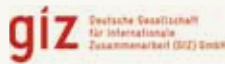




Ministry of
Local Government

Fact Sheet
Women
Participation in
Local Government
Units Elections of
2012 - 2013



Introduction

Applying the ratified women's quota system helps increase women's representation in Local Government Units (LGUs). However, it remains necessary to evaluate this clearly against the management environment in LGUs. As such, it will be necessary to make a gender-based assessment of the management, control and decision-making power in local councils. LGUs increased in number prior to the 2004 local elections. Until then, they were managed by councils appointed by the Ministry of Local Government, with consideration to tribal and family representation. This structure has created a climate of mistrust by the local community in their relation with the central authority.

With the changes to the Local Elections Law and the formation of LGUs in 2005, including the enactment of proportional representation in the third and fourth phases of local elections, as well as the ratification of the women's quota system, women's representation became a de jure reality. While the percentage of appointed women in LGUs did not exceed 1.4% in the year 2000, the law approved a minimum level of representation of 20%.

This fact sheet aims at highlighting, documenting and providing an initial review from a gender perspective of the major indicators related to the most recent local elections that took place in 2012 and 2013.

Local Government Units (LGUs)¹

There are 354 LGUs in the West Bank. However, the most recent local elections, which took place in three phases in 2012 and 2013, were conducted only in 123 LGUs. Consensus was reached in the majority of LGUs in favor of one bloc (215 LGUs). Consensus within the majority of these councils was reached around lists of clan or political faction-clan nature.² This has played a role in shaping a standardized stereotypical structure and nature of role distribution in the administration of the LGUs. In essence, LGUs interpret the roles of women in local councils as more conventional and mainly reproductive roles. Within these combinations, the law guarantees the presence of women in local councils within the framework of the women's quota system.

1. Number of LGUs according to type of election



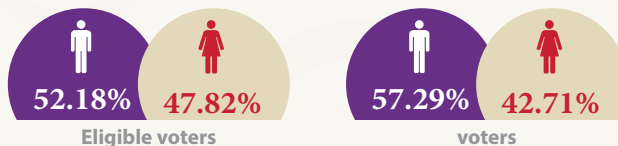
¹ Source: Official information received from the Central Election Commission.

² Look for CEC report for published list

Voters and actual voters

There are 594,840 registered electors, but only 319,852 actually voted.

2. Eligible voters vs. actual voters by gender (%)



Men excelled in their participation in the elections processes, they accounted for 57% of voters in comparison to 43% of women voters.

Nevertheless, the increase in the number of women participating in elections does not mean they voted freely. **Indeed, indicators show that they remained captive to the prevailing culture as they were reported to have voted by a family decision.**³

Running for elections

Despite the high turnout in the elections, the percentage of women running in these elections remains low with less than one quarter of female candidates.

³ See surveys of Center for Development Studies, Birzeit University (2004-2007), home.birzeit.edu/cds

The total number of candidates in the elections was 5,809. The percentage of women candidates accounted for 25% of the total number.

3. Percentage of male/female candidates in the recent local elections



The lowest percentage of women candidates in governorates reached 22% in Jerusalem, while the highest percentage was in the Salfit governorate with 29%. Percentages ranged between 23%-25% in the remaining governorates.

Family control continues to play a major role in women's decision to run for elections. The tribal culture still governs the election process and management of local councils, consequently, weakening community participation in general and women's participation in particular.

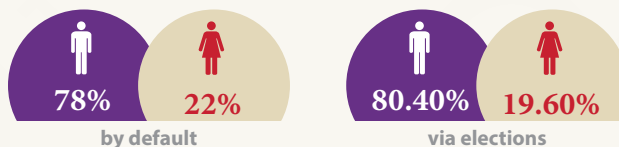
In general, data reveals that the percentage of women running for elections has increased in recent local elections compared with the elections conducted in 2004-2005. This is attributed to the ratification of the electoral quota and the proportional representation systems. It is remarkable that the electoral participation among women in the previous election was higher than the current elections, taking into consideration the heightened national interest since this was the first provisional local elections under the Palestinian Authority.

	2004 - 2005	2012 - 2013
Percentage of women candidates	19.2%	24.8%
Percentage of registered female voters	48.7%	47.8%
Percentage of women members of local council	13.7%	21%
Percentage of female voters	47.8%	42%

Election results

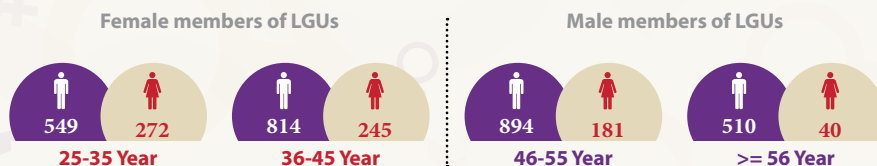
- 738 women became members of local councils out of a total of 3505 members who were either elected or appointed by default.
- The percentage of women's representation in local councils reached 21%, a percentage that is 1% higher than that specified in the quota.
- Women winners in the elections: 271 women won by elections from a total of 1,381 winners (men and women). The percentage of women did not exceed the legally set minimum percentage (quota) but rather fell short by 0.4%.
- Women winners by appointment: 467 women won by default from a total of 2124 winners (men and women). The percentage of appointment exceeded the specified quota by 2%.

4. Percentage of women and men winners of recent elections by default or by election



It was also noticed that male and female youth representation equally increased. Around 70% of female members are below 45 years of age. This is an indicator of possible action to advance young women as leaders in LGUs to set the ground for enhanced women's participation in general elections in Palestine. However, it is important to note that, relatively, women reserved-seats in local councils was a result of their clan support. Thus, it is preemptive to think that political and social participation has become easier and more accessible.

5. Number of local council members by age group and gender



Presiding over LGUs: Only one woman became mayor and headed Bethlehem Municipality. This is an indicator of a significant decline in comparison to the

previous elections where three women mayors were elected to head the municipalities of Ramallah, Bani Zed and Abouein.

Furthermore, one women's bloc ran for local council elections in the city of Hebron but failed to obtain the threshold necessary to run in the elections. This bloc obtained 2.5% of the total votes which was the lowest percentage among all the other lists.

As for the distribution of male and female elected in different governorates, the following table shows that most members were elected by default.

Local Elections 2012 – 2013 number of winners by default per phase								
	Phase I		Phase II		Phase III		Total	
Governorate	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Jerusalem	163	41	15	5	14	4	192	50
Jenin	180	49	35	10	14	4	229	63
Tulkarem	72	19	19	8	0	0	91	27
Toubas	28	8	8	3	0	0	36	11
Nablus	202	58	23	13	7	2	232	73
Qalqilia	101	26	0	0	7	2	108	28
Salfit	31	9	0	0	0		31	9
Ramallah & Al-Bireh	265	73	41	10	14	4	320	87
Jericho	21	6	9	2	0	0	30	8
Bethlehem	188	50	7	2	0	0	195	52
Hebron	145	36	6	3	42	20	193	59
Total	1396	375	163	56	98	36	1657	467
	1771		219		134		2124	

The following table shows elected male and female members distributed per governorates. Results show that the Governorate of Salfeet was among the leading governorates that participated in elections while the least number of ballots was in Jerusalem where most lists won by default.

Local Elections 2012-013; winners in elections per phase								
Constituency	Phase I		Phase II		Phase III		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Jerusalem	20	4	9	2	7	2	36	8
Jenin	135	36	29	6	0	0	164	42
Tulkarem	65	16	9	2	0	0	74	18
Toubas	39	9	11	2	0	0	50	11
Nablus	114	27	30	8	9	2	153	37
Qalqilia	39	9	16	4	7	2	62	15
Salfit	103	25	14	4	7	2	124	31
Ramallah & Al-Bireh	150	40	39	10	14	4	203	54
Jericho	19	5	14	4	0	0	33	9
Bethlehem	79	19	9	2	11	2	99	23
Hebron	81	17	20	4	11	2	112	23
Total	844	207	200	48	66	16	1110	271
	1051		248		82		1381	

However, in general, the data does not show regional gaps since the number is associated to the number of LGUs in the governorates and since the Local Elections Law is clear regarding women's representation given the minimum female quota of 20%.

Main conclusions

Regression in local councils and the democratic electoral process

- The recent local elections showed declined interest in terms of size of participation, percentage of registered voters, and voter turnout compared with the elections of 2004-2005, despite the fact that elections took place for the first time in key municipalities such as Hebron.
- This regression was clearly reflected in its impact on the democratic electoral process where 61% of the members of local councils were selected by default through local consensus around one list and the absence of democratic competition. No elections took place in 4.5% of local councils in the West Bank.
- No local elections took place in the Gaza Strip as a result of the political division. This is also a negative indicator for the democratic process within the LGUs and their developmental role.

Indicators that require attention in regards to gender issues

- The local elections brought about a strong representation of the tribal spectrum [culture]. According to an initial review of the configuration of the election lists, whether on a competitive or consensual basis, it was clear that family ties played a major role in their formulation and alliances. Rarely did the political party alone play a role in the format of the local elections but rather the tribal format reflected itself along with the political party.
- The women's quota continues to play a central role in enabling women to access LGUs in terms of representation. This was clear in the recent elections, although it was expected that this percentage would have increased given the scope of efforts made by the various organizations and their work with local councils rather than being restricted to the quota system as the minimum level.

Local councils' work environment ... an environment that is not responsive to gender

Evidence confirms that the experience of women's political participation in local councils did not produce changes in gender roles and neither led to any weakening of patriarchal relations within the society. On the contrary, the surrounding environment imposed restrictions on the freedom and movement of women and further promoted the traditional roles of women thus resulting in the absence of real and genuine women's participation:

- Women's participation in local councils is hindered by restrictions and/or various social and cultural conditions. Such conditions weakened any effective participation of women whether in terms of membership in local councils, or the absence of an environment that enhances the participation of women within these councils.
- Notwithstanding the assumed facilitations provided by the law, the individualist tendencies within the local government and local councils' institutional system still constituted an impediment to women's easy access to decision-making and prevented the creation of a safe and convenient environment for elected female local council members.
- The women's movement - as a socio-political movement- is the lever and force for change within local councils. This requires a larger platform to focus on women's leadership roles within local councils particularly since current women members of local councils are young women.
- The need for an effective role and belief at the political level of the importance of integrating women in local governance and in the work of local councils.

