a Difference”, shedding light on women’s situation in Gaza Strip due to the imposed siege, their recognition of denied rights and their struggle to overcome the economic hardship.

As part of its ongoing monitoring of access restrictions, WHO continued to collect information about the denial for women to leave Gaza as well as deaths related to this denial. In the West Bank, WHO is also working on the establishment of an access incident tracking system that would document access incidents to be used for advocacy purposes. It is envisaged that such a system will help in identifying female medical cases deprived or delayed in accessing health services due to delay or denial of emergency paramedics’ access at checkpoints.

The WHO Advocacy Unit has continued to strengthen and broaden the knowledge and respect for health as a basic human right within the general Palestinian population and decision makers. Moreover, given that the conflict has a differentiated impact on men and women, the applied gender sensitive perspective to the project has been considered fundamental for its effectiveness.

WHO has supported MoH in establishing and operating thematic groups to facilitate and coordinate the implementation of activities of different care providers, providing advice, recommending priorities and exchanging information. Among the thematic groups particularly relevant for women are the Reproductive Health, the Nutrition Thematic Group, the Mental Health Thematic Group and the Women and Child Thematic Group.

UNFPA supported, through posters, workshops, and TV and radio spots the "16-day Campaign 2007" (November 25 – December 10, 2007) to combat VAW. Within the campaign activities, UNFPA initiated a platform for discussion among a number of different actors. A national conference on combating gender based violence (GBV) was organized and held by UNFPA and the Ministry of Women’s Affairs (MoWA). UNFPA and MoWA are in the process to give follow up to the conference’s recommendations, among which the elaboration of a national strategy to combat GBV.

As part of its recent studies, UNFPA published a study entitled "*Women in Crisis and Cultural Preservation*", where Palestine becomes a case study to identify the relationship between culture and development by monitoring the evolution of cultural concepts. Through the narrations of women themselves and their opinions, gathered through focus groups, it appeared that women tend to uphold the local culture and identity in areas of crisis and armed conflict.

UNIFEM realized billboards and a radio spot to advocate for the respect of women's fundamental rights, in particular the inalienable right to life, given the occurring and alarming number of cases of femicide. The radio spot was realized after a drawing winning a competition launched by UNIFEM on the occasion of the *16 days campaign to combat violence against women 2007* among women centres.

I. Gender mainstreaming

As part of the UN Strategic Operational Areas of Activity for 2008, and with the aim of supporting UN-wide initiatives, two sessions on Gender Mainstreaming have been organized and held by UNIFEM in June 2008. The two sessions, mutually agreed by Heads of Agency and the UNCT Gender Task Force, were conducted by a UNIFEM Programme Specialist from the agency’s Head Quarters. The first session was attended by key programming staff from UN agencies, including the ones participating in the joint MDG programmes, as well as Ministry of Planning and Ministry of Women’s Affairs. The second session specifically targeted Heads of Agencies and aimed at discussing gender mainstreaming within the context of the “One UN” approach and the use of the UNCT *Performance Indicators for Gender Equality*, as developed by the UNDG Task Team on Gender Equality

UNIFEM, within its work in the UN system as catalyst and innovator that promotes gender equality, conducted, in August 2008, jointly with FAO a one-day sector-specific Gender Workshop on "*Mainstreaming Gender in Agricultural Issues*". The workshop was tailored for FAO field staff and was conceived as a venue to discuss the meaning and importance of integrating gender perspective into planning, implementation and monitoring of food security related projects.

In line with FAO’s determination to promote gender equality and mainstream gender issues into the work of the organization and with UNIFEM's mandate to provide all necessary support to UN Agencies for

mainstreaming gender, this first workshop aimed at (1) gaining an understanding of the gender dimensions of the agricultural issues and (2) building up knowledge for practice applying a gender analysis tool to an FAO project.

Efforts to mainstream gender at the Agencies level were made as well. UNDP, based on its gender audit, provided gender training on gender sensitization, gender analysis and gender sensitive indicators in programmes to more than 40 operational and programme staff members. UNDP drafted its own gender strategy.

Under the *Deprived Families Economic Empowerment (DEEP)* programme for the empowerment of Palestinian poor families through financial and non-financial (promotional social safety net activities) services, UNDP has selected, among the implementing partners, two microfinance institutions and four NGOs whose mission and objectives are women-only focused. DEEP mainstreamed gender being attentive to balance between females and males in the process of appointing new field workers and NGOs project coordinators (45 females out of 86 newly appointed persons). Furthermore, in the selection of poor families to be enrolled in the Promotional of Social Safety Net Activities, as of mid-August 2008, out of the 2100 families selected to participate in the programme, 622 were female house headed (nearly 30% of the targeted families). A gender mainstreaming approach was adopted by UNDP also in the *Participatory Rural Development and Planning Project*, aiming at the institutionalization of participatory planning and community development at the governorate level through strengthening the planning capacity of local authorities' institutions. As part of the approach, one of the basic selection criteria of the 16 community projects included the serious commitment "to gender equality and to support the involvement of women into managing and running the projects after completion". Out of the 16 selected projects, five were extensions of girls' schools and a kindergarten, thus benefiting more than 1,100 girls.

As part of gender sensitive programming, the UNRWA Gaza Field Office and the *Job Creation* programme developed a maternity policy enabling pregnant contract holders to enjoy 42 days unpaid maternity break. Nursing mothers benefited from UNRWA's Breast Feeding Policy. In addition, the office developed a gender-sensitive monitoring modality to ensure a decent and respectful work environment for women.

UNESCO considers Gender equality as a special theme, which should be mainstreamed in all its programmes. In contribution to this end and stemming from the major role of women as main transmitters of Intangible heritage, emphasis was put on Palestinian Hikaye, which is a narrative expression practiced mostly by women. Following the proclamation of the Palestinian Hikaye as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity in 2005, concrete activities, starting from research and documentation to utilization, were carried to implement the 5-year action plan aiming at safeguarding and revitalizing this form of oral expression relevant to women.

Contribution to developing an enabling environment in regard of women cinema, the seeds of a resource centre on women cinema was established at Shashat; a Palestinian cultural NGO in Ramallah which focuses on women's cinema and the social and cultural implications of women's representations.

As part of a larger initiative, the ILO is committed to promoting tools for mainstreaming gender equality in the world of work. Participatory gender auditing is one of these tools. In preparation for this effort the ILO has sponsored an official of MOWA to participate in an intensive training course on participatory gender auditing in the ILO Training Centre in Turin in May 2008. As a result of this training, MOWA is working on a strategy for implementing participatory gender audits within PA institutions

UNIFEM, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNRWA and ILO have been involved in drafting and finalizing a joint programme, under the Spanish Millennium Development Global Trust Fund on "*Gender Equality and women's Empowerment in the occupied Palestinian territory*". This three-year joint programme was granted 9 million USD to promote Palestinian women's social, economic and political empowerment by 1) reducing gender-based violence and all forms of violence against women and the girl child 2) increasing the representation of women's and women's issues in decision-making bodies and 3) enhancing opportunities for women to participate economically equally. The implementation of the joint programme is expected to start before the end of 2008.

Under the same Spanish Trust Fund, UNESCO, UNIFEM, UNDP and FAO have been involved in drafting and finalizing a joint programme on "*Culture and Development in the occupied Palestinian territory*". This three-year joint programme was granted 3 million USD to promote institutional development and socio-economic development through cultural and eco-tourism and creative industries. UNIFEM provided

technical support to the participating organizations to engender, as requested by the MDG Secretariat, the programme document. The implementation of the joint programme is expected to start before the end of 2008.