



Funded by
the European Union



Terms of Reference (TOR)

Expert Researcher / Research Institution

Assessing Civic Space, Democratic Participation, and Inclusive Dialogue in Palestine: Women's and Youth Leadership, Representation, and Policy Influence

Project

Strengthening Palestinian Civil Society's Capacity for Democratic Engagement, Inclusive Dialogue, and Community Resilience

Implemented by the Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development (PWWSD) with the support of Expertise France.

1. Background

Palestinian society continues to face significant political, social, and economic challenges that directly affect civic participation, democratic engagement, and inclusive governance. These challenges have been exacerbated by the prolonged Israeli occupation, restrictions on civic space, political fragmentation, shrinking democratic processes, and limited opportunities for meaningful participation in public decision-making.

Women and youth are among the groups most affected by these dynamics despite their critical role in advancing social change, democratic governance, community resilience, and sustainable development. Although various mechanisms and initiatives have sought to strengthen their participation in public life, significant barriers continue to limit their influence on policy-making, governance structures, and democratic processes.

At the same time, innovative initiatives such as Women's Shadow Councils have emerged as important mechanisms for strengthening women's participation in local governance, enhancing civic engagement, and promoting inclusive representation within public affairs.

Within the framework of the project "Strengthening Palestinian Civil Society's Capacity for Democratic Engagement, Inclusive Dialogue, and Community Resilience," PWWSD seeks to commission a comprehensive applied research study that examines the status of civic space and democratic participation in Palestine and assesses the extent to which existing political, social, economic, and institutional frameworks provide meaningful opportunities for women and youth to engage in public life, influence decision-making, and contribute to policy development at local and national levels.

The study shall generate evidence-based findings and practical recommendations aimed at strengthening democratic participation, inclusive governance, social cohesion, and women's and youth leadership in Palestine.

While local elections constitute an important mechanism of democratic participation, the study adopts a broader perspective that examines civic and democratic participation beyond



Funded by
the European Union



EXPERTISE
FRANCE
GROUPE AFD



electoral processes, including policy influence, public engagement, civic dialogue, leadership, and representation.

2. Purpose of the Assignment

The purpose of this assignment is to conduct a comprehensive research study examining civic space, democratic participation, inclusive dialogue, local leadership, and social cohesion in Palestine through a gender-responsive and youth-inclusive lens.

The study shall assess opportunities and barriers affecting women's and youth participation in public life and develop a practical roadmap for enhancing inclusive participation, democratic governance, and policy influence.

3. Study Title

Assessing Civic Space and Democratic Participation in Palestine: Women's and Youth Leadership, Representation, and Policy Influence

4. Overall Objective

To assess the extent to which existing political, social, economic, and institutional frameworks in Palestine enable women and youth to participate meaningfully in civic and democratic life and influence public decision-making and policy-making processes at local and national levels.

5. Specific Objectives

The study shall:

1. Assess the current state of civic space in Palestine and examine how political, social, economic, and institutional factors influence women's and youth participation in civic and democratic life.
2. Analyse the extent to which women and youth participate in policy-making, public decision-making, and local governance processes, and identify opportunities and barriers affecting their influence and representation.
3. Examine the role of inclusive dialogue, media, and civic discourse in promoting democratic participation, accountability, representation, and social cohesion.
4. Assess the contribution of Women's Shadow Councils as innovative mechanisms for strengthening women's leadership, civic engagement, inclusive participation, and influence within local governance and public affairs.



Funded by
the European Union



EXPERTISE
FRANCE
GROUPE AFD



5. Analyse findings through a gender-responsive and youth-inclusive lens, including the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) framework and UNSCR 1325, to identify gaps and opportunities for advancing meaningful participation and leadership.
6. Develop evidence-based recommendations and a practical roadmap for strengthening civic space, democratic participation, local leadership, and policy influence of women and youth in Palestine.

6. Research Questions

Main Research Question

To what extent do existing political, social, economic, and institutional frameworks in Palestine provide meaningful opportunities for women and youth to participate in civic and democratic life and influence policy-making and public decision-making processes?

Theme I: Civic Space

- What are the main characteristics of civic space in Palestine?
- What opportunities and restrictions affect civic participation?
- How does shrinking civic space impact women and youth?
- How does the Israeli occupation affect civic and democratic participation of women and youth?
- What are the implications of occupation-related restrictions on civic space, public participation, and democratic engagement?

Theme II: Democratic Participation

- What opportunities exist for meaningful democratic participation?
- What institutional, political, and social barriers affect participation?
- How inclusive are existing democratic processes and governance structures?
- What structural barriers affect women's and youth participation?
- How does political division influence participation, representation, and democratic engagement?
- What are the implications of the absence of regular elections on democratic participation?
- What is the impact of the absence of the Palestinian Legislative Council on participation, accountability, and democratic governance?

Theme III: Policy-Making and Public Decision-Making

- To what extent are women and youth involved in policy formulation and public decision-making processes?
- What factors facilitate or hinder participation in policy processes?



Funded by
the European Union



EXPERTISE
FRANCE
GROUPE AFD



- What mechanisms can strengthen meaningful engagement and influence in policy-making?
- To what extent do women and youth influence public priorities, policy agendas, and governance processes?

Theme IV: Local Governance and Leadership

- What is the current status of women's participation in local governance?
- To what extent do women influence planning and local decision-making?
- What challenges and opportunities exist for women leaders?
- How do local councils and student councils contribute to civic and democratic participation?
- To what extent do age-related factors affect political representation and leadership opportunities for youth?
- What has been the impact of gender quota systems on women's political participation and representation?

Theme V: Women's Shadow Councils

- How have Women's Shadow Councils contributed to community civic engagement and women's leadership?
- To what extent do Women's Shadow Councils strengthen inclusive participation and representation in local governance and public affairs?
- How do Women's Shadow Councils contribute to public dialogue, accountability, and community participation?
- What lessons can be learned from their experiences, achievements, and challenges?
- What opportunities exist for replicating and scaling the Women's Shadow Councils model?

Theme VI: Media and Civic Discourse

- What role does media play in promoting civic engagement and democratic participation?
- How does civic discourse shape participation, representation, and accountability?
- How can media better support women's and youth voices in public affairs and decision-making?
- To what extent does media contribute to creating an enabling environment for democratic engagement and inclusive dialogue?

Theme VII: Inclusive Dialogue and Social Cohesion

- What role does inclusive dialogue play in strengthening democratic participation?
- How can inclusive dialogue contribute to social cohesion and community resilience?



Funded by
the European Union



EXPERTISE
FRANCE
GROUPE AFD



- What mechanisms are needed to strengthen participatory dialogue at local and national levels?
- How do civic participation and inclusive dialogue contribute to trust-building and social cohesion within Palestinian society?

Theme VIII: Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Framework

- How does UNSCR 1325 relate to women's civic and democratic participation in Palestine?
- What implementation gaps exist in relation to women's leadership, participation, and representation?
- What opportunities can strengthen women's leadership through the WPS framework?
- How can the Women, Peace and Security agenda contribute to strengthening civic space, democratic participation, and inclusive governance for women and youth?

7. Scope of Work

The study shall be aligned with the project's five core pillars:

1. Civic Space
2. Democratic Participation
3. Inclusive Dialogue
4. Local Leadership
5. Social Cohesion

The study shall integrate gender-responsive and youth-inclusive approaches while applying the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) framework, including UNSCR 1325.

The study shall assess women's participation through the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) framework and examine its relevance to civic participation, leadership, representation, and decision-making processes in Palestine.

The study shall examine the impact of the Israeli occupation, political division, restrictions on civic space, and the absence of regular democratic processes on women's and youth participation, leadership, and representation.

8. Methodology

The selected consultant/institution shall adopt a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative research methodologies.

A. Research Approach



Funded by
the European Union



EXPERTISE
FRANCE
GROUPE AFD



The study shall adopt:

- A mixed-methods research design.
- A gender-responsive and youth-inclusive approach.
- An intersectional approach that takes into consideration the diversity of women and youth, including young women, women with disabilities, youth with disabilities, rural women and youth, marginalized groups, and other populations facing multiple and intersecting forms of exclusion.
- A feminist political analysis framework to examine power relations, representation, participation, and decision-making processes affecting women and youth in Palestine.
- A participatory research approach that actively incorporates the perspectives and experiences of relevant stakeholders throughout the research process.

B. Desk Review

The review shall include:

- Relevant Palestinian laws and policies.
- Local government legislation.
- Civic participation frameworks.
- Democratic governance frameworks.
- Women's participation policies.
- Youth participation policies.
- National Action Plans related to UNSCR 1325.
- Previous studies and assessments.
- Academic literature and policy papers.
- Studies related to civic space, democratic participation, political representation, local governance, women's leadership, youth engagement, and social cohesion in Palestine.

C. Quantitative Analysis

The analysis may include:

- Women's representation data.
- Youth participation indicators.
- Governance and participation statistics.
- Civic engagement trends.
- Available national and local datasets.
- Electoral participation and representation data where relevant.
- Gender quota implementation and representation trends.

D. Qualitative Data Collection

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)

The consultant shall conduct approximately 40–50 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with relevant stakeholders, including:

- Women leaders.



**Funded by
the European Union**



**EXPERTISE
FRANCE**
GROUPE AFD



- Youth leaders.
- Shadow Council members.
- Local council representatives.
- Student council representatives.
- Civil society organizations.
- Women's organizations.
- Government representatives.
- Policy-makers.
- Academics and researchers.
- Journalists and media professionals.
- Legal and governance experts.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

The consultant shall conduct at least six (6) Focus Group Discussions representing women, youth, shadow council members, community leaders, and civil society actors from different geographic locations.

The focus groups may include:

- Women activists.
- Young women.
- Young men.
- Women with disabilities.
- Youth with disabilities.
- Shadow Council members.
- Community leaders.
- Civil society actors.

E. Case Study Component

The study shall include a dedicated chapter examining Women's Shadow Councils as an innovative model for community civic engagement, women's leadership, and inclusive participation in local governance and public affairs.

The consultant shall conduct approximately 30–40 in-depth interviews with active Women's Shadow Council members to document their experiences in promoting civic engagement, influencing local priorities, fostering community participation, strengthening women's leadership, and contributing to public dialogue and decision-making processes.

The study shall also identify key achievements, challenges, lessons learned, and opportunities for replication and scaling.

F. Geographic Coverage and Gaza Methodology

The study shall cover the West Bank and Gaza Strip.



Funded by
the European Union



EXPERTISE
FRANCE
GROUPE AFD



The consultant shall provide a dedicated methodology for data collection in the Gaza Strip, including remote and context-sensitive research approaches, to ensure adequate representation and avoid information gaps between the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The methodology shall clearly explain the proposed tools, sampling approach, accessibility measures, and mitigation strategies for challenges related to access, communication, security, and data collection in Gaza.

G. Analytical Framework and Indicators

The study shall utilize a comprehensive analytical framework aligned with the project's five pillars:

- Civic Space.
- Democratic Participation.
- Inclusive Dialogue.
- Local Leadership.
- Social Cohesion.

The study shall develop and utilize gender-sensitive indicators, including but not limited to:

- Civic Space Indicators.
- Political Participation Indicators.
- Democratic Representation Indicators.
- Leadership and Decision-Making Indicators.
- Enabling and Protective Environment Indicators.
- Restrictions and Barriers Indicators.

The analysis shall assess the impact of:

- Structural barriers.
- Israeli occupation and movement restrictions.
- Political division.
- The absence of regular elections.
- The absence of the Palestinian Legislative Council.
- Age-related disparities in representation and participation.
- Gender quota systems.
- Local councils and student councils.

on women's and youth participation, leadership, representation, and policy influence.

H. Data Limitations and Ethical Considerations

The final report shall include a dedicated section documenting data limitations, access constraints, contextual challenges, and methodological limitations affecting the research process and findings.



Funded by
the European Union



EXPERTISE
FRANCE
GROUPE AFD



The research shall adhere to ethical research principles, including confidentiality, informed consent, protection of participants, safeguarding standards, and the “Do No Harm” principle.

The consultant shall ensure that all data collection and analysis processes are conducted in a safe, inclusive, culturally sensitive, and conflict-sensitive manner.

9. Deliverables

The selected consultant/institution shall submit:

1. Inception Report.
2. Detailed Methodology and Data Collection Tools.
3. Desk Review Report.
4. Presentation of Preliminary Findings.
5. Draft Research Report.
6. Validation Workshop for presenting and validating key findings and recommendations.
7. Final Research Report (40–60 pages excluding annexes).
8. Executive Summary (maximum 5 pages).
9. General Policy Brief (4–6 pages) summarizing key findings and recommendations.
10. Roadmap for Strengthening Women’s and Youth Civic Participation and Democratic Engagement.
11. PowerPoint Presentation of Final Findings.
12. Communication Brief (2–3 pages) summarizing key findings and recommendations for public dissemination and media engagement.
13. Stakeholder Presentation Session to present the final research findings and facilitate dialogue among relevant stakeholders.
14. Five (5) Policy Briefs developed following approval of the final research report, covering:
 - Civic Space
 - Democratic Participation
 - Inclusive Dialogue
 - Local Leadership
 - Social Cohesion

10. Duration



**Funded by
the European Union**



**EXPERTISE
FRANCE**
GROUPE AFD



The assignment is expected to be completed within 60 working days from the date of contract signature, including data collection, analysis, validation, and final reporting.

11. Required Qualifications

The consultant/team should possess:

- Advanced degree in Political Science, Public Policy, Development Studies, Sociology, Governance, Gender Studies, Law, or related fields.
- At least seven (7) years of demonstrated experience in conducting policy-oriented research and studies.
- Proven experience in governance, democratic participation, civic engagement, gender equality, women's rights, and public policy.
- Strong knowledge of the Palestinian political, governance, and civil society context.
- Demonstrated experience in qualitative and quantitative research methodologies.
- Excellent analytical, writing, and communication skills in English.

12. Eligibility

Applications are open to:

- Individual consultants.
- Research centers and institutes.
- Consulting firms.
- Academic and research institutions.

In the case of institutions, organizations, research centers, or consulting firms, a Lead Researcher/Team Leader shall be designated as the primary focal point and responsible for the overall quality assurance, coordination, and timely delivery of all assignment outputs.

13. Application Requirements

For Individual Consultants

Applicants shall submit:

- Updated Curriculum Vitae (CV).



Funded by
the European Union



EXPERTISE
FRANCE
GROUPE AFD



- Technical Proposal outlining the proposed methodology, workplan, timeline, and understanding of the assignment.
- Financial Proposal in EUR.
- At least two samples of previous relevant studies, assessments, or policy research assignments.

For Research Centers, Academic Institutions, and Consulting Firms

Applicants shall submit:

- Organizational profile.
- Technical Proposal outlining the proposed methodology, workplan, and team composition.
- Financial Proposal in EUR.
- CVs of proposed team members and lead consultant.
- At least two samples of similar assignments completed by the institution.

14. Evaluation Criteria

Applications will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

Criteria	Weight
Technical Proposal and Understanding of the Assignment	30%
Proposed Methodology and Workplan	25%
Relevant Experience in Research, Governance, Civic Participation, Gender and Public Policy	20%
Qualifications and Experience of Consultant/Research Team	15%
Financial Proposal	10%
Total	100%

Only applicants obtaining a minimum technical score of 70% will proceed to the financial evaluation stage.

15. Taxes and Financial Obligations



Funded by
the European Union



EXPERTISE
FRANCE
GROUPE AFD



The proposed financial offer shall be submitted in EUR and shall include all applicable costs associated with the assignment.

For individual consultants, applicable income tax deductions shall be applied in accordance with Palestinian laws and regulations.

For companies, consulting firms, research institutions, and organizations, Value Added Tax (VAT) and any other applicable taxes shall be handled in accordance with the valid legal and financial regulations and upon submission of the required official documentation.

PWWSD reserves the right to apply any legally required deductions, including income tax and other statutory deductions, in accordance with Palestinian financial regulations.

16. Intellectual Property Rights

All materials, data, reports, findings, tools, transcripts, databases, analyses, policy briefs, presentations, and other outputs developed under this assignment shall become the exclusive property of the Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development (PWWSD).

The selected consultant or institution shall not publish, reproduce, distribute, or use any project materials, findings, or outputs without prior written authorization from PWWSD.

All information collected during the assignment shall be treated as confidential and used solely for the purposes of this assignment.

17. Ethical Commitment, Safeguarding, and PSEA Policy

The Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development (PWWSD) is fully committed to preventing and addressing all forms of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA), as well as ensuring a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment for all individuals involved in its activities.

Any acts or practices constituting Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by employees, volunteers, partners, consultants, or contractors are strictly prohibited and will result in immediate disciplinary measures, including possible contract termination.

PWWSD adopts the United Nations definitions of SEA as outlined in document ST/SGB/2003/13.



Funded by
the European Union



EXPERTISE
FRANCE
GROUPE AFD



All PWWSD employees, volunteers, partners, consultants, and contractors are required to immediately report any suspicions, allegations, or confirmed incidents of SEA through the organization's secure and confidential reporting mechanisms.

Compliance with PWWSD's Code of Conduct, Safeguarding Policy, and PSEA Policy is mandatory under this assignment and any resulting contract.

The selected consultant or institution will be subject to vetting procedures, including reference checks. Upon selection and prior to contract signature, the selected applicant will be required to:

- Read and acknowledge PWWSD's official PSEA Policy.
- Sign the PSEA Self-Declaration Form.
- Commit to complying with all safeguarding, protection, and ethical standards adopted by PWWSD throughout the duration of the assignment.

Failure to comply with these requirements, or any breach of the above obligations, shall constitute grounds for immediate termination of the contract without liability on PWWSD.

18. Application Process

Interested applicants shall submit their applications electronically with the subject line:

Application – Research Study Consultancy Services

Applications should be sent to:

jobs@pwwsd.org

Deadline

10 June 2026.

Applications received after the deadline will not be considered.

Only shortlisted applicants will be contacted.

PWWSD reserves the right to accept or reject any application without assigning any reason and is under no obligation to select the lowest financial offer.