



Palestinian Businesswomen's Association  
الجمعية الفلسطينية لصاحبات الأعمال

## Policy paper:

**Increase the representation of Palestinian women  
in non-traditional sectors of work  
Vehicle maintenance sector (cars) as a model**

**December  
2018**

**:Prepared by  
Alaa Abdel-Gawad and Yara Zayed**

The study prepared by Alaa Abdel-Jawad and Yara Zaied, for the Palestinian Businesswomen’s Association “Asala” at the end of 2018, aimed to explore the opportunities for women to get involved in the mechanics & maintenance sector of automobiles. The study was completed through an analytical applied research, which included the private sector, commercial companies, medium car maintenance shops (garages), as well as job creation opportunities for women in this market, with Ramallah being the focal point of the study. The study set several axes to achieve its goal, such as analyzing the importance of women's participation in non-traditional sectors in the West Bank, the possibility of applying a real model in practical reality, in addition to developing a mechanism to ensure the continuity of the practiced model.

The exploratory study suggests that the model is able to create permanent jobs and income opportunities, for approximately 120 female graduates from Palestinian universities and colleges, specifically in the fields & majors of mechanical engineering, mechatronics, and vehicle maintenance. In order to achieve this proposition, the study authors, argue that if women are given a set of trainings related to vehicle maintenance, theoretical and practical, between the corridors of auto companies and medium-sized vehicle maintenance shops (garages), creating permanent job opportunities becomes possible.

The study established two main hypotheses, the first, women are victims of the daily practices of the Israeli occupation, which deprives Palestinians of their natural wealth, movement and production. The second, being the discrimination against women based on gender in occupied Palestine. This deprives women from exercising their political, economic and social rights under the patriarchal system, which created to a gap in the labor market between males and females, in favor of males, where the participation of males is much higher than that of females.

Based on a survey conducted by the Asala Association, 25% of workers in vehicle companies in occupied Palestine are females. Through the survey it was evident that most of the jobs held by women are confined to office work, within sales and marketing departments, with little to none chances of progression. Women are facing the discourse of their patriarchal conservative society, which rejects their work in other circles such as maintenance and vehicle mechanics.

In order to change this perception of discourse, we need to change the existing characters of gender equality (equality based on gender), as well as the stereotypes that exists in society regarding males and females.

A set of tools were used for this study for data collecting, qualitative tools (interviews and focus groups) and quantitative tools (electronic forms). The study was centralized around the automobile sector, as well as, vocational training centers and schools within Ramallah & Al-Bireh province, with the unit of analysis being the Palestinian woman. Interviews and focus groups were conducted with representatives from the Ministry of Labor, career centers and representatives of automobile companies. Regarding the quantitative forms, they were distributed in two stages, stage one was for the surveys, which was distributed randomly to members of the community to measure individuals' attitudes towards the work of women in the vehicle maintenance sector, while stage two targeted workers in rehabilitation centers and vocational schools for a group of institutions such as the Lutheran Federation, Hisham Hijjawi College of Technology, Technical Center for Vehicle Inspection, The Department of Continues Education at Polytechnic University - Hebron, the YMCA (Women Empowerment Program), and the Lutheran School in Ramallah.

Concerning the results of the interviews, a set of fundamental results came out, the most prominent of which was that there are bodies and models that actually support women's tendency to work in the automobile maintenance sector, in addition to having projects targeting this subject that are implemented by The Danish House in Palestine organization. In regards of having a vehicle maintenance center, that is completely managed and operated by women, the focus groups interviews revealed partial disapproval among respondents; yet they did not oppose the idea of the center itself. Respondents presented some proposals that might lead to the success of the idea, with the assertion that there are real challenges that can prevent the realization of it. Once the requirements and experiences necessary for the success of the idea were elaborated, the majority of participants in the focus groups emphasized the importance of gaining experience for those wishing to work in the center, as well as the center being managed by a mechanical engineer, who has extensive experience in order to obtain the best services. The respondents indicated that forming a team of women to run such a center requires at least 5 years of experience in managing it, with no need for the workers to have experience in mechatronics; but they must have sufficient knowledge of simpler matters.

The quantitative analysis was executed in two phases, in the first phase had 1234 respondents (676 females and 558 males), responded to the random sample electronic, when the respondents were asked about their belief regarding women's ability to work in the vehicle sector and market, maintain them, manage their own companies, and diagnose problems related to vehicles and vehicle electricity, 68.31% of the respondents answered that they believe women are capable; while 31.6% think that they are not. 77% of female participants answered yes women are capable; while 61% of male participants answered yes women are capable.

The second phase of the quantitative data collection process, during which 212 questionnaires were distributed to a group of different training and educational institutions and centers, 75 questionnaires were filled out by females, and 137 by males working in these institutions and companies. When respondents were asked whether they think they prefer women to work in diagnosing technical problems of vehicles (electricity, mechanics, etc.), 44% of them answered yes, with no significant difference between males and females according to the gender variable, in terms of percentage. When asked about their position regarding women working in sales, marketing and advertising department, warehouse management, secretarial, coordination, accounting and computers, 95% of respondents agreed that women are able to participate in these departments.

In the second phase, surveys showed that 32% of the respondents encourage the integration of women into the vehicle maintenance profession in vehicle spare parts centers and "garages"; while 68% of them do not encourage it. When asked whether they believe that women can work in the field of vehicle maintenance using traditional methods (diagnosis without a computer), only 26% of them stated that it is possible.

The study concluded with a set of results and recommendations, the most prominent of which was that the idea of establishing a specialized vehicle maintenance center run by women is achievable, which is an interesting idea capable of opening new prospects related to the local community as a step towards the participation of women in non-traditional work. In order for this to be successful, several steps must be taken, including raising community awareness about it, creating a state of balance based on gender, investing in advertising and related media, and utilizing existing expertise in employing women workers and engineers.

The study also recommended the formation of an advisory committee, whose members would help according to their positions and specializations in achieving such goal. The committee would consist of the competent authorities, such as the Palestinian Ministry of Labor and vocational training centers at the intersection with the private sector, and work collectively on preparing trainings according to specific standards, as well as, have complete programs ready for implementation. The study proposes to train 120 individuals (100 females and 20 males) jointly, provided that the work will continue after completing the exercises in a joint way, which will contribute to achieving successes for females with social change in one way or another. The researchers also recommend that a mechanical engineer should be appointed to be responsible for the training center.

To view the full study, please contact us:

Via email: [info@asala-pal.org](mailto:info@asala-pal.org),

Or, via phone number: 02-2413035