

The background features a woman in a grey silhouette holding a globe. Behind her is a large, stylized female symbol. The scene is set against a beach with a blue sky and ocean.

# Implementing CEDAW for Palestinian Refugee Women in Lebanon

## Breaking Through Layers of Discrimination

**First  
Supplementary  
Report**

**Submitted to  
CEDAW Committee**

**Geneva 2008**

This report is the result of a cooperative general design and general review and input by the following organizations working with Palestinian Refugee Women in Lebanon

(in alphabetical order):

**Association Najdeh**

**General Union of Palestinian Women - Lebanon**

**Solidarity Association for Social and Cultural Development**

**Women's Humanitarian Organization (WHO)**

**& Norwegian People's Aid**

Looking forward to a wider circle of contributions in future reports.

This report is prepared by Aziza Khalidi, ScD – Association Najdeh

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**“There is no doubt that Palestinian women have experienced refugee status differently than their male counterparts at all levels of the public sphere. They have been discriminated against and marginalized in the labour force, in education, in political representation as well as in the private sphere.”<sup>1</sup>**

Abdo (2000)

## **Introduction**

This report supplements the shadow report presented by Lebanese NGOs to the CEDAW committee. It also stands as the first report on Palestinian refugee women in Lebanon submitted to the CEDAW.

What distinguishes monitoring CEDAW implementation for refugee women at large and for Palestinian refugee women in particular is the multiplicity of agencies that are accountable for their general legal political, social and economic welfare: (1) the host country, (2) the agency offering assistance under mandate from the United Nations as well as (3) the country of origin, and (4) the civil society in its capacity of service delivery that complements the mainstream service providers. In the case of Palestinian refugee women, the first agency is the Lebanese government on whose soil the refugees reside and under whose jurisdiction they are legally accountable. The second agency is UNRWA- an agency distinct from the UNHCR – that is responsible for providing assistance and other forms of protection to refugees. The third entity - the country of origin - is rather complicated in practice although obviously referred to in theory. A sovereign State of Palestine is yet to exist, however the current Palestinian entity in relation to refugees is the Palestine Liberation Organization that is represented as an observer on the Advisory Commission of UNRWA as well as being an observer member in the United Nations General Assembly. Such a state of affairs complicates the legal status of refugees vis-à-vis the host country as well as the United Nations. Complications in relation to Lebanon are reflected by the lack of ratification of Casablanca Protocol of 1965 by Lebanon. This protocol allows Palestine refugees to work in a manner similar to their treatment in other Arab countries. The complication vis-à-vis the United Nations System is the separate entity of UNRWA in relation to UNHCR thus the loss direct application of the accumulation of international experience as reflected by recent programmatic advancement by UNHCR and for purposes of this document in the area pertaining to SGBV in the form the related Guidelines<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Abdo, Nahla (2000) Engendering Compensation: Making Refugee Women Count! Prepared for the Expert and Advisory Services Fund International Development Research Centre posted on [http://www.arts.mcgill.ca/mepp/new\\_prn/research/papers/abdo\\_09.htm](http://www.arts.mcgill.ca/mepp/new_prn/research/papers/abdo_09.htm)

<sup>2</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees UNHCR (2003) Sexual and Gender Based Violence against Refugees, Returnees, and Internally Displaced Persons, Guidelines for Prevention and Response.

The report addresses matters that relate to all three entities. However the discourse is formally addressed to the State of Lebanon in keeping with the existing format, and through the state of Lebanon to the other two entities until the issue is resolved in future reports pertaining to refugee women. This approach was used in the report submitted by NGOs on the rights of the Palestinian Refugee Child in Lebanon in 2005<sup>3</sup>.

This reports aims at identifying and presenting a synthesis of available information relevant to monitoring the implementation of CEDAW for Palestinian refugee women, as well as identifying achievements and challenges in implementation of CEDAW.

Information is gathered by several organizations working in the area of empowerment of Palestinian refugee women. Representatives from several NGOs met and identified the main points of the report as follows: violence against women, women at work, education, special needs. They also acknowledged the need to contextualize the report. This approach serves to identify enabling and disabling factors in relation to eradicating discrimination against Palestinian refugee women. In addition, an independent literature review was conducted on relevant research and documentation pertaining to Palestinian refugee women in general and with a focus on Lebanon.

### **Addressing the refugee community in the Lebanese State reports:**

The term refugee was not mentioned in the preliminary report nor was it mentioned in the second report issued by the State of Lebanon. However, in the third State report (2006), a table showing the breakdown of projects to combat violence against women in Lebanon in 2005 – 2006, and their components by implementing body the first mention of Palestinian refugee was in the context of raising awareness against violence against children.<sup>4</sup> That table, however, did not mention the research as well as the grass roots work of several NGOs working within the Palestinian refugee community.

### **Organization of the report:**

This report is organized in general along the lines of selected articles of CEDAW from Article 7 to Article 16 inclusive. Domestic violence will be addressed in the section relating to marriage and the family. Special needs and old age vulnerability will be addressed in the section on health. The report contains recommendations.

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<sup>3</sup> The Coordinating Forum of NGOs Working Among the Palestinian Community in Lebanon (2005) Rights of the Palestinian Child in Lebanon, Third Supplementary Report.

<sup>4</sup> Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Consideration of reports submitted by State Parties under article 18 of the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Third periodic report of States Parties, Lebanon (received by the Secretariat on 6 July 2006), p.38.

## Context

This section covers the following topics: Palestinian refugees, their status in Lebanon and Palestinian refugee women.

### The people:

Table 1- Projected Palestine Refugee Population in Lebanon in perspective 2000-2020\*

Year	Camps	Camps + Non Camps	Total (West Bank, Gaza, Jordan & Syria) with Estimated non camp	Proportion of (West Bank, Gaza, Jordan & Syria) refugee population (%)
2002	106	198	3335	5.9
2005	110	206	3561	5.8
2010	117	218	3918	5.6
2015	123	229	4261	5.4
2020	129	240	4598	5.2

Source: adapted from Fafo (2005) Palestine Refugees, Information for Policy, Fafo Paper 2005:22 \* Data from original source is based on Fafo surveys 1998 and official statistics

*“There are no declared official statistics in Lebanon on the Palestine refugees. The figures published from time to time by the Central Statistics Bureau in the PLO’s Palestine National Fund are no more than estimates extrapolated from samples. According to UNRWA’s annual figures, the number of Palestine refugees is presently, according to its statistics, 4,283,892 refugees.<sup>i</sup> More than one-third of them reside in 59 camps in Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip. The number of Palestine refugees in Lebanon is 401,071,<sup>ii</sup> nearly half of them living in 12 camps with the remainder outside the camps and in a number of localities. This figure does not include all the Palestine refugees in Lebanon, only those registered in UNRWA’s records.”<sup>5</sup>*

The number of Palestinian refugees is an estimate which is sensitive to political factors. The range is between 200 to 400 thousand individuals.

Other demographic features:

According to findings from LIPRIL survey the population is young (higher dependency ratios). It displays declining fertility and it is older than camp refugees in other areas. (Ugland, p.31).

### Palestinian Refugees

The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees is an instrument that defines the mission, vision and programmatic objective of organizations working with refugees. A special development pertaining to mainstreaming gender in principle as well as in action

<sup>5</sup> See Natour & Yassine, 2007 p.16

is embodied in the Guidelines pertaining to SGBV<sup>6</sup>. However, the 1951 convention is said to be inapplicable to Palestine refugees in a recent introductory note by UNHCR. Moreover, UNRWA's mandate is formally restricted to assistance and not protection as it is the case with UNHCR – although services such as health and education and social services qualify as social protection however, UNRWA cannot intervene legally on behalf of refugees as it is the case with UNHCR. Palestine refugees are under the protection of the Lebanese government.

*Protection according to UNHCR: 'all actions aimed at ensuring the equal access to and enjoyment of the rights of women, men, girls, and boys of concern to UNHCR, in accordance with the relevant bodies of law (international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law). (UNHCR, SGBV Guidelines p.9)*

### Definitions of Refugee:

*"A refugee is some one,*

- *who has a well founded fear of persecution because of his/her race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.*
- *Is outside his/her country of origin,*
- *And is unable or unwilling to avail him/herself to the protection of that country, or to return there for fear of persecution."*

**1951 Convention relating to status of refugees**

*"Any person compelled to leave his/her country owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination, or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of his country of origin or nationality."*

**Organization of African Unity Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa 1969.**

*Persons who flee their country "because their lives, safety, or freedom have been threatened by generalized violence, foreign aggression, internal conflicts, massive violation of human rights or other circumstances which have seriously disturbed public order."*

**The Cartagena Declaration, 1984** adopted by a colloquium of Latin American government representatives and jurists.

Legal description of The Palestinian Refugee in Lebanon – a dynamic concept:

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<sup>6</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees UNHCR (2003) Sexual and Gender Based Violence against Refugees, Returnees, and Internally Displaced Persons, Guidelines for Prevention and Response.

In general the following two definitions give a broad overview of the legal meaning of a Palestinian and a Palestine refugee from the perspective of PLO and UNRWA respectively.

Article Five [in the Palestine National Charter] stipulated that *“the Palestinians are those Arab citizens who held permanent residence in Palestine until 1947, whether they were removed from it or remained in it, and whosoever has a Palestinian Arab father after that date, inside or outside Palestine, is a Palestinian”*.<sup>7</sup>

*“Under UNRWA's operational definition, Palestine refugees are persons whose normal place of residence was Palestine between June 1946 and May 1948, who lost both their homes and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict. UNRWA's services are available to all those living in its area of operations who meet this definition, who are registered with the Agency and who need assistance. UNRWA's definition of a refugee also covers the descendants of persons who became refugees in 1948. The number of registered Palestine refugees has subsequently grown from 914,000 in 1950 to more than 4.4 million in 2005, and continues to rise due to natural population growth.”*<sup>8</sup>

However, from the perspective of the Lebanese legal system, matters get more ambiguous. In a very recently published study on the legal status of Palestine refugees in Lebanon (2007), Natour and Yassine summarized the legal situation of Palestinians in Lebanon as follows:

*“While Lebanon dealt with the Palestinians on its territory as refugees in the care of UNRWA, which meant disavowal of most commitments incumbent on the Lebanese State and therefore dealing with the Palestinians at times as Arab refugees, at other times as foreigners, depending on exigencies and criteria that led to evasion by the Lebanese State of legal entitlements to which it is bound.”*<sup>9</sup>

They also noted the ambiguity of the status vis-à-vis international and regional instruments as follows: *“ The international community, in relation to the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951), refused extension of the clauses of this Convention to the Palestine refugees under its jurisdiction.”*<sup>iii</sup>  *Arab reservations to the protocol on treatment of the Palestinians in the League of Arab States allowed vacating it of its content. The legal standing of the Palestine refugees in Lebanon varied by imposing restrictions on it; sometimes they were considered stateless foreigners, at other times there was amelioration of some legal restrictions or their enforcement. But in general the refugees' legal status remained void of any clear and binding framework for availing them protection.”*<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Cited in Human Development Center, 2007 The Legal Status of the Palestine Refugees in Lebanon and the Demands for Adjustment, El- Natour, Suhail, Dalal Yassine 2007p.14-15.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.un.org/unrwa/refugees/whois.html>

<sup>9</sup> Human Development Center, 2007 The Legal Status of the Palestine Refugees in Lebanon and the Demands for Adjustment, El- Natour, Suhail, Dalal Yassine 2007p. 15.

<sup>10</sup> Human Development Center, 2007 The Legal Status of the Palestine Refugees in Lebanon and the Demands for Adjustment, El- Natour, Suhail, Dalal Yassine 2007p. 15.

## **Multiplicity of Jurisdictions / referral authorities / stewardship:**

*“This vague way of dealing with the matter of referral authority returns to the latter’s split between several sources of jurisdiction impacting on the lives of the Palestine refugees. When it is a matter of identity papers and travel documents, it is the Lebanese State; when it is a matter of social, health and education services, it is the Refugee Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). When it relates to political developments and representation, then it is the PLO and political factions. And when it concerns areas under the latter, then it is the popular federations, unions and NGOs. Lebanon’s Palestinians have been living under such a split ever which way for some time.”<sup>11</sup>*

## **Palestinian refugee women:**

Attempting to decipher features of refugees from a legal perspective, two emerge:

(1) The first is exclusion from international instruments targeting protection of refugees and the second is exclusion from regional instruments. Palestine refugees are excluded from the 1951 convention the UNHCR is mandated to oversee on the basis that they are under the mandate of another UN agency namely UNRWA. *“The Convention does not apply to those refugees who are the concern of United Nations agencies other than UNHCR, such as refugees from Palestine who receive protection or assistance from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), not to those refugees who have a status equivalent to nationals in their country of refuge.”* Intro note by the office of UNHCR - Convention and Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees Text of the 1951 Convention pp5 & 6 – UNHCR 2007.

(2) The second feature of the current legal status of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon Regarding regional instruments of protection Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are excluded from the Casablanca Protocol of 1965 given the fact that the Lebanese government did not ratify it.

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<sup>11</sup> Human Development Center, 2007 The Legal Status of the Palestine Refugees in Lebanon and the Demands for Adjustment, El- Natour, Suhail, Dalal Yassine 2007p. 22.

## **UNRWA's Mandate – Restriction to Social and Economic Assistance**

UNRWA is an implementing agency reporting directly to the UN General Assembly. Its advisory commission includes Lebanon as an active member and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as an observer member. UNRWA's mandate is restricted to social, and economic assistance<sup>12</sup>. Other matters of protection is handled by the host government.

“UNRWA is a subsidiary organ of the United Nations. The Agency's chief officer, the Commissioner-General, is appointed by the UN Secretary-General after consultation with the Advisory Commission and is the only head of a United Nations body to report directly to the General Assembly. The Advisory Commission meets annually to review Agency activities. Its membership consists of Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, EC, Egypt, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Jordan, , Lebanon, Netherlands, Norway, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the Syrian Arab Republic, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States. The EC, League of Arab States and Palestine Liberation Organization attend as an observer.”<sup>13</sup>

### **UNRWA's is undergoing a modernization of its management as follows:**

“Our values contribute to the realization of our vision and the implementation of our overarching programmatic objectives. They are rooted in the United Nations Charter; in the Agency's mandate, directives, rules, regulations and code of conduct, and in human rights instruments. Our values include a strong emphasis on human rights for all, non-discrimination and respect, sharing of information and knowledge, and with an emphasis on consultation, cooperation and consensus-building.”<sup>14</sup>

“In the case of Palestinian refugees, the United Nations agency created to meet their needs, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, or UNRWA, is permitted to operate only at the discretion of the host government and is mandated to provide assistance but not protection. Therefore, in terms of international law, this group of refugees lacks effective protection mechanisms. The denial of rights ‘has prevented the Palestinian refugee community from prospering and has placed them on a course of de-development.’<sup>15</sup>

### **Protection of Refugee women:**

Several international instruments were considered in the UNHCR Guidelines as requirements for protection of refugee women:

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<sup>12</sup> UNRWA's predecessor agency United Nations Relief & Refugee Assistance UNRRA was established as a fund for disbursement of assistance under the topic of Assistance to Palestine Refugees UN General Assembly resolution 212(III) 163 plenary meeting, 19 Nov 1948. (Official Records of the Third Session of the United Nations General Assembly, p.68 and 69).

<sup>13</sup> source: <http://www.un.org/unrwa/organization/index.html>

<sup>14</sup> Source: Serving Palestine Refugees More Effectively, Strengthening the Management Capacity of UNRWA, UNRWA's Organizational Development Plan 2006-2009 p11

<sup>15</sup> Palestinian Human Rights Organization (Beirut), Political and Legal Status of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon

“Ensuring the protection of refugee women requires adherence not only to the 1951 convention and its 1967 Protocol but also to other relevant international instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the two Additional Protocols of 1977; the 1966 Human Rights Covenants; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women; the Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict; the Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages, the Convention on the Nationality of Married Women, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.”<sup>16</sup>

However, since 1951 convention does not apply to Palestinian refugees, such accumulation of experience of protection of women against violence maintained within the administrative domain of UNHCR.

### **A woman and a refugee and without a sovereign state to go back to – a triple jeopardy:**

Palestinian refugee women are coping with three major layers of discrimination: (1) gender, (2) refugee status, and (3) statelessness. There is evidence of gender discrimination against women which is the bulk of this report; moreover, the interplay of gender and refugee status presents another complication, and when statelessness - the absence of a fully sovereign and functional state - is added to the mix, the challenge facing Palestinian refugee women in their struggle to disentangle as well as attempt to resolve intricate cultural / economic / social and political dimensions of gender discrimination is compounded even further.

## **Political and Public Life – Article 7**

### **Attitudes towards engaging in public life:**

Findings from Blome-Jacobsen’s analysis indicate the presence of a gender gap in the attitude towards work for women. Women have more favorable attitude to women’s public participation than men. Palestinian refugee women in Lebanon are midway between a more liberal attitude in Syria and a more conservative attitude in Jordan<sup>17</sup>. Younger men in Lebanon camps and gatherings displayed a more conservative attitude than the older cohort with respect to engagement of women in public life. A higher percentage of older men 50+ support women ‘as ministers and members of parliament’ compared to the younger cohort 24 to 34 years<sup>18</sup>.

Blome-Jacobsen concluded that men prefer women participation in public life but not in leadership roles.

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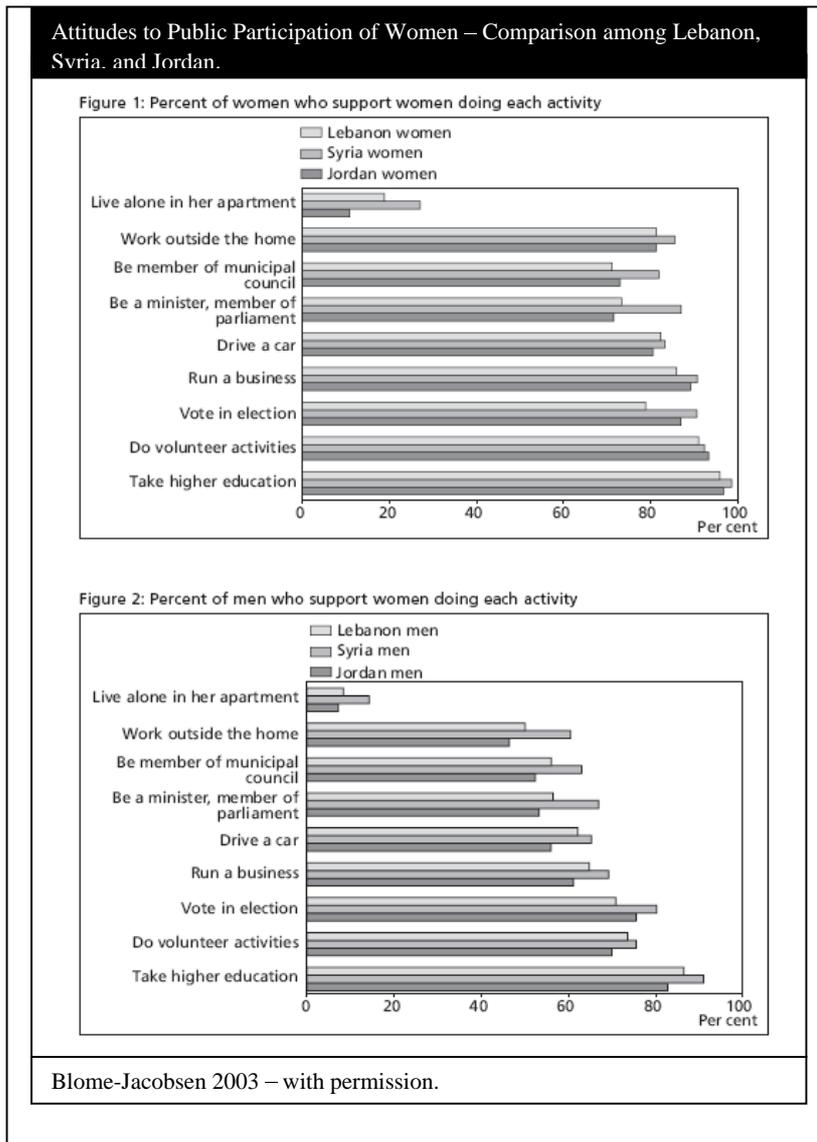
<sup>16</sup> Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women, prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Geneva, July 1991, paragraph 6.

<sup>17</sup> See Blome-Jacobsen, 2003 op.cit. p.10 figures 1 and 2.

<sup>18</sup> See Blome-Jacobsen 2003 , op.cit p. 11 figure 2.

“In general, men want women to have an active but not leadership role. That is, there is more support of women voting in elections (70 to 85 percent) than there is for a women [sic] serving in office either at the municipal or national level (50 to 65 percent).”<sup>19</sup>

Moreover, the more educated men are the more supportive they are for women engaging in public life.<sup>20</sup>

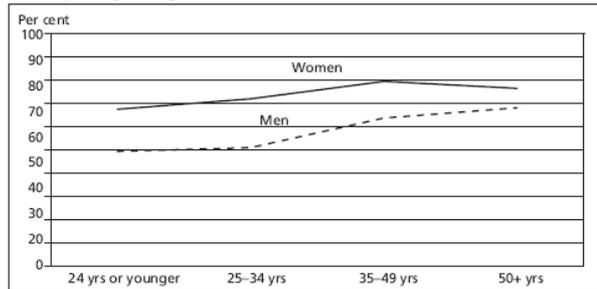


<sup>19</sup> See Blome-Jacobsen 2003, op.cit p. 11.

<sup>20</sup> See Blome-Jacobsen 2003, op.cit p. 11.

Attitudes of men and women towards political Participation of women by age

Figure 3: Percent that support women as ministers or members of parliament by age. Lebanon camps and gatherings.



11

Blome-Jacobsen 2003 – with permission.

There are two channels for involvement of Palestinian refugee women in political and public life: political organizations and non-governmental organizations. Both are inter-related. Involvement in decision-making at the higher management levels is most prominent in NGOs compared to the relatively traditional political structures.

Prioritization of nationalist concerns over gender rights was referred to by Abdo in her analysis of marginalization of women in the home. However, that paradigm has shaped the direction of women activists. The slogan ‘our liberation is through our participation in the struggle’ quite popular in the seventies was applied at the time by marginalization of gender issues and in essence defining the participation in the struggle primarily by direct relief work, and health education and social services at the bulk of women’s agenda at the expense of advocating more share in political decision-making.

Although anecdotal evidence indicates that women’s involvement in the rank and file of political organizations is quite extensive, it is the key political decision making circles that women have limited substantive access to. Another currently practiced strategy of involving women in political activity is through segregation of political structures rather than mainstreaming women in the ranks – community interface, middle and upper decision making. These features are documented for the West Bank and Gaza<sup>21</sup>. Also variation of ideologies among political organizations may play a role in configuring the contributions of women at the higher decision making level.

On the other hand the situation is much brighter with the NGO community where women have more space to contribute to decision-making as well as actually lead such organizations.

Strategy of the General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW) regarding Palestinian refugee women represents a statement of principle is another manifestation of the attempts at political involvement of the Palestinian women. The section on Palestinian

<sup>21</sup> See Islah Jad, Women and Politics, Institute of Women’s Study, Birzeit University, 2000 pp58 -62.

refugee women in the strategy was placed within the political component of the general strategy of the GUPW. Main issues raised are the right to return, maintaining national identity, and work. The section underscored the role of UNRWA as the provider of a comprehensive range of services - health and education, social services, job placement services, and relief.

## **Representation – Article 8**

The prime barrier to assessing women's representation in existing Palestinian political structures in Lebanon in relation to Lebanese government is their fragility as political actors in view of the current state of fragmentation of the Palestinian body politic at large as well as current fragile political situation in the Lebanese body politic. Only recently (15/05/2006) has a PLO representative office been open in Beirut.<sup>22</sup> The General Union of Palestinian women has an office in the PLO representative office in Beirut. However, there is no representation of women in the representative's office upper management in Lebanon.

## **Nationality – Article 9**

Despite the absence of a sovereign state, the foundation of a non discriminating law of nationality was laid in the constitution of the State of Palestine. A substantive legal leap was made regarding gender equality in the Palestinian Constitution which applies to all Palestinians. Article 4 in the PLO Covenant of 1968, which restricted the transfer of nationality to males<sup>23</sup> was annulled by article(12) of the 2003 constitution where the right to pass nationality became equal across the sexes:... “the right passes on from fathers or mothers to their progenitor. It neither disappears nor elapses unless voluntarily relinquished.”

Needless to mention is that the right to return as embodied by UN General Assembly resolution 194 III is the embodiment of the spirit of the law of nationality for Palestinian refugee women and men. This resolution applies to the descendents of the generation that was forced to leave Mandate Palestine in 1948. However, there are no provisions in that resolution that address the equality of men and women in that right.

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<sup>22</sup> For more details see Natour & Yassine 2007 pp 22-28.

<sup>23</sup> Article 4 of the PLO covenant states that “The Palestinian personality is an innate, persistent characteristic that does not disappear, and it is transferred from fathers to sons.”

Article (12)

“Palestinian nationality shall be regulated by law...This right passes on from fathers or mothers to their progenitors. It neither disappears nor elapses unless voluntarily relinquished.”..

Constitution of the State of Palestine third draft 2003

## Education – Article 10

UNRWA is the major provider of basic education services for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. According to UNRWA sources, pupil enrollment is 38 370 during the school year 2006/2007<sup>24</sup>. There is a relatively high enrollment of girls with respect to other fields of operation. Proportion of girls’ enrollment is 52%. Lebanon is second in line following the West Bank where the enrollment of girls reaches 57%<sup>25</sup>

### Attitudes towards education of girls:

Findings from Najdeh’s KAP survey regarding opinions on parents’ responsibilities regarding education indicated a higher proportion of respondents reporting that the husband has more right compared to the wife. That applied to both boys and girls and is more accentuated when the question was restricted to girls<sup>26</sup>.

*Attitude towards education and the risk of domestic violence:* Findings from multivariate analysis in the Najdeh KAP survey indicate that the husband having more rights<sup>27</sup> regarding deciding on education of girls<sup>28</sup> is one of the important risk factors for occurrence of beating in the household.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> As of 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2007.

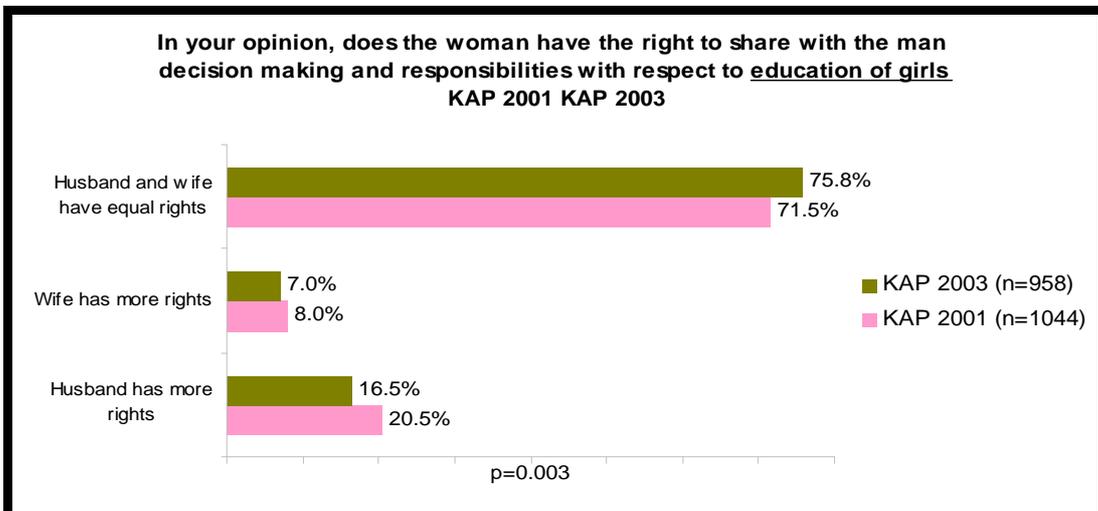
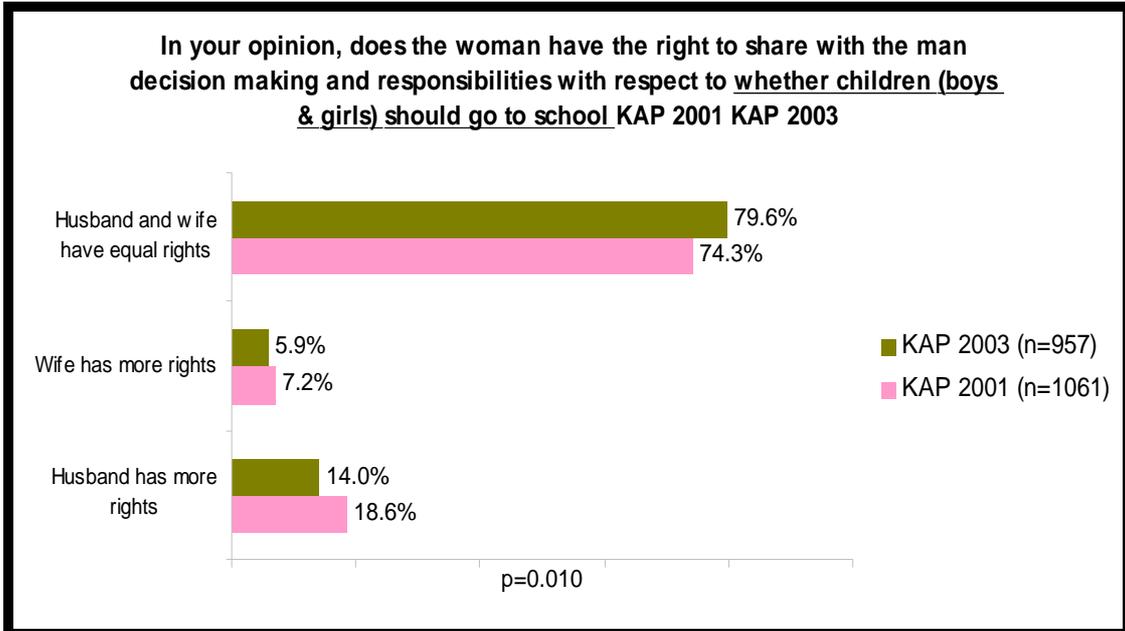
<sup>25</sup> Source is public information office, UNRWA Head Quarters Gaza, September 2007

<sup>26</sup> Najdeh KAP1 KAP2 Survey report annex 3 part 2.

<sup>27</sup> compared to equal rights with the wife.

<sup>28</sup> While controlling for the education of both boys and girls.

<sup>29</sup> Najdeh KAP1 KAP2 survey report p. 19

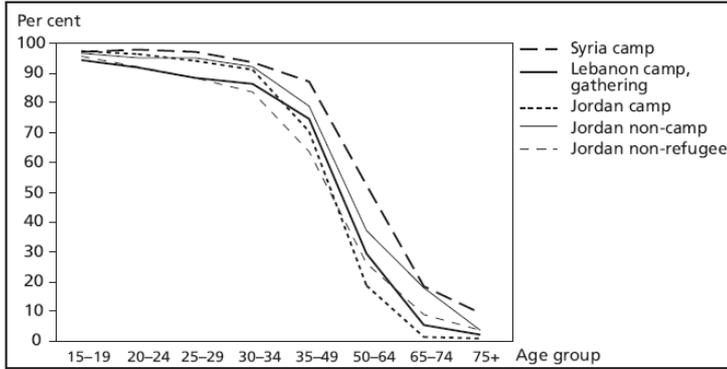


**Literacy:**

Compared to women from other host countries Palestinian refugee women in Lebanon have consistently lower levels of reported literacy across age groups (with the exception of Jordan camps aged 35-49 + years age groups) as shown.

Age Distribution of Proportion of literate women, comparison among Palestinian refugee women Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, camps, and Jordan non-refugees.

Figure 24: Percent women literate by age.



Source: Blome-Jacobsen, 2003 p.35 – with permission

**Table 2 Estimated School enrolment ratios (percent) among Children and Youth by sex among refugees in Lebanon compared to Refugees in Gaza, West Bank, Jordan, and Syria.**

	Lebanon		Gaza		West Bank		Jordan		Syria	
	C	CG	C	NC	C	NC	C	NC	C	GC
Total Persons (1000)	<b>93</b>	<b>39</b>	289	349	96	299	164	905	146	28
Enrolment (Percent)										
Male Primary age group*enrolment ratio	<b>92</b>	<b>90</b>	93	91	93	92	92	95	91	90
Female Primary age group* enrolment ratio	<b>94</b>	<b>94</b>	92	92	93	93	93	95	91	94
Male Secondary age group enrolment ratio	<b>39</b>	<b>50</b>	69	61	54	53	59	71	47	43
Female Secondary age group enrolment ratio	<b>48</b>	<b>61</b>	53	49	52	51	63	77	51	58
* (6-11 years & 12 – 15 years, Lebanon 12-14 years) C=UNRWA Camps, NC= All refugees outside camps, GC= Refugees in “Gatherings and Clusters”										
Source: adapted from Fafo (2005) Palestine Refugees, Information for Policy, Fafo Paper 2005:22 Data from original source is based on Fafo surveys 1998 for Lebanon, West Bank and Gaza Strip 1995, Jordan 1996, 2000, and Syria 2001 and official statistics										

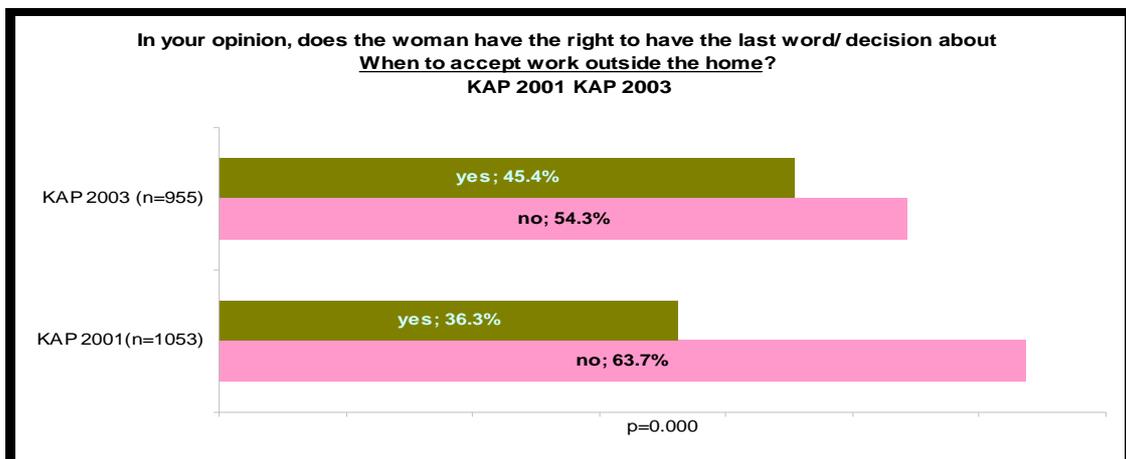
**Table 3 Estimated Palestinian Refugee adult education and Human Capital by sex among refugees in Lebanon compared to Refugees in Gaza, West Bank, Jordan, and Syria.**

	Lebanon		Gaza		West Bank		Jordan		Syria	
	C	CG	C	NC	C	NC	C	NC	C	GC
Total Persons (1000)	<b>93</b>	<b>39</b>	289	349	96	299	164	905	146	28
Enrolment (Percent)										
Young adults without basic education (18-30 years)	<b>61</b>	<b>52</b>	24	34	30	33	36	20	46	41
Working age with secondary or higher education (20 -62 years)	<b>12</b>	<b>14</b>	43	39	31	34	28	42	29	30
Male illiterates (15 years and older)	<b>17</b>	<b>12</b>	8	9	9	8	12	8	7	7
Female illiterates (15 years and older)	<b>30</b>	<b>26</b>	23	20	23	23	26	29	16	8
Enrolled, completed vocational training (males)	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	-	-	-	-	24	29	20	24
Enrolled, completed vocational training (females)	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	-	-	-	-	19	23	16	18
C=UNRWA Camps, NC= All refugees outside camps, GC= Refugees in “Gatherings and Clusters”										
Source: adapted from Fafo (2005) Palestine Refugees, Information for Policy, Fafo Paper 2005:22 Data from original source is based on Fafo surveys 1998 for Lebanon, West Bank and Gaza Strip 1995, Jordan 1996, 2000, and Syria 2001 and official statistics										

# Employment – Article 11

## Attitudes towards work

There is revealing evidence on attitudes regarding women and work from population surveys. In the Najdeh KAP Surveys 2001 and 2003, more than half respondents (54 to 64%) indicate that women do not have the right to have the last word regarding accepting work outside the home. Moreover, findings from Blome-Jacobsen’s analysis indicate that half of the men do not think it is appropriate for a woman to work outside the home<sup>30</sup>.



## Labor force Participation

According to Blome-Jacobsen, the labor force participation of refugee women compared to men is low which is similar to the situation of women in their host countries<sup>31</sup>. In Lebanon, a higher proportion of women in their forties are enrolled in the labor force compared to women in their twenties. A reverse pattern is shown among refugee women in Syria. This may be related to the attitude towards work among younger more conservative generation, and the demands of the market for jobs requiring higher level of education.

Female headed households demonstrate low education and limited labor force participation<sup>32</sup>.

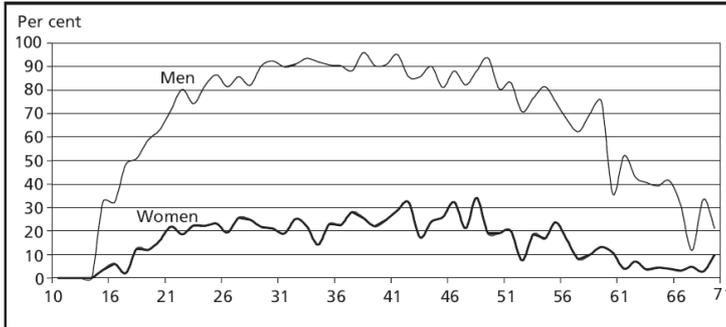
<sup>30</sup> See Blome-Jacobsen 2003 op.cit pp 10 and 11.

<sup>31</sup> See Blome-Jacobsen 2003 op.cit p 22.

<sup>32</sup> LIPRIL, 2003 pp. 270, 271.

**Labor force Participation of Palestinian Refugee women and men in Lebanon by age.**

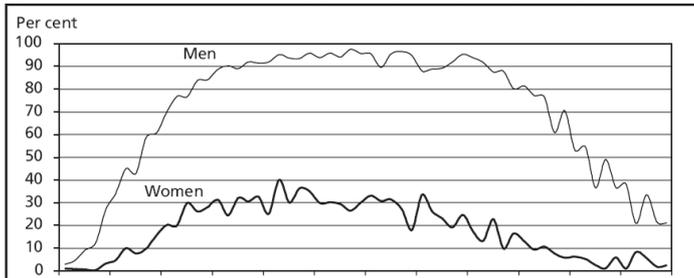
Figure 13: Percent in the labour force by gender. Lebanon Camp and gathering.



Source: Blome-Jacobsen, 2003 p.23 with permission.

**Labor force Participation of Palestinian Refugee women and men in Syria by age.**

Figure 14: Percent in the labour force by gender. Syria Camp and gathering.



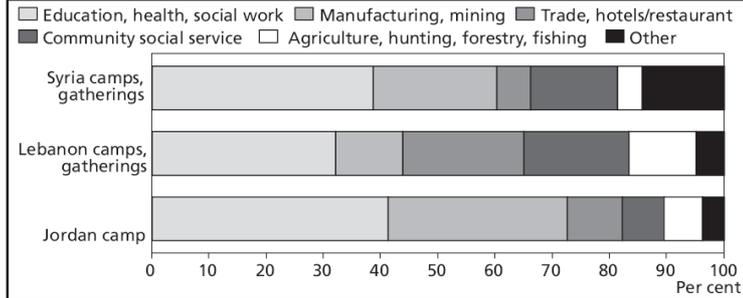
Source Blome-Jacobsen, 2003 p.23 with permission.

**Sectors of employment**

Palestinian refugee women in Lebanon are mostly employed primarily in the education, health and social work, trade (hotels, restaurants), community social service. Palestinian refugee women in Lebanon have the largest proportion employed in the agricultural sector compared to those in Syria and Jordan.

### Laborforce Participation of Palestinian refugee women by sector

Figure 20. Distribution of women in the labour market by industrial sector of employment.



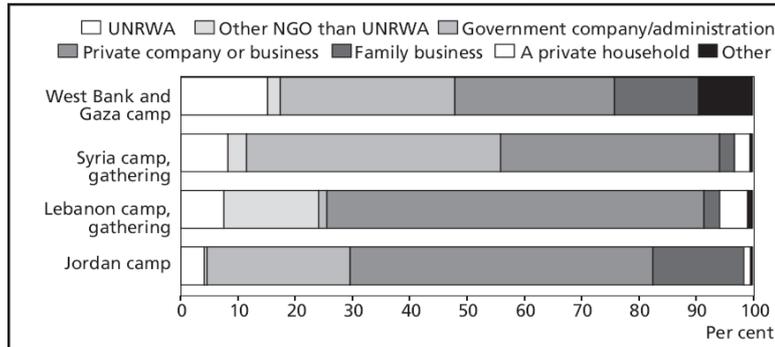
Source Blome-Jacobsen, 2003 with permission.

### Employers:

Refugee women in Lebanon are employed mainly by private companies, followed by NGOs, followed by UNRWA. Refugee women in Lebanon have the highest proportion compared to Syria and Jordan who are employed by a private household.

### Palestinian refugee working women by employer

Figure 21: Distribution of women in the labour force by employer.



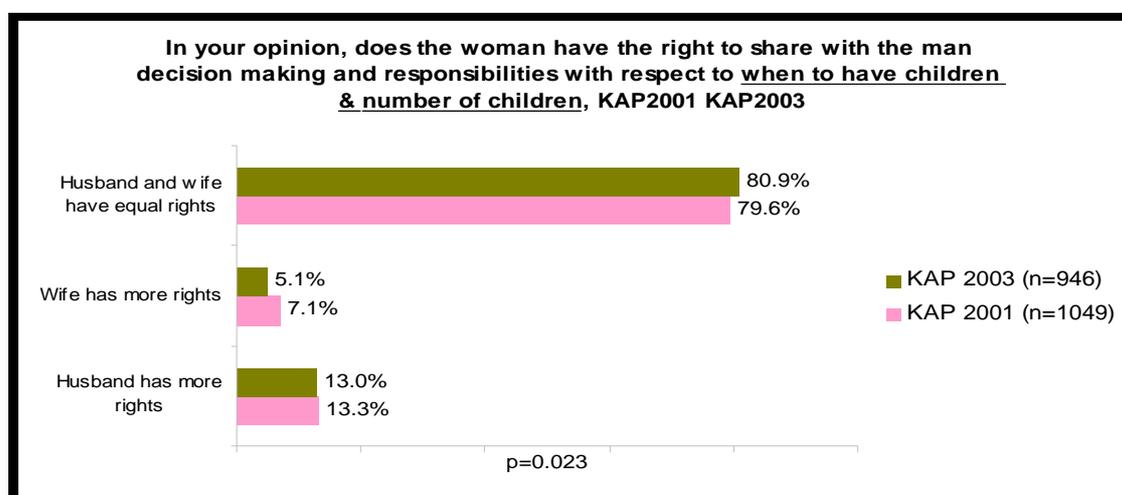
Source Blome-Jacobsen, 2003 with permission.

## Health – Article 12

Refugees in Lebanon according to LIPRIL have highest maternal mortality rate (239 deaths due to childbearing per 1000 live births), Gaza is second highest (112 deaths due to childbearing per 1000 live births).<sup>33</sup> In addition, Palestinian refugee women living in camps and in gatherings in Lebanon have the highest smoking rates (15 percent, 18 percent respectively), followed by Syria Camps and Gatherings (8 and 6 percent respectively).<sup>34</sup> One quarter of Palestinian refugees 15years and older report highest proportions of chronic disease in comparison with other areas.<sup>35</sup>

Refugee women in Lebanon report using UNRWA health services the most compared to Syria and Jordan.<sup>36</sup>

Evidence from Najdeh's KAP surveys on attitude towards childbearing indicates a perception of equal rights for the majority of respondents. However around 13% indicate that the husband has more rights.



Blome-Jacobsen concludes that Palestinian refugee women in the reproductive age are well catered for by UNRWA since its inception by means of a well established maternal and child health care system.

However, elderly women and women with disabilities have yet to benefit from such a comprehensive health intervention.

Moreover, elderly Palestinian refugee women living alone are at risk of poor housing conditions. These constitute the largest proportion of women living alone. (Blome-Jacobsen, 2003)<sup>37</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Fafo, 2005 – computed by the sisterhood method.

<sup>34</sup> Fafo, 2005 – computed by the sisterhood method.

<sup>35</sup> Fafo, 2005 – computed by the sisterhood method.

<sup>36</sup> Fafo, 2005 – computed by the sisterhood method.

Regarding women and girls with disabilities, statistical evidence shows that they constitute 1.8 percent are of a lower proportion than males (2.8 percent). Only one quarter of women over 15 years are married in contrast to 50 percent among males. Disability among women is mostly from bodily infirmity from disease or congenital rather than from the war.<sup>38</sup>

## **Economic and Social Benefits – Article 13**

There is general barrier to both women and men regarding economic and social benefits given the current labor laws in Lebanon. Palestinian women and men can enroll in social security without reaping its benefits because they are foreigners.<sup>39</sup> According to LIPRIL survey only 15 percent of women and men have work permits implying that the majority do not have access to social health or retirement benefits<sup>40</sup>.

The above predicament is exacerbated by an added layer of discrimination that the Lebanese women are enduring in terms of their economic and social benefits as mentioned in the Lebanese NGOs Shadow report.

## **Rural Women – Article 14**

The largest proportion of the Palestinian refugee population lives in urban or peri-urban areas (LIPRIL). However, evidence from the type of work, from LIPRIL survey indicates that 12 percent of women and 11 percent of men currently in the labor force work in agriculture.<sup>41</sup> Those who work in agriculture have a lower educational achievement<sup>42</sup>. There is also regional clustering where in Tyre area in the south, 4 in 10 working men and women work in agriculture<sup>43</sup>.

## **Law – Article 15**

Palestinian refugee women are under the jurisdiction of the Lebanese law. So issues pertaining to Personal Status laws are identical to those endured by Lebanese women.

## **Marriage and Family life - Article 16**

Median age at first marriage for all ever-married women is 18 years and the median age for men is 23. It is lower for the younger cohorts 25 and less compared to older ones. (Khawaja in Ugland, 2003 p.35). The percent unmarried among women and men 37 and 46 percent respectively was regarded by Khawaja as high. By age 55 years, 23 percent of women are widowed. Fertility is low (3.0 children per woman) by comparison

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<sup>37</sup> Blome-Jacobsen, 2003 P.43

<sup>38</sup> Madi, Y. (2003) Analytical Study on Disabled Palestinians in Camps and Gatherings in Lebanon

<sup>39</sup> See Natour, Yassine 2007 pp68-82.

<sup>40</sup> LIPRIL p.150.

<sup>41</sup> LIPRIL p.142.

<sup>42</sup> LIPRIL table 5.12 p.144.

<sup>43</sup> LIPRIL p.144.

with other Palestine refugee communities while it is higher than that in Lebanon (TFR in 1995 was 2.5 children per woman).<sup>44</sup>

**Table 4 Distribution of women and girls by marital status by age - Living Conditions Survey among Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon (Fafo)**

Age	Single	Married	Widowed	Divorced	Separated	Total
15	88.85	10.67	0.19	0.19	0.10	100
20	54.32	44.07	0.25	1.36	0.00	100
25	37.75	58.82	0.86	2.33	0.25	100
30	32.49	61.54	2.87	2.87	0.23	100
35	25.04	65.65	6.09	2.71	0.51	100
40	19.90	66.75	8.82	3.27	1.26	100
45	17.41	65.19	12.59	3.70	1.11	100
50	11.14	65.98	21.11	1.17	0.59	100
55	5.17	66.21	26.21	1.72	0.69	100
60+	1.92	45.52	50.51	0.90	1.15	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>37.00</b>	<b>49.00</b>	<b>11.02</b>	<b>1.80</b>	<b>0.47</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: adapted from Khawaja in Uglan et.al (2003) Difficult Past, Uncertain Future. Living Conditions Among Palestinian Refugees in Camps and Gatherings in Lebanon. Fafo Report 409, p.33.

**Table 5 Distribution of men and boys by marital status by age - Living Conditions Survey among Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon (Fafo)**

Age	Single	Married	Widowed	Divorced	Separated	Total
15	99.91	0.09	0.00	0.00	0.00	100
20	89.40	10.06	0.11	0.43	0.00	100
25	58.56	39.97	0.27	0.94	0.27	100
30	22.50	75.25	0.14	1.97	0.14	100
35	8.69	90.02	0.18	0.55	0.55	100
40	4.86	92.43	0.27	2.16	0.27	100
45	4.20	94.96	0.42	0.42	0.00	100
50	3.86	9.82	0.77	1.16	0.39	100
55	0.43	97.44	1.71	0.43	0.00	100
60+	0.83	87.95	10.23	0.66	0.33	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>45.89</b>	<b>51.86</b>	<b>1.30</b>	<b>0.78</b>	<b>0.17</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: adapted from Khawaja in Uglan et.al (2003) Difficult Past, Uncertain Future. Living Conditions Among Palestinian Refugees in Camps and Gatherings in Lebanon. Fafo Report 409, p.33

<sup>44</sup> “The total fertility rate TFR declined from about 4.5 children per woman in 1987-1990 period to around 3.9 children per woman in the period 1991-1994. During the entire 12 year period, TFR decrease by about 1.5 children on average amounting to a decline of 33 percent.” (Khawaja, in Uglan et al. 2003 p.36).

## **Domestic violence:**

Violence against women in the family setting is a major challenge facing Palestinian refugee women in Lebanon as indicated by evidence from several studies. Physical form of domestic violence appears to be rampant in Palestinian refugee households in Lebanon. There is statistical evidence of abuse to both women and children from varying studies. Blome-Jacobsen reports that Palestinian refugee women in Lebanon report the highest proportion of being ever beaten compared to refugee women in Syria and Jordan: 23 percent of respondents in Lebanon report being ever beaten by their current husband. One half of women reported being beaten in front of their children<sup>45</sup>. Beating of women in front of their children can be used as an indicator of gender related violence rather than just a matter of social norms.

This proportion reported by Blome-Jacobsen is similar to findings from a study of women beneficiaries of a local NGO in several camps in Lebanon conducted in 1999<sup>46</sup> where the proportion was 29.6 percent. In-depth interviews among 452 women beneficiaries of Najdeh services which were translated in a statistical format revealed that almost one third of wives 29.6 % reported ever being beaten, in 91% of the cases the husband was the perpetrator. Only 5.5% of wives reported having shouted at their husbands. Multivariate logistic regression models showed a significant relationship between proportion of wives being beaten by husbands and their perceived relationship with their husbands as well as with the presence of self reported chronic illness with the wives. Findings also showed a negative association with the age of the husband (age group 46 to 67 years). It is noteworthy that about 10 percent of women who report having an excellent relation with the husband report a history of having been beaten.<sup>47</sup>

To disentangle domestic violence from SGBV findings on attitudes were examined. However, Blome-Jacobsen findings show that attitudes towards beating women were similar for men and women and they are most favoring compared to Syria and Jordan. This reflects a rather disturbing social norm for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.<sup>48</sup> This is reverberated by findings from Najdeh KAP surveys which underscore the presence of beating across the family – fathers and mothers are main perpetrators, children and women are main victims. Majority of respondents (67%) indicated that Physical violence is reported to occur in their neighborhood, even a higher majority 80 percent reported occurrence of beating in their home.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Blome-Jacobsen, Lauri, (2004) Educated Housewives, Living Conditions among Palestinian Refugee Women, Fafo-report 425 p.47

<sup>46</sup> Association Najdeh, 2000

<sup>47</sup> Association Najdeh 2000 Domestic Violence among Some Palestinian Refugee Communities in Lebanon: An Exploratory Study and Ideas for Further Action.

<sup>48</sup> Blome-Jacobsen, Lauri, (2004) Educated Housewives, Living Conditions among Palestinian Refugee Women, Fafo-report 425 p.46

<sup>49</sup> Najdeh KAP1-KAP2 survey report

Findings from domestic violence knowledge attitudes and practices surveys (KAP surveys) conducted in 2001 and 2003 show that the culture of discrimination against women is evident from the existence of respondents who overtly deny women the right not to be exposed to harm (at least 5% of respondents in KAP 2003 survey). Evidence from the surveys also indicates the persistence of the culture of physical violence exemplified by corporal punishment, and psychological violence still flourishes among households although it primarily targets the weakest in the power continuum i.e. children. (The power map within the family is the husband followed by the wife followed by the children.) Angry behavior by heads of households which is usually displayed in the form of beating; and a sizeable proportion (15 to 21 %) of respondents indicates that the husband has the upper hand in managing household expenses.

Studies at the time 1999, 2001, 2003 indicate a minimal knowledge about CEDAW at the community level. Sources of help are mostly next of kin indicating that attitudes towards seeking help reflect the private nature of the problem. The context of violence in households further amplifies the effects of discriminatory actions against women.

Figure 32: Men. Number of circumstances it is ok to beat one's wife.

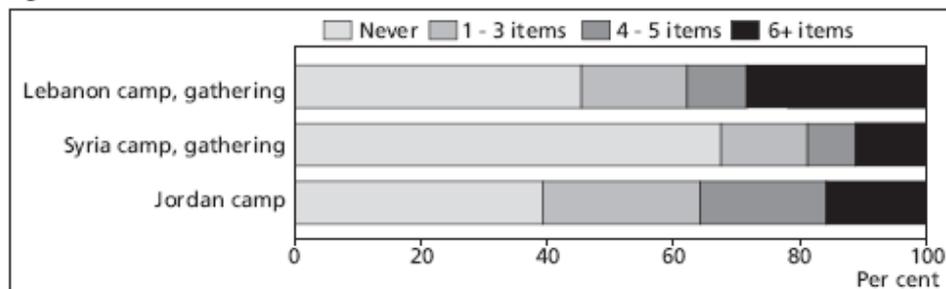


Figure 33: Women. Number of circumstances it is ok to beat one's wife.

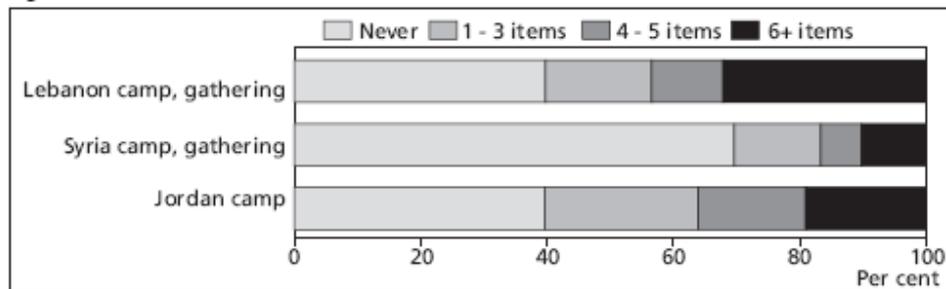


Table 6: Percent of women ever beaten by current husband.

	Percent of women ever beaten by current husband
Syria camps, gatherings	21.5
Jordan camps	13.7
Lebanon camps, gatherings	23.0

Figure 34: Percent of women ever beaten by current husband by five year age groups.

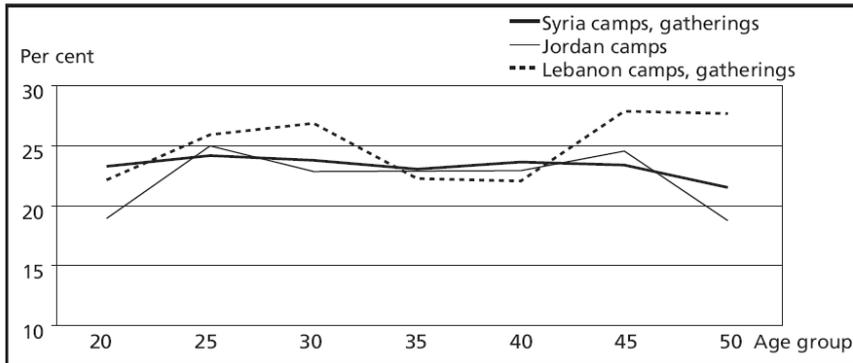
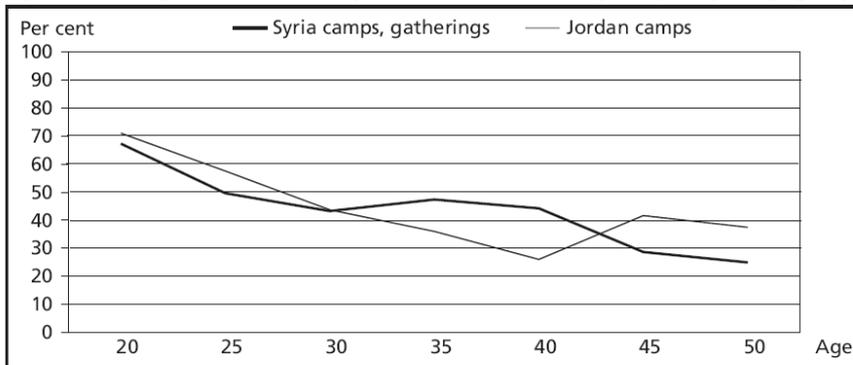


Figure 35: Among those ever beaten, percent beaten in the last year by five year age groups.



The above table and graphs are from Blome- Jacobsen 2003 by permission

## Current Initiatives and Programs Relevant to Implementing CEDAW among Palestinian refugees in Lebanon:

The following table summarizes available information regarding the efforts of NGOs that are pertinent to women's advancement. Activities cover areas of education including preschool to funding, to research. Sectors include health, education, and advocacy.

Agency	Domain (health, education, human rights, domestic violence, livelihood)	Program / Activity (advocacy, counseling, health education etc.)	Target population	Since..
UNRWA	Health, education, livelihood	UNRWA's Initiative 1-K gender mainstreaming <sup>50</sup>	Women, children.	1950s
Association Najdeh	livelihood	Vocational training, small loans, embroidery for women	Mostly women All age groups	1970s
	education	preschool education, assistance for university education	Girls and boys	
	Domestic violence	Advocacy, counseling, Research	Women and men	
	Human rights – general, right to return, right to work campaign	Advocacy, research	Women and men	
General Union of Palestinian Women	livelihood	Vocational training, small loans, craft	Women	1970s
	education	preschool education	Girls and boys	
	Human rights – general, right to return,	Advocacy	Women and men	
Women's Health and Welfare Organization	Health, Social, preschool education	Home care services	Elderly Women and men	1990s
Solidarity Association for Social and Cultural Development	Health, domestic violence, human rights	advocacy	women	1990s
PARD	Health and environment	Primary health care, women's health, Community Health education, environmental health, youth activities	Adult women, youth in selected gatherings	1980s
Norwegian People's Aid	Financing, violence against women, vocational training, livelihood, capacity building, networking and advocacy	Partnership with local NGOs mainly in the fields of: Vocational training, preschool education, university education, disability rehabilitation, gender program, advocacy	Youth, women, children, and refugees	1980s

<sup>50</sup> UNRWA, Serving Palestine Refugees More Effectively, Strengthening the Management Capacity of UNRWA UNRWA's Organizational Development Plan 2006-2009 p.81.

<b>Agency</b>	<b>Domain (health, education, human rights, domestic violence, livelihood)</b>	<b>Program / Activity (advocacy, counseling, health education etc.)</b>	<b>Target population</b>	<b>Since..</b>
The National Institution for Social Care and Vocational Training	Social services, health service, livelihood	Preschool, family guidance, vocational training, dental care for children	Youth, families	1970s
The National Association for vocational training and social services	Livelihood, social services	Vocational training, microcredit, youth activities	Youth, men and women	1980s
The National Association for Social Medical Care and Vocational Training	Livelihood, health, preschool education	Vocational training, health services	Youth, community at large	
The Ghassan Kanafani Cultural Foundation	Education, culture	Preschool education, disabilities, art, children's libraries	Children, persons with special needs	1970s
Palestinian Arab Women League	Livelihood, education	Vocational training, micro credit, income generation through embroidery	Women, youth	1970s
The Association for the Development of Palestinian Camps (Inaash)	Education, livelihood	Preschool education, income generation through embroidery, student tutoring	Women, youth, and children	1970s
The National Foundation for Health Social and Educational Services	education	Preschool education	Children (one camp)	
The Handicapped Social Association			Disability	
KG Resource and Training Center – Ghassan Kanafani Foundation affiliate	education	Training of KG teachers and supervisors		
Nabaa Association	Community empowerment		youth	1990s
Welfare Association	Financing	Vocational training, preschool education, university education, disability and health		1980s

Source: The Coordination Forum of NGOs Working among the Palestinian Community in Lebanon, List of member organizations.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

This document presents evidence of the complexity of the situation of discrimination inflicted on Palestinian refugee women in work, education, political decision-making and the domestic sphere. Although there is generational advancement in education, Palestinian refugee women in Lebanon have a lower educational level compared to other Palestinian refugee women, they have the highest prevalence of smoking which makes them vulnerable to debilitating and expensive chronic disease later in their lives. There is overt discrimination in work given the lack of social benefits for most of those employed with the private sector. Palestinian refugee women in Lebanon are more likely than in other countries to live on their own and those that do have lower level of education.

Palestinian refugee women in Lebanon, like refugee men are less protected by international agencies given the mandate of UNRWA that is limited to protection in areas of education, health, social services. Such despite valiant efforts in improving managerial performance, progressing with gender mainstreaming initiatives, and initiating community empowerment projects for women, the fact remain that the financial challenge that UNRWA is facing affects service coverage especially the hardship cases including women heads of households and for the elderly at large especially elderly women living alone.

The above-mentioned challenges are exacerbated by the challenges of the legal status of women. This puts more restrictions on the entry to the work force by view of being Palestinian, with no formally sovereign state with whom the Lebanese State would be able to engage in acts of legal reciprocation especially in work.

Palestinian refugee women share with the Lebanese women the burden of existing Personal Affairs laws that do not criminalize violence against women in a manner equivalent to its destructive nature especially the so called ‘honor crimes’ and domestic violence.

Consequently, the following are some recommendations and commitments,

### ***Recommendations,***

- Reaffirming recommendations presented in the Lebanese NGO shadow report pertaining to the status of Lebanese women. Implementing such recommendations would eliminate several impediments towards fully implementing CEDAW for refugee women in general and for Palestinian refugee women in particular.
- Calling upon the Lebanese government given its responsibility in protecting the refugee population,
  - To apply the civil and social human rights covenant to Palestinian refugee women and men residing in Lebanon with a special emphasis on the right to work since that would eliminate a significant impediment towards implementing CEDAW for refugee women.

- To recognize the special vulnerable status of Palestinian refugee women vis-à-vis other refugee women given the lack of a sovereign state that would allow applying the principle of reciprocity in civil matters including work.
  - To call on the United Nations to increase resources allocated to UNRWA as well as intensifying linkages between UNRWA and UNHCR especially in the area of sharing information and experiences on Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) and adapting the UNHCR SGBV Guidelines to the needs of Palestine refugee women.
  - To include a section in the State Report that assesses the implementation of CEDAW on refugee women in general and Palestine refugee women in particular.
  - To advocate along with appropriate agencies efforts to ameliorate living conditions for Palestinian refugees with a special attention to elderly refugee women living alone.
- Calling upon the Palestine Liberation Organization given its responsibility in maintaining the national identity of the refugee population, to increase the participation of women in higher levels of political decision making.
  - Calling upon the international community and specifically the UN General Assembly given its responsibility in supporting UNRWA
    - to enhance efforts to support the valiant efforts of this organization within its domain to insure basic health, education and social services to women and to the population at large,
    - and provide special support and acknowledgement of its efforts at mainstreaming gender in its operation
    - to enhance existing linkages with UNHCR especially in the field of sexual and gender based violence.

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