The Association of Women’s Action for Training and Rehabilitation

Summary

Strategic Directions for Action

2021 - 2024

The Association of Women’s Action for Training and Rehabilitation - AOWA is active in an environment rife with risks and challenges, congested with incidents and changes with uncertainty, instability and persistent external threats. Images are mixed and trends are complex in the environment where it becomes difficult to assemble and direct efforts towards specific targets that are clear and stated. With uncertainty, yielding to feedbacks becomes the dominant approach, leaving efforts in vain and making it necessary to walk in the same place, which in turn generates fragmentation and increases the state of dependence to nothingness. In order to emerge from this situation, there is a need for a compass that determines the direction of the process. In addition to an orderly, clear visioned direction, based on a well-thought-out approach that combines efforts and directs them towards clear, stated and agreed objectives; capable of managing the process of change, effectively utilizing available resources, and mobilizing the underlying resources, which the strategic framework seeks to provide for managing change and building the future.

AOWA has gone through a number of stations throughout its march of struggle and development. The most notable of these stations was the formation inside of the Palestinian political movement, then moving towards public mobilization and the activation of women's participation in the national struggle and hence, expanding women's participation in the *Intifada*, as well as building the components of steadfastness and resistance. This was followed by the process of establishing AOWA and the orientation towards organizing women to participate in State-building and development, reaching out to building women’s capacities - including economic capacities and the founding of cooperatives and social economic solidarity groups, which expand the presence of women in the public space, as well as making effective and dignified participation in all aspects of public life.

AOWA sees the ongoing Palestinian feminist movement as a historic opportunity, which must be seized and built upon towards greater empowerment geared towards freedom, emancipation and liberation.

AOWA views strategic planning as a process that touches upon and builds the desired future, as well as charting the way towards managing and bringing about the desired changes, within the framework of the effective use of available sources and possibilities. It is an affirmation of the association’s developmental public identity. It is also, a guarantee to focus on specific goals and topics and to uphold the base values and principles that it has set for itself, in the belief that those who are well prepared to build the future have a better chance to shape and create it.

This strategic framework was developed through an interactive process involving delegates from AOWA’s General Assembly, Board of Directors, staff and a number of partners and volunteers. The process was based on participatory tools and methods; it included a review of previous plans, capacities and surrounding environment analysis’ meetings of which the results have been adopted for developing this document.

The usual analysis of the Palestinian reality points to a significant gap in gender relations between women and men of different categories and classes; covering most aspects of life including roles, responsibilities and social status, as well as the access to and control over the sources and decision-making centres, and the access to basic human rights. This gap indicates that the environment forming these relationships is poorly adapted and that this environment allows the gap to survive and does not bridge it. This explains the weak impact of various interventions in bridging this gap, including feminist movements in support of women's rights, the efforts of civil society organizations and institutions, the formation of the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the development of cross-sectoral strategic plans, the establishment of gender mainstreaming in ministries and the formation of gender units, and Palestine's signature on a package of international conventions and treaties, including those related to women's equity and equality. When interventions are unable to bring about the desired change despite the efforts made, the reasons and obstacles that impede the achievement of goals everywhere in the working environment must be sought, including research into the formal and civil structures and systems in place, which are the most important components of these relationships.

The continuation of the Israeli occupation is reflected in different ways on the composition of the Palestinian society and the dynamics of social relations. On the one hand, the Israeli occupation represents the greatest external threat, and its human rights violations include the main danger facing the Palestinians. On the other hand, the erosion of Palestinian sovereignty and the limited ability of the Palestinian National Authority to extend its sovereignty and implement its various programs, moreover, the subordination of the Palestinian economy to the Israeli colonial economy, and the resulting weakening of economies of scale, in addition to the distortion of the economy’s structure; impeding the movement of capital, goods and money. And lastly, limiting the operational capacity of the Palestinian economy.

The occupation is fueling insecurity, encroachment of clan forces and weakening law enforcement.

As before, the continuation of occupation has made freedom from Israeli occupation a top national priority, thus defeating the themes of social liberation, such as women’s equity and equality, the rule of law, civil rights and freedoms and other issues related to social liberation and civil, economic and social rights.

The weakness, if not absence, of the political will to bring about the social change that is necessary for social liberation highlights one of the basic structure deficiencies in playing its role in women’s justice and equality, and thus in bridging the gender gap. The absence of the Legislative Council, the encroachment of the executive branch, the disruption of democratic life; fueled by political division, as well as the expansion of the Presidency Foundation’s power, the weakness or failure of official institutions to provide the necessary services; and the poor functioning of their role; owing to their weak structure, scarce resources and weak integrity system, provided an opportunity to deepen and expand corruption and the spread of patronage, favouritism and nepotism. The weakness and mismanagement of the executive branch and the prevalence of corruption in its structure and working systems have contributed to the deterioration of the security situation, the increase in cases of insecurity, people taking their rights by themselves and the attacks on others and on public properties and estimations, moreover, breaking the law and going against it. Also, the weak institutional structure and inadequate sovereignty have contributed to strengthening the power of the clans; their working systems and their tools of control with their masculinity, paternalism and power relations.

Inputs and data contained in the reports of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics - PCBS are rich in issues and problems that reflect women's exclusion and limited opportunities, inequality and discrimination; including community acceptance of participation, women’s public space avilability, employment and promotion, labour’s gender-based division, employment opportunities, participation and economic rights, exclusion from decision-making and weak political participation, as well as poverty, early marriage and violence. All this reflects the injustice faced by women and their exposure to risks.

Some inputs point out change in:

With the darkness of the vision and the depth of the gap, societal mobility refers to signs and changes in gender relations; even if they are small in size, they indicate a dislocation in the position and role of both men and women in society: in education, health, economic activity, cultural literary presence and in participation in general.

* Women's economic participation: According 2017 survey results, women's participation in the labour force (women aged 15 and over) was 19.2% at the time where the same group of men was 71.6%. [[1]](#footnote-1)(After the percentage of economically active women that was less than 10% according to 1997 survey results)
* Education: The participation rate of young people and adults in formal education (formal education: Education provided by the schools’ system, secondary schools, universities and other formal educational institutions) in the age group 15 years and above, 20.4% noting that the participation rate of women was 22.8% higher than that of men of 18.0%.
* Teachers in public schools: 22,693 females and 16,333 males.
* Pharmacists in Palestine: 60.2% are women.
* The percentage of females within the secondary and higher education status was 49.1% compared to 43.9% for males in 2017.
* Health: The survival rate at birth for men was 72.7 years, and 75 years for women.

These challenges face severe and strong obstacles and attempts to blur and pull back. A crane must break the closed cycle of exclusion, building and developing women’s capacities to participate effectively; in order for this mobility to become a reality and a powerful force.

During its working period, AOWA has refined its institutional capacities, accumulated knowledge and experience, established best practices in the leadership and governance, also in the management, resources and capacities of the association, and lastly, in operating and dealing with target groups, partners and funders. Over the years of its operation, AOWA has switched from its spontaneous public work to a systematic and organized action.

AOWA’s work experience is one of the most important pillars of change management. The association builds its strategic plan on a rich patrimony of success stories and best practices, and the successful implementation of the strategic plan depends, in many respects, on the association’s capabilities and institutional capacities.

The association has a solid ground to lead the implementation of the strategic plan, involving: a geographically and sectorally dispersed General Assembly, a voluntary, active and effective Board of Directors, in addition to work-leading systems and guides, a work experience rich in lessons and morals, a giving staff. And also, branches, offices and cooperative organized working groups, networking and collaboration, and lastly, supportive and effective partners.

Based on the general environment analysis and the SWOT analysis, strategic issues related to AOWA’s identity have been identified and focused on the following:

Strategic Issues

In general, Palestinian women face a system of problems, obstacles, difficulties and barriers that prevent their participation in public life, as well as their participation in the development process and from benefiting from its outcomes. These problems and obstacles intensify and deepen as women's social position becomes more difficult. For example, people with disabilities, ethnic, racial or religious minorities, and other social determinants, the impact of these obstacles is increasing and women are becoming more exposed to external shocks and influences. They face greater challenges and difficulties in shaping their livelihoods and developing strategies to adapt to life and difficult progression.

The limited place available for women in public space, and the impediment of their participation and access to public issues, as well as reducing their benefit from them, is the first strategic issue faced by the association; consistent with its identity, authorization and the building of its capacities.

This issue has been shaped by the inadequate institutional and legal systems and structures, the poor societal acceptance of women's presence and participation, and the limited opportunities for women to form and build their human and social capacities.

The second issue is women's limited access to resources and human capacity building for active participation in economic, social and cultural life.

In order to address these issues and deal with their causing and resulting problems, AOWA must build on its institutional capacities and empower itself to be able to play its part and to move towards its vision. This is the third strategic issue.

Identity and Determination of Who We Are

**Vision**

A liberated and free Palestinian civil society where in its public space; women participate effectively, with dignity and security.

**Mission**

A mass women’s civil society association with a progressive development message that promotes women's participation and presence in national, economic and social issues in order to bring about the desired social change.

**Values and Principles**

The Association of Women’s Action is committed to upholding a system of values ​​and principles that guides its action.

Democracy, including renewal of leadership within the framework of interaction and creative mobility.

Integrity, including transparency, accountability, participation, partnership and non-discrimination.

Participation, teamwork and joint learning.

Victory for the marginalized, the exposed and the less fortunate.

Building on and promoting volunteerism.

# Strategic Goals and Interventions

**First Strategic Goal:** Improving the public environment to encourage women's active and secure participation.

The association works in accordance with a policy system to achieve this goal, primarily:

- Leaning on a solid foundation of public ties and relations.

- Building on a system of partnerships, cooperation and joint action.

- Upholding the principles and values of civic action and advocating women's issues.

**Sub-objectives and pivots of interventions:**

* 1. . Political will, policies, plans and budgets responsive to equality and justice.

- Critical studies, research and working papers to raise discrimination and inequality issues.

- Mobilizing and forming public opinion on women's rights and development issues.

- Participation, lobbying and advocacy in support of women's issues.

- Participation and campaigns promoting women's participation in public life.

- Lobbying and advocacy campaigns to develop policies that stimulate and encourage small and medium-sized women's initiatives and enterprises (exemption from fees and taxes, financing facilities, providing incentive loans and facilitation of registration processes).

- Allocation of programmes to expand the available public community space for women (Restoration and conversion of old buildings to a workshops and services area for women's enterprises).

- Lobbying for the development and allocation of programmes supporting women's small and medium-sized investment initiatives.

2.1 . The legal and legislative environment is more just and equitable for women.

- Critical review of laws and legislation from women's rights perspective.

- Organizing panel discussions, workshops, round tables on women's rights issues.

- Contributing to the ongoing debate on the laws’ contents.

- Development of proposals for amending the laws and organizing campaigns, activities and events to improve the chances of their adoption and acceptance.

- Organizing lobbying and advocacy campaigns on women's rights issues.

- Lobbying and advocating for a law promoting small and medium-sized women's enterprises and initiatives.

3.1. Institutionalization of women’s rights and issues.

- Participation in relevant councils and committees.

- Participation in the development of gender unit plans.

- Participation in the development of the national cross-sectoral plan for gender equality and reviewing its implementation.

- Expanding the application of the quota system to include all community bodies, councils and structures (Chamber of Commerce, child protection councils, employment councils and other).

4.1 . Palestine is taking its international commitments to women's issues more seriously.

- Organizing and participating in lobbying campaigns for the publication of conventions and treaties signed by Palestine in the Official Gazette.

- Re-reading Palestinian laws from the perspective of international conventions.

- Organizing lobbying and advocacy campaigns to amend the laws in line with international obligations.

5.1 . Community acceptance of women's presence and participation in public space is more concrete.

- Implementation of community awareness activities on justice and gender equality; targeting schools, clubs and various community groups.

- Displaying the issues and topics of injustice and recruitment to be discarded and addressed.

- Dissemination, using media and drama to promote women’s rights, justice and equality.

- Reviewing and developing media curricula and programs to be sensitive to gender issues.

- Organizing community dialogues sessions, also on media level, to promote justice and equality issues.

**Second Strategic Goal**: Empowering women to have the access to resources and capacity building to participate in economic, social, political and cultural life.

The association works in accordance with a policy system to achieve this goal, primarily:

- Starting from the developmental rights-based portal in dealing with women’s issues.

- Positive discrimination to bridge the historical gap in capacity building and access to sources.

- Freedom of choice and disposition of the resources are basis for independence.

**Sub-objectives and pivots of interventions:**

1.2. Increased knowledge of rights and access to living.

- Organizing awareness-raising programmes, field visits, schools, institutes and universities.

- Organizing social media awareness campaigns.

- Developing the printing and distribution of booklets and leaflets on fundamental rights.

2.2 . Mobilization, activation and teamwork.

- Mobilization of males and females volunteers.

- Implementation of capacity building programmes for males and females.

- Encouraging girls to engage in community-based activities and initiatives (besides different schools and community centres).

- Organizing and launching local initiative support programmes for girls.

- Mobilize girls to join existing women's groups or to form new groups.

- Support and encourage girls and women to approach local councils and trade unions.

3.2. Expansion of existing women's groups and formation of new groups.

- Organizing local activities and events that contribute to attracting girls to women’s centers and groups.

- Expanding the membership of existing women's groups and organizing events to encourage participation.

- Formation of new women's or youth groups under the headings and titles of community initiatives.

- Work on building the initial capacities of the clusters.

- Enable groups to share knowledge and joint learning.

4.2. Develop the community view, structure, programmes of vocational training centres, and make them more welcoming for girls.

- Organizing lobbying and advocacy campaigns to open up vocational training centres for girls and in all disciplines.

- Suggesting and developing vocational training programmes for girls.

- Ensure that vocational training centres are suitable to integrate girls.

- Incentives to enrol girls in vocational training centre programmes.

5.2. Building the technical and institutional capacities of cooperatives and social economic solidarity groups.

- Technical vocational training for women group members in production processes and services.

- Building the institutional capacities of the joint action groups to act as cooperatives and socio-economic solidarity groups.

- Providing facilities for funding (composition of a loan guarantee fund, financing costs fund, Formation of savings and credit groups).

- Supporting cooperatives and social economic solidarity groups with income-generating projects.

6.2 . Activation of networking, learning and joint working relationships.

- Promotion of specialized geographical and sectoral networks

- Capacity building of operational networks (bylaw, joint action plan, programmes and campaigns)

- Supporting the implementation of a campaign for each network and group

**Third Strategic Goal:** Enabeling the Association of Women’s Action to carry out its mission and move towards its objectives.

The association works in accordance with a policy system to achieve this goal, primarily:

- Leaning on the association’s public development character

- Building on the association’s strong public connections.

- Investing in latent energies and promoting voluntary action.

**Sub-objectives and pivots of interventions:**

1.3. Raising the governing body readiness of the association.

- Review and amendment of bylaw.

- Expansion of the General Assembly membership to include young women members.

- Providing the association’s leadership (Board of Directors) with young energies.

- Establishment of specialized committees with the participation of the Board of Directors and the women members of the General Assembly.

- Completing the plans and policies system that leads the association.

2.3 . Strengthening the administrative structure and technical staff.

- Recruitment of new, young and specialized cadres, including fund-raising.

- Capacity building of the current staff.

- Development of a volunteer recruitment system

- Revision and development of the administrative system.

3.3. Improving the resources and capacities of the association.

- Renewal of equipment.

- Searching for a new headquarters with a suitable meeting room.

4.3. Improving the association’s finances.

- Diversification of funding sources and broader targeting of local funding.

- Revision and development of the financial system.

5.3 . Transition to work according to long-term programs.

- Building an information base.

- Expansion of targeted centers.

- Allocating a budget for each center and implementing periodic, sequential activities in each center.

- Providing the centres with libraries and cinemas.

6.3 . Activation of partnerships and networking.

- Activating public ties through local groups

- Strengthening existing partnerships and working relationships

- Expansion of network membership

- Hosting of some networks

7.3 . Enhancing sustainability opportunities of the association.

- Completing the construction of systems and manuals.

- Strengthening the role of reference bodies.

- Documentation of work experience, learning from experience and dissemination of best practices.

1. Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force Survey, revised annual report 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)