



Filastiniyat

**Strategy Document
2008-2010**

“Restoring Hope... Building a Better Future”

Foreword:

Believing in the importance of strategic planning in improving performance towards the realization of its mission and objectives FILASTINIYAT began formulating its Three-Year Strategic Document in 2007 with the maximum participation of its staff and Board members and founders. This strategic planning exercise, which was based on a thorough analysis of the external and internal environments surrounding the operations of FILASTINIYAT, resulted in the identification of four strategic goals, the realization of which is linked to immediate objectives and specific outputs that are also linked to a set of activities and indicators. These will enable the Palestinian public to evaluate the performance of FILASTINIYAT against its declared objectives.

The organization's Vision and Mission Statement were reformulated within the framework of the strategic planning. On the basis of the new Vision and Mission, strategic issues were identified and linked to clear work programs that integrate the entire Strategic Plan, which was named "**Restoring Hope... Building a Better Future**".

We are hopeful that **Restoring Hope... Building a Better Future** will contribute to supporting Palestinian young male and female leaders, as well as helping the Palestinian young women and men engage actively in the societal change through their free will to change norms and practices on the local level, protecting freedoms and democracy which is embedded in the Palestinian culture. FILASTINIYAT wishes this new strategy will contribute to insuring the freedom of opinion and expression through monitoring violations, public awareness raising, and advocacy and lobbying campaigns which are based on universal human rights laws and declarations.

This comes in the context of FILASTINIYAT's Mission which believes in the universality of human rights and in building a free, democratic Palestinian society governed by justice, equality, and respect to pluralism

In conclusion, FILASTINIYAT extends its gratitude to its staff, board and founders for their invaluable contributions to and interaction with the planning process, and to Al-Sahel Company for their distinctive professional effort in supervising the formulation of the Strategic Plan. And finally to the Frederick Nauman Foundation for supporting this effort.

Wafa' Abdel Rahman
Founder and Director

1. Vision

An effective social movement of youth and women that strives for effecting social, economic and political change.

2. Mission Statement:

We work to empower youth and women leaders towards strengthening their discourse and roles in the societal, economic and political domains, within a democratic, pluralistic and tolerant society. Our work is grounded by the principles espoused by Declaration of Independence and the international conventions on human rights.

These elaborations provide definitions of the terms and expressions commonly used by Filastiniyat

Freedom of Opinion and Expression:

The right to political association.

The right to participate in political activities in general.

The right to express opinions freely (expression of opinion, thoughts, and beliefs publicly and freely).

The right to assembly, association, and holding public meetings.

The right to protest and strike peacefully.

Article 19 from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”

Civil and Political Rights: The right to life, the right to freedom and safety, the right to not being subject to torture or slavery, the right to political participation, the right to freedom of opinion and expression, the right of thought and belief, the right of association, and the right of peaceful assembly.

Leader: a leader is a person who has an influential position within society and/or has personal and intellectual characteristics that enable him/her to become an influential figure within society.

Society: A society is a grouping of individuals which is characterized by common interests and may have distinctive culture and institutions. Members of a society may be from different cultural and religious backgrounds. A society may be a distinct group of people with particular geographic areas (such as a village), a nation state, such as Palestine, or a broader cultural group.

Youth: For Filastiniyat, youth are persons who are between 18-35 years of age and who have leadership characteristics. They are people who can champion and lead change, and who believe in the principles of pluralism, secularism, human rights and tolerance.

Women: For Filastiniyat, women are females who between 18-45 years of age and who have a leadership characteristics, yet don't have the access or are not exposed to the

public due the patriarchal characteristic of society. They are women who can champion and lead change, and who believe in principles of pluralism, secularism, human rights and tolerance.

Media: Includes and refers to various aspects of media channels: recorded media, print media, electronic media, published media, mass media, news media, and any combination of these types of media.

Discourse: Is the use of communication techniques and media to deliver a statement, make a position, demand, or announcement. It is also the institution that carries the discourse and exposes it through its practices.

Pluralism: is the acknowledgement and respect for diversity in political, cultural, and religious domains.

Tolerance: is the attitude and practices that prohibits discrimination against those whose practices or group memberships may be disapproved of by those in the majority. It includes tolerance for cultural, religious, and political beliefs that are congruent with the principles of human rights and do not infringe on the political, cultural, economic, social and human rights of others.

3. Strategy Rationale:

3.1. Overview of the problems facing Palestinian youth

Mainstreaming youth and women participation in democratic governance the establishment of civil society networks (youth and women networks), and capacity building in the fields of democracy, citizenship, and human rights (representation and freedom of association and expression) are at the core of Filastiniyat's mission. Through building the youth and women's capacity and broadening their knowledge of their democratic rights to associate, voice their concerns, and advocate for their common interests, Filastiniyat will contribute to the promotion of a participatory, pluralistic democracy in Palestine. In line with its commitment to promoting democratic discourse and policy dialogue, Filastiniyat will engage youth and women leaders and activists in the public discourse.

By focusing on youth and women in particular, Filastiniyat will contribute to mainstreaming the rights of children and gender equality in public discourse. This strategic direction comes in tandem with the national priorities for the promotion of good governance practices and in strengthening the role of civil society in democratic governance.

Youth (age group 15-29) represented 26.8 percent of the Palestinian population living in the West Bank and Gaza in 2005, and, according to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, are expected to represent more than one third of the population by 2010. The participation of this age group, and more specifically the subset of youth in the age group 18-25, in public life is limited. Moreover, that youth are disengaged and alienated from

formal politics is widely stated and empirically incontestable. In the recent legislative elections that took place in early 2006, only 30% of the eligible 18-30 year-olds voting. Few young people belong to political parties, and anecdotal evidence gathered during the preparation of this document clearly suggests that a large proportion of young people are growing a sense of apathy to the political and democratic process in Palestine.

Low levels of youth participation in democratic politics are not a uniquely Palestinian phenomenon, however. Youth 'apathy' is common and increasingly worrying feature of even the 'mature' democracies. This is typically expressed in low levels of voter turnout among the youth. While voting is only one of the mechanisms through which citizens voice their needs in a democratic system, it is the most basic level of participation, giving an indication of the levels of political engagement more generally.

While several youth development and women empowerment projects and initiatives have been implemented –and continue to be implemented- in Palestine over the past ten years, some of which specifically aiming at increasing youth and women participation in the political democratic process and state building, very little impact has been felt. To date, no real successes have been recorded in Palestine with regard to mainstreaming youth and women concerns in public discourse and policy making, even though issues relating to young people and women fall across a variety of policy areas such as education, health, and local and economic development.

The following are some of the reasons why youth's participation in the democratic process in Palestine is limited:

- **Limited leadership skills and weak understanding and appreciation of the democratic process**

Civic education, including the conceptual background to democracy and civic participation, has not been part of the formal education system in Palestine until very recently, and is not taken seriously by most public schools. A recent study conducted by a private consulting firm which was commissioned to monitor good governance practices within the public sector, revealed that in most public schools, civil education is taught by teachers who do not have adequate experience in or background on the subject. Moreover, the Palestinian curriculum in general and the school experience in particular do not give adequate attention to building the student's life skills. Students are hardly given any space for expressing their opinions and expressing their concerns about to school administrations. This is particularly true in public schools which absorb more than 80 percent of the school-age children. Very few schools have student councils.

The situation in universities is slightly better as university students are provided with the opportunity to experience the democratic exercise of student council elections and other political activities. However, like formal secondary education, the Palestinian university experience generally does not provide students with

leadership skills, neither does it provide them with a solid understanding of or appreciation for their citizenship responsibilities.

- **Limited outreach, communication, and advocacy capacity among youth and youth groups**
Filastiniyat's experience in working with youth and youth groups has clearly proven that their communication, outreach and advocacy skills are quite limited. Accordingly, their ability to articulate their concerns and needs is quite limited. Hence, their ability to effectively participate in public life is largely undermined.
- **Fragmented, project-based approach to building youth networks**
While several initiatives have been implemented over the past few years and aiming to promote youth participation in local development and improve their life skills to empower them to realize their full potential, most of these programs did not share a common vision or a strategic objective and largely concentrated on achieving local outputs. As a result, youth development has been piecemeal and did not succeed in creating a common ground for youth concerted action or a common forum for the exchange of experience and knowledge sharing. As a result of the absence of a clear vision for increasing youth participation in the democratic process, limited institutionalization of youth capacity building initiatives, as well as the absence of a capacity building and networking model that effectively facilitates youth participation in the democratic process at both the local and national levels, youth participation in public life is –and will be– severely constrained.

In the current context, the development of Palestinian civil society must begin with a basic approach: the provision of hope. Working with youth is substantial to promote and enhance the building of democratic and viable civil society. Empowering youth and organizing them in strong and coherent groups will strengthen their political, economic and social participation, and will enable them to serve their interests and needs during this difficult period and on the long term.

3.2. Overview of the problems facing women

The status of Palestinian women is and has been a function of the policies of the different periods of foreign occupation of Palestine as well as the norms stipulated by the Arab culture and tradition. Consequently, a thorough, general description and analysis of the current status of the Palestinian can only be derived from examining the broader context that has been shaping the political and socio-economic life of the Palestinian people, from the days of the Ottoman rule over Palestine to date. However, for the purposes of this strategy document, the analysis of the status of Palestinian women focused on issues on which there has been a consensus among the different stakeholders, and in which Filastiniyat has a vested interest in highlighting.

3.2.1 The Burden of Poverty on Women

Poverty¹ created an evident burden on Palestinian women as the numbers of the poor within the Palestinian community as a whole grew quite noticeably in the Second Intifada. This is quite prevalent when considering that the most extreme cases of poverty are comprised of female-headed households (30% of female-headed households live before the poverty line, in contrast to 22% of male-headed households). The Palestinian Ministry of Planning indicated in its latest Poverty Report that 73% of female-headed households are incapable of meeting their households' basic nutritional, clothing, educational, health, and housing needs.

The poverty among women is mostly attributed to “the scarcity of economic, political and, often, social opportunities for women, as represented by areas of possessions, inheritance, educational services and social security”². As such, the scarcity of such opportunities and the consequent inability of women to attain economic subsistence through paid employment contribute to the “feminization of poverty”, thus compounding the burden on women and their victimization.³

3.2.2 Educational and Training Opportunities

The right to education is one of the basic rights set by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and one which unequivocally heralds long-term sustainable development. Although the figures on education and enrollment are relatively impressive in comparison with other under-developed countries, especially after the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, there a number of issues/figures that lead to the conclusion that females do not have an equal access to educational and training opportunities. Namely:

- In the West Bank, there is a higher literacy rate among males (91.7%) than females (76.3%). The same trend is found in the Gaza Strip, although literacy rates vary slightly (91.1% and 78.6% for males and females respectively).
- The higher level of female literacy rates in certain areas is highly correlated with the existence of UNRWA schools which provide free basic education for refugee children (this is mostly true in and around refugee camps).
- The discrepancy between male and female education levels is most evidently clear in both high school and higher education. For example, the high school dropout rate among females is estimated at 49.1% while it is 46.3% among males. While most males drop out to seek employment and support their families,

¹ What is meant by Poverty here is overall poverty which is defined as: The lack of income necessary to satisfy essential non-food needs -such as clothing energy and shelter- as well as food needs. According to the global targets set by the 1995 World Summit for Social Development, countries should work with the World Bank and the United Nations System to halve the share of population living in poverty by 2015.

² United Nations Development for Women, “Evaluating the Status of Palestinian Women in Light of Beijing Platform for Action”, 2002, pp. 6.

³ Abu Dayyeh Shmas, Maha, “Towards Gender and Development in Palestinian Society: An Approach for Development Cooperation”, Italian Development Cooperation, 2002.

females are often forced to drop out because their families cannot support their education and societal attitudes are not keen on female education⁴.

- Vocational training is marginal and underdeveloped in Palestine for both men and women. However, where vocational training is provided to women, it is concentrated on vocations that have been traditionally acceptable for women, i.e. beauty care, office management/secretary, teaching, embroidery, and home economics. Men on the other hand receive vocational training in areas that are in more market demand as surveying, accounting, bookkeeping, mechanics, carpentry, etc... This provides men with better opportunities in the work market than girls.
- In addition to the clear inequality in access to vocational training, it should be mentioned here that the Palestinian curricula is often fond to reinforce traditional gender roles, with women often portrayed as being submissive and weak. In cases where women are portrayed as being strong, especially in certain stories from Islam, the lack of training among teachers and the lack of sensitivity to and understanding of gender issues among students often defeats the purpose of the story.

Issue for Consideration at the National Level:

- a. Figures on dropout rates merely measure the “percentage of students who left school during the school year”. Consequently, they do not provide an accurate figure on the actual total dropout rate. Thus, the female dropout rates may be higher than reported.
- b. Figures on university enrollment may be misleading as they do not take into account students enrolled in higher education abroad, most of whom are males.
- c. While the Palestinian Ministry of Education has made good decisions to contribute to equality between female and male students, no real procedures were taken to implement these decisions.
- d. The inequality in education could be monitored in several aspects, including: availability of basic services in schools, classroom capacity versus occupancy, average number of students per teacher, proximity of schools to community centers.
- e. The need to have trained professional counselors in schools capable of dealing with problems related to potential female problems whether in school or at home.

3.2.3 Health Care and Related Services

The Palestinian health care system has been historically known to be characteristically weak due to numerous technical, financial and political challenges. These challenges have remarkably affected, even severely limited, the level and type of access to health services for all Palestinians, and especially for women.

⁴ Many females also dropout to get married at an early age, often the marriage being arranged by the family. According to Palestinian statistics, 19% of girls between 15-19 years were married before they reached the age of 18, compared to 1% of men in the same age bracket.

In an analysis of the Palestinian health services carried out by the World Health Organization in 2000, it was revealed that the "...prevailing model of health care is largely based on the medical model...[It] has not progressed to adequately incorporate social and economic elements in the process of addressing the health status in Palestine." Moreover, the official Palestinian health care system does not give much attention, if any, to the holistic mental health concept, which would include psychological, sexual, and social health, the absence of which contributes to reinforcing discrimination and marginalization of women. Further, no real attention is given to the gap between male and female infant mortality rates (33.2% for males and 27.3% for females), the illnesses and that are more common among female children than male children (diarrhea and respiratory infections).

According to the report published by the Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counseling titled *The Status of Palestinian Women*, the most important factors having direct effects on women are:

- The absence or ineffectiveness of policies directed to the improvement of women's health;
- Poor eating habits through the various stages of woman's life cycle, given that women are already more susceptible to malnutrition and anemia;
- Early marriage and young motherhood, frequent and close pregnancies;
- The lack of health services offered to women in their various localities and the concentration of such services in urban centers;
- The lack of preventative care (e.g. breast cancer);
- The absence of a social system that guarantees the welfare of women from a health perspective; and
- Insufficient health care services provided to women from the age of puberty to menopause.

3.2.4 Violence Against Women

Violence against women is defined as "any act of violence based on sex inflicting or potentially inflicting physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering of the woman, including threats of perpetrating such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of freedom, whether in the public or private life."⁵ Accordingly, violence transcends the physical abuse that is most commonly associated with the word.

Palestinian women, due to the political atmosphere under which they have been living and the set of traditional beliefs engendered within the Palestinian society, have been experiencing all forms of social, political, and economic violence. All the while, the issue of violence against women has not captured the lime light until very recently. A survey of attitudes conducted in 1995 revealed that Palestinians rank the issue of oppression against women at number 18 in a prioritization list of 21 issues questioned. The same survey also revealed that 42% of the respondents believe that the husband has the right to beat his wife if he feels this is necessary.

⁵ According to the Beijing Conference's report, 1995.

The most disturbing fact in this regard is that women often find themselves without shelter from the violence inflicted upon them, whether physical or social. The dominant patriarchal attitude within the Palestinian society as a whole has not facilitated the existence of a protective environment for women facing oppression. In fact, domestic violence is still largely viewed as a domestic affair that often get circumvented -if they do- by tribal and familial interventions. What contributes to this is that the existing laws (i.e. the personal status law and criminal law) do not protect women from violence, rather perpetuate the traditional subordination of women to men.

A recent poll conducted in the West Bank and Gaza in 2005 by the Palestinian Center for Public Opinion and the Women's Working Association Development, which included the opinions of 1,113 Palestinian citizens indicated that the current political situation have lead to an increase in the occurrence of violence against women (86% of the total surveyed). 52% indicated that traditions stand in the way of women advancement. 68% of the surveyed sample indicated that the Palestinian Authority should ratify a law that strongly penalizes individuals who resort to violence against women for any reason. 31% indicated that they view the general treatment of husbands to their wives as being largely violent. 56% of the surveyed sample confirmed that they know first hand women who have been physically or verbally abused by their husbands.

In two surveys conducted by Bisan Center for Research and Development which included 3,744 married women, almost half of the surveyed women indicated that they have been subject to psychological violence. About one fifth of the surveyed women indicated that they have been subject to physical violence an one third indicated that they have been subject to economic violence. In another study conducted by Bisan and which included 1,153 single women, it was revealed that 35% of the women were subject to verbal violence from their families, and 21% indicated that they have been subject to sexual abuse.

There is a consensus among women rights activists that violence against Palestinian women will not be stopped unless the following pressing issues are addressed at the national and local levels⁶:

- The need for clear national policies that adequately deal with discrimination against women on the basis of gender;
- The need of clear legislation that protects women from violence, especially that the Palestinian Legislation is characteristically weak in dealing with issues of violence against women;
- The need to review the criminal and personal status laws especially in dealing with violence against women;
- The lack of domestic violence units at police stations that are capable of appropriately dealing with such issues;

⁶ These issues are largely based on: Randa Siniora's background paper titled "The Right to be Protected from Violence." It should be noted, however, that interviews and focus groups conducted for the purpose of drafting this report have revealed similar issues as the ones highlighted by the paper.

- The lack of a clear address at the Ministry of Social Welfare dealing with violence against women;
- The lack of a safe house for women in difficult circumstances that can offer protection as well as professional support for such women; and
- The lack of adequate policy-oriented research that would help in p

3.2.5 Unsupportive Economic and Political Structures (Participation & Representation)

Despite their considerable effective contribution to the economy through paid and unpaid work/labor, Palestinian women suffer from being underrepresented in the areas of economic-decision making. In fact, their economic rights are often violated, due to the prevailing cultural and legal obstacles that undermine their ability to enjoy their right of ownership and inheritance among other things. The role of Palestinian women in economic and non-economic activities (in agriculture and within their homes) are largely not reflected in official statistics, which reinforces the traditional gender roles and the concept that women are unequal to men.

In general, Palestinian women still suffer from the deficiency in terms of limited employment opportunities, inadequate working conditions and men's near-total control over economic resources, despite the ratification of the new Palestinian Labor Law which is more sensitive to women's rights than the preceding law. The following are some indications to this conclusion:

- Women's share of the GDP is \$385.5, while men's share is \$4,127.9, the gap being 93.3%.
- Women in senior management positions in both public, private and NGO sectors account only 13.6% of the total position (the glass ceiling effect).
- The total share of women from loans provided by banks is 11%, with men receiving the rest.
- Only 11-13% of employed women retain a wage or salary, most of whom are not protected by any employment laws.
- There is a considerable gap the wages earned by men and women working in the same sector and for the same employer. In aggregating the gap in the different sectors, the gap is estimated at 66.2% in the West Bank and 81.3 in the Gaza Strip.

The marginalization of women in the political decision-making sphere is also evident in Palestinian context. For example, the number of female candidates in the 1997 legislative elections was 27, compared to 676 male candidates. Only 5 of the women candidates were elected to the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC). It should be noted here that despite that considerably high women membership in political parties, only 10 of the 27 candidates were nominated by their respective political parties, which reinforces the conclusion that women are marginalized even within their own political parties.

Wafa: CAN YOU WRITE SOMETHING ABOUT THE QUOTA/RECENT ELECTIONS. SOMETHING ALONG THE LINES: While the Palestinian Elections Law was amended in 2005 to grant women a better opportunity to get engaged in the

legislative process through a introducing a quota system for women, women's participation in the legislative process has been characteristically weak.

It can be noted the following are considered as obstacles towards women's participation in the political decision-making process:

- The Palestinian Elections Law: This Law does not give the Palestinian woman the requisite opportunity to women to enter and win elections as it reinforces tribalism and majority rule concepts.
- The prevailing culture: Women are viewed by the society at large is incapable of dealing with political matters in comparison to men.
- The political will: There is no real official will to incorporate women in the political decision making process through policies and legislations.

3.2.7 Lack of Commitment to Promoting and Protecting Women's Rights

There can be no talk about commitment to women's rights without the existence of legislations that explicitly protect women from engendered discrimination. Unfortunately, with very few exceptions, the Palestinian laws currently in place, which are comprised of a combination of different statutes that were in place during different periods of foreign rule and occupation over Palestine, neither adequately protect women nor promote gender mainstreaming. In fact, Muslims, Jews, and Christians are each governed by religious laws and separate courts in personal matters according to affiliation. This division is further exacerbated within the Christian community in accordance with the denominational affiliation.

The multiplicity of laws has been having a profound negative impact on Palestinian women especially in regards to personal status, elections, and family matters. For example, women have no legal right to enter into contracts over her own personal relationship. To do this women are obliged to get a guardian's approval.

The most salient features of the Palestinian laws that reinforce discrimination against women are:

- Non-recognition of gender equality in law, resulting in discrimination in civil status and elections laws as well as citizenship rights.
- There is no legal protection for women's income earned, especially after marriage.
- Women are considered to be in need of a male custodianship in matters related to personal status and civil laws.
- The lack of implementation of laws that protect women rights (inheritance for example).
- The lack of legislation that stipulates the need to examine the effect of ratified legislations on women.
- The inadequacy of the criminal law and due process in dealing with physical violence against women and the dominance of the tribal legal system in solving physical aggression on women, which is often to the detriment of women. For

example, a woman rape victim is waived the right to prosecute by tribal law if the aggressor agrees to marry the rape victim.

3.2.8. National Policy Priorities

Since its establishment in 1994, the Palestinian National Authority has been trying to address, although some would say inadequately, the need to integrate women in the political decision making process and development as well as protect their rights. The most salient outcomes of these attempts have been the passing of an elections law that equates between the rights of men and women in elections, and the establishment of Women Directorates within some Ministries. One of the most prominent of these is the Directorate of Women within the Ministry of Planning which serves as a reference for the Ministry of Planning on issues related to gender and advising on national policies that would decrease the social, economic and political gender gap.

The General Union of Palestinian Women is a voluntary, PLO-affiliated popular organization that operates throughout the world and aims to achieve seven goals. Promoting the role of women in society and incorporating women needs in development initiatives, building the technical skills and capacities of women, protecting women's rights, reviewing laws and legislations from a gender perspective, and ensuring that adequate attention is provided for women's health issues through advocating policy instruments are among these goals. In fact, the national agenda for promoting and protecting women rights has been articulated by the General Union of Palestinian Women. This plan (The National Strategy for the Advancement of Palestinian Women) represents a useful long-term approach to improve the status of Palestinian women. It identifies strategic objectives and details components that are to be pursued by different actors and further . Namely:

- **In the political realm:** challenging occupation and struggling towards attaining national independence (to implement international resolutions that ensure legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people; to develop the various methods of Palestinian women participation in the national, political, and social struggle in Palestine and abroad; to provide support for Palestinian Jerusalemite women to preserve their full rights in Jerusalem; to free unconditional all political prisoners in Israeli jails; to support Arab women's struggle and resistance of occupation and sieges; and to consolidate global coordination with women in their struggle for peace, equality and development); ensuring the return of refugee women (to use all the possible means to pursue the implementation UN resolution 194; to maintain UNRWA's full services for the Palestinian refugees until their return; to ensure the unification of Palestinian families and their repatriation in accordance with the Human Rights Declaration; to guarantee the civil rights of Palestinians in the Diaspora; and to implement all signed agreements concerning the refugee right of return); and facilitating women participation on decision-making (to consolidate democracy within civil society institutions in order to ensure equal opportunities for women in establishing democratic society in which equality and social justice prevail; to raise the percentage of women participating

in all aspects and levels of political life; and to consolidate participation of women in setting governmental policies and/or other decision-making processes).

- **In the economic realm:** to enable the Palestinian people to have sovereignty over their land and their natural resources; to consolidate women's economic rights and independence including appropriate work opportunities and conditions; to establish comprehensive developmental philosophy based on humanitarian, economic and political values within the Palestinian society; to increase the number of women within the labor force and to ensure gender equality in employment in all fields of work and production sectors; to ensure working women's participation in professional and labor unions at all level and to find mechanisms that would enable women to be elected to leadership posts within their unions without prejudicing their jobs; to provide rehabilitation and training services for women as access to resources and markets increase their participation in the work force and in the gross national production of income; to provide supporting services for working women; and to prepare social studies and research on the national level concerning poverty and to calculate the percentage of women within society sectors who are below poverty line.
- **In the legal realm:** To set Palestinian legislations that would protect and consolidate women's rights and to amend existing laws according to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women; to guarantee an independent judicial authority to reinforce the fundamentals of democratic civil society in accordance with the principle of the separation of the three powers; and to ensure legal awareness of all aspects of the society, particularly women's rights as they are human rights.
- **In the realm of media:** To work towards establishing a public information media that serves social and national issues including women's issues; to support posting female media professionals in policy and decision-making positions in the fields of culture and public information; to enhance women's skills in all aspects of the media and to encourage women/girls to attend media educational and training programs; to spread and firmly fix concepts and values based on democracy and gender equality by means of information campaigns in coordination with specialized media departments; and to change women's negative image in all forms of media.
- **In the social dimension realm:** The strategy focuses on improving the social conditions on three main levels through a set of objectives under each level. Namely, the improvement of the health services provided within the Palestinian territories, especially those provided to women; the improvement the educational and training opportunities provided for women; and the protection of children according to the International Convention of the Rights of the Child.

4. Strategic Issues and Strategic Goals

Based on the above analysis, and within the framework of Filastiniyat's mission and vision for the next three years, the following strategic issues have been identified:

Issue #1: Absence of policies and political will to support the advancement of youth and women.

Issue #2: Strong cultural legacy that reinforces the marginalization of youth and women

Strengthening the democratic process in Palestine requires laying the foundations for and facilitating active participation of citizens and citizen groups in democratic governance. In doing so, the project has selected to target youth for several reasons, not the least of which being they represent the single largest population group and the fact that they are marginalized when it comes to policy setting and public decision making. Achieving effective participation of youth in the political process in Palestine has a great potential for changing the status quo of limited governance practice and dominance of the "old guard" of the political scene.

The capacity building, empowerment, and network building strategy directly addresses the main limitations for effective youth participation in the democratic process, which have been highlighted above. This strategy has been informed by international experience which shows that good practice in programs that promote youth participation in democratic processes should: provide choices; address issues perceived as important by youth; build their capacity, raise young people's awareness of social, political economic, cultural and personal issues that affect them; provide training and skills development to youth; ensure that youth are given ongoing support in their civic role; provide them with a sense of ownership in decision-making; and involve a careful recruitment and selection process of beneficiaries (Youth and the Millennium Development Goals: Challenges and Opportunities for Implementation, April 2005). The majority of these have been incorporated in the project designs (see below).

- The lack of professional and specialized legal representation services that guarantee the abidance to international humanitarian law on time.
- The weakness in the observation, documentation, and publication of violations that are in breach of the standard international human rights.
- Weakness in public awareness of prisoners and their families' rights.

4. Strategic Objectives

1. Influencing public policies, donors' programs and private sector for more inclusion of women and youth.
2. Building the capacity of youth and women young leaders
3. contribute to the change of the current media discourse towards the inclusion of women and youth perspectives

4. Building the internal capacity of Filastiniyat in issues of fundraising, empowering of staff, inclusion of more members, and the improving the capacities of its governing body (the board).

5. Immediate Objectives

- 1.1 monitoring the performance of the PLC
- 2.2 monitoring the aid programs to Palestine (integrity of reconstruction programs)
- 2.3 Monitoring media discourse
- 2.1 Training you leaders (22-30 years old) in issues of community mobilization, monitoring, projects leading, assessment of communities needs, starting up economic projects.
- 2.2 Raising the youth leaders' awareness in issues of political system, accountability, integrity, microcredit and social change
- 2.3 building the capacity of women and youth in media
- 3.1 introducing an alternative model of TV and radio programs that are gender sensitive and respect youth discourse
- 3.2 monitoring media biases
- 4.1 training of staff in reports writing and English skills
- 4.2 media campaign for donors
- 4.3 opening the membership to young leaders

8. Activities

- Production of PLC Effectiveness Index. Which entails; Collection of data on PLC session and members performance (field visits), writing and analysis of the report and printing and dissemination. Finally conducting public meetings and media programs on the results.
- training 10 young community leader's groups in the WB to conduct field research on aid implementation and re-construction projects.
- conducting press-conferences upon completion of every project monitored
- conducting policy meetings to communicate the findings with donors, government, implementing agencies (NGOs and Contractors).
- Training young monitors (TV, Radio and Press)
- Conduct the actual monitoring, and feeding the data into a software.
- production of the report and the analysis
- policy meetings with media outlets, donors and NGOs
- Conducting 3 annual media conferences on the status of media
- Production of 48 Talk shows in the radio and TV
- production of 3 yearly newsletter
- establishing a steering committee of private businesses to cooperate with the youth project