

Wi'am Palestinian conflict resolution Center

Submitted to: Oxfam GB

**A Field Study from Palestine: Capacity Assessment of Women from
Five Villages in the Western Area of Bethlehem**

Bethlehem

2009

Executive Summary

Part One

- **Introduction**
- **Statement of Purpose**
- **Research Assumption**
- **Methodology**
- **Objectives or Aim**

Part two

- **Data collection: this study will based on empirical material that I will gather during the field study. The empirical material is mainly based on interviews , focusing groups with women**
- **Analysis**
- **Outcomes**
- **Challenges and obstacles**
- **Conclusion**

Annex:

- **Glossary**
- **A brief villages Profile**

References

Executive Summary

The baseline research conducted for this project will be used to build a comprehensive program for women aimed at the improvement of women's participation in community life and increased capacity in livelihood generation and financial status. In addition to improved financial benefits for women, the project seeks to enhance each participating woman as a full person, including increasing confidence, awareness, and social and political participation in her society.

The research methodology utilized in the capacity assessment consisted of ethnographic data collection that was generated through both group interviews (focus groups) and one-on-one interviews in five villages adjacent to Bethlehem; Nahlien, Battier, Husan, Walajeh, and Jab'a during the period of March – August, 2009.

This research was supervised by Nivine Saraf Sandouka from Oxfam GB.

Introduction

Khaled Hosseini, profoundly stated, "*A society has no chance of success if its women are uneducated...*"

We believe in the depth of the truth that this quote conveys, because education is one means of empowering women. Educating women can be done in numerous ways. She can be empowered by acknowledging her rights and accepting responsibility for her role in society. By stepping out of the kitchen and into the community, women are able to see that being a mother or wife does not erase her responsibility for taking a proactive role in the broader society.

In this study we believe that empowering women economically and politically will have a great impact on her participation in decision making. It is a must for women to play an active role in decision making for any decision that is made in her village or society has a direct impact on her.

Statement of Purpose

There is a wide feeling among women that the projects targeting them need to encompass a developmental component and that the outcomes should include improvements in their socio-economic and political participation in the community. Improving a woman's the social status is a key factor affecting her ability to have a greater impact on the broader community and to take her place within the traditionally male dominated society. Wi'am, after consultation with Oxfam, found it essential to take a synergistic approach in program development by including in its

development efforts areas where gaps exist and need to be filled, thus ensuring women's increased social status. Equally important is awareness concerned with existing opportunities that women can take advantage of in reaching their full potential.

Research Assumption of this Study

Empowering women economically and politically will have a profound impact on her decision-making. Women's active role in decision-making has a direct impact at the village and societal levels, as well as an effect on her.

Based on this assumption and on the information gained through this assumption, we will design a comprehensive program that meets the developmental needs of women.

Methodology

The methods used to conduct the research were ethnographic. We conducted interviews with women from each of the five villages who differed in social status and ideological beliefs. Our cross-village sample totaled 80 women, ranging in age from 20 – 55 years. Less than 4% of the total sample had university degrees and the majority had reached the 10th grade.

Two kinds of interview techniques were used: Group and one to one interviews. Group interviews captured the knowledge, opinions, and attitudes of women from a broad range of households throughout a specified village. Women took part in a meeting (focus group session) in which they

cooperatively answered questions concerned with their social, economic and political status. Further, one-on-one interviews were conducted with women who played influential community roles and are members of village councils.

Objectives or Aim

At the onset of the research study we had intended to determine a means for developing the capacity of women in all five villages that could result in profit for them by advancing their role in society and developing their character and individuality. However, we soon learned that although the five villages are located in close proximity to one another, there were numerous differences between them. The differences included:

- Educational levels
- Women's need
- Women's mentality
- Level in realization their rights

Due to these factors we were excluded from utilizing one strategy in all five villages. As a consequence, we were able to benefit from learning about the contradictions and differences between the situations of women at each of the sites.

The research was conducted in the following village field sites:

1. Nahlien

2. Battier
3. Husan
4. Walajeh
5. Jab'a

Data collection: this study was based on empirical material that was gathered during the field study. The empirical material is mainly based on interviews, focusing groups with women

We divided the study into nine parts, which are:

- Mobility
- Marriage
- Decision making over spending
- Social
- Economical
- Political
- Health
- Education
- Livelihood

Mobility:

Mobility is an important factor to talk about when it comes to villages. Sometimes it is what stands in the way of its development, for people are unable to reach the services that are offered in the city. Transportation in Battier, Husan, Walajeh and Nahleen was not an issue. The women we interviewed said that there are always several cars and a bus available to take them to Bethlehem and that transportation is not a problem in their village.

On the other hand in al Jab'a transportation is a service that they severely lack, making a typical trip to Bethlehem a nightmare. There are only two cars that leave the village in the morning and come back in the evening if you miss anyone of them you will not be able to leave or come back to the village. This stands as a major problem in front of the people of the village, making lack of health care in the village a major problem. One of the women in the village told us that she is in need of a dentist but she can't go due to the poor transportation. She stated that to go for an one hour appointment she has to catch the early in the morning car and then wait till the evening for the evening's car to go back into town, meaning that just to go to the doctors or to Bethlehem for shopping means that she will leave her house during the hours of the day, so she needs a babysitter for her children. This is also a major problem for the university students especially females who would like to study in Bethlehem University instead of the Open University.

One cannot but acknowledge the impact the Israeli occupation has had on the mobility of people. In some villages it is impossible to leave the village to go to the city without crossing checkpoints and the segregation wall. This has paralyzed the movement of people in numerous areas especially females, for many families fear the safety of their daughters if they cross the checkpoints alone unaccompanied. Not only did the wall and check points have an impact on peoples social life it also had an impact on people's health for transferring sick people to hospitals in the city is considered a challenge.

Moreover, limitation of mobility is not only restricted by lack of transportation. Social factors play the biggest role in restricting women's movement. Only about 10% of women said they can leave their houses freely without previous permission from their husbands. The rest stated that they need to ask permission and have a good reason to leave the house and go to the city. Due to this they stay in their village under the name of customs and traditions. The people's mentality is still tribal, effecting women's movement and making them unable to freely and easily leave their houses. Limitation on movement isn't only inflicted by the males of the village. The females also play a role in restricting the movement of other women. For example, one of the women in Husan told us that she used to constantly go to visit her sister in Jerusalem. Her husband had absolutely no problem with her visits and encouraged her to go. However her neighbors surrounding her kept gossiping about her and criticizing why she leaves her house so often. Due to this she has now stopped going to visit her just to stop people talking and gossiping.

Education

"When you educate a man you have educated an individual, but when you educate a woman you have educated a nation. ..." Dr. Kwegyir Aggrey

Educating females is a must in order to see growth and development in any society. We find that this aspect is among the most important ones that need to be tackled in order to increase women's participation in society and make her reach decision making roles.

Having schools in the same village helps females get educated. In the villages we entered all villages has schools where girls can continue their high school education except the Jaba' . In the Jab'a the females have to travel to another village called Soreif . The girls of the village have to travel to the other village by foot and pass the segregation wall twice a day. This is a huge problem in the winter. Furthermore, al Jab'a was the village with the lowest educational level we see that the reason behind this is clear, for a lot of people fear for the safety of their daughters to travel and cross the segregation wall on a daily bases. We meet one of the girls who attended school in Sorief she said:

“Yes, most of the time I am afraid when I cross the wall and in the winter and sometimes I reach home wet, yet I always imagine my daily trip to school as an adventure, for even if the build the wall higher and higher are dreams are much higher and will be reachable”

In Battier they recently built a girls school that goes up till the 12th grade in order to overcome such a problem.

Moreover, through the group meetings we noticed that there is a vast difference between the generation that was interviewed and the following generation when it comes to education. In all the group interviews less than 4 % of the women present had finished University and gained a degree. However, for their daughters they see that education is a must. Arguing that nowadays it's a must for the new generation to get their education and in the village of Walajeh there is a female who has traveled abroad to get her Master degree. This case is considered a revolution in the village for they

usually only care about sending the boys abroad for further education considering that the girls will get married and hold another family name , but the boy will remain in their family.

The vast majority of females have are able to claim their right to education. However, the violation against this right is depicted in the fact that she is not allowed to study what she wishes to, neither where she wants to. Many girls are forced to study in Al_Quds Open University that only requires that they leave the house to sit for exams. They are only allowed to study subjects such as Arabic English, math's so that they can fit into the job that society sees appropriate which is to become a teachers. Even when the males of the villages look for wives they look for teachers considering it the sole job that is appropriate for women as said, "*A women's Job*".

In Husan we were informed that last year they told families that the Tawjihi class will become mixed meaning boys and girls will sit side by side in the class room. When families knew they highly objected to this matter and said that if the schools stay mixed they will remove their girls from school. The women gave us an example of a man whose daughter is among the cleverest in their village she was a straight A student. He said if she has to sit next to a male to sit for exams he won't allow her to enter the examination room.

A small number of women said that their daughters have studies, pharmacy, engineering, law, business, yet they are going to face problem when they wish to start working. Even though she may have graduated with higher grades then her fellow male classmate yet her certificate will still be looked down on and she will remain considered still not yet qualified for the job.

This goes back to the fact that many men consider women unable to handle situations and cope under stress. Furthermore, previous studies have shown that women spend four times more time looking for- a job than males do.

To conclude, this shows that females have yet not fully been able to claim their full right to education since they don't have a say over what to study or where to study. Furthermore, in the village of al Jaba' females education is constantly under threat for when the Israeli occupation decides to fully close the segregation wall the girls are going to find themselves with no school to attend since Uni sex schools and them joining the males school is considered an nonnegotiable taboo.

Livelihoods

The separation wall, which Israel began to build in June 2002, is yet another obstacle that has added to the suffering of Palestinians living in the West Bank. The construction of this wall deep in Palestinian territory has separated communities' from their land and livelihood. People in the villages rely on two major sources of income, the first is on gardening and the second on work as workers inside Israeli settlements. First of all, when it comes to relying on farming the people face massive problems due to the fact that the Israeli authorities has confiscated large areas of the lands they use for farming , leaving them with very little space to plant and grow their crops. The farmers not only suffer from lack of lands they also suffer from lack of water to water their crops with.

In addition, the vast majority of people rely on work inside Israel as a source of income. However, after the second Intifada broke out and the start of the

construction of the segregation wall thousands of Palestinian workers have found themselves jobless. The Israeli authorities only issue work permits to a limited number of Palestinian workers and these permits are not always given. So to conclude one has to call upon the fact that there is no garneted source of income for the families. This is why the women of the village see that it is of urgent need for them to build the skills they already have and turn them into profitable business.

Various organizations, such as World Vision, have made contributions that impact livelihood outcomes in the five villages. For example, World Vision was able to accomplish the following:

- Opened 3750m agricultural roads in Nahhaline, Wad Fukeen and Hussan villages. Provided one tractor for Al Walaga village.
- 200 women benefited from vocational and computer training.
- Conducted 45 training-hours in Capacity building for 25 sponsorship volunteers and the steering committee members.
- Conducted 30 training-hours in English Language for 17 of the sponsorship volunteers.
- Achievements of Preserving Al-Makhrour Mountain Project
 - 93 Farmers have access to their land
 - 21 farmers have their stone huts suitable for living
 - Rehabilitating 2.3 existing agricultural roads
 - Generation 115 working days of employment opportunities.
 - 8 stone huts were connected to the electrical network
 - 9 water cisterns were renovated

- 2000 m2 of retaining walls were built
- 5 Latrines were constructed

All of these things contributed to the overarching goal of increasing capacity for people living in the villages to work toward sustainable livelihoods.

Skills

After studying the skills that the women of the village already had, we reached to the conclusion that the women did possess numerous skills. However, they all had the same skills. We were not able to find a skill that differentiates a village from another one. The skills were the following:

- Beading
- Embroidery
- Cooking
- Beauty skills
- raising cattle
- making deserts
- Drawing
- Sewing
- gardening

- Painting on glass
- making candles
- producing pickles

I'tidal Im'ar said that the women of her village were given courses on how to write proposals for projects, following this course they were able to produce highly organized proposals which I'tidal says are considered professional but they need someone to help direct them in the right way to be able to find donors for these projects.

Furthermore, the women pointed out that they keep receiving the same workshops and courses. For instance in Battir they took the same first Aid course seven times.

Moreover, in the entire village the women's main concern was to improve their marketing skills, for they feel that it is the most things they lack and the key factor in gaining a sort of income. These are the following courses that the women asked to be given:

- Marketing skills
- English language
- How to deal with their children
- General knowledge and history lessons
- Advanced beauty courses

- Advanced courses in raising cattle and that the follow up time period be extended.

Decision making over spending

We live in a male dominate society, where men are usually the ones who have the say over everything. However, the time has come for women to be active instead of passive and submissive. As an individual she has the right to express herself and her voice be heard. Participation should be transformed from ink on papers to reality. The question we aroused was do women have any sort of say inside the household over the spending and income. There was difference in opinions concerning this matter some of the women said that their husbands give them complete control over the entire house hold matters such as raising the kids, how the money is spent, changing things around the house. Many women repeated that their husbands consider that the house is the sole place where women should be able to make decisions and that they are allowed to call the shots inside the house, so long as they remain silent outside the household. Lots of women told us expressions their husband's use such as, *"Do what you please as long as you inside the house"*, *"why do you care what happens outside you should stay focused on your house and children that should be all that matters for you"*.

Social

Social life is an important part of one's life. It is the space that one gives to him-herself as an individual. Sadly the women's social life in the community is merely restricted to happy occasions such as weddings and engagements and sad occasions like funerals. There is very little social life through clubs. This is due to the fact that each club in the village is associated with a political party making women's participation much difficult. Women fear going to the clubs so that they won't be considered a member of Fateh or Hammas or PFLIP. This means that all villages are in urgent need of clubs that do not belong to any political party.

However the women in Al-Jab'a don't have a club to meet, they only have a small room in the village's clinic and this room is in a very poor conditions.

The rest of the villages that do have clubs in their villages said that the lack of their participation in the clubs goes back to the following reasons:

- Lots of women don't go to the clubs due to lack of advertisement. They say that they were unaware of the courses and workshops that take place.
- Each club is associated with a political party, meaning if they participate with club X that means that they support a specific political party.

Furthermore, the women of Husan feel that the village council only offers services when getting something in return, they also say that that they are

bias towards a specific political group and they don't offer these services to everyone. For they only invite a certain group of women to their activities.

Health

Through visiting the five villages in order to conduct our research we faced the reality that even the smallest most essential rights that are taken for granted in numerous places are totally absent in some villages. The right to health care is considered one of the most essential rights for any human being, and each human deserve to receive the best possible health care. Sadly in these five villages most of health care services are in poor conditions except in Walajeh where there is no health care at all. The level of health care differed from village to village. We found that there are some villages with really good health care such as Battier. They have medicinal clinics, dentists, laboratories to get test results they only go to Bethlehem in cases when they need to deliver a baby or further health care. Jab'a village has really poor health care. They only have an unequipped room which they use as the village's clinic. This clinic only opens once a week and consists of no dental clinics meaning whenever they need to see a dentist they have a problem because the transportation is really difficult meaning going to a dentist is a misery . Moreover, Walajeh Village is the worst among them all, because they don't even have a clinic they have to go to Bethlehem for any kind of treatment however small it is.

Marriage

Early marriage used to be something common part of everyday life in all the villages. However, things have changed, for all the women present in the interviews stated the fact that education for females has become a must nowadays and that their daughter are the ones also who want to peruse their education before marriage. Furthermore, they even told us that concerning choosing who they marry some girls have that choice in some cases.

In Husan we were shocked to find out that early marriage rates have raised recently. The women said that early marriage was beginning to vanish, however they were surprised to find out that it started coming back. This is only represented in Husan the rest of the villages considered it as becoming something from the past. The reason behind the comeback of early marriage is that families can no longer spend on all their children, so they consider early marriage a way that they can ease the hardship of the rest of the family.

Obstacles at family level and society

As women living in tribal society they face numerous obstacles on a daily bases. However we found that the greatest obstacle of all is women themselves. A large number of the women we interviewed if not the majority lack the knowledge of their rights and the lack the most essential ingredient that is needed for any kind of improvement and which is "*faith in themselves*". Nawal Fanon stated, "I feel that the number one obstacle is women themselves. I see that they must first of all believe in themselves in order for others to believe in them. Some males may stand in her way, but

with determination she will prove herself able to play an active role in society"

Furthermore, another obstacle women face is their families and society. For instance, under current inheritance legislation, a daughter is entitled to inherit one half the share of a son. However, many women renounce this right in order to maintain the social support of family and relations. While the National Strategy advocates guarantees "*women's legal rights for social security and inheritance rights*", we would like to call upon the fact that this area has not yet been addressed by systematic campaigns. The only thing standing in her way is their families and so called customs. We were told that even if a girl does have the courage to stand up in front of her brothers and ask for her rightful share of the inheritance she is still not given it despite the fact that the law is on her favor.

96% of the women we interviewed considered customs and traditions as something negative because it puts them down as women and allows society to fit them in the role it finds appropriate based on the interest of a patriarchal society. Yet strikingly when we asked Ameneh one of the elected women who are in the village council what are the obstacles that women face her answer was, "*There are no obstacles what so ever that stand in the way of women in the community I live in. women in my village have fully taken their rights, and there is not any sort of violence against women, for women are able to express themselves and are heard in any time or place*"this contradicted what the women answered in the group interview. Moreover the women of Husan also

consider that they have claimed their rights and that they don't face any obstacles, when asked to elaborate more a women said, "*customs and traditions shouldn't be changed they are all positive and w agree with them, what do you want from us in order to belie that we have gained our rights. You want us to take of our head veils and attend parties at night in order to convince you that we have taken our rights*"

However, one cannot always consider family and society as the party that pulls people down. We were told many success stories where the family were the ones who pushed their daughter to go for their dreams and fulfill their dreams. For Ameeneh told us her story of how being a mother to 4 children didn't stand in the way of her accomplishing her dream of becoming a life guard. For she is now a life guard in Battier swimming pool.

"I have always had a passion for swimming and horseback riding. I told my family that I would like to peruse this passion of mine, they had no problem but they feared on my behalf they kept telling me are you sure you want to do this because it's a big responsibility. I registered for the course with two other women from the village, but both of them withdrew from the course I am the only one who competed it. Without the support and encouragement of my family I wouldn't have been able to fulfill my dream"

Division of Labor

Division of labor in the villages we visited isn't quite considered division. A very low percentage of women do work outside their homes more than 90% of the women are housewives. In all the group interviews we were told that she solely is responsible for the house chores and teaching and raising the children only 4 women out of all the 80 women we interviewed said that their husband's help them in teaching the children.

In Husan women still believe that a woman should work only if she has to bring money. They still haven't reached the realization of the importance having a dependent job will play in building women's character and individuality. "She shouldn't work if her husband has money she should stay at home; I believe that she should only work if she has to"

There are two opinions concerning women being marginalized in Husan. Some feel that women are marginalized based on the gender, others believe that women have taken their rights and say "*what do we have to do so that you believe that we have taken are rights take off our head veils and go to parties*"

Nevertheless, the women of batter and Nahleen have reached the realization that they are not playing a bigger enough role in society and they consider their role as appalling one. This realization has yet not been reached by the women of other villages for in Jab'a and Husan they consider that they play a big role and that they have reached their goal.

Political

Women's political participation is the ultimate factor that will help empower women. Every political decision that is made has a direct impact on women so it is a must that women's voice be heard politically and that she play an active part in this field. The political participation is major matter that we were researching in all five villages. Each village has reached a different level when it comes to women's participation in the village councils.

All the villages had female members in the village council except 'jaba'a. In the village council elections that took place in ~~Husan~~-Jab'a women neither participated nor elected other males, for they were informed that it is something forbidden religiously. This means that women were not only marginalized but they had absolutely no role in the elections and their opinion on which they see worth to be in the village council was muted. The Irony of the fact is that the women of Jaba'a agreed on the fact that having women in the village council is a must because only a women will be able to understand the needs of another women and a women will only feel comfortable when telling the problems to another women. Yet, they did not vote for a woman, even though they are convinced of her importance.

+In Battier there are two female members in the village council who were elected. We interviewed one of these women and she felt that there was no discrimination against her throughout her campaign nor was there any after it. She says that women do play an effective role in the village council for everything happens by voting and she has a say just like the men. However, she believes that the Quota law was inflicted on the society that the growth didn't come from within meaning that the mentality didn't change and that

any change is temporary. “The quota law has helped partially change in men’s mentality. But this is a temporary change” (I’tidal Ima’mar)

She also believes that women entering the political world and reaching decision making decision plays a major role in encouraging females to get their education. She also sees that there is an urgent need for women to be present on the negotiation table.

In Nahleen Nowal Fanoon the elected female in the village council, sees that she did not suffer from any sort of violence against her before or after the elections. And that she has a say like a man in the village council because every decision is made by voting and she has the right to agree or object.

An integral question that needs to be asked was what kind of role the women's organizations play during the elections. And on what bases were women elected. According to Amneh no women organizations supported her she stated, “The played a negative role with me in the elections, after I entered the elections I am able to confidently state that women oppress women more than men do , they always put each other down” She highlighted the fact that they only support their members.

When I’tidal in Battier was asked if women’s organizations helped her in the elections she replied, “*yes they helped a lot*” she also feels that Ngo’s have helped encourage women to participate in the community. Furthermore many workshops were given before the elections concerning empowering women, woman’s rights,

This shows that woman's organizations support doesn't necessary reach to all women even though the main umbrella that they work under is to support and empower all women.

This wasn't the case with Ameneh in Nahaleen. After entering the elections there was clear violation against her and her family making her quit. She told us her story as following, first of all at the beginning of her campaign she said that there was no sort of discrimination against her on the contrary she gained the support of her husband and family and friends. After the elections were over and she started to work in the village council she was shocked by the discrimination against women and the constant attempts to marginalize them. First of all, mobile phones were given to all the members of the village council, yet not to the women, for they were not counted as members. Secondly they used to set the times to hold meetings very late at night knowing that this will be difficult for the female members to attend. Despite this they were always present at the meetings however late they were held at night. They also used to assign and cancel meetings without informing the females present. Furthermore, she told us her story about how problems started, Problems in the village council started from day one. The main problem started when we had to vote for the head of the village council. As a member of Fateh I decided to vote for a Fateh representative. However, when it was requested from all those who wanted to run for the elections to raise their hands, I was surprised to see that there was no one from Fateh. The only person who raised his hand was a member of Hamas and since no one else was running to be head I assumed that all the Fateh members are going to vote for him, so I also gave him my voice. What I did

not know was that all the Fateh members were on an agreement that they are going to place blank papers as votes, and none of them told me that.

This is where all the problems started. They kept holding that against me and accused me of being a member of Hamas. However, I think I need to state the fact that the person who was elected worked for the village not for a political party. He didn't differentiate between Fateh and Hamas. He helped me in getting the kindergarten; he supported my work even though he knew I was Fateh. Then the other members started sending reports to Ramallah accusing me of working against Fateh and that I was working for Hamas even though this is pure nonsense. They tried to pressure me through my husband they kept sending him to at work to different far places like Jericho and Jenin, and froze his promotion in ranks. The head of the village council at that time told me I will”

When asked if she encourages other women to enter the elections she replied, “Yes of course I do, even though my experience can't be considered a successful one”

The Jab'a village is the worst when it comes to the political role that women play. Women did not even enter the elections, the women were told that since the population of the village does not exceed 1000 people that don't have the right to elect in the village council elections and that people are assigned instead of elected. They still haven't reached to the level of realizing their rights.

Since the Qota places women in the village council regardless the fact if the males wanted such a thing. All the women we interview admitted to the fact that they see that the only reason they are present in the village council is because of the Quota and if it wasn't there they would have the chance to be where they are. It is clear that the male's mentality has not reached a stage where they free willingly choose to have women in the village council. However Ameneh told us in her interview that the number one person who helped her while she was in the village council was the head of the village council committee she stated that he believed that she had the ability to be a true leader he even stated according to her, *"I would resign as a head if I am sure that you will take my place"*

Moreover, women support other women in time of elections, but they do not base their support on women as individuals as much as they do on family names and political parties. The women we interviewed found it almost impossible for a woman to win in the elections if she was not supported or backed up by a big family or a political party. In the women's group interview in the walageh the women called upon the fact that they don't see that the right women reached the right positions and that the elections were based on family names. When we asked the women in the village council about to what extent did her family name and political party help her respond was that she won because of her participations a services that she has offered the community and had nothing to do with her political party or family name.

Economy

After signing the Oslo Agreement there has been a clear decline in the Palestinian economy. This is due to the bad political situation, for there has been confiscations of vast areas of lands which are considered to be the number one source of income for farmers and people of the village, also not forgetting the restrictions inflicted on peoples movement. The poor situation has evidently damaged the Palestinian economy, effecting the Palestinian family especially children and women. Because of this Palestinian women took a stand and entered the work field in order to provide for her family. She worked in farming, even though there is lack in lands, hand crafts, in addition to educating herself, for education has increased among village women.

The Palestinian woman has profound powers that have not been totally used. The society has deprived itself from such powers which have a clear impact of society's growth and development. Women's participation in society is considered a must. This is why in our center we strive to help empower women and remove all the obstacles standing in her way. Women have deservedly proven themselves worthy in the work field, for one cannot ignore her accomplishments and the effect she has had on society. We are not calling for women to over-throw men or to start a revolution against them, we are calling that women's rights be respected and that she be given an equal chance to prove herself and be equal in the chances that males get.

In the villages we visited the uneducated women worked in farms or at home where that embroidered, sewed, and made handcraft. 95% of the educated women worked as teachers. While a large percentage of women work in

agriculture labor force the majority work as unpaid family labor, making them unable to generate any kind of income to the family, instead of their jobs it's turned into their duty.

Conclusion:

To conclude, there is a vital need to establish job creation schemes for women in order to improve their economical status. This without doubt will lead to an improvement in women's participation in society as active members and help her enhance her individuality. We would like to point out the fact that even though the five villages seem similar, yet if they differ in numerous aspects such as the realizations of rights, health care, and people's mentality. So we find that it will be very difficult to use one methodology in all the villages. Moreover, one the factor that we found has indirectly pulled women down is the political division among the Palestinians. This lies as an obstacle for many women, for example if a women wants to run for elections she has to have a political party backing her up, if not, it will be impossible for her to win. Also, if women want to attended activities in the village's club they will be considered s followers of the political party that helps the club.

In addition, we found that a large number of women lack the realization of their rights. They see nothing wrong with what is happening around them and that there is no sort of discrimination in the villages they live in, and that each sex lives according to how they should. Yet we cannot eliminate the fact that some women, even though very few have reached the realization of their rights and have awaken demanding being able to play a bigger role in society.

Women possess numerous skills that may help boost their status in society if used correctly. Consequently, we see that it is very important to offer them training in order to improve these skills

Glossary and definition

Capacity building: for the researcher it is about giving women self-confidence. It could also be called self-confident building. Capacity building is the education NGOs offer women so that they will be aware about their own capacity in politics, on the work market etc. Giving women the capacity to know what to do when they take place in politics, what their rights are, so they can act out these rights. Without women's development our development will be for seen. It includes development skills for women, preparing them for their new roles, legal reforms, administrative structures and mechanism that will work to change the crippling bureaucratic attitudes. Giving women knowledge and awareness about their rights is the key issue.

What is Capacity Development?

In the field of development, the concept of *capacity development* emerged in the 1980s and became the central purpose of technical assistance in the 1990s. It is most commonly defined as the process by which individuals, groups, institutions and organizations improve their ability to perform functions, identify and solve problems efficiently and to understand and deal with their development need in a broader context and in a sustainable manner.

What is a Capacity Assessment?

It stands to reason that to improve, one must first measure existing ability and know-how. Such an evaluation is of particular importance if financial, political or other reasons contribute a strong rationale for utilizing and strengthening existing capabilities rather than starting from scratch.

A *capacity assessment* is an exercise undertaken to appraise the *existing capacity* of an individual or collective entity to perform key functions and deliver expected results. Thus, a capacity assessment links latent capacity with performance. A capacity assessment is an integral and indispensable part of any capacity development process. It may be conducted by an external assessor or be internalized as standard management practice. It can be an ad-hoc event or can (and should) be part of ongoing management and programming processes.

Depending on the context of the problem and the resources available, a capacity assessment can be conducted at one or more levels-organization, sector, or individual. But regardless of the entry point, a capacity assessment must take account of the interconnectedness of capacity issues between the targeted level(s) and the enabling environment.

NGO Nongovernmental organization:

The term NGO is applied to a wide range of organizations, which are not established or operated by government. NGOs are usually private, non-profit organizations, which are run by their members.

Village council

Is a type of local government used in the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) for Palestinian localities that usually number between 800-3,000 inhabitants. The village council is also known D-level municipalities. There are 220 village councils in the Palestinian territories.

Village councils could consist of three to eleven members, including a chairman, a deputy chairman and secretary. The chairman is the head of the council. Unlike municipalities, village councils do not hold elections; rather, the representatives of a village's largest clans choose a chairman who is then appointed by the Local Government Minister of the Palestinian National Authority

Quotas reserved seats are a system that guarantees women a certain number of seats in the Local government independent of the electoral result. In Palestine seats are reserved for women by law, the country has a quota system with reserved seats with direct elections which means that there are certain seats for women to whom only women are allowed to contest. The quotas system has been used in Palestine in different forms for a couple of years; in politics on local level for women and people from certain castes and tribes when the representative on village-, block- and district level is appointed.

Community Profile

Battir Village

January 2009

Overview:

Battir is a Palestinian village, which is a village for Bany Hassan tribe. In the past Battir was considered to be part of Jerusalem, but following 1948, the village was considered to belong geographically to the Bethlehem governorate.

90% of the lands of Battir are considered as area C under Oslo agreement. Battir village lies adjacent to the Armistice line (Green Line) and is located 6 kilometres west of Bethlehem city. The village occupies a total area of 7165 Dunums and has a total population of 5500 inhabitants over a span of 5.6 kilometres according to the head of the village council, and 3960 inhabitants according to PCBS 2007.

About 671 Dunums of Battir lands lay west of the Armistice Line (Green Line). Battir citizens have continued cultivating these parcels of land based on 1949 Rhodos agreements signed by the Jordanian and Israeli Governments. The Agreement allowed Battir residents to continue cultivating their own land west of the Armistice Line.

Battir and the surrounding villages are well known of their springs and high valuable agricultural land. They represent the source of fruits and vegetables for Bethlehem District. Battir is also located within an area of an exceptionally high landscape quality. The area on both sides of the

Armistice Line is covered with agricultural plants and forest trees in addition to olive trees. The village is also famous for its historical monuments such as ancient houses that go back to the times of the Romans, tombs and coloured stones.

On April 21, 2005, the Israeli occupation forces handed six Palestinian villages (Al Walajeh, Battir, Husan, Wad-Fukin, Al Qabu and Surif) the military order number **(86/05/T, Judea & Samaria, 2005)**. The military order specifies the land seizure of 756.5 Dunums from the aforementioned villages to construct a Wall with a total length of 10,560 meters and an average width of 130 meters. However, measurements of the seized area conducted by the GIS (Geographical Information System) department at the Applied Research Institute-Jerusalem (ARIJ) showed that the actual size of the targeted area as indicated in the military order stands at 970 Dunums and isolates about 3500 Dunums west of the Wall; a miscalculation that habitually occurs with Israeli military orders

On February 19, 2006, the Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) handed the same villages an updated military order numbered **(86/05/T, Judea & Samaria, 2006)**, specifying the land seizure of 766 Dunums from the aforementioned villages to construct a Wall with a total length of 10,466 meters and an average width of 130 meters, additionally 2790 Dunums will be isolated west of the Wall from the six village's lands. The updated military order indicated shifting in the Route of the Segregation Wall in Battir and Husan villages, where the Wall was moved few meters to the west.

The Segregation Wall in Battir

According to the military order, the section of the Segregation Wall to be constructed on Battir lands has a total length of 3 km extending from southwest to the northwest of Battir village. Moreover, the Segregation Wall will isolate 229 Dunums from Battir lands; that is 3% of the village total land will be segregated west of the Wall

On February 20, 2005, the Israeli Ministry of Defense issued an updated plan of the Segregation Wall in the West Bank. Villages located south and southwest of Bethlehem, including Battir, witnessed a change in the Wall route. Whereby, Bethlehem western rural villages (Battir, Husan, Nahalin and Wadi Fuqin) will be enclaves by two Walls one in the east that runs along bypass road number 60 and one in the west that runs parallel to the Green Line. These villages will be segregated from the rest of Bethlehem Governorate (main service provider) the only link will be through a tunnel that links them with Al Khader. The tunnel ends at a terminal that falls under the Israeli forces supervision and controls the Palestinian movement both ways of it.

Nowadays, to be able to access other surrounding villages such as Alwalajeh the people have to go through Bethlehem city, although the distance between the two villages is very short and can be accessed within 10 minutes.

In the case of Battir, the Wall will not pass along and on the Green Line; rather 3.3 km of the Segregation Zone will penetrate the north-western and western parts of Battir village. In addition, about 230 Dunums of Battir land are seized for the construction of the Wall. A total of 626 Dunums will be isolated behind the Wall.

Economic Situation:

- Farmers have been working in Israel as workers or in settlements, but ever since the second Intifada started it has been extremely difficult to obtain work permits. The Israeli authorities have imprisoned / issue fines those who try to cultivate their land which lies in the confiscated section. Never the less, agriculture is considered the main source of income. There are almost 350 unemployed, according to the head of the village council.
- Around 35-40 % of the labour force is unemployed. According to the head of the village council 'the markets are closed because anything we can sell could only be sold in Jerusalem. Bethlehem has a limited market for the residents of Battir. 0 % of our goods can be sold in Jerusalem because it is almost impossible for us to obtain permits to enter.' Furthermore, sometimes there is a closed checkpoint at the entrance of the village where by people cannot even reach Bethlehem.
- There are two olive pressers, construction workshops, mechanics' workshop, bakery, grocery and butchery.
- 50-70 families that escaped to the Gulf States and those try to send money back to help other families. Some might even come back due to the economic situation.
- There is a need for rehabilitation and work opportunities - according to the head of the village council.
- UNRWA also supports in providing sort of social welfare - employment programme that provides some income.
- Some people forced into selling off jewellery & lands

- The standard of living in general has gone down from what it used to be.

Education:

- There are four schools in Battir; 2 of which are secondary, and one is an UNRWA secondary school for girls that were established in 1954 (as 99% fled to Jordan in 1948, but came back and kept the village).
- Recently the inhabitants collected money, and they received donations from World Vision of 100,000 USD to build a new secondary school for girls. The residents also helped in providing workers and material for free.
- Due to the difficult economic situation the number of students wishing to have a higher education dropped from 1500 to 350 students, as parents cannot afford paying tuition and transportation, this is according to the head of the village council.
- Although in 1934 the first student to attend university was from Battir.
- Today there are 250 university graduates. 'It has been difficult to find work for them - there are no opportunities' said the head of the village council.
- The Israeli municipality does not permit the expansion of schools.
- The boys' school faces a problem in that it lies on the green line, thus it is very difficult to rehabilitate the school. The head of the village council explained that he couldn't understand why the Palestinian Authority has built a school in a very small village in the Eastern side of Bethlehem where by most of the classes are empty since the

population is too small! While it does not provide any sort of support for Battir and surrounding villages.

Health:

- There is a health clinic in the village, which was built by the village council, and one family Dr. is present in that clinic.
- There is no hospital in the village or specialized health clinics thus when the roads are blocked, the health situation deteriorates as residents can't reach Bethlehem or Beitjala's hospitals.
- In the past there was a program sponsored by the Italians, which had both local and international doctor's volunteers in the local health clinic.
- Additionally there is a pharmacy in the village.

The Village Council and other NGOs:

- The village council is made up of 7 men and 2 women. The head of the village council is an engineer who was elected several times - he has been there for 13 years. The elections should be held again in September 2009
- Battir has a few local organizations: Women & child centre as well as a women's committee, an educational centre, an educational forum, a sports club, and a charity centre. These centers are either old or new and are independent of each other thus having their own policies and political agendas. These centres try to be active and effective but due to the political situation encompassing them they tend to have limited

capabilities. According to the head of the village council, these organizations try to be active, and he feels that their work is seasonal. The workers in those organizations are volunteers. Yet, there is a council which is made up of representatives of these organizations.

- There aren't many initiatives in the village to improve the situation.
- Oxfam GB used to work in Battir but it stopped its projects over there.
- The village council feels that most projects target the North of the West Bank, or at the most the villages do not receive any budgets from the Bethlehem municipality money. For example, there was a 20 million USD in donations to Bethlehem but none of which was received by the surrounding villages.
- The village council tries its best to carry out infrastructure work such as paving streets, but still more should be done to improve the situation. The inhabitants tend to pay for anything that needs to be done, however this is very hard because money is rarely present.
- Battir is a member in the common village council - 6 villages, which is made up of 6 different villages.
- Council of 'Shared Services', which includes 19 locations West & East of Bethlehem. These have one thing in common lack of funds, although occasional ventures do happen.
- The village council collects an amount of 15 NIS from each household per month to collect the garbage from the village. Although there is no effective taxation system.
- According to the head of the village council ' it is very hard to get budgets from the government - in 2007 Battir had a budget of 270,000 NIS but only 70,000 to 40,000 NIS reaches the village.' From other

discussions this may be due to the new law of ‘solvency law’ issued in 2008. As people were not paying their water bills or other taxes. ‘INGOs and international community donates to the PA, but nothing reaches the villages.’

- The street in the village was paved by UNDP and the Islamic Bank.
- The village council was also able to provide lights in the streets.
- There are eleven families in the village in general, but they are branches of three different ‘Hamola’.

Water:

- Battir has 7 water springs, all of which are contaminated as there is no sanitation network in the village and thus the ‘dirty’ water reaches the water springs. Although those provide 2450 cubes of water which is used for agriculture.
- The Palestinian water authority does not provide Battir and surrounding villages with any sanitation nor water network.
- The water that reaches Battir comes from the Aztion settlement. It costs 2.68 NIS per cube, and the village council charges 4.00 NIS per cube.
- The water situation in the summer is very difficult especially that the water passes several villages and locations before it reaches Battir.
(May till September)

Contact information

Contact person	Village	Number
Eman Hajahjreh	Jab'a	0599431803
Itidal Moumar Mouna Zagyer	Battir	0522378971 0598905214
Siham Al Araj	Al walajeh	2767181
Raja Yassrer	Husan	0598426883
Nawal Fanoun	Nahalin	0522240412