



משרד ראש הממשלה  
הרשות לקידום מעמד האישה

**REPORT SUBMITTED BY  
THE STATE OF ISRAEL**

**The Status of Women in Israel  
"Beijing +20"**

**The Authority for the Advancement of the Status of  
Women**

**The Prime Minister's Office**

**October 2014**



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## **SECTION ONE: REVIEW AND ANALYSIS**

In May, 2014, celebrations for Israel's 66<sup>th</sup> Year of Independence took place under the banner, "The Era of Women." Twelve women were chosen to light the 12 torches at the traditional national ceremony.

This honor points to the progress that Israeli women have made towards empowerment since the establishment of the State of Israel. We are pleased to present this report to the United Nations and to our feminist colleagues throughout the world, chronicling our advances and achievements along with the challenges we still face.

The State of Israel was established in 1948 by the Declaration of Independence, which promises full social and political rights to all of Israel's citizens, regardless of religion, race or gender.

Even as the State continued to struggle for its very existence through its early decades, and even as Israel continues to face existential threats, legislation promoting women's equality and human rights has been a central part of Israeli society.

Education for both boys and girls (extended to age 18 in 2007) has been compulsory since the establishment of the State, and The Equal Rights for Women Law 5711-1951 was enacted only three years later. Ever since, Israeli women have continued to make significant, if not always steady or linear, progress towards gender equality.

According to Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), at the end of 2013, the State of Israel had a population of approximately 8,134,100 inhabitants. Seventy-five percent of the population are Jewish; 20.7% are Arabs, while the remaining 4.3% are defined as "others" (family members of Jewish immigrants who are not registered by the Ministry of Interior as Jews; non-Arab Christians; non-Arab Muslims; and residents who do not have an ethnic or religious classification).

In 2012, Israel's UN Human Development Index (HDI) value was 0.900, positioning Israel in the very high human development category, ranking 16 out of 187 countries and territories. Between 1980 and 2012, Israel's HDI value increased from 0.773 to 0.900, an increase of 16 percent or an average annual increase of about 0.5 percent. Israel has a GII value of 0.144, ranking it 25<sup>th</sup> out of 148 countries in the 2012 index (and representing an improvement of two stages since the 2009 ranking). Israel has also scored high on the Freedom House rankings of political and civil liberties.



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In 2011, life expectancy for men was 80 years and for women 83.6 years. This is higher than the OECD average and continues the upward trend of the last decade. Although the average age is growing older (27.6 in 2000 and 29.5 in 2011), Israel's population is young in comparison to the populations of other Western countries: In 2013, 28% of the population was aged 0-14, while only 10.3% were older than 65.

Israel is a vibrant, dynamic and fast-paced country, with an active civil society and an assertive feminist movement. Israel is rapidly becoming a leader in the struggle for women's equality, with multi-pronged programs of legislation, increasing awareness and consciousness, hundreds of feminist and women's organizations, and numerous institutional mechanisms to promote equality.

In the summer of 2011, Israelis took to the streets in the largest demonstrations in Israel's history, calling for "social justice." Women played a central role in these demonstrations and in their organizations. The demonstrators' demands were diffuse and largely unfocused, and few have been directly adopted by the government. Yet we are confident that these demonstrations served as a catalyst and that the undefined demands are being transformed into more specific, regional-local, identity-based expectations. Furthermore, there can be little doubt that these demonstrations brought awareness of equality as a crucial macroeconomic and macro-social issue and transformed Israeli social discourse in a way that will lead to progressive social change.

As women, we are witness to this in important ways: In government and in the Knesset as well as in the written and electronic media, debate is increasingly gender oriented. Women are speaking out, claiming their rights, exploring gender differences, and interjecting gender perspectives and their demands for gender equality into all aspects of public and private life. Human rights awareness within the Israeli public has increased and the language of rights has permeated into the daily life.

Social debate in Israel is increasingly more inclusive and less hegemonic. Israel is rapidly adopting a multi-dimensional and multi-cultural perspective on feminism in particular and in society in general. Thus, minority women and women who have immigrated to Israel from Ethiopia and the Former Soviet Union, as well as from other countries, together with women from the lower economic strata, are all making their voices heard and participating in the debate, without any patronization or "maternalism" on the part of more veteran or more privileged women.



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## **A. Israel's Major Achievements In The Promotion Of Gender Equality And Empowerment Of Women**

### **1. The establishment of The Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women**

In March, 1998, marking International Women's Day, the Knesset (Israeli parliament) voted unanimously to establish the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women, replacing previous, narrower mechanisms.

The Authority is vested with advisory and monitoring powers and may suggest to the government policies designed to advance the status of women, promote gender equality, eliminate discrimination against women, and prevent domestic violence and other forms of violence against women. In addition, the Authority supervises the gender policies of the different governmental bodies.

The functions of the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women in Israel include:

- \*Coordinating and promoting cooperation between state government, municipalities and other authorities regarding the status of women;
- \*Monitoring and following-up on the activities of government offices and ministries whose activities relate to the topics assigned to the Authority;
- \*Advising the ministries on the implementation of laws relating to the Authority's fields of activity;
- \*Ensuring that the recommendations of the State Comptroller on these issues are implemented;
- \*Expanding public awareness regarding the topics that the Authority oversees, including within the educational system and the media;
- \*Formulating policy regarding gender equality and the elimination of discrimination against women;
- \*Serving as an information center as well as initiating research on the topics that the Authority oversees;
- \*Establishing special programs and services for women to promote gender equality;
- \*Promoting the implementation of CEDAW;
- \*Preparing information on the status of women in Israel for various international bodies, including the UN;
- \*Training and preparing the Advisors on the Status of Women in the local and regional authorities (see below).



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\*Initiating and maintaining ties with international organizations and organizations in other countries that deal with the same and similar topics.

In November 2007, Israel passed the Gender Implications in Legislation law 5767-2007. Among the many laws passed in recent years, which are detailed throughout this report, this law is a key gender mainstreaming tool that stipulates that all bills that come through the Knesset must be analyzed in terms of gender before they are passed. The Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women has been assigned the task of preparing this analysis.

**2. Establishment of an interactive network of governmental, quasi-governmental and non-governmental institutions and agencies**

Efforts to realize the human rights of women consist of work done by all levels of government as well as by NGOs and civil society agencies.

As we note below, the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women is actively involved in enhancing the work of the governmental and quasi-governmental agencies, and offering professional support and cooperation to the NGOs.

In this context, we also note the Statutory Parliamentary Committee (one of only 16) in the Knesset. The members of this committee have regularly demonstrated their willingness to cross party lines in order to promote the status of women and their commitment to working with the many feminist NGOs and have championed significant legislative advances.

The Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women conducts workshops and training sessions for women who will fill these roles. In addition, in 2010, the Authority published, "It's Your Right," an informational booklet for members of municipal and regional councils, published in conjunction with WePower, a feminist NGO.

Over the past twenty years, we have seen definite growth and maturation of NGO's and civil society: clearer, more sophisticated agendas that address comprehensive issues such as gender-mainstreaming rather than specific, localized issues; creation of ad-committees and collaborations as well as on-going consortiums that emphasize cooperation and maximization of pooled assets rather than competition over scarce resources; the ability to carry out well-defined, strategically-guided socio-political campaigns to advance the status of women.

As an example, we note that The Coalition for Direct Employment, made up of more than 30 organizations, is currently working to empower women who are employed as contract workers and to create awareness of the negative and gendered aspects of



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outsourcing and contract work. The project serves to broaden feminist awareness as well as to create gender mainstreaming in formal institutions and social change organizations.

Furthermore, women's organizations have not shied away from confronting meaningful possible lines of division within the feminist movement, such as issues of peace and feminism, racism within the movement, and intersectionality. In this regard, the movement has brought new understandings and new populations into the arena, including women from lower socio-economic strata, women with disabilities, and other marginalized women.

At the same time, the Authority notes with satisfaction that various activities that were once implemented solely by women's volunteer organizations are gradually becoming the province of the government. This is particularly evident in the field of violence against women.

### **3. Creation of a comprehensive legal structure**

Israel's primary achievements in the area of women's rights are anchored in and supported by an extensive, comprehensive body of legislation. The implementation and enforcement of this legislation increase public awareness, empower women, deter offenders, and provide practical, concrete solutions for the advancement of women.

While much of this legislation was originally geared towards protecting women (such as paid maternity leave), newer legislation is increasingly geared towards broader definitions of gender and towards gender mainstreaming. Thanks to the cooperation between legislators and NGOs, many of these legislative initiatives have been composed to reflect women's realities and aspirations.

For example, the Law for the Prevention of Sexual Harassment is rooted in human liberty and dignity, while the proactive Law Against Stalking reflects the statistical fact that stalking is a dangerous act most commonly committed by men against women who have rejected their advances or ended relationships with them.

In Section D, below, we detail the main legislative and legal developments in the promotion of gender equality. Here we wish to note that, taken together, these legislative actions represent an unequivocal declaration of public policy against gender discrimination and for women's equality.

Most recently, we see a very interesting use of torts (injury law) to protect women against the harmful effects of discriminatory laws and practices and uncovering the possibilities it has to affect large-scale social change, especially for women and girls improving the lives of minorities subjected to discrimination, especially women who



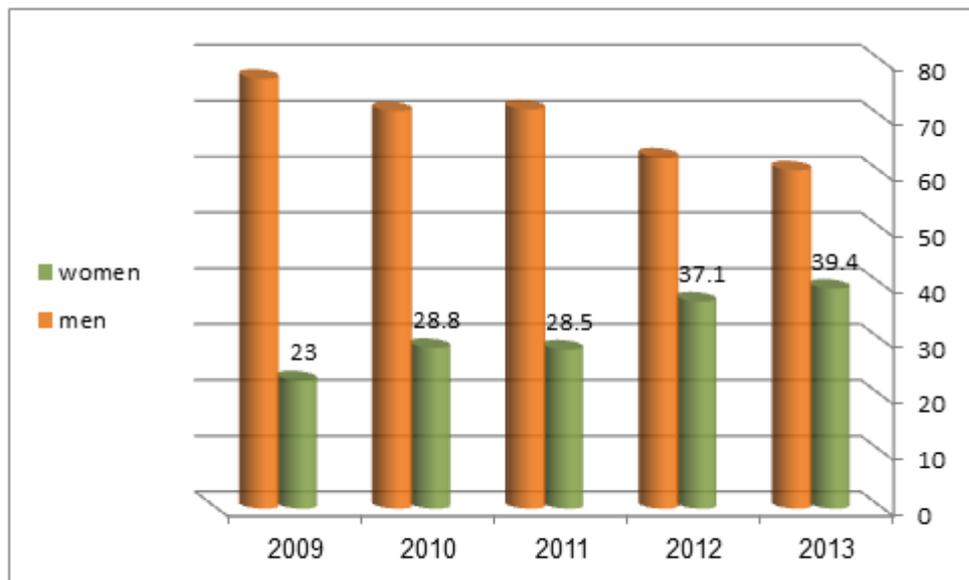
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have been physically abused or whose economic independence and rights have been violated.

#### 4. Increased Representation of Women in Key Positions in Society

The proportion of women involved at high levels of political, social and economic decision-making is expanding. Israeli legislation mandates "appropriate levels of representation" for women, which has been widely interpreted by the Israeli courts to include affirmative action.

*Table 1: Percentage of women appointed to public committees and Councils, 2009 - 2013*



We also attribute this achievement to the efforts of The Authority for the Status of Women, which, since 2012, has been tasked with establishing and maintaining a list of women who possess the qualifications to fill these positions. Government ministers and others who make appointments to these committees are required, by law, to use this resource.

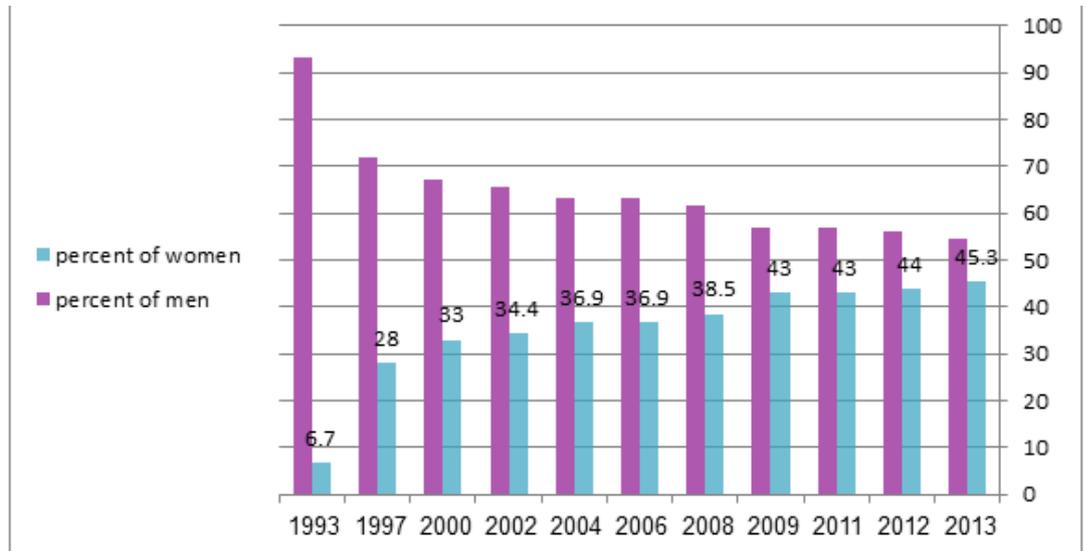
Following last year's general elections, there are more women in the Knesset than ever before (23%), but the number of ministers and other women in prominent public positions remains negligible (only 4 out of 30 cabinet ministers are women).

At the same time, we see a similar trend of growth in the directorates of public companies and directors-general of governmental ministries, as illustrated in Table 2 and Table 3:

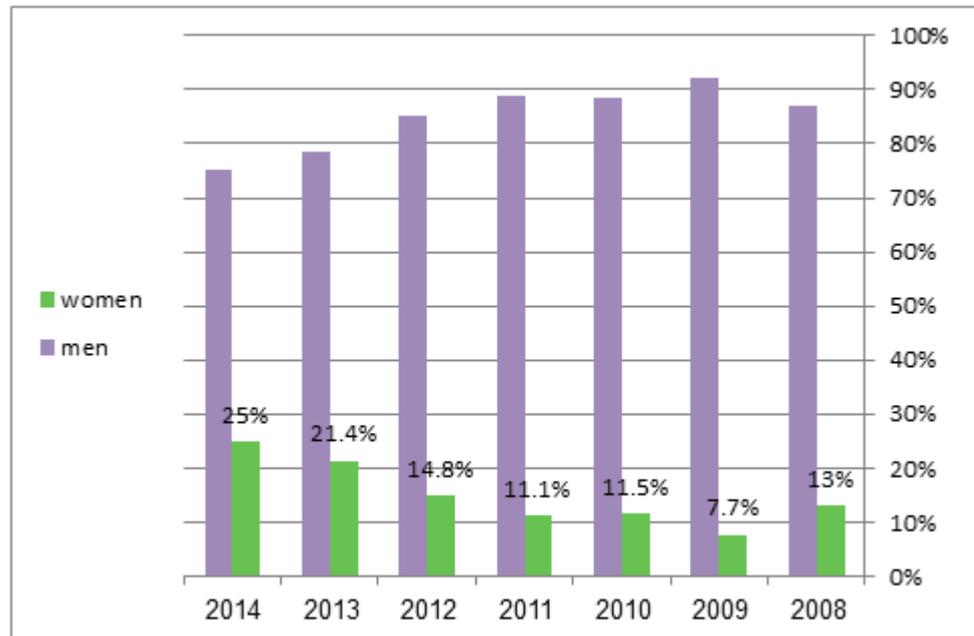


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**Table 2: Representation by Gender in Directorates of Public Companies**



**Table 3: Directors-General in Government Ministries**



To a great extent, we attribute this growth to Government Decision No. 1326, from 2007, which mandates equal representation on these bodies and to the extensive cooperation between the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women and



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the justice who is responsible for determining the validity of any and all senior appointments to the civil service.

In order to draw attention to women who hold senior positions, the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women takes note of women who have been trailblazers in a wide variety of fields and have made a significant contribution to society and to the country – yet have remained unrecognized or unknown. By 2013, the list included nearly 200 women, some already deceased. Increasing exposure and awareness of these women's activities will empower women and as well as bring a just correction to the historical wrong done to these women.

The Authority also holds an annual ceremony to honor women trailblazers; In 2014, the Authority honored Professor Gabriella Shalev, the first women to serve as Israel's Ambassador to the UN, and Professor Tammy Ronen Rosenbaum, head of the Faculty of Social Sciences at Tel Aviv University.

In other symbolic gestures, the Authority is collaborating with the Postal Service to ensure that women are honored and commemorated on postage stamps and with governmental authorities to ensure that women are commemorated on currency bills. Indeed, in 2013, an equal number of men and women were selected for the newly minted currency.

## **5. Violence Against Women**

As we detail in Part Two, Israel has made tremendous strides towards providing women subjected to violence with options to extricate themselves from this cycle and live dignified and productive lives. A comprehensive set of legislation, much of it ground-breakingly feminist and progressive, provides women with numerous options for empowerment and change; guides the police, judicial system, and treatment authorities; and helps to change public norms and opinions.

Active feminist groups are creating new norms in all areas of society; abuse, while still denied by some "old boys' groups," is no longer tolerated by the public. The Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women has played an important role in this change through media campaigns, public education efforts, workshops and in-service-training throughout the public and private sector, and dissemination of informational booklets informing women of their rights and alternatives and encouraging them to extricate themselves from cycles of violence.

Perhaps the most dramatic event over the past five years has been the conviction and incarceration of Israel's president on charges of rape and sexual harassment. Of course, as Israeli citizens, we are neither proud nor pleased that our former president is now in jail. Yet, as feminists committed to gender equality and progressive social change, we are proud that even the president of the country is not immune from punishment when he abuses his power. We have no doubt that this has created a



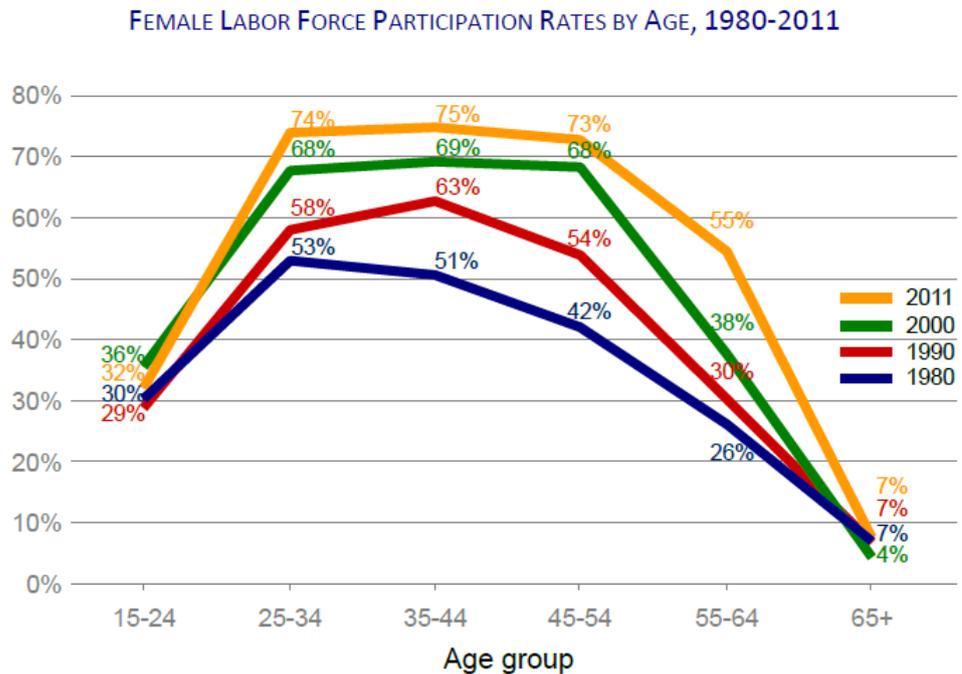
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greater awareness, not only of sexual harassment at all levels, but also of the goal of a more egalitarian, respectful society.

**6. Women's Progress in the Workforce and Labor Market**

Labor participation rates among women have been steadily increasing over the years, with education playing a role in this trend.

**Table 4: Female Labor Force Participation Rates, by Age, 1980-2011**



Source: Haya Stier and Efrat Herzberg, Taub Center  
Data: Central Bureau of Statistics, *Labor Force Surveys*

As we can see, more women of all ages work and participation increases from decade to decade. Furthermore, according to data provided by the Taub Center, the differences in labor force participation between the various prime working-age groups have largely disappeared since 2000, indicating increased stability in the desire to work throughout these age groups.

We also note the synergetic interaction between higher education and increased labor force participation: A major reason for this rise is that employment opportunities increase with higher education and that these offer potentially higher financial remuneration, increasing the incentives to enter the labor market. Furthermore, the higher wages that accompany higher education levels make it increasingly possible to

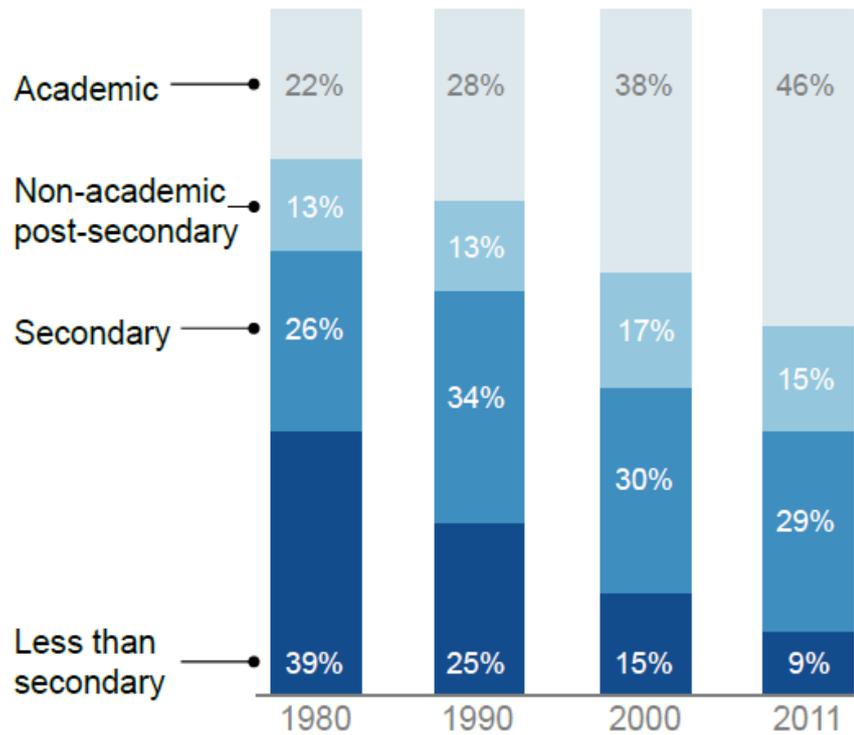


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afford the costs of domestic help and childcare, thus making entry into the work force more economically feasible and attractive.

Table 5:

**DISTRIBUTION OF FEMALE LABOR FORCE BY EDUCATION, 1980-2011**



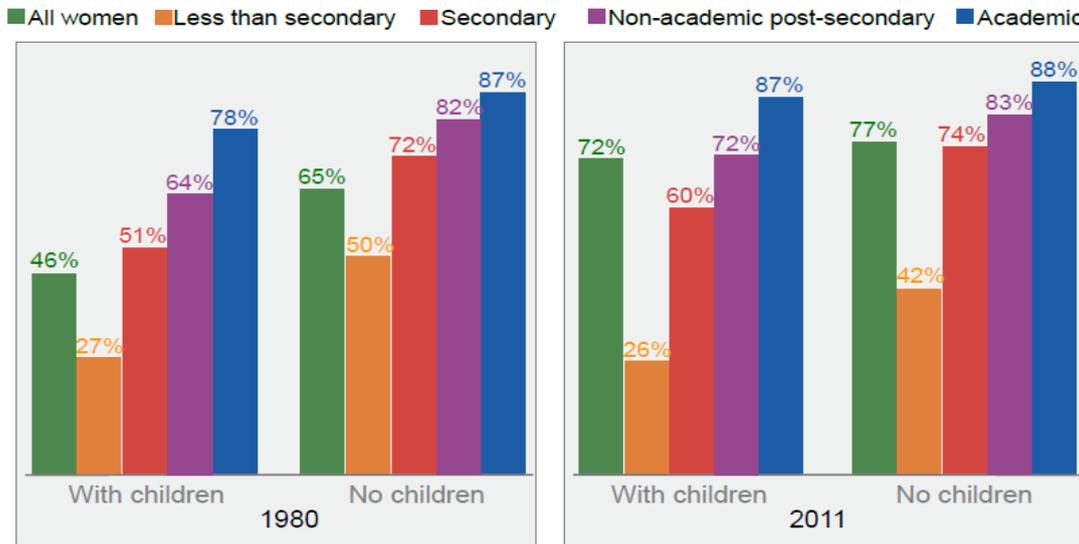
Source: Haya Stier and Efrat Herzberg, Taub Center  
Data: Central Bureau of Statistics, *Labor Force Surveys*



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Table 6:

FEMALE LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES BY PRESENCE OF CHILDREN IN THE HOME\* AND EDUCATION  
as a percent of women aged 25-44, 1980 and 2011



\* Children under the age of 4 in the home; women aged 25-44

Source: Haya Stier and Efrat Herzberg, Taub Center

Data: Central Bureau of Statistics, *Labor Force Surveys*

A recent campaign by the ad-hoc group, "The Coalition of Organizations Against Raising Women's Retirement Age in Israel," reveals the socio-political-conceptual sophistication of feminist groups, their involvement in the labor market, and their ability to progress beyond anachronistic demands for formal and numerical equality to more nuanced understandings that sameness in the context of inequality is substantively unfair.

Under a law passed in 2004, women, but not men, may retire at age 62; if they wish, women may continue to work until age 67, when retirement is mandatory for both sexes. The retirement age, in this instance, refers to the minimum age when employees may access their retirement benefits. However, in late 2011, a committee that had been hastily appointed by the Finance Minister recommended that the mandatory retirement age for women be raised to 64 by 2017 and 67 in 2026.

Israeli women are caught between two problems - ageism and sexism - in the context of a segregated work market, discrimination against women, and persistent wage gaps. Thus, raising the retirement age puts women in a particularly precarious position. Binding women to the labor force by law will only make them poorer. Since most women don't earn as much as men, and since some working women are living in "deep unemployment," raising the age of retirement doesn't mean more years of



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paying into the system – it means longer years of poverty. And when the woman is finally entitled to receive that pension, it will never be enough to pull her out of the debt and despair that she will have accumulated.

The Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women supported the Coalition's position, despite the position of the government in favor of changing the age. With this encouragement, the Coalition mounted a sophisticated public campaign of lobbying, letter writing, and savvy, intensive use of the media. In appeals to the government, the coalition made it clear that raising women's retirement age without correcting the faults in the system, including making it easier for women with lower education levels to enter, remain and advance within the labor force, will make the situation worse. Instead of legislating formal equality, the coalition declared, the government should view the lower retirement age as a form of equalization or compensation.

After being voted down in the Knesset, the decision was put off indefinitely.

## **B. Major Challenges Facing Israeli Women in Efforts to Promote Gender Equality and Empowerment**

Not surprisingly, some of our greatest achievements are in the areas that still pose the greatest challenges to achievement of true gender equality. These are the areas that have traditionally been the most difficult for women, the results of discrimination and stereotypes, glass ceilings and mud floors, and multiple marginalities.

For these reasons, we list here five challenges – three of which we also listed above as achievements – and then detail them below.

These challenges are:

- \*Representation of women in key positions in society;
- \*Progress in the workforce;
- \*Enforcement of legislation and inadequate penalties;
- \*Violence Against Women;
- \*Gender mainstreaming.



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### 1. Representation of Women in Key Positions in Society

As we show above, women have made significant progress in this area. Yet, their numbers, while proportionately higher, remain relatively and absolutely low.

Table 7, for example, illustrates this with regard to directors general in government ministries:

**Table 7: Percentages of Male/Female Directors General in Government Ministries, 2008 - 2014**

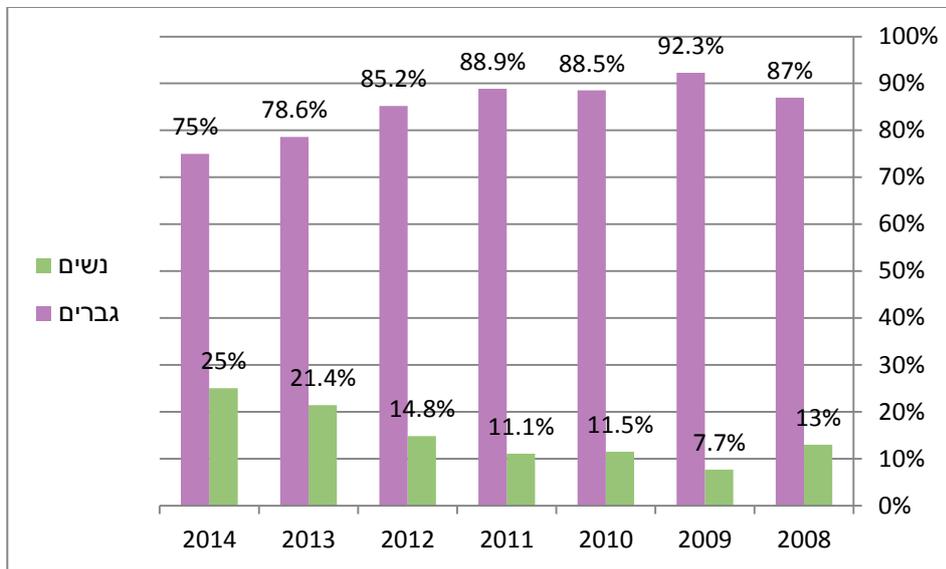


Table 8 summarizes the percentages of women in other key public positions:

**Table 8: Percentage of Women Holding Key Public Positions**

<b>% of women</b>	<b>Framework</b>
<b>20.5%</b>	Directors in Public Companies
<b>64%</b>	Women in the civil service
<b>49%</b>	Women in the three highest levels of the civil service
<b>33.6%</b>	Women with senior contracts in the civil service



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<b>% of women</b>	<b>Framework</b>
<b>33%</b>	Directorship of the Bank of Israel
<b>22.5%</b>	Members of Knesset, since 2013.
<b>17.4%</b>	The current government (established in 2013).
<b>9.5%</b>	Ministerial Legislative Committee
<b>25%</b>	Supreme Court Justices
<b>50%</b>	Judges
<b>2.7%</b>	Women who head municipal authorities (out of 256 such authorities)
<b>14.7%</b>	Women sitting on local and municipal councils
<b>9%</b>	Physicians heading hospitals or HMO's
<b>17%</b>	Heads of Hospital departments
<b>23.5%</b>	Board of Governors of Universities

As the chart reveals, the level of representation on the municipal level is low: only 2.7% of mayors and 14.7% of municipal or regional councils are women.

We attribute these difficulties to a number of reasons, including traditional norms against women's public activism which also work against political involvement; difficulties inherent in balancing a public career with family responsibilities; and the centrality of the military in Israeli society, so that high-ranking officers, who are usually men from "old boys" networks, are given preference in political parties and elections.

The Authority affirms that the participation of women in all frameworks and institutions is essential for any democratic society. We believe that women's participation ensures the best use of human resources; enhances equal access and equal-opportunity; increases women's sense of civil affiliation and belonging; gives expression to a wealth of voices and perspectives; and serves as a concrete implementation of the value of equality.

To these ends, the Authority for the Advancement of the status of Women conducts courses for women's leadership, with the goal of creating a core of women with the



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potential to assume key positions. During 2013, some 700 women participated in such courses.

In order to further enhance the status of women, the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women has engaged in activities aimed at enhancing the knowledge and commitment of council women with regards to the status of women in their localities. These plans have long-term benefits in addition to the short-term ones. These activities are meant to assist in preparing a cadre of women to run for office in local elections by providing them with knowledge and skills, personal and institutional empowerment, and the opportunity for widespread networking that they need to run effective campaigns.

The Authority also sponsors ongoing courses and workshops for persons advising mayors and heads of local councils. In these courses, the Authority emphasizes personal skills, inculcates values relating to gender equality, and provides the participants with further academic and practical skills. As part of this course, for example, the participants are required to analyze the municipal budgets from a gender perspective and are provided with expert guidance and mentoring to enable them to do so. In cooperation with the Advisor on the Status of Women in the Civil Service, the Authority has also actively promoted the interests of supervisors for the status of women in Governmental Ministries. This support has included workshops, conferences, preparation and distribution of informational materials, and more.

In 2013 alone, some 700 women participated in these activities, in addition to the thousands of women who, over the past decade, have participated in empowerment and training courses offered by the many women's and feminist NGO's.

On 28 March 2010, the Government resolved to entrust the Government Corporation Authority to handle the nomination of supervisors for advancement the status of women in government corporations, subsidiary corporations and mixed corporations as defined by law (Government Resolution No. 1563). According to this resolution, corporations are required to train these supervisors for their position according to the guidelines of the Government Corporation Authority and in consultation with the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women. The Government Corporations Authority is required to notify the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women.

As we have shown, there is an increase in women's political activity. However, the ultra-Orthodox parties and some of the Arab parties still do not place women on their election slates.



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Women's organizations in Israel have shown their readiness and ability to use Israel's justice system and especially to appeal to Israel's High Court of Justice, which is judicially activist and has proven itself sensitive to gender issues. Together with other organizations that have taken upon themselves to lobby for legislative change, serve as rights watchdogs and fill the other roles so necessary to ensure that in the future, women to be included in political and legislative arenas.

## **2. Progress in the Workforce**

Since the establishment of the State, there have been clear efforts to involve women equally in all spheres of employment; however, it has also been clear from the beginning that the implementation of equality requires much more than declarations or legislative initiatives. In the pre-State and early State eras, most women were engaged in traditional professions and activities, as they continue to be today. Indeed, employment segregation is decreasing very slowly; as noted by the Gender Index for 2014, fully 47% of workers would have to change their professions in order to reach gender parity.

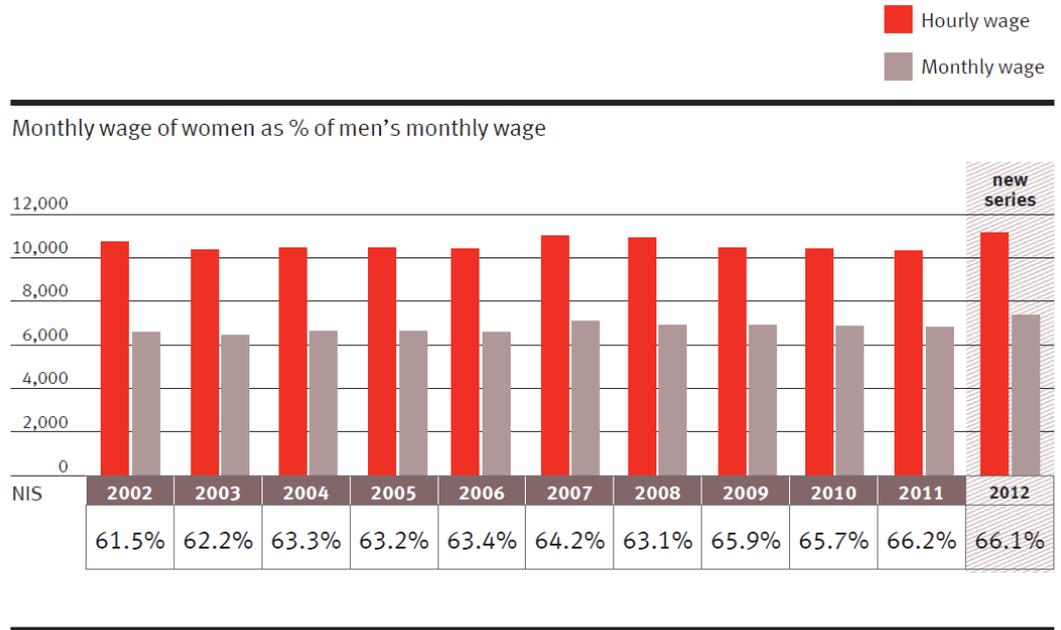
Wage gaps between men and women remain highly stable across the years despite extensive legislation mandating equal pay for equal work. According to data collected by the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women, in March, 2014 the gap in monthly salaries between men and women is 33.9%; taking into consideration the average hourly wage, the average gap is 15.5%.

The gender gap is particularly salient in the data for monthly salaries. This is because many women work part-time or hold temporary jobs.



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**Table 8: Women's Salaries as a Percentage of Men's Salaries 2002-2012**



Hourly wage of women as % of men's hourly wage

**Table 9: Hourly Wage of Women as a % of men's hourly wage**



Source: Adva Center analysis of CBS, *Income Survey*, various years; statistics for 2012 provided courtesy of the Consumption Department of the CBS.

We also note growing differences between different groups of women. In the past, women who were financially better-off worked for the state as teachers, nurses and social workers. This has changed as salaries in the public sector have decreased and as the private sector has opened up (to a degree) towards women. In general, women



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who are less well-off are employed in clerking, selling and caring, especially in the public sector or in positions outsourced by the public sector.

We also note that there are large numbers of non-Israelis in the labor market. Since the late 1980s, the government has permitted entry of migrant workers. There are now some 300,000 legal migrant workers and an unknown number of illegal or undocumented workers. Most of these women are engaged in caring for the elderly or the disabled. Although Israeli law mandates that they receive minimum wage and all stipulated social benefits, this is irregularly enforced and provides no recourse for workers who are here illegally.

With regard to Israeli women's employment, the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women is engaged in numerous programs to encourage women to develop initiatives and start their own businesses. The Authority also conducts special courses geared towards Arab women, focusing on economic empowerment and business planning, in order to encourage them to open independent small businesses. These courses are conducted in collaboration with the Authority for Economic Development in the Arab, Druze, and Circassia sectors, which is also based in the Prime Minister's Office. During 2013, some 400 women participated in these courses.

The Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women is seeking to increase the percentage of women in science and technology, which is currently about 30%. Over the past few years, the Authority has conducted several national projects to encourage women to seek careers in these fields. Most recently, the Ministry for Science, Technology and Space has issued a call for women and minority graduate students to apply for scholarships for the academic year 2014-2015 and has introduced a new scholarship, named in memory of recently deceased Shulamit Aloni, an outspoken, pioneering feminist, human rights activist, and former Israeli cabinet minister and MK, specifically for women.

### **3. Enforcement of legislation and inadequate penalties**

As we show throughout this report, legislation regarding women rights and status in society is sophisticated and comprehensive; however enforcement of existing legislation is weak, especially in the secondary labor market. Sanctions should be added to all pieces of legislation regarding women's issues to provide a stronger deterrent to current and potential violators. These must be accompanied by labor policies based on workers' rights.



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#### **4. Violence Against Women**

As we have shown above, and as we detail in Part II, Israel has made tremendous progress on this front, in terms of legislation, services, and changing norms. However, we are also aware that even this progress is not enough. An unknown number of women still suffer from violence in their homes. Acquaintance rape is still prevalent, and when prosecuted, sentences are often too light. Sexual harassment is still common, as is offensive advertising and media programming. Every year, approximately 500 women are forced to avail themselves of the services provided by the shelters for women victims of violence. Finally, we note that while violence against women can be, to some extent, controlled through legislation, it is the changing of social norms and the creation of a truly egalitarian society that will bring it to its end.

#### **5. Gender mainstreaming**

Although Israeli legislation mandates equality for all, it is necessary to ensure gender mainstreaming in all programs and arenas, and especially in educational programs, so that young people will be inculcated with the values of gender equality, equal allocation of resources, and affirmative action.

As noted, the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women is mandated to provide gender assessments for proposed legislation; during the years 2009-2013, the Authority provided 392 such assessments. In 2013, the Finance Minister established a committee to conduct a gendered assessment of the national budget, in order to determine gendered guidelines for budgetary allocations.

In 2013, The Adva Center, non-partisan policy analysis institute, issued a "Guide to Gender Assessment of Budgets in Municipal and Regional Authorities." In-depth and comprehensive, the Guide is designed to aid the Advisors and activists in their efforts to promote gender equality.

Furthermore, and also as noted above, the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women in Israel, as well as other NGOs and think tanks, provide courses for women in various positions of authority to teach them about gender mainstreaming in planning and budgeting.

### **C. Setbacks in progress towards Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women**

As in many countries, Israel has witnessed an increase in the power of the radical ultra-religious right which, over the past few years has begun to take advantage of political constellations to enforce their views on public space. Much of this focuses on the exclusion of women from the public sphere, including, for example, refusals by



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religious men to allow women to sing in public ceremonies, including those sponsored by the government and the municipalities; refusals to include women in conferences and conventions; defacement of billboards and other advertisements depicting women; and gender-segregated busses.

The Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women, together with the government, the legislature, and civil society, are actively opposing these trends. In 2012, the Justice Ministry established a professional committee to examine the issue. In May, 2013, the Attorney General accepted the findings of this committee, and appointed one of his deputies to oversee their implementation; this group has been mandated to turn in its recommendations by October 2014. Currently-pending legislation pending will define exclusion of women from public places as a criminal offense; in the interim, government decision 1526 from March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2014 declares that exclusion of women constitutes discrimination and is therefore a serious violation of human rights and contradicts Israel's international commitments.

The institutions dealing with this issue recognize its legal and public complexity. The demand for separation between men and women is an accepted practice among some members of some communities, but this conflicts with the basic conceptions of equality, human dignity and inherent worth, and the rule of law as accepted in the State of Israel. The committees have reached the conclusion that deciding in favor of these communities' preferences would undermine the very basic principles upon which democratic Israeli society has been founded.

At the same time, these authorities recognize a woman's right to avoid certain activities in public if they conflict with her religious or cultural beliefs. For these reasons, the committees have focused on public authorities and the institutions under their provenance, noting that public institutions are responsible for advancing and protecting the human rights of all individuals. This includes: public and official ceremonies (including seating arrangements); public transportation (including separate seating areas for men and women); radio and television broadcasts (women as commentators, announcers, and/or anchors); signs calling for women to "voluntarily" walk on a specific side of the road; etc.

Moreover, coming out of all these efforts is a clear statement: while the exclusion is directed towards women, it affects all women and all men in all forms of public life.

In August 2012, Jerusalem activists group (now a political party), headed by an avowedly feminist woman, petitioned the High Court of Justice against the Egged bus company in Jerusalem. In recent years, Egged had refrained from showing women in advertisements on its buses, due to its concern that the images would offend or draw protest from its ultra-Orthodox clientele. In late May, the company signed an



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agreement to allow pictures of women, after the state agreed to provide compensation for any acts of vandalism the ads would incur.

## **D. Main constitutional legislative and/or legal developments in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women**

Between 2010-2014 alone, some 50 legislations were passed to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women. Among the most salient:

- Amendment 45 to the Women's Employment Law makes it illegal to fire a man or woman who is undergoing IVF or other fertility treatments.
- Amendment 46 to this law extended maternity leave from 14 to 26 weeks; although the additional 12 weeks are not paid, the woman may not be fired during that time and for 60 days after her return to work.
- Amendment 16 to the Law of Companies makes Israeli law more similar to legislation in other advanced countries with regard to conglomerates and corporations and mandates that in their regular reporting these groups must include information on gender representation in management and directorates, thus increasing transparency with regard to advancement of women.
- Amendment No. 5 to the Equal Rights for Women Law mandates appropriate representation for women and was expanded to include investigate committees and governmental commissions of inquiry. The law requires the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women to establish a resource with the details of women qualified, in the opinion of the head of the Authority, to serve in this capacity. If the appointing authority argues that it "cannot find" a woman for the position, it must consult with the Authority's resource list.
- Amendment 48 to the Women's Employment Law extends the rights and benefits of parenthood to adoptive, prospective and foster parents. The law is intended to make it easier to balance family and work and furthers egalitarian parenting.
- According to amendment 48 to the Women's Employment Law, women's age of mandatory retirement remains flexible, between age 62 and 67.
- Amendment 7 to the Sexual Harassment Law extends the statute of limitations for pressing charges against sexual harassment from three to seven years, thus contributing to women's empowerment, increased public consciousness and awareness of the severity of the crime.



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- Amendment 39 to the Guaranteed Income Law provides welfare benefits to women who are residing in a shelter for battered women (applicable to some 500 women a year).
- An amendment to The Tenders Law adds a prohibition to discrimination due to age to sex, sexual preference, and personal status, which were previously prohibited.
- Amendment 9 to the Law for Prevention of Sexual Harassment expands the definition of an authority or dependent relationship to civil servants within the framework of their jobs. This amendment will increase awareness in society in general, including among civil servants who hold authority or other power (the choice to provide benefits, for example) over citizens. As is well-known, a majority of those who use these services, especially welfare services, are women, many of whom are particularly vulnerable.
- Amendment 6 to the Age of Marriage Law has raised the minimum age for marriage from 17 to 18, thus enabling more women to pursue education and a profession. Extensive evidence indicates that women who marry young are subjected to sexual, physical, and/or emotional violence and are often "married off" against their will.
- Amendment 199 to the Income Tax Law provides for separate income tax assessments even if a couple shares the same income. With this amendment, the law becomes more suitable to legal, social and gendered reality, in which women who earn an income together with their spouses are equal partners in the generation of that income. Thanks to this amendment, women will be more financially independent from their partners.

*With regard to laws and/or regulations that remain in place that could have adverse effects on promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women, we note that, in general, there is no separation of religion and state in Israel: the state regulates and legislates religion. In most cases, the interpretation of the religion is according to the strictest sub-streams. For women, this is particularly relevant with regard to issues of personal status and, increasingly, women's participation in public space.*

According to Sha'aria (Muslim) law, while both men and women are able to file for divorce, the court decides whether or not to grant it based on recommendations from mediators selected by both parties. The court also decides whether the woman receives the Mohair (the pre-determined amount of money given to the wife following a divorce) based on the reason for the divorce, as well as on the women's behavior in the period before the divorce. It is generally easier for a husband to divorce his wife than for a wife to divorce her husband; this imbalance is manifested in many ways.



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Regarding Catholic and Greek Orthodox women, only the Greek Orthodox religion allows for divorce; however, the conditions under which divorce is permitted are very stringent. For example, a Greek Orthodox woman can only divorce if she is subject to life-threatening domestic violence.

For Jewish women, who are the majority, a Jewish woman is allowed to initiate divorce proceedings, but her husband must give his consent to make the divorce final. If the husband disappears or refuses to grant the divorce, the wife is considered an "agunah" (lit. "chained woman") and may not remarry or give birth to *halakhically* (according to Jewish law) legitimate children. Rabbinical tribunals may, and sometimes do, impose sanctions on a husband who refuses to agree to a divorce, but still do not grant a divorce without the husband's consent, thus leaving women open to "blackmail" by recalcitrant husbands.

Although there has been progress on this front, including expanding the authority of the rabbinic courts to penalize the recalcitrant spouse, the essential imbalance and discrimination against women remains in place.

The group known as "Women of the Wall" provides another example of the way in which the religious establishment interprets Jewish law and takes jurisdiction over public space in ways that are detrimental to women – as well as the way in which women have organized to change this situation.

The Western Wall, the last vestige (a retaining wall) of the Holy Temple, is a historical, national, religious and spiritual symbol, of meaning to many secular as well as religious Jews. In accordance with Orthodox interpretation of Jewish law, the plaza in front of the Western Wall is divided into a men's section and a women's section. Women of the Wall is a group of Orthodox women who wish to pray at the "women's section" of the plaza, in a manner which, in terms of almost all interpretations of Jewish law except the most strict and the most misogynist, is permissible. However, religious authorities, joined by minions of ultra-Orthodox men and numerous ultra-Orthodox women, have forbidden them to do so.

In recent years, the issue has gained tremendous public attention and sharpened public understanding of the relationship between religious and political issues and women's rights in a society in which there is no separation between state and religion. After appealing to the government, the Courts and public opinion, it appears that solutions have been found that will uphold these women's religious rights.

At its most obvious level, the campaign by Women of the Wall reflects the broader demand by religious women to achieve the social and legal recognition of their right, as women, to pray according to their beliefs and to assert their spirituality. At a more political level, this has been a highly symbolic fight linked to a set of battles with the



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religious establishment over its monopoly on standards for Jewish conversion, marriage, divorce, and burial, which bears tremendous importance for women.

### **E. Mechanisms for Dialogue**

The Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women and the State of Israel are particularly proud of the cooperation that we have developed between branches of government, institutional mechanisms, and NGOs. Grass roots activist feminists are full partners as we move towards equality, implementing projects and engaging in public awareness and consciousness campaigns. We view this activity as a sign of the maturity of both the government and civil society and recognition of their roles and contributions.

While respecting each group's autonomy and goals, the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women serves as a clearing house, convener, enabler and coordinator.

Since 2006, the Prime Minister's office has been regularly conducting a unique mechanism of "round tables" to discuss central issues, including illustrations of best practices and clarification of differences of opinion among the different stakeholders, with an emphasis on the relationship between the government and civil society. During 2014, other government ministries will establish similar mechanisms in each ministry. The format for these additional roundtables has already been determined, and they will be part of a new advisory committee that will take part in policy-decisions as well as other processes.

We believe that this system of cooperation serves as a model for other countries.

### **F. International Cooperation**

MASHAV – Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation at Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was founded in 1957 and is responsible for the design, coordination and implementation of the State of Israel's development cooperation programs. In events of natural disasters, MASHAV provides humanitarian assistance and participates in reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts. MASHAV's approach seeks to ensure social, economic and environmental sustainable development, joining international community efforts in implementing the Millennium Development Goals and formulating the new SDGs and the Post 2015 agenda.

MASHAV takes an active part in appraising the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted at the 4th World Conference on Women Beijing 1995, and the outcomes of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly in 2000, taking into consideration the importance of promoting gender equality in the context of



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development, as highlighted at the 4th High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan in 2011 which emphasized the need to accelerate efforts to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Through its specialized training extension, the Golda Meir Mount Carmel International Training Center (MCTC) MASHAV promotes training for development cooperation with gender equality and empowerment of women as cross-cutting issues that percolates through all MCTC training activities.

To date, MASHAV/MCTC has trained over 20,000 professionals from Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe, Central Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean and the Middle East in socio-economic topics, with gender issues as a cross-cutting issue throughout. Thousands more women and men have participated in gender related On-the-Spot courses on different continents.

International women's leadership conferences devoted to topics declared by the UN to be of concern are held biennially, bringing together professional women from around the world who hold leadership positions and come to discuss best practices with other leaders. Recent Conferences include:

- *Women's Leadership for Sustainable Development 2007* - held in cooperation with UNESCO;
- *The Global Financial Crisis – Implications for Women 2009*, in cooperation with UN-OSAGI;
- *Science, Technology and Innovation; Education and Training for Women and Girls 2011*, in cooperation with UNESCO;
- *The Post-2015 and Sustainable Development Goals Agenda: Ensuring the Centrality of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the Next Framework 2013*, in cooperation with UN Women and the UNDP.

MASHAV/MCTC's activities view gender mainstreaming as a strategy for achieving gender equality. The underlying approach focuses on human development and security together with the basic needs approach which proposes a participatory bottom up approach. Professional programs are all organized in cooperation with partner organizations and/or UN special agencies, as well as with international and non-governmental organizations.

*CEDAW and Other International Conventions:* Israel ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1991. While CEDAW holds no formal status under international Israeli law, its directives do



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function as an interpretive guide for Israeli courts and the legislature as well as the executive branches.

Upon ratifying CEDAW, Israel entered two reservations to two separate articles within CEDAW, Article 7(b) and 16(2). To date, these reservations, which are based on respect for and accommodation with religion in the unique Israeli context, have not been changed.

Israel became a signatory in 2001 to both the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Israel ratified both treaties in 2008.

Israel is a party to International Labor Organization (ILO) conventions regarding equality and the prohibition of gender discrimination, including Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951, and the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958.

European Neighborhood Policy – The Union for the Mediterranean: The Union for the Mediterranean is a network of relations between the 27 member states and 16 partners across the Southern Mediterranean and the Middle East, of which Israel is one.

Within this framework, a ministerial conference was held in Istanbul in 2006 on the subject of "Strengthening the Role of Women in Society". The Istanbul conclusions require the states to submit periodical progress reports, with which Israel complies. In November 2009 a follow up Ministerial Conference was held in Marrakech, in which Israel also took part.

In the struggle for sustainable development, issues of women's advancement and their role in the eradication of poverty have long been priorities. The ongoing dire condition of women and their low status in many developing countries, particularly in terms of their equal access to education, vocational training and employment, continue to give a sense of urgency to the need to change prevailing social attitudes towards women and to empower them to claim their rightful role in their nations' progress.

As Israeli women, we value contact and cooperation with like-minded organizations and women throughout the world. We believe that we have much to learn from the experiences of other countries, both those more and less developed than Israel, and we also believe that many of our experiences and our progress can contribute to the activities of women in other countries as well.



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## **G. Millennium Development Goals**

Israeli Authorities, including the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women and the Foreign Office, have consistently related to the Development Goals as markers for our progress.

With regard to some of the goals, and especially extreme hunger, universal primary education, and child mortality, these goals have been largely achieved. With regard to the other goals, as noted in this report, Israel is making significant progress.



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## **SECTION TWO: PROGRESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CRITICAL AREAS OF CONCERN**

### **1. Women and Poverty**

As noted above, Israel has one of the highest poverty ratios in the OECD. Yet, as we discuss throughout this report, the poverty is relatively limited, and, although entrenched, reaches levels of "deep poverty" in only a few, isolated cases, which the State is attempting to ameliorate.

For the past thirty years, Israel has been undergoing a process of privatization and adjustment to the globalized world economy. In part thanks to these programs, Israel has become renowned for its strong macro-economic performance and world leadership in hi-tech research and development. Indeed, Israel's HDI for 2012 is 0.900, as noted above.

However, when the value is discounted for inequality, the HDI falls to 0.79, a loss of 12.3 percent due to inequality in the distribution of the dimension indices. This is because although Israel's macro-economic indicators are good, the benefits do not "trickle down" to the majority of the population and especially not to the more vulnerable population sectors, most of whom are located in the country's socio-geographical periphery. This assessment places Israel at roughly the middle of the developed world in terms of the concentration of income at the top end of the income spectrum.

As everywhere, women are particularly affected by poverty – in 2000, fully 67% of the recipients of income guarantees (the lowest level of social welfare benefits) were women. Some 40% of Israel's children live under the poverty line, according to market incomes (i.e., prior to receipt of welfare benefits and payment of taxes.)

Israel has numerous mechanisms in place to deal with these issues. The National Insurance Institute (NII) is the statutory institution responsible for the administration of the National Insurance Law and other legislation that deals with income maintenance in Israel. These include, for example, allotments to mothers after giving birth and income maintenance guarantees. Women do enjoy a wide variety of benefits through the NII, some of which have been instituted in the past decade: Women who work out of their homes are able to receive old-age pensions from the age of 65 and, if they are unmarried or divorced, they are entitled to that pension from the age of 60.

Women with physical disabilities also receive benefits specific under the law; a housewife who has not worked outside of her home is entitled to disability benefits



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which are similar (although still not equal) to those paid to a women who has been employed outside of her home.

However, due to austerity plans and government belt-tightening, these benefits are no longer adequate to ensure a quality standard of living. Furthermore, we are witness to the combined effects of cut-backs in social services and the injection of private money into public systems (made possible by privatization). Thus, along with increases in the social safety net, Israeli policies must consider reinstatement of universal expenditures into public services, such as health and education.

Thus, the main task facing Israel is to lift a sizeable chunk of the rest to a higher level of income and life-style. At the time of preparation of this report, a government-appointed committee has been convening to consider ways to meet this goal, and it is expected to issue its conclusions in the near future.

## **2. Education and Training of Women**

Two sets of legislation have contributed to ensuring that women in Israel will receive adequate education: the determination of age 18 as the minimum age for marriage of girls and legislation mandating compulsory education for girls and boys until age 18. Thus, overall levels of illiteracy and semi-literacy in Israel today are very low, even among minority and disadvantaged populations.

Furthermore, as noted above, women's educational levels are rising, and increased education does, indeed, bring increased remuneration. Moreover, we see that girls fare better than boys in high school and eligibility for admission to college: 65% of girls receive matriculation exams, in contrast to 53% of boys; 1.7% of girls drop out of secondary school compared to 4.5% of boys; 52% of girls meet the minimum requirements for higher education, compared to 44.5% of boys.

According to the Ministry of Education, it is the role of the educational system to contribute to bringing about change among both boys and girls, so that in the future, they will be free of stereotypes and able to fulfill their personal, individual potentials. Gender equality is a world view, according to the Ministry, and its principles must be included in all aspects of the educational process: in knowledge, culture and tradition; in attempts at changing boys' understandings of "masculinity" and girls' understanding of "femininity"; in critical pedagogy; in the relationships between teachers and students and their parents; in the allocation of funds and resources, and more.

To this end, in 2002 the ministry established The Department for Gender Equality, dedicated to the promotion of gender equality, inculcation of these values over the entire period of a child's participation in the educational system, and changing the views according to which different groups in the population are assumed to possess different traits and talents. The attempt to create this change in gender consciousness



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is promoted in a number of activities, including: Guidance programs for boys and girls in the schools, in cooperation with other professional agencies; school-wide in-service training programs for teachers and kindergarten teachers; academic training programs for teachers and kindergarten teachers; empowerment workshops for teachers and kindergarten teachers; inclusion of gender content in knowledge and learning; developing learning units and guidelines for matriculation and independent-study projects, in cooperation with the relevant agencies within the ministry; developing specialized programs within the social science study programs in the schools; encouraging graduating students to prepare final projects related to gender studies; organizing conferences and conventions.

In 2009, the ministry invested unprecedented sums of resources in its activities in the Arab sector, aided by funding allocated by a government decision to implement a five-year program geared to increasing equality between minority groups and the majority group in Israeli society. The Department views these programs as particularly important, since they enable the young students and their teachers to expose themselves to different views and thus attempt to change their own world views, their perceptions of their capabilities, and their dreams.

The Department believes that the educational provider – teacher, principal, kindergarten teachers, counselor, etc. - must be at the center of this activity. Based on an understanding of the crucial importance of the teacher's role as an educator, the department realizes that it is important to enable the teachers, most of whom are women, especially in the younger grades, to have the opportunity for consistent self-reflection and examination of her inner worlds, the sources of strength she can draw on from within herself, and her own ability to see herself as a worthwhile member of society, imbued with a clear sense purpose and an education vision. To this end, the Department strives to provide teachers with the skills to fully engage in an educational process that she creates and then leads. Furthermore, the teacher is most often the link between the school and the community, and as she is empowered, she brings this empowerment to the entire community.

The unit conducts In-Service training for teachers and some 15 regional and national conferences every year on topics relating to gender equality, in cooperation with regional and municipal authorities and feminist NGOs.

In the year 2013, the unit issued the following specialized curricula:

- A class program entitled, "The Other is Me," with an emphasis on International Girls' Day.
- Programs for the prevention of violence against women, with an emphasis on prevention of pornography and prostitution.



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- Programs for International Women's Day, at different grade levels, produced in cooperation with the Authority for Society and Youth; in 2014, the program will focus on the representation of women in the media.
- Programs dedicated to the theme of "The Era of Women," which was the central theme of the Independence Day celebrations.
- A special program in history for 9<sup>th</sup> graders, focusing on the suffragists and women's struggles for equality in Israel and throughout the world.

The ministry is engaged in proactive efforts to increase the numbers of girls who study scientific and technological subjects through a variety of programs, including workshops for teachers, supervisors and principals; a program for girls living in Israel's social and geographical periphery that provides enrichment in the natural sciences and mathematics in order to make it easier for the girls to gain admission to the universities and colleges in these departments; mentoring programs; and scholarship programs. Several of these programs are implemented in collaboration with NGOs, local authorities, and/or hi-tech companies. In 2014 alone, some 220 girls participated in a 6-year program intended to advance girls in the fields of the natural sciences, engineering, technology and manufacturing, conducted in collaboration with WIZO (a women's organization), the Technion Institute of Science, the Haifa municipality, and several hi-tech companies, including Intel and IBM.

More than 5000 girls have participated over the past few years in a program entitled "Mind the Gap" which, under the slogan, "Science is for Girls," prepares girls who are studying computer science to serve as mentors for younger girls. Another program is geared to girls who have completed high school; the program was established in 2000 and by 2013, over 2000 girls had received a deferment of their compulsory military service in order to study technological and scientific studies and then apply these studies during their military service.

Women make up the majority of students at Israel's institutions for higher learning: Women make up 57.1% of all students, 56.5% of undergraduate students, 59.9% of MA students, and 52.1% of PhD students. However, women's higher education follows traditional paths that will perpetuate women's over-participation in the pink-collar professions: Women make up 83.2% students enrolled in programs of study for the para-medical professions and 87.7% of those enrolled in education and teacher certification programs. In the physical studies, only 38.1% of the students are women; only 28.8% of the students in mathematics, statistics and computer science.

The Council for Higher Education promotes gender equality in Israel's universities and colleges. In 2011, the committee appointed by the council completed its deliberations and presented its conclusions to the universities; these recommendations advise the universities to enact affirmative action for women in the sciences, to



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encourage establishment of an alternative to the post-doctoral year abroad as a prerequisite for an academic position and/or to provide financial aid to those women who do go abroad and other ways to encourage young women faculty members. The council also established a specific funding for women's In-Service Training and mandates that every institution of higher learning must appoint an advisor for the advancement of the status of women.

The National Council for the Promotion of Women in Science and Technology was established in the year 2000, according to an Israeli government decision subsequent to similar decisions by the European Union. The aims of the council are to serve as a network linking adult and adolescent women in science and technology; to serve as a contact point for problems related to women's role in science; to collect information regarding programs promoting women's role in science; to propose and implement programs that will promote women in science; to raise public awareness regarding the status of women in science; to coordinate between public and private initiatives for the advancement of women's involvement in science.

There are also specific programs geared to ultra-Orthodox women. Some 600 women participate in these programs annually.

As feminists and as Israelis we are particularly proud of Professor Ada Yonath of the Weizmann Institute who was awarded the 2009 Nobel Prize in chemistry for her groundbreaking work in understanding how cells build proteins. She is only the fourth woman to win the Nobel chemistry prize, and the first since 1964, when British Dorothy Crowfoot Hodgkin received the prize. In her numerous interviews with the local and international media, Yonath, with her determined yet engaging manner and ready smile, encouraged girls and women to study and pursue their goals and dreams. "Women make up half the population," she told the interviewers at the time. "I think the population is losing half of the human brain power by not encouraging woman to go into the sciences. Woman can do great things if they are encouraged to do so."

The Ministry of the Economy conducts training courses for special sectors of women: women living in development areas, ultra-Orthodox women, single-mothers, and so forth, in an attempt to improve their economic situation by employment status. These courses include technological training and engineering, as well as workshops for the development of employment skills.

### **3. Women and Health**

Israel's National Health Law, which in its current format was passed in 1998, ensures health insurance based on progressive payments to all Israeli citizens. Coverage is comprehensive and inclusive and includes, for example, pregnancy and childbirth;



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termination of pregnancy (under stipulated conditions – see below); chronic mental and physical disabilities; and acute and chronic hospitalization and treatment.

The basket of health services offers a growing number of medications, including remedies for numerous gender-specific problems, such as osteoporosis. However, in the current economic crisis, the basket of approved medications has not been expanded adequately, leaving some women, especially the elderly, unable to pay for medications that are not covered by the basket of health services.

The Patients' Rights Law, passed in 1996, guarantees patients their rights to autonomy, dignity, privacy and confidentiality; makes it mandatory to disclose all relevant information to the patient and/or her family; and empowers a woman to participate in informed decision-making regarding her life and well-being. Health services are provided in all areas of the country, although specialized services are provided mostly in the medical centers in the country center and there are gaps in the frequency and quality of services between the center and the geographical periphery.

The Ministry of Health has established a special unit to identify and provide services to women who are abused by their spouses, based on the recognition that the medical system is a good source for the location and identification of these women. Recognizing that women's health is a unique specialty, with particular physiological and social-cultural characteristics, the State of Israel established the National Council for Women's Health. The Council has taken upon itself to bring gender-based medicine into all areas of the medical profession, so that practice will be both evidence- and gender-based.

The Council has contributed to increasing awareness by sponsoring workshops, public information campaigns, conferences, and so forth, for medical professionals, the military, advisors to the mayors and heads of local councils; advisors on the status of women in the government ministries; and other target audiences. In 2009 alone, the Council convened three times, determining its program for upcoming years. The Council is also aiding in the establishment of the Association for Gendered Medicine and seeks to create positive cooperation between the Association and the universities and the medical organizations.

The Council is also continuing to take an active role in contributing to medical school studies, so that physicians and other medical personnel will be more aware of women's needs. For example, the Council has established a committee to study heart disease and gender, based on the "Acute Coronary Syndrome" – the Israeli Survey.

Furthermore, the Council has taken an active role in determining the medications included in the basket of services and medications provided under the health law and in recommending that HIV testing become part of the routine testing offered to all pregnant women by the national health law.



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The National Council for Women's Health, Neonatology and Genetics aids the Health Ministry in determining national policy and improving the quality of medical services offered to women.

All of the Health Funds have established women's health centers, offering basic preventive treatment (PAP, mammography, bone-density screening, osteoporosis testing, etc.) as part of the regular health plans. In addition, several of the funds and a number of hospitals have developed private women's health services, offering the same services as well as others, including non-conventional treatments.

Since, as in other developed countries, heart disease is the leading cause of death for Israeli women, several health groups, and especially Hadassah-Israel, have made it their goal to educate the population about heart disease and prevention through lifestyle changes, screening and risk reduction management.

The Ministry of Health has also set up hostels for women and girls who suffer from eating disorders, supported by a special grant from the National Insurance Institute. Each hostel provides treatment to some 14 young women and girls, who arrive at the hostel after receiving acute treatment and after they have reached a minimal weight-level that will enable them to take advantage of the treatment.

The Ministry has developed a set of clear protocols for identification and treatment of victims of domestic and sexual violence, which determines that staff that should be available at each location and the forms of treatment to be offered at various stages of intervention.

The Department for Mothers, Children and Adolescents provides services from the pre-natal period through adolescence, including developmental assessments for infants, toddlers and children and early detection of developmental problems, inoculations, in-service training for physicians and nurses, and other important services.

The State also maintains a network of "Family Health Centers – Well Baby Care" that provide preventive and development services at low cost. These clinics are distributed throughout the country, providing services to all sectors of the population. To adolescents and women these centers offer services such as instruction, education, and health promotion, with particular attention to emotional health and prevention of violence against women, family planning, and pre-pregnancy education. To pregnant women, they offer prenatal care by nurses and physicians, information regarding various genetic and other forms of testing; information regarding nutritional supplements and other health-promotion topics, smoking-prevention, dental care, exercise, and so forth. For newborns and toddlers, the clinics provide on-going "well baby care," including vaccinations, developmental monitoring, instruction on nursing and feeding, referrals to specialists as indicated, etc. The centers also provide



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guidance and workshops for parents, from courses to prepare for the birth through first aid for infants, etc.

These services are provided to every woman and child, including migrant workers, whether they are in Israel legally or illegally.

Obstetrical and gynecological services are available and covered by the National Health Law. There is no restriction of access to contraception; however, the costs of contraceptives are not fully covered by the National Health Insurance Law and are only partly subsidized by some of the Health Funds.

Several prominent NGOs work for the promotion of family planning and maintain information and counseling centers; several centers serve adolescents exclusively. The Israel Defense Forces provide contraceptive education as well as contraceptives to both male and female soldiers.

Israel has one of the highest rates of assisted reproduction facilities per population in the world. In keeping with Israel's strong pro-natalist orientation, the costs of in-vitro fertilization and other reproductive technologies are entirely covered by the National Health Insurance Law, up to and including the birth of two children for married couples. Furthermore, the law prohibits employers from dismissing women or men who are undergoing fertility treatments, as this would be considered discrimination on the basis of parenthood.

In legal terms, cessation of pregnancy due to a threat to health or welfare of the mother is considered a medical procedure and not an abortion per se.

Research shows that the authorities are cognizant of the psychological damage that can ensue as a result of forcing a woman to carry an unwanted pregnancy to term. Elective abortion is legal in Israel under certain circumstances. The law stipulates that a hospital committee, convened at a woman's request, may approve termination of pregnancy under specified circumstances; these include: a woman's age (under 19 or over 40); a pregnancy that results from rape, incest, or extra-marital relations; and serious congenital defects in the fetus. Thus, for all practical purposes, legal and medically-safe abortion is available to almost all women and cost of the procedure, hospitalization and follow-up is covered by the national medical insurance law.

A woman is entitled to make the decision to terminate a pregnancy and is not required to consult with, nor does she need the consent of, anyone else. Minors do not need the consent of a parent/guardian.

Legislation initiated by the government and passed by the Knesset regulates egg-donation, which is permissible only from women who volunteer to do so for the specific purpose of bringing a child into the world. The donation is anonymous and the donor is entitled to retain her eggs for her own future use and/or to contribute



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them for research purposes. The law permits three series per donor, and each is intended for no more than three women.

The government has supported legislation that prohibits the use of underweight models in advertising.

Although Israel's medical system remains comprehensive, we do note that due to austerity measures and cut-backs, the system has become increasingly unequal. Individuals who have the ability to pay are increasingly purchasing supplementary private insurances, which entitle them to shorter waiting periods for services and medical procedures, improved testing, choice of physician, and so forth. Aware of this difficulty, the government appointed a broad-based committee, headed by the Minister of Health, who is a woman, to propose solutions to this difficulty.

#### **4. Violence against Women**

The struggle to prevent violence against women involves legislation, education, information, and enforcement. Each year, as the annual International Women's Day approaches, the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women implements an information campaign in order to raise consciousness regarding violence against women. Throughout the year, the Authority for the Advancement of Women provides Israeli women with information regarding emergency numbers, the location of the treatment centers, and so forth, so that they will have where to turn in cases of violence in the family or other forms of danger. The information is disseminated in Hebrew, Arabic, Russian, Amharic, French, English and Spanish.

Another campaign implemented by the Authority encouraged men to turn to the centers in order to receive the professional help that will enable them to change their behaviors. The campaign, implemented in 2013 and 2014, increased the numbers of men who turned to these centers. The Authority is also sponsoring workshops for self-defense for women currently at risk for violence, in cooperation with the police department and the advisors for the advancement of the status of women in the municipal councils.

In an effort to enhance prevention, the Ministry of Education, also in cooperation with NGOs, implements a special program emphasizing "Non-Violent Friendships and Dating," which teaches students to deal with the varied life-situations in which they are likely to find themselves. The program teaches mutual respect among human beings in general and among men and women in particular; inculcates values and norms of equality and mutuality; provides opportunities to develop constructive communication; and teaches the students how prevent violent situations within society, the family, and intimate relationships.



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Two inter-ministerial national programs have been implemented since 2008: The Program for Treatment of Victims of Sexual Attack and the Program to Extricate Women from Prostitution. Both programs are multi-year and well-funded and include professionals from the governmental ministries and public bodies. The programs include the following elements:

- Two emergency rooms that provide immediate shelter for prostitutes, in Haifa and Tel Aviv.
- A national hotline and treatment referral service for teens and women in prostitution who are facing abuse, rape and theft.
- A long-term hostel
- Day centers for emotional and vocational rehabilitation
- Mobile infirmaries

*Spousal Violence Against Women:* The Ministry of Social Welfare, together with other institutions for social services, operates some 90 centers for the treatment and prevention of violence against women, shelters for battered women and their children, legal aid centers throughout the country, as well as a national hot line. Some 7,000 women are treated in these centers annually, and some 700 are given protection in the shelters. Approximately 16,000 complaints of violence against women are filed with the police every year.

In accordance with the Law for the Prevention of Violence in the Family, it is possible to obtain a restraining order against a violent family member; some 8,000 requests for such restraining orders are brought to the courts every year. The Law for the Rights of Victims of Crime provides the victim with the right to protection from the suspect/accused of violence and/or his relations throughout all legal proceedings.

*Sex Offenders:* The Law for Protection to the Public from Sex Offenders provides for monitoring and follow-up, as well as other limitations, on sex offenders, in order to protect the public from recidivism. The Law also establishes a registry of sex offenders who are under supervision. Through its various mechanisms, the law establishes a balance between the restrictions that limit sex offenders' freedoms and the level of threat they pose toward the general public.

The Division for the Supervision of Sex Offenders is an integral part of the Israeli Prisons Service; it operates on a national level and works with the District and the State Attorneys' Offices as well as with other relevant bodies.

*Trafficking of Women:* We note with satisfaction that Israel has made tremendous progress in its treatment of the problem of trafficking in women. According to the US State Department, in 2012 and 2013, Israel was ranked at the highest levels. A



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parliamentary committee, established in 2001, continues to oversee government activities and to make policy recommendations, in coordination with numerous feminist and human rights groups that seek to aid the victims of trafficking, to raise public awareness, and to ensure that punishment against perpetrators will be stiffer.

The government prohibits all forms of human trafficking through the Anti-Trafficking Law of 2006, which prescribes penalties of up to 16 years' imprisonment for the trafficking of an adult, up to 20 years' imprisonment for the trafficking of a child, up to 16 years' imprisonment for slavery, and up to seven years' imprisonment for forced labor. Over the past few years, the government has conducted several dozen investigations of sex trafficking and forced labor. However, sentences given to convicted sex traffickers are low and, too often, offenders have been given sentences that are not sufficiently serious to deter the crime.

In May 2006, government decision 63 established the Coordination Unit of the Campaign Against Human Trafficking within the Ministry of Justice. The Unit, which recognizes explicitly that while some men also experience trafficking, it is inherently a gendered crime, was tasked with coordinating all efforts in this field, including coordination with non-governmental agencies, legislative efforts, etc. The government took an additional four decisions, including establishment of an annual award for the individual and/or institution that did the most to end the phenomenon, the establishment of the shelter (see below), establishment of a permanent committee of directors-general, articulation of a national plan, and more.

The Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women, together with the interdisciplinary unit and other units within the Justice Ministry, has engaged in extensive public education against trafficking.

Regional police districts and other professional units have been provided with specialized training in human trafficking and are responsible for enforcing trafficking crimes and handling trafficking investigations, overseen by an Israel National Police headquarters component. Through the government's anti-trafficking unit, the government continues to provide numerous anti-trafficking trainings, workshops, and seminars for law enforcement, prison, immigration, and judicial officials, labor inspectors, social workers, and NGOs.

The Government of Israel has maintained its protection of trafficking victims, including its efforts to employ effective procedures to identify and protect some trafficking victims among vulnerable populations, including migrant workers and vulnerable migrants from the Sinai. Israeli law enforcement authorities employ systematic procedures to identify foreign sex trafficking victims among high-risk persons. The police have implemented a program together with an NGO to help



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identify sex trafficking victims during police raids of brothels and refer them to NGO protection services.

The government continues to fund the 35-bed *Maagan* shelter for primarily foreign female trafficking victims and the 35-bed *Atlas* shelter for foreign male trafficking victims, both of which allow shelter residents to leave freely. These shelters offer job training, psychosocial support, medical treatment, language training, legal assistance, and other rehabilitative services. During 2012, the government opened transitional apartments to house 18 additional trafficking victims, as needed.

In 2012, the shelters housed 58 trafficked women, 53 men, and nine children. Two minors who were among victims of trafficking that arrived from the Sinai were referred to the shelters, and the children of some adult trafficking victims were housed in the shelter with their parents. The shelter staff maintains contact with trafficking victims after they have left the shelter in order to assist victims with reintegration into Israeli society and to ensure future work conditions are not exploitative. For example, the men's shelter assisted 75 forced labor victims with short-term housing and assistance with work visas and legal aid. The legal aid branch of the Ministry of Justice continues to provide free legal aid to trafficking victims and has a special representative with expertise in handling human trafficking cases. In 2012, the branch granted legal aid to 101 victims of trafficking, including victims of sex trafficking and forced labor, as well as to 186 victims who entered from the Sinai and may have experienced conditions of forced labor and sex trafficking in Egypt. The government encourages victims to assist in the investigation and prosecution of trafficking but does not require their participation as a condition for receiving assistance.

Though the numbers of foreign migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers arriving in Israel from Egypt significantly decreased by the end of 2012, the Israeli government continues to grapple with policies to address the group's vulnerabilities, some of whom were subjected to trafficking prior to their entry into Israel. The government adopted new identification procedures in 2012 that require all prison staff in detention facilities to notify a social worker of suspected trafficking victims in detention, who were in turn required to notify the police and legal aid; these procedures have significantly increased the number of victims identified in detention facilities to 156.

We recognize that trafficking against human beings is a particularly dynamic phenomenon, which changes its forms and patterns. The coordinating unit is constantly keeping "its fingers on the pulse" in order to identify new or previously unrecognized forms. In one particularly heinous instance, a woman was enslaved in a foreign diplomat's home; since the diplomat enjoyed diplomatic immunity, the Foreign Ministry was involved, while a feminist NGO, guided by the Coordinating Unit, provided services to the abused woman. The committee is also aware of the



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potential for abuse of surrogate mothers from less-developed countries and has taken steps to institute clear regulations and to apprise all relevant authorities of these ethical and potentially legal issues.

The unit, together with several other organizations, including Joint-Israel, the European Union and others, conducted a unique and precedent-setting event in the Knesset, which focused on the challenges and difficulties inherent when Israeli culture meets the cultures from which the women who have been trafficked come from. This first program focused on the cultures of Eastern Asia (Sri Lanka, Thailand, China, the Philippines, etc.).

*Prostitution:* The Unit also took on a central role in discussions within the Justice Ministry regarding legislation to criminalize those who seek the services of prostitutes. The unit even brought in several women who were actively involved in prostitution at the time, in order to provide them with the opportunity to present their preferences and perceptions. The law did pass its preliminary reading but, due to general elections, its passage has been postponed; it is expected to be brought up again in the near future.

*Sexual Harassment:* A recent amendment to the Law for the Prevention of Sexual Harassment criminalizes and also permits civil action in the case of publication or dissemination without permission of video clips, movies and/or recordings if they focus on the individual's sexuality and could humiliate or degrade her or him.

*Victims' Rights.* The Crime Victims' Rights Law – 2001, represents a significant achievement for women's NGOs, and the increasingly broad interpretations of its provisions reflect a change in the attitude of law enforcement agencies towards victims. The law grants victims numerous rights, with special emphasis on victims of violence and sexual offences; these include the right to protection at every stage of the criminal proceedings; the right to be notified regarding developments in the proceedings; the right to be notified of the perpetrator's arrest or release; the right to be accompanied by a companion during investigations; the right to express an opinion prior to each stage in the proceedings.

In addition, regulations have been implemented to authorize courts to order that the testimony of a complainant in a sexual offence case be given in the accused's absence (e.g., in closed chambers or closed circuit TV), if and whenever the court believes that the complainant or her testimony may suffer if she testifies in person.

Legislation that went into effect in 2005 requires the authorities to provide relevant information to a victim of crime at every stage of the criminal procedure. As mandated by law, the police have established a computerized system for this purpose. Victims of crime may receive the information by calling a designated phone number or by text or voice messages, and through the internet.



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The police have received special training kits and additional training materials. The police also provide informative materials in all relevant languages related to the criminal procedure and to crime victims' rights. Furthermore, in recent years, the police have been operating a computerized threat assessment system that assists in evaluating and assessing the threat posed by suspects in domestic violence cases. The system receives information from various sources and by combining these sources and evaluating certain parameters, it assembles a profile of each suspect. At 11 police stations throughout the country, there are also specialized risk assessment squads, and social workers are employed to provide instance assistance when a domestic violence complaint is filed.

Distress buttons are issued to women at high risk once they have received a court order for their protection. In August 2011, Amendment 111 to the Criminal Code came into law, according to which it is forbidden to even allude to the identity of a victim of a sexual crime and/or to photograph him or her without his/her permission, thus putting an end to paparazzi-like behavior.

## **5. Women and Armed Conflict**

In July 2005, Israel was the first UN member to include parts of 1325 as an amendment to its 1951 Equality of Women's Rights Law, committing the government to including women from all parts of society in all national policy-making committees and teams and specifically including the peace process. Women's and feminist NGOs have regularly appealed to Israel's High Court of Justice to enforce women's appointments, which the Court has done. Subsequently, as noted above, legislation mandating the appointment has been increasingly enforced, and the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women has been instrumental in identifying women who can, and should, participate in policy-making, investigative and other types of commissions and committees of inquiry.

In late October, 2013, a coalition of 30 Israeli feminist groups released "A Comprehensive Action Plan for the Application of United Security Council (UNSCR) Resolution 1325" at a public conference. They called on the government to include women from all sectors of Israeli society in peace-negotiation teams and other decision- and policy-making bodies. The conference was attended by Justice Minister Tzipi Livni, UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Robert Serry, MKs representing a wide political spectrum, and hundreds of participants (most of whom were women). UN Director-General Ban Ki-Moon sent a greeting by video.

The Israeli Comprehensive Action Plan took nearly two years to complete and included nine "round tables," held throughout the country, with the participation of hundreds of women. The plan is composed of five objectives, including equal representation of women from all sectors of society in decision-making bodies and



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processes at national and local levels; gender-mainstreaming all decision-making bodies and processes; protection of women from all forms of violence in public and private spheres; preventing violent conflicts and confronting racism; advancement of the Comprehensive Action Plan and implementation of 1325 in all government ministries and bodies.

*Women in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF).* In August 2001, the Women's Corp was dismantled and, in its stead, an advisory body to the Chief of Staff was created. This body is headed by the Advisor on Women's Issues, who holds the rank of Brigadier General. This body is assigned to create an atmosphere in which women can better utilize their abilities in the IDF, advance equal opportunities and empower women in the IDF and in Israeli society. According to the advisor's vision, as approved by the IDF's Chief of Staff in September 2008, the IDF as a leading organization in Israeli society will shape the service of its personnel, men and women alike, for the advancement of the goals of the IDF and the State of Israel while providing equal opportunities according to qualifications and abilities for a significant and honorable service.

In 2002, the Israeli Knesset passed legislation mandating equal opportunity and responsibility for men and women within the IDF so that only bona fide occupational qualifications are to be taken into account in assigning men and women to their positions in the armed services. Although implementation of this legislation has been slow, and even this slow change requires constant monitoring by military authorities and civil society, changes have been instituted; this is particularly true in the areas of technology and scientifically-based military roles (and these roles also provide conscripts, male and female, with important advantages when they are discharged into civilian life.)

Today, women are able to serve in 88 percent of all military positions, as compared to 73 percent 10 years ago. Currently, 12 combat positions are open to women. As of May 2008, women represented three percent of all combat soldiers. In 2008, women comprised 34 percent of all soldiers in compulsory service and 41.7 percent of compulsory service officers, 21 percent of career service officers and 10 percent of officers in senior ranks. Among women officers, 21 percent are First Lieutenants, 25 percent are Captains, 23 percent are Majors, 12 percent are Lieutenant Colonels and 4 percent are Colonels and above.

While women are fairly well represented at the lowest level ranking "senior officer" positions, as can be seen, far fewer have succeeded in advancing beyond that post to the positions of Lieutenant Colonel, Colonel, Brigadier General, Major General and Lieutenant General. According to a survey conducted by the Advisor to the Chief of Staff on Women's Affairs for the IDF, 45 percent of military units reported instances of gender discrimination, 64 percent of regular female soldiers felt that they were



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accorded equal opportunities within the military and 35 percent reported that they were discriminated against during their service because they were women.

Although women in the military have at times been discriminated against because of extreme interpretations of religious law that demand separation between men and women, the military and civil society are well-aware of these difficulties and continue to endeavor to ensure that women are accorded equal opportunity for advancement and meaningful service.

The Chief of Staff's Advisor on Women's Issues has promoted three major projects: Promotion of the establishment of the Women's Military Service Committee, charged with outlining the vision and making recommendations concerning structural aspects of military service of women; consolidation of a military behavioral code on gender issues that will constitute obligating norms and standards for soldiers and officers and influence the cultural environment and army daily life concerning gender issues; setting goals for a progressive improvement of women's representation in the army and promoting a plan for increasing the representation of women in senior leadership positions, which includes specific targets for each of the corps and is based on the percent of women qualified for promotion within each rank.

In recent years, the IDF has operated a number of projects aimed at encouraging women to enlist in technical and technological professions. With these projects, the IDF offers designated special training for women, in order to be better able to serve in these technological professions. Several technical professional courses have been made available to women, including flight supervisor, flight simulator operators, paramedics, search and rescue, operators of heavy machinery, tank operation instructors, logistics, electronics, aircraft maintenance, and others.

Since the Israel Defense Forces, like militaries everywhere, is built on hierarchy and power, it is not surprising to find incidents of sexual harassment. The military, which views this issue gravely, has taken firm and effective steps to empower women and to teach men about the implications, both social and legal, of sexual harassment.

## **6. Women and the Economy**

As we discussed this issue extensively in the first part of this report, we will here note some of its other most salient aspects.

In late May, 2014, the Knesset approved legislation, initiated by the head of the Parliamentary Committee for the Advancement of the Status of Women, and in coordination with a project implemented by the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women, mandating an examination of wage gaps in public-sector and third-sector organizations.



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In 2008, Israel established a Commission for Equal Opportunity in the Work Place, tasked with eliminating discrimination and integrating values of equality in the labor market, as well as finding mechanisms to overcome the difficulties in enforcement of equality laws.

*Family-friendly employment policies:* Amendment 48 to the Women's Employment Law extends the rights and benefits of parenthood to adoptive, prospective and foster parents. The law is intended to make it easier to balance family and work and furthers egalitarian parenting. Parents are entitled to share the right to maternity leave, to vacation days because of children's illness.

In 2008, the Civil Service, at the initiative of the Authority for the Advancement of the Status Women, established a professional committee to examine ways to create more family-friendly employment policies; at the beginning of 2011 the government established a committee to examine the ways to implement the first committee's recommendations. This committee submitted its recommendations to the government in February 2013.

Even prior to this, the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women had called for the establishment of "mothering rooms" in all workplaces. Later in 2013, the Civil Service put out new regulations, in which it eliminated the use of the term "maternal position" and replaced it with "parental position," to refer to the special needs and benefits accorded to all parents of young children. The Civil Service is currently engaged in implementing a broad program to generate change in practice and awareness of equality within the family. In our opinion, these changes will ease some of the obstacles that have prevented women of young children from advancing in their careers.

Recommendations for a family-friendly work environment include, among others:

- \* Instating a weekly shorter-day for all employees;
- \* Creating flexible working hours;
- \* Evaluating performance across multiple dimensions, so that time invested will not be the sole criteria for evaluation;
- \* Introducing recognition of work-from-home as valid work-time for employees;
- \* Allowing for a gradual return to work after maternity leave;
- \* Introducing structured discussions of mutual expectations, in order to take into account the specific needs of each and every worker;
- \* Increasing the numbers of pre-K's and kindergartens, so that children can be placed in frameworks closer to home or the workplace;
- \* Operation of summer camps during vacations;



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- \* Active implementation of women's representation in institutions and organizations, in order to guarantee equality for women within the organizations.

The Department for Day Care and Early Childhood Care encourages the establishment of afternoon programs for children through third grade. Activities usually continue until 4 or 5 pm, in order to make it easier for working parents to maintain full-time employment.

Amendment 4 to the rights of students, stipulates that academic frameworks must provide consideration for students who are undergoing fertility treatments, are pregnant, have given birth, have adopted a child or have taken in a foster child.

The government has taken a number of important decisions, including decision 602 (2010), to allocate an additional NIS 30 million to the budget for day care and early childhood care, in order to support construction, expansion or renovation of existing buildings to make them suitable for use as child care centers. In 2011, it allocated an additional NIS 320 m to the basic budget of the Department for Day Care and Early Childhood Care (Decision 2241, 2010) to encourage women to work by establishing additional afternoon programs.

With regard to working mothers, statutes of the civil service state that: Sept. 1 (the first day of school) is an optional day of work; every government office must provide a "mother's room" (for the comfort of nursing mothers); an adoptive mother has the same rights to a shortened workday as a birth mother. Civil service regulations make it illegal to fire or cut back on the work of a woman under certain conditions, including pregnancy, fertility treatment, maternity leave, or residence in a shelter for battered women.

Several ministries and authorities, including the Israel Police Force, have already begun to implement at least some of these recommendations, based on their recognition that enabling women to advance serves the organization, as well as the woman herself. In January 2014, the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women informed private workplaces of these recommendations, and from the responses it has received, it would appear that increasing numbers of private workplaces are voluntarily implementing family-friendly workplace policies, too.

*Training:* A number of programs operate in geographically peripheral areas in order to encourage women to open small businesses. These include programs in which the women receive support, guidance, information and business training; programs for younger women; and a series of specially-designed programs for women from the



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Bedouin sector. These programs are carried out in cooperation with a variety of women's NGOs.

According to Government decision numbers 412 and 413, regarding the advancement of Bedouin, Druze and Circassia women, during 2009 and 2010, the government allocated some 440 stipends and scholarships and conducted 55 professional workshops, dealing with community organization, leadership, employment and business initiatives, high school equivalencies, and more.

*Employment of women over the age of 60:* For women over 60, working usually means working part-time. Before reaching the age of 60, in 2008, some two-thirds of women worked full-time. Among women aged 60-64, about half – 47.5 percent worked part time, while among women aged 65-69, over two-thirds (71.4 percent) worked part-time. The social services employ some 59% of women aged 60-64 and 61% of women aged 65-69.

For women over 60, employment is characterized by two distinct groups: a minority of less than 25% of women are well-educated women who work full time in managerial or professional occupations and earn relatively high wages; a majority are women with low to middling educational achievements who are employed in part-time jobs, mostly in care, clerical and sales work, at low wages. These figures point to the fact that most women over 60 who are employed continue work because they have no choice, as they probably do not have income from pensions, and even if they do, the pensions are small and their main source of income is old-age pensions from the National Insurance Institute.

## **7. Women in Power and Decision Making**

We discussed this aspect of women extensively in Part I, noting both the successes we have achieved and the challenges we face.

We add here several legal advances:

- In April 2011, an amendment to the law for Proper Representation for Women broadened the concept of equal representation to government-appointed investigatory committees as well as to official commissions of inquiry. The Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women was tasked with establishing a list of women who can serve as candidates for these bodies. Should an appointment committee not include a woman on their list of candidates, they must refer to the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women and receive the names of women who are appropriate.
- An amendment to legislation governing public companies mandates that in their reporting, these companies must include data regarding gender



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representation on the directorates, thus contributing to both expanded transparency and social consciousness.

- Numerous programs, conducted by the Authority for the Status of Women, often in conjunction with NGOs and women's groups, provide leadership training workshops in an effort to create a core of women capable to taking on influential, senior positions in society.

### **8. Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women**

As noted, among the governmental and public organizations operating to advance the status of women, we cite:

- \* In all government ministries and auxiliary offices, in the police force and prison service, etc., Supervisors for the Advancement of the Status of Women are responsible for ensuring gender equality;
- \* The Inter-Ministerial Committee for the Advancement of the Status of Women, which was established in 2001.
- \* Advisors on the Status of Women. Israeli law mandates an appointment of an advisor on the status of women in Municipal Authorities. The Advisors serve as an arm of implementation of the policies of the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women.
- \* An Inter-ministerial committee for the advancement of the status of women has been established;
- \* The Department for the Advancement and Integration of Women in the Civil Service monitors and advocates for women's advancement;
- \* The Equal Opportunities Commission was established in 2008, with the goals of ensuring equality in the workplace and increasing public sensitivity to the importance of equality.
- \* The unit for Advancement of Gender Equality in the Ministry of Education is concerned with gender norms in education.

Since 2011, the Israel Women's Network, supported by the Strauss Conglomerate, has published the "Catalyst Count" of women's representation in senior positions in companies that are members of the Tel Aviv 100 Index. The Count is intended to serve as a management tool, providing consistent information over time in order to encourage appointment of women to senior management positions and to generate variety of human capital in business.



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## 8. Human Rights of Women

In 2010, the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women, together with other groups, published a comprehensive "Guide to Rights and Services," which was widely publicly distributed with daily newspapers. The Guide provides a list of rights and benefits for all, and specifically emphasizes women's rights and the benefits to which they are entitled.

Although women make up only 2% of the prisoner population in Israel, we believe that the quality of human rights can and should be assessed according to the treatment of society's weakest and most vulnerable individuals. In this regard, we cite treatment accorded to women prisoners. Most of these women come from deprived backgrounds, including childhood physical and sexual abuse. Most of them are addicted to drugs and most have been engaged in prostitution. Some 70% of these women are mothers, most of them single, most of them with small children. Within the framework of the Authority for the Rehabilitation of Prisoners, specific programs have been established for women, including alternative solutions for minors, pregnant women and mothers of young children.

Resources for the rehabilitation of women prisoners, whether on parole or probation, include a hostel, where they can live together with their children; a training center, with day and night-time workshops for vocational training; and focused workshops conducted in conjunction with women's NGOs.

As we noted above, and as in many countries, we have witnessed an increase in the power of the radical ultra-religious right, which, over the past few years, has begun to take advantage of political constellations in order to enforce their views on public space, which include strict gender segregation. This has included, for example, refusals by religious men to allow women to sing in public ceremonies, including those sponsored by the government and the municipalities; refusals to include women in conferences and conventions; defacement of billboards and other advertisements depicting women; and gender-segregated busses.

The Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women, together with the government, the legislature, and civil society, are actively opposing these trends. In 2012, the Justice Ministry established a professional committee to examine the issue. In May, 2013, the Attorney General accepted the findings of this committee, and appointed one of his deputies to oversee their implementation.

Currently-pending legislation will define exclusion of women from public places as a criminal offense; in the interim, government decision 1526 from March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2014



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declares that exclusion of women constitutes discrimination and is therefore a serious violation of human rights and contradicts Israel's international commitments.

In August 2012, Jerusalem activists group (now a political party), headed by a feminist woman, petitioned the High Court of Justice against the Egged bus company in Jerusalem. In recent years, Egged had refrained from showing women in advertisements on its buses, due to its concern that the images would offend or draw protest from its ultra-Orthodox clientele. In late May, the company signed an agreement to allow pictures of women, after the state agreed to provide compensation for any acts of vandalism the ads would incur.

Also as we noted above, the laws that govern personal status in Israel discriminate against and violate women's rights because, according to these interpretations, women are held separately before the law. Although this issue goes to the heart of many identity and political controversies in Israel, the law has not been changed. However, the state and women's organizations have organized to limit and ameliorate its effects. For example, in 2008, the Spousal Property Relations Law was amended, thereby enabling the division of property even before the conclusion of divorce proceedings, which can sometimes continue for a long time. This amendment reduces the danger that the husband will put pressure on his wife to agree to inferior terms of property division before he will accede to the divorce.

In 2007, the Rabbinical Courts Law (executing divorce rulings) was amended and the means for enforcement against those who refuse a divorce were expanded in order to reduce the number of "chained" [agunot] women who are refused divorce and who suffer egregious harm to their freedom.

Prenuptial agreements dictate that in a case of divorce proceedings initiated by one of the two partners in a marriage, the recalcitrant side – usually the husband – will be obligated to pay a large sum of money until the marriage is dissolved, thus limiting men's power to extort their wives. Women's groups have also succeeded in gaining the support of the administrative head of the Rabbinic Courts for these agreements.



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## 9. Women and the Media

The media both reflect and create reality. In Israel, freedom of the press is legislatively guaranteed and protected, but suffers from the same economic pressures that are affecting the established media, and especially the print media, throughout the Western world.

Over the past decade, we have seen the emergence of a corps of committed, motivated women journalists who proudly promote feminist and gender-equality agendas, especially in the print media. They present women's issues as news, discuss non-traditional topics such as national security and the military, and bring a gender perspective to their analyses of events and issues. They have also been particularly vocal, organizing mentoring groups and a women journalists' caucus that has taken upon itself to monitor and advocate for women in the field, including "outing" sexual predators within the profession, even if statutes of limitations preclude legal proceedings against them.

Several women host programs in prime time, on both radio and television. Similarly, in the print media, several feminist columnists and reporters have reached prominence. However, over all, women are underrepresented – especially on panels on TV and radio and as columnists and op-ed in print and internet, and especially for topics traditionally regarded as areas of male expertise – such as the economy, security, physical planning, etc.

The situation in the public broadcasting authority is currently in flux, due to legislation that calls for its complete restructuring. The Council for Cable TV and Satellite Broadcasting is a public council, established by law, and its fundamental task is to regular multi-channel subscriber television by representing, protecting and promoting the public interests in this field; in the recent past, the council was headed by a chairwoman, and in the council's professional body, a majority of the employees are women.

The Council has given great consideration to the issue of preventing broadcasting that may be degrading and derogatory to women and/or that creates social perceptions of women as sexual objects. NGO's and the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women monitor such occurrences. The Authority initiates queries to the responsible elements in cases where offensive publicity appears.

During the years 2007-2013, the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women filed nearly 100 complaints regarding offensive and degrading advertising; in most cases, the advertising was cancelled. In addition, the Authority has initiated a series of eight informational and consciousness-raising activities, including informing editorial boards regarding changes in legislation; calling upon the Journalism Council



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in this regard; calling on the public to be aware of offensive advertising and to inform the Authority.

In 2013, in an effort to encourage women's visibility as experts, the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women began compiling a "Shelist" of women experts in numerous fields. Feminist NGO's have compiled similar lists and monitor the various channels and outlets.

### **10. Women and Environment**

The Israeli environmental movement has made tremendous strides over the past decade, emerging as a central player in environmental decisions and determination of policy. Although there is no distinct eco-feminist movement, many of the environmental NGOs are headed by women.

The Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women asserts that gender-sensitive environmental planning is commensurate with good planning. Furthermore, we are committed to a planning process that will be empowering and participatory in all stages, for all of Israel's citizens.

Legislation mandating gender assessments for all proposals ensures that future legislation will be sensitive to the needs of women.

### **11. The Girl Child**

In Israel, the basic rights of all girl children are recognized. Any female or male child born to parents residing here legally is automatically granted citizenship; all male and female children are equally entitled to inherit from their fathers, whether or not their mothers were married to the father. The government provides all families with monthly child allowances for children up to the age of 18.

In July 2007, the Compulsory Education Law was amended in order to broaden its scope and apply compulsory education to youth between the ages of 15 and 18 (inclusive). The Amendment strives to protect youth in this vulnerable stage from negative influences and to prepare them and provide them with better tools for successful integration as productive adults in society. Thus, the Government found it necessary to provide an obligatory educational framework rather than an optional one. Another desired effect of the Law is a decrease in dropout and removal of pupil rates, since the amendment compels the provision of solutions within the education system to all pupils in this age group.

The Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women has prepared an extensive, gender sensitive position paper regarding the necessity of free pre-school education from age 3; this position was presented to the Committee responsible for



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implementing the demands of the protests of 2011, and the position taken by the authority was accepted.

The National Health Law mandates that all children with developmental difficulties must be treated in centers that specialize in this field; 32 such centers operate throughout the country, along with an addition 40 satellite units.

Albeit rarely, underage marriage still takes place, especially among certain groups of Arabs and ultra-orthodox Jews. Between 2000 and 2006, 41 complaints regarding the marriage of minors were filed; however none were prosecuted. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics, 40 percent of all married Arab women were married before the age of 19. At the same time, the median marriage age for women in Israel rose between 2004 and 2006 across all religious and ethnic groups. The median age for Jewish women rose from 25.6 to 25.7; for Muslim women from 20.6 to 20.8; for Christian women from 20.6 to 20.8; and for Druze women from 20.9 to 21.5. The average age of marriage for women in 2006 was 26.6 for Jews, 22.3 for Muslims, 24.7 for Christians

*Child Labor:* The Juvenile Labor Law (1953) generally prohibits work for children under age 15, except during holidays and vacations, for which there are legislation and regulations that carefully stipulate the conditions under which it is permissible to employ children.

NGOs dedicated to fair labor practices regularly publish guidelines in the press and in pamphlets distributed at schools and youth clubs in order to inform teenagers of their rights. A grass roots group of religious youth, Ma'agalei Tzedek (Circles of Justice), has organized to protect all workers by handing out certificates of recognition to places that observe labor laws; treat their workers, including youths, fairly and legally; provide accessibility, and so forth.

*Violence Against Girls:* Social services in Israel are aware that teenage girls and young women are susceptible to violence, due to their vulnerability and the pressures of adolescence. The Service for Girls and Young Women in the Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services is designed to protect these girls and to provide psycho-social and rehabilitation services to girls at risk due to physical, sexual, verbal or emotional violence, substance abuse, and/or dysfunctional family relationships. The services are provided by especially-trained professionals.

In cases of sexual abuse, minors under the age of 14 are to be questioned by a child investigator authorized to handle and investigate sex offences. Minors over the age of 14 are to be questioned by a youth investigator authorized to handle and investigate sexual offences.



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According to the law, a person committing an indecent act with a minor between the ages of 14 and 18, exploiting relations of dependence, authority, education, or supervision, is subjects to four years' imprisonment. In addition, the Prevention of Sexual Harassment Law was amended in 2007 to broaden the scope of the law, so that a minor under the age of 15 is not required to indicate that sexual proposals or sexual attention is unwelcome in order for these actions to be considered sexual harassment, even without exploitation of a special relationship between the minor and the harasser.

The statute of limitations on civil suits as a result of sexual assault or abuse of a minor by a person on whom the minor was dependent, whom she or he trusted, or with whom he or she was in treatment has been extended, so that the statute of limitations does not begin to be counted until the victim reaches the age of 28.

*Prostitution and Trafficking of Girls:* The state established an inter-ministerial committee to attend to prostitution by minors, headed by the deputy director-general of the Internal Security Ministry. The committee recommended that a permanent committee be instituted, and it was established in 2012, giving immediate and particular attention to minors; again, the committee recognizes that this is a gendered crime. The committee mapped the situation and needs, in terms of education, health, law enforcement, and so forth, and presented its report to a joint meeting of the Knesset Committees on the Campaign Against Trafficking in Women and the Rights of Children in February 2014. It is currently being considered in preparation for initial legislative proposals.

The Ministry of Education acts vigorously to promote information campaigns intended to raise awareness among both the staff and pupils. A booklet on trafficking in women and prostitution has been prepared by the Ministry of Education for distribution to the personnel of the secondary education system. The booklet includes comprehensive information on prostitution and trafficking in women in general and in Israel in particular, legislation, enforcement and other measures of combating trafficking and prostitution, educational activities and lesson plans regarding these issues, methods to raise parents' and community awareness and involvement, and information on the various bodies and organizations dealing with these issues within the educational system.

The Ministry has continued to increase its efforts to raise awareness of the general issue of trafficking in persons, and, more specifically, of trafficking for the purpose of prostitution. These efforts have included holding four conferences for members of the educational system, each attended by hundreds of participants. The issue of trafficking has been integrated into the educational program concerning gender equality. As part of this 14-session gender equality program, two sessions are dedicated to issues relating to trafficking in women. The program is complemented



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by training for the relevant members of the education system, as well as activities involving the pupils' parents.

To mark the International Day Commemorating the Abolition of Slavery, the Ministry circulated a lesson plan focusing on the prostitution and trafficking in women as a form of slavery in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, bringing home to the pupils the reality that a girl engaging in prostitution could be a girl in their class or someone they know.

A recent amendment to the Penal Code annulled the two year limitation period for submission of indictments concerning pornographic advertisements of minors. It is now illegal to use minors in even "soft" pornographic advertisements. The Penal Law has been further amended so that the principal of extraterritoriality has been applied to pornography and prostitution offences committed against minors, so that it is possible to try offenders in Israel even though the act might not constitute a criminal offence in the country in which it was allegedly committed.

*Mechanisms for Supporting Girls and Young Women at Risk:* The Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services provides treatment and services to girls and young women between the ages of age 13 and 25 who are in situations of risk and distress (danger within the family; physical, sexual, and mental violence; unwanted pregnancy; etc.) The treatment is provided by specially-trained social workers in the departments of social services and through voluntary service-providing associations.

In cooperation with the local authorities and associations, frameworks for treatment operate within a warm and supportive environment. These include:

- **Warm Home Club:** a daytime community center which has the goal of empowering girls;
- **Sexual counseling stations:** jointly operated by both the local authorities and the Ministry of Health;
- **Transitional apartments:** each providing a home to 4-6 girls age 17 and above who cannot stay in their own homes and need accompaniment and guidance;
- **Arab girls:** the Ministry provides a framework that operates during the daytime, five days a the week, and provides immigrant girls and girls from the Arab sector completion of their education, living skills, social skills, and professional training;
- **ADI (Power, Care, Friendship):** A project that deals with girls who are the victims of violence or girls with destructive behavior; care is given in a daytime center, serves as a supportive framework, treats and rehabilitates the girls, without asserting authority and without detaching the girls from their surroundings;



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- **Mentoring Program (Girls for Girls):** girls who have experiences distress and have overcome it assist other girls who are in such a situation; the program is operated by Tel Aviv University (School for Social Work), together with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services, the Ministry for Immigrant Absorption, the Joint's Ashalim, and WIZO.

## **B. Austerity measures and public-sector downsizing**

While OECD countries have been steadily increasing their public expenditures as a share of GDP per capita per pupil, Israel, which used to spend more than the OECD, has been reducing its expenditures to below OECD levels.

This trend has a historical as well as a political background. In 1985, following a severe economic crisis, Israel changed course from its social-democratic economy, guided in large part by the evolving Washington Consensus. From then on, emphasis has been placed on economic growth, with less attention paid to full employment or upgrading the labor force; the business sector over took the helm of economic growth from the state; and the state itself was downsized. Within a decade or so, Israel saw the rise of clearly identifiable business elite. However, these policies have also resulted in the marginalization of large parts of the Israeli population. Throughout these developments, Israeli workers have also been losing their collective power.

Women are most negatively affected by these processes. We note, however, that the "pendulum" of social change seems to be changing direction. Since the demonstrations of 2011, there is increasing awareness of, and attention to, inequality as a social problem and an existential threat to Israeli society. Several government committees are currently deliberating over ways to reduce poverty, reduce inequality and increase employment and wages.



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## **SECTION THREE: DATA AND STATISTICS**

### **A. National Indicators for Monitoring Progress in Gender Equality And Gender Indicators**

In July, 2014, a formal committee appointed by the Finance Minister, tasked with a gender-based analysis of the national budget and with making recommendations for full gender analyses, concluded its work. The recommendations are expected to be accepted by the government in the near future.

The establishment of this committee reflects the policy of the Finance Minister, according to which gender-sensitive budgetary allocations are a crucial part of the determination of national and governmental priorities and recognition that budgetary allocations are likely to affect men and women differently. In response, the committee's recommendations include not only gender mainstreaming, but clear plans as to how to implement this mainstreaming and these analyses throughout all of the governmental ministries and auxiliary units.

The committee further emphasizes that such an analysis increases awareness and sensitivity, enhances political will, generates knowledge and creates a vital base of data, according to which the various institutions and units are able to evaluate their own policies and programs and their contribution to the advancement of the status of women and gender equality as well as the development of a more equitable society. The committee has recommended adoption of gradual implementation of gender analysis of the budget and integration of gender mainstreaming in the process of preparation of the budget, to be completed over four years. The recommendations include training of relevant personnel as well as professional monitoring of the implementation .

We are proud to note that gender mainstreaming will also serve as a guide for analysis of other sectors of society. Thus, upon completion of this process, Israel will be a world leader in budgetary gender mainstreaming and analysis.

Even before the establishment of this committee, since 2009, as a result of an amendment to the Statistics Ordinance, Israeli law has required that all statistics released by the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) be disaggregated according to gender. Furthermore, an amendment to the Equal Rights for Women Law 5711-1951 mandates that all public bodies that collect, process and publish data (such as the



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National Insurance Institute, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of the Economy, etc.) include gender-disaggregated data.

Thanks to these two amendments, official statistics released by the State serve as an important source of information for analysis and policy planning and recommendations. This data both contributes to the gender-impact assessment, which the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women is obligated to prepare for each and every proposed legislation, public project, and so forth. Thus, it further enables the Authority to proactively determine gender-progressive policies and projects.

Furthermore, Israel is proud to have developed an especially innovative project for collection and analysis of data in the service of gender equality, created by WIPS, Israel's foremost think tank. Established in 2009, WIPS is dedicated to creating changes in the public mindset and policy and to produce strategic tools and programs to improve and increase women's representation across the spheres of their lives.

WIPS' flagship project is its Gender Index, compiled in coordination with a wide variety of other women's organizations. The Gender Index delineates a series of carefully-determined indicators to provide definitive information on the status of women in Israel.

Preliminary research revealed that until now, indices purporting to define the status of women have been largely derived from data bases developed from a male perspective. The WIP's Gender Index attends to women's status in a wide range of fields, based on a range of variables and indicators that mirror social phenomena (e.g., elected office, media, military, balance of work and family, religious life, etc.) It will thus not only be a first of its kind in Israel, but will serve as a model for other countries to evaluate the status of women over time, in their countries.

The Gender Index rests on positive synergy between academic knowledge and theory and primary knowledge stemming from work in the field, with an emphasis on the mechanisms that enable women to participate and advance in the political and other public spheres.

The Gender Index has been formally presented in several conferences, and we are confident that it will soon be adopted in both academia and public policy work .



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## **B. Nine indicators on violence against women**

As extensively noted in our discussions above, Israeli authorities and NGOs maintain detailed and careful statistics regarding the indicators on violence against women. The precise statistics are presented in Sections 1 and 2 of this report.

To date, data has been collected by service providers.

At this time, a committee of directors-general of governmental ministries, headed by the director-general of the Internal Security Ministry, has been established to advance the campaign against violence against women; the Authority for the Status of Women is, of course, a central member of this committee. Among its other responsibilities, the committee has been charged with developing an inter-ministerial strategic program for the elimination of violence against women and with establishing clear indicators regarding violence against women; the indicators determined by the United Nations will be a central part of this process.

Furthermore, within the next year, as part of a comprehensive plan for improvement of social services provided to the public, all files will be digitized, enabling us to make fuller use of the data that we do have, as collected from individual cases and case and best-practices studies.

## **C. Data on Particular Groups of Women**

### **1. Bedouin Women**

In the context of resettlement plans by the Israeli government, The Authority for the Status of Women has focused significant attention on the status of Bedouin women. There are more than 180,000 Bedouins living in the Negev desert area. Most of them (approximately 120,000 – 66 per cent) live in urban and suburban centers which have been legally planned and constructed. Existing towns can accommodate most of the needs of the Bedouin population and vacant lots await additional occupants in all of these towns.

However some 60,000 Bedouins (34 per cent) reside in hundreds of unauthorized clusters, which are spread over an area of more than 500,000 dunams, obstructing urban expansion in the greater Negev area and hindering the common good of the Bedouin population. Israeli authorities are currently attempting to find solutions for these tensions between the indigenous Bedouin population and State planning authorities, a situation that is common to many countries.



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Bedouins enjoy all the rights and opportunities of Israeli citizens, including the right to receive formal education at all levels, health services etc., in accordance with the laws of Israel.

Overall, the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of women engages in numerous efforts to provide the women with knowledge regarding employment and business entrepreneurship, constructing business strategies, setting up a working budget and writing a business plan, and so forth. The Authority also provides Bedouin women with the opportunity to complete their formal education by providing special courses in relevant subjects, such as language skills, computers, use of the internet and more. It also provides information and courses regarding empowerment and community leadership such as life skills, parenting, health awareness, and skills needed to operate community projects.

It is important to also note that these activities do not stand alone and are supplemented by improvements in areas such as public transportation infrastructures that enable Bedouin girls to attend schools near their homes.

Thus, change is evident in the Bedouin society, while we remain cognizant that in this traditional, patriarchal society, change requires tremendous investment and will come incrementally and slowly.

## 2. Arab and Other Minority Women

The Prime Minister's Office houses an extensive Authority for the Economic Advancement of the Arab, Druze and Caucasian Sectors. This Authority is guided by the view that Israel's minority populations are a vital part of the Israeli economy and have the potential to make a crucial development to that economy.

Minorities make up some 20% of the population of Israel, but their participation in the workforce reaches only some 27% of the employed. This Authority has created numerous programs for both men and women to encourage their employment, including programs geared at re-training and projects for the small-business sector, including micro-financing and business loans.

Arab women, ages 18-66, make up a particularly important group, because their work-force participation levels – 27% as contrasted with 76% in the majority Jewish population – leaves extensive potential for development.

The Authority recognizes that Arab women face particular obstacles in their attempts to integrate into the workforce, including lack of jobs, lack of appropriate education and training, poor public transportation, lack of child-care, cultural difficulties, and socio-political difficulties.



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In this context, the Authority for the Economic Advancement of the Arab, Druze and Caucasian Sectors, guided and aided by the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women, have created a number of programs to aid women. The "Woman of Valor" program, for example, is based on the concept that entry into the workforce should be gradual and accompanied with mentoring, empowerment and networking. The program has been successfully implemented, and continues to operate, in close to a dozen Arab villages and cities.

Similarly, the Authorities are aware that middle-sized and small business are important to the growth of the economy, as well as to their owners, and are particularly valuable for minorities. To this end, the Authorities have conducted hundreds of courses for women, with the participation of close to 2,000 women. Several hundred businesses have been opened.

In conclusion, and proudly, we believe that these programs combine the best of two important concepts that we have illustrated throughout this report: unwavering commitment to equality and believe in the importance of socio-cultural and political sensitivity.

## **SECTION FOUR: EMERGING PRIORITIES**

### **Inequality**

Over the last two decades, Israel has gained a prominent reputation for strong economic performance and for leadership in hi-tech and bio-tech research and development. Israel, however, is included among countries with good macro-economic indicators that do not benefit most households.

As noted above, in 2012, Israel's HDI rating was .900. However, when the value is discounted for inequality, the HDI falls to 0.79, a loss of 12.3 percent due to inequality in the distribution of the dimension indices .

Furthermore, we note the wage gap between men and women, which remain highly stable across the years, despite the extensive legislation mandating equal pay for equal work. According to data collected by the Authority for the Advancement of Women in March, 2014, the gap in monthly salaries between men and women is 33.9%; taking into consideration the average hourly wage, the average gap is 15.5% .



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### Poverty

Recently, a government-appointed committee has presented recommendations for implementation of a War Against Poverty. The Committee was tasked with reducing the incidence of poverty within ten years from 20% to 10% and with presenting recommendations for consistent policies that create jobs at a living wage and raise the level of education of the population at large. We are hopeful that the recommendations made by this committee will be implemented, despite the budgetary changes that must be made as a result of the recent escalations in the conflict in our region.

### Inclusive Security

More than a decade ago, Israel was the first United Nations member to pass legislation adopting UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which calls for including women in all levels of policy-making and peace-building.

As we noted above, Israeli NGO's, supported by the Committee for the Advancement of the Status of Women, have developed an action plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325.

### Glass Ceilings

We are proud to state that Israeli legislation provides full equality for all Israeli citizens and numerous instances of affirmative action for women and especially minority women. And yet, as the data we have presented above attests, women face numerous glass ceilings – in the workplace, in public representation, in the political arena, academia, medicine, and so forth. Like the proverbial glass ceiling, the barriers that women face are not visible, since the visible barriers have been attended to by legislation.

We recognize that, at least in part, these barriers are due to the different paths that men and women face as they progress through their careers. Women reach higher positions as a result of promotion, while men reach them by other means, such as initial terms of employment, contracts, and "old boys' clubs".

For these reasons, while we will continue to promote feminist legislation and will be increasingly vigilant with regard to its implementation, we recognize that we must strive to change social norms to ensure equality of all of Israel's women.