

Consultant Report For

Gender Capacity Assessment- PAIC

Title of the programme:	Environmental Climate Justice Programme
Partner Organizations	The Applied Research Institute-Jerusalem (ARIJ) Land Research Centre (LRC) MA'AN Development Centre Palestine–Agricultural Development Association (PARC) Palestinian Hydrology Group (PHG)
Method for conducting the assessment	Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)
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Introduction to the Assignment

As part of the Environmental climate justice programme, funded by the Swedish consulate , Dr, Vanessa Farr and Ms Hanan Kaoud were commissioned to conduct a Gender Analysis and capacity assessment for the programme that includes analysis of the current gender situation in the legal, political, social and economic spheres as they relate to women’s empowerment in rural development. The proposed Environmental and Climate Justice Programme is a partnership between We Effect, a Swedish non-profit and civil society development organisation established in 1958 and working in the State of Palestine since 1998 and the Palestinian Agricultural Institutions Coalition (PAIC) established in 2018; a coalition of six environment, climate and agricultural non-governmental organisations in Palestine – the Agricultural Development Association (PARC), Palestinian Hydrology Group (PHG), Land Research Centre (LRC), MA’AN Development Centre, and the Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem (ARIJ).

Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to assess the capacities the six partner organizations who form the Palestinian Agricultural Institutions Coalition (PAIC). The partners are engaged in various aspects of rural development, and support has been sought by We Effect to build a shared sense of responsibility for the creation and implementation of gender equality (GE) and gender mainstreaming policies, strategies and programmes that are coherent both within individual organisations and across the Coalition, able to contribute to existing local, national, and international advocacy efforts to connect climate justice (CJ) and social justice (SJ), and capable of bringing the benefits of both to rural communities, especially women and girls engaged with the agricultural and cooperative sectors.

Objective and Methodology:

The objective of the assessment was to facilitate a participatory engagement process by enabling the POs participating staff to gain insights about how to promote gender equality in their daily work. A space was provided for them to assess their knowledge and understanding of gender equality and their capacities to mainstream gender, and each staff was supported to identify and analyze constraints and major capacity gaps that impede them from advancing gender mainstreaming in their work. The assessment further aimed to identify capacity gaps and propose recommendations for the development of an advanced capacity development plan for the year 2022.

The assessment used the focus group discussion data collection method, engaging with each member organization to discuss attitudes and knowledge about gender equality and gender mainstreaming. In these discussion, we found that some good gender mainstreaming work has been done in a number of the PAIC's interventions, with positive effects.

In early preparations for this capacity assessment report, in late April 2022, five online key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted in English with senior management of members of PAIC. Five in-person focus group discussions were held with programme and operations staff of individual organisations. In August, 4 days of field visits were held with focal points and rights holders. Also in August, two intensive consultation and learning sessions were held (one with directors and one with programme focal points). Conversations were open-ended to allow participants to guide the discussion as much as possible. The main focus of discussions was climate change and climate justice, and how these relate to and articulate with the advancement of gender inequality in Palestine.

Concept of Gender Mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming is defined in accordance with the agreed conclusions of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations, which states that gender mainstreaming is *"the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality"*. [Generic Mandates \(ECOSOC 1997/2\)](https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/intergovernmentalmandates.htm)¹

¹ <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/intergovernmentalmandates.htm>

Gender Equality and agroecology: links

A guiding question was asked: is it useful, and would it advance PAIC's thinking, to draw a comparison between the slow uptake of gender equality praxis and a slow movement towards embracing agroecological thinking and praxis across all parts of the militarily occupied territory? Both field work and discussions suggest that similar problems are attached to both the gender equality and the climate change agendas. Especially, we found that the potential for social norm change implicit in both movements has been derailed into technicalities such as the development of unimplementable policies, handbooks and other systems that purport to lead to internal change, but may in reality be a way of appeasing donors and acquiring the matching resources that accompany both the gender equality and the climate change agenda. More training might well do something to start addressing both problems, but it would need to start from an acknowledgement that both are political issues requiring challenging and possibly unpopular political solutions.

Key findings:

- In general, the attitude among PAIC to gender mainstreaming is largely open and positive. Progress has been made among all members to move towards the integration of a gender perspective in programming.
- All PAIC organizations have a gender policy or a gender action plan. There is either a gender policy or a draft policy that is being under implementation.
- Appointment of a Gender Focal Point in each member is a resource for gender mainstreaming in the programme. The intensive experience of examining PAIC partner projects in the field has helped build a coherent gender focal point team, which is an asset to PAIC overall.
- All the partner organizations have committed to mainstreaming gender and work side by side with We Effect, and leaders are on board.
- Gender disaggregated data is collected and is part of project planning and implementation, and is drawn from in monitoring and evaluation reporting.
- Adjustments are sometimes made during project implementation based on feedback from the field in order to better target and meet the needs of girls and boys, women and men.
- Participants in the FGDs highlighted that they always collect and use gender disaggregated data in their reports. However, further work would need to focus on using the collected data in the evaluation and gender assessment processes and more training on using qualitative data and shifting from only numbers as well using the collected data for further analysis of the impacts of the programme on the lives of the people whom they are mandate to serve.
- In the FGDs, the majority of the participants did have some knowledge of the different gender policies, frameworks or strategies guiding how partners work on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women. However, this was limited to ensuring gender parity (i.e. sex disaggregated data). The participants highlighted that gender is an important concept for them and is crucial in their work. Staff need to become more aware of the effects of concepts and practices based on differentially valuing people based on gender; on challenges such as gender-based violence; on gender mainstreaming and gender analysis; on frameworks for women's empowerment; and on human rights and a do no harm approach. These relevance of these concepts and tools within sustainability efforts also needs to be made clear.

- The participants indicated that they need to be more engaged in the planning of the interventions within the project so they can avoid blind spots and siloes. While they are not gender or advocacy experts, they aspire to learn to engage more effectively on advancing gender equality in all interventions.
- In the FGDs, participants indicated that gender is being integrated in the policies and strategies of the organizations. However, staff members highlighted the need for more trainings and integration of gender equality concepts into their work.

Recommendations and ways forward:

1. The collective mentorship of PAIC member senior management would make a significant contribution to moving organisations from inertia to action. Building PAIC's research capacity is a crucial first step in advancing effective advocacy about the political dimensions of climate change and the political constraints that double and even triple women's vulnerability in deteriorating environments.
2. Given the military occupier's remarkably effective disinformation campaigns (e.g. promoting themselves as "global experts in water management"), the PAIC needs to focus intently on building a counter-narrative that exposes the extraction and maldistribution that are the real sources of the occupiers' climate change-mitigation "successes".
3. All PAIC members need to keep working to clarify important concepts of gender and gender mainstreaming, women's economic exclusion as a function of patriarchal capitalism, ecology and gender, and gender sensitization. PAIC partners require support to coordinate focus group discussions/webinars about diverse topics: gender and environment; GBV, economic challenges and environmental degradation; gender transformative approaches; and mainstreaming in general. Training on basic concepts related to gender could create a common basic understanding of gender mainstreaming. Additional, including specialised trainings might be required as needed.
4. PAIC members should commit to including a gender and sustainability analysis before any initiative is undertaken. This should identify challenges such as the effects of gender inequalities and discrimination – and their root causes and consequences – relevant to the programme, in order to facilitate the monitoring and evaluation of gender outcomes.
5. Reintroduce Fair Resources allocation system (FRAS) as a concept.
6. Include information related to international and national human rights laws and legislation, and environmental challenges, especially when these shed light on and combat opposition to advancing women's political and economic rights, and their right to a clean and safe environment.
7. PAIC needs to take on the challenge that, while the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was only adopted by the PA in 2014, it has already suffered reputational harm from opponents wielding conservative (and even Salafist) language. The PA is slow to align national laws with CEDAW, which means PAIC members have a greater obligation to build their knowledge of CEDAW, and to prepare Shadow Reports as part of their advocacy efforts to protect women's and girls' rights, especially in rural areas. A good rubric is the 2011 Observer Paper, "CEDAW, Rural Women and Climate Change." Specific focus should be given to CEDAW General Recommendation 37 (2018) on gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of CC.
8. PAIC's capacities must be built to enable it to perform gender needs assessment for its rights holders, to learn new methods of increasing the capacities of rights holders, especially women, on leadership skills and decision-making to improve livelihoods while considering how to make interventions sustainable.

9. Focused training on HRBA and its applications; with focus on women's rights laws and legislations, especially as these overlap with environmental laws.
10. Proactively build agroecological and food sovereignty associations beyond PAIC, in particular through learning more about, and potentially aligning with agroecological training being developed for Palestinian women. This work should be both committed to sustaining traditional knowledge and farming methods, and recognizing women's experience and expertise as knowledge-holders.

Policy

11. PAIC to receive continued support to establish gender equality policies and strategies, and keep building and sharing existing capacity and expertise, especially to maintain the momentum built in the shared field experience and training in August 2022. PAIC should ensure that women experts are deployed wherever possible, especially in public-facing roles. Proactive interventions in this area could include developing human resources and procurement policies that privilege diversity in the hiring of consultants, trainers and workshop facilitators.
12. Focus on changing social norms at the local community level by continuing to develop gender-responsive, transformative activities which meet the social and economic needs of women and men, old and young; and which also build skills in non-violent action and communication. Devise credible and proactive empowerment measures so that all recipients can effectively take part in activities.

Planning and Programming

13. Establish a shared space in PAIC in which a broad coalition of members (not only gender officers!) learn how to identify and address shared concerns between how gender inequality is economically and politically produced, and politically and economically-induced Climate Change. All PAIC members to be supported to deploy their learning in more effective field-level observation and more effective storytelling/advocacy.
14. Build capacity to set results-based gender indicators against which changes can be monitored and assessed. Align these with the Sustainable Development Goals to ensure that positive change can be reported into an existing framework, while supporting the PA's SDG obligations.
15. Gender analysis precedes any efforts to advance gender mainstreaming in a project or programme cycle, requiring PAIC members to become conversant with gender equality concepts and build in-depth understanding of how to advance women's participation and ensure their rights.
16. Devise practical solutions. For example, building a food sovereignty movement is a means of advancing the right to maintain local, traditional foodways while increasing women's ability to make decisions about the disposal of economic resources. The focus should shift from numbers of women included to an assessment of the extent to which women influence decisions and outcomes at the community level, in cooperatives or other civil society organizations, in media representations, and in policy interventions. Build capacities to identify gaps and overcome challenges including negative behaviours and norms that disallow or undermine women farmers' participation and advancement in cooperatives, markets, and learning programs.
17. All data collection should be systematic, disaggregated by sex and age (and location), evidence-based and include both quantitative and qualitative information. Data collection in itself provides opportunities for community engagement in planning, strategizing and programme development, making and implementing decisions, developing capacities, and understanding and benefiting from results.

18. Further training is needed on gender analysis approaches, include learning on how to develop qualitative and quantitative gender sensitive indicators and how to measure them especially when developing baseline and end line studies.
19. Further develop focal points' technical skills on producing assessment questionnaires from a gender perspective, through mentoring and capacity building interventions.
20. PAIC members should be prepared to identify and respond to any instances of gender-based violence (GBV) they encounter in their daily work, and to build a strategic mechanism so that PAIC can issue timely and relevant commentary if a case of GBV reaches the media.
21. Inside PAIC members, introduce the concept of care and care economy and its relation to sustainability
22. Further develop the understanding on the impact of climate change on the rights and roles of women and men.
23. Gain stronger skills in gender budgeting.

Conclusion

As spaces for resistance, regenerative thinking and new ideas close around them, one of the maladaptive responses Palestinians are making is playing out particularly in the rural farming communities in which PAIC members concentrate their work. All interviewees reported that their partner communities have become more vulnerable to deepening conservatism that is reshaping and narrowing social norms about women's roles, responsibilities and access to public space. The various social impacts of this conservatism were a continuous theme in the interviews and many respondents pointed out concrete examples of the ways in which programme delivery to women was becoming more complex, deepening the challenges faced when delivering programs in rural areas.

What is more difficult to gauge, especially from interviews, is how this generally conservative shift might be showing up inside PAIC organisations themselves. We can infer from the interviews that most interlocutors have a good basic grasp of gender inequality; and none objected to discussing the issue. All were aware of the need to use the conceptual phase of programme planning to make greater efforts to ensure women's inclusion – or at least, all were able to grasp why donors might respond favourably to their efforts to disaggregate their programme right holders by age and sex in their annual and other reports. Yet a majority “were not aware of what gender policies are and why they are important for the organizations”.

Of most interest to us is the fact that, exactly like climate change discourse itself, PAIC members have been taught to see the work of overcoming gender inequality as a purely technical issue that will be addressed through interventions such as better counting of numbers of programme recipients, more funds for activities with women, more trainings etc. That gender inequality, like climate change, is part of the bigger picture of oppression facing Palestinians, and that it is intentionally and deliberately produced to maintain relations of social dominance and economic extractivism, was visible to fewer respondents than we expected. One or two even deployed language much like that which characterises Climate Change denialism: “where's the proof of an intersection between gender equality, climate change and climate justice?” asked one respondent. “What indicators have we got that show climate change and climate justice are harder for women to attain than men?” And finally: “I'm a practical scientist, an engineer. When you can show me the numbers behind these connections we're talking about, I'll accept that my organisation's approaches have to change more quickly.”

Aside from arguments such as these, which we read as defensive, the interviews and field discussions themselves were helpful to illustrate what might, in gender equality terms, be changing inside PAIC organisations. The gender officers who attended the field-based training days contributed their knowledge and thoughtful analytical capacity to the discussions held at each project site and in the day of training. They are deft at negotiating intergenerational and other power struggles. All field interactions were marked by respect and collegiality, and a high degree of interest in gaining more expertise on gender, environment and power.

While climate change adaptation may seem a future activity in other settings, Palestinian society is already adapting, perhaps especially young people, as not only the climate worsens, but the deprivations of the military occupation deepen. Older male leaders expressed concern about how growing educational disparities between young men and women are reshaping the workplace. In discussions that expanded beyond a focus on women, male leaders were invited to consider the relational aspects of gender norms. This helped them overcome a certain amount of defensiveness and overgeneralization about “which” Palestinians suffer most from the military occupation. One hundred percent of society does, of course, yet the differential effects on individuals and communities needs to be unpacked, including through an exploration of what it might mean to rural families to navigate a reality in which young men, eschewing higher education, are making the difficult crossing into ’67 Palestine in search of better wages, including as agricultural workers. The arduous, unsafe and humiliating conditions in which they labour are a uniquely gendered burden that men feel pressurised to carry in order to meet their own expectations of successful masculinity, but they pay a significant personal price for their work choices, including in their deepening alienation from the land.

There are some technical interventions that can help advance gender equality, and there was a general acknowledgment that well-conceptualised gender policies, when they are properly implemented, are an effective mechanism for opening up professional work to women. Some of the changes in PAIC member’s demographics were seen not only as a response to women’s greater educational attainments, but because proactive gender equality human resources policies and other internal policies are supporting greater workplace diversity. These experiences are important to acknowledge because they offer a concrete example of how good policies can change institutions over time, enabling cumulative positive effects that should be replicable inside PAIC as a whole. Reflecting on internal changes, PAIC members agreed that creating the conditions for gender equality is a slow process that requires consistent effort. If it is correctly supported, their experience is a collective asset: PAIC members can draw on it as a group as they forge their common gender equality policies and strategies.

Recommended topics for training /workshops/webinars:

- What are the links between gender equality and environmental sustainability?
- How are “technical” project interventions also likely to be gendered (i.e., who is expected or taught to understand maintenance of new equipment? What happens if only men are taught, but refuse to do maintenance because they think it’s “women’s work”?)
- Which global environmental frameworks include gender, and how can we use them more effectively because of that feature? What is the intersectionality between GBV and environmental issues?
- How can gender-responsive policies and projects support environmental outcomes?

- How to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in biodiversity, climate change, land degradation, international waters, chemicals and waste.
- How to mitigate climate change and to prevent its negative human rights impacts?
- Inclusivity – leaving no one behind – to ensure that all persons have the necessary capacity to adapt to climate change
- Accountability and effective remedy for human rights harms caused by climate change
- Human Rights Based Approach, non-human rights and environmental protection, and Do No Harm
- Care and sustainability