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Annual Report 2015

The Palestinian Businesswomen’s Association “Asala”

Annual Report (2015)

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About Asala

Foundation

The Palestinian Businesswomen's Association "Asala" is a Palestinian Civil Institution which began to work in 1997 under the name of "Center for Women's Economic Projects (CWEP)." It was registered at the Ministry of Interior in accordance with the Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations Law of 2001 under number RA-269-B

Our objectives:

- Contribute to women's economic and social empowerment to ensure their effective participation in the Palestinian community.
- Strengthen and promote women's economic empowerment throughout capacity building services and activities which include (trainings, consultation, advocacy and lobbying for women's economic rights and facilitation of women's access to marketplaces.)
- Strengthen and sustain Asala's institutional and organizational capacity.

Vision:

The Palestinian Businesswomen's Association "Asala" envisions an entrepreneurial Palestinian woman who is capable and influential in a democratic society that adheres to social justice.

Mission:

The Palestinian Businesswomen's Association "Asala" works with Palestinian women who have limited resources and enables them to access their economic and social rights through a developmental and holistic approach based on their needs.

Values

Accountability, professionalism, commitment, rights-based approach, participation-based approach, solidarity, innovation and empowerment

Board of Directors for The Palestinian Business Women's Association "Asala"

Ms. Raja' Rantisi
Chairperson

Mr. Yousef Sha't
Deputy Chairperson

Ms. Dima Qassis
Treasurer

Ms. Nahid Freij
Member

Mr. Jamal Haddad
Member

Mr. Bilal Abu Hijleh
Member

Ms. Nisreen Hanbali
Member

Mr. Ibrahim Al Masri
Member

Ms. Ruba Izz
Member

Foreword by the Chairperson of the Board of Directors

Greetings

I extend my warmest blessings and greetings in the beginning of this year to wish the best of luck and peace for all Palestinian people.

The year of 2015 has ended with full of challenges and events, most notably the escalation of the brutal attacks on our people in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Jerusalem. However, the aggression has reached its peak through the demolition of houses and the burning of children alongside the ongoing Israeli attempts to destroy the Palestinian market through inserting settlements' goods in the Palestinian market and the confiscation of the Palestinian lands which are considered the primary resources for most Palestinian families especially who work in the field of agriculture. This has been the root cause of the economic deterioration in Palestine in addition to the Palestinian social norms and traditions that have been undermining –for a long period of time- the economic and social role of Palestinian women.

Stemming from our belief to achieve gender equality in most life aspects based on social justice and non-discrimination, Asala has successfully made various national achievements and widely opened many doors for assisting Palestinian women to have a just social and economic life.

Today we present our current annual report for 2015 which highlights Asala's major achievements and future aspirations in the coming years. These achievements, future ambitions and our strategic plans haven't been accomplished individually or by a single organization but rather achieved by a unified participation of women first and the participation of all the society's institutions in all governmental, non-governmental and private sectors.

In conclusion, on behalf of the board of directors and the General Assembly of Asala association, I would like to thank all Palestinian women for their deep trust which is growing over years. Special thanks to the management team and field staff as well as both local and international partners and for all who support Palestinian women and Asala Association.

Raja' Rantisi

Asala's partners since the Association's establishment in 1997 until the end of 2015

Asala's Organizational Development

The Annual General Assembly Meeting

The General Authority of Asala Association has held its regular General Assembly meeting on the fifth of May in 2015. The meeting took place at Asala's headquarter in Ramallah and Al-Bireh with the presence of the General assembly members in the West Bank office and members of the Gaza Strip via a video conference in the presence of 18 members out of 25 members. The meeting was attended by Mr. Abdullah Daraghmeh, a representative from the Ministry of National economy,

Ms. Raja' Rantisi (The Chairperson of Asala Association) presented a welcoming speech to the attendees and thanked the Board of Directors for their efforts provided to the association during the year of 2014. The agenda of the meeting was unanimously agreed on by the attendees first, then Ernst & Yang Company presented the financial report which includes the expenses, revenues and the calculation method of the property in addition to a full explanation of the registration process and the separation of Asala Company for Credit and Development. However, after the discussion, the financial report was voted on and unanimously approved.

The annual report for 2014 has demonstrated the major achievements and successes of the association. Asala staff answered most of the attendees' questions and queries on the associations' activities and local campaigns. Later, the annual report has been unanimously voted upon and approved.

Some of the meeting's highlights are:

A new Board of Directors composed of nine members has been elected for The Palestinian Businesswomen's Association "Asala" for the next three years.

Raja' Rantisi Hamayel - Chairperson, Yousef Sha't- Vice Chairman, Dima Qassees - Treasurer, Nesreen Hanbali Abu Shawish - Member, Ruba Izz - Member, Nahed Freij-member, Jamal Haddad - member, Ibrahim al-Masri - member, Bilal Abu Hajla- Member.

A training course for Asala Association's staff members

a training course has been conducted on time management, self-management and energy management skills

The Palestinian Businesswomen's Association "Asala" has organized a training course in time , self-management and energy management skills, for Asala administrative and field

staff member which took place in Jericho. The training was offered by Blanc Consulting Company which aims at fostering the participants' knowledge and skills in the domains of time, energy and self-administration. The training lasted for two full days.

The main outcomes of the training course is to outline the basic concepts of self-management and energy management including the six dimensions of the self and several self-management techniques. The training has also illustrated the basic concepts of time management and the possession of knowledge. Furthermore, it has focused on some methods to exercise positive behaviors and attitudes, highlighted the importance of time management and the best possible method for time investment.

The main training topics tackle self-concept, self-management, and the concept of energy management, the notion of time management, the dimension of time and some important facts about time management.

Services provided by The Palestinian Businesswomen's Association "Asala"

Asala Association is fully aware of the difficulties and challenges women face in the economic and social spheres. This has underlined the significance of supporting women through a holistic and integrative approach to ensure the delivery of optimal results and to achieve women's economic and social empowerment. Thus, Asala's programs have been designed to promote and sustain small business projects to generate incomes of projects managed by women. These programs have helped Asala to achieve the goal of enhancing women's capabilities with low income to obtain their social and economic rights. Therefore, they aim to change the behavioral and institutional norms preventing women from investing in their potentials and powers. Asala has a clear message to convey regarding this which will be described below:

Asala is seeking to ensure women's access to their social and economic rights through lobbying and advocacy for women's equality and integration into the family, society and institutions.

Asala tends to develop and build women's capacities and skills so they can be able to successfully manage their projects. Asala is also working to raise women's awareness and participation in gender equality and women's access to their economic and social rights which can prompt the needed change.

Asala uses a series of values through their field of work to ensure, promote and perpetuate women's sustainable access to local, national, regional and international marketplaces through a network of Asala's wholesalers and continuous work to create new connections with the buyers.

Asala is committed to the efficiency and sustainability in performing its operations especially the need-based interventions and the high-quality services delivered to beneficiaries. Asala is also committed to reduce the non-operating expenses to guarantee the delivery of funding to the largest group possible of beneficiaries.

The following pages will include a detailed information on the three strategic pillars that Asala Association peruses towards Women's economic empowerment and the major results for 2015 and the previous years.

The first pillar: Capacity Building Services for Palestinian women

Asala Offers a wide range of services in capacity building services to fulfill the needs of Palestinian rural women and provides several individual and detailed training services in their residential areas. It is worth mentioning that the capacity building, trainings and consultancy services can be sometimes very costly for women. Firstly, inviting women to participate in summer courses located in cities has been proved inefficient because women are often unable to leave their responsibilities including long-term and income-generating projects. Secondly, the Israeli checkpoints and the closure of specific areas caused an increase in the commute time for women making traveling costly, tiresome and risky. Thirdly, class trainings are usually presented by male trainers which makes it uncomfortable for the target group. Besides, some group trainings for women are considered inefficient especially if the provided material is irrelevant.

Asala's approach of Capacity Building

After listening to the needs of the trained women, Asala has launched the capacity-building program and created a team of trainers composed of 24 female trainers from the West Bank and Gaza Strip who are degree-holders in economics, accounting, marketing and other relevant fields. These trainers were intensively trained to give trainings to other women. Asala has also heavily invested in these female trainers so they can effectively provide trainings in villages, refugee camps and cities. The training courses are provided to small groups of women (ranging between 8-15 women) in areas near their residence and work places so they can easily attend the courses.

The female entrepreneurs among the trained women are equipped with the necessary skills and abilities offered by Asala female trainers so they can start and manage their own income-generating business projects. The trainers provide individual consultancy and training for women to have a successful and convenient follow up on their projects. Since July Asala has conducted more than 804 training courses for 9648 women. A significant number of men have also benefited from trainings on gender concepts since the beginning of the capacity-building program in 2008.

Training Methods:

Asala is currently working to provide the following training courses:

- Project-management, marketing and finance Training: This training course covers the practical and strategic needs of rural women concerning project-management and the advancement of management skills.
- Skills development: This training course is tailored to provide practical and modern training for women in food production, livestock ranching, sewing, knitting, soap making and other skills.
- Gender concepts: This training course addresses issues related to the distribution of gender roles and tackles gender equality at work, society, home, women in media and gender-based violence in Palestine. The purpose of this course is to help women to manage their personal life and their business projects. It also enables women to overcome the challenges and obstacles stemming from the cultural norms and social stereotypes in their communities. This training course targets both women and men to bring about social changes.
 - Economic and social rights: This training course includes a preview on policies, procedures and legislation related to achievements in terms of women's development and the implementation of these achievements. This training session contributes to raise women's awareness on legal issues and rights in order for women to recognize their rights as an individual and an entrepreneur.
 - Lobbying and advocacy: This training course encompasses around the steps and techniques necessary to launch lobbying and advocacy campaigns which empower women to claim their rights. This training course provides individual and group training for women interested to bring about social changes in their societies.
 - Leadership and communication skills: This training course helps women to learn about the proper and optimal practices for effective leadership and communication at home, work and their community.

Moving forward course: This training course combines gender concepts, project-management methods and marketing techniques to promote women's economic and social empowerment alongside men. Through this training, women were able to develop entrepreneurial skills, to access groups' and institutional support in project development fields.

In this report we will shed the light on Asala's work in the capacity-building program since 2008 and until late 2015 in terms of geographic distribution, training methods and sectors

in which trained women have benefited from. We'll start off by describing the geographic distribution of the trainings within the West Bank and Gaza strip.

Since the establishment of the capacity-building program in 2008 and until late 2015, a large proportion of the training courses was held in the West Bank. In fact, Asala Association has carried out 724 training sessions in the West Bank and 80 training sessions in Gaza Strip.

The following chart illustrates the geographic distribution of the training courses conducted by Asala Association.

Since 2008, "Asala Association" was able to work with (9648 women) from various regions in the Palestinian territories, however the largest share of women was in the West Bank with 8451 women and 1179 women in Gaza Strip. The following chart shows the geographic distribution of the beneficiaries.

Asala's training programs are categorized in three sub-programs and began to work since 2008 such as Project management, marketing and finance, capacity-building services, economic and social fields, social empowerment, a total of 804 training courses allocated as follows:

- Project Management, Marketing and Finance: total of 410 training courses.
- Skills Development (soap, straw, cosmetology, etc.) 230 training sessions.
- Economic fields and social empowerment: 164 training course.

The following chart illustrates the distribution of training programs at Asala Association.

Since 2008 until late 2015, within the capacity-building training program, Asala has offered 230 training courses including cosmetology, sewing, soap making, food production, straw-knitting and copper craft distributed as follows:

Regarding the training program in economic and social empowerment fields, from 2008 until late 2015, Asala has provided, nearly 164 training courses in the fields of (gender concepts, lobbying and advocacy and economic rights) distributed as follows:

Social indicators:

The training programs at Asala Association was founded to help women from all groups , educational levels and residential areas, through a qualified and trained staff specialized in training fields provided by Asala. According to the beneficiaries' given data, the following will describe the participation rate in trainings depending on the level of education.

The participation rate for females whose household-monthly income was less than 1,000 NIS was 39%, women whose household monthly-income ranged between 1000 and 2000 NIS constituted 36% and women whose family income was more than 2000 NIS constituted 16%. The next chart will show the categories and ratios per income.

The Second pillar: Lobbying and advocacy for Economic rights of Palestinian women

The traditional perception of women's work indicates that women must be restricted to staying home or within a family-owned business. However, these types of jobs are usually unpaid and undervalued. It's worth mentioning that employment statistics in countries don't often reflect the real value of women's informal work, such as small business management. Needless to say that some organizational-constraints hinder social and economic empowerment for impoverished women and make it extremely challenging. Therefore impoverished women were unable to access information, institutions and resources necessary to advance living standards for women.

Coming from this standpoint, Asala has worked on lobbying and advocacy campaigns which aim to integrate women into national institutions, acknowledge women's involvement in the Palestinian economic development process and recognize women's right to access resources regardless of their locations. Asala's major campaigns and activities in 2015 will be displayed as follows

Women's Right to Inheritance campaign "My right to inherit".

Women usually face obstacles when trying to develop their economic situation, these obstacles are mostly resulted by some cultural factors that prevent women from making financial profit. This also applies to her "right of inheritance" and "ownership of property". This has urged Asala to eliminate cultural obstacles which impede women from their right to inherit. In 2013, Asala has implemented a widespread awareness-raising campaign about Women's Right to Inheritance to defy the cultural misconceptions of Women's Right to Inheritance. The goal of the campaign is to enforce legislations that guarantee a fair distribution of inheritance and to disregard the old traditional norms, in particular, women's share of inheritance. Asala has signed a national mutual agreement, during the campaign, between the Ministry of Women's affairs, the Islamic courts, ecclesiastical courts, provincial municipal women's organizations and representatives of civil society, to support the campaign. One of the leading campaigns of lobbying and advocacy organized by the Palestinian Businesswomen's Association "Asala" in 2014 is "Women's Right to Inheritance" campaign. These inheritance campaigns began in 2012 with the assistance of scientific support through research, surveys, studies and methods. These campaigns were implemented by the Association at local and regional levels. However, the campaigns activities have continued since the success of the first campaign in 2013 and 2014.

The Sharia court has issued a memorandum of understanding on women's rights to inheritance in 2014 as a result of Asala's campaign. The memorandum stated that it's binding to distribute inheritance showing the size and means of distribution to the heirs before implementing any legal action related to the transfer of ownership included in the inheritance. Furthermore, the inheritance must be distributed four months after the death of the owner until the period of grief is over. The memorandum also included that the woman must be able to know her right of inheritance before making any decision to transfer her share of inheritance to one of the male heirs in the family.

Asala works, in cooperation and partnership with numerous national institutions towards a strategic plan in 2015 and for the coming years to create a department of inheritance at the Ministry of Justice which deals with undertaking executive and regulatory procedures to follow up on limitation of succession and Inheritance procedures in order to protect Palestinian women's rights. In 2015 Asala Association has conducted a number of awareness-raising sessions in the West Banks , attended by 439 women and men in addition to another conference titled with "My right to Inherit" in Ramallah and Al-Bireh. The conference was attended by many local, international governmental and private institutions.

These meetings aim to bring both women and men together to improve their understanding of women's right to inheritance according to the Sharia law, the Palestinian law and the Sharia courts proceedings in Palestine regarding the limitation of succession, types of lands and the real estate proceedings.

The meetings were held by a legitimate judge, an official delegate from Ecclesiastical Court who are specialized in the science of inheritance and divisions of inheritance as well as judges assigned by the Office of the Supreme Judge from all governorates who hold many titles such as Heads of the Sharia courts or the Secretary General of the Sharia Judicial Council. There was a variety of questions and discussions and the meetings were attended by men and women from different 76 villages across the West Bank. The distribution of 439 beneficiaries was as follows:

Southern West Bank: 270 women and men, including Hebron, Bethlehem
Central West Bank: 93 women and men, including Ramallah and Al Bireh
Northern West Bank: 76 women and men, including Nablus

During the field awareness-raising meetings, women who participated in the meetings have significantly outnumbered men. The number of women who headed from their villages in order to participate in the awareness-raising meetings for "My right to inherit" was 324 women. This gives a clear indication that the Palestinian woman is in a dire need to know her economic and social rights and is interested to claim her right as well as to improve her current economic situation. The number of male attendees didn't exceed 115 men who were representatives of governmental and civil society institutions. This has also a positive indication of males' participation in women's activities. Males' presence was missing in the local community for a long amount of time and this proves the necessity of

males' presence in these kinds of meetings because the social norms and traditions usually give men the upper hand when it comes to inheritance-related matters

The following chart illustrates the participation rate between the two genders:

During the campaign of "My Right to Inherit", an evaluation survey has been designed to be filled by the participants. These surveys had a series of questions which were then evaluated and assessed in each governorate separately, and to detect if there is any case of women being deprived of their right of inheritance to be followed through by the partners of the campaign. These questions represent the participants' perspectives in terms of inheritance denial or oppression while distributing the inheritance. The answers were classified in three levels, namely, (very frequently, less frequently, rare) and by reviewing the surveys, the results show that there are many differences in opinions between men and women as the following charts show:

According to the results of the previous charts for 439 participants, it was clear that men's perspectives are different from women's. Some men were not expressively clear that they actually have performed any kind of denial of inheritance among their sisters, mothers or any female member. This explains that women have a wider perception of their own oppression given that they are the right-claimers.

In the honor of March 8th 2015. The second conference titled "My Right to Inherit"

On March 10th 2015, the Palestinian Businesswomen's Association "Asala" held a second conference titled "My Right to Inherit" based in Ramallah and Al-Bireh which came after the first conference (2014) in Hebron. The conference was in partnership with the Ministry of Women's affairs and many Palestinian women's and civil institutions.

The Conference was attended by many governmental and civil society institutions, women's organizations, human rights and international institutions, in addition to the presence of the Legitimate Sharia Judiciary, the Formal Judiciary and the Formal Ecclesiastical Court as well as the presence of national media institutions, different partner-institutions. Some success stories of the inheritance campaign have been presented.

The conference was opened with a welcoming statement for the attendees by the Palestinian Businesswomen's Association "Asala" who emphasized on the continuity of the campaign "My the Right to Inherit " which began in 2012 and the tendency to reach out to all the Palestinian houses in order to raise women's awareness to their inheritance rights including economic and social rights. This stems from the association's role through lobbying and advocacy program to carry out the national objectives that would assert the

importance of women's access to resources for economic and social empowerment and simultaneously to bring about social and economic independence.

The next speech was provided by the Ministry of Women's Affairs which is a strategic partner of "Asala" Association. The ministry asserted that women's right to inheritance is a legitimate right protected by the law and the Sharia, and our role as national institutions is to enforce civil and Sharia law which is an integral part towards the creation of the Palestinian state. Additionally, the existing partnership with Asala Association is very crucial for the completion of the work to achieve gender equality, empowerment and independence for Palestinian women in a country that adheres to social justice.

The conference included a speech by the Supreme Council of the Sharia Courts who is willing to open the doors to the Palestinian Businesswomen Association "Asala". The council cherished the partnership between Asala Association and the Sharia Courts. He also confirmed that it is a valuable partnership due to the fact that Asala Association strives to seek a national, legitimate and legal goal, he added that all national institutions must open the doors to Palestinian institutions in charge of the legal work and the role of human rights especially women's rights. The council affirmed that this right is not a favor granted by anyone but a legitimate right given by god, protected by the law and all of us must collaborate to provide it in a just manner.

The Palestinian Businesswomen Association "Asala" presented a summary of "My Right to Inherit" Campaign and the action steps needed for the coming years. A concluding statement was then made by "Asala" Association which includes the participants' agreed points and some of the outcomes

The participants agreed on the following:

- Denying women's and girls' rights to inheritance, or making any Circumvention to avoid these rights is a violation of god's law and what has been stated by the general international mechanisms and the national ones first and foremost.

- Women's and girls' claims of their rights may cause a clash with their parents, and may shake the family structure in some circumstances. These claims may as well be a motive to inflict physical and psychological damages to women and at the same time might instill women's feelings of deprivation, oppression and persecution which therefore could impact their personal security.
- The conferees have agreed on various courses of actions and outcomes due to the fact that protecting women and girls from the denial of inheritance is a national, civil

and official responsibility that requires consistent and concerted efforts built on the foundation of different activities in order to reach regulatory and legislative measures to guarantee obtaining their full rights without any denial of these rights.

- The conferees believe that women's and girls' access to resources ,more specifically, inheritance rights will be the driving force to advance the humanitarian presence of women and will massively upgrade their status at different levels and sectors. Thus, reinforcing their decision making and participation in local communities. This can ultimately ensure a strong and sustainable development alongside justice and equality.

The collective priorities claimed by women and girls at different activities are legitimate and undividable demands. Moreover, these demands should be the source of guidance for all Palestinians when exercising their roles in order to ultimately reach general regulations and standards that can contribute to economic and social progress in the Palestinian society. These regulations and standards can create a state of balance between the important roles that women and girls are eager to achieve in our modern society on one hand, and the actual status they should hold at various levels and sectors to confront their different rights, on the other hand.

Women's and girls' awareness of their inheritance rights and the mechanisms to attain these rights cannot be accomplished without the development of roles to all Palestinians. This is contingent upon the development of justice and the property protection which is a result of the struggle by various Palestinian feminist groups, legal, social and human rights movements. Therefore, the awareness process of women's rights and adjusting these priorities in parallel with the basis of these rights is considered an essential issue that requires work to ensure women's and girls' access to their different rights focusing on inheritance rights.

Recommendations

Some major and most important recommendations of female and male participants are:

- The need to increase awareness-raising meetings to ensure full participation of women and girls in these meetings.
- The need to increase males' presence and representation in awareness-raising meetings run by clergy men
- The need to guarantee protection for women who decide to claim their rights
- To pressure decision makers in order to distribute inheritance through executive bodies.
- To Raise awareness of formal courts' proceedings
- To invite clerics in mosques and churches to talk about women's inheritance
- To impose Pressure in order to have a compulsory distribution of inheritance.

Some major and most important recommendations of male participants are:

- The need to increase the number of awareness-raising meetings so all women can become involved in the meetings
- The need to raise awareness in the field of non-conflict resolution among sisters and brothers
- The need to continue these types of meetings along with the presence of male reformers in Palestinian villages
- The need to educate women of their rights first and to educate men as well

Cases reported to the Palestinian Businesswomen's Association “Asala”

What distinguishes “My Right to Inherit” Campaign is the effective role of partners of the campaign. For instance, YMCA has a distinctive role by following up with cases that were reported to Asala and through providing qualified female lawyers specialized in inheritance to follow through with cases at the Sharia and the Formal courts as well as offering consultancy. 176 cases in the West Banks have been reported during 2014 and 2015, while 52 cases of them were reported to the YMCA to be followed up by competent lawyers, 89 cases to be consulted by Sharia judges who are active in the field and 35 cases were transferred by “Asala” staff members to competent authorities such as relevant ministries and institutions.

Partners of “My Right to Inherit” Campaign

The Ministry of Women’s Affairs: Played a huge role in the implementation of action plans and through fieldwork collaboration with many communication centers in the West Bank.

Supreme Judge Department: Provided a clarification and advisory information regarding the science of inheritance and the Sharia proceedings through awareness-raising meetings in the field

YMCA: Has an active role in following up with cases that need qualified female lawyers and for Sharia-related cases

Media institutions: Published free-of- charge messages via local radio institutions including (Alfalstiniyah TV, Nisaa FM radio, alfajer TV, Al-Rabe’a FM radio)

Success stories for “My Right to Inherit” Campaign

The success stories varied during the year of 2014. One of the cases is Ms. Z.G, 47 year-old, from South of Hebron who claimed her children’s rights from her husband’s family after it was decided that their share was not more than the piece of the land they built their house on. She claimed her limitation of succession from the Sharia Court and after calculating the financial value of her properties, it turns out that the properties are worth 50,000 JD for

her and her family. This was in addition to several pieces of lands at strategic places in Hebron and not only in the village has she resided in. She was going to continue the court's proceedings until one of her family members asked her to stop the procedures and he will give her and her family their full share.

The real success for (Z.G) is what she has accomplished after acquiring her share. She has established a huge supermarket in the Southern area of Hebron. Moreover, she has bought a freight car and a chickens' farm. This has helped to create a number of job opportunities for her and her children and for many unemployed people in the area.

Ms. (Z.G) encourages all women who hasn't been able to obtain their rights to directly seek the law without hesitation given that their legitimate rights are protected by the law.

“Registering in Chambers of Commerce” Campaign

Asala has launched a campaign to register small businesswomen in the informal labor sector, in particular, the registration of business projects run by women at the Chamber of Commerce. The purpose behind this campaign is to encourage pioneer female entrepreneurs to formally register their projects in order to reinforce their formal presence in the private sector institutions. This can be the first stepping stone towards developing women's role and participation in the decision-making and policy-making process. Asala has worked in partnership with the General Union of Palestinian chambers of Commerce which managed to enforce new procedures that support the registration of small businesses in local Chambers of Commerce and led to a decrease in requests related to the projects' capital as well as the reduction of registration fees from 120 to 20 JD. Furthermore, the campaign has reduced the number of registration documents, this proves that there is a pursuit for projects to be registered.

Asala has then run a national campaign with the participation of Chambers of Commerce to encourage businesswomen to register their projects in the Chamber of Commerce. This has increased the registration rate of projects by women in the West Bank by % 56 in two years only. While the rate of small businesses was % 14 (among the registration rate of businesswomen who have registered in the Chamber of Commerce). This result has been a historical moment for the Chambers of Commerce in which Asala's campaign was able to access places where the Chamber of Commerce has never witnessed any registration in.

Since the implementation of the campaign, Asala has been working to establish and build few gender units in local Chambers of Commerce responsible for providing services to female entrepreneurs. Asala has also trained female employees to acknowledge the limitations that female entrepreneurs encounter, in order for Asala to offer consultancy and trainings on the access points in the marketplaces. In addition to assisting trainees to fulfill other needs mentioned by the female entrepreneurs who are registered in the Chambers of Commerce.

Asala persists to continue its partnership with the General Union of Palestinian Chambers of Commerce within all areas in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, to promote social and

economic status of women in local Chambers of Commerce and in the entire community as well.

The activities and results in 2015 of “The registration in the Chambers of Commerce” Campaign

Signing a new Memorandum of Understanding

Asala and the General Union of Chambers of Commerce celebrate the achievements of the partnership and signing a new Memorandum of Understanding.

Under the auspices of the Ministry of National Economy, the Palestinian Businesswomen Association “Asala” and the General Union of Palestinian Chambers of Commerce have celebrated the achievements of the current partnership for three years. This event took place on Tuesday 17.02.2015 in Ramallah and Al-Bireh

Ms. Raja’ Al-Rantisi (The chairperson), Ms. Reem Al-Aboushi (The Executive Director of Asala Association) and Asala’s the staff members. Mr. Khalil Rzeq (The president of the Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Ramallah and Al-Bireh) and Mr. Jamal Jawabra (The Secretary-General of the General Union of Chambers of Commerce) representatives of the Chamber of Commerce. In addition to many directors and Presidents at The Chambers of Commerce in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Ms. Raja’ Al-Rantisi opened the meeting in a welcoming speech and thanked the attendees from all the Palestinian Governorates including the representatives of the Palestinian chambers of commerce, governmental and women’s institutions, civil society and international organizations. Ms. Rantisi has provided an overview on the “Registering in The Chambers of Commerce” Campaign since it began in 2012, and the significance of registering businesswomen in the Chambers of Commerce which could empower women in the economic field. She also shed the light on the communal fieldwork to raise women’s awareness towards registering in the Chambers of Commerce and the importance of the established gender units. Moreover, Ms. Rantisi has asserted the important cooperation between the Chambers of Commerce and Asala Association. Ms. Rantisi also mentioned that there will be a mutual plan between the two parties in 2015.

Mr. Khalil Rizek (The president of the Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Ramallah and Al Bireh) gave a speech and praised the joint efforts between the Chambers of Commerce and Asala Association over the past three years. He particularly mentioned the significance of females’ presence in the Chambers of Commerce so they can join Boards of Directors in the near future. Mr. Rizek pointed out that women and men are equal exactly as the two pillars which are considered the primary structure of the Palestinian State. He also urged to support the local products and to boycott Israeli goods.

The Deputy Prime Minister of The National Economy Ministry Dr. “Mohamed Mustafa” and Mr. “Ihab Al-Hajj” gave a speech demonstrating the eligible rights of women to access the the Chambers of Commerce so they can benefit from all the services that can develop their

small projects and to be able to enter the marketplace through local products. He also confirmed that the Ministry will provide everything needed for women with small business projects in order to access the formal sectors.

One of the major events at the ceremony was signing a new Memorandum of Understanding. The scripts includes some old texts related to lowering the registration fees, the amount of registration documents and the project's capital. Additionally, the campaign has covered all the chambers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The memorandum was signed by the two parties during the ceremony.

Ms. "Asmahan Barageth" who is registered in the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Southern Hebron has shared her success story during the ceremony. She began her speech by saying that her dream has come true through registering in the Chamber of Commerce. She then explained to the audience the process of beginning her project in 2012 and how it has gradually developed through the registration into the Chamber of Commerce. Her story has been published at Asala's Facebook page and official Website.

A brief presentation was displayed during the ceremony on the important achievements made during the time of partnership. This includes an increase of enrollees in the Chamber of Commerce by % 30 out of 2600 members, and the participation of 230 women in exhibitions and bazars held by both parties during the time of partnership. Not to mention that 1500 women have benefited from the field training courses in the areas of project management, gender-related issues, lobbying and advocacy, as well as many other training courses for women and officials at the gender units. The presentation also showed some future business activities in 2015 including "Lobbying and Advocacy" Campaign which calls for women's involvement in elections and Board of Directors as well as future campaigns and trainings to be implemented in 2015.

The ceremony was attended by different Palestinian and international institutions such as the Ministry of women's affairs, the Ministry of planning, Ministry of labor, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Finance, The National Committee for Women's Employment and a number of women's and human rights institutions such as the Canadian Representative office, Netherland's Representative Office, Switzerland's Representative Office and the Australian's Representative Office as well as several relevant institutions.

An increase in the number of the enrollees in The Chamber of Commerce:

In 2015 there has been a prominent increase in the number of businesswomen enrolled in The Chambers of Commerce, amounted to 2978 women after the number was 2668 in 2014. The following chart shows the increase since the beginning of the campaign in 2012 until the end of 2015

Asala and the General Union of Chambers of Commerce have established three new gender units

Asala Association in partnership with the General Union of Chambers of Commerce have established new three gender units in the Chambers of Commerce (Tubas, Qalqiliya, and Southern Hebron). Asala has contributed in the mentioned chambers by providing different proportions of salaries for each gender unit which helped the units to cover the rest of the salary. This has helped the gender units to sustain their work in the Chamber of Commerce.

The gender unit's mission focuses on facilitating transactions for registered women in the Chamber of Commerce. In addition, they provide the necessary services for trainings, exhibitions, bazars and other relevant services. The gender units are preparing strategic plans in cooperation with the General Union of Chambers of Commerce and Asala Association to meet women's need-based goals.

Capacity building- Asala staff

Titled "Licensing and registering economic enterprises in Palestine"

In 2015, Asala Association, in cooperation with the General Union of Chambers of Commerce, has conducted eight training courses within the fields of licensing and registering small businesses in Palestine. The training courses targeted all Chambers of Commerce in the West Bank which are 13 Chambers of Commerce besides the General Union of Chamber of Commerce staff members based in (Jenin, Tubas, Nablus, Tulkarem, Hebron, Bethlehem, Southern Hebron, Northern Hebron, Qalqilyah, Ramallah, Jerusalem, Jericho, Salfit and the General Union)

The Directors of Chamber of Commerce, the staff members, public-relations employees and female employees at the gender units took a part in the training to provide services for members and attendees and to register the members. The goal of the training was to introduce the trainees to the main registration and licensing procedures for small and medium-sized business projects, which comes in the light of having various governmental-licensing bodies and different registration fees. However, any of the mentioned business project can be individual or a company project.

If the project is individual, then there is a number of licenses that must be obtained for the project to begin, mostly the registration license in the commercial record and "Trades and industries" license. Whereas, if the project is a company project, it can have many forms. The company project can be a regular one that takes a family form or can be a private shareholding project which is often a family-owned project. While the projects that focus on collecting money are considered public shareholding companies. However, due to the variety of project types for economic projects, the training emphasizes on developing the

capabilities of the Chambers' staff members so they can provide services to the members, more specifically, the female owners of small and medium-sized business projects.

The training material has included an in-depth overview of the registration and licensing procedures, as well as a wide range of registration references. This is due to the complexity of licensing procedures in Palestine and the abundance of legal requirements in registration and licensing along with several agencies in charge, the lack of coordination among them, the different fees for and the prolonged time in obtaining the license to begin the project. In addition to the other licensing procedures such as (The registration fees for a company or a factory , the fees paid to the Ministry of Economy and Civil Defense, importation fees , specifications and standards, fees paid to the Ministry of Local Government, Agricultural licenses, fees paid to the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Health, and others), besides, the duplication of licenses especially The Trade and industries license and the profession-practicing license .However, both of the licenses' fees are paid to the local authority. It's crucial to build a one unified window to avoid the duplication of licensing, the different kinds of fees and the prolonged periods of time to obtain the license. Implementing these steps would contribute to promoting investment, encourage business owners to register and avoid the informal sector in addition to the importance of the commercial record to the individual and the economic project as well as the importance of the trade name to the project (company-type projects). Different types of business companies have been addressed according to how they're categorized in the law and the characteristics of each type, in addition to the mechanisms and policies of integrating gender units in the Chamber of Commerce and the private sector, coupled with the promotion and empowerment of female entrepreneurs' roles in the economic field.

The most prominent outcomes of the training was a significant increase in the trainees' awareness (as they reported) regarding licensing and registration procedures for small and medium-sized business projects. Through the training, the attendees were more able to instruct members of the General Assembly who are interested to register, particularly businesswomen, on the procedures to follow in licensing and related intellectual rights, as well as the optimal method to register individual and company projects and the transition from irregular to regular project, in particular, projects associated with businesswomen. Therefore, one can say that the training has left a positive influence on trainees and has met the expected results. The trainees have expressed their satisfaction over the training which has developed their skillset and fields of expertise through linking the training to the practical and applicable aspects. The trainees were also hugely interested to register and serve businesswomen to push for the economic empowerment. The training has been presented by Dr. Na'eem Salameh who is an expert in private sector laws.

Recommendations by participants during the exercises:

- To unify the registration procedures in the Chambers of Commerce
- To unify the registration fees in the Chambers of Commerce
- To Promote the role of a unified program in the Chambers of Commerce
- To work on building a unified window for projects' registration
- To eliminate the duplication of fees and licenses especially the Trade and Industries Licenses and the Profession-practicing license
- To strengthen the role of the Chambers in registering the economic projects and the leading role of the Chambers of Commerce in the registration process without any other parties involved
- To apply the principle of mandatory membership at the Chambers in coordination with relevant parties
- To strengthen female entrepreneurs' role and to empower women's economic role at the Chambers and at the private sector
- To increase the number of training sessions for employees in order to develop and increase their competence. Some training topics were claimed by the trainees such as : an intensive training on the regulatory environment of the economic family-owned enterprises and linking them to businesswomen projects, the feasibility study, intensive training on the regulations and the Chambers' system, the quality of services the Chambers can offer to the General Assembly members and businesswomen as well as the intellectual property rights according to the current laws and the importance of these laws to the small and medium-sized enterprises and businesswomen's projects .

Awareness-Raising Meetings for Female and Male Members of the Chambers of Commerce

The Palestinian Businesswomen Association "Asala", in cooperation with the General Union of Chambers of Commerce, has conducted eight central awareness-raising meetings at eight Chambers in the West Bank. The purpose of the meetings was to clarify the objectives and the role that Chambers of Commerce play in the Palestinian economy. The meetings discussed some key topics that concerned female and male members of the Chamber of Commerce. Some of the major topics are:

The legislative authority of the Chambers' main work stream, major decisions and regulations related to the aim of the Chambers' establishment, the objectives of the General Union and the Chambers of Commerce as well. Furthermore, an illustration of the Chambers' missions which include the Chambers' representation among official bodies, the consideration of members' interests and the proposals provided related to the legislations

The awareness-raising meetings tackled Chambers of Commerce's' fields of specialties in terms of serving their members and the organizational role it plays towards strengthening the local economy. The meetings incorporate a detailed explanation of the Chamber's Affiliation Law which states that every person who practices any business or any industrial

activity and has a head office, a subsidiary, or an agency within any field related to Chamber of Commerce, has to affiliate to the Chamber and pay the affiliation fees in accordance to the Chambers' system of laws.

The awareness-raising meetings managed to explain the services delivered by the Chambers of Commerce for all members depending on the level and the terms of registration for women with small businesses. Furthermore, the meetings demonstrated the mutual agreement between Asala Association and the General Union of the Chambers of Commerce.

In another context, the awareness-raising meetings emphasized on gender concepts, the creation of the legal formula and the crucial role it plays to provide services for women, its main objectives according to the Chambers of Commerce's and the Union's vision as well as its important role at different levels such as programmatic, procedural and grassroots levels.

Nearly 250 female and male members of the Chambers of Commerce gained the benefits of this training in Chambers located in (Ramallah, Hebron, Jenin, Tubas, Qalqelyih, Northern Hebron, Southern Hebron and Salfit)

Success stories for “registering in the Chambers of Commerce” Campaign

The registration process in the Chambers of Commerce for businesswomen with small business projects is a transformational step for women at personal and developmental level. There are numerous success stories for this campaign. The following are some of the chosen stories for 2015:

Shebliyeh Awawdeh: The Chamber of Commerce has developed my talent and I aspire to be a member of the Board of Directors

Shibliyeh Awawdeh (22 years old) is originally from Dier Dibwan village based in the East of Ramallah. She suffers some hearing and speech problems. Ms. Awadeh has some skills such as drawing on wax papers, drawing on woods and pottery. She started working on her skills two years when she was selling her products to some friends and neighbors. Her income was \$200 per month.

Since the awareness-raising meeting in 2015 conducted by Asala Association in cooperation with the Chambers of Commerce in Ramallah and Al-Bireh, Ms. Shalabiyeh was encouraged to register. Nevertheless, in less than a year she was involved in seven consecutive exhibitions, met new people and friends. This has increased the demand on her products and her income.

Moreover, Ms. Awawdeh has also took a part in many training sessions and meetings held by the Chamber of Commerce. This has substantially developed her personality and supported her psychologically. She believes that this has tremendously helped her to make

some changes at personal level. She regularly meets the Chamber of Commerce members and engages in work she loves. Because of this, her monthly income has exceeded \$1200.

This change draws a smile on her face and inspires her to become a member of Chambers of Commerce's Board of directors (for Ramallah and Al-Bireh)

Maram Faradneh: "I gained my skills by myself and I can teach them to others"

Maram Faradneh (24 years old) has a skill of a handmade art for designing and creating accessories and handicrafts. She acquired this skill through her love and consistent practice of the handicrafts, in addition to her persistence and patience which made her work look more appealing. She began working on her project by selling the handmade products to her friends and neighbors. She registered in the Chambers of Commerce (Ramallah) in 2015, during her involvement at the awareness-raising meeting at Asala Association,

Maram says: "My monthly income has never exceeded \$ 350, but after I registered in the Chambers of Commerce and got involved in many bazars, exhibitions and training sessions such as marketing and finance, my average income has increased to 1100 per month"

Maram aspires to be involved in international exhibitions and to acquire more skills.

Helana abu Sharifeh: From a room in the house to a huge toys store

Ms. Helana Abu Sharefieh: 32-year-old, from Tulkarem began working in her house with a budget of \$ 2000 which she borrows from her friend. She emptied out one of her house rooms to sell out kids' toys. Ms. Sharefieh has encountered a great deal of challenges in promoting and marketing her products. However, in 2015 she registered in the Chamber of Commerce in Tulkarem through attending an awareness-raising meeting held by Asala Association. She was successfully able to register and become an effective member of the Chamber due to the simple registration process.

Through engaging in exhibitions, bazars, financial and marketing trainings as well as networking with traders at the Chamber. Ms. Abu Shareifa has been successful to possess two small shops next to her house. Moreover, through her continuous work and connection with the Chamber of Commerce and Asala Association, she has now four large stores where she sells children's products.

Since having a budget of more than \$1500, Helana seeks to build a huge manufacture of children's toys in Palestine.

Media campaigns- "Registering Businesswomen in the Chambers of Commerce" Campaign:

Radio-commercials Campaign

The Palestinian businesswomen Association "Asala" has broadcasted 600 radio commercials to advertise "Registering in the Chambers of Commerce" campaign

Radio and TV channels	Type/ Number of interviews
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TV- commercials Campaign

Palestine TV and Al-falstiniah TV have broadcasted 300 TV commercials produced by Asala Association during 2015 to invite women with small businesses to register in the Palestinian Chambers of Commerce

Publications

Asala Association has designed and issued 5000 brochures on the services delivered by the Chambers of Commerce, the registration-related policies, the Chambers of Commerce’s regulations and policies as well as the role of the gender units at the Chambers of Commerce. In addition, Asala Association has produced 2000 brochures which contain information about the registration procedures, the importance of the registration in the Chambers of commerce as well as 30 roll-ups used in the awareness-raising meetings.

Media coverage in supporting “Lobbying and Advocacy” Campaigns

Social media websites are considered to be one of the most influential tools in the “Lobbying and Advocacy” Campaign besides being the fastest way to deliver information.

Facebook

Facebook is the first social media website and the most widespread in the world especially in the Arab world and the Palestinian society. Asala Association has utilized Facebook to post all the activities and campaigns within the frame of lobbying and advocacy since the number of Facebook followers at Asala’s page has been nearly 40,000. Using Facebook website has contributed to convey the message in a faster manner. Moreover, it has helped the Association to respond to all sent queries and questions to be followed up regularly

Twitter

In 2014, Asala Association has created an official Twitter page which was helpful to communicate with internet users -not necessarily women. Twitter is considered a fundamental tool in terms of delivering messages for decision-makers and pioneer female entrepreneurs who are interested in lobbying, advocacy and marketing.

News stories and reports in audio media:

Asala takes into account all the necessary methods to deliver the intended message and to achieve the desired objectives. Media is considered by Asala an essential tool for the complementation of lobbying and advocacy strategies. Media has been well used in 2014 across Palestine and the Arab world as follows:

Al-falstiniah TV	A number of interviews on “My Right to Inherit” Campaign
A-lfalstiniah TV	A report on “ “Registering in Chambers of Commerce” Campaign
Ma’an TV	A number of interviews on “Registering in Chambers of Commerce” Campaign
Ma’an TV	A number of Interviews on “My Right to Inherit” Campaign
Palestine TV	A report on “My Right to Inherit” Campaign
Palestine TV	A report on “Asala” Association in a TV program and in a newscast
Alfajer TV (Tulkarem)	A report on “My Right to Inherit” Campaign in Tulkarem
Sheraa’ TV	A report on “My Right to Inherit” Campaign in Tulkarem
Kolalnas TV	A report on “My Right to Inherit” Campaign in Tulkarem
Ro’ya TV	A report on a conference held about “My Right to Inherit” Campaign
Voice of Palestine FM - Ramallah	A radio interview on Women’s International Day
Ajyal Radio- Ramallah	6 interviews in the morning program on Women’s International Day
24 FM Radio	A radio interview on Women’s international Day
Nisaa FM - Ramallah	4 various radio interviews
Raya FM- Ramallah	A radio interview on Asala’s activities
Al-Rabe’a FM- Hebron	2 interviews on Asala’s activities
Marah FM - Hebron	An Interview on “Women’s Right to Inheritance” Campaign
Tariq Al-Mahabe Radio- Nablus	An Interview on Women’s International Day
Dahriya Radio - Hebron	A report on the registration in the Chambers of Commerce
Al-Balad Radio-Jenin	An Interview on Women’s International Day
Bethlehem Radio 2000	An Interview on Women’s International Day
Al-Quds Educational TV	An interview on Asala’s activities

News and reports in local Audio media

Local newspapers and news agencies	Time of the message's announcement
Al Quds	13
Al Ayyam	9
Al Haya Al Jadida	6
Wafa news agency	7
Mann news agency	9
Palestine network	5
Dunia al Watan	4
Shasha news	6
Watan news agency	7
Panet webpage	3
PNN	7
Dunia al Watan	9

The Third Pillar: Promoting and supporting women's access to the marketplace

The Palestinian female owners of business projects and welfare associations face different levels of informality, incompetent collaborative work, and low productivity, high production cost, lack of opportunities to access information and skills, limited creative capabilities, weak infrastructure for competition and trade, market instability, absence of reliable market database, high transaction fees in addition to the cultural, legal and psychological obstacles. Asala Association's intervention in the capacity-building domain has a slight impact if these obstacles are not completely removed. Thus, Asala Association is working on various projects to ensure a full access of women to the local, regional and sometimes international markets.

Business Clubs

In 2008 Asala has established Business Clubs where women entrepreneurs could meet with women who seek to start the own small businesses. The responsibilities of the Business Clubs include providing a convenient venue and atmosphere that enable women to meet, exchange experiences, discuss business projects, purchase goods with the wholesale price and obtain support from competent women who can train female entrepreneurs within their places of residence. These clubs have been structured to work as welfare associations. Asala Association has been constantly working with these clubs and with different women's associations to offer consultancy for women and provide marketing opportunities for their products.

Exhibitions and Bazars:

Asala association has organized many exhibitions to help women increase their sales throughout linking businesswomen with wholesalers. Given the strong connection between Asala association and many Palestinian institutions, Asala has invited a number of females who have benefited from Asala's services to participate in exhibitions of local products. Through these exhibitions, Asala has trained women to advance their understanding of the value chain, pricing and marketing mechanisms. Below are the major exhibitions in 2015:

Exhibition titled "Support the Palestinian products of women"

Under the auspices of her Excellency, the Minister of the Palestinian National Economy, Ms. Abeer Odeh, the Palestinian Businesswomen Association "Asala" held an exhibition titled "Support the Palestinian products of women" during 2015 held at Movenpick Hotel in Ramallah and Al-Bireh. The exhibition was attended by her Excellency, the Minister, the Deputy of the Ministry of Women Mr. Bassam Al-Khateeb, the Chairperson of Asala Association Ms. Raja' Al-Rantisi, the Cultural attaché of the US Consulate General Ms. Robin Solomon, the executive manager of Asala for Credit and Development Company Ms. Reem Al-Aboushi, the Chairman of the General Union of Chambers of Commerce Mr. Khalil Rezeq, as well as a number of governmental and women's NGOs and representatives of several embassies in Palestine.

The ceremony was opened by Ms. Raja' Al-Rantisi who welcomed the audience and presented a precise explanation of the project, the importance of the exhibition and the main welfare associations involved. Ms. Rantisi has addressed the primary challenges women face in places where welfare associations are located such as Kufr Laqif village, Jalbon, Al-Naqourah and Marda'. Most importantly, Ms. Rantisi stated the difficulties

imposed on Palestinian by the ongoing Israeli occupation and the apartheid wall which has crossed over many agricultural lands and farms.

The exhibition has directly targeted 100 female beneficiaries and 450 of their family members. Ms. Raja' Rantisi has stressed the need to support local products made by Palestinian women which can enlarge the local products' share in the Palestinian market. She also highlighted the need to integrate products made by women into the national strategic plan of exportation which claims an annual increase of exports by 13%.

On the other hand, Ms. Raja' thanked all people who took part in the success of this exhibition and who supported Asala Association. She began by thanking women who endure difficulties to produce high quality products. She also thanked New Farm Company which took a full responsibility to train women on quality standards to generate a product to be sold in local and global markets simultaneously.

In the same context, her Excellency, the Minister of the National Economy, Ms. Abeer Odeh stated on behalf of Mr. Rami Al-Hamdallah -the Prime Minister of the Palestinian National Authority- saying "I kindly extend my greetings and congratulations to the members of civil and public organizations and a number of investors and donors involved in this national and economic event. Not to forget, Asala Association who has honored me with the opening of this exhibition which reflects the Palestinian willpower and solid determination to develop our economy despite all hardships".

Ms. Odeh has also emphasized on the fact that women's empowerment and active economic participation is one of the main objectives for economic development which the donor countries seek to achieve. She added that there is a close connection between women's contribution in social development, economic involvement and promoting her capabilities on one hand, and the economic development on the other hand. Because women are considered as half of the society, therefore, no society will be able to achieve sustainable development without its other half and without the full exploitation of the human resources. The ceremony ended with the cutting of the ribbon by the Minister of The National Economy, and a tour for participants inside the exhibition.

On the sidelines of the ceremony which was conducted by "Asala" Association in February 2015, and in cooperation with the General Union of Palestinian Chambers of Commerce in Ramallah and Al-Bireh, an exhibition for The Chamber of Commerce's female members was organized at the reception hall of the Movenpick Hotel exhibition.

A number of women were involved in the exhibition from all over the West Bank with different products. The amount of sales varied differently, the least amount of sales was 1340 NIS and the highest was 1850 NIS. The exhibition had a duration of three hours including the reception and the implementation part which was considered a great success for women.

The audience of the exhibition included a number of presidents and directors of the Chambers of Commerce, as well as a number of representatives from governmental, private and international organizations.

Partnerships with the private sector:

In partnership with New Farm Company (which holds 22000 IOS and is a Fair Trade certified company) Asala has presented high level trainings on quality assurance for women's welfare associations. The New Farm Company has not only trained women but rather help them to determine the products with values. New Farm Company has also signed contracts with a number of welfare associations to purchase a large amounts of products made by women and sell them in local, regional and global markets.

Since the beginning of the partnership, Asala association has carried out many projects and activities, mostly training sessions for women on food manufacturing and has signed agreements with local traders, women's associations and the New Farm Company. As a result it has increased the demand on products made by women and facilitated the delivery of these products to the local and international markets.

Training courses with New Farm Company

The Palestinian Association for businesswomen "Asala" has conducted numerous training sessions in cooperation with the Al-Jalboon Association, Murda and Al-Naqorah business club. The trainings discussed the following topics:

- Training on pickling, in particular, making Makdous (tangy eggplants stuffed with walnuts, red pepper, garlic, olive oil and salt) and cucumbers: The training took place in Al-Naqourah business club. The goal of the training is to teach women on the proper methods to produce pickles, storage methods, expiration dates, the description label and the common practices and mistakes while making pickles especially when dealing with salt concentration.
- Training on making Maftool and Frikeh (Arabic food): The training took place in Al-Jalbon Welfare Association. The goal of the training is to teach women on the proper methods to produce Maftool in line with The New Farm international standards and national standards. The training covers the testing methods of raw materials, storage methods problems
- Training on the production of Tomato sauce: The training took place in Kufr Laqaf association. The main objective of the training is to raise the quality of the product, how to fix the products' defects, to reduce costs, information about the description labels and how to extend the expiration date

- Training on making Shatta (Hot sauce) and pomegranate molasses: The training on the production of Shatta took place in Murda Welfare Association. The main goal of the training is to teach women the proper and healthy mechanisms of producing a high-quality Shatta in line with the regular standards as well as the techniques on adding salt

The aim of the exercises in general is to improve the skillset of the trainees in producing specific products, how to raise the products' quality and to reduce the costs through within the frame of the following points:

- Identify the proper and healthy methods of food production
- Introduce trainees to the manufacturing standards of vegetables and grains
- Teach trainees on how to use the imported equipment of the Association (Rivera Cato meter and the acidity scale)
- Introduce the trainees to the products' expiration date
- Introduce trainees to the description label for each product
- Introduce trainees to the production methods which are subject to the local and international standards
- Teach trainees on how to calculate the natural value of the products
- Introduce trainees on the pasteurization and sterilization methods

A success story

Shadia: Moving from “the kitchen” is not a shame, and Asala helped us to break free

Behind every successful women is a hidden story and each story has a beautiful combination of patience, determination and persistence. Most women made their success by their own hands where the Palestinian Businesswomen Association has stood beside them with each step taken.

Shadia Abu Hashish (from Al-Naqourah village) is one of these pioneering entrepreneurs who have climbed the ladder of success step by step. She said that the most significant achievement she made as a woman in her village is to overcome the barrier of “shame” which society imposed on women. She added, “Woman’s stereotypical role in my village is associated with cooking and cleaning”. We began the idea of our project by making, packing and selling lemon juice in addition to many other food products. Yet, after the implementation process has started, there has been a structural change on the way women are perceived in my society.

Shadia continues: “Since the establishment of the Business Club in 2010, Asala Association has supported us with each step. One of the major difficulties we had to face was marketing the products. Asala has helped us with food manufacturing through providing training in line to international standards as well as trainings on packaging, project management and many other trainings which have developed our capabilities”.

With regard to marketing, we participated in many of Asala's local and international exhibitions which enormously helped us in networking with many local traders. Besides, the agreement we signed with New Farm Company has guaranteed the continuity of our products' demand such as the lemon juice and the jams.

Shadia says: "the female beneficiaries of the business club has exceeded 50 female members including women who work in part and full time. During peak hours, the number has reached 70 women". The credit of this work effort goes directly to women and indirectly to their families. Since the work has been developed with some added quality, a special center was built in Al-Naqourah village. This came after renovating one of the old houses which became the official center of the business club. The center has a training room, a kitchen and a storage room to ensure easy means of communication and a successful work.