



EuroMed Feminist Initiative
المبادرة النسوية الأورومتوسطية
Initiative Féministe EuroMed



Regional Observatory on VAWG
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Palestine Report

2024 Regional Index on VAWG

SCORING RESULTS 2024 REGIONAL INDEX ON VAWG

Report -Palestine
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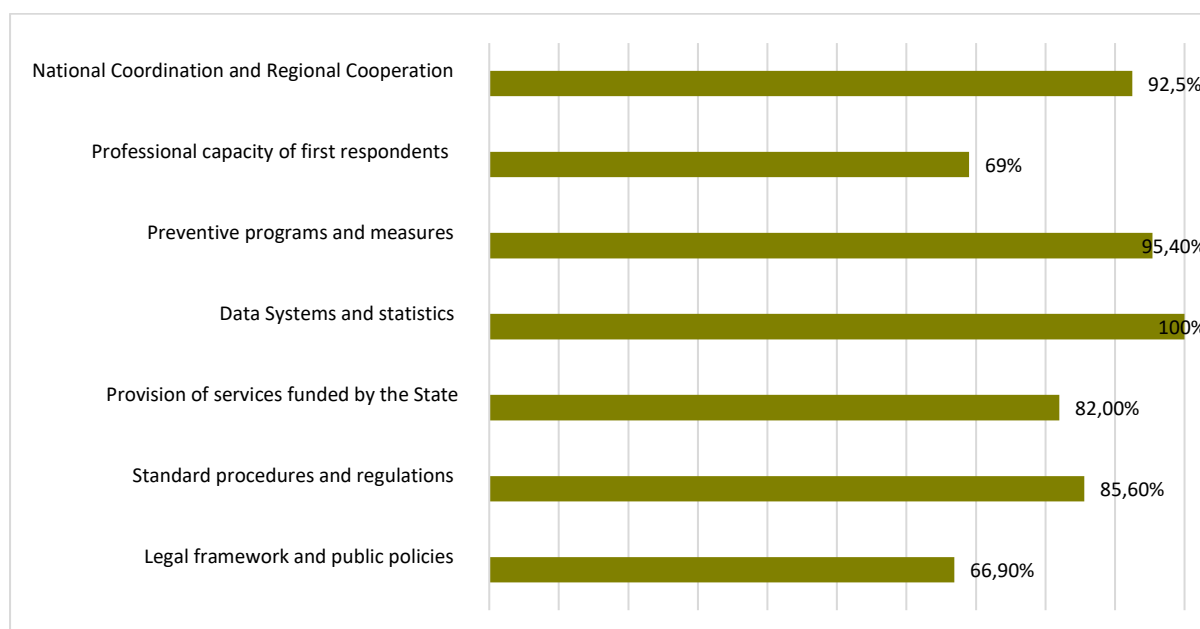
Introduction

This report presents a comprehensive assessment of the progress made in combating Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) in Palestine across seven key categories: legal framework and public policies, standard procedures and regulations, provision of services funded by the State, data systems and statistics, preventive programs and measures, professional capacity of first respondents, and national coordination and regional cooperation.

The overall results reveal varied levels of achievement: data systems and statistics scored the highest with a full 100%, reflecting strong capacity for evidence-based policymaking. Preventive programs and measures (95.4%) and national coordination and regional cooperation (92.5%) also recorded very high achievements. Standard procedures and guidelines (85.6%) and the provision of services funded by the State (82%) reflect solid progress, though implementation gaps remain.

The legal framework and public policies (66.9%) and the professional capacity of first respondents (69%) scored lower, pointing to continuing challenges in aligning legislation with international standards and institutionalizing systematic training.

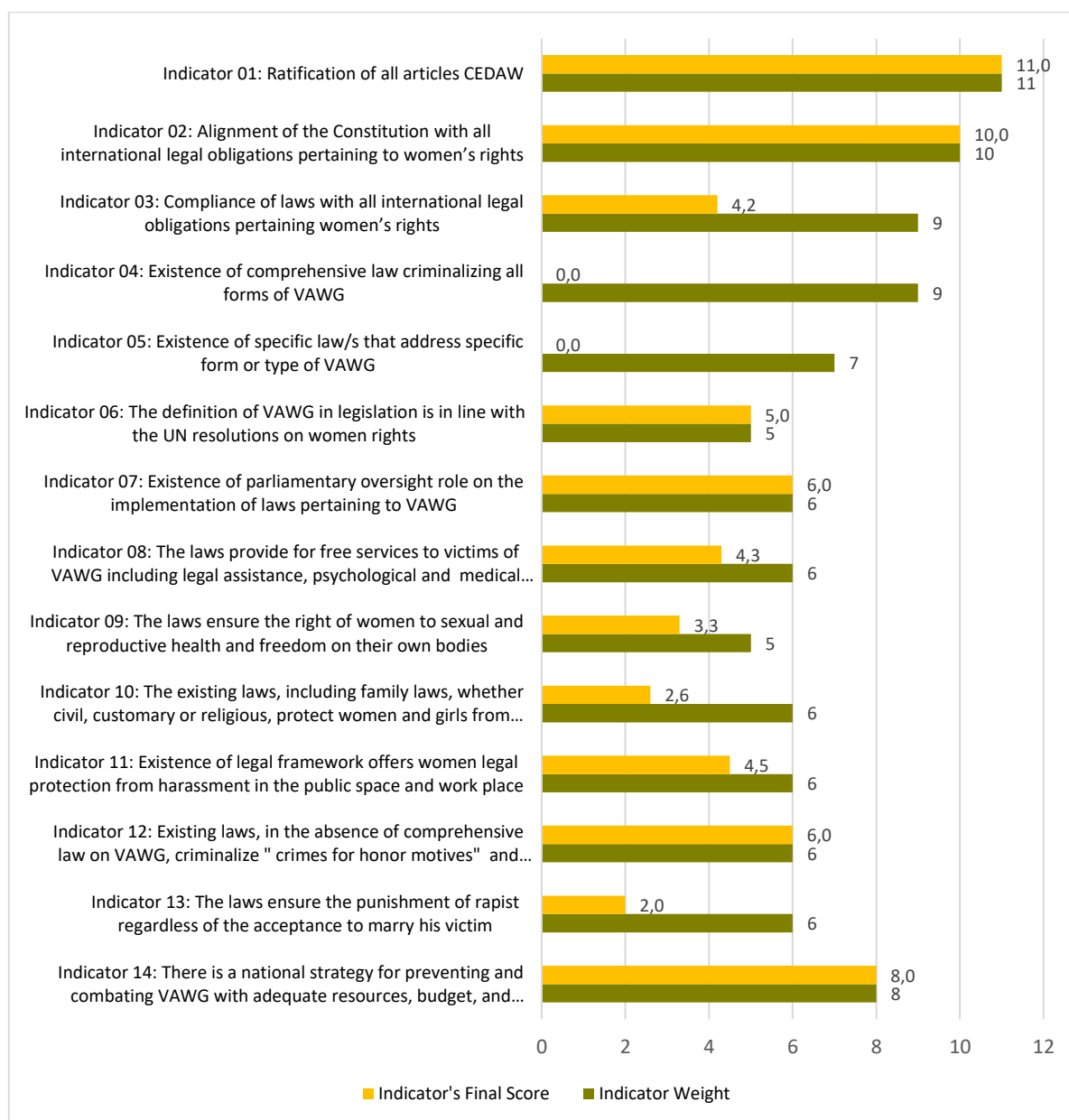
Level of achievement per category



❖ First Category: Legal Framework and Public Policies

Legal framework and public policies achieved 66.9%, reflecting gaps that still need to be addressed in aligning laws with international standards.

First Category: Legal Framework and Public Policies



All articles of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) have been ratified. (Indicator 1 score of 11/11) However, family and marital relations are not governed by a unified legal system, as three different sets of laws apply due to the Israeli occupation's division of the State of Palestine. In the West

Bank, Jordanian Personal Status Law No.61 of 1976 is applied, in the Gaza Strip, the Egyptian Family Rights Law No. 303 of 1954 is applied and in East Jerusalem, Israeli laws are imposed on Palestinians.

Regarding **the Constitution**:

a) Although the Palestinian Basic Law does not explicitly stipulate the primacy of international treaties over national laws, the Palestinian Supreme Constitutional Court affirmed in its Interpretation No. (4) of 2017 that international treaties acceded to by the State of Palestine prevail over ordinary legislation and are applied directly once published in the Official Gazette, provided that they do not conflict with the national, religious, and cultural identity of the Palestinian people. This judicial interpretation represents an important step toward formally aligning the national legal system with its international obligations, though the application is a subject to interpretive constraints.

b) The Palestinian Basic Law, which serves as a temporary constitution, prohibits discrimination based on sex. Article 19 stipulates that all Palestinians are equal before the law without discrimination based on race, sex, colour, religion, political opinion, or disability.

c) The Basic Law does not include detailed provisions on women's rights and gender equality, nor does it explicitly affirm full equality between men and women. However, Article 9 establishes the principle of equality before the law and prohibits discrimination.

d. The constitution does not adopt affirmative measures to achieve gender parity in participation.

These constitutional provisions reflect in indicator 2 score of 10/10 though their application remains subject to interpretive constraints in alignment with the international obligations.

At the **national legislative level**, the main laws inconsistent with international commitments on women's rights are as follows:

1. The Penal Code does not comprehensively criminalize all forms of violence against women and girls.
2. Abortion is prohibited in the West Bank under Articles 321–325 of the Jordanian Penal Code, and in Gaza under Articles 175–177 of the Penal Code of 1936.
3. Article 282 of the Penal Code criminalizes sexual relations outside marriage in both Gaza and the West Bank.

4. Articles 309–318 of the Penal Code in the West Bank, and Articles 161–166 of the 1936 Penal Code in Gaza, criminalizes prostitution but while penalizing the clients, does not guarantee protection for women in prostitution.
5. The Personal Status Law was amended in 2024 to ensure greater gender equality in marriage and divorce, including raising the minimum age of marriage to 18 for both sexes, granting mothers a role in guardianship, restricting polygamy, and expanding women's rights in divorce. However, inheritance remains discriminatory, and men still retain unilateral divorce rights.
6. Labor law imposes restrictions on women's employment in certain “hazardous” sectors and jobs and does not explicitly criminalize workplace sexual harassment.

The above points lowered the overall compliance level under indicator 3 (4.2/9), reflecting partial inclusion of gender equality principles. There is still no comprehensive law criminalizing all forms of VAWG which explains the zero score for indicator 4.

There is no specific law addressing VAWG comprehensively. Main laws relevant to combating the different forms of VAWG include: the Crime Prevention Law No. 7 of 1954 in the Gaza Strip, the Law of Family Rights of 1954 in the Gaza Strip, the Penal Code No.16 of 1960 in the West Bank, the Personal Status Law of 1976 in the West Bank. (Indicator 5 score of 0/7) There is no specific definition of VAWG in the Palestinian legislation. However, some forms of VAWG are defined under the Jordanian Penal Code. (Indicator 6 score of 5.0/5)

The law does not guarantee access to legal aid, although the National Legal Aid Strategy (2019) provides general support. Because this support is not specifically tailored to survivors of gender-based violence, indicator 8 scored 4.3/6. The laws also do not explicitly guarantee psychosocial or medical support for survivors. Sexual and reproductive health are addressed in different laws including family planning services, medical care, and provision of contraception. Sexual and reproductive health, and family planning services are provided free of charge under the Public Health Law. However, abortion is illegal, allowed only if the pregnancy endangers the life of the pregnant woman, according to article 8 of the Public Health Law. 1. Indicator 9 scored 3.3/5.

Legal framework criminalizes some forms of harassment and sexual exploitation, which is why indicator 11 reached 4.5/6. Rape is punishable by law in both Gaza and the West Bank; however, marital rape is not recognized, and enforcement remains weak.

Legal articles allowing mitigation of penalties for “honour” crimes were repealed in 2011 and 2018 in the West Bank. The government in Gaza has not applied the reforms. There is no legal prohibition of FGM as it is not practiced in Palestine. Article 10 of the Jordanian

Personal Status Law sets the legal age of marriage for women in the West Bank at 18 years while, in the Gaza Strip, it is 17 years old under article 7 of the Egyptian Family Rights Law. However, in “exceptional circumstances”, the judge may approve a marriage for girls under these limits. (Indicator 12 score of 6.0/6).

The rapist is penalised regardless of the acceptance to marry the victim. Article 152 of the Penal Code in the Gaza Strip and article 292 of the Penal Code in the West Bank criminalises rape. If the rape was committed against a minor under the age of 16 the sentence is tightened to fourteen years imprisonment in the Gaza Strip and in the West Bank, if the minor is under the age of 15 the penalty is tightened to the death penalty and to twenty years imprisonment if committed against a minor under the age of 18. In the West Bank, article 308 of the Penal Code, which allowed the rapists to avoid prosecution by marrying their victims, was repealed in 2018. (Indicator 13 scored 2.0/6)

National Strategies: The Ministry of Women’s Affairs developed the National Strategy to Combat Violence against Women in Palestine (2023–2030), with five priorities. The strategy includes implementation mechanisms such as building effective partnerships, defining roles, and a monitoring and evaluation plan. However, it does not allocate the necessary resources or budget for implementation. Despite this limitation, the existence of such a strategy is acknowledged, which is why indicator 14 scored a full 8.0/8.

Main Gaps

- Penal Codes in the West Bank and Gaza do not comprehensively criminalize all forms of VAWG (e.g., marital rape not recognized).
- Personal Status Laws retain discriminatory provisions on inheritance, divorce, and guardianship.
- No unified family law across the West Bank and Gaza; plural legal systems create inconsistencies.

Recommendations

- Enact a comprehensive law on combating VAWG, naming and criminalizing all forms of violence, including marital rape and child marriage.
- Reform Personal Status Laws to ensure equal rights in marriage, divorce, guardianship, and inheritance.
- Move towards harmonizing personal status laws across different jurisdictions.

❖ **Second Category: Standard Procedures and Guidelines**

Standard procedures and regulations reached 85.6%, indicating strong but not yet comprehensive mechanisms in place.

Second Category: Standard Procedures and Guidelines



Justice

Procedures exist to facilitate women survivors of violence in accessing justice. These include reporting systems managed by the police, courts, and units within the Ministry

of Interior such as the Complaints Unit, as well as hospitals. For this reason, indicator 15 scored 12/12.

When a report of VAWG is filed, actions are taken in line with laws and procedures. However, there is no information on the number of cases that proceed compared to those reported. Hence, indicator 16 score of 5.1/9.

There is still no unified national system to track the percentage of cases adjudicated compared to those reported. However, the Ministry of Women's Affairs has launched the process of developing a centralized database under the National Observatory on Violence and the National Referral System, with the aim of monitoring judicial and procedural pathways of cases, enhancing transparency and accountability, supported by international partners. For this reason, indicator 17 scored 7.0/7.

Police

The Palestinian Police's Family and Juvenile Protection Department receive and handles complaints of domestic violence, coordinate with other Palestinian police departments, government institutions, and CSOs. (Indicator 18 score of 8.0/8).

The Family and Juvenile Protection Department has also established coordination mechanisms with other service providers, ensured transportation to relevant medical and social services, and carried out awareness-raising for women on their rights. A set of rules under the National Referral System governs how women survivors of violence are referred from one service provider to another and enables them to liaise directly with female police officers. Accordingly, Indicator 19 scored 8.0/8.

There are no specific guidelines for identifying women victims of human trafficking. However, the Council of Ministers approved a draft Anti-Trafficking in Persons Law, aimed at strengthening data collection on trafficking in Palestine and providing stronger protection for victims. Some provisions of the Jordanian Penal Code and the Child Law apply in the West Bank and offer protection to women victims. Article 310 of the Jordanian Penal Code criminalizes various forms of sex trafficking, such as prostitution. In Gaza, however, no regulations are in force due to the ongoing Israeli war on Palestine. Because of this gap, indicator 21 scored only 2.0/6.

Health

Certain regulations oblige healthcare providers to care for and/or refer survivors of violence against women and girls. The Ministry of Health, in cooperation with national institutions, developed a Pocket Guide for the Management of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Cases, aimed at all service providers, including healthcare professionals. (Indicator 23 score of 9.0/9.) The Ministry of Health also provides women survivors of violence with free health services, especially psychiatric and forensic medical services. In 2020, the Unified Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for Case Management for GBV Survivors in Gaza were published, covering coordination among health, justice, police, and social affairs sectors. In the West Bank, a coordination centre within the National Referral System oversees the health sector's response to GBV survivors. The Ministry of Health also has a General Directorate for Women's Affairs that monitors GBV cases and provides free services. In Gaza, information is lacking. (Indicator 24 score of 6.0/6.)

Education

There is no specific mechanism to monitor compulsory education for girls. However, Article 24 of the 2003 Basic Law (amended in 2005) makes education compulsory and free for all citizens in public institutions. Article 5 of Law No. 8 of 2017 on Education mandates compulsory education until the 10th grade, while Article 9 obliges parents or legal guardians to enrol children in schools.

The Gender Unit of the Ministry of Education is responsible for ensuring ministry policies address the differing needs of women and men, and for coordinating with local authorities to establish a monitoring and evaluation system in education responsive to gender needs. The Education Strategic Plan (2017–2022) included measures to expand girls' access to education, including making textbooks more gender-sensitive. (Indicator 25 score of 8.0/8).

There are no regulations or procedures specifically prohibiting sexual harassment in education. However, provisions of the Penal Code impose harsher penalties for sexual offenses against minors. Article 42 of the 2004 Child Law criminalizes sexual exploitation of minors and obliges the State to take "all legislative, administrative, social, educational, and preventive measures" to secure this right.

The Ministry of Education has facilitated awareness initiatives to combat sexual harassment in schools and universities, by equipping teachers, staff, and female

students with protection tools as enhanced complaint mechanisms in educational institutions. Ministerial Complaint System No. 08 of 2016 also established a unit to address grievances, though not limited to harassment cases. (Indicator 26 score 6.0/6) By contrast, there are no specific systems or procedures addressing VAWG in youth centres, clubs, or sports stadiums.

The National Strategy to Combat Violence against Women in Palestine (2023–2030) aims to fight discrimination in society, in public spaces, which could apply to such venues. (Indicator 27 score of 3.0/6).

Main Gaps

- Lack of a unified national system to track reported VAWG cases.
- Absence of clear, institutionalized guidelines to identify trafficking victims.
- Limited mechanisms to prevent harassment in youth centres, clubs, and sports facilities.

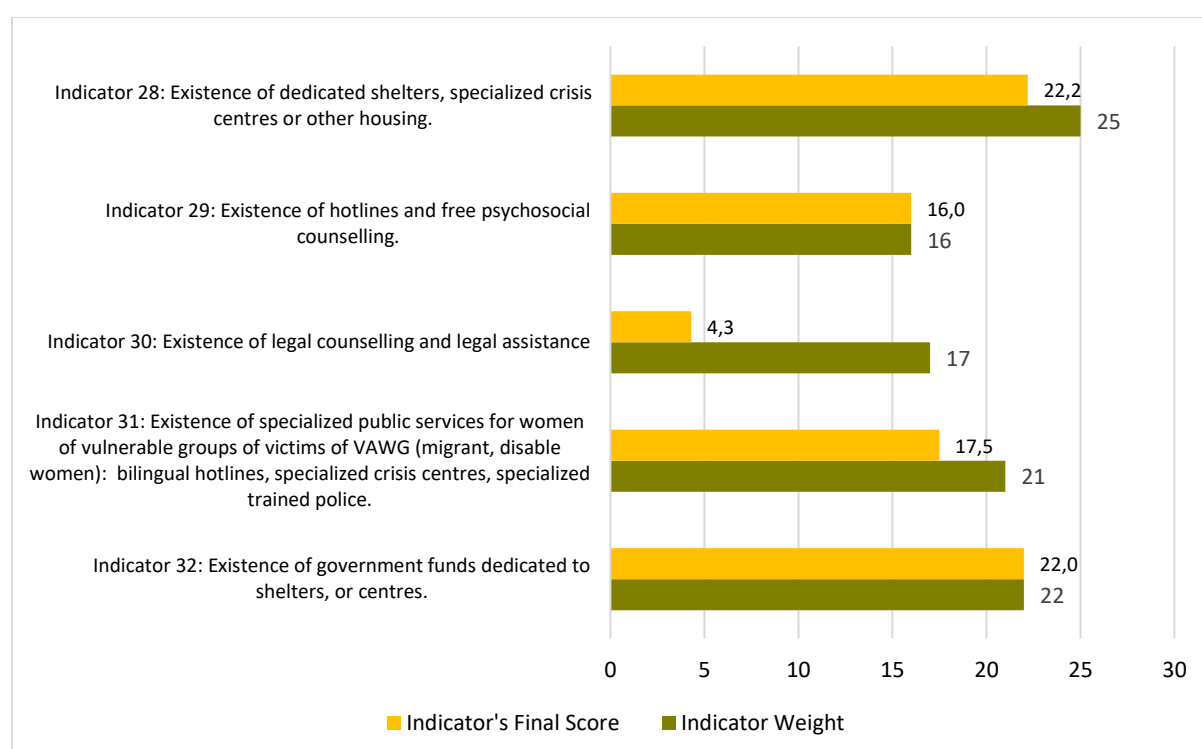
Recommendations

- Establish a centralized database to monitor VAWG case progression within the justice system.
- Develop and adopt national guidelines for identifying and supporting victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation.
- Strengthen anti-harassment and protection mechanisms in sports, cultural, and youth spaces.
- Ensure sustainability of police and health referral mechanisms across Gaza and West Bank.

❖ **Third Category: Provision of Services Funded by the State**

Provision of services funded by the State scored 82%, showing consistent service delivery with room for improvement in coverage and quality.

Third Category: Provision of Services Funded by the State



Specialized services are provided for survivors of VAWG. There are three shelters in the West Bank, located in Bethlehem, Jericho, and Nablus, under the supervision of the Ministry of Social Development. The government allocates funding for the three State-run shelters in the West Bank: one is directly managed by the Ministry of Social Development, while the other two are operated by civil society organizations under the ministry's supervision. For these reasons, indicator 28 scored 22.2/25 and indicator 32 scored 22.0/22.

Amid the ongoing aggression in the Gaza Strip since October 2023, women's protection and shelter services have suffered severe humanitarian consequences: GBV facilities in areas such as Khan Younis were closed, and as a result of widespread displacement and the destruction of infrastructure, most women continue to live in temporary, overcrowded shelters that are not adequately equipped. Under the current circumstances, there is no evidence of active operation of either governmental or

community shelters as was the case before the aggression. This explains why the score for indicator 28 did not reach the full weight (22.2/25).

Psychosocial counselling is provided in the government-run shelters under the Ministry of Social Development. The police in the West Bank have set up a hotline (114), but it is designated for reporting all criminal cases, not specifically those related to VAWG. Indicator 29 scored 16/16, reflecting the existence of counselling and hotlines.

To be noted that in Gaza, no hotline is available.

The government provides legal counselling for women survivors of VAWG through shelters and the Ministry of Social Development. However, these services remain limited, which explains the low score of indicators 30 on legal counselling and legal assistance (4.3/17).

Main Gaps

- Shelters are concentrated in the West Bank; no operational shelters remain in Gaza due to the ongoing aggression.
- Legal counselling and assistance for survivors are under-resourced.

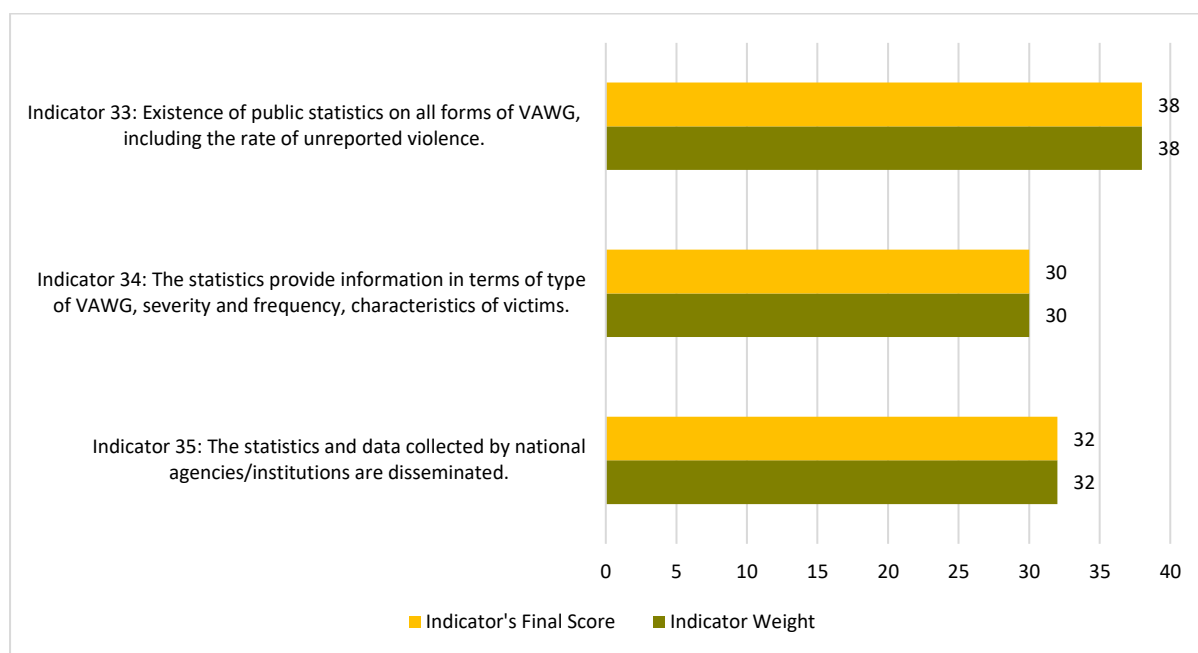
Recommendations

- Expand the network of shelters to ensure nationwide coverage, including rebuilding capacities in Gaza.
- Strengthen legal aid provision for survivors, ensuring it is survivor-centred and widely accessible.
- Provide sustainable resources for psychosocial counselling and reintegration programs.

❖ **Fourth Category: Data System and Statistics**

Data systems and statistics achieved a full 100%, highlighting the strongest area with reliable and disseminated data.

Fourth Category: Data System and Statistics



Regular and updated statistics are available to measure the rate of all forms of VAWG. The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics conducts a dedicated survey on violence, particularly against women. For this reason, indicator 33 scored 38.0/38.

The published data is mostly limited to the official website of national institutions, such as the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics.

Dissemination is ensured primarily through official platforms. Accordingly, indicator 35 scored 32.0/32.

Main Gaps

- Current surveys do not capture all forms of violence, especially hidden or unreported cases.
- Dissemination of statistics remains mostly limited to official websites, reducing accessibility for civil society and researchers.

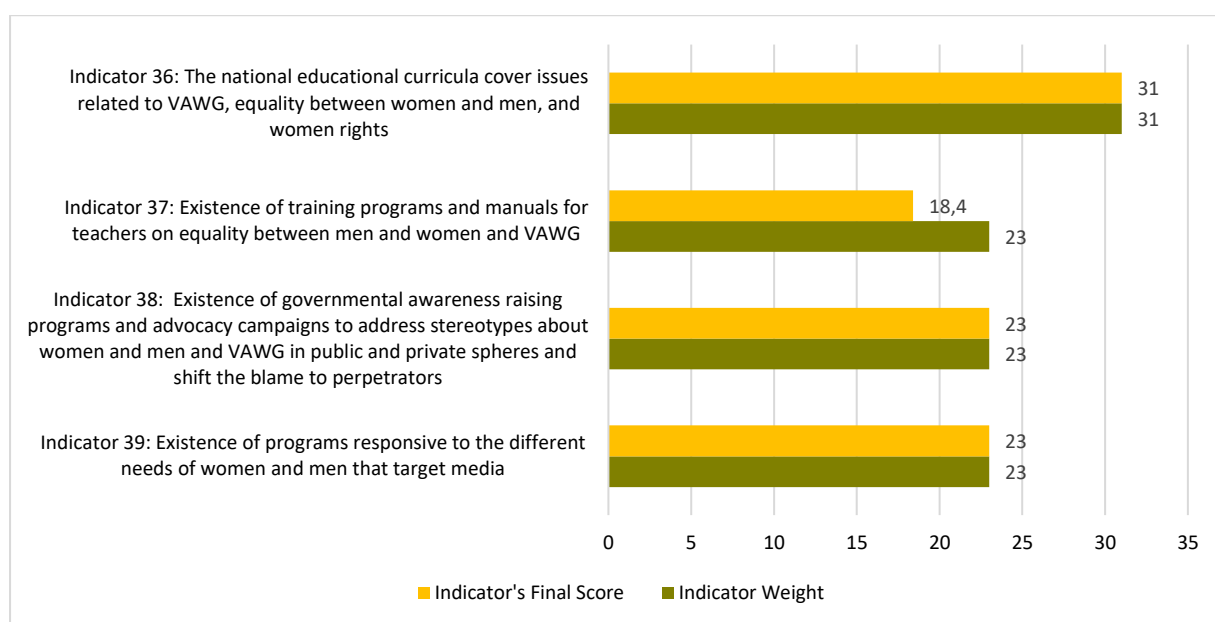
Recommendations

- Broaden national surveys to capture prevalence of all forms of VAWG, including unreported cases.
- Expand dissemination through regular reports, briefs, and public data portals.

❖ Fifth Category: Preventive Programs and Measures

Preventive programs and measures reached 95.4%, demonstrating very high achievement in awareness, education, and prevention initiatives.

Fifth Category: Preventive Programs and Measures



The national curricula include issues of VAWG, gender equality, and women's rights. The Ministry of Education works on reviewing textbooks to ensure that they do not promote discrimination (Indicator 36 scored 31.0/31).

Since 2023, the Ministry of Education, in partnership with UNFPA, has trained 600 teachers to promote gender equality and challenge stereotypes in school curricula. In recent years, there has been a significant shift in building the capacity of educational staff in the field of gender equality and VAWG.

Interventions have moved from relying solely on limited guidance manuals to the development and institutionalizing of training programs for teachers at the national level, through partnerships between the Ministry of Education and UN agencies. These trainings have also been integrated into the Education Sector Strategic Plan (2023–2027), ensuring sustainability and gradual expansion across both public and private schools.

This reflects Palestine’s commitment to fostering a safe and discrimination-free learning environment, based on the National Gender Strategy and new educational reform plans (Indicator 37 score of 18.4/23).

The Ministry of Women’s Affairs also launches an annual awareness campaign as part of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, as well as a campaign addressing violence against women in the workplace (Indicators 38 and 39 both have full scores of 23.0/23).

Main Gaps

- Teacher training programs on gender equality and VAWG remain at an early stage, with partial integration.

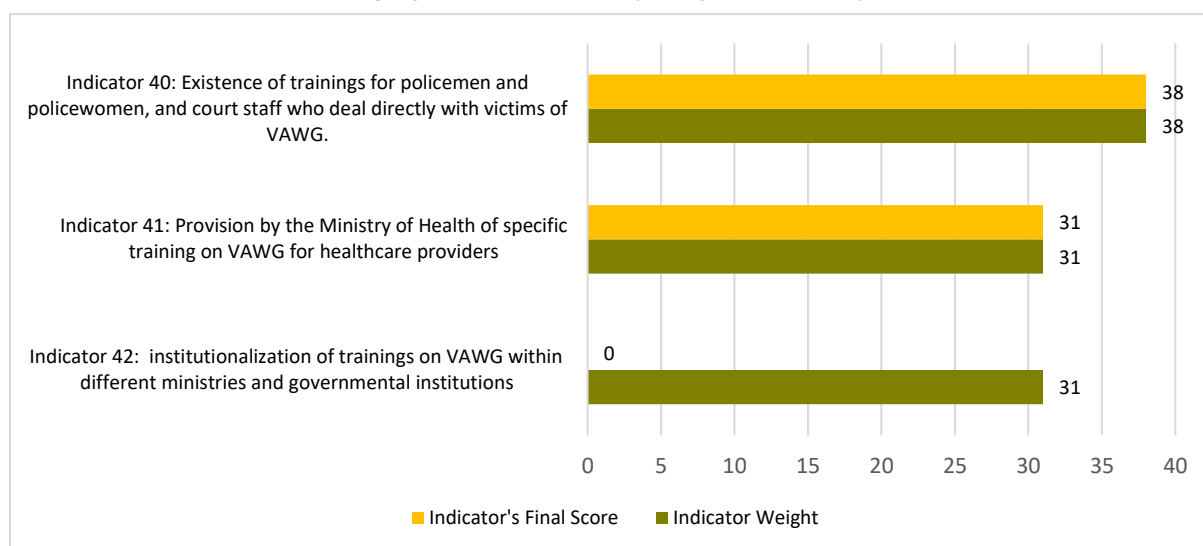
Recommendations

- Institutionalize teacher training programs nationwide and ensure systematic follow-up.
- Develop standardized teacher training manuals or use existing ones, as [*Manual for Teachers on Gender Sensitive Education in the South Mediterranean*](#) For and institutionalized training programs.
- Expand preventive programs into youth centres, community institutions, and workplaces.

❖ Sixth Category: Professional Capacity of First Respondents

Professional capacity of first respondents scored 69%, reflecting ongoing challenges in institutionalizing training and building systematic capacity.

Sixth Category: Professional Capacity of First Respondents



The Ministry of Women's Affairs provides some training courses, and the executive plan of the National Referral System tasked the Ministry with identifying the training needs of service providers who work with survivors of VAWG, preparing a training manual, and measuring the impact of the training courses (Indicator 40 score of 38.0/38 and Indicator 41 score of 31.0/31). However, there is no institutionalized training program on VAWG within ministries and government institutions (Indicator 42 score of 0/31).

Main Gaps

- Training remains ad hoc and not fully institutionalized across ministries.
- Health and social service providers receive limited or no systematic training on VAWG response.

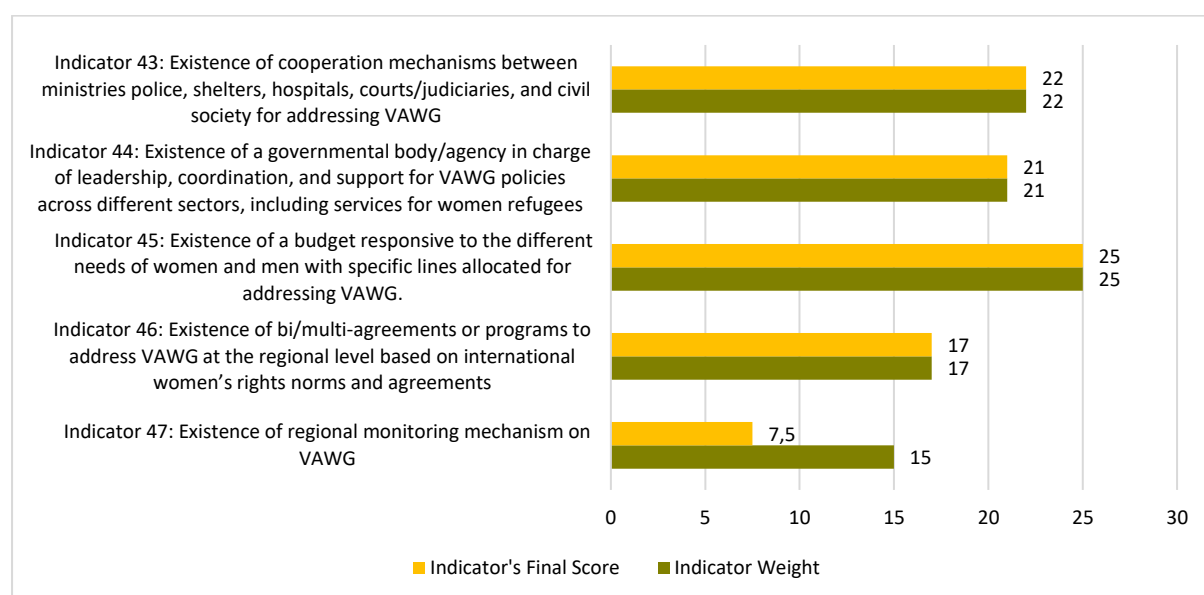
Recommendations

- Institutionalize mandatory training on VAWG across police, judiciary, health, and social services.
- Develop a monitoring system to assess the effectiveness and impact of trainings

❖ **Seventh Category: National Coordination and Regional Cooperation**

National coordination and regional cooperation achieved 92.5%, showing strong inter-ministerial and regional collaboration with minor areas for strengthening.

Seventh Category: National Coordination and Regional Cooperation



There are mechanisms for cooperation between the police and other government institutions within the framework of the National Referral System. The Family Protection Department of the police also handles cases of domestic violence and coordinates with other institutions. This explains why indicator 43 scored 22.0/22.

There is also coordination between ministries led by the Ministry of Women's Affairs, which coordinates with the Ministries of Interior, Health, and Social Development to address cases of VAWG and to support women's rights policies.

The Ministry of Women's Affairs coordinates the government's commitment to integrating the different needs of women and men into laws and public policies and to promoting women's rights. The Ministry also ensures coordination among various sectors, including women's rights organizations, and seeks to improve services provided to women. As a result, indicator 44 scored 21.0/21.

On budgets: the Palestinian government still lacks a comprehensive national budget that takes into account gender-differentiated needs. However, since 2023, initial attempts have been made to integrate gender-responsive budgeting into sectoral

budgets, particularly in the Ministries of Education and Social Development. In addition, limited allocations have been made to address VAWG under the National Strategy to Combat Violence (2023–2030). These allocations remain partial and rely heavily on external funding, highlighting the need to develop institutional mechanisms to ensure sustainable national financing. This progress is reflected in indicator 45 full score of 25.0/25, though sustainability challenges remain.

At the regional level, Palestine participates in frameworks such as the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM). The Ministerial Declaration of the Fifth UfM Ministerial Conference on “Strengthening the Role of Women in Society” includes four priority areas, one of which is combating VAWG.

The League of Arab States established the Arab Women’s Committee, which in February 2020 launched a five-year strategy to define national priorities in Arab countries in line with the Beijing Platform for Action. Additionally, the Arab League launched the “Cairo Declaration for Arab Women: The Arab Women Development Agenda 2030”, adopted in 2017. The declaration integrates gender equality into environmental and climate action and disaster response, and includes specific results aimed at eliminating VAWG.

Palestine also participates in informal regional networks as the Coalition of Arab Women Parliamentarians to Combat Violence against Women, which aims to raise awareness among parliamentarians and the public, place VAWG among legislative priorities, and promote joint actions among parliamentarians in cooperation with relevant civil society organizations.

The Arab Women Parliamentarians Network for Equality (Ra’edat) advocates for gender equality and combating VAWG and calls for the adoption of comprehensive legislation in the Arab region. Indicator 46 score 17.0/17, shows that Palestine participates in regional initiatives, with formalized bi-and multilateral agreements and implementation mechanisms.

Except for the Regional Index on VAWG, there is no other regional monitoring mechanism.

Palestine, as a member of the UfM follows up on the implementation of the Ministerial Declaration on Women’s Rights (2022, Madrid). In terms of monitoring of the Declaration, the ministers of the UfM States showed willingness in the 5th UfM Declaration to “Pay particular attention to well-functioning monitoring processes in the

four priority areas of the Cairo Declaration well as to the quantitative and qualitative evaluation of the impact of actions undertaken.” (Indicator 47 score of 7.5/15)

Main Gaps

- There is no gender sensitive budget with specific allocations for VAWG.
- Lack of bilateral or regional cooperation agreements specifically addressing VAWG.

Recommendations

- Establish a sustainable, gender-responsive budget with dedicated allocations for VAWG.
- Strengthen bilateral and regional cooperation frameworks to enhance monitoring and accountability.



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