



مركز شؤون المرأة - غزة
Women's Affairs Center - Gaza



Report on

Violence against women with disabilities in the workplace

Violence against women “VAW” is a breach of women's human rights; it prevents them from enjoying their human rights and fundamental freedoms such as the right to life, personal security, and the right to education as well as the right to health, the right to housing and the right to participate in public life. This violation keeps women dependent and helps to perpetuate power imbalances between men and women. This has repercussions on women's health and well-being, leading to high humanitarian and economic costs and hindering development whereas there are short-term and long-term costs. There is also the direct cost of for violence against women’s services, and there is indirect cost when it comes to wasted jobs and productivity as well as loss and suffering¹. Violence is a public and national issue and is not only a women's problem, but also has material consequences for the state, society and individuals surrounding and victim.

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has confirmed in its General Recommendation “18” that women with disabilities may be subject double discrimination on the basis of gender and disability and that they are considered to be a vulnerable group with double discrimination affecting all aspects of their lives. When compared with men with disabilities, women with disabilities appear to be more likely to be more susceptible to poverty and isolation; usually paid less than men and are less represented in the labor force than men. As a result, they are also more likely to be victims of violence and/or less able to escape the cycle of violence.

Women and girls with disabilities are subjected to violence in many contexts in their homes, in institutions, at the hands of their immediate

¹ Secretary General’s report 2006

family members, caregivers or strangers, in the community, in schools and other public and private institutions.

- The number of females with disabilities is about 55,537, or 6% of all females in the Gaza Strip, compared to 72,425 males with disabilities, with 7.6% according to the 2017 General Labor Census and the 2017 General Population and Housing Survey data.
- Palestinian population with disabilities (15 years and over) by labor force relationship, 2017

	Employed	unemployed who worked before	unemployment who never worked before	Economically inactive	Total
Male	4,029	1,047	3,625	30,719	39,420
Female	3757	982	3,166	14,223	22,128

The general Census 2017: Final Population Results – Detailed Report – Gaza Strip

- Women with disabilities participate in the Palestinian labor force, accounting for only 4% of all women with disabilities, compared to 21% of men with disabilities.
- 85% of women with disabilities reported being subjected to violence.
- 92.3% of women with disabilities are exposed to psychological violence.
 - The most used forms of psychological violence against women with disabilities:
 - Discrimination within the family by 81.6%,
 - Cursing, insulting and yelling by 81.3%,
 - Humiliation, constant reminder of disability and disparagement as well as inferiority, respectively, in similar proportions of 76.3% and 74.0%.
 - Physical violence at 65.3%.

- The most severe forms of physical violence are beating and pushing at 81.6%, and 80.3%, respectively².
- Sexual violence by 13.3%.
- Economic violence by 85.3%, the most important form of which is the inability to dispose their property, the denial of daily allowance, the denial of property and their right to inheritance.

There is a gap in monitoring violence against women in the workplace. We, the Women's Affairs Centre, have initiated in partnership with UNFPA and Humanity & Inclusion (HI) a series of individual and group interviews with women with disabilities who have experienced temporary or permanent employment opportunities to check if they have been subjected to violence or have heard about others who have experienced violence in the workplace and we came up with this report.

This summary report reflects the reality of violence against women with disabilities in the workplace and then makes a series of recommendations that will reduce violence against them. Civil, human rights and women's organizations working with people with disabilities need to address this phenomenon and encounter it in various ways to eliminate or even reduce it.

² According to the statement of the Eighth of March (8/3/2019) issued by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics

³ " Access by women with disabilities to the formal and informal justice system, WAC's publication 2016

This report aims at:

1. Learn about the reality of violence against women with disabilities in the workplace in the Gaza Strip.
2. Identify the most important perpetrators of violence against women with disabilities in the workplace and defense mechanisms and to confront violence by women with disabilities.
3. Provide a set of suggestions and recommendations to reduce violence against women with disabilities in the workplace.

Methodology :

The report used a participatory and learning approach, collecting data for the report using multiple research tools: (3) structured interviews with working women with disabilities and other women working with persons with disabilities, and (2) focused group discussions with women with disabilities with practical experiences and diverse disabilities (auditory, visual and physical), and a case study.

2. Focused Discussion group with women with disability

(*) The first group involved (16) women with disabilities: (9) with physical disabilities, (5) visually impaired persons, and others from different parts of the Gaza Strip, university graduates from different disciplines working or experienced temporary employment opportunities in civil society institutions.

The second group involved (13) women with disabilities, 7 of whom have physical disabilities, 4 with hearing impairment, and (2) with visual impairment, including university graduates, aged 20–38 years.

(3) Structured and in–depth interviews:

First: with the head of the complaints department of the Ministry of Social Development, who has a physical disability.

Second: With the coordinator of the Association of Stars of Hope in Gaza.

Third: A woman with a disability who suffers from violence in the workplace.

Violence against women with disabilities in the workplace:

(1) Psychological violence/psychological abuse:

Persons with disabilities are subjected to psychological violence while working and in the workplace, psychological violence is the most common type of violence, and women with disabilities consider it the most severe and worst form of violence. Its forms include:

- 1– Neglect in the workplace leaving them without clear tasks.
- 2– The constant reminder by others of disability and deficiency, where if women with disabilities are employed, their disability is obvious.
- 3– The looks of compassion and kindness on the part of others and their notice of inferiority, weakness and helplessness.
- 4– Underestimating and belittling their abilities and by working potential even if they have university degrees.
- 5– Exposure to psychological violence as a result of being subjected to verbal violence and ridicule and calling them abusive words and cursing and bad words on their way to work, especially while walking in the street, forcing parents to prevent them from leaving the house.

(2) Denial of resources, opportunities and services:

- ✓ Also, one of the most important forms of violence against women with disabilities in the workplace is the denial of their various rights: right

to work, being forced and pressured into leaving work, whether it is because of the refusal of parents or the refusal of employers under the pretext of inability to adapt the place and other reasons which prevents them from obtaining the right to work, their right to access resources and services, and not providing them with the necessary facilities to enter the labor market. Some of the forms of violence mentioned by women with disabilities that fall under the denial of resources, opportunities and services are:

- 1– Unsafe access by women with disabilities to the workplace.
- 2– Difficulty using public transport.
- 3– The premises are located within buildings where there is no electric elevator.
- 4– Lack to adapted work spaces for women with disabilities.
- 5– The lack of technical aids in many workplaces, and the lack of equipment and aids to facilitate the work of women with disabilities.
- 6– Refusal to accept job applications by employers for applicants are women with disabilities, or to disparage and underestimate their applications when applying.
- 7– Not all websites adapted for persons with disabilities except jobs.ps.
- 8– The format of job advertisements that suggest that people with disability are encouraged to apply for jobs.
- 9– If women with disabilities pass the first stage of their careers and qualify for interviews, they are asked embarrassing questions to remind them of their disability.
- 10– Assigning women with disabilities tasks that are not suitable for their specialty or the nature of the job they have been assigned to, such as being required to perform the duties of the service attendant or the cleaner and to make tea and coffee for the staff.

- 11- Assigning women with disabilities to difficult and tiresome tasks that are not commensurate with their disabilities.
- 12- The salary allocated to them may be lower than those in the same institution, considering that employing them is an act of kindness.
- 13- Depriving women with disabilities of their right to participate in decision-making, denying them membership of the general assemblies of institutions, or excluding them from board elections.
- 14- Exploitation and control of their salaries and denying them opportunity to control it by parents. In case of rejection, the women with disability are subjected to verbal, psychological and physical violence.

sexual violence:

Participants with disabilities did not talk about being exposed to sexual violence at work. However, while working with groups and interviews we found that there were people who were sexually harassed on their way to work on the street, while in cars transporting them to the workplace, while in the elevator or while helping others in the street or the stairs where they are grabbed from sensitive areas either intentionally or unintentionally, especially those with physical disabilities. All those who were harassed outside the family were while in cars and by public drivers or male passengers.

Who engages in violence against women and people with disabilities in the workplace?

Violence against women with disabilities is carried out in the workplace by individuals, different actors and at different levels of management:

- (1) The service attendant/cleaner can be one of the perpetrators of violence who may ignore women with disabilities or refuse to provide them with hospitality.
- (2) Male or female reception staff at the premises, such as secretary, and other persons who receive persons with disabilities in institutions or receive their applications in the event of job applications. "
- (3) The manager of the organization or the employer.
- (4) Staff/co-workers.
- (5) Drivers: The category of public drivers is the most violent group against people with disabilities outside the family, according to the majority of participants.
- (6) Guards of buildings where their places of work are located.

How women with disabilities behave when they are exposed to violence:

The coping mechanisms of women who are subjected to violence in general and those with disabilities in particular are not very different, although there is some kind of privacy for people with disabilities:

- 1- The strategy of silence and non-disclosure, especially violence in the family, this type of violence remains confidential.
- 2- No formal complaints for fear of greater violence.
- 3- Talking to someone close to her whom she feels safe with from within the family and is often out of the family.
- 4- Write posts on Facebook and use of social media.
- 5- Talking and debriefing about what's inside them during seminars and workshops.
- 6- The police, especially those on the streets.

Complaints mechanisms:

When asked about the mechanisms for filing complaints and whether women with disabilities can access and use them freely, it was found that there is no knowledge among the participants on the subject, nor do they know if there are bodies to complain to. Also, they have never filed a complaint with any official or unofficial entity other than we have previously mentioned about the immediate use of police officers in the event of harassment by public driver.

Support networks for women with disabilities who are survivors of violence:

- 1– The family of women with disabilities is a threat and a place of violence, while at the same time it could be a safe haven for women with disabilities when they are subjected to violence.
- 2– Some NGOs that provide protection services for persons with disabilities have unfortunately not mentioned specialized institutions for persons with disabilities.

Services for women with disabilities who are subjected to violence:

- 1– The majority of participants do not have sufficient knowledge of the services provided to women and girls who are subjected to violence and limit the services to awareness, education and training workshops.
- 2– Services to respond to gender-based violence are not fully adapted (buildings and trained crews)

Recommendations/suggestions to reduce violence against women with disabilities:

Violence against women and girls with disabilities remains generally invisible and requires a range of interventions to address and reduce it.

1. Awareness campaigns for women with disabilities about gender-based violence they may face in public life, the working environment in particular, and protection mechanisms.
2. Educating women with disabilities about gender-based violence response services and referral pathways for service providers.
3. Building the capacity of employers around the mechanisms of conducting job interviews and recruitment procedures for women with disabilities, and creating job opportunities that suit their abilities, skills and type of disability.
4. Raising community awareness to change the societal image of women with disabilities and highlighting the violence they are subjected to through awareness workshops and the use of social media platforms.
5. Awareness and education campaigns targeting public drivers on disability and the rights of persons with disabilities, especially women, and violence against them.
6. Including disability in the core of training materials and courses for professionals and workers in the field of violence and ensure the dissemination of information on available protection and other services.
7. Building the capacity of women with disabilities to be able to defend their rights.

8. Ensure that law enforcement officials, prosecutors and judges are adequately trained on the forms and patterns of violence against persons with disabilities, including women and girls.
9. Lobbying and advocacy campaigns to develop accountability mechanisms to prevent and punish discriminatory practices.
10. Availability of sign language translation in police and court proceedings.
11. Facilitate access to and dissemination of information on gender-based violence response services.
12. Adapting response services to women in all respects (training crews, buildings and dissemination of information) to include women with disabilities.
13. Cooperation and networking between women's institutions and related NGOs and institutions working with women with disabilities and building alliances and coalitions to address violence against women with disabilities.
14. Activating the role of the media not only in highlighting violence against women with disabilities, but also in highlighting the successes of women with disabilities and their ability to challenge their disabilities, breaking the silence, talking about violence against them in the workplace and elsewhere, and showing success stories and good practices.
15. Adaptation of public spaces and workplaces for persons with disabilities.