



GENDER- BASED ANALYSIS OF SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE MINISTRY OF LABOR: A BENEFICIARY -BASED STUDY

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“Institutionalization of a National Gender- Responsive Budget” Program

MIFTAH publication 2013
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First Translated Edition, English – April 2013
Sponsored by the UN WOMEN



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Earlier editions in Arabic Sponsored by

- NGO Development Center –NDC (2010)



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Foreword:

This study is part of the continuous efforts exerted by the Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy MIFTAH, through the “Institutionalization of a Gender-Responsive Budget” program, through which MIFTAH lobbies with policy and decision-makers at the official level to adopt the best development approach and promote principles of integrity, equality and social justice.

The study is the third in a series of analytical field studies of the services sectors. Conducted in 2011, it constitutes a gender-perspective analysis of the services delivered by the Ministry of Labor as perceived by beneficiaries. This study aims to identify the gender gaps in the services delivered by the Ministry of Labor to men and women, and proposes recommendations that aim at adopting policies that contribute to bridging the gaps functionally within the Ministry and in job opportunities and employment services, and provide a legal framework that safeguards the rights of women in social protection, decent work and union organization.

We hope that this study lays the grounds for a dialogue with official policy and decision makers, and constitutes a resource for researchers, as it comprises a field survey targeting a sample of beneficiaries of the services of the Ministry of Labor in the West Bank.

We express our appreciation to the Ministry of Labor staff for their positive cooperation and for facilitating the researchers’ task. We also thank all directorates for providing the required information and the Gender Unit for all the efforts it made in support of this study.

Lily Feidi
Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
MIFTAH

Preface:

This study explores the conditions at the Ministry of Labor, which has been for a while open and responsive to researchers, scholars and various institutions. The Ministry has welcomed all inquiries and opened all its files to answer all questions. We express our appreciation to such cooperation and positive interaction which we enjoyed during the interviews and the field survey. We also extend our appreciation to all the departments we had visited, particularly, the Gender Unit for the cooperation, coordination, and for facilitating work at the directorates of the Ministry of Labor in various governorates.

Introduction:

As part of “Institutionalization of a Gender-Responsive Budget” program, which aims at raising awareness about gender issues, this study measures the services delivered by the Ministry of Labor (MOL), through its Employment , Cooperatives, Inspection, Vocational Training, and Labor Relations programs, examining their gender-responsiveness, from the perspective of their beneficiaries in various directorates in the West Bank.

The field survey attempts to identify the opinions of both women and men in these services, measuring the level of satisfaction and the efficiency of those services from a gender perspective, i.e. the opinions of women and men separately. The last section in the survey attempts at directly identifying gender trends towards vital and gender-specific issues, such as equality and equal opportunity.

This study is important because it helps identify the level of responsiveness of MOL to the needs of the public and the perception of the public, females and males, of these services, through research, evaluation and constructive criticism, to improve institutions and better serve the Palestinian society, both men and women.

Considering gender issues contributes to improving the quality and efficiency of services delivered to the society, as it takes into account the different needs and potentials. It also helps integrate women in the public domain and treat them as productive humans and major contributors to the society on an equal basis with men. It also helps change the social and institutional trends that marginalize women.

This study identifies the different issues in service delivery pertaining to the labor market and improving livelihoods, which effectively contributes to further integration of women in the labor market, through employment or cooperatives.

Hence MIFTAH was keen to conduct this study and measure the public attitudes and views from a gender-perspective.

The Ministry of Labor from Gender perspective:

In its 2008 Annual Report, the Ministry of Labor (MOL) identified its vision as “a better working environment, an effective labor market and sustainable development “. This vision is enshrined in MOL mission and goals: improving employment opportunities, work environment, and advancing vocational rehabilitation as a tool for developing the labor sector, and ultimately the society.

MOL considers its geographic outreach and the existence of 14 directorates in the West Bank governorates, as well as the qualified and experienced staff as strengths, while it considers the lack of human and financial resources, media and Information technology as weaknesses.

The issue of human resources was raised within the framework of the Gender Audit conducted by MOL in 2010, which concluded that the current MOL staff, just like other Palestinian National Authority (PNA) institutions, had been appointed within the legacy of a gender-neutral policy that has not given women the opportunity to assume central and major positions, hence restricting senior positions to men.

Despite the establishment of a gender unit, as part of the national gender mainstreaming plan to respond to gender equality challenges, the Audit report concluded that these departments were still far from effectively contributing to improved transparency that would contribute to promoting equal opportunities, equality and impacting decision makers.

The following observations were made during our interviews with the relevant departments, Employment, Vocational Training, Labor Relations, Cooperatives, and Inspection:

Most employees are men. For example, in the Inspection Department, only 10 out of 40 inspectors are females. Moreover, there are two aspects to staff weakness in directorates: the number of employees is not sufficient in general, and the number of men exceeds that of women, while some directorates do not have any women employees.

The absence of women from some directorates or programs prevents women from seeking MOL services. It is worth noting that there may be women employees but not necessarily in all programs, which discourages women from seeking the services of programs that lack women employees. This raises a question about the possibility of convert through the study on the mission and goals and how they are implemented on the ground, reflecting gender equality and equal opportunity within MOL, and consequently how this reflects on MOL services to men and women in the society.

The problem of inequality and staff gender distribution is reflected in the perspective towards work and the delivered services. This is obvious in the definition of “unemployed” males and females, as a man is “spontaneously” treated as unemployed, while a woman has to prove her status by submitting official documents, in a series of discrimination. For example, employment programs give priority to men, as the old proverb says, “Men’s work opens a house and protects a woman”. Employment is considered vital for men as family providers, and a mere source of protection for women. Hence, a legitimate question arises about gender concepts and equality among citizens in rights and duties, especially in official institutions. It is worth noting that the Audit report pointed out the male chauvinistic culture that prevailed over MOL structure and work procedures.

The shortage in staff leads to lack of services, which is observed specifically in the Inspection program. Although there are 80,000 establishments in the West Bank, the department has only 40 inspectors, which raises questions about efficiency.

MOL inactivity in the media and in raising awareness about its role and services, in addition to the lack of publications available in its directorates to explain its policies and instructions, sheds doubts about the use of MOL vision, mission and goals. MOL suffers from lack of services and gender-blindness, compounded by the shortage in staff, all of which lead to inadequate services. For example, there are only eight training centers in the West Bank, without consideration to the different sizes or needs of various governorates. Only 3 out of 16 vocational specializations are deemed appropriate and consequently open for women: sewing, beauty care, and secretarial studies, constituting gender inequality in opportunities and specializations, and conforming to a traditional culture that places women in traditional vocations that conform to their reproductive, rather than productive roles. Furthermore, these centers do not provide all specializations, but each center provides some, without any clear rationale for the selection of specializations.

Monitoring violations and inspection are conducted in a manner that does not enable detecting violations against women in the workplace, or against marginalized groups, such as persons with special needs or women, although the Inspection Department indicates that women working in manufacturing suffer from grave violations in working hours, vacations, and wages.

The core MOL service, employment and alleviation of unemployment seems to be its major weakness. While the increasing numbers of job applicants exceeds 6900, MOL is unable to provide any opportunity, except in emergency job-creation programs, which are short-term or temporary. According to MOL 2008 report, the Ministry provided 340 job opportunities only through various mean, an extremely small number compared to the number of applications.

Obviously, MOL is not exerting additional effort to attract women or to sense their issues and needs. MOL suffices to maintain an open-door policy, with no consideration to gender. This is manifested in the absence of policies that encourage women, the fact that most employees are men, and the prevailing male-dominated culture in addressing women needs, particularly in employment.

Methodology:

The study adopted the following research methods:

First: In-depth interviews with heads of different MOL units targeted by the research, to identify the services delivered by each unit separately, the nature of problems and obstacles they face and different accomplishments.

Second: A questionnaire designed to measure the services MOL provides to men and women. The questionnaire identifies the nature of MOL beneficiaries in different directorates, especially the departments in direct contact with the public, namely Employment, Cooperatives, Vocational Training, Labor relations, and Inspection. It also identifies the main reasons for the public to visit MOL and how they heard about its services. More importantly, the questionnaire attempts to identify public perception of MOL services, the extent to which MOL caters to the needs of the public, and whether they consider it feasible to seek MOL services. The study attempts at identifying all these issues from a gender-perspective, i.e. the perspectives of men and women separately. The field research sample design, targeting MOL men and women beneficiaries, considered the following:

- 14 research points in all MOL directorates were selected: Nablus, Jenin, Qalqilyah, Tulkarem, Tubas and Salfit (North West Bank); Ramallah, Jerusalem and Jericho (Center) and Bethlehem and Hebron (Dura and Yatta) (South).
- An equal number of questionnaires was given to each research point, with an average of around 43 respondents in each, which enabled analyzing the findings according to three regions (North, Center, and South) and measuring the movement of beneficiaries at each MOL directorate separately.
- 584 questionnaires were gathered, through regular random sampling towards the beginning of the day. By the middle of the first day, all visitors were surveyed. Since women visit MOL less often, all women were selected to fill the questionnaire.
- Two female researchers worked in every research point: one mainly followed up the interviews and the respondents' sample, while the second field researcher followed up counting the total number of visitors seeking MOL services, and classifying them according to gender and the reason for visit. The questionnaires were filled in three workdays: 02-06/11/2011.

Table 1: Distribution of the sample according to region, gender and purpose of visit

District	Female	Male
Nablus	131	192
Jenin	28	95
Tubas	19	29
Tulkarem	7	24
Salfit	22	44
Qalqilyah	30	149
Jerusalem	29	54
Ramallah	11	59
Jericho	22	51
Bethlehem	22	60
Hebron/ Dura	22	73
Hebron/ Yatta	22	22

The above table indicates that the largest numbers of visitors were in Nablus, Qalqilyah, and Jenin, most severely harmed by the 2002 invasions, during which Jenin and Nablus were besieged, while the Apartheid Wall devastated and isolated Qalqilyah, destroying various job opportunities there, especially in agriculture. The main purpose for visits was to obtain work permits or obtain health insurance because of dire conditions. In the Center (Ramallah, Jerusalem, Jericho), the numbers of visitors were smaller. In Yatta/Hebron, numbers of men and women visitors were equal.

Analysis of the survey and public perception of the Ministry's services:

To understand the public who seek MOL services in various directorates, it is necessary to identify and monitor some of their attributes.

48% of the sample were women, while 52% were men, almost equal to enable comparison and gender-based analysis.

Young women of 18-25 years age group, mostly fresh university and college graduates constituted the largest proportion in the sample (14.7%) compared to (11%) of men only. The sample is concentrated in the 25-45 years age group for both men and women. Individuals are more concerned with job stability to achieve personal stability, get married and have children in this age group. According to The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), the highest rate of married workers fall within this age group. They suffer from dire economic conditions and high unemployment rate; they have young children who are not at a working age, and consequently constitute the neediest group and the largest group that seeks MOL services. The rate decreases with the increase in age, reaching 8.7% for men and women above 55 years of age.

Most female and male respondents (67%), received some education, while holders of higher degrees constitute 11%, indicating that the less educated are in greater need for MOL services. 6% of the sample were illiterate (table 2). This rate is proportionate with the limited Palestinian labor market, which suffers from high competition, in which persons with low education levels cannot compete, and must look for jobs. However, the Table below reveals a problematic relationship between education and the labor market for women. The higher their education, particularly at university levels, the less are their opportunities in the labor market. According to PCBS, unemployment rates among educated women are soaring, which is largely attributed to the linkages between women education and their reproductive role, to which the society gives the priority. Hence, women tend to specialize in education and services that fit their reproductive role, hence increasing supply and suffering from decrease in demand. Women attempt at finding alternatives by seeking different MOL services, including employment services. This explains that 11% of the survey sample were educated women.

Table 2: Distribution of the sample according to level of education and gender

Education	Female	Male	Average
Illiterate	7.5%	6%	3.0%
Literate	3.9%	3.2%	3.5%
Primary	18.2%	21.2%	19.8%
Intermediate	23.9%	31.7%	28.0%
Secondary	27.1%	28.8%	28.0%
Diploma	6.8%	6.1%	6.4%
Bachelor	13.9%	7.4%	10.5%
High Diploma	4%		2%
Masters		1.0%	5%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Unemployment rates exceeded 60% among men and women in the sample, while housewives constituted 63.6% of women. Hence the majority of women are non-working women, and they visit MOL to seek services for women or for men, their husbands. 13.5% were either part-time or full-time working women, which is close to women's share of the labor market according to official statistics. 62% of men work either part-time or full-time jobs, a rate which is also close to men's share of the labor market according to official statistics. The sample, though, does not reveal the nature of jobs, whether in the government or the private sector, though it is assumed that MOL services target workers outside the public sector.

Table 3: Relation to labor force according to gender

Rapport to Work	Female	Male	Average
Full-time worker	9.6%	31.4%	21.1%
Part-time worker	3.9%	30.4%	17.9%
Unemployed	12.5%	29.5%	21.5%
Housewife/cares for the household	63.6%	6%	30.4%
Full-time student	7.9%	1.6%	4.6%
Incapacitated	1.1%	4.5%	2.9%
Unemployed/not seeking a job	1.4%	1.9%	1.7%
Total	100%	100%	100%

The household:

Married individuals constituted 81% of the sample, indicating that most seekers of MOL services have their own families and do not live with parents. The rate of married men is higher than that of women (89% men and 72% women). Adding widows, separated and divorced women, the rate of women increases to 82%. Single women seek MOL services too, constituting around 18% of MOL service seekers.

Table 4: Marital status according to gender

Marital status	Female	Male	Average
Single	17.9%	10.6%	14.0%
Married	72.1%	89.1%	81.1%
Divorced	3.2%	3%	1.7%
Widowed	6.4%		3.0%
Separated	4%		2%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Regarding the household structure, most households (67%) have 4-8 members, with negligible difference between men and women. This rate exceeds the fertility rate in the West Bank, equivalent to 4.1 births. It also exceeds the statistical rates of the 2007 Palestinian Census. The Census revealed an increase in nuclear families of four or less members, interpreted as a tendency in the Palestinian society towards smaller families, while the study reveals that the household members of MOL service seekers exceed four. This means that the higher the number of household members is, the more it needs assistance.

Table 5: Number of household members according to gender

Number of household members	Female	Male	Average
1	2.9%	2.2%	2.5%
2	9.3%	9.0%	9.2%
3	5.7%	7.1%	6.4%
4	11.5%	14.8%	13.2%
5	11.8%	12.9%	12.4%
6	16.1%	13.5%	14.7%
7	15.4%	15.1%	15.3%
8	12.2%	10.9%	11.5%
9	5.0%	6.4%	5.8%
10	4.7%	2.3%	3.4%
11	1.4%	1.9%	1.7%
12	1.1%	1.3%	1.2%
13	2.5%	1.3%	1.9%
14		3%	2%
15		3%	2%
18	4%	6%	5%
	100%	100%	100%

Income and poverty:

2009 PCBS report on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) indicated that poverty rates and gaps have been widening since 2000, whereby the poverty gap reached 9.8% in 2007, while the incomes of 34.5% of the population fell below the national poverty line for the same year, and the incomes of 38.4% of working males and females fell below the poverty line.

Indicator	2006	2007
Rate of population with an income below the national poverty line	30.8	34.5
Average poverty gap	8.5	9.8
Rate of workers with an income below the national poverty line	35.1	38.4

Source: PCBS (2009) - MDGs, statistical report.

These statistics have grave consequences on work indicators and poverty in Palestine, and on the outcome of the study, since poverty gaps and rates are escalating, and even 38.4% of workers are below the national poverty line. This places additional burdens on the government, whereby MOL must contribute to solving this problem, either by

providing job opportunities, or by enacting laws and policies that protect workers, such as employment and minimum wage policies, and unemployment policies that include employment opportunities and social protection, especially that public employees have much higher levels of protection laws and policies than the private sector.

At the same time, the income of most surveyed households is less than 2000 NIS monthly, almost on the poverty line, bearing in mind that the deep poverty line is at 1800 NIS. The sample indicates that those who seek MOL assistance are below the poverty line, since the income of 34.5% is less than 1000 NIS monthly (35% of women), i.e. much lower than the deep poverty line. It seems that women seek MOL assistance after exhausting all other opportunities and attempts to provide for themselves. They resort to MOL after they fail to improve their livelihoods. Hence, MOL constitutes the last resort where they hope to receive assistance.

Single, widowed, divorced and separated women, who provide for themselves and their families, constitute 28%, a high proportion that indicates that women heads of households are the poorest. What kind of assistance do these women need, and is there a significant difference between men and women in receiving the service...

Table 6: Average income according to gender

Average family income (in NIS)	Female	Male	Average
Less than 1000 NIS	35.4%	33.4%	34.3%
1000-1999 NIS	35.4%	32.8%	34.0%
2000-2999 NIS	16.4%	19.0%	17.8%
3000-3999 NIS	7.1%	9.0%	8.1%
Above 4000	5.0%	4.8%	4.9%
I don't know	7%	1.0%	8%
	100%	100%	100%

Sources of income:

Although the numbers of full-time or part-time employees do not exceed 39% of the sample, 69% of the sample receive wages and salaries as sources of income, which means that paid jobs do not constitute the most important source of income for Palestinian households, and that alternatives are available, possibly through official aid, such as the Ministry of Social Affairs, which supports the poorest families, or through allowances paid to the families of martyrs and prisoners. The sample also indicates that a proportion of MOL visitors are students, around 8% of females, which raises a major question about the role of MOL in alleviating poverty, finding job opportunities and providing different forms of support to poor families such as health insurance.

Furthermore, 18% of the Palestinian communities still live in rural areas, where the rate of women working in agriculture amounts to 38.9% of those who are economically active, compared to 12% among men of those who are economically active. The agricultural sector ranks second after the services sector in terms of women employment in the labor market. In the sample, men depended income from agriculture 915.8%) more than women (4.6%). Although dependence on agriculture or on family agricultural or

non agricultural enterprises did not exceed 10.5%, a very small proportion in terms of area, population and the significance of agriculture, the low rate of women who make a living from agriculture is attributed to the fact that women in agriculture work in family-owned land, and such work is considered part of the domestic work. Consequently, many women do not consider it a source of income and a positive contribution to production, but rather support and contribution to the family. Consequently, women do not define their agricultural work as a source of income, and might identify themselves as unemployed or housewives. Finally, the low proportion of persons depending on agriculture as a main source of living in the sample, might be explained by the perception that agriculture provides a “stable” income, and men and women working in agriculture do not seek MOL support. Deeper search may reveal that these women seek the assistance of the Ministry of Agriculture, or receive small loans from small and micro lending institutions. Reports of lending institutions indicate that rural women are recipients of loans for agricultural, livestock or food processing enterprises.

Table7: Sources of income according to gender

The major source of household income according to importance	Female	Male	Average
Family enterprises (agricultural and non agricultural)	4.6%	15.8%	10.5%
Salaries and wages	74.6%	64.0%	69.0%
Remittances (International and internal aids)	9.6%	4.5%	6.9%
Other/ specify	11.1%	15.8%	13.5%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Why do women and men seek the services of the Ministry of Labor?

Analysis of the sample indicated that the persons who seek MOL assistance are the poorest and the least educated. They are mostly unemployed for different reasons, or have part time jobs. Persons with full time jobs constituted fifth of the sample. Regarding women, a good proportion provide for themselves and their families. All these groups of the society seek different MOL services and programs at various directorates. The following table indicates the reasons that lead men and women to go to MOL and reveals statistical discrepancies between men and women:

Table 8: Aim of visit to MOL by beneficiaries

Aim of the visit	Females	Males	Average
To register for job search	15.7%	4.2%	9.6%
To follow up a previous case	4.3%	4.2%	4.2%
To enroll at vocational training		3%	2%
To process a work permit	22.1%	31.2%	26.9%
To process issues related to cooperatives	2.1%	7.1%	4.7%
To seek legal advice	1.1%	2.3%	1.7%
To process labor problems and cases	2.9%	6.4%	4.7%
To process issues related to inspection of work conditions	1.1%	6%	8%
To process registration at public health insurance	45.0%	40.2%	42.5%
Other, select	5.7%	3.5%	4.6%

Cases related to work in Israeli enterprises and health care constituted the largest two reasons for visiting MOL different directorates; 42.5% for health insurance and 26.9% for work permits. Women constituted the higher proportion in health insurance (45% women and 40% men), while men constituted the larger proportion in work permits (31.2% men and 22.1% women). However, these women mostly do not seek work permits for themselves, but rather for their husbands or sons, as indicated in the interviews. Only 9.6% of both men and women seek job opportunities, noting that the rate is higher among women (15.7% women and 4.2% men). Exploring this issue revealed that job seekers prefer obtaining a work permit despite the harder work and the checkpoints, because getting such jobs is faster and wages are higher. While these wages are not commensurate with the Israeli wage scale, yet they are higher than wages in PNA areas or in Palestinian enterprises. This explains the very high rate, given that MOL data shows that there 600,000 unemployed persons. Unfortunately, no job opportunities are available to reduce this number. Meanwhile, MOL tries to resolve the problem partially by computerizing files and linking them to the database of the Ministry of Interior and Population Registry, in an attempt to identify the real number of unemployed persons, according to Inas Kalbouni, Director of Employment Department at MOL, who said, “600,000 persons are registered in the computerized record of the department, most of whom are unemployed. The labor market information system has 600,000 files. There are attempts to coordinate efforts, but in the end there are no job opportunities. It is now part of the computerized system and is linked to the Ministry of Interior and Population Registry”.

MOL service seekers prefer to work in the Israeli labor market, and a low proportion seeks jobs in the local market.

The problem is not only in the small number of women visiting the Employment Department, but also in men, who only go for specific reasons, most notably obtaining work permits and health insurance, the latter occurs generally at the beginning of the

year. According to the MOL, 99,500 free health insurance subscriptions are issued annually, indicating that a wide sector actually needs health insurance, rather than seek jobs. This is expected, since MOL customers are below the poverty line and have very low incomes. Consequently they urgently need health insurance whether they work or not. Health insurance covers whole families and not only individuals, including women and men.

A small proportion of the public seeks MOL vocational training services (0.3%) for example. This may be explained by the timeframe of vocational training, which coincides with the beginning of the school year. During the survey period, there were no training courses activities. The low proportions of seekers of legal advice and labor cases in comparison with seekers of work permits and health insurance, possibly reflect the priorities of men and women as well as their expectations and needs from MOL; Work permits and health insurance constitute their urgent needs.

How the public heard about the various programs of the Ministry of Labor:

Social relations with friends and relatives constituted the first source of information about MOL services. 58.8% of women heard about MOL services from relatives, compared to (38.5%) of men. The second major source of information is friends, especially for men (36.3%), compared to 24.8% of women. The reason is that the majority of women are housewives performing their traditional reproductive role, and their sources of information fall within this circle. This proportion is largely consistent with the fact that most women MOL visitors are housewives.

The rate of those who sought MOL services because of advertisements did not exceed 7.1%, of whom 4.7% only were women. This is a negative indication that means that MOL does not rely on advertisements to promote its services, especially among women, which in turn indicates that MOL does not play its role in raising awareness and empowering female and male workers. This evidently is reflected in the number of women visiting the Ministry, not only to obtain permits for their husbands, which they heard about from circles of friends, but also for other MOL programs. This explains the low demand on Mol services, such as job searches. According to MOL Department of Employment, there are no media programs to attract women. For example, in Hebron directorates, only men seek jobs opportunities. Nevertheless, MOL exerts no efforts in the media or through promotion policies to attract women and provide them with services. In this context the question is whether this stems from poor management or from MOL's inability to provide employment, and it does not promote employment to avoid the dilemma of securing jobs. If the reason is not mismanagement, we did not receive any response in this regard from the Department of Employment. However, the Inspection Unit admitted weakness in awareness campaigns, which are restricted to some posters, brochures, and seminars held upon the request of the management of companies and factories, rather than upon the initiative of the Inspection Unit, or as part of a systemic public awareness campaign, with special focus on women.

Table 9: Sources of information about MOL services according to gender

How did you know about the program	Female	Male	Average
Friends	24.8%	36.2%	30.8%
Relatives	58.8%	38.5%	48.1%
Advertisements	4.7%	9.2%	7.1%
Other	11.7%	16.1%	14.0%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Applicable procedures at the Ministry of Labor:

Different MOL directorates in all the West Bank governorates receive visitors, where there is usually one or more employees at different departments. The majority of men and women, as they indicated, seek health insurance (42%) throughout the year, although it is usually issued at the beginning of the year. This explains the large numbers of visitors, followed by obtaining work permits (27%). These are the main reasons for visiting MOL.

New registrations and updating information constitute together around 40% of the reasons. Health insurance and work permits are the two main activities, since registration and updating information are pre-requisites for applying to all other services. Although the public does not have high expectations from MOL, especially in employment, people still register their information.

Alternately, there are statistically significant discrepancies between men and women in the overall reasons for visiting MOL and the adopted procedures. While for men, getting work permits and registration of cooperatives constitute priorities, employment is a priority for women. This may be attributed to men's preference for work permits which they consider more feasible financially, while women target the local market for employment, and therefore visit MOL with the hope to get such opportunities.

Men are more interested than women in other MOL services, such as solving labor cases, addressing complaints, legal advice counseling and conflict resolution and settlement related to cooperatives although at lower rates compared with other services. It is worth noting that the largest rate of those who said that received none of the MOL services were women not men.

The quality of service delivery and the level of satisfaction:

Regardless of the reasons for men and women to seek MOL services, how do they perceive these services, and do they feel that MOL is the suitable place to request those services, as part of its mission and its institutional and national role? Or are these services provide in a bureaucratic and condescending manner, which create feelings of dissatisfaction and discomfort? In this regard, we will try to explore the subject at several levels, including the place, staff and provided services.

Regarding the place and the system, most respondents expressed their satisfaction (71-73%), particularly with working hours (82%), with no significant discrepancy between men and women.

Regarding availability of information from publications about the provided services, including the advisory services, the rate of satisfaction did not exceed 47% of the respondents, which is consistent with MOL acknowledgement of weakness in media and awareness.

64% of respondents said that the staff and the services they provided were good, which meant that employees listened to their problems, directed and guided them, and efficiently responded to their needs. This proportion is lower than that of satisfaction with the place and the system. The level of satisfaction with the performance of the Ministry decreases regarding treatment and communication, which means that the change and improvement in the premises of directorates does not necessarily mean improved services.

However, there are statistical differences between men and women visitors of directorates, where women expressed less satisfaction than men with the services and information provided. For example, 62% of the women, compared to 72% of the men believe that employees do not give them enough time to listen to their cases and consequently report them properly. This may be explained by the preconception and the dominant cultural belief that women exaggerate in the presentation of reality and rely on elaboration. However, upon scrutiny, we noticed that the majority of employees were men, and women employees were not available in all programs and departments, i.e. provided services. The Inspection Unit for example has around 40 inspectors, of which only 8-10 are women. At the Employment Department, most offices in various departments have no women employees. According to the Employment Department, there is a general administrative problem in some directorates, such as Tubas. Consequently, women may refrain from talking about their work problems and circumstances, or men may not understand the actual needs of women and the importance of different services to them, or their urgent need for work. According to the dominant social culture, and even in the official concepts, men are the family providers, and women's work is not considered a serious or necessary source of income to the family. This is obvious in MOL definition of the unemployed; While it addresses the definition of unemployed men smoothly and normally, it operates under the assumption that women are housewives, and women who apply at MOL for unemployment benefits, for example, are asked to bring certified documents from the head of local council or municipality where they live, verifying that they are unemployed and not housewives. This constitutes a grave discrimination in determining the employed persons and family providers, which in turn reflects on understanding various needs of men and women.

This is reflected in women's evaluation of the nature of treatment at MOL (67% said that it is formal), while 45.3% of men said it is rather friendly. This may be explained by the previously mentioned fact that most employees are men, which enables informal conversations. However, the majority of men and women (98.6%) said that conversations were mostly about the purpose of the visit.

Consequently, a large proportion of women (74%) felt comfortable with treatment during the visit, noting that the rate of comfort was higher among men (78%). Interestingly, 20% of women who gave no opinion about the level of comfort, which contradicts with the statement that visits were formal, friendly with no significant tension (2%), which may constitute grounds to believe that women often do not assess conversations immediately, which made a low proportion of women (3%) feel insecure during the visit.

Public perceptions of services at the Ministry of Labor:

More than half of those seeking MOL services complete the paper work from the first time (57%). Around 29% need mostly two visits to complete their paper work, in a period not exceeding one hour for the majority of men and women, with women served faster. But does speed play a role in men and women perceptions of MOL service provision, or is it irrelevant to evaluating the performance of MOL?

Both men and women largely believe (46%) that getting services is largely associated with favoritism. One third of women seeking vocational rehabilitation services believe so, which is higher than the rate of men. A separate question on vocational rehabilitation was deliberate, as it constitutes free and short-term learning opportunities for groups with lower incomes and lower levels of education, enabling them to find professional jobs. There is competition over this attractive public service.

This belief is reinforced by the divergent opinions in the comparison between the private and public vocational training. Women's opinions are divided over the belief that private centers are better than public centers, and are divided over their desire to access training and rehabilitation through the Ministry or at private rehabilitation centers; women have a stronger feeling and belief than men in the prevalence of favoritism. This may be attributed to the fact that not all public vocational rehabilitation centers have specialized women training courses, and opportunities available for women are less than men. Women are offered sewing and beauty care courses, while men are offered electricity, blacksmithing, carpentry... , which makes a smaller rate of men(19%) than women believe that private vocational rehabilitation centers are better.

A perception of lack of transparency prevails regarding addressing the public's requests. This is also observed in employment services in addition to vocational training. Once again a higher proportion of women (61%) assert that employment opportunities are largely linked to favoritism. However, in employment, the rate of men is close to that of women. The high unemployment rate , the decline of the Israeli labor market, and the PNA failure to provide job opportunities as confirmed by the Department of Employment, are factors that increase the pressing need for work and spread a sense of injustice among men and women, as it affects their daily lives.

The increasing sense of injustice because of favoritism leads to a decrease in the sense of justice and the ability to submit make complaints; only half of the men and women believe they can submit complaints (63.1% men and 51.7% women). Moreover, 30% of the women believe that employees treat men better.

While around 44.6% believe that opportunities are equal and available to all, a large rate of men and women (50%) are skeptical and do not believe that equal opportunity prevails, with no discrepancy between men and women.

62.5% of the men and 54.4% of the women believe that there is always someone available to provide assistance. This belief, prevailing among a slight majority of respondents, may be explained by the sufficient number of employees in various directorates, as MOL reports, and to the small number of female employees, which increases the perception of trust, understanding and distinction among women.

22% of women do not exactly know what MOL does to solve labor problems, or whether labor cases and disputes take time to be resolved, while a small rate (38%) believes

that labor cases and disputes take time and that MOL resolves them. Meanwhile, 45% of men believe that labor union cases and conflicts take time. Actually, labor disputes take time according to the Labor Law. Declaring labor disputes requires procedures, correspondence and negotiations, prior to entering into a labor dispute in which MOL is a party. It should be noted that the majority of most labor unions are men, especially in decision-making positions. Most labor facilities in the West Bank constitute of men or of men and women, with only a few run by women only. It makes sense that men have more appreciation and knowledge of the situation than women. It also makes sense that 22% responded by "I don't know", either because they do not belong to any labor facility or simply because they are not in union decision-making circles within the unions. It is strange, though, that 8% of men do not know, which raises a question on awareness efforts and procedures adopted by MOL and the unions, which seems to be a common weakness among them. This is confirmed by the fact that most respondents learned about Mol services through family and friends, and not through the media and publicity of those services.

Finally, more than half the men (58%) and women (52%) consider MOL procedures clear, while the rest were skeptical, which may be attributed to the poor media and awareness efforts exerted by MOL to introduce the public to its role, functions and goals.

Gender-perspective public assessment of the services of the Ministry of Labor:

First: Opinions of men and women vary towards the difficulties in accessing services, some of which are directly related to the Ministry, while others are related to different individual conditions, females and males, such as the difficulty in access to MOL offices, long waiting hours, lack of services, the absence of employment services, or even the lack of finances to pay for transportation to MOL offices. However, females consider lack of services, particularly employment services a priority, while males consider lack of access to MOL offices their priority.

These problems constitute the actual daily issues of Palestinians men and women in general. Men and women suffer lack of mobility, and distance may not be the decisive factor for dissatisfaction, as MOL offices are located in the cities, and serve cities and the countryside. However, distance is measured by the difficulties that Palestinians face to reach the destination- the Ministry in this case- such as checkpoints and gates at the Apartheid Wall. These factors make access difficult. Only 9.4% of respondents were dissatisfied with the long waiting hours, taking into account that the concept of time is relative, since in a previous question most respondents indicated that paper work does not take more than one hour to be completed.

Women complained more than men about the lack of employment services, which is in line with women's perception towards various issues such as favoritism, treatment of women compared to men, training and employment opportunities all of which are in favor of men.

In light of all that, how do women and men assess their personal experiences at the Ministry, after arriving to MOL offices for receiving different services?

The findings indicated that more than half of the men, based on their personal experience, considered that policies and procedures take into account the realities and needs of the public, that they contribute to promoting equal opportunity between men and women, that they treat men and women with equality, and that information is available at the Ministry to help overcome the difficulties.

On the other hand, less than half of the women (44%) believed that there was equal opportunity for women and men. There is a feeling among women of inequality at different levels, though not in clear and decisive rates.

Second: Women have fewer opportunities than men. This section comprises gender-based evaluation and questions that provide clear results about men and women perceptions of separately. As one group, some differences in perceptions appeared, but rates were close and generally agreed on various issues with rates that exceeded half. However, clear discrepancies appear in the section, which includes separate evaluation of services, particularly on two issues: approval of MOL procedures and treatment, and equal opportunity.

Women believe that men have higher employment opportunities, as only 30% of women believe there is equality, while the rest tend to believe that either there is no equality or that could not assess it. 40% of men believe there is equality. Although more men believe there is equality than women, the rate among men indicates that they do not highly agree over equality. This confirms that men and the Ministry believe that males, not females are the family providers, and that MOL is a representation of the male dominated society in addressing women employment.

Women believe that men have larger opportunity to get training, rehabilitation and capacity development. Only 28% believe there is equality. Only 40% of men believe there is equality.

Women believe that men have larger opportunity to participate in MOL workshops; only 29% of women believe that there is equality. This also reflects the view that workshops, which aim at raising awareness, enhancing employment and knowledge, are needs of the heads of households and the family providers to improve their status, while women are not perceived similarly.

For all the above reasons, women (34%) believe that they have fewer opportunities to register for employment in comparison with men (46%). Moreover, and as mentioned earlier, the definition of an unemployed person does not apply to women except with the certification issued by the chairperson of the local council of her place of residence. Women believe they have fewer opportunities than men to receive assistance. 29% of women only believe they have equal opportunity in comparison with 42% of men. These rates make sense, as MOL provides assistance to the less privileged, i.e. the unemployed, and women in this situation are mostly housewives, as we have seen at the Ministry; the major problem arises when the head of household is unemployed.

Women believe that men have better opportunities in filing complaints, access to decision-makers and treatment by officials at MOL. 41% of men only believe there is equality. The executive summary of the Gender Audit conducted at MOL concluded that men were in decision-making positions, decisions were in favor of men and that in a

world surrounded by men, women view their opportunities to file complaints or to access officials more complicated than opportunities of men.

Women believe that men have more opportunities for movement in between the different MOL offices and directorates. 40% of men only believe that there is equal opportunity of movement. Freedom of movement for women is a major issue in feminist literature and gender studies. Access to services is a main difficulty for women. Women seeking MOL services are no exception, in terms of moving from their places of residency, accessing decision-making circles or moving at directorates, such difficulty in movement and access leads to the result that gives preference to men. This is the women's perception to the issue, and men's perception too, though at a lower rate. Women believe that men are more capable of registering cooperatives, and men agree with them to some extent. This is also linked to resources and access to them. Cooperatives are not loans, but rather property, which is a men's world. Women have difficulty in access to credit from banks, in addition to difficulties in their classification as family providers in official institutions. Things are similar at the Ministry. Hence, women perceive that men have better opportunities than women in obtaining cooperatives assistance.

Regarding the gender-perspective of equal opportunity, the fact that 18-20% of women responded by "I do not know" to the above questions leads us to a different conclusion from those reached at the beginning of the study, about the prevailing culture in the society and in official institutions, which is not favorable to women, allocates different social and productive roles to each sex, and consequently provides them with different rights and access to resources. The situation confuses women, as they live in a conflict between the need for the Ministry's services, and the mainstream in the society, between MOL policies that maintain an open-door policy in its various directorates and programs to both men and women, and invisible and implicit difficulties within policies that deprive her from equal opportunity with men, in a society that considers men the family providers and heads of households, and consequently more eligible for assistance; a society that considers that men's natural place is the public domain, while her place is the private domain. Even when she succeeds in reaching the Ministry, she faces more difficulties in access to services and in treatment at different departments. Such a rate of women who do not know about issues of equal opportunity and equality, requires an in-depth study of invisible gender discrimination. It is not sufficient to have policies that open the doors for both sexes, but the whole structure must be prepared to address both sexes.

Conclusions:

- Women constitute half sample, mostly comprising women and men between 25-45 years of age. The sample also includes a proportion of young single women, with higher levels of education and lower illiteracy rates. The largest proportion of women in the sample were housewives, with limited incomes- close to or even below the poverty line- and large households. Women, and even men have exhausted all possibilities before resorting to the Ministry.
- Most women and men target obtaining a work permit or registering in health insurance. These are vital and fundamental issues for the household. However, a rate of women sought MOL services for employment.
- Family and friends are the primary sources of information, not MOL advertisements or awareness campaigns that publicize their services.
- Priorities of men are cooperatives and work permits, while the women's priority is employment.
- While both women and men express their satisfaction with the place, system and completion of transactions, women are dissatisfied with issues of favoritism and preferential treatment for men, although men do not fully agree with them. The level of satisfaction drops upon addressing services, rather than the place.
- Women do not believe that there is equal opportunity or equality, but that MOL employees contribute to promoting inequality in opportunities and inequality.
- Women believe that men have better opportunities in employment, cooperatives, speedy transactions, movement and access within departments and directorates and staff treatment and understanding.
- MOL structure is currently not qualified to provide services with gender equality; a male-dominated mentality continues to prevail over the treatment of women service seekers, particularly in employment. The number of employees is insufficient and not gender-balanced.
- MOL media efforts are negligible in comparison with the scale of challenges and needs. It has no promotion or media policies targeting women.
- Despite all these problems, MOL and its staff seek to cooperate with various institutions to find the best means to meet various needs and improve their work.

Recommendations:

- To increase the number of employees, focusing on gender diversity in the different departments, by placing a man and a woman in every program.
- To implement a media policy targeting women first, and raise awareness about MOL services, means of access, and necessary procedures to access those services.
- To further clarify MOL gender policy through developing a gender work manual that sets rules and procedures that ensure equal opportunity.
- To adopt gender policies of affirmative action that contribute to bridging the gap at the internal functional level and at the level of service delivery.
- To redefine the services and conditions to obtain them; to re consider the definition of the “unemployed”; eligibility for cooperatives assistance, and to follow-up and inspect the working conditions of women.
- To seek providing more employment opportunities; furthermore, conduct market studies to match supply and demand and make employment efforts more efficient and effective.
- To conduct studies about the public who does not seek MOL services, to identify the reasons and whether they are related to the Ministry or to individuals, in order to address any possible shortcomings.
- To exert more effort on social protection, through providing decent work, union organization and an enabling legal framework.
- To re-consider the Labor Law’s definition of the concept of work.
- To establish labor courts, which contribute to resolving many cases of violation of workers’ rights.

Sources:

- The Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Labor, 2008.
- Population and Employment Statistics; PCBS.
- The Executive Summary of the Gender Audit of the Ministry of Labor.

Annexes:

Annex 1:

Names and specializations at the vocational training centers of the Ministry of Labor

Number	Position Name
1	Vocational Training Center, Beit Jala
2	Vocational Training Center, Beit Our
3	Vocational Training Center, Tulkarem
4	Vocational Training Center, Qalqilyah
5	Vocational Training Center, Jenin
6	Vocational Training Center, Nablus
7	Vocational Training Center, Halhoul
8	Vocational Training Center, Hebron

Professional specializations:

Blacksmithing and aluminum
Plumbing
Turning
Air conditioning and refrigeration
Radio/ Television
General Electricity
Maintenance of office appliances
Auto mechanic
Auto electrician
Auto body repair and painting
Carpentry
Executive secretary
Beauty and hair dressing
Sewing and fashion design
Architectural design
Tiling

Annex 2:

Questionnaire

A gender-perspective survey of recipients of the Ministry of Labor services

Beneficiary's questionnaire

All information in this questionnaire is for statistical purposes only and are not intended for any other purpose					
s1	Questionnaire No.	<input type="checkbox"/>	s4	District:	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
s2	Name of locality	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	s5	Name of center/vocational training center	
s3	Respondent's purpose of visit to the office	1- Employment 2- Vocational training 3- Inspection 4- Cooperatives 5- Other			

Section I: Respondent's social and demographic attributes			
s6	What is your usual place of residence	Name of locality Locality code:	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
s7	Sex	Male Female	<input type="checkbox"/>
s8	Age / years		<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
s9	Level of education	Illiterate Literate Primary Intermediate Secondary Diploma Bachelor Higher Diploma Master Doctorate I do not know	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
s10	Relation to the work force during the past month	Full time Part time Unemployed Full time Housekeeper Full time Student Incapable of work Incapacitated Does not work or seek work	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
s11	Marital status	Single Married Divorced Widower/widow Separated	<input type="checkbox"/>

S12	Number of household members	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
S13	Monthly average income < 1000NIS 1000 - 1999 NIS 2000 - 2999 NIS 3000 - 3999 NIS > 4000 NIS I do not know	<input type="checkbox"/>
S14	The most important household source of income Family enterprise (Agricultural and non-agricultural). -Wages and salaries -remittances internal or external assistance Property -others, specify ...	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section II: Access to MOL services

S15	The main purpose of the visit? Register for job opportunity Inquire about a past case clarify (.....) Enroll in vocational training Inquire about work permit Inquire on issues related to cooperatives Seek legal advice Inquire about labor cases Inquire about inspection of working conditions Join public health insurance Other, specify /.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
S16	How did you know about the program (service) that you are about to visit at MOL? 1- Friends 2- Relatives 3- Advertisements 4- Other (specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>
S17	Which procedure/s did you make during this visit? 1-yes 2- no	<input type="checkbox"/>
S17_1	Information registration	<input type="checkbox"/>
S17_2	Information update	<input type="checkbox"/>
S17_3	Submit a complaint	<input type="checkbox"/>
S17_4	Inquire on previous complaints	<input type="checkbox"/>
S17_5	Cooperative registration	<input type="checkbox"/>
S17_6	Enrollment at vocational training	<input type="checkbox"/>
S17_7	Health insurance	<input type="checkbox"/>

s17_8	Employment registration (looking for a job)	<input type="checkbox"/>
s17_9	Getting a permit	<input type="checkbox"/>
s17_10	Resolving a pending labor case (labor dispute)	<input type="checkbox"/>
s17_11	Legal advice and awareness	<input type="checkbox"/>
s17_12	Settle and resolve matters of cooperatives.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
s17_12	Others(select	<input type="checkbox"/>
s17_13	I did not receive any of the services I sought	<input type="checkbox"/>
s18	Do you pay fees to get MOL services or for vocational training,? 1-yes 2-no	<input type="checkbox"/>
s19	How much fees did you pay for the service in NIS?	

Section III: Quality of services and satisfaction

s20	To what extent are you satisfied with the following aspects related to services delivered by MOL and its different centers? 1. Satisfied 2. Partially satisfied 3. dissatisfied 4. Inapplicable	<input type="checkbox"/>
s20_1	Number of working hours	<input type="checkbox"/>
s20_2	Order	<input type="checkbox"/>
s20_3	Cleanliness of place	<input type="checkbox"/>
s20_4	Appropriateness of the reception room	<input type="checkbox"/>
s20_5	Giving sufficient time to present your case	<input type="checkbox"/>
s20_6	Giving adequate guidance and awareness (for your case)	<input type="checkbox"/>
s20_7	Efficiency of provided services and their responsiveness to your needs	<input type="checkbox"/>
s20_8	Treatment of administrative staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
s20_9	Treatment of senior officials	<input type="checkbox"/>
s20_10	Providing the necessary information(such as brochures on MOL services and advisory assistance)	<input type="checkbox"/>

We wish to ask you about the nature of the treatment, conduct and conversation with the service providers at MOL directorates		
S21	How would you describe the relationship with the service provider? 1. Friendly 2. Formal 3. Tense	<input type="checkbox"/>
S22	What kind of conversation was held with the service provider? 1. About the purpose of the visit 2. Service provider tried to address irrelevant topics	<input type="checkbox"/>
S23	Your feeling during the meeting 1.Comfortable 2. Tense 3.	<input type="checkbox"/>
S24	Did you feel safe during the meeting? 1. Yes 2. No	<input type="checkbox"/>
S25	How many times did you visit MOL to complete your transaction? 1. Once 2. Twice 3. Three times 4. More than three times	<input type="checkbox"/>
S26	How much tie is needed to arrive to the nearest vocational center (or MOL directorate)? 1. Less than one hour 2. 1-2 hours 3. Over three hours 4. Other (Specify)...	<input type="checkbox"/>
S27	In general, to what extent do you believe the following is true? 1. True 2. Partially true 3. False	
S27_1	Enrollment in vocational training requires mediation (favoritism)	<input type="checkbox"/>
S27_2	Employees treat men more properly than women	<input type="checkbox"/>
S27_3	I Prefer vocational training at private centers than MOL centers	<input type="checkbox"/>
S27_4	MOL services are available for everybody	<input type="checkbox"/>
S27_5	If I face a problem, I can file a complaint	<input type="checkbox"/>
S27_6	Registration in the employment program is easy and does not require any mediation (favoritism)	<input type="checkbox"/>
S27_7	Resolution of labor relations problems (labor or collective trade union issues) requires a long time	<input type="checkbox"/>
S27_8	When I visit MOL offices I find someone to help me	<input type="checkbox"/>
S27_9	Labor dispute resolution	<input type="checkbox"/>
S27_10	Procedures at MOL are clear	<input type="checkbox"/>

s28	<p>Out of the following difficulties, which is the most important difficulty that you face when you seek MOL services?</p> <p>Access to MOL offices or centers because they are distant from my place of residence</p> <p>The long waiting hours</p> <p>Lack of services</p> <p>Lack of staff to help</p> <p>Lack of the employment services I need</p> <p>Financial difficulties</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
s29	<p>We wish to ask you about MOL applicable policies and procedures according to your personal experience at the Ministry (during your visit to MOL offices for processing transactions or for vocational training)</p> <p>1.I agree 2. Partially agree 3.I do not agree</p>	
s29_1	MOL Policies and procedures take into consideration the different circumstances and needs of male and female service seekers.	<input type="checkbox"/>
s29_2	MOL Policies and procedures promote equal opportunity between men and women.	<input type="checkbox"/>
s29_3	MOL practices and regulations treat men and women with equality	<input type="checkbox"/>
s29_4	Information is available at visit	<input type="checkbox"/>
s30	<p>In which of the following MOL services do you agree or disagree that there is equality and equal opportunity?</p> <p>1. Agree 2. Partially agree 3. I do not agree</p>	
s30_1	There is equal opportunity in the Employment program.	<input type="checkbox"/>
s30_2	There is equal opportunity in vocational training and capacity development.	<input type="checkbox"/>
s30_3	There is equal opportunity in participation in MOL workshops.	<input type="checkbox"/>
s30_3	There is equal opportunity in registration for employment.	<input type="checkbox"/>
s30_4	There is equal opportunity in access to assistance.	<input type="checkbox"/>
s30_5	There is equality in the ability to file complaints, and the way officials process them.	<input type="checkbox"/>
s30_6	There is equality in the ability to access and influence decision-makers at MOL.	<input type="checkbox"/>
s30_7	There is equality in the ability to move freely within the directorate according to personal circumstances.	<input type="checkbox"/>
s30_8	There is equality between men and women in the ability to register cooperatives.	<input type="checkbox"/>
s30_9	Women face difficulty in registering cooperatives compared to men.	<input type="checkbox"/>

s31	In general, is access to the (MOL Directorate) easy, either on foot or by public transportation? 1. Easy, and transportation is available. 2. Easy, but transportation is not always available. 3. Difficult, and transportation is not available	<input type="checkbox"/>
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