

Past Achievements and Future Directions of Women's and Feminist Organizations in Israel

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PREFACE

The National Council of Jewish Women, the oldest Jewish women's organization in the United States, was founded in 1893 by Hannah G. Solomon, a visionary leader. NCJW is a grassroots organization that turns progressive ideals into action with a focus on advancing social and economic justice for women, children and families both in the United States and Israel. Faced with increasing challenges in advancing gender equality in Israel - from the growing power of the rabbinate and its detrimental impact on women's personal status, to the increasing intolerance for women in the public sphere, to the multi-dimensional impact of the constant state of war and insecurity, and to the struggle by the growing number of NGO's working on women's issues to secure adequate funding for sustainability - NCJW decided in early 2016 that it was time to assess the current state of the women's agenda in Israel in order to help chart a future path of strength and sustainability. To this end, NCJW leadership approached the Mazer Family Fund of UJA-Federation of New York for a seed grant to support a research project that would culminate in a one-day symposium bringing together American and Israeli feminist activists. With support from the Mazer Family for this groundbreaking effort, NCJW then turned to the Israel-based Dafna Fund, with its deep knowledge of and commitment to activists in the field, to be its partner in this effort.

The Dafna Fund, Israel's first and only feminist fund, was established in 2003 by Prof. Dafna Izraeli z"l, a feminist scholar and activist. The purpose of the Dafna Fund is to promote women as agents of social change and feminist mainstreaming through grant-making, capacity building and convening of feminist thought leaders from all walks of Israeli society. Driven by curiosity and appreciation of the knowledge of wise women in all fields of feminist action, the Dafna Fund was committed to cultivating and supporting evidence-based strategic thinking and action for social transformation. When the board of the Dafna Fund decided to sunset, they knew that they wanted to leave behind a legacy of appreciation for the past achievements of the feminist arena in Israel as well as a bold commitment to charting a future of gender equity and feminist mainstreaming.

This exciting and groundbreaking research project came to fruition thanks to a strong partnership between the Dafna Fund and the National Council of Jewish Women represented by Hamutal Gouri, Executive Director of the Dafna Fund, and Dina B. Charnin, Director of Israel Policy and Programs at NCJW who worked tirelessly and with complete devotion to manage both research and symposium projects. Both organizations are so grateful for the partnership and for the opportunity to work closely together and learn so much from one another. It speaks to the importance of North Americans and Israelis working together to advance social change. We are thrilled that the Jewish Women's Funding Network joined us to participate in a week long study tour leading up to the symposium on March 8th, 2018, International Women's Day when the research was formally presented.

We would like to thank Dr. Nancy Strichman for conducting the research in a spirit of great curiosity and analyzing the findings in such a brilliant and rigorous manner. We thank the research steering committee members Ghada Abu Jaber-Nijem, Maggie Bar-Tura and Prof. Daphna Hacker for their invaluable input and wise guidance. It is our collective hope that the insights and findings presented in this report will help inspire new collaborations, greater focus and increased funding for the entire network of feminist organizations in Israel that are striving each and every day to build a strong civil society with women at its center advancing social change and building a stronger more vibrant democracy.

National Council of Jewish Women
Beatrice Kahn, President
Nancy K. Kaufman, CEO

Dafna Fund
Barbara Dobkin, Chair
Hamutal Gouri, Executive Director

March 2018

NOTES FROM THE RESEARCHER AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As I write this, I am feeling an overwhelming sense of privilege to have been able to carry out this research process over the past year. I had the opportunity to meet in person more than three hundred women in the framework of this research, traveling all over the country from Sderot to Safed. I was granted a window into the lives of these women and was able to hear about many of their heroic efforts to create a more just society in Israel. I wish to acknowledge the research participants who willingly gave of their time and shared their experiences, stories and challenges. Their optimism and faith in the power of women to bring about social change during difficult times in Israel has served as a constant inspiration to me throughout the writing of this report.

It has been quite a challenge over the past year to take such compelling stories from so many women and condense them into a report that can serve as a snapshot of the rich and varied efforts in 2017 to advance women and girls in Israel. Every time I finished an interview, I knew that there were so many more fabulous women that I could be reaching out to and adding their perspectives as well. At the end of this year-long marathon, my primary goal is to point to significant trends and pose questions that might help guide more strategic discussions around these issues. I hope that it is readily apparent that the questions I raise are prompted by my desire to foster constructive dialogue and are rooted in my profound respect for the past and current efforts to advance women in Israel. I would like to thank my research steering committee, Hamutal Gouri, Dina Charnin, Ghada Abu Jabar-Nijem, Maggie Bar Tura and Prof. Daphna Hacker, for their invaluable guidance, wisdom and unwavering support throughout this entire process.

I would also like to note my deepest appreciation and respect, and thank you to Liora Asa, Keren Greenblatt, Lior Elefant, Shahari Shalabi, Lena Russovky and Fathi Marshood for their critical role in the research process, not only as guest facilitators and hosts for many of the focus groups but also for their active engagement throughout the process. And I would also like to extend a special thanks to the generous guest facilitators and hosts: Liron Peleg- Hadomi, Dr. Elana Sztokman, Nurit Hadjadj, Anat Saragusti, Tal Korman, Galit Yahya Tzfadia, Iris Posklinsky and Rachel Siegel.

I would like to express my endless gratitude to those who acted as readers, editors and/or cheerleaders: Prof. Barbara Burstin, Avivit Hai, Deborah Cosgrove, Prof. Andrea Kupfer Schneider, Barbara Dobkin, Nancy Kaufman, Dr. Jenny Cohen, Shelly Kupfer and Ayelet Ilany, who set the gold standard for this kind of project in her 2001 US Women to Women Report. I am also completely indebted to Efrat Yaari who accompanied me throughout the research, transcribing focus groups and translating all of the research materials (including the interim and final report) with such patience and insight. The important contributions of Pamela Deutsch, Heftsi Cohen-Montagu and Simon Montagu to the translation and, most significantly, to the editing of the final report is greatly appreciated as well.

And lastly, I would like to thank again all of the research participants, especially for their enthusiasm and dedication, as well as for their practical feedback and significant contribution to the research. And I would especially extend my appreciation to many research participants who provided meaningful input and feedback to the interim report, including Prof. Pnina Mutzafi Haller, Dr. Galit Shaul, Prof. Hanna Herzog, Rena Genn, Prof. Naomi Chazan, Prof. Helena Desivilya, Barbara Swirski, Estee Reider, Dr. Amalia Saar, Prof. Ruth Halperin- Kaddari, Dorit Carlin, Dr. Gali Sembira, Insaf Abu Shareb, Prof. Daphna Golan, Yael Shalgi, Nancy Bernstein, Heidi Paredes, Aliza Mazor, Kaym Gershon and Shifra Bronznick.

I can't emphasize enough how much the openness and generosity of all of the research participants throughout has enriched this report in every way. It has been an honor to meet so many incredible women during this past year who are so passionately working to make Israel a better place for everyone.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The story of women's and feminist organizations in Israel is characterized by great strides, some setbacks, many challenges and marked opportunities for greater impact.

Today, there are more than a hundred organizations active in Israel that are devoted exclusively to advancing women's status or promoting gender equality. These organizations touch on issues as diverse as: economic empowerment, fair and equal political representation, sexual harassment, gender wage gaps, peace efforts, religious freedom, healthy sexuality, preventing gender-based violence and women's expression in the arts and culture.

Women's and feminist organizations have had notable success over the years in impacting the public discourse and shaping public policies on topics from domestic violence and political representation to gender sensitive budget analysis and women's economic empowerment. Topics once solely on the feminist agenda have now become mainstreamed and have attracted monetary investments from the public and private philanthropic sectors to improve the lives of women and girls. Moreover, many broad-based organizations are championing causes such as greater female political leadership and civic engagement. New actors are also having a significant impact on the field including: activists on social media and numerous websites, blogs and mainstream media, activists within the private sector working to advance women's representation in management and professional forums, and civic activists who are leading grassroots initiatives at the community level.

“Past Achievements and Future Directions of Feminist and Women's Organizations in Israel: A Participatory Action Research Project” is a joint undertaking of the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) and the Dafna Fund. This project combines both research and action. The research will be used to help leaders, activists, and funders of women's organizations think strategically and develop a road map for the future advancement of gender equality in Israel.

The research aims to present a snapshot of the agendas, priorities and concerns expressed by the field. It primarily seeks to shed light and build on the vital conversations that are taking place among activists, organizational representatives, funders, journalists, and public officials regarding the current and future efforts in Israel to promote the status of women and advance gender equality.

Throughout the research process, the goal was to act on the principles of participatory action research, a collaborative approach to the research process that emphasizes both participation and action. As such, more than three hundred women were engaged in an ongoing, iterative process which began in January 2017. The process created a depth and breadth of research which is unique, and which may be relevant for other fields in civil society.

The final research report identifies achievements and challenges over the past fifteen years and poses strategic questions for the future. Key achievements and issues to be considered when framing strategic conversations on the topic of advancing women and girls in Israel include:

- **Strengthening Organizations' Ability to Influence Policymaking:** Information and knowledge are critical for informed action, for policy and decision makers, funders and the media. There is a need to examine how data collection is being supported as a critical tool for shaping the opinion of policymakers and the public discourse.
- **Building Political Power to Advance Women:** There is a positive shift in legislation, government allocations and policies benefitting women and girls, in large part thanks to the ongoing advocacy efforts of women's and feminist groups. Yet these gains are very fragile and threatened from a variety of directions. Strategies to galvanize more substantial political power may include increased political engagement and representation for women championing feminist agendas, grassroots engagement and promoting women to key positions in media, civil service and business.
- **Creating Greater Synergy Between Organizational and Independent Activities:** As the field of activism continues to expand to new actors- online advocates, journalists, as well as informal groups of activists from diverse communities -organizations and activists will benefit from greater synergy and collaboration.
- **Enhancing Diversity While Strengthening Greater Solidarity:** With so many varied efforts to advance the status of women and girls, it is a significant challenge to take on the goal of building a shared space among so many diverse communities of women. A) Organizations and activists need to continue creating more diverse and inclusive efforts, while also seeking to create a more unified agenda for advancing women. B) New thinking and new ways for collaborative efforts are required.
- **Creating Opportunities for Common Ground and Shared Interests:** A variety of collaborative efforts, from coalitions with broad-based organizations to engagement with male spiritual and political leaders within religious communities, are helping to reframe the discourse to one that perceives the advancement of women and girls as a "community issue" of broader importance.
- **Developing A Broader Base of Support for Women's and Feminist Organizations:** There is a recognized need by women's and feminist organizations to gain greater visibility, enhance community outreach and create a stronger base for community fundraising. Community development involves the investment of time and resources in outreach, leadership development and engagement.
- **Supporting Platforms for Storytelling and Supporting Art for Social Change:** Through a variety of mediums, including social media, film and the arts, women are taking advantage of opportunities to tell their stories and to impact on the public discourse. Both written and visual storytelling are increasingly acknowledged as critical tools for engagement and advocacy.
- **Funding for Infrastructure and Collaborative Efforts:** The full report includes messages to funders on how they may best help to enhance the collective impact of efforts to advance women in Israel.

The summary and full report found below detail the achievements of the last fifteen years, raise strategic questions, and list specific action steps to be taken in order to spark reflection and initiate new conversations for future directions for women's and feminist organizations in Israel.



OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH AND THE PARTICIPATORY PROCESS

For those committed to the advancement of women and gender equality in Israel, there are many complex questions that come to mind when trying to understand the current state of affairs. There has been great progress in the past few decades - increased female political representation, significant advances in women's educational status and employment levels, and growing public awareness of important issues related to advancing the cause of women and girls. Yet, many obstacles remain stubbornly in place. It was in the spirit of sparking greater conversation regarding the current state of women's and feminist organizations in Israel that the Dafna Fund and the National Council of Jewish Women, with the generous support from the Mazer Family Fund of UJA-Federation of New York, commissioned this research.

The research aims to present a snapshot of the agendas, priorities and concerns expressed by the field. It primarily seeks to shed light and build on the vital conversations that are taking place among activists, organizational representatives, funders, journalists, and public officials regarding the current and future efforts in Israel promoting the status of women and advancing gender equality. In an effort to provide readers with an opportunity for more in-depth discussion and perspective of the various topics raised in this report, extensive research citations have been highlighted throughout the text. Selected quotes from research participants on the wide variety of topics raised have also been included both in the text of the full report and in the footnotes.

Throughout the research process, the goal was to act on the principles of participatory action research, a collaborative approach to the research process that emphasizes both participation and action. As such, more than three hundred women were engaged in an ongoing iterative process which began in January 2017. Two hundred women, including activists, nonprofit staff, academics, politicians, funders and journalists were individually interviewed while approximately one hundred and twenty-five women participated in fourteen focus group sessions. In an effort to build opportunities for participant engagement, an interim report was circulated in the Fall 2017 to research participants to elicit feedback. As part of this open-ended approach, new focus group topics arose, so that many participants were invited to participate in additional focus groups and/or provide individual feedback on the interim findings of the research.

The nature of this research is primarily to present an overview of the current state of the field and raise strategic questions that are relevant to the work being carried out on behalf of women and girls in Israel. It is hoped that the research process and the subsequent discussions it generates can spark reflection and initiate new conversations on a variety of topics, key to advancing the field further in a constantly changing and challenging landscape.

OVERVIEW OF THE FIELD

Today in Israel, there are more than a hundred active organizations exclusively devoted to advancing women's status or promoting gender equality. These organizations touch on issues as diverse as economic

empowerment, fair and equal political representation, sexual harassment, gender wage gaps, peace efforts, religious freedom, healthy sexuality, preventing gender-based violence and women's expression in the arts and culture. The field has continued to expand over time, adding diversity in terms of both the different identities and agendas of women's organizations.

Despite the challenge of *"growing feminism in an unfriendly environment"*¹, women's and feminist organizations have had marked success over the years in impacting on the public discourse and shaping public policies on topics ranging from domestic violence and political representation, to gender sensitive budget analysis and economic empowerment of women. Topics once solely on the feminist agenda have now become mainstreamed and have attracted monetary investments from the public and private philanthropic sectors to improve the lives of women and girls. Moreover, many broad-based organizations are championing causes such as greater female political leadership and civic engagement. New actors and new forms of civic action are also having a significant impact on the field - activists on social media, websites, blogs and mainstream media, activists in the private sector working to advance women's representation in management and professional forums, and civil activists who are leading grassroots initiatives at the community level.

As the field continues to open up to new types of interventions, activism and engagement, the toolkit for advancing women's rights and gender equality has expanded as well. A snapshot of the strategies and activities that characterize the work indicates that there is a diverse and broad range of tactics used, including policy and legal advocacy, provision of direct services, raising public awareness, encouraging activism, community outreach and education, and the nurturing of partnerships and networks.

Yet the volatile social and political context in Israel presents challenges for a unified agenda regarding the advancement of women, as there are many varied experiences for women depending on differences in ethnicity, nationality, economic status, sexual orientation, geographic location and religious affiliation. And indeed, while there is a rich history over the past decade of collaborative efforts and coalitions, without umbrella organizations or other conveners, it is difficult to pinpoint indicators that typically serve as markers of a consolidated movement. Indeed, the question is actually raised whether there is a women's movement per se, or whether it is a mosaic of very diverse efforts that are working in a variety of ways to advance the status of women and gender equality.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS, SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES, AND STRATEGIC CONCERNS FACING THE FIELD

Key elements that impact the efforts to enhance women's equality and promote gender equality at the state, community, individual and organizational level are explored more in depth in these selected four areas: 1. Government and political representation, 2. Public discourse and shift in social norms, 3. Advances in women's personal status, 4. Current NGO landscape.

I. Government and Political Representation

Notable Achievements Include:

- **Increased Women's Representation** ▪ **Increased Application of a 'Gender Lens'** ▪ **Government Support for the Traditional Feminist Agenda.**

Over the past fifteen years, there has been increasing representation of women in the public and private sector; more legislation for gender equality; and growing female representation in politics. Services that were once seen as strictly on the feminist agenda are now generally accepted and have been institutionalized around the country. With the growing interest in applying a 'gender lens' to policymaking, government entities are increasingly recognizing the need to gauge the impact of policies on gender equality, collect

the relevant data, and develop services that address the unmet needs of women and girls. The accessibility of the global media and the discourse internationally linking women's status and national development is helping to frame policy discussions in Israel. Moreover, with a dramatic increase in the number of women's organizations that are engaged in public advocacy, more NGOs are working in collaborative ways with public authorities to meet informational needs on topics such as the gender gap in income levels between men and women.

Significant Challenges Include:

▪ **Lack of Strong Political Will for Advancing Women** ▪ **Growing Backlash to Women's Empowerment** ▪ **Difficulties in Navigating Public Sector.**

While there has been significant progress in terms of policymaking, use of data and political representation, numerous obstacles remain in place. In the political sphere, it has become very clear, especially in recent years, that greater women's numerical representation alone does not guarantee more attention to the feminist agenda or greater support for legislation in favor of women and girls. While the public sector has taken on the responsibility of supporting programs that were once operated independently by women's organizations, there is concern as to whether these programs will continue to reflect the core principles of women's empowerment, as increased privatization of the public sector brings a great deal of uncertainty and competition. And after many years of efforts to promote civil marriage, enact egalitarian practices such as access to prayer sites, and provide greater protection for women in cases of divorce, there has been little progress in dismantling the prevailing male-dominated structures that allow religious institutions to effectively discriminate against women. Lastly, there is a backlash against the progress of women taking place in an environment suspicious of and even hostile to organizations supporting civil and human rights, with the inevitable risks that are now posed to both individual female activists and women's organizations.

Strategic Concerns

▪ **Strengthen Organizations' Influence on Policymaking** ▪ **Mobilize the Public for Community Advocacy** ▪ **Raise Political Voices.**

Given the recent trends in Israel, it is critically important to consider what kinds of tools and which capacities of women's organizations to support. The professional skills, policymaking expertise and research capacities needed in the field to gather the data for effective advocacy are of utmost importance at this stage, in order to help organizations navigate the challenges of advocacy and partnerships with the government. Likewise, organizations and activists can be bolstered in efforts to better mobilize their base of supporters, volunteers and the wider community, thereby enhancing their role as advocates.

Questions to Consider on Mobilizing the Public for Community Advocacy:

- ❓ What does community-based advocacy look like? How can organizations be best equipped to better mobilize their base of volunteer and supporters? Which factors need to be in place?
- ❓ How can advocacy groups and direct service organizations develop stronger community support to possibly impact on policymaking? How is it possible to develop greater political awareness and the link to activism and community advocacy?
- ❓ What are the cross-cutting issues that have the greatest potential to mobilize women's organizations and activists from across the political spectrum to create joint mechanisms for advocacy?
- ❓ What can be learned from other actors across civil society (i.e., the environmental movement) who have expanded their effort to garner widespread membership and engage in street activism to effect policy change?

Action Steps...

- ▶ Focus on tools of effective advocacy, including policymaking expertise, research capacities and connection with the field that are of utmost importance at this stage in promoting efforts to advance women. Support efforts to collect compelling data from a variety of sources including the use of hotlines and the gathering of individual stories and tracking of website usage and a gender analysis of governmental statistics.
- ▶ Explore how to strengthen efforts by organizations and activists to push for greater political awareness and action by women of all backgrounds (i.e., community advocacy, grassroots mobilization, fielding more female candidates).
- ▶ Consider ways to get involved as a supporter and/ or volunteer. Explore opportunities to act as a bridge among diverse populations and sectors to create joint mechanisms for advocacy. Examine ways to increase the visibility and outreach of the work to enhance community engagement and broader advocacy efforts.

■ Utilizing International Networks to Further Support Local Efforts.

Engagement with international networks over the past decade has helped advance a variety of issues facing women in Israel, from addressing sex trafficking to the emphasis placed on economic empowerment for women. Participation in national and international support networks can foster capacity building on topics such as advocacy and data collection, which are key tools that can be further supported and developed. Yet as women's and feminist organizations take on a very broad range of issues and challenge the status quo, they can be charged with importing ideas that are counter to prevailing local values and open themselves to accusations that they are inviting international criticism that is harmful to the state. As such, while taking advantage of the expanding 'toolkit' of research, ideas and inspiration that is coming from abroad, it is essential to support efforts that build constructive learning exchanges and dialogue in a way that is culturally sensitive and adaptable to the local context in Israel.

Questions to Consider on Strengthening Exchanges and Links with International Networks:

- ❓ How does engagement with international networks and forums enhance the women's agenda in Israel?
- ❓ How can opportunities be expanded for greater dialogue and partnership between women's organizations and activists in Israel and other countries? What are the possibilities for joint learning, relationship building, networking, and collaborative efforts?
- ❓ How can similar struggles and the shared interests of women from Israel and abroad be included and furthered as part of a learning network? What can be learned from Israel's experience? What models of success for advancing women can be adapted to the Israeli context?
- ❓ What can be learned from participation in international networks and learning exchanges (which include activities as diverse as film festivals, professional conferences and site visits) and how can these types of efforts be strengthened?
- ❓ How is it possible to cultivate relationship building with networks abroad, including collegial relationships with funders, which spark the development of a shared agenda for greater collective impact and joint action?

Action Steps...

- ▶ Assess how to create more learning opportunities and exchanges, as part of a broader effort to nurture a greater sense of mutuality and partnership among women and girls in Israel and in other countries. Support efforts to build on a shared agenda for joint action and consider possibilities for relationship building, networking, and collaborative efforts.
- ▶ Join the 'conversation' that has been taking place through venues such as knowledge forums, delegations and film screenings of women's stories.
- ▶ Consider the possibilities of further developing sustainable connections and engagement in tandem with philanthropic efforts.

2. Public Discourse on Women's Rights

Notable Achievements Include:

▪ Change in the Use of Language and Discourse ▪ Multiplicity of Outlets for Women's Perspectives and Stories.

In recent years, there have been dramatic changes in the public discourse on multiple issues of concern to women and girls, along with a growing awareness and exposure to feminist thought. Gender studies programs, many operating for decades, are offered in universities and colleges around the country and have graduated hundreds of activists who are doing a variety of work in the field. The change in the public discourse has reached more traditional communities, and there are previously taboo topics, ranging from issues such as breast cancer to harmful practices against women, such as polygamy and domestic violence, that are increasingly being addressed and/or challenged in public. The emergence of religious feminism over the past decade has been especially meaningful in Israel, a country where there is no separation of 'church and state'.

The growth of social media and access to the internet has provided a more accessible way for news and commentary from a woman's perspective to be disseminated, sparking social change efforts in Israel as in other parts of the world. With websites that reach many thousands on a daily basis, social activists and journalists can now easily make the claim that they are, as noted by one activist, "*raising a generation of feminists*" in Israel among diverse communities of women. The growing number of women filmmakers and the greater public exposure to their work is yet another of the many new platforms that has been created by women in the arts to encourage the process of storytelling in all types of formats.

Significant Challenges Include:

▪ Concern regarding the Accessibility of Feminism ▪ Impact of Rising Religiosity and the Military/Conflict on Public Discourse.

In spite of the significant progress that has been made, the term 'feminism' is still often negatively perceived by the general community and even by many women. There is also a question of the degree to which many of the past accomplishments of the feminist struggle are acknowledged or simply taken for granted. In general, women's issues are still given a lower priority in the public discourse, while social issues are generally considered secondary to security concerns. Indeed, the state of constant conflict and a divisive political landscape is a reality that especially marginalizes women's voices. Moreover, the rising nationalism and religious fundamentalism that is increasingly part of the political atmosphere is further preventing the inclusion of women's voices in the public debate.

Strategic Concerns

■ Cultivating Opportunities for Strengthening the Work of Newly Emerging Actors ■ Synthesizing Different Kinds of Activism.

As the field of activism continues expanding to new actors - online advocates, journalists, as well as informal groups of activists from diverse communities, it is important to consider how to create better synergy among the various types of efforts to advance women and girls. The upshot is that it is critical, especially with the broad outreach of social media and the internet, to effectively engage and support all manner of activism, to develop a more symbiotic relationship between grassroots and online activists and established nonprofits. Recent examples of community-wide initiatives that successfully break down the official categories of activism should be further explored.

Questions to Consider on Synthesizing Different Forms of Activism:

- ❓ How is it possible to nurture a more synergetic relationship between grassroots and online activists and organizational representatives? What are the opportunities for greater cooperation among established nonprofits, emerging initiatives, and alternative, more spontaneous efforts of activism?
- ❓ How can more fruitful dialogue and conversation between the different kinds of activism be encouraged?
- ❓ What mechanisms are available to fund and support more sustained activism, both on and offline, for those activists who would prefer not to become more 'institutionalized' in their activities?
- ❓ How can informal and formal meeting venues and networking opportunities be created and sustained to enhance the overall impact of the work?

Action Steps...

- ▶ Take on the goal of building a shared space on a variety of platforms. Consider how organizational representatives and grassroots and online activists are able to create relationships to enhance the overall impact of the work.
- ▶ Reflect on a variety of opportunities for supporting coordinated efforts and ways to support innovative and diverse forms of activism from different sectors.

■ Creating Opportunities for Common Ground, Shared Interests, and Greater Solidarity.

As the field of advancing women and girls continues to expand, new opportunities for developing creative partnerships are presenting themselves. A variety of collaborative efforts, from coalitions with broad-based organizations to engagement with male spiritual and political leaders within religious communities, are helping to reframe the discourse to one that perceives the advancement of women and girls as a "community issue" of broader importance. Cooperative efforts continue to be developed as well among women from diverse communities. One of the challenges is to consider what steps should be taken to encourage collaborations on topics of shared interest, carefully considering who the potential new allies in the field are, both in terms of varied populations and different sectors of society (i.e., academia, governmental sector and private sector).

Questions to Consider in Identifying Shared Interests:

- ❓ What are the levers to support greater collaboration among diverse groups of women? What are the shared issues today in public discourse that can serve to unite women? How can greater solidarity

be encouraged around issues that have the potential to galvanize the public?

- ❓ What can be learned from organizations, in fields as diverse as peace efforts to women's health, that have built strong partnerships with diverse communities of women and operate in geographically dispersed areas?
- ❓ How is it possible to identify shared strategies among allies supporting women's issues to impact on the public discourse and affect change? What is the role of broad-based organizations, religious institutions, community leaders and others that support the efforts to advance women?
- ❓ Who might be new allies to work on particular issues and how can cooperative efforts be more productively framed?

Action Steps...

- ▶ Keep exploring the potential for greater cooperation on issues between women of diverse backgrounds as well as between women and men. Support efforts to reach greater solidarity on specific topics as a critical way to amplify the overall voice of women.
- ▶ Consider your strategic approach to the work (i.e., how to reach your target population and who that is) your effort in building long-term partnerships. Explore issues such as the language(s) used in the workplace and in outreach efforts, the diversity of your staff and board, and the role models in your organization.
- ▶ Take the opportunity to share your platform with women from various backgrounds and communities to build connections. Keep in mind the importance of collecting a mosaic of perspectives, and the use of stories to illustrate complexities and share multiple narratives.

3. Advances in Women's Personal Status

Notable Achievements Include:

■ Increasing Educational and Employment Opportunities Across Sectors of Society for Women.

While there is a wide range of factors that account for the lifestyle and status of women, attention is being paid specifically to the advances in education and economic empowerment- two of the top items on the agenda of the government and NGOs. And indeed, from micro-enterprises to fair trade initiatives, there have been innovative and diverse efforts over the past years to promote women's economic independence. In conjunction with these types of endeavors, there are also many formal and informal networks of support that have been spearheaded by women in various professional settings in an effort to cultivate friendlier work environments, opportunities for learning, career advancement, and communities of support. Lastly, the goal of enhancing educational and employment opportunities for women, especially within the Palestinian and ultra-Orthodox community, has garnered support from both the public and philanthropic sectors in recent years.

Significant Challenges Include:

■ Persistence of Traditional Gender Roles and Patriarchal Structures, in the face of Growing Religious Fundamentalism.

There is progress, yet the question remains as to the extent to which efforts to increase the income of women have also been accompanied by other supportive structures and shifts in cultural attitudes. While it is relatively easy to provide job seminars, offer loans and give skills trainings, it is much more difficult to address the broader structural barriers and social obstacles that continue to impede progress. And in

the midst of significant advancements in so many fields, there is still a question as to the degree to which many basic assumptions about women and their gender roles have evolved over time. Workplace cultures across a wide spectrum of professions present barriers to women when it comes to their advancement or equal pay, and surprisingly high numbers of sexual harassment scandals still plague large institutions in the public and private sectors. The persistence of harmful social norms continues, with alarming statistics of incidents of domestic violence and even murder. Lastly, not only has the overlap between religion and state remained firmly intact, but there are numerous signs that the growing influence of extremist religious views has only served to discriminate against women even more.

Strategic Concerns

Considering the Role of: ■ Women's Organizations ■ Broad-Based Organizations.

With investments from the public and private sectors in areas such as employment and economic independence for women, strategies such as employment training and micro credit financing are being employed not only by women's organizations, but also by more broad-based organizations and government. In advancing the cause of women and girls, it is important to reflect on which issues are drawing the greatest support, what are the most effective ways to address these issues, and how can the capacities of individuals and organizations be strengthened. At the same time, intractable problems and complex policy-making processes require the continued support of a cadre of strong, flagship women's organizations to promote a women's agenda over time with a particular focus on achieving full equality. However, as efforts to improve the lives of women continue to advance and the field remains open to new players including more broad-based organizations, women's and/or feminist organizations will have to continue to redefine their distinguishing, unique value.

Questions to Consider on the Role of Women's Organizations:

- ❓ What is the current state of dialogue and cooperation taking place between broad-based organizations and women's organizations? What are the advantages of collaborative efforts? Should such exchange be better nurtured and supported?
- ❓ What are possible steps to ensure that broad-based organizations that are involving themselves with women's issues are fully prepared and committed to promoting gender equality? What conversations are taking place to consider which topics could be 'mainstreamed' (i.e., political training programs) and which should be targeted only for women or girls (i.e., recovery from sexual abuse)?

Action Steps...

- ▶ Encourage strategic conversations on how women's organizations and feminist activists should continue to support gender mainstreaming, build the women's agenda, while also sustaining their own unique added value.
- ▶ Explore ways to create opportunities for further exchange and dialogue between women's organizations and broad-based organizations that hold shared agendas. Support collaborative efforts that build on the unique strengths and contributions of diverse players in the field to further greater impact.

Working to: ■ Address Structural Changes ■ Incorporate Systematic Approaches.

Over the past decade, more attention has been paid to the acknowledged limitations of women's empowerment strategies and the importance of recognizing broader structural barriers and social obstacles.

For example, specifically with regard to economic independence, the question remains as to the extent to which the efforts to increase the income of women has also been accompanied by a shift in cultural attitudes, available job opportunities and/or supportive structures such as child care and transportation. All types of empowerment programs, according to research participants, have continued to evolve so that they now seek to address not only empowerment at the individual level, but at the collective level as well. It is the translation of individual empowerment to collective empowerment that remains a core principle, and it is worthwhile to assess educational and/or employment programs with this consideration in mind.

Questions to Consider on Ensuring a More Systematic Approach:

- ❓ How is the term 'empowerment' defined in the creation of programs seeking to enhance the educational and employment opportunities of women and girls?
- ❓ To what degree do these programs incorporate an approach that looks both at individual achievement and broader social issues? How are structural barriers and/or cultural norms that often serve as major obstacles to full equality being addressed in the program content?
- ❓ Are programs focusing on individual achievement also considering opportunities to equip women activists with the tools needed to advance their status and better conditions both within and without their own communities?
- ❓ How does work at the individual level translate into enabling women to become agents of change and community leaders educating others?

Action Steps...

- ▶ Conceptualize women's empowerment in terms of its economic, socio-cultural, familial/ interpersonal, legal, political and psychological factors, and how each of these factors influences the household, the community and beyond. (See Appendix 2 for a conceptual overview of women's empowerment, Malhotra et al., 2002).
- ▶ Examine how programs are targeting their strategies and creating interventions with these broader considerations in mind.

4. Landscape of NGO work

Notable Achievements Include:

▪ **An Increase in the Number and Diversity of Organizations** ▪ **Outreach to Targeted Populations** ▪ **Services Provided** ▪ **Opportunities for Collaboration.**

A broad range of women's groups have been established in the past decade or so, from small grassroots initiatives to larger, institutionalized organizations to address the needs and interests of women from different religious and ethnic backgrounds, including newly arrived immigrants and refugees. The very existence of many of these organizations is considered an achievement and a step toward greater progress in improving the lives of women all over Israel. The diversity in the agendas of these organizations continues to expand, and the strategies employed by organizations and activists continue to develop in new, innovative directions. Moreover, there are many opportunities for women to engage in activism that are rooted in their own feminist principles and that tackle more general societal concerns. Indeed, it is possible to locate feminist work in all types of NGOs and public initiatives.

Significant Challenges Include:**▪ Lack of Visibility of the Work ▪ Problematic Funding Landscape ▪ Difficulty in Integrating Diverse and Marginalized Voices.**

While there is a vibrant field of women's organizations and feminist activism, many organizations involved with women's issues are not necessarily well known by the general public. And while there has been significant progress over the years toward greater inclusion, the challenge of integrating diverse voices into the mainstream agenda of women's organizations remains unresolved. Questions have also been raised about the ability of established organizations to mobilize large numbers of activists and supporters in order to effect large-scale community change. Moreover, the expansion and diffusion in the number of initiatives dealing with women's issues has led to a sharp increase in competition for funding at the same time that the amount of funds available in Israel and from overseas has diminished. As a result, the field has been left with few natural conveners, and there is a widespread concern regarding the lack of solidarity or "*sense of sisterhood*" on a variety of issues, a situation which many feel misses an opportunity to greatly amplify the voices of women.

Strategic Concerns**Reflecting on: ▪ Funding Mechanisms ▪ Relationships ▪ Philanthropic Requirements.**

Over the years, critics of ngo-ization claim that it has led to a weakening of social movements. Moreover, well-intentioned philanthropic practices in various fields of civil society have been seriously challenged over whether they have inadvertently diminished the ability of established organizations to mobilize large numbers of volunteers and activists in order to effect widespread change. In light of this, it is worth examining how current funding policies advance or perhaps might even inhibit the capacity of community leaders to gather and mobilize supporters. In addition, it is important to consider how the emphasis on project-based methodology affects leaders' ability to create flexible strategic plans that can respond to volatile situations in Israel. Foundations today, should explore how to balance their own strategic needs with the needs of the field so that their grantees have some latitude to act proactively and with flexibility in the dynamic work of social change.

Questions to Consider on Philanthropic Practices:

- ❓ What is the best way to support organizational efforts that are aimed at creating broad, systematic change? How can the work of organizations and activists be enhanced?
- ❓ How do the current reporting mechanisms help or hinder the ability of an organization to be strategic and responsive to current concerns, especially in such a volatile environment? How do the current reporting structures inform decision making processes both for funders and for organizations/activists?
- ❓ How are funders nurturing long-term relationships with organizations to support both infrastructure needs and provide strategic flexibility? What does it mean to create partnerships in philanthropy?
- ❓ How do funders' emphasis on innovation impact work in the field? How can systematic change be supported over time, and what are realistic expectations regarding such change in the short term?

Action Steps...

- ▶ Ensure that funders consider their broader role in supporting the overall field of advancing women and long-term systematic change, and not limit their support to specific projects or topics that are currently trending.
- ▶ Review current reporting mechanisms in terms of how they advance the work of organizations and activists, inform decision making processes and present learning opportunities for both funders and organizations.

Strengthening Efforts to: ■ Diversify Resources ■ Enhance Community-based Fundraising.

Over the past decade, a paradigm-shift in community-based fundraising and income generating activities has taken place, and women's organizations are gradually recognizing the need to diversify their funding sources and tap other means of financial support. Organizations are employing different strategies to develop additional sources of income, garner greater philanthropic support locally and more broadly engage with the community. Many of these efforts reinforce another important goal of organizations which is to extend their outreach, effectively engage with their local communities and build long-term support. While volunteer engagement has always been a priority for many of these organizations, more and more nonprofits in this field are creating a base for community fundraising (i.e., membership drives, local fundraising events, online campaigns, active board members). Activities that provide opportunities for meaningful community engagement, including platforms for exchange and storytelling, should be nurtured and further developed.

Questions to Consider on Diversification of Resources and Community Outreach:

- ❓ How can organizations gain greater visibility and broaden their community outreach? What are the possibilities for expanding local, volunteer engagement to create a stronger base for community fundraising (i.e., membership drives, fundraising events, online campaigns, active board members)?
- ❓ What types of resource-sharing models, shared media campaigns and coalition building efforts by NGOs can be replicated? What cooperative approaches to marketing items for sale and joint grant applications can be utilized?
- ❓ Are there other ways to diversify resources and forge new partnerships with other sectors (i.e., public, private)?
- ❓ How is it possible to expand the opportunities for shared platforms to promote story-telling and artistic expression?

Action Steps...

- ▶ Build on innovative efforts to create resource-sharing models, shared media campaigns and coalition building to enhance the overall impact of the work.
- ▶ Explore efforts to diversify resources and create partnerships with other sectors (i.e., public, private).
- ▶ Consider how to support the efforts to gain greater visibility, broaden community outreach and expand volunteer engagement to create a stronger base for community fundraising. Expand opportunities for shared platforms to promote story-telling and artistic expression.

Conclusion

As indicated above, and throughout the full report below, the collaborative approach to the research sought to emphasize both participation and action at every stage of the process. It is hoped that concerns and action steps summarized above and highlighted in the full report can help to spark reflection and initiate new conversations on a variety of topics that are essential to achieving greater collective impact in the future.



INTRODUCTION

SETTING THE STAGE

For those committed to the advancement of women and gender equality in Israel, there are many questions that arise when trying to understand the current state of affairs. There has been great progress in the past few decades- increased political representation, significant advances in educational status and employment levels, and more public awareness and attention to issues facing women and girls. Yet, many obstacles remain stubbornly in place. For example, with the highest number of women in the Knesset than ever before, why is there still not a significant female political voice and agenda? If there are great strides in promoting women's education and employment, why do such significant wage gaps and unemployment numbers persist? With the growing emphasis on philanthropic support with a 'gender lens', why are so many women's organizations still underfunded? With so much visibility now given to issues such as sexual harassment and domestic violence against women, why are there still so many instances of these abuses in all types of settings around the country? This reality of two steps forward and one step backward exists on multiple fronts. It was in the spirit of sparking greater conversation on the current state of women's and feminist organizations in Israel that the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) and the Dafna Fund commissioned this research. The research reflects on achievements over the past decade and raises questions and ideas about future directions.

GOALS OF THE RESEARCH AND OF THE PARTICIPATORY PROCESS

The research aims to present a snapshot of the agendas, priorities and concerns expressed by the field. It primarily seeks to shed light and build on the vital conversations that are taking place among activists, organizational representatives, funders, journalists, and public officials regarding the current and future efforts in Israel to promote the status of women and advance gender equality. Accordingly, this report seeks to:

- **Provide an overview of the current landscape** and explore the overall context of the broad efforts being made to advance women's rights. Progress in recent years will be considered as well as challenges that lie ahead;
- **Present the perspective of the many voices in the field** as expressed by the multiple interviewees and focus group participants;
- **Offer a framework and structured materials for examining these issues**, such as facilitated discussion questions to guide conversations among various stakeholders in the field;
- **Engage the field in a dynamic process** of sharing the research findings and inviting a conversation of joint reflection and feedback;
- **Act as a catalyst to spark further discussion** among practitioners, activists, funders and other supporters of the work in the field;
- **Enrich the findings by providing links and citations** to the varied research on the topic and the numerous resources circulating that inform the work.

All throughout the research process, the goal was to act on the principles of participatory action research, a collaborative approach to the research process that emphasizes both participation and action. As such, more than three hundred women were engaged in an ongoing, iterative process which began in January 2017.¹ More than two hundred interviews were carried out during this period, with activists,

nonprofit staff, academics, entrepreneurs, politicians, funders and journalists (See Appendix for list of Interviewees). An interview list was first compiled with input from the members of the research steering committee, and then a process of 'snowball' sampling took place, with additional interviews added over time.² Fourteen focus group sessions were also conducted that involved approximately one hundred and twenty-five women (See Appendix for the list of participants and guest hosts/ facilitators).³

In an effort to build opportunities for participant engagement, an interim report was circulated in the Fall 2017 to research participants to elicit feedback. As part of this open-ended approach to the process, focus group topics arose over the course of the research, and many of the participants from these groups were invited to participate in additional focus groups and/or provide individual feedback on the interim findings. In addition, an extensive literature review took place throughout different phases of the research as well.

Multiple research citations have been highlighted to provide readers with an opportunity for more in depth discussion and perspective on the various topics raised in this report. Additionally, pertinent quotes from participants have been included both throughout the text and in the footnotes to better share the rich insights of research participants.

It is important to consider the context in which the research design was created and carried out. The research is funded by the NCJW and the Dafna Fund with their specific concern in mind to inform the field, as well as to provide tools and perspectives for funders abroad who are seeking to support efforts in Israel. The study focuses more on established feminism and less on non-institutionalized feminism, spontaneous activism or radical feminist efforts. As this research is also seeking to reach international audiences, the report is published in English and Hebrew in full and the executive summary and overview have been translated into Arabic. When possible, the references cited are in English.

This report raises strategic questions that are relevant to much of the work being carried out on behalf of women and girls in Israel. It is hoped that the research process and the subsequent discussions it generates can spark reflection and initiate new conversations on a variety of key topics.⁴

OUTLINE OF THE REPORT

Chapter 1 provides a short **overview and context**, noting the major topics and strategies used over the years to advance women's issues and promote greater gender equality in Israel.

Chapter 2 explores issues primarily at the **national and state level**, analyzing achievements and challenges related to advancing women's rights and gender equality within government institutions, and the role of political representation. The chapter also highlights two strategic concerns: **a.** strengthening organizations' and activists' influence on **policymaking**, and their ability to mobilize the community and raise a political voice, and **b.** utilizing **international networks** to further support local efforts.

Chapter 3 examines the **public discourse** and its impact primarily at the **community level**, exploring achievements and challenges related to public awareness and social norms that are linked to advancing women's rights and gender equality. The chapter also notes two strategic concerns: **a.** identifying and building on the work of **new, emerging actors** and synthesizing different efforts, and **b.** creating opportunities for **common ground, shared interests, and greater solidarity**.

Chapter 4 reviews various aspects of **economic and educational** advances for women primarily at the **individual level**, exploring achievements and challenges. The chapter also focuses on two strategic issues: **a.** distinguishing the role of **women's organizations and more broad-based organizations**, and **b.** addressing **structural changes** and ensuring that systematic approaches to the work are applied.

Chapter 5 considers the **NGO landscape**, examining selected achievements and challenges related to progress at the organizational level. The chapter also raises two strategic concerns: **a.** reviewing of **funding mechanisms and requirements**, and **b.** strengthening efforts to **diversify resources** and enhance **community-based fundraising**.

Chapter 6 concludes by offering a **summary of key take-aways** from the research and considers **further steps** to advance the field.

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1. Reason & Bradbury, 2008; Chevalier & Buckles, 2013.
 2. Patton, 2014.
 3. Beginning in January 2017, a series of in-depth, semi-structured interviews were carried out with over 200 individuals. The majority of interviews with Israeli research participants were in person interviews, and took approximately 1 ½ hours. Over 125 women participated in fourteen focus groups, with approximately one fifth of the focus group participants interviewed individually as well. In keeping with the research design outlined above, it was during the interview process of the first several months that the agenda of the focus groups, their locations, and invitee list was determined.
 4. Cousins & Whitmore, 1998. Each of the stages of the data collection process with interviews and focus groups as the primary data collection tools, is an opportunity to not only gather data, but also to potentially cultivate meaningful “strategic conversations”(Van der Heijden, 1996).



OVERVIEW OF THE FIELD

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Today, there are more than a hundred organizations active in Israel that are devoted exclusively to advancing women's status or promoting gender equality, touching on issues as diverse as economic empowerment, fair and equal political representation, sexual harassment, gender wage gaps, peace efforts, religious freedom, healthy sexuality, preventing gender-based violence and women's expression in the arts and culture. The field has continued to expand over time, adding diversity both in terms of the different identities and agendas of women's organizations.

Despite the challenge of “*growing feminism in an unfriendly environment*”¹, women's and feminist organizations have had marked success over the years in impacting the public discourse and shaping public policies on topics from domestic violence and political representation to gender sensitive budget analysis and women's economic empowerment. Topics once solely on the feminist agenda have now become mainstreamed and have attracted monetary investments from the public and private philanthropic sectors to improve the lives of women and girls. Moreover, many broad-based organizations are championing causes such as greater female political leadership and civic engagement. New actors and new forms of civic action are also having a significant impact on the field, including activists on social media and numerous websites, blogs and mainstream media, activists within the private sector working to advance women's representation in management and professional forums, and civil activists who are leading grassroots initiatives at the community level.

As the field continues to develop, adding new types of interventions, activism and engagement, the ‘toolkit’ for advancing women's rights and gender equality has also expanded. A snapshot of the field in terms of the strategies and activities that characterize the work indicates that there is a diverse and broad range of tactics used to advance issues, including policy and legal advocacy, provision of direct services, raising public awareness, encouraging activism, education and community outreach and the nurturing of partnerships and networks.

Yet the social and political context in Israel presents challenges for a unified agenda regarding the advancement of women, as there are so many varied experiences for women depending on differences in ethnicity, nationality, economic status, sexual orientation, geographic location and religious affiliation. And indeed, while there is a rich history over the past decade of collaborative efforts and coalitions, without umbrella organizations or other conveners, it is difficult to pinpoint the markers of a consolidated movement. Indeed, the question is actually raised, whether there is a women's movement per se, or if there is a mosaic of very diverse efforts that are working in a variety of ways to advance the status of women and promote gender equality.

CONTEXT OF THE FIELD

The status of women and the issue of gender equality in Israel is a challenging subject, given the many paradoxes that exist.² In a variety of fields, including politics, business and academia, women have made significant progress, serving as heads of political parties, government ministries, major companies, and even as justices on the Supreme Court.³ Progressive legislation passed over the years



has ensured that laws are in place to protect women's equality and support their active engagement in the public sphere.⁴

Yet, at the same time, there are many societal practices, political factors and cultural and religious norms that serve to reinforce the marginalization and actual exclusion of women.⁵ The centrality of the family as the social unit in Israel and the importance of motherhood,⁶ as well as the primacy of the military⁷ and the protracted conflict between Israel and its neighbors are just a few of the many factors that reinforce traditional gender roles.⁸ Perhaps most importantly, gender discrimination also arises from the lack of separation between religion and state, with a variety of consequences that generally impact negatively on the status of women.⁹ The religious courts in Israel are a separate judiciary system (including Jewish and Muslim courts) with complete control over religious and family matters (i.e., no civil marriage or divorce).¹⁰ As such, Israel surrenders jurisdiction on family matters to "*religious authorities [who] are the most powerful opponents of equal rights for women.*"¹¹ Moreover, as a result of the political party system in Israel and its dependence on coalitions, the Ultra-Orthodox Jewish parties have become increasingly influential in setting the political agenda, including pushing for extreme gender segregation in the public sphere.¹²

Indeed, Israel is a deeply divided society, characterized by internal national, ethnic, class, and religious rifts, which play out against the backdrop of the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian political conflict and regional tensions.¹³ Beyond these divisions are the many societal, economic and political challenges that the country faces. This complex reality has often resulted in civil society organizations splitting along identity lines (i.e., Jewish NGOs, Arab NGOs, religious NGOs, Ethiopian NGOs).¹⁴ While Israeli civil society has been described as very vibrant and active, there is fragmentation and obstacles to cooperation between the NGOs in the field, with many organizations overlapping in their efforts and competing for the same limited resources.¹⁵ Over the years, women's organizations, gender scholars and activists have sought to overcome these multiple divisions in Israeli society and fractures among NGOs by promoting a more inclusive approach to feminist work.¹⁶ The ongoing conflict and tensions between Israel and its neighbors, as well as the particular experience of double discrimination that Palestinian women face living in Israel as part of the minority, have posed a significant challenge for women activists to build a collective voice.¹⁷ Yet, by the mid- 1990's, there were systematic efforts to include the voices of more Palestinian, Lesbian and Mizrahi (Jews of Middle Eastern and North African origin) women.¹⁸ And in more recent years, the dominant feminist discourse has gradually opened up and is seeking to more effectively engage the voices of Ethiopian, Russian-speaking, Bedouin, and Ultra-Orthodox women.¹⁹ While the pace of change and community engagement is not equal across all populations and across the country's geographic regions, activism among women including among those who have traditionally been distanced from social change action, is increasing.

Today, there are more than a hundred organizations active in Israel that are devoted exclusively to advancing women's status or promoting gender equality, touching on issues as diverse as economic empowerment, fair and equal political representation, sexual harassment, gender wage gaps,²⁰ peace efforts,²¹ religious freedom, healthy sexuality, preventing gender based violence and women's expression in the arts and culture.²² The field has continued to expand over time, adding diversity both in terms of the different identities and agendas of women's organizations.²³ For example, in recent years, with the growth of religious feminism, several newly established Orthodox women's organizations have taken on topics relating to family law, labor rights and political representation, and Palestinian women's organizations have worked to increase access to civil courts and address personal status laws (divorce, inheritance, child custody) in Islamic courts.²⁴ In certain traditional communities, women's efforts are increasingly addressing topics that were previously taboo, and are challenging practices that are hurtful or even harmful to women, such as polygamy, early marriage, and gender based violence, including murder.²⁵ Table I indicates both the variety in terms of organizational efforts and the breadth of topics that are addressed by the field.

**Table 1: Types of Organizations Working in the Field and Topics Addressed**

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Type of Organization/ Efforts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NGO Organizations (both women-led organizations/ feminist organizations and broad-based organizations²⁶) that are community-based and/or operate at a regional or national level • Research Institutes • Public Coalitions • Social Media - Facebook Communities/ Internet News Sites • Informal and Formal Groups Connected through Professional Interests (i.e., film and television, journalism, computer coding) |
| Topics Addressed ²⁷ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment and Economic Independence/ Empowerment • Leadership and Women's Representation in Politics • Women's Personal Status and Rights in Religion and Law • Prevention of Gender Based Violence/ Support of Victims of Violence • Artistic expression of Women in Art, Film and Literature • Peace and Security • Prevention of Ethnic/Class Based Discrimination • Body and Health Awareness, Healthy Sexuality and Reproductive Rights • Women's Sports • Raising Feminist Awareness/ Education • Empowerment of Women/ Leadership of Women as Social Change Agents • Prevention of Prostitution and Trafficking of Women/ Rehabilitation and Support • Jewish-Palestinian Partnership • Community-Social Movements |

> KEY FINDING Despite the challenge of “growing feminism in an unfriendly environment”²⁷, women's and feminist organizations have had marked success over the years in impacting the public discourse and shaping public policies on topics such as domestic and sexual violence, political representation, affirmative action and protective labor laws, gender sensitive budget analysis and economic empowerment of women. Topics once solely on the feminist agenda have now become mainstreamed,²⁸ and have attracted monetary investments from the public and private philanthropic sectors to improve the lives of women and girls. The government is engaged in a number of initiatives to promote higher education and employment for women in particular communities, and it has provided basic support for a variety of social services such as domestic violence shelters and rape crisis centers all over the country.²⁹ Moreover, many broad-based organizations are championing causes such as greater female political leadership and civic engagement.³⁰ As in other parts of the world,³¹ new forms of civic action are significantly impacting the field, and emerging actors include activists on social media and numerous websites, blogs and mainstream media, activists within the private sector working to advance women's representation in management and professional forums, and civil activists who are leading grassroots initiatives at the community level.³²

As the field continues to develop, adding new types of interventions, activism and engagement, the ‘toolkit’ for advancing women's rights and gender equality has also expanded. In an effort to provide an overview of the myriad of efforts currently being carried out, Table 2 provides a snapshot of the field in terms of the strategies and activities that characterize their work. As can be seen below, there is a diverse and broad range of tactics used to advance issues.

**Table 2: Strategies and Activities That Characterize the Field**

| | |
|--|--|
| Advocacy at the Community, National and International Level | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy vis-à-vis elected officials and public-sector officials (i.e., engagement with Knesset committees, establishing budget forums, providing gender analysis of state budget by ministries, submitting policy papers, lobbying for government recognition of the need for specialized services for specific populations); • Applied research, data collection and analysis and knowledge development (i.e., distribution of municipal funds by gender, annual gender index); • Formalizing and mandating public positions addressing gender (i.e., advisors on women's status at municipalities, universities, etc.). <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International and Regional Advocacy (i.e., presentations to CEDAW/UN, legal appeals on international level); partnerships with networks, both internationally and regionally, for advancing women. <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing Political Representation (i.e., community organizing, leadership training, negotiation with political parties); • Training and Encouragement of Board/Civic Service Representation (i.e., mentorships for women to serve as board directors; compilation of lists for women as conference speakers). |
| Provision of Direct Services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Provision (i.e., offering small business loans, battered women's shelters, trainings; specialized economic support to battered women or women seeking to get out of prostitution), with an added emphasis on specific populations and unique needs (i.e., economic independence for victims of violence, 'half way houses' that go beyond the emergency solution that shelters provide); • Hotlines (i.e., providing support and referrals to cases of sexual violence, legal support for wage discrimination cases, gathering information on reports of gender segregation); |
| Promotion of Legal Frameworks and Alternatives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal Based Approach (promoting legal solutions in family law; greater representation of women in religious courts; preventing legislation that can be harmful for women, such as for mothers in child custody cases or the legal age for women to retire/ be entitled to pensions); • Legal Representation in courts and religious institutions (i.e., women's representation on Jewish religious councils and religious pleaders in court cases; female judges in Sharia court); • Court Appeals (i.e., legal battles and court cases regarding issues such as fair representation and gender discrimination; appeals over cases of work discrimination based on gender; cases of gender segregation on buses, public spaces). <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating greater opportunities for alternative approaches to the religious courts - "work arounds"-, considered as short-term solutions to address topics such as civic law and the granting of a 'get', a divorce in religious Jewish courts (i.e., the option of pre-nuptial agreements that provide more protection for women; alternative marriage ceremonies). |



| | |
|--|---|
| Raising Public Awareness and Encouraging Activism | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organized Protests / Demonstrations (i.e., raising awareness of sexual harassment, protesting killing of women/domestic violence; advancing egalitarian access to prayer sites; demonstrations supporting peace initiatives). • Political Mobilization (i.e., membership drives, lobbying by organizational volunteers, active recruitment of candidates); • Community organizing (i.e., promoting fairer working conditions for contract employment in fields such as cleaning staff, kindergarten teachers; housing rights in disadvantaged neighborhoods). • Social Media Community and Internet Websites (i.e., creating online communities as news source, artistic expression, support, education resources); alternatives for mainstream media with diverse options (i.e., communities based on varying levels of religious observance; social media offered in various languages); • Source of data, news, from the perspective of women in current affairs; collection of data (i.e., stories of sexual harassment, reports of extremism in gender segregation on buses, public spaces, etc.) |
| Education and Community Outreach Efforts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Artistic Expression/Storytelling and Link to Activism (i.e., growth of forums for artistic expression in literature, art from previously marginalized women's voices; videos, internet and movies to raise topics and awareness; the use of movie screenings as a vehicle for broader discussions on activism; incubators for women directors; forum for women involved in film and television). • Education and promoting awareness and exposure to a feminist discourse (i.e., teaching of history and rights of women; keeping public attention on the pervasiveness of problems such as sexual harassment/ educational prevention programs; programs on topics such as body positivity, healthy sexual relationships and reproductive rights; raising awareness on health topics of particular relevance to women such as breast cancer); • Gender studies academic course and programs (such as training for kindergarten teachers or high school students); • Providing religious education for women and girls, and opportunities for spiritual leadership (i.e., frameworks for religious training, egalitarian services offered). |
| Nurturing Partnerships and Networks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coalition Building (i.e., to advance policies, to exchange information; joining of international support networks for advancing women and advancing legal solutions such as women's involvement in peace and security; and topics of sex trafficking and prostitution); • Collaborative efforts with broad-based organizations and community leadership (i.e., joint effort to advance more pluralistic prayer and separation between 'church and state'; promoting the spiritual role of women together with Orthodox rabbis; community-based cooperation with local religious figures such as sheiks to oppose domestic violence). • Creating networks of support and forums within certain professional fields (i.e., including journalists, filmmakers, computer programmers and entrepreneurs); • Applying a methodology to mainstream gender equality in all types of organizational settings.³³ |



> KEY FINDING As discussed above, the unique social and political context in Israel makes it quite difficult to arrive at a unified agenda for advancing women, as there are so many varied experiences of women related to their differences in ethnicity, nationality, economic status, sexual orientation, geographic location and religious affiliation. And indeed, while there is a rich history over the past decades of collaboration, there are few natural conveners, and no umbrella organization that acts as a data source or networking provider.³⁴ Without opportunities such as annual conferences and jointly shared platforms, it is difficult to pinpoint indicators that typically serve as markers of a coordinated social movement as is the case of the environment movement and the LGBTQ movement in Israel.³⁵ Indeed, the question is actually raised whether there is a women's movement per se, or a mosaic of very diverse efforts that are working in a variety of ways to advance the status of women and gender equality.³⁶

In the next four chapters, key elements that impact on the efforts to enhance women's equality and promote gender equality at the state, community, individual and organizational level are explored more in depth. The following chapters focus on significant achievements and challenges in each of the areas, 1. the work with state institutions and political activity, 2. the public discourse and shift in social norms, 3. advances in women's personal status and 4. the current NGO landscape. Each chapter concludes with a discussion on notable strategic concerns and a few questions to consider. Selected quotes from research participants are integrated into the chapters throughout as well as cited extensively in the footnotes.

1. Rapoport & El-Or, 1997. p. 2.
2. Chazan, 2011; Rimalt, 2012; Allon, 2013. *The multitude of paradoxes is not unique to Israel*. See for example, England, 2010 and Mandel & Birgier, 2015.
3. Tzameret-Kertcher et al., 2016.
4. See Raday, 2005; Rimalt, 2012; and Bitton, 2014 for an analysis of the advances and limitations of the legal field in Israel in terms of gender equality.
5. Mandel & Birgier (2015) report that, like in many other countries, women have advanced in terms of their role in the labor market, yet the view of gender roles has remained relatively stable, and the inferior position of women in the family has not improved to a large degree. Also see Raday, 1991. For more on political engagement of women historically in Israel and the how the dynamics of the party system and minority parties affect the representation of women, see Rahat & Itzkovitch, 2012.
6. Within the Jewish community, for more perspective on the notion of "motherhood as a national mission", see Berkowitz, 1997, as well as Safir, 1991 and Fogiel-Bijaoui, 2002. For a perspective of the centrality of motherhood within the Palestinian community, see Abu-Rabia-Queder, 2007.
7. Izraeli, 1997; Golan, 1997.
8. Aharoni, 2015; Aharoni, S. & Deeb, R. 2004; Espaniol 1997; Ghanem, 2005.
9. Referred to as "The Unhappy Marriage of Religion and Politics", see Razavi & Jenichen (2010) for other examples around the world of the link between religion and politics and its implications for gender equality.
10. For example, see Halperin-Kaddari (2013) for a report on the study of the experiences of Jewish women in the midst of divorce in Israel. Numerous feminist movements throughout the Middle East are addressing the issue of personal status laws in religious courts (see Hatem, 1993), and other societies as well face these complex issues of conflict between religious law and civil law, including the restrictions of the right to marry and divorce, see Douglas et al. 2011.
11. See Feldman 2011, p 13, cited in Zion-Waldoks, 2015. As noted by Weiss & Gross-Horowitz (2012), the State-authorized Rabbinic Courts affect the status all Jewish women in Israel regardless of religious observance.
12. Erez-Likhovski & Shapira-Rosenberg, 2014; Sztokman, 2015; Israel Religious Action Center, 2012; Allon, 2015; Tirosh, 2017.
13. Mizrachi & Herzog (2012); Golan & Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2014; Al-Haj 2002; Smooha 1993.
14. See Sanz Corella & Ben Noon, 2013; Jamal, 2007. As reported by Almog-Bar & Ajzenstadt, 2010, most of the women's civil society organizations are established to address specialized needs of women in a specific community (i.e., Ultra-Orthodox, Palestinians, and immigrant women from the former Soviet Union and Ethiopia).
15. Sanz Corella & Ben Noon, 2013; Jamal, 2007.



16. For an historical overview of these issues, see, for example, Safran, 2006 and Dahan-Kalev, 2001 and Dahan-Kalev, 2007.
17. It is important to note that reference to Palestinian throughout the report will generally be used to refer to Palestinians who are citizens of Israel. See Espanioly 1997; Ghanem, 2005; Deeb, 2010; Abu-Rabia-Queder, 2007; Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2009
18. See Izraeli et al. Eds. 1999; Espanioly 1997; Keshet et al., 2001; El Or, 2006; Motzafi-Haller, 2011. The question of diversity within women's organizations, as noted by Ilany (2001), has continued to be a challenge, in terms of ethnic background, class, nationality, sexual orientation, education, religion, age and other attributes.
19. For example, on efforts to advance the women's status in the Bedouin community, see Rabia, 2011 and Abu-Rabia-Queder, 2007.
20. For more on the increasing education rates of women in Israel along with continued, while improved, gender inequality in the labor market, see Stier & Herzberg-Druker, 2017. To explore details on labor force participation rates, education levels, trends in gender pay gaps, attitudes on gender roles, and the division of labor at home, see Mandel & Birgier, 2015. See Mann, 2017 for an analysis of Israel's early childhood care and education policy, and how it can affect women in the workplace. Also see Dagan- Buxaglo & Hasson, 2014, and, for example, Benjamin, 2011 and Benjamin, 2016.
21. See Thon-Ashkenazy & Loevy, 2015; Aharoni, 2015; Aharoni, & Deeb, 2004; Steinberg, 2015; Sasson-Levy, Levy & Lomsky-Feder, 2011; Helman & Rapoport, 1997; Blumen & Sharon Halevi, 2009; Herzog, 2008. Certainly, there are complexities in the relationship between Jewish and Palestinian activists, as will be explored further.
22. Research has been carried out in the past decade or so both in terms of mapping the field of feminist organizations, including Palestinian women's organizations, Jewish orthodox women's organization and feminist organizations- see Abramovitch, 2008; Ilany, 2007; and Abu Jaber Nijem, 2007. A mapping of Jewish and Jewish and Palestinian feminist organizations identified forty-six organizations (Abramovitch, 2008), and nineteen Palestinian women's organization were mapped by Abu Al Assal at Al Tufula Center in 2006. Over the past ten years, many more types of initiatives have been established, as indicated in the extensive number of organizational representatives listed in the Interviewees list in Appendix I. For an in-depth analysis of reproductive policies in Israel and the impact on women's rights, Birenbaum-Carmeli, 2003 and for a more historical perspective of abortion policy, see Amir & Benjamin (1997). With a universal health care system, and family planning mechanisms in place, abortion rights are not a leading topic for women's organizations as it is in many other countries. See Kelly & Gauchat, 2016 and Elgar, 2016.
23. According to Almog-Bar & Ajzenstadt, 2010, there has been a sharp increase in the number of women's organizations since the 1990's. There were over 1,200 women's organizations registered under the Israeli Association Law (1980) by 2004, which includes a wide range of organizations that serve women in some type of capacity. Also see Elon, 2006. This research focuses primarily on women's and feminist organizations that bring a particular agenda of advancing gender equality and women's rights in Israel, and as such, is focused on a much more narrow sample of organizations. As explained by Almog-Bar & Ajzenstadt, 2010, the current operations of so many of the welfare services provided by women's organizations reinforce rather than challenge "the patriarchal arrangement of the welfare state."
24. Halperin-Kaddari & Yadgar, 2010; Zion-Waldoks, 2015; Ross, 2007. For challenges of creating alliances or a common struggle of women from different religious communities in Israel, see Swirski, 2000 and Hajjar, 2004.
25. Espanioly 1997; Rabia, 2011; Abu-Rabia-Queder, 2007; Herbst & Gez, 2012; Gieger, 2013; Hasan, 2002.
26. The term 'broad-based organizations' will be used throughout this report to refer to general organizations that are not focused exclusively on women's issues. In many instances these organizations have developed projects that specifically focus on gender equality and women's empowerment.
27. Rapoport & El-Or, 1997. p. 2.
28. See, for example, Steinberg, 2013.
29. See Halperin- Kaddari, Gorenstein-Fenig & Horowitz, 2016, and Wilmovsky & Tamir, Eds.(2012) for an overview of the status of women in Israel and an examination of the role that the government plays in advancing and protecting women's rights.
30. As noted above, the term 'broad-based organizations' refers to general organizations that do not exclusively address women's issues.
31. Biekart, & Fowler, 2013; Glasius & Ishkanian, 2015.
32. Misgav & Fenster (2016) explore varying types of activism of the feminist Mizrahi movement Achoti (Sister) for Women in Israel. For an analysis of activism as expressed in the 2011 Social Protests in Israel from a gender perspective, see Fenster & Misgav, 2015, and for a general overview, see Marom, 2013.
33. Ben Eliyahu & Lerer, 2015.
34. According to Wilmovsky & Tamir, Eds. (2012), there is a lack of communication among the different NGOs that gather data and statistics on the current status of women, thereby weakening advocacy efforts. This is attributed to both a lack of dialogue and resources. Yet it should be noted that over the last year, since the start of the research, there are new collaborative efforts among organizations and activists that are seeking to create greater opportunities for knowledge exchange and networking, and to establish a shared online platform and data base.
35. See Tal et al, 2013; Hartal, 2016; Hartal & Sasson-Levy, 2016; Ben David & Rubel-Lifschitz, 2017.
36. For a further discussion on this topic, see Herzog, 2012, or for a more international analysis, Molyneux, 1998.



GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL REPRESENTATION

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Significant Achievements and Challenges

Over the past fifteen years, there has been increasing representation of women in the public and private sector, more legislation for gender equality, and growing female representation in politics. Services that were once seen as strictly on the feminist agenda are now generally accepted and have been institutionalized and there is a growing interest in applying a 'gender lens' to policymaking. As such, government entities are increasingly recognizing the need to gauge the impact of policies on gender equality, to collect the relevant data and to develop services that address the unmet needs of women and girls. The accessibility of the global media and the discourse in international development linking women's status and national development is helping to shape policy, and there are examples in recent years of the significant influence the international community has had on Israeli policy towards women. Moreover, with a dramatic increase in the number of women's organizations that are engaged in public advocacy, more NGOs are working in collaborative ways with public authorities to meet informational needs on topics such as the gender gap in income levels between men and women.

Yet, at the same time, while there is significant progress in terms of advances in policymaking, use of data and political representation, there are many obstacles that remain in place. In the political sphere, it has become very clear, especially in recent years, that greater women's numerical representation alone does not guarantee more attention to the feminist agenda or greater support for legislation in favor of women and girls. While the public sector has taken on the responsibility of supporting programs that were once operated independently by women's organizations, there is concern as to whether these programs will continue to reflect the core principles of women's empowerment, and increasing privatization brings a great deal of uncertainty and competition. After many years of efforts to promote civil marriage, to enact egalitarian practices such as access to prayer sites, and to provide greater protection for women in cases of divorce, there has been little progress in dismantling the prevailing male-dominated structures that allow religious institutions to effectively discriminate against women. Lastly, there is a backlash against the progress of women. This is taking place in an environment that is especially suspicious of and even hostile to organizations supporting civil and human rights, imposing risks to both individual female activists and women's organizations.

Selected Strategic Concerns

Given the recent trends in Israel, it is critically important to consider the kinds of tools and capacities that are being supported within women's organizations. The professional skills, policymaking expertise and research capacities in the field needed to gather the data for effective advocacy is of utmost importance at this stage, in order to help organizations navigate the challenges in

partnering with the government and being 'in the fray' of policymaking. Likewise, organizations and activists should be supported in efforts to better mobilize their base of supporters, volunteers and the wider community, thereby enhancing their role as advocates.

There is also the sensitive question of balancing the role of international institutions, networks and support in Israel and determining how these outside players are utilized in efforts to promote the status of women. As women's and feminist organizations take on a very broad range of issues and challenge the status quo, for example, they can face charges that their ideas are foreign to prevailing values, or that they somehow invite international criticism which might be seen as harmful to the state. Participation in international support networks and/or membership in shared learning platforms can offer capacity building on topics such as advocacy and data collection and foster exchange of knowledge on critical topics facing women and girls. Over the years the 'toolkit' of research, ideas and inspiration coming from abroad continues to grow, and efforts to support further constructive learning exchanges and culturally sensitive dialogue should be explored further.

SECTION I / NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS THUS FAR

Formalized Support and Mechanisms to Ensure Women's Representation at All Levels

"We now see it is not a big deal to have a woman in power. We are used to it, like ministers in the government, the Supreme Court, heads of the national banks. There is a layer of strong women out there now that serves as an inspiration to others."

► **Increasing Representation of Women in the Public and Private Sector.** The number of women holding top positions in both the private and public sector continues to increase.¹ Women hold leadership positions in government ministries, the Supreme Court, and national financial institutions.² There is a growing awareness of the importance of female representation and female participation at the local and national level and in the public and private sectors (board representation, panels at conferences).³ Efforts in recent years, both in the public and private sectors, have included the creation of lists or data bases of women who are experts in their field in order to promote greater gender balance in public forums.⁴

► **Advancing Legislation for Gender Equality.** Legislation in the past decade or so has established a series of precedents to promote gender equality in governmental authorities and on public boards, reinforcing progressive legislation that guaranteed women's rights upon the establishment of the State of Israel. For example, the Gender in Legislation Law, passed in 2007, requires a gender review of legislative proposals and the inclusion of women in all public committees and policy teams established by the government.⁵ The Commission for Equal Employment Opportunity, established in 2008, seeks to ensure equal employment opportunities and generate public awareness of the importance of equality.⁶ Additional legislation passed in recent years mandates an advisor on women's status to every municipality and sexual harassment officers in public institutions including universities. Each of these steps represents progress in institutionalizing change. Other issues related to fair representation have been promoted in recent years, such as the government sponsored efforts to promote women and girls' involvement and leadership in sports.⁷

► **Amplifying Voices of Women in Religious Institutions.** Progress is reflected in Jewish religious institutions with the entry of Jewish women on religious councils and as religious pleaders in court cases.⁸ Over the past decade there are examples of women joining local religious councils, serving on election committees for Rabbinical appointees and acting as community spiritual leaders. Recently,



for the first time in Israel's history, a woman judge was appointed in the Sharia court which addresses personal status issues for the Muslim community (i.e., marriage, divorce, conversion, inheritance and prevention of domestic violence).⁹

“If I talk about any issues related to women, I need to be able to cite from the Koran and know where the citations are. In the past they could say we don’t understand the religion, and we would get attacked. Now we have the power and the knowledge and information, so they are starting to have a conversation with us. This is our strength now, and we are holding our own with anyone in the community.”

► **Growing Female Representation in Politics.** Political parties are including more women on their lists, which, in recent years, has led to the highest percentage of women in the Knesset.¹⁰ Specifically within the Palestinian community, a breakthrough over the past decade has led to formal representation of women in the High Follow-Up Committee for Arab Citizens of Israel, the umbrella organization of Palestinian citizens of Israel, as well as increased representation on political party lists.¹¹ The success of Arab women and their activism over the past decade is considered a model by a small group of Ultra-Orthodox activists, who in recent years are legally challenging, for the first time, the ban on female representation in their political parties.¹²

► **Opening of Opportunities for Women in Institutions such as the Army.** While the engagement of the organized feminist community with the military and security establishments remains a controversial topic within the Israeli feminist arena, women's organizations have for years taken on the issue of gender segregation and the role of women in the army.¹³ Since the groundbreaking Supreme Court decision over twenty years ago in which a female won the right to qualify to become a combat pilot, the army has since expanded the opportunities available to women, with over 90% of positions currently open to enlisted women.¹⁴

Influence of the Global Agenda on Women's Rights

► **Growing Significance of Gender Equality on the Global Agenda.** There are a number of recent examples that illustrate the significant influence of the international community on Israeli policy towards women, including the US State Department's Sex Trafficking Ranking Index.¹⁵

As the international community places greater emphasis on women's rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) offers another avenue for influencing the policies in Israel regarding women¹⁶, in addition to United Nations Security Council Resolution No. 1325 on women, peace and security.¹⁷ Coalition efforts of more than thirty-five women's organizations have led the Israeli government towards fuller implementation of the Resolution No. 1325.¹⁸ As part of the continued efforts by women to achieve greater impact on issues related to peace and security, tens of thousands of women are currently being mobilized as part of a grassroots effort to promote peace talks in Israel.¹⁹ Israel's membership in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) since 2010 has also led to significant public efforts to decrease socio-economic gaps, with specific attention to enhancing employment opportunities for minority communities, including Palestinian women.²⁰

“The social struggle against sex trafficking was one of the most successful ones in recent years in Israel, and the reason it had ‘teeth’ was because of the political pressure. These women were invisible, and organizations were able to gather the statistics on their own to prove it was indeed a growing crisis in Israel. Combined with the threat of sanctions by the US of a low rating on this topic, it helped to galvanize the government to address the topic under political pressure. It showed that when it matters, effective action can be taken to address a crisis affecting women.”

► **Increasing Impact of International Media and Networks Locally.** The accessibility and pervasiveness of the global media and the discourse in international development linking women's status and national development is helping to shape local discourse.²¹ Engagement with international support networks can serve to strengthen the organizational capacities and create an exchange of ideas and strategies on topics as diverse as raising breast cancer awareness to developing the practice of budget analysis through a 'gender lens'. Participation in international exchanges has promoted mutual learning, for example, on topics as diverse as peace efforts among women to policy approaches for the prevention of sex trafficking and prostitution. For example, over the past decade, international delegates have come to learn from Israel's experience in addressing sexual trafficking, while in turn, advocates and policymakers from Israel are exploring international models to adopt, such as the Nordic model on prostitution (which is considered the international standard to both protect and rehabilitate prostitutes while criminalizing the purchase of sexual services).²² Moreover, regional networks of support are becoming increasingly common specifically among Palestinian women's organizations, covering issues ranging from gender based violence to advancing women's status within existing frameworks of religion and community traditions.

► **Prioritizing of Women's Issues for International Development Agencies.** The establishment of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, also known as ('UN Women') in 2010 and the support of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) highlight key commitments to gender equality and women's rights on the international scene in recent years.²³ Given growing emphasis on gender equality, international development agencies funding in Israel, such as the European Union and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) have included 'gender impact' in their funding. In addition to women's organizations, broad-based organizations are also implementing a variety of programs directed at women in areas ranging from political representation to social entrepreneurship.²⁴

Increased Acknowledgement of a 'Gender Lens', and a Feminist Agenda

► **Mainstreaming of a Feminist Agenda.** A variety of services and programs once strictly only on the feminist agenda are now considered mainstream and have been institutionalized over the years. Examples of such initiatives include economic empowerment efforts for women, shelters for battered women and centers for the prevention of family violence or sexual abuse.²⁵ Public support and government recognition of the need for specialized services for specific populations has continued to expand (i.e., programs to support economic independence for victims of violence, 'half way houses' that go beyond the emergency solution that shelters provide)²⁶ With the increasing attention of the public sector and private philanthropy on the topic of women's economic stability, strategies such as employment training and micro credit finance are being offered not only by women's organizations, but also by broad-based organizations and government-sponsored initiatives.²⁷

► **Applying a 'Gender Lens' to Decision Making.** There is growing interest in the concept of applying a 'gender lens', also referred to as 'gender mainstreaming' to policymaking considerations and service allocation.²⁸ For example, both national and local government entities are increasingly recognizing the need to gauge the impact of policies on gender equality and to develop services that address the unmet needs of a variety of women and girls.²⁹ In recent years there is also an expansion in the

"At first there was pushback on why we needed to explore things through a 'gender lens', such as the subject of women's health and men's health, but slowly there has been a change in perspective. As a result, for example, we now see that there is more coverage of breast cancer for women...The pressure is coming from the field and there is much information available which attracts the attention of the public. It is this cycle that generates the change."



amount of legislation requiring public institutions to produce data showing a gender impact and to consider ways to address inequalities in allocations and service provision.

From the gender index tracking of women's status in society, to the monitoring of the percentages of municipal positions for women, data are being processed by organizations and made more accessible to the public for use in decision making processes.³⁰

“Because of successful advocacy over the years by women’s organizations, there is actually a law now that the government is required to give statistics specifically on women and not only report on general populations. And this is an example of what civil society brings... The civil society has the data, and the government doesn’t always have the breakdown. The NGOs have the information and the analysis and now there is more talk on the topic of gender, and it is also getting to the media.”

► **Employing the Use of Data for Advocacy and Policymaking.** Whereas fifteen years ago there was only a handful of women's organizations that were noted for lobbying or advocacy work in the Knesset, today it has become an integral part of the work of many of the NGOs in the field.³¹ Organizations have put in place numerous mechanisms to gather data (i.e., distribution of municipal funds by gender, health care budget allocations by gender) and have developed the professional expertise to process that data as well as to offer consultation services to governmental bodies.³² Moreover, organizations now offer a series of guide books and case studies for applying a 'gender lens' to various fields such as municipal planning, and provide trainings for activists and public officials to help support advocacy and policymaking efforts.³³

Broader societal trends such as growing public pressure for government transparency and increased citizen engagement in policy processes are also contributing to a greater ability on the part of activists and organizations to advocate for more gender equity in allocations and governmental policy that supports women and girls.³⁴ There is growing pressure on the public sector to not only gather data that enables policymaking through a gender lens, but also to chronicle social phenomenon that heretofore was not recorded; such as instances of domestic violence.³⁵ For example, after years of advocacy efforts, the government recently carried out the first official survey of prostitution in Israel, leading to a subsequent shift in the willingness of policymakers to address topics such as rehabilitation possibilities for former prostitutes and the criminalization of those purchasing sex services.³⁶

“The use of hotlines, for example, by the women’s organizations helps to track what is happening on the ground, from workplace discrimination to gender segregation on buses to sexual harassment by medical professionals. Together with the gender analysis of governmental statistics on everything from health to jobs, we have numbers that we didn’t have before... This is powerful for our advocacy efforts.”

“The advantage of the data is that it helps pinpoint the problems, increases the power of the argument and also gives you an agenda for activism and further digging into certain issues... Before, we would be dismissed because we did not have the data to prove it.”

“After so many years we finally now have the first official governmental survey on prostitution. With findings that show a relatively high number of minors in the business, along with the fact that more than half the women surveyed are mothers, the conversation is beginning to shift the discussion on policy options. The survey also found that more than half are new immigrants who would leave the business if it was economically possible for them.... We see that with this data it is possible to begin to reframe the problem and that policymakers are more willing to address the topic through legislation and governmental support.”

SECTION 2 / SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES STILL TO BE FACED

Fragile Support for Institutionalized Mechanisms and Lack of Strong Political Will for Advancing Women

“Some women’s organizations have a large number of volunteers, but the volunteers do not become agents of change. Generally, there is not an organized link to political activism, and as such there is not a mobilization of organizational supporters but rather there is an alienation from politics.”

► **Difficulty in Translating Political Participation to Political Power.** In the midst of a volatile and divisive political context in Israel, there is no women’s political party or party primarily focusing on women’s issues, and it is only recently that growing evidence of patterns of a “women’s vote” can be identified.³⁷ Advancing topics related to gender equality and women’s rights has generally been perceived as ‘secondary’ to the more pressing issues of national security.³⁸ Moreover, there is a relatively weak connection between the formal political arena and the informal sphere of organizational work, and as such, there is less likelihood of transforming women’s political participation into actual political power.³⁹ Indeed, there are few organizations that have created any type of “women’s lobby”

with representation of large numbers of women, or that have fully employed other tools of community-based advocacy that could exert pressure to advance issues on the feminist agenda.

Lastly, there is a lack of formal mechanisms and natural constituencies to provide support for fielding the candidacies of women for elected office at the local level.⁴⁰ Indeed, while there is progress in the representation of women in the Knesset over the years, the numbers of women holding elected office in municipalities and regional councils remain remarkably low.⁴¹

“It is very simple to explain. One of the most formidable barriers for women to entering politics, aside from family responsibilities, is financial. It takes a significant amount of money to run for office, and women simply do not have the same access to resources... Raising the funds needed to support a candidacy is a daunting challenge.”

► **Women’s Numerical Representation Alone Does Not Guarantee Progress.** While the number of women in official political positions has grown, it is questionable whether this has raised their influence in terms of policy achievements and social progress.⁴² As evidenced in recent years, women’s representation in political positions does not, in and of itself, guarantee a feminist perspective, nor can it be taken for granted that such representation will lead to the promotion of a women’s agenda.⁴³

“We of course see that having women’s representation is not the same thing as promoting a women’s agenda... You can put thirty women in the Knesset but if only five are feminists, you have done little to increase the impact.”

It is a paradox that the increase in the number of women holding public office or participating in the political arena has not led to a substantive change in the tone and discourse of Israeli political culture.⁴⁴ Moreover, it is often difficult to create cross-party or cross-sector collaborations among those seeking to advance the status of women and gender equality in a political culture where loyalty to the political party is primary and women’s issues are “the first thing to get negotiated away.”⁴⁵

“We need to be able to organize politically... If you want to have feminist politicians, women have to support them. It’s doable.”



► **Despite Progress, Political Parties Still Practice Exclusionary Policies.** While there has been significant progress in the past years regarding women's representation in political parties, there are particular populations that remain underrepresented in political office. Among the Ultra-Orthodox political parties, for example, it is actually written in their bylaws that a woman is prohibited from holding an officially elected public role. As such, *"the starting point is absolutely zero. Nothing, not even one woman on a city council from Metulla to Eilat."*

"This is not something that happens in a small, closed community for anthropologists to do research on. No, this is the face of Israeli democracy. Half a million women are without any representation, and the courts and Knesset all support this exclusion."

Among other communities, there is also a glaring lack of representation of women in any kind of elected office, such as among Bedouin women.

"We need to represent our own interests, and not have other women, or Bedouin men talking on our behalf without us as representatives... If our only representative in the Knesset is a Bedouin man who is a polygamist, then nothing will change. Only men can talk politics? A man will represent my interests? We are forgotten, we are not there."

► **Lack of Infrastructure, Budgets and Authority for Appointed Positions.** Formal positions that have been mandated by the government (i.e., advisors on women's status, sexual harassment prevention supervisors) to advance women are not necessarily supported by adequate budgets or meaningful political authority and clout.⁴⁶ There is also little guarantee that the individuals appointed are committed to the priorities of women's empowerment or bring the needed expertise and/or understand the current work in the field.

Growing Backlash to Women's Empowerment and Lack of Progress in Traditional Institutions

► **Few Marks of Progress within Religious Institutions.** After many years of efforts to promote civil marriage, to enact egalitarian practices such as access to prayer sites, and to provide greater protection for women in cases of divorce, there has been little progress in dismantling the prevailing male-dominated structures that allow religious institutions to effectively discriminate against women.⁴⁷ While there was success in separating the division of property from the 'get' process and in providing creative "work arounds" (including pre-nuptial agreements that provide more protection for women), there still has not been a significant breakthrough regarding family matters governed by religious law and tribunals.⁴⁸

"The frustration is that the entrenched inequality and the institutional discrimination in family law, which is a direct result of the exclusive control of religious law has over marriage and divorces, is almost taken as natural. It is taken for granted not only by rabbinical courts, but also by family courts and now is accepted as a fact of life. As a result, the whole power structure is completely distorted by all involved. There is a refusal to accept the day to day experience of women seeking a divorce; the concessions that they are forced to make is extortion."

► **Questionable Use of the Term: 'Gender Equality'.** Causing consternation as well is the increasing political power of men's organizations that, under the guise of 'gender equality', are challenging legislative efforts supporting women.⁴⁹ This can often translate into results that are quite inimical to women and children (such as lowered amounts of child support paid by fathers).⁵⁰

“The term of ‘gender equality’ is placed in the framework of equal rights for both parents, but you can’t have equal rights when the fundamental structure of the religious courts is inherently stacked against the interests of women.”

In fact, several interviewees were reluctant to use the term ‘gender equality’ and preferred instead to talk of ‘women’s rights.’ The concern is that the term ‘gender equality’ does little to take into account the current state of power relations between men and women nor sufficiently acknowledges the inherently disadvantaged position of women.

“In many of the Western countries there is a backlash from the men, and it comes following an era of real feminist successes and progress. In Israel it is as if we skipped the era of the progress and jumped straight to the backlash. The area of family law is an example of this.”

► **An Increasingly Hostile Environment for Activists and NGOs.** There is a trend in Israel, as in other parts of the world, whereby NGOs addressing topics such as human rights, refugees and peace initiatives are facing an increasingly hostile environment.⁵¹ Various civil society organizations are too often seen as a threat to the government and have come under fire for receiving funding from abroad.⁵² There are a

“Tactics against nonprofits in recent years are having a chilling effect on freedom of speech. In the past five years, more than half of those targeted have been women. And this goes with the other trends we see of harassment and verbal attacks against activists. We are going into a new world, and the struggle against the human rights organizations we will soon see happening against those defending women’s rights.”

variety of governmental sponsored actions that have sought to undermine those who speak out against governmental policies. Women’s and feminist organizations that are taking on a very broad range of issues and challenging the status quo can face charges that their ideas are alien, or that they somehow invite international criticism that undermines the state.⁵³ As indicative of the current political climate, there are charges made by public officials against women’s organizations that are bringing issues to international institutions such as UN CEDWA, with claims that they are “shaming” Israel and “airing dirty laundry.”⁵⁴ And certainly within traditional communities, women’s groups can be viewed as de-legitimate, often facing accusations of importing feminism from the outside.

This situation of escalating threats and slanderous rhetoric can pose risks both to individual female activists and to women’s organizations.⁵⁵ The growing backlash against the progress

of women is often fueled by social media campaigns that have led to dangerous cyber bullying, verbal attacks on individuals and/or real attacks on their property. The personal price for activism is particularly steep in traditional communities where there are often social sanctions and other types of “shaming mechanisms” to keep women in their alleged place. There have been a variety of instances over the years in which women have been seriously threatened for speaking out on topics such as the discriminatory nature of gender segregation or the lack of political representation in Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox communities.⁵⁶ There are instances reported where families have also paid a heavy price for activism, with long-term consequences affecting, for example, marriage prospects and educational opportunities for children.

Difficulties in Navigating the Public Sector and NGO Involvement in Feminist Causes, especially in an Era of Privatization

► **Ensuring that Government Sponsored Programs Reflect Principles of Empowerment.** While the public sector has taken on the responsibility of supporting programs that were once operated



independently by women's organizations (i.e., battered women shelters, hotlines for sexual abuse, women's economic independence), there is ongoing concern as to whether these programs will continue to reflect the core principles of women's empowerment.⁵⁷ Given greater collaboration with governmental or non-governmental entities, the question is raised whether the feminist agenda will continue to be prioritized and whether the organizational structures that reflect the values of women's empowerment will be maintained.⁵⁸

► **Defining the Role of Women's Organizations and Broad-Based Organizations in Advancing Women.** Women's and feminist organizations are continuing to partner and collaborate with broad-based organizations that have the potential to reach additional audiences, on topics as diverse as egalitarian prayer access, civil marriage and gender segregation, to greater political representation among women and rehabilitation programs for former sex workers. Yet with this changing landscape and the investments that are being made in areas like women's employment and women's leadership by broad-based organizations and the public sector, concern remains about the limited scope of women's and/or feminist organizations and the growing role of general organizations in advancing these efforts.⁵⁹ The concern about whether broad-based organizations are addressing the complexity of issues in enhancing the status of women mirrors similar concerns about whether governmental programs that are adapted from feminist organizations will continue to reflect principles of women's empowerment, as discussed above. There is the ongoing question, as expressed by interview participants, of whether these broad-based organizations, often operating on a national level, are bringing a structural critique to their work, expertise in the field, and deep commitment to making systematic change.⁶⁰

“There are many examples of general organizations that are taking the lead on issues like programs for women's employment. And there are other examples of women's organizations that have a feminist agenda but are constantly running up against the opposition of men in their communities. For example, it took an organization that is considered as mainstream without an explicitly feminist agenda, to have the resources and capacities to roll out significant projects for women like a school lunch project for the Bedouin community. The question is how the women's organizations fit into this work.”

► **Increasing Privatization Brings Uncertainty and Competition.** Veteran feminist organizations that were pioneers in providing specialized services are often required, depending on the percentage of government funding, to compete every few years for government contracts. As privatization of public services increasingly influences the social sector, non-profit service organizations can find themselves in competition with private companies for these government contracts in an increasingly competitive ‘marketplace.’⁶¹ While women's organizations have successfully garnered public support for a variety of services for women and girls, (i.e., employment for women leaving cycles of violence, support programs for girls considered at risk, and small business training), relying so heavily on public support is problematic at best. The neo-conservative economic policies pursued by the government have led to a scaling down of public sector support, while also creating growing economic gaps for marginalized populations and exacerbating the social problems that so many women's organizations are seeking to address.

SECTION 3 / REFLECTION ON TWO SELECTED STRATEGIC CONCERNS AND A FEW QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER...

I. Strengthen Organizations' Influence on Policymaking ■ Mobilize the Public for Community Advocacy ■ Raise Political Voices.

Like their counterparts around the world, women's organizations in Israel are expanding the number of collaborations and partnerships with various players in an effort to address complex social problems and impact policy.⁶² Even with greater governmental awareness of the many challenges facing women,

“Often you hear the distinction between social change and services, but today the borders between them are not so simple. Many service providers have long recognized the need to engage in advocacy. And they need support in how to both balance the work of service provision with tools for influencing the policy making process. On the flip side, many working for social change need help in grounding their work in the community.”

nonprofits need to continually strike a careful balance between providing services (which are often funded in part with public resources) and advocating for social change.⁶³ Given the trends of growing public pressure for government transparency and increased citizen engagement in policy processes,⁶⁴ it is critically important to rethink the kinds of tools and capacities that need to be supported within women's organizations. The professional skills, policymaking expertise and research capacities necessary to gather the relevant data for effective advocacy is of utmost importance today in order to help organizations navigate the challenges in partnering with the government.

Rather than assuming a dichotomy between advocacy and service, it is important to acknowledge that in this new environment, most organizations operate on the continuum between advocacy and service.⁶⁵ As advocates for causes such

as continued public funding for afterschool activities for at-risk girls, the expansion of customized services to marginalized population (i.e., women refugees, new immigrants) or for budget allocations to support government mandates on legislation, organizations and activists are engaged in the policymaking process.⁶⁶

“It is so easy to marginalize the civil society organizations if there is not local support. What if these organizations had 25,000 grassroots members to speak out? The numbers in the community can serve as a form of protection and legitimacy.”

The majority of organizational representatives spoke of their membership in a broad range of coalitions and their engagement in collaborative efforts with other NGOs and activists, as they seek to impact on decision making processes at the local and national levels. Therefore, organizational stakeholders, funders and other supporters should consider how organizations can be equipped to better mobilize their base of supporters and volunteers, to thereby enhance their role as advocates.⁶⁷ In considering the importance of advocacy, it is worthwhile to reflect on how to engender greater public support as well as how to enable organizations and activists to become better advocates and negotiators with public officials.

Questions to Consider to Mobilize the Public for Community Advocacy:

- ❓ How is it possible to better support advocacy efforts by both organizations and activists seeking to advance women's issues in Israel?
- ❓ What does community-based advocacy look like? How can organizations be best equipped to



better mobilize their base of volunteer and supporters? Which factors need to be in place?

- ❓ How can advocacy groups and direct service organizations develop stronger community support to possibly impact on policymaking?
- ❓ What are the cross-cutting issues that have the greatest potential to mobilize women's organizations and activists from across the political spectrum to create joint mechanisms for advocacy?
- ❓ What can be learned from other actors across civil society (i.e., the environmental movement) who have expanded their effort to garner widespread membership and engage in street activism to effect policy change?

2. Utilizing International Networks to Further Support Local Efforts

Especially in the current political climate, there is the tricky question of how big a role international institutions, networks and support should play in Israel and how these outside factors are utilized to advance the cause of women and girls. As indicated in numerous examples above, participation in international networks and frameworks like CEDWA can foster knowledge exchange, provide tools for data collection as well as help to shape public policy and the public discourse.⁶⁸

“Policy making in Israel is affected by global trends and global institutions, and at the same time, it is being influenced from the bottom up. The new trends towards greater government transparency, citizen journalism and the public’s access to the government’s budget and policy are changing the landscape... Women’s organization have the potential to bring these trends together.”

“When we are working outside our community and advocating our cause, at least it is easier for people to understand the concept. The help we can get from outside the Ultra-Orthodox community is invaluable. Working inside our community is like baby steps... We will never be an army; we will be a small guerilla activist group, and this is the best we can wish for... So, we have many strategies that we use, both building from the bottom up to create leadership at the local level, while at the same time using international frameworks like CEDWA and at the state level through the Supreme Court.”

Organizational stakeholders, in considering how to create more learning exchanges, should also expand opportunities to learn from other models besides Western feminist models, which may actually be more effective within certain communities in Israel.⁶⁹ For example, the success of many Western African countries in addressing harmful practices such as polygamy and early marriage through a community-based approach with diverse stakeholders may be of much relevance.⁷⁰ In addressing the challenge of the religious courts, there is much to learn from Muslim feminists in countries like Tunisia who are making progress with regard to Islamic law and inheritance rights for women.⁷¹

The challenge is to nurture and build on all the positive developments from abroad and consider carefully their adaptation to the unique setting in Israel. This is happening on a broad range of topics, including, for example, breast cancer awareness and healthy sexuality, with efforts that have involved reaching out to communities in Amharic, Russian, Arabic and Hebrew in culturally sensitive ways.⁷² There are prominent examples of efforts to find a common meeting ground on issues that are of particular interest to Jewish communities around the world, such as egalitarian access to prayer at the Western Wall. This issue has gradually evolved from a question of pluralistic prayer to the larger issue regarding the very presence and legitimacy of women in the public sphere. In yet another example of building on ‘conversations’ happening abroad is the screenings of international films of women’s stories

as a tool for community outreach (i.e., the mobilization of women to join efforts in promoting peace with the Palestinians or the engagement of Ultra-Orthodox women to enhance their political voice). In its turn, the screening of Israeli films abroad is increasingly highlighting women's issues as the number of films focusing on the stories of women and girls from diverse communities continues to grow.

Questions to Consider on Strengthening Exchanges and Links with International Networks:

- ❓ How does engagement with international networks and forums enhance the women's agenda in Israel?
- ❓ How can opportunities be expanded for greater dialogue and partnership between women's organizations and activists in Israel and other countries? What are the possibilities for joint learning, relationship building, networking, and collaborative efforts?
- ❓ How can similar struggles and the shared interests of women from Israel and abroad be included and furthered as part of a learning network? What can be learned from Israel's experience? What models of success for advancing women can be adapted to the Israeli context?
- ❓ What can be learned from participation in international networks and learning exchanges (which include activities as diverse as film festivals, professional conferences and site visits) and how can these types of efforts be strengthened?
- ❓ How is it possible to cultivate relationship building with networks abroad, including collegial relationships with funders, which spark the development of a shared agenda for greater collective impact and joint action?

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1. See Tzameret-Kertcher et al., 2016, for an overview and more detailed statistics on the 'Gender Index'. The Gender Index, developed at the Center for Advancement of Women in the Public Sphere (WIPS), provides data on a variety of issues and provides an overall picture of gender inequality and the status of women in Israeli society.
 2. Tzameret-Kertcher et al., 2016.
 3. As part of a wider attempt to enhance representation and the public profile of women, research participants have noted a variety of nonprofit and for-profit efforts to create lists of potential women speakers for conferences.
 4. Many interviewees also noted the shift that is taking place in the representation of women in public forums and the growing public awareness around this issue. Much more attention is given to having a gender balance at conferences. As one woman reflected on these developments, "It's still not even, but at least now they know it's not okay."
 5. For a discussion of these legislative changes, see Teschner, 2013. Steinberg (2013) explores gender mainstreaming and the perspective of advisors on the status of women at the governmental ministry level.
 6. See Equal Employment Opportunities Commission's Strategic Plan, 2012-2013.
 7. Athena, is the professional branch of the Public Council for the Promotion of Women's Sports in Israel, and operates under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture and Sport. For an historical overview of women and sports in Israel, see Darom, 2002, and on the role of media in women and sports, see Bernstein & Gality, 2008.
 8. According to 2017 research published by the organization, Hiddush, 70 women currently serve nationwide (on 58 of Israel's Jewish religious councils), representing 17% of the total 407 Jewish religious council members throughout Israel. For more details on the progress and challenges facing women in Jewish legal courts, see Halperin-Kaddari & Yadgar, 2010; Weiss & Gross-Horowitz, 2012, and Zion-Waldoks, 2015.
 9. Palestinian women's organizations have been advocating on this issue for over a decade. For more information, see Lieber (2017).
 10. Over the past 25 years, the number of women in the Knesset has steadily risen from 7 out of 120 after the elections of 1988 to a peak of 32 in the 2015 elections. For the sake of comparison, the percentage of women in the Israeli Knesset is now



almost 27%, making it higher than in the U.S. Senate (20%) or the House of Representatives (19.4%). Three out of the 21 ministers (14%) in the current Israeli cabinet are women. For more details on how these percentages compare to international statistics, see Kenig, 2016.

11. See Abu Jaber Nijem, 2007 and Ghanem, 2005. Women's issues have subsequently become a part of the Follow-Up committee's agenda, and women's representation has grown in the political parties as well. For challenges in this regard, and for more about how political processes exclude women in the Palestinian community, see Herzog & Yahia-Younis, 2007. As noted by interviewees, there has been notable progress over the years in advancing women's representation in party leadership and in increasing women's electoral presence in politics at all levels. Yet as one research participant mused, "The Arab political leadership still always goes to its primordial default. It gives statements about women being equal, but then you can see by their actions and what they do, that they stand for the male society and anti-feminist actions. I see the progress, but we are facing many challenges."
12. See Eglash, 2017. Research participants from the ultra-Orthodox community, for example, speak with admiration about what they see as the progress made by Arab women in advancing their role in political life over the past decade and they have hope to eventually emulate some of the successes of women in the Palestinian community.
13. For an historical perspective on this topic, see Izraeli, 2009.
14. Yet as one interviewee reflected on the changes since the Supreme Court decision over twenty years ago: "While the army is opening up and making space for women, it hasn't really thought through what the deeper gender messages are and the work that needs to be done in order to challenge the deeply seated narrative that girls can't do like boys." For more on the discussion of women's role in the army, see Sasson-Levy, 2003; Rimalt, 2007; Lomsky-Feder & Sasson-Levy, 2015; and Tirosh, 2017.
15. One of the most notable examples was the pressure placed on Israel in 2007 after it received a low ranking from the US State Department regarding human trafficking. The Israeli government, with the cooperation of many women's organizations, was able to effectively address its involvement in sex trafficking (raising its ranking from the US State Department by 2012). Hacker (2015) provides an overview of how United States' pressure on Israeli authorities was effective in leading to greater assistance for trafficking survivors. See Hacker & Cohen (2012) as an example of a report submitted United States Department of State, *The Shelters in Israel for Survivors of Human Trafficking*, published by Hotline for Migrant Workers and Keshet.
16. Hacker (2015) provides an overview of how engagement with the global discourse on anti-sex trafficking, together with United States' pressure on Israeli authorities, significantly shaped efforts to address sex trafficking in Israel. See, also, for example, the report submitted Working Group on the Status of Palestinian Women Citizens of Israel in 2016. For more on the role of international institutions, such as CEDAW and the European Union, and how women's rights activists from "ethno-religious countries", such as Israel, India and Iran, are using these institutions to pressure their governments to change the national legal or policy frameworks, see Razavi & Jenichen, 2010. Submissions to CEDAW (the UN Committee to End Discrimination against Women) over the past decade have highlighted, for example, the significant gaps in standards of education, employment, health and political representation of Palestinian women, as compared to other sectors of the population. See, for example, NGO Alternative Pre-Sessional Report on Israel's Implementation of the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, *The Working Group on the Status of Palestinian Women Citizens of Israel*, submitted in 2006 and 2016.
17. For more on the topic see Aharoni, (2015). The United Nations Security Council Resolution No. 1325 on women, peace and security, passed in 2000, has provided a framework for a broad coalition of women's organizations in Israel in their ongoing efforts to ensure proper representation of women in governmental committees on issues related to foreign policy, security and peace negotiations. Since 2012, a forum of over thirty- five women's organizations has focused on the implementation of the UN Security Council resolution 1325 and the impact of women on issues relating to foreign policy, security and peace negotiations. Efforts such as the women's coalition to promote the UN Security Council's Resolution No.1325 also have proven divisive, and have not included several leading Palestinian women's organizations that were not willing to engage in dialogue with the Israeli security establishment.
18. For more about the coalition efforts, see Thon-Ashkenazy & Loevy, 2015.
19. See Barakat, 2016 on peace efforts among a diverse range of women in Israel as part of *Women Waging Peace*.
20. See the 2017 OECD Economics Survey report for Israel.
21. Swirsky (1991) has referred to this as "feminism from above" (pp. 297–298), in reference to influence of the global context and international discourse, such as in the establishment of the Knesset's Committee of Inquiry into the Status of Women in the 1980's (Cited in Herzog, 2002).
22. For more on this model, see 'A Brief Primer on Prostitution in Israel' Prepared by the Task Force on Human Trafficking and Prostitution, 2016 and Rimalt, 2017.
23. For details on the impact of SDG's see Women Thrive Alliance, n.d.; See Kabeer, 2005 for an analysis of gender equity, empowerment and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).
24. For example, see Oxford University's Said Business School Case Study, *Al-Sanabel Catering*, n.d.

25. See, for example, Almog-Bar & Ajzenstadt, 2010. By 2001, there were numerous examples of programs such as shelters for battered women, hotlines for victims of sexual assault, and various women's empowerment programs that were created by the feminist community that eventually became mainstreamed. This trend of public support and shift in social services was recognized by Ilany (2001) and over the past decade continues to be expanded in terms of specialized services to varied populations. See Allasad Alhuzail, 2015 and OECD, 2015 for examples related to economic independence and micro-credit programs for women.
26. See Halperin-Kaddari, Gorenstein-Fenig & Horowitz, 2016 and Wilmovsky & Tamir, Eds. (2012) for an overview of the status of women in Israel. For a more specific analysis of the role that the government plays in advancing and protecting women's rights, see Wilmovsky & Tamir, Eds. (2012). Also, the challenges of 'customized' support for women's social service NGOs and complex relationships with the public sector is explored in Almog-Bar & Ajzenstadt, 2010.
27. See Allasad Alhuzail, 2015 and OECD, 2015. For a critical perspective on the topic of women's economic empowerment programs, see Sa'ar, 2016 and Sa'ar, 2010. Also, see Brayer-Garb, Olmert, Coussin, & Tirosh Eds., 2017 for an analysis of gender and capitalism.
28. As defined by Hasson et al., 2015 in their report on Israeli municipalities' approach to gender mainstreaming and gender auditing of budgets: "Gender mainstreaming advances gender equality by integrating a gender perspective into the processes of policy making, planning and allocation of budgets and resources."
29. As an example of a 'gender lens' applied to budgetary allocation, two main questions are asked, as cited in Hasson & Seigelshifer (2015) in a gender audit by the Adva Center of a municipal government's sports budget: 1. What are the differential needs of residents – men and women? 2. To what extent are these needs being met by political decisions, public services, and current budget allocations? Also, for example, Chazan (2011) marks the significance of strategies that are adopted by organizations and research institutes in advancing topics such as gender-based analysis of the national budget, while also noting the commitment of the Israel Bureau of Statistics' to producing gender-specific data.
30. See Hasson et al., 2016; Dagan-Buzaglo & Hasson, 2014; Tzameret-Kertcher, 2016 and Levi et al., 2017.
31. See Ilany, 2001; Almog-Bar & Ajzenstadt, 2010.
32. As cited in Hasson & Seigelshifer, 2015. For more on these topics at the municipal level, see Hasson et al. (2015). It should be noted, however, as according to Wilmovsky & Tamir, Eds. (2012), that while there is information available generally on different aspects of the status of women in Israel, there are still discrepancies in the data and a shortage of data. There is not always the needed segmentation where the gender data is provided, nor is the data necessarily available according to factors such as socioeconomic status and religion. Also, as an example of collaborative efforts with public institutions and the NGO sector, see *Narrowing Pay Gap – Lessons From Around The World* (2014) by Dagan-Buzaglo & Hasson by the Adva Center and Equal Pay. For details on labor force participation rates, education levels, trends in gender pay gaps, attitudes towards gender roles and the division of labor at home, see Mandel & Birgier (2015).
33. See Hasson, 2015.
34. See Meijer, 2012; Balassiano & Chandler, 2010.
35. For example, see Erez et al., 2015; Shalhoub-Kervorkian & Daher-Nashif, 2013; and Hassan, 2002. Also see Halperin-Kaddari, Gorenstein-Fenig & Horowitz, 2016 and Wilmovsky & Tamir, Eds. (2012) for further analysis of these topics, and a discussion of the challenge in gathering accurate data on sexual harassment and assaults.
36. As noted above, for an overview of the survey findings and related legislation, see 'A Brief Primer on Prostitution in Israel' Prepared by the Task Force on Human Trafficking and Prostitution, 2016. See Rimalt, 2017 for more about the legislation regarding this topic in Israel.
37. Interestingly, in the 1970's an effort to establish a women's political party in the lead-up to the 1977 parliamentary elections was opposed by many feminists who rejected the idea of politics and preferred to remain an extra-parliamentary movement (Safran, 2006). Traditionally, there were many women involved in feminist activism who preferred non-hierarchical organizations rather than engage with organizational approaches and institutions identified as 'male' (Safran, 2006). Decades later, in the early 2000's, Ilany (2001), in considering the strategies for political participation of women's organizations, addressed the lack of attention to defining a women's political agenda and reaching consensus on the definition of 'feminist politics'. It should be noted that in more recent elections, with specific regard to voting patterns, Chazan (2011) discusses increased evidence of a 'women's vote' in the 2009 election, and notes signs that this trend is continuing. In this context, see Shamir & Gedalya-Lavy, 2015 and Gedalya, Herzog, & Shamir (2010). For a discussion of the need to enhance the political power of women in Israel, see Rimalt, 2012. Also, see Rahat & Itzkovitch, 2012, for more on the political engagement of women historically in Israel and an examination of how the dynamics of the party system and minority parties have affected the representation of women.
38. The dominant discourse in Israel has generally viewed issues that are specifically pertaining to women, along with other civil and social concerns, as 'secondary', to the more pressing needs of the Israel's defense and security in the face of ongoing regional conflict (see Chazan 1989, Freedman 1990, Halperin-Kaddari & Yadgar, 2010).



39. See Chazan, 2011. Herzog (1999) addresses the division between the political sphere and the voluntary sphere, explaining that the perception of the political sphere as 'male' and the variety of obstacles facing women who seek and actually enter political office, has made volunteerism the preferred "means of entry into the public arena" for women. For a brief review of organizational efforts to increase women representation in politics among the Palestinian community, see Abu Jaber Nijem (2016). In reviewing *Gender and Israel*, Fogiel-Bijaoui (2012) critiques the lack of attention paid to institutionalized politics, as well as to the relationship between civil society and institutionalized politics. Her concerns about the link between the de-politicization of the Israeli women's movement and the reduction of its influence as a political force has been echoed by research participants. For efforts in this regard, see for example, Akirav & Ben-Horin, 2015 and Sela, 2016.
40. Interviewees discussed the impact of an 'old boys network' and the difficult of gaining access to the significant funds needed to begin to consider building a public profile in politics.
41. See Levi, B. et al., 2017. As cited in Wilmovsky & Tamir, Eds. (2012), as of 2011, out of 256 local authorities, only five authorities (or 2%) were headed by women.
42. For a more in-depth analysis of this issue, see Chazan, 2011.
43. This is a frustration that was expressed by many research participants. Indeed, as Chazan's (2011) writes, there are many contradictions when looking at the influence of women in politics. In considering these contradictions, she reflects that the past decade has been noteworthy for the fact that "the rising political clout of women has not been translated into sustained power, their increased political presence into effective influence, or their tangible legislative gains into significant socioeconomic progress."
44. See Chazan, 2011.
45. Another specific nuance with regard to Palestinian political parties is related to the complexity of majority/minority relations and the role of religion in politics. As one research participant explained with regard to family law and discriminatory practices against women of the Muslim courts, "Most of the community is religious, and the politicians are afraid to stand up to them. They don't want to get the Knesset involved in Islam. They can't even touch it because then it would mean having the Jewish community involved in changing Islam. Everyone is afraid to be seen as against religion."
46. There are examples of this in the past, as cited by Herzog (2008). As reported by interviewees, the post of Advisor on the Status of Women, established within the Office of the Prime Minister, for example, has lacked both authority and resources in recent years. Another example is the delayed implementation of the law establishing the Government Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women, which was passed in 1992, but was only implemented in 1998.
47. See Ilany, 2007 and Ross (2007) for details of how the Jewish judicial system (Halacha) affects the status of women. As cited, the main implications are 1. Inequality of men and women in the observance of religious law. 2. Restriction of women in the public sphere 3. Women's dependence in personal and family status 4. Inequality in marriage and divorce laws and 5. Woman's place in tradition.
48. See Halperin-Kaddari & Yadgar, 2010 for a more in-depth discussion of this complex issue. Based on successful advocacy efforts of women's groups, there was a 2008 amendment to the Spousal (Property Relations) Law (1973), which allowed for the distribution of marital property prior to the awarding a get.
49. Several interviewees were reluctant to use the term 'gender equality' at all, and preferred instead to talk of 'women's rights.' As one research participant observed: "There are legislative proposals that claim gender equality, but do not change anything in the system... Gender equality is a concept that is used in an academic way, but does not take a clear position on the power relations between the two sides. Women are the unprivileged in the current situation and are suffering from inequality, so I want to change that; I want to claim the rights of women." Another interviewee explained, "In the public discourse, men are now seen as the poor ones, the victims who suffer in a divorce for example. Where is the feminist movement on the issues of alimony and child custody?... And whoever speaks out against these male organizations, they are attacked."
50. Recent efforts to change alimony payment and child custody arrangement in divorce situations is emblematic of the challenge in defining the use and terms of 'gender equality'. For more about the current debate in Israel regarding child custody laws and backlash from men's groups, see Hacker (2013) and Hacker & Halperin Kaddari (2013).
51. Sanz Corella & Ben Noon, 2013.
52. Sanz Corella & Ben Noon, 2013.
53. Abu-Rabia-Queder, 2006; Sa'ar, 2005.
54. An interviewee explained how the current political environment gives greater weight to these types of accusations and discourse than in the past.
55. An interviewee gave insight on this topic: "There is a new tactic brought to Israel a few years ago whereby a larger organization sues a small organization for something such as slander, and then seeks to exhaust them." It is of such concern that one particular funder has set aside monies for the specific purpose of helping civil society representatives who are increasingly

- being sued on such charges.
56. As reported by interviewees, within the ultra-Orthodox community there have been threats made against the women that often have extended to their families. One activist questioned: "Do you know the price that I have paid? They call us crazy, schizophrenic, that we are not really Haredi. They make trouble for our children in the schools and some of us have had to take our children out of the system. Your family doesn't accept it as well; you don't get invited to family weddings. You pay such a high price and you can't ask every Haredi woman to do this." Another woman reflected on this as well, "They say that ultra-Orthodox women don't want to be in politics. But women have tried, and they were threatened with all the usual tactics, including physical threats to burn their car, so they stopped...."
 57. Indeed, fifteen years ago, Ilany (2001) spoke of this concern regarding empowerment programs, distinguishing between the "feminist originated empowerment programs" and the "more mainstream variant" that lacks the psychological benefits and the social processes.
 58. Navigating the relationship with governmental ministries can be challenging, and there are bureaucratic requirements that can come into conflict with organizational structures established according to feminist values (i.e., non-hierarchical decision-making processes, equal pay scale of salaries) that clash with governmental requirements. Abramovich (2008) noted the balancing act and potential compromises of feminist organizations whose organizational strategy includes a combination of providing services and mobilizing public opinion while also seeking to impact on policy decision making processes. This challenge is certainly not unique to women's organizations and many civil society organizations have to carefully balance their role as partners and recipients of public funding while also potentially opposing certain government policies.
 59. A research participant explained, "There are many examples of feminist organizations that were not able to scale up, and so other broad-based organizations that were strong enough and stable enough often took the lead in issues like women's employment program." While the range and diversity of the women's organizations can be extensive, there is the concern that individual issues are not getting the attention they deserve and thus will not be able to significantly influence societal trends. For example, as another interviewee explained, "My impression is that many things are going on today in the Arab society that have no connection to what the organizations do. Their work has become very limited; it is very local and very small, and I'm not sure that they are creating a general change. With the women's organizations, there is something here and there, but the feeling is that everyone is working on a small scale."
 60. See Malhorta et. al (2002 for a broad discussion of these issues regarding the complexity of women's empowerment.
 61. For an overview of privatization of health, education and welfare services in Israel, see Ajzenstadt & Rosenhek, 2000 and for more on the reduced role of the state in providing social services, see Shafir & Peled, 2002.
 62. For discussion on how Israeli women's civil society organizations are navigating the complex relationship with the government, see Almog-Bar & Ajzenstadt, 2010. See Evans, 2016 for a discussion of the women's movement and political parties.
 63. Almog-Bar & Ajzenstadt, 2010; See Onyx et al, 2010 for a global context, and Cohen, 2010.
 64. Meijer, 2012; Balassiano & Chandler, 2010; Guo & Saxton, 2014; and Auger, 2014 provide examples of new tools for advocacy with social media. See Zchout & Tal, 2017 on how Israeli environmental NGOs are balancing challenges of advocacy.
 65. Almog-Bar & Ajzenstadt, 2010. See also Kaufman, 2010, and Cohen, 2010.
 66. For example, for a perspective on the needs of newly arrived women refugees from Eritrea and other asylum seekers, see Ghebrezghiabher & Motzafi-Haller, 2015. See Almog-Bar & Ajzenstadt, 2010 on the expanding role of Israeli women's civil society organizations in the midst of changing public policies.
 67. See, for example, Akirav & Ben-Horin, 2015.
 68. For example, see Peleg- Hadomi, 2010 for a case study of learning exchange projects and inter-organizational networking between Israel and the United States.
 69. See Jad, 2007 and Shalhoub-Kevorkian et al., 2014 for a discussion on the danger of Bedouin women's NGOs being perceived as "donor-driven" and "reflecting a Western agenda."
 70. For a discussion of polygamy in Israel, see Rabia, 2011. For an international perspective on addressing these types of harmful cultural practices see Gillespie & Melching, 2010; Winterbottom, 2009; Shell-Duncan, 2008; and Monkman et al., 2007.
 71. Cordall & Mahmood, 2017; Blaise, 2016. For an overview of the critical role of feminists around the world who are from religious communities and use religious interpretations to advance gender equality, see Razavi & Jenichen, 2010.



PUBLIC DISCOURSE ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Significant Achievements and Challenges

In recent years dramatic changes have taken place in the public discourse on issues specifically related to women and girls, prompted in part by a growing awareness of feminist thought. Gender studies programs, many operating for decades, have been offered in universities and colleges around the country and have graduated hundreds of activists who are doing all kinds of work in the field. The change in the public discourse has reached more traditional communities, and there are a variety of previously taboo topics, ranging from issues such as breast cancer to harmful practices against women, that are increasingly being addressed and openly challenged. The emergence of religious feminism over the past decade has been especially meaningful in Israel, a country where there is no separation of 'church and state'.

The growth of social media and access to the internet has provided a more accessible way for news and commentary from a woman's perspective to be disseminated, sparking social change efforts in Israel, as in other parts of the world. With many websites that reach thousands daily, there are social activists and journalists who can convincingly make the claim that they are, as one activist said, "*raising a generation of feminists.*" The growing number of women filmmakers and the many new platforms for women in the arts also encourages storytelling in all kinds of formats.

Yet in spite of the significant progress that has been made, the term 'feminism' is still often negatively perceived by the general community and even by many women. There is also a question of the degree to which many of the past accomplishments of the feminist struggle are acknowledged and/or simply taken for granted. In general, women's issues are still seen as 'less important', while social issues generally are considered secondary to security concerns in the public discourse. Indeed, constant conflict and a divisive political landscape is a reality that especially marginalizes women's voices. Moreover, rising nationalism and religious fundamentalism that is increasingly part of the political atmosphere is undermining the inclusion of women's voices in the public realm.

Selected Strategic Concerns

As the field of activism continues to expand to new actors, with online advocates, journalists, as well as informal groups of activists playing an increasingly important role in social media campaigns and grass roots activism, it is important to consider how to create better synergy among the various efforts. The upshot of this is critical, especially with the broad outreach of social media and the internet, and it is essential to effectively support all types of activism and to encourage more symbiotic relationships between grassroots and online activists and established nonprofits. In recent years, there have been examples of community-wide engagement that are breaking down the official categories of activism, and it is worthwhile to contemplate what can be learned from these types of initiatives.

There are new opportunities for developing creative partnerships and working collaboratively with women from diverse communities, broad-based organizations and communal leadership. A variety of efforts, such as engagement with male spiritual and political leaders within religious communities, can be helpful in reframing the discourse where “women’s issues” are perceived as “community issues.” One of the challenges is to determine what steps should be taken to encourage collaborations on topics of shared interest and how to carefully identify new allies in the field, both in terms of populations and different sectors of society (i.e., academia, governmental sector and private sector).

SECTION I / NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS THUS FAR

Change in the Public Discourse, Use of Language and Influence of Gender Studies

► **Shift in Public Discourse and Awareness of Women’s Rights.** There are dramatic changes in recent years regarding the public discourse on women, with growing awareness and exposure to feminist thought by women of all ages. The use of relatively new terms such as ‘gender’ and ‘economic

empowerment’ has become commonplace. The language is not only a question of vocabulary, but it is leading to a shift in how issues are defined or perceived with regard to policymaking (for example, the framing of ‘women rights’ as ‘human rights’). Terms such as ‘sexual violence’ or ‘sexual harassment’ have become part of the general discourse, raising public awareness about the seriousness of the problem in society.

“Even before #Me too arrived, this topic of sexual harassment and sexual violence has been everywhere. Brave women have come forward from all different communities; the social media has blown up the topic.”

Especially In more traditional communities, there are a variety of previously forbidden topics, including rape, sexual harassment

and other harmful practices against women, that are increasingly challenged and addressed in public. A notable shift in the discourse has also taken place with regard to sex trafficking and prostitution. Whereas more than a decade ago there was little awareness or even acknowledgement of the problem, the efforts of organizations and activists have contributed to the current political environment where comprehensive policy solutions are receiving widespread public support.¹

Through extensive efforts to raise awareness, issues affecting women’s health such as breast cancer, healthy sexuality and reproductive rights are increasingly addressed openly in both formal and informal settings.² With heightened exposure and greater access to information, women are better equipped with the knowledge to make more informed choices. Women’s organizations and activists have helped to raise public awareness on a myriad of issues in recent years related to women’s status and rights; on topics including divorce and family law, services available for victims of domestic violence, legal recourse for workplace discrimination, and birth control options. And while an adequate solution has not yet been found for thousands of women seeking divorce in religious courts, there is heightened awareness about the plight of *agunot* and *mesorevet get*.³

► **Increased Frameworks for Gender Studies.** With many gender studies programs in place for years, it is essential to consider what their impact has been in university settings as well as in the broader societal context.⁴ Indicators of its influence on the nonprofit sector include the number of alumni engaged in activism and the range of collaborative efforts between NGOs and gender studies programs. The gender studies programs have also acted as a critical platform for the dissemination of ideas and promulgated new concepts of feminism to different communities in Israel.

“After years of activism, what I learned at the gender studies programs is that not all feminism is anti-religious, and that religion is more than a male institution that hurts women... Religion is an important part of our Arab society and we need to see that there are women who are religious and Mizrahi and radical and liberal, and I saw all the ways to be a feminist. It opened for me the possibility of a better partnership and to be less rigid.”

Outside of university settings, the concept of 'gender studies' has been introduced in the past decade or so to a variety of new populations, with gender sensitivity training being offered in a wide range of situations, from programs for municipal kindergarten teachers, to high schools and pre-army service programs.

► **Emergence of Religious Feminism.** For a variety of reasons, the growth of religious feminism can be especially meaningful in Israel. Religious values, which permeate throughout society from politics to life cycle events, are currently defined and acted on in a way that is often at the expense of gender equality.⁵ The religious courts (including Jewish and Muslim courts), which are a separate judiciary system, still hold control over religious and family matters, with a variety of consequences that generally impact negatively on the status of women.⁶ Moreover, Israeli coalition politics inevitably grants minority groups (most significantly the Orthodox Jewish parties) disproportional influence in the decision-making process.⁷ And yet, over the past fifteen years, there has been an exponential growth in Orthodox Jewish female activism that is impacting the conversation on everything from family law, to sexual harassment, to representation of women in religious frameworks.

Greater access to both religious and secular education, the influence of modern Orthodoxy trends abroad and the work of feminists in Israeli secular society, have all contributed to the rise of feminism within the Jewish religious community in Israel.⁸ Recently, and for the first time, Ultra-Orthodox women are fighting for the right of representation in their own political parties and are using tools such as submission to CEDAW to press their case.

“I realized when you become a feminist you put on glasses. And then, after this happened, I couldn't take them off. But it wasn't just getting glasses, for me it was laser surgery!”

“It took eighty years and we are a small and fragile voice, but fifteen years ago political representation for Ultra-Orthodox women was not considered even possible. But the discourse exists. It has started.”

The rise of religious feminism is also increasing opportunities for women of different religious communities to address practices related to family courts (such as Orthodox women and Muslim women disputing certain aspects of religious family law through university based legal clinics), as well as challenging harmful customs such as early marriage.⁹ And, as noted previously, advances among Muslim women include the recent success of the first- ever women appointee to the Sharia court in Israel.

► **Reframing of Issues that Open Opportunities for Collaborative Efforts.** Women's organizations over the past decade have brought attention to such subjects as women's representation in the public sector and gender analysis of public sector budgets. This growing discourse has created more opportunities for collaboration on the part of public institutions such as local municipalities and government ministries. As such, more consultations and joint efforts are happening to advance greater equality and to capture relevant data. There is also evidence of new collaborations with community and religious leaders, which hold significant potential, that have occurred to promote women's rights within traditional religious communities (i.e., women's cooperation with an organization run by male Orthodox rabbis which is promoting the spiritual role of women and collaboration between a community-based women's group and local sheiks to oppose domestic violence).¹⁰

“When we are fighting violence in the community, we need to work with everyone, including the religious institutions and the sheiks, and we need to make sure that this is seen as a community issue, not a women’s issue.”

“We want to make sure that our activism is not seen as anti-religious... we were able to have the community leaders speak out about actions against women that have nothing to do with religion, but are rather about culture and tradition... This was an important first step...”¹¹

Lastly, increasing extremism in recent years and its spillover effect to the broader populations, has also led to growing public discourse around the issue of women’s presence and legitimacy in the public sphere. The alarming phenomenon of extreme gender discrimination has led to previously unforeseen (and openly public) collaborative efforts, such as between Orthodox women activists and institutions promoting pluralistic Judaism, in order to challenge the legal basis of gender segregation in communities around the country.¹²

A Multiplicity of Outlets for Bringing Women’s Stories to Life through Social Media, Film, and Art

► **Influence and Accessibility of Social Media/ Internet.** Facebook pages and websites are growing in their audience and influence. The openness of this medium, has provided a more accessible way for news and commentary from a woman’s perspective to be disseminated.¹³

“There are no gatekeepers anymore... We no longer have male editors telling us what is relevant or news worthy, but rather we decide for ourselves.”

“Our website came exactly in a critical time for younger women. They can check google for the word ‘feminism’ and we come up, so we are able to take advantage of the medium in an important way. I wish I had it when I was young!”

With many websites that reach thousands daily, there are social activists and journalists who can convincingly make the claim that they are, as one activist said of, “raising a generation of feminists.”

Mainstream media is taking notice, often building on stories first addressed by these websites. The increased capacity of nonprofits to collect data (i.e., statistics on budget allocations by gender) is now coupled with the use of social media to highlight the inequalities in allocations and service provision. Social media is also used to collect data (for example, to document instances of sexual harassment), allowing the field to stay informed with updated and relevant information.

► **Opportunities for Online Community Building and Activism.**

There are numerous internet communities that have sprung up in recent years, offering a shared space for women from diverse backgrounds and with varying levels of religious observance.¹⁴ The

democracy of this medium offers the opportunity for women to create online platforms in several languages to educate, raise awareness, and build networks in ways that heretofore were nonexistent. Specific issues, like sexual harassment, has been given unprecedented exposure, offering women the possibility of sharing their experiences with the option of confidentiality.¹⁵ For some, access to social media on topics such as domestic violence or lesbian culture has been a lifesaver, allowing them to find likeminded communities that provide support. Engagement with social media is leading to many instances of activism both on the part of individuals and groups often outside of a formal, organized setting.¹⁶

“In the last few years, the feminist struggle has been led by Facebook and internet sites and well-known activists and journalists. Individual women now have various platforms to make significant inroads...”

Numerous interviewees also spoke of the importance of videos, streaming data of live protests, and other creative ways to raise awareness and galvanize online communities to collective action.



► **Growing Platforms for Women's Storytelling and Artistic Expression.** There are a growing number of Israeli women filmmakers and 'incubators' that are available for women directors, along with opportunities of mentorship for women in television and film. This is part of a critical trend whereby various new forums for women in the arts have been established and have encouraged the process of 'storytelling'.¹⁷ Indeed, there have been instances when highly sensitive topics, such as divorce, drug use, rape or homosexuality, have been unmasked on film by female directors, challenging their own traditional communities to openly address these issues.

Film screenings have increasingly been used around the country by activists and organizations and are often accompanied by dialogue in an effort to raise consciousness on critical topics facing women and girls. These types of gatherings have been a vehicle for discussions on efforts by women in Israel and around the world to successfully bring about change, ranging from the role of women in bringing about peace in Liberia a decade ago to the struggle for women's voting rights in England at the turn of the 20th century.¹⁸ In addition, many films about women's stories have been used around the country as a tool for community outreach and further engagement (i.e., community mobilization of women to engage in promoting peace with the Palestinians or the mobilization of Ultra-Orthodox women to hold office within their political parties). There are also many new initiatives by feminist groups to create opportunities for women artists from diverse backgrounds to showcase their artwork, publish stories and create wider platforms of outreach.¹⁹ These efforts have encouraged consciousness raising, and provided visibility that is advancing gender equity in a variety of settings. For example, a forum for women in television and film was able to bring public pressure on a major Israeli newspaper to add female film critics to its roster.

"Films can create discourse that we could only dream about in our work. It was courageous and dealt with really hard-core issues and did not avoid explosive topics. This maybe is a privilege that movies or art have that organizations do not. And luckily there are many new voices and feminist women writers."

"If you do not hear the voice of women, then you are hidden to society. And this can be the role of film. You can't be what you can't see. We need alternative images of women... This includes unlikable women as well."

"When we first asked the newspaper about adding women critics, they gave us excuses like there was no more room on the excel sheet. Eventually we were able to pressure them to add female critics... By having feminine critiques of a film, it encourages the audience to see a different perspective."

SECTION 2 / **SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES STILL TO BE FACED**

Concern regarding the Accessibility of the Feminist Discourse and the 'Branding' of Feminism

► **Problematic Perceptions of the Term 'Feminist'.** In spite of progress (or perhaps because of...), the term 'feminism' is still often negatively perceived by the general community, including many women, and its use can easily provoke an antagonistic reaction.²⁰ For example, even after years of gender studies at universities and colleges around the country, research participants expressed concern that feminist studies programs still can be marginalized and slighted when it comes to funding and academic prestige.²¹ Moreover, theories of feminism are not necessarily 'translated' properly into everyday language, and the feminist discourse is often perceived as too academic, unclear or arcane.²²

"We need to re-check our discourse on feminism and women's rights and see if it suits people- what it means to them, how it relates to their lives."

“Come down a level! Feminists use a language that is not understood. No one wants to hear about the term ‘patriarchy’... I want to hear stories, and hear them in a way that individuals can understand, and without any theory.”

Recognition is often not accorded to the past accomplishments of feminists or are simply taken for granted.²³ As noted by research participants, the discourse on ‘feminism’ still has work to do in terms of linking the theories to the everyday lives of diverse groups of women. And in spite of years of feminist activism in all types of communities, feminism is still associated by many with the political left and/or with the secular community in Israel, and the majority of the women's organizations still operate primarily in the main metropolitan areas of the country.

*“The conversation goes something like this:
First these women tell me they are not feminists.
Then I ask them a series of questions:
‘Do you enjoy the right to vote?’
Do you like having your own credit card?
Do you want to have a say in what happens to your body’?
They always answer yes
And so, I say, ‘then you are a feminist!’”*

Lastly, interviewees pointed out the link in their eyes between women's progress and the deliberate effort by many to “demonize” and de-legitimize feminism.²⁴ Women spoke of the ‘labeling’ of feminism in order to belittle it and/or to paint feminists as “radicalized” and therefore not to be counted.

► **Feminist ‘Checklists’.** Feminist discourse is often seen as exclusive, whereby women who don't fit into a certain category are ignored or dismissed. As noted by an interviewee, “there is a checklist that too many women feel that they need to stand by.” The “checklist” can be related to a variety of items from religion to politics, and is too often used to determine whether one is bona fide ‘feminist’ or not.²⁵ Interviewees and focus groups spoke of many heated discussions that have taken place particularly in online communities over who is a feminist, and how to transform this discourse into a more inclusive approach that builds on shared commonalities among women.

“Individuals who don't call themselves feminists are online, re-sharing other women's stories on sexual harassment. Whether or not they support a one or two state solution, or believe that women should be skinny or not, they have made a statement that sexual harassment is not acceptable. They are part of the change... Instead of saying ‘you're in’ or you're out’ as a feminist, lets introduce it to people for free: You can be a feminist.”

Concern regarding the ‘Inclusivity’ of Feminism. Often terms such as “Ashkenazi feminism,” “white feminism,” “western feminism” are used by research participants as a way to label the agendas of women's organizations that are perceived as being out of touch with the concerns of large populations of women in Israel.²⁶ It is important to consider in more depth for example, the significant influence of Mizrahi feminism on the work of women's organizations- on their agenda, accessibility and outreach to diverse populations- and what can be learned from these efforts.²⁷ There are also questions about outreach to varied communities with unique histories and traditions, where feminism is defined and considered in a very different context.²⁸ Among several Ethiopian activists interviewed, for

“When dealing with racism, you need to choose your battles. If I need to pick between a struggle against racism and support for feminism, for me, racism is ‘existential.’ It is my first priority.”²⁹



example, the idea of specifically addressing feminism is perceived as a “privilege” that they cannot afford considering all the other profound challenges faced by the entire Ethiopian community.

Likewise, there are special challenges in those communities that simply do not have an active civil society that engages either men or women and lack a tradition of nonprofit work. In the Druze community, for example, there are other challenges to outreach efforts.³⁰ According to interviewees, there is little engagement of Druze women with Palestinian women's organizations, given the military service of many Druze men, and there is a question of how much engagement exists with other types of formalized efforts.

“As Druze mothers of soldiers, the discourse regarding issues such as feminism and militarism is entirely different from the discourse that other Arab women in Israel have.”

Indeed, there are a variety of marginalized communities of women in Israel who lack formalized NGO representation to express their perspectives, including the growing number of refugees and foreign workers who often work in caregiving professions. Even significantly larger communities, like Russian-speaking women, are generally under-represented in civil society work.

“There have been only a few efforts that have brought Russian-speaking women in as genuine partners, understanding their need to talk their own language. Having our voices and perspective heard by existing NGOs seems much more valuable than establishing a separate NGO to advance our interests.”

Yet there are questions raised by interviewees regarding the effectiveness of establishing additional nonprofits that are identity based, rather than efforts that build on shared interests of women. It is critically important to consider ways to further integrate the varying perspectives of different populations into the mainstream work of women's organizations through greater representation and partnership.

The Price of Ongoing Regional Conflict and the Impact of the Military/Conflict on Public Discourse

► **Women's Issues are Perceived as ‘Less Important’.** The lack of a peaceful solution to Israel's conflict with the Palestinians is devastating on many levels. Research participants attested to the fact that social issues will always be considered as secondary in the public discourse to security concerns.³¹ This especially rings true during times of conflict, when military priorities take precedence. The question then arises as to how women's issues can be prioritized given such a contentious political environment. For example, a number of research participants noted the constraints and limitations that are sometimes placed on various Palestinian women's organizations that are affiliated with political parties, resulting in the women's agenda being sublimated or dismissed altogether.

“To really convince anyone that the feminist struggle is important in the Palestinian community is an impossible struggle. We are always told to wait. It is very difficult to put your issues before the issue of the men and the protracted conflict...”

► **Women's Voices on the Conflict Are Marginalized.** Not only are issues of gender equality considered to be of secondary importance in Israel, but the cost of the conflict itself is not measured in terms of the far-reaching implications for women's lives.³² The state of constant conflict and a divisive public discourse is a reality that especially marginalizes women's voices; a reality that is currently being addressed by various efforts in Israel and around the world to promote the UN Security Council's Resolution No. 1325.³³ The rising nationalism and religious fundamentalism that is increasingly part of the political climate is further preventing the inclusion of women's voices in the public debate on the ongoing conflict.

“We have something to say as women and as citizens, not just because we gave birth to a soldier....I don't want to talk from the womb; I want to talk from my brain.”

“In times of conflict we only see women in the media as the mother of a soldier or a victim, and there is much less of their input about the big picture or decision-making processes about security concerns.”

Discourse Among Women Mirrors Larger Societal Divisions. The political realities and divisions in Israeli society between the Jewish community and Palestinians have often prevented more collaborative efforts among women.³⁴ As discussed previously, there is the ongoing question about the degree to which feminism, traditionally associated with liberal and leftwing politics, is inclusive of all women regardless of their political viewpoints and religious observance.³⁵ Barriers to collaboration are often raised when there are divisions among women from different backgrounds or who are holding clashing political views. Efforts such as coalition work to promote the UN Security Council's Resolution No. 1325³⁶ also have proven divisive, with several leading Palestinian women's organizations not willing to consider engaging in dialogue with the Israeli military establishment within the framework of conversations on peace and security.

“In more peaceful times, the discourse can be different. But as soon as there is an armed conflict, any sense of sisterhood disappears. Every woman goes to her group and supports it.”

SECTION 3 / REFLECTION ON TWO SELECTED STRATEGIC CONCERNS AND A FEW QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER...

1. Generate Opportunities for Strengthening the Work of New Emerging Actors and Synthesizing Different Kinds of Activism

In Israel and around the world there is a new type of activism that is taking root. This phenomenon is fueled by the growing importance of social media and the engagement of new actors in a variety of social causes, including the advancement of women and girls.³⁷ Individual actors, such as journalists and online advocates, as well as informal groups of activists, are playing an important role in social media campaigns and grass roots activism.³⁸ While there has always been both tension and cooperation within the feminist community between formal nonprofits and informal groups of activists, the dramatic opening of the field to new actors has required organizational representatives, activists, funders and other stakeholders to carefully consider what is the most effective way to build more crossover collaboration and exchange.³⁹

At first glance, it might appear that many organizations are disconnected from street and online activism, or, alternatively, that activists have purposively chosen to distance themselves from organizational efforts.⁴⁰ However, the reality is more nuanced and complex, and often the collaborative efforts that take place do not occur in the public sphere but rather through more private channels.⁴¹ The question for stakeholders and supporters is how to create better synergy between the various types of institutionalized and less institutionalized activism. The upshot of this is critical, especially with the broad outreach of social media and the internet, to effectively engage and support all manner of activism, to develop a more symbiotic relationship between grassroots and online activists and established nonprofits. In recent years, there have been examples of community-wide engagement on topics such as peace initiatives and housing costs that have been breaking down the official categories of activism and it is worthwhile to consider how to learn from these types of initiatives.⁴²

Questions to Consider on Synthesizing Different Forms of Activism:

- ❓ How is it possible to nurture a more synergetic relationship between grassroots and online activists and organizational representatives? What are the opportunities for greater cooperation among established nonprofits, emerging initiatives, and alternative, more spontaneous efforts of activism?



- ❓ How can more fruitful dialogue and conversation between the different kinds of activism be encouraged?
- ❓ What mechanisms are available to fund and support more sustained activism, both on and offline, for those activists who would prefer not to become more 'institutionalized' in their activities?
- ❓ How can informal and formal meeting venues and networking opportunities be created and sustained to enhance the overall impact of the work?

2. Creating Opportunities for Common Ground, Shared Interests, and Greater Solidarity

As the field of advancing women and girls continues to expand, new opportunities for developing creative partnerships are presenting themselves and leading many to question if a new playbook is required.⁴³ As indicative of the value increasingly placed on promoting women for the overall benefit of society, the number of efforts involving men as allies as well as the engagement of broad-based organizations in advancing feminist causes continues to grow. And with the rapid growth of religious feminism in Israel, the engagement with men, particularly with male religious and political leaders, is considered as a significant step forward in legitimizing the advancement of women within religious societies. In spite of the many inherent challenges in these types of collaborative efforts, the hope and expectation is to shift the discourse so that, as cited above, "women's issues are increasingly viewed as community issues."⁴⁴ Indeed, there have been a number of innovative approaches that have led to new collaborations with community and religious leaders on topics ranging from egalitarian religious practices to domestic and sexual violence. As noted previously, examples of such cooperation include a joint organization of Orthodox women and men promoting the spiritual role of women, and the collaboration of a Palestinian community-based women's group with local sheiks to oppose domestic violence.

In re-thinking who the allies are of activist women, it is also important to consider how to better nurture connections not just with men, but also with women from diverse communities. While there is a long history of cooperative efforts between Jewish and Palestinian female activists, those efforts generally have touched on only a limited number of issues like peace initiatives, domestic violence awareness or economic empowerment. We have noted how political realities and divisions in Israeli society between Jews and Palestinians have often posed a significant barrier to past and present partnerships.⁴⁵ However, despite this, there are more opportunities for women of different religious communities to work together (such as Orthodox and Muslim women at a university based legal clinic beginning to address issues related to religious family law) on an increasingly broader range of issues.⁴⁶

"The feminist discourse over the years has celebrated diversity and supported the expression of each group and their differences. It is time now to find the shared interests and concerns. We need to now focus on solidarity so that we can increase our strength and power to effect change."

The challenge is to think about what steps should be taken to encourage collaborations on topics of shared interest, carefully considering who the new allies in the field are,⁴⁷ both in terms of populations and different sectors of society (i.e., academia, governmental sector and private sector). Another delicate matter to consider is how to support the work that is being done by activists in more closed, conservative communities, without jeopardizing their reputation or speaking out on their behalf. As noted by interviewees, the sensitivity that surrounds work in traditional communities requires caution in collaborations with organizations and groups outside that society. Activists, organizational representatives and other players have to consider where the meeting ground might be to push for progress, especially at a time of growing fundamentalism and extremism.⁴⁸

Questions to Consider in Identifying Shared Interests:

- ❓ What are the levers to support greater collaboration among diverse groups of women? What are the shared issues today in public discourse that can serve to unite women? How can greater solidarity be encouraged around issues that have the potential to galvanize the public?
- ❓ What can be learned from organizations, in fields as diverse as peace efforts to women's health, that have built strong partnerships with diverse communities of women and operate in geographically dispersed areas?
- ❓ How is it possible to identify shared strategies among allies supporting women's issues to impact on the public discourse and affect change? What is the role of broad-based organizations, religious institutions, community leaders and others that support the efforts to advance women?
- ❓ Who might be new allies to work on particular issues and how can cooperative efforts be more productively framed?

1. For a broad overview of the current legislation regarding the criminalization of those purchasing sex services, see Rimalt, 2017.
2. As one interviewee explained, "Israel is in the middle on the question of access to abortion- not total access or no access, but partial... In these political times, we have been told not to wake a sleeping bear and try to address the limitations of the legislation. There is also the growing power of the Ultra-Orthodox and more aggressive efforts to harass religious women who chose this option." For an overview of the abortion law and its link to individual rights in Israel as compared to other countries, see Rimalt, 2017.
3. See Weiss & Gross-Horowitz, 2012. Aguna, ('anchored' or 'chained' in Hebrew) is a halachic term for a Jewish woman who is 'chained' to her marriage. Jewish law requires that a man grant his wife a "get" (official bill of divorce) of his own free will in cases of a divorce. When there is not a get or special permission from halachic authority (usually granted based on the assumption that her husband is dead), an aguna cannot marry under halachic law and any children that she might have with another man would be considered illegitimate. In the past, aguna cases usually were due to a husband dying without any clear evidence or witnesses to his death, or a husband who had a physical (i.e., coma) or mental disease that left him unable to grant a divorce. Today, as explained by interviewees, more and more aguna cases are the result of a husband withholding a get in an attempt to extort money, to gain a more favorable divorce settlement and/or to simply take revenge. A woman who is denied a get by her husband is technically called a "mesorevet", yet the term "aguna" is more commonly used.
4. For an historical perspective on women's studies in Israel see Safir, Nevo & Swirski, 1994.
5. See Halperin-Kaddari & Yadgar, 2010.
6. For example, see Halperin-Kaddari (2013) for a report on the study of the experiences of Jewish women in the midst of a divorce in Israel. Feminist movements throughout the Middle East are addressing the issue of personal status laws in religious courts (see Hatem, 1993). For more information about other societies facing the complex issues around the conflict between religious law and civil law, including the restrictions on the right to marry and divorce, see Douglas et al. 2011.
7. Halperin-Kaddari & Yadgar (2010) noted the trend of emerging religious feminism years ago. For an analysis of how Israel is made up of both a "secular-modern ethno-nationalism and an orthodox-dominated religious traditionalism," see Halperin-Kaddari & Yadgar, 2010. A legacy of Ottoman rule, Israel has a "religious personal status regime", as noted by Halperin-Kaddari & Yadgar (2010), which means that personal status issues are determined according to the religious affiliation and religious laws of the parties involved.
8. See Halperin-Kaddari & Yadgar, 2010.
9. Halperin-Kaddari & Yadgar, 2010.
10. Certainly advances in the field provokes this question and interviewees have raised it as well. As one interviewee reflected, "There is the argument that empowerment can come only from women, but I think that is a mistake, especially in a closed, traditional society like the Orthodox community. The empowerment has to be from working together with men. Otherwise there won't be a real breakthrough." Another interviewee shared a story about a conference on child marriage and polygamy in the Bedouin community to which she was invited: "...And we were just sitting there at the university. I told them you can't have a conference without the men. Go out to the villages, have these conversations with the men. You are just talking to yourselves."
11. Another activist addressed the importance of trying to remain sensitive to the values of the culture while seeking to advance the cause of equality, noting the distinction between culture and tradition and religious practice: "Our goal is to interpret the religion more favorably toward women. In the past there was a lot of outrage and accusations that we were getting outside money to change the Sharia law in Israel. Over time we have built the connection with religious leaders and we are approaching things differently." As such, a more collaborative approach to the work has been developed in recent years that is based on greater cooperation.
12. See the reports by Israel Religious Action Center (IRAC, 2012) and Erez-Likhovsk & Shapira-Rosenberg (2013-2014). Increasingly

there are examples of collaborative efforts with Orthodox women and organizations such as IRAC that are seeking to promote a more pluralistic Judaism. Whereas in the past any collaboration would have been "behind the scenes" in an effort to protect Orthodox women from accusations, as explained by an interviewee, there is a growing willingness to show cooperation in a public manner.

13. As one interviewee also pointed out, the importance of the internet and the impact of the switch from print to online is affecting the field of journalism as a whole: "What has changed over the last decade is that the editors are no longer guessing what people like and what is most important to their audience. There are clear statistics on this for online reading, and we know what people read and not read... It is now much more of a democracy, and less about the editors' viewpoint."
14. See, for example, Zaavi, 2015.
15. For a study on the positive impact of collective action on individual well-being, see Foster, 2015.
16. A research participant reflected on these trends: "The big revolution in recent years in the religious community is taking place on social networks... They use Facebook to raise awareness, to organize, to plan get together for movie screenings and for protests as well. All the data that was collected on the most recent case of an Orthodox politician accused of sexual harassment was gathered through Facebook."
17. With regard to the role of art and storytelling as a medium to reach women and play a greater part in public discourse, an interviewee explains, "We want to present different images of women. We want a woman to learn about herself from the perspective of a woman, not just from men... And the experience of other women can show her that she is not alone..."
18. As an illustrative example, it is interesting to consider the reflections of one interviewee after a film screening: "When I saw the movie 'Suffragette' I realized that everything men were saying against the women's political representation in the ultra-Orthodox community had been said before. They just took it from the 19th century. All the sayings: 'Men do it better'; 'Politics is too messy for women'; 'Men do a great job representing women's interests'; 'It is immodest for women to be in politics.' It is frustrating to think you are stuck in the 19th century, and I realized that we are suffragettes in the very first stage."
19. Keshet & Alon, 2014; Keshet et al., 2001; Dekel, 2015; Azmon, 2001.
20. As noted by Friedman (1999), it is still the case after all these years that many women tend to avoid identifying themselves as feminists. There are many stories of interviewees who are themselves hesitant or who know women who are uncomfortable or downright hostile to the term 'feminism.' As one woman quipped, "In Israel, feminism is definitely the 'f' word." Another activist explained: "My concern is that the feminist movement has become this old aunt that nags about sexual harassment and rape and doesn't let women have fun. That is my worry." On a positive note, one research participant spoke of Gal Gadot's public persona and the recent popularity of her playing Wonder Woman in the blockbuster film: "Maybe since Gal Gadot describes herself as a feminist it may have an influence!"
21. For example, one academic asserted that "The university is not happy to have feminist scholars. There are those who only 'came out of the closet' after they got tenure." Another academic explained, "I feel alone in my activism and I am isolated on campus as a feminist scholar. I work with amazing women, but they are not in my field. There are whole fields at the university that do not have anything related to feminism in the coursework. It is still so marginalized..."
22. An interviewee considered this issue in depth: "We as academics, as feminists, write incomprehensible articles instead of writing articles that people can understand. We have to remember our basic impulse is to change the world and we cannot do this by writing about complex theories. I am not sure we are doing enough to communicate our ideas to the public."
23. As pointed out by interviewees, there is a lack of knowledge and appreciation even among women, especially younger ones, for what their predecessors have achieved and the battles they have fought. As one participant explained: "This is a generational issue. There is a great deal taken for granted now... A lot of girls feel that there is no need to fight, and they do not define themselves as feminists. However, at some point, they will hit the structures that hold them back. So we do have a problem here..."
24. An interviewee expressed this frustration, "One of the big changes you are getting as women are becoming more integrated into more spheres of Israeli life is that now you are getting the push back. In Israel, feminism was and continues to be demonized, so for a lot of younger women, they believe the caricature of an unattractive, angry 'feminist' taking out her own frustration on the world."
25. As a research participant remarked, "There are those who ask us how we can be both a feminist and ultra-Orthodox. They don't understand how we choose our battles. I feel that the feminist revolution forgot all about us and now that we remind them of us, some women are uncomfortable with the whole idea of putting feminism and ultra-Orthodoxy together. There is the old feminist approach that doesn't understand how I can agree to wear a wig and still be a feminist."
26. For insights into the "feminist identifications across the ethnic-national divide", and varying perspectives on the association with feminism, see Sa'ar, Lewin & Simchai (2017). One longtime activist considered what she had learned about adapting the meaning of feminism as she interprets it within her own Palestinian community: "To be a good mom is not to be a bad feminist. I learned this and I don't want to have a feminism that is like a cult with rules, in the same way traditional womanhood dictated expectations." Ilany (2001) questioned the relevance of feminism to different communities, noting the marginalized groups of Mizrahi, lesbian, Palestinian women, women from outlying, peripheral areas, poor and elderly women. She wrote of the perception that "Israeli feminism was the realm of women from non-marginalized groups as well as female victims of violence whose life circumstances brought them to feminist organizations."
27. See Dahan-Kalev, 2001 and Dahan-Kalev, 2007. Abramovitch (2008) discusses the influence of the Mizrahi feminism in terms of "turning sideways" to women who are marginalized and in the geographic, ethnic, economic or social periphery. "Turning sideways" can be distinguished from efforts to turn "upward", for example, by focusing on issues relating to the glass ceiling that prevents the progress of women in senior positions. As Abramovitch (2008) notes, third wave feminism challenges the idea of "feminist universalism", and seeks to broaden the discourse by granting needed recognition to distinctions (i.e., class, ethnic and religious) among women.

28. One interviewee considered the term feminism and its use within the context of Palestinian society. "There is also a problem with the words that are used by feminist organizations. We use a gentler word in Arabic, 'Nasaweeya.' Why use the word that stigmatizes women who want to stay unmarried or be divorced? Let's use words that fit the society that do not raise such heated opposition. Why do I need to scream that I am a feminist? I still am, even if I don't scream it."
29. For more about challenges of the Ethiopian community and integration into Israeli society, see Abu et al, 2017 and Korem & Gabriel Horenczyk, 2015.
30. For more on the Druze women in Israel, see Halabi (2015).
31. This issue was also raised previously in the discussion of politics. For more details, see Chazan 1989, Freedman 1990, Halperin-Kaddari & Yadgar, 2010.
32. See Aharoni & Deeb, 2004, published by Isha L-Isha, Haifa Feminist Center and Kayan -Feminist Organization.
33. Many research participants addressed this issue. For example, as one interviewee explained, "The military takes over, and the discussion is within the narrow framework of what the army says. Public discourse is not just led by and about men; it is the voice of the army, and women and civil society are excluded."
34. See Herzog, 2013. Abramovitch (2008) noted the lack of connection between the two communities, both on a personal level in terms of friendships and networks and in terms of formal collaborative efforts among the communities. Efforts over the years, as reported by interviewees, have tried to create more bridges on the personal and professional level.
35. As early as the 1970's, a central debate among feminist activists was whether the feminist struggle should be separated from other political efforts and/or whether the discrimination against any social group should be linked to the feminist struggle (see Abramovitch, 2008).
36. Thon-Ashkenazy & Loevy, 2015; Aharoni, 2015.
37. See, for example, Lovejoy, Waters & Saxton, 2012; Zorn et al., 2012.
38. Mendes (2015) describes the development of 'Slutwalks' that have spread all over the world, including to Israel, and the growing importance of social media and online activism.
39. See Martin & Valenti, 2013 for an analysis of the new possibilities for collective impact of online activism.
40. As cited from Glasius & Ishkanian, 2015, there is much more cross-over and collaboration between formal NGOs and informal groups of activists that may be apparent, calling the relationship "surreptitious symbiosis."
41. See Israel Religious Action Center (2012) and Erez-Likhovsk & Shapira-Rosenberg (2013-2014).
42. See Misgav & Fenster, 2016 for a study of different types of activism, with the Achoti (Sister) for Women in Israel as a case study.
43. For example, see Messner, 2015 for more about men as "feminist allies" in efforts to end violence against women in the U.S. or see Gillespie & Melching, 2010; Winterbottom, 2009; Shell-Duncan, 2008; and Monkman et al., 2007, for examples of community wide efforts to end cultural practices harmful to women and girls in Africa. Also see Cornwall & Rivas, 2015.
44. This terminology was used by participants in the research who were promoting a shift in the perception of how to address community wide challenges such as early marriage or domestic violence. As more discussion is taking place regarding a broader, more inclusive engagement with communities, interviewees considered how men could fit into the picture in their struggle for gender equality. Often within this context, women spoke about the many benefits for men if gender roles could be less narrowly defined. For example, as one interviewee explained, "Women did everything we could to make feminism work. But we did not have success in getting men into the home, and the narrow view of masculinity is holding back feminism. We need to convince men to have an interest in feminist ideas. There is one academic program in gender studies that focuses on male feminism and masculinity and this needs to happen more." Yet voices of caution are heard as well over how to navigate the process of engagement, as cited by a research participant: "There is a tiny but growing movement of feminist men. But male feminism is tricky, because when men want to do feminism, they want to take over."
45. See Halperin-Kaddari, Gorenstein-Fenig & Horowitz, 2016 for an overview of data related to women and the family. As an example of how the ethno-religious conflict is used to divide women and build on already existing racial divides, see Carmi, 2014. For more on the complexities of creating alliances in countries with ethno-religious conflict such as Israel, see Razavi & Jenichen, 2010.
46. For a more in-depth discussion on the significant challenges for women from different religious communities in Israel to perceive a common struggle or create alliances, see Swirski, 2000 and Hajjar, 2004, and about the complexity in general of nationality and religion, see Shalhoub-Kevorkian et al., 2014. The design of the family law structure, known as 'communalization' which is under the jurisdiction of each religious community, for example, impedes efforts to try to create an alliance or common agenda across the board for women's rights (see Swirski 2000). As cited by interviewees, an example of barriers to cooperation is when Palestinian women activists chose not to join forces with Jewish women's rights activists to promote the option of secular civil family laws as an alternative to communal law of religious courts. Rather, they preferred to deal on their own with Muslim courts, as they successfully did when the Family Courts Law was amended in 2001. This law led to a reduction in the exclusive jurisdiction of Sharia courts, thereby expanding access to civil courts for the Muslim community. As explained by interviewees, the resistance to collaborative efforts also comes from a fear that promoting new laws will give the state more authority over the Palestinian community without addressing the problem of state discrimination. See Hajjar, 2004.
47. See Cornwall & Rivas, 2015 for a discussion of the shift in discourse from 'gender equality' and 'women's empowerment' to global justice at the international level, and the new possibilities of cross- sector collaborations and alliances. See Cole & Phillips (2008) for examples of new alliances for feminist groups on an international scale.
48. See Heilman, 2007; Allon, 2015; Erez-Likhovski & Shapira-Rosenberg, 2014; Sztokman, 2015; Israel Religious Action Center, 2012.



ADVANCES IN WOMEN'S PERSONAL STATUS

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Significant Achievements and Challenges

While there is a wide range of factors that account for the lifestyle and status of women, attention is being paid specifically to the advances in education and economic empowerment- two of the top items on the agenda of the government and NGOs. And indeed, from micro-enterprises to fair trade initiatives, there have been innovative and diverse efforts over the past years to promote women's economic independence. In conjunction with these efforts there are also many formal and informal networks that have been spearheaded by women to try to cultivate more friendly work environments, opportunities for learning and advancement and communities of support. Lastly, over the past decade the goal of enhancing educational and employment opportunities for women, especially within the Palestinian and ultra-Orthodox community, has attracted support from the both the public and philanthropic sectors.

There is progress, yet the question remains whether the efforts to increase the income of women have also been accompanied by other supportive structures and shifts in cultural attitudes. While it is relatively easy to provide job seminars, offer loans and give skills trainings, it is much more difficult to address the broader structural barriers and social obstacles that continue to impede progress. And in the midst of significant advancements in so many fields, there is still a question as to the degree to which many basic assumptions about women and their gender roles have evolved. Workplace cultures across a wide spectrum of professions present barriers to women when it comes to their advancement or equal pay, and surprisingly high numbers of sexual harassment scandals still continue to plague large institutions in the public and private sectors. The persistence of gender-based violence is reflected in the alarming statistics on incidents of domestic violence and even murder. Lastly, not only has the overlap between religion and state remained firmly intact, but there are also numerous signs that the growing influence of extremist religious views has only served to discriminate against women even more.

Selected Strategic Concerns

With investments from the public and private sectors, programs on topics such as employment training and micro credit financing are implemented not only by women's organizations, but also by more broad-based organizations and the government. In advancing the cause of women and girls, it is worthwhile to reflect on the issues that are being supported, the most effective way to address them, and how to strengthen the organizational capacities of the various initiatives. At the same time, intractable problems and complex policy-making processes require the continued support of a cadre of strong, flagship women's organizations to promote these issues over time with a particular focus on achieving full equality. As efforts to advance gender equality continue to expand and the field is open to new players like the more broad-based organizations that

are dealing with women's issues, women's and/or feminist organizations will have to continue reflecting on their distinctive value.

Over the past decade, more attention has been paid to the acknowledged limitations of women's empowerment strategies, and the importance of factoring in broader structural barriers and social obstacles. For example, specifically with regard to economic independence, the question remains whether efforts to increase the income of women have also been accompanied by other supportive structures such as child care and transportation, available job opportunities as well as a shift in cultural attitudes. All types of empowerment programs, according to research participants, have continued to evolve so that they now seek to address not only empowerment at the individual level, but at the collective level as well. It is the translation of individual empowerment to collective empowerment that remains a core aim, so it behooves supporters to assess educational and/or employment programs with this type of consideration in mind.

SECTION I / NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS THUS FAR

Increasing Educational and Employment Opportunities for Women

► **Innovative and Diverse Efforts to Promote Economic Empowerment.** There have been many indicators of success in the field of economic empowerment for women over the years, with wide engagement from diverse communities all over Israel. Achievements in recent years, led by women's organizations, have included the opening of fair trade stores, the expansion of micro-

finance opportunities and the establishment of shared efforts such as cooperatives and partnerships. A variety of employment models have been developed by women's groups to create income for women while encouraging the preservation of cultural traditions and artistic heritage such as in the Ethiopian and Bedouin communities that have too often been overlooked by mainstream Israeli culture. In addition to preserving artistic heritage through efforts such as embroidery and fashion items, other creative employment training programs such as wedding photography and disc jockeying, as well as kitchen catering for Bedouin women, have provided additional income.¹ As a result of these efforts, in many instances women are able to maintain community traditions, gain their own economic independence and strengthen their local communities.²

"The women we work with come from a variety of communities: Mizrahi, Ethiopian, Russian-speaking and Palestinian communities, and many of our partners are on the periphery of Israeli society. For them, to have a business is not enough, to teach to fish is not enough... They need the lakes to fish in, and we need to help create a lake for them by building the fair-trade movement and supporting female owned small businesses."

A key consideration for programs seeking to build economic empowerment is not only to ensure individual success, but to also build wider mechanisms for ongoing support. As such, initiatives

spearheaded by women's organizations in past years have emphasized, among other things, social and business networks as catalysts for personal empowerment, the utilization of mentoring programs and the promotion of business collaborations for joint products and marketing efforts.

► **Networks and Support for Women in the Workplace.** There are more and more efforts by women to independently organize and create forums of support communities within certain fields or organizations. Examples of these types of networks include a forum for women in computer programming, Palestinian women entrepreneurs, feminist activists in academic settings, female journalists, and women in television and film.



"I remember years ago at the startup company where I worked, men would tell me not to be so aggressive. I also heard from them that I was not technical enough, whatever that meant. Other women heard similar comments. The networking that has been created now for the women in this field is essential. It has strengthened them."

Collective actions are being taken by women in a variety of fields, including journalists, filmmakers, and entrepreneurs, and often these groups are addressing the challenge of an 'old boys' club', gender stereotypes, and other obstacles to professional advancement. There is a methodology that has been developed to mainstream gender equality in organizations, and there is a growing community that is being created to learn from organizational case studies in the field.³

► **Greater Access to Religious Education.** The growing access of women to religious education, especially within the Jewish Orthodox community, is often termed "revolutionary" and is considered as a meaningful step towards gender equality.⁴ Since the authority and prestige of religious figures is of great significance in the Orthodox community, this access is creating unprecedented opportunities for employment and leadership.⁵ Women have subsequently then been able to take on leadership roles, including teaching posts on the topic of Torah and Jewish thought and management positions in religious institutions. And as a result of religious educational opportunities for women, communal leadership positions have gradually opened up to women including representatives on religious councils, pleaders in the rabbinical courts and halakhic (Jewish law) counselors and kashrut supervisors.

"We now have a strong cadre of women who are rabbinical scholars in the Orthodox tradition, and there is great potential.... We need to give them much more public visibility and make sure that there are opportunities for them to take on more positions of communal leadership, be mentors, and act as role models."

► **Investments in Reducing Education Gaps.** Efforts to increase educational and employment opportunities for women, especially within the Palestinian and ultra-Orthodox community, have attracted substantial attention from both the public and philanthropic sectors over the past decade. Notable changes have taken place regarding the opportunities specifically for women in the Palestinian community, with important progress in areas such as access to higher education. In terms of education, Palestinian women generally have made the most rapid progress, dramatically increasing educational rates and outpacing Palestinian men.⁶ Gradual shifts in government policy, often due to advocacy efforts by women's organizations, have led to investments in employment options, greater access to child care and transportation within and around the Palestinian community.⁷ The importance of reducing significant gaps in educational opportunities and of providing the infrastructure for Palestinian women and girls to obtain an education and find employment, is slowly gaining more acceptance and drawing greater support through governmental initiatives.⁸

► **Opportunities in the Area of 'Women's Expertise'.** With the growth of women's nonprofits and widespread activism, along with the mainstreaming of the feminist agenda, there are greater opportunities for women to be employed in positions such as trainers, mentors and researchers in the field of women's issues. The continued professionalization of the women's movement has led to additional opportunities, while enabling women to be compensated for working to advance their rights. As paid professionals or as volunteers, women are gaining important expertise and experience in media relations and communication, in advocacy efforts with government, in creating budgets and acquiring planning skills, and in partnering with funding institutions.⁹ There are also numerous opportunities now in place for women from disadvantaged communities, such as Arab Bedouin villages or development towns with a high percentage of Mizrahi populations, to acquire key skills in community activism and engage in social action.¹⁰

SECTION 2 / SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES STILL TO BE FACED

Traditional Gender Roles Remain Deeply Entrenched Amidst Growing Religious Fundamentalism

► **Lack of Supportive Frameworks for Economic Empowerment.** Over the past decade, more attention has been paid to the acknowledged limitations of women's empowerment strategies, and the need to focus not only on individual women but on broader structural barriers and social obstacles.¹¹ Specifically with regard to economic independence, there is a greater understanding by public officials that there needs to be more emphasis on issues such as the overall hiring practices of employers and job opportunities in conjunction with the need to strengthen individual skills (i.e., skill training seminars, coaching in resume building, interviews). In addition, the question remains whether the efforts to increase the income of women are also accompanied by other supportive structures and shifts in cultural attitudes, ultimately enabling them to leave the cycle of poverty. For example, within the Palestinian community there is still a need to continue investing significantly in the infrastructure- transportation, child care arrangements and job openings within a reasonable travel distance to support a woman's ability to work.¹²

“There are cultural obstacles for women to go to work in our community; changing perspectives is also about changing the situation: If a woman needs to wake up at five in the morning and stand in the dark until the bus comes, and it takes two hours till she gets to work at a job with a low salary, that’s a problem.... And then she comes home late at night, after the kids have been in expensive day care all day or with the family. Of course, her husband will tell her that it is just easier and cheaper for her to stay home.”

Indeed, employment opportunities for Palestinian women have not kept pace with their educational levels and there persists a significant employment gap between Arab women and Jewish women.¹³

► **Traditional Attitudes towards Gender Still in Place.** In the midst of significant progress and advancements in so many fields, there is concern that basic assumptions about women and their role in society have not continued to evolve at the same pace.

Research participants posed this question about evolving gender roles with regard to their own family life, the institutions in which they work, and their community's expectations of them. For example, in considering the growing educational and employment levels among women within the ultra-Orthodox

“In Israel, we are not just family friendly; we are family obsessed. Women don’t have reproductive rights in Israel; they have reproductive duties.”

“In our community, in recent years we brought the women outside to the workplace, but we did not bring the man inside to the house... And the women still do all the housework. We didn’t deal with how men need to be real partners with the women.”

community in recent years, it is important to distinguish, as one interviewee explained, between encouraging employment among women in order “to empower women” versus employment that is “to empower the Haredi lifestyle.” Moreover, the recently developed ‘gender index’ in Israel that tracks women’s progress in all populations indicates an ongoing wage gap between men and women, and other indicators also point to persistent inequalities in other areas as well.¹⁴ Examples of “macho” or “chauvinistic” workplace cultures were described by research participants across a wide spectrum of professions where barriers to women existed when it came to their advancement or equal pay.¹⁵ And as previously referred to, surprisingly high numbers of sexual harassment scandals still continue to plague work places and public institutions like the police, the army, the high tech industry and elsewhere.¹⁶



► **Uneven Opportunities for Religious Education.** As is the case with so many aspects of gender equality, the progress is not clear-cut. While there have been significant advances for Orthodox women in terms of their ability to gain access to religious texts and leadership opportunities, the dominant trend is in the direction of political radicalization and resistance towards egalitarianism of any kind. Moreover, there is concern that the religious egalitarianism that has occurred in the Jewish community is primarily taking place only in the more privileged strata of society (i.e., Ashkenazi, middle to upper class, close to the geographic center of Israel).¹⁷ The situation for the majority of religious Zionist girls in the social, economic and geographic periphery is reportedly getting worse, with the trend leaning towards separate, and often unequal, education for religious girls.¹⁸ The growing wave of extremist policies on gender segregation is increasingly impacting on all types of educational frameworks, leading to further discrimination against women and girls in both religious and non-religious institutions (such as the army and university settings).¹⁹

► **Growing Extremism Impacting on General Society.** Not only has the connection between religion and state remained firmly intact, but there is much evidence of the growing influence of extreme religious viewpoints which tend to discriminate even more against women and girls.²⁰ In recent years, within the ultra-Orthodox community, there are many examples of gender segregation ranging from the erasing of women's images from newspapers, pamphlets and even children's books to women being expected to sit at the back of the bus and avoid 'men-only' sidewalks.²¹ Given the growing political power of the ultra-Orthodox community, this situation is not only affecting women within the ultra-Orthodox community, but it is also impacting on the larger community as well, with public battles over gender segregation on buses, airlines, in universities and other public spaces.²²

► **Persistence of Social Norms and Actions that are Harmful to Women.** Sexual harassment is evidenced in all segments and levels of Israeli society, with stories over the past few years of high-profile men in elected positions, in the army, and in the national police coming under suspicion for sexually assaulting or harassing women.²³ Even with more public awareness, there still are multiple examples of domestic violence and even murder, including the killing of women in the name of family 'honor'.²⁴ The plight of *agunot* and *mesorevet get*, (women chained' in their marriages) remains largely unresolved and economic challenges for women who are able to leave their partners persist. Longstanding practices harmful to women and girls continue to be found in more traditional communities, such as child marriage in certain Arab communities and in the ultra-Orthodox Jewish community. Polygamy among the Bedouin community in the Negev is still practiced, and there is great difficulty in galvanizing communal support against this tradition.²⁵

“Here in Israel we inhabit a few centuries. We are in the 21st century, and we can have conversations about ‘leaning in’ and whether or not women can have it all in balancing career and family. We can talk about politics in which we are on a par with other western countries. And then we inhabit the 20th century when we are still talking about equal pay for equal work and sexual harassment. Then we inhabit the 10th century, with these medieval regulations that govern family law with medieval social structures.”

“Who would have thought twenty years ago that we would have radio stations that do not allow women to talk, sidewalks marked for ‘men-only’ or a bus system where women have to sit in the back of the bus? There is no linear progression.”

“In the last few years the term ‘multi-culturalism’ is used to defend an intolerant society. We are told that each society has different values and roles for women; how ultra-Orthodox women want to sit at the back of the bus, and how Bedouin women support polygamy... So, in the midst of this, how do we react? Are we supposed to respect every aspect of a society that always keeps women down?”

SECTION 3 / REFLECTION ON TWO SELECTED STRATEGIC CONCERNS AND A FEW QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER...

I. Considering the Role of Women's Organizations and Broad-Based Organizations

Broad-based organizations are addressing multiple issues related to women's status and are implementing a variety of programs for women.²⁶ Growing emphasis on gender equality on the world stage has also led international development agencies to consider gender impact in their funding to Israel, thereby attracting more NGOs to the field. Several broad-based organizations in Israel have been able to successfully pioneer educational and employment opportunities for women (for example, among Bedouin women in the Negev), that uniquely fit into the culture of the community. It is important to carefully consider this new reality, especially as so many of these general organizations, as distinguished from many women's organizations, are able to scale up programs geared towards women and operate in communities around the country.

There is extensive coalition work taking place between women's organizations and broad-based organizations on subjects such as economic empowerment for women, increased political representation, and the promotion of more egalitarian and pluralistic frameworks for religious expression and secular options such as civic marriage. It is often the collective voice of diverse organizations that can bring meaningful change, and it is likely that more creative alliances will continue to develop as the field grows. At the same time, it is important to consider the intractable problems and complex policy-making processes that require a cadre of strong, flagship women's organizations with a singular focus on achieving full equality. Over the years, these women's organizations have brought expertise in the unique experiences of women and girls, and in-depth knowledge of the barriers that exist to their advancement, while ensuring that their work is informed by feminist scholarship and principles of empowerment. Many of these women's organizations have not only provided services, but they have also been uniquely positioned to advocate for continued public support for meaningful programs affecting women and girls and have worked to ensure that these programs are accompanied by advances in legislation.²⁷

As efforts to improve the lives of women continue to show signs of success and the field remains open to new players like broad-based organizations, women's and/or feminist organizations will have to continue to redefine their distinguishing, unique value. It is, in a sense, the inevitable price that many women's organizations are now paying for successfully promoting the principles of gender mainstreaming. Funders and other supporters as well will need to consider carefully not only specific short-term projects or trends in the field, but also the role of women's organizations in helping to build the overall women's agenda in Israel.

Questions to Consider on the Role of Women's Organizations:

- ❓ What is the current state of dialogue and cooperation taking place between broad-based organizations and women's organizations? What are the advantages of collaborative efforts? Should such exchange be better nurtured and supported?
- ❓ What are possible steps to ensure that broad-based organizations that are involving themselves with women's issues are fully prepared and committed to promoting gender equality?
- ❓ What conversations are taking place to consider which topics could be 'mainstreamed' (i.e., political training programs) and which should be targeted only for women or girls (i.e., recovery from sexual abuse)?



2. Working To Address Structural Changes and Incorporate Systematic Approaches

Since their early days, women's organizations in Israel, as well as their counterparts around the globe, have played a critical role as agents of change to empower women at the individual and collective levels.²⁸ The process of empowerment is viewed as fundamental for building the capacity of women as social change agents, thereby enabling them to promote a more equitable and just society both for themselves and their communities. A growing body of literature has developed that elaborates on the meaning and definition of the term 'empowerment', as well as on its dimensions, process and outcomes.²⁹ As the public sector and broad-based organizations invest in enhancing the status of women in areas such as in education and employment, there is an ongoing question, both in Israel and abroad, regarding the degree to which these types of programs will lead to greater empowerment for women and full equality. For example, economic empowerment programs employed over the years by feminist organizations have focused not only on the question of a woman's contribution to the household income, but also on the importance of a woman's economic independence. It is her economic independence that is understood to be the prerequisite for exercising agency in the household, community and/or the wider society (i.e., increased women's control over family resources; increased access to quality education and health services; improved dynamic of power relations within families; impact on decreasing poverty over time).³⁰

All types of empowerment programs, according to research participants, have continued to evolve so that they now seek to address not only empowerment at the individual level, but at the collective level as well.³¹ Indeed, there is noted difficulty in translating the work of women's empowerment groups into action on the communal level, and it requires significant investment to equip activists with the tools necessary to advance their status and rights inside their own communities and in the wider society.³² Recognition of these limitations has also led to a notable shift in the strategic focus at efforts of empowerment, with greater emphasis placed on leadership skills and community organizing.³³ It is the translation of individual empowerment to collective empowerment that remains a core principle, and it is worthwhile to assess educational and/or employment programs with this in mind.

Questions to Consider on Ensuring a More Systematic Approach:

- ❓ How is the term 'empowerment' defined in the creation of programs seeking to enhance the educational and employment opportunities of women and girls?
- ❓ To what degree do these programs incorporate an approach that looks both at individual achievement and broader social issues? How are structural barriers and/or cultural norms that often serve as major obstacles to full equality being addressed in the program content?
- ❓ Are programs focusing on individual achievement also considering opportunities to equip women activists with the tools needed to advance their status and better conditions both within and without their own communities?
- ❓ How does work at the individual level translate into enabling women to become agents of change and community leaders educating others?

1. See Sarab (2016) for a discussion of the programs offered by the Arab-Jewish Center for Equality, Empowerment and Cooperation (AJEEC) that trains Bedouin women to be photographers and disc jockeys in the women's sections of weddings.

2. See Alhuzail, 2015 for research on micro-finances efforts among Bedouin women in the Negev.

3. Ben Eliyahu & Lerer, 2015.
4. As cited in Ilany (2007), Zivan writes in 2005 "Now, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, as the achievements of the feminist revolution begin to permeate public awareness, as liberal Jewish movements already accept women rabbis and leaders, the voice of orthodox Jewish women is finally emerging, seeking its place in orthodox Judaism."
5. Interviewees discussed various options for women, which can include involvement with the Institute for Rabbinic Court Pleaders that trains representatives for agunot and mesoravot get at rabbinical courts, programs for Halachic advisors on issues such as Jewish family purity, scholarship in joint 'think-tanks' with rabbis on Halacha such as family life and planning, and greater female involvement in synagogue life.
6. See Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute Analysis of Central Bureau of Statistics data, in 2000 and 2014. In 2014, 30% of Arab women ages 25-34 had 16+ years of education, compared with only 10% in 2000. The rates for Arab women have surpassed those for Arab men, with 30% compared with 21%. It should be noted however, that along with these improvements, there are significant gaps that still remain between Arabs and Jews at both the lower and higher education levels (Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute Analysis, 2015).
7. Deeb, 2010; Keinan & Bar, published by Kaayan (2007).
8. See Hai, 2012; Hai, 2013; Hai, 2014; and the Inter-Agency Task Force on Israeli Arab Issues Report on Government Resolution 922 (2017), for an overview of governmental efforts to reduce significant gaps and rectify decades of discriminatory policies towards the Palestinian community. For example, public initiatives such as the Government Resolution 922 provides substantial funds and support in strengthening social services and upgrading the current infrastructure in Arab localities.
9. Herzog (2012) notably writes of this growing phenomenon.
10. See Dahan-Kalev, 2007 and Herzog, 2015. With specific regard to women in the Bedouin communities in the South, there are a variety of challenges, as cited by research participants. These challenges include the following: 1. More than half of the Bedouin community in the Negev lives in villages that are not recognized by the State and are therefore lacking basic services such as infrastructure, education, health, as well as any sort of economic activity. Unemployment and poverty rates are extremely high in all of the Bedouin villages (whether recognized or unrecognized) and are especially so among women. 2. The Bedouin villages in the Negev are scattered in a large geographic area with minimum transportation facilities to connect them, and this is one of the many obstacles that hinders women's access to services and paid employment; 3. As members of a patriarchal-tribal structure, girls and women in the Bedouin community in the Negev endure extremely rigid rules of conduct. Restrictions on females' mobility outside the private sphere of their family further minimize their opportunity to access education and employment.
11. See Ilany, (2001).
12. As cited in the NGO Alternative Pre-Sessional Report on Israel's Implementation of the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, The Working Group on the Status of Palestinian Women Citizens of Israel, 2006. As noted back in 2006, in a report submitted by a group of organizations to CEDAW (the UN Committee to End Discrimination against Women), there is still a gap between Palestinian women and every other sector of the population in every sphere of life (i.e., standards of education, employment, health and political representation).
13. The most significant employment gap is between Arab and Jewish women. Even though employment rates for Arab women have increased since 1997, only 33% of Arab women of working age were employed in 2014, compared with 71% of Jewish women (Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute Analysis of Central Bureau of Statistics data, 2000 and 2014).
14. See Tzameret-Kertcher et al. (2016). The Gender Index, published by WIPS-The Center for the Advancement of Women in the Public Sphere. For more on the increasing education rates of women in Israel along with continued, while improved, gender inequality in the labor market, see Stier & Herzberg-Druker, 2017. To explore more details on labor force participation rates, education levels, trends in gender pay gaps, and attitudes towards gender roles and the division of labor at home, see Mandel & Birgier (2015).
15. See Stier & Herzberg-Druker, 2017 for an analysis of the gender inequality in the labor market. See Mann, 2017 for an analysis of Israel's early childhood care and education policy, and how it can affect women in the workplace.
16. For example, an internal survey of the Israeli army found that 1 out of 6 female soldiers reported that they have been sexually harassed during their military service, as reported in Times of Israel. September 10, 2017. For more on women's role in the army, see Sztokman, 2015. For a historical perspective on the dynamics of women in the Israeli police force, see Shadmi, 1993.
17. As Shakdiel was cited by Ilany (2006), there was a breakthrough by 2006 because Torah scholarship for women was no longer controversial. Shakdiel, however, does note in Ilany (2006), that there are economic obstacles to Torah study for all girls and that there is a need to outreach to Mizrahi women in order to recruit them to relevant educational frameworks.
18. Ilany (2006) addresses the gap between the seminaries versus the religious state-education system. As noted, the religious



state education system separates the girls from the boys, holds them to a much lower standard with lower expectations, and does not introduce them to any thoughts of empowerment or gender equality.

19. In the past few years, there has been much greater attention and growing public acknowledgement of the efforts by Ultra-Orthodox communities to further exclude women from the public sphere in all types of settings in Israel. As one interviewee observed, "We are dragging the ultra-Orthodox into the modern society - into the army, higher education- but the cost is their demand that their needs of gender separation and gender restrictions be respected. Prior to a few years ago, we let the ultra-Orthodox do what they wanted in their sphere and we, more or less, did what we wanted in our sphere. As they continue to push into secular society, all of a sudden there is an awakening of the Israeli public and an awareness of a red line."
20. See Chazan, 2011.
21. As a simple example, an interviewee shared a picture of an advertisement for a large fundraising event that was being held for an Orthodox women's organization. The advertisement listed only men on the event schedule, which included speeches and musical concerts. For emphasis, she exclaimed, "There is not one woman in sight on this entire poster! And it's a women's organization!"
22. For more about this issue, see Sztokman, 2015.
23. See Erez et al, 2015; Shalhoub-Kervorkian & Daher-Nashif, 2013; and Hassan, 2002. Also see Halperin- Kaddari, Gorenstein-Fenig & Horowitz, 2016 and Wilmovsky & Tamir, Eds. (2012) for further analysis of these topics, and a discussion of the challenge in gathering accurate data on sexual harassment and assaults.
24. There is also concern about whether such intractable problems can be effectively addressed, as explained by a research participant: "We can organize a demonstration, but the question is whether we are really teaching against violence in our community. Each time there is an incident, it gets in the public spotlight and then it is forgotten again. And we need to take a more comprehensive approach to these challenges... We know that the big subjects like poverty and violence can't be addressed by only one organization." See Erez et al., 2015; Shalhoub-Kervorkian & Daher-Nashif, 2013; Hassan, 2002; See Halperin- Kaddari, Gorenstein-Fenig & Horowitz, 2016 and Wilmovsky & Tamir, Eds. (2012).
25. See Rabia (2011) for an overview of this phenomenon in the Bedouin community in the Negev.
26. For an international perspective on these trends, see Arutyunova & Clark 2013.
27. See Schmid & Almog-Bar (2016) for background on the challenges in advocacy for human service providers in Israel. For an Israeli case study exploring some of the challenges of maintaining feminist principles in the midst of an institutionalization process, see Zilber, 2002.
28. See Ilany, 2001. For international examples, see Malhorta et. al, 2002 and Kabeer, 2000.
29. For discussion on this topic, see Razavi, 2000 and Malhorta et. al, 2002.
30. See Sa'ar, 2007 as an illustration of comprehensive evaluation of economic empowerment of Economic Empowerment of Women (EEW) programs. Assessments of EEW programs over the years have considered factors not only related to business ownership, but also indicators such as the increase in the average family income, the pursuit of further education, savings, and gains in steady employment.
31. For example, Malhorta et.al (2002) argue that while economic, social and political factors are often critical to ensure that women are empowered, these factors are not always sufficient. Moreover, they assert that "without women's individual or collective ability to recognize and utilize resources in their own interest, resources cannot bring about empowerment."
32. See Abu-Jaber Nijem, 2007 and Ilany, 2001. As cited by Ilany (2001), "the main weakness of the strategy of empowerment is its focus on the individual woman, as opposed to structural and social processes."
33. For example, see Deeb, 2010 for a discussion of how the Kayan-Feminist Organization shifted strategies in an effort to create more sustainable, grassroots community activism among women.



LANDSCAPE OF NGO WORK

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Significant Achievements and Challenges

A broad range of women's groups have been established in the past decade or so from small grassroots initiatives to larger, institutionalized organizations to address the needs and interests of various populations from different religious and ethnic backgrounds, including the needs of newly arrived immigrants and refugees. The very existence of many of these organizations is considered an achievement and step toward greater progress in improving the lives of women all over Israel. The diversity in the agenda of the organizations continues to expand and the strategies employed by organizations and activists continue to develop in new, innovative directions. Moreover, there are many opportunities for women to engage in activist efforts, which are rooted in their own feminist principles, on topics of more general societal concern. Indeed, it is possible to see feminist work in all types of NGOs and public initiatives.

Yet, while there is a vibrant field of women's organizations and feminist activism, many organizations involved with women's issues are not necessarily well known among the general public. And while there has been significant progress over the years toward greater inclusion, the challenge of integrating diverse voices into the mainstream agenda of women's organizations remains unresolved. Questions have also been raised about the ability of established organizations to mobilize large numbers of activists and supporters in order to effect large-scale community change. Moreover, the expansion and diffusion in the number of initiatives dealing with women's issues has led to a sharp increase in competition for funding at the same time that the amount of funds available in Israel and from overseas has diminished. The continued dispersion of the work in advancing women has left the field with few natural 'conveners', and there is widespread concern that the lack of solidarity or "sense of sisterhood" in the field impedes overall progress.

Selected Strategic Concerns

Over the years, critics of ngo-ization claim that it has led to a weakening of social movements, and well-intentioned philanthropic practices in various fields of civil society have been seriously challenged over whether they have inadvertently inhibited the ability of established organizations to mobilize large numbers of volunteers and activists. In light of this, it is worth exploring how current funding policies impact on the capacity of community leaders to expand their base. It is also important to examine how an emphasis on project-based methodology affects an organization's ability to create flexible strategic plans. Foundations today should explore how to balance their own strategic needs with the needs of the field so that their grantees have some latitude to act proactively and with flexibility in the dynamic work of social change.

A paradigm shift in community-based fundraising and income generating activities has taken place in recent years, and women's organizations are gradually recognizing the need to diversify their



funding sources and tap other means of financial support. Organizations are employing a variety of different strategies to develop additional sources of income, garner greater philanthropic support locally, and more pro-actively engage with the community. Many of these efforts reinforce another important goal of organizations which is to extend their outreach by effectively involving their local communities and building long-term support. While volunteer engagement has always been a priority for many organizations, more and more nonprofits in this field are creating a base for community fundraising (i.e., membership drives, local fundraising events, online campaigns, active board members). Activities that provide opportunities for meaningful community engagement, including platforms for exchange and storytelling, should be nurtured and further developed.

SECTION I / NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS THUS FAR

An Increase in the Number and Diversity of Organizations, Outreach to Targeted Populations, Services Provided and Opportunities for Collaboration

► **Multiplicity of Organizations and Avenues for Activism.** Over the past decade or so, a broad range of women's groups have been established from grassroots initiatives to larger, established organizations to address the needs and interests of various populations of different religious and ethnic backgrounds. The very existence of many of these organizations in and of itself is considered an achievement, and a step toward greater progress in improving the lives of women all over Israel.¹ New and varied areas of concern have been pursued, including specialized economic support to battered women or women seeking to leave prostitution, political leadership training courses, free legal counseling for marginalized women, breast cancer awareness, mentorships for women to serve as board directors, and forums for women filmmakers.² As a result, the strategies employed by organizations and activists continue to develop in new directions.³

There are coalitions of all kinds, with women's and feminist organizations, activists, and broad-based organizations, addressing a range of topics from the promotion of civil marriage and rehabilitation services for prostitutes, to addressing the gender wage gap and enhancing the political representation of women in all levels of elected office.

► **Adaptation of Feminist Values by Broad-based Organizations.** Feminist work takes place in organizations that are not necessarily women's organizations and may not include the term 'feminism' in the way they describe their work.⁴ As addressed earlier, there is a mainstreaming of the feminist agenda and efforts to promote gender equality can be found in all types of public and private institutions. There are also certain areas, in the fields of political leadership and civil service training for example, where there are programs into which feminist principles have been decidedly integrated and forums have been established that have purposefully included both men and women as part of their organizational strategy.⁵ Social justice organizations that are based on values of fairness and equality often address issues that are disproportionately affecting women (i.e., fairer working conditions for those under contract employment, such as caregivers or day care workers).⁶ Alternatively, there are organizations, such as those promoting greater access for people with disabilities, that consider themselves entirely rooted in feminist values, yet are not led exclusively by women.

"The feminist arena today is more diverse, inclusive and intersectional in its approach than it was 15 years ago. New generations of activists are bringing fresh perspectives and knowledge to the field, and organizations are coming together to collaborate in more meaningful and strategic ways. We should be proud of what we have accomplished... even with all the work yet to be done."

“We have examples now of when we were able to break the partition among ourselves as women and work together. And now we are able to collaborate with men, and to galvanize our efforts with supporters from abroad.... If we show that women can be a catalyst for change in Israel for revolution, then the sky is the limit. This is an engine with great power.”

► **Greater Opportunities for Cooperative Efforts and Cross-Sector Collaboration.** A growing range of efforts featuring a broader range of subjects (from peace initiatives to protecting girls at risk) that are being addressed by women's organizations and individual activists are contributing to new, unexpected partnerships all over the country. With the growth of 'religious feminism', as highlighted earlier, there are more opportunities for women of different religious communities to work together towards advancing women's status. Greater openness to different aspects of feminism has also led to a “softening of the feminism” for example, within the Palestinian community, leading to more dialogue and cooperation between secular and religious women. Likewise, there are a variety of concerns such as the promotion of civil marriage and the fight against gender

segregation in public spaces that is paving the way for new collaborations between religious and secular activists within the Jewish community.⁷

► **Engaging with Community and Religious Leadership.** Activists from more traditional backgrounds have often had to face the challenge of 'legitimacy' in their own communities, causing them to tread carefully in their efforts.⁸ There exists for them the danger of being accused of bringing “imported feminism” into their community or being considered “anti-religious.”⁹ However, there are signs of new types of collaborative efforts with male communal leadership to advance issues that significantly impact the lives of women in communities around Israel.¹⁰ These new players may have been perceived previously as 'unlikely partners,' yet to the women involved, their emerging collaborations are natural and essential. As indicated by activists, collaborative efforts with religious leaders, when possible, can help make the distinction between what is cultural and traditional versus what is rooted in religion, a critical distinction when it comes to opposing long standing traditions such as polygamy that can be found among certain Bedouin communities in the Negev.¹¹ Indeed, research participants have spoken of looking to different models to bring change at the grassroots level from non-Western countries and of engaging with the religious communal leadership in addressing discriminatory social norms.¹²

SECTION 2 / SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES STILL TO BE FACED

Lack of Visibility, Problematic Funding Landscape and Difficulty in Integrating Diverse and Marginalized Voices

► **Lack of Widespread Recognition and Visibility.** As mentioned, the general impression among research participants is that many organizations dealing with women's issues are not necessarily well known or have limited visibility either with the general public or specifically among women.¹³

“I would want to know more about what is going on, but there is so little information available. I find out about activities often by chance. There is no organized database that one can tap to easily gain a clear picture of the extent of activism in the field.”

Indeed, one of the consequences of the diffusion and growth of women's organizations is that there is less familiarity with each and every one of the many diverse efforts. Another explanation offered is that there is a general lack of sufficient media attention paid to critical issues facing women, and as such, it is suggested that women's and feminist organizations have to be much more aggressive in “marketing” themselves and their work to the general public.¹⁴



The issue of visibility is also linked to the challenge of sparking broad community-based engagement with issues facing women and girls and affects the ability of the many diverse efforts around the country to coalesce together and create large-scale collective impact.

Questions have been raised about the ability of established organizations to mobilize large numbers of volunteers, activists and supporters to effect widespread community change, especially in light of the concerns regarding the price of 'ngo-ization'.¹⁵ Indeed, many research participants pointed out that several of the more prominent social struggles that have attracted public attention in recent years have been predominately led, not by nonprofits, but by different types of independent activists in the field.¹⁶

► **Problematic Funding Environment.** The expansion and diffusion in the number of initiatives dealing with women's issues has led to a sharp increase in competition for funding at the same time that the amount of funds has diminished both in Israel and from overseas.¹⁷ Women's and/or feminist organizations are often seeking grants from the same limited number of funders, and are also competing against a growing number of broad-based organizations that are adding gender-specific programs.¹⁸ It is also pointed out, that the current funding mechanisms, which are generally limited to a few years, do not help to strengthen the overall organizational capacities of NGOs nor encourage long-term planning.¹⁹ And while there are several examples of organizations that have adopted creative strategies to ensure local funding revenues (i.e., corporate philanthropy, socially conscious businesses, membership driven organizations), many of the organizations in the field remain dependent on the model of funding from abroad and have yet to explore other sources of potential income.²⁰

► **Challenge of Integrating Diverse and Marginalized Voices.**

While there has been significant progress over the years toward greater inclusion, the challenge of integrating diverse voices into the mainstream agenda of women's organizations remains unresolved.²¹ Whereas in the past there have been targeted efforts to be inclusive of different communities such as lesbian, Mizrahi and Palestinian women, there are various segments of the population that still are underrepresented, including members of the Russian speaking and Ethiopian communities.

Concern is expressed by many research participants regarding the lack of diversity in the staff and lay leadership of too many women's organizations, the degree to which organizational agendas are not representative of different groups of women in Israel, and the manner in which partnerships are developed in and among various communities.²² The topic of inclusiveness within women's organizations was raised not only in regard to representation of different populations, but also in regard to regional representation. Many peripheral regions of the country outside of the major cities do not have a strong women's organizational presence on the ground.²³

“Where are the big levers to make change? Within the feminist movement, it is hard to see the levers of big changes... You can't make a huge public impact with micro wins, with micro achievements.”

“In general, the women's organizations do not have Russian speaking women on their steering committees, their boards or their staff. They are not present and thus are not able to shape the agenda and be part of the decision-making process. Who are the women in contract employment work? Who are the women who are suffering from sexual harassment and stigmas regarding sex? There are no Russian speakers for example on the hot lines for sexual abuse... If you want to help a certain population, it helps to be from that population.”

“You can't send a coordinator to commute from Tel Aviv to the Negev every day. It makes a difference when you have a local coordinator and an understanding of community politics and someone who knows the neighborhood activists, the local residents.... You can't talk about the place, or in the name of the place; you have to speak from the place itself”

Often under significant budgetary constraints, many organizations are unable to broaden their outreach, e.g. translate materials into Amharic, Arabic and Russian, create a local presence in a variety of locations.

► **Lack of Natural Conveners or Networks.** While there have been numerous coalitions throughout the years and forums that have effectively advocated for shared concerns, the continued diffusion of the work in advancing women has left the field with few natural 'conveners'.²⁴

"I am in the field for years, and until I actively began to seek out organizations, I had no idea of their scope. There are strategies that we think we are inventing, but women years ago were using them... We would all benefit if there was a better way to learn from other women and from past experiences."

There are an insufficient number of online (i.e., shared websites) or offline meeting places (i.e., annual national conferences), where nonprofit staff, community activists, social media activists, and researchers can get together to promote larger networks of collaboration. Many research participants firmly believe there is a great need to develop further opportunities for learning exchange and meaningful engagement.²⁵ As more and more feminist activism is conducted outside of the formal organizational sphere, there is also the question of how nonprofit staff can better partner with local activists and representatives from online communities. Indeed, interviewees noted with concern the current lack of

solidarity or "sense of sisterhood" in the field. And without natural conveners to promote collaboration, existing organizations have less ability to speak on behalf of large sectors of the female population and have more limited opportunities to identify areas of shared interests.

"We do not have a coalition of feminist organizations... and we need to have one voice."

"We have celebrated diversity over the years... Now it is time to find what is shared beyond our separate identity groups. We have to turn back and see about where the solidarity is. We can then build on this to make real progress..."

SECTION 3 / REFLECTION ON TWO SELECTED STRATEGIC CONCERNS AND A FEW QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER...

I. Reviewing Funding Mechanisms, Relationships and Requirements in Philanthropy

Over the years, certain costs associated with 'ngo-ization' have been readily identified in civil societies around the world and particularly in regard to the women's movement.²⁶ Critics of ngo-ization claim that it has led to a weakening of social movements, and mass mobilizations over political issues have given way to micro-level interventions that produce strictly 'technical' solutions.²⁷ There is also the charge that certain well-intentioned philanthropic practices have backfired, leading to unforeseen and potentially counterproductive results.²⁸ In light of this, it is worth examining how current funding policies advance or possibly inhibit the capacity of community leaders to engage on a wider scale, and how the emphasis on project-based methodology impacts on their ability to create flexible strategic plans.

Many funders of women's organizations direct monies for specific, short term projects rather than for organizational infrastructure and capacity building.²⁹ Additionally, they often limit the grants to a period of two to three years which usually undercuts the real possibility of systemic change.³⁰ Priorities can



become skewed and focused primarily on meeting project timetables and objectives, a situation which often gives organizations little flexibility or ability to design a long-term strategy.³¹ Proposal and reporting requirements are quite burdensome, certainly compared to the actual amount of funds provided, requiring organizations to devote precious time and resources to this task.³² These requirements and the sophistication demanded in reporting, also tend to disadvantage and actually exclude those women's organizations or grassroots initiatives coming from the margins of society either economically, socially and/or geographically.

Women's and/or feminist organizations are often seeking grants from the same limited number of funders and are also competing against a growing number of broad-based organizations that are adding gender-specific programs.³³ The chronic difficulty in covering operational expenses can lead organizations to adapt to the agenda of funders at the expense of their own vision, strategies or ideologies.³⁴ In acknowledging this dilemma, some funders are offering multi-year grants and providing operational support to those partners they consider long-term to encourage them to develop more systematic and creative approaches to their work. In recent years, funders have sought to encourage more collaborative requests for proposals (including, for example, covering salary expenses of individual organizational representatives who are members of a joint coalition). Foundations today should explore how to balance their own strategic needs with the needs of the field so that their grantees have some latitude to act proactively and with flexibility in the dynamic work of social change.³⁵

Questions to Consider on Philanthropic Practices:

- ❓ What is the best way to support organizational efforts that are aimed at creating broad, systematic change? How can the work of organizations and activists be enhanced?
- ❓ How do the current reporting mechanisms help or hinder the ability of an organization to be strategic and responsive to current concerns, especially in such a volatile environment? How do the current reporting structures inform decision making processes both for funders and for organizations/activists?
- ❓ How are funders nurturing long-term relationships with organizations to support both infrastructure needs and provide strategic flexibility? What does it mean to create partnerships in philanthropy?
- ❓ How do funders' emphasis on innovation impact work in the field? How can systematic change be supported over time, and what are realistic expectations regarding such change in the short term?

2. Strengthening Efforts to Diversify Resources and Enhance Community-based Fundraising

Over the past decade, a paradigm-shift in community-based fundraising and income generating activities has taken place in many countries around the world. Whereas in the past emerging civil societies had been nurtured and primarily supported from overseas, that has changed in Israel and elsewhere.³⁶ More and more NGOs, including women's and feminist organizations, are gradually recognizing the need to diversify their funding sources and tap other means of financial support.³⁷ Organizations in the feminist arena have engaged in income-generating activities (i.e., production and sale of artwork, renting out of office space, providing trainings for cost) and have developed partnerships with the private sector (i.e., in-kind contributions, volunteers and mentorships, sponsorship of events). Certainly, these types of activities are complex endeavors, and have to carefully be developed in order to ensure that they continue to reflect the values and principles that the organization is seeking to promote.³⁸ It is also

critical to consider what is feasible for women's organizations working with different populations and the opportunity each community may or may not have to build partnerships and attract support. For example, a women's organization intent on fundraising in a major metropolitan area has very different prospects for success compared to an organization from a community that may be in the geographic or economic periphery.³⁹

Perhaps most importantly for women's and feminist organizations as well as for other nonprofits in Israeli civil society is the critical link between community-based fundraising and community engagement. While volunteer engagement has always been a priority for many of these organizations, more and more nonprofits are expanding their contact and engagement with local supporters in order to create a base for community fundraising (i.e., membership drives, local fundraising events, online campaigns, active board members).⁴⁰ Resource-sharing models and coalition building continue to be developed and replicated by women's organizations in recent years. These types of models, which include shared efforts in public campaigns and advocacy, cooperative approaches to marketing items for sale and joint grant applications, all help to extend resources and offer the possibility of forging new or improved partnerships. Lastly, gaining visibility and creating an audience for compelling stories or for women in the arts is of crucial significance as nonprofits seek to broaden their community outreach. As part of efforts to build stronger community networks, many organizations have begun to either offer a platform of their own or tap into one of the existing platforms for women's storytelling and artistic expression which are increasingly cropping up.⁴¹

Questions to Consider on Diversification of Resources and Community Outreach:

- ❓ How can organizations gain greater visibility and broaden their community outreach? What are the possibilities for expanding local, volunteer engagement to create a stronger base for community fundraising (i.e., membership drives, fundraising events, online campaigns, active board members)?
- ❓ What types of resource-sharing models, shared media campaigns and coalition building efforts by NGOs can be replicated? What cooperative approaches to marketing items for sale and joint grant applications can be utilized?
- ❓ Are there other ways to diversify resources and forge new partnerships with other sectors (i.e., public, private)?
- ❓ How is it possible to expand the opportunities for shared platforms to promote story-telling and artistic expression?

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1. As reported by Abu Jaber Nijem, 2007 the very emergence and institutionalization of women's organizations was considered to be a significant achievement in and of itself. Likewise, the establishment of Orthodox feminist organizations represents a historical shift in Israel (Zivan, 2005) as does the establishment of Mizrahi feminist nonprofits and related community activism.
 2. In terms of an Israel feminist agenda, it is interesting to consider what issues Ilany (2001) identified over a decade ago as the most pressing issues to be addressed by women's organizations. The four issues were economic empowerment, women's health, anti-violence measures, and strategies for political participation. At the time, economic empowerment was considered as a new item on the feminist agenda, while the other three topics- women's health, anti-violence measures, and strategies for political participation- had been part of the agenda for decades (Ilany, 2001).



3. Today, the term 'empowerment' is used in the discourse, but it is not touted as the primary strategy as in the past. Ilany (2001) pinpointed the weakness of the empowerment strategy as being primarily focused on individual women and not on structural inequality, discrimination in infrastructures, funding mechanisms, and social mechanisms in place that are disempowering women.
4. Historically, many national women's organizations, which are not necessarily considered feminist by the general public nor label themselves that way, have made a notable contribution to both advancing the status of women in Israel and positively influencing the public discourse on the topic (see Bernstein, 1987; Shilo et al. 2001; Herzog 2002).
5. There are varied perspectives regarding the efficacy either of programs that are integrated or for women only, as indicated by differing perspectives of research participants. For example, there is an ongoing discussion regarding the training for political leadership and the value of courses that are for both men and women versus only for women.
6. The government has significantly reduced the role of the public sector as an employer, and is increasingly using temporary-employment agencies (Raday, 1999). See, for example, Benjamin, 2011 and Benjamin, 2016 on the gender outcomes of the changing labor market in Israel.
7. As noted by interviewees, more and more Orthodox women are working in collaboration with organizations that are promoting religious pluralism as part of an effort to address the growing extremism in the Jewish community. Indeed, over ten years ago, Ilany (2006) wrote of the need to enhance joint efforts between religious women of different streams and secular women, noting the overlapping interest in issues such as violence against women, religious courts and issues of social justice.
8. Certainly there is a wide range of approaches and no small measure of debate on how to address cultural practices that are harmful to women, and yet remain sensitive to the values of the culture. For example, an interviewee expressed concern with past approaches that only sparked more antagonism against efforts at promoting women within the Palestinian community: "In our community, people weren't used to individuals coming from outside the extended family to discuss various issues. Suddenly we were bringing feminist organizations and social workers to address personal issues and it was threatening to a community that was not used to this whole Western concept of social welfare.... The community was not familiar with these values and accused activists of 'destroying the family.' They saw feminist organizations as interfering in their business. They didn't accept us and we didn't know how to reach out to them. We didn't speak to them in their language and it created a distance."
9. For example, as explained by research participants, the Orthodox community is considered as a 'closed society' with specifically defined codes of conduct. With great importance placed on keeping the discourse within these acceptable codes of conduct, those who speak out can risk the loss of legitimacy within the community. Also, see Abu Rabia Queder, 2007 for a discussion in the Bedouin community about how feminism can be perceived as threatening, and how the concept of activism itself is seen as a foreign import.
10. Identified by Ilany (2001) as a limitation in the focus on empowerment strategy, the question of the involvement of men and boys in advancing women and girls still remains a challenge today. As more broad-based organizations take on programs directly targeting women, the question remains how a wider audience is engaged in advancing equality. Indeed, one of the limitations noted previously of the empowerment strategy is that it focuses on women exclusively and does not relate to men and engage them in any type of dialogue regarding change (see Ilany, 2001).
11. See Rabia (2011) for an overview of this phenomenon among the Bedouin community in the Negev.
12. As one scholar explained, "We learned to cut and paste American feminism, but we do not know enough about feminism in India, Egypt and elsewhere. It is a failure of our organizations and academics here because we need to reach out to feminists from around the world and consider different approaches." Examples of how 'western' or 'white feminists' may differ as compared to 'non- white feminists' or 'non-western feminists' include varied perspectives regarding the role of religious institutions and the possibility of partnership with the male political and spiritual leadership of local communities.
13. See Hertzog & Glickman, Eds. (2011) and Hertzog, Ed. (2012), published by SHIN- Women's Parliament, for examples of efforts to make the public more aware of the feminist discourse and enhance the visibility of women in public life.
14. Almog-Bar & Ajzenstadt (2010), for example, found that the majority of women's organizations in the research sample did not actively publicize their activities or engage in outreach, but rather women learned of services through referrals or word of mouth.
15. For example, an interviewee reflected on both the growing conservatism within her community and the lack of drive to get out and protest as they had in the past: "I see more and more head coverings now with women... In every Arab village, there is a picture at the entrance with a woman in a hijab with the title – 'Your honor is through your hijab.' And there are no protests against this! Why don't we go out and demonstrate over those advertisements? We used to protest all the time." See Fogiel-Bijaoui (2012) for a discussion of ngo-ization and its implications for feminism and political influence. Herzog (2007), on the other hand, counters the argument that the ngo-ization has led to de-politization of the women's movement. Rather, she

- argues that a “restructuring” has taken place in the women’s movement, rather than it “disappearing.” Herzog (2007) also raises the point that the movement in Israel continues to have a political voice, and has expanded the discourse to include other issues related to social justice, including the topic of peace and security.
16. The criticism of the ‘ngo-ization’ of feminist movement is seen in other parts of the world as well. There is the concern that ‘ngo-ization’ forced a transition from grassroots movements to one that has created ‘apolitical’ organizational structures based on small NGOs, each of which develops strategies with paid professionals, maintains close ties with public sponsors, and raises money from funders abroad (Lang 1997; Sadoun, 2006; Alvarez 1999). The ngo-ization, according to this argument, has replaced grassroots mobilization, and as such, has weakened the influence of feminism as a political force (Silliman, 1999). As indicated in interviews and focus groups, there are minimal opportunities for creating a wider community of women’s organizations and initiatives, and individuals are not often familiar with the variety of work being carried out in the field. This reality seems to extend both to those women who are engaged in feminist causes as well as to those who are unaffiliated. Indeed, as noted by Abramovitch (2008) much of the feminist work in Israel in the past decades did not ‘captive’ the majority of women or become a mass movement. However, it did set in motion a variety of mechanisms and established an infrastructure for growing support and mobilization.
 17. Organizational representatives from the Palestinian community, for example, noted the shift in funding priorities among international donors towards refugees worldwide, for example. Other interviewees, in discussing the American Jewish community, a source of significant funding for many women’s organizations, are greatly concerned that recent political events in the United States will further reduce already limited funding. See Fleisch & Sasson, 2012 and Sasson, 2010 for trends regarding American Jewish giving to Israeli organizations.
 18. One interviewee in considering the current funding scenario, expressed sentiments that have been echoed by many: “We are saturated with organizations. There is an inflation of NGOs, and many of the women’s organizations are doing the same thing. It’s like a jungle, a fight for your life.”
 19. Generally, the practice of many foundations is to grant relatively small amounts of money and limit the grants to a period of two to three years. The project-based nature of the work, which tends to be short term in its scope, is also considered another negative outcome of the ‘ngo-ization’ process that potentially limits an organization’s ability to have a broader impact.
 20. As with other organizations in Israeli civil society, the question is increasingly raised how women’s and/or feminist organizations can develop additional sources of income within Israel, while enhancing their local visibility and level of community engagement at the same time.
 21. Certainly, criticism from within the feminist movement is not new (see, for example, Dahan-Kalev 2001 and Dahan-Kalev, 2007). To consider a more historical perspective, it is worthwhile to recall the ‘Quarters System’ that was introduced in the mid-1990’s in an effort to ensure appropriate representation in feminist work with Mizrahi, Palestinian-citizens of Israel, lesbian and Ashkenazi women. As noted in interviewees, the ‘Quarters System’ has since come under criticism both for excluding other women (i.e., Ethiopian/Israelis or Russian speaking women) and for not being reflective enough of diverse identities even within each category. The question of diversity within women’s organizations continues to plague women’s organizations, as noted years ago by Ilany (2001), in terms of ethnic background, class, nationality, sexual orientation, education, religion, age and other attributes.
 22. Interviewees who represent various minority communities also raised questions as to the degree to which women’s organizations have sought them out in the past, how much now they might want to engage with them in future collaborative efforts and what their response would be. For example, an interviewee from a Palestinian organization pointed out that “we had to rethink how we want to work in partnerships. We decided that we did not need to take on projects that other organizations brought to us to implement. We now think more about how the budget is distributed, who has control over the project strategy, etc.” Another interviewee noted, “We tried to find cooperation, but it did not happen.... We would engage with them more if we had built it from the beginning together.” For example, as one interviewee reflected on the involvement of Russian speaking women, who are generally under-represented in civil society work: “We are asking for a real partnership as equal partners in a relationship where our partners respect our differences of opinion and experience. We are not looking for a big sister, big brother relationship. There have been only a few efforts that have brought Russian women in as genuine partners, understanding their need to talk their own language. There has to be more...” As noted previously, this is an ongoing theme that has been addressed previously in research. Ilany (2001) talks of the “challenge of de-marginalizing socially marginalized groups of girls and women within the feminist community itself,” distinguishing between engaging women as active participants in the organizational work versus reaching out to them as “consumers” of services.
 23. This is certainly not an issue that is unique to women’s organizations, yet it does remain a problem. As noted, years ago, Abramovitch (2008) spoke of the transience of programs that do not stay rooted in peripheral communities.
 24. Yet it should be noted that over the last year, since the start of the research, there are new collaborative efforts among organizations and activists that are seeking to create greater opportunities for knowledge exchange and networking, and to establish a shared online platform and data base.



25. As Safran (2006) reports, there were efforts in the early years of the movement, the mid-1970's and in subsequent years, to establish some type of coordinating body on a national level (such as NOW organization in the United States), which fell apart due to internal tensions, power struggles, inherent structural challenges and/or ideological differences.
26. See Lang 1997; Sadoun; 2006; Alvarez 1999; Silliman, 1999; and Markowitz & Tice, 2002.
27. See Markowitz and Tice, 2002.
28. See Ebrahim, 2005; Elbers, 2011.
29. See Wallace et al., 2006 and Elbers & Art, 2011.
30. For more on the grantmaking practices that can inhibit organizational learning and long-term impact, see Ebrahim, 2005; Elbers, 2011.
31. Ebrahim, 2005; Elbers, 2011; Arvidson & Lyon, 2013.
32. For an analysis of these dynamics regarding reporting and accountability, see Ebrahim, 2005 and Arvidson & Lyon, 2013.
33. An international perspective on these trends is presented in Arutyunova & Clark, 2013.
34. Ebrahim, 2005; Elbers, 2011; Arvidson & Lyon, 2013.
35. An interesting approach to explore is "catalytic philanthropy", termed by Kramer (2009) that proactively catalyzes social change, as distinguished from more traditional grantmaking.
36. See Despard et al., 2017; Doherty et al., 2014; and Jager & Schroer, 2014 on the growth of social enterprises and 'hybrid' organizations.
37. Within Israel, more and more civil society organizations are finding private sources of support and reducing dependence on the public sector and government (See Bar & Gidron, 2009). There are notable concerns in this regard, as noted by interviewees and cited in the literature. For example, Almog-Bar & Ajzenstadt (2010) cite the challenge of creating a true partnership with the business sector, especially when private companies become involved in the decision-making process regarding the social services that they support. Additional concerns include the question of adapting a business sector culture that contradicts the prevailing style of organizations and the risk of "mission drift." See Khieng, 2013; Khieng & Dahles, 2014; Fischer, Wilsker, & Young, 2011 for strategies and implications of resource diversification from an international perspective. For a discussion of strategies related to cross sector partnerships, see Al-Tabba et al., 2013
38. See Khieng, 2013; Khieng & Dahles, 2014; Fischer, Wilsker, & Young, 2011.
39. Yet as emphasized by an interviewee, it is important to consider fundraising at the local level regardless of income: "The contribution is about ownership and the idea that there is a belief in what the organization is doing. It also indicates that the people of the community are considered as a resource and valued as partners."
40. For insights into social media-driven fundraising and the increase in crowdfunding and other practices, see Saxton & Wang, 2014.
41. Azmon, 2001; Keshet et al., 2001; Keshet & Alon, 2014; Dekel, 2015. See also Georgetown University Center for Social Impact Communication, 2014 for the role of storytelling in NGO work and the link to social change.



CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

As reflected in the design and implementation of the research, a key goal of the process was to spark strategic conversations regarding the current state of women's and feminist organizations in Israel. This final section therefore outlines a variety of action steps developed directly from key strategic concerns that can serve to help encourage and enhance the vital conversations that are taking place among activists, organizational representatives, funders, journalists, and public officials on how to more effectively promote the status of women and advance gender equality.

1. ■ Strengthening Organizations' Ability to Influence Policymaking ■ Mobilize the Community ■ Raise a Political Voice. The professional skills, policymaking expertise and research capacities needed in the field to gather the data for effective advocacy are critical at this stage in order to help organizations navigate the challenges of advocacy and partnerships with the government. Likewise, organizations and activists can be bolstered in efforts to better mobilize their base of supporters, volunteers and the wider community, thereby enhancing their role as advocates.

Action Steps...

- ▶ Keep in mind that the tools of effective advocacy, including policymaking expertise, research capacities and connection with the field, are of utmost importance at this stage in promoting efforts to advance women. Support efforts to collect compelling data from a variety of sources, from the use of hotlines and the gathering of individual stories to the tracking of website usage and a gender analysis of governmental statistics.
- ▶ Explore how to strengthen efforts by organizations and activists to push for greater political awareness and action by women of all backgrounds (i.e., community advocacy, grassroots mobilization, fielding more female candidates).
- ▶ Consider ways to get involved as a supporter and/ or volunteer and reflect on potential opportunities to act as a bridge connecting various efforts among diverse populations and sectors to create joint mechanisms for advocacy. Examine how to increase the visibility and outreach of the work to enhance community engagement and to broaden advocacy efforts.

2. ■ Utilizing International Networks to Further Support Local Efforts. Engagement with international networks over the past decade has helped advance a variety of issues facing women in Israel, from addressing sex trafficking to highlighting the importance of economic empowerment for women. As research, policy models, ideas and inspiration continue to come from abroad, it is timely to consider carefully their local application and adaptation, and alternatively, what the lessons and experiences are that can 'exported' from Israel to advance women and girls.



Action Steps...

- ▶ Assess how to create more learning opportunities and exchanges, as part of a broader effort to nurture a greater sense of mutuality and partnership among women and girls in Israel and in other countries. Support efforts to build on a shared agenda for joint action and consider possibilities for relationship building, networking, and collaborative efforts.
- ▶ Explore opportunities for learning and for enhancing the visibility of issues affecting women and girls that can take place through conferences, visiting delegations, and participation in professional networks, as well as through creative alternatives such as film festivals, social media and other platforms for an exchange of ideas. Join the 'conversation' that has been taking place through venues such as knowledge forums, delegations and film screenings of women's stories.

3. ■ Cultivating Opportunities for Strengthening the Work of Newly Emerging Actors ■ Synthesizing Different Kinds of Activism.

As the field of activism continues expanding to new actors - online advocates, journalists, as well as informal groups of activists from diverse communities, it is important to consider how to create better synergy among the various types of efforts to advance women and girls. The upshot is that it is critical, especially with the broad outreach of social media and the internet, to effectively engage and support all manner of activism and to develop a more symbiotic relationship between grassroots and online activists and established nonprofits.

Action Steps...

- ▶ Take on the goal of building a shared space on a variety of platforms. Consider how organizational representatives and grassroots and online activists are able to create relationships to enhance the overall impact of the work.
- ▶ Reflect on a variety of opportunities for supporting coordinated efforts and on ways to support innovative and diverse forms of activism from different sectors.

4. ■ Creating Opportunities for Common Ground, Shared Interests, and Greater Solidarity.

With so many varied efforts to advance the status of women and girls, it is a significant challenge to take on the goal of building a shared space. Yet, as the field of advancing women and girls continues to expand, new opportunities for developing creative partnerships are presenting themselves. Cooperative efforts continue to be developed as well among women from diverse communities. A variety of collaborative efforts, from coalitions with broad-based organizations to engagement with male spiritual and political leaders within religious communities, are helping to reframe the discourse to one that perceives the advancement of women and girls as a "community issue" of broader importance.

Action Steps...

- ▶ Keep exploring the potential for greater cooperation on issues among women of diverse backgrounds as well as between women and men. Take the opportunity to share your platform with women from various backgrounds and communities

to build connections. Support efforts to reach greater solidarity on specific topics as a critical way to amplify the overall voice of women.

- ▶ Consider your strategic approach to the work (i.e., how to reach your target population and who that is) and your efforts in building long-term partnerships. Explore issues such as the language(s) used in the workplace and in outreach efforts, the diversity of your staff and board, and the role models in your organization.
- ▶ Examine successful efforts as case studies, which can highlight the challenge of balancing individual voices, different identities and varying concerns.

5. ■ Considering the Role of: ■ Women's Organizations ■ Broad-Based Organizations.

With investments from the public and private sectors in areas such as employment and economic independence for women, a variety of strategies to advance women are being employed not only by women's organizations, but also by more broad-based organizations and public institutions. As efforts to improve the lives of women and girls continue to expand and the field is increasingly open to the initiatives of the public sector and more broad-based organizations, women's organizations will need to continue redefining their distinct and unique value. In the midst of these developments, consideration must be given to having a cadre of strong, flagship women's organizations to promote these issues over time with a particular focus on achieving full equality.

Action Steps...

- ▶ Encourage strategic conversations on how women's organizations and feminist activists should continue to support gender mainstreaming, build the women's agenda, while also sustaining their own unique added value. Facilitate conversations on topics relating to strategic focus, partnerships, community engagement and sustainability (See Appendix I, Worksheet I).
- ▶ Explore ways to create opportunities for further exchange and dialogue between women's organizations and broad-based organizations that hold shared agendas. Support collaborative efforts that build on the unique strengths and contributions of diverse players in the field to further greater impact.

6. ■ Working to: ■ Address Structural Changes ■ Incorporate Systematic Approaches.

Over the past decade, more attention has been paid to the acknowledged limitations of women's empowerment strategies and the importance of recognizing broader structural barriers and social obstacles. All types of empowerment programs have continued to evolve so that they now seek to address not only empowerment at the individual level, but at the collective level as well. It is the translation of individual empowerment to collective empowerment that remains a core principle, and it is worthwhile to assess educational and/or employment programs with this consideration in mind.

Action Steps...

- ▶ Conceptualize women's empowerment in terms of its economic, socio-cultural, familial/ interpersonal, legal, political and psychological factors, and how each of these factors influences the household, the community and beyond. (See Appendix



2 for a conceptual overview of women's empowerment (Malhotra et al., 2002).

- ▶ Examine how programs are targeting their strategies and creating interventions with these broader considerations in mind.

7. ■ Reviewing ■ Funding Mechanisms ■ Relationships ■ Requirements in Philanthropy.

Over the years, critics of ngo-ization claim that it has led to a weakening of social movements. Moreover, well-intentioned philanthropic practices in various fields of civil society have been seriously challenged over whether they have inadvertently diminished the ability of established organizations to mobilize large numbers of volunteers and activists in order to effect widespread change. In light of this, it is worth examining how current funding policies advance or possibly inhibit the capacity of community leaders to gather and mobilize supporters. In addition, it is important to consider how the emphasis on project-based methodology affects leaders' ability to create flexible strategic plans that can respond to volatile situations in Israel.

Action Steps...

- ▶ Ensure that funders consider their broader role in supporting the overall field of advancing women and long-term systematic change, and not limit their support to specific projects or topics that are currently trending.
- ▶ Review current reporting mechanisms in terms of how they advance the work of organizations and activists, inform decision making processes and present learning opportunities for both funders and organizations.
- ▶ Consider the possibilities, as funders, of further developing sustainable connections and engagement in tandem with philanthropic efforts (See Appendix I, Worksheet 2).

8. ■ Strengthening Efforts to ■ Diversify Resources ■ Enhance Community-based Fundraising.

Over the past decade, a paradigm-shift in community-based fundraising and income generating activities has taken place, and women's organizations are gradually recognizing the need to diversify their funding sources and tap other means of financial support. Organizations are employing different strategies to develop additional sources of income; garner greater philanthropic support locally and more broadly engage with the community. Many of these efforts reinforce another important goal of organizations which is to extend their outreach, effectively engage with their local communities and build long-term support. Additional activities that provide opportunities for meaningful community engagement, including platforms for exchange and storytelling, should be nurtured and further developed.

Action Steps...

- ▶ Build on innovative efforts to create resource-sharing models, shared media campaigns and coalition building to enhance the overall impact of the work. Explore efforts to diversify resources and create partnerships with other sectors (i.e., public, private).
- ▶ Consider how to support the efforts to gain greater visibility, broaden community outreach and expand volunteer engagement to create a stronger base for

community fundraising. (i.e., membership drives, local fundraising events, online campaigns, active board members).

- ▶ Expand opportunities for shared platforms to promote story-telling and artistic expression.

As indicated throughout, the collaborative approach to this research undertaking has sought to emphasize both participation and action at every stage of the process. It is hoped that the concerns and action steps highlighted above can help engender more reflection and initiate new conversations on a variety of topics that are essential to achieving greater collective impact in the future.



APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: FACILITATED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The following section includes a variety of suggestions for facilitated discussion guidelines for various stakeholders working towards advancing women's rights and equality in Israel. There are two worksheets included that are made up of facilitated discussion questions for organizational representatives and women's foundations.

WORKSHEET I / Facilitated Discussion Questions for Organizational Representatives

STRATEGIC FOCUS

1. How do we articulate a theory of change for our organization and for our programs? How do we ensure that the each of our programs promotes desired outcomes and systematic change?
2. In considering our theory of change, how do we challenge ourselves to see different points of views and perspectives?
3. How do we make sure that we are operating in a strategic way, where the values and vision of our organization are aligned with the type of activities we carry out and the organizational infrastructure that we have created?
4. How are we making sure to stay updated and engaged with the different types of activism that are promoting our area of interest? How do we continue to check our strategies to ensure that they are in keeping with changes in the field?
5. How do we define diversity? How do our organizational structures and policies reflect this diversity in our board, staff, volunteers and in our strategies, etc.? How do we work towards creating an organizational setting that reflects the diversity of women in Israel and engages in broader conversations with those community partners who are also working to advance women?
6. How do we work towards assisting the women in decision making forums to promote the interests of women and give voice to women's concerns in their public role?
7. How do we gain broader support from our community to further promote these issues? How do we consider the political arena and our role in promoting policies that are favorable towards women?

COALITIONS, PARTNERSHIPS AND NETWORKING

1. How do we help push the field forward to create stronger solidarity and a louder collective voice? How do we do so while respecting individual contributions and the uniqueness of each type of effort?
2. What is the potential for further collaboration with established women's organizations and other

broad-based community organizations? What is the potential for further collaboration with social media activists, journalists and writers?

3. What does it mean for us to work in collaborative efforts? How do our actions strengthen the broader field?
4. What are the added benefits of working in coalitions? Are there are other ways to share resources?
5. How do we engage men in our work? Where do the feminist men fit in?
6. How do we consider partnerships with broad-based organizations? How do women's organizations influence the discourse of broad-based efforts to advance women?

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH TO THE PUBLIC

1. What is our role specifically in magnifying the voice of women coming from both formal and informal settings?
2. How else can the social media and internet be used for outreach and engagement of women in the work?
3. What is the strategic role that we can play in helping to ensure that the variety of programs available to women reflect the principles of empowerment?
4. What is the strategic role that we can play in helping to ensure that the programs carried out under the title of 'gender equality' genuinely advance women?
5. How do we plan for the inevitable backlash to progress? How do we engage the community to address this?

SUSTAINABILITY

1. How should we address the issue of sustainability? Are we exploring new sources of funding such as giving circles, corporate philanthropy, socially conscious businesses, membership driven organizations? What is the link between our funding sources and our community engagement with the community and degree of visibility?
2. How do we as an organization help to support our staff and volunteers? How do we address issues of professional development? How do we help support our staff and volunteers who may be experiencing 'burn out'? How are we helping as an organization to create a work-life balance for our staff and volunteers? What are the messages we are sending out as an organization?
3. How do we as a board support the work of the staff? What does it mean for us to create organizations that are reflective of feminist values? Does our organizational management structure reflect the values that we are seeking to promote in the general society?
4. Do we expand leadership opportunities? Do we expand our circle of influence and invite different voices?
5. How do we make sure to balance the positive as well as negative aspects of the 'ngo-ization' of our work? Have we considered all possibilities in terms of encouraging activism and setting an example ourselves? Are we continuing to be pro-active about opportunities and are we continuing to think 'out of the box'?

WORKSHEET 2 / Facilitated Discussion Questions for Women's Foundations

PROMOTING A SPECIFIC TOPIC/ CONTENT (THE WHAT?)

1. What is the topic that we are most interested in advancing in Israel? (See Chapter I for an overview of topics)
2. How are we determining what are the priority issues in Israel to address in terms of promoting gender equality and advancing women and girls?
3. Are we supporting efforts that have shown indications of some type of progress? Alternatively, how do we want to fund something that may be innovative but without a proven track record?

PROMOTING A PROCESS, BOTH IN TERMS OF HOW THE ISSUES ARE ADVANCED AND HOW OUR FUNDING MECHANISMS PLAY A ROLE (THE HOW?)

“The how” in terms of the work in the field:

1. What type of organization/ initiative would we like to fund?
2. What strategies for greater political mobilization and community engagement can be encouraged among our grantees/partners?
3. How are our partners/ grantees approaching the younger generation and taking advantage of mediums such as social media for outreach efforts?
4. How are partners/ grantees working to engage in collaborative efforts to widen the overall community impact of their work?

“The how” in terms of the work as funders:

5. How do our funding strategies strengthen the work in the field over the long-term?
6. What is the impact of our funding strategy on our grantees/partners?
7. Are we encouraging collaborative and cooperative efforts in our grantmaking process? What do we know about best practices in funding collaborative work?
8. What else do we bring to the table to strengthen the work? How else can we work towards advancing women in Israel in addition to funding? (i.e., creating organizational partnerships, connecting to numerous international support networks and collaborative efforts)
9. How else can we help women's organizations to develop a greater degree of independence and diversification in their financial income?

PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE CONNECTIONS AND ENGAGEMENT (THE WHY?), ASKING THE QUESTION OF WHY WE ARE DOING THIS WORK, AND HOW IT WILL STRENGTHEN EFFORTS AND CONNECT US AS FUNDERS TO ISRAEL)

1. What topics addressed by our grantees/ partners will most likely mobilize our contributors to become further engaged with the issues as activists and as funders?
2. How does our funding strategy attract more donors to support women's issues in Israel and around the world?

3. How much have we initiated and promoted ongoing dialogue with the changemakers in the field?
How do we strengthen the work as funders and engage in meaningful exchanges that further advance the work in the field?
4. What are additional types of exchanges that can be nurtured between women abroad and in Israel?

APPENDIX 2: DIMENSIONS OF WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT (MALHOTRA, ET AL. 2002)

The following chart developed by Malhotra et al. (2002) offers a succinct and helpful overview of the dimension of empowerment. It is useful to consider the various categories and the overall framework not only to conceptualize the type of outcomes that are desired but also in terms of targeting strategies and interventions per each topic.

| Dimension | Household | Community | Broader Arenas |
|--------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Economic | Women's control over income; relative contribution to family support; access to and control of family resources | Women's access to employment; ownership of assets and land; access to credit; involvement and/or representation in local trade associations; access to markets | Women's representation in high paying jobs; women CEO's; representation of women's economic interests in macro-economic policies, state and federal budgets |
| Socio-Cultural | Women's freedom of movement; lack of discrimination against daughters; commitment to educating daughters | Women's visibility in and access to social spaces; access to modern transportation; participation in extra-familial groups and social networks; shift in patriarchal norms (such as son preference); symbolic representation of the female in myth and ritual | Women's literacy and access to a broad range of educational options; Positive media images of women, their roles and contributions |
| Familial/ Interpersonal | Participation in domestic decision-making; control over sexual relations; ability to make childbearing decisions, use contraception, access abortion; control over spouse selection and marriage timing; freedom from domestic violence | Shifts in marriage and kinship systems indicating greater value and autonomy for women (e.g. later marriages, self-selection of spouses, reduction in the practice of dowry; acceptability of divorce); local campaigns against domestic violence | Regional/national trends in timing of marriage, options for divorce; political, legal, religious support for (or lack of active opposition to) such shifts; systems providing easy access to contraception, safe abortion, reproductive health services |

| Dimension | Household | Community | Broader Arenas |
|----------------------|--|---|---|
| Legal | Knowledge of legal rights; domestic support for exercising rights | Community mobilization for rights; campaigns for rights awareness; effective local enforcement of legal rights | Laws supporting women's rights, access to resources and options; Advocacy for rights and legislation; use of judicial system to redress rights violations |
| Political | Knowledge of political system and means of access to it; domestic support for political engagement; exercising the right to vote | Women's involvement or mobilization in the local political system/campaigns; support for specific candidates or legislation; representation in local bodies of government | Women's representation in regional and national bodies of government; strength as a voting bloc; representation of women's interests in effective lobbies and interest groups |
| Psychological | Self-esteem; self-efficacy; psychological well-being | Collective awareness of injustice, potential of mobilization | Women's sense of inclusion and entitlement; systemic acceptance of women's entitlement and inclusion |

APPENDIX 3: CHART OF SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENT AND CHALLENGES IN RECENT YEARS IN ISRAEL

This chart summarizes many of the key points raised in terms of efforts to advance women the status of women and gender equality more than a wide variety of fields.

| | There Are Many Achievements In Recent Years Such As: | Yet, Along With Progress, There Are Challenges Such As: |
|---|---|--|
| Relations with Government and Political Representation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing Formalized Support and Mechanisms to Ensure Women's Representation at All Levels • The Influence of the Global Agenda and Growing International Attention to Women's Rights • 'Gender Lens' is Being Given Increased Acknowledgement in Public and Private Sector, with Greater Capacities to Capture Data • Government Funding and Support for Many Programs on the Traditional Feminist Agenda | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fragile Support for Institutionalized Mechanisms to Advance Women, With a Lack of Strong Political Will for Advancing Women • Growing Backlash to Women's Empowerment and Lack of Progress in Traditional Institutions • Difficulties in Navigating Government Involvement in Feminist Causes, especially in an Era of Privatization |
| Public Discourse on Women's Rights | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Change in the Public Discourse, as well as a Growing Influence of Gender Studies Programs and Gender Frameworks • Multiplicity of Outlets for Bringing Women's Perspectives and Stories to Life through the Impact of Social Media, Film, and Art | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns over the Accessibility of the Feminist Discourse and 'Branding' of Feminism • Price of Ongoing Regional Conflict and the Impact of the Military/Conflict on Public Discourse |
| Advances in Women's Personal Status | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing Educational and Employment Opportunities Across Sectors of Society for Women | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional Gender Roles Remain Deeply Entrenched • Patriarchal Structures Remain Intact Along with Growing Religious Fundamentalism |
| Landscape of NGO Work | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An Increase in the Number and Diversity of Organizations, as well as in Targeted Populations and Services Provided • Greater Opportunities for Collaboration / Outreach and Cross- Sector Collaboration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions Regarding the Visibility of the Organizations and Ability for Broad Mobilization • Changing Funding Landscape for Women's Organizations and Lack of Financial Support • Ongoing Challenge of Integrating Diverse and Marginalized Voices |

APPENDIX 4: LIST OF INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWEES

Academics, Researchers

1. Ayelet Ilany, Oranim College
2. Dr. Gila Menachem, Tel Aviv University
3. Dr. Hagit Hacoen Wolf, Hebrew University
4. Dr. Orna Blumen, Haifa University
5. Dr. Amalia Saar, Haifa University
6. Dr. Sharon Halevi, Haifa University
7. Manal Shalabi, Haifa University
8. Prof. Tamar El Or, Hebrew University
9. Dr. Mary Totry, Oranim College
10. Dr. Neta Ziv, Tel Aviv University
11. Prof. Daphna Hacker, Tel Aviv University
12. Dr. Ariella Shadmi
13. Prof. Helena Desivilya, Emek Yisrael College
14. Dr. Yofi Tirosh, Tel Aviv University
15. Dr. Sarab Abu-Rabia-Queder, Ben Gurion University
16. Prof. Henriette Dahan Kalev, Beer Sheva University
17. Dr. Tanya Zion, Ben Gurion University
18. Prof. Naomi Chazan, Hebrew University and Shavot (The Center for the Advancement of Women in the Public Sphere)
19. Dr. Tal Dekel, Tel Aviv University
20. Prof. Hannah Herzog, Tel Aviv University and Shavot (Center for the Advancement of Women in the Public Sphere)
21. Prof. Esther Hertzog, Beit Berl College and SHIN- The Israeli Movement for Equal Representation of Women
22. Prof. Ruth Halperin-Kaddari, Bar Ilan University and the Rackman Center
23. Dr. Noya Rimalt, Haifa University
24. Prof. Pnina Mutzafi Haller, Ben Gurion University
25. Dr. Rinat Ben Noon, IDC Herziliya

Organizational Representatives

1. Shmuel Shattach, Ne'emanai Torah Va'Avodah
2. Amna Kanana, Awareness 4U
3. Prof. Daphna Golan, Academy-Community Partnership for Social Change
4. Keren Shemesh, Itach- Maaki
5. Safa Younes, Arous Elbahar (The Bride of the Sea)
6. Rafa Anebtawi, Kaayan Feminist Organization
7. Marina Zamsky, Forum for Immigrant Families
8. Fida Tabony Nara, Maapach Tagreer, Coalition of Women for Peace
9. Sarit Larry, Maapach Tagreer, Coalition of Women for Peace
10. Kwala Rehani, Economic Empowerment for Women
11. Naife Sarisi, Nisaa Wa Aafaq (Women and Horizons)
12. Suzanne Patt Benvenisti, Taub Center for Social Policy Studies
13. Hadas Fuchs, Taub Center for Social Policy Studies
14. Samah Salima Aghbariya, Noam- Arab Women in the Center
15. Patrick Levy, Alumot
16. Dalia Halabi, Dirasat
17. Hannah Kahat, Kolech- Religious Women's Forum
18. Adi Mohel, Value Sport
19. Lesley Sachs, Women of the Wall
20. Talya Deitcher-Marcus, ICAR - The International Coalition for Agunah Rights
21. Chagit Rubinstein, Koret's Israel Development Fund
22. Kiram Baloum, Jasmine
23. Keren Greenblatt, Shutafot Coalition
24. Sanaa Zreik Saleh, Nisan, Koret Funds
25. Nariman Suliman, Be-etzmi
26. Heidi Paredes, Sidre
27. Nabila Espanioly, Al Tufula Cente
28. Ronit Piso, Esha L'Esha
29. Anhar Masarwa, Givat Haviva
30. Sari Revkin, Yedid
31. Ronna Brayer-Garb, Shavot (Center for the Advancement of Women in the Public Sphere)
32. Dr. Susan Weiss, Center for Women's Justice
33. Sarah Kala-Meir, The Jerusalem Open House for Pride and Tolerance
34. Tom Canning, The Jerusalem Open House for Pride and Tolerance
35. Rula Alatawna, Alnuhud- Association for the Promotion of Bedouin Women's Education in the Negev
36. Wafaa Eben-Beri, AJEEC-NISPED (Arab-Jewish Center for Equality, Empowerment and Cooperation and Negev Institute for Strategies of Peace and Development)
37. Ola Nezmi, The Abraham Fund Initiatives
38. Khulud Khamis, Esha L'Esha
39. Barbara Swirski, Adva Center

Organizational Representatives

40. Dr. Yael Hasson, Adva Center
41. Anat Thon Ashkenazy, Itach- Maaki
42. Hadass Ben Eliyahu, Shavot (Center for the Advancement of Women in the Public Sphere)
43. Orly Bitty, Naamat
44. Shira Eytan, Shatil
45. Liron Azoulai, Women's Courtyard/ Hazer Nashit
46. Dr. Eilon Schwartz, Shaharit- Creating Common Cause
47. Nurit Hadjadj, Young Naamat
48. Michal Gera Margalio, Israel Women's Network
49. Tamar Schwartz, Women's Spirit, Ruach Nashit
50. Naama Elsana, Desert Embroidery Lakia
51. Asmaa AlSanaa, Desert Embroidery Lakia
52. Khadra Elsanah, Sidre
53. Insaf Abu Shareb, Itach- Maaki
54. Reut Michaeli, Hotline for Refugees and Migrants
55. Irit Shamaret, The New Fund for Cinema and TV
56. Dr. Gali Sembira, Shaharit- Creating Common Cause
57. Yael Rockman, Kolech- Religious Women's Forum
58. Liel Even-Zohar, WePower/ Ken
59. Rakefet Medor, Beetzmi
60. Keren Hadad- Taub, Kolech and Advot
61. Mirit Zidi, Women's Courtyard-Hazer Nashit
62. Orna Reshef, Woman to Woman, Jerusalem Shelter for Battered Women
63. Yael Wolfenson, Co'ach L Ovdeem
64. Anat Hoffman, Women of the Wall and Israel Religious Action Center (IRAC)
65. Rabbi Noa Sattath, Israel Religious Action Center (IRAC)
66. Maki Neaman, Ruach Nashit/ Bambino Theatre Project for Gender Equality
67. Rabbi Devorah Evron, Midrasha at Oranim College
68. Dr. Galit Shaul, The Rackman Center
69. Olya Weinstein, Project Kesher
70. Irina Lutt, Project Kesher
71. Orna Amos, Coalition for Fair Employment
72. Inbar Hurwitz, Sheatufim
73. Dana Goldberg, Kinoclan and filmmaker
74. Gila Melech, Women Waging Peace
75. Mickey Gitzin, Israel Hofsheet
76. Kasa Gento, Olim Beyachad
77. Are'en Hawari, Palestinian-Israeli Women's Forum
78. Naila Awwad-Rashed, Women Against Violence
79. Orit Solitziano, the Association of Rape Crisis Centers in Israel
80. Shula Keshet, Achoti (Sister) for Women in Israel

Organizational Representatives

81. Rabbi Ayala Samuels, Forum of Women Reform Rabbis
82. Estee Rieder, Nevharot
83. Naomi Schneiderman, Woman to Woman/ Jerusalem Shelter for Battered Women
84. Lilach Tzur Ben Moshe, Turning the Tables
85. Michal Barkai-Brody, Alma Academy for Female Leadership
86. Sigal Kanotopsky, Olim Beyachad
87. Tal Korman, Feminist Home, Sapir College
88. Esty Shushan, Nevharot
89. Michal Avera Samuel, Fidel, Association for Education and Social Integration of Ethiopian Jews
90. Sigal Razin, One out of Nine
91. Osnat Yezikiel Lahat, Alumot
92. Nitzan Senior Shneor, Young Politics
93. Dr. Gary Coleman, The Yaacov Herzog Center
94. Michal Yudin, We Power/ Ken
95. Alexander Berger Polsky, Ladaat
96. Dr. Mazal Shual, We Power/ Ken
97. Iris Stern Levi, Her Academy
98. Dana Weinberg, Women and their Bodies
99. Nitzan Kahana , Task Force on Human Trafficking and Prostitution
100. Chen Arieli, The Aguda, Israel's National LGBTQ Task Force and Dugree

Funders

1. Sigal Feller Yaniv, Jewish Funders Network
2. Barbara Dobkin, Dobkin Family Foundation
3. Lili Stern, Schocken Foundation
4. Avivit Hai, Inter Agency Task Force on Arab-Israeli Issues
5. Shari Eshet, National Council of Jewish Women
6. Rina Goldberg, the Jewish Federations of North America
7. Carol Goldgeier, Gimprich Family Foundation
8. Elisheva Gilad, Heinrich Boell Foundation
9. Rena Genn, Miami Federation
10. Batya Kaloush, Social Venture Fund
11. Brenda Bodenheimer Zlatin, Blaustein Philanthropic Group
12. Dorit Carlin, Sebba Fund
13. Yael Shalgi, Yad Hanadiv Foundation
14. Don Futterman, Moriah Fund
15. Rachel Liel, New Israel Fund
16. Yuval Yavne, New Israel Fund
17. Avigail Kormes, New Israel Fund
18. Romy Shapira, Heinrich Boell Foundation
19. Aaron Back, Ford Foundation
20. Judy Cohen, Jewish Women's Foundation, Pittsburgh
21. Sharon Levite- Vaknin, Keren Baktana

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| Funders | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 22. Maya Lapid Edut , Committed to Giving Forum 23. Naama Meiran, Gandy Foundation 24. Emily Friedman-Novak, Jewish Funders Network 25. Tammy Baldinger, Jewish Women's Funds of the Greater Palm Beaches 26. Rachel Siegel, Jewish Women's Foundation, New York 27. Ellen Flax, Hadassah Foundation 28. Nancy Schwartz Sternoff, Jewish Women's Foundations Network 29. Anita Altman, Mazer Family Foundation 30. Elise Hahn-Felix, UJA Federation of NY, Mazer Family Foundation 31. Andrea Glickman, National Council of Jewish Women, Pittsburgh 32. Nancy Kaufman, National Council of Jewish Women 33. Karyn Gershon, Project Keshet 34. Joelle Berman, Amplifier 35. Liora Asa, Swiss Family Foundation 36. Jennifer Kryshka, Jewish Women's Foundation of the Greater Palm Beaches 37. Debbie Hoffman, NCJW Cleveland, 38. Rachel Wasserman, JWF Atlanta 39. Dahlia Ben David , JWF, Women's Amutot Initiative Committee Miami 40. Talia Horev, Matan 41. Hana Amoury, Rosa Luxembourg Foundation |
| Organizational Consultants/ Fundraisers | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fathi Marshood 2. Gabi Neiman 3. Safa Garb, Mandel Institute 4. Shahira Shalabi, Mandel Institute 5. Yossi Goldman 6. Betsy Melamed 7. Galit Yahya Tzfadia, Shatil 8. Shifra Bronzwick, 9. Aliza Mazor, Bikkurim 10. Jenny Cohen 11. Hagit Shachar 12. Dror Eytan |
| Business Sector | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Nili- Goldstein, Daat Company 2. Smadar Nehab, She Codes 3. Reem Younis, Alpha Omega Company 4. Sigal Bar On, Dr. Fischer 5. Efrat Admon, Onlife Internet Site 6. Elah Alkalay, IBI Investment House |

**Public Sector,
Politicians and
Public Officials**

1. Salima Soulman, Authority for the Economic Development of the Arab, Druze and Circassian Sectors
2. Alice Shalvi, Israel Women's Network, Israel Prize winner
3. Tziona Koenig-Yair, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
4. Julie Fisher, Diplomatic Spouses of Israel Association
5. Mariam Kabaha, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
6. Einat Wilf, former Knesset member
7. Ruti Sofer, Advisor to Tel Aviv Mayor
8. Ksenia Sletlova, Member of Knesset- Zionist Camp
9. Tamar Zandberg, Member of Knesset - Meretz
10. Aida Tuma, Suleiman, Member of Knesset and Head of Committee on Status of Women
11. Merav Michaeli, Member of Knesset- Zionist Camp
12. Senator Nan Rich of Florida

**Journalists,
Writers,
Facebook
Activists**

1. Anat Saragusti, 972
2. Dr. Elana Sztokman
3. Ghada Zoabi, Bokra.net
4. Allison Kaplan Sommer, Haaretz
5. Lior Elefant, Politically Koret
6. Noga Cohen, MAKO
7. Lena Russovsky, Channel Kan
8. Miriam Herschlag, Times of Israel
9. Charlotte Haille, Haaretz
10. Maya Roman, Politically Koret

Total: 206 Interviewees

Appendix 5: List of Focus Group Participants

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Haifa, Spring 2017. Palestinian women organizational directors and activists/ Guest facilitator - Fathi Marshood | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Nariman Suliman 2. Anhar Mazarha 3. Amna Kanana 4. Rafa Anebtawi 5. Fida Tabony Nara 6. Naife Sarisi 7. Nabila Espanioly 8. Naila Awwad-Rashed 9. Doaa Diab Abu-Glihiga |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Tel Aviv, Spring 2017 – Activists, writers and journalists on social media/ Guest facilitators and hosts- Keren Greenblatt and Lior Elefant | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Anat Nir 11. Maya Roman 12. Moran Naor 13. Noga Cohen, Mako 14. Lena Russovsky 15. Gavan Gvaram 16. Shulamit Ferber |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Kiryat Ata, Spring 2017. The Vital Voices leadership group participants/ Hosted by Liron Peleg-Hadomi | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 17. Noah Khatib 18. Amara Hino 19. Manar Hayadre 20. Diana Zreig 21. Doaa Diab Abu- Glihiga 22. Tzoufit Hires |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Modiin, Spring 2017 - activists addressing Jewish religion and gender/ Hosted by Dr. Elana Sztokman | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 23. Josie Glausiusz 24. Shoshana Kordova 25. Margalit Frydman 26. Jessica Fishman 27. Ofira Krakauer 28. Dr. Hagit Hacoen Wolf |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Tel Aviv, Spring 2017. Young Naamat activists/ Guest facilitator- Nurit Hadjadj | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 29. Olga Kozlovsky Abergel 30. Haya Haj-Yaya 31. Tallia Polatinsky 32. Nihal Abojohr 33. Yaqeen Sarsur 34. Tair Tahar 35. Orit Weise 36. Mina Karp 37. Nadia Belkind 38. Chen Koren 39. Avital Abadi 40. Tehila Gabay Deutsch 41. Reut Ahdut |

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|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Tel Aviv, Spring 2017. Members of the Women Journalist Forum/ Hosted by Anat Saragusti | 42. Yarden Skop 43. Hadas Steif 44. Sivan Klingbail, 45. Vered Cohen Barzilay 46. Efrat Admon 47. Yifat Glick 48. Anat Mandel 49. Anat Saragusti |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Tel Aviv, Spring 2017. Russian Speaking activists/ Guest facilitator- Lena Russovsky | 50. Elena Romanovsky 51. Rita Volosin 52. Milana Sandler 53. Estie Shenderovich 54. Vahane Boriah |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Sderot, Spring 2017. Activists/ Politicians and Academics in the Negev, at Sapir College / Hosted by Tal Korman with guest facilitator- Galit Yahya Tzfadia | 55. Dr. Sigal Nagar Ron 56. Ora Levi 57. Yahaloma Zechut 58. Ofra Yitzhak Hai 59. Rina Shaked 60. Professor Pnina Mutzafi Haller 61. Michal Mizrachi 62. Niva Rem 63. Julie Kate 64. Achlama Peretz 65. Sigal Moran 66. Sharon Ken-Dor 67. Camilla Landskind Milner 68. Shiri Cohen 69. Leah Shakdiel 70. Rauma Mansour 71. Ofra Itzhak-Chai |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Negev, Spring 2017. Activists, ngo staff and academics/ Guest facilitator - Shahira Shalabi | 72. Dr, Sarab Abu Rabia-Queder 73. Amal Nasara 74. Insaf Abu Shareb 75. Insaf Abu Raash 76. Hesan Alsanah 77. Suzanne Elavra 78. Samira Elfiyomi |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Tel Aviv, Spring 2017 – Follow up meeting with activists, writers and journalists on social media/ Guest facilitators and hosts -Keren Greenblatt and Lior Elefant | 79. Moran Naor 80. Korem Keshet 81. Rachel Beitarte 82. Mor Company 83. Feigie Stern 84. Sharon Mayerski 85. Karny Ben Yehuda 86. Maya Paz 87. Shulamit Ferber |

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|--|--|
| <p>In Safed, Spring 2017. Members of Partnership 2000 program and Activists / Hosted by Iris Posklinsky, with guest facilitator -Liora Asa</p> | <p>88. Shayna Rehberg- Paquin 89. Mor Yaacov 90. Vabnesh Destev 91. Netiva Hafid 92. Maayan Zyskrot 93. Bracha Eitan 94. Shani Caspi 95. Tzipi Alster 96. Sharon Lanpinsky</p> |
| <p>In New York City, Summer 2018. Members of the New York Jewish Women's Foundation, co- facilitated with Rachel Siegel</p> | <p>97. Susan Abramowitz 98. Frances Brandt 99. Miriam Caslow 100. Debbie Cosgrove 101. Marilyn Gottlieb 102. Elise Hahn-Felix 103. Judie Raff 104. Marilyn Thypin 105. Jamie Allen Black 106. Stephanie Blumenkranz 107. Natasha Mayer</p> |
| <p>In Haifa, Fall 2017. Follow up meeting with Palestinian organizational directors and activists/ Guest facilitator - Fathi Marshood</p> | <p>108. Nabila Espanioly 109. Shahira Shalabi 110. Are'en Hawari 111. Samah Salima Aghbariya 112. Lamiah Na'amneh</p> |
| <p>In Tel Aviv, Fall 2017. Follow up meeting with organizational directors and online activists and journalists/ Guest Facilitators and hosts— Keren Greenblatt and Lior Elefant</p> | <p>113. Barbara Swirsky 114. Noga Dagan Buzaglo 115. Miriam Gvraham 116. Lena Russovsky 117. Tamar Schwartz 118. Iris Stern Levi, 119. Shula Keshet 120. Michal Gera Margaliot 121. Netta Loevy 122. Hagar Levy- Kedme</p> |



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“Past Achievements and Future Directions of Feminist and Women’s Organizations in Israel: A Participatory Action Research Project”

is a joint undertaking of the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) and the Dafna Fund.

This project combines both research and action: the research will be used to help leaders, activists, and funders of women’s organizations think strategically and develop a road map for the future advancement of gender equality in Israel.

The research aims to present a snapshot of the agendas, priorities and concerns expressed by the field. It primarily seeks to shed light and build on the vital conversations that are taking place among activists, organizational representatives, funders, journalists, and public officials regarding the current and future efforts in Israel to promote the status of women and advance gender equality.