



**Palestinian National Authority**



**Gender Equality & Women's Empowerment**

# **Strategic Plan for Combating Violence against Women (VAW) 2011 - 2019**

**Ministry of Women's Affairs**

**National Committee to Combat Violence against Women**

## Introduction:

This document is a strategic plan to combat violence against women (VAW) in territories under the Palestinian Authority (PA) for the period of 2011 - 2019. A Medium-Term Plan for the years 2011 - 2013 has also been developed with partner institutions to determine the priorities for implementing the Strategic Plan over the next three years. At the end of this period and every three years subsequent, the overall Plan's priorities will be reassessed and a new Medium-Term Plan developed.

The approach of this Strategic Plan is to combat VAW by “promot[ing] the principle of the rule of law based on women’s rights and improving institutional mechanisms in Palestinian society in order to protect and support abused women to live in a society free from all forms of discrimination based on equality, dignity, and respect for human rights.” To achieve this goal, the Plan adopts a cross-sectoral approach as it deals with a developmental issue that not only affects women, but also influences the social, economic, and political systems of the Palestinian state as a whole. Hence, the implementation of the Plan will depend on the government’s commitment to ensuring that ministries adhere to the necessary procedures, as well as on the commitment of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to the Plan’s general framework. The private sector and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) also have responsibilities and roles to play in the Plan’s implementation and follow-up with the National Committee on Combating VAW<sup>1</sup>. UNRWA particularly bears direct responsibility for the provision of basic rights to Palestine refugee women.

The National Committee on Combating VAW was established in 2008 by the Palestinian Council of Ministries and is led by the Ministry of Women’s Affairs. The Committee is responsible for following up and monitoring the implementation of this proposed Strategic Plan. Its wide-ranging membership includes a variety of governmental institutions, as well as non-governmental institutions represented by the NGO Forum for combating VAW (Al Muntada) and the General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW). The Strategic Plan generally aims to mainstream work on combating VAW into the different governmental institutions through the National Committee’s endorsement of the Plan and each ministry’s adoption of Strategy goals specific to their mandate. In following stages, each ministry must work on determining priority intervention policies from those proposed under each Strategy goal, followed by the development of work plans and appropriate indicators within this general framework.

The follow-up and evaluation procedure, considered to be a main component of this Plan, requires that the National Committee form a specialized committee in partnership with women’s institutions, women’s academia, and the Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR). This specialized committee’s main responsibility will be to monitor and follow up on the implementation of the National Strategic Plan for Combating VAW and measure its success in ending VAW.

The significance of this Strategy lies in its provision of a general framework to regulate the work of many partners on the issue of violence. In addition, this Strategy determines the different and overlapping roles between the various parties concerned with combating VAW in order to

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<sup>1</sup> Members of the National Committee on Combating VAW are: Ministry of Women’s Affairs (MoWA), Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA), Ministry of Justice (MoJ), Ministry of the Interior (MoI), Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE), Ministry of Health (MoH), Ministry of Labor (MoL), Ministry of Information, Ministry of Islamic Waqf and Religious Affairs, Office of the Chief Judge, President’s Office Units of Governorates Affairs, General Secretariat of the General Union of Palestinian Women, and the NGO Forum for Combating VAW (Al Muntada).

achieve better outcomes towards ending VAW and ensuring women's rights to a better standard of living.

**The National Strategic Plan for Combating Violence against Women** was prepared by the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) in cooperation with UN WOMEN (United Nations Development Fund for Women - UNIFEM). This Plan responds to the United Nation's (UN) third Millennium Development Goal (MDG), which calls for gender equality and women's empowerment in the occupied Palestinian territory. The VAW National Strategy is considered one of the MDG program's outcomes and calls for ending gender-based violence through intervention at three levels: prevention, protection and law enforcement.

**The definition of violence against women (VAW) adopted in the Strategy is:<sup>2</sup>**

“All forms of physical, mental, sexual and verbal violence and social and economic deprivation; threats of such acts; coercion and other deprivations of liberty that are directed against a woman because she is a woman, whether directly or indirectly, inflicting physical, psychological, sexual, mental, social or economic harm or suffering, and whether occurring in public or in private life.”

Violence is a very broad term that encompasses all forms of discrimination against women, including being deprived of the right to work, health, education, political participation, as well as family and civil rights in both public and private life. This Strategy addresses violence, as a general development issue, in more detail within the boundaries of the aforementioned definition. The Strategy should be seen as complementary to the Palestinian National Authority's Cross-Sectoral National Gender Strategy for 2011-2013, which considers violence as one of its main themes.<sup>3</sup> Hence, it is also important to read the proposed policies and interventions parallel to the Cross-Sectoral National Gender Strategy, remembering that from a holistic perspective, discrimination against women is considered to be violence perpetrated against women.

**Main themes in the organization of work on combating violence against women:**

- Promote protection and empowerment mechanisms for women violated by the Israeli occupation.
- Promote a legal framework and institutional mechanisms to protect women from violence.
- Improve social protection and social support offered to women victims of violence.
- Improve health services for dealing with cases of VAW.
- Change community perceptions of VAW through promoting the principle of violence prevention as part of the strategic direction of institutions working on the protection of women's rights.
- Improve the system of legal protection, defense, and jurisdiction to the benefit of women victims of violence.

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<sup>2</sup> This definition was developed by institutions taking part in the preparation of the Strategy based on the definition of VAW in CEDAW – Article 1 (1979), which defines it as “violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately. It includes acts that inflict physical, mental or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivations of liberty.”

<sup>3</sup> The Cross-Sectoral National Gender Strategy 2011 – 2013 was developed by MoWA in 2010. It was based on a decision from the Council of Ministers to consider gender a main cross-sectoral theme in the overall national plan of the PA for 2011-2013. In determining the themes of the plan, VAW was considered a main theme and, as such, it has been addressed by a separate strategic plan, which is also seen as part of the general framework of the Cross-Sectoral National Gender Strategy. Therefore, the Cross-Sectoral National Gender Strategy refers VAW issues to the VAW-related Strategic Plan referenced in this document.

- Improve the system for monitoring, evaluation and follow-up of the Strategic Plan for Combating VAW.

**Expected outcomes of this Plan:**

- Victims of violence obtain the protection and support necessary for their rehabilitation in the community on a national level.
- Change occurs in the attitudes of the target groups in the Plan in support of women's rights.
- Local laws and legislation change to reflect a view towards protecting women from violence.
- Infrastructure of community institutions concerned with women's protection from violence better serves women's rights.
- Media deals with cases of VAW in a systematic and organized manner.
- Organized work and systemic exchange of information takes place between institutions working on combating violence.

**Methodology for the development of the Strategic Plan:**

The development of the Strategic Plan was undertaken in full partnership with all major stakeholders in the public, private and NGO sectors, in addition to individual women from different localities. Such a participatory approach reflects MoWA's belief that involving all relevant stakeholders in the development of the Plan will best reflect the needs of all groups without discrimination, and will therefore lead to stakeholders' adoption and support of the Plan.