



## **Annual report 2013** **Executive Summary**

### **General Context:**

The political development in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, the complicated internal political Palestinian scene, the deteriorated economic situation and financial crisis, the practices of the Israeli occupation and the *de facto* separation between the West Bank and Gaza Strip, all-in-all continue to hinder the social, economic and political development of the Palestinians. Recognizing these challenges, MIFTAH strategically contributes to constitutional reform and democratic processes, working to raise opportunities for active engagement of youth and women as right-holders, voters, candidates and leaders through fostering impartial spaces for policy dialogue, agreement, and influence actions across organized groups on social and governance reforms, reconciliation and peace-building.

Equal participation represents a critical challenge, and thus MIFTAH includes in the organization's Resources Framework and Action Plan an explicit reference to the National Strategy to Combat Violence against Women (VAW) 2011-2019 to fulfil a national Human Rights commitment which recognizes youth and women in situations of in-conflict. Accordingly, where the hostilities that characterize warfare are not as visible, a more in-depth approach to utilizing International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and its required provisions are adopted.

Respectively, this report showcases the results achieved in 2013 and demonstrates the continued need to advance approaches to participatory engagement and developed policies and legislations that will empower marginalized citizens more broadly through advocacy and dialogue to contribute to a change of the mind-set of the majority of stakeholders, through promoting principles of good governance, respect and protection of Human Rights. MIFTAH works toward advocating for stable democratic institutions, the rule of law and access to justice, Human Rights, and the protection of fundamental freedoms as well as educating citizens on their right to participate in the political process. These aspirations are at the heart of MIFTAH's mandate to increase youth and women's political representation and decision-making positions. Thus, MIFTAH remains committed to raising the level and quality of strategic advocacy and constructive intervention to make it happen.

### **Summary of programs, operations and activities:**

MIFTAH works towards the vision of an independent, democratic and sovereign Palestinian state, which grants Palestinians their basic rights, preserves their dignity and enjoys international recognition and respect. In view of that, MIFTAH seeks to promote the principles of democracy and good governance within various components of Palestinian society and it further seeks to engage local and international public opinion and official circles on the



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Palestinian cause. Consequently, MIFTAH remains within the framework of the 2012-2016 Strategic Plan to ensure the long-term character of its programs for wider impact and sustainable results. MIFTAH works to:

1. Empower effective leadership within all components of Palestinian society in order to enhance democracy and good governance and raise public awareness concerning the rights and responsibilities of good citizenship; and
2. Influence policy and legislation to ensure their safeguarding of civil and social rights for all sectors and their adherence to principles of good governance through the Policy Development and Advocacy Program

To that end, MIFTAH's outcomes are pursued using engagement policies, participation and voice guided by local ownership while recognising the value of political, social, civil and cultural rights that track human rights-based approaches as well as international commitments and agreements that are based on Human Rights and International Humanitarian Laws that are taken into consideration in the Palestinian Basic Law.

To that extent, MIFTAH operates in areas covering the West Bank (WB) and Gaza Strip (GS) through its core team located in Ramallah, in close coordination with active field coordinators assigned in eight districts in the WB & GS. More precisely, MIFTAH expands its activities to cover the most marginalized areas in the WB and GS including Area C and east Jerusalem and gears its activities to work with youth including women and girls, male and female political activists, male and female leaders, male and female local council members, Palestinian Legislative Council members, Palestinian Political Factions, and male and female members of Community-Based Organizations and public institutions.

### **Youth and Women Empowerment Programme:**

#### **Women and Youth Empowerment:**

This program aims to provide leadership training for women to become active community leaders, as well as skill development to elected women local councils' officials. The program provides specialized awareness training and campaigns aimed at overcoming stereotypes of women in influential circles. Further, it is concerned with providing women community leaders the opportunity to have access to political and decision-making officials, enhancing their visibility and ensuring that their views are heard and needs are mainstreamed. This program also intends to boost a culture of dialogue and acceptance of the 'other' within the factions and within the Palestinian political system. Further, the program intends to raise the awareness of



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society of the role of young political leaders in the process of change and development and to provide an environment that empowers youth in the structure of the Palestinian political system.

Enhancement of youth participation in civil society, politics and decision-making processes in Palestine

Because access to fundamental rights is not equally granted to all Palestinian citizens and in order to adhere to principles of human rights, MIFTAH worked with the Active Political and Social Youth Network, comprising of different social, educational and economic backgrounds. In fact, MIFTAH provided a platform for youth to create dialogue, transform conflicts and build consensus on critical issues in the transition processes of Palestinian society, towards building a democratic state and enhancing youth participation in this process. Members of the network were able to raise their voices and defend their rights through different public initiatives, media, official meetings and workshops with duty bearers to address the setbacks that hinder their participation in drawing the political and social agendas. They reached a transcendence of contradictions and a joint vision with a complete action plan that MIFTAH fully supports including, among others, influencing policy and decision-makers to engage civil society, mainly the Palestinian youth in the design and implementation and monitoring of anti-corruption programmes. As a result, a report reflecting a National Youth Anti-Corruption Strategic Interventions is being produced and recommended to be nationally adopted by PACC and AMAN. The report is being finalized for printing and dissemination.

Support Young Palestinian Women Political Leadership: Phase II: UNSCR 1325 in Action; Realizing UNDP's 8 point Agenda

Activities demonstrate an impact that is inspired by the wide opportunity opened for 83 political women leaders, mostly members in forums and political factions. Over the course of the year, the project has succeeded, among other things, in delivering comprehensive capacity development programmes to women on leadership skills as well as on techniques of establishing networks and dialogue channels with decision makers within their political affiliations. Further, the group of 40 young women leaders acquired the knowledge in relation to the political and legal systems in Palestine in addition to the critical issues related to women's political participation and the legal limitations affecting the efficiency of women's political role in Palestinian society. Nevertheless, the groups were empowered to demand their rights in managing higher responsibilities within their political factions and were encouraged to actively engage with their communities at the different levels.



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Development of local communities in the districts of the Jordan Valley and Jerusalem through income generation projects for women in rural areas

To contribute to the improvement of women's standards of living and economic status, increasing the level of women's productivity and enhancing women's social participation at the local community level, this project selected the most vulnerable areas in Palestine that suffer from increased poverty, high rates of women and youth unemployment, and the expansion of Israeli settlements and confiscation of lands. In 2013, 10 groups of women comprising of 72 women from different areas of the Jordan Valley and Jericho City were supported through small income-generation projects to support fulfilling their practical and strategic needs. To enhance women's technical and vocational skills as well as economic participation, the selected women were intensively trained by specialized experts through 10 organized training courses on how to manage their projects through delivering specialized training on project management, financial procedures, and women rights. The project promoted networking between the local communities and government ministries, associations, local councils and municipalities as well as private sector institutions, aimed at providing technical advice and practical support to the project team and beneficiaries, hence contributing to strengthening cooperation and integration of work in an orderly fashion.

### **Support Young Palestinian Women Leadership: Voices for Change**

Stressing on the importance of engaging the community in decision-making and improving community participation in promoting women's interests and bringing women's concerns on the social and political agenda, the project contributed to bringing social issues, which are considered as sensitive by the conservative society, into public discussions at the local community level. Throughout 2013, 60 participants of young female community leaders were trained on Effective Engagement, Advocacy and Issue-based Campaigning, Alliance Building and Networking and Leadership and Public Speaking Skills. In addition, 50 participants benefited from roundtable discussions including Heads of NGOs, employees of Human Rights organizations and the project target groups in addition to 70 participants who benefited from training workshops around "Effectively Dealing with Audio-Visual Media". The groups were able to develop specific thoughts that were addressed through three community-based initiatives, murals, TV spots, and posters, and awareness sessions in universities in addition to public awareness campaigns.



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### **Support Women's Transformative Leadership in Changing Times and Democratic Transition**

MIFTAH aimed to raise women's awareness towards achieving their rights, increase women's self-confidence to take leadership roles in private and public spheres, and create a stable ground for lobbying around leaders and policy makers towards formulating gender responsive policies and regulations. The project contributed to improving the leadership and life skills of around 22 Palestinian women, youth and community leaders who demonstrated increased awareness and confidence in expressing their political and socio-economic rights. The trained women worked to raise the awareness of around 435 participants (78% females) in workshops and meetings on active citizenship, citizens' rights and duties, community and political participation, advocacy and networking.

#### **Elections Support Programme:**

MIFTAH's election support program aims to ensure the transparency and integrity of the election system and works to guarantee a free and fair election process through election monitoring activities. In addition, the election support program is concerned with ensuring representation of marginalized groups, with a focus on women and youth in elected positions at all levels.

In 2013, MIFTAH worked with local communities across key governorates in the West Bank, including east Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. Through holding around 60 town hall meetings in localities, MIFTAH succeeded in reaching out to around 1,625 citizens: 457 males and 1,168 females. Awareness was raised on the importance of active citizenship, political participation and civic engagement.

Additionally, MIFTAH worked on empowering the role of the elected female members in local councils to make them visible through developing their capacities and connecting them with officials and decision makers. Consequently, MIFTAH worked with 120 elected female council members through capacity development workshops and exchange of visits to share information and experiences from the different local councils. In addition, MIFTAH provided a platform for female local council members to meet officials from the Ministry of Local Government to bridge the communication gap with high officials to address management, operational and strategic issues, and to mainstream women's needs in local policy development and planning processes. The female council members requested improving interventions within the local governance strategies to enhance the female councilor's leadership role.



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### **Policy and Advocacy Programme:**

MIFTAH aims to contribute to achieving more supportive policy environment for reform and democratization in Palestine, and to ensuring the responsiveness and transparency of the decision making processes and their outcomes.

#### **Toward Instituting a National Gender Responsive Budget (GRB)**

By the same token, MIFTAH launches advocacy initiatives and campaigns to advance the public attention on Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB), expand the pool of experts on the subject and involve civil society organizations to increase the level of awareness and promote accountability and transparency in the national budget. Further, MIFTAH works with the local media on developing specialized articles focusing on the impact of GRB on good governance and democratic practices in Palestine.

#### **Gender Equity and Protection Programme**

It became apparent to MIFTAH that Civil Society Organizations and women Community-Based organizations lack the capacities and tools to activate UNSCR 1325 through documenting Israeli violations and holding the Palestinian government and the Occupation accountable in terms of their declared commitment towards International Resolutions on Human Rights. Hence, MIFTAH continued advocating and lobbying for Women, Peace and Security through policy dialogues with policy makers where MIFTAH seeks to create a platform for an organized national collective action to address the many forms of violence against Women in Palestinian society pursuant to UN resolutions on women, peace and security. Extensive work focused on holding policy dialogue meetings that disclosed a need to expand negotiations with relevant public institutes and judicial parties around the operational procedures that are followed to protect women against violence. A Community Leaders Committee was established from 28 members, comprising of eight female and 20 male members. The committee is considered an influential body that can actively engage in influencing the local communities, especially males, to challenge social restrictions and limitations imposed on women that led to an increase in gender-based violence, and further to influence policy makers around women's legal rights and access to justice. In addition, around 56 awareness raising workshops were conducted around women's economic rights for around 3,054 participants from the local communities, comprising of 1342 females and 1712 males. Furthermore one round table discussion was conducted in the Hebron district with the participation of 30 representatives (12 females and 12 males) from the Police, Sharia court, Mufti, relevant public institutions and NGOs. Furthermore, one documentary was produced to document the experience of the community leaders' committees



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in Hebron, Jericho and the Jordan Valley. Finally, a specialized questionnaire was conducted to document cases of violence against women and girls within the context of UNSCR 1325 and 1889, to be adopted by the national coalitions and CSOs.

Throughout 2013, MIFTAH established networks between CSOs and Community Leaders Committees to unify and strengthens their positions and avoid national duplications of efforts exerted towards eliminating gender-based violence and violence against women.

### **Risks, risk mitigation and sustainability:**

MIFTAH is aware of the risks associated with the implementation of the programs' activities, many of which are general and pertain to all development projects in Palestine while others are specific to projects that promote good governance. The main risks currently pertaining to the work of MIFTAH and means of risk mitigation are summarized below:

1. Postponed National Elections (Presidential and PLC). Paralyzed current PLC. Ongoing Palestinian political divide between WB and GS. Given the complex political context, this risk will need to be accepted. However the outputs of MIFTAH's work result in an informed and organized cadre of mostly women and men who are politically aware and alert.
2. Elected Islamic parties with a conservative agenda win and are non-supportive to women's rights. Amalgamating Civil Society Organizations' work urges women's organizations and activists to develop strong working relations with secular and moderate Islamic parties; hold them accountable for delivering on promises; and support them in developing a vibrant inclusive political agenda for all Palestinians.
3. The Israeli occupation and the pending results of the political peace negotiations constitute major risks. In regards to MIFTAHs work, it is an immense obstacle when it comes to mobility, as neither target group participants nor MIFTAH staff can travel freely between different areas for meetings, activities, networking etc. MIFTAH has field coordinators across the West Bank, east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip to make up for this and continue working in all areas.
4. Elected women representatives have little experience in governance, are unable to deliver and suffer from credibility deficit. Capacity building and awareness raising programs of partners will address competency and skills necessary to run an elected office; more specifically, tailor made programs and materials for potential women leaders.





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5. Lack of common understanding among partners on the notions of participation and engagement in HR and IHL advocacy campaigns and policy dialogues. MIFTAH's programme and media staff are experienced and well known in the field and have cooperated in similar activities in the past. Through capacity development and awareness raising programmes, the outcomes will establish a common set of terms and concepts that could lead the work in the field of HR and IHL.
6. Low participation of CSOs and public institutions in the workshops, conferences and other activities that MIFTAH will organize. MIFTAH has strong institutional links and networking with other CSOs and with the Palestinian Authority. This will guarantee adequate response to the events that will be organized. However, interactions with relevant events and conferences will be explored.
7. Lack of coordination / communication. MIFTAH has strong experience in project management and therefore the probability of that occurring is minimal. However, to mitigate such an unexpected event, partners will be requested to undertake management tasks, mainly youth networks, groups, CSOs including CBOs. More time will be spent from MIFTAH management in dealing with delays. Regular meetings will take place.
8. Intensive focus on addressing HR and IHL in the oPt among CSOs; there is a chance of overlap with other national programmes. MIFTAH will conduct assessment including mapping of other programmes as well as provide for intensive consultations with different stakeholders including CSOs. MIFTAH encourages regular coordination with national coalitions including Human Rights National and International Organizations.
9. Dependency of Civil Society Organizations on international financial aid. The Palestinian Authority's financial crisis increasingly affects the Palestinian society and its citizens. The financial instability has been looming since 2011 and in 2012 and 2013 on several occasions the Government has not been able to pay the salaries of civil servants. MIFTAH will put in place a resource mobilization strategy to ensure that sufficient funding is in place, to ensure the sustainability of its operations, and will further contribute in promoting the private sector's social responsibility.
10. Continued Palestinian youth and women's political underrepresentation. MIFTAH adopts policies, strategies, advocacy campaigns and programmes to promote the political role of youth including women to transform in the direction of leadership and create a stable ground for lobbying at the policy making level to enforce formulating gender responsive policies and regulations.