



Democracy & Workers' Rights Center-Palestine
مركز الديمقراطية وحقوق العاملين - فلسطين

Participatory needs' assessment study

**for the socio-economic empowerment of women in fishing communities
in the Salateen area in the North governorate & the Swedish village in
Rafah**



This study is part of the project: "Promotion of solidarity based economy in Gaza empowering women in the local economy"

Implemented in partnership with Nexus Emilia Romagna

& co-financed by Emilia Romagna Region

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Introduction

This study was prepared by the Democracy and Workers' Rights Center in the Gaza Strip, in partnership with Nexus Emilia Romagna and with the support of the Emilia Romagna Region.

It forms part of the action plan for a project aiming at developing the capacities of women in the Gaza Strip, and strengthen economic solidarity and cooperation in the fishing community. The aim of the participatory study is to describe the economic, social and cultural factors that affect the situation of the targeted communities in the Swedish village in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip, and the Salateen neighborhood in Beit Lahiya, in the northern Gaza Strip, provide the basis for a detailed baseline about the economic and social dimensions of the project, and useful information to develop a detailed operational plan for the empowerment of women in the targeted communities through the establishment of joint productive and solidarity projects to improve their economic opportunities. The intended beneficiaries and local communities were involved in the preparation of the study in order to issue practical recommendations based on their situation and future aspirations.

I. Study framework

Study objectives:

This study aims to:

- Highlight the economic, social and cultural factors that affect the situation of the targeted communities in the Swedish village in Rafah, and the Salateen neighborhood in Beit Lahia in the northern Gaza governorate
- Provide a detailed baseline for the economic and social dimensions of the project, and information that will be useful for developing a detailed operational plan for empowering women in the targeted communities to establishment of joint solidarity projects to improve their economic opportunities.
- Involve beneficiaries (women) and their families, local authorities, non-governmental organizations and fishermen's union, in the formulation of recommendations in order to ensure the effectiveness of planned activities and steps for the creation of two cooperatives
- Analyzing and identifying practical and strategic needs of men and women, and identifying common interests between women and men, and resources to ensure the feasibility and sustainability of planned activities, and come up with recommendations and strategies to ensure the sustainability of the project

Study determinants

This study focuses on the fishing community in the Gaza Strip, and specifically on the targeted communities and women in the Swedish village in Rafah and Al-Salateen area in Beit Lahia.

Study importance

This study draws its importance from the importance of addressing widespread poverty and unemployment in the Gaza Strip. The percentage of families in Gaza living under the poverty line and in deep poverty is extremely high. The group targeted by the study (fishing communities) constitutes a marginalized group in the Gaza Strip. Fishing communities form part of Gaza's social fabric, and have been bearing the brunt of the Israeli blockade and measures that drain their resources and jeopardize their future. The effects of the Israeli occupation are complemented by a range of internal economic, social, cultural and political factors, due to which this category of the population is facing extremely dire social and economic conditions.

Study methodology

The study relied on the following methodology to achieve its objectives:

1. Collection and review of the literature and previous local studies and information from various sources (statistics, laws, policies and documents) in order to provide a brief description about the economic, social and cultural reality in the Gaza Strip in general, and the situation of women and the fishing community in particular

2. Collection and analysis of information in the field through:

- a. Personal interviews with decision-makers from representatives of different ministries (Labour - Social Affairs), in addition to representatives of the municipalities in the targeted areas, about the economic, social and cultural factors that affect the situation in the targeted communities in the Swedish village and Salateen area, and integrate them with a more general overview of the situation in the Gaza Strip more generality
- b. Interviews with local stakeholders, local authorities and non-governmental organizations, women's organizations and fishermen's union, beneficiaries and women working in the informal economy in activities related to fishing, and are interested in the establishment of the cooperative.
- c. Preparation of a research questionnaire and implementation of focus group meetings with the targeted groups of women, taking into account that women of all ages, levels of education, social culture and social situation are represented in order to assess their specific situation and needs

II. General context analysis for the project

1. Background on the general political, social, economic and cultural context in the Gaza Strip

In the Gaza Strip, one and a half million Palestinians live in poverty and poor economic conditions. The poverty rate has recently exceeded 80%, as the Israeli occupying power tightened its comprehensive blockade imposed on the Palestinian territory, and reinforced its procedures aiming at isolating the population, in particular residents of the Gaza Strip. As a result, the size of the humanitarian disaster and crisis experienced by Palestinian men and women has doubled, turning the Gaza Strip into a huge collective prison, whose population is denied freedom of movement and whose economy has been strangled (Palestinian Center for Human Rights, 2008).

The residents of the Gaza Strip have been suffering from the Israeli occupation, its violations of international humanitarian law and its collective punishment measures since the beginning of the occupation in 1967. These violations have grown in intensity and scale after the outbreak of the Second Intifada in September 2000. The policy of blockade and continued closure of the Gaza Strip through the control of border crossings, denial of freedom of travel, education and medical treatment, has rendered the situation in the Gaza Strip akin to a ticking time bomb. Violence exercised by the Israeli occupying power through all its policies has led to widening the circle of violence and poverty, which directly impacts the situation of women and children (Al Mezan Center for Human Rights, 2008). Negative effects on women, especially social, economic and psychological effects, have also increased.

Repeated Israeli military attacks against the Gaza Strip have increased poverty and unemployment among the Palestinian population, through their targeting of the infrastructure, destruction of thousands of housing units and economic establishments, which has deprived thousands of workers from their job opportunities (Ministry of Economy – 2012)

2. Background on women's situation in the Gaza Strip under Israeli occupation and internal division

Residents of the Gaza Strip are experiencing difficult social, political and economic situation, especially with the imposition of the Israeli siege on the Gaza Strip from September 20, 2007, after the Israeli government's decision to consider the Gaza Strip a hostile entity. This blockade has substantially contributed to a serious deterioration of the human rights situation in the Gaza Strip, especially economic, social and cultural rights, as this siege is the worst and most severe since the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories in 1967 (Mezan Center for Human Rights 2007). This deterioration has overshadowed the lives of Palestinian women in the Gaza Strip, as their living conditions and social, psychological and economic status has deteriorated, while their burden has increased. The situation has reached catastrophic proportions, especially after the launch of the Israeli war on the Gaza Strip in the December, 27, 2008; 110 Palestinian women and 355 children were killed in Operation Cast Lead, while the total number of Palestinians killed during the Israeli offensive reached 1410 (Mezan Center, 2009). Furthermore, 763 homes headed by

women were destroyed and damaged, while 10,356 homes headed by men were destroyed totally or partially damaged. This war on the Gaza Strip, which lasted for 22 days, also caused the displacement of 107,330 people living in these houses (Al Mezan Center Report, 2009).

In addition to the daunting consequences of Israeli military offensives against the civilian population, Palestinian women have also been affected by the consequences of the internal division. Women and children are the weakest link in situations of crisis and infighting, and sometimes constitute a means of pressure and lever. A study (Women's Affairs Center, 2008) showed that the internal political division had consequences for every Palestinian family, and had a negative impact on family and social relations. It also undermined relations with people's social network, i.e. friends, neighbors and acquaintances. Its impact for Palestinian women was that they became more likely to be exposed to domestic violence and social threats from social or political forces in their communities, as a result of the chaos generated by the political and security situation in the Gaza Strip.

The aforementioned study confirmed that domestic violence has increased significantly after the internal political division, because of disagreements about political affiliations, or because of poverty and unemployment. Women found themselves powerless to confront the violence exerted against them. Many husbands emigrated, and left their families and their children alone, as a result of fear of harassment and arrest due to their political affiliation to other parties, which created additional sufferings to women, who became responsible for supporting their households alone.

A study about the psychological and social effects on women, who lost family members, (Women's Affairs' Center, 2008) indicated that women, who lost sons to the infighting are suffering from additional psychological problems resulting from feelings of hatred and lack of acceptance of others, and their orientation towards isolation, depression, and disintegration of family relationships.

Women's participation rate in the labor force remains extremely low, at 16% in 2013 in the Gaza Strip compared to 66% for men. The disastrous impacts of the blockade and Israeli military offensives on Gaza's economy, combined with the negative effects of the internal political situation, have rendered it extremely difficult for women to find gainful formal employment. As a result, the unemployment rate among women has reached 53%, compared to 28% among them. Women are mostly working in traditional sectors, i.e. agriculture and services.

3. The situation of the fishing sector and fishermen in the Gaza Strip

a. The situation of fishermen according to the farmer's union study

The Palestinian fishing sector is an important economic sector in terms of its participation to the Palestinian national income, in addition to employing a large number of fishermen, estimated at 3,500 fishermen, and about 500 people working in occupations associated with fishing, such as fish traders, mechanics, electricians, fishing boat builders, carpenters for fishing tools, etc . The fish caught at sea is also an important source of protein that contributes in ensuring food security for Palestinians. However, this sector is facing many problems, including of a political nature, caused by the Israeli occupation of Palestinian

territorial waters, and the closure of border crossings, which prevents the entry of spare parts into the Gaza Strip, in addition to preventing the export of fish to the West Bank.

It is also facing environmental issues, due to the dumping of sewage into the sea, and the use of prohibited nets and fishing methods by fishermen, which has a significant impact in impeding the growth of the fishing sector. In addition, the sector is affected by weak management of fishing resources by governmental and non-governmental institutions.

It could be argued that local problems can be solved through concerted local efforts, but the biggest problem facing the fishing sector is the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territorial waters, which entails frequent closure of the sea by the Israeli occupying power, thus depriving Palestinian fishermen and citizens of Palestinian from this important economic resource. This leaves them dependent upon food aid and other forms of assistance from social aid institutions.

The closure of the sea up to 3 nautical miles after the December 2008 - January 2009 Israeli offensive against Gaza has an extremely negative impact on the fishing sector. Many fishing boats were prevented from exercising their activity, and the category most affected were motor launches, which stopped fishing sardines, which represent 40 to 70% of the total fish catch.

Israel did not solely shut down 89% of Palestinian territorial waters, but it continued its violations of Palestinian fishermen's most basic human rights, as many were shot at, causing injuries sometimes fatal, or arrested, to intimidate fishermen and vandalise their property.

The frustration felt by all those working in the fishing sector, because of the huge problems and difficulties they have been facing, has not succeeded in breaking the determination of Palestinian fishermen to pursue their activity, despite their increasing poverty and sufferings. Despite all odds, they have held on to their fishing nets and boats, maintained their presence at sea, and stated their right to live and make a livelihood of their choosing.

b. Comments to the fishing agreement (according to the Oslo agreements of 1993)

- 1- Israel did not allow the implementation of the agreement on fishing that stipulated that Palestinian fishermen would have access to 20 nautical miles, but only allowed them to fish up to 12 nautical miles during the relatively quiet times preceding the second Intifada (1994-2000)
- 2- If one calculates the area, where Palestinian fishing should have been authorized, based on a distance of 20 nautical miles from Gaza's shore, it would have meant access to a surface of 512 nautical square miles; when calculated on the basis of 12 nautical miles, the surface is estimated at 430 nautical square miles. One can visualize how small this area is considering that 71% of the surface of the earth is covered by water (139 million square miles, whereas seas and oceans represent more than 97% of this area)

Coastal fishing is a traditional occupation in the Gaza Strip, passed on by parents to their children. There is limited progress in the development of the Palestinian fishing sector despite the great efforts invested by local and international governmental and non-governmental organizations in helping fishermen to increase

their catch. The political circumstances experienced by Palestine, in particular the continuation of the Israeli occupation and its constant restrictions on the fishing sector, particularly reduction of the fishing area and prohibiting Palestinian fishermen from reaching the open sea like other fishermen in the world, has significantly reduced the possibilities of developing and increasing the contribution of the fishing sector in the national income as an important economic activity.

c. Importance of fishing activities for the national economy

- 1- Meeting the demands of local consumers by satisfying the requirements of the domestic market, so that consumers can fulfil their needs for a major food item
- 2- Obtaining fresh fish that can be prepared in various ways as per consumers' preferences
- 3- Employing a large number of workers in the fields of: fishing, manufacturing and maintenance of boats, well as in associated businesses such as selling fishing equipment, marketing, storage and transportation, in addition to the fish salting industry, which means that there are occupations with a direct link to fishing and others that are indirectly linked to it, but remain dependent upon it.
- 4- Contribute to the GDP, and achieving increased added value whenever it is possible to develop this activity.
- 5- Although exporting fish has been prohibited by the Israeli occupying power, Israel fresh fish of poor quality is imported with, including sea fish and freshwater fish.

4. Background on cooperative work

Cooperatives are voluntary civil society organizations, which are self-managed and formed by persons, who voluntarily decide to unite in order to serve their economic, social and cultural interests and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically managed project. The international logo for cooperatives consists of three equal rings symbolizing freedom, justice and equality in their economic activity. The International cooperative alliance has adopted the following cooperative principles:

- 1- Elective membership open to all without discrimination based on sex, social status, ethnicity, political affiliation, or religion; cooperatives are considered as neutral ground
- 2- Democratic management of cooperatives, which are governed by their members; members participate in adopting its policies and have an equal voting right (one vote for each member)
- 3- Members contribute fairly to the capital of cooperatives and obtain profits commensurate to their dealings with the cooperative; the balance is devoted to developing the cooperative and supporting other activities
- 4- Self-management and independence of cooperatives, which are managed by their members and financed by them; cooperatives can cooperate with other organizations or with governments, either at the administrative level or for funding, on the condition that they maintain their democracy and independence.

- 5- Education, training and information provision to the members of cooperatives, their elected leaderships and employees so that they can contribute with efficiency in developing their cooperatives
- 6- Cooperation among cooperatives to serve their members more efficiently and reinforce the cooperative movement through joint work through local, regional, and international cooperative organizations and federations
- 7- Paying attention to the community for sustainable social development; cooperatives provide services in the field of health, education, the provision of drinking water, etc, to their communities through policies approved by their members. The most important types of cooperatives are as follows:
 - a. Multipurpose cooperatives that exert all types of economic and social activities
 - b. Consumer cooperatives
 - c. Agricultural cooperatives
 - d. Professional cooperatives for producers exercising a certain occupation
 - e. Services cooperatives such as housing cooperatives, school cooperatives, transport cooperatives, electricity cooperatives and other types of service oriented cooperatives

Cooperatives require greater umbrella institutions such as States, so that they can contribute to sustainable development. The State can provide legal and administrative services such as registration, development and training in administrative and vocational matters, lending, protection from natural disasters, economy issues and the market, etc. ..

5. Cooperatives in Palestine

a. Cooperatives in Palestine

There are about 500 cooperative associations in the Palestinian territory and more than a 1000 cooperatives that are not active. About half of them are agricultural cooperatives, a third are housing cooperatives and the remainder services, professional and consumer cooperatives. Historically, cooperation and cooperative work was linked with the popular culture, local customs and traditions, and values. Among them, we can mention “al-Awna” and solidarity among members of families and clans, which used to organize people’s activities in times of joy, crisis and with regard to their businesses.

Cooperatives and cooperative work are influenced by the general Palestinian context. A weak economy and related social transformations have turned about half of the labor force into bureaucrats and non-productive employees in Gaza. In addition, a new culture has emerged dominated by the precepts of the consumer society, and aversion to political parties and social institutions, such as cooperatives. The political situation is also affecting values, as it is characterized by a lack of sovereignty, division and lack of political will among the population, which is languishing as an hostage to Israel and exposed to aggression in all its forms.

b. The role of cooperatives in Palestine – situation and perspectives

The philosophy of cooperative work is based on collective participatory work instead of individual work, and the unification of resources and efforts rather than their fragmentation and distribution. It considers that individual interests are a part of collective interests, instead of being placed above them. It relies on the rule of the community spirit rather than individualism in managing community resources.

The advantages of cooperative work lie in the pooling of resources and their complementarity, and cost savings as a result of collective demand and purchase of raw materials and means of production, instead of being scattered. It also achieves efficient performance in the recruitment of human resources by raising capacities, dissemination of knowledge and ensuring that human resources have a feeling of ownership towards their project and are keen on its success and development. It ensures as well the efficiency of the collective use of material resources to achieve the maximum returns possible. Credit & lending cooperatives undertake to finance the projects of their members. Finally, production cooperatives ensure the storage and mass marketing of the products of their members at the lowest cost and for the greatest profits, which are being distributed fairly and part of which contribute in social responsibility projects.

In the Palestinian context, some of the benefits of cooperative work is protecting the land and supporting the steadfastness of its residents through providing best organizational and economic forms to make use of the land, through agriculture, housing or any services field. It also helps in fighting unemployment, addressing needs and poverty, and moving from social relief work for marginalized groups, which has proved its failure over the past years, to organized work that contributes in achieving competitiveness in production. Cooperatives aim at providing job opportunities and income to their members through their collective active and keen participation in its projects

c. Obstacles faced by the cooperative movement in Palestine

- Weakness of the cooperative culture among the society and low awareness about its benefits and proper ways to undertake cooperative work, whereas there is a propagation of an individualistic culture and lower willingness to cooperate and undertake volunteer work, especially among young people. If take participation in workshops as a tool of measurement, attention is drawn to the fact that most of the male audience is older, and youth constitute a minority. Thus, it appears that there an age gap is emerging in the cooperative movement, which may prevent leadership being passed from one generation to the next
- The legal, administrative and political environment that should support cooperative work is obsolete, and incentives for cooperatives are weak
- There is a weakness of democratic practice in cooperative associations, leading to low cooperative awareness among members of these associations, and a decline in the ability of cooperatives to meet the real needs of their members and thus play an active role in community development.
- There is a widespread phenomenon of phantom and formal membership, which is not based on belief in cooperative values; these members are thus not actively engaged in cooperative work, and are motivated by individual interest, instead of being moved by a collective spirit and enthusiasm for the benefit of the group.
- There have been cases of emergence of phantom projects, aimed only at attracting funding, leading to the turning cooperatives into artificial structures, with no real work on the ground.
- There is a low level of networking, linkage and complementarity between cooperatives working in the same field
- According to the director of the General Union of Cooperatives, one should be cautious about some figures that have been published about cooperatives, as they are not representative of the real situation and one should not build any conclusions based on them

IV. Study findings

1. Indicators of the economic weakness of fishermen's families

1- Dependency on humanitarian aid

Studies indicated that 78.8% of the families of fishermen depend on humanitarian aid, particularly families living in deep poverty. In fact, 90.5% of the families that receive assistance are living in deep poverty.

This aid is mostly food aid. 93.4% of the aid received by families is food assistance and only 4.6% is cash assistance.

In addition, studies indicated that 78.7% of the humanitarian assistance received by fishermen families comes from UNRWA, 11% from the World Food Program, and the remainder from the Palestinian Social Affairs Ministry. The majority of this assistance is obtained periodically, every two or three months, and mostly includes basic food staples, such as flour, beans and vegetal oil.

2- Factors that affect the fishing sector

This section describes the most important factors that have contributed to the deterioration of the fishing sector in the Gaza Strip, while measuring the impact of these factors based on related statistical indicators and comparing them to most recent data, including points of reference in the context of different circumstances. In addition, it shows how fishermen interact with these factors, based on their opinions, and their appreciation of the strength of their impact on their work in this sector.

a. External factors

- **Israeli measures against fishermen**

Israeli forces have placed barriers and obstacles to prevent fishermen from exercising their profession by using all possible means, such as:

- Reducing the permitted fishing area to only 3 miles, an area poor in fishing resources (as per study entitled "Cultivation without land and fishing without water" undertaken with technical support from FAO in May 2010).
- Arresting fishermen and assaulting them physically while they are at sea or close to the Gaza, Khan Younis or Rafah shore, i.e. in waters where fishing is allowed for Palestinians within the area of 12 miles by article 11 of the Oslo agreements
- Deliberately shooring at fishermen, causing injury to some
- Continuous damaging or confiscation of fishing boats by Israeli military vessels

- Confiscating permits granted to fishermen, in addition to daily controls and harassment by the Israeli navy
- Closure and imposition of sea blockade: Israeli occupying forces regularly enforce a siege on the Gaza Strip and close the sea for fishermen, thus violating international laws and customs

In 2010, the Palestinian Center for Human Rights registered 20 complaints of violations of the rights of fishermen, including injuries, arrests, confiscation and damaging of fishing tools. In addition, there are dozens of daily aggressions that have been monitored and documented according to fishermen testimonies. According to the official reports issued by the Fishing Resources Department at the Ministry of Agriculture, the losses of fishermen have reached 40 million US dollars during the past five years, of them 25 million of indirect losses resulting from Israeli closure and sea blockade, and 15 million as direct losses due to sinking of boats, destruction of fishing nets, confiscation of the machinery on fishing boats, confiscation of fishing boats, detention of fishermen and imposition of financial penalties on them. An opinion survey conducted among fishing communities in the Gaza Strip showed that they all concur about the high impact of these measures on the fishing sector and the work of fishermen in the Gaza Strip.

- As a direct result of the blockade imposed on Gaza, there have been repeated increases of the price of fishing tools; the blockade has also sometimes caused a penury of these tools. Testimonies from fishermen and competent authorities indicated that fishermen require an amount estimated at 17,000 US dollars for traction boats, 8000 US dollars for small launches, 3000 US dollars for small boats. They also need to provide the necessary tools and equipment, spare parts and necessary maintenance during every fishing season.

b. Internal factors

These factors are related to the internal context of the Gaza Strip, and concern the capacities of human resources in fishing communities, techniques used, the capacity to plan and propose alternatives, or the capacities of grassroots organizations, etc.

These factors are complementary with aforementioned external factors, and contribute in exacerbating the four major problems that were highlighted based on the opinion of the fishing community and actors active in this sector, such as international institutions and civil society organizations. These problems are as follows:

1. Growth of human and material losses caused by the Israeli attacks.
2. Weakness of production in the fishing sector
3. Inefficient marketing process of the product
4. Deficiencies in the role of grassroots organizations representing fishermen, and limited capacities and resources of competent governmental agencies

In order to address these four issues, fishermen lack the following capacities:

1. Regarding the growth of human and material losses caused by the Israeli attacks:

- There is no clear mechanism for raising the voice of fishermen and advocating for their rights regarding daily Israeli aggressions
- Fishermen lack equipment, such as GPS, that would enable them to identify the places where fishing is possible, especially at night
- There are no plans or resources for dealing with emergencies resulting from Israeli attacks against fishing boats, such as rescue boats equipped for transporting wounded fishermen, or for bringing any damaged fishing boats back to their port
- Fishermen lack knowledge of the content of fishing agreements with Israel, which constitute the framework for the fishing sector

2. Regarding the weakness of production in the fishing sector:

Official statistics of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics show clearly the decline in the fish production rate. This has reached a record decline by 42% between 2000 and 2009, as fish production fell from 2623 tons in 2000 to 1526 tonnes in 2009. It should be noted that the per capita consumption of fish according to FAO should be 11 kg per capita, while the average per capita consumption in the Gaza Strip only reached 3-4 kg.

When monitoring changes between 2000 and 2009, we can see that a number of factors have affected catch rates, particularly external factors that have been mentioned in the preceding paragraph, as well as a set of internal factors including:

- Inability to provide for the needs of the fishing occupation in terms of fishing nets and spare parts for boats, because of physical barriers.
- The lack of equipment that would enable fishermen to identify areas where fish is abundant, such as fish detection equipment
- The absence of facilities for storing fishing tools and equipment on the shore close to where they go fishing
- The lack for maintaining or building fishing boats
- Lack of qualified human resources for the maintaining or building fishing boats
- Fishing is a seasonal occupation; there are long periods during the year, where fishermen's catch is low (there are two fishing seasons per year; the spring season extends from April 15th until July 15th, and the autumn season runs from September 15th until November 15th. Fishing takes also place the rest of the year although fish is much scarcer than during these seasons, with the exception of the period from mid-July to mid-August, when fishes are reproducing. Fishing then stops entirely, and fishermen are prevented from accessing the areas, where fish reproduce)

3. Regarding inefficient marketing process of the product:

- There are no facilities equipped for wholesale of fish
- Fish is sold far away from places, where consumers usually shop, and there are no mobile selling units
- Facilities for freezing and storage of fish are inefficient

4. Regarding deficiencies in the role of grassroots organizations representing fishermen, and limited capacities and resources of competent governmental agencies:
 - The capacities of grassroots organizations representing fishermen in terms of human resources and administrative capacities are insufficient to address the needs of fishermen, and raise their voices to competent authorities

2. Findings of focus group meetings & interviews in the Swedish village and the Salateen neighborhood

Since our project is targeting fishing communities, we have gathered information from studies and have undertaken interviews with key stakeholders in order to analyze the situation of this sector, and the socio-economic situation of the communities that depend on it. Interviews with fishermen & their wives from the two targeted communities are in the specific sections devoted to them.

1- Interview with the vice-president of the fishermen's union:

There are around 3800 fishermen in the Gaza Strip. Fish catch used to reach 4500 tons before the blockade and siege on Gaza, and it was reduced to 1500 tons per year because of it. Fishermen are only allowed to fish in a perimeter of 3 miles from the coast, and the Gaza area is the one most exposed to violations, as 49 boats have been confiscated by the Israeli occupation forces. Fishing starts being really worthwhile at a distance of 7 miles from the coast.

Types of fish: small fish are caught although this is globally prohibited because there are no alternatives. Fishing is the biggest productive sector after agriculture in the Gaza Strip.

Problems faced by fishermen in the Gaza Strip:

- There is no social security for fishermen, and they are unable to send their children to school and universities. Children work with their parents in the fishing profession from a young age. Fishermen are also unable in the current situation to afford health care for themselves and their families.
- The fuel shortage (gasoline and diesel) and high prices is also an issue, since fuel is needed to operate motorboats. A motorboat requires 25 liters of fuel for 12 hours at sea.
- Low catch and difficulty of fishing due to restrictions in fishing perimeter .

The Oslo agreement stipulated that fishermen have the right to fish up to 20 miles from the coast, but only a distance of 12 miles was permitted. After the Intifada and the blockade, fishing was only permitted within a distance of 3 miles from the coast. After the truce agreement with Israel, the distance was only extended to 6 miles. This does not make any difference, because fish becomes more abundant at a distance of 7 miles from the coast.

- Imposition of taxes on fishing licenses and fishing boats. Fishermen are forced to sell inside the fish market belonging to the municipality. With the few resources available to them, fishermen are unable to pay these taxes.

- Ministry of Interior decision in Gaza that forbids fishermen from claiming compensations if they have gone further than the 6 miles permitted
- The fishermen's port in Gaza has been turned into a public recreational area, which has harmed fishermen and their work through damaging of boats and nets, and littering on part of visitors. They have also been refused the permission to build additional rooms for fishermen inside the port, while there are 1800 fishermen in Gaza's port.

2- Interview with Mr. Zakaria Baker, the president of the fishermen's committee in Gaza governorate:

He spoke about the sea blockade and Gaza's fishermen, and that they are the group most exposed to attacks and violations of their rights. Gaza's fishermen constitute 60% of all the fishermen in the Gaza Strip, they have 21 motorboats that are suited for working at a distance of over 8 miles from the coast, 100 motorboats and 70 rowing boats. 85% of the fish catch is made by Gaza's fishermen, they can reach the north and south.

North area fishermen have mostly rowing boats that cannot go further than 3 miles from the coast, and they only have 10 motorboats. North fishermen belong to the union in Gaza governorate area.

Needs of fishermen families in terms of projects:

- 3- Food products' center for marketing and distribution to other centers
- 4- Employing women in maintenance and repair of fishing nets
- 5- Cooperation with "Makulat" kitchen (fish pastries)
- 6- Sewing instead of fishing, a kitchen for sea products (production of shrimp spread available throughout the year)
- 7- A tourist boat specially for women (emulating the experience of Madeleine Kalab, who fishes at sea and also takes visitors of Gaza's port, particularly women, on sea trips)

He recommended merging the Gaza governorate and the north if a cooperative is established because:

- 8- There are many women in Gaza working in many fields with their families
- 9- There is more fish catch in Gaza than in the north
- 10- Cooperation between fishermen in Gaza and the north

3- Interviews about the situation in the Swedish village and the Salateen neighbourhood and their communities

1. Description of the Swedish village in Rafah

The Swedish village is located south west of Rafah city. It is bordered by Rafah shore on the west, Al-Sawafi sand dunes on the east, farms in the north and the border with Egypt in the south. There are about 2000 residents in the village, the majority working in the fishing sector. Many of them are looking for work in agriculture, although the high salinity of the aquifer has led to a decline of the agricultural sector.

The Swedish village is an area that is somewhat isolated from the rest of the Rafah neighborhoods, about (1.5 km) from the city center from the seafront. The village has lived in difficult circumstances, because of the Israeli occupation. It was a closed area for many years. The village lack the most basic requirements of life, as it is devoid of any basic social and sanitary infrastructure: it has no schools, kindergartens, medical clinic or or wastewater collection system. Most housing is dilapidated, and 80% of the villagers make their living in fishing. There are 91 households.

Population: 1568 inhabitants, according to the year 2007 PCBS census

Area: 25,427 m²

Number of buildings: 91

Number of families: 91

Facilities: there is one mosque, and a privately-owned kindergarten that was damaged during the Israeli offensive

Employment: 80% of the village population depends on fishing

a. Interview with Khaled Khader, president of Mawassi area committee and Rafah municipal council member, responsible for the Swedish village area:

Mr. Khaled mentioned that the Swedish village is in fact a refugee camp, and that UNRWA bears responsibility for providing services. There is no planning framework from Rafah municipality for the area. He indicated that facilities only included a mosque and a playground. The village has one association, the Swedish Village Society, but it is not active and exists in name only.

Water & electricity and phone lines are available in the area, but the quality of the water is poor and requires desalination.

The village has no market or shops selling food products, vegetables, meat, chicken, or fish. These basic needs cannot be satisfied in the village and residents are forced to go to the main market the nearby town.

The organizations that have helped the fishermen in the area are the Union of Agricultural Work Committees, and they implemented a project for employing fishermen and their wives. In addition, residents get food coupons from UNRWA.

Any project that DWRC may want to implement in the village requires cooperation with the municipality and the Mawassi committee. In addition, there is a possibility that the municipality provides a place or piece of land to be used for the project's purpose.

Rafah municipality:

We contacted the municipality in order to explain our project and obtain further information concerning the Swedish village, and talked with municipal council member Abu Ahmed Al-Soufi, who is in charge of it. He praised DWRC work, welcomed our project, and gave instructions to the person in charge of

administration and planning at Rafah municipality to provide us with all needed assistance. The municipality official said the municipality is trying to reduce the sufferings of the residents, and is aware that they are facing many problems such as the lack of wastewater disposal infrastructure, access to drinking water, and the proximity of a wastewater disposal point to the village. He added that they have drawn plans to address these issues, but that the financial situation of the municipality does not allow them to implement these plans.

Visits to associations and CSOs

We visited the Environment Friends Society and the Mawassi Society in Rafah, explained our project and asked them about their prior activities in the village. They explained that these associations target the Swedish village. They said that the association has implemented several projects in the village and has targeted women in a project for repairing nets and installation of (falin) and lead weights. The duration of the project was 3 months, and female workers were paid a salary of 300 US\$. They also distributed aid to the fishermen in the form of fishing equipment such fishing nets, falin, and lead weights. These projects were for emergency assistance only and temporary job creation.

Interviews with residents:

b. Interview with women from the Swedish village:

We met with Zuhour Abu Odeh, Husna Ibrahim Ashour and Amal Abu Odeh. They said that the Swedish village is a border area and most of its residents depend on fishing as a main occupation. Women in the area held their children and spouses in fishing through knotting nets and repairing them, and other supportive work.

Regarding the needs of the targeted group, they declared that women in the area, particularly after the Israeli offensive against the Gaza Strip in 2014, need the following:

- a. Provide yarn, fishing nets and tools, because the Israeli attacks damaged or destroyed some of these tools, and fishermen cannot replace them because of poverty.
- b. Work to provide a fish market, because this area is far from the existing market; women have to go a long distance to sell fish in the market, and face harassment by the municipality and some fish dealers.
- c. The area lacks access to safe drinking water; during the Israeli offensive, the population was pleading with various authorities to provide water
- d. The area lacks a sewage network, and relies on primitive ways for sewage disposal
- e. After the destruction of many fishing boats, and fishermen's harassment at sea by the Israeli navy, the unemployment rate among fishermen has become very high
- f. After the war, the population in the area has been suffering from psychological issues, because of poverty, unemployment and their inability to provide for the needs of their children.

- g. Women workers are demanding for action to be taken to improve their living conditions through the provision of a development project that will be ongoing and that will ensure them a decent life. After the war, fishermen have been forced to resume fishing in primitive ways as a result of the restrictions imposed on them and unfulfilled needs. This has had negative consequences for women working in the sector.

c. Interview with fisherman Yousef Meqdad “Abu Majid” and his wife:

Abu Majid works as a fisherman and is the head of the fishermen committee in the village. He talked about the difficult economic situation they are facing in the village, including the fact that the Israeli occupation forces forbid fishermen from exercising their profession and entering the area. They are always coming under fire and exposed to arrest. In addition, the Egyptian Navy also repeatedly harasses them and only allows them to enter a limited area in the sea.

Fishermen currently depend on emergency assistance provided by UNRWA. They are in need for relief projects and job creation.

Abu Majid’s wife used to work with him in repairing fishing nets and selling fish in the market but now there is no work because they rarely managed to reach fishing areas. She obtained training in knotting and repairing nets as part of a project of the agricultural federation and catholic relief, and they obtained nets and temporary jobs that helped them a little in meeting their daily needs.

She says that most women in the village lack awareness and knowledge. Few send their daughters to study at university due to the bad economic conditions and distances. There is only one kindergarten in the village and it is fit for using. Schools are far away and universities as well. Most of the women are housewives and help their husbands in the fishing profession. They need productive and awareness projects for women, and crafts and vocational training.

2. Description of the Salateen neighbourhood in Beit Lahya, in the north Gaza governorate

Information from Beit Lahiya municipality on the Salateen neighborhood:

Population: 8000 inhabitants, 60% under 18 years of age

Residents own small properties, and many who are refugees, do not own their homes.

Employment: Many residents work in fishery due to their close proximity with the beach and this is an inherited profession. They suffer from Israeli occupation forces practices that restrict access to fishing areas and attack fishermen. Women participate with their husbands in the fishing profession by working on mending fishing nets and on other requirements. Children sometimes also help. Other residents, professionals and graduates, suffer from unemployment due to the blockade. Residents require material and psychological support, many infrastructure projects and facilities, whether educational, kindergartens, cultural and sports centers, mother and child support centers, job creation projects.

Interviews with residents:

a. Interview with women from the fishing community

We interviewed 3 women from the fishing community in the neighbourhood, Dalia Ghaleb Al-Sultan, Samira Diab Al-Sultan, Muntaza Al-Sultan and Sawsan Ahmed Al-Sultan. They said that most of the residents of the Salateen area in the northern Gaz Strip depend on fishing as a professional occupation and that women in the area assist their sons and spouses by knitting and repairing fishing nets, and other supporting work.

They indicated that the needs of the targeted group, i.e. women in the area, particularly after the year 2014 Israeli offensive against Gaza, consist of:

- 1- Providing yarn, nets and fishing tools, as the Israeli offensive destroyed or damaged some of these tools, and fishermen cannot replace them, because of poverty.
2. Provide a project to produce pastries, or wool or project, or a project to sew winter clothes for fishermen, because of the high prices of these clothes and because women have the technical ability to implement these projects.
3. Establishing an association for women working the fishing sector in the area, and implementing projects for developing women's capacities in general in this marginalized area
4. The Israeli occupying forces have destroyed most of the fishing boats on the beach, and fishermen in the area have been forced to rely on a sharing system, whereby several families work on the same boat. This does not generate adequate income for them.
5. Fishermen's income is very low, because the Israeli occupation forces deliberately shoot at fishermen, arrest some of them and confiscate their boats and nets; this has happened even after the end of the Israeli offensive
6. Women have doubled their work burden to assist their spouses and children, because of the inability of fishermen to hire workers to assist them in knitting and repairing fishing nets due to lack of income.
7. Spare parts for equipment and motors used in fishing have become unavailable due to the continued closure of border crossings; if they are available, prices are so high that fishermen cannot afford to buy them
8. Most of women in the area have become unable to send their children to schools, kindergartens and universities, because of poverty and lack of income
9. After the war, the residents have been suffering from psychological problems, because of poverty, unemployment and their inability to provide for the needs of their children.
10. Women workers are demanding action to improve their living conditions through the provision of an ongoing development project to ensure them a decent life.

b. Interview with Nael Al-Sultan, a youth activist of the neighborhood

90% of the male residents are former workers in the Israeli labor market, and they used to work in fishing and agriculture. 10% are governmental employees and students and graduates.

Before the war on Gaza, no young women were studying in universities due to the bad economic situation and some of the customs and traditions, but after the war some families started sending their daughters to university but the number does not exceed 20.

Most of the women in the neighborhood are housewives and work with their families in supportive work for fishery; they help in mending fishing nets, and in marketing and selling fish.

Most residents are raising poultry, sheep or rabbits in their homes, and produce cheese and dairy products at home, and sell them.

There is no experience in handicrafts, there is only one garment shop with four female workers.

There is no market inside the neighborhood, and schools are 2 km away. There is one new kindergarten, and there are no factories or workshops. There are two seaside resorts but there is no park inside the neighborhood and no recreational areas for children.

There is no health clinic inside the neighborhood, the closest is located 1 km from the area.

The sea blockade, Israeli practices and arrests of fishermen have affected the fishing profession.

Needs:

- Productive projects for the area
- Project for poultry, sheep and rabbit farms
- Improvement and rehabilitation of agricultural lands, water is available
- Project for women to mend fishing nets and produce them
- Training women in other handicrafts

d. Interview with fisherman Jum'a Ahmed and his wife:

Mr. Jum'a mentioned that most residents of Al-Salateen neighborhood are engaged in fishing and work with their families, and all of them use rowing boats. There are only 10 motorized boats operational in the neighborhood, which leads to poor fish yields. Fishermen market fish locally to people they know. There is no fish market in the north area. He talked about the sufferings of fishermen in the Al-Salateen neighborhood in the north area due to continuous harassment from Israeli occupation forces, arrests of fishermen, and loss of fishing nets because Israeli forces are always chasing them.

Regarding the projects they have benefited from, they benefited from a project of the Agricultural Federation and CRS, through which they received fishing nets, and a number of fishermen and their wives were employed for a limited period.

Mrs. Ahmed spoke about her work with her husband and said that she is training women to produce and repair fishing nets; she worked as a trainer on a project implemented by CRS in the to teach the wives of fishermen these skills.

3. Special report on the effect of the Israeli offensive of 2014 on the Swedish village in Rafah and the Salateen area in Beit Lahya.

1. Effects on the Swedish village

As mentioned previously in the study, the Swedish village is located southwest of Rafah city; it is bordered on the west by the Rafah seashore, on the east by sand dunes (Al-Sawafi), on the north by citizens' farms and to the south by the Egyptian border. The 2000 residents of the village are mostly working in fishing, and fishing is not an option, then they seek employment in agriculture. Although the severity of groundwater salinity triggered a decline in the agricultural sector, the Swedish village is somewhat isolated from the rest of Rafah neighborhoods. It is connected to Rafah by a street of about 1 km that follows the seashore. The geography of the area had a negative impact on the village residents during the Israeli offensive on the Gaza Strip because this street is open from the west to the sea, where Israeli warships were located and maintained continuous fire throughout the period of the offensive. Therefore, no one could access the village, and this increased the sufferings of the residents of the village, who were totally isolated.

Like other areas of the Gaza Strip, the Swedish village, its seashore and the open land in its vicinity were targeted by Israeli rockets and missiles during the offensive, which caused the following human and material losses and damages:

- Fisherman Mohammed Abdullah Ahmad Zahouk was killed, when an F16 warplane targeted a group of fishermen. He was the breadwinner a family of 9 members, and had been working as a day wage worker for the owner of a fishing launch.
- The house of fisherman Raafat Rabah Abu Salima was bombed and completely demolished. Most of the houses of village residents have cracks due to constant shelling of the area, and some have been damaged by it.
- A shell fell on the village kindergarten, and destroyed it partially
- A paddle boat and a motor boat (used for fishing) were damaged by the shelling from Israeli warships, as well as the fishing nets that were kept on the beach, which were damaged by shells and their shrapnel. Fishermen's shacks on the beach were destroyed.
- During the Israeli offensive, water supply to the village was discontinued, because municipal workers came under Israeli shelling, while they were operating the water wells that supply the village. The village's workers' committee contacted DWRC field coordinator in Rafah, Bilal Abu Hmeid, who was able to communicate with the Eng. Osama Abu Naqira at Rafah municipality. At first, the municipality refused to address the issue, because they feared to for the lives of their employees, but upon his insistence (he threatened to open the wells himself), water was pumped to the village. It is worth noting that the village had been without water for three days, and had

talked to everyone about their issue, but without result. Without our intervention, their situation could have become dramatic.

- Electricity supply is worse than in other areas of the Gaza Strip, there are constant electricity cuts, and villagers have access to less than 6 hours of daily water supply.
- Israeli shelling damaged all farmland, and vegetables and other crops that people had been growing.
- Since the ceasefire, and since fishermen have been given permission to enter the sea, only a small number of fishermen have actually been able to resume their work due to damages to fishing nets and boats. Only some fishermen are actually able to practice their profession.

2. Effects on the Salateen neighbourhood

The northern areas of the Gaza Strip have been particularly affected by the Israeli offensive. The Al-Salateen area, in Beit Lahia, which is a border area, came under intensive Israeli shelling and there were clashes between Israeli Special Forces and Palestinian resistance. The following damages were caused:

- A number of houses have been fully destroyed in the neighborhood, and others partially; during the first days of the Israeli offensive, residents (including fishermen's families) had to flee and seek refuge in UNRWA schools in the Jabalia refugee camp area and in Gaza Al-Naser, i.e they became IDPs. Most have returned to the neighborhood, except those whose homes are no longer existing or unfit for residence
- Many fishing boats suffered partial or total damage, as well as the shacks fishermen used for storing their equipment. They estimated that 25% of fishing tools were damaged.
- Fishermen have been using paddle boats reaching only a 100 meters from the shore
- The two schools located in Al-Salateen have been partially damaged by shelling in their vicinity
- Many of the agricultural lands have suffered damages due to direct shelling and holes caused in them; crops were damaged or destroyed by explosive substances and lack of irrigation due to the damages to water wells and their selling
- There is no longer any water supply. Residents rely on purchase of filtered water and on filling up water tanks for daily use.
- Electricity, like in other Gaza Strip areas, is only available for 6 hours per day.

IV. Study conclusions

1. Findings of questionnaires filled with intended women beneficiaries

a. Main findings of questionnaires filled in the Swedish village

This information was gathered through needs' assessment questionnaires filled with women residents of the Swedish village in the Rafah governorate, during a meeting with targeted women in the area. 64 questionnaires were filled, and their summarized findings are:

1- Education level:

Most women (32) have secondary school education, 7 are illiterate, 13 have only completed elementary school and 10 have been to university.

2- Women's occupations:

Most women are housewives, and they have the following skills: repairing and knotting nets – they received training in this field-, cooking, cleaning and marketing fish, preparing salty pastries, maftoul (Palestinian couscous) and sweets, embroidery and cosmetics (hairdressing). Among them, there are women, who have computer and sales skills.

3- Income-generating activities in the village from women's point of view:

Fishing, embroidery, food production (maftoul, salty pastries, cakes, selling fish, preparing food, pickling), sewing nets, selling turmous and pop-corn, selling all food needs and commodities such as meat, eggs, fish, cheese, chicken, vegetables, cleaning products and preserves (there is no market in the village and no shops selling meat, chicken or vegetables).

b. Main findings of questionnaires filled in the Salateen neighbourhood

This information was gathered through needs' assessment questionnaires filled by women residents of Al-Salateen neighborhood during a meeting with targeted women in the area. 31 questionnaires were filled, and their summarized findings are as follows:

1- Education level:

Most women (14) have elementary school education, 4 are illiterate, 3 have completed primary school, 9 have been to secondary school and 1 to university.

2- Women's occupations:

Most women are housewives, and they have the following skills: repairing and knotting nets – they received training in this field-, cooking and cleaning fish, preparing salty pastries, poultry and sheep breeding.

3- Income-generating activities from women's point of view:

Through the questionnaires that women filled, we found out that a great number of them wish to implement activities and projects in the Salateen area, and that they believe that these activities and projects can generate income. They are as follows: fishing, food production, poultry and sheep breeding, repairing and knotting nets.

Most women have no knowledge about cooperative work, and are in need for awareness-raising in many fields.

Note: these questionnaires and data were collected before Israel's war against Gaza in 2014

2. Recommendations

Recommendations for developing the cooperative movement in Palestine

This study resulted in many recommendations for taking measures to develop cooperative work in Palestine, including short-term action, mid-term or long term measures; the most important were:

- There is a need to harmonize policies, programs and plans, which must proceed from the situation on the ground to elaborate performance indicators that will make it easier to measure outputs. For example, if we wish to increase the proportion of cooperative members among the population, we have to determine in which sectors and in what ratio according to realistic estimates. When we say that there are 70,000 families that have agricultural holdings and are outside the cooperative movement, we have to identify the percentage of families that will be targeted and in which fields they will be integrated in the cooperative movement. When we say that 72% of the families need new housing units over the next decade, we must define those that may be targeted for housing cooperatives and their geographical distribution, and financial and organizational frameworks to achieve the targeted plan.
- There is a need for reinforcing networking between local and international partners for developing the cooperative movement, and coordinating efforts between them to come out with a clear vision for future work and reduce risks of failure
- There is a need to create incentives for cooperatives; for example, this can be done by solving the issue of taxation and its negative impact on the earnings of cooperatives, and accelerating tax refunds for the agricultural sector and cooperatives in particular, in addition to the implementing the proposal to establish a fund for providing governmental support to the cooperative movement
- It is important to expedite the completion of a suitable legal and administrative environment, and the institutionalization of the cooperative movement.
- It is important to focus on educational programs to spread cooperative values, fight against the spirit of selfishness and individualism, and promote a culture of voluntary work and respect for the rule of law

- There should be steps for establishing fish markets, as there are no buildings hosting wholesale markets in the sector; for example, in Gaza, fish are sold in the street in front of a number of municipal shops, which exposes it to pollution, not to mention that sometimes sewage is overflowing in the street and fishermen are exposed to this
- In order to develop a proper marketing system for fish, an auction hall could be built in each fishing marina meeting the following conditions:
 - 1- Location should be very close to where fish is downloaded from the boats
 - 2- It should be a covered hall, outfitted with all facilities for selling during the day or at night
 - 3- It should be easy of access for producers or workers in the fish selling network.
 - 4- It should provide cleanliness, and attention should be paid to avoid any exposure of fish to pollution.
 - 5- There should be technical facilities to download production from fishermen and upload it for traders.
 - 6- There should be cooling rooms to store the fish.
- Modifications should be made to the Ottoman system, which places the fish market under municipal authority; this should enable ownership by a marketing committee constituted of all actors working in the fishing sector, including governmental agencies or non-governmental actors.
- Exporting and importing fresh fish

3. Solutions

This study concludes with a number of solutions to some of the problems that have been put forward in order to improve the situation of fishing communities; the most important of these solutions are:

- 1- Exerting international pressure on Israel to expand the fishing area for Gaza's fishermen to enable them to gain access to fishing resources
- 2- Finding a political consensus to enable former employees to return to their jobs at the service of fishermen, and enable donor agencies to resume their work with the General Directorate for Fishing Resources
- 3- Organizing an environmental awareness campaign for fishermen to make them aware of the risks and dangers entailed in disregarding the law
- 4- Implementing a number of projects, such as:
 - a. Providing fishermen with the inputs for their work without counterpart for as long as as funding allows
 - b. Providing vocational training programs for the families of fishermen (sons and daughters)
 - c. Undertaking a training program to increase the skills of members of the fishermen union and its board of directors, and the employees of the General Directorate for the Fishing Resources
 - d. Rehabilitating repair workshops for boats in the southern area (Deir Al-Balah, Khan Younis, Rafah) and employing professionals in these workshops and supporting their salaries for a certain period of time
 - e. Establishing a workshop for building and repairing boats in the fishing marina in Gaza, and employing professionals in this workshops and supporting their salaries for a certain period of time

- f. Creating employment programs for fishermen outside ports, in projects that have long-term sustainability
 - g. Involving fishermen in fish farming projects
 - h. Establishing wholesale fish markets in the four fishing ports in the Gaza Strip
- 5- In order to support and empower women in the Gaza Strip in general, and in the fishing communities in particular:
- a. Establishing developmental cooperative projects that contribute in supporting women in addressing the issues they are facing in marginalized areas and improving their difficult economic situation
 - b. Raising women's awareness in marginalized areas of their various rights through meetings, workshops and training courses on cooperative work and its importance, marketing mechanisms, and successful management based on participatory and cooperative work
 - c. Empowering women to participate in political and civil life to defend their rights as guaranteed by various laws, and in particular their right to health and social insurances, and empowering them to participate in decision-making; issuing laws that protect women from economic and social exploitation
 - d. Advocating for an increase of women's representation in cooperative associations and organizations, and administrative bodies of trade unions, which will enable them to be in touch with all groups and categories of the local population, and at Arab and international levels
 - e. Providing financing solutions for women's small income-generating projects, which will enable them to achieve their economic and social goals, and modifying financing mechanisms from grants and donations to substitute them by cooperative loans, which are more sustainable
 - f. Gender-mainstreaming in policies related to cooperative leadership and development, and allocating part of the budget of the General Directorate for Cooperatives to support cooperative activities, and providing guidance services to women members of cooperatives to help orient their work and support them to pursue their efforts
 - g. Under the current circumstances, and considering the lack of political perspectives for an improvement of the fishing sector situation in the short-term, any economic projects of women in the targeted communities should be oriented towards activities that are not dependent upon this sector, but provide a viable alternative source of income for these communities

References

Literature review included:

- A study on indicators about women's situation in the Gaza Strip from a gender perspective, 2010, PWWSD
- A study from the Union of Agricultural Work Committees in Gaza, 2009
- A study on the Role of Palestinian Women in Political and Economic Participation, 2012, Women's Affairs Center
- A Needs Assessment Study for Fishermen and their Families, Maan Development Center, 2011
- A study on the Situation of fishing and fishermen in the Gaza Strip, 2011, Union of Agricultural Work Committees

Other sources of information:

- Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics data about poverty in Palestine – 2007
- Palestinian Center for Human Rights report, 2009
- Mezan Center for Human Rights reports 2007-2008-2009
- National Ministry of Economy, 2012

**Annexes: Questionnaire used in participatory needs assessment
with potential women beneficiaries**

Name:.....**Age:**.....**ID number:**.....

Governorate:.....**Neighborhood:**.....**Phone number:**.....

Social status: single () married () widowed () divorced ()

Number of family members: Male: Female:

Level of education:

Illiterate () Primary () Elementary () Secondary () University () Vocational training ()

Have you ever obtained training or participated in an awareness meeting? Please specify:

.....
.....

Occupation:

Housewife () Handicraft () Mending fishing nets () Cleaning fish () Has a paid job ()

Works for the family without pay () Other

Women's skills; please specify your skills

Handicraft () Computer () Sales () Cooking ()

Other skills

Do you have sufficient time to work with a cooperative, and how many working hours can you spare for working?

.....
.....

Do you have children needing care, and do they need a child care center while you work?

.....
.....

What are the income generating activities in the community?

.....
.....

Are you a member of:

An association () A union () Other (.....) specify

Do you have information about cooperative work? If the answer is yes, explain the background:

Yes () No ()

.....
.....

Have you benefited from any other projects:

.....

Does your family benefit from any assistance? Please specify from whom assistance is received and the type of assistance

.....
.....

Who supports the family? and their number ()

What is the average monthly income of the family:

Does the family have members, who spend all their time studying in schools or universities? Please specify the number: Yes () No ()

Child care center () Schools () University ()

If the answer is no, please clarify the reasons:

.....

Are there persons with disabilities in the family? Specify:

Yes () No () Degree of kinship

.....

Are there persons suffering from chronic diseases in the family? Specify:

Yes () No () Degree of kinship

.....

Needs of the family and its priorities: (improving housing – food – education – health – improving work conditions)

.....
.....

Does a member of the family work in fishing? Specify names, degree of kinship and nature of work:

Yes () No ()
.....

Boat owner – Hired fisherman – Retired fisherman – Trader – Boat maintenance – Mending fishing nets – Other

Does the family own means for fishing: Yes () No () Specify:

Medium Motor boat – Shanshoul medium motor boat – Shanshoul small motor boat – Maltash small motor boat – Sanar small motor boat – Paddle boat – Other

Has the family suffered material or moral damages due to Israeli measures: (specify)

.....
.....
.....

In your opinion, what are the most dangerous problems that face people working in the fishing sector?

.....
.....
.....

Has any party intervened to address the problems faced by people working in fishing (if there are any)? Specify the organization, methods of intervention and outputs.

.....
.....
.....