

SAWASYA

PROMOTING THE RULE OF LAW IN THE STATE OF PALESTINE

FINAL PROGRAMME NARRATIVE REPORT

REPORTING PERIOD: 1 JULY 2018 – 31 DECEMBER 2023



Photo 1: Judicial staff using Mizan II application. Hebron. ©Sawasya II

The UNDP, UN Women and UNICEF Joint Programme ‘*Sawasya II: Promoting the Rule of Law in the State of Palestine*’ is generously funded by the Government of the Netherlands, Sweden – Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), Spain - Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) and the European Union (EU).

Programme Title & Project Number	Country, Locality(s), Priority Area(s) / Strategic Results																																								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programme Title: “Promoting the Rule of Law in Palestine” (Sawasya II) MPTF Office Project Reference Number: 00111750 	State of Palestine <i>Agenda 2030: Goal 16:</i> Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels; <i>Goal 5:</i> Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls <i>2018-2022 UNDAF: SP2:</i> All Palestinians, especially those exposed to vulnerabilities, have equal access to accountable, effective, and responsive democratic governance, in line with international human rights standards. <i>2023-2025 UNSDCF: Outcome 3:</i> Palestinian governance institutions and processes at all levels, are more democratic, inclusive, rights-based, transparent accountable, and sustainable. <i>2017-2023 National Policy Agenda: Pillar 1:</i> Path to independence; <i>Pillar 2:</i> Governance reform; <i>Pillar 3:</i> Sustainable development																																								
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Programme Cost (US\$) Total approved budget as per project document: USD 50,000,000 <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 30%;">Agency Contribution</td> <td style="width: 10%;">UNDP</td> <td style="width: 10%;">BPPS:</td> <td style="width: 10%;">USD</td> <td style="width: 30%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>945,000</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Contributions from Donors to MPTF/JP</td> <td>Netherlands: USD 20,208,120</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>SIDA: USD 13,933,796</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>European Union: USD 4,995,719</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total Contributions to MPTF/JP</td> <td>USD 39,137,635</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Contributions from other donors parallel to MPTF/JP</td> <td>Spain (earmarked/non-MPTF): USD 1,420,560</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>TOTAL: USD 40,558,195</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Agency Contribution	UNDP	BPPS:	USD			945,000				Contributions from Donors to MPTF/JP	Netherlands: USD 20,208,120					SIDA: USD 13,933,796					European Union: USD 4,995,719				Total Contributions to MPTF/JP	USD 39,137,635				Contributions from other donors parallel to MPTF/JP	Spain (earmarked/non-MPTF): USD 1,420,560				TOTAL: USD 40,558,195					Programme Duration Overall Duration: 66 months Start Date: 01 July 2018 Original End Date: 30 June 2023 Current End Date: 31 December 2023
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Programme Assessment/Review/Mid-Term Eval.	Report Submitted By																																								
Mid-Term Evaluation Report – <i>if applicable please attach</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name: Simon Ridley Title: Joint Programme Manager 																																								

X Yes No Date: <i>19.01.2021</i> Final Evaluation Report – March 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Participating Organizations: UNDP/UN Women/UNICEF○ Email address: simon.ridley@undp.org
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sawasya II represented the primary programmatic vehicle of the United Nations (UN) for advancing the rule of law, gender justice, justice for children, and human rights in the State of Palestine for the period 2018-2023. *Sawasya II* was designed to contribute to key priorities of the five-year United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2018-2022 and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2023-2025 for the State of Palestine, to the realization of the 2030 Agenda and of its sustainable development goals (particularly SDG 16 and SDG 5) and to the implementation of the National Policy Agenda of the State of Palestine (2017-2023).

The programme brought together the main UN entities mandated and invested in these areas – the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) - in an integrated Programme framework, *Sawasya II* sought to support the Government of Palestine in building a progressively functioning and increasingly inclusive rule of law system that respects, protects and fulfils human rights and gender equality and, in parallel, promotes peace and security.

Sawasya II targeted specific bottlenecks in justice and security service provision. Security and justice institutions were supported to strengthen the quality and efficiency of the services they provided to Palestinian rights holders. Moreover, *Sawasya II* supported all relevant Palestinian government institutions and civil society organizations in providing legal aid to the Palestinian population. This support was developed and tailored to respond to the specific needs of the different areas of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem,¹ and the Gaza Strip.

The *Sawasya II* programme, a joint initiative of UNDP, UN Women, and UNICEF, was implemented from June 2018 to December 2023 with the overarching goal of strengthening the rule of law and improving access to justice for all Palestinians, particularly women and children. Operating in a challenging context marked by the ongoing Israeli occupation, political division between the West Bank and Gaza, weak institutions, and deep-rooted gender inequality, the programme aimed to address key barriers to justice sector reform at multiple levels. This report sets out the cumulative achievements of the programme over its five-and-a-half-year life cycle.

Key Achievements

The *Sawasya II* programme, which ran for 5.5 years, made significant contributions to strengthening the rule of law and access to justice in Palestine, particularly for women and

¹ For the purposes of this report, East Jerusalem is treated separately from the West Bank solely due to the fact that the State of Palestine is not able to deliver justice and security-related services to Palestinians residing in East Jerusalem thereby requiring a different response from the programme.

children. The programme utilized a results and resource framework consisting of 41 indicators to monitor and evaluate its performance, with each indicator having yearly and cumulative targets.

Despite the challenges, the *Sawasya II* programme demonstrated a strong overall performance, with the vast majority of the indicators being achieved or partially achieved. Despite the challenging context, *Sawasya II* made significant strides towards its objectives. Key achievements include:

1. Strengthening the legal and policy framework: *Sawasya II* contributed to aligning key legislations with international human rights standards. This included the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), such as increasing the age of marriage to 18 and allowing women to open bank accounts for their children. Progress was also made on the Juvenile Protection Law, with the introduction of provisions for confidentiality and case reviews, and the Family Protection Bill (FPB), with extensive consultations and awareness-raising activities. The programme supported the development of the Gender Checklist for drafting legislation. Furthermore, the issuance of a Presidential decree amending the Penal Code No. 16 of 1960 and its amendments, included a definition of “discrimination” and criminalized it. The amendment also abolished Article 208 of the same law which now permits imposing a prison sentence on the perpetrators of torture and those who order them or refrain from stopping the crime thereby prohibiting torture on any basis.



2. Enhancing the capacity and accountability of justice institutions: *Sawasya II* played a key role in supporting the development and roll-out of the *Mizan* court management system, which has significantly improved the efficiency, transparency, and accountability of the court system. The programme also invested in strengthening the institutional capacity of key justice sector actors, such as the Attorney General's Office (AGO) and the High Judicial Council (HJC), through targeted training, the development of standard operating procedures, and the establishment of specialized units for women and children. This included the development of Violence Against Women (VAW) standard operating procedures for the HJC, and the creation of Gender Units within the HJC, Ministry of Justice (MOJ), and AGO. *Sawasya* also assisted with the amendment of the Palestinian Civilian

Police (PCP) and Public Prosecution VAW SOPs in line with the rights of women with disabilities and provided expertise on the development of Risks Assessment Templates, *inter alia*. Moreover, *Sawasya II* supported the development of emergency plans on the provision of services to women survivors of violence for the main five justice and security institutions to address challenges faced by the sectors during the pandemic.

Mizan Court and Case Management System



3. Expanding access to justice for vulnerable groups: *Sawasya II* forged partnerships with a wide range of civil society organizations to provide legal aid, counseling, and awareness-raising services to thousands of vulnerable Palestinians, particularly women and children. The programme supported the development of a comprehensive legal aid strategy, the establishment of specialized legal aid clinics in universities and one-stop centers providing integrated services for victims of violence, and the training of legal professionals on gender-responsive service delivery. *Sawasya II* also invested in building the capacity of local community-based organizations to provide legal awareness and assistance services, particularly in Area C, East Jerusalem, and Gaza.



4. Promoting gender-responsive justice and security services: *Sawasya II* placed a strong emphasis on promoting gender equality and women's access to justice across its interventions. This included support for the development of specialized courts and units for women and children, such as the VAW specialized court in Nablus and the one-stop centers providing integrated legal, psychosocial, and police services for victims of violence. The programme also worked to transform attitudes and behaviors towards women and girls within justice and security institutions through gender training, the identification of gender champions, and support for women's networks such as the Palestinian policewomen network.



Challenges

Despite these significant achievements, the programme faced several challenges in advancing certain strategic priorities. The passage of key legislative reforms, such as the FPB, and the institutionalization of legal aid mechanisms remained elusive due to political sensitivities, competing priorities, and resistance from some stakeholders. The COVID-19 pandemic also had a significant impact on the delivery of justice services, particularly for women and children, exacerbating existing vulnerabilities and creating new barriers to accessing services. Since 2023, the humanitarian crisis caused by the war in Gaza, compounded by weakened institutions and loss of institutional memory, presents major challenges in accessing justice, security, and human rights.

Way Forward

The programme evaluation highlighted several key lessons learned. These include the importance of flexibility and adaptability in programming to respond to the evolving context and priorities; the need for sustained advocacy and technical support for legislative reforms, coupled with public awareness-raising and mobilization; the value of strategic partnerships with civil society and the international community to leverage resources and influence policy; and the critical role of data and evidence in informing programme strategies, monitoring progress, and supporting policy advocacy.

Based on the evaluation findings, key recommendations for the next phase of *Sawasya* include:

1. Institutionalizing and scaling up successful models, such as the *Mizan* court management system and the one-stop centers for victims of violence, while ensuring their financial and operational sustainability through increased national ownership.
2. The need to intensify advocacy for the passage and implementation of key legislative reforms, such as the FPB and the Juvenile Protection Law, in close collaboration with civil society partners and the international community.

3. Strengthening the strategic focus on promoting gender-responsive justice and security services, including through the expansion of specialized courts and units for women and children.
4. Deepening engagement with civil society partners to promote legal empowerment, social accountability, and public demand for justice sector reforms, particularly at the grassroots level.
5. Enhancing the use of data and evidence to inform programme strategies, monitor progress, and support policy advocacy.
6. Developing a clear sustainability and exit strategy, in close consultation with national partners and donors, to ensure the continuity of key functions and services beyond the lifespan of the programme.

Conclusion

The complex and volatile political, economic, and social context in Palestine continues to pose significant challenges to the sustainability and impact of these efforts. As the programme enters its third phase, it will be crucial to build on the lessons learned, prioritize interventions that can deliver tangible and lasting improvements in the lives of Palestinians, and advocate for sustained political and financial support for justice sector reforms. This will require a continued commitment to partnership, innovation, and evidence-based programming, as well as a strategic focus on addressing the structural barriers to justice and equality in Palestine. With the right investments and collaborations, Sawasya III has the potential to make a transformative impact on the rule of law and access to justice in Palestine, contributing to a more peaceful, just, and inclusive society for all.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ADR	Alternative Dispute Resolution
A2D	Alternatives to Detention
AG	Attorney General
AGO	Attorney General's Office
CAT	Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
CBO	Community-Based Organization
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
COGAT	Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories
COM	Council of Ministers
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EJ	East Jerusalem
EUPOL COPPS	EU Police Coordinating Office for Palestinian Police Support
FJPD	Family and Juvenile Protection Department
FJPU	Family and Juvenile Protection Unit (PCP)
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GLC	Gender Legislative Committee
GPC	General Personnel Council
GoI	Government of Israel
GoP	Government of Palestine
GRM	Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism
HJC	High Judicial Council
ICHR	Independent Commission for Human Rights
IG	Inspector General (PCP)
IS	Internal Security (PCP)
JAL	Judicial Authority Law
JSS	Justice Sector Strategy
LAB	Legislative Advisory Bureau
LoA	Letter of Agreement
LHC	Legal Harmonization Committee
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MOH	Ministry of Health
MOI	Ministry of Interior
MOJ	Ministry of Justice
MOSD	Ministry of Social Development
MOWA	Ministry of Women's Affairs
OPT	Occupied Palestinian Territory
OSC	One Stop Centre

PA	Palestinian Authority
PBA	Palestinian Bar Association
PCBS	Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
PCP	Palestinian Civil Police
PG	Palestinian Government
PJI	Palestinian Judicial Institute
PMF	Palestinian Maintenance Fund
PMO	Prime Minister Office
PPMU	Planning and Project Management Unit
PSL	Personal Status Law
PwDs	People with disabilities
RAP	Results Action Plan
RRC	Rehabilitation and Reform Center
SJD	Supreme Judge Department
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
SRF	Strategic Results Framework
TOR	Terms of Reference
ToT	Training of trainers
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VAW	Violence Against Women
VAW SPPs	Specialized Public Prosecutors on Violence against Women
WPC	Women’s Protection Counsellors
WwDs	Women with disabilities

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DEDICATION

This report is dedicated to the memory of the more than 34,000² lives lost in Gaza since the outbreak of the conflict on 7 October 2023. Some of these people lost to us were colleagues, partners, and beneficiaries of the *Sawasya* programme.

We acknowledge the profound suffering and hardship endured by the people of Gaza during this tragic period. Our thoughts are with the families and loved ones of all those who have been affected by this devastating loss of life.

It is our sincere hope that a path to a just and lasting peace can be found, one that respects the rights, dignity, and security of all people in the region. Only through open and honest dialogue, understanding, and compromise can the cycles of violence and loss be broken.

We dedicate our ongoing work to supporting the resilience and strength of Palestinians as they strive to build a brighter future. May the memories of those lost serve as a powerful reminder of the urgent need for a resolution to the conflict that upholds human rights and enables all people to live in peace, safety, and prosperity.

² As of the time of writing, 1 May 2024.

I. Achievements

Outcome 1: Rule of law institutions are strengthened and reunified by legal, regulatory, and policy frameworks in line with international standards

Output 1.1: Key legislations are revised to strengthen the independence of the rule of law institutions and ensure their consistency with international standards



406,000+ clicks on women's rights advocacy content



Coordination mechanism established between Gender Support Teams

In 2018, *Sawasya* worked to strengthen the accessibility and sustainability of the *Al-Muqtafi* legal database, developed by Birzeit University's Institute of Law. The database was regularly updated, including the addition of 8 issues of the Palestinian Official Gazette, 91 laws, 12 amended legal provisions, and 165 legal principles derived from jurisprudence commentary.

Despite these efforts, the legal framework in Palestine continued to face challenges in fully aligning with international human rights standards, particularly CEDAW and the CRC. *Sawasya* maintained a focus on building the capacity of government and civil society actors to review and draft legislation through a gender-responsive lens, while also enhancing access to legislation and jurisprudence to promote transparency and accountability.

In 2019, key progress was made, with the adoption of two presidential decrees operationalizing elements of the CRC and CEDAW. The first decree increased the age of marriage to 18, while the second allowed women to open and manage bank accounts for their children.³ Important progress was also made on the Judicial Authority Law (JAL), with civil society and justice actors engaging in a dialogue on the ongoing revision process. Additionally, the "Gender Checklist" was launched, providing a methodology for drafting and revising legislation from a gender perspective.

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic hindered legislative progress, with no new laws amended or adopted. Priority was given to reviewing the latest draft of the Family Protection Bill (FPB), with legal analysis highlighting its lack of alignment with international standards. Around 65,000 citizens⁴ accessed social media content on the need to adopt the FPB and combat gender-based violence, led by a coalition of 17 CSOs. During that year, the program also continued to automate access to legislation and jurisprudence through the *Al-Muqtafi*

³ Prior to this, girls aged as young as 14 and seven months could enter in a marital relationship, while the minimum age was 16 for males.

⁴ Disaggregation unavailable.

database, which saw the addition of 246 new legal principles, 30 consolidated pieces of legislation, and 3,228 judgments.

In 2021, revisions were implemented to enhance the Juvenile Protection Law No. 4 of 2016, strengthening provisions for confidentiality and introducing case reviews at the conciliation and magistrate court levels. The share of women's representation in local election lists also increased by 30% following the introduction of quotas. However, the legal framework remained not fully aligned with international standards, particularly CEDAW. An important development was the publication of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in the official gazette,⁵ which meant that under Palestinian law, the convention was then applicable in Palestine.

To foster a comparative approach, *Sawasya* convened 32 legal practitioners (40% women) to discuss the compatibility of *Shari'a* law and human rights, examining how the evolution of *Fiqh*⁶ can inform Personal Status Law reform dialogue. An analytical report of the National Violence Survey was also initiated with the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) to offer insights and policy entry points. Work continued on expanding the *Al-Muqtafi* database, with 4,780 new judgments added, including 1,000 rulings by Islamic family courts.⁷

In 2022, progress was made on the legislative front, with the publication of the executive by-law for the Palestinian Child Law,⁸ introducing additional protection measures for children. The national referral system for women victims of violence was also comprehensively revised, and the national strategy on combating violence against women (VAW) for 2023-2029 was adopted. However, the legal framework continued to lack full alignment with international standards, particularly CEDAW.

The National Violence Survey Analytical report, finalized in 2022, showed that over 59% of ever-married Palestinian women were exposed to violence by their husbands. This underscored the urgency of increasing protection for women, as little progress was made on the FPB and Personal Status Law reform fronts. To form a better understanding of the real impediments facing progress in the work on the FPB, the programme prepared a socio-political analysis on these challenges which aimed to answer two main questions; 1) Why has the FPB not been passed?; and 2) What can be done to increase the likelihood of passage?

In relation to those questions, the socio-political analysis takes into consideration factors and dynamics affecting the development and endorsement of the FPB by looking at stakeholders' institutions, interests, individual interests, ideas, power relations, concerns,

⁵ Decree Law No. (25) of 2021 regarding the publication of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

⁶ The term "Fiqh" refers to Islamic jurisprudence.

⁷ The other 3,780 decisions were issued by Courts of Appeal in Hebron, Nablus, and Ramallah.

⁸ Executive Regulations for Protection Procedures and Granting Rights to Children No. (16) of 2022

risks, and opportunities. Key actionable recommendations based on the analysis to support the endorsement of a responsive FPB were issued and discussed with development partners and CSOs. The study will be used by the programme and its partners on advocacy for the FPB and gender justice agenda in general.

Furthermore, in line with the findings of the PCBS National Violence Survey, the programme developed a study on the Economic Costs of Violence Against Women in Palestine in 2022, to develop estimates on the cost of violence against women in Palestine and provide policy-level recommendations on key potential reform areas, including at the level of national policies, programming and budgeting.

In 2023, despite the publication of the Mediation Guidelines for Children in the Official Palestinian Gazette, only limited legislative results were witnessed. The ministerial committee finalised a draft mediation law and also drafted amendments to the arbitration law. Due to the war in Gaza, government work has been seriously affected. It is hoped the issue will be picked up in 2024. Additional effort in this regard was with the PCP to support the Palestinian Civil Police in strengthening the legal framework governing police work by reviewing the police law and previously developed Police Law regulations, instructions, and bylaw.

To address the lack of progress on legislation, *Sawasya's* civil society partners widely disseminated video/TV and interactive content on key bills like the Family Protection Bill (FPB) and the Personal Status Laws (PSLs), as well as labor rights and the rights of women with disabilities. This reached over 406,000 clicks. To further build public support, seven billboards were positioned across three governorates and an awareness manual on the FPB was produced.

Recognizing the importance of grassroots engagement, *Sawasya's* CSO partners reached out to 120 women in Qalqilya and Hebron with the support of 38 volunteers (84% women). Additionally, 25 volunteers (88% women) led a protest outside the Prime Minister's Office demanding the prompt adoption of the FPB. This was complemented by 20 volunteers (95% women) accessing a three-day advocacy and lobbying training where they designed interventions for their communities. Moreover, 137 media professionals (75% women) participated in workshops on legislation protective of children's and women's rights, while 121 CSO members and academics (72% women) took part in roundtable discussions on the challenges affecting women's and children's access to justice in 2023.

Aware of the need to strengthen institutional responses, *Sawasya* continued to support the Gender Units at the High Judicial Council, Ministry of Justice, and Attorney General's Office (AGO) in 2023. This included the development of annual work plans and a coordination framework, as well as the establishment of a bi-monthly coordination mechanism through Gender Support Teams. To accompany this, 54 staff (59% women) accessed capacity building on developing gender-responsive indicators. Furthermore, the AGO Gender Unit

spearheaded a gender review of the new Justice Sector Strategy (2024-2029), with 25 justice sector representatives (72% women) attending a joint workshop on gender mainstreaming.

Output 1.2: Evidence-based planning and policy development in the justice and security sectors are strengthened



Justice strategy national team established



Priority policy areas identified for next policy cycle

In 2018, *Sawasya II* provided tailored support to the Prime Minister's Office's General Secretariat to establish a General Directorate for Monitoring and Evaluation (GD/ME). This led to the development of a unified Strategic Results Framework (SRF) reflective of the National Policy Agenda's (NPA) policy goals and interventions, as well as 5 sectoral results action plans (RAPs) including for the justice and security sectors. The program organized a validation workshop with representatives from 7 key justice and security institutions⁹ as well as from the Ministry of Infrastructure, the Ministry of National Economy, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Health to collect inputs and validate the framework¹⁰ to ensure their inputs were properly integrated.

To accompany the SRF's institutionalization, *Sawasya II* supported capacity building for M&E focal points through 5 coaching sessions. It also conducted an assessment on the justice sector's M&E and planning capacities, which recommended the development of standardized training courses and planning SOPs covering all 7 justice institutions. These efforts were critical steps towards better governance and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs or 2030 Agenda).

In 2019, the operationalization of the SRF by the PMO represented a key milestone towards systematic reporting against the targets of the National Policy Agenda for 2017-2022 (NPA). *Sawasya* provided tailored support to ensure the transition went smoothly after a government reshuffle. This included work to automate M&E processes, with coaching sessions for the Attorney General's Office and High Judicial Council staff. The Palestinian National School of Administration (PSNA) also developed its first standardized training program¹¹ for M&E and planning staff across the 7 justice institutions.

To promote "putting citizens first", the 7 justice institutions developed a comprehensive outreach plan and launched a unified communication platform on Facebook in 2020. This

⁹ The 7 justice institutions include the Ministry of Justice, the High Judicial Council, the Attorney's General Office, the Supreme Judge Department, the Legislative Advisory Bureau, the Palestinian Judicial Institute and the Constitutional Court.

¹⁰ On this occasion, the participants suggested the completion of reporting activities before the issuance of the budget forecast. The comment was duly integrated into the M&E implementation guidelines.

¹¹ Implementation started in January 2020.

allowed over 244,000 citizens (30% women) to directly engage on content related to judicial work. The program also supported the development of emergency response plans by key institutions to address gaps in protecting women from gender-based violence during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2021, the biannual PCBS "Rule of Law and Access to Justice" survey showed considerable improvements in public trust and satisfaction with the police and judiciary compared to 2018. This built on enhanced M&E systems, including the piloting of automated reporting at the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) and High Judicial Council (HJC) to track progress against policy targets. The planning and project management community of practice across justice institutions was also strengthened through standardized PNSA training.

Efforts to make policy development more accountable continued, with the Outreach Campaign Committee resuming work on the second phase of the unified media campaign in 2022. Research was also initiated on the impact of violence on women activists' access to justice. Monitoring and implementation of the 2030 Agenda focused on integrating the Administrative Courts into the SDG 16 national team and informing the forthcoming justice sector strategy. *(for more information, see section below)*



Photo 2: Snapshot of the Palestine Justice Sector Campaign Facebook Page, established in previous years to engage and inform the public about the workings of the justice sector. (October 2023). @Sawasya

In 2023, the new Justice Sector Strategy (2024-2029) sought to minimize implementation gaps through institution-specific projects that integrate resource mobilization. The Outreach Campaign Committee also reconvened for a new joint campaign, which initial analysis showed had significant public engagement. Research on the impact of violence on women activists' access to justice was ongoing, with a focus on displacement, GBV, poverty, and disability.

Monitoring and implementation of SDG 16[+]

Throughout the lifetime of this phase of the programme, Sawasya played a key role in building the capacity of the SDG 16 national team, facilitating their participation in international events, and supporting the localization of SDG 16 within national policies and institutions. This helped establish SDG 16 as a unifying platform for the rule of law and institutional development efforts across the State of Palestine.

In 2018, *Sawasya II* supported the SDG 16 working group led by the MOJ. This included enabling the participation of the national team's lead in the Istanbul Innovation Days¹² to learn from others' experiences on SDG 16 implementation and monitoring. *Sawasya* also agreed to recruit a coordinator to assist the working group in developing an implementation plan.

The formation of the fully functioning SDG 16 national team in 2019 was a key milestone, providing a unified platform for institutions, civil society, and academia across the State of Palestine to advance institutional building. The team, with support from the Palestinian Central Board of Statistics (PCBS), worked to further localize SDG 16 targets within national planning processes.¹³ It also set up sub-groups on access to justice, anti-corruption, and institutional development.

In 2020, despite COVID-19 constraints, the national team finalized an SDG 16 survey by the Global Alliance for Reporting Progress on Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies and provided training on SDG 16 to 18 members of the justice institution Planning and Project Management Units (61% women). The training material was incorporated into the PNSA's standardized course offerings.

Work continued in 2021 through 2023 to operationalize SDG 16[+] within policy frameworks, including by ensuring the administrative court system was integrated into the national team and working groups. Support was also provided for a strategic planning exercise to further streamline SDG domestication. This aimed to further strengthen the coherence of SDG 16 implementation efforts.

¹² “The Istanbul Innovation Days (IID) have become a well-known annual gathering of partners to explore and accelerate organizational learning about emerging trends and innovative approaches to development and policy making. For UNDP, IID have emerged as a central R&D mechanism to help rethink and challenge our work continuously and build a new generation of services with and for our partners and clients by incentivizing emerging initiatives and experiments around strategic issues.”

<https://www.innovationdays.istanbul>

¹³ With regard to localization and monitoring of all SDG indicators, the PCBS – in close collaboration with *Sawasya* - developed baselines for indicators and adapted its data management structure to make a more strategic use of institutionally produced data with the view of supporting informed reporting. To make the initiative sustainable, a ‘Records and Statistical Monitoring’ database was established with the aim of collecting and formatting statistics extracted from administrative records of public institutions and to combine them with survey-related data. For more information, see the [PCBS's page](#) relating to SDG indicators.

Output 1.3: West Bank and Gaza Rule of law institutions are reunified



National Transitional Justice Strategy developed



National conference on transitional justice held

The stalled reconciliation process between the West Bank-based Government of Palestine and the de facto authority in the Gaza Strip has severely affected the country's rule of law sector and negatively impacted prospects for institutional reunification. Cognizant of the limited window of opportunity, the *Sawasya II* programme devised a 'politically smart' approach to support securing a unified civic space for engagement in the reconciliation process and provide evidence-based advocacy.

In 2018, this materialized in the publication of a report entitled "Necessity v. Expediency: Transitional Justice in Palestine" which provided in-depth legal analysis and recommendations for an inclusive reconciliation process. The report encouraged civil society organizations (CSOs) to take a leading role through advocacy campaigns, monitoring the transitional justice process, and capacity building for youth leaders. *Sawasya II* organized technical workshops with 51 CSO representatives to discuss operationalizing these recommendations.

Building on this, in 2019 over 380 representatives (33% women) from 45 grassroots organizations across Gaza joined with West Bank civil society to advance the stalled reconciliation process. Consultations led CSOs to prioritize developing technical solutions for policymakers, focusing on accountability and transitional justice. Three position papers were produced, which *Sawasya* supported enhancing with international expertise and public opinion survey data.

Despite the lack of concrete reunification policies or plans during 2020-2022, civil society efforts continued. A report entitled "Civil Society Organizations: Vision on Integrating Transitional Justice Mechanisms in the Reconciliation Process" was produced. The production of the report was part of a larger policy dialogue on transitional justice that brought together 546 CSO representatives and other actors (39 % women).¹⁴ This report was made up of four position papers on prosecution, reparations, vetting, and institutional reform. This laid the groundwork for developing a national transitional justice strategy and establishing a civil society-led community coalition for transitional justice.

In 2023, a preliminary draft of the national transitional justice strategy was produced following a National Conference on Transitional Justice attended by a wide range of stakeholders. This was complemented by a law school competition on transitional justice hosted by *Sawasya's* CSO partner. While concrete reunification progress remains elusive,

¹⁴ Representing 92 CSOs.

the programme has consistently supported civil society initiatives to advocate for accountability, truth-seeking, and reform as part of an inclusive reconciliation process.

Output 1.4: Advocacy on strengthening rule of law institutions and promoting human rights is reinforced



4,932 criminal trial sessions monitored

Over the 2018-2023 project cycle, *Sawasya II* consistently scaled up its support to civil society in order to strengthen their capacity for effective monitoring of the justice and security sector, as well as develop evidence-based advocacy strategies. In 2018, the programme organized two workshops with a total of 65 CSO representatives from across the West Bank and Gaza. The aim was to harmonize the working methodologies of the various civil society coalitions operating in Palestine and produce concrete recommendations for strengthened monitoring and advocacy vis-à-vis duty bearers in the justice and security sector.

Key recommendations formulated by the participants emphasized the need to further enhance information sharing and coordination around common priorities, both between and within coalitions. Participants also stressed the importance of systematically collecting evidence on the functioning of the justice sector, including through the implementation of court monitoring initiatives. These workshops were also an opportunity to underscore the value of evidence-based advocacy and discuss approaches to ensuring the financial sustainability of coalition work. Furthermore, participants highlighted the criticality of better reaching out to marginalized communities in order to mobilize grassroots pressure for political change.

Congruent with these workshop outcomes, *Sawasya II* subsequently supported two specialized 2-day training sessions on court monitoring principles and methodologies. A total of 50 civil society representatives from the West Bank and Gaza, as well as members of the Palestinian Bar Association (PBA) and the Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR), participated in these sessions. The training aimed to equip participants with the necessary skills and tools to effectively monitor court proceedings and leverage the resulting evidence for advocacy on judicial reform. The vast majority of participants (97.7%) affirmed the relevance of this court monitoring training to further promote judicial reform and efficient court services in their line of work.

Building on this foundation in 2019, a network of 9 civil society organizations,¹⁵ all partners of the national coalition for the reform and protection of the judiciary, embarked on the first-ever large-scale court monitoring initiative in the State of Palestine. Over the course of the

¹⁵ A total of nine court monitors were deployed (1/organization) over the course of the one-year pilot.

year, they monitored more than 10,600 criminal court hearings, covering 72% of cases in the West Bank¹⁶ and 28% in the Gaza Strip. This pioneering effort not only enhanced civil society's "watchdog role", which was increasingly acknowledged by authorities, but also provided valuable empirical evidence to drive advocacy for judicial reform and compliance with international fair trial standards.

This was achieved despite contextual challenges, such as the dissolution of the Grand Criminal Court in June 2019, which obliged monitors to redeploy across multiple locations in the West Bank. Limitations were also placed on the monitoring of cases involving juveniles, as a general authorization could not be obtained due to confidentiality requirements. Consequently, only 260 such cases could be monitored, in the cities of Ramallah, Nablus, and Gaza, where specific judicial authorizations were granted. Based on the evaluation of this one-year pilot, *Sawasya II* determined that further investment would be needed to sustainably secure civil society's access to the courts and refine the monitoring instruments.

Concurrent with these court monitoring efforts, in 2019 civil society also opened an unprecedented nationwide dialogue with citizens on justice sector reform. More than 280 participants across the West Bank were consulted on how, in their opinion, access to justice and the effectiveness of the judiciary could be improved. This was a significant milestone, as only 4.1% of the general public were previously aware of the existence of the Palestinian Justice and Security Sector (JSS),¹⁷ and local actors and civil society had traditionally been excluded from contributing to the development of relevant policies and plans.

The citizens who participated in the dialogue stressed that comprehensive justice reform should entail the unification of Palestinian legislation, as well as the acceleration of the reconciliation process between the West Bank and Gaza. They also emphasized that any reform process should be citizen-led, involving a committee composed of legal professionals, academics, and civil society representatives, with a mandate to prevent undue interference by the executive branch. Regarding access to justice specifically, the dialogue highlighted the need to establish an independent body for the provision of legal aid, with clear quality and accountability standards. Participants also stressed the importance of investing additional resources to optimize the Palestinian Judicial Institute (PJI)/e-Justice system and revise regulatory frameworks to address gaps in judicial notification processes.

Building on this citizen engagement, in 2020 *Sawasya II* supported the publication of the first two comprehensive court monitoring reports¹⁸ covering the entire State of Palestine. Drawing on the work of 9 researchers (6 of whom were women) from a 24-member CSO

¹⁶ To the exclusion of EJ.

¹⁷ According to the 'Rule of Law and Access to Justice Survey' conducted by the PCBS in 2018.

¹⁸ Two analytical reports on were produced during the reporting period entitled "Criminal Trials before the Serious Crimes Court and First Instance Courts in the West Bank and Gaza Strip" and "Trials before the Juvenile Courts in the West Bank and Gaza Strip."

coalition,¹⁹ the reports analyzed more than 12,900 criminal hearings and identified key bottlenecks hindering access to justice. The main recommendations called for enhancing the transparency of court proceedings, addressing capacity gaps in the justice sector, strengthening oversight and accountability mechanisms, and improving women's access to justice.

Complementing the court monitoring work, in 2021 a coalition of CSOs also produced an advocacy report based on consultations with over 240 citizens, primarily from the Gaza Strip.²⁰ These consultations, which built upon the 2019 and 2020 nationwide dialogue, provided an additional platform for the public to freely express their views on justice sector reform. The report's recommendations echoed many of the citizen-driven priorities identified the previous year, including the need for an independent legal aid body, optimization of digital tools like the PJI/e-Justice system, and revision of regulatory frameworks to address notification gaps.

In 2021, further to the findings of the nationwide consultations involving 700 legal professionals and civil society actors, a CSO coalition developed a comprehensive justice reform advocacy strategy. Aligned with this, the second phase of the court monitoring project was launched, shifting the approach from a hearing-based to a case-based methodology. This incorporated specialized indicators on violence against women and child rights, developed in line with international standards and with support from expert partners. Despite COVID-19-related challenges that delayed some reporting, all monitors were able to access tailored training, particularly on gender and child justice aspects.

Court monitoring efforts continued in 2022 and 2023, with 3,383 and 4,932 criminal sessions observed respectively across the West Bank²¹ and Gaza. The data collected revealed notable disparities in crime patterns between the two regions, with the West Bank seeing a prevalence of financial crimes (33%) and Gaza more focused on drug-related offenses (45%). Preliminary findings from a forthcoming report on gender-based violence cases by the CSO coalition also highlighted high rates of informal reconciliation outside the formal justice system, as well as knowledge gaps among judges regarding the provision of legal information to survivors.

To enhance the efficiency and timeliness of the court monitoring work, IT automation was introduced in 2023. This streamlines data collection, processing, and analysis, ensuring the production of reports that can more quickly inform evidence-based advocacy. The court monitoring data, combined with the insights from the previous national consultations, has had a positive influence on the development of a justice sector reform advocacy strategy.

¹⁹ The coalition is composed of 24 CSOs; however, *Sawasya* partnered with 9 of them on this project.

²⁰ Two consultations were conducted in late January 2021 in the cities of Gaza and Khan Yunis, covering all five governorates of the Gaza Strip (i.e., North Gaza, Gaza City, Deir El Balah, Khan Yunis, Rafah).

²¹ Excluding East Jerusalem.

This is anticipated to be a key focus under the upcoming *Sawasya III* programme, building on the solid foundation established over the past five years.

Throughout this period, *Sawasya II* has consistently supported civil society in playing a pivotal role as a watchdog and change agent in the justice sector. By steadily strengthening their capacity for rigorous monitoring, evidence-based analysis, and coordinated advocacy, the programme has contributed to enhanced accountability, transparency, and responsiveness of rule of law institutions in the State of Palestine. As the initiative transitions to its next phase, the robust civil society-driven reform agenda developed under *Sawasya II* will remain a crucial driver of progress towards a more just, equitable, and accessible justice system for all Palestinians.

Outcome 2: Service provision by rule of law institutions is effective, accountable, and inclusive

Output 2.1: Quality and efficiency of security and justice services provided to the Palestinian citizens are improved

	758,297 marriage and divorce certificated digitized		9270 Palestinians reporting misconduct by the police
	Dozens complaints filed with HJC		2,119 Palestinians reached out to the helpline operated by FJPU
	Unified sign language legal dictionary developed		Toxicology laboratory operationalized
	Child protection diploma accredited by MOEHE		Police accountability strategy developed
	ADR digital applications developed		25 e-Learning courses produced
	Mizan III structure and system settings developed		e-Inspection developers assigned to system development
	Mediation guidelines for children published in Official Palestinian Gazette		Guidelines on child-sensitive inspection initiated

Support inclusive and accountable policing

In 2018-2019, *Sawasya II* supported the Palestinian Civil Police (PCP) in operationalizing its community policing strategy. This included organizing workshops to develop a 2019 action plan, supporting PCP members' participation in a regional conference on community policing in Tunis, and assisting in establishing a joint PCP-CSO accountability task force. An assessment was also conducted on the effectiveness of the current PCP accountability system.



Photo 3: CSO-police taskforce working on the drafting of the police accountability strategy. ©Sawasya

In 2020, despite delays due to COVID-19, progress was made in rolling out the community policing pilot in the Jericho governorate, including developing unified terms of reference for local advisory committees. A workshop was held with the PCP to strategize on incentivizing demand for community policing services. The PCP unified disciplinary code was endorsed by the Ministry of Interior (MoI), and the PCP-CSO accountability taskforce was reactivated.

In 2021, an online complaint mechanism was operationalized by the PCP's Bureau of Grievances and Human Rights, allowing citizens to report alleged police misconduct. The PCP-CSO accountability taskforce continued its work, although progress on community policing services was limited due to lack of political will and staff turnover. Public trust in the PCP increased by 36.4% compared to 2018.

In 2022, significant progress was made in enhancing citizen-centered and accountable policing in Palestine. The online complaint mechanism within the PCP was operationalized and expanded, allowing citizens to report alleged wrongdoing or misconduct by the police through an accessible online portal. The joint PCP-CSO accountability taskforce continued to contribute to the review of law enforcement measures and propose improvements in police performance and transparency. The Programme also achieved a 22% increase in the enforcement of court decisions in Area C, demonstrating the validity of an approach based on improving access to services in most marginalized areas. Despite a 65% increase in citizen awareness of the community policing strategy in the pilot governorate of Jericho, the lack of buy-in from PCP's senior management hindered progress in rolling out community policing services.

In 2023, the online complaint mechanism was fully launched, with 1484 complaints received reporting alleged instances of wrongdoing or misconduct by the police. A police accountability strategy for 2023-2027 was developed in collaboration with the PCP-CSO taskforce. Job descriptions and SOPs for accountability units were centralized and disseminated. A study visit to Turkey laid the groundwork for learning networks and partnerships on police accountability. Work continued with the PCP-CSO taskforce to review law enforcement measures during COVID-19 and propose improvements. Despite a 65% increase in awareness of the community policing strategy in the Jericho pilot area, no services were rolled out due to a lack of buy-in from PCP senior management.

Unfortunately, there was never a clear agreement within the PCP about what constituted “community policing”. As such, there was opposition from key managers within the PCP to the pilot which made it impossible to move forward with the concept and required *Sawasya* to terminate the pilot and cease the plan to replicate the pilot in other governorates.

Support for fair and equitable judicial procedures



Photo 4: the two experts showing how to operate the LC-MS/MS machine in line with the ISO standards. ©IP

The *Sawasya I* programme achieved substantial results in supporting fair and equitable judicial procedures, including the development of e-services across the justice chain and the establishment of a Unified Warrant System through the expansion and customization of *Mizan II*. Despite these achievements, the programme identified enforcement gaps,

particularly in the Hebron Governorate, the most populated area in the West Bank. Therefore in 2018, in line with the 2016 Joint UN Strategy for Hebron,²² *Sawasya II* adopted a human-rights-based approach that considers the complexities of the area and pays specific attention to the most vulnerable segments of Palestinian society. A comprehensive assessment conducted by *Sawasya II* revealed significant challenges in Hebron Governorate,²³ such as a lack of human resources at the courts' level, with a gap of over 60 judges,²⁴ resulting in the highest caseload per judge in the West Bank, and a lower ratio of prosecutors to inhabitants compared to the rest of the West Bank.²⁵ The assessment also highlighted the general lack of knowledge of the Justice Sector Strategy (JSS) 2017-2022 and its goals and targets among local stakeholders due to centralized planning processes at the High Judicial Council (HJC) level. To address these challenges, the assessment suggests considering Hebron Governorate as a pilot for local courts' participation in the budget and work plan development process for 2020-2022, organizing focus group discussions to inform the upgrade of *Mizan II* in line with newly issued laws, and holding a workshop with relevant stakeholders during the first quarter of 2019 to discuss the findings and propose targeted interventions to improve the quality and efficiency of security and justice services in Hebron Governorate, taking into account the specific context within which Palestinian institutions operate in the area.

²² Joint UN Strategy for Hebron (2016), UNSCO, available at

https://unsco.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/joint_un_strategy_for_hebron.pdf

²³ The assessment included Hebron City court (conciliation and first instance), Dura court (conciliation and first instance), Halhul court (conciliation) and Yatta court (conciliation) as well as the 6 family courts under Hebron Governorate's jurisdiction (Hebron City court, Dura court, Halhul court, Yatta court, Al-Zahiria court, Tarqumia court). Hebron Governorate's 11 police stations were also part of the assessment (Noba PS, Izan PS, Sa'er PS, Halhoul PS, Hebron City PS, Hebron Old City PS, Banu Na'im PS, Dura PS, Yatta PS, Alsamou' PS, Al-Zahiria PS).

²⁴ 30 judges and 175 various administrative staff are deployed in the Hebron Governorate. This is considerably under the 2017-2022 JSS target that stands at 13 judges/100,000 inhabitants, the current Hebron Governorate ratio being 711,223 (2016 census) individuals/30 judges.

²⁵ Caseload by judge by WB's governorate in 2017: Hebron (651), Nablus (526), Ramallah (456), Bethlehem (401), Jenin (347), Tulkarem (332), Jericho (233), Qalqiliya (214) (source: assessment)

In 2019, the Hebron Governorate pilot's action plan for 2019-2021 was approved to address high court backlog and poor enforcement of justice decisions. The main service delivery bottlenecks in the governorate: high court backlog and poor enforcement of justice decisions were the focus of the pilot. The HJC took important steps towards automating the current notification system, which is the nexus between these two challenges, to allow for its rapid rollout in the pilot governorate. A draft law was submitted to the President's Office to give legal force to electronic notification modalities, laying the groundwork for the generalization of the initiative at the national level. This change was initiated through a participatory approach involving regular and family court staff, judicial police, and notification officers, who learned from best practices in the MENA region through workshops organized by the Programme. The bottom-up participatory approach also guided discussions and the identification of priority areas for the development of the pilot's action plan, with most of 2019 dedicated to securing the buy-in of all enforcement actors at the local and national levels. It was planned that in 2020, justice staff from the eleven West Bank governorates, including Hebron, would formulate recommendations on the upcoming budgeting exercises to be integrated at the central level, and efforts would focus on ensuring the pilot is on track with its deliverables, including upgrading the *Mizan II* and Adalah case management systems and making legal aid more accessible to the public.

In 2020, an e-Notification feature for lawyers was developed in the *Mizan II* court management software, and 150 lawyers received training. The HJC opted for an in-person training programme delivered by Jordanian High Court judges, which was postponed to 2021 due to COVID-19. The implementation of the model court system was also postponed due to the pandemic.

In 2021, a single-judge pilot court was established in Ramallah to settle low-value civil claims, and an assessment was planned for 2022. Appellate courts' technical offices were further operationalized by providing equipment. The PJI's e-Learning portal was expanded with 18 new courses, and all judges accessed continuous training. Judges also received training on administrative justice following legislative amendments which created stand-alone administrative courts rather than benches within pre-existing courts. Work began on improving evidentiary processes, including assessing the forensic medicine unit's toxicology laboratory needs.

In 2022, a new volume of legal precedence was issued, and the single-judge pilot court model was expanded to other areas in the West Bank. Solid evidentiary processes were developed, including refurbishing evidence rooms in public prosecution offices and operationalizing the MOJ's toxicology laboratory with experts from Jordan's toxicology lab. Efforts to enhance accessibility for PwD included renovating court and prosecution offices and developing a unified legal sign language dictionary. Capacity building for judicial staff focused on strategic planning, management, budgeting, and human resources was also carried out.

In 2023, five laboratory technicians (40% women) were trained on utilizing advanced toxicological evidence analysis equipment. Data entry support was provided for developing a disposal system for seized items and court registries. Four additional e-Courses were produced, focusing on criminal law, legal English, children’s rights, and financial crimes which brings the total of e-Learning courses to 25 over the entirety of the programme. Detention cells in courts and prosecution offices were refurbished to meet international standards. Efforts continued to enhance accessibility for individuals with disabilities and improve the Palestinian Maintenance Fund's capacity to monitor and plan legal aid needs.

Support to inspection and prison monitoring mechanisms

In 2018, *Sawasya II* organized workshops with inspection departments to assess judicial inspection practices and introduce global best practices. An assessment was conducted, and recommendations included unifying inspection functions, developing a unified code of conduct, and establishing an online complaint system between the HJC and AGO. A workshop on detention monitoring was also held to raise awareness of international standards and clarify roles among government stakeholders. Upon completion of the workshop, the participants were able to formulate recommendations that included the need for enhanced synergies between the prosecution and the judiciary (including joint visits), increased frequency of visits, enlarged inspection coverage to all detention facilities (not only correction and rehabilitation centers) and enhanced follow-up processes in adherence to the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture. The participants also proposed to align monitoring templates with international standards, with a particular focus on the detention conditions of women and juveniles.

In 2019, human rights were further mainstreamed in prosecution work through the creation of standard operating procedures (SOPs) for the AGO Human Rights Unit and training for prosecutors. Important progress was made on this front, with the endorsement of a unified template for prison monitoring,²⁶ which is anticipated to be linked with *Mizan II* and the AGO’s monitoring and evaluation system. The instrument is in adherence to the standards enacted in the OPCAT as well as in the Nelson Mandela,²⁷ Beijing²⁸ and Bangkok Rules²⁹ and was tested for use by the AGO, HJC and MOJ, all mandated to conduct inspection activities.³⁰

In 2020, prison monitoring processes were digitalized, and a user manual was developed to strengthen accountability and reporting. AGO Human Rights Unit staff were equipped with

²⁶ The AGO/HRU is tasked with inspecting detention facilities that fall under the jurisdiction of public prosecution’s oversight.

²⁷ UN Economic and Social Council (1957), United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.

²⁸ UN General Assembly (1985), United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice.

²⁹ UN General Assembly (2010), United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-Custodial Measures for Women Offenders.

³⁰ As per the Criminal Procedures Code (article 26) and the Reform & Rehabilitation Centers Law.

electronic tablets and software training was planned for 2021. Unified court inspection procedures were established and operationalized, and inspectors attended online training. Due to COVID-19, the development of new *Mizan II* modules for complaint processing was postponed to 2021.

In 2021, the operationalization of the Nelson Mandela and Bangkok rules at the AGO Human Rights Unit was a significant achievement. All 24 staff members received training on effective, accountable, and inclusive service provision for women in detention, focusing on responsive mechanisms and oversight standards for Rehabilitation and Reform Centers (RRCs) and addressing the lack of support female offenders experience due to societal stigma.

The work done in this area is essential for enhancing public trust in the judicial system's ability to offer fair trial avenues for defendants in criminal cases. Progress was made with a 12% increase in the proportion of individuals who have confidence that they would be fairly tried if they came into contact with the criminal justice system. The digitalization of monitoring processes was further advanced, allowing for immediate synchronization of information during prison visits and rapid corrective measures. Training was provided to 22 HJC staff and AGO Human Rights Unit members on the use of the newly rolled-out software, and tablets were provided to support the digitalization process.

The AGO Human Rights Unit's role as a key policy conduit for mainstreaming international law obligations was strengthened with the development of SOPs for investigating torture cases in line with international conventions and protocols. The unit's members participated in capacity building to operationalize the new procedures quickly. Efforts continued to mainstream human rights principles in the work of justice institutions, with the HJC conducting a needs assessment that revealed the necessity of establishing a dedicated Human Rights Unit.

The digitalization of the complaint mechanism at the HJC and AGO levels was another significant development, aiming to strengthen the current accountability framework by systematizing the review of complaints and promoting transparent and secure ways for citizens to access information. This support is critical, considering that the proportion of unsentenced detainees stands at around 50% between 2018 and 2020. Efforts were also made to strengthen court inspection mechanisms across the judicial chain, with the development of a joint inspection manual and training for inspection departments.

In 2022, a draft manual was developed to institutionalize the use of the e-Prison monitoring system at the MOJ, emphasizing the identification of degrading treatment,³¹ prevention of

³¹ See inter alia Rule 2 of the Nelson Mandela Rules, UN General Assembly (2015), "The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners", A/RES/70/175, New York.

abuse,³² and access to healthcare for prisoners.³³ MOJ Human Rights Unit members were trained on the manual and reporting templates. At the AGO, a yearly review of the prison monitoring manual was conducted, and monitoring templates were planned to be updated in 2023 based on identified gaps. An e-Complaint system was launched by the HJC, receiving 102 complaints, but requires upgrading to accommodate children's needs. Steps were taken towards digitalizing inspection mechanisms, with judges and prosecutors participating in study tours and conferences on e-Inspection. Work began on developing a joint AGO/HJC e-Inspection system linked to the *Mizan* court management software.

In 2023, the MOJ e-Prison monitoring manual continued to be operationalized, with a focus on effectively handling complaints from detainees. Sixteen MOJ Human Rights Unit members were trained in the manual and reporting templates. Development of the joint AGO/HJC e-Inspection system progressed, with a team of developers assigned to the project. A joint study tour to Kosovo took place to support the implementation of court inspection SOPs. The HJC e-Complaint system received 59 complaints, and work is ongoing to upgrade it for child accessibility. Efforts are being made to improve prosecutorial planning capacity and support the MOJ legal department in reviewing bills against international standards.

Support to enforcement and notification mechanisms

With 87.5% of lawyers considering that backlog of enforcement of judgments is imputable to a shortage of staff and 71.3% to the complexity of procedures³⁴, considerable work and resources need to be invested to improve the immediate enforcement environment. To address these major shortcomings in 2019, enforcement stakeholders across the justice chain joined forces under the framework of a unique action plan for 2019-2020. The latter intends to take forward the recommendations of the judicial police assessment conducted under *Sawasya I* and updated this year, which suggests, *i.a.*, to bridge the current legislative gaps in relation to the enforcement of warrants³⁵ and to allocate more resources to strengthen cooperation. The action plan was formulated on the occasion of a workshop, facilitated by *Sawasya* and the PCP, that brought together representatives of enforcement departments of the HJC, AGO, Supreme Judge Department (SJD) as well as the President's Office, MOI, MOJ, EUPOL COPPS, DCAF and GIZ. The action plan was developed based on the revision of the judicial police assessment conducted in 2019 and on the main results of

³² See inter alia Rule 4 of the Bangkok Rules, UN General Assembly (2010), "The United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders", A/RES/65/229, New York.

³³ See inter alia Rule 27 of the Bangkok Rules, *Id.* Furthermore, a strategy and action plan were developed in 2021 to support the work of the National Committee on International Humanitarian Law.

³⁴ PCBS (2018), 'Rule of Law and Access to Justice Survey'. Only 46.3 % of them imputing the current situation to the constraints brought about by the occupation.

³⁵ The judicial police was established following the issuance by the Government of Palestine, in adherence to article 68 of the Palestinian Basic Law, of the Decision No. 99 of 2005 establishing and regulating the work of the judicial police. However, Decision No. 99 of 2005 does not task the judicial police with performing judicial officers' duties as set out in article 22 of the Criminal Procedure Law No. 3 of 2001. Furthermore, the Criminal Procedures Law No. 3 of 2001 does not grant judicial officers, or any specific authority, with the power of executing judicial warrants, thereby compromising the legality of currently applied procedures.

the PCBS ‘*Rule of Law and Access to Justice*’ survey relating to enforcement. Moving forward, work will focus on supporting the action plan’s rollout and on raising the public’s awareness on penal consequences it is exposed to, when non-complying with enforcement decisions.

In 2020, enforcement rates in the Hebron pilot area further increased, with a 228% enforcement rate in family courts, despite challenges posed by COVID-19 and the suspension of security and civilian coordination between Israel and Palestine.³⁶

In an effort to provide continuous support, 26 enforcement department staff (27% women) were trained on the use of the *Mizan II* case management system, and family and regular courts in Hebron received additional hardware capacity. The judicial police in Hebron were given six electronic tablets with support from *Sawasya*, enabling them to deliver warrants or judgment decisions to residents in the pilot area, regardless of their location, by digitally accessing notifications through the *Mizan II* system. The HJC and AGO databases were further linked with the judicial police in 2020 through the development and enhancement of features in the *Mizan II* technology. To make the notification of decisions more efficient in areas served by the Government of Palestine, regular and family courts in Hebron received 12 electric bikes from the Programme, as notifiers previously relied on unreliable means of transportation, resulting in only 30-40% of the daily notification demand being met.³⁷ A joint Facebook campaign by justice institutions and the judicial police reached over 936,000 Palestinians (32% women) with video content on enforcement under COVID-19 and over 305,000 (31% women) with content on the work of the judicial police. In 2021, efforts will focus on complementing GIZ's work to enhance the judicial police digitalized system (Epsilon) to systematically collect data on main enforcement bottlenecks, which was initially planned for 2020 but postponed due to the six-month suspension of security and civilian coordination.

In 2021, the enforcement of judgments by first instance courts in the Hebron governorate (pilot area) increased by 56% compared to 2020 and 8% compared to 2019, while conciliation courts witnessed a slight decrease of 7% and 2%, respectively. In non-pilot areas, progress has been slower, with decreases of 15% and 25% in the enforcement of first instance court judgments compared to 2020 and 2019. A preliminary assessment by the HJC showed a 40% increase in delivery by notifiers who accessed a motorcycle and a 25% increase by those equipped with electric bikes in 2020, leading to regular courts and the Judicial Police in Hebron receiving six motorcycles from the Programme. The Hebron pilot approach was expanded to the West Bank governorates of Ramallah and Nablus, where the Judicial Police accessed equipment to create more conducive working conditions for enforcement staff. Seven additional motorcycles were procured to improve notifiers'

³⁶ An enforcement rate of 100% would imply that all cases are being enforced that were adjudicated by the court in the year. A 228% rate implies that significant progress was made in addressing the backlog of enforcements.

³⁷ *Sawasya II* (2019), “The District of Hebron: Access to Justice, Courts and Public Prosecution Assessment”.

mobility and will be delivered to the HJC in 2022 with support from *Sawasya*. An IT expert was recruited by the AGO and HJC to develop additional features to better manage the exchange of warrant information and judgments, with work expected to be completed in 2022, along with the communication campaign on enforcement work under the Outreach Campaign Committee.

In 2022, enforcement rates in the Hebron pilot area increased by 11% for conciliation courts but decreased by 51% for first-instance courts compared to 2021, largely due to court work interruptions and strikes. However, criminal case enforcement increased by 27%. A task team from the HJC was deployed to East Jerusalem to support notification backlog reduction, and nine motorcycles were delivered to the HJC and Judicial Police to improve notifiers' mobility. Electronic linkages between courts, prosecutorial services, and the judicial police were strengthened through programming support and office rehabilitation.

In 2023, enforcement rates in the Hebron pilot area increased by 10% for conciliation courts and 159% for first-instance courts compared to mid-2022. Substantial increases were also observed in non-pilot areas. Equipment support was provided to the Judicial Police in Nablus to alleviate backlog issues. *Sawasya* continued to advocate for legislative changes to activate the e-Notification system which would significantly further reduce backlogs.

Support to the development and implementation of the e-Justice strategy

Under *Sawasya I*, the expansion, and customization of *Mizan II* allowed for the development of e-services across the justice chain and a dedicated portal benefiting both justice service beneficiaries and law professionals. *Sawasya II* aimed to expand e-justice services under a coherent e-justice strategy reflective of the courts. In 2018, an IT needs assessment of the main judicial institutions (MOJ, HJC, AGO, and SJD) was conducted, highlighting areas for reinforcement and support from *Sawasya II*. The assessments outlined the need for upgrading and expanding current e-justice services, enhancing internal IT capacity, expanding storage capacity, improving IT security, and providing IT equipment and training. *Sawasya II* made plans to support the implementation of *Mizan II* and the expansion of *Adalah* in 2019, along with a security upgrade of *Mizan II* within the HJC. The programme participated in a conference organized by the Lebanese University of Beirut, showcasing *Mizan II*'s achievements and identifying the need for more sustained exchanges on case management with regional stakeholders.

In 2019, the e-Justice matrix, setting out a 5-year roadmap for the operationalization of 19 e-Services, was endorsed by 12 institutions. The matrix builds upon the progress made under *Sawasya I* and aims to expand the range of e-Services by linking courts with prosecution offices and key ministries. *Mizan II* was further customized and expanded to cover specialized prosecution offices and family courts' enforcement departments. Connectivity between regular courts and the Judicial Police was established through *Mizan II*. IT staff received training on e-Service development and *Mizan II* utilization. One of the main achievements of 2019 was a regional case management conference. In a concerted effort to promote achievements relating to case management systems and to foster south-south

cooperation on this front, the High Judicial Council of the State of Palestine - with the support of *Sawasya* organized a regional conference on case management systems in the justice sector, which brought together 122 representatives from 16 MENA countries.³⁸ During the conference, participants had the opportunity to have exchanges on comparative experiences pertaining to case management systems in regular courts, and family courts as well as on customization in relation to juvenile and gender justice needs, particularly on the treatment of administrative data for cases relating to children and violence against women. In addition to contributions from Palestinian justice representatives, Jordanian, Egyptian, and Turkish delegations had the opportunity to provide an outline of their respective systems' particularities and to exchange views on challenges and opportunities that could be further explored in south-south collaboration modalities.

In 2020, the e-Justice matrix was formally adopted by 12 heads of institutions,³⁹ and the first e-Service was rolled out, allowing millions of Palestinian citizens to initiate and track the authentication of their documents online. This development significantly improved access to effective, inclusive, and accountable services while reducing costs to citizens by minimizing the need for physical visits to the court. *Mizan II*-based enhanced connectivity between governmental agencies, such as the Ministry of Transport and Communications and the HJC, further contributed to removing critical administrative barriers. To support the rollout of e-Services, security protocols of the 12 institutions that compose the e-Justice Committee⁴⁰ were fully streamlined, and the hardware capacity of the MOJ, HJC, and SJD was enhanced. Seventeen IT staff (24% women) from across institutions of the e-Justice Committee were trained on IT security and networking, while frontline court staff received sensitization on customer services and digital work. The establishment of a customer service centre in Qalqilya was postponed until 2021 due to the reprioritization of resources by the MOJ.

In 2021, progress was made towards automating the enforcement of justice decisions, particularly for vulnerable segments of Palestinian society, through the digitalized transfer of alimony orders from courts to banks using the *Mizan II* case management technology. This development shifted the responsibility of alimony execution away from women, who are disproportionately affected by the burden of collecting proof and liaising with financial institutions and freed up critical court resources. To support the rollout of the e-Service, nearly 180,000 enforcement documents were archived in the *Mizan II* system during the period, and execution costs were further reduced with the launch of a new e-Service for filing enforcement motions by justice clients or lawyers. The number of users satisfied with the performance of *Mizan II* continued to increase during the period, despite a slight decrease against the target. The implementation of the e-Justice strategy also helped make justice

³⁸ Algeria, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Somalia, Tunisia, Turkey, Yemen and the State of Palestine.

³⁹ The e-Justice committee is comprised of the MOJ, HJC, AGO, SJD, PJI, Constitutional Court, LAB, PBA, Palestinian Anti-Corruption Commission, judicial police, the military judiciary as well as the Palestinian Maintenance Fund.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

sector management systems more efficient, with the digitalization of the MOJ human resource management system. Efforts continued to operationalize the e-Justice portal, upgrade the MOJ data management center, and enhance the IT capacity of the HJC, SJD, AGO, and PNSA against the e-Justice matrix. Inter-institutional connectivity was strengthened through training and access to software and equipment, while work focused on upgrading *Mizan II* for the digitalization of reporting processes between the HJC, AGO, and the Judicial Police to mainstream child justice principles and international standards. Considering Palestine's substantial advances in case management, work continued to foster south-south cooperation and *Mizan II* technology transfer to Djibouti, with plans to take this forward in 2022 along with communication work within the framework of the Outreach Campaign Committee.



Photo 5: Discussion on the South-South- cooperation and *Mizan II* technology transfer (August 2023). ©Sawasya

banks using *Mizan II* technology.⁴¹ This development particularly benefited women by shifting the responsibility of alimony execution away from them and reducing payment failures or delays. Digitalization continued to be leveraged to reduce transactional and execution costs, with high levels of *Mizan* satisfaction despite a 0.6% decrease against the target. A milestone in 2022 was the ability of family enforcement departments and the judicial police to exchange warrants electronically, realizing efficiency, accuracy, and record-keeping gains. Ninety HJC enforcement department staff and land settlement courts (28% women) received capacity building on IT security, programming, and networking to optimize *Mizan II* usage and develop in-house management capabilities. The HJC accessed storage equipment, and developers were deployed at the AGO to identify connectivity opportunities with the HJC and judicial police. Thirty IT staff of justice institutions (20% women) were trained in project and product management, networking, and security. Work

In 2022, efforts were made to strengthen enforcement systems and resolve family disputes more efficiently through a digital transition. A significant step was the digitization of over 700,000 marriage and divorce certificates and their integration with the civil records registry, resulting in considerable administrative efficiency gains for citizens. The *Mizan* database was expanded with the archiving of 120,000 documents by the HJC, and new security features were added to the e-Service for the digitalized transfer of alimony orders from courts to

⁴¹ *Adalah* is the case management for family courts; however, enforcement departments use the *Mizan II* technology.

continued on transferring *Mizan II* technology to Djibouti, with an MoU drafted between the HJC and Djibouti's MOJ for signature in 2023.

In 2023, efforts continued to focus on strengthening enforcement systems and resolving family disputes more efficiently through digital transition. During the period, approximately 150,000 marriage, divorce, and inheritance certificates were linked with the civil records registry, enabling citizens to retrieve critical documents and reduce wait times from weeks to minutes, supported by 41 data entry staff (80% women) and the provision of necessary IT equipment. The *Mizan* database was further expanded with the archiving of 170,000 documents related to disposed cases, aided by the procurement of nine scanners. Eighty-four SJD staff (42% women) received capacity building on digital transactions at family courts to foster responsiveness, and applications were developed by the MOJ to streamline the enforceability of settlements and awards from ADR processes with courts and improve the accreditation process of ADR actors. The *Mizan III* structure, system settings for case registration, database, and reporting templates were developed by a joint team of three developers (100% men) from the HJC, AGO, and SJD. Hardware and software equipment was procured for various justice institutions to streamline *Mizan's* rollout and utilization, and 80 administrative staff (70% women) and 13 judges (15% women) were trained on the court management system. Two IT technical specialists (100% men) were recruited to strengthen enforcement linkages between the *Shari'a* court system and the Judicial Police, and material was procured for several courts to ensure continuous digitalized court operations.

Over the lifecycle of the programme in this area, *Sawasya* has moved *Mizan* from a case management system to a court management system. In the last two years of the programme, the team has taken this even further in working with the wider justice sector⁴² to use *Mizan* as the center of an entire e-Justice architecture. In essence the programme is taking a Digital Public Infrastructure⁴³ approach to assist the government in rolling out ever more effective and efficient government services. While *Mizan* is solidly placed in the justice/security sector, it is hoped that other sectors will look at this work and pursue similar digital transformations for the good of all Palestinians.

⁴² *Inter alia* Ministry of Transportation, Central Bank of Palestine, the Palestinian Maintenance Fund.

⁴³ DPI is an evolving concept, but there is growing consensus on it being a combination of (i) networked open technology standards built for public interest, (ii) enabling governance, and (iii) a community of innovative and competitive market players working to drive innovation, especially across public programmes.

<https://www.undp.org/digital/digital-public-infrastructure#:~:text=DPI%20is%20an%20evolving%20concept,innovation%2C%20especially%20across%20public%20programmes.>

Support to the development of child-friendly justice procedures

During the inception phase, the programme assessed the national juvenile justice system to inform interventions under *Sawasya II*, documenting current detention practices,



Photo 6: Children benefitting from psycho-social support as part of their customized support plan, Gaza, (2018) ©IP

diversionary measures, and access to justice for children in contact with the law in light of the provisions set out in the Juvenile Protection Law (JPL) of 2016. The assessment found that a lack of coordination among main juvenile justice actors and limited capacity of frontline justice service providers hampered progress on access to specialized services for vulnerable children. It also highlighted that the 33 child protection counselors regularly failed to complete social inquiry reports for children in contact with

the law, which was part of their additional workload as reflected in the JPL. The lack of infrastructure and judicial capacities to ensure access to diversionary measures, mediation, and rehabilitation and treatment programmes translated into limited access to services, often characterized by the absence of quality assurance.

Therefore in 2018, *Sawasya II* prioritized capacity building efforts for specialized services, supporting the delivery of training sessions on juvenile justice to 22 newly enrolled juvenile police officers and 33 child protection counselors. The programme also supported the enrolment of 12 juvenile police officers in an 18-month professional diploma on supervision to allow for in-house supervision capacity. Child protection counselors benefited from 59 group supervision sessions and 65 coaching visits, enabling them to complete needs assessments, develop action plans, and draft social inquiry reports. *Sawasya II* further aligned the execution of judicial decisions with principles set out in the JPL by exposing eight juvenile prosecutors and judges to Jordanian juvenile justice processes and organizing a follow-up workshop with 7 specialized judges and 27 juvenile prosecutors to identify main bottlenecks in implementing the JPL. Participants agreed to develop referral procedures between juvenile judges and prosecutors for the execution of cases, along with procedures, guidelines, and execution forms to support the execution judge. The programme conducted visits to children in Palestinian detention facilities and documented violations against them, collecting questionnaires from 75 children in conflict with the Palestinian law and completing 15 affidavits for those who experienced ill-treatment in detention. Analysis of the questionnaires indicated that 22.6% of children were detained with adults, 18.6% were detained using improper procedures, 13.3% were handtied during arrest, and 8% were subjected to physical violence. In light of these findings, the programme planned to support the launching of the "Know Your Rights" campaign targeting children in conflict with the

Palestinian law and community awareness sessions for parents on juvenile justice mechanisms in 2019.

In 2019, the State of Palestine demonstrated its commitment to meeting obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and other international instruments by finalizing the mediation guidelines by the Ministry of Social Development (MOSD) and the AGO, further aligning the policy framework with international standards for the administration of juvenile justice (Beijing rules). The guidelines established clear criteria and qualifications for the selection of mediators, clarified roles and responsibilities in the mediation process, and provided step-by-step guidance on the mediation process. These guidelines were set to serve as a basis for the development of the mediators' training material, aiming to improve the quality of alternatives to detention measures that continued to be increasingly applied, as evidenced by the 40% increase in children who benefited from mediation over the reporting period. With the operationalization of the guidelines, mediation was expected to be professionalized and better geared towards the needs of children, focusing on ways to reintegrate them within society and turn their experience into meaningful growth. The number of children receiving alternatives to detention (A2D) increased by 7% in 2019, and the further customization of *Mizan II* enabled juvenile judges, prosecutors, and child protection counselors (CPCs) to retrieve critical information that could inform decisions on the opportunity to apply A2D. However, A2D remained to be more systematically applied when compared to the 21% decrease in children who received custodial sentences that year. The Programme supported the signing of MOUs between the MOSD and 18 organizations that provide A2D services, including psychosocial support, life skills, and/or vocational training, representing a major accomplishment given that only five West Bank-based centers were previously qualified to provide such services. The Programme also conducted an assessment on the opportunity to introduce rehabilitation programmes in Dar Al-Amal (Ramallah) and the Girls' Care Home (Beit Jala), the two existing social care homes for children in the West Bank, which housed more than 300 children (23% girls) in 2019. The assessment highlighted the importance of establishing programmes that provide children with basic skills, tailored educational support, and personalized psychosocial care.

In 2020, the COVID-19 crisis provided opportunities to accelerate change in child justice, with a 72% increase in the number of children who accessed mediation and a 5% increase in those who accessed alternatives to detention (A2D) compared to annual targets, representing a 23% and 31% increase from 2019, respectively. The State of Palestine released 85% of placed children (112 out of 132) during the period, establishing itself as a leader in the region, and the case of Palestine was featured in the UNICEF Child Protection e-Bulletin as one of the best practices in the MENA region. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child adopted concluding observations on the initial CRC State of Palestine Report, highlighting the need to remove exceptions allowing marriage under 18, improve access to justice for child victims of sexual abuse, promote non-custodial and non-judicial measures, and prioritize family support. In the West Bank, 222 children (all boys) accessed A2D interventions implemented by accredited institutions and centers, with five pilot initiatives

rolled out in various locations and expanded to two additional governorates. Child safeguarding guidelines were developed, endorsed, and disseminated in A2D institutions and centers to ensure respect for the best interest of the child and safeguards enshrined in national laws and international standards. In parallel, children from rehabilitation centers in the West Bank and Gaza received psychosocial support, although COVID-19 and an accidental fire at the Girls Care home in Bethlehem delayed some planned activities. Legal aid standards for children were developed, operationalizing key elements of the National Legal Aid Strategy (NLAS) and ensuring children's representation at different stages of case proceedings. Capacity building activities were slowed by the COVID-19 crisis, with training on mediation guidelines postponed to 2021, but juvenile police officers, Child Protection Counsellors (CPCs), and CSO staff enrolled in a supervision professional diploma at Birzeit University.

In 2021, the important policy gains made under *Sawasya* to divert child offenders away from criminal proceedings continued to be consolidated into juvenile justice work, with a 4% increase in the number of children who accessed mediation compared to 2020 and a 28% increase compared to 2019. This was supported by the further operationalization of the mediation guidelines⁴⁴ by the AGO, MOSD, and the FJPD, and the identification of 14 community members (36% men) from the West Bank as mediators through a robust selection process. Judicial staff's knowledge of mediation was also enhanced, with 72 juvenile justice actors (24% women) accessing training in November. The *Mizan II* (AGO) case management system was enhanced to meet the emerging requirements of the juvenile justice system, allowing juvenile prosecutors and child protection counselors to access online cases of children at risk of delinquency. An increase of 35% was registered in the number of children accessing alternatives to detention (A2D) compared to 2019, indicating a longer-term shift towards the systematization of non-custodial practices. Six centers entered into partnerships with the MOSD to provide A2D vocational training,⁴⁵ and 122 children (20% girls) from across the West Bank developed life and practical skills. Sixty-five children (8% girls) accessed vocational training on photography and videography skills, and 55 children (38% girls) at risk of delinquency accessed art and reading therapy sessions in pilot locations.

In Gaza, a plan was developed to strengthen the capacity of A2D service providers, but due to COVID-19, educational facilities were closed for most of the year. A 14% decrease in the number of children having received a custodial sentence was observed compared to 2020, and 132 children (17% girls) in conflict with the law accessed psycho-social support through *Sawasya's* partner. In Gaza, 43 families worked on evaluating their parenting style and ensuring their educational approaches do not perpetuate violence, and 195 boys accessed structured psychosocial support after being released from the Al-Rabea RRC. Efforts were

⁴⁴ The mediation guidelines were developed during the years 2019 and 2020. The National Juvenile Justice Committee is headed by the MOSD and is comprised of both governmental and CSO actors.

⁴⁵ MOUs were signed between the MOSD and the vocational centers. They were identified in the five governorates of Tubas, Nablus, Tulkarem, Ramallah and Hebron.

invested in strengthening the capacity of the judicial sector, with 22 regular judges (9% women) in Gaza improving their knowledge of child protection and 15 specialized juvenile judges (13% women) in the West Bank enhancing their professional skills. Work continued on the endorsement of legal aid standards, with the piloting of finalized standards among a selection of lawyers. In Gaza, 10 lawyers from the PBA (10% women) and 20 newly graduate lawyers (55% women) accessed advanced training on juvenile justice, and 119 law students (71% women) accessed awareness on children's rights and international standards of juvenile justice. Efforts were invested in developing and institutionalizing a training program for helpline respondents, and work began on developing a justice for children action plan in Gaza through consultation workshops with 44 juvenile justice actors (36% women).

Investments continued in the capacity of child justice and protection frontline workers, with 45 counselors, juvenile prosecutors, and judges (66% women) enhancing their knowledge of good reporting practices. Sixteen protection counselors and police officers (56% women) completed the 18-month supervision professional diploma at Birzeit University. The second phase of the court monitoring project was designed to monitor the management of cases of children and respect for children's rights. An e-Complaint system was developed to address the absence of remedy for duty-bearer violations, and a code of conduct for AGO and HJC staff was developed to ensure the systematic application of child protection principles in judicial work. Steps were taken towards drafting technical guidelines for the al-Rabea RRC and developing child-friendly practices at the AGO and SJD.

During 2022, notable advancements were made towards the institutionalization of measures for juvenile offenders that divert them from the criminal justice system and minimize carceral outcomes, with a 10% increase in the number of children who accessed mediation compared to the previous year (93% increase against the target) and a 46% reduction in custodial sentencing of children (54% decrease against the target). There was also a 29% reduction against the annual target in the number of children detained by the Family and Juvenile Protection Units. These achievements were made possible by the successful operationalization of the mediation guidelines by the AGO, MOSD, and FJPD, which were adopted in 2020 by the National Juvenile Justice Committee in line with the JPL of 2016. Significant efforts were made, including the identification of 79 new mediators (40% women) – a 464% increase compared to 2021, and the certification of 34 mediators (50% women) who had previously accessed training. Overall, 128 newly identified and previously trained mediators, community mediators, child protection officers, juvenile police, and prosecution staff (32% women) accessed capacity building on mediation for children. Three capacity-building initiatives focused on JPL obligations, child-friendly and child-safeguarding practices and policies during mediation, and the roles and responsibilities of all involved stakeholders were launched in 2022, using case studies.

The year saw significant progress in child justice, with the publication of the executive by-law of the Palestinian Child Law of 2004 (Decree-Law No. 16 of 2022) and the endorsement of legal aid standards by the PBA, which provide specific guidance on representing children and aim to empower them throughout legal proceedings. An increase of 32% was registered

in the number of children accessing alternatives to detention (A2D) compared to 2021 (39% against the target), with a particular focus on prioritizing psychosocial interventions within A2D family-based initiatives in the West Bank and the development of child-dedicated safeguarding policies for hosting children in conflict with the law in Gaza. The national referral guidelines for child protection created in 2017 were revised to better meet the needs of children, including those with disabilities, and regulate referrals for children between new partners that were not regulated at family/*Shari'a* courts and the AGO. Considerable effort was dedicated to creating case management guidelines for child protection to harmonize responses and intervention strategies for children who have experienced violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation, and mistreatment. Efforts were made to enhance reporting mechanisms for children, with 706 individuals (63% women, 0.04% girls, 0.03% boys) reaching out to the helpline operated by the FJPU, and 38 police officers (39% women) were trained on child needs and the provision of support services for survivors of violence.

In 2023, efforts towards institutionalizing diversionary measures and child-friendly procedures were continued. The number of children accessing mediation increased by another 10% compared to the previous year, and there was a further 46% reduction in custodial sentencing of children. Mediators' performance and training needs were assessed to apprise targeted capacity building. In Gaza, the MOSD initiated dialogue to develop mediation guidelines and establish a National Juvenile Justice Committee. A2D services continued to expand, with 33 children in Gaza engaged in vocational training and 20 children benefiting from family group conferencing (FGC). Psychosocial support remained a priority, with 79 children in Gaza receiving individual assessment and therapy. The case management guidelines for child protection were finalized and endorsed by the MOSD, and 43 child protection case managers were trained on their implementation. The one-year child protection diploma was accredited by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and began at Bethlehem University in December 2023 with 29 child protection frontline workers enrolled. Twenty-three family counselors were enrolled in the counseling diploma program. Efforts to improve reporting mechanisms continued, with ongoing support for the FJPU helpline and the efforts to establish the family courts' helpline. Training for child justice actors focused on implementing the revised referral guidelines, child-friendly treatment during proceedings, and restorative justice principles. Work began on developing guidelines for child-sensitive judicial inspection and conducting a juvenile justice assessment to inform evidence-based recommendations for system improvement. A disability-assessment to evaluate the human, physical, and environmental spaces at the FJPU across the 11 governorates was drafted. Efforts were made to initiate a recidivism assessment to evaluate the social and legal factors in which children come in contact repeatedly with the system, but could not be finalized due to the war in the Gaza Strip.

Output 2.2: Quality and efficiency of security and justice services provided to areas unserved by the Palestinian Government (Gaza, Area C, Hebron 2 And EJ) are improved



ADR procedure guide developed



Database for ADR practitioners further developed

Support to enhanced access to justice and security service provision in Area C

Sawasya I's support to fair and equitable judicial procedures yielded substantial results, including the development of e-services across the justice chain, the establishment of a Unified Warrant System through the expansion and customization of *Mizan II*, and the enhancement of enforcement and notification processes. However, despite these achievements, the delivery of justice and security services remains challenging in parts of the Palestinian occupied territory, particularly in Hebron Governorate, where about 11% of the Palestinian population lives in Area C.⁴⁶ Congruent with the 2016 Joint UN Strategy for Hebron,⁴⁷ in 2018, *Sawasya II*'s human-rights based programmatic intervention conducted an assessment to identify main areas of improvement by examining the courts' operational challenges and caseload, notification and enforcement challenges, and collaboration between key actors of the justice and security sector. The programme suggested that Hebron Governorate be considered a pilot for the participation of local courts in budget and work plan development for 2020-2022 and will concentrate on further automating enforcement processes in the Governorate in 2019 to ensure that judicial decisions reach duty bearers and right holders more efficiently.

In areas unserved by the Government of Palestine, access to effective, accountable, and inclusive justice and security services is not systematically guaranteed, resulting in important delivery gaps, particularly in the Jericho and Hebron governorates, where Area C accounts for 89%⁴⁸ and 47%⁴⁹ of the territories, respectively. In 2019, a number of accomplishments were made towards addressing critical service delivery bottlenecks in the selected areas through the provision of tailored and community-based solutions that have the potential to be replicated at the national level. *Mizan II* was rolled out in the Hebron governorate's family courts' enforcement department as a first step towards its generalization in the whole West Bank in early 2020, representing an important milestone for improving justice delivery, particularly for women and children living in unserved areas. Revisions of the notification legal framework were initiated by the HJC, with *Sawasya*'s support, to outsource notification and shift towards an electronic system in the Hebron

⁴⁶ 2016 data. See: Joint UN Strategy for Hebron (2016), UNSCO, available at https://unsco.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/joint_un_strategy_for_hebron.pdf

⁴⁷ Joint UN Strategy for Hebron (2016), UNSCO, available at https://unsco.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/joint_un_strategy_for_hebron.pdf

⁴⁸ Negotiation Affairs Department (available [here](#)).

⁴⁹ Ministry of Local Government (2016), Spatial Plans for Palestinian Communities in Area C of the West Bank (available [here](#)).

governorate, laying the groundwork for the generalization of the initiative at the national level. The endorsement by the Chief of Police of unified TORs, developed by the Programme, for the establishment of local advisory committees in the Jericho pilot governorate also represents a crucial step towards ensuring the rapid replicability of the action in other parts of the West Bank.

In 2020, a 15% increase in enforcement in the Hebron pilot governorate was observed, indicating a reduction in court backlog. This progress was attributed to *Mizan II* linking the judicial police with the HJC/AGO, allowing for digitalized warrants and justice decisions to be handed over electronically by police officers during routine controls in areas B and C. While community policing services were not rolled out due to COVID-19, local security and training plans were developed by the PCP, and members of three Local Advisory Committees were identified in Jericho, Al-Ouja, and Aqabat Jaber camp.

In 2021, a 3% decrease and an 8% increase in enforcement of justice decisions in the Hebron pilot governorate were observed compared to 2020 and 2019, respectively, reemphasizing the need to improve access to services in unserved areas. The rollout of community policing services continued to be hindered, particularly by the overall degradation of the security context and critical turnover within the PCP. Despite this, the PCP initiated the expansion of the pilot initiative to Tubas and Ramallah governorates, and extensive groundwork undertaken in previous years contributed to a 65% increase in awareness of the community policing strategy in the Jericho pilot governorate compared to 2018.

In 2022 and 2023, no further support was given to the PCP on community policing.

Support efforts to enhance security and justice in the Gaza Strip

In 2019, efforts were geared towards improving the judiciary's capacity to provide more responsive services in the Gaza Strip. Over 650 justice actors (10% women) were sensitized on applying human rights, 280 on women's rights (5% women), and 139 on transparency (4% women) in the judiciary. 108 public health and service providers (40% women) were trained on drafting medical reports on SGBV victims, protecting survivors, and national referral pathways. 131 key actors (5% women) were trained to promote the general application of the Arbitration Law No. 3 (2000).

In 2020, 762 judicial and public health responders (20% women) were trained on enhancing their technical capacity in gender-responsive emergency planning, child and gender justice, and accountable law enforcement. Emphasis was placed on international and national legal frameworks in litigating VAW cases, SGBV, referral pathways, evidentiary mechanisms, prevention of secondary victimization, forensic medicine, and child-friendly approaches.

In 2021, 612 judicial actors (34% women) accessed training on enhancing their technical capacity in child and gender justice, including family law, litigation of VAW cases, GBV evidentiary mechanisms, referral pathways, cyber-criminality, and child-friendly police

standards. Emphasis was placed on domestic and international standards, procedural integrity, transparency, and accountability.

In 2022, 873 judicial actors (17% women) accessed training on enhancing their technical capacity in child and gender justice, including child rights, the criminal justice framework for children in conflict with the law, child protection principles, litigation of VAW cases, GBV, evidentiary mechanisms, and enforcement mechanisms. Emphasis was placed on domestic and international standards, procedural integrity, transparency, and accountability.

In 2023, 341 judicial actors (2% women) accessed training on enhancing their technical capacity in child and gender justice, including child rights, the criminal justice framework for children in conflict with the law, child protection principles, litigation of VAW cases, GBV, evidentiary mechanisms, and enforcement mechanisms. Emphasis was placed on domestic and international standards, procedural integrity, transparency, and accountability.

In general, work to enhance security and justice in the Gaza Strip is quite difficult due to the need to work through civil society actors. As this sector is normally led by state institutions, not being able to work on developing the capacities of those stakeholders significantly impedes progress on the issue. Moreover, it is nearly impossible to create any sustainability with activities done in these sectors in the Gaza Strip therefore progress on this particular issue has been limited at best.

Support to the development of Alternative Dispute Resolution mechanisms

In 2019, the assessment conducted by *Sawasya* to map out existing ADR mechanisms in the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and the Gaza Strip and identify entry points for interventions that enhance access to justice for women and children revealed that the public and service providers⁵⁰ remain generally uninformed and unaware of ADR solutions. Palestinians in unserved areas tend to resort to informal justice mechanisms, often resulting in non-contentious resolutions that present weaknesses in protecting the rights of women and children. Key actors in the ADR space agreed to take forward recommendations, including reactivating the mediation draft law



Photo 7: MOJ dialogue session on legislative amendments and electronic registration system for arbitrators. (2023) ©MOJ

⁵⁰ Main formal ADR providers include family courts, the prosecution – including the juvenile prosecution, ICHR, CSOs, the Civil Peace Department (Hebron H2), the Al-Faisal Arbitration Center (East Jerusalem).

committee, professionalizing the ADR practice while ensuring adherence to human rights standards, and supporting civil society in promoting ADR at the community level.

In 2020, progress was made in promoting ADR mechanisms. 30,000 Palestinian citizens (40% women) accessed content on ADR mechanisms through radio episodes and social media posts, distinguishing ADR from tribal/clan-based justice. 188 Palestinians (35% women) were trained on creating ADR mechanisms across the West Bank, focusing on promoting rule of law-based conflict resolution that fosters gender equality. 22 arbitrators and other actors (41% women) attended ADR training by *Sawasya's* CSO partner in collaboration with the MOJ. While ADR mechanisms are often conflated with informal justice, efforts were made to raise public awareness of these instruments, which have proven resource-efficient for justice clients and duty bearers. However, ADR is perceived as not offering the same safeguards as court proceedings.

In 2021, work continued on strengthening the legal framework for ADR, prioritizing the passing of the Mediation Bill to guarantee the rights of vulnerable parties, particularly women and children, and link with specialized mediation mechanisms. The Mediation Bill



Photo 8: Conference on the effectiveness of ADR in Palestine. Nablus (May 2023) ©An-Najah National University

Committee, led by the MOJ, accessed expertise to produce a legislative policy memorandum assessing the cost of passing the Mediation Bill. A research study on the nexus between arbitration and civil peace revealed that the main hindrances to fostering ADR mechanisms lie in inadequate processes for accrediting arbitrators, lack of dedicated training and capacity development, and the absence of oversight and accountability systems at the MOJ. Interventions focused on raising awareness to stimulate demand

for ADR services among citizens, with roughly 71,200 citizens accessing online content on ADR methods. 231 citizens (84% women) participated in focus group discussions and community dialogue sessions on using ADR to resolve disputes and the difference between ADR and informal justice processes. Hebron community members produced a policy paper exploring the relationship between conflict resolution, human rights, and gender equality to inform the MOJ/ADR Unit's work. 32 law students (63% women) participated in training on ADR mechanisms, including gendered aspects of access to justice, using a gender transformative approach. Discussions took place to incorporate ADR within law school curricula. 36 experts (33% women) attended a six-day TOT training on ADR and will use acquired skills to foster capacity building in mediation and arbitration, with specific emphasis on gender power dynamics.

In 2022, a multi-track approach was adopted to further operationalized ADR mechanisms. A study tour to Morocco with representatives from the MOJ, HJC, AGO, and Qalqilya Governorate Office focused on identifying the main elements of a Mediation Law, reforming the arbitration framework, fostering synergies with civil society, and institutionalizing ADR mechanisms at the local level, including through the development of a database of ADR practitioners. 48 practitioners (46% women) accessed capacity building on enhancing ADR-based access to justice and fostering gender justice through ADR. 136 arbitrators (38% women) accessed training on conflict transformation mechanisms and women's and children's rights. Efforts focused on developing a code of conduct for arbitrators to mainstream principles of human rights, gender justice, and the rule of law within arbitration practice. Focus group discussions were held to discuss amendments to the Arbitration Law of 2000, aiming to clarify the role of courts and the process of appointing arbitrators,⁵¹ as an intermediary step towards adopting a revised legal framework that enhances guarantees of accountability and integrity in arbitration practice and streamlines exequatur procedures. 28 lawyers (79% women) accessed training on arbitral award drafting, procedures, and management of arbitration cases. Thousands of Palestinians had access to online and radio content (82,500 views) on arbitration and land/real estate disputes. A conference was organized to discuss the current legal framework and identify gaps in mediation involving children and arbitration in family and commercial courts.

In 2023, efforts persisted in enhancing the operationalization of ADR mechanisms through a comprehensive multi-track strategy. Steps were taken to develop a database of practitioners operating in the field of ADR, with database specifications developed for more effectively connecting citizens with arbitrators. Work continued on advancing the Mediation Bill, with the development of a legislative policy memorandum and a regulatory impact analysis, as well as finalizing amendments to the Arbitration Law No. 3 of 2000. Progress on these fronts and the electronic registration system for arbitrators was presented in a dialogue session with 52 MOJ staff, arbitrators, and CSO representatives (40% women). A comprehensive guide on ADR procedures was developed to offer step-by-step solutions to alleviate court backlogs, with faster and more cost-effective proceedings. Thousands of Palestinians had access to in-person (754 – 29% women) and online and radio content (953,100+ clicks)⁵² on various aspects of arbitration and ADR.

⁵¹ *Sawasya II* (2020), “An assessment of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms in Palestine.”

⁵² It encompasses the number of reach (the total number of people who see your content), impressions (the number of times your content is displayed, no matter if it was clicked or not) and engagement (defined as the number of clicks, likes, shares and comments on a post).



Photos 9-10: Conference in Hebron on commercial arbitration and ADR, Hebron Commercial Chamber (March 2023). ©Sawasya

Two conferences in Hebron and Nablus on commercial arbitration and ADR effectiveness drew 550 participants (45% women) from diverse backgrounds. Another conference was organized in May 2023 to discuss the current legal framework and identify solutions, including establishing arbitration units by local authorities, ramping up awareness efforts, and promoting women's representation in ADR. 75 ADR professionals (40% women) attended capacity building on conflict resolution and transformation mechanisms, and regular coordination meetings were held by the Ministry of Local Government to emphasize the importance of establishing arbitration units at the governorate level and their role in raising public awareness.

Outcome 3: All Palestinians, especially children and vulnerable groups, have access to justice, security and protection without discrimination

Output 3.1. Vulnerable populations have access to justice, security and protection



Establishment of Ministerial Committee on legal aid law



6,533 Palestinians accessed legal aid services in areas A & B (2,406 women and 1,473 children)



4,443 Palestinians accessed legal awareness through MENA's first legal incubator established in Gaza



17,815 Palestinian accessed legal awareness services in areas A & B (8,713 women and 5,900 children)



68 law students accessed financial support to pursue their studies in Gaza



1,928 students enrolled in clinical education programmes in the West Bank and Gaza

Support to the development of a sustainable legal aid system

In 2018, *Sawasya II* focused on supporting the Palestinian government in establishing a state-sponsored legal aid system to provide vulnerable communities with free legal consultation and representation services. The programme assisted the National Legal Aid Committee (NLAC)⁵³ in finalizing the National Legal Aid Strategy (NLAS), which was endorsed in November 2018. The NLAS outlines the strategic framework and operational modalities for a sustainable national legal aid scheme, prioritizing criminal and family law cases and emphasizing the need for specialized services for women and children. *Sawasya II* also supported NLAC members' participation in the UNDP-sponsored 'Third Legal Aid Conference' in Georgia, providing an opportunity to learn from innovative practices in establishing sustainable legal aid systems.

In 2019, the NLAS was officially adopted by the newly formed Justice Sector Higher Committee,⁵⁴ with the removal of references to legal aid in family courts upon the Palestinian Bar Association's (PBA) request. The PBA's resistance to the NLAS led to uncertainty about its role, and interventions in 2020 focused on providing technical support to the NLAC to advance the strategy's operationalization, develop a legal aid law and standards for children in conflict with the law, and establish a *Mizan*-connected legal aid database.

In 2020, progress towards establishing a national legal aid mechanism was limited due to a lack of impetus to take forward the NLAC's work and shifting political priorities. Attempts to resume dialogue and advocate for the NLAS's adoption did not yield tangible results, leading

⁵³ The National Legal Aid Committee is comprised of members of the MOJ, AGO, HJC, Family Courts, PBA, the Independent Commission for Human Rights and academic institutions.

⁵⁴ Composed of the MOJ, HJC, AGO, PBA, ICHR, the PCP as well as the Legal Advisor of the President.

to reduced programmatic investments. A review of *Sawasya's* strategic engagement with the NLAC was initiated based on the mid-term evaluation's recommendations.

In 2021, major strides were made towards operationalizing key elements of the NLAC's work. The Supreme Judge announced the formation of a working group to develop an institutionalized legal aid mechanism under the Supreme Judge Department (SJD). This strategic shift was based on *Sawasya's* internal review of its legal aid engagement entitled “*Legal Aid: Lessons Learned and a Strategy for Engagement.*”⁵⁵ A pilot initiative was also developed to establish a unified legal aid mechanism for Ecclesiastical courts.⁵⁶ Limited technical support was provided to the NLAC due to the PBA's resistance, and the development of a legal aid database remained on hold.

In 2022, an MoU was developed between the MOJ and PBA for establishing a law-based aid system, but it remains to be endorsed pending consensus on the allocation of resources from notary bond certification. Work continued on establishing a unified legal aid mechanism among Ecclesiastical courts, with the finalization of the legal status document.⁵⁷ The operationalization of key legal elements, even in the absence of a legal aid law, is crucial, especially as family cases disproportionately impact women and children. The PCBS 'Rule of Law and Access to Justice' survey in 2021 highlighted a 23% increase in the number of Palestinians aware of the legal aid court fund for appointed lawyers compared to 2018, representing a 20.8% increase against the biannual target. Moreover, there was a 95% increase in the number of citizens satisfied with legal aid services provided by the Palestinian Government in 2021 compared to 2018, indicating a 91.6% increase against the biannual target and demonstrating the potential for larger scale institutionalized legal aid.

In 2023, a ministerial committee was established to draft a comprehensive legal aid law, but its preliminary scope appears to conflict with existing legal aid provisions. Work was invested in reviewing the committee's scope to align with the current legal framework. Progress continued on the unified legal aid mechanism among Ecclesiastical courts, with the nomination of church representatives to the fund's board. Efforts to operationalize key elements of a legal aid framework persist, as awareness and satisfaction with legal aid services have increased among Palestinians. The vast majority of these legal aid services are in fact funded by the *Sawasya* programme.

⁵⁵ UNDP, UN Women, UNICEF Joint *Sawasya* Programme (2021), “*Legal Aid: Lessons Learned and a Strategy for Engagement.*” Internal document.

⁵⁶ These courts handle matters related to personal status, such as marriage, divorce, alimony, child custody and inheritance, for their respective religious communities. The six main ecclesiastical courts in the Holy Land are: 1) the Latin Patriarchy (Catholic) Court; 2) Greek Orthodox Court; 3) Armenian Orthodox Court; 4) Syriac Orthodox Court; 5) Anglican Court; 6) Lutheran Court. These courts operate alongside civil courts and apply their respective religious laws to personal status matters for members of their faith communities. The recognition and jurisdiction of these courts vary depending on the specific country and legal framework in which they operate, such as Israel or the State of Palestine.

⁵⁷ Representation from the Greek Orthodox Patriarch, the Armenian Patriarch, and the Syriac Orthodox Patriarchate were not present. However, the latter expressed its support to the mechanism prior to the workshop.

Support legal education through university legal aid clinics and law firm incubator

In 2018, *Sawasya II* explored innovative ways to boost law graduates' employment and access to legal aid for disadvantaged populations, introducing the concept of legal incubators. Workshops were organized in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to identify entry points for developing a pilot incubator in East Jerusalem, targeting Palestinian lawyers. A secondary goal of this effort in East Jerusalem was to try and increase Palestinian members of the Israeli Bar Association.

In 2019, partnerships were concluded with four Palestinian universities⁵⁸ to implement practice-based curricula through legal clinics in close collaboration with practicing law professionals, including civil society providers,⁵⁹ with a focus on gender justice. Students from Al-Quds University provided legal awareness and aid services to East Jerusalemites, and a female law graduate benefited from an apprenticeship placement. A workshop was facilitated in Gaza to discuss solutions for supporting young female lawyers, with plans to explore a firm incubator module for practicing women in 2020.

In 2020, 273 vulnerable Palestinians accessed legal aid services, and 540 became more aware of their rights through clinical/apprenticeship education programmes adapted to COVID-19 challenges.⁶⁰ Legal clinics utilized remote communication and produced high-quality videos to raise legal awareness. A legal research competition was launched, and apprenticeship placements continued at Al-Quds University. In Gaza, law students attended clinical training on various legal topics and received court-based training.

In 2021, 280 vulnerable Palestinians accessed legal aid services, and 332 became more aware of their rights through the work of students enrolled in clinical programmes.⁶¹ Innovative digital practices were further integrated, and apprenticeship placements continued at Al-Quds University. In Gaza, vulnerable students accessed scholarships for qualifying traineeships in legal aid CSOs. Students were empowered to become agents of change



rights. Nablus. © An-Najah National University

⁵⁸ Gaza Strip: Al-Azhar University, the Islamic University; West Bank: Al-Quds University, An-Najah University.

⁵⁹ Al-Quds University provides legal aid for EJ cases and An-Najah University for cases falling under the Palestinian jurisdiction. Al-Azhar and the Islamic University legal clinics do not provide legal aid services.

⁶⁰ In the West Bank, the clinical/apprenticeship programme is implemented through the An-Najah National University (Nablus) and the Al-Quds University (Jerusalem). In the Gaza Strip, it is implemented by the Islamic University of Gaza and Al-Azhar University, both located in Gaza city. Legal aid service provision by students was only ensured in the West Bank.

⁶¹ Delivered through the clinical programmes of the An-Najah National University and Al-Quds University.

through policy proposal development and gender transformative approach (GTA) training. Clinical work also focused on assessing the impact of human rights violations on vulnerable segments of society. Work was initiated to establish Palestine's first legal incubator, with a detailed roadmap developed for implementation in Gaza. Such work builds on the Community Legal Resource Network that was established in the late 1990s in response to New York's legal aid crisis at the time. The Network functioned as a launching pad for fresh law graduates who had an interest in serving vulnerable communities. Through the Network, they had access to tailored training on professional skill development and business management that enabled them to establish practices shortly after graduating.⁶² This approach is particularly adapted to Gaza's context, which is faced with both massive unemployment⁶³ and increasing legal needs.⁶⁴ Its establishment is also key to addressing gender inequality in the legal profession, given the gross underrepresentation of women practicing law in Gaza or serving in the judiciary.⁶⁵ International expert Prof. Fred Rooney – and pioneering figure in this field⁶⁶ - developed a detailed roadmap for the establishment of the incubator which was scheduled to be implemented by the University College of Applied Sciences (Gaza) in 2022.



Photos 12-13: Insaf Legal Incubator lawyers during a training session inside the UCAS spaces and the photo to the right is another a meeting with Prof. Fred Rooney, Gaza (July /September 2022). ©UCAS

In 2022, the first legal incubator in the MENA region was established in Gaza, providing practical training and business support to lawyers to 15 lawyers (67 % women) to launch their own practices. Legal aid programmes in the West Bank and Gaza Strip continued to expand, with 977 (43% women) vulnerable Palestinians accessing legal aid services and 2,092 (81% women) becoming more aware of their rights through the work of students enrolled in clinical programmes.⁶⁷ The clinical programme was expanded to Birzeit University, and students received training on the role of defense lawyers and participated in mock trials. Awareness work focused on child labor, children's rights, women's rights, economic violence against women, and press and media regulations. Gender

⁶² See Rooney F. & Steele J. (2014), Exporting the Legal Incubator: A Conversation with Fred Rooney, University of Massachusetts Law Review, Vol. 09/Issue 01, pp. 108-133 (2014).

⁶³ PCBS (2021), Press release on the results of the labor force survey, available [here](#)

⁶⁴ According to *Sawasya II*'s partners.

⁶⁵ *Sawasya II*'s interviews.

⁶⁶ See Rooney F. & Steele J. (2014), Exporting the Legal Incubator: A Conversation with Fred Rooney, University of Massachusetts Law Review, Vol. 09/Issue 01, pp. 108-133 (2014).

⁶⁷ Delivered through the clinical programmes of the An-Najah National University and Al-Quds University.

transformative training sessions were piloted, and apprenticeship placements continued at the Al-Quds Community Action Center. Students conducted field research on the impact of demolitions and violations of the right to education, and financial assistance was provided to help students complete their law degrees.



Photo 14: The An-Najah legal clinic team taking part in the AlexU-CRCICA Vis Pre-Moot competition. Alexandria, Egypt. (March 2023) © An-Najah National University

In 2023, the legal incubator in Gaza represented 67 Palestinians (42% women) in civil courts and provided legal awareness sessions to 4,443 Palestinians (58% women, 15% boys, 10% girls) on various legal topics. University-based clinical programmes continued to expand, with 468 vulnerable Palestinians (43% women) accessing legal aid services and 1,709 (62% women) becoming more aware of their rights through the work of students

enrolled in programmes at multiple universities. Focus was given to socio-economic rights, housing, land, and property rights, PSL, and labor law, with special consideration for the rights of women and children. Preparatory steps were taken to activate the Legal Aid Clinic at Birzeit University, and students participated in the Alex U-CRCICA Vis Pre-Moot competition in Egypt. One law student accessed a traineeship placement at the Al-Quds Community Action Center, and financial assistance was provided to students in Gaza to help them complete their law degrees.

Over the course of the programme, *Sawasya* has attempted to increase Palestinian representation in the Israeli Bar. For many vulnerable law students, apprenticeship (a prerequisite to taking the bar exam) constitutes a financial constraint, whose associated costs can delay or even hinder entry into the job market. Therefore, access to apprenticeship-based scholarships contributes to removing critical obstacles and improving the employability of young law graduates in a manner that benefits the community. Such an approach was first tested at the Al-Quds Community Action Center. The two trainee lawyers who accessed placement in 2019⁶⁸ and 2020 at the Center⁶⁹ successfully completed their [apprenticeship](#) in 2021, and qualified to take the Israeli Bar examination. In 2023, one of the candidates was notified that she passed the bar.

⁶⁸ The first trainee completed her apprenticeship in 2020.

⁶⁹ An implementing partner to Al-Quds University.

Support CSOs in providing legal aid and awareness services in conformity with the NLAS

In 2019, *Sawasya II* supported the provision of legal aid services to vulnerable Palestinians in areas served by the Palestinian government,⁷⁰ ensuring access to quality legal aid until a national legal aid scheme is approved and fully funded. In the West Bank, 1,028 vulnerable Palestinians (34% women and 13% boys⁷¹) accessed legal aid services, with a focus on criminal justice. Lawyers were trained in responsive service provision for GBV and juvenile justice cases. Awareness-raising activities were conducted on the right to access legal aid services. Targeted interventions were rolled out to make children more aware of their rights when in contact with the Palestinian criminal justice system, including a legal awareness initiative led by children from rehabilitation centers and a nationwide school campaign.

In 2020, 149 individuals accessed legal aid through the government-resourced court fund for criminal cases, a decrease from 2019 due to the lack of progress in establishing a national legal aid mechanism. Efforts were recalibrated to address immediate needs brought about by the COVID-19 crisis, including legal assistance for workers accessing their rights in Israel and legal aid services for vulnerable women in family courts. In the West Bank, 859 vulnerable Palestinians accessed legal aid services, a decrease from 2019 due to the non-renewal of the *Sawasya*-PBA partnership and the redirection of this support. Legal awareness was provided to 3,539 individuals, with a focus on children's rights during the pandemic. A CSO-managed hotline was established to report violations of children's rights, and a school campaign to promote children's rights was postponed to 2021 due to COVID-19.

In 2021, 749 Palestinians (19% women, 39% boys, and 4% girls) accessed legal consultation and representation in conformity with the NLAS, with a focus on responding to the growing demand for legal aid for women victims of violence in priority governorates. Legal awareness was provided to 1,541 individuals (32% women, 34% boys, 15% girls), with a strong focus on children's rights. School counselors were trained on children's rights to foster a rights-based and rule-of-law culture within schools.

In 2022, 2,500 Palestinians (43% women, 26% boys, and 1% girls) accessed legal consultation and representation, a significant increase from the previous year due to the expansion and strengthening of the CSO portfolio and clinical programmes. Legal aid focused on the best interests of the child, with enhanced guarantees for meaningful participation, privacy, and confidentiality. Efforts were made to reduce the number of children sentenced to detention, with a preference for alternative measures such as mediation and community-based interventions. Legal awareness was provided to 6,588 Palestinians (44% women, 22% boys, 14% girls), with a focus on children's rights, digital rights, and legal aid for women in family courts.

⁷⁰ Areas A and B.

⁷¹ Only two girls accessed legal aid during the period.

In 2023, 1,417 Palestinians (38% women, 10% boys, and 1% girls) accessed legal consultation and representation during the first half of the year, with representation focusing on litigating against substantive and procedural rights violations. Legal aid expanded, particularly in relation to PSL, with women accessing legal aid for inheritance, child custody, separation, divorce, alimony/maintenance, and labor law. Efforts continued to systematize and institutionalize diversionary measures for children, with a high percentage of cases involving children in contact with the law being closed through mediation. A roundtable on holistic representation for children and women was organized, recommending a review of the legal framework, awareness-raising among judicial authorities, and the establishment of a monitoring committee. Legal awareness was provided to 3,024 Palestinians (54% women, 8% boys, 17% girls), with a focus on women's PSL/family rights and children's rights. Efforts were made to holistically increase awareness of children's rights through school sessions and sensitization on digital rights and online safety.

Conclusion

In summary, *Sawasya II's* efforts to support the development of a sustainable legal aid system in Palestine focused on operationalizing the National Legal Aid Strategy (NLAS) and working with the National Legal Aid Committee (NLAC). Progress was made in establishing legal aid mechanisms under the Supreme Judge Department (SJD) and Ecclesiastical courts, but challenges persisted due to resistance from the Palestinian Bar Association (PBA) and shifting political priorities.

The programme also invested in legal education through university legal aid clinics and law firm incubators, aiming to enhance the quality of legal practice and foster a rule of law culture among young professionals. Partnerships with universities and the establishment of the first legal incubator in the MENA region in Gaza were notable achievements, providing practical training and support for law graduates to launch their own practices and serve vulnerable communities.

Legal consultation and representation were provided in criminal justice, family law, and labor law cases, with a particular focus on the rights of women and children. Efforts were made to systematize and institutionalize diversionary measures for children in conflict with the law, promoting mediation and community-based interventions over detention.

Legal awareness campaigns and targeted interventions were conducted to inform vulnerable populations of their rights and the availability of legal aid services. School counselors and children were engaged in promoting a rights-based and rule of law culture, and awareness-raising activities focused on issues such as children's rights, digital rights, and women's rights under personal status laws.

Despite progress made in these areas, challenges remained in establishing a fully functional and sustainable legal aid system in Palestine. The lack of a comprehensive legal aid law,

resistance from the PBA, and shifting political priorities hindered the full implementation of the NLAS. Nevertheless, *Sawasya II's* multi-faceted approach, encompassing policy support, legal education, direct service provision, and awareness-raising, contributed to strengthening access to justice for vulnerable populations and promoting a culture of rule of law in Palestine. In June 2023 the Council of Ministers issued a decision to establish a ministerial committee headed by the Minister of Justice to draft a legal aid law. There is a consensus now among the justice institutions including the PBA on the importance of having a national legal aid scheme. *Sawasya* began plans for the next phase to support a 2 day workshop in February 2024 for the committee where discussions will start on the different articles of a legal aid law using an old drafted version.

Output 3.2. Vulnerable populations in areas unserved by the Palestinian Government have access to justice, security and protection



86,180 Palestinians accessed legal aid services in areas C, Hebron2, East-Jerusalem and Gaza (61,805 women and 5,446 children)



73,549 Palestinians accessed legal awareness services in areas C, Hebron 2, East-Jerusalem, and Gaza (46,686 women and 8,570 children)

Support the Government of Palestine in providing and coordinating legal aid

In 2018, *Sawasya II* supported the Jerusalem Affairs Unit at the President's Office and the Ministry of Jerusalem Affairs in organizing a workshop on the coordination of legal aid in East Jerusalem. The workshop brought together key stakeholders involved in legal aid provision in East Jerusalem to discuss challenges and agree on recommendations to strengthen legal aid coordination. Participants highlighted the need to develop an inclusive forum for coordination, strengthen joint legal strategies and case referral, develop quality assurance mechanisms, deepen research on funding gaps, and strengthen and unify data collection on legal aid services. *Sawasya II* committed to taking forward these recommendations in 2019.

Progress was made towards establishing a platform for the coordination of legal aid in areas unserved by the Government of Palestine in 2019, bringing together CSOs and the Commission on Detainees and ex-Detainees. The platform aims to unify legal aid standards and mechanisms for quality monitoring, strengthen referral mechanisms and data collection, and conduct regular joint advocacy and research. *Sawasya* focused on creating this space and engaged in bilateral exchanges with main state actors rather than directly facilitating policy dialogues. Plans were made to support the development of TORs for the platform, the operationalization of the mechanism, and the development of quality assurance standards and a dedicated database.

In 2020, progress was made towards realizing the platform for the coordination of legal aid in unserved areas. Work continued on the TORs which envisaged the platform's mandate, membership, implementation mechanisms, governance, and funding modalities. The TORs were conceived as a quality assurance guidebook for providing unified services and included directions for establishing a legal aid database and research interventions. The platform's establishment was formally endorsed by provisional members in March, following advocacy efforts by *Sawasya*. However, internal restructuring within governmental institutions and shifting political priorities due to COVID-19 stalled progress in the second half of the year. *Sawasya* planned to review its strategic engagement to further incentivize coordination while resuming dialogue with new institutional leadership.

In 2021, priority was given to coordinating legal aid for Palestinians most affected by the COVID-19 crisis. However, progress at the policy level remained limited as resources were mobilized to mitigate the pandemic's effects. The operationalization of the platform for the coordination of legal aid in unserved areas continued to bear the brunt of shifting policy priorities, internal restructuring, and a degraded political environment in East Jerusalem against the backdrop of the May conflict. An incremental approach was adopted, prioritizing areas of cooperation related to COVID-19, such as securing access to health care for prisoners, which will be continued in 2022. Work continued to support addressing priority needs, particularly those of workers most affected by the crisis, with a focus on access to sick leave fund⁷² benefits in coordination with the Ministry of Labor and an emphasis on impact litigation.

In 2022 and 2023, progress at the policy level continued to stall as resources were not allocated to the operationalization of the platform for the coordination of legal aid in unserved areas against the backdrop of a degraded operational environment. Therefore, work focused on supporting CSOs in East Jerusalem to address growing legal needs.

Provision of legal and psychosocial services to unserved vulnerable populations in East Jerusalem/Area C⁷³

In 2018, *Sawasya II* provided legal aid services to 137 vulnerable children in East Jerusalem, including legal counseling sessions and representation. During arrests, transferred and/or interrogated children are at risk of physical and emotional ill-treatment, and ensuring children's access to a lawyer, especially at the early stages of arrest, is critical to minimize those risks and prevent children from signing forced confessions. The programme also invested efforts in raising awareness among children and their parents in East Jerusalem communities about their rights at the moment of arrest and under detention. Three awareness-raising sessions were conducted by two lawyers in 'hot spot' areas, reaching out to 130 children and their parents. Parents and children commended the awareness sessions for enhancing their awareness of basic legal rights. Further, the programme continued to work towards the reintegration of 386 ex-detainee children and to provide support to their caregivers. Psychosocial support to ex-detainee children is central to normalizing their situation and enabling them to reengage in school and family activities. Additionally, 41 children (23 boys and 18 girls) received structured psychosocial support, and 10 boys received individual counseling. This support is key to reducing the often traumatic impact of arrest and detention on children and their families and consisted of home visits, individual and group counseling, and structured psychosocial activities targeting children and their parents.

In 2019, 9,413 Palestinians (60% women, 6% boys, 4% girls) benefited from legal aid services in East Jerusalem and Area C, including cases pertaining to human rights violations, HLP, residency, registration, family unification, labor, and social welfare. This support is

⁷² The sick leave fund is managed by the Population and Immigration Authority.

⁷³ This includes Hebron H2.

critical given the current political situation that particularly affects children, especially in East Jerusalem, increasing their vulnerabilities and putting them at risk of being detained by Israeli Forces. With an average of about 450 children being arrested each year, ensuring early representation greatly contributes to minimizing the risks of ill-treatment. The selection of projects by partner CSOs was based on a comprehensive analysis of funding gaps and priorities, complementing the technical support planned under this output to enhance legal aid coordination. Furthermore, 352 vulnerable Palestinians (61% women, 11% boys, 6% girls) were sensitized on their rights in communities likely to be affected by violations. This has proved particularly beneficial in the Silwan neighborhood of East Jerusalem, where two sessions were organized by *Sawasya* for children and their parents, with reportedly increased knowledge of one's rights when in contact with Israeli Forces. In addition, 398 ex-detainee children (all male) accessed reintegration interventions, including 84 children targeted with psychosocial services. Reintegration interventions consist of home visits, individual and group counseling, and integrated psychosocial activities for both children and their parents.

In 2020, 9,114 Palestinians (62% women, 3% boys) accessed legal aid services in East Jerusalem, Area C, and Hebron H2. While legal aid delivery increased by 27% during the first semester, the various closures that occurred in the second half of the year negatively impacted services, resulting in a 3% decrease over the period in East Jerusalem and Area C compared to 2019. Demand and provision of human rights-centered legal aid particularly pertained to residency rights (including family reunification, economic, and social rights), access and movement, family rights, and child justice when in contact with Israeli law. A strong focus was also put on ensuring access to justice for women victims and survivors of violence as the severity of SGBV cases noticeably increased throughout the year. Methodology was adjusted at the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, mobilizing all available remote means, including setting up WhatsApp and Zoom accounts and leveraging social media capability. Such platforms were utilized to grant Power of Attorney, testify, and receive and answer urgent queries, including assistance in submitting unemployment files.

In 2021, 2,409 Palestinians (56% women, 25% boys, 1% girls) accessed legal aid services in East Jerusalem and Area C. In view of the degradation of the operational environment during the period, focus was put on meeting the demands of the most affected groups. While children in East Jerusalem are at high risk of being detained due to frequent contact with Israeli forces, soaring cases of child arrests⁷⁴ during the period resulted in a 100% increase in legal aid services in East Jerusalem. Among the 620 children who accessed legal aid (98% boys), 140 were represented by a lawyer (94% boys). It occurred against the background of the violent escalation that culminated in an eleven-day infighting between Hamas and Israel. In such context, early counseling and representation proved key to protecting children against self-incrimination and resulted in their prompt release in most instances.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ UNICEF (2 June 2021), « Escalation in the Gaza Strip, West Bank and Israel », Situation Report No. 4.

⁷⁵ Most child arrests occurred in the Al-Issawieh, the Old City of Jerusalem, and Silwan hotspot neighborhoods of East Jerusalem.

Freedom of movement remained a core concern during the period. Legal aid proved crucial for 168 Palestinians (46% women) who saw their travel restrictions lifted following



Photo 15: A group of trained lawyers with WCLAC on international standards and sharia courts. Ramallah (June 2023). © WCLAC

Sawasya's partner's intervention. More Palestinians also accessed their social, residency, and family rights. For example, 59 women obtained custody of their children and alimony rulings through *Sawasya* partners' interventions. In addition, 18 family lawyers (78% women) accessed capacity building in East Jerusalem to further instill social responsibility in young law professionals' practice for the benefit of their community. A strong focus was put on feminist litigation with the establishment of a 'Feminist Legal Hub', which mobilized 12 family lawyers (92% women) invested on this

front.

In 2022, 3,121 Palestinians (55% women, 19% boys, 0.1% girls) accessed legal aid services in East Jerusalem, Area C, and Hebron H2. This represented a 30% increase compared to the previous year. While levels of legal aid remained similar in East Jerusalem, the number of Palestinians accessing services increased by 392% on the previous year in Area C and Hebron H2. This coincides with an alarming rise in violence perpetrated against Palestinians and increasing legal aid needs and awareness in relation to settlers' attacks, particularly in the West Bank. At the time 2022 was being coined the deadliest year since the end of the second intifada,⁷⁶ focus was put on the provision of services, and awareness, including online and documentation of incidents.

In this context, children also continue to be at high risk of being detained and the harsh political, economic, and social circumstances they grow up under. While no major conflict occurred during the period, soaring legal aid demand witnessed in 2021 was transposed into 2022 with 577 children having accessed legal aid (99% boys). In such context, early counseling and representation are key to protecting children against self-incrimination and result in their prompt release in most instances.

Freedom of movement remained a core concern during the period. Legal aid proved crucial for 283 Palestinians (10% women). Palestinians also accessed support to realize their social, economic, and residency rights. Considering the urgency of such demands, a strong emphasis was put on developing app-based legal aid services. Not only the availability of digital services has proved critical in easing access to information, but it is also contributing to streamlining data management and collection among *Sawasya's* partners.

⁷⁶ See OCHA (2022), Protection of Civilians Report | 25 October | 7 November 2022.

Support to women who bring PSL claims into the family court system was also strengthened in 2022. As a result, 51 women obtained alimony and custody of their children through *Sawasya* partners' efforts. Such support is often a lifeline for women in East Jerusalem, particularly as a vast majority of them hold different legal statuses than their spouses, frequently leaving them fearful of approaching the formal justice system for fear of retaliation or deportation. As women continue to face structural discrimination in PSL-related matters, a strong focus was put, this year, on improving lawyering practice through taking forward feminist litigation. Fifty-two (52) family lawyers (79% women) accessed capacity building in East Jerusalem with an emphasis placed on advancing gender justice in the court room, following the establishment of a 'Feminist Legal Hub' in 2021. In this context, 46 women activists who were trained on community-based women's rights sensitization were mobilized this year. Broader strategic litigation efforts were also invested in, with a successful focus on improving access to municipality services for marginalized communities in East Jerusalem that bore fruit last year.

In 2023, 2,157 Palestinians (51% women, 16% boys, 0.05% girls) accessed legal aid services in East Jerusalem, Area C, and Hebron H2. This was a 22% increase compared to the previous year. While levels of legal aid remained similar in Area C and Hebron H2, the number of women and men seeking legal aid in East Jerusalem nearly doubled, while legal aid demand for boys remained high compared to mid-2022. This coincides with an alarmingly degraded situation in East Jerusalem, marked by an acceleration of house demolitions.⁷⁷ With 2023 far surpassing already almost equating the unprecedented fatality rates of 2022, which were the highest recorded since the end of the second intifada,⁷⁸ focus continued to be put on the provision of services, awareness, including online and documentation of incidents. In this context, children, and particularly boys, are at high risk of being detained due to the harsh political, economic, and social circumstances they grow up under. To illustrate, 385 boys (as opposed to 53 girls)⁷⁹ benefited from free legal representation supported by the Programme. In this context, early counseling and representation are crucial to safeguarding children from self-incrimination, often leading to their timely release.

Freedom of movement remained a core concern during the period. Legal aid proved crucial for 185 Palestinians (16% women). For example, 66 Palestinians (3% women) had their travel bans successfully lifted during the period, with support from the Programme. Permit requests for farmers whose access to their agricultural lands is restricted by Israeli authorities; while no formal decision was made during the period, administrative authorities reached out to the farmers, which may result in a favorable decision. More broadly, support aimed at protecting Palestinian social, economic, and residency rights, with cases pertaining to HLP, housing, land, property, residency, registration, family unification, labor,

⁷⁷ See OCHA (2023), Protection of civilians Report | 13 June | 4 July 2023.

⁷⁸ See OCHA (2023), Protection of civilians Report | 5 September | 18 September 2023.

⁷⁹ 47 in Area C, 86 in East Jerusalem, 98 in Area A&B, 202 in Gaza Strip, and 5 in H2.

social welfare, and unemployment benefits. With regard to the latter, women tend to be overrepresented (85% during the period) as they frequently find themselves in vulnerable positions on the job market. Similar to travel restrictions, legal assistance pertaining to employment benefits often yields positive outcomes, without necessitating formal court representation. To illustrate, 47% of the files submitted during the period were already successfully resolved (14% of them are still pending a resolution), resulting in over USD 300,000 in benefits for claimants. To expand such gains, legal aid providers in East Jerusalem have further coordinated knowledge sharing on employment rights, including through the organization of training.

Support to women who bring PSL claims into the family court system was also further strengthened in 2023. As a result, 479 women⁸⁰ obtained a verdict in their favor through partners' interventions. Such support is often a lifeline for women in East Jerusalem, particularly as a vast majority of them hold different legal statuses than their spouses, frequently leaving them fearful of approaching the formal justice system for fear of retaliation or deportation and heightening GBV risks. Aware of this, work also focused on securing residency permits for women holders of Palestinian IDs married to East Jerusalemites. Such interventions resulted in a 77% success rate during the first half of the year and are critical in protecting women from discrimination.

Legal aid provision to unserved vulnerable population in the Gaza Strip, including access to protection for children in conflict with the law

In 2018, the programme entered into a partnership with 4 CSO-based legal clinics in the Gaza Strip that provide legal counseling and representation (before family courts) to individuals whose financial resources are insufficient to afford regular legal services. Furthermore, the programme maintained its partnership with the PBA's Gaza Branch, which continued to provide marginalized communities with legal counseling through its 3 field offices and representation before regular courts in the Gaza Strip. In 2018, a total of 1,321 individuals (including 947 women) accessed legal aid services, among whom 263 benefited from legal representation before Palestinian courts. In anticipation of the NLAS' operationalization, the programme supported a workshop on coordination between legal aid providers in the Gaza Strip with representatives of the 4 partner CSOs and the PBA (Gaza) during which they agreed to strengthen their referral, monitoring, and reporting capacities in the framework of the 'Awn Access to Justice Network'. Furthermore, the programme entered into a two-year partnership with 9 CSOs (2019-2020) to provide legal aid services to vulnerable Palestinians in front of Israeli jurisdictions (in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza Strip). With the programme's support, the provision of legal aid will particularly focus on rights relating to access to social and labor benefits as well as residency status, family reunification, and child registration. The CSOs are to concentrate on settler violence cases, family law issues, detention, and on challenging restrictions of movement.

⁸⁰ This figure is the results for one partner in Gaza. However, the total number of women who received judgements in their favour in 2023 was 479 women. Note that data from Gaza is up to June 2023 due to the ongoing war.

In 2019, important strides were made in the Gaza Strip towards improving the current policy framework in adherence to international legal aid standards. It translated into the formalization of an early representation mechanism through the signing of a series of MOUs between the PBA, the police, the AGO, the HJC, and reform & rehabilitation centers. This was an important step forward towards ensuring that anyone who is arrested, detained, or charged with a criminal offense is entitled to legal aid at all stages of the criminal justice process. To rapidly activate the mechanism, the Programme supported the establishment of a referral platform that brings together all engaged actors, including the legal aid providers operating under the umbrella of the Awn Network. Through the platform, 112 cases were already referred to the PBA this year, with 86% by rehabilitation centers. In addition, progress was made towards promoting A2D initiatives for children in conflict with the law through the undertaking of a service mapping assessment, which constitutes a first step forward towards their systematization. In line with this, 21 children (all boys) benefited from diversion measures through the MOSD vocational training centers. In parallel, 10,087 Palestinians (73% women, 5% boys, 1% girls) from the Gaza Strip accessed legal aid services during the period, with a focus on family and criminal cases in front of Palestinian jurisdictions and on cases of Palestinians detained in Israel. Through a well-defined partnership with civil society, legal aid services continued to be provided by the PBA for regular court cases⁸¹ and by specialized CSOs for family court cases.⁸² CSOs also provided critical support to Palestinians detained in Israel. It translated, i.a., into the release of 12 detainees⁸³ and the issuance of 24 indictment statements, which enabled prisoners' families to receive critical social welfare assistance. This progress was underpinned by the systematic documentation and monitoring of instances of detention of Palestinians in Israel.⁸⁴

In 2020, the severe disruption of court work⁸⁵ and the judicial vacuum it created prompted legal aid providers to join forces in advocating for responsive policies and ramping up service provision for better protection of women and children. While reports began to emerge of fathers increasingly denying former spouses' custody rights, partner legal aid providers changed their modus operandi and took to social media to offer a platform to directly engage with judicial decision makers. During one of these Facebook live sessions, a woman whose son had been abducted by his father was able to bring her case to the attention of the Chief Justice of the Family Court. She obtained a meeting with him on the following day, which led to the enforcement of her custody rights and to her being reunited with her son six days later. The Chief Justice also introduced emergency measures for Family Court work to resume for

⁸¹ Through the PBA's legal aid clinics in the governorates of Gaza, Khan Younis and Rafah.

⁸² Through CSOs' legal aid clinics located in each governorate of the Gaza Strip.

⁸³ Through the action, one woman was also granted visitation rights. One man who had completed its sentencing was also released, following administrative support to secure proper residency documentation for the oPt.

⁸⁴ 84 in total over the period.

⁸⁵ From 22 March to 20 April. Regular courts began to operate at a reduced capacity on 22 March; family courts were shut down on 25 March.

urgent cases (i.e., child custody, visitation, and alimony). Following this successful policy intervention, a second live Facebook session was organized with the Director of the Family and Child Section of the Civil Police Public Relations Office to discuss access to justice for victims/survivors of violence.

The COVID-19 pandemic provided an unprecedented opportunity to harness digital transformation in the field of legal awareness. More than 415,000 social media users accessed dozens of live-streaming sessions via CSO Facebook pages⁸⁶ that informed them on their rights and on the availability of services. They were able to interact and ask questions in a manner similar to what they would during face-to-face interactions. With more than 63,400 views on a single streaming, such content also proved critical in disseminating information related to access to legal services for SGBV victims/survivors, particularly at a time where women were in the same household with their abusers. To tackle the shadow pandemic of SGBV, legal awareness resources were further mobilized and digitalized, including during the #Fi_Zamn_Al-Jaihat⁸⁷ Tweeting Day for the benefit of 870,804 individuals who had access to content on judicial challenges during emergency times and on the need to adopt the FPB.

In parallel, 7,813 individuals (62% women, 5% boys, 5% girls) accessed legal awareness through sessions conducted across the Gaza Strip before and during the COVID-19 outbreak once safety measures were in place. To enhance legal awareness among parents of children currently or previously placed in Al-Rabe'a in Gaza, *Sawasya* and its partners conducted structured legal awareness sessions for 246 parents (68% women). Each group attended four awareness sessions addressing topics related to children's legal rights when they come into contact with the Palestinian Law, access to legal services, as well as ways to protect their children. Further to this, some parents asked for more in-depth sessions and were referred to one-to-one counseling support, while others sought legal advice.

As a result of legal aid providers ramping up efforts to ensure the uninterrupted provision of services, 12,106 Palestinians (79% women, 0.1% girls, 3% boys) accessed legal aid with a specific focus on family cases. Interventions also continued to address most pressing legal aid needs for criminal cases. Regarding the latter, 369 Palestinians (28% women, 0.4% boys) facing movement restrictions to and from the Gaza Strip or detention in Israel accessed legal aid services; 18 men among them were released. Targeted interventions by specialized CSOs also led to the introduction of biweekly 10-minute parental phone calls for children detained in Israel and the issuance of an internal recommendation to allow detainees to make phone calls for humanitarian emergencies. In line with this, 226 children (26% girls) were released from pre-trial detention through free early representation. This follows concerted engagement by partners and other stakeholders to heed the UN's call to release children, including the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. Overall, 2020 witnessed a

⁸⁶ In addition to 34 radio episodes and two radio spots. Disaggregation unavailable. Data collection methodologies are being adapted to enable further analysis.

⁸⁷ In English, "in the time of the pandemic".

20% increase in service provision as compared to 2019, thereby substantiating the observed growing demand for legal aid for women in front of family courts in other parts of the State of Palestine.⁸⁸

In 2021, 12,407 Palestinians (80% women, 0.2% girls, 3% boys) accessed legal aid in the Gaza Strip. A strong focus continued to be put on criminal representation in front of Palestinian jurisdictions.⁸⁹ As a result, 229 adult inmates (8% women) were released.⁹⁰ Furthermore, 89 boys⁹¹ placed at the Al-Rabea RRC were released following interventions by the PBA legal aid clinics. In line with this, a strong focus of action was also put on lessening the impact of contact with the criminal justice system and fostering reintegration through tailored and individualized psychosocial support for all released boys. Emphasis was also placed on improving children's capacity to reach out to justice professionals with the rollout of a toll-free helpline through which 15 children (7% girls) were directly able to engage with a lawyer during the period. This is in step with progress made by the PBA to further operationalize the MOUs on early representation for individuals charged with criminal offenses - particularly children.⁹² This included two coordination workshops organized during the period with 70 representatives of the AGO, the HJC, and PBA (100% men).⁹³

However, most cases supported by the Programme were related to PSL matters, including separation, divorce, custody, alimony as well as visitation rights, for which women tend to disproportionately seek legal aid support (women represented 90% of family legal aid cases during the period). In view of this, strong emphasis continued to be placed on access to family law information for women but also on women's rights under criminal and civil law. During the period, they represented 74% of the total number of community members who accessed legal awareness in the coastal enclave (8,119 out of 10,904). Following the sessions, several of them approached legal aid providers to seek additional advice, thereby demonstrating the relevance of such an approach in promoting access to justice avenues. In view of this, work continued to focus on fostering legal awareness on social media, with 380,072 social media users having had access to online content.

In 2022, 15,947 Palestinians (74% women, 0.2% girls, 5% boys) accessed legal aid in the Gaza Strip. This represents a 29% increase as compared to 2021. With the focus on criminal

⁸⁸ Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (2021), "Compounded threats: How COVID-19, Occupation and Patriarchy Have Impacted Palestinian Women in 2020".

⁸⁹ One hundred and forty-five (145) Palestinians also accessed legal aid for cases relating to movement, detention or crossing into Israel.

⁹⁰ In 2022, the detained population was estimated at 1,600 inmates in Gaza, including around 45 women.

⁹¹ They are among the 399 boys who received legal representation. 12 among the 399 boys who received legal representation are still awaiting ruling on their case. 613 boys were detained in total in 2021.

⁹² See Sawasya (2019), « Annual Narrative Progress Report – 1 January to 31 December 2019». The MOUs were signed in 2019 between the PBA and the AGO, HJC, police and RRCs for the referral of The PBA provided consultation services to 451 persons (71 % women) and representation services to 365 persons (99 % women) in front of Gaza's regular courts.

⁹³ Steps were also taken by the PBA to improve access to services for female inmates through a coordination meeting that brought together the PBA and judicial and social actors.

representation in front of Palestinian jurisdictions, including on lessening the impact of contact with the criminal justice system for children and fostering reintegration through tailored and individualized psychosocial support. Adopting an integrated approach aimed at producing restorative outcomes of justice, 165 children (all boys) in contact with the law accessed psycho-social services, including life skills education as well as individual and group counseling and art therapy. Emphasis was also placed on improving children's capacity to reach out to justice professionals with the rollout of a toll-free helpline through which 57 parents (26% women) were directly able to engage with a lawyer during the period. In addition, legal aid support was provided to Palestinians facing movement restrictions exiting Gaza or being arrested for crossing into Israel. However, the majority of cases pertained to PSL-related matters (separation, divorce, custody, alimony), which is crucial for women who continue to face structural discrimination in front of family courts. In view of this, legal aid providers in Gaza organized a conference on "Enhancing the Protection of Women's and Children's Rights Defenders" with the aim of launching a protection network for activists, who are increasingly targeted for advocating for gender justice, including for the passing of the FPB and the domestication of CEDAW.

In order to counter detrimental narratives and raise awareness on legal rights, particularly women's rights, 13,147 community members accessed in-person legal awareness in Gaza (62% women, 1% boys, 5% girls). This represents a 21% increase as compared to 2021. Continued focus was put on women's rights and children's rights, including on social media, with hundreds of thousands of social media users having had access to content online (1,594,072 views) and on the radio. However, legal awareness sessions for school students on children's rights were postponed to 2023 due to new regulations. Nevertheless, 1,590 parents (84% women) accessed 91 community-based awareness sessions on juveniles' access to justice, legal aid services, and children's rights. This was complemented by 257 parents (59% women) of children in conflict with the law having had access to in-person awareness sessions on parental care and positive discipline across the Gaza Strip.

In 2023, 6,365 Palestinians (89% women, 1% girls, 3% boys) accessed legal aid in the Gaza Strip. While this represents a 26% decrease as compared to the first semester of 2022, the levels of legal aid sought by women remained sensibly similar. This outcome stems from a sustained programmatic emphasis on enhancing women's access to justice, particularly as they are overrepresented in PSL cases (marriage, divorce, separation, custody, maintenance, alimony, inheritance). As a result, over 4,000 women (0.7% girls) accessed consultation or representation support in front of *Shari'a* courts in Gaza. An emphasis on criminal representation in front of Palestinian jurisdictions was also maintained, with the particular aim of mitigating the effects of children's encounters. Therefore, 112 children (two girls) in conflict with the law accessed early legal aid consultation and representation services. Emphasis was also placed on improving children's capacity to reach out to justice professionals with the rollout of a toll-free helpline through which 33 children (1 girl) were directly able to engage with a lawyer during the period. In addition, legal aid support was provided to 62 Palestinians (73% men, 27% women) facing movement restrictions exiting Gaza or being arrested for crossing into Israel.

Furthermore, 15,661 community members accessed in-person legal awareness in the Gaza Strip (53% women, 14% boys, 18% girls). This represents a 171% increase as compared to 2022 at mid-year level, as efforts were remobilized around legal awareness, particularly for children.



Photo 16: Women and children participating in a legal awareness session in Gaza, engaging not only in training but also through a creative method, the CDMC's renowned theatre play 'Kalam Riham,' translating to '[Words of Reham](#)', Gaza, (2023). © CDMC

While legal awareness sessions for school students on children's rights were postponed to the new 2023 academic year, 1,590 parents (84% women) accessed 91 community-based awareness sessions on children's access to justice, legal aid services, and children's rights. Continued focus was put on women's rights and children's rights, including on social media, with hundreds of thousands of social media users having had access to content online (114,000+ views) and on the radio.

Outcome 4: Women's access to justice and security improved through gender-responsive service delivery and empowerment of women

Output 4.1: Technical and institutional capacities of rule of law institutions to respond to the needs of women improve



Improved capacity of security institutions to respond to the needs of women

In 2018, *Sawasya II* supported the development of a 2019 work plan for the Palestinian Civil Police (PCP) Gender Unit, aligning priorities with the PCP Gender Strategy (2017-2022). The programme also supported the finalization of the Gender Mainstreaming Administrative Programme 2019 work plan of the Security Sector Strategic Plan (AP9) by the Ministry of Interior (MOI). On the cybercrime front, procedural guidelines for the PCP's Family Protection and Juvenile Unit (FPJU) and the specialized public prosecution were jointly established by the programme to enhance responsive management of cybercrime cases against women and girls.

In 2019, a 1% increase in VAW cases filed with the FJPU was observed. The AGO and PCP developed guidelines for providing services to women and girls who are victims of cyber violence.⁹⁴ Over 7,000 police officers were sensitized on advancing gender equality in the workplace through a six-month campaign which included media-related material in collaboration with EUPOL COPPS and as part of supporting the implementation of the Gender Strategy of the PCP mentioned above. A baseline perception survey conducted by *Sawasya* revealed a positive impact on the perception of women in the police. Efforts

⁹⁴ Consultations were held at the levels of the four specialized units within the AGO and PCP as well as with district-based officers.

continued to mainstream gender in the broader security sector, with a 33% increase in female enrollment reported in the AP9 progress reports.⁹⁵

In 2020, a helpline operated by the FJPD was set up in June as part of the PCP's emergency plan to respond to the pandemic. Guidelines to operate the helpline were endorsed by the Chief of Police, and a capacity-building programme was developed and implemented to train helpline operators. The mid-term review of the PCP gender strategy (2017-2022) was conducted, highlighting progress in human resources and community outreach but the need for enhanced gender-sensitive budgeting and monitoring practices.

In 2021, the cybercrime guidelines developed jointly by the AGO and PCP were adopted by the Chief of Police.⁹⁶ Eight police officers received training on cybercrimes by the Cybercrimes Unit of the PCP, and five districts were designated as pilot locations. Specialized IT equipment was provided to FJPD officers for investigating cybercrimes. The helpline for victims of violence was further operationalized, with 904 individuals (89% women) reaching out to operators. Guidelines to operate the helpline were endorsed, and 11 specialized officers were trained. Additional funding for the AP9 annual work plan implementation was secured by the MOI Gender Unit.



Photos 17: A session conducted by UNW, facilitated by a contracted consultant, on Cybercrime for specialized officers and frontline workers in Ramallah (April 2022). @Sawasya

In 2022, significant progress was made in improving the capacity of security institutions to address women's needs. The FJPD helpline received contacts from 706 individuals (63% women, 0.4% girls, 0.03% boys), with 25% subsequently referred to the police. Thirty-eight (38) FJPD officers (39% women) received training on helpline service provision. A facility assessment conducted in nine PCP FPJU district offices identified the need to redesign FPJU premises to prioritize women and children's best interests, safety, and confidentiality. Performance assessment tools and beneficiary questionnaire templates were created to standardize quality assurance across FJPUs and address delivery gaps. Fifteen (15) police officers (7% women) participated in training on police roles in the

⁹⁵ The Gender Mainstreaming Administrative Programme work plan of the Security Sector Strategic Plan (AP9) plan aims, i.a., at enhancing gender responsive service delivery and infrastructure in the security sector, increasing the number of women within security institutions, increasing the number of women in leadership positions.

⁹⁶ It sets out a protective framework that defines the roles and responsibilities of each service provider, including the PCP's FJPD (first responder) and the Specialized Prosecution (i.e., family protection prosecutor and electronic crime prosecutor).

amended national referral system for women victims of violence. Support continued for the Security Sector Gender Programme (AP9), with the development of the 2022 annual work plan and capacity building for Gender Unit members at the MOI.

In 2023, progress continued in enhancing the capacity of security institutions to address women's needs. The FJPD helpline received contacts from 27 individuals, with 6 subsequently referred to the police district offices. The PCP, HJC, SJD, AGO, and MOSD developed a list of cross-cutting priorities to enhance emergency responses for VAW cases. Equipment was procured to accompany the rollout of the cybercrime guidelines and the helpline. The performance assessment tool and beneficiary questionnaire template were operationalized, with 13 FJPU heads (100% men) trained on their use. The MOI Gender Unit developed its 2023 annual work plan, and a joint priority list for 2023-2024 was endorsed by the MOI to advance the Security Sector Gender Programme (AP9).

Improved capacity of prosecution services to respond to the needs of women

In 2018, VAW Specialized Public Prosecutors (SPPs) finalized SOPs on prosecuting VAW cases, approved by the AGO. The programme supported training for 25 specialized prosecutors (17 men and 8 women) on the SOPs. An assessment by VAW SPPs highlighted operational challenges, leading to the development of a 2019 annual work plan by the AGO. The plan included capacity building for SPPs on VAW responsive prosecution and monitoring.

In 2019, the SOPs for prosecuting VAW cases were launched, with the Attorney General and Ministers of Social Development and Women's Affairs reaffirming the need for responsive prosecutorial solutions and reviewing the legal framework to better protect women victims of violence. A mapping conducted by *Sawasya* and prosecutors revealed coordination and resource management gaps affecting the delivery of specialized services.⁹⁷ The VAW Chief Prosecutor took immediate measures to improve the prosecutorial environment through on-the-job mentoring and establishing a mechanism to monitor and follow up on the SOPs' application. *Sawasya* planned to focus on strengthening the specialized prosecution's capacity and sensitizing the general prosecution on VAW cases in 2020. Organizational development was supported through capacity building of 90 AGO staff on VAW regulatory frameworks, responsive prosecution services, and enhancing gender sensitivity in the workplace.

In 2020, legal instructive guidelines were developed with VAW Specialized Prosecutors to improve immediate services to survivors while preventing re-victimization. The guidelines explore ways to form legal arguments that strategically mainstream constitutional and international law principles to improve the litigation framework for VAW cases and enhance the efficient prosecution of SGBV cases. The AGO accessed organizational support on

⁹⁷ 19 chief prosecutors among them were sensitized on biases and negative perceptions frequently held against survivors of violence as well as to international obligations under CEDAW. An 2% increase in the number of cases transferred by the public prosecution to the courts was observed this year.

implementing the VAW SPP mandate and SOPs on investigating VAW cases to improve referral and coordination across the prosecutorial chain at all jurisdiction levels. Capacity building and organizational development activities at the AGO Gender Unit were postponed to 2021 due to COVID-19. However, twenty-five (25) VAW Specialized Prosecutors (40% women) received PPE and hygiene products, and the AGO emergency plan was executed.

In 2021, the instructive prosecutorial guidelines were finalized in collaboration with 12 prosecutors (33% women), endorsed during a four-day workshop with inputs from lawyers and judges. Eighteen (18) out of 25 specialized prosecutors (39% women) received capacity building on applying the guidelines and their intersection with other instruments. Eleven (11) out of 13 VAW prosecution administrative staff (54% women) accessed capacity building on case management, focusing on confidentiality and advancing gender justice. Accountability-oriented measures were introduced through the operationalization of monitoring tools by specialized prosecutors, including formalizing quarterly review meetings. Work was initiated to provide capacity building for chief prosecutors, prosecutors, and the AGO inspection department on responsive services for women survivors of violence, to be implemented in 2022. Gaps in the *Mizan II* case management system were identified regarding gender disaggregation, and work on this will be taken forward in 2022.

In 2022, the AGO's Gender Unit played a key role in policy and capacity transformation. As part of an integrated training approach, 17 administrative staff (53% women) received training on gender equality, women's rights, and VAW from the Gender Unit, aiming to sensitize them to the challenges faced by women in the justice system and improve case management responses. Additionally, 19 Chief Prosecutors (5% women) contributed to revising the SOPs of the AGO's Family Protection Unit and received capacity building on VAW responsive services, including tools for identifying VAW cases.

A consultative report was produced to identify the priorities of partner institutions in the justice, security, and social sectors regarding the management of VAW cases during emergencies. Institution-specific priorities were identified for the MOSD, AGO, and SJD, as well as multi-sectoral priorities for all institutions (HJC, PCP, MOSD, AGO, and SJD). The partners agreed on the need to develop referral pathways, establish SOPs on multi-sectoral virtual services, and provide capacity building to service providers for cases of women survivors of violence during emergencies.

Future work will focus on postponed activities, including awareness-raising on VAW and gender-sensitive judicial inspection, implementing legal instructive guidelines for the specialized prosecution, digitalization within the *Mizan III* framework, ToT to build VAW capacity of public prosecutors, and supporting VAW specialized prosecutors in developing accountability and monitoring tools.

In 2023, efforts focused on making judicial inspection and family prosecution more responsive to women's needs. Eight prosecutors (75% women) from the Judicial Inspection

Department attended training on VAW and gender justice. Gender-sensitive judicial inspection at the prosecution level is essential to identify and rectify gender-specific biases or inequalities. The workshop addressed concerns surrounding CEDAW's implementation and its relation to Palestine's normative framework. It also highlighted GBV statistics, the prosecution's role in addressing violence, the importance of specific procedures for survivors, and the need to address the needs of survivors with disabilities in the Prosecution's Procedures Manual. Eighteen (18) Chief Prosecutors (1% women) participated in training on the Family Prosecution SOPs, which include guiding tools for identifying VAW cases. Forty-two (42) prosecutors (38% women) accessed training on the prosecution's role in combating GBV.

Support effective, operational, multi-sectoral services in place for SGBV survivors

In 2018, *Sawasya II* supported efforts to strengthen coordination and cooperation between service providers within justice and security institutions. The programme reinforced mechanisms for referring VAW cases to shelters, supporting a meeting with representatives from the PCP (FPJU), specialized prosecution, and MOSD to discuss bottlenecks in referral processes. Recommendations were made to enhance cooperation at the district level, streamline admission procedures, and update MOUs between the MOSD and PCP/public prosecution. The programme also supported establishing a coordination body within the HJC for managing and adjudicating VAW cases. Consultations were conducted with HJC, PCP, MOSD, and Mehwar Center⁹⁸ representatives to discuss challenges and exchange ideas on enhanced coordination between the judiciary and other stakeholders. Recommendations were made to ensure psychosocial reports are an inseparable component of case files and that social counselors can attend court sessions. The programme facilitated the activation of the serious case review mechanism⁹⁹ to examine coordination between the PCP, VAW SPPs, MOSD, Bethlehem Governorate, and Mehwar Center following the homicide of a couple who had sought protection from involved institutions.

In 2019, a platform was established to coordinate the action of VAW judges and prosecutors as a first step towards operationalizing the specialized judicial body. Two meetings took place, focusing on preventing revictimization during prosecution and litigation phases. The existing dialogue platform between the FJPU and VAW prosecutors was further operationalized, with three meetings held to improve the One-Stop Center (OSC) work and reinforce coordination at the district level. Three meetings were organized with specialized prosecutors and FJPU representatives from all West Bank governorates to discuss priority

⁹⁸ Three (3) consultation sessions took place during the reporting period: the 1st one targeted 14 VAW judges (7 males and 7 females); the 2nd one targeted 18 persons (12 females and 6 males), including representatives of MoSD, VAW judges and the GU at the HJC; the 3rd one targeted 19 representatives (10 females and 9 males) of the judiciary (VAW judges) and the PCP/ FJPU representatives.

⁹⁹ Which is a sub- committee to the High National Committee to Combat VAW. A SoPs for the serious case review was developed along with a descriptive analytical report on the murder case that was reviewed by all partners to map the provided services, identify the good practices and the gaps, and agree on recommendations to enhance protection services and coordination amongst all partners.

areas: women's admission to shelters, suicide attempt reporting, forensics in SGBV cases, and case referral to the specialized prosecution.¹⁰⁰ Participants highlighted the need for clear policy guidance on cases where VAW victims refuse assistance and improved referral coordination with the MOSD. OSC team members received advanced training on providing consolidated VAW services, leading to the implementation of measures such as anonymizing files, assigning unique focal points to cases, and activating a case review mechanism. *Sawasya* facilitated two serious case review sessions in the Ramallah OSC and Jericho emergency shelter with FJPU, VAW specialized prosecutors, and MOSD to identify bottlenecks and solutions. An assessment of OSC service provision was conducted, with recommendations including assigning a full-time counselor, formalizing linkages with civil society providers, and promoting peer-to-peer support. FJPD capacity to provide responsive services to VAW survivors was strengthened through training for newly recruited FJPU officers on responsive VAW services and a workshop on FJPD organizational development.

In 2020, the COVID-19 crisis and its shadow pandemic¹⁰¹ shed light on pre-existing service provision gaps, particularly the lack of adapted emergency protocols to efficiently protect SGBV survivors. SGBV increased by at least 20%,¹⁰² while VAW cases filed with FJPU decreased by 18%, resulting in decreased prosecution (-22%) and conviction (-33%) levels. Immediate priority was given to developing emergency plans by the MOSD, PCP (FJPUs), HJC (VAW judiciary), AGO (VAW specialized prosecution), and SJD to ensure continuous and responsive services for SGBV victims/survivors. The MOSD and FJPUs operationalized their protocols, including a specialized police helpline to incentivize reporting of SGBV instances. A proposal was submitted to the Chief Justice for holding remote court hearing sessions in VAW cases supported by the *Mizan II* technology. The COM established an MOSD-led protocol for the safe testing and placement of survivors of violence in quarantine centers and their longer-term referral. Instructions were issued by the VAW specialized prosecution for the systematic referral of SGBV cases by FJPUs. Virtual dialogue meetings were held with key service providers to discuss challenges brought about by the COVID-19 crisis and formulate recommendations to address knowledge and procedural gaps. Risk Assessment Templates (RATs) were successfully rolled out by the police and prosecution for identifying additional threats to women's safety. A capacity building plan for Women's Protection Counselors (WPC) was developed by the MOSD to promote better VAW case management practices and focus on increasing WPC's understanding of women's trajectories across the investigatory, prosecutorial, and litigation chain, with emphasis on sexual violence cases.

¹⁰⁰ As identified over the course of the six dialogue meetings facilitated by the Programme in 2019.

¹⁰¹ See UN Women (May 2020), "Justice for women amidst COVID-19." available [here](#).

¹⁰² The increase in the number of women seeking help from specialized organizations ranged from 20 % to 69 % during the lockdown. Source: [OCHA](#).

In 2021, key strides were made towards improved capacity to process VAW claims, with a 41% increase in cases transferred to courts and a 39% increase in convicted perpetrators compared to 2020. Work to establish two new One-Stop Centers (OSCs) in Nablus and Hebron was initiated, building on the OSC protocol's adoption in 2020 and efforts to integrate services for women survivors of violence through an MOU for case management coordination between the MOSD, PCP, and AGO. Emergency plans were endorsed by the Chief of Police, Chief Justice, and Minister of Social Development. All women protection counselors are now better equipped to provide efficient and responsive support to women victims of violence during judicial proceedings. All women prison counselors based in the West Bank accessed on-the-job capacity building and professional supervision on responsive services for female inmates. Thirty-seven (37) gender champions (62% women) were identified from different institutions across the justice and security sectors. RATs continued to be operationalized, and an evaluation of the rollout phase was initiated. Fifteen (15) representatives (80% women) from the justice, security, and CSO sectors led the review process of the 2017 report on essential services to women victims of violence, highlighting the need to enhance protection for service providers, strengthen accountability frameworks, improve shelter admission procedures, and address longer-term economic prospects for survivors.¹⁰³ A one-year action plan was developed by involved actors with commitments and milestones to ensure the provision of VAW services as essential services.



Photo 18: The opening of the One-Stop Centre for women and girls' survivors of violence in Hebron, Hebron (September 2023). ©Sawasya

In 2022, progress was made towards tailoring justice responses to the needs of women and girls through strengthening effective, operational, and multi-sectoral services. The

¹⁰³ The review was conducted by the HAYA Joint Programme is funded by the Government of Canada and is jointly implemented by a consortium of UN agencies consisting of the UN Women, UNFPA, the UN-Habitat, and the UNODC. HAYA brings together the Palestinian Authority, UN agencies, civil society organisations, community-based organisations, and other partners to reduce the vulnerability of women and girls to all forms of violence and from the threat of such violence. MOWA and MOSD are key partners of the HAYA Joint Programme, along with other ministries including the MOEHE, the Ministry of Health, the MOJ, and the Ministry of Local Government, and various municipalities, civil society and community-based organizations. HAYA seeks to end violence against women and girls through various outreach and awareness-raising activities to change harmful practices and attitudes perpetuating and validating violence, increase access to necessary services for survivors of violence, as well as strengthen the institutional capacity of government officials to develop and implement legal and policy frameworks promoting and protecting women's and girls' rights to live free from violence. The HAYA Joint Programme also focuses on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all, achieving gender equality, and empowering all women and girls, and making cities inclusive safe, resilient, and sustainable.

prosecution and adjudication of VAW cases continued to increase,¹⁰⁴ with a 3% increase in cases transferred to courts and a 16% increase in convicted perpetrators compared to 2021. Efforts continued to expand the One-Stop Centre (OSC) model to Nablus and Hebron, with refurbishment work concluded. The operationalization of the RATs included an integrated review process conducted by social service providers, public prosecutors, and police officers to support standardizing and individualizing their use. A research product was commissioned to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the social and legal realities faced by women in conflict with the law, with preliminary outcomes indicating the need to review applicable legislation, enhance women's awareness of their rights, and strengthen coordination and collaboration between the justice, social, and security sectors. Sixty-one (61) newly identified gender champions (84% women) contributed to advancing multisectoral services for women and girls across the justice, security, and protection chain. The case conference manual on cases of women victims and survivors of violence was amended from a disability perspective in collaboration with the Global UNDP/UN Women Joint Programme on Addressing Stigma, Discrimination, and Violence for Empowering Women with Disabilities. A stigma tool was piloted and adopted by the MOSD to better detect and responsively collect data on discrimination and violence against women with disabilities. A protocol on behavioral change and advocacy for the rights of women with disabilities was developed based on research findings. Media students accessed protocol-based training to better address the rights of women with disabilities and the violence and discrimination they face.

In 2023, the capacity of survivors of violence to bring claims into the formal justice system continued to improve, with a 2% increase in cases transferred to courts and a 33% increase in convicted perpetrators compared to 2022 at mid-year. The OSC in Nablus started operating in January, experiencing a 23% increase in cases compared to the OSC in Ramallah. The operationalization of the OSC in Hebron experienced delays until June due to difficulties connecting it with the FJPD network. Twenty-three (23) MOSD, PCP, and prosecution staff from the three OSCs (48% women) accessed further training on integrated service protocols. Continuous coordination support was provided, particularly between the RRCs, MOSD, and civil society actors, focusing on joint visits and inmates' access to psycho-social services. Twenty-seven (27) women's counselors at the MOSD underwent training on the National Referral System for Women Victims of Violence, expanding their understanding of gender-based violence and their role within the VAW response chain. Amendments to the case conference manual on cases of women victims and survivors of violence from a disability perspective were finalized and disseminated.

Improved capacity of the judiciary to meet the needs of women

In 2018, *Sawasya II*, in collaboration with the HJC, prepared a concept note on the training needs of VAW judges, covering aspects related to the responsive adjudication of VAW cases, such as VAW and international human rights conventions, legal interpretation, and incorporation of international human rights principles and customary law into domestic

¹⁰⁴ To the exception of 2020 as service provision was considerably interrupted due to the COVID-19 epidemic.

rulings. A call for proposals was advertised to identify partnership opportunities with academic institutions. A criterion list for responsive infrastructure was prepared by the HJC's Gender Unit with the support of *Sawasya II*'s technical expert, ensuring VAW services within the judiciary adhere to international human rights standards, women's access to justice principles, and best practices. *Sawasya II* planned to support refurbishment work for establishing the specialized coordination body within the HJC in 2019.

In 2019, a 31% increase in the number of convicted VAW perpetrators was observed¹⁰⁵ compared to 8% in 2018, potentially indicating the emergence and consolidation of new practices within the judiciary and transformed attitudes and behaviors towards women and girls. Two training programs were developed by the PJI, in partnership with the Birzeit University Continuous Education Institute, for regular and family court staff on VAW. The programs aimed to promote a progressive interpretation of applicable legislation, operationalize core elements of international human rights law (particularly CEDAW), and alter prevailing biases and perceptions that can affect judges' decisions in VAW cases. Thirty-one (31) regular judges, two HJC gender unit staff (52% women), 20 family judges, and court staff (40% women) benefited from the programs. Support was provided to develop the HJC gender unit's AWP for 2020. Twenty-nine (29) VAW judges and family judges (38% women)¹⁰⁶ were trained on the National Referral System for women victims of domestic violence,¹⁰⁷ which was established under the National Strategy to Combat Violence Against Women (2011-2019) but needs to be fully operationalized, with gaps remaining in coordination and collaboration between actors. Planning began to support efforts to operationalize the system at the family courts level in 2020 and improve services delivered by family courts to women and children based on the ongoing appraisal assessment. The assessment highlighted the importance of addressing gender and human rights gaps within applicable PSLs while developing short and medium-term interventions and procedures to address structural and institutional challenges faced by women and children in accessing justice. *Sawasya* aimed to reinforce its leading role with national and international actors through co-chairing the Justice Sector Working Group's gender, human rights, and legislation sub-group with OHCHR.

In 2020, the COVID-19 crisis provided renewed impetus to make the nexus between the family and regular judiciary ensure better access to justice for women victims/survivors of violence. An emergency plan for family courts was developed to provide a pathway for VAW cases to be brought into the criminal justice system, based on the findings of the "Rapid Appraisal of the *Shari'a* Courts' Effectiveness in Realizing Women's and Children's Rights"¹⁰⁸ produced by *Sawasya*. The plan was conceived in close cooperation with institutions of the VAW-response chain (MOSD, FJPD, HJC, AGO, Palestinian Maintenance Fund) to ensure structural progress. It envisages a reinforced role for the family judiciary and prosecution

¹⁰⁵ Not to be solely attributed to *Sawasya*.

¹⁰⁶ The HJC gender unit also participated in the training.

¹⁰⁷ Two separate workshops were conducted for regular court judges on the one hand (14 regular judges – 50 % of women), and family court judges (15 family judges – 27 % of women).

¹⁰⁸ Referred to as the family court assessment.

within the National Referral System, particularly in cases of children born outside of wedlock or *Orfi* marriages,¹⁰⁹ and provides a roadmap for building institutional capacity for responsive and comprehensive adjudication in family cases. PPE and hygiene products were provided to family judges, court staff, and VAW judges, and regular courts were equipped with thermometers. The HJC and SJD emergency plans for VAW case management were adopted, and IT equipment support was provided to facilitate coordinated virtual services. A guiding document for implementing emergency measures in cross-cutting areas was initiated by the HJC and AGO during a virtual workshop facilitated by *Sawasya*. Work was initiated to develop a helpline at the family courts level and support civil society in improving services at family courts' Counseling Units in Gaza. Thirty-two (32) regular judges, two HJC Gender Unit representatives (50% women), 20 family judges, and court staff (40% women) attended the two PJI training programs rolled out throughout the year,¹¹⁰ promoting a more progressive and human-rights-based application of Palestinian legislation. VAW SOPs were developed by the HJC to unify standards and procedures for case management and adjudication, addressing challenges faced by women in seeking justice within current domestic and international frameworks. Nablus was identified as the pilot location for establishing a specialized VAW court to offer a safe and responsive environment for SGBV survivors and protect against secondary victimization. Capacity building activities for family judges on cybercrimes, research on family arbitration, and new features in the *Mizan II* case management system were postponed to 2021 due to the worsening COVID-19 crisis.

In 2021, efforts continued to operationalize the VAW specialized judiciary. Work to equip the VAW specialized court in Nablus was finalized, scheduled to open on 9 March 2022, against the background of International Women's Day. It will catalyze expertise on managing VAW cases and offer a safer and more responsive environment for GBV survivors, better protecting them against secondary victimization in interactions with the criminal justice system. Coordination between the Head of the Planning Unit and the VAW judiciary focal point at the HJC was critical in taking the project forward. It also builds on the finalization of VAW SOPs by the HJC, which unify standards and procedures for case management and adjudication. The SOPs are currently under review by a committee of four selected judges (75% women). Consultations with broader judicial actors were planned before the SOPs' final adoption. The SOPs specifically address challenges faced by women when seeking justice within the framework of domestic and international laws and policies, following a victim-centered approach. The HJC emergency plan for VAW case management was

¹⁰⁹ According to the Glossary of The Marriage Contract in Islamic Law in the Shari'ah and Personal Status Laws of Egypt and Morocco, "zawaj urfi" is a customary marriage (1992, 165). In The Laws of Marriage in Islam the meaning of customary marriage is further explained:

Customary marriage means a marriage which is not officially registered. People often ask about the judgement concerning it and whether it is permitted and sound in the Shari'a or not. ... When a valid contract is made by the woman's guardian in the presence of two witnesses, the contract is sound according to the Shari'a. The recording of the contract by the hand of the official entrusted with recording marriage contracts is not one of the preconditions for the validity of the contract [under Shari'a] (Uthman 1995, 54-5).

<https://webarchive.archive.unhcr.org/20230519140838/https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6ab8910.html>

¹¹⁰ This was implemented in close partnership with the Birzeit University Continuous Education Institute.

adopted by the Chief Justice, and the SJD emergency plan was finalized. Both accessed IT equipment support to facilitate the provision of coordinated virtual services.¹¹¹ Work was initiated to develop a guiding document for the implementation of emergency measures in cross-cutting areas by the HJC and AGO. Work was also initiated to develop a helpline at the family courts level by *Sawasya*¹¹² and support civil society in improving services at family courts' Counseling Units in Gaza. Thirty-two (32) regular judges, two HJC Gender Unit representatives (50% women), 20 family judges, and court staff (40% women) accessed the two PJI training programs rolled out throughout the year, furthering the standardization of judicial knowledge in a manner that takes forward a more progressive and human-rights-based application of Palestinian legislation. Support will focus on the piloting of the VAW judiciary and improved judicial knowledge relating to cyber-criminality affecting women and girls going forward.

In 2022, specialized VAW judicial services continued to be crucial in ensuring women's access to effective remedies, reparation, and protection within the justice system. A significant milestone was achieved with 107 cases adjudicated in front of Palestine's first specialized VAW court in Nablus, which opened in 2022.¹¹³ This achievement resulted from long-term advocacy aimed at establishing multidisciplinary teams capable of effectively addressing the needs of women victims/survivors of violence while strengthening guarantees of protection and safeguarding women's rights to safety, privacy, and dignity. The survivor-centered design of the VAW court is essential in ensuring that women victims/survivors of violence can access justice, featuring a separate entrance, elevator, and a private waiting area accessible to all women, including those with disabilities, the elderly, and pregnant women. The courtroom also accommodates a private office hosting a social counselor and the specialized public prosecutor, ensuring women are aware of their procedural and socioeconomic rights. Monitoring efforts were invested to strengthen evidence-based planning and policy reform, indicating the need to raise women's awareness of the services provided by the VAW specialized court, strengthen coordination with the public prosecution, and disseminate risk assessments with judges. The VAW court opening builds on years of work to unify standards and procedures for case management and adjudication, as VAW SOPs have been reviewed by a committee of four selected judges (75% women), which extended consultations to other judiciary members. Thirty-seven (37) specialized VAW judges (46% women) took part in additional training on women's rights, responsive adjudication, and international human rights law. The revision of the national referral system for women victims of violence was a significant step towards standardizing case management and adjudication procedures, including the inclusion of family courts. Forty-three (43) judges and three Gender Unit members at the HJC (54% women) attended capacity building on cyberviolence, focusing on patterns and methods used by perpetrators,

¹¹¹ Support to knowledge transfer to junior VAW judges and capacity building for family prosecutors was reallocated to the procurement of computers. Support to SJD arbitration was cancelled upon the SJD's request. Similarly, infrastructural support to Ramallah's family court was not taken forward during the period.

¹¹² Through the UN Women and UNICEF components.

¹¹³ 82 misdemeanour and 25 felony cases.

societal stigma, fear of retaliation, and the need for judicial discretion. Thirty (30) administrative staff (5% women) participated in training on gender equality, women's rights, and violence against women delivered by the HJC Gender Unit, revealing a lack of knowledge among frontline staff on critical concepts and highlighting the need to build the Gender Unit and Gender Support Team's capacity in disseminating knowledge and building synergies throughout the justice sector.

In 2023, specialized VAW judicial services remained crucial in ensuring women's access to effective remedies, reparation, and protection within the justice system. A significant milestone was achieved with 2882 cases adjudicated (9 felonies and 2873 misdemeanours) since the beginning of 2023 in Palestine's first specialized VAW court in Nablus. Efficient



Photo 19: In partnership with HJC, the opening ceremony of the first VAW (Violence Against Women) court in Nablus (2022). ©Sawasya

monitoring and documentation mechanisms are essential for safeguarding women's rights to safety, privacy, and dignity. A survivor-centered questionnaire was developed during the period, focusing on women survivors' satisfaction with accessed services. A first monitoring report was produced towards the end of 2023. The VAW court's experience emphasized the need for accessible courtroom designs for all

women, including those with disabilities, the elderly, and pregnant women. As a result, the refurbishment of other courtrooms in Nablus is underway and expected to be finalized by the end of the year. It is in line with ongoing efforts to further institutionalize the VAW judiciary, with efforts spearheaded by the Gender Unit leading to policy improvements in VAW classification and the assignment of VAW judges to relevant cases.

However, women continue to face numerous obstacles when bringing claims into the justice system, particularly in front of family courts, as discriminatory provisions are still in place, especially in the Jordanian PSL of 1976 applicable in the West Bank. Divorce is the inalienable right of the husband, while separation initiated by a woman must be judicially sanctioned. In this context, article 132 of the PSL allows a woman to seek the appointment of two male arbitrators jointly with her husband to initiate the dissolution of the marriage on grounds of discord. Given the unequal power dynamics and gender discrimination at play, arbitration proceedings frequently result in women forfeiting their rights to secure separation. This was highlighted by the study on arbitration conducted last year, whose

recommendations were presented and discussed with a group of six senior (4 men and 2 women) family court judges.¹¹⁴ This is a critical step towards the submission of amendments by the SJD for endorsement by presidential decree, emphasizing abolishing discriminatory clauses that forbid women from practicing arbitration in front of family courts and including proper safeguards for their selection. The role of counselors in family court proceedings is also critical, particularly in identifying instances of domestic violence. Thirty (30) counselors and judges (40% women) from Gaza participated in three dialogue sessions facilitated by *Sawasya*'s CSO partner, agreeing on the need to develop a specialized training course for counselors that also addresses the psychosocial aspects of family court counseling. Two other sessions took place with 65 first instance and appellate judges (100% men) on the role of the Counseling and Family Reform Departments and how it intersects with litigation. While the study also recommends ramping up awareness activities, the SJD Media Department received equipment from *Sawasya* during the second half of the year to enhance communication about women's rights in family courts. Work was invested during the period to operationalize the SJD helpline, which will be pursued during *Sawasya III* with a focus on developing SOPs and stress relief coaching sessions for counselors.

Human rights-based organizational development at the levels of family courts

In 2019, a major achievement was the launch of the first standardized training for family judges in the State of Palestine. The rollout of the program over an 18-month period sought to achieve the PJI's vision of developing a cadre of better-educated Palestinian judges and prosecutors while promoting and fostering the operationalization of core elements of international human rights law, particularly CEDAW. In the absence of a formalized domestication process and a holistic review of discriminatory Palestinian laws and regulations, priority was given to enhancing family courts' accountability to provide more gender-responsive services. *Sawasya* supported the development of a draft bylaw and SOPs for the SJD's inspection department to enhance complaints processes and procedures, with finalization currently underway.

In 2020, efforts continued to standardize judicial knowledge at the family judiciary level, with the rollout of the first continuous standardized training (18 months) for family judges at the PJI. The COVID-19 crisis presented an opportunity to harness digital transformation within

¹¹⁴ The judges adopted key recommendations from the gender justice perspective related to the arbitration law that is applicable in the *Shari'a* courts in the West Bank and submitted them to the Supreme Judge. These include abolishing the masculinity condition to become an arbitrator; developing a code of conduct for arbitrators; enhancing the accountability measures in the arbitration system, adopting a binding policy to conduct a periodic analysis of the reports issued by arbitrators on an annual basis and developing arbitration standards and procedures. This was a result of the advocacy and consultation sessions led by *Sawasya* on the findings and recommendations of research that was developed on the impact of the arbitration system on women's access to justice and the realization of their financial rights. The arbitration system plays a key role in promoting or impeding women's access to justice and their financial rights. Arbitrators are tasked with investigating the causes of discord between spouses, identifying and rating the level of responsibility each of the spouses holds and preparing a report for judges that includes the percentage of the financial rights that women are entitled to. The research identified key challenges within the arbitration system impeding women's access to justice and their realization of their financial rights.

the PJI. Due to the impossibility of rolling out face-to-face training modalities, the PJI's digital portal was upgraded, and two e-Courses on family law were developed with *Sawasya's* support, focusing on the prosecution and enforcement of family court decisions. This progress enables knowledge development and consolidation within the PJI in relation to family law. The e-Courses will be rolled out in 2021, together with training for PJI staff in this area.

The development of a draft bylaw and SOPs for the SJD's Inspection Department to enhance complaint processes and procedures was finalized in the second half of the year, establishing responsive evaluation methodology and criteria for inspection. The upgrade of the *Adalah* case management system for the digitalization of inspection procedures was initiated. Capacity building interventions aimed at addressing service provision bottlenecks highlighted in the family court assessment were postponed to 2021.

In 2021, efforts continued to operationalize the Human Rights Unit at the SJD, with the development of an action plan with support from *Sawasya*. This follows the undertaking of a needs assessment in family courts, revealing that human rights progress is hindered by conflicting Palestinian legislation, lack of awareness on human rights among justice clients and court staff, and insufficient guarantees in terms of confidentiality and fair judicial proceedings. Work continued to improve SJD's inspection processes, with the draft bylaw and SOPs for the SJD Inspection Department updated in line with Decree Law No. 8 of 2021, modifying Decree Law No. 3 of 2021, which foresees well-defined criteria and allocates more human resources and expertise to the Inspection Department. Reporting templates for inspection visits were developed, to be followed by capacity building for inspectors and upgrading the *Adalah* case management system for digitalizing inspection procedures (e-Inspection program) in 2022. The initial draft bylaw and SOPs were developed in 2020 but modified due to the unexpected adoption of Decree Law No. 8 of 2021,¹¹⁵ which brought substantial procedural improvements. A draft assessment of Counselling Units within family courts was produced jointly by *Sawasya's* UN Women and UNICEF components, showing important gaps in human resources, infrastructure, coordination with other SJD units and departments, and adherence to gender justice and children's rights standards. The assessment, which builds on *Sawasya's* specialized expertise, will inform programmatic engagement for efficient, effective, and responsive services for women and children.

¹¹⁵ It modifies Decree Law No. 3 of 2021 on the Family Judiciary and Law No. 19 of 1972 on the Formation of Family Courts.



Photo 20-21: Supreme Judge Department team during a study tour to Egypt on Judicial Inspection for Sharia court members, Egypt (March 2022). Photo courtesy of *Sawasya* through partners ©*Sawasya*

In 2022, work continued to establish a Human Rights Unit at the SJD to catalyze policy and capacity development efforts. This included the endorsement of SOPs submitted for approval to the Supreme Judge last year with expert support from *Sawasya*. The Human Rights Unit is anticipated to be launched within the framework of *Sawasya III*. Building on previous inspection efforts, including a study tour to Egypt's High Judiciary Council and the Ministry of Justice in Cairo, capacity building on the updated SOPs will be conducted in the second half of the year. The development of the e-Inspection program is anticipated to be taken forward under *Sawasya III*, following its successful completion at the HJC/AGO level.

Enhanced security and justice services for women in Gaza

In 2018, the programme advertised a call for proposals to identify opportunities for partnership with CSOs in the Gaza Strip that will focus on the delivery of legal aid services and psychosocial support to women survivors of violence, including women in conflict with the law.

In 2019, 45 out of 70 female inmates detained in the Gaza rehabilitation center accessed psychosocial support, and 58 among them accessed legal aid services, including 23 represented through the PBA. This support is critical as many female inmates suffer social stigma and isolation and have limited means to access psychosocial and legal assistance. Twenty-five (25) Gaza Strip-based female journalists were trained by *Sawasya* on the major challenges that stand in a woman's way to seek and access justice, focusing on how they can use journalism to raise critical issues and make women's voices heard and appreciated. After the training, six journalists delivered four awareness sessions on women's rights to 166 members of civil society (CBOs) (83% women) across the Gaza Strip as a first step towards broader sensitization on the challenges women face across the justice chain. Twenty-six (26) trainee lawyers (54% women) were provided advanced training by the PBA on gender justice and women's rights over a 25-hour program, better equipping them to provide gender-responsive services.

In 2020, 9,545 vulnerable women and girls accessed legal aid in front of family courts and regular courts (including female inmates) through the AWN Network in the Gaza Strip, which

provides integrated services in line with key elements of the NLAS. In addition, 762 judicial actors (20% women) improved their delivery of responsive services to women and girls in contact with justice systems. Work continued to focus on enhancing the practice of lawyers catered to the needs of women in the Gaza Strip, including those brought about by COVID-19. Twenty-five (25) female family lawyers were trained through *Sawasya*, with 22 among them having obtained their certification from the SJD during the reporting period. Four of the successful candidates accessed traineeship placement within the AWN Network, further ensuring the sustainability of the initiative. Seven hundred and sixty-five (765) women accessed legal consultation and representation by the four-trainee lawyers on cases pertaining to alimony, child visitation, and custody rights, which considerably increased during COVID-19.

Efforts were invested towards making the nexus between criminal and family legislation in step with the work undertaken at the level of the Palestinian judiciary. As a result, 86 PBA lawyers (59% women) developed a better understanding of the Personal Status Law and the existing space to take forward VAW protective mechanisms and international human rights in legal arguments. To further promote progressive litigation, 21 freshly graduated lawyers (67% women) engaged in a conversation with judges, prosecutors, and social workers on women's access to justice and participation in the justice sector in the framework of the gender campaign implemented by the PBA with support from *Sawasya*. In addition, 25 freshly graduated lawyers (60% women) set up the Gender Lab, a platform aimed at taking forward women's representation in professional and leadership positions. Such a platform is in line with the Gender Strategy adopted by the Women's Unit within the PBA for 2020-2022, which envisages four areas of interventions: capacity building on gender equality, gender-responsive governance, legal literacy, high-quality services for vulnerable women, and support for female lawyers' marketability. The strategy's implementation was initiated with 21 newly graduated lawyers (71% women) having gained knowledge of international human rights law and the Agenda 2030 during the Legal Camp organized by the PBA Women's Unit. These lawyers formed the core of PBA Women's Rights Unit after adopting the new Gender Strategy. Supported by *Sawasya*, the Legal Camp represented an important opportunity for the lawyers to hone their skills to plan, lead, and advocate for the advancement of women's rights where they led an initiative at the camp to advocate for women's rights specifically women's legal rights.

In 2021, 45 key mediation and arbitration actors of family justice (31% women) were better equipped to enhance security and justice for women. CSO advocacy work secured commitments from Gaza's Supreme Judge to establish a complaint mechanism, promote remote hearing, support women's representation in the judiciary, and better monitor lawyers' performance. Work continued to reinforce the nexus between family and criminal law, focusing on legal protection from gender-based violence and referral to sheltering services.

The PBA conducted a comprehensive review of policy papers analyzing the police, AGO, HJC, and RRCs, revealing that the shortage of female police officers and judges affected the

treatment of women arrested for criminal offences. Access to services was limited and inadequate, and the lack of allocated resources jeopardized reintegration prospects.

The PBA recommended improving cooperation between prosecutorial and police services to enhance referral mechanisms with social services and promote a more gender-balanced work environment. Additionally, 52 female inmates accessed psycho-social support, and 36 inmates received dignity kits.

Future work will focus on strengthening the policy environment impacting female inmates while guaranteeing their access to integrated services.

In 2022, efforts were made to enhance the capacity of justice actors in Gaza in the areas of gender justice, gender-responsive legislation, and women's access to justice. Despite significant gaps remaining, the focus was on providing support to the most marginalized, particularly female inmates in Reform and Rehabilitation Centres (RRCs). All 70 female inmates detained in RRCs last year accessed 223 counseling sessions, 119 family counselling sessions with close relatives, and 13 group sessions as part of reintegrative interventions. RRC staff and partners reported a significant decline in suicide attempts among female inmates, with no cases registered in 2022. Additionally, 40 female inmates received targeted interventions, including health services (dental care, checkups, medical treatment, and prescriptions), economic empowerment services, and essential care support (clothing, childcare support, dignity kits). Partner interventions also included recreational trips for 37 female inmates and six addiction treatment sessions for ten identified women, led by Arab women from other countries with similar experiences. Moreover, for the first time, female inmates were able to visit their children in the Al-Amal Institution for Orphans with support from the Programme.

In 2023, all 70 female inmates detained in RRCs this year received 62 counselling sessions, 98 family sessions with close relatives, and 20 group sessions as part of reintegrative interventions. This support is crucial for female inmates experiencing depression, anxiety, and anger management issues. Additionally, 60 female inmates accessed targeted interventions, including allowance provision, economic empowerment services, and essential care support (clothing, childcare support, dignity kits). Partner interventions also included legal aid services for 39 female inmates, with 31% of them receiving representation for their criminal and civil cases. This is based on a previously concluded MoU between the PBA and the RRC's administration, which further institutionalizes access to legal services for the most vulnerable segments of society, mainly women and children.

Output 4.2: New practices of justice and security service providers are supported to transform their attitudes and behaviours towards women and girls



First policewomen network established, and membership modalities developed.



190 additional gender champions identified

In 2018, as part of its strategy to enhance gender equality and women's access to justice and security, the *Sawasya II* programme collaborated with various partners to develop a 'gender curriculum' for the Police Academy's educational programmes. The head of the PCP Gender Unit also received training to further mainstream gender in the PCP's work. Plans were made to organize a workshop with female judges and prosecutors in 2019 to discuss career development challenges and opportunities.

In 2019, 34 gender champions were identified across the justice and security chain to bring onboard their perspectives and enable new institutional practices. The gender training curriculum for the PCP was finalized, and 17 gender district coordinators were trained to roll out the programme in 2020. The PJI and the International Association of Women's Judges¹¹⁶ organized a two-day workshop with female judges and prosecutors, with *Sawasya's* support. The glass ceiling remains to be broken for many Palestinian female members of the judiciary, as they less frequently access training opportunities and merit-based leadership positions. To overcome this, participants recommended to establish institutional policies that actively encourage the recruitment – through, *i.a.*, engaging the legal academia - and promotion of women at leadership positions, including by establishing a female judge association, which will be taken forward in 2020. Training was also provided to family judges and prosecutors to challenge assumptions and gender stereotyping related to domestic abuse cases.

The training organized for 15 family judges and prosecutors (27% women) to sensitize them on the National Referral System represented an important opportunity to challenge assumptions and gender stereotyping, particularly regarding the underlying causes that prevent women from seeking justice in instances of domestic abuse. However, post-assessment results indicated the need for further efforts, as only 21% of participants believed that women in Palestinian society are exposed to violence, including family violence. Participants recommended engaging Family Counselling Units (family courts) in the discussion and facilitating joint exchanges between family and VAW judges, especially concerning instances of marital rape or gaps in the execution of court sentences. *Sawasya* explored partnering with civil society to develop activities that engage VAW survivors in action designing to ensure service responsiveness, but faced a lack of expertise in this area.

¹¹⁶ The IAWJ is a global association of female judges that shares a commitment to equal justice for women and the rule of law. Its objective is to “promote and empower women judges who can help uproot gender bias, end discriminatory laws, advance gender-responsive courts, and promote human rights”.

In 2020, there was an increase in female representation in the PCP, AGO, and HJC. There was a respective increase in female representation at the level of the PCP (63%), AGO (24%), and HJC (26%) compared to 2019. This progress was in line with the rollout of the gender training programme by the PCP at the police academy level. The gender training programme was rolled out in the police academy, and 31 additional gender champions (65% women) were identified. These champions helped bridge service delivery gaps during the COVID-19 crisis. The PBA Women's Units received training on advocacy strategies for better representation of women in leadership positions ahead of the PBA's general elections in 2021.

In 2021, 37 gender champions (62% women) were identified, and women's representation in the PCP increased from 3% to 5.5% over the past five years. Steps were taken towards establishing a Palestinian Network of Women Judges, with female judges and prosecutors participating in a refresher workshop to identify practical steps for mentoring, capacity building, and career development programmes.



Photo 22-23: Palestine's first Policewomen Network Conference in Jericho (May 2022). @Sawasya

In 2022, 61 new gender champions (84% women) were identified, and their contributions were instrumental in advancing multisectoral services for women and girls. Several key steps were taken to establish Palestine's first policewomen network. Following the launch of Palestine's first policewomen conference in May 2022, a working group consisting of 25 police officers (100% women) was established to develop the network. The bylaws of the network were produced, board elections were held, and an annual work plan was developed. Steps were also taken towards establishing a Palestinian network of women's judges, and work began to hold a three-day conference in early 2023.

In 2023, 27 justice actors were identified as gender champions, nearly meeting the annual target. Among them were a *Shari'a* court judge advocating for a review of the arbitration system's discriminatory provisions, 10 female family lawyers promoting gender equality, eight prison counselors championing best practices for women in conflict with the law, and eight prosecutors incorporating gender-responsive considerations into their operations.

Palestine's first policewomen network was launched in January at the Jericho-based Police Academy. The network is anticipated to serve as a valuable forum for women in law enforcement to advocate for gender equality and equal opportunity, provide capacity development opportunities, and promote community-based engagement. Capacity building for board members on leadership skills was planned. A three-day workshop was held in collaboration with the Head of the Union of Moroccan Women Judges to identify obstacles hindering gender equality within the judicial profession and explore potential solutions. The workshop emphasized the importance of initiating a mentoring programme encompassing the wider legal community.

Output 4.3: Women and children have access to justice, security and protection (partly reported under Outcome 3)



71,130 women and children accessed legal aid services across the oPt



69,903 women and children accessed legal awareness services across the oPt



850+ students more aware of women's rights and gender justice



Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians had access to online content on women's rights

Support to legal representation services for women

In 2018, the *Sawasya II* programme organized two legal training sessions in Rafah and Khan Younis, targeting 70 newly graduated lawyers and journalists (including 60 women) to build their capacity on issues related to women's rights, gender, and enhanced access to justice for women. Additionally, the programme's four implementing partners in the Gaza Strip reached out to 2,655 beneficiaries (2,190 women) through awareness-raising sessions aimed at increasing access to information related to women's rights and gender justice. The PBA continued to support women's access to civil and criminal justice in Gaza, and a lawyer within the PBA was identified to assess the quality of services provided to vulnerable groups, particularly cases involving women, in the following year.

In 2019, 13,838 women and girls (4%) accessed legal aid services, including 13,489 (4% of girls) in areas unserved by the Government of Palestine (East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip). Among them were 105 female inmates from the Gaza Strip and West Bank,¹¹⁷ with 23 benefitting from representation from the PBA. Additionally, 90 female inmates accessed critical psychosocial support through arts, sports, and evidence-based therapy techniques. Moreover, 106 Palestinian women married to men from the Negev accessed legal aid, and 76 received psychosocial support, as most of them had experienced psychological or physical violence.

¹¹⁷ There are a total of 145 inmates across the State of Palestine. 75 female inmates are present in the West Bank and 70 in the Gaza Strip.

In 2020, 15,518 women and girls accessed legal aid services by CSOs, while no women and two girls accessed legal aid services through the state-sponsored court fund in the West Bank for criminal cases. Women in detention, being most at risk of marginalization and denial of justice, received special attention. As a result, 144 female inmates from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank accessed legal aid through partner organizations supported by *Sawasya*. Due to the exceptional vulnerability of women in detention to COVID-19, female inmates from various RRCs accessed personal protective equipment (PPE) and hygiene kits and were sensitized on virus transmission and prevention. Additionally, 123 female inmates accessed vocational training, arts, sports, and evidence-based therapy to address the mental health vulnerabilities exacerbated by the lockdowns. Efforts were also made to ensure that female inmates could maintain contact with their support systems outside detention, with 43 inmates receiving top-up phone vouchers. Psychosocial support was scaled up through remote sessions to equip female inmates with the skills necessary to manage stress and anxiety caused by the crisis.

In 2021, 11,423 women and girls accessed legal aid services by CSOs, and three girls (no women) accessed these services through the state-sponsored court fund in the West Bank for criminal cases. During the period, emphasis continued to be placed on women in detention, with 38 female inmates from the four West Bank's RRCs¹¹⁸ continuing to access comprehensive support based on a threefold approach combining therapy, income-generating activities, and sports. The women accessed over 200 therapy sessions,¹¹⁹ continued producing and marketing handicraft goods, and participated in fitness classes initiated during the COVID-19 crisis. Furthermore, 45 female inmates and detainees accessed hygiene kits and awareness of COVID-19 safety and vaccination protocols. Efforts were also invested in assessing ways to promote better linkages between social services and the PCP for women detained in police centers.

In 2022, 14,613 women and girls utilized legal aid services by CSOs, and three girls (no women) accessed these services through the state-sponsored court fund in the West Bank for criminal cases. Among these, 760 women, including women with disabilities, women who use drugs, and women in conflict with the law, accessed legal aid and psychosocial support through *Sawasya's* partnerships with civil society. Notably, this included over 320 women who had survived violence. Women were represented before courts in Hebron, Tulkarem, Ramallah, and Bethlehem, with a focus on family law-related cases. Support was also extended to the most marginalized women, including those in detention, with 70 women (100% of the women detained in the five RRCs in the West Bank) accessing regular weekly individual, group, and family therapy sessions, hygiene kits, and vocational training. Building on successful interventions during the COVID-19 crisis, female inmates in the

¹¹⁸ They are allocated in Nablus, Jenin, Jericho and Ramallah. On average, there are 40 female inmates in the West Bank. However, the total number of female inmates in 2021 is not available.

¹¹⁹ They accessed various therapy modalities, including psychological first aid (PFA), cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR) therapy and narrative therapy.

Ramallah, Jenin, and Jericho RRCs accessed 18 sports sessions, positively impacting their confidence and well-being.



Photo 24-25: Stars of Hope hold a moot court workshop for cases related to women with disabilities, in partnership with the ICHR and Birzeit University. Ramallah (September 2023). ©Sawasya

In 2023, 7,185 women and girls were provided legal aid services by CSOs, while the state-sponsored court fund in the West Bank for criminal cases did not serve women/girls during the period. Among these beneficiaries, dozens were women with disabilities, following ramped-up efforts by a specialized partner CSO to improve their access to legal aid services. Nineteen clinical students (89% women) underwent a three-day capacity-building programme focused on disability inclusion and relevant legal frameworks. Additionally, 17 clinical students (88% women) from Birzeit University's Legal Clinic and 20 lawyers (70% women) from the Bar Association participated in training on strategic litigation and access to justice for women with disabilities. In the meantime, 50 women (nearly 90% of the women detained in the five RRCs in the West Bank) accessed regular weekly individual, group, and family therapy sessions, sports sessions, and vocational materials. Furthermore, 31 correctional and health officers (61% women) accessed capacity building on mental health management to better address the needs of inmates.

Support family court lawyers in Gaza on human rights standards of litigation

In 2021, out of 66 qualified family court lawyers (100% women) meeting vulnerability criteria¹²⁰ and having access to targeted complementary capacity building on human rights standards of litigation, 10 integrated the traineeship placement program in the partner CSOs.¹²¹ Such initiatives are pivotal in enlarging the professional offer for young lawyers and helping them gain significant experience that can empower them within the fields of law and business going forward.

In 2022, leveraging well-established legal aid networks in Gaza, 10 female lawyers accessed placement in one legal aid clinic for initial training before being dispatched to other partner legal aid clinics across the Gaza Strip, representing litigants in front of family courts. Through their work, they conducted 577 consultations, representing 462 cases with a 42% success rate, and contributed to raising awareness of women's rights among Gaza communities.

¹²⁰ Established by the partner CSO in close collaboration with the Programme.

¹²¹ Integrated within the *Sawasya* legal aid clinics led by UNDP.

This is in addition to five trainees (40% women) who accessed placement within the PBA Women's Rights Unit. The success of strategic litigation depends on the availability of feminist standards of litigation grounded in a thorough understanding of women's lived experiences. Linking female family lawyers with women's rights advocates to improve legal practice is crucial in developing a shared comprehension of the challenges facing women in family law cases and identifying strategies for utilizing the law to advance their rights.

In 2023, a new cohort of 10 female lawyers accessed placement in one legal aid clinic for initial training before being dispatched to other partner legal aid clinics across the Gaza Strip, representing litigants in front of family courts. Through their work, 459 women received consultations, and among them, 367 women were represented (for a total number of 465 cases). During this period, 71 women achieved favorable verdicts. Additionally, 1,334 individuals (80% women) participated in 68 awareness sessions conducted by the 10 trainee lawyers to enhance their knowledge of personal status rights. Such initiatives are crucial for improving access to justice, understanding specific needs, and establishing robust foundations for future strategic litigation.

Address legal needs of Palestinian women in unserved areas

In 2018, *Sawasya II*, through consultation with CSOs and based on findings and recommendations of studies conducted in the framework of *Sawasya I*, identified areas that require programmatic interventions, particularly access to justice for women in Gaza, including those with disabilities. In partnership with CSOs in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, the program aimed to support evidence-based advocacy for the development of responsive legislative frameworks, focusing on court monitoring, strategic litigation, legal aid, and psychosocial support for the most marginalized groups, particularly targeting female inmates and women living in the Negev region.

In 2019, 98% of women and girls who accessed legal aid services were in unserved areas. In Gaza, a strong focus was put on the most marginalized women, with 52 female inmates from the Gaza Strip accessing legal consultations and representation in criminal and civil cases over the course of 18 visits to RRCs conducted in the second half of the year. Such work is critical as female inmates often experience difficulties bringing claims into the court systems in relation to civil and family law cases. Cognizant of the impact of criminal sentencing on family dynamics, 60 family members (58% women) also accessed legal and psychological awareness on the rights and needs of relative female inmates, with emphasis placed on discrimination and the longer-term effects of gender-based violence and violence against women.

In 2020, community-based legal aid providers played a key role in identifying, addressing, and organizing service provision, particularly under COVID-19. With such work, West Bank and Gazan women married to men from the Negev accessed safe legal and psychosocial services through the helpline, social media, and newly set up WhatsApp groups. Among them, more than 300 women took part in 18 face-to-face awareness sessions organized before and after the lockdown measures. Thirty-four (34%) of marginalized women learned

about the existence of services through such sessions, followed by information disseminated through stickers (26%), social media (15%), legal centers (11%), local welfare (10%), and hospitals (3%). Over 30% of women who reached out to providers reported instances of physical, including sexual, and psychological violence, with the number of those seeking assistance more than doubling in May and tripling in June. This trend was also observed after restrictions were gradually lifted, substantiating an increase in Palestinian women seeking divorce in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis. The hotline and WhatsApp groups became the main platforms for information on COVID-19 and the identification and transfer of cases to the legal center (40%), which continued to operate remotely with lawyers holding consultations via telephone.

In 2021, 98% of women and girls who accessed legal aid services were in unserved areas. In Gaza, a strong focus continued to be put on the most marginalized women, with 52 female inmates from the Gaza Strip accessing legal consultations and representation in criminal and civil cases over the course of 18 visits to RRCs conducted in the second half of the year.¹²² Furthermore, human rights standards of litigation in criminal and civil cases were promoted with lawyers having enhanced skills in gender-responsive case management. Nineteen lawyers (68 % women) and members of the PBA's Women's Unit took part in a post-graduate clinical education program that focused on the documentation of cases using a gender-responsive approach and the identification of gender vulnerabilities in the work of legal clinics. Participants also advocated with law schools at Al-Azhar University and the University of Palestine to promote gender equality in curricula and raise awareness of gender-based violence. Additionally, five members (40 % women) of the Women's Unit accessed internship opportunities, focusing on enhancing their legal skills and increasing their gender mainstreaming capability.

In 2022, 94% of women and girls who accessed legal aid services were in unserved areas. These interventions are critical to improving access to justice for women who often experience multiple layers of vulnerability. To illustrate, 258 Palestinian women who hold Palestinian identification and are married to men with differing legal statuses accessed legal aid, including the provision of helpline services. The consultations revealed that 49% of the cases required legal action, primarily related to residency rights, GBV, and personal status law. These findings underscore the severity and urgency of the legal challenges faced by marginalized women, including women in detention.

In 2023, a significant percentage of women and girls who accessed legal aid services were in unserved areas. Given the substantial representation of women, it is crucial to ensure access to high-quality and responsive legal services. To address this, 10 new law graduates (50% women) participated in the internship program of the PBA Women's Rights Unit,

¹²² However, work was slowed on this front at the beginning of the year as access to the Ansar Reform and Rehabilitation Center was hampered by COVID-19 restrictions. While the lawyer maintained regular contact with the inmates mainly via phone calls, she was able to resume visits from April onwards as restrictions were gradually lifted. On average, there are 45 women inmates in Gaza. The total number of women inmates for 2021 is not available.



Box 1: Participants who attended for the first time a gender justice training (PBA's Women's Rights Unit).

offering first-hand exposure to the work of the Women's Rights Unit and promoting women's rights in early legal practice and within communities. As a result, the ten trainees led ten awareness sessions in which 203 women took part, and 14 accessed legal consultation. Additionally, 100 new lawyers (45% women) participated in a three-day camp on gender justice organized by the PBA's Women's Rights Unit, exposing them to the systemic inequalities and discrimination faced by women and girls and how these issues intersect

with legal practice. Furthermore, 315 family lawyers (55% women) accessed training focused on international human rights, emphasizing child and gender justice.

Support to legal awareness of women's rights across the State of Palestine

In 2019, more than 1,500 citizens engaged in civic initiatives organized by a network of 17 civil society actors supported by *Sawasya*, calling for the prompt adoption of legislation protective of women victims of violence. During the 16 days of activism, more than 800 citizens participated in a human chain to demonstrate their commitment to ending violence against women. The network also issued a position paper on the FPB, highlighting the rights and principles that the bill should adhere to, notably those embedded in CEDAW and the Istanbul Convention. In parallel, 13,329 individuals (77% women, 1% boys, 1% girls) accessed legal awareness on the rights of women and family-related matters, in addition to 22,504 social media viewers who were sensitized on women's financial prerogatives under the Personal Status Law. As part of these awareness efforts, a civic education module for parents and students on violence against women was implemented in pilot schools in the West Bank, reaching 380 parents (74% women).

In 2020, 12,862 Palestinians (56% women, 7% boys, 13% girls)¹²³ accessed legal awareness on the rights of women and family-related matters, in addition to more than 648,000 Palestinians who had access to online¹²⁴ sensitization on women's rights and the availability of services during COVID-19. As part of these awareness efforts, 774 parents and students (58% women and girls) accessed civic education modules in the Gaza Strip supported through *Sawasya*, aiming to make the educational system part of the violence against women preventive response. In line with this, 40 school counselors (38% women) were trained to provide early warning for children who may be facing intra-familial violence in the

¹²³ This number refers to the number of individuals that were directly targeted by interventions relating to women's rights and family-related matters.

¹²⁴ Including through the broadcasting of radio spots.

Gaza Strip. In a context that sheds light on the necessity to have legislation protective of women and girls in place, about 65,000 Palestinians were reached on social media with key messages on violence against women and the criticality of adopting the FPB. This was organized by a network of 17 CSOs supported by *Sawasya*, which advocates for the prompt adoption of the FPB in line with international standards. To more efficiently fight propaganda and fake news, a national coalition of CSOs was formed and reviewed its strategy to shift focus towards social media, strengthening alliances across the occupied Palestinian territory (including the Gaza Strip) and centering communication around notable SGBV cases. In line with this strategy, 147 activists and key civil society actors (93 % women) gained knowledge on the FPB over the course of six dedicated workshops (online and in-person).

In 2021, 13,184 Palestinians (68% women, 5% boys, 2% girls)¹²⁵ accessed legal awareness on the rights of women, family-related matters, and cyberviolence, in addition to more than 498,318 Palestinians who had access to online sensitization on women's rights and the availability of services, particularly during COVID-19 and in the aftermath of the eleven-day escalation of violence. As part of these awareness efforts, two pilot youth volunteer groups were established in the governorates of Hebron and Qalqilya for increasing community awareness of the FPB and the need to improve instruments for protecting women's rights. About 8,000 Palestinians (60% women) were reached by volunteers through two main outdoor events, including one bazaar and a mural exhibition. The two groups, composed of 38 volunteers (84% women), accessed capacity building on human rights, women's rights, gender-based violence, FPB, the penal code, and law-based discrimination against women. This is complementary to the 60,000 Palestinians (58% women) who accessed content on the FPB on TV and radio on the occasion of the 16 days of activism through the work of a coalition of women's rights organizations supported through *Sawasya*.

In 2022, 21,577 Palestinians (57% women, 9% boys, 7% girls) accessed legal awareness on the rights of women, family-related matters, and cyberviolence, representing a 38% increase compared to the previous year.¹²⁶ This includes 16 awareness sessions and workshops aimed at increasing awareness of cyber-crimes and digital security in Gaza and North Gaza. Five hundred and eighty-three (583) Palestinians took part in these sessions (including 78% women and 12% of PwDs). Taking forward a comprehensive approach to legal awareness, participants were sensitized to new technological methods for securing social media accounts, particularly among women, and increasing awareness of available services and applicable laws concerning cyber-crimes and digital security. They gained a better understanding of cyber-crime concepts, ways to report them and secure their presence online. The participants made several recommendations, including the need for

¹²⁵ This number refers to the number of individuals that were directly targeted by interventions relating to women's rights and family-related matters.

¹²⁶ This represents a 51 % decrease as compared to the baseline. However, the baseline was based on year 2017, where a substantially higher number of Palestinians accessed legal awareness when compared to 2018 and subsequent years.

more awareness sessions on digital security and cyber-crimes for the elderly and the parenting community.

Furthermore, throughout the reporting period, a coalition of organizations invested in advancing gender justice in the West Bank conducted a range of activities aimed at increasing awareness and support for the passing of the FPB. As a result, a total of 461 participants (6% men), mobilized across two protests/demonstrations organized by the coalition, including through a sit-in in front of the Council of Ministers. Moreover, the coalition organized nine awareness-raising sessions on the FPB in various localities in the region. Two hundred and fourteen (214) participants took part in these sessions, including members of the Ministry of Local Governance with support from the Nablus municipality. The sessions highlighted the importance of passing the law, discussed its objectives and main articles, and provided opportunities for participants to comment on and discuss the last version of the FPB and exchange on experiences in other countries in the region (Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, and Tunisia).

In addition, 2,316,817 views on online sensitization on women's rights and the availability of services and on the need to adopt more responsive legislation were reported. This included efforts by the coalition to disseminate messages, infographs and videographs on their Facebook page on the FPB. Nearly, 55,300 people were registered on the page set up by the coalition to disseminate knowledge on the FPB, including through two TV episodes on the impact of legislations issued since the national division and amendments made to the PSL and the Family Procedure Law amendments in Gaza, as well as an episode on the impact of the legislation issued since 2007 on women with disabilities. Such efforts were paired with the development of civic modules to make children and the youth effective relay of gender equality and human rights within their communities. Therefore, five puppet shows were organized for 756 children students (79% girls) in five UNRWA schools, which raised their awareness about their rights and gender equality. Based on positive feedback, 14 youths (57% women) accessed a seven-day training, including on screenplay development pertaining to promoting women's rights and combatting gender discrimination and GBV in Gaza. Work was also invested to develop the capacity of groups of youth across the State of Palestine (92% and 79% women/girls respectively) who conducted legal awareness sessions to the benefit of 84 women, covering topics such as the impact of climate change on women's rights and the FPB. Capacity development of the youth groups included training on targeted advocacy and on understanding the dynamics that surround the adoption of the FPB to adapt strategies to different publics (proponents, opponents, and neutrals).

In 2023, 20,425 Palestinians (53% women, 13% boys, 17% girls) accessed legal awareness on the rights of women, family-related matters, and cyberviolence, representing a 116% increase compared to the previous year. This includes 14 awareness sessions and workshops aimed at increasing the awareness of students and parents on VAW cyber-crimes, digital security and digital rights in Gaza. Eight hundred and fifty-nine (859) took part in these sessions (including 80% women and 9% of people with disabilities). Advancing a holistic approach to legal awareness, participants were introduced to contemporary

technological methods for enhancing social media security, especially for women. This training was based on the Protection Manual for Women and Youth from Cybercrimes issued this year, with a view to increase awareness of available services and relevant laws pertaining to cyber-crimes as well as understanding of digital threats, reporting mechanisms, and online security practices.

Furthermore, 2,518,218 clicks on content pertaining to online sensitization on women's rights and the availability of services and on the need to adopt more responsive legislation were reported. Therefore, 23 puppet shows were organized for 2,891 students (55% girls) from eight private and UNRWA schools, which raised their awareness about their rights and gender equality. School students expressed their appreciation for the innovative educational methods and tools introduced to them, and eagerly requested more engaging educational performances. In addition, 482 Palestinians across the Gaza Strip also accessed the performance and praised the approach. In parallel, a digital media campaign was launched for the promotion of women digital rights with the hashtag #الحماية_حق ("protection is a right") used by more than 50,000 people on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, including many youths. Through this campaign, digital content was developed to deliver concise, clear, and direct messages to the general public, especially targeting women, girls, and the youth. The content aimed to educate them about online safety, protection from cybercrimes, and avenues for reporting digital violations. This is key to ensuring that they are equipped to access justice and protection services effectively.



Photo 26: A Digital media campaign poster for the promotion of women's digital rights with the hashtag protection is a right, Gaza (April 2023). ©Sawasya

Implementation Challenges and Operational Lessons Learned

Legal Harmonization:

In 2018, the legal harmonization process continued to be characterized by an absence of political impetus, resulting in limited institutional support. Drawing from *Sawasya I's* lessons, the program activated its 'politically smart' approach by freezing technical engagement with the Legal Harmonization Committee (LHC) and increasing advocacy to foster stronger political will. Coordinated efforts by *Sawasya II's* Heads of Agencies and

OHCHR and EUPOL COPPS yielded positive results, with the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) instructing line ministries to identify legislation for review against international standards, particularly the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). *Sawasya II* decided not to engage in further technical support but remained ready to support political-level dialogue. In 2019, the LHC remained in a process of restructuring. *Sawasya* halted technical support on legal harmonization but continued to stand ready to support political dialogue on this front.

Key lessons:

- During transitional phases, continuous advocacy is required to mitigate potential adverse effects on the functioning and independence of judicial institutions.
- *Sawasya's* 'politically smart' approach is relevant and provides adapted programmatic responses.

Reconciliation/Reunification Process:

In 2018, the long-drawn-out reconciliation process seemed to have continuously failed to put an end to the 12-year-long division between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. With the 2017 Cairo agreement falling apart only four months after its signing, prospects for tangible results on the reconciliation front appeared particularly limited. Crucial requirements for the success of reconciliation initiatives, such as inclusivity, popular consultation, and compelling national dialogue, seemed to be lacking in the context of shrinking civic space for engagement to increase policy and rule of law reforms. In view of this, *Sawasya II* centered its interventions for 2019 around support for civil society's monitoring of and advocacy for a reconciliation process inclusive of transitional justice measures. The program aimed to provide sound technical support for the revision of the Judicial Authority Law within the framework of the Informal Donor Group and through CSO participation. In subsequent years work in this area exclusively focused on supporting CSOs to conduct their own dialogues and develop informative policy papers.

Key lesson:

- *Sawasya's* 'politically smart' approach is relevant and provides adapted programmatic responses.
- Due to the agility afforded to *Sawasya* by its development partners, the programme was able to use this approach to shift course and begin intensive work with a coalition CSOs which was able to produce a series of policy papers and begin a series of dialogues between Gaza and the West Bank.

Family Protection Bill:

The Government of Palestine had yet to initiate the domestication process of human rights treaties and conventions, particularly CEDAW, to which the State of Palestine is a party. The lack of political impetus to operationalize human rights obligations and conduct a holistic revision of the current legal framework, specifically the Personal Status Law and the Penal Code, continued to severely affect women's access to their rights. This situation was exemplified by the long-drawn-out adoption process of the FPB, which spanned over 20

years. Although the Bill was endorsed by the Council of Ministers on 27 December 2018 and transferred to the President's Office, it was expected to return to the Council for further amendments, without tangible prospects for adoption. In view of this, the program aimed to continue leveraging UN Women's expertise to provide informed legal analysis of the Bill and its amendments, engage with the wider development partners' community to support advocacy with relevant stakeholders and civil society, and sensitize the public on the implications of the absence of a responsive legal framework. In parallel, *Sawasya II* planned to continue rolling out its gender strategy through its support for responsive frameworks.

Key lesson:

- The programme indeed took a step back and had a political analysis of the FPB. By doing this it forced the team to examine why its work had not produced the adoption of the bill. Ultimately this paper and discussion had a major influence on the development of *Sawasya III* to have a larger focus on behavioral change to lay the groundwork to head off opposition to the bill.

Establishment of the Interim High Judicial Council (HJC):

In 2019, President Mahmoud Abbas endorsed law decrees amending the Judicial Authority Law (JAL), resulting in the immediate discharge of 50 judges and severely impacting work at the court level. The establishment of the interim HJC saw Issa Abu Sharar succeeding Emad Saleem Sa'ad as Chief Justice for a one-year mandate to lead the interim Council. The decrees were perceived by many observers as an attempt by the executive to jeopardize the independence of the judiciary. *Sawasya* took a twofold role, feeding the international community with critical information and analysis while engaging with the interim HJC to ensure that the views of justice actors and civil society were taken onboard. The program intensified its engagement with non-institutional partners and advocated for a merit-based, transparent, and competitive promotion process, as well as fair and impartial dismissal procedures that adhere to the JAL. *Sawasya* successfully secured a space for civil society and justice providers to engage with representatives.

Key lessons:

- During transitional phases, continuous advocacy is required to mitigate potential adverse effects on the functioning and independence of judicial institutions.
- Engagement with civil society actors and front-line providers is key to ensuring that their views are reflected and integrated into the process.
- Engagement with the international community through knowledge and information sharing is essential to unify messaging.

Lack of Operationalization of the National Legal Aid Strategy (NLAS), Representation of Women in the Legal Profession, and Backlash Against CEDAW:

In 2019, the NLAS remained to be operationalized over a year after its endorsement by the NLAC due to the Palestinian Bar Association's (PBA) shifting positions and lack of impetus to take forward an agenda that promotes access to justice for all. The PBA made

commitments to appoint lawyers to represent juveniles who cannot afford private services, but the list of appointed lawyers was not made available to the courts, prompting *Sawasya* to revisit its approach and refer children to CSO partners. Discussions with the PBA regarding legal aid support for VAW victims/survivors were put on hold due to the PBA's lack of willingness to provide comprehensive legal aid support in a context of shrinking space for other actors to invest in this field without the PBA's ascent.

Women's representation within the PBA was also a concern, with only one woman among the 15 members of the PBA's board.¹²⁷ The PBA Chair refused interventions aimed at improving the situation, such as establishing quotas, and evoked internal competition between women to justify the situation. Intensive efforts were invested by the program to improve women's representation in the work of the PBA's legal aid clinics in the Gaza Strip, eventually leading to the recruitment of two female lawyers after a much protracted and closely followed-up process.

In the context of a general backlash against the State of Palestine's accession to CEDAW, the PBA Chair publicly stated that the international instrument conflicts with Islam and domestic law. In view of the current situation and the lack of PBA's impetus to take forward a human rights-based agenda in the West Bank, the *Sawasya*-PBA partnership pertaining to the provision of legal aid in areas served by the Government of Palestine was not renewed, and additional resources were invested in the Gaza Strip to ensure that the partnership aligns with the program's principles of engagement.

Key lessons:

- Partnerships require regular reevaluation when they cease to align with the program's intended impact and objectives.
- Coordination between institutions, civil society, and international stakeholders is required to counteract harmful and detrimental public discourses.
- *Sawasya's* gender strategy was not fully adapted to advance and promote women in partners' organizations and thereby was revised.
- The *sui generis* nature of the Palestinian legal landscape offers opportunities to incrementally operationalize key elements of a state -sponsored legal aid mechanism even in the absence of a legal aid law.
- The rollout of a legal aid mechanism pilot at the level of Ecclesiastical courts can provide opportunities to not only address key legal aid concerns, likely to affect most vulnerable Palestinians but also allay concerns over revenue losses among lawyers who practice both in front of Ecclesiastical and regular courts.

Impact on the Rule of Law in the Gaza Strip in 2021:

The escalation of violence and its aftermath had a substantial impact on access to justice. Regular and family court activities were discontinued throughout the escalation period and immediately after, and the work of some 350 lawyers was greatly affected. This prompted

¹²⁷ The board elected in 2021 has two females, one in Gaza and the other in West Bank.

scaled-up collaboration between the HJC and the PBA (Gaza branch) for recovering deeds, files, and other lost documents to limit the impact on access to justice. Other specialized organizations that provide services in front of family courts or work to improve access to justice for Palestinians in Gaza were also affected, albeit to a lesser extent. The completion of financial transactions, including alimony payments, was disrupted during the period due to the destruction of the Palestine Production Bank and the Islamic National Bank headquarters, along with various branch offices. Gaps in the enforcement of custody and visitation decisions were also reported throughout the escalation period, and the majority of services for survivors of gender-based violence were suspended during the hostilities, with protection shelters being shut down. The academic year, already strained by COVID-19 restrictions, was shortened as a consequence of the conflict, thereby affecting the implementation of clinical education activities that were resumed in 2022.

Key lesson learned:

- While armed conflicts continue to exacerbate existing vulnerabilities, coordination among institutions and justice actors is key to limiting their impact. The eleven-day hostilities demonstrated the role enhanced coordination can play in limiting the impact of conflicts on the rule of law and access to justice, as the HJC provided support to the PBA in recovering essential documents lost to the conflict. This builds on progress made over the past few years and during COVID-19 to formalize cooperation pathways.

Impact on the Rule of Law in the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) in 2021:

Against the background of a deteriorated human rights environment, violence was on the rise during the period, with a peak observed between May and April. As a result, contact with Israeli law increased in frequency, particularly for children. This translated into a sharp increase in the number of children who accessed legal aid during the reporting period (100% in East Jerusalem) as compared to 2020.

Key lesson learned:

- A deteriorated human rights environment tends to drive legal aid demand for children and other vulnerable segments of the population. A deteriorated human rights environment tends to breed violence that affects populations primarily residing in disproportionately affected parts of the State of Palestine. It also affects children as an increase in the frequency with which they enter into contact with Israeli forces is generally observed and accompanied by growing legal aid needs.

Crystallization of Public Discontent Around Judicial Reform in 2022:

The year 2022 was marked by important social movements that crystalized around judicial reform, following the adoption on 6 March 2022 of seven decree-laws with limited consultations with the legal community and civil society in the continuous absence of a functioning PLC. The significance of the decree-laws also stemmed from concerns they raised in relation to fair trial guarantees, criminal procedure safeguards, equality of arms between the prosecution and the defense, right to appeal, and the presumption of

innocence. While initially suspended, the implementation of some of the decree-laws as early as July prompted a large-scale strike by lawyers that continued into August, thereby substantially affecting the work of the courts, particularly in terms of civil enforcement. Signs of spillover to other sectors began to show, with preeminent business groups joining the contestation. Growing discontent culminated in the rescinding of the substantive bulk of the amendments. It also coincided with the HJC's decision to suspend lawyers' compulsory stamping of notary bonds that constitutes important resources for the PBA. The year 2022 ended without an agreement being reached between the various stakeholders and resulted in a total of 80 days of disruption in court work.

Key lesson learned:

- The Programme's unique positioning with the legal community, civil society actors, and institutional counterparts is key to convening meaningful dialogue. The MOJ-PBA dialogue was resumed with technical assistance from the Programme, which led to concrete proposals on legal aid going forward and to easing the strained relationship between the PBA and the judiciary.

Impact on the War in the Gaza Strip in 2023:

Years of work investing in CSOs and the PBA in Gaza to be able to provide services to the most vulnerable have now ceased to exist. The current status of many of *Sawasya*'s partners is unknown and their ability to deliver any kind of services to the people of Gaza will be impacted for years to come.

Key lesson learned:

- Service provision in Gaza will ultimately need to be addressed in *Sawasya III*. However, maximum flexibility on the part of development partners will be needed in order to address the legal needs in the future. Close monitoring of developments needs to be ensured to ramp up support where identified. With legal aid demands being highly susceptible to the overall environment, it is key to continue strengthening monitoring of trends and conduct qualitative research on the ground to better identify legal aid gaps and rapidly ramp up support where needed or offer efficient institutionalised solutions, if the situation on the ground permits.

In conclusion, the various challenges and lessons learned in the implementation of the *Sawasya II* program from 2018 to 2023. Key themes that emerged include the impact of political instability, institutional changes, and the lack of operationalization of crucial strategies and mechanisms on the rule of law and access to justice in Palestine. The program consistently adapted its approach to navigate these challenges, leveraging its partnerships with civil society, justice actors, and the international community to advocate for reforms and provide support where needed. Continuous monitoring, analysis, and engagement proved essential in maintaining the program's relevance and effectiveness in a volatile context. The lessons learned throughout the implementation period underscore the importance of flexibility, coordination, and evidence-based interventions in promoting the rule of law and access to justice in complex environments.

II. Monitoring¹²⁸ & Evaluation

Following a robust participatory methodology, the fifth Programme Board Meeting was organized in January 2023. On this occasion, the 2022 main achievements were reviewed. As a result, the 2023 annual work plan was approved. Key actions against the Management Response adopted in February 2021 continued to be implemented and [progress](#) was registered during the period. In addition, the programme document of “*Sawasya III: Reinforcing Equal Access to Justice for all Palestinians*” (2024-2029) was approved by the Local Project Appraisal Committee in April and the Social and Environmental Screening was completed. In parallel, *Sawasya* continued to make use of its quantitative database as well as the qualitative data (focus group discussions with beneficiaries)¹²⁹ and produced a “*Monitoring and Evaluation Analytical Report*” that provides information against the OECD criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability entitled. This is based on solid data collection and efforts to continue improving the Programme’s capacity for evidence-based management and reporting.

SUMMARY OF FINAL EVALUATION

Soon after the completion of the mid-term evaluation, the development partners made it known that they were considering a third phase of the programme. In order for the development of the third phase to be ready for launching at the completion of phase two, the final evaluation needed to be completed with enough lead time to ensure that the recommendations and lessons learned fed into the phase three document. Therefore, the organization of the final evaluation took place in late 2022 and was completed in the Spring of 2023.

This section presents the findings and recommendations of the final evaluation of *Sawasya II*, which assessed the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability of the programme against its stated objectives. The evaluation also examined the extent to which the programme mainstreamed gender equality, human rights, and the needs of vulnerable groups, particularly women and children, across its interventions.

Programme Context and Objectives

Sawasya II was designed and implemented in a challenging and volatile environment marked by the ongoing Israeli occupation, the deepening political division between the West Bank and Gaza, a dysfunctional legislative system, weak institutional capacities, and deeply entrenched gender inequality and discrimination. Despite some incremental progress in previous years, many of the fundamental preconditions for sustainable rule of law and access to justice remained elusive.

¹²⁸ The monitoring of risks is assessed separately and regularly.

¹²⁹ Qualitative data are also collected using the Survey Monkey software. This activity is listed under Output 1.2 in the 2022 annual workplan (“Renewal of subscription of the Survey Monkey”).

In this context, *Sawasya II* set out an ambitious agenda to address key barriers to justice sector reform at multiple levels:

1. Strengthening the legal and policy frameworks to better align with international human rights standards;
2. Enhancing the capacity and accountability of justice and security institutions to deliver quality services;
3. Expanding access to justice and legal empowerment for vulnerable groups, particularly women and children; and
4. Promoting gender-responsive justice and security service delivery.

To achieve these objectives, the programme leveraged the comparative advantages and expertise of the three participating UN agencies and forged partnerships with a wide range of governmental and civil society stakeholders.

Evaluation Methodology

The final evaluation of *Sawasya II* employed a mixed-methods approach, combining an extensive desk review of programme documentation, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with key stakeholders, and field visits to selected implementation sites in the West Bank and Gaza. The evaluation assessed the programme against the standard OECD-DAC evaluation criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability, while also examining the integration of gender equality and human rights principles.

While the mid-term evaluation was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, meaning that the evaluation team ended up conducting the evaluation remotely. For the final evaluation the team was able to be in the State of Palestine and was able to visit all areas where the project was implemented including the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem.

Key Findings

Relevance

The evaluation found that *Sawasya II* remained highly relevant to the justice and security needs of Palestinians, particularly women and children. The programme's objectives and strategies were well-aligned with national development priorities, as articulated in the Palestinian National Policy Agenda and various sector-specific strategies. However, the challenging political and legislative environment limited the space for pursuing certain structural reforms, such as the passage of the Family Protection Bill.

Despite these constraints, *Sawasya II* demonstrated flexibility and responsiveness in adapting its interventions to the evolving context and priorities. A notable example was the programme's support for developing the *Mizan* court management system, which has strengthened the efficiency, transparency, and accountability of the court system while empowering court users.

Coherence

Sawasya II played a critical role in promoting greater coherence and coordination among international actors supporting the rule of law and justice sector in Palestine. As the co-chair of the Justice Sector Working Group, *Sawasya II* facilitated information sharing, joint planning, and advocacy on key policy and programming issues. The integration of the European Union as a funding partner during this phase was a significant milestone in strengthening donor alignment.

The joint programme modality of *Sawasya II* was widely viewed as a success factor, enabling the three participating UN agencies to harness their complementary mandates and capacities towards common objectives. The co-location of programme staff, the strong leadership of the programme manager, and the consistent support from senior management in the agencies were cited as key enablers of effective collaboration.

Effectiveness and Impact

Sawasya II made significant contributions to enhancing access to justice and strengthening the rule of law in Palestine, particularly for women and children. Key achievements highlighted by stakeholders included:

- The successful roll-out of the *Mizan* court management system, which has streamlined court processes, improved transparency, and empowered citizens to track the progress of their cases.
- The expansion of legal aid and counselling services through partnerships with civil society organizations, which have enabled thousands of vulnerable Palestinians to access justice.
- The establishment of specialized one-stop centres providing integrated legal, psychosocial, and police services for women and child victims of violence.
- Targeted capacity-building interventions with key justice sector institutions, such as the AGO and the HJC, which have strengthened their ability to deliver quality services.
- The development of internal and external accountability mechanisms, such as court monitoring and complaints systems, has increased public trust in the justice system.

However, progress in advancing certain strategic priorities, such as the adoption of the Family Protection Bill and the institutionalization of legal aid, remained limited due to political sensitivities and competing priorities.

Efficiency

Sawasya II was widely recognized as a well-managed and efficient programme. The investment in adequate human resources, including the co-location of staff from the three agencies, enabled the programme to deliver a complex set of interventions while maintaining the flexibility to adapt to emerging opportunities and challenges. The programme also made significant strides in strengthening its monitoring and reporting

systems, although there is scope for further enhancing the use of data and learning to inform programme strategy and decision-making.

Sustainability

The sustainability of the gains achieved by *Sawasya II* emerged as a key concern, given the worsening fiscal crisis facing the Palestinian Authority and the likely reductions in donor support in the coming years. While the programme had made efforts to build sustainable capacities within justice institutions and civil society partners, the prospects for maintaining and scaling up successful initiatives remained uncertain in the absence of more fundamental reforms to the enabling environment.

Recommendations

Based on the evaluation findings, key recommendations for the next phase of *Sawasya* include:

- I. Develop a clear strategy for institutionalizing and scaling up successful models, such as the *Mizan* system and the one-stop centres, while ensuring their financial and operational sustainability.
- II. Intensify advocacy and technical support for the passage and implementation of key legislative reforms, such as the Family Protection Bill and the Juvenile Protection Law, in collaboration with civil society partners.
- III. Strengthen the strategic focus on promoting gender-responsive justice and security services, including through the expansion of specialized courts and units and the mainstreaming of gender competencies across the justice sector.
- IV. Deepen engagement with civil society partners to promote legal empowerment, social accountability, and public demand for justice sector reforms, particularly at the grassroots level.
- V. Enhance the use of data and evidence to inform programme strategies and to support policy advocacy, including through regular dissemination of findings from court monitoring and user satisfaction surveys.
- VI. Develop a clear sustainability and exit strategy, in consultation with national partners and donors, to ensure the continuity of key functions and services beyond the lifespan of the programme.
- VII. Advocate for sustained donor investment in the justice sector, while also exploring opportunities for greater national ownership and resource mobilization.

Conclusion

The *Sawasya* programme has been a critical pillar of the UN's efforts to promote the rule of law and access to justice in Palestine over the past decade. *Sawasya II* made significant strides in strengthening the capacity and accountability of justice institutions, expanding access to legal services for vulnerable groups, and promoting gender equality in the justice sector.

The joint programme modality, the strong partnerships forged with national stakeholders, and the flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances have been key factors in the success of *Sawasya II*. However, the evaluation found the complex and volatile political, economic, and social context in Palestine continues to pose significant challenges to the sustainability and impact of these efforts.

The evaluation further stated that in the next phase of the *Sawasya* programme, it will be crucial to build on the lessons learned and to prioritize interventions that can deliver tangible and lasting improvements in the lives of Palestinians, particularly women and children. This will require a sustained commitment to supporting institutional reforms, empowering civil society, and promoting social accountability, while also addressing the structural barriers to justice and equality in Palestine.

Annex I Research and Communication Products

Sawasya II Papers, Knowledge Products and Reports:

Publication Title	Year	Language	Produced by	Published /Not Published	Link
Transitional Justice In Palestine	2018	English/Arabic	<i>Sawasya</i>	Not published	
Evaluation Report: “Legal Clinics Inside Law Schools in Palestinian Universities”	2018	English	<i>Sawasya</i>	Not published	
National-Legal-Aid-Strategy	2018	English/Arabic	<i>Sawasya</i>	Not published	
Gender Responsiveness of the Palestinian Courts’ Environment in the West Bank for Violence against Women Cases in 2015-2016 A Baseline- Study	2018	English/Arabic	Prepared by Hadeel Rizq-Qazzaz Itidal Jariri	Not Published	
Regional conference on case management systems in the justice sector Report	2018	English	<i>Sawasya</i>	Not Published	
Needs Assessment for the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) - IT unit	2018	English	<i>Sawasya</i>	Not Published	
Guidance lists for reviewing legislation from a gender perspective	2018	Arabic	<i>Sawasya/Mo J</i>	Not Published	
Necessity v. Expediency: Transitional Justice in Palestine	2018	Arabic	<i>Sawasya</i>	Not Published	
Gender Checklist	2019	Arabic	<i>Birzeit University</i>	Not Published	
Analytical study: The Palestinian Judicial Police	2019	Arabic/English	<i>Sawasya /PCP</i>	Not Published	
Report on Regional Conference on Case Management Systems	2019	English	<i>Sawasya/ HJC</i>	Not Published	
Security assessment report to identify Work priorities for the local advisory committees/	2019	English/Arabic	<i>Sawasya/PC P</i>	Not published	

Community Policing project in Jericho and the Jordan Valley Governorate					
Report on the Effectiveness of the Palestinian Civil Police Disciplinary Accountability and Complaints System	2019	English/ Arabic	Sawasya/PC P	Not published	
Stakeholder Analysis Report Formation of the Local Advisory Committees/ Community Policing	2019	English/Arabic	Sawasya/PC P	Not published	
An Assessment of Alternative Dispute Resolution Mechanisms in Palestine	2019	English/Arabic	Sawasya/M OJ	Not published	
Report on the Effectiveness of the Palestinian Civil Police Disciplinary, Accountability and Complaints System	2019	English/Arabic	Sawasya/PC P	Not published	
Analytical study report - Palestinian Judicial Police	2019	English/Arabic	Sawasya /PCP	Not published	
Public Perception Survey in Jericho Governorate on Palestinian Civil Police	2019	English/Arabic	Sawasya /PCP	Not published	
Final report on supporting the human rights units in the Attorney General's Office to strengthen the oversight process over detention and rehabilitation centers - correctional, rehabilitation, and glasses centers	2020	Arabic	Prepared by: Salah Al Din Musa	Not published	
Analysis of the Family Protection Bill	2020	English	Sawasya	Not Published	
Brief on Emergency Sheltering Services for Women Victims and Survivors of Violence	2020	English	Sawasya	Not Published	

Brief on the Impact of COVID-19 on Women's Access to Justice	2020	English	Sawasya	Not Published	
Rapid Assessment on the Impact of COVID-19 on Women and Girls Victims of Violence	2020	English	Sawasya	Not Published	
A Forecast on the Effect of COVID-19 on the Justice Sector: Prospects and Possibilities	2020	English	Sawasya	Not Published	
Arbitration and civil peace in Palestine	2020	Arabic	Sawasya/ Shams CSO	Not Published	
Palestine Transitional Justice Report Civil Society Organizations' Vision on Integrating Transitional Justice Mechanisms in the Reconciliation Process	2020	English/Arabic	Sawasya/ Musawa	Not Published	
A Forecast on the Effect of COVID-19 on the Justice Sector: Prospects and Possibilities-Paper	2020	English	Sawasya	Not Published	

Human Rights Unit SOPs	2021	Arabic	Sawasya /AGO	Published	
Sawasya II Early Response Paper (Emergency response)	2021	English	Sawasya	Not Published	
Palestine Transitional Justice Consolidated Position Paper: Civil Society Organizations' Vision on Integrating Transitional Justice Mechanisms in the Reconciliation Process	2021	English	Sawasya/ Musawa	Not Published	
Transitional justice in Palestine between necessities and interests	2021	Arabic	Sawasya	Not Published	
Arbitration Procedures Manual	2022	Arabic	Sawasya /MOJ	Not Published	

Report-Gender Approach into Curriculum of Legal Clinic Course of the Law Faculty at An-Najah National University	2022	English	Sawasya /An-Najah University	Not Published	
FACILITATOR'S GUIDE GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE SESSIONS FOR STUDENTS	2022	English	Sawasya /An-Najah University	Not Published	
National Referral and Networking System to protect children from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation	2022 -23	Arabic	Sawasya/ Terre des Homme	Published	
Child Protection Case Management Guidelines	2022 -23	Arabic	Sawasya/ Terre des Homme/M OSD	Published	
South-South Good Practices Submission Guidance	2022	English	Sawasya		
A Study on Evaluating the legislation in force during the division from a gender perspective The legislative vision and the official applied policy Eligibility for gender equality	2022	Arabic	Sawasya/ Musawa	Published	
A study on women with disabilities- Access of WwDs to Justice	2022	Arabic	Sawasya/ Stars of Hope	Published	
The economic cost of violence against women in Palestine	Mar 2022		Sawasya	To be published	
Report on VAW cases	2023	Arabic	Sawasya/Ist iqlal university	Published	
Court Monitoring Report on Criminal Cases in both the Northern Governorates (the West Bank) and the Southern Governorates (Gaza Strip)	2023	English/Arabic	Sawasya/ Istiqlal university	Published	

Code of conduct and ethics for arbitrators- Still a draft	2023	Arabic	Sawasya/ Shams	Not Published	
Code of ethics for the translation profession- Still a draft	2023	Arabic	Sawasya /MOJ	Not Published	
Research paper: Women and arbitration between reality and hopes	2023	Arabic	Sawasya	Not Published	
Research paper: "The effectiveness of establishing arbitration and mediation units in local councils in light of the experience of chambers of commerce."	2023	Arabic	Sawasya	Not Published	
Research paper: The importance of alternative means of resolving disputes in Area C in light of the limited legal jurisdiction	2023	Arabic	Sawasya	Not Published	
Summary of Transitional Justice Strategy in Post-Internal Conflict Palestine	2023	English/Arabic	Sawasya/ Musawa	Not Published	
A study on women in conflict with the law	Apr 2023	Arabic	Sawasya	To be published	
Palestine's Transitional Justice Strategy Following Internal Conflict	2023	English	Sawasya	Not Published	Link here
Legal aid standards for juvenile defense attorneys	2023	Arabic	Sawasya/ DCI	Not Published	
Research study on the impact of violence against women activists during unrest periods on women's access to justice	Nov 2023	English	Sawasya	To be published	

Media and communications related material.

Publication Type	Date	Language	Produced by	Published/ Not published	Link
New Article/PR “Successful Completion of "INSAF" Pilot Phase: Middle East’s First Legal Incubator”	Oct 2023	English/Arabic	Sawasya	Published	link
News Article/PR “One-Stop Centre for Women and Children Survivors of Violence Open in Hebron”	Sep 2023	English/Arabic	Sawasya	Published	link
Human Story “Challenging Stereotypes: How a Young Lawyer Became a Vocal Advocate for Women's Rights”	Jun 2023	English/Arabic	Sawasya	Published	link
News Article/PR “Palestinian Civil Policewomen Conference: Shaping the future of Palestinian Policewomen “	May 2023	English/Arabic	EUPOL COPPS/Sawasya	Published	English, link + Arabic, link
News Article/PR “Strengthening the child protection national system in the State of Palestine: MOSD, UNICEF & TdH launch the technical guidelines for case management to protect children”	Apr 2023	English/Arabic	Sawasya	Published	Link
News Article/PR “Strengthening the Capacities of Women Judges and Public Prosecutors in Palestine”	Mar 2023	English/Arabic	Sawasya	Published	link
News Article/PR “The police and the Sawasya program organize the launch ceremony for the completion of the rehabilitation of several judicial police offices and the electronic complaints system in Ramallah”	Jan 2023	Arabic	PCP /Sawasya	Published	link
Brochure- National Referral and Networking System to protect children from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation	2023	Arabic	Sawasya /Terre des Hommes	Published	

Child Friendly Treatment during Legal Procedures Guidelines	2023	Arabic	Sawasya /Terre des Hommes	Published	
Human Story “Legal aid is a lifeline to domestic violence victims: Alaa steps up to get a fresh start in life, Story on legal clinic-Gaza”	Jan 2022	English	Sawasya	Published	link
Inauguration of a Specialized Court for Violence Against Women Cases in Nablus by the High Judicial Council and Sawasya Programme II	Mar 2022	English/Arabic	Sawasya	Published	English /Arabic
News Article/PR” UNDP and Birzeit University to Establish Legal Clinic at the Faculty of Law and Public Administration”	Apr 2022	English/Arabic	Sawasya	Published	link
News Article/PR “Ministry of Social Development and Stars of Hope Association Held a Forum on People with Disabilities with Sawasya Programme”	Dec 2022	English/Arabic	Sawasya	Published	link
Human Story” Access to Justice for the Most Vulnerable in the Gaza Strip”	Mar 2020	English	Sawasya	Published	link
News Article/PR “In Gaza, helping mothers reunite with children separated by the COVID-19 lockdown”	Jul 2020	English/Arabic	Sawasya /PCHR	Published	link
New article/PR “UNDP, Un Women, and UNICEF launches the Sawasya II Joint Programme”	Sep 2018	Arabic	Sawasya	Published	link
The Legal Clinic as a Lifeboat The story of Adham, a child from the Gaza Strip	Nov 2018	English	Sawasya		
Regional conference on case management	Jun 2021	English/Arabic	Sawasya		

systems in the justice sector Flyer					
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Annex II Result & Resource Framework

The *Sawasya II* programme, which ran for 5.5 years, utilized a results and resource framework consisting of 41 indicators to monitor and evaluate its performance. Each indicator had a yearly target and a cumulative target set for the end of the programme. The programme achieved or partially achieved 34 out of the 41 targets, representing an 82.9% success rate in meeting the indicator targets.

Two indicators, accounting for 4.9% of the total, were cancelled due to the cancellation of associated activities. One of these indicators was related to the reconciliation process between Gaza and the West Bank. However, as there were no significant developments in the reconciliation process, the planned activities were not carried out. Similarly, the Palestinian Civilian Police could not reach an internal agreement on the community policing concept, leading to the cancellation of another indicator.

Of the remaining five indicators that were not achieved, three (7.3% of the total) faced issues with data collection, making it difficult for the programme to ensure data integrity due to the partners changing both the definition and how data was collected. Despite this, the programme continued its efforts in the associated areas. Another one of these indicators was linked to a cancelled indicator, as mentioned earlier.

The last two indicators that were not achieved can be attributed to specific challenges. One indicator, representing 2.4% of the total, was not met due to the baseline being set very high. This indicator was related to the number of people targeted with awareness-raising activities on women's rights. In 2017, when the baseline was established, there was a special emphasis on expanding the activity of awareness raising of women's rights and the programme was unable to match those numbers in subsequent years.

In summary:

- 82.9% of the indicators (34 out of 41) were achieved or partially achieved
- 4.9% of the indicators (2 out of 41) were cancelled due to the cancellation of associated activities
- 7.3% of the indicators (3 out of 41) were not achieved due to data collection issues
- 2.4% of the indicators (1 out of 41) were not achieved due to the baseline being set very high
- 2.4% of the indicators (1 out of 41) were not achieved due to other reasons

If this is recalculated to reflect the two cancelled indicators the results are as follows:

- 87.2% of the indicators (34 out of 39) were achieved or partially achieved

- 7.7% of the indicators (3 out of 39) were not achieved due to data collection issues
- 2.6% of the indicators (1 out of 39) were not achieved due to the baseline being set very high
- 2.6% of the indicators (1 out of 39) were not achieved due to other reasons

When considering only the 39 indicators that were not cancelled, the *Sawasya II* programme's performance appears even more impressive. The programme achieved or partially achieved 87.2% of the indicators, demonstrating its effectiveness in meeting the majority of its targets.

Despite the challenges faced in achieving some of the targets, the *Sawasya II* programme demonstrated a strong overall performance, with the majority of the indicators being achieved or partially achieved. The programme continued its efforts in areas where data collection issues were encountered and adapted to the changing circumstances that led to the cancellation of certain activities.

Achieved
Partially Achieved
Cancelled/No Activities
Not Achieved
No data

Indicator Code	Indicators (with baselines & indicative timeframe)	Baseline year	Baseline value	Annual Target	Target by 2023	Actual Values						
						2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Accumulative by 2023
SAWASYA II OVERALL GOAL: A FUNCTIONING AND INCLUSIVE RULE OF LAW SYSTEM THAT RESPECTS, PROTECTS AND FULFILLS HUMAN RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY, AND PROMOTES PEACE AND SECURITY												
G-1	Percentage of public who have trust in the Palestinian Civil Police. <i>Disaggregated by sex and age</i>	2018	64.10%	1% increase.	65.4	Baseline	No data	No data	70.3	No data	70	70

G-2	Percentage of public who have trust in the judiciary. <i>Disaggregated by sex and age</i>	2018	57.70%	1% increase.	58.9	Baseline	No data	No data	65	No data	67	65
G-3	Percent of Palestinian public who are satisfied with the performance of the police. <i>Disaggregated by sex and age.</i>	2018	56.90%	2% increase	59.2	Baseline	No data	No data	63.1	No data	66	66
G-4	Percent of Palestinian public who are satisfied with the performance of judges. <i>Disaggregated by sex and age</i>	2018	44.90%	2% increase	46.7	Baseline	No data	No data	53.9	No data	52	52

OUTCOME 1: RULE OF LAW INSTITUTIONS ARE STRENGTHENED AND REUNIFIED BY LEGAL, REGULATORY AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS IN LINE WITH INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

1.1	Number of existing/new laws amended/adopted in line with international standards	2017	1	2 yearly	12	2	2	0	3	1	3	11
1.2	Number of policies/regulatory framework/plans adopted in line with international standards	2017	0	2 yearly	11	1	2	3	2	6	6	20
1.3	Number of policies/harmonized laws/plans linked to the Gaza/WB reunification process adopted.	2017	0	2 yearly	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Output 1.1: Key legislations are revised to strengthen the independence of the Rule of Law institutions and ensure their consistency with international standards												
1.1.1	Number of laws reviewed/revise to align with HR standards	2017	2	2 yearly	12	1	2	0	2	1	2	8

Output 1.2: Evidence-based planning and policy development in the justice and security sector is strengthened through enhanced data collection, monitoring and evaluation (in alignment with SDG/HR indicators)												
1.2.1	Number of annual integrated work plan adopted in the framework of the justice and security sector strategies	2017	0	1 yearly	6	1	5	7	1	2	0	16
Output 1.3: West Bank and Gaza Rule of Law institutions are reunified												
1.3.1	Number of policies, harmonized laws, plans linked to the Gaza/WB reunification process developed	2017	0	2 yearly	12	0	0	4	0	0	0	4
Output 1.4: Advocacy on strengthening rule of law institutions and promoting HR is reinforced												
1.4.1	Number of monitoring reports on the justice and security sectors published and supported by the project	2017	0	2 yearly	12	0	0	3	1	3	2	9
OUTCOME 2: SERVICE PROVISION BY RULE OF LAW INSTITUTIONS IS EFFECTIVE, ACCOUNTABLE AND INCLUSIVE												
2.1	Unsentenced detainees as a proportion of overall prison population. <i>Disaggregated by sex and age</i>	2017	52.30%	1% decrease yearly	27..8	56.1%	48.2	48.2	54	50.9		50.9
2.2	Number of children in conflict with the Palestinian law detained at the Family and Juvenile Protection units. <i>Disaggregated by sex and age</i>	2017	386	3% decrease yearly	326	175	250	176	568	237	434	434

2.3	Public perception of a free trial: "Level of confidence that you will receive a fair trial if you were charged with committing a criminal act/delinquency". <i>Disaggregated by sex and age</i>	2018	39.80%	Increase of 10%	48.2	Baseline	No data	No data	44.6	No data	45.9	45.9
Output 2.1: Quality and efficiency of security and justice services provided to the Palestinians are improved												
2.1.1	Percentage of public aware of the PCP community policing strategy	2018	10.90%	Increase of 10%	19.2	Baseline	No data	No data	26.2	No data	19.3	19.3
2.1.2	% of judgements enforced. <i>Disaggregated by criminal and civil, including family courts and pilot/non pilot areas</i>	2017	Reconciliation Courts: 60.6%	1% increase yearly	63.7	53.0%	76.3%	84.7%	113.0%	88.8%	127.6%	127.6%
			First Instance Courts: 66.1%	1% increase yearly	69.5	50.80%	108	80.8	94.6	69.5	121.2	121.2
2.1.3	% of justice sector users who are satisfied with the performance of HJC Mizan IT system. <i>Disaggregated by sex and age</i>	2018	88.90%	2% increase.	92.5	Baseline	No data	No data	90.1	No data	80.1	85.1
2.1.4	% of children sentenced receiving a custodial sentence	2017	26.60%	1% decrease.	25.2	20.3	16	24.9	21.4	11.6	8.3	8.3
2.1.5	% of children who benefit from alternatives to detention	2017	58.10%	1% increase.	61.4	77.70%	48%	62.7	64.6	85.1	85	85
2.1.6	% of children who benefit from mediation in the investigation process as alternative to detention	2017	31%	1% increase.	32.7	32%	44.70%	55	57.2	63	40.3	40.3

Output 2.2: Quality and efficiency of security and justice services provided to areas unserved by the Palestinian government are improved												
2.2.1	% of judgements enforced in area unserved by the PA. <i>Disaggregated by pilot/non pilot areas</i>	2018	61.30%	Increase of 1% in the pilot areas	64.1	Baseline	75.6	83	65	77	120.4	120.4
2.2.2	Number of security and justice related community services provided with the support of the project in the pilot areas	2018	0	5 increase yearly	25	Baseline	0	0	0	0	0	0
OUTCOME 3: ALL PALESTINIANS, ESPECIALLY CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE GROUPS, HAVE ACCESS TO JUSTICE, SECURITY AND PROTECTION WITHOUT DISCRIMINATION												
3.1	Percentage of public aware of the existence of legal aid services supported by the PG. <i>Disaggregated by sex, age and Palestinian/Israeli jurisdictions</i>	2018	<i>The Prisoners Affairs Committee: 39.8%</i>	Increase of 2% by 2020	41.4	Baseline	No data	No data	44.8	No data	47.4	47.4
		2018	<i>Colonization and Wall Resistance Committee: 21.5%</i>	Increase of 2% by 2020	22.4	Baseline	No data	No data	22.7	No data	18	18
		2018	<i>The Ministry of Jerusalem Affairs: 17.9%</i>	Increase of 2% by 2020	18.6	Baseline	No data	No data	19.4	No data	16.1	16.1
		2018	<i>Prisoner Club: 39.4%.</i>	Increase of 2% by 2020	41	Baseline	No data	No data	46	No data	46.2	46.2

3.2	Percentage of public satisfied of the legal aid services provided by the PG. <i>Disaggregated by sex, age and Palestinian/Israeli jurisdictions</i>	2018	41.30%	Increase of 2% by 2020	43	Baseline	No data	No data	80.7	No data	67.7	67.7
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Output 3.1: Vulnerable populations have access to justice, security and protection

3.1.1	Number of individuals living in area served by the PG who benefited from legal aid services supported by the project. <i>Disaggregated by age, gender, geographical area, type of jurisdiction (Palestinian/Israeli) and type of legal aid providers (CSO or PG)</i>	2018	3,622	1% increase.	18,641	Baseline	1028	859	749	2500	1417	6553
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3.1.2	Number of individuals living in area served by the PG who benefited from legal awareness services supported by the project. <i>Disaggregated by gender, geographical area</i>	2018	463	1% increase.	2,382	Baseline	587	3,539	1,541	6,588	5,560	17,815
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Output 3.2: Vulnerable populations in areas unserved by the Palestinian government have access to justice, security and protection

3.2.1	Number of individuals living in areas unserved by the PG who benefited from legal aid services supported by the project. <i>Disaggregated by age, gender, geographical area (area C, H2, EJ, Gaza), type of jurisdiction (Palestinian/Israeli/Gaza de facto) and type legal aid providers (CSO or PG)</i>	2018	6,583	1% increase.	33,881	Baseline	19,443	21,220	14,816	19,068	10,194	84,741
3.2.2	Number of individuals living in areas unserved by the PG who benefited from legal awareness services supported by the project. <i>Disaggregated by gender, geographical area (area C, H2, EJ, Gaza)</i>	2018	4,444	1% increase.	22,872	Baseline	12,742	9,323	11,643	15,266	21,747	70,721
3.2.3	Number of children living in areas unserved by the PG who benefited from legal aid services supported by the project. <i>Disaggregated by age, gender, geographical area and Palestinian/Israeli/Gaza de facto jurisdictions</i>	2018	209	1% increase.	1,075	Baseline	1,553	631	1,018	1,459	590	5,251

OUTCOME 4: WOMEN'S ACCESS TO JUSTICE AND SECURITY IMPROVED THROUGH GENDER-RESPONSIVE SERVICE DELIVERY AND EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

4.1	Number of cases on violence against women filed with FJPU annually	2017	3,346	1% increase yearly	20,772	1,773	3,862	3,177	1,090	1,362	1,162	12,426
4.2	Number of cases on VAW that were transferred by public prosecution to courts.	2017	2,263	1% increase yearly	14,049	3,093	3,158	2,450	3,451	3,539	3,348	19,039
4.3	Number of VAW cases that are convicted (including types of cases, types of sentences)	2017	638	1% increase yearly	3,961	853	1,067	750	1,044	1,215	1,022	5,951
Output 4.1: Capacity of Rule of Law institutions to respond to needs of women are improved												
4.1.1	Number of tools (policies, strategies, SOPS, etc) developed to deal with VAW cases in line with international standards	2017	0	2 yearly	12	2	1	1	2	3	3	12
4.1.2	Number of gender champions (e.g., focal points, agents of change, leaders, etc) and role models identified and promoted within justice and security institutions	2018	22	5% increase yearly	130	Baseline	34	31	37	61	27	190
Output 4.3: Women have access to justice, security and protection												
4.3.1	Number of women who benefited from legal aid services supported by the project. <i>Disaggregated by age, geographical area and Palestinian/Israeli/Gaza de facto jurisdictions</i>	2017	5,938	1% increase yearly	36,864	821	13,342	15,479	11,348	14,554	8,667	64,211

4.3.2	Number of women who benefited from legal aid services supported by the PG. <i>Disaggregated by age geographical area and Palestinian/Israeli jurisdictions</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	12	N/A	N/A	2	2	3	0	7
4.3.3	Number of people (disaggregated by sex) targeted with awareness and sensitization interventions on women's rights	2017	35,334	1% increase yearly	182,660	2,828	13,329	12,862	13,184	21,854	27,307	91,364