
World Bank Examines Impact of Conflict and Closure Regime on Palestinian Women

Arabic: [العربية](#)

Ramallah, February 16, 2010 — The socio-economic impact of the ongoing conflict and the comprehensive closure regime on the Palestinian population of the West Bank and Gaza have been well documented. A [report](#) published by the World Bank analyzes an important, but as yet largely unexplored, dimension of this issue — the long term impact of the system of movement and access restrictions on relations between women and men.

Based on data covering the years 2000 to 2007, the report examines how Palestinian women have coped with the impact of a dramatic retreat of males from the labor market. Some have been able to take, or remain longer in, salaried positions in the public and services sector. Many more have been forced to take on menial and unprotected work. Much of the remainder has turned to informal activities not easily captured statistically — agriculture, petty trade and crafts such as sewing.

Women's stepped-up involvement in work in the public sphere has come at a high cost : They must carefully navigate the need to behave in a manner that is culturally appropriate with the need for increased mobility; they must tread carefully by not overstating their new role as provider for the sake of preserving family harmony; and they must add to their already burdened productive and reproductive household roles. Social ties and networks have been elements of support, but they too are suffering the weight of restrictions and economic collapse.

The impact of economic hardship and the disruption of the traditional family unit have been compounded by the stresses of a conflict environment — intrusion of violence into the domestic space, the need to support detained male members of the family and the collapse of public order. In addition, there are indications of a correlation between loss of male employment and increased domestic violence.

Recent relaxation of movement restrictions in the West Bank has not been sufficient to reverse these trends and the situation Gaza continues to deteriorate. **The authors stress that lifting of the closure regime is the most effective way to ease the hardship faced by Palestinian women. They recommend, however, that in order to mitigate long-term deterioration of the social fabric, the Palestinian Authority take immediate action** in four areas: (1) Enable employment for women that is perceived as "dignified", especially through improvement of public transport regulation and enforcement of labor law; (2) Support and expand opportunities for youth employment; (3) Facilitate social cohesion, especially in Area C and others isolated by movement and access restrictions; (4) Collect better data on gender-disaggregated economic participation.