

Baseline, Monitoring and Mid-Term Evaluation Strengthening Civil Society

Final Baseline report OPT

Client: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Netherlands Management Board Social Development

Rotterdam, 30 August 2022



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Executive Summary

The evaluation consortium executed the Baseline Study for OPT between February and June 2022. The purpose of the Baseline Study presented in this report was:

- To provide baseline values and data concerning the SCS indicators and specific thematic indicators mentioned in annex B & C of the Descriptive Document concerning the human rights situations, gender, capacity of civil society, civil space and thematic focus areas in OPT;
- To assess the relevance of the policy instruments in OPT; and
- To assess the relevance of policy implementation in OPT.

The baseline entailed the measurement of the SCS “basket” indicators, as well as the thematic indicators that are relevant to the OPT partnerships. The baseline reports of the partnerships programmes did not provide, in most cases, a (qualitative) measurement of baseline indicators, but instead context analyses. The country dimension was not very-well in-depth analysed for some partnerships or even missing, with only regional or global overviews. Part of the indicators could only be measured with existing survey data that will not necessarily be updated before the midline, which will be only partly compensated by the collection of qualitative data and new M&E data available from the partnerships. On the other hand, the baseline allowed to shed sufficient light on the current state of civil society organisations, based on stakeholders interviews, a survey with 126 CSOs and more in-depth interviews with 20 CSOs who are partners in the SCS partnerships (1st and 2nd tier) in the context of a capacity assessment including also a review of their websites and documents. On average, their score on the eight capabilities of the framework chosen are high, with an ability to analyse the political arena and adapt to ongoing changes in the environment with the highest average scores. There is some more variation among organisations in the production of evidence, in the capability to inspire trust among power holders and build rapport with them, as well as the capability to produce tailored messages for different target groups. In the few cases scores are low, this is not necessarily related to organisation’s weakness, but it could be related to the focus of its activities or the approaches and strategies adopted by the organisations itself. This positive picture, however, also depends on the fact that the assessed organisations are probably also stronger than average, having being selected to be implementing partners. In any case, it is important to acknowledge that chosen partners do have many capacities to share and strengthen by working with CBOs or individuals in the communities, especially women and young people.

The survey gives a more nuanced picture on the L&A capabilities, and especially on the effectiveness of CSOs. Respondents acknowledge that the capacity to represent the constituency, analyse the local reality and identify problems and identify and select actions that are relevant in front of local needs and of local political and social dynamics are high among civil society. However, the capacity to engage in local governance processes and with actors holding administrative, economic, social or operational functions, and the capacity to mobilize external support – social/political or financial – are deemed low. Also the capacity to mobilise the constituency and the capacity to react to changes in the environment are not assessed as strong. Overall, the views of respondents on CSO’s influence on policy processes are fairly negative: they feel they are not sufficiently consulted on governmental policies and strategies, and that their successes in blocking, adopting or improving a law or a policy are occasional.

The lack of an enabling environment for civil society appears particularly problematic and makes for an increasingly shrinking civil space. The responses to the survey indicate the clear perception of a lack of enabling environment for civil society. No more than one quarter of respondents every time agreed about the presence in the OPT of elements essential for the life of CSOs such as obtaining the registration of a CSO, opening a bank account, or receiving and managing funding from national and international donors, possibly without government intervention. Restrictions on freedom of association and opinion are perceived as high: only one respondent in four agreed that CSO members are free to gather and organise meetings and events; one in five agreed that CSO members are free to express their opinion in public and conduct their campaigns and less than one in six believes that CSO members are free from interference by government agencies. Restrictions come from several sources: Israeli organisations such as the NGO Monitor which perform aggressive smearing campaigns with some impact also on donor funding; PA with its recurring attempts to control NGO funding through the law and to repress opposition through security checks; the banking system with strengthened due diligence procedures; the Gaza de facto government, putting obstacles on the way of those organisations that do not conform to conservative social norms. Somehow, also certain donors insisting on the obligation to screen and vet organisation contribute to create divisions among CSOs.

The baseline also allowed to assess the relevance of the SCS policy ToC and implementation design, i.e. the partnerships that are funded under the SCS policy and its various instruments.

The SCS ToC has several elements making it relevant for the OPT: the fact that it presents the need for *addressing the shrinking of civil space as a necessary and complementary action to strengthening CSOs* and that it recognises that *L&A efforts are to be directed not only towards government, but also towards business, and other influential societal actors*. Also, the fact that *the subject of influencing is not limited in the ToC to laws and policies, but also includes (social) norms and practices*, gives more space to advocacy activities that target non-state actors, or in any case local level actors, and not just the (central) institutions, which are highly limited in their power and control over the territory.

At the same time, some assumptions of the SCS ToC need to be problematised: that *donor funding has always a positive impact on CSOs capacity and legitimacy*; that *counterparts and ministry are willing and able to support and complement advocacy towards government, private sector, and help address shrinking civic space*; and that *the transformative role of CSOs goes hand in hand with their legitimacy in the eyes of society*. Furthermore, the assumption that *the more CSOs have L&A capacity and legitimacy in the sense that they have sound connections with their "constituencies", the more the Government, the private sector and other societal actors will respond to their advocacy efforts and will address the concerns of marginalised groups in their laws, policies, norms and practices* is problematic. But above all, the assumption that *there is a government which has the power and resources to respond to the needs of their citizens by implementing laws and policies* under the influence of CSOs L&A efforts is only partly valid in OPT. There is an occupying power, Israel, that maintains control over access to tax revenues by the PA and does not take up responsibility for addressing the needs and concerns of the population in the areas under its direct control. Furthermore, there are internal divisions in the PA and Gaza and the West Bank are governed by different political factions, and have different legal systems, etc. which limits the scope of legislation issued by the PA and the reach of governmental policies and strategies.

The question of whether it has been relevant to focus on lobby and advocacy capacity is one in point. The large and medium sized Palestinian CSOs already have strong lobby and advocacy capacities. It is also true that the reason why certain laws are not approved or implemented, or certain policy issues are not addressed, are not to be found in the lack of L&A capacity of CSOs. One would therefore be tempted to answer negatively to the question. Yet, given the shrinking civil space, and the deteriorated governance situation, it must be admitted that CSOs in this moment need support to resist, and it is important that such support goes to their advocacy and lobby activities and not just to their service delivery role. It is probably more a matter of identifying which more advanced areas of L&A need to be supported.

All the partnerships address issues that are of great relevance for the Palestinians in this moment, and in particular for the most marginalised segments of the Palestinian population. A large part of the partnerships have implementing partners which have stable links with grassroots organisations in the intervention areas; through these grassroots links, they are able to receive feedback, convey it to the partnership and adapt the activities to local needs. There are, though, two qualifications to be made.

Relevance to the country reality is stronger when there has been an effort to develop a country level ToC.

‘Southern leadership’ understood as local/national ownership, varies across the board. However, beyond the set-up of the partnerships, southern leadership has been enhanced by the selection of organisations that are recognised for their expertise and connection to target groups; by the fact that activities have been identified by Palestinian partners; and by the fact that Palestinian partners do not depend upon the partnership for their sustainability.

In terms of coherence with the bilateral programme, there are clear linkages of most partnerships with the first priority area of the MACS-2019-2022 – *A just and peaceful society*. However, partnerships have only to a limited extent coordinated their efforts under the SCS policy implementation, or coordinated it with NRO. By contrast, partners – in particular 2nd tier – coordinate at country-level with other actors operating on similar issues and not related to SCS policy implementation.

Youth involvement is present to different degrees in all partnerships, except for those focused on sustainable development and trade. Gender transformative approaches are to be found to variable extent at the level of intentions (proposals) of partnerships in the OPT and at the level of concrete activities planned/implemented and their M&E. The approach is mostly focused on empowering women and girls, raising their awareness and self-confidence, and rarely aims at changing masculinities.

When it comes to intersectionality, it is included in most of the partnerships as a concept and in several cases it is applied to targeting victims of multiple discrimination/marginalisation. The most common types of intersectionality addressed by partnerships are those between being women, on one hand, and being young, living in a marginalised area like East Jerusalem or Area C rural areas, or having a disability, on the other hand.

Finally, all partnerships demonstrate a high degree of conflict sensitivity, which takes into account the principles of “do not harm” or “do good” in relation to the several potential tensions that could be created/exacerbated when intervening in the OPT: the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the internal division on the PA, but also the societal divisions on topics such as gender equality.

Based on the above conclusions, the following recommendations are directly primarily to MFA, but also indirectly to implementing partners:

- MFA could ask partnerships to clarify and strengthen the targets and capacity building objectives of smaller sized CBOs and civil society leaders;
- MFA could also ask thematically focused partnerships to better define the issues they are going to advocate in the OPT and the expected outcome, including best and worst case scenarios;
- MFA should encourage the implementation of focused capacity building on: M&E; international advocacy; gender analysis applied to the local context;
- Those partnerships which have not developed a full country programme should be encouraged to at least favour some synergy/coordination among their grantees in the country;
- NRO could explore synergies and complementarities between its funded programmes and projects and the SCS partnerships;
- NRO could strengthen coordination between the various SCS partnerships, and between SCS partnerships and other implementing partners of the bilateral programme;
- It is essential that NRO together with Team Europe, and implementing partners continue promoting joint responses to policy measures, laws and regulations that restrict the freedom of expression and association, from both the PA and the Israeli side;
- NRO and international donors concerned should further dialogue with CSOs on conditional funding, in order to eliminate misunderstandings, or remove actual restrictions that are harmful for civil society.

1 Introduction

The Consortium Ecorys, Beyond Group, AWRAD was selected to conduct the evaluation assignment for Strengthening Civil Society (SCS) Framework of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) for lot 3 (MENA) consisting of Lebanon and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). The assignment consists of three main elements; a Baseline Study, the Third-Party Monitoring (TPM) and Data Quality Assessment (DQA) and a Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE).

The evaluation consortium executed the Baseline Study for OPT between February and June 2022. The purpose of the Baseline Study presented in this report was:

- To provide baseline values and data concerning the SCS indicators and specific thematic indicators mentioned in annex B & C of the Descriptive Document concerning the human rights situations, gender, capacity of civil society, civil space and thematic focus areas in OPT;
- To assess the relevance of the policy instruments in OPT; and
- To assess the relevance of policy implementation in OPT.

The baseline marks the beginning of the evaluation period 2022-2024 and is implemented when most programs were up and running, which has been the first half of 2022.

1.1 Methodology and approach

The evaluation follows a theory-based mixed-methods approach, applied through a contribution analysis to assess effectiveness. This section specifies the data collection techniques used in the baseline study. The main evaluation questions for the baseline study have been elaborated in an evaluation matrix corresponding with the OECD DAC evaluation criteria of relevance, coherence, next to providing a baseline measurement for the SCS and thematic indicators presented in annex 5.

The evaluation combines a gender mainstreaming and human rights-based approach (HRBA). This combined approach allows to assess the integration of gender equality concerns into the design, implementation, and monitoring of the different partnership interventions, including in relation to the five key principles of the HRBA¹, and will be applied across the evaluation criteria.

Main data collection and analysis methods

The data collection and analysis methods used in the baseline were a document review, a ToC workshop, key information interviews, a survey and validation workshop. To assess **organisational capacity strengthening** of civil society the team made use of the eight core capabilities relevant for lobby and advocacy effectiveness².

The following documentation was used in the [document review](#):

- [Documentation from all 10 partnerships](#) and [the Leading from the South framework / AWDF](#), to compile a partnership fiche based on a grid reflecting the key research questions and indicators. The documents include: the project proposal including budget and result frameworks, MFA

¹ The five HRBA working principles are: Applying all human rights for all; Meaningful and inclusive participation and access to decision-making; Non-discrimination and equality; Accountability and rule of law for all; Transparency and access to information supported by disaggregated data.

² Willem Elbers & Jelmer Kamstra (2020) How does organisational capacity contribute to advocacy effectiveness? Taking stock of existing evidence, *Development in Practice*, 30:5, 599-608, DOI: 10.1080/09614524.2020.1779664.

appraisal, baseline reports 2022, partnership agreements, multi-annual plans 2021-2025, annual plans 2021 and 2022, to the extent possible the annual reports 2021 and AWDF funded projects in OPT.

- [Documentation specific to a certain partnership](#), to the extent possible: Templates and guides of capacity/self-assessments, M&E tools and guidelines, ToRs for grantees/initiatives, consortium publications (i.e. approaches and conceptualisations), workshop notes, annual report of 2nd tier partner.
- [MFA policy documentation](#), including: Grant Instrument documents for: Power of Women; Power of Voices; SRHR partnership fund; Women, Peace and Security; Thematic ToCs and result frameworks including basket indicators; LFS Policy Framework; External Advisory report on Strengthening Civil Society; Strengthening Civil Society IATI indicator guidelines for PoV, SRHR and WRGE (PoV, PoW, WPS, LFS); IOB Evaluation quality criteria 2020; and the Meaningful Youth participation toolkit.
- [Contextual documentation and literature](#): Letter to parliament on the government's assessment of the external review carried out by Proximities Risk Consultancy of possible links between the Palestinian non-governmental organisation (NGO) Union of Agricultural Work Committees (UAWC) and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP); Multi-Annual Country Strategy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands for the Palestinian Territories 2019-2022; United Nations Development Assistance Framework State of Palestine 2018-2022; The Netherlands and Palestinian Territories strategic document.

[Key Information Interviews](#) were used as a primary data collection method. In total, the evaluation team conducted 50 interviews.

- The team conducted (mostly online) interviews with all the lead and/or in-country leads of the consortia, in total 12.
- The team held interviews with selected in-country organisations to inform the Organisational Capacity Assessment: the evaluation team selected 20 partner (1st / 2nd) organisations for interviews, ensuring the representation of at least two organisations of each consortium (if applicable), of different types of organisations (i.e. NGOs, theatre, media, (health and legal) service providers) and of multiple regions (West Bank, Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem), including two Palestinian organisations based in Israel.
- Furthermore, the following stakeholders were interviewed: 3 interviews with representatives of the Netherlands Representative Office; and
- 12 interviews with international organisations and donors, including the OPT representation of the EU, GIZ, UN Women, Catholic relief Service, Sweden, and USAID;
- One Palestinian umbrella CSO, the Union of Charitable Societies of Jerusalem;
- Two Palestinian experts: one from the Birzeit University, and the director of the ICHR.

A participatory contextualisation of the policy SCS ToC in OPT was the basis for the analysis of its relevance. The contextualisation built on the [Workshop on the Theory of Change of the Policy for Strengthening Civil Society](#), the ToCs of the partnerships (four generic, seven contextualised), and on expert interviews with external stakeholders (see KII section below). The workshop took place online on 31 March 2022, with in-country partners of 7 of the 10³ partnerships present, as well as NRO and MFA representatives. The ToC workshop was conducted in two parts: the first half through plenary discussion on the topics capacity, legitimacy, and transformative role of CSOs; the enabling environment and civil space, the responsiveness of duty-bearers and the role of support to CSOs. The second part was conducted in thematic break-out sessions, focussing on the right-

³ Partnerships: Strengthening Civil Courage; Palestinian Women and Girls lead and engage on WPS in PT; Giving for Change; Fair for All, Power Up!, YW4A, FemPawer and Masarouna. In-country partners of the other partnerships were either not able to attend, were not yet introduced to the evaluation team, or were not yet identified by the partnership.

holders, the duty bearers, the targeted laws and practices, and other contextual factors enabling or constraining change.

Survey on CSOs: AWRAD contacted 280 civil society organisations, of which, 55 are among those involved in the SCS partnerships as 2nd and 3rd tier and 225 are other Palestinian CSOs. The response rate reached 45% as 126 organisations (respectively 34 and 92) responded to the survey. The online survey was distributed by e-mail to the focal points identified in each organisation or to the heads of the organisations, this was followed up by a phone call to confirm the receipt of the emails and to encourage participation and response. The majority of the organisations completed the survey electronically, while 10 of them had it administered over the phone.

Validation and triangulation: The evaluation team has combined the above data collection methods and information sources to gather sufficient and appropriate evidence, including independent sources for validation and triangulation. The draft baseline study was discussed with the reference group on July 4th, and during a **validation workshop** on 6 July 2022 in Ramallah with NRO staff and consortium partners. The workshop allowed for validation and triangulation of data but also provided recommendations for future developments of the SCS framework.

1.2 Challenges and limitations

A first limitation for the implementation of the baseline study was the – in most cases – slow start of the partnerships. The partnerships were meant to start activities in 2022, some of them were still in the process of organising themselves, contracting partner organisations, including for Tier 2, and designing interventions. As a result the team had to spend considerable time to understand the set-up of the partnerships (with many changes from the set up as presented in the project proposals) and programme interventions before engaging in data collection.

Another challenge was the often slow response of partnerships and other stakeholders to our information and interview requests or in providing additional documentation and information. The required considerable time to obtain contacts affected the extent we could interview partners in the consortia. Next, a number of partnerships did not agree to share project proposals (or parts of these) with the team, which limited our ability to make a review of their programmes or projects funded.

A further challenge for the research was the fact that some partnerships do not have a programmatic set up in the country, but rather use the funds to finance projects responding to Call for Proposals (CfP), or to provide OPT organisations with short term emergency small grants, making it difficult to carry out a situational analysis but also to conduct an assessment at MTE stage.

Next, as already mentioned in the Inception report, the baseline reports of the partnerships programmes do not provide, in most cases, a (qualitative) measurement of baseline indicators, but instead context analyses. The country dimension is not very-well in-depth analysed for some partnerships or even missing, with only regional or global overviews.

The selected research methods also come with limitations for baseline data collection, below the main ones are discussed:

- The budget did not allow for data collection at the individual (right-holder) level. Data collection for the WRGE indicators 1.3, 2.3, 3.3, 4.3 (individuals with improved attitudes and practices) and 5.2.2 (individuals with strengthened capacity) is based on the desk review of Partnership

data (taking account of the IOB data quality criteria), publicly available data and a limited number of interviews with grassroots organisations. At mid-term evaluation stage (case studies) and during the TPM, FGDs with for example youth, women, and people in vulnerable situations and other targeted groups will be included. Next, Part of the indicators could only be measured with existing survey data that will not necessarily be updated before the midline, which will be only partly compensated by the collection of qualitative data and new M&E data available from the partnerships

- Next, capturing evidence with regard to the effects (and baseline situation) for advocacy is a challenge. Data on for instance the implementation of laws and policies was collected through the survey (general combined evidence for the SCS programme), desk review of publicly available studies and data, the partnership baseline data and consultations with the partnerships and key stakeholders. The quality of data captured however relies on (triangulated) perceptions and the extent to which stakeholders were willing to share specific insights with the team. Furthermore, many of the partnerships only will identify advocacy objectives at a later stage of the project (to allow for capacity building and a bottom-up process) which makes it difficult to collect baseline data at this stage.
- Baseline data collection for the indicators linked to SCS 5, capacity strengthening relies to a large extent on the OCA for individual Tier 2 partners made. In chapter 4, the limitations of the selected method and mitigation are discussed. Within a partnership there may be a division of tasks, so not all CSOs need all capacities. It is however not feasible to make an assessment at partnership level as partnerships are too diverse in their internal coherence, setup and composition and do not always include a clear division of labour and complementarity. Next, eventually, the evaluation would be interested in strengthening Palestinian organisations that last, while partnerships are ephemeral.
- Data collection based on the workshop, interviews and partnership documentation might involve a degree of bias. To mitigate bias, interviews were held with external independent stakeholders, next to a review of more independent data and information sources. Also, since the survey was voluntary, and given the difficulties in reaching out to organisations as described above, potential systematic correlation between interest in participating in the survey and relevant characteristics of the responding organisations cannot be ruled out.

2 SCS policy framework, instruments and programmes

2.1 SCS policy and country level ToC

The SCS policy framework 2021-2025 pays specific attention to the contribution and role of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by focusing on poverty reduction and representing and strengthening people's voice in conflict, post-conflict, and more stable contexts. Within the broader SDG agenda, the MFA policy focuses on SDG 5 in particular, aiming at promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. The MFA identified this as a goal of all components of Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation (BHOS) policy.⁴

Overleaf the ToC as developed by the MFA is presented. It summarises the more direct results of the outputs/ policy instruments (mobilisation, funding, diplomacy, technical expertise etc.), as well as short and long run outcomes. Civil society support is based on the principle that a diverse and pluralist civil society is both a goal in itself and a means to an end as it is crucial for sustainable and inclusive development, good governance and responsible citizenship. It shows that in the long run, the civil society policy framework (SCS) is expected to contribute to sustainable inclusive development for all and fight against poverty and injustice by promoting civil society's political role. This presents a shift in focus from aid aimed directly at combating poverty through service delivery to aid aimed at tackling the root causes of poverty and (gender)inequality through lobby and advocacy.⁵

ToC Rationale:

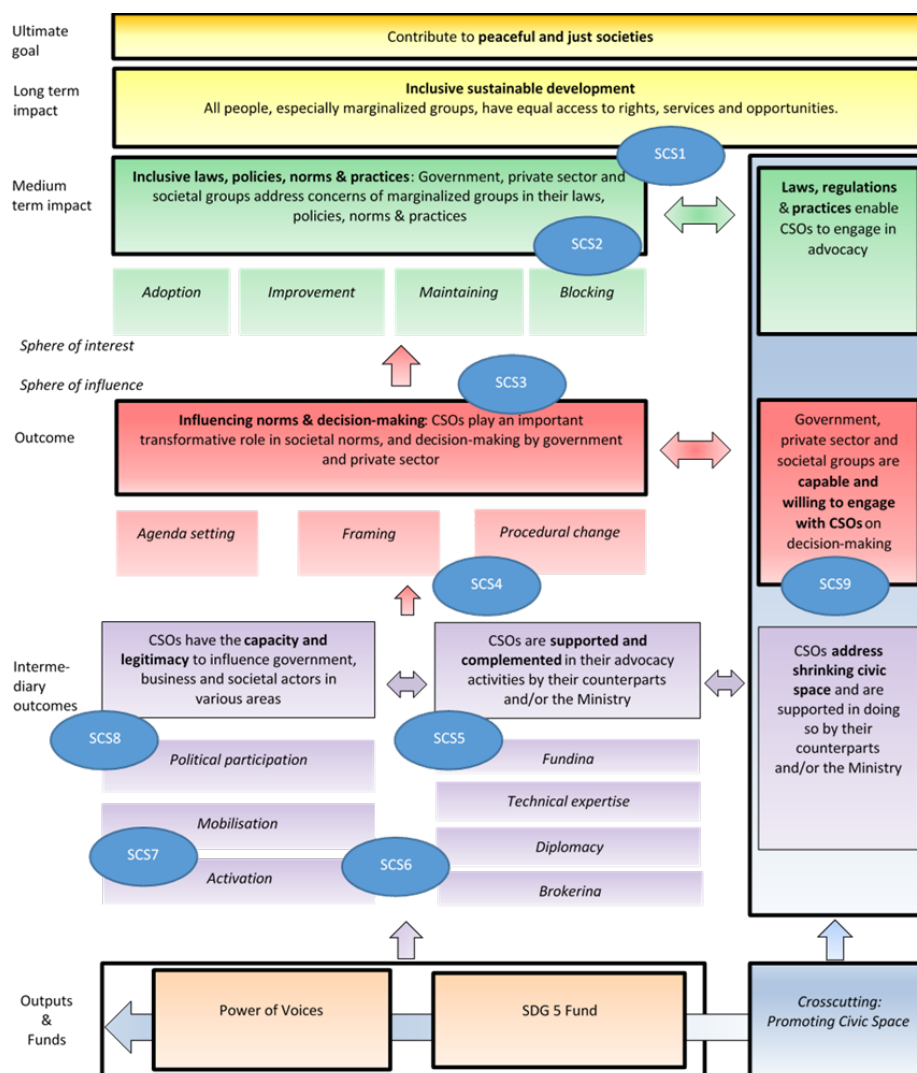
- The SCS framework consists of two sets of policy instruments grouped under 'Power of Voices' and 'SDG 5 Fund' (see section 2.2);
- First of all, CSOs need the right capacities to be able to implement strong advocacy strategies, therefore, mutual capacity strengthening of CSOs in this area is one of the main underlying strategies of the SCS framework;
- With these strengthened capacities, CSOs can implement more effective advocacy strategies supporting their 'transformative role' in the sense of setting agenda's, influencing public discourse or gaining a seat at the table;
- This should pave the way to positive changes in laws, policies and norms of state actors, societal actors or businesses, for those that live in poverty or in another vulnerable situation.
- Advocacy doesn't stop here, because actual implementation or application of these laws, policies, norms and practices is the ultimate goal. This will in the end ensure that they have a real impact on improving people's lives;

⁴ Source: <https://www.government.nl/binaries/government/documents/policy-notes/2019/11/28/policy-framework-strengthening-civil-society/Grant+instrument+PoV+FINAL.pdf>.

⁵ Executive summary Strengthening Civil Society Theory of Change Supporting civil society's political role, December 1, 2019

- Finally, civic space is an important precondition for all these steps towards structural change. This can relate to individual citizens, to the formation and functioning of CSOs, but also to less tangible aspects such as the functioning of the public sphere and the formation and distribution of norms, values, social capital and trust in a society.

Although the ToC provide a straightforward visualisation, it is important to stress the complex and changeable nature of advocacy processes, implying that they will usually go back and forth between these different steps depending on contextual changes.



The ToC is the basis for the development and elaboration of the SCS indicators that form the basis for the monitoring system and this evaluation study. A number of key assumptions underpin the ToC:

- Poverty, (gender)inequality and exclusion are caused by power asymmetries. Local ownership of the political process aimed at changing power relations is crucial for inclusiveness, effectiveness and sustainability of development efforts.

- CSOs play a crucial role in changing power relations and need strengthening of the right capacities for implementing successful advocacy strategies.
- Different civil society roles require different organisational forms (i.e. formal / informal), capacities and different forms of legitimacy.
- Addressing the shrinking of civil space is a necessary and complementary action to strengthening CSOs.
- Donor funding has a positive impact on CSOs capacity in low-income, lower-middle income and higher-middle income countries, and on their legitimacy in their political roles through mutual capacity strengthening and assistance in advocacy processes, including offering protection in hostile environments and lobbying for improved civic space.
- Counterparts and ministry are willing and able to support and complement advocacy towards government, private sector, and help address shrinking civic space.
- Promoting civil society's political roles needs a long-term, context-specific approach, which incorporates mutual learning, trust and local ownership.

An important step in the ToC approach and supporting learning and adaptation is to set the policy level ToC into the different country contexts. In the next chapter we provide an overview of the overall and specific thematic contextual factors for the OPT, whilst in section 5.1 we discuss the relevance of different ToCs, and underlying assumptions in the OPT.

2.2 Policy instruments and partnerships

The sections below provide an overview of the different grants and provide further information on the structure, thematic focus and work of the partnerships active in OPT. The organisations in blue are the in-country leads (and either 1st or 2nd tier), the organisations in green are 1st tier organisations active in OPT and organisations active in more than one partnership are made bold. More elaborate information on the different partnerships is provided in Annex 7

Power of Voices

The specific themes covered by the Power of Voices (PoV) instrument are: 1) Climate mitigation and adaptation; 2) Trade and making value chains more sustainable; 3) Food security, sustainable water management and/or WASH (including water, sanitation and hygiene); 4) Women's rights and gender equality (WRGE); 5) Freedom of speech or Freedom of Religion and Belief; 6) Equal rights LGBTIQ+; 7) Security and Rule of Law (RoL).

PoV aims to strengthen CSOs to lobby and advocate at local, national, and international levels to achieve SDGs and a more inclusive and sustainable society⁶. It focusses on the social contract between citizens and government and on accountability of governments and the private sector. Partnerships under this grant instrument focus on one of the above themes⁷ linked to thematic ToCs of the MFA, while gender equality needs to be mainstreamed throughout. WRGE is not only a

⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2021, *Grant instrument Power of Voices*).

⁷ 1) Climate mitigation and adaptation; 2) Trade and making value chains more sustainable; 3) Food security, sustainable water management and/or WASH (including water, sanitation and hygiene); 4) Women's rights and gender equality (WRGE); 5) Freedom of speech or Freedom of Religion and Belief; 6) Equal rights LGBTIQ+; 7) Security and Rule of Law (RoL)

stand-alone theme, but also a cross-cutting issue within all programmes. In OPT, the MFA finances five partnerships through PoV.

Name, lead, and 1 st tier	2 nd tier	3 rd tier	Thematic focus	OPT budget (and overall budget)	Short description
<p>Fair, Green and Global Alliance Both Ends, SOMO, Transnational Institute</p> <p>ActionAid, Stichting Schone Kleren Campagne, Vereniging Milieudefensie, IT for Change, The Samdhana Institute</p>	<p>N/A, minimal links to countries; SOMO and Transnational Institute have links with the Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations Network (PNGO).</p>	<p>No tier 3</p>	<p>Trade and Making value chains more sustainable</p>	<p>No country data (€ 61.000.456)</p>	<p>FGG works towards increasing the power and decision-making influence of organised, mobilised and informed civil society, especially women, to advance their fair and green trade and value chains. No activity of the partnership has been identified in the OPT, therefore the partnerships is not included in the baseline.</p>
<p>Fair for All Oxfam Oxfam Palestine</p> <p>SOMO, Huairou Commission, Third World Network-Africa</p>	<p>Palestinian Farmers' Union (PFU), Transparency Palestine (AMAN), Rural Women's Development Society (RWDS), Palestine Trade Centre (PalTrade)</p>	<p>Networks, CSOs, women and farmers, women clubs, women farmers, unions, members of women coop., OPT public sector, gov. groups, SMEs</p>	<p>Trade and Making value chains more sustainable</p>	<p>€ 2.075.000 (€ 71.616.549)</p>	<p>Fair for all advocates for policies that contribute to an enhanced agricultural sector with increased linkages to regional and international markets focusing on youth, women and women's rights organizations, cooperatives and women led businesses; the improvement of key regulations and their implementation (e.g. tax refund), the ease of movement for raw and processed agricultural products, and increased budget allocation to the sector.</p>
<p>Giving for Change Wilde Ganzen / Ikon</p> <p>Africa Philanthropy Network, Global Fund for Community Foundations, Kenya Community Development Foundation</p>	<p>Dahlia Association⁸, Bisan Centre and Watan Media Network</p>	<p>Community/grass-root groups and individual youngsters and women</p>	<p>Freedom of Speech or freedom of Religion</p>	<p>€ 1.211.936 (€ 24.254.836)</p>	<p>Giving for Change aims to empower communities to express their voice and to take control of their own development; and hold government and power-holders accountable and respect human rights. In OPT, the partners work through community mobilisation and providing small grants to grassroots initiatives, as well as</p>

⁸ Partnerships with Shams Human Rights and Democracy Media Center, Bethlehem University (Department of Social Sciences), YMCA East Jerusalem and Ramallah, Al Marsad (Social and Economic Policy Monitor), The Independent Commission for Human Rights did not materialise.

Name, lead, and 1 st tier	2 nd tier	3 rd tier	Thematic focus	OPT budget (and overall budget)	Short description
					through organising youth camps.
Strengthening Civil Courage Pax and ABAAD (remote) Amnesty International Nederland, DefendDefenders.	Palestinian Centre for Peace and Democracy (PCPD); Community Action Centre of the Al-Quds University (CAC)	Coalitions, local committees, CBO network for youth and women, young individuals	SRoL	€ 2.061.370 (€ 57.024.708)	The partnership aims at equal power relations for inclusive peace and justice. It works on diminishing repression of civic space, practical cooperation of society and authorities in striving for peace and human rights, transforming damaging gender norms, and lessening the impact of external stress factors which obstruct peace and justice.
Count me in! Mama Cash UAF Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID), Creating Resources for Empowerment in Action (CREA), Just Associates (JASS), Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights	N/A, only grantees	No tier 3 (short-term relation with small women's rights initiatives)	WRGE	€ 608.355 (€ 35.375.965)	CMI! supports women's rights organisations (WROs) and defenders (WHRDs) to become better resourced, coordinated and resilient. In OPT, only UAF has been active so far, providing direct and short-term funds for emergency purposes to five grassroots CBOs/initiatives that are not yet well-established.

Power of Women

With the Power of Women (PoW) grant instrument the MFA seeks to contribute to the prevention of SGBV, women leadership and participation, and women's economic empowerment. The instrument aims to strengthen the capacity of women's rights organisations (WROs) on lobbying and advocacy to foster social, economic and/or political transformation to achieve equal rights and opportunities for women and girls. This instrument was developed based on interviews with WROs and past programming experience. For the purposes of this instrument, WROs are defined as CSOs that has women's rights and gender equality in its statutes, has three years' experience in promoting women's rights and gender equality, and with at least 70 per cent of activities oriented toward the promotion of these goals. In OPT, three partnerships are active financed under PoW.

Name, lead and 1 st tier active in OPT	2 nd tier	3 rd tier	Thematic focus	Budget	Short description work in OPT
YW4A (Young Women for Awareness, Agency, Advocacy, and Accountability)	Psycho-Social Counselling Centre for Women (PSCCW);	Young women (15-30 age category), of which 60% marginalised; WRO and CSOs (youth	WRGE	€ 2.924.327 € 11.153.066	YW4A strengthens the (advocacy) capacities of women's rights organisations (WROs) and young women's leadership. In OPT, the partnership supports five CSOs and one faith-based organisation with

Name, lead and 1 st tier active in OPT	2 nd tier	3 rd tier	Thematic focus	Budget	Short description work in OPT
World YWCA Equality Now, Young women's Christian Association (YWCA Palestine), Young Women's Christian Association of Kenya	The Stars of Hope Society (SHS); Women Media & Development (TAM); AI- Harah Theatre; Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL)	clubs and women centres)			financial aid and capacity building activities on women's leadership, raising awareness, influencing social norms, and accountability.
Fem PAWER Kvinna till Kvinna The Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development (PWWSD) Arab Women Organization of Jordan (AWO), Collective for Research and Training on Development action (CRTD.A)	N/A (TBD)	Women rights organisations and private sector organisations, including networks	WRGE	€ 2.651.932 € 10.900.000	Fem PAWER aims to strengthen gender-sensitive accountability mechanisms for Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) and Economic gender-based violence E/GBV. OPT partners focus on women's political participation and rights of working women. They built community centres/safe spaces for women, engage in lobbying and advocacy, mobilise women in CBOs and trade unions, and provide training.
Power up JASS G@W Coalition of African Lesbians, Yayasan Pemberdayaan Perempuan Kepala Keluarga (PEKKA)	Doria Fund ⁹	(Emerging) feminist groups/initiatives.	WRGE	€ 133.137 (€ 11.079.420)	The partnership works to equip activist leaders with the confidence, information, advocacy skills, strategies and connections they need to organize women for 1) elimination of sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls; 2) Strengthening women's leadership and participation in decision-making; 3) Strengthening women's strategies for economic resilience and stability. PU! provides a grant and capacity building programme with technical assistance to emerging feminist groups focussing specifically on economic rights for women, including labour and employment rights, and GBV.

⁹ Originally planned to work with: The Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC); The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy (MIFTAH); Palestinian Working Women's Society for Development PWWSD); Birzeit University; then Doria was chosen as 2nd tier partner although not based in OPT.

Women, Peace and Security (WPS)

The WPS instrument includes support to service delivery and to CSOs to lobby and advocate for:

1. Enhanced protection of women and girls in conflict and post conflict environments.
2. A decrease of harmful gender norms which are obstacles to sustainable peace.
3. Creating equal leverage in conflict prevention, resolution, peacebuilding, relief and recovery.

Name, lead and 1 st tier active in OPT	2 nd tier	3 rd tier	Thematic focus	Budget	Short description work in OPT
Palestinian Women and Girls lead and engage on WPS in OPT (We Rise) War Child War Child Palestine, together with: The Palestinian Initiative for Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy (MIFTAH), The Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC), Oxfam Palestine	Palestinian Counselling Centre (PCC); Psycho-Social Counselling Centre for Women (PSCCW); Red Crescent Society (RCS); Arab Centre for the Development of Social Media (7amleh); Women and Media Development (TAM); and the Culture and Free Thought Association (CFTA)	WRO/grassroot organisations, local branches and offices, NGOs involved in social accountability action, youth groups/documentarians/former trainees/volunteers	WRGE	€ 4.877.400 (€ 4.877.400)	We Rise strengthens prevention and protection for women and girls from violence and human rights violations, increases meaningful participation of women, and strengthens the accountability for the rights of women and girls. Partners work on capacity building of local protection committees, awareness raising on GBV, media outreach and online databases and increasing collective evidence.

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) Partnership Fund

SRHR, including HIV/AIDS, has long been one of the priorities in Dutch foreign policy. The SRHR Partnership Fund is intended to strengthen lobbying and advocacy capacity and allows for service delivery by grantees as well. It aims to strengthening sexual and reproductive health and rights including:

- enhanced knowledge of SRHR, particularly among young people;
- greater availability of modern contraceptives and anti-retroviral drugs;
- increased use of SRHR services;
- reduced maternal and AIDS mortality.

In OPT, one of the partnerships is active under this fund:

Name, lead and 1 st tier active in OPT	2 nd tier	3 rd tier	Thematic focus	Budget	Short description work in OPT
Masarouna Oxfam Oxfam Palestine Stichting Radio Nederland Wereldomroep (RNW) Media, TBD	AISHA, Juzoor for Health and Social Development, Muntada al Jansaneya, SHS, PFFPA and Culture and Free Thought Association (CFTA)	Grassroot organisations, activists, schools and individuals.	SRHR	€ 5.101.292 (€ 5.176.487)	The partnership aims to mobilize young people to support their fight for greater freedom of choice and respect for their SRHR. Partners work on strengthening youth engagement in civil society towards influencing decision makers and society to address inadequate legislation and harmful traditional norms that affect their SRHR. Additionally, the program will work on the formation of new partnerships and alliances and

Name, lead and 1 st tier active in OPT	2 nd tier	3 rd tier	Thematic focus	Budget	Short description work in OPT
					on awareness raising and information provision to communities.

Leading from the South

The (Leading from the South) LFS grant instrument provides direct support to Southern feminist women's organisations, movements and networks, and has a secondary focus on service delivery. LFS is intended to contribute to greater ownership by local organisations and aims to strengthen the lobbying and advocacy role of WROs to set in motion an empowerment process to improve women's social, political and economic participation. LFS involved four Southern (regional) women's funds that act as a channel for funding to WROs, movements and networks. They are responsible for selecting the grantees and enable capacity development, exchanging experiences and strengthening relations among WROs as part of the grant requirements. One of these four organisations, the African Women's Development Fund (AWDF), has selected six Palestinian organisations as grantees. AWDF's grant making is to contribute to three impact areas: 1) Eliminate violence against women and girls & sustain respect for women's bodily integrity and autonomy; 2) Protect full economic rights and justice for women; and 3) expand democratic space; sustain inclusive governance and equal political participation of women.

Name of organisation	AWDF Thematic area	Grant amount (USD) and period
Mothers School Society	Economic security and justice	264.300, 2 years
Stars of Hope Society for Empowerment of Women with Disabilities	Economic security and justice	177.000, 3 years
YWCA of Palestine	Leadership, participation and peace	177000, 3 years
Women Media and Development	Body and Health Rights	713.004, 2 years
The Society of Women Graduates in Gaza Strip	Body and Health Rights	193.000, 2 years
Psycho Social Counselling Centre for Women	Economic Security and Justice	400.000, 2 years

Civic Space Fund (CSF)

The MFA is available for individual embassies and it aims to promote capacity strengthening for lobby and advocacy and independency of CSOs. The CSF is focussed on the priority countries of the MFA and active in the OPT, while a CSF-Flex Option is open to embassies in all OECD-DAC countries. The Flex option is made available to create the opportunity to widen the room for civil society by helping or supporting to create a strong, vibrant civil society that holds public and private actors to account. In 2022, no partnerships in OPT are funded through the CSF.

3 Situation analysis

3.1 Overall context

The Palestinian civil society is complex and multi-layered: (i) the first level includes grassroots groups and community-based organisations; (ii) the second level is composed of CSOs and other intermediary organisations (e.g. no-profit resource centres, charities); (iii) the third level comprises aggregations of CSOs focusing on a certain sector, geographical area or campaign; and (iv) the fourth level consists of general larger aggregations of CSOs, such as the national civil society platforms. Gender, human rights and agricultural and rural development are the three policy areas where civil society is most active.

Global, regional, inter Israeli-Palestinian, as well as country specific factors play a role in the envisioning and implementation of CSO work, especially as it relates to civic participation:

- The Israeli occupation and Israeli policies against the Palestinian Civil Society with the most recent campaign of labelling a group of CSOs as terrorist organizations¹⁰ as well as the ongoing work of smear and hate campaigns¹¹ by the NGO Monitor.
- Internal political challenges including the absence of effective legislative body, the domination of the executive authority over the other authorities, the weak performance and low popularity of the political parties; in the absence of an effective Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), CSOs that are promoting democracy, human rights, policy change and good governance find themselves in coercive position to fill the gap.
- The division between Gaza and West Bank and the control of the de-facto government and its interference in the CSOs work in Gaza.

Several donor programmes have been supporting CSO in the OPT over the last decades.

Currently, a few can be mentioned, among others:

- GIZ has been running a Strengthening Civil Society Organisations in the Palestinian Territories programme for 10 years (current third phase is 2019-2023) focusing on strengthening of internal governance, strategies, structure.
- USAID has a funding programme on Civil participation and community engagement, started in 2019 since it resumed funding to the OPT, managed by the Catholic Relief Service.
- Sweden has two programmes, one on culture and freedom of expression, focusing on shrinking space, and one in support of human rights NGOs, channelling fund to 7 HR organisations, 4 Israeli and 3 Palestinians. This is the small successor of a larger programme, the HR NGO secretariat, funded in the past by a consortium of likeminded donors, including the Netherlands.
- The EU funds the Shoraka project, led by PNGO, focused on contrasting shrinking civil space for civil society in the OPT.

¹⁰ On 21 October 2021, Israel's Defense Minister Benny Gantz issued a decision to designate 6 Palestinian human rights groups as "terrorist organizations" under Israel's domestic 2016 Counter-Terrorism Law. <https://www.adalah.org/en/content/view/10508>

¹¹ The work of the Palestinian NGO Monitor, founded in 2002 and based in Jerusalem, analyzes and reports on the output of the international NGO community from a pro-Israel perspective. It publishes a regular report on Palestinian NGOs which accuses them of links with terror organizations, anti-Israeli bias and highlighting Israeli violations while ignoring Palestinian 'terror'. The organization is funded by wealthy private pro-Israel foundations mainly in the US diaspora. The organization's influence is strongly felt by diplomats and government funders in the OPT

3.2 Specific context per theme

In this section we provide a brief overview of the context in the sectors where the SCS partnerships operate.

3.2.1 WRGE

There are several international indices that are used to measure and reflect gender equality at country levels such as Gender Inequality Index (GII), Enabling Environment Index (EEI) and Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI), however, unfortunately the OPT is not included in these indices due to lack of relevant data. SIGI does include partial quantitative data on the OPT, namely rankings in three dimensions:

Discrimination in the family	Access to productive and financial resources	Civil liberties
Very high – 89%	High – 65%	High – 59%

Women and girls are disproportionately impacted by the discriminatory practices of the occupation, such as houses demolitions, prevention of family unification, freedom of movement and others. Gender myths and stereotypes on the other hand, have structurally influenced women's access to rights, power, resources and knowledge, and resulted in the development of discriminatory legislations, policies and practices, that undermine women's experience, voices and rights, and reinforce males' domination and supremacy over women.

A look at the **progress towards CEDAW** can provide a comprehensive overview of where the OPT stands in terms of trends and policy approaches to WRGE. The President of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) issued Presidential Decree No. (19) concerning ratification of the Convention in 2009. This was considered to be a significant step towards the promotion of Palestinian women's rights and the adoption of effective legislation and laws to conform to the content and provisions of the Convention. Despite this unilateral commitment, the PNA has not fulfilled its due obligations in this respect. According to the "Concluding observations on the initial report of the State of Palestine" adopted by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women at its seventieth session (2–20 July 2018); there are many concerns in relation to the adoption of CEDAW and achieving women's rights.

- A package of **inherited discriminatory laws** against women continue to be applicable in the OPT, which adversely affects achieving actual result in equality and eliminating discrimination against women, to which the state has the obligation to seek to achieve.
- **Fragmentation of the legal system** is such that women and girls in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank are subjected to multiple sets of laws, which afford varying levels of protection.
- The **persistence of discriminatory stereotypes** concerning the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society, which perpetuate the subordination of women.
- The **high prevalence of gender-based violence** against women, in particular so-called "honour killings" and domestic and sexual violence, which remain socially accepted and underreported due to the stigma suffered by victims.
- Women are still **underrepresented at decision-making levels**, including in local government, trade unions, the foreign service and the judiciary.
- The **high unemployment rate** among women and the lack of concrete measures to enforce the principle of equal pay for work of equal value in order to narrow the gender wage gap.
- The **economic empowerment** of women has not received appropriate attention and the economic policies pursued by the State party have had a negative impact on women.

- **Women with disabilities** are exposed the most to all forms of marginalization, discrimination, exclusion and violence based on their disability and on their sex.

During KIIs with key stakeholders held as part of this baseline study all stakeholders confirmed the above and further issues that Palestinian society suffers from.

3.2.2 SRHR

In relation to SRHR, improvement in a number of indicators was achieved during the recent years with several indicators that led to positioning the OPT as one of the highest in the region^{12,13}. However, the conservative social norms and traditions and the perception of SRHR as a sensitive/taboo issue make young people's SRHR difficult to address in the OPT. According to a study conducted by Palestinian Medical Relief Society (PMRS) and UNFPA Palestine in 2019 and a follow up study by Sharek Youth Forum and UNFPA in 2020; 73.3% of a group of 300 girls and women surveyed indicated embarrassment as the main reason why they do not discuss SRH issues with others. 42% said they do not know where to start, and 20.3% reported not having adequate information about what to ask¹⁴.

Sexuality education is limited to a focus on reproductive health. Due to border controls and restrictions on movements, **health services are stretched and medical treatments often not available or outdated**, including for SRH. Restricted SRH access is compounded by the effects of the COVID-19 crisis.

Women and girls face additional barriers in relation to SRHR. Moreover, outdated laws and regulations in general fail to protect marginalized groups including women, girls, and other groups including **LGBTIQ+**. Outdated laws decriminalise marital rape, condone GBV and prohibit abortion. Same-sex acts are decriminalised in the West Bank, yet criminalised in Gaza. In practice LGBTIQ+ face rampant discrimination, harassment, and detention across OPT.

Furthermore, **young people** are often left in the dark when it comes to SRH information and education. Sexual and reproductive health curricula at schools are basic, often limited to a biology lesson, and do not meet the needs and questions youth might have at this critical time of their lives. Often schools and educators are hesitant or not cooperative when it comes to covering SRH lessons in their classrooms. Moreover, most parents prefer not to address these topics with their children either for social or religious reasons or simply because they lack the tools and knowledge of how to address these topics with their children. As a result, young people receive little or no information from these channels and must rely on external sources such as peers or the media for information. The current information and resources available in schools do not meet the expectations and needs of young people when it comes to sexual and reproductive health.¹⁵

¹² <https://palestine.unfpa.org/en/node/22582>

¹³ Indicators included: Coverage with antenatal care (99.5%), Delivery with the assistance of qualified health professional (99.4%), Caesarian section rate (27.7%), Contraception prevalence rate (53.4%), Coverage with post-natal care (92%), Unmet need for family planning (10%), Practice of breast feeding (97.6%), Practice of exclusive breast feeding (36.4%).

¹⁴ Sharek Youth Forum & UNFPA. 2020. Social Norms and Sexual and Reproductive Health Among Youth in Palestine. https://palestine.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/social_norms_and_sexual_and_reproductive_health_among_youth_in_palestine.pdf

¹⁵ Sharek Youth Forum & UNFPA. 2020. Social Norms and Sexual and Reproductive Health Among Youth in Palestine. https://palestine.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/social_norms_and_sexual_and_reproductive_health_among_youth_in_palestine.pdf

3.2.3 Security and Rule of Law

Stagnation of the peace process, the state-building process, and national reconciliation efforts have all hindered recent efforts to strengthen the rule of law, and while technocratic solutions have made positive inroads towards improving institutional capacities, strengthening services and advancing access to justice and security, many of the fundamental preconditions for sustainable rule of law development have yet to be realised. There are key external and internal factors that affect sustainable development in the rule of law and the realisation of human rights in the OPT. The key external factor is the ongoing occupation by Israel, whereas the key internal factors are the deep national division since 2006, a dysfunctional legislative environment, fractured legal jurisdictions, weak institutional capacities, corruption, discriminatory social norms, and a lack of clarity around institutional roles and mandates.

The legal status in the OPT is at once complicated and unique because a number of authorities have ruled over the OPT throughout history. Various legal systems have prevailed in the OPT. The partition of the OPT has also led to the emergence of complex and varying legal systems in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Jerusalem.¹⁶

After Hamas' win in the legislative elections in the year 2007; and the following clashes between Hamas and Fatah in Gaza Strip; Hamas took over of the Strip and President Mahmoud Abbas declared a state of emergency. The Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) was dissolved by a ruling from the Supreme Constitutional Court. PLC's inactivity and weak formal oversight have seriously undermined control and accountability. In addition to the ordinary law making process, oversight and accountability are in fact key tasks entrusted to the PLC.

Major efforts have taken place to reconcile between the factions ever since; but these efforts failed to lead to new presidential and legislative elections, or the resumption of the PLC's work. Hamas members of the Legislative Council in the Gaza Strip convene meetings independently and pass laws, while the President resorts to issuing decrees on behalf of the Legislative Council.¹⁷

According to ICHR's 2020 annual report; human rights track was marked by decline and deterioration as a result of the ongoing Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory and entrenched political divide legal and legislative frameworks not being developed to remove obstacles to strengthening human rights and public freedoms or contribute to supporting the set of rights laid out by Palestinian Amended Basic Law of 2003. ICHR emphasized that the absence of the legislative power, namely the PLC, combined with the persisting internal Palestinian political divide, further undermined public institutions, weakened citizens' trust in these institutions, and warded off a real and serious intention to hold elections.¹⁸

In the following two sections we focus on two categories of rights on which the partnership focused on RoL (Strengthening civil courage) is working: residency and housing rights and digital rights.

Residency and housing rights

Since the annexation of **East Jerusalem** in 1967; Israel has employed several measures to limit the amount of land available to Palestinians living there where they can obtain a legal permit to build and expand. As a result; Palestinians have no choice but to build without permits. The Jerusalem Municipality estimates that between 15,000 and 20,000 housing units were built without

¹⁶ Birzeit University. The Legal Status in Palestine.

¹⁷ Al-Haq. 2015. Palestine's crippled legislative authority. <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2015/06/palestine-gaza-legislative-council-totalitarian-regime-law43.html>

¹⁸ ICHR. 2021. The status of Human Rights in Palestine. https://cdn1.ichr.ps/cached_uploads/download/2021/10/20/executive-summary-of-the-twenty-sixth-annual-report-of-ichr-2020-1634716818.pdf

permits in Palestinian neighbourhoods until 2004. An unknown number have been built since. These structures are then issued demolition orders by the Israeli authorities, ignoring their role in forcing residents into this impossible reality. Thousands of Palestinians in East Jerusalem live under constant threat to their homes and businesses; in many cases, the authorities follow through on this threat or force residents to demolish the structures themselves.¹⁹

Since 2009; 6,658 structures have been demolished and 8,910 people have been displaced as a result in Area C.

Since January 2022, 242 structures have been demolished and 212 people have been displaced.²⁰

Similarly, in about 60% of **Area C** – 36% of the West Bank – Israel has blocked Palestinian development by designating large swathes of land as state land or other restricted land types; by allocating land to settlements; or by other measures. And even in the remaining 40% of Area C, Israel restricts Palestinian construction by seldom approving requests for building permits, whether for housing, for agricultural or public uses, or for laying infrastructure. The odds of a Palestinian receiving a building permit in Area C – even on privately owned land – are slim to none. As a result, many Palestinians forgo requesting a permit altogether build without permits. This, in turn, forces them to live under the constant threat of seeing their homes and businesses demolished.²¹

Since 2009; 1,680 structures have been demolished and 3,166 people have been displaced as a result in East Jerusalem.

Since January 2022, 66 structures have been demolished and 186 people have been displaced.²²

Israel's demolition policies are illegal, and international community considers forceful displacement a grave violation of international law. Moreover, in some cases it may constitute a war crime or a crime against humanity.²³

Digital rights

7amleh - the Arab Centre for the Advancement of Social Media released on Tuesday, 11 January 2022, its seventh annual report "Hashtag Palestine²⁴," illuminating the digital rights violations of Palestinians and pro-Palestinian advocates online. At the level of technology companies, policies of social media companies would be discriminatory and algorithms would flag Palestinian content and political speech arbitrarily and indiscriminately. Palestinian and Arabic content would be over-moderated while anti-Palestinian incitement and hate speech would be treated with less scrutiny. During the events of May 2021 social media platforms in less than two weeks, deleted, suspended and restricted hundreds of posts related to the OPT. 7amleh documented more than 1,000 violations of Palestinian digital rights across different platforms, with Facebook and Instagram atop the list of the most violating platforms. At the same time, according to the "Index of Racism and Incitement" issued by 7amleh in June, incitement in Hebrew against Arabs and Palestinians increased by 15 times during the aggression on the Gaza Strip and the events of May 2021, compared to the same period in 2020.

¹⁹ B'tselem. 2019. East Jerusalem. <https://www.btselem.org/jerusalem>

²⁰ UN OCHA. 2022. Data on demolition and displacement in the West Bank. <https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoimMmJkZGRhYWQtdk0MS00MWJkLWI2NTktMDg1NGJlMGNiY2Y3IiwidCI6IjBmOWUzNWRLTU0NGYtNGY2MC1iZGNjLTViYTQxNmU2ZGM3MCIslmMiOj9>

²¹ B'tselem. 2019. Planning Policy in the West Bank. https://www.btselem.org/planning_and_building

²² UN OCHA. 2022. Data on demolition and displacement in the West Bank. <https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoimMmJkZGRhYWQtdk0MS00MWJkLWI2NTktMDg1NGJlMGNiY2Y3IiwidCI6IjBmOWUzNWRLTU0NGYtNGY2MC1iZGNjLTViYTQxNmU2ZGM3MCIslmMiOj9>

²³ MIFTAH. 2021. Effect of House Demolition on Jerusalemite Women. <http://www.miftah.org/Display.cfm?DocId=26726&CategoryId=13>

²⁴ <https://7amleh.org/2022/01/10/hashtag-palestine-rise-in-violations-of-palestinian-digital-rights-in-2021>

A threat to freedom of expression, according to 7amleh, would come from the “Facebook Law” approved by the Israeli Ministerial Committee for Legislation in December 2021 in the first draft. The law which would allow the Israeli Public Prosecution to refer to the Israeli courts to issue binding decisions to remove any content online, which would have serious repercussions on Palestinian digital rights. 7amleh objects to the bill stating that it opens the door to government censorship of any content which exposes repressive policies on the part of the authorities, presents evidence of human rights violations, exposes violence by Israeli security forces, objects to policies of belligerent use of force etc.

Also on the Palestinian Authority side, the Cybercrime Law has been criticised by the ICHR for problematic aspects regarding freedom of expression, allowing for a broad scope of incrimination and curtailment of the right to criticism²⁵.

3.2.4 Trade and making value chains more sustainable

Communities involved in commodity value chains are often impacted by environmental degradation and at constant risk of land, water and other resources being taken over. This fragile situation is further impacted by power imbalances generated by the dominance of large private-sector corporations which skew economic gains downstream in value chains. Palestinian women, are concentrated in the least-secure and lowest-paid positions. The Palestinian Authority has very limited control over resources (especially access to land) or of its borders (with respect to trade). This seriously impedes its capacity to develop enabling policies to support sustainable interventions and places additional constraints on both civil society and private sector actors who work in this field. The lack of adequate legal and policy framework for the agricultural sector as well as a lack of adequate budget for the Ministry of Agriculture of the PA have been subject of severe criticism, by Oxfam in particular. Furthermore, the Palestinian Authority’s over-emphasis on export crops would have resulted in a chronic lack of investment in local production, with a strong impact on the agricultural sector²⁶.

3.3 Baseline measurement per SCS (and linked WRGE/SRHR) indicators

SCS1 # of laws and policies for sustainable and inclusive development that are better implemented as a result of CSO engagement

Below are the main laws and policies where there are implementation gaps for the different themes and which will be advocated by the partnerships. In Annex 8 an overview table of the different indicators and how the baseline value was measured is provided.

Trade and making value chains more sustainable

Farmers in the OPT face a challenging situation, due to restricted access to land and water, export, import of inputs, etc. In this context, the **Tax refund mechanism** for the purchase of agricultural inputs is important to farmers as it enables to compensate the losses from crises, attacks by the Israeli army, etc.; this mechanism, however, at the moment does not work as it should, with farmers waiting for too long their refunds. Many of them do not have financial capacity to wait so much. There is a complaint system for farmers, covering five ministries (MoF, MoA, MoNE, MoL, MoSD) under the PMO, which still needs to be fully activated.

²⁵ ICHR, the status of human rights in Palestine, Executive Summary Twenty Fourth Annual Report 1 January – 31 December 2018

²⁶ Oxfam Novib, Program Proposal: Fair for all, Improving Value Chains at Scale

FA number of policies and measures put in place in the last years by the government following lobbying and advocacy from sector organisations, need more consistent implementation. The PA has made some commitments to devise **anti-dumping policies and market protection**, but needs to be stimulated to put them in practice. A **Tax refund mechanism** has been established for the purchase of agricultural inputs, which is important to farmers as it enables to compensate the losses from crises, attacks by the Israeli army, etc.; this mechanism, however, at the moment does not work as it should, with farmers waiting for too long their refunds. There is a complaint system for farmers, covering five ministries (MoF, MoA, MoNE, MoL, MoSD) under the PMO, which still needs to be fully activated.

Furthermore, there is the issue of **implementation of trade policies**, aimed at the ease of movement for raw and processed agricultural products, trade between Gaza and the West Bank, external trade and export facilitation through supporting trade missions, B2B meetings and trial shipments, co-financing and incentives engaging the private sector. Although a number of initiatives have been taken over the years, with decisive support from the Netherlands, and mainly through the Office of the Quartet, there is still room for improvement.

On a different note, a focus of SCS partnerships is also the implementation of laws contributing to the economic empowerment of women. The good functioning of cooperatives is key to the efforts to improve working conditions of women, moving them from the informal to the formal market. Currently, cooperatives face two main challenges: marketing and quality control. The Cooperative Work Committee is responsible for the **implementation of the labour legislation and namely the legislation on cooperatives**. Among others, the activation of the cooperative training college and the cooperative fund are important envisaged tools. Fair for all is, in particular the Rural Women Development Society, are working to obtain the full implementation of these provisions, and to strengthen the rights and opportunities for women working in cooperatives and beyond.

Women rights and gender equality

Thanks to WRO, there have been some advancements in the last year concerning legislation on women rights and gender equality. However, such advancements are affected by a huge implementation gap, one important reason being the lack of commitment of the PA to enforce norms that go against the traditional and religious norms.

In relation to GBV there has been some documented advancement in legislation Concerning so-called "**honour killings**".²⁷ However, the application of this law is not followed-up. Another achievement was the raising of the **minimum age for marriage** to 18 years, in line with international conventions. Yet, a number of exceptions are admitted, and the margin of discretion left to judges by such exceptions limits the implementation of the law.

At the level of policies, the **implementation of the national strategy on gender-based violence** is still incomplete; there is a need for revision and development of the current National referral system (NRS), as this system contains several gaps and shortcomings which became evident during the state of emergency declared to contain Covid19. Furthermore, girls below 18 years are treated as adult women, and a child protection system is lacking. From the point of view of geographical imbalances, the lack of family protection units in the Gaza Strip, despite the high incidence of gender-based violence against women, is an issue.

²⁷ One is the adoption of Decree Law No. 5 in March 2018 repealing article 308 of the Penal Code of 1960, which is applicable in the West Bank and which exonerated perpetrators of the crime of rape if they married the victim, and the repeal of article 340 of the Penal Code, and the revisions to articles 98 and 99 thereof, which provided for mitigating factors in cases of homicide of women.

The survey: perceived impact and influence of CSOs on policy/law implementation

Survey respondents were asked about the perceived impact and influence of CSOs in their respective sectors on the various levels of government and other actors. Overall, the views of respondents are fairly negative.

The majority of CSO respondents (58,7%) stated that organisations of their sectors never or only occasionally managed to obtain a better implementation of a law, policy or strategy of the government through their advocacy activity.

45,8% of respondents stated that civil society is not successful in influencing activities of the government at the national level (vs. 13,3% who think that it's successful; the others having a neutral position); 37,5% stated that civil society is not successful at influencing local government (vs. 25.0% thinking that it's successful); and 59.2% affirmed that civil society is not successful in influencing activities governmental activities at the international level (vs. 15.8% stating that it's successful).

The reasons of lack of influence are identified in the attitudes and characteristics of policy makers and in the lack of an enabling environment, more than the lack of knowledge and capabilities by CSOs. Most influential factors hindering the engagement of CSOs in policy processes are, according to respondents, the fact that "policy makers are not able to act due to the lack of a functioning legislative body in the OPT" (57,9%), "possible corruption among some policy makers" (46.3%), "laws and bylaws and regulations concerning civil society organisations that are not favourable" (39,6%) and "limited power of policy makers under the occupation" (37%).

The lack of trust in the possibility to influence central government authorities is confirmed by another question. When asked about the ability to influence specific actors, a majority of respondents declared that CSO have little or no influence on the PA (56,9%), the de facto government in Gaza (74,2%), political parties (62,9%), religious leaders (74,1%), the private sector (50.0%) and Israeli occupation practices (73,3%). A bit more positive is the view on the ability of CSOs to influence local government (only 39,7% little or no influence), trade unions (38,8% little or no influence) and international organisations and donors (38,0%). Consistent indications come to responses to the question on whether duty bearers are willing and capable to engage with CSOs on decision making: more openness is perceived from trade unions (33,7%) and international organisations/donors (30,3%); less openness is perceived from religious leaders (6,5%) and the Gaza government (7,4%), but also the PA (15,9%) is not perceived as open. In between fall private sectors (22,6%) and local government actors (22,5% of respondents perceive them as open).

SCS2 # of laws, policies blocked, adopted, improved for sustainable and inclusive development as a result of CSO engagement

The baselines do not report any measured value, which is assumed to be 0. In the following sections, the main laws, policies that the partnerships aim to get blocked, adopted, improved

Trade and making value chains more sustainable

The Fair for All partnership (especially partner AMAN) targets the government for fair financial policies, a transparent budget, more budget for the development sector, social services and health. The partnership advocates in particular an **increase in the PA budget of the agricultural sector** (now representing only 1% of the PA budget). Finally, the Fair for All partnership also advocates the **establishment of agricultural councils**. These are specialised councils to regulate market, storage, input, for given crops. A law regulating their functioning was drafted by the Ministry of Agriculture and submitted to the Council of Ministers; it is now awaiting approval by Presidential Decree. The Palestinian Farmer Union In the past succeeded to identify new laws and identify

contradictions in existing laws to foster farmers' rights. As a result there is now **a set of policies for the agricultural sector adopted by the government**, such as those for tax refund for the purchase of agricultural input, which however still need "legs" to be implemented – and this is the subject of the current partnership.

Women rights and gender equality

WRGE indicator 1.1: # of laws, policies and strategies blocked, adopted or improved to eradicate all forms of violence against women and girls in public and private life:

The main legal issue in this regard is the delay in the adoption of the draft **family protection law**²⁸. In 2014 a draft law was submitted to the Cabinet/Council of Ministers by the National Commission for Combating Violence against Women which was established by the Ministry of Social Development and the Ministry of Women's Affairs and women's organizations of the Palestinian civil society²⁹. The Council of Ministers completed the law after three readings, and agreed to submit it to President Mahmoud Abbas for adoption in its final form in 2016. However, the law has not been adopted till this day³⁰.

Violence against women is linked to the patriarchal culture dominant in the Palestinian society. This culture is based on discrimination against women, and was previously reflected, and remains very prevalent in laws and regulations in force in the OPT till this day, especially the **personal status laws** in effect. Different religious groups are governed by different laws on family matters. There are Personal Status Laws for Catholic Christians, Episcopal Anglican Christians, Orthodox Christians, and Coptic Orthodox Christians. For Muslims, the Jordanian Personal Status Law No. 61 of 1976 is applied in the West Bank and the Egyptian Law of Family Rights of 1954 applies in Gaza³¹. Examples of personal status laws and articles that emphasize and sustain the patriarchal culture include articles of marriage (e.g., polygamy, wives' obedience to their husbands), divorce (e.g., men have more freedom than women in divorce), child custody rights are discriminatory against women, inheritance discrimination, and other articles³².

Other pending issues in relation to law and GBV include the following³³:

- The fact that the **definition of rape under the Penal Code** of 1960 applicable in the West Bank does not include marital rape, cases of which are often settled through reconciliation by tribal committees.
- A draft law on **sexual harassment** in public spaces which is not yet officially passed.

²⁸ CEDAW. 2018. Concluding observations on the initial report of the State of Palestine

²⁹ The law addresses a set of issues in form of articles, most prominent of which are:

- The concept and determinants of domestic violence.
- Departments tasked with enforcing the law.
- Responsibilities of women protection guidance counsellors (and any other family member victim to domestic violence).
- Protection and legal aid services.
- Protection orders and procedures.

³⁰ PWWSD. 2021. Position Paper on Gender Based Violence in Light of the Absence of the Family Protection Law. <https://pwwsd.org/uploads/16368494131463390137.pdf>

³¹ UN SCWA, UN Women & UNFPA. 2018. Palestine Gender Justice & The Law. <https://www.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/palestine-adjusted.pdf>

³² Ibid

³³ PWWSD. 2021. Position Paper on Gender Based Violence in Light of the Absence of the Family Protection Law. <https://pwwsd.org/uploads/16368494131463390137.pdf>

WRGE indicator 2.1. # of laws, policies and strategies blocked, adopted or improved to promote women's voice, agency, leadership, and representative participation in decision-making processes in public, private and civic sphere

The relevant Palestinian laws and policies that address **women's participation in decision-making** (with specific focus on **political participation**) are the following³⁴:

- In the Basic Law; the right to participate in political life is guaranteed. The right to hold public office and positions is enshrined in accordance with the principle of equal opportunities; (Article 26)
- Decree Law No. 1 of 2007, which provides for a quota stipulating that a minimum of 30 per cent of candidates standing for election must be women;
- The Law No. 10 of 2005 on local elections, which provides for a minimum quota stipulating that 20 per cent of the candidates in local-level elections must be women;

The above laws and policies are perceived favourably³⁵ to encourage women's political participation in the country, however, concerns remain that women are still underrepresented at decision-making levels, including in local government, trade unions, the foreign service and the judiciary³⁶. In its concluding observations on the initial report of the State of Palestine in 2018; CEDAW recommended the implementation of temporary special measures, in particular the **establishment of a mechanism to monitor compliance with the quota of a minimum of 30 per cent representation of women in all institutions**, including in appointed and elected positions, in particular in local government, trade unions, senior leadership positions, the foreign service and the judiciary.

WRGE indicator 3.1. # of laws, policies and strategies blocked, adopted or improved to promote women's economic rights, empowerment and entrepreneurship

The main law that is of relevance to women's economic empowerment in the OPT is the **Labour Law of 2000** with the following key articles:

- Discrimination in the workplace between men and women is prohibited.
- Employers are prohibited from dismissing a woman because she takes maternity leave.
- A maternity leave of 14 weeks (used to be 10 weeks and was amended in March 2022, which represents a success for advocacy by WRO).

However, there are several issues that restrict women's empowerment:

- the **absence of legislation that prohibits, and sets out the punishment for perpetrators of, sexual harassment in the workplace**³⁷.
- The law includes some **legal restrictions on women's employment in certain industries** that do not apply to men, such as mining³⁸.
- The concentration of women in the informal sector, including in the agricultural sector, where **women working in family enterprises are excluded from social security protection**, and the fact that the **Labour Act does not extend to domestic workers**³⁹ or to the **informal sector**, in which women are concentrated.
- The absence of concrete measures to enforce the **principle of equal pay for work of equal value** in order to narrow the gender wage gap in the country⁴⁰.

³⁴ CEDAW. 2018. Concluding observations on the initial report of the State of Palestine

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Women are underrepresented in the judiciary and public administration, and their participation in top-tier public sector positions is still marginal. In 2016, women constituted only 11.7 per cent of public sector employees in senior positions, 23 and only 17.2 per cent of judges are women (18.6 per cent in the West Bank; 10.5 per cent in Gaza).

³⁷ UN SCWA, UN Women & UNFPA. 2018. Palestine Gender Justice & The Law. <https://www.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/palestine-adjusted.pdf>

³⁸ Ibid

³⁹ The President's Decree No. 2 of 2013 provides some protections for domestic workers relating to the number of working hours, the right to rest, remuneration, post-contract rights, and compensation.

⁴⁰ CEDAW. 2018. Concluding observations on the initial report of the State of Palestine

WRGE 4.1. # of laws, policies and strategies blocked, adopted or improved to promote women's meaningful and equal participation and leadership in conflict prevention, peace- and state-building and protect women's and girls' rights in crisis and (post-)conflict situations.

- Concerning women, peace and security, the provisions of the Security Council resolution 1325 have been incorporated into a cross-sectoral national gender strategy and the National Policy Agenda, for the period from 2017 to 2022. Yet, women are not fully involved in the implementation of the national action plan on Security Council resolution 1325. In addition, the mechanism for the implementation of the national action plan is not adequately funded, and **the national observatory to collect data in this area has not been established** owing to lack of funding.

Sexual and reproductive health and rights

SRHR indicator H Changes in (inter)national laws, policies, norms and practices leading to decrease of barriers to SRHR and HIV/AIDS services:

In general, in the OPT laws and regulations fail to protect the SRHR of (unmarried) women, girls and other marginalised groups including LGBTQI+. Women and girls face additional barriers in claiming bodily integrity and are vulnerable to GBV, child marriage and unwanted pregnancies, often the consequence of social and economic reasons. Several draft laws relevant to SRHR services have not yet been adopted. Outdated laws decriminalise marital rape, condone GBV and prohibit abortion. Same-sex acts are decriminalised in the West Bank, yet criminalised in Gaza⁴¹. In practice **LGBTQI+** face rampant discrimination, harassment, and detention across OPT.

According to the applicable laws, **abortion** is criminalized unless there is a medical reason for it. Article (8) of the Public Health Law stipulates that abortion is medically acceptable only if there is a threat to the woman's life, and if it is certified by two doctors. In this case, abortion can be performed with the consent of the woman, or the consent of her guardian. In cases of sexual violence and rape, an official committee reviews each case before making a decision about abortion.⁴²

The **National Strategy for Reproductive and Sexual Health in the OPT** for the years 2018-2022, stated 3 strategic objectives for the sexual and reproductive health sector, 1) ensure the provision of high-quality mental and sexual health services. 2) Enhancing the level of reproductive and sexual health across different age stages, through spreading societal awareness, and the adaptation of healthy and preventive behaviours. The Ministry of Health (MOH) has adopted a Strategic Plan on Promoting Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) outlining the approach and interventions of the Ministry to ensure citizens' rights in SRH. Whereas previous SRH plans focused on women only, the 2018–22 plan introduces policies that aim at integrating men.

The Ministry of Education (MOE), in coordination with the MOH and civil society institutions, implements two programs in Palestinian public schools - the School Health in Schools and the Adolescent Health program - providing adolescent health education by distributing manuals and running **adolescent health centres** and GBV programs in schools. Discussing **sexuality education** in schools remains a taboo in Palestinian society. But health and education counsellors are available in many schools, even though there is a shortage of staff, compared to the number of

⁴¹ 1. Laws governing LGBTQI+ in the OPT: British Mandate Criminal Code Ordinance No. 74 of 1936, section 152(2). Outlaws same-sex relations. CATEGORY OF OFFENSE: Unnatural/indecent acts. LEGAL PROVISION(S): Carnal knowledge against the order of nature. SENTENCE: Up to 10 years in prison.

⁴² UN SCWA, UN Women & UNFPA. 2018. Palestine Gender Justice & The Law. <https://www.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/palestine-adjusted.pdf>

schools and students, and some counsellors must serve more than one school. Numerous training sessions on SRH have been held, but there exists a lack of information regarding the number and quality of these sessions.

The survey: perceived impact and influence of CSOs on policy/law-making

A majority of CSO respondents (59,1%) said that organisations of their sector of intervention only rarely or occasionally managed to obtain the blocking, the adoption or the improvement of a law, policy or strategy of the government through their advocacy activity.

On the other hand, only 10,2% of respondents stated that civil society organisations in their sector are regularly consulted on governmental policies and strategies. A majority (50,9%) stated that this is rarely or never done.

SCS 3: # of times CSOs succeed in creating space for demands and positions: agenda setting, infl. the debate and/or creating space to engage

Several of the organisations involved in the partnerships have a track record of putting on the agenda and raising debates on issues that were considered new, or advanced, or even controversial, including some addressed by the partnerships (digital rights, safe abortion, access to sexual education, the rights of people with disabilities, the rights of the child, and a whole range of women's rights and gender equality related topics) but also other topics (e.g. food sovereignty, conditional donor funding). In general, most of these organisations are involved in awareness raising campaigns, targeting particular social groups or communities or the public in general. There is also a well-developed ability to join forces and create coalitions on particular themes in order to push topics of relevance. The methods for raising the debate ranges from traditional ones (e.g. demonstrations, sit-ins) to new ones (e.g. social media based). **The outcomes of the agenda-setting activities are not always successful**; sometimes the debates trigger the harsh opposition of conservative forces, however they are lively and active. In general, **sectoral issues concerning specific social groups are always subject to the risk of not being considered a priority vis-à-vis basic human rights violations and the occupation**. The effort that the organisations pushing for them is therefore double. It also has to be said that there are issues that do not seem to have any place in the public agenda despite the efforts of some organisations over the years; the simple raising of these issues trigger attacks on those promoting them. One example is LGBTIQ+ issues which are actually a taboo. On the other hand, **CSOs pushing controversial issues are also often accused by Palestinian experts/activists of following a 'westernised' or 'neoliberal' agenda** instead of developing their own agenda based on national needs. This criticism is partly justified because of CSOs financial dependency on donors is an incentive for them to follow the donors' agenda, but it is also used to mask conservative resistance to controversial issues. Furthermore, as some interviewed stakeholders stated, despite many Palestinian NGOs being integrated in international networks on environment or women's rights, their **contribution to the global agenda** on poverty, equality and the environment has still unfulfilled potential. This is also confirmed by the survey – about half of respondents (46,8%) said that the CSO of their sector have the capacity to establish coalitions at national level to a large or very large extent; instead only 33,9% of respondents said the same thing concerning the capacity to establish or join coalitions, alliance and partnerships at international level. In addition, according to some interviewed stakeholders, when it comes to **put on the agenda the human rights of the Palestinians internationally**, Palestinian HR NGOs seem more able to 'preach to the converted', than to bring on their side more tepid foreign governments/actors; this would put them in a weak position vis a vis the very aggressive international advocacy activities of the Israeli NGO Monitor.

WRGE indicator 1.2. # of times that CSOs succeed in creating space for CSO demands and positions on violence against women and girls, through agenda setting, influencing the debate and/or movement building:

The adoption of a strategic plan for combating violence against women, covering the period from 2011 to 2019, and the establishment of a national observatory to study violence against women, the legislative achievements on honour killings and GBV are the result of **coalition-building by women's organisations**. Several coalitions have been built, among which: the Palestinian NGO Forum to Combat Violence Against Women – Al Muntada; CEDAW Palestine (a coalition for the implementation of CEDAW). These coalitions have had **alternate successes in shaping the agenda**; Even if they were able to advance the debate on their respective topics, they were also confronted to attacks and backlashes by opposing forces, drawing from the most conservative segments of society. One example in point is the anti-CEDAW campaign launched by tribal and clan actors of the conservative city of Hebron to oppose the implementation of this already ratified international legal instrument and discredit feminist organisations supporting it.

WRGE indicator 2.2. # of times that CSOs succeed in creating space for CSO demands and positions on women's voice, agency, leadership and representative participation in decision-making processes in public, private and civic sphere, through agenda setting, influencing the debate and/or movement building:

Concerning participation in decision-making, some momentum has been created through quota legislation (such as the adoption of Decree Law No. 1 of 2007, which provides for a quota stipulating that a minimum of 30 per cent of candidates standing for election must be women, and the Law No. 10 of 2005 on local elections, which provides for a minimum quota stipulating that 20 per cent of the candidates in local-level elections must be women), and now several NGOs (including some of the SCS partnerships) are working to ensure **spaces for participation and leadership by women, especially young women, in municipal representative bodies**. The Palestinian Working Women Society for Development, for instance, organised shadow councils of women for local authorities to widen engagement in politics of women and to implement projects of local authority councils from a gender perspective.

WRGE indicator 3.2. # of times that CSOs succeed in creating space for CSO demands and positions on women's economic rights, empowerment and entrepreneurship, through agenda setting, influencing the debate and/or movement building

WROs such as those involved in the SCS partnerships, such as the Palestinian Working Women Development Society and the Rural Women Development Society, have been working for years to **create spaces for women to further their economic rights and economic empowerment** and to increase women's opportunities in the labour force. PWWS has organised women in trade unions, advocated working women rights including minimum wages and social protection, putting the focus also on the rights of women in the informal sector, which are the majority of working women, and are the less protected by the Palestinian labour law. Likewise, the Rural Women Development Society through its network of Women's clubs in all the OPT, pursues the economic and social empowerment of women, individually, e.g. in cooperatives, conducting also lobbying and advocacy e.g. for women's cooperatives. The establishment of women coalitions and fora has strengthened the space for activism. However, on the other hand, attacks to WRO from conservative forces, with a non-supportive attitude by the PA, seems to indicate a shrinking of such space.

WRGE Indicator 4.2. # of times CSOs succeed in creating space for CSO demands and positions to promote women's meaningful and equal participation and leadership in conflict prevention and peace- and state-building and protecting women's and girls' rights in crisis and (post-)conflict situations

A National Civil Society Coalition on UNSCR1325 has been established, however under strong influence of the power - under the leadership of the General Union of Palestinian Women, a PLO-affiliated organisation, and in cooperation with the Ministry of Women's Affairs. CSOs have succeeded in getting the government to ensure the participation of women at the reconciliation discussions between Fatah and Hamas held in Cairo in October 2017. Yet at the moment the stalemate of internal reconciliation as well as of the Middle East Peace process make it difficult to find a space for women to shape and influence a peacebuilding agenda.

The survey: coalition and movement-building

43,1% of survey respondents stated that the tendency to build coalitions or movements with other CSO to implement L&A activities in their respective sectors is widespread, against only 14.7% who stated the opposite (with the other 42.2% taking a neutral position). This tendency was confirmed in particular by a majority of respondents from organisations working on WRGE and on fundamental rights and RoL (52,9% and 54,7% respectively); two sectors where, indeed, there well-established fora and coalitions (e.g. Al Muntada, Palestinian Council of Human Rights Organisations (PCHRO)).

SCS 4: # of advocacy initiatives for, by or with their membership/constituency

Only some of the organisations involved in the partnerships are constituency-based (PFU, RWDS, PWWSD, Stars of Hope). Nonetheless, a large majority of CSOs involved in the partnership have links with local communities; several of them (e.g. RWDS, PFU) have their own network of affiliated local CBOs (e.g. women's clubs), other ones work with small CBOs on a regular basis (e.g. PCPD) and others reach out to CBOs and communities on the basis of particular projects or as a systematic activity (e.g. Dalia association). All these organisations carry out some form of awareness raising of the population or particular target groups. **This awareness raising, however does not necessarily translate into political participation.** When it does, it is in different forms:

- By promoting the participation of young women in decision-making by supporting them in municipal elections;
- By organising community initiatives and campaigns in dialogue with local authorities (e.g. Dalia Association);
- By gathering feedback from membership / local chapters that informs advocacy at national level (e.g. PFU).

In many cases, though, the outreach to local level through affiliated CBO/CBO networks is mainly aimed at delivering services to local communities/target groups and at raising awareness on such services, rather than at promoting political participation (for instance PFU has legal clinics to assist farmers in the Jordan Valley, WCLAC has consultation services for women on GBV, YWCA organises young women with a focus on their economic empowerment). Advocacy is carried out only on top of these activities. In some cases (e.g. the WRO) national level advocacy is conducted through coalitions – therefore with a further intermediation layer between the constituencies, and the dialogue (or confrontation) with authorities. An exception to this is an organisation which has as its core purpose the enhancement of democratic participation, PCPD. The organisation trains young people/women to advocate for human rights, freedom of speech, women's rights, and to monitor local governments through “social accountability” actions. The strategic plan and the programmes are identified through the permanent consultation with: a) the CBO Network (83 organisations); b) the trainees and volunteers (555 people, mostly youth); c) the NGOs and CBOs, which are involved in establishing local committees on monitoring public services and policies

(social accountability, electoral monitoring, etc.). PCPD is one of the implementing partners of the Strengthening civil courage partnership.

The survey: allocation of time/effort/activities to influence government policies by CSOs

Almost half of the responding CSOs (49.9%), and almost two-thirds of those working on fundamental rights and RoL (62,8%) but also more than one half of those working on WRGE (59,4%) has as a central goal to influence the government. 42,9% of CSOs allocates considerable time and effort in activities to influence government policies (and 60,5% of those working on fundamental rights and RoL). This shows that there is a considerable investment in advocacy, despite the low perceived effectiveness.

SCS 5 # of CSOs with increased L&A capacities

Currently, the average score of CSOs included in the partnership as 2nd tier on all L&A capabilities is a 4.3 out of 5 (4.4 for women-led organisations and 3.9 for youth-led organisations). Average scores on the different capabilities are the following ones:

Capability	All (N=20)	Women-led (N=10)	Youth-led (N=2)
Produce evidence	4,3	4.5	3.0
Inspire trust among power holders	3,7	3.9	3.4
Represent constituency interests	4,0	4.2	4.0
Analyse the political arena	4,5	4.6	4.0
Produce tailored messages	4,4	4.4	4.5
Work collectively	4,1	4.2	4.0
Build rapport with power holders	4,3	4.6	3.7
Adapt to ongoing changes in the environment	4,6	4.6	4.6

Clearly, all CSOs involved as Tier 2 already have strong capabilities in L&A. But also when values are lower, this might also reflect specific strategic choices of the sampled CSOs.

According to the interviews with the organisation representatives as well as external stakeholders (donors, experts), Palestinian CSOs are generally strong and have good advocacy skills and capacities, however, **smaller size CSOs and CBOs would be in need of capacity building in advocacy**. Furthermore, all organisations (including large ones) would show room for improvement concerning:

- **international advocacy** towards the Dutch MoFA, the EU, and the EU Member States, enabling to counter defamations campaigns such as those from the NGO Monitor;
- **documenting HR violations**, in particular focusing on Israeli occupation and on GBV;
- **knowledge management, MEAL** and exchange of experiences among CSOs, at regional and at country level;
- the use of **internet-based media** and the setting of communication strategies involving non-traditional tools and approaches.

The survey: perceived CSO capabilities

Survey respondents were asked about the extent to which the organisations working in their same sector have certain capabilities. On a scale from 1 to 5, highest scored were given to “the capacity to represent the constituency they serve” (3.6), The capacity to analyse the local reality and identify problems (3.6) and “the capacity to identify and select actions that are relevant in front of local needs and of local political and social dynamics”(3.5). Lowest scores were given to “The capacity to

engage in local governance processes and with actors holding administrative, economic, social or operational functions” (2.5), The capacity to mobilize external support – social/political support (2.7) and “The capacity to mobilize external support – raise funding from donors”. However also “the capacity to mobilise the constituency”(2.9) and “the capacity to react to changes in the environment” received a below average (less than 3) score.

5.2.1 # of organisations (disaggregated by women-led, youth-led or other and formal/informal) with strengthened capacity to advance women's rights and gender equality (link SCS5)

The average score (on a scale 1 to 5) on the ability of organisations to conduct gender dynamics analysis is equal to 3.95; such average score is equal to 4.5 in the 10 women-led organisations and equal to 3 in the two youth-led organisations.

SCS 6 : CSOs included in Strategic Partnerships Programmes

The SCS partnerships involve a total of **61 CSO, of which 32 national organisations**. The level of involvement of national organisations varies across partnerships:

- 3 partnerships have **national organisations in the 1st tier** (FemPower, YW4A, We Rise), which have been fully involved in the design of the programme and are currently involved in the implementation;
- Another 4 partnership have a variety of **national organisations in the 2nd tier** – Fair for All, Masarouna, Strengthening Civil Courage, Giving for Change; also these organisations have been involved in the programme design, sometimes based on previous partnerships with the lead organisation;
- The other 3 partnerships (Count Me In!, PowerUp!, AWDF) have **no implementing partner in the country**, but only fund projects through sub-granting from one of the 1st tier partners; these partnerships have no specific country programme; their grantees have designed autonomously their projects but do not have any say in the partnership given their limited involvement with it.

The national partners are mostly well-established NGOs, but also a few smaller CSO are involved (e.g. Al-Harah Theatre, The Society of graduate women in Gaza strip, Mothers School Society). The larger NGOs have in many cases a stable network of CBOs they work with (not necessarily through formal affiliation), allowing to reach out to a larger target group. (See also chapter 4).

The characteristics and capacities of the 2nd tier organisations are further illustrated in chapter 4.

SCS 7 # of CSO with an enhanced representation of their constituency

Only five of the organisations involved in the partnerships have a clear constituency to represent (The Palestinian Farmers Union; The Rural Women Development Society; The Palestinian Working Women Society for Development, YWCA, Stars of Hope; the first three are “traditional” representative organisations in the OPT, the fourth is an international faith-based organisation present since long time in the OPT, and the fifth is an organisation with a strong focus on the right of women with disability). However, also other ones, like Dalia or PCPD, work closely with community groups that can be therefore considered as a sort of constituency.

From our capacity assessment it appears that **mechanisms for allowing constituency groups to influence the organisations’ strategies and decision-making processes are relatively weak** across the board: only the PCPD, YWCA Palestine, Dalia Association and the PFU have permanent mechanisms through which constituencies can influence the organisation’s agenda and decisions. In most other cases there only are informal or indirect modalities to bring the voice of constituencies into the decision-making processes.

Also interviewed stakeholders have been quite critical concerning the ability of Palestinian CSOs to represent their constituencies. According to some, not enough focus and attention is granted to constituencies by CSOs. Despite complying with formal requirements of Palestinian law regarding the presence of an assembly, a board and regular elections, NGOs would not be very democratic in general. A sign of this would be the fact that some have been led by the same persons for many years.

The survey: representation and mobilization of constituencies

The majority of survey respondents (52,3%) recognise CSOs of their sector a high capacity to represent the constituency they serve; however, only one fourth of them (23,8%) recognise them the capacity to actually *mobilise* the local community or the constituency. This confirms the above critical points concerning the lack of communication with constituencies despite a clear mandate and the intention to act in their name.

SCS 8 # of CSO which use a gender and social inclusion lens with specific attention to youth

With respect to their own internal functioning, **5 organisations out of 20 sampled** for the capacity assessment (Al Harah Theatre, YWCA, AMAN, 7amleh and AISHA) **have formalised policies to ensure representation of youth and women** in the governance of organisations; **another 9 organisations pursue an increased involvement of women and youth** as part of their strategy. This is not surprising considering the need for generational turnover in many organisations, but also the increasing focus of donors on this subject. Still, about 25% of the analysed organisations is not strongly sensitive to gender dynamics and only 6 of the 20 sampled organisations for the capacity assessment systematically conducts gender analyses, which represents a limitation for a proper use of a 'gender lens'. Of the funded partnerships, only two (both led by Oxfam – Fair for All and Masarouna) have chosen to report on indicator SCS8.

The survey: perceived inclusiveness

Survey results highlight a fair degree of perceived inclusiveness of CSOs by respondents: 41,3% of respondents stated that young people are involved as activists of the organisations of their sector, 14.7% that they are also sometimes empowered as leaders and 14.7% that organisations are mostly youth-led. Percentages do not vary much according to sectors, just are slightly higher for CSOs working on WRGE and Fundamental rights/RoL. Furthermore, 39,9% of respondents stated that organisations of their sector include people from different social groups and vulnerable groups to a large or very large extent, while 62,1% of respondents confirmed that organisations of their sector include people from marginalized areas, such as East Jerusalem, Area C, Hebron H2 and Seam Zone.

Concerning the inclusion of men and women, only 22.9% state that both are equally involved in the CSOs of their sector; however most denounce a slight prevalence of one of the two sexes; only 11.9% declare a strong imbalance in favour of men and 15.6% a strong imbalance in favour of women. This concerns, surprisingly, also those organisations which work on WRGE – only 23,6% see women strongly prevailing in their sector; however it must be taken into account that these organisations are not by definition WRO, just consider WRGE as one of their sectors of intervention.

SCS9: # of actions in support to better NGO and/or labour/trade union legislation, policies, by-laws and codes of conduct that improve civil society space

The civil space is considered to be shrinking in the OPT according to all the consulted sources⁴³. Restrictions come from several sources.

⁴³ Interview with ICHR and other donors

1. **Israeli organisations** with strong links with the Israeli Government, such as the NGO Monitor. According to ICHR reports, organisations spend considerable time in responding to allegations of terrorism and are becoming increasingly cautious on how they speak not to end up like the organisations designated by Israel as “terrorist”
2. **The PA** with its recurring attempts to control NGO funding (also for competition reasons) by changing the Law of Charitable Societies of 2000 in direction of greater control on NGO funding and to make tax advantages for CSOs conditional on government approval. The PA also performs checks through the security forces on board members. PA also applies different stricter regulations for NGOs in Gaza: every two years the NGOs need to ask renewal of their “licenses” and all checks are based on security assessments. In all the OPT, security forces are very much involved in background checks and vetting of CSOs board members.
3. **The banking system.** Some banks are facing trials in Israel or US with allegations of funding terrorism or money laundering; thus they strengthened their due diligence procedures and restrict transfer of funding, especially to Gaza based organisations.
4. **The Gaza de facto government:** Hamas monitors CSO work, putting obstacles on the way of those organisations that do not conform to conservative social norms, for instance by mixing boys and girls in activities.
5. **The donors.** CSOs are very dependent on donors and some donors have made funding conditional on the obligation to screen and vet organisation members to ensure their non - involvement in terrorist activities. This is creating divisions among CSO between those who comply and those who refuse to comply with these requirements.

All these challenges have generated collective reactions by Palestinian CSOs who, as already mentioned, are quite capable to network and build coalitions on matters of collective interest. The success of these advocacy campaigns is mixed. One advocacy campaign – which saw the donors on the side of CSOs – was clearly successful and permitted last year to stop the attempt by the PA to revise the Law of Charitable Societies introducing prior government approval for receiving funding. However the government succeeded in imposing its prior approval for grants to non-profit companies. Another advocacy campaign has been set-up against conditional funding, listing several NGOs who refuse to accept donor funding for which subscribing to anti-terrorism clauses is required; yet the only consequence for the time being is that some NGOs are not receiving funding any more, on their choice. This, somehow, also triggers a healthy reflection on how to reduce donor dependency, that is, for instance, actively supported by the Giving for change partnership.

The survey: the (dis)enabling environment for CSO in the OPT

Survey respondents from CSOs were asked to state their agreement or disagreement (“true or extremely true”) concerning certain elements restricting or facilitating the life of CSOs and that operationalise the “civil space”. The responses indicate the clear perception of a lack of enabling environment for civil society. No more than one quarter of respondents every time agreed about the presence of a facilitating element. Bureaucratic paperwork and access to funding appears difficult: only a small minority of respondents agreed that it is easy to obtain the registration of a CSO (15,8%), to open a bank account for a CSO (19,5%), to receive and manage funding from national and international donors (20,4%), to receive funding without government intervention (21,4%). Restrictions on freedom of association and opinion are perceived as high: only 24,0% of respondents agreed that CSO members are free to gather and organise meetings and events; 18,6% agreed that CSO members are free to express their opinion in public and conduct their campaigns and only 12,1% denied that CSOs are exposed to security scrutiny by security agencies and 14,9% agreed that CSO members are free from interference by government agencies. On a

positive note, exposure to social and community bullying is considered a problem only by 21.8% of respondents, raising however to 40% of respondents working on SRHR.

3.4 Baseline measurement specific WRGE indicators

In the following sections, those WRGE indicators that are not directly linked to basket indicators are discussed.

WRGE indicator 1.3 # of individuals (disaggregated by type, age and gender) with improved attitudes and practices towards the elimination of all forms of violence, including harmful practices

According to the baseline study of the We Rise partnership⁴⁴, **33.4% of respondents indicated awareness of harmful patriarchal and societal norms against women and girls**. Females in the WB appear to be more aware of harmful impact of patriarchal practices than males, which is not the case in the GS, where the value for males and females are very close; this is also explained by the higher education level of women in the WB. Men and in particular young men, as well as young women, reported lower levels of awareness.

Another finding concerning practices coming from the We Rise baseline is that **1 out of two women and girls in the WB and the GS (45.4%) believe it is safe to report SGBV**. Girls from the age group 15-17, abandoned women and widows, and women living in villages less often reported believing that it is safe to report GBV. Noteworthy is that 33.9% of survivor women agreed that it is safe to report SGBV. This is in line with the results of the PCBS of household violence survey in 2019, stating that 61% of women exposed to violence preferred not to talk about it (meaning that 39% would talk and/or seek help).⁴⁵

WRGE indicator 2.3 # of individuals with improved attitudes and practices towards women's voice, agency, leadership and representative participation in decision-making processes:

The published data on individual attitudes and practices are very limited, especially recent and updated data. However, a survey by UNWomen in 2017⁴⁶ delivered the following key findings: There is strong agreement among men and women that gender equality has not been achieved in the OPT; however inequitable gender attitudes remain common in the OPT, and women hold more equitable views than men do. **Men and women in the OPT for instance disagree as to whether women should occupy more public roles:** 59% of men vs. 41% of women agree that “women should leave politics to men”; 40% of men vs. 21% of women think that “Women who participate in politics or leadership positions cannot also be good wives and mothers”; 59% of women but only 42% of men believe that women should have greater representation in political authority⁴⁷. These results are also confirmed by the baseline survey conducted by the We Rise

⁴⁴ Questionnaire administered to females (n=520) and males (n=280) of the targeted communities. Palestinian Women and Girls Lead and Engage on Women Peace and Security in occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), Baseline Assessment, October 2021.

⁴⁵ CEDAW. 2018. Concluding observations on the initial report of the State of Palestine

⁴⁶ The survey included 1,200 men and 1,199 women, aged 18 to 59, representing Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem; source: UN Women & Promundo. 2017. Understanding Masculinities: Results from the INTERNATIONAL MEN AND GENDER EQUALITY SURVEY (IMAGES) – MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA. <https://palestine.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Palestine/Attachments/Publications/2018/02/IMAGES-MENA-Multi-Country-Report-EN-16May2017-web.pdf>

⁴⁷ UN Women & Promundo. 2017. Understanding Masculinities: Results from the INTERNATIONAL MEN AND GENDER EQUALITY SURVEY (IMAGES) – MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA. <https://palestine.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Palestine/Attachments/Publications/2018/02/IMAGES-MENA-Multi-Country-Report-EN-16May2017-web.pdf>

partnership: 7 out of 10 women, and about 5 out of 10 men support women political participation⁴⁸. Young men have the least score value, as well as divorced and single men.

Findings of the UNWomen survey also show that most Palestinian men do not support laws that could help realize gender justice in the OPT, including a law that would equalize inheritance rights. Nevertheless, data show some changes in gender-related attitudes and practices among certain men who have come to appreciate women's abilities and equal status. Men in the qualitative study were very willing to acknowledge that they had previously held biases against women⁴⁹.

More detailed data on attitudes on WRGE and women's participation in decision-making are provided in Annex.

WRGE 3.3. # individuals (disaggregated by type, age and gender) with improved attitudes and practises on women's economic rights, empowerment and entrepreneurship.

Women's participation in higher education has been increasing in the OPT, as has women's participation in the paid labour market, compared with previous decades. Still, the division of work within the household falls sharply along gendered lines. As mentioned above; published data on individual attitudes and practices are very limited, however, the same survey by UN Women & Promundo referenced above revealed that men expect preferential access to educational and economic opportunities in times of scarcity, and many women agree. Around 83 per cent of men and 70 per cent of women agreed that men's access to work should take priority over women's when such opportunities are scarce.

WRGE 4.3 # of individuals (disaggregated by type, age and gender) with improved attitudes and practices on promoting women's meaningful and equal participation and leadership in conflict prevention, peace- and state-building and protecting women's and girls' rights in crisis and (post-) conflict situations

There are no specific survey data on this indicators in the OPT that might serve as baseline. In terms of defence and security, noteworthy only 2.6 per cent of men and 25 per cent of women approve participation of women as soldiers or combatants of military and armed forces.

WRGE indicator 5.2.2 # of individuals with strengthened capacity (knowledge and skills) to advance women's rights and gender equality:

Unfortunately, there are no publicly available data and research on the capacity of individuals to advance women's rights and gender equality; on the other hand, this indicator is more suitable for being measured at partnership level taking 0 as a baseline for the target groups whose knowledge and skills are to be strengthened.

The survey: perceived CSOs ability to influence social norms and practices

A large majority of the respondents, 88,8%, state that CSOs in their sectors try a lot (61,2%) or at least sometimes (27,6%) to raise awareness and influence social norms. At the same time, only 31,2% of respondents think that CSOs are actually able to influence the attitudes of the population and societal norms (and 27,4% of respondents from organisations working on WRGE). This reflects the fact that social norms are hard to modify, or can be so only on the long term, and perhaps a sense of inefficacy in this field by CSOs.

⁴⁸ Palestinian Women and Girls Lead and Engage on Women Peace and Security in occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), Baseline Assessment, October 2021.

⁴⁹ UN Women & Promundo. 2017. Understanding Masculinities: Results from the INTERNATIONAL MEN AND GENDER EQUALITY SURVEY (IMAGES) – MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA. <https://palestine.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Palestine/Attachments/Publications/2018/02/IMAGES-MENA-Multi-Country-Report-EN-16May2017-web.pdf>

3.5 Baseline measurement of specific SRHR indicators

3.1 # of youth using SRH services (overall SRHR)

According to a recent survey⁵⁰ “Social Norms and Sexual and Reproductive Health Among Youth in Palestine” conducted by UNFPA and Sharek Youth Forum; **only 20% of all respondents know of a youth medical centre in their areas** and more than half of them is unaware of any youth centre that they might consult or obtain services at. When asked if they ever needed a reproductive health-related medical service or consultation, 33% of respondents responded affirmatively.

SRHR indicator J # of communities, CSOs and advocacy networks with increased lobby & advocacy capacities

Previous studies in the OPT indicated that **there are 17 active organisations in the field of SRH**⁵¹. However, these organisations do not have systematic and comprehensive and holistic programs to address SRH of young people in particular. There are initiatives by several organisations and networks such as Juzoor, Sawa, Ypeer to name a few. However, these initiatives are not large scale, one of the reasons being that SRH civil society organisations are dependent on schools, parents and ministries for their access to youth. This access seems the exception rather than the rule and is sometimes dependent on personal connections and networks of CSO members.

SRHR indicator B # of young people reached with comprehensive, correct information on sexuality, HIV/AIDS, STIs, pregnancy and contraception:

The access to comprehensive **information on SRHR** is currently limited in the OPT. According to the Sharek-UNFPA survey:

- Respondents were asked “Have you received any sexual and reproductive health information from home or school?” and 46% of males and 54% of females responded “Yes”.
- Respondents were asked to evaluate their current knowledge of sexual and reproductive health issues and answer the question: “Do you currently have enough information?” and 41% of males and 30% of females answered “Yes, I have good knowledge and reliable resources I consult from time to time”⁵².

SRHR indicator C # of health facilities that adopt and implement youth-friendly SRH and HIV/AIDS services

UNFPA has managed to put Youth Friendly Health Services (YFHS) on the agenda of the MoH, who agreed to adopt YFHS standards and package in line with WHO standards. In 2014, the MoH with support from UNFPA started to offer YFHS in **one health centre in the West Bank (Dura town)** with a view of replicating the model in other locations. Although the centre continues to deliver youth friendly services beyond the project duration, the MoH could not pursue replication of the YFHS model, citing financial constraints as the main reason. Subsequent to the initial experience in building the model with the MoH, UNFPA has sought to establish the YFHS model in

⁵⁰ Sharek Youth Forum & UNFPA. 2020. Social Norms and Sexual and Reproductive Health Among Youth in Palestine. https://palestine.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/social_norms_and_sexual_and_reproductive_health_among_youth_in_palestine.pdf

⁵¹ PMRS. 2019. Mapping Adolescent and Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health Services in Palestine. https://healthclusteropt.org/admin/file_manager/uploads/files/1/9-Mapping%20of%20youth%20sexual%20and%20reproductive%20health%20services%20in%20Palestine%2018%20April%202019%20final.pdf

⁵² Sharek Youth Forum & UNFPA. 2020. Social Norms and Sexual and Reproductive Health Among Youth in Palestine. https://palestine.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/social_norms_and_sexual_and_reproductive_health_among_youth_in_palestine.pdf

Palestinian universities as part of its project “Strengthening Reproductive Health and Rights for Palestinian Youth,” in a view to reach out to young people pursuing higher education⁵³.

According to a 2019 mapping of Adolescent and Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health Services in the OPT conducted by PMRS⁵⁴, awareness campaigns’ activities and distribution of SRH educational materials are provided by all institutions through specific departments, clinics, centres or programs; however, there is a lack of adequate SRH educational materials specifically designed for adolescents: only 59% indicated the availability of age-appropriate posters on site (77.8% in WB compared to 37.5% in Gaza). Another important aspect of SRH services, is **the availability of contraceptives and condoms to both young men and young women**: 70% of service providers are providing different types of family planning methods such as pills, spiral, and condoms based on availability and free of charge or for minimal fees for certain methods; yet, these services are mostly provided for married women and men. Furthermore, the blockade on Gaza and internal political division has been a barrier for the availability of materials and supplies within the Gaza Strip.

SRHR indicator I Description of effective use of accountability mechanisms by citizens/communities and civil society organizations towards SRHR of all people

There is no evidence of effective use of accountability mechanisms in the area of SRHR in the Opt. Although Article (33) of the Basic Law guarantees the right for all citizens to litigation demanding their right and entitled them to compensation, however, there is no specific constitutional or legal accountability framework for the protection of SRHR as there is no law on reproductive health as the only law covering areas of violence against women, the Family Protection Law is still in draft form and under discussion. It’s also worth noting here, that the Family Protection law does not have any specific accountability procedures on SRHR. The Government should identify and implement specific accountability arrangements for its SRHR policies including the National Reproductive Health Strategic and Action Plan 2014-2016 and accountability arrangements should be described in future policy documents.⁵⁵

⁵³ PMRS. 2019. Mapping Adolescent and Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health Services in Palestine. https://healthclusteropt.org/admin/file_manager/uploads/files/1/9-Mapping%20of%20%20youth%20sexual%20and%20reproductive%20health%20services%20in%20Palestine%2018%20April%202019%20final.pdf

⁵⁴ PMRS. 2019. Mapping Adolescent and Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health Services in Palestine. https://healthclusteropt.org/admin/file_manager/uploads/files/1/9-Mapping%20of%20%20youth%20sexual%20and%20reproductive%20health%20services%20in%20Palestine%2018%20April%202019%20final.pdf

⁵⁵ Miftah. 2015. Country Assessment towards Monitoring and Reporting: Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) in Palestine

4 Assessment of the organisational capacity

4.1 Introduction

The assessment of the capacities of the Palestinian CSOs involved in the partnerships had the main goal to define the current situation that characterises these organisations, so to have a benchmark for the TPM and MTE.

The assessment considered Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3 partners, these different groups of entities have been analysed using different information collection tools, and by making specific reference to the capacity assessment model developed in the inception report, making reference to a model developed by Elbers & Kamstra, based on the analysis of empirical evidences regarding CSOs' engagement in advocacy and lobby actions for policy change and for influencing governance. This model, in particular, focus the analysis on 8 set of capabilities linked to advocacy, as in the following figure.

Figure 4.1 Advocacy capabilities. Source: Ecorys elaboration of Elbers & Kamstra (2020)



These capabilities focus on a series of factors influencing the effectiveness of CSO actions in influencing policies and decision-making processes, by targeting influent actors and by representing constituency needs. Such a model reflects the analysis of empirical evidences carried out by Elbers & Kamstra, disentangling the abstract notion of advocacy capacity into concrete components.

This analytic approach appears relevant in the Palestinian case, as it looks at the “internal factors” influencing the capacity of CSOs to influence external policy environment. However, some adaptations have been made looking at the specific indicators, so to avoid imposing pre-cast models on capacities needed for advocacy.

The assessment does not pretend to represent how the Palestinian CSOs engage in advocacy, lobbying and with communities, or the way they engage in governance processes or in service delivery, rather it has a specific focus on the CSO capabilities and capacities, measured according to a standard model, which can allow for comparison and for measuring changes in organisational capacities and functioning, and to make visible even changes in organisational strategies and governance.

Such model clearly has some limits, that will be considered in the analysis. Namely:

- it focuses on advocacy and lobbying, while in many cases a policy and governance role can be played by CSOs also by delivering services and by engaging in other activities (including participation in movements, which are not directly aiming at influencing policies);
- it only focuses on the “internal” capability side, without considering the interaction among actors and context conditions that influence the effectiveness of advocacy actions and the extent to which CSOs can engage in policy processes and governance - at local, national and international level - with public authorities and power/duty holders;
- while considering the social dynamics related to CSO functioning and the relationships with different actors, the model is characterised by a limited consideration of rules, processes and dynamics that influence the legitimacy and the representativeness of an organisation, related to family/clan and informal relations, familiarity and “shared experiences” among actors, shared or conflicting interests; all factors strongly influencing the functioning of both public authorities and CSOs in Middle Eastern Countries;
- it considers “capabilities” without linking them to the organisations’ strategies and objectives: to properly work CSOs attitudes, functioning modalities, and activities, need to be coherent with strategies; a consequence of that is that an organisation can deliberately choose a certain organisational, internal governance, communication and activity model, even if this conflicts with commonly recognised models looking at CSOs’ capacities and capabilities;
- the model tends to consider all CSOs as similar, without looking at their differences, that may strongly influence engagement in advocacy and lobbying and the tendency to develop or not certain capacities; thus, grassroots and self-help organisations – which mainly focus on protecting the interests of their own members and can have a clear constituency – are considered without any distinction from professional NGOs, or from CS platforms. For instance, in the specific environment of Palestinian CSOs, an example of grassroots groups is the “Mother School Society” – composed by women engaging at local level in service delivery and connecting to networks mainly as a way to access to further resources for solving local issues, which are detected through direct communication with beneficiaries and their communities. An example of professional NGO is MIFTAH – which is a think tank working mainly at national level, through the engagement of experts and researchers, on analysing policies and governance mechanisms, without direct linkages with communities.

Despite these limitations, the model and different capabilities appear useful and suitable for monitoring change in organisations (as also confirmed in the ToC workshop and stakeholder interviews) and to compare the situation at different points in time and to compare with each other the organisations and entities that are involved in the programme, in a single country and in different countries. Nevertheless, as a mitigation, the team has been adopting different strategies:

- to refer to the model, and particularly to the indicators identified for the operationalisation, in a relatively flexible way, using them as proxies, rather than looking at them as rigid parameters; for instance, when looking at power holders reference was made not only to public authorities but also to different groups of actors influencing decision making (political parties, religious institutions and groups, traditional leaders); likewise, when looking at representation capacities,

the way organisations are able to base their strategies and agendas on emerging issues at community level was considered together with formal mechanisms;

- to consider the model as a framework for measuring and comparing rather than as the only reference in the analysis and interpretation;
- to include in the analysis context- and strategy-related factors, allowing to better understand the way CSOs engage in their own political, social and legal environment.

It is to be considered in this framework that the capacities of CSOs are not the only elements influencing the effectiveness of advocacy (i.e. collective work aimed at influencing decision-making actors and stakeholders) and lobbying (i.e. the work carried out targeting decision-makers and other stakeholders through direct communication). Effectiveness of these actions strongly depends upon the context, including factors such as the actual capacity to engage in change by decision-makers and stakeholders, the interests that such decision makers bear, the fact that spaces exist for interaction and for dialogue, etc.). The importance of such external factors – which are not considered in the analysis – explain why not necessarily the capabilities of actors imply the effectiveness of advocacy and lobbying.

The assessment of capacity strengthening at Tier 2 level is based on the interviews and document review and on the application of a set of indicators, measuring the CSO capability to engage in advocacy and lobbying by looking at their structures, operational mechanisms and activities. Tier 2 partners include NGOs and networks that were identified as national partners for the partnerships. These entities are the ones that are directly linked to the organisations leading the partnerships. Mostly these CSOs act at national level, even if sometimes – in the specific case of OPT – they are not able to work all over the Country because of the restrictions linked to the Israeli occupation and to the division between the West Bank and Gaza.

The assessment for Tier 1 organisations was focused on the self-assessment of such entities and on their expectations regarding the partnerships. The assessment for organisations at Tier 3 level involved a review of the capacity strengthening approach taken by the Partnership and the methods used to assess these, to the extent these were (or could) be made available to the team.

4.2 Tier 1

4.2.1 Expectations towards the partnerships of International Tier 1 organisations

Perceptions of the international Tier 1 partners are similar across the different partnerships. Based on the interviews, exchanging country experiences both globally and regionally and including sharing visions and strategies is an important expectation. Interviewees for instance express interest in gaining new ideas for lobby and advocacy towards their own (Dutch or other) government. Gaining country experiences is also linked to sharing insights into a country's security situation and ways to protect in-country right-holders and organisations' safety. Tools, guidelines and publications are shared or expected to be shared, for instance to assess security situations, a report violation on gender impact of the occupation.

Tier 1 interviewees further expect to learn from specialised thematic knowledge that partner organisations have, for instance on experiences and guidelines on community mobilisation, gender mainstreaming, integrating youth participation throughout the partnership, and ways to engage CSOs in SRHR issues. Some tier 1 partners also expect to learn about different ways to break down silos between partners.

The expectation and need to provide these spaces for learning was stressed during interviews. Tier 1 interviewees mentioned that tier 1 partners followed trainings and learning events organised by in-country partners or one of the consortium members.

4.2.2 *Expectations towards the partnerships of Palestinian Tier 1 organisations*

Expectations in relation to the partnerships are similar among these organisations and mainly focus on the increase of the capability to carry out advocacy at international level on the Palestinian peculiar condition. The expectation is to increase the visibility of the Palestinian issues at international level and to have an improved relationship and access to EU institutions and MS. There is no expectation related to the improvement of policy work at national or local level, while the opportunity to engage with entities from other geographical areas in knowledge and experience exchange is a key element of interest in taking part to the initiatives.

Further expectations refer to the possibility to improve capacities in specific areas, including:

- MEAL (in particular for WACLAC and YWCA)
- Internet-based communication (YWCA, PSSWC)
- The strengthening of national coalitions and platforms (as the Muntada coalition, involving 17 organisations working on GBV)
- Widening the reach of the organisation at national level, also through access to further resources (PSSWC)
- Engaging with PwD and intersectionality (WACLAC)

4.3 Tier 2

As mentioned above, tier 2 entities are those that are expected to participate in partnership activities, and to further involve and support local entities, thus they have a twofold position: on the one hand, they are expected to benefit from partnerships, on the other hand, they are expected to be the key intermediary organisation to support tier 3 entities. Capacity strengthening activities are in most partnerships based on the consideration of this twofold position. Even if in some cases training courses are planned – normally led by a partner organisation - in most cases capacity strengthening is based on sharing experiences and practices, on the establishment of new communication channels among organisations, and on the provision of support (including financial support) for implementing specific activities.

The CSO capacity assessment takes into consideration a sample of 20 Tier 2 CSOs. These were chosen so as to represent different kinds of partnerships, different groups of CSOs and the situations emerging in the different geographical areas of the OPT (i.e. the West Bank, the Gaza strip, East Jerusalem and the Palestinian communities within Israel). In annex 1 we provide information on the Tier 2 CSO sample.

Some of the considered CSOs participate in different partnerships, assuming different positions and roles. As already discussed, a few organisations - namely WACLAC, YWCA Palestine, MIFTAH and PSSWC - are involved both as 1st tier and as 2nd tier entities in different partnerships, while PCPD is involved as 2nd and 3rd tier partner in two different initiatives.

The CSOs involved in the partnerships were selected based on their involvement in both advocacy and supporting other CSOs. Thus, they represent to some extent a relatively small group of “strong entities” in the framework of the wider Palestinian CSO community, which is much more differentiated in terms of capacities and of effectiveness. Sampled CSOs average scores for the different capabilities are the following ones. The maximum possible score is 5.

Table 4.1 Average score of the assessed organisations on the eight capabilities

Capabilities	Average score	Actual Minimum score	Actual Maximum score	Range of the scores
Produce evidence	4.3	2.3	4,8	1 - 5
Inspire trust among power holders	3.7	2.6	4.6	1 - 5
Represent constituency interests	4.0	3.5	4.5	1 - 5
Analyse the political arena	4.5	3.3	5	1 - 5
Produce tailored messages	4.4	2.5	5	1 - 5
Work collectively	4.1	3.2	4.8	1 - 5
Build rapport with power holders	4.3	2.3	5	1 - 5
Adapt to ongoing changes in the environment	4.6	3.8	5	1 - 5

In the few cases scores are low, this is not necessarily related to organisation's weakness, but it could be related to the focus of its activities or the approaches and strategies adopted by the organisations itself. It can also be noted that there is some more variation among organisations in the production of evidence, in the capability to inspire trust among power holders and build rapport with them, as well as the capability to produce tailored messages for different target groups.

4.3.1 *The capacities to engage in advocacy and lobbying*

Advocacy and lobbying capacities in the analysed group of organisations are in general strong. This does not come as a surprise, since most of these organisations were selected because of the roles they play in the Palestinian CSO context and because of the expertise they bring in the partnerships' consortia. Nevertheless, not all capacities are at the same level, and it is possible to identify – in some cases surprisingly – some capacity gaps.

Produce evidence

The first capability area identified in the model focuses on the capacity to analyse social, political and economic dynamics and identify problems, with a focus on gender, HR and social justice. In general, the 2nd tier entities involved in the considered Partnerships in the OPT have **strong** capabilities related to this area:

- The **capacity to use a plurality of analysis tools to understand the local context and to generate evidence is high or moderately high for all organisations**. The few organisations having a moderately high capacity to use different tools for producing evidences are not involved in the evidence-based advocacy, but rather in supporting the empowerment of their key target groups. These organisations are more involved in creating training and empowerment opportunities for their partners – so as to foster cultural and social change - than in the attempt to modify policies or influence decision making.
- The **capacity to produce reports focusing on the analysis of emerging issues, is slightly lower**. Out of the organisations having the higher capacity in this framework that mostly specialise on research and reporting, the others occasionally engage in reporting, often based on opportunities and resources. Scores related to this indicator are in fact strongly depending upon the strategies and modalities of action of the organisations. However, when this capacity appears very low, this is not just linked to the fact that reports are not produced, but to the fact that analysing the external reality is not a common practice and that the organisation tends to refer to pre-set interpretations and positions.
- Equally **diversified** is the situation regarding the **capability to produce Human Rights and Social Justice analysis in relation to the local context**. In the case CSOs gained low scores on such capability, their action were based on a pre-defined set of principles and approaches,

rather than on specific assessment of the context. However, this was also consistent with the general strategies and action of these organisations, which are not focusing on monitoring or analysis, but rather on empowerment of persons and groups, through training, awareness raising, etc.

- The capacity of the Tier 2 entities to carry out **gender analysis in specific contexts** also appear as an area in which **capacities can be improved**. Some organisations while focusing on issues strongly related to gender, or while being women's organisations, do not look at the specific factors influencing unbalances, discriminations and gender dominance situations. 25% of the analysed organisations are not strongly sensitive to gender dynamics.

Inspire trust among power holders

The second component is the capability to inspire trust among power holders. Being recognised as trustworthy can appear tricky in contests characterised by conflict relationships among actors, and particularly between CSOs and public authorities. However, for a CSO being recognised by power holders is a basic requirement to be able to influence policies and governance. Two main areas are considered, which are shortly assessed below. Looking at these areas however, we made reference not only to public power holders, but also to other stakeholders that can influence policies and governance, as those linked to private sector or to other non-state actors, at local, national and international level. An attempt was made to look at the internal organisational features that influence the two considered areas, even if such features cannot always be able to overcome obstacles emerging in relation to the context.

- The **capacity of an organisation to be recognised as a bearer of civil society voice**, based on its involvement in consultations and partnerships, both by public authorities and private sector entities. This capacity is **not uniformly present** in the analysed sample: for more than half of entities there is a limited recognition by other actors, as only for 10 entities (50%) there is a strong recognition by public actors and only for 5 (25%) a recognition by other actors (such as private sector actors)). The limited recognition is mostly depending upon the strategic choices of the CSOs. Some entities do not interact with public entities, while some other entities try to avoid being involved in partnerships that can limit their autonomy. Private sector and other non-state actors are out of the focus of most CSO relations with other actors.
- The capacity of an organisation to **be recognised as a trustworthy entity by decision-makers** and by donors, thanks to its transparency, and to its governance and representation mechanisms. Most CSOs in the sample have **high scores** to this respect, thanks to the fact that all organisations are compliant with legal obligations and with the donor's requirement. In fact, in a difficult context as that of the OPT and Israel, compliance with legal obligations and transparency are for most organisations a basic defence mechanism, providing at least a basic protection from judicial harassment, social labelling and political attacks. As it will be analysed in the following paragraphs, together with transparency mechanisms, a way to manage risks is that of participating to coalitions and to create mutual social support mechanisms. Governance, transparency and representation mechanisms are – on the other side – also a basic element for organisation to maintain international political backing and donors' support.

Represent constituency interests

For looking at the capability to represent constituency interests, several factors were taken into consideration, including the existence of modalities to look at such interests, the ways to communicate with constituencies, and the formal or informal representation of stakeholders within decision making processes. These factors are normally influencing legitimacy of CSOs to represent interests, even if such legitimacy can also strongly depend upon further factors, such as the history of organisations and their leaders. However, these last elements cannot be analysed in a comparative way, as not always are related to transparent and visible dynamics and processes.

The capability to represent constituency interests is generally high among the sampled organisations. However, it also reflects the organisations features and focus. While for most of them the **mechanisms for communication with CBOs and population groups are relatively strong**, this is less true for those organisations that do not aim at representing communities or other population groups and tend to engage with CBOs as beneficiaries, rather than as their constituency.

Something that is worth noting is that **in most cases, mechanisms for allowing constituency groups to influence the organisations' strategies and decision-making processes are relatively weak**. Only five of the CSOs samples have permanent mechanisms through which constituencies can influence the organisation's agenda and decisions. In most other cases, there only are informal or indirect modalities to bring the voice of constituencies into the decision-making processes.

Analyse the political arena

The capability to analyse the political arena was assessed looking at a) the capacity to define and implement strategies based on the analysis of the context, and b) the capacity to define and implement strategies for responding to emerging challenges regarding human rights, social justice and gender equality in the organisations' operation contexts. In all cases, the sampled organisations appear having **a high capability to analyse the political arena in which they operate**.

Only one organisation does not apply stakeholders and interests' analysis in relation to specific contexts. However, rather than a weakness of the organisation, this is related to its functioning and working modalities. The work of the organisation focuses on facilitating reflection, discussions and providing information inputs – with the aim of feeding long-term cultural and social change processes – rather than addressing specific policies or responding to short-term emerging issues.

Produce tailored messages

The capability to **produce tailored messages and therefore to target specific groups** through communication and advocacy is another area that was considered in the analysis. Capacities and organisational capability are **high and very high for all organisations**. All analysed organisations use a large variety of media tools, to communicate – normally in a focused way – with different advocacy and communication target groups. Two partial exceptions exist in this context, one organisation only uses on-line media, and the other organisation is mainly working at local level through service delivery, and mainly engaging with local actors which are relevant for its service delivery action.

Work collectively

The capability to work collectively was analysed in reference to some main capacities:

- The **capacity to mobilise resources and partners**, looking at experiences and mechanisms through which organisations raise the resources needed for their activities. All the sampled 2nd tiers CSOs in the OPT have **high or very high capacities** in this respect. Most of them are well-established entities with a strong and **diversified funding mix**.
- The **capacity to set up and participate in joint actions** with other actors, such as INGOs, national CSOs, cooperatives and private actors. Such capacities appear **strong for all organisations**, even if some differences emerge. These mainly reflect the strategies and modalities of action of the different entities, and their analysis of the political context, more than the capability of organisations. Only in one case, there is a limited capacity to set up

partnerships involving international NGOs and international entities⁵⁶. The participation in partnerships and coalitions appears a feature common to all analysed organisations. This is not only linked to the selection criteria adopted in the identification of tier 2 partners in the formulation of partnerships' initiatives, but also to the fact that the participation in coalitions and partnerships constitute both a tool for increasing action effectiveness, and a tool for reducing exposure to risks. This is particularly important in the Palestinian context, which is characterised by multiple challenges linked to the Israeli occupation, on the one side, and to the weakness of Palestinian authorities, on the other one.

- The **capacity to support other actors and organisations**, including the engagement in activities aimed at supporting actions which are led by other entities, the collaboration to actions by local level organisations, and the delivery of financial support to local CSOs and in particular to CBOs. Looking at these three areas, **the capacities of all considered CSOs are high**. The main difference among CSOs concerns the engagement in funding other entities. Clearly, those organisations which have a mission and an action that do not focus on supporting/mobilizing grassroots entities (but rather are focusing on internet-based communication, theatre, research), or those that are structured as a network of local groups affiliated to the national organisations, do not provide financial support to other organisations. The lack of an engagement in this field should therefore not be seen as a weakness, but rather – on the contrary - as the capacity to align mission, strategies and action.

The high capability of organisations to work together appears surprising when compared with most studies on CSOs in the OPT, where competition among organisations is usually rated as high and where the functionality of platforms is rated as relatively low. This difference is strongly related with the small group of CSOs that participate to the MoFA supported partnerships: most of them are leading organisations, with well-established funding bases, and strong competitive advantages. These entities find in the participation in small and large platforms and coalitions both a mechanisms for increasing and maintaining their (social and political) legitimacy, and a way to foster their goals and objectives. Differently from what happens with smaller and weaker entities, platforms and coalitions are for these stronger entities, not used as a mechanism to access funds.

Build rapport with power holders

Building rapport with power holders is a **tricky issue in the OPT**, since the Palestinian Authority and the local authorities have a limited capacity to implement reforms, to enforce laws and even to implement basic governance functions, both because of internal factors and because of external ones. These include – among others - the lack of a legislative assembly, the fact that government and regulative reforms are by presidential decrees, and the lack of resources for local authorities, that implies the assumption of a substitutive role by CSOs. In this framework, the Israeli occupation represents another important factor, which limits the effectiveness of local governance mechanisms, and often imposes agendas related to security issues. Despite that, the sampled CSOs have in most cases a **strong capacity to influence local governance processes**:

- by participating in consultation mechanisms and spaces by invitation of public authorities (as ministerial and sector committees)
- by maintaining long term relations and cooperation with ministries, including through the stipulation of Memoranda of Understanding
- by directly engaging in in advocacy and participatory governance actions (including through campaigns, and through the development of committees for the management of services and for monitoring health, human rights and Israeli occupation impacts).

⁵⁶ As mentioned this organisation is involved in a shift from charitable work at local level, to a stronger engagement on women's empowerment actions, that would require increased involvement in partnerships with other CSOs (even in this case, perhaps, the participation to platforms and coalitions is strong).

An important element to consider in this framework is that local authorities (and to a large extent also the national authorities) are strongly interacting with other societal actors, including the family/clan systems, the private sector and the religious authorities, so that a strong capacity to participate to governance mechanisms is usually linked to a capacity to interact with these many societal actors.

The few entities which are not engaging with public authorities, are those whose **focus is on cultural and social change or that are in specific contexts that would not allow engaging to a higher extent with public power holders.**

Adapt to ongoing changes in the environment

The **specific context of the OPT** requires from CSOs to develop a strong capability to adapt to ongoing changes in the environment. On the one hand, the lack of parliamentary election has the consequence to increase the instability of government and public bodies, as positions and decisions appear often to be related to short-time interests emerging among the different political/interest groups that participate in government, rather than to long-term policies. On the other hand, the division with Gaza, and the Israeli occupation led to frequent changes in the possibilities and “practicability” for CSOs actions focusing on policy, governance and even service delivery, as well as access to financial services, and the labelling of organisations because of their opposition to occupation. In addition to that, access to donors’ and external resources can easily change as consequence of changes in the international political environment, and of the domestic politics of donor countries.

Considering all that, it appears quite evident that the organisations involved as 2nd tier partners have a **strong capability to adapt to changes**. All sampled organisations have been in fact operating for several years, ranging from one organisation that was created over a century years ago – to the over 10 years of operation for younger sampled entities.

Responses to these challenges consist of:

- direct lobbying towards the Palestinian president’s office, and towards parties;
- participation in sector-based groups and commission, including those set up by donors;
- creation of coalitions which engage both in advocacy actions targeting political groups and the general public.
- international advocacy and the engagement with UN and with EU Countries governments.

In addition to the above, new challenges which CSOs face are related to **radical religious groups and to internet-based communication and hate speech**. Responses to such challenges vary. Some entities refer to public authorities and to the judicial system, other avoid being targeted by limiting their own discourse, using a “prudent language” for talking about topics which are perceived as delicate (sex, gender), or engaging with religious leaders for increasing organisational legitimacy.

Active legal actions and counter-information dissemination against false news and hate speech, particularly by Israeli radical organisation, is another way to cope with challenges.

Finally, a further challenge is connected to access to donors and to fragmentation, competition and the lack of coordination among CSOs. Despite the presence of many coalitions and platforms⁵⁷, CSOs tend mainly to work in isolation, to create consortia when requested by donors, or to create “vertical partnerships” between stronger CSOs and smaller ones – often affiliated to the stronger

⁵⁷ Platforms and coalitions focus on advocacy issues that range from Israeli occupation and HR violation, to the improvement of family law, or working on the coordination of access to specific services, as the reference systems for health and against GBV.

ones, or having the stronger CSOs as main or only resource sources. A common feature of these “joint initiatives” are the fact that resources and actions can be carried out together, but seldom there is a process for setting of common/shared strategies. The use of indicators confirms such strong capability. **All organisations are featuring mechanisms and strategies for assuring their own safety from a legal perspective**, for defending themselves from illegitimate judicial and police actions, and from political pressure; for managing issues related to access to basic resources and to monitor the external environment.

4.3.2 *Expectations and CS actions*

Based on interviews, 2nd tier CSOs expectations regarding the MoFA supported partnership refer to:

- Improvement of advocacy at international level, including through increased access to the Government of Netherlands and to EU Headquarters and Member states.
- Increased access to international CSO networks, and to opportunities for the exchange of experiences.
- Increase of the exchange of experiences and for mutual support among Palestinian CSOs based in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem and with Palestinian CSOs based in Israel.
- Improvement of communication strategies, with a strong focus on internet-based communication.
- Access to additional resources, to manage specific issues (advocacy, documentation of Israeli violations of HR, service delivery to GBV/Human Rights violation victims, communication, needs linked to the changing priorities of donors).
- Access to training opportunities on specific areas (sexual and reproductive health and rights, services and advocacy for persons with disabilities, Advocacy, Documentation of rights violations, etc.)

Activities that were included in the partnerships – that were identified in cooperation with Tier 2 partners - are therefore mainly focused on these issues.

4.4 Tier 3

3rd tier entities within the SCS partnerships are in some cases CBOs and grassroots organisations, in other cases, national larger organisations (including among the other one entities as PARC, one of the larger NGOs in the OPT). Tier 3 organisations in particular include:

- The local partners and local sections of national organisations;
- Service organisations focusing on gender, with a focus on better service delivery on specific areas (gender, sexual and reproductive health and rights, monitoring Israeli HR violations, etc.)
- Other national organisations that are involved in activities, but do not have a specific role in their implementation/management.

4.4.1 *The capacities to engage in advocacy and lobbying*

Based on the survey, the interviews, and the analysis of documents, the capacities and capabilities among Tier 3 organisations are extremely differentiated, as these organisations include large national entities⁵⁸; entities that are also involved in other partnerships as Tier 2⁵⁹; as well as local NGOs and CBOs, such as those that are targeted by most Tier 2 entities in their training,

⁵⁸ PARC is the larger NGO focusing on agriculture in the OPT, which is recognised having a reach wider than that of government ministries

⁵⁹ As the PCDC, which has a strong action both on advocating on peace and democracy and on the development of democratic institutions, and in fostering the empowerment of local entities and local democratic governance mechanisms.

empowerment and capacity building activities. Information focused on the specific Tier 3 CSOs involved in the partnerships is still lacking, as the informal assessment actions and Organisational Capacity Assessment foreseen in the partnerships are still ongoing, as well as in many cases the identification of Tier 3 partners. Nevertheless, looking at the baseline survey (which covered a wide range of Palestinian CSOs) and at the analysis of CSOs capacities as a whole, important areas for improvement are:

- Analysing the organisations' contexts and producing evidences for advocacy;
- Representing constituency interests;
- Working together, and limiting dependency upon larger NGOs or donors;
- Being recognised and inspire trust among power-holders (in particular at local level).

These issues appear only partially considered in the activities set up by the partnerships for strengthening the capacity in advocacy and lobbying of Tier 3 entities, that are focusing on:

- Documentation of HR violations, particularly focusing on those related to Israeli occupation;
- Encouraging community philanthropy;
- Enhancing service delivery capacity, through the increased understanding of issues related to specific focus areas (Human Rights, Sex and Health Rights, Women empowerment, documentation of rights violations etc.);
- Exchange of experiences and mutual support among Palestinian CSOs based in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem;
- Improvement of communication strategies.

5 Relevance

5.1 Relevance SCS and thematic TOCs of the policy instruments (RQ 2)



To what extent are the SCS and thematic TOCs of the policy instruments relevant in the specific countries? Has the choice to focus on capacity strengthening and lobby & advocacy proven to be the right choice?

To address this question, we present here some remarks based on interviews had with Palestinian stakeholders and discussions at the ToC workshop.

The SCS ToC has **several elements making it relevant for the OPT**.

First of all, the fact that it presents the need for *addressing the shrinking of civil space as a necessary and complementary action to strengthening CSOs* is quite urgent in OPT, as there are there – like in other countries – signs of increased restrictions on activities of CSOs, exacerbated by the binding constraints of the Israeli occupation and the Division of the Palestinian Authority.

Secondly, the ToC understands the target groups of lobbying and advocacy in broad sense; it recognises that *L&A efforts are to be directed not only towards government, but also towards business, and other influential societal actors*. This is especially important in a country characterised by a weak central government and an incomplete statehood, such as the OPT.

Thirdly, the fact that *the subject of influencing is not limited in the ToC to laws and policies, but also includes (social) norms and practices*, gives more space to advocacy activities that target non-state actors, or in any case local level actors, and not just the (central) institutions, which are highly limited in their power and control over the territory. In a situation where it seems more difficult to find the traditional counterparts of lobbying and advocacy, CSOs are striving to find different societal actors that are able, despite these limitations, to promote the adoption of new norms and practices that address the concerns of marginalised groups. These include, among others:

- Municipalities, as the most longstanding public institutions in the OPT and the closest to communities, and governors;
- Sectoral organisations and professional associations, who have a certain power of adopting internal policies/codes of conduct that reflect on the wider society, and often are the sole service providers where the government does not arrive;
- International actors and donors, because of the funding provided on which CSOs are dependent and because of their influence on the PA and Israel;
- On a negative side, it is noted that *clans* are also important actors, holding power in the Palestinian society, but not sensitive to transparent lobby and advocacy.

At the same time, **some assumptions of the SCS ToC need to be problematised** if one takes into account the OPT context, making the ToC a bit less relevant, or requiring some qualification or adaptation.

A first problematic assumption is that *donor funding has always a positive impact on CSOs capacity and legitimacy*. Of course, donors are still a strong, if not the principal ally of CSOs, and have

supported them when it has come to contrasting the attempts of the PA to render further difficult the life of CSOs through increasingly complicated procedures and controls⁶⁰.

However, donors are also sometimes accused to be part of the problem of shrinking civil space and not just part of the solution:

- donor funding has created competition between CSOs and PA, and among CSOs, as well as a strong donor-dependency of CSOs;
- the various requirements and conditions legitimately imposed by donors for funding CSOs, have generated a situation of tension and division among CSOs that accept and CSOs that do not accept to satisfy these conditions;
- Donors sometimes impose their agendas focusing on certain issues that are not necessarily considered a priority by the community, thereby contributing to the phenomenon of NGOs chasing the donor money rather than strengthening their legitimacy and relation with their constituencies.

A second assumption is that *counterparts and ministry are willing and able to support and complement advocacy towards government, private sector, and help address shrinking civic space*. The Netherlands has some policy influence in its focus sectors such as justice or PSD. However, the Netherlands does not fund the PA directly and has therefore has limited leverage in policy dialogue at a PMO/presidency level. As there are already vocal CSO coalitions addressing shrinking civic space, the posture of the Netherlands, and of other donors, is more of an indirect support. Furthermore, in Gaza the de facto government is object of a no contact policy for most donors.

A third assumption is that the *transformative role of CSOs goes hand in hand with their legitimacy in the eyes of society*. Actually society is diverse and legitimacy is a complex matter when there is no formal representation mechanism. As a matter of fact, CSOs that adopt more ambitious transformational goals e.g. women rights organisations, in the OPT, in recent time have faced disapproval of an increasingly large conservative part of the society. These progressive organisations would be considered as elitist, promoting “western” values rather than national or community interests. They are often depicted as detached from the grassroots level, which means that they have low levels of legitimacy. This even if these same organisations have distinguished themselves for service delivery towards women victims of violence, replacing state intervention or even in partnership with the government. All in all, sometimes CSO need to strike a balance between keeping popular support and pursuing transformational goals.

A fourth assumption is that that *the more CSOs have L&A capacity and legitimacy in the sense that they have sound connections with their “constituencies”, the more the Government, the private sector and other societal actors will respond to their advocacy efforts and will address the concerns of marginalised groups in their laws, policies, norms and practices*. This is not obvious in a situation of blocked democracy like the one of the OPT, where there is no functioning legislative body and parliamentarians responding to their voters, where presidential elections are suspended indefinitely and the legislation function has been centralised in the presidency without any clear accountability mechanism.

A fifth assumption only partly valid in the OPT is *that there is a government which has the power and resources to respond to the needs of their citizens by implementing laws and policies* under the influence of CSOs L&A efforts. The PA has of course its strategies and policies and some role in the delivery of services. However, the governance set up in the OPT is quite different from other countries:

⁶⁰ For instance, the EU working group on civil society has supported Palestinian CSOs in opposing the revision of the Law on Charitable societies; the EU currently funds a project on Shrinking Civil Space, Shoraka, led by the PNGO platform.

- There is an occupying power, Israel, that maintains control over access to tax revenues by the PA and does not take up responsibility for addressing the needs and concerns of the population in the areas under its direct control;
- There are internal divisions in the PA and Gaza and the West Bank are governed by different political factions, and have different legal systems, etc. which limits the scope of legislation issued by the PA and the reach of governmental policies and strategies.

Also the private sector (business) faces limitations in its response capacity, because of the restrictions in the market economy also caused by the occupation, and because of a certain concentration of the economic power in few clan-based undertakings⁶¹. The concept of corporate social responsibility is being promoted in the OPT since some years but is still at a very rudimentary stage.

In light of these problematic assumptions, **the question of whether it has been relevant to focus on lobby and advocacy capacity is one in point**. Actually, as it is clear from the previous chapters, the large and medium sized Palestinian CSOs do already have strong lobby and advocacy capacities. They are quite advanced and autonomous in setting up coalitions in various sectors, and in creating platforms for joint lobbying and advocacy. It is also true that the reason why certain laws are not approved or implemented, or certain policy issues are not addressed, are not to be found in the lack of L&A capacity of CSOs. One would therefore be tempted to answer negatively to the question. Yet, given the shrinking civil space, and the deteriorated governance situation, it must be admitted that CSOs in this moment need support to resist, and it is important that such support goes to their advocacy and lobby activities and not just to their service delivery role. It is probably more a matter of identifying which more advanced areas of L&A need to be supported (such as international advocacy, or use of social media), and how to favour that CSOs with better L&A capacities reinforce the smaller CBOs. At the same time it is important to increase the ability of CSOs to self-sustain themselves financially so that they are able to pursue their own, constituency mandated L&A agenda rather than shifting their priorities instrumentally in order to secure donor funding.

As to the relevance of the **thematic ToC**, based on the information reported in chapter 3, the discussions at the ToC workshop and stakeholders' interviews, the following remarks can be made:

- All the **SRHR** ToC, except for the HIV/AIDS related part, is relevant to OPT, as the objectives it states (with the exceptions of HIV/AIDS related ones) are also the objectives of current activity of key CSOs funded in the Masarouna partnership as well as some WRO: better information and greater freedom of choice for young people about their sexuality, improved access to SRH, better public and private health care for family planning, pregnancies and childbirth, including safe abortions; the sexual and reproductive rights of all people, including those belonging to marginalised groups, institutionally respected & protected.
- The **WRGE** ToC is also in large part relevant; gender-based violence; participation in decision-making and leadership; economic rights, empowerment and entrepreneurship are also high on the agenda of WRO and other CSOs in the OPT. The impact area "Women's meaningful and equal participation in conflict prevention, peace- and state-building and women's and girls' rights protections in crisis and (post-)conflict situations", is partially relevant; protection of women and girls' rights in heavily affected areas such as Gaza is certainly relevant; women's participation in peace and state building is somehow less relevant given the current stalemate in the peace process and in the building of a Palestinian State. Some stakeholders commented that the WPS agenda is largely donor-driven and one has to resort to a broad interpretation of the themes there included in order to fit into donor's themes.

⁶¹ Find reference

- The other thematic ToC (RoL, PSD) are only marginally touched upon by the funded partnerships, therefore the assessment of their relevance is not pertinent.

5.2 Relevance and alignment of implementation design (RQ 4-5)



To what extent are the strategic partnership programmes aligned with the Multi-Annual Country Strategy and its operationalisation (including geographical areas, partner organisations, approaches etc.)?

The focus areas of investment by Netherlands according to the MACS 2019-2022 are:

1. A just and peaceful society
2. Access to land, water and energy
3. Sustainable trade and economic development.

The strengthening of the position of women, girls and youth and climate change are crosscutting issues.

Most partnerships are clearly relevant to the first area while two are (although much more indirectly) relevant to the third area. They also take up the crosscutting focus on women and youth.

Under “**A Just and Peaceful Society**”, *The Netherlands will focus on protecting the democratic space in the PT, with the promotion of inclusive and accountable governance at the core of the work. It will continue to promote a diverse, inclusive and pluriform space for human rights organizations, CSOs and individual human rights defenders. (...).*

The strengthening of CSOs and particularly those defending human rights, through the SCS partnerships, fits very well into these objectives. Seven partnerships have a clear human rights focus, particularly on WRGE, and the other three have some connection with human rights at least. Two partnerships also aim to promote inclusive governance and accountability of institutions with focus on the local/municipal level. Freedom of expression and internet freedom will have particular emphasis according to the MACS, and indeed two partnerships intervene on this subject.

In terms of possible synergies/complementarities, two programmes are of particular relevance: the Sawasya II access to justice programme, funded by the Netherlands, Sweden, Spain and the EU and implemented by UNDP/UNICEF/UNWOMEN, involving 39 CSO, among which also two out of those supported by the SCS partnerships. The justice angle is particularly interesting as it is a necessary complement when it comes to WRGE but is not strongly addressed as such by the SCS partnerships. The Netherlands also funds a Civil Society Programme together with UNDP, supporting five Palestinians and five Israeli human rights organisations. We were not yet able to access to the relevant information pending a request to the responsible NRO officer.

In terms of geographic focus under this priority area, the MACS states that the Netherlands will provide dedicated humanitarian support to the most marginalized communities in Area C, refugees (especially those residing in camps), and Gazans without access to safe water or sanitation, with a focus on women and youth. Indeed, the partnership which have the strongest territorial approach (GFC) focuses on marginalised communities in area C; other partnerships also aim to reach out to that area.

Under the **Sustainable trade and economic development focus area**, the Netherlands aims to enhance the competitiveness of the private sector, stimulate trade relations between the Dutch and Palestinian private sector, improve movement and access in Gaza, boost exports of and employment within the IT and (climate smart) agricultural sector as promising areas for growth.

Of the SCS partnerships, indeed 2 touch upon trade and PSD issues, but only one is actually active in the OPT. The particular topics addressed by this partnership (e.g. tax refund and complaint system for farmers, women's cooperatives) match those addressed by the country programme to a limited extent therefore synergies and complementarities are less evident than in the previous area. Fair for all advocates for ease of movement for raw and processed agricultural products, trade between Gaza and the West Bank, a topic which is also strongly supported by NRO.



To what extent are the ToCs of the different partnerships adjusted for the country context? To what extent have potential risks been identified and taken into account in the TOC? To what extent are the assumptions underlying the ToCs validated by existing quality literature and evaluations?

About half of the partnerships have a Theory of Change which has been adjusted to the country context, or a specific country level ToC, or at least have contextualised some of the elements of the ToC (e.g. - intermediate and early outcomes per pathway of change; Giving for Change - challenges and opportunities are articulated per country). The other four partnerships only have a global level ToC. In a few (3) cases the ToC assumptions (pathways) are supported with findings from the literature and statistics as well as the baseline fieldwork; in other cases (2) the detailed context analysis per country is informed by literature and data, but literature is not used to underpin assumptions. In one case, there is no literature-based validation of the ToC, however the programme includes evidence-based research. Overall, from interviews it is clear that the ToC is informed above all by the direct field experience of the implementing partners, before being based on any scientific evidence. This is understandable as the partnerships are not going to support, in most cases, totally new activities for the partners or the countries, or somehow they are in continuity with previous activities from which lessons can be learned.

At least six partnerships take into account the contextual risks in the risk matrix. These often relate to the Israeli occupation, war, annexation policy, geographic fragmentation and siege on Gaza as well as internal political division; the shrinking civic space and repression of CSOs; Covid-19. In the case of Giving for change, opportunities are also highlighted from the fact that donor/INGO dependency that starts to be acknowledged and provides an opportunity for “shifting the power” through community philanthropy. The link between risk analyses and the ToC is most often not explicit (as the risk analysis belongs to different sections of the formats of the proposals/reports/plans); but sometimes one can note that risks implicitly addressed in the ToC as ‘problems’ and/or as the opposite of ‘assumptions. As it will be discussed under section on conflict sensitivity, most of the critical risk elements in the OPT have a protracted crisis nature, and somehow, the partners seem to have learned to bypass or circumvent these risks, or focus on activities that are not too much affected by these risks.

To what extent are the activities aligned with the needs of the beneficiaries during the implementation of the project? What dimensions of inequality and discrimination against groups that are structurally excluded do the partnership programs aim to address?

As it should be clear from the context section, presenting data on women's discrimination (including double discrimination of girls and disabled women, women leading small business and/or working

women); difficult access to SRHR for women and youth, and difficult conditions of marginalised communities in Area C, East Jerusalem and Gaza, **all the partnerships address issues that are of great relevance for the Palestinians in this moment, and in particular for the most marginalised segments of the Palestinian population.** A large part of the partnerships has implementing partners which have stable links with grassroots organisations in the intervention areas; through these grassroots links, they are able to receive feedback, convey it to the partnership and adapt the activities to local needs. There are, though, two qualifications to be made.

- Based on interviews, **most partnerships have designed their interventions according to their organisational mission, vision and strategy, which is also informed by their linkages with communities and grassroots organisations** (and sometimes by the donors' agendas). Project-specific bottom-up consultations of end beneficiaries/marginalised groups as a way to design the programme are more a rarity. The notable exception is a partnership focused on organising communities to discuss, propose and implement their own social or economic initiatives, to be supported by community philanthropy. The issue of "freedom of speech" under which the partnership is presented, is therefore a starting point to allow communities (or other informal groups, of young people for example) do decide for themselves what to do. Of course, those partnerships that only operate through grantmaking in the OPT react to funding requests and therefore also have a bottom-up approach, however they do not have a country program design in strict sense.
- If the general **relevance of the activities proposed by the partnerships appears to be good**, this is **not a guarantee that activities will be considered by the population relevant in every place at any particular time.** In the OPT, there is often a situation, as pointed out by stakeholders, of 'suddenly changing priorities': when an occupation-related event occurs, the attention of the population affected goes away from particular issues to focus on that main event. This is a challenge for those causes that by some (often male) parts of the CS landscape tend to be judged "important, but not a priority in this moment", such as women rights or SRHR. However the argument of "not being a priority" is often used to dismiss the cause of social groups that actually see their human rights violated, thus it makes sense for organisations to insist in promoting these 'non priority' causes.

5.3 Southern Leadership & legitimacy (RQ 6-7)



To what extent did southern leadership materialise in the design of the programmes? How have the in-country partnership alliances been formed?

Only one partnership having actions in the OPT is funded through the Leading from the South Instrument, the one led by the African Women Development Fund (AWDF). It is basically a sub-granting activity towards three organisations without any country programme and with only limited interaction between the lead and the grantees, therefore it is difficult to establish the added value of South-South cooperation in this case.

More in general, looking at all partnerships supported by the Dutch MFA, 'southern leadership' understood as local/national ownership, varies: three partnership have national organisations in the 1st tier, another 4 have them in the 2nd tier, and 3 do not have any implementing partner in the country, but only grantees (see chapter 3.3, SCS 6).

When they do exist, Palestinian first and second tier organisations appear to have been sufficiently involved in decision making and in programme design. Southern leadership was ensured in several ways, including:

- The selection of strong organisations, that even when they are relatively young and small, are **recognised for their expertise and connection to target groups, and participate in networks, platforms and coalitions;**
- The fact that **activities have been identified by Palestinian partners**, consistently with their strategies, plans of actions and needs;
- The fact that in some cases, partnerships are not new to their Palestinian members, and represent just a new phase of **long-term cooperation** mechanisms;
- The fact that, in other cases, entering in the partnerships was a **response to emerging challenges**, as those related to the reduction of funds due to shift of the donors' attention towards other countries or issues;
- The fact that, **in no cases, the Palestinian organisations involved in the partnerships depend upon them for their sustainability** or for funding their main actions: funds from the partnerships are always used to support specific actions that were included in the organisations' strategies, but for which it was difficult to find alternative support sources.

How do partners view their own legitimacy towards beneficiaries and duty bearers? What gives these civil society organisations legitimacy towards beneficiaries, rights holders and duty bearers? (Constituency, expertise, independence, service provision, religious belief, human rights treaties, etc.)

The source of legitimacy of partner organisations is manifold: sometimes it is constituency representation, sometimes the provision of services also understood as community organising services, sometimes expertise; one Christian organisation is included, but religious beliefs do not seem to be the main source of legitimacy. But in most cases, there are multiple sources of legitimacy.

As discussed in chapter 4, most organisations have strong communication links with grassroots groups and population groups, but some organisations do not aim at representing communities or other population groups and tend to engage with CBOs and target groups as beneficiaries, rather than as their constituency. Furthermore, mechanisms to involve grassroots groups/communities in decision-making or strategic planning are underdeveloped. This exposes CSOs to potential legitimacy issues, that can also be instrumentalised in various ways by conservative forces and by power holders for downplaying the importance of CSOs' requests. On the other hand, even those organisations that are more service-orientated, and do not have constituency in strict sense, can find a source of legitimacy in their everyday contact with target groups, and in the deep knowledge of their condition, especially in those areas where CSOs replace government in service delivery.

5.4 Coherence (RQ 8)



External coherence: To what extent has policy implementation been coordinated with relevant stakeholders (embassies and delegated programmes, other strategic partners, national NGOs, multilaterals, etc.).



Internal coherence: To what extent was the Ministry involved in coordinating the different efforts, and are there any tangible plans for coordination of implementation in place? Have shared ambitions between partnerships been developed?

Internal coherence has been limited so far, while external coherence is mostly left to individual partners initiatives.

Based on documentation and interviews, the SCS partnerships interlink by the thematic overlap between organisations (Women economic empowerment and legal rights, political participation, trade and value chains), the involvement of organisations in multiple partnerships, and the similarity of activities.

Based on interviews, **partnerships have only to a limited extent coordinated their efforts under the SCS policy implementation.** Interviewees indicate that there is no regular contact among partnerships around similar themes, activities or organisations in the first year(s), and so far, no shared ambitions, synergies or joint efforts have emerged. In the interviews, the leads/in-country leads give the inwards-looking focus during the first phases of implementation as reason. Almost all partnerships concentrated on setting up the programme and finalising the baseline and recruiting processes. Interviewees mention that it is the intention to seek more interactions and coordination with other partnerships in the coming implementation phases.

In contrast to regular contact for coordination, there have been ad-hoc conversations among organisations, such as around a specific theme (i.e. SRHR). In these cases, partners engaged in joint L&A and influence within the political sensitivities, for instance in developing a joint statement. Yet, these interactions are based on general, previously-existing relationships, for instance among larger organisations. They are on organisational level and not specifically initiated for or linked to the partnerships under the SCS framework.

Interviews suggest that contact between SCS partnerships in the OPT has not really been facilitated by the NRO. The NRO organised an introductory meeting on 29-30 March 2022⁶², and a follow-up is planned for early July 2022. Yet, this meeting has been the only one, and the NRO has not been strongly involved in coordinating the different efforts under the SCS policy framework. Individual interactions with the NRO did take place, which interviewees perceived as good and partnerships (in-country leads) mentioned the good working relation they have with the NRO. The main expectations SCS partnerships have of the relation with the NRO are networking and coordination, exploring collaboration on certain actions, and regular knowledge exchange.

In proposals, partnerships make reference to other Dutch funded projects and programmes, yet more at an international level than at country level. These include but are not limited to: Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law, learning agenda MFA, and the Knowledge Hub Governance and Citizenship, the Reclaim Sustainability! consortium. In the documentation, few references are made to project and programmes at country-level. Interviews show that in practice, the coordination with these partnerships have not materialised.

In contrast to partnerships between themselves, partners – in particular 2nd tier – **coordinate at country-level with other actors operating on similar issues** and not related to SCS policy implementation. This happens through networks and coalitions of mainly other NGOs/CBOs, for instance, through thematic working groups of PNGO, the CEDAW committee, UN 1325 coalition,

⁶² Introduction meeting with the Dutch Representative in Ramallah (NRO) and other NL lead partners of the strategic partnerships active in OPT.

and a coalition for combatting GBV (see for elaboration chapter 4). The strong ability to forge coalitions however, as pointed out in the validation workshop, does not guarantee the durability of such coalitions over time, nor has ensured a stronger impact on policy making.

In terms of coherence of the SCS policy with policies and programmes supported by other donors in the same area, we did not find any operating mechanism to ensure it, beyond the participation of the Dutch embassy to EU level civil society working group. Currently, civil society is supported, among others, by GIZ, however with more focus on internal governance than lobby and advocacy; by the EU in terms of addressing the shrinking civil space; and to a limited extent by USAID (after it resumed support to the OPT, and with strong conditionalities that are not accepted by a wide range of civil society organisations). Ways of dealing with the issue of conditional funding, antiterrorism clauses, and vetting processes are officially aligned, while mitigating practices to the risk of penalising organisations unduly targeted by smearing campaigns have been put in place in different manner by different donors. This is not necessarily a negative thing as it might have allowed for a needed flexibility in a very sensitive area. A certain degree of coherence has been in any case shown by donors in supporting CSOs vis a vis the attempt of the PA to further introduce controls on NGO funding. In that respect, it is particularly important that Netherlands works with other partners that through direct financial support to the PA have more leverage in policy and political dialogue.

5.5 Gender, inclusion and intersectionality (RQ 9-10)



To what extent is gender effectively mainstreamed in the design of the programmes? To what extent do programmes use gender transformative, rights-based, inclusive, and intersectional approaches in their design, and have these been translated in concrete approaches and (MEL) activities? Has gender-based budgeting been applied?

Gender transformative approaches are to be found to **variable extent** at the level of intentions (proposals) of partnerships in the OPT and at the level of concrete activities planned/implemented and their M&E.

In order to assess the level of gender mainstreaming, it is necessary to distinguish between the partnerships which focus on WRGE and the other ones.

The partnerships focusing on WRGE are the majority and they would be expected to take up a gender-transformative approach explicitly. At the level of intentions, several partnerships mention they want to challenge existing gender norms and power relations, engaging men as well, and consistently implement feminist approaches to MEL, also covering for instance resistance generated by social norms and privileging women's voices and points of view. In practice we note that most partnerships, tend to focus on the least controversial aspects of gender equality, like protection from violence against women, or women economic empowerment. Also, **the approach is mostly focused on empowering women and girls, raising their awareness and self-confidence, and rarely aims at changing masculinities** (work with men tends to be aimed at creating a favourable environment in the communities, in terms of acceptance). This is understandable also because of the hostile environment for women rights organisations, developed recently in the OPT because of conservative forces questioning CEDAW, attacking women activists, etc.. As in the words of one of the implementing partners, the approach lies "between gender sensitive and gender transformative".

As to the other, non WRGE partnerships, two of them, have at least one key objective focusing on gender equality, again broadly understood: support to women cooperatives, and promoting participation of women in democratic decision-making, respectively. In addition, one of the partnerships has a gender mainstreaming activity taken forward by the specialised partner. A gender transformative approach is also claimed by another partnership, however in the practical activities, the implementing partner keeps a low profile on it, when dealing with the communities, in the fear that, for instance, the reason for a 'gender workshop' would be not understood. Perhaps, the most transformational approach that is embedded in one of partnership, has different accents: more technical/health focused by the West Bank based partner, more cultural/socially focused and openly discussing controversial issues such as safe abortion, sexuality or LGBTIQ+ issues with a gender lens, by the Israel-based partner.

Finally, we did not find forms of **gender-based budgeting** applied to partnership design. By contrast, gender-based budgeting is a subject – among others - of one of the partnerships.

When it comes to **intersectionality**, it is included in most of the partnerships as a concept and in several cases it is applied to targeting victims of multiple discrimination/marginalisation.

The most common types of intersectionality addressed by partnerships are those between being women, on one hand, and being **young, living in a marginalised area** like East Jerusalem or Area C rural areas, or having a **disability**, on the other hand. **Religious diversity** is addressed by one partnership as well. LGBTIQ+ issues are a taboo, and actually only one grant from one of the partnerships goes to a LGBTIQ+ organisation, however not developing any intersectional synergy with other forms of discrimination (at least from what emerges from the information received).



How have girls/ boys, adolescents, youth, young women and men, adults, people with disabilities, LGBTIQ+ people, religious & ethnic minorities, and people in the lowest wealth quintiles been involved in program design? To what extent and how was equal and meaningful participation of all groups guaranteed?

The program design built in most cases on previous experiences of the partnership and the implementing organisation, and on their existing relations with other grassroots organisations; so in most cases there was no such an ad hoc, section/based approach to consulting individuals prior to the specific project, which does not mean that there was no consultation at all. Furthermore, the target groups to be involved depend on the context and the subject.

In terms of **youth involvement**, this is present to different degrees in all partnerships, except those focused on sustainable development and trade - not because the implementing partners are not interested, but because there is limited interest and involvement of young people in the agricultural sector (an issue that organisations are addressing, but outside the partnership).

Applying the scale of youth involvement, from informing as the lowest level of engagement, through consulting, involving and collaborating to empowering, it emerges that:

- At least four partnerships do **empower** young people to take a leadership role in their community and in the decision making processes at local level; notably: One partnership is coordinated by a youth-led organisation supports and facilitates young women's individual and collective capacities for a social lasting change, enhancing their leadership, and promoting their voices and agenda; Another partnership not only gives youth clubs the possibility to develop their own initiatives, but has also established a Youth advisory group composed by 16 young people, who give advice on the project, of which two are in the consortium advisory group; Giving for change tried to establish shadow youth councils which however did not last long, and

has a focus on youth initiatives, works with youth CBOs or informal groups supporting their initiatives.

- At least two partnerships, **collaborate** with young people in defining the activities that are funded (that actually are proposed by the youth themselves), involving among other grantees .. i) aiming at empowering youth and grassroots organisations; ii) performing as a rap musical group; and iii) supporting youth peace activists.
- At least four partnerships **involve** young people in project activities, notably: Strengthening civil courage trains young people/women to advocate for human rights, freedom of speech, women's rights, and to monitor local governments; one partnership trains young women to develop their lobby and advocacy capacity; another works with youth from universities, involves young people in the communities as champions against gender-based violence; one of the three AWDF funded projects, will train and work with 480 women and young women in 12 rural areas of Tubas, Tulkarem, Ramallah and Hebron to lead the advocacy in the communities.

Besides youth, we can assume that people with disabilities were involved in the design of the partnership were Stars of Hope participated, an organisation focusing on the needs of women with disabilities.

5.6 Conflict sensitivity and integrity (RQ 11-12)



What measures were taken to integrate conflict sensitivity in the design of the partnership's programmes? To what extent do all SCS strategic partnerships use integrity and safeguarding policies & principles in the design of their programs?

All partnerships demonstrate a high degree of conflict sensitivity, which takes into account the principles of "do not harm" or "do good" in relation to the several potential tensions that could be created/exacerbated when intervening in the OPT. Several of them have developed tools, have conducted formal conflict analysis exercises and are quite explicit on the issue of conflict sensitivity in their proposals, plan and reports. But also in terms of contents, setting objectives, choosing topics, partnerships appear to be very careful not to get into conflictual situations. The risk of being too confrontational or conflictual does not seem to belong to the partnerships funded in the OPT.

If we take the main **Israel-Palestinian conflict, actually partnerships mostly work around it, rather than working on it**. There is no direct lobby and advocacy work with Israeli and Palestinian political actors, although some consequences of the occupation are addressed (for instance, working on residency rights, or by working on free movement of goods, or by claiming digital rights of Palestinians). The **internal divisions in the OPT are also carefully worked around**, as there is no lobby and advocacy initiative aimed at addressing the political actors involved in the conflict between Hamas and Fatah, or inside Fatah. Actually the lobby and advocacy dimension at the national level is very limited in the partnership, which reduces the risk of tensions between the PA and civil society organisations. There is a **considerable tendency to resort to the local (municipal or community) level**, as a level at which issues can be addressed, while awaiting (or no longer awaiting perhaps) that statehood becomes a reality.

But also on **other types of conflicts and tensions concerning more the attitude of the society** towards gender equality, LGBTIQ+ issues and all those that are considered "western values" triggering controversy, the partnership have developed a **very careful attitude**, aimed at avoiding the triggering of conflicts. This is a conscious response to recent attacks and backlashes

concerning the implementation of CEDAW, the rise in power of conservative forces, also within the PA, with influence on the lack of action of the presidency in the implementation of the Convention. A pragmatic attitude is adopted by organisations, trying to work on the themes of CEDAW without speaking of CEDAW but actually addressing the themes supported by the convention, for instance.

As to **integrity and safeguarding policies** and principles, the team did not have the time and resources to undertake a due diligence on partnerships on this aspect. However it can be mentioned that **several partners mention provisions in their proposals** – one of the partnerships for example has an Integrity Framework consisting of a Code of Conduct, Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Policy (AFAC), Child Safeguarding Policy (CSP) and Speak Up! Procedure in 2019/Q1 2020; and its Palestinian partner has a code of conduct. One of the other partnerships and its Partners also has such integrity policies. On top of that, one has to consider that the **Palestinian CSO** of the level of those implementing the partnerships **are systematically subject to controls from both donor side and government side** (registration process, obligations regarding the governance of NGOs, but also controls on board members by security forces, etc.).

5.7 Inclusion of lessons learned from previous policy framework implementation (RQ 13)



To what extent have lessons learned from previous partnership programmes been taken into account in programme design?

Three SCS partnerships are a continuation from previous grant instruments, namely Fair for All, FGG, and Count me In. Of all the partnerships under the SCS framework, only one strongly elaborates on lessons learned from previous policy implementation. The documents of **all the other partnerships** – in particular the proposals – **do not refer, only do so only to a limited extent or implicitly, to lessons learnt from previous implementation**. When references are made – for instance to the WPS policy framework, mid/end-term evaluations, policy framework Dialogue and Dissent – there is no elaboration on *how* the consortia respond and take lessons into account. Rather, the programmes seem to build on previous work of 1st and 2nd tier partners on a specific topic or activity, and on the (changing) context (e.g. experiences with Covid, technological developments), according to the proposals. In that way, the design of the programmes is substantiated by literature and studies on the context. This element – how well the proposal describes how the results of evaluations and/or studies feed into formulation of the proposal – is scored relatively low across all partnerships.

6 Conclusions and recommendations

6.1 The situation of civil society in the OPT

A unique context

Strengthening civil society in the OPT means supporting its lobby and advocacy ability in a unique context. Contrary to other countries, there is not a fully established state, there is no normal legislative process as laws are promulgated by Presidential Decree, and no legislative body of parliamentarians accountable to their constituencies. There is an occupying power, Israel, that maintains control over access to tax revenues by the PA and does not take up responsibility for addressing the needs and concerns of the population in the areas under its direct control. There are internal divisions in the PA and Gaza and the West Bank are governed by different political factions, and have different legal systems, etc. which limits the scope of legislation issued by the PA and the reach of governmental policies and strategies. Also the private sector (business) faces limitations in its response capacity, because of the restrictions in the market economy also caused by the occupation, and because of a certain concentration of the economic power in few clan-based undertakings.

A vibrant civil society, with strengths and weaknesses

Nonetheless, a vibrant civil society does exist in the OPT which, besides ensuring the delivery of essential services, puts effort in conducting lobby and advocacy to defend the rights of vulnerable groups and various constituencies. The baseline allowed to shade light on the current state of civil society organisations, based on stakeholders interviews, a survey with 126 CSOs and more in-depth interviews with 20 CSOs who are partners in the SCS partnerships (1st and 2nd tier).

Actually, as it is clear from the capacity assessment conducted on the Palestinian CSOs involved in the partnerships, CSOs have already strong lobby and advocacy capacities. On average, their score on the eight capabilities are high, with an ability to analyse the political arena and adapt to ongoing changes in the environment with the highest average scores. It can also be noted that there is some more variation among organisations in the production of evidence, in the capability to inspire trust among power holders and build rapport with them, as well as the capability to produce tailored messages for different target groups. In the few cases scores are low, this is not necessarily related to organisation's weakness, but it could be related to the focus of its activities or the approaches and strategies adopted by the organisations itself.

This positive picture, however, also depends on the fact that the assessed organisations are probably also stronger than average, having being selected to be implementing partners. In any case, it is important to acknowledge that chosen partners do have many capacities to share and strengthen by working with CBOs or individuals in the communities, especially women and young people.

The survey gives a more nuanced picture on the L&A capabilities, and especially on the effectiveness of CSOs. Respondents acknowledge that the capacity to represent the constituency, analyse the local reality and identify problems and identify and select actions that are relevant in front of local needs and of local political and social dynamics are high among civil society. However, the capacity to engage in local governance processes and with actors holding administrative, economic, social or operational functions, and the capacity to mobilize external support – social/political or financial – are deemed low. Also the capacity to mobilise the constituency and the capacity to react to changes in the environment are not assessed as strong.

Overall, the views of respondents on CSO's influence on policy processes are fairly negative: they feel they are not sufficiently consulted on governmental policies and strategies, and that their successes in blocking, adopting or improving a law or a policy are occasional. Two types of challenges do emerge:

- The challenges CSO have in getting the attention of power holders, given the lack of accountability mechanisms, the limited openness of the PA to CSO input, not to speak of the limited openness or most often total lack of communication with the Government of Israel or Gaza de facto government. In this respect, the external support of donors is important and there is a perception of insecurity in relations with donors lately, with the increase of conditional funding.
- The challenges CSO have in relation to communication with the society – shown by the gap between ability to represent constituencies and actual ability to communicate with them reported by the survey respondents; such gap is mirrored by the gap between the aspiration of changing social practices and norms, on one hand, and the acknowledgement that these norms are very hard to change and impact has been limited so far, on the other hand.

A “disabling” environment

The lack of an enabling environment for civil society appears particularly problematic and makes for an increasingly shrinking civil space. The responses the survey indicate the clear perception of a lack of enabling environment for civil society. No more than one quarter of respondents every time agreed about the presence in the OPT of elements essential for the life of CSOs such as obtaining the registration of a CSO, opening a bank account, or receiving and managing funding from national and international donors, possibly without government intervention. Restrictions on freedom of association and opinion are perceived as high: only one respondent in four agreed that CSO members are free to gather and organise meetings and events; one in five agreed that CSO members are free to express their opinion in public and conduct their campaigns and less than one in six believes that CSO members are free from interference by government agencies.

These perceptions are well explained by the various restrictions of civil space coming from different sources, as pointed out by interviewed experts and stakeholders. Restrictions come from several sources: Israeli organisations such as the NGO Monitor which perform aggressive smearing campaigns with some impact also on donor funding; PA with its recurring attempts to control NGO funding through the law and to repress opposition through security checks; the banking system with strengthened due diligence procedures; the Gaza de facto government, putting obstacles on the way of those organisations that do not conform to conservative social norms. Somehow, also certain donors insisting on the obligation to screen and vet organisation contribute to create divisions among CSOs.

In this context, the choice of addressing shrinking civil space along with strengthening L&A capacities of the SCS policy appears particularly relevant and important to unblock the potential of CSOs in the OPT, especially if good coherence is ensured with other programmes strengthening civil society in the OPT. More broadly, it is important to strengthen the OPT CSOs' overall *resilience* in the current unfavourable context.

6.2 The relevance and coherence of the implementation design of the policy (the partnerships)

The baseline also allowed to assess the relevance of the ToC and the implementation design, i.e. the partnerships that are funded under the SCS policy and its various instruments.

The question of whether it has been relevant to focus on lobby and advocacy capacity is one in point. Actually the large and medium sized Palestinian CSOs are quite advanced and autonomous in setting up coalitions in various sectors, and in creating platforms for joint lobbying and advocacy. It is also true that the reason why certain laws are not approved or implemented, or certain policy issues are not addressed, are not to be found in the lack of L&A capacity of CSOs. One would therefore be tempted to answer negatively to the question. Yet, given the shrinking civil space, and the deteriorated governance situation, it must be admitted that CSOs in this moment need support to resist, and it is important that such support goes to their advocacy and lobby activities and not just to their service delivery role. It is probably more a matter of identifying which more advanced areas of L&A need to be supported.

All the partnerships address issues that are of great relevance for the Palestinians in this moment, and in particular for the most marginalised segments of the Palestinian population. A large part of the partnerships have implementing partners which have stable links with grassroots organisations in the intervention areas; through these grassroots links, they are able to receive feedback, convey it to the partnership and adapt the activities to local needs. There are, though, two qualifications to be made.

Relevance to the country reality is stronger when there has been an effort to develop a country level ToC. About half of the partnerships (Strengthening Civil Courage, YW4A, FemPower, We Rise) have such a contextualised ToC or at least have contextualised some elements of their intervention logic.

‘Southern leadership’ understood as local/national ownership, varies across the board: three partnership have national organisations in the 1st tier, another 4 have them in the 2nd tier, and 3 do not have any implementing partner in the country, but only grantees. However, beyond the set-up of the partnerships, southern leadership has been enhanced by the selection of organisations that are recognised for their expertise and connection to target groups; by the fact that activities have been identified by Palestinian partners; and by the fact that Palestinian partners do not depend upon the partnership for their sustainability.

In terms of coherence with the bilateral programme, there are clear linkages of most partnerships with the first priority area of the MACS-2019-2022 – *A just and peaceful society* and two are (although much more indirectly) linked to the third area. However, partnerships have only to a limited extent coordinated their efforts under the SCS policy implementation, or coordinated it with NRO. By contrast, partners – in particular 2nd tier – coordinate at country-level with other actors operating on similar issues and not related to SCS policy implementation.

Youth involvement is present to different degrees in all partnerships, except for those focused on sustainable development and trade (not because the implementing partners are not interested, but because there is limited involvement of young people in the agricultural sector - an issue that organisations are addressing, but outside the partnership). At least four partnerships do empower young people to take a leadership role in their community and in the decision making processes at local level; one partnership collaborates with young people in defining the activities that are funded

(that actually are proposed by the youth themselves) and four involve young people in project activities.

Gender transformative approaches are to be found to variable extent at the level of intentions (proposals) of partnerships in the OPT and at the level of concrete activities planned/implemented and their M&E. The approach is mostly focused on empowering women and girls, raising their awareness and self-confidence, and rarely aims at changing masculinities. Most 'advanced' topics are picked up by the partnerships working on SRHR, even if not always with a gender lens. A prudent approach is in part explained in part by the difficult environment, with recent attacks against feminist organisations.

When it comes to intersectionality, it is included in most of the partnerships as a concept and in several cases it is applied to targeting victims of multiple discrimination/marginalisation. The most common types of intersectionality addressed by partnerships are those between being women, on one hand, and being young, living in a marginalised area like East Jerusalem or Area C rural areas, or having a disability, on the other hand.

Finally, all partnerships demonstrate a high degree of conflict sensitivity, which takes into account the principles of "do not harm" or "do good" in relation to the several potential tensions that could be created/exacerbated when intervening in the OPT: the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the internal division on the PA, but also the societal divisions on topics such as gender equality.

6.3 Recommendations

Based on the above conclusions, the following recommendations are directly primarily to MFA, but also indirectly to implementing partners.

- MFA could ask partnerships to clarify and strengthen the targets and capacity building objectives of smaller sized CBOs and civil society leaders, in close consultation with southern partners, setting realistic objectives. The abilities of the Palestinians implementing partners, demonstrated in the capacity assessment, are to be exploited in full.
- MFA could also ask thematically focused partnerships to better define the issues they are going to advocate in the OPT and the expected outcome, including best and worst case scenarios.
- MFA should encourage the implementation of focused capacity building on: M&E; international advocacy; gender analysis applied to the local context.
- Those partnerships which have not developed a full country programme should be encouraged to at least favour some synergy/coordination among their grantees in the country, in order to strengthen the impact of the activities of each funded organisation/project.
- NRO could explore synergies and complementarities between its funded programmes and projects and the SCS partnerships; particularly in areas like access to justice, which is an essential aspect of addressing GBV, which is not in focus in the partnerships. Likewise, in the area of private sector development, joint advocacy and synergies could be established with the relevant partnership.
- NRO could additionally strengthen coordination, not only between the various SCS partnerships, but also and especially, with SCS partnerships and other implementing partners of the bilateral programme working on similar issues.
- In order to contrast the shrinking civil space, it is essential that NRO together with Team Europe, and implementing partners continue joining forces with other international organisations and donors in order to further the agenda of Palestinian civil society, promoting adequate joint responses to policy measures, laws and regulations that restrict the freedom of expression and

association, and advocating better conditions for the establishment and functioning of civil society organisations. Such joint response should also address Israel as key duty-bearer when it comes to fundamental rights of Palestinian citizens.

- NRO and international donors concerned should further dialogue with CSOs on conditional funding, in order to eliminate misunderstandings, or remove actual restrictions that are harmful for civil society. At the same time, it's important to support a healthy reflection that has started, among CSOs, on how to overcome donor dependency and promote sustainability of CSOs through other means such as community philanthropy.
- Some first observations on the implementation design of the instruments and results framework:
 - Some of the partnerships do not have a programmatic set-up but rather use the funds as part of long-term funding agreements or to provide short-term emergency support. The SCS policy framework allows for flexibility in the set-up of partnership. It remains however to be established to what extent this support contributes to the achievement of higher level results at country level. A similar point can be made in the cases that partnerships active in a large number of countries, only provided very limited country budgets.
 - The current set up of the tender process does not allow for programme appraisal at country/ regional level which works against coherence between programmes and with other programmes. Also, sometimes the (international) lead partner is bilaterally in touch with each local partner, and local partners do not work together coherently and just implement each a separate programme component. To some extent this aspect could be assessed in the proposal stage, checking if the partners have worked together actually.
 - We noted diverse partnerships, sometimes disjointed, but not completely “forced marriages”. Given the generalised need for funding, some opportunistic alliances will always be there, and even those could evolve along the process into some more coherent forms of cooperation.
 - The process whereby lead organisations/ partnerships apply and have to negotiate about what countries to work in with the ministry, after which only the partners can be contracted, is not beneficial for southern or in-country leadership.
 - The five-year partnership agreements include one-year for set up of the programme and the baseline study. The present status (May-June 2022) of a considerable number of the partnerships shows that many, particularly the new ones required more time, also because the programmes had to be set up in multiple (in cases over 10) countries at the same time. It could be a consideration to limit the number (new) countries.
 - First findings show that some of the larger partnerships, particularly those which do not have a partnership member with a stable presence in the country, have not been able to contextualise their generic ToC (sufficiently). This makes it more difficult to assess the contribution of funded activities to country level outcomes and impacts.
 - Finally, with regard to the proposed outcomes as per the results framework and realities on the ground the focus on legislation and reference to an “agenda” (assuming a policy/political process based on public debate) is certainly problematic, although not irrelevant, because there are still laws and policies raising debates and discussions. The thematic outcomes generally are relevant..

6.4 Take-aways and next steps for the TPM & DQA and MTR

- Considering the strong capacity of the Tier 2 partners, the organisational capacity assessment made will not allow too measure capacity changes, for instance in a case an expert organisation is able to increased its knowledge based etc. requiring also more qualitative assessments;

- Considering the late start of many of the partnerships but also the long-term nature of change processes that are pursued, at MTE stage (first half of 2024) most likely will be too early to see changes for higher level outcomes.
- A number of partnership programmes only focus on capacity building and training in the initial stage whilst L&A activities are only planned for the later stages of the project. It is expected that the focus of the MTE will need to be more on the processes, indicators SCS3 and lower level results.
- The in-depth (case) studies both for the TPM and MTE will need to include interviews/ FGDs with beneficiaries, women and people in vulnerable situation to make a more comprehensive assessment of their involvement and participation.
- At MTE stage we intend to select a number of policy level outcomes for which a contribution analysis will be made. Taking into account the number of partners/ partnerships involved, Netherland policy priorities and the extent to which other actors/ development partners are active in the specific field, the selection could include: Fair for all (tax refund and complaint system for farmers), Strengthening Civil Courage/YW4A (women and girls in decision-making at municipal level), Masarouna (Youth friendly SRHR services), Fair for all, Fem Pauer and YW4A (Women economic empowerment) among others.
- The DQA should provide better insights on the in-country reporting of the different partnerships. At this stage, many partnerships were still developing their (in-country) MEL, or we were not able (also timewise) to talk to the MEL advisor. This would also provide more insights in the actual data collected (and offer an opportunity to advise on the quality of data collection) as not all data collected is reported on.

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P.O. Box 4175
3006 AD Rotterdam
The Netherlands

Watermanweg 44
3067 GG Rotterdam
The Netherlands

T +31 (0)10 453 88 00
F +31 (0)10 453 07 68
E netherlands@ecorys.com
Registration no. 24316726

W www.ecorys.nl

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