



Women's Economic Empowerment in the Private Sector:

Women's Representation and Participation in Decision-Making Positions as a Necessary Tool

Policy Paper (3): Mechanisms to Confront Institutional Economic Violence in the Private Sector



Women's Economic Empowerment in the Private Sector: Women's Representation and Participation in Decision-Making Positions as a Necessary Tool

Policy Paper (3): Mechanisms to Confront Institutional Economic Violence in the Private Sector

Publications of the Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development

Website: www.pwwsd.org

Email: pwwsd@pwwsd.org

Prepared by:



MAS
PALESTINE ECONOMIC POLICY
RESEARCH INSTITUTE (MAS)

Research Team

Dr. Sameh Hallaq (Head of research team)

Anmar Rafeedie

Misyef Misyef

Research Assistants

Bisan Tmeizeh Wafaa Al-Bitawi

Review and Translation Team

Basma Al-Naji

Amal Khreishe

Nawal Alkhalili

This study was prepared by the Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS) for the Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development.

Copyright © Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development 2025

This study was conducted by the Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development as part of the Feminist Program for Women's Economic Rights (FemPawer), with support from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of the funding institutions.



Explanatory Introduction

Over the past five months, the Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS) has prepared a detailed study for the Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development (PWWS), titled “Women’s Economic Empowerment in the Private Sector: Women’s Representation and Participation in Decision-Making Positions as a Necessary Tool.”

In its six chapters, the study covers a wide range of topics related to women’s empowerment, such as women’s participation in the Palestinian labor market, their work in the informal sector and unpaid care work, in addition to their participation in decision-making positions. The study also included a descriptive and diagnostic analysis of women’s participation in the labor market, a qualitative analysis of women’s entrepreneurship and a quantitative analysis on economic violence, in addition to other topics related to women’s empowerment.

One of the study’s chapters contains a detailed and comprehensive presentation of the research findings, and each policy summary will focus on one of the study’s main themes and present key recommendations that would enhance women’s economic empowerment.

Brief Background

Economic violence does not only refer to violence perpetrated by a husband against his wife. Women in the labor market also suffer from economic violence within the establishments and institutions in which they work. Consequently, women’s employment does not automatically lead to empowerment or economic independence. In the same context, we find that one of the most prominent motivations for women to join the informal labor market is its flexibility, which enables women to combine their domestic and childcare roles with paid work, making it a preferred option for many. However, studies indicate that women’s work, driven by necessity, often leaves room for exploitation, inequality, and erosion of rights. Many women work without formal contracts that guarantee their rights, absence of occupational safety and health procedures and neglect of work-related

injuries. This leaves women vulnerable to being fired and easily replaced through the contracting system. Moreover, according to literature reviews, the exclusion of women from decision-making positions, and their monopoly by men, does not contribute to strengthening internal systems that support equality or provide privileges to women. Therefore, it is important to place these findings within the context of women's limited presence in decision-making positions. Therefore, this summary seeks to develop policy visions for mechanisms to address the institutional economic violence women face in the private sector.

Key Findings and Challenges

The private sector is the largest employer of women in Palestine, as it employs 66.3% of working women. It should be noted that only 25% of women have employment contracts, while the rest work without any. Due to the lack of legal protection for female workers in the private sector and weak control, all matters related to working conditions and terms are individual relationships between the employer and the female worker. This leads to the loss of women's economic and social rights. Therefore, the gender gap regarding participation in the Palestinian labor market remains wide, with the balance tilted positively in favor of men. The opposite is true regarding unemployment, where rates are higher for women than for men.

A descriptive quantitative analysis of the economic and social working conditions of women in the private sector, even in its organized form, reveals that women rarely enjoy full economic and social rights as stipulated in the Palestinian Labor Law or when compared to their male counterparts. This is particularly true with regard to economic rights, such as written contracts, salary slip, end-of-service benefits, or paid leave such as maternity leave, holiday leave, etc. The findings also indicate that the gap between women and men in the private sector, both formal and informal, is very wide with regard to their presence in senior and legislative positions. This undoubtedly impacts financial inclusion, and exclusion from this sector constitutes a form of economic violence against women in these establishments.

In addition, the absence of a legal framework that deters employers from violating labor laws, and of effective overseeing mechanisms, encourages the continuation of these violations. Approximately 25% of women in the private sector work without contracts, and thus work without paid or legally guaranteed protection, making them more vulnerable to social and economic violations. This can be explained, for example, by the difference in the rates of access to these rights between workers in the formal and informal sectors. The rate of lack of employment contracts is significantly higher in the informal sector, in parallel with the low rates of access to various rights.

In the informal sector, we find a clear decline in the percentage of those who receive a written contract of a limited term (9.2%), an unlimited term (3%), a salary slip (2.9%), or an end-of-service bonus (9.1%), while none of them receive insurance against work injuries, nor do they receive other rights or benefits, such as training and paid vacations of various types.

Recommendations and Proposed Policy Interventions:

1. **Increase government efforts to distribute and alleviate the burden of unpaid care work** by expanding early childhood care and education services to reduce the impact of unpaid care work on women's labor market opportunities, being a form of economic violence. This can be achieved by implementing the new education law to establish public nurseries or providing financial incentives to the private sector and NGOs to provide these services.
2. **Adopt policies that support gender balance in family care, such as paternity leave**, to encourage men to assume care responsibilities. This contributes to achieving gender balance in the long term, especially when combined with awareness campaigns aimed at changing social norms. It is proposed here to increase the duration of paternity leave from three days to at least two weeks to promote the division of care work between the sexes.
3. **Design training programs to raise men's awareness** of the importance of women's work and economic participation, and reduce negative patriarchal influences within the family toward women's entrepreneurship

or their participation in the labor market on the supply side. This will, in turn, increase family support for women's economic participation, paving the way for their economic empowerment and strengthening.

4. Cooperate with civil society and international organizations **to organize educational initiatives and raise awareness** among younger generations of gender equality, which will contribute to alleviating the burden on women and expanding their economic opportunities.
5. **Enhance oversight and monitoring** of working women's economic and social rights by establishing new inter-ministerial standards and policies to enhance women's participation and protection in the labor market. These may include:
 - Establishing sustainable employment programs targeting women in marginalized areas such as the Jordan Valley, Jericho, and villages, particularly those with high rates of women's participation in the labor market in settlements.
 - Allocating more than 50% of employment programs to women, to raise women's participation in the labor market and enhance their independence and economic empowerment. Currently, women's participation in the labor market barely exceeds 17% at best.
 - Activating oversight on private sector establishments to ensure fair working conditions and gender equality, and ensure that women's economic and social rights are not ignored. This requires a significant and effective role from all official institutions and organizations advocating for women's rights.
 - Establishing specialized labor courts to hear cases involving women working in the private sector, based on the Palestinian Labor Law.
 - Establishing legal units to review employment contracts signed in the private sector establishments, in cooperation between the

Ministry of Labor and the Ministry of National Economy, to ensure that contracts comply with the rights and obligations stipulated in the Labor Law, particularly those related to economic rights.

6. **Provide a set of incentives to employers in various sectors** to improve the work environment and provide flexible working conditions for women. These incentives include reducing working hours, increasing vacation days, enabling remote work in jobs that allow it, and increasing overtime pay. For example:
 - Providing tax breaks for companies that adopt flexible work policies and provide remote work opportunities for women.
 - Providing training programs to support companies in implementing flexible work policies, promoting women's employment and developing their capabilities.
 - Providing positive preferences in government procurement for companies that adopt flexible work policies for women.
 - Providing positive preferences in government-sponsored projects (in the field of information and communications technology) for companies that adopt flexible work policies for women.
 - Organizing government awards to honor companies that succeed in providing a flexible and sustainable work environment for women.
 - Encouraging companies to market their advantages associated with flexible work and providing employment opportunities for women.

Publications of the Palestinian Working
Woman Society for Development

Website: www.pwwsd.org

Email: pwwsd@pwwsd.org

