

**An Analytical Perspective of  
The Gender-Responsiveness of the Municipal Development Program/ Phase One  
through the work of the  
Municipalities Development and Lending Fund**



Analytical report on MDLF gender perspective.

***Towards Institutionalizing a Gender-Responsive Public Budget”***

Funded by EU\ UN WOMEN



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## **Executive Summary**

Within the context of the preparation of gender-responsive budgets at the local and global levels, and as an important and powerful tool for developmental change, this analytical paper has been prepared, within a series of relevant studies, to measure “**the impact of funding and support of infrastructure projects and consideration of gender issues**”. This paper includes a multi-dimensional analysis of the work and communication networks of the Municipal Development and Lending Fund (MDLF), as the mediating financial portfolio of the main sources of funding to the municipalities. MDLF has developed a set of performance indicators and linked to them to funding of municipal councils with the aim of improving municipal work.

The analytical paper has two aspects:

The first is linked to the institution itself (MDLF) and its affiliates “the municipalities”, with respect to the developmental vision and how it operates with the municipalities; and,

The second is related to the vision of municipalities and the local communities towards developmental action in general and its direct and indirect relation with MDLF.

### **Methodology:**

The work methodology is based on participation and dialogue with various stakeholders in the following manner:

- 1- Literature review: The research team reviewed all MDLF documents and planning and financial manuals, as well as municipal documents and strategies.
- 2- Interviews and meetings at MDLF: The research team held meetings with six MDLF officials whose responsibilities included planning, finance, engineering and social issues, as well as decision-making.
- 3- The research team selected four municipalities with different classifications according to MDLF funding criteria: Bethlehem, Al-Auja, Jenin and Turmusaya. These municipalities are located in different governorates and affected by different political, environmental, economic and social factors. The research team held meetings with decision-makers, staff and local communities there.

## **Main conclusions**

-There is a direct relation between the funding agenda and the responsiveness of the local community. The local community responded to a set of conditions, even merely as a formality. Adopting clear determinants that properly incorporate gender issues by the funder will have an impact on the local community and enable gender mainstreaming.

-MDLF has recently revised its gender policies; this report supports and institutionalizes MDLF work.

-Basic development concepts that underlie the context of the relations between MDLF and the municipalities and the latter's relations with the local communities are open for questioning, because of MDLF funding criteria and conditions based on existing policies and executive manuals.

-Several important factors in the adopted criteria, such as the political factor are neutralized and the need criterion is minimized.

-The documents and current policies adopted by MDLF and the municipalities address gender issues as an executive criterion, linked to possible room for some women who participate in local government and developmental planning issues. This framework creates class and power gaps in the context of gender relations and roles in the local communities.

-MOLG and the municipalities' vision towards development and strategic plans is based on goals linked to infrastructure and developmental projects, such as expansion and rehabilitation of road networks, rehabilitation and construction of schools or water and wastewater networks, etc...The developmental goals are achieved through a vision that is reflected in the framework of policies of change that affect peoples' lives, both men and women.

-It is possible to develop a gender-friendly set of strategic goals that bridge the existing gender gap through infrastructure projects, which may reflect on a program of social change that achieves justice and equity for women movements in the different communities.

-There is a gap in the vision, work content and financial policies and their gender-responsiveness. The developmental content of the different plans and program lacks a vision of gender mainstreaming. Hence, this is automatically reflected in a gender gap in financial policies which are not

gender-responsive and contribute to the absence of a planning perspective that can understand the needs of different groups in the community from a gender-perspective, and consequently the absence of gender justice and equity.

-The municipalities address the local community within a class-oriented and discriminatory context against the marginalized groups, mostly women. Municipalities treat the educated class as experienced and informed persons and take into consideration tribal and personal interests in local government issues. This impedes the active participation of women and various underprivileged groups in the community. Consequently, MDLF can seek to employ local expertise and enhance positive initiatives to introduce structural change within the structures of municipalities and their vision towards gender issues.

### **Main recommendations**

**-Gender mainstreaming of MDLF policies:** To adopt documents, manuals and models as a work strategy reflected in the vision, mission, programs, projects and activities in an inter-sectoral manner, to effect change through gender mainstreaming, rather than introduce gender mainstreaming as a goal by itself.

**-Planning:** Take significant steps to convey the concept of adequate planning and the participation of various social groups from different backgrounds.

**-Disclosure (awareness and access to information):** Disclosure must be an unquestionable tool in various aspects and stages of municipal work.

**-Criteria:** Incorporate secondary criteria that take into consideration political dimensions and sub-classifications to achieve more justice.

**-Financial policies:** To amend the budget preparation manual to include the Council of Ministers (COM) Decision on the preparation of gender-responsive budgets.

**Coordination:** Set up a unit (or assign a coordinator) at MDLF to communicate with municipalities and gather information about their visions towards projects, how they are linked to a social context and the level of their satisfaction with the relation with MDLF.

**-The role of municipalities:** Give municipalities the opportunity to play a larger role in project implementation, rather than restrict their activities to the engineering departments, but identify other executive roles for other departments such as the women department or customer service department etc...

**-Participation:** Incorporate the process of participation as a concept that reflects real contribution of women, and the importance of the participation of all social groups.

- Develop various dialogues during the process of public consultations with the local community, which includes analyzing and mapping women and men interests and issues in a manner that enables identifying existing gaps.
  - Move from dialogue and consultation to real action, through enabling the local community to take the initiative in approving policies and monitoring their implementation.
- **Training:** Design training programs adopted by infrastructure projects to raise the awareness of the implementing and planning parties about gender issues.
- **Consultants:** Develop terms of reference (TOR) for consultants which include gender-responsiveness of the consultancy.
- **Monitoring and evaluation:** Enhance the process of monitoring and oversight over implementation since projects are public property.
- **The developmental dimension in infrastructure projects:**
- Hold wider consultations about linking infrastructure projects to specific themes, focusing on one developmental theme that municipalities shall achieve during the year.
  - Link infrastructure projects to social concepts that consider different roles for men and women, provided these projects take into consideration the strategic and practical interests of women.



## **1- The general framework of the report**

### **1-1 Introduction**

Gender mainstreaming of plans and policies of institutions is a continuous and on-going process that aims at sustaining the operational approach for lobbying and change, based on the perspective of justice, equality and equity between men and women of the impact of developmental policies, plans and programs on each; any deficiencies or gaps in the work perspectives and policies make alleviating discrimination and existing gender gaps difficult. Engendering policies and systems or embarking on gender-responsive financial policies is an on-going participatory process, in which all parties participate through the optimal use of resources inside the developmental institution, achieved through procedures, policies, laws and amendment of existing systems and structures, changing the individuals' gender attitude. It is worth noting that participation and partnership do not only mean making the voice heard, but is also a process of empowerment of women and men in their various aspects of life which supports their impact on decision-making, planning and developmental effectiveness, through policies that contribute to stimulating and promoting participation.

Consequently, this analytical paper shall examine two aspects in its vision of Municipal Development Program-Phase One: The first is linked to the organization itself and its partners the municipalities, and the other is linked to its developmental vision, projects and the basis of its work with the municipalities, in addition to the vision of municipalities and the local communities of general development work and its direct and indirect relations with MDLF. It is worth noting that the various actions MDLF has recently taken included a review of its policies towards gender issues. This report supports the work MDLF had started, and is in line with your inclination towards its institutionalization within MDLF.

### **1.2 Analytical overview**

**There are two foundations for the analytical framework:**

**The first foundation is related to the institution and its structure:**

- Reality analysis: which addresses gender issues and their relation with program funding and implementing agencies through addressing the staff gender awareness, capacity, commitment and practices.
- The policy itself: through explaining the reasons that make the funding and implementing agency believe in the importance of gender issues or not (in theory and practice).
- The implementation strategy or plan of action: This section provides details on how the financial and developmental policies are

implemented on the ground, including the identification of activities, time-bound goals, budgets, responsibilities and indicators for monitoring and evaluation.

**The second foundation is related to the developmental impact and gender justice:**

- **The relations between various players in the community:** Different communities do not consist of homogenous groups. There are often differences or diverging interests according to age, class and gender.
- **Relations within the family:** The private domain does not provide equality for all members and there are differences based on age and gender. Women in particular face challenges in the private domain that impede their ability to communicate on private matters in the public domain.
- **Challenges that impede participation:** men and women have different responsibilities and burdens; consequently, room for women to participate in public life and activities other than care and house chores is limited or almost nil, which limits women participation. There are relevant rules adopted by official and non-official institutions that also limit women communication and participation.
- **Gaps and discrepancies in the ability to participate:** Existing gaps in the society include gender gaps. Hence, men have higher education and more experience, which proportionately grants them more space and access, and a higher ability to participate.
- **Benefits of participation reflect on the power relations:** In the above context, the benefits and practices of participation are reflected in light of the interests of the stronger and more active forces; consequently, relations between men and women within the family are unbalanced and unequal, and are linked to power and authority which is flexible rather than rigid.

## **1.3 Methodology**

In general, it is necessary to understand the program and policy interventions and their various benefits in terms of gender relations and in the context of the socio-economic classes, as this contributes to realizing the impact of such interventions on various groups. Consequently, the methodology is based on a process of review of indicators that considers gender and engages women and men in the dialogue with stakeholders inside MDLF and inside municipalities, in addition to meetings with the local community. To understand the context, the team used key questions that help present a critical analysis, with the aim of developing the existing vision, work strategies and policies to achieve justice and equity for the local communities and promote partnership between the municipalities and MDLF.

### **1.3.1 Working tools**

1. Literature review: The team reviewed all MDLF planning and financial documents and manuals, as well as the municipalities' documents, particularly those related to strategies and strategic planning.
2. Interviews and meetings at MDLF: The team held meetings with six MDLF officials, responsible for planning, financial affairs, engineering, social issues and decision-making.
3. The research team selected four municipalities with different scores according to MDLF funding criteria; these are: Bethlehem, Al-Auja, Jenin and Turmusaya. These municipalities lie in different governorates and are influenced by different political, environmental, economic and social factors.
  - Several meetings were held inside each municipality to examine the level of their awareness and responsiveness to MDLF policies, according the following levels:
  - Meetings with decision-makers inside the municipalities, including mayors, deputy mayors or council members.
  - Meetings with officials from the municipal staff,: financial officer, strategic planning officer and any other officials in various administrative or executive departments.
  - Meetings with the local community: One focus group was held at each municipality with male and female representatives of the local community.

## **1.4 Information about MDLF**

### **1.4.1 Background**

The Municipal Development and Lending Fund (MDLF) was established in accordance with a Palestinian Council of Ministers Decision No. 32/36/09 on 20 October 2005, as a semi-governmental organization that cooperates with the Ministry of Local Government (MOLG), and based on the national policies and plans that aim at expediting the establishment of sustainable, self-sufficient, decentralized, advanced credit worthy local government, through managing the funds of the local government sector. MDLF replaced the Project Coordination Unit and the Project Technical Secretariat (PCU/PTS), which worked at MOLG to help local authorities carry out their responsibilities in collecting, investing and managing the necessary financial resources to deliver and expand services.

MDLF aims at developing local authorities economically, socially and culturally through providing grants and loans for development projects of local authorities and their utilities, helping them overcome the financial and administrative difficulties they face in delivering services in their jurisdictions.

To achieve these goals, MDLF undertook the task of providing municipalities, local councils, joint service councils and the institutions that belong to municipalities with advanced financial tools and services, facilitate access to finance and to various means of support. Furthermore, MDLF seeks to fundraise with donors, boost non-governmental money transfers and improve responsiveness to emergencies.

### **1.4.2 MDLF work**

#### **1.4.2.1 The vision**

MDLF is a national sustainable institution that constitutes a main source of financing to develop the local government sector and contribute to achieving better quality life to Palestinian citizens.

#### **1.4.2.2 The mission**

MDLF is a national semi-governmental sustainable institution that seeks to provide and effectively manage loans and grants to contribute to enabling local authorities to deliver distinctive services and achieve sustainable development in line with national plans and policies, in particular the national plan for the local government sector.

### **1.4.2.3 The Main program: Municipal development**

Municipal development is a pioneer reform and development program designed by MOLG on behalf and with the guidance of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). The program considers that developing good governance and better accountability of local government constitutes the cornerstone for developing municipal services.

The Municipal development program is distinctive, since it not only provides grants to support infrastructure projects, but also supports good performance through building municipal capacities in financial, planning and operational aspects. To achieve this goal, the program adopts the grant allocation mechanism, based on a systematic grant distribution system for capital consultancies and infrastructure projects according to need, size of population and good management practices. Around 74% of the West Bank residents live in urban areas, distributed over 107 municipalities, while the residents of Gaza Strip are distributed over 25 municipalities. Local authorities are among the oldest forms of government and administration in Palestine, which continue to constitute a main reference for citizens.

During the past eight years, the municipal budgets decreased by an average of 31% because of the on-going conflict in the region and the continuous economic fluctuations. Israeli attacks and invasions resulted in grave losses in municipal assets and properties, which adversely affected their ability to deliver municipal services. The main challenge the Palestinian local authorities face today, in addition to the lack of freedom of access and movement, is to deliver appropriate services amidst the decrease in income and the stifling financial crisis.

The Municipal development program is in line with the general outline of the National Reform and Development Plan, which stresses the establishment of a sustainable and stable state that has effective, transparent and accountable local authorities.

How does the municipal development program function? This is a multi-phased national development program. Phase One, which lasts for three years, targets all municipalities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The program has four main windows:

Window 1: Provides grants to municipalities for capital investment (infrastructure and municipal services), and is a performance-based system, rewarding municipalities for their financial, technical and planning management through a mechanism of grant allocation. Municipalities are

expected to decide on the use of these grants in accordance with their Strategic Development and Investment Plans (SDIP) and in consultation with their citizens and the local community.

Window 2: Pioneer projects that aim at **reflecting national policies on local government in programs and projects that promote innovation** and contribute to improving municipal capacities and incomes. The program supports PNA goal of promoting the merger of local authorities to improve their efficiency, effectiveness and economy. The program also implements pilot projects to improve municipal collection and enhance community participation.

Window 3: Capacity-building, comprising capacity-building packages for municipalities in financial management, strategic planning, technical practices, especially in operations and maintenance. This window was designed to complement the infrastructure window which depends on the grant allocation mechanism and municipal scoring which helps municipalities improve their performance and obtain higher scores.

Window 4: Project management and follow-up. This includes local consultants, monitoring and evaluation, communications, public relations and program management. This window shall focus on public and municipal awareness and guidance about the program's goals and their municipality's score and performance to encourage mayors and community leaders improve their performance.

#### **1.4.3 Grant allocation mechanism**

**The grant allocation mechanism is one of the most important elements of the municipal development program managed by MDLF. For the first time, a performance-based mechanism is used to provide grants to support infrastructure in Palestine.**

This mechanism is based on three main criteria, namely size of population, need and performance. Municipalities were scored according to their performance using 12 main indicators on good governance. Grants were allocated according to scores, so that municipalities with higher scores and better performance received larger grants than those with lower scores. MDLF scored municipalities and used the scores in Phase one. However, the scores are updated and reviewed annually. The Program cooperates with

mayors to help municipalities improve their scores and enhance their performance.

During Phase Two, the indicators increased to 16, divided in the following manner: (50% for performance, 30% for population and 20% for need).

## **2. Report findings**

### **2.1 Main conclusions from interviews and MDLF documents**

#### **2.1.1 Who benefits from MDLF projects**

MDLF identifies three main criteria for the beneficiaries of its grants, loans and projects, in the following manner:

- 1- Performance: This is a technical criterion that aims at developing municipal performance, and which has proven efficient. (This criterion is linked to transparency, good governance and accounting and control standards etc... MDLF has 16 indicators for this criterion). This criterion has the highest weight in deciding the size of funding (50%).
- 2- Size of Population: as the individuals receive a rate of the projects' budget. This criterion weighs (30%).
- 3- Need: It weighs 20% in the evaluation process for projects

First: MDLF general policies approved by MOLG exempt MDLF from funding village councils and project committees, as these fall under MOLG responsibility for implementing similar projects to what MDLF implements for municipalities.

Second: The criteria themselves and their applicability on the capacities of municipalities that have better experience, skills and larger population, in comparison with the most important criterion, need, whereby stronger municipalities with a larger population receive more funding. This class dimension has an impact on poorer municipalities and consequently a gender impact, in terms of extent of benefit and impact on the male and female youth, children and elderly.

Third: It is related with the nature and aspects of funding, as 80% of MDLF funding goes to infrastructure projects, while social issues and capacity building projects do not receive more than 10%. The Municipal Development Program considered the importance of the social dimension in infrastructure projects, so that they would serve all groups of the community. An environmental and social management plan is applied, whereby focus groups for stakeholders and all affected parties are held to identify the

environmental and social impact as well as the necessary mitigating measures before and after project implementation. Women participation is required at the focus groups, and constitutes an element in the funding applications submitted by municipalities. Furthermore, MDLF said that they verify compliance during implementation. Upon analysis on the ground, it turned out that financing infrastructure does not adopt a social approach, as there is a gap between infrastructure issues and social issues. Nevertheless, this is not enough, since the presence of a gender-based social approach and vision can set the grounds for a developmental vision for infrastructure projects.

**Fourth:** MDLF has clear legal procedures stipulated in the procurement manual for the selection of consultancy firms. The social perspective is absent from the consultancies' criteria of control and impact assessment. The question remains open about the vision and competence of companies to address social issues of a developmental dimension and their relation to gender in evaluation and strategic planning.

**Fifth:** Participation as an approach, since the methodology proposed in the manuals does not include true involvement of women. However, municipalities often adopt this approach (within the small room available for women) only to receive funding. This is not gender mainstreaming of local government policies in general and of municipalities in particular. Recently, **MDLF took a positive step towards promoting women participation, making it mandatory.**

## **2.2 MDLF manuals from a gender perspective**

### **2.2.1 Strategic development planning manual**

#### **2.2.1.1. Participation**

This is a technical manual that supports developing strategic plans, stressing the importance of stakeholder analysis and mobilization, as well as effective representation and participation of various groups and segments of the local community. This step leads to setting up representative and specialized committees that represent the local community and identify and reflect its priorities. It is worth noting that participation is a major tenet in developing strategies, and should guarantee equal participation for men and women, and reflect the priorities of different social groups (men and women). However, is it capable of doing so in its current structure?

Participation shall explain the reasons for gender discrepancy and address them through incorporating principles of justice, sustainable development



and equal opportunity into the manual's strategy to ensure addressing cases of inequality in access to resources.

### **2.2.1.2 Analysis of the reality**

There is a gap in the nature of issues and information the manual uses in its reality analysis, approach and proposition about the possibility of providing gender-segregated information, data and statistics. This does not substantially help identify the problems that impede local development. Hence, it is difficult for this manual to take into consideration the importance of work with the private informal sector, despite its importance and its impact on local development, and the nature of the community groups that are active in this sector, i.e. women. As the manual addresses participation, it evidently assumes equal access to resources and community means of communication. However in reality, when methods of participation are applied, they favour males rather than females, and even within male participation, it favours a group within the community with homogenous interests, while the majority is absent, and this is **outside MDLF framework**.

### **2.2.1.3 Development plans and programs or developmental projects**

Based on the practical experience with municipal strategic plans, in which this manual was applied, strategic plans were rather developmental projects than development programs, which also created a gap in developing a plan that conforms to MDLF objectives of funding infrastructure projects. Regarding the objectives of the strategic plan, a major part of these objectives is not a development objective, but is rather an activity, such as expanding and rehabilitating roads and organizing traffic etc... All these activities serve one objective of facilitating and organizing the citizens' movement and transportation. Some objectives have no content, such as preserving the general environment of the town, or organizing construction and licensing processes, as these are procedures and not objectives. Furthermore, strategies do not have any gender-related content, although there is **the will to enhance women participation at MDLF**.

However, none of the objectives addresses the needs of different groups or contributes to bridging the existing gender gap, such as objectives that focus on increasing the opportunities of women and men in participation and decision-making, or expanding the economic opportunities for women and men. It would have been possible to develop a system of strategic goals that serve gender issues and bridge the existing gender gap, but the current manual and its approach could not cover this aspect in its application, which was reviewed by the work team.

MDLF gender review of the manual was not a coincidence, but a result of their conviction that the manual is void of a gender perspective in strategic planning, as generally concluded by the work team who reviewed it.

#### **2.2.1.4 Planning phases**

The manual takes all planning phases into consideration, including preparation, composing planning teams and committees, stakeholder analysis and mobilization, development of plans with the participation of the community to develop a sense of ownership, and leads to their participation in implementing as well as in monitoring and oversight on implementation.

Within this context, each local authority has its own specificity and ability to engender its own strategic plan, or the vision and concepts used by the strategic planning team of women participation, and to use a gender-based planning framework so that implementation would be gender-sensitive whenever possible, while taking into consideration the need to be informed of development priorities and national plans, either to influence them or benefit from the efforts of all players to achieve the development objectives of the local authority and the complementary roles for the best use of resources.

#### **2.2.2 The municipal manual for the preparation of estimated budgets**

This is a strictly technical manual that helps municipalities prepare their budgets. It reflects the municipal annual plans, which in turn are supposed to reflect the local community needs and priorities, including gender-responsiveness.

As a financial manual, it is much better than other manuals, but it does not ensure linking plans and budget preparation to gender-responsive procedures through the different stages of budget preparation.

It aims at harmonizing the methodologies and rules adopted in the preparation of estimated budgets, in line with MOLG vision and based on the annual plans. This manual is based on a set of MOLG rules and visions, as well as the National Reform and Development Plan and the subsequent annual plans. **The manual is not based on the Council of Ministers Decision Number (01/05/13) for the Year 2009 on gender-responsive budgets.**

The manual is void of any indicators for gender mainstreaming. Moreover, the powers granted to senior officials to change the budgets according to the manual, may leave gender issues to the discretion of this group. The manual is purely financial which aggravates the gender gap because it is void of any social dimensions that may promote the preparation of gender-responsive budgets.

### **2.2.3 Budget type**

Most local authorities adopt allocations and items budgets, which do not reveal needs and achievement of objectives, especially regarding gender mainstreaming. The manual adopts the approach of mid-term activities linked to the Reform and Development Plan and what stems from it. Generally, this approach is much better than the allocations and items budgets. Mid-term is better than long-term interventions. However, this may prevent introducing the desired strategic change in substantive issues such as gender.

### **2.2.4 Accounting basis**

The manual stipulates the use of accrual basis and amended accrual basis budgeting, while allowing for the use of cash basis in several aspects, which does not reflect actual commitment and is closely linked to the items budget. Programs and performance budgets are linked to accrual basis accounting

which records the transaction when it actually occurs, irrespective of the cash paid during the transaction.

### **2.2.5 Planning and the budget**

The manual requires reflecting the strategic plans in the budget; those who do not have plans shall resort to heads of sections and departments to identify priorities. This mechanism is void of any social dimension, and does not use need and identification of gaps with the local community as a basis. There is a need to consider the community and their needs as partners and to clarify the rules and mechanisms to heads of departments upon preparing activities and programs.

### **2.2.6 The municipal annual plan template**

The plan template includes the name of activity, code, duration, the party responsible for implementation and necessary preparations. The template does not include the overall strategic objective to be achieved or the secondary objectives which are considered the most important elements for evaluation during implementation. It is also of utmost importance to clarify the mechanisms and basis for program selection, and activate the role of the statistical figure, other than population in the diagnosis of reality, since it is used in several indicators as a basis for selection.

### **2.2.7 Budget preparation**

#### **2.2.7.1 Budget statement**

MOLG sends the budget statement, which has no social dimension and **requires change**. It should be used as a point of entry to introduce gender to budget preparation. The statement binds the local authorities to use a unified template in budget preparation. All items are estimated on a monthly basis, which makes it more difficult to reflect any social dimensions. The statement directs local authorities to identify a set of indicators related to revenue and expenditure analysis, which is purely financial and related to the ratios of sub-items to overall items of the same type, but reflect no social dimensions that link them to the achievement of the desired objectives.

### **2.2.7.2 Budget team**

The budget team, including its head, are identified in a conventional manner, and budget preparation and understanding plans relies heavily on individual members, who need training on gender issues and gender mainstreaming. Moreover, there is a need to revise the whole structure responsible for budget preparation, from the municipality to MOLG, its gender distribution, capacity and vision.

### **2.2.7.3 Participation in the budget**

The manual indicates participation in budget preparation, but not the participation of all groups of service receivers and providers, but rather participation of the groups that prepare the budget; objectives and strategies are identified in a top-bottom approach from the higher to the lower administrative levels, while budgets are identified from lower to higher administrative levels, bearing in mind that effective participation requires the development of strategies and plans from both lower and higher levels.

### **2.2.7.4 Basis for the evaluation of item estimates**

The most important performance indicators do not include gender dimensions and the nature of beneficiaries from services, in addition to studying the sensitivity of revenues and their responsiveness to providing services to marginalized groups. Hence, the performance indicators must be more detailed and specific of the target group, **and whether they are beneficiaries of services or tax payers.**

### **2.2.7.5 Analysis of deviations and performance reports**

An analysis of the deviations of actual expenditures from estimates is conducted on a monthly basis with performance evaluation for every period. This item comprises room for intervention to ensure adjustment. However, a unified form is also used for all activities and administrative units. As mentioned earlier, unifying forms has several advantages in terms of facilitating work and aggregation, but it contributes to generalizing mistakes and concealing a set of gender issues.

### **2.2.7.6 Shifting between items**

The Budget Law No. (1) for the Year 1997 allows for shifting between items to ensure that the estimated expenditure items have not been exceeded, and this may allow for influencing the vital programs and activities in favour of other items with the Minister's approval, hence there is a need for caution to ensure that activities are not affected in a manner that may lead to carrying the deficit forward to other years.

### **2.2.7.7 Budget Prediction**

Developing the budget is a process of prediction of the future that must reflect future plans in numbers. To ensure gender mainstreaming, it must also include plans and objectives, as well as quality data that diagnose reality to ensure that the budget achieves the desired developmental goal. However in the manual, predictions are based on a set of fixed factors and variables such as grants and aid, population, and the economic conditions, while the social dimension and the different needs of social groups from a gender-perspective are totally absent. There is also a need for listing the goals identified by the municipality and mainstreaming them which makes setting the goals and plans a main theme in ensuring gender mainstreaming. However, since predictions heavily rely on previous years, the social gaps will be aggravated if the same conventional approach of overlooking gender in budget development is maintained.

### **2.2.8 The cash-basis accounting procedural manual**

Developing this manual came in line with proposing the National Reform and Development Plan. It included financial and accounting procedures and templates which focused on municipal development through grants for supporting infrastructure projects at municipalities linked to performance and capacity development in this framework, in particular financial and accounting transactions in projects related to infrastructure; i.e. it focused on developing knowledge and skills that improve the performance of male and female workers in particular, despite interest in developing skills within the limits of bank transactions and accounts and mechanisms of withdrawal and deposit.

The manual is gender-responsive, especially that its language and discourse are male dominated. No equal attention is given to operational projects, in

which women usually work, as capital projects, from which women are usually absent. It is worth noting that none of the project ideas mentioned men, women or marginalized and poor groups.

The manual also overlooked any community oversight within the framework of the principles of transparency good governance, addressed by the above-mentioned manuals. This manual restricted control to competent parties linked to MOLG, MDLF, municipalities and external auditors.

### **3. Municipalities and their relationship with MDLF**

#### **3.1 Partnership**

MDLF aims at helping the municipalities improve their performance and respond to citizens' needs through different programs and projects, based on the national policies of developing the local government sector. Municipalities perceive their relations with MDLF as relationships of partnership and cooperation. Nevertheless, a thorough look reveals that this relation is not as good as it should be according to some municipalities, who say that this relation is sometimes compelling, whereby MDLF dictates conditions and imposes criteria that shape these relations, their consequences and their future. Some municipalities express their doubts towards the existing form of partnership. The reservations expressed by the municipalities, especially on the criteria and the manuals, are not taken into consideration by partners (the municipalities). Others pointed out the nature of implementation conducted by MDLF, saying that the municipality is an implementing party, through the engineering department which shares oversight with MDLF, while payments and control are direct MDLF responsibility, which means an absence of actual partnership. Some municipalities assert that a relationship of partnership and cooperation exists, except in criteria, which are not satisfactory and require further discussion and dialogue between MDLF and the municipalities.

#### **3.2 Criteria**

Despite the clarity of criteria and their harmony with MDLF's technical and practical vision, the municipalities have their reservations towards MDLF funding criteria (performance, population and need), as they believe that distribution is not fair, since larger municipalities benefit rather than smaller ones, and old municipalities with long experience rather than new ones. The points of view of municipalities are taken into consideration, although these criteria are the outcome of prolonged discussions with local and international experts and have been discussed with municipalities; regional

workshops were held with the presence of the Minister of Local Government and board members, and feedback was taken from municipalities before adopting these criteria.

It is not possible to generalize the point of view of some municipalities in this regard. Municipalities considered that MDLF excludes and directly neutralizes the political factor in its evaluation. Al-Auja Municipality believes that it lives under difficult conditions because of the occupation practices and policies against their land, which limit any potential for development, while MDLF uses its criteria. Jenin Municipality has a similar opinion, as it believes that MDLF does not take into consideration the negative impact of occupation on some municipalities such as the Wall, settlements and land and water confiscation. There are plans to expand MDLF scope to include Area (C).

### **3.3 The Manuals**

Positions of municipalities towards the manuals and knowledge about them are mixed and ambiguous. While Turmusaya and Jenin municipalities believe that the manuals address the municipalities' reality since they were developed by experts capable of assessing development needs, the municipality of Al-Auja believes that these manuals were developed for large municipalities with capacity and experience, unlike their own. The municipality of Bethlehem also believes that the financial manuals are sometimes too bureaucratic. Some municipalities said that they found themselves forced to use the manuals and strategic planning to comply with MDLF criteria and receive funding, while Jenin Municipality believes that the manuals largely contributed to developing the developmental aspect of the strategic plan. In general, the municipalities consider the process of strategic planning a first experience for some municipalities and stress the importance of the participatory approach and dialogue and partnership with actors from the local community.

### **3.4 Strategic planning and the participation of the local community**

**As a strategic step, MDLF contributed to incorporating the strategic planning methodology into municipalities.**

Municipalities use the same methodology in strategic planning, through using the main manual. Jenin Municipality prepared its 2012-2015 Strategic Plan and it believes that it is a step in the right direction, as it helped it assess needs and identify priorities. The plan was developed in cooperation with a



group of experts and active citizens in various fields, and included the visions that reflect the needs of various groups.

The Municipality believes that the plan adopted a participatory approach with different institutions, while the local community considers that 70% of the active institutions did not participate in the Strategic Plan. The Municipality developed its planning and consultations process through establishing a municipal consultative council, consisting of economic figures and competent citizens capable of contribution. The participation of women continued to be welcome as a pattern, through the Friends of the Municipality Club, which includes women from the education sector.

As for Turmusaya Municipality, it is currently developing its four-year strategic plan with community participation. The planning process was advertised through the social media, at the women and men's entrances to mosques, and through direct communications and invitation to a public meeting; expatriates were invited and attended the meeting. Four committees were established to prepare the strategic plan, two of which have one woman out of five members, while there are three women in the planning committee and no women in the fourth committee. The Municipality considers that a group of people were recommended strictly on merits basis. The on-going process generally does not distinguish between different groups as it serves the whole community. There is no clear written gender policy, but MDLF requires in writing women representation in meetings. The municipal council acknowledges the importance of participation, since convincing the community facilitates implementation; especially that 70% of the projects implemented by the municipality are funded through donations from the community, who identify what they want. They also stressed the importance of active women participation, "The more people participate in planning, the more they are satisfied".

Most institutions, associations and expatriates participated; meetings with expatriates were held in summer and included all groups, not only expatriates. As is the case with Jenin Municipality, women participation in strategic planning remains open for questioning.

Regarding Al-Auja, Municipality, it is the first time they carry out a strategic planning process. The municipality considers that consultations with the local community often take place on some issues, but the community tends to be recipient because of the absence of the culture of community partnership, according to the municipality; neither does the community participate in developing plans and projects. Despite on-going efforts that

aim at gradual integration of the community, participation is currently not satisfactory. According to the municipality, not all needs of different groups are taken into consideration because this would increase the cost, a major limitation to the municipality's work. Regarding involving women in the planning process, there were discussions of the absence of a gender policy and that representation at Al-Auja Municipality considers tribes, and hence general and women participation are included in tribal representation, even through the limited role played by the women club.

The Municipality believes that serious obstacles hinder women participation even at the municipality itself: meetings are held at 7 p.m.; the municipal building is far; and, there is no public transport to facilitate participation. On the other hand, there is a real desire among women to participate and contribute to community issues. Holding the council meetings at an earlier time would enable larger women participation.

Representatives of the civil society and the local community in Bethlehem expressed their dissatisfaction with the scale and form of participation, since it does not fulfill the purpose. Participation is restricted to groups and persons who are close to the municipality, and interaction between the institutions and the municipality is not adequate, since a general feeling of discrimination in public service delivery prevails, as some neighborhoods and streets far from the city center are ignored, and do not get opportunities in reconstruction or in service delivery.

### **3.5 The financial and accounting system**

The financial system of local authorities is still far from being gender-responsive for several reasons including the separation between planning and municipal budgets; such separation often causes conflicts or differences, especially with the budget statement, which may overburden the budget, such as the requirement to allocate 10% of the budget as contingency, amid the financial crisis which the local authorities face. The mechanical link between the strategic plan and an implementation plan continues to be uncertain because linking strategic planning to the budget is essential, rather than having a needs basket pending funding.

### **3.6 The municipalities' vision towards the importance of infrastructure projects and their link to gender issues**

The municipalities' perspective towards women participation in infrastructure projects promoted stereotypes. Municipalities justified women

participation in electricity projects for example, by the fact that women spent most of their time at home, while others justified women participation in projects of internal roads and pavements because they wear high heels. Impact assessment and participation are for women, despite MDLF assumption about women participation in all projects.

### **3.7 The local community's perspective of the relation with the municipalities**

The local communities described the relation with the municipalities as ambiguous sometimes, and characterized by the absence of partnership at other times. Others believed that it is based on partnership, as is the case in Turmusaya. Some local community groups indicated that municipalities acknowledged certain influential parties, possibly tribal, political, institutional or even personal, and that this strongly affected the potential for integrating women in municipal work and building a partnership with them. The local community also stressed the absence of clear procedures for the disclosure of information and issues related to municipal work, and that work is mostly done through personal and family relations, without any binding disclosure law, which impedes the citizens' ability to exercise their oversight role. Despite attempts of some women institutions, as in Bethlehem, to develop partnerships with the municipality, communication is almost absent because of lack of responsiveness, despite establishing four committees to work on the strategic plan, but they were not effective in real women participation.

## **4 Main conclusions and future vision**

### **4.1 Conclusions**

There is a direct relation between the funding agenda and the responsiveness of the local community; the local community has been responsive to a set of conditions, even if only as a formality. The more there are clear determinants imposed by the funder and which properly reflect gender issues, the more this reflects on the local community and enables the institutionalization of these issues. The main determinants that impede achieving social integration are:

- The main development concepts are still questionable in the approaches of Municipal Development Program and the municipalities, whether in the context of their relations or in the relations of municipalities with the local community.

- The municipalities and the local community said that MDLF neutralizes many factors of extreme importance to the work of municipalities and their capacities. Moreover, MDLF neutralizes the need criterion, which is the lowest in the scale of criteria. In other programs, MDLF has undertaken the task of strengthening the municipalities in Area (C).
- The existing MDLF and the municipal documents and policies address gender issues as an executive work criterion, linked to some possible space for women participation in local government issues and developmental planning. This framework ignores class and power gaps in existing gender relations and roles in local communities, which create gaps in access to different resources, including the interests of both women and men in development on the basis of justice and equity.
- MDLF and the municipalities' vision towards development and strategic plans is based on goals linked to infrastructure and development projects, such as expanding and rehabilitating road networks, or rehabilitating and building schools or water and wastewater networks, etc. Developmental goals are achieved through a vision reflected in a policy framework of change that touches on peoples' lives, both men and women. Some municipalities even focus in their plans on procedural aspects and link them to the strategic plan as developmental goals, such as regulating construction, licensing and markets etc... It would have been possible for MDLF vision and strategy to focus on one gender-sensitive developmental goal reflected in the strategies of municipalities, such as: **expanding women and men's participation in the decision-making process, or expanding the economic opportunities for women and men**. Hence, it is possible to develop a set of strategic goals that serve the gender cause and bridge the existing gender gap through infrastructure projects, and which can be reflected in a social change program that achieves justice and equity to women movements in different geographic locations.
- A gap exists in the gender-responsiveness of the vision and content of financial action and policies; the developmental content of plans and programs themselves suffers from its gender mainstreaming vision. This automatically reflects on the gender gap in financial policies and their irresponsiveness to a content that contributes to the absence of a planning perspective capable of understanding the needs of each group in the community from a gender perspective, and the absence of

- any possibility to achieve justice and equity between men and women. Consequently, it is hard to link the budget items and expenditures to priorities and strategic plans that seek to achieve equality and equity for all groups of the community.
- The municipalities perceive their relations with the local communities in a class discriminatory context towards the marginalized, mostly women. Municipalities treat the educated class as a group with expertise and opinion, and use tribal and personal interests in administering local government. This puts the active participation of women and various underprivileged groups in the community in a dilemma. Hence, MDLF can exert pressure so that MOLG adopts procedures to appoint local expertise and deepen positive initiatives to introduce structural change inside the municipalities and their visions towards gender.

#### **4.2 A future vision towards a more participatory and gender-responsive relation**

There are several central issues that MDLF, the municipalities and MOLG as an umbrella must do to ensure gender-mainstreaming of the municipalities and their financial and structural policies, to become gender-responsive, particularly in their budgets, planning and partnerships.

**The first issue: promoting the concepts of partnership, justice and equity in MDLF work:** Municipalities suffer from gaps in their potentials and capacities according to the expertise, budget and relationship of each municipality, hence the dire need for seriously reconsidering the criteria that MDLF uses in its relations with the municipalities according to the following factors:

-The political factor: MDLF continues to neutralize the different political conditions surrounding each municipality. While occupation has a direct and an indirect impact on the overall local government activity, the impact of occupation on some municipalities is greater than others, because of their vulnerability to direct practices that impede their potential development. Hence, MDLF must be more flexible with more politically vulnerable municipalities.

- Flexibility in addressing the needs of the municipalities more vulnerable to occupation policies.
- MDLF must add a criterion for municipalities in Area (C), those besieged by settlements and more vulnerable to occupation practices.

- MDLF must also add a strong social dimension for those municipalities and give them developmental priority in addition to infrastructure projects.

**-The concept of partnership:** Adopting and promoting the concept of partnership on a wider scale with municipalities. Building a partnership relation with municipalities empowers them from a gender perspective amid an absence of programs and policies that contribute to motivating and promoting participation and partnership. Furthermore, there is a need to promote the concept of partnership in the municipal work with the local community.

-Set up a unit (or identify a coordinator) at MDLF to communicate with the municipalities to get to know their visions towards projects, their relation and linkage to the social context and the extent of their satisfaction with their relation with MDLF.

**-The concepts of justice and equity:** linking funding and its financial value to three criteria and determinants “with the importance of details within them” is not a fair policy with municipalities which have varying potentials. Hence, there is a need to develop policies that achieve justice and equity, as well as preferential systems according to the needs of the local residents.

<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Implicit criteria</b>	<b>Observations</b>
Population	Sex: males, females with age groups and levels of education, Poverty level, unemployment rate, persons with disabilities and chronic diseases	Studying the nature and characteristics of residents and reflecting them in the criterion makes it more equitable in reflecting the needs of different groups
Need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The municipality’s need of resources (examine available financial and human resources and the availability of public utilities and basic infrastructure).</li> <li>- The municipality’s need in relation to the residents’ ability to</li> </ul>	Occupation continues to be the most dangerous risk that must be deterred and the need to support the steadfastness of endangered areas such as Al-Auja, which is facing a clear threat, particularly in water.

	<p>participate, contribute and access different resources (this is done through measuring the ease of access to public services and utilities for different groups, focusing on children and persons with disabilities).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Israeli imminent threat that impedes the capacity of several municipalities, especially financially (cities in Area (C) and cities close to settlements and the Wall).</li> </ul>	
<p>Performance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Amend the budget disclosure article so that it covers disclosure before, during and after budget preparation.</li> <li>- Link indicators to the terms of reference that must be adopted regarding social representation.</li> <li>- Performance indicators lack any written indicator on social inclusion and community accountability (the ability of people to access information and their ability to change), which guarantee that local communities are</li> </ul>	

	<p>motivated to seek better participation and representation of all groups. Hence, this should be included in performance indicators.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Add written project impact assessment (for example, do expanding infrastructure projects take into consideration the reproductive role of women?)</li> </ul>	
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**The second issue:** Seek to introduce gender mainstreaming as a work strategy rather than a goal for decision-makers and active players at MDLF and their partners at municipalities. There is a need to assert that the social, cultural and economic contexts created differences between the roles of men and women, and this gap led to discriminatory practices. Hence, there is a need to base work on concepts that analyze reality in the context of gender relations, acknowledge the existing gaps and seek to create equality, equity and true non-discrimination in all the policies and approaches of MDLF and the municipalities. Setting the grounds for developmental rights and the importance of participation in the context of gender relations, not only from the perspective of gender equality and non-discrimination, but also as a positive action in the form of preferential or equality systems and the measures that must be taken at the Fund or to improve the capacities of municipalities in this context. It should be noted that the gender policy gaps exist at several tiers:

**The first tier:** the existing documents, terms of reference, manuals and policies require gender mainstreaming of the planning, implementation, follow-up, financial and control policies, so that social issues are included in infrastructure projects and a vision of change is internalized. Moreover, there is a need to promote the concept of participation ensuring that gender is taken into consideration in community involvement, through the use of procedures that seek access to marginalized groups, particularly women.

- The basic consciousness that women are not a homogenous groups but belong to different classes, age groups, areas, levels of education and cultural backgrounds. There is a need for frames that guarantee



representation of marginalized groups, while acknowledging the importance of the participation of non-governmental and other community organizations.

- Engender MDLF policies, documents, manuals and templates as a work strategy reflected in the vision, mission, programs, projects and activities in a cross-sectoral manner, thus making gender mainstreaming a change process rather than a goal to be achieved.
- Incorporate the concept of participation to involve real contribution of women through: 1) Raising awareness about the importance of participation and the role of the local community in participation, including women, and bolstering their trust in their community role; 2) Participation means empowering to enhance participation in decision-making and needs assessment; and 3) Participation means change in the concepts and vision and identifying projects that meet the community needs and priorities.

**The second tier:** linked to the convictions and inclinations of influential persons inside institutions (MDLF and municipalities) and even within implementing consultancy firms. Changing individual inclinations and opinions that have a direct or indirect impact is no less important than policies and documents. It is also important to impose structural and intellectual social conditions on the companies implementing strategic planning or infrastructure projects, and to work with the human resources to introduce change concepts that contribute to changing traditional approaches in gender analysis.

- Design training programs within each infrastructure project to raise the awareness of implementers and planners about gender issues; this includes consultancy firms, contractors, engineering departments and the staff responsible for control, follow-up, evaluation and orientation at MDLF. These training programs shall be developed by gender specialists.
- Develop terms of reference that include gender-responsiveness of the implemented consultancy, either by adding a gender specialist to the work team, or by recognizing MDLF gender policies during implementation, while asserting the importance of men's role in local communities as supporters of women in the participatory process, either through mixed meetings or by promoting the idea of community partnership among the local community as a whole.

-Companies must be open with the local community, with its diverse cultural, gender and class groups, rather than treat them as one group.

**The third tier:** Based on the above, it is important to adopt strategies that promote participation and seek to include viewpoints of all groups of women in planning, implementation and control.

- Awareness of and access to information: Awareness campaigns and initiatives that target different groups, mostly women; this tier includes highly transparent disclosure of and access to information for women.
- Participation of different parties in the consultation process: creating various debates during the **process of consultation** with the local community. This process includes an analysis of the interests of women and men, mapping and analyzing various issues to clarify the interests and issues of men and women and enable identifying the existing gaps.
- Setting up local committees; representing interest groups in various committees within different classes and ages, and within a gender context. Such representation shall be capable of establishing groups capable of representing and involving all parties in the processes of planning, implementation and control.
- Partnership: moving from the stage of dialogue and consultations to the stage of action, through actually shifting the initiative to the local community on the ground in following up and approving policies as well as following up their implementation.
- Monitoring and evaluation: Enhancing the process of monitoring and oversight over implementation adopting the viewpoint that projects are public property for all.

**The third issue:** The planning and implementation strategy: giving a real opportunity for women and girls to actively participate like men in the planning, implementation, oversight and monitoring processes through overcoming social, cultural and political barriers, to include their vision in work and develop basic indicators that take their participation into consideration, and be aware of the temporary damages afflicted on women because of implementation, especially of infrastructure projects which may limit their movement sometimes, and increase or even multiply their reproductive burdens other times (the oversight function is still ambiguous especially in risk assessment and the ability to bind the implementing companies to adhere to terms that mitigate those risks). This requires

building executive capacities in methods of gathering information, assessing needs and identifying priorities, so that they will be engendered and capable of identifying and bridging gaps.

- **Disclosure of the process of strategic planning** and identifying the project priorities through public means that ensure access for women such as activating the roles of women members and local committees.
- **Stimulating and raising awareness of all groups and classes of the people on the importance of planning prior to the first public meeting, to ensure wider women participation.** A suitable time for women must be set after they finish their house chores to ensure better attendance of women from various social classes, age groups and reproductive roles.
- Terms of reference for the concept of community participation and representation to ensure justice and transparency. As a first step, this should aim at creating direct community participation culture with no mediators.
- **Support women-led community and grass root organizations** through building relations and alliances with them to strengthen them and ensure the participation of different groups of women.
- **The use of means of communication that ensure access to women,** such as a campaign for the participation of different neighbourhoods, classes and age groups, addressing women directly rather than through families, since communicating with families does not necessarily mean the participation of all their members, especially women.
- Activating the principle of representational quotas in meetings and committees, rather than restricting women representation to traditional committees (for women, children and the disabled) which strengthens the traditional roles of women.
- Using methods that raise women's interest and attention to strengthen their participation and illustrate the importance of existing projects for women: infrastructure projects are linked to freedom of movement and safe and easy access; water projects ensure access to safe water at home, and this includes water distribution of shares, water needs and management and electricity projects, lighting streets, distribution of poles and avoiding installing them on pavements to ensure free and safe walking there.
- Conducting random and informal individual interviews with men and women, especially during the first phase so that the municipalities identify women knowledge and awareness and involve them in the process of

participation.

- Using spatial mapping and priority mapping to indicate the capacities and potential which make it possible to identify priorities and needs in an unconventional manner.

**The fourth issue:** Institutionalizing a gender unit at MDLF and the municipalities as a main part of their structure. This would have an impact on the work of different departments, since its work is inter-sectoral and influences policies, programs and approaches.

**The fifth issue:** Strengthening the concept of development in the work with municipalities, to be included in the municipalities' missions, policies and visions and linked to their major responsibilities in managing public life, direct communications with the local community and the details of their daily lives and the vision towards local government as a framework that strengthens community participation. Their central goal and work strategy is the development of local communities, rather than work as an executive management of different projects without having the grand vision and strategy linked to development as a whole. This shall definitely enhance the local community's trust in municipalities and ensure transparency linked to good governance which seeks to achieve justice and equity among people, men and women alike.

-Better consultations on linking infrastructure projects to themes, so that municipalities focus on one developmental theme every year and try to achieve it. For example, the year of enhancing access of the local community, particularly women, to different services delivered by municipalities, and the related needs of projects, pavements, organized markets, electricity projects, street lights, water etc, through the relationship with MDLF.

- Link infrastructure projects to social concepts that perceive the different roles of men and women, taking into consideration the strategic and practical interests of women: for example, building a desalination plant in marginalized communities as a practical need for women, in which a strategic goal, linked to water management is achieved; or expanding internal roads in town to ensure easier access to service centers, which achieves the strategy that ensures safe and free movement and access for women in public places.

**The sixth issue:** linking the work with municipalities to the positive spirit and creative local initiatives, so that the existing institutional environment at the municipalities adopts a positive attitude towards criticism and potential for development:

-As concluded from meetings, there is room for expanding the dialogue with the local community, but MDLF manuals and their technical aspects often set an almost mandatory route for funding. With partnership and flexibility, it is possible to ensure developing suitable grounds for activating a gender-based dialogue that enables identifying and understanding the needs of the local community from the perspectives of men and women.

-Consequently, the research team did not observe that the municipalities consider gender issues, except at a limited level, not reflected in the municipalities' policies and internal structures; the strategies have not developed to enable a work team at the municipality to effect bigger change and enable women and men to deal with relevant gender and development needs

-Examine the municipalities' policies, mission, or institutional framework and the extent of their gender mainstreaming to achieve equal opportunity to mitigate the gender gap and set up a system for developing indicators to examine reality and identify existing gaps in the local community.

-Detect challenges of equal access of men and women to different services and the extent of benefit from MDLF infrastructure projects.

-Examine the budget and projects, whether they achieve the goals, their gender responsiveness, and the extent to which they meet the needs of women and men alike, etc.

-Strengthen the status of women in access to municipal services and access to decision-making at the municipality: activate the customer service centres and encourage the structuring of municipalities to ensure the presence of a gender unit that addresses all the municipal structures and policies.

**-Capacity-building:** MDLF and the municipalities need capacity building in gender and planning issues and gender-responsive budgeting, since these are new concepts in Palestine. There is a dire need for developing cadres that can reflect such a methodology in the local government planning and budgeting processes to achieve justice and equity.

**The seventh issue:**

**-Financial policies and their gender-responsiveness:** Work is still ongoing on the approaches, rather than the policies both at MDLF and the

municipalities for such a methodology. This requires exerting effort at several levels:

-Adopting a planning perspective capable of understanding the community needs for each group within the community from a gender-perspective. Such a framework requires adopting the concept of community participation based on direct dialogue with the local community, including men and women, to enable understanding gender differences, practical and strategic needs and community roles of men and women.

-Adopt a developmental perspective that achieves justice and equity, enhances fair and equitable access to available local resources, financial or moral, and fulfils the ambitions and desires of different community groups, especially women from different classes and age groups.

-Link the planning process to available resources and budgets, which contributes to setting up the spending priorities and strategic plans from a developmental perspective, to achieve equality and equity among the different community groups and segments.

-Work on amending MOLG budget statement to become more engendered, and includes the implementation of all goals through the optimal use of resources and equitable identification of taxes and fees to ensure meeting needs and administering justice to all groups in the local community.

#### **-Budget preparation manual**

- Amending the budget statement to stipulate clearly and directly the use of the gender-responsive budget law, taking into consideration all groups and community participation during all stages of budget preparation and implementation.
- The Council of Ministers Decision to adopt a gender-responsive budget shall be incorporated in the budget preparation manual.
- The manual was developed by financial specialists, and is financially flexible and responds to the varying needs of municipalities. However, the approved Council of Ministers Decision to adopt a gender-responsive budget must be incorporated, and all templates and indicators must be amended to analyze the social, and not only the financial impact of budget implementation.
- Link the strategic plans directly to the budget, so that it would be possible to compare the approved objective and the allocated amount; set secondary goals implemented in stages to reach the project overall objective, and enable measuring the social impact and work on programs and performance budgets to bridge the existing gap related to the direct impact (attached is an amended proposed annual work plan).

- Based on the conclusions of meetings with the municipalities which indicated that implementing the manual is linked to computer software, especially for applying the accrual basis accounting, there is a need for linking the training with the supporting computer software.
- The concept of partnership in the budget preparation manual must include all groups within the civil society and not be restricted to budget preparers (starting with the accountant until MOLG approval).

### The amended proposed annual work plan for municipalities

Strategic objective	Secondary goal	Activity	Activity code	Party responsible for activity implementation		Implementation period in months	Beneficiaries		Implementation period	Responsible department	Preparations	Expected challenges and obstacles
				males	females		males	females				
From the strategic plan directly of the previously approved plan	The strategic objective is divided into a set of secondary goals											

- Budget prediction in the budget preparation manual: there is a need to ensure that amendments of items in each stage are made in a manner that does not affect the set goals and programs.
- Basis for assessing projected items: the most important performance indicators for municipalities (identified in the budget projection evaluation) used to review the projections of different items for all the included revenues and the rate for the previous year, their similarity with similar municipalities, in addition to per capita. Such indicators are void of gender dimensions, the specificity of programs and activities, the nature of service beneficiaries, and studying the inclusion of revenues with guaranteeing service delivery to the needy. Performance indicators must be more detailed and specific, dividing the target community to segments (males, females etc...) and whether they are service beneficiaries or tax payers, to ensure equity and effectiveness in selecting the beneficiaries.

Description	Procedure	Classifying the payers, their characteristics and economic conditions	Classifying the beneficiaries (males, females) and their characteristics	The results of impact assessment of the previous period
	The procedure must include comparisons of the per capita share according to the nature of individuals and comparison with the changes in the current situation towards the beginning of each year, which does not depend solely on the previous budgets and their performance.			

### 4.3 Operational recommendations from stakeholders and local communities at municipalities

Direct recommendations about the work of MDLF and general finances:

- Have real representation of women organizations at the boards of directors (adding representatives of women organizations).
- Have clear representation for municipalities at MDLF and in the processes of developing manuals.
  - Add representatives of municipalities for follow up with existing consultants on various manuals.
  - Intensify workshops during the development of manuals to take feedback from municipalities.
- Work on amending criteria to achieve more justice according to need and the size of population.
- Train financial teams on different accounting systems, gender-responsive budgets and methods of writing them in a readable form for citizens.
- Use The Association of Palestinian Local Authorities (APLA) meetings of financial managers for exchanging experience, transferring knowledge and building the capacity of weaker municipalities that have limited financial performance, and train them on gender-responsive budgets too.
- Set up an independent division at service centres to provide information about budgets and budget preparation.
- Reduce routine in project implementation.
- Dedicate a unit or an individual at MDLF and new municipalities to help in donor communications to ensure the availability of other resources, especially for new municipalities.
- Develop software for the manuals on planning, finances, and accounting follow-up, since shifting to accrual-basis accounting, for example, requires software.
- Amend manuals or provide simpler manuals that suit municipalities with limited capacities, such as training on management, law, maps.



- Identify projects first, and then disburse funds according to projects, so that the size of funding does not impede vital developmental projects that have an impact and lead to community change.
- Amend criteria so that they focus more on need and also reflect the political and economic conditions.

**Recommendations of the civil society and the local community to the municipalities, MDLF and stakeholders**

- Have clear, written and binding MOLG policies about community inclusion.
- Have a binding law on disclosure of information.
- There is an obvious lack of understanding among women of their rights and duties; hence the need for raising public awareness and community education about the role of municipalities and the nature of relations with them.
- Each party must clearly undertake its responsibilities.
- Civil society organizations are required to refrain from playing the role of the victim and make use of the staff and cadres, such as lawyers to exercise the role of legal accountability.
- Develop indicators to measure the responsiveness of the municipality to citizens' needs.
- The planning process must include all groups of the community, as the disabled and the youth are not represented in municipal activities and women are not effectively represented.
- MDLF must attend meetings and expand consultations with the local community.
- MDLF must strengthen the evaluation and impact assessment of different projects on different groups.
- MDLF funding criteria are not fair, and must reflect the real situation by focusing on the need indicator.
- Conduct regular evaluation of the plan, rather than wait until the end of the four year period.
- Work with the plan's priorities in parallel to avoid creating gaps between them, such as building schools, constructing roads and installing water pipes in parallel.
- Increase training to all employees and members about various topics that contribute to improving the municipal performance in general.
- Develop a gender unit at municipalities.
- Establish a consultative council from the local community.
- Hold regular meetings every three months between the municipalities and the local communities to communicate and inform about the municipalities' work.