



Bank of Palestine Supports Every Palestinian Woman

Courtesy of Bank of Palestine



There is no doubt that the engagement of women and their unique contribution assists in building an innovative and productive society. Various studies have indicated that a workplace without women lacks innovation and creativity. Accordingly, we committed to this as our long-term strategy. We view the Palestinian woman as a heart that accommodates all life's challenges and a brilliant mind that envisions all solutions; she is an example of determination and kindness; there are no limits to the generosity that she provides to her family, work, children, and community when she is given the chance.



Bank of Palestine is keen on employing women.



A workshop entitled "Know Your Bank For Banking Awareness" in cooperation with "Mubadiroun (Initiators) Project" held at Bank of Palestine in Gaza.

Women at Bank of Palestine ... Distinctive Employees

Based on these facts, we at Bank of Palestine decided to create opportunities as necessary to give Palestinian women a major role in leading initiatives, contributing to the change process, and pushing the productivity wheel forward, to come closer to achieving their rights legislated by religion and charter. Based on the saying "Be the change you want to see in the world," Bank of Palestine began to develop a comprehensive program under the title *Felestineya* to support Palestinian women.

To those who expect this program to be limited to a social media page or a training program for women, or have other limited expectations, we say: Of course not! The program is much more.

The *Felestineya* program is an idea that began years ago, following various studies conducted by the Bank that measured the participation level of women in the economic and social fields, and their ability to make changes in institutions, businesses, jobs, and professions. Given that local and international studies proved that the participation and presence of women

leads to change and advancement of ideas and achievements, in addition to increasing the productivity and quality of business, the Bank itself took various steps to increase the number of its female employees. Since 2007, the number of female employees doubled from 16 percent of the total number of employees to 32 percent by the end of 2015. The Bank also enhanced the participation of women in assuming effective roles within the senior management positions at Bank of Palestine. For the first time in history, a woman was elected as a member of the board of directors during the General Assembly elections in 2014. The Bank also increased the number of women in administrative positions in branch and sub-branch management, executive management, and other positions, in addition to greater equality in the employment process, including hiring pregnant women, unlike other institutions that refuse to do this for social and economic reasons. The Bank also provides pregnant women with full rights at work, health insurance, and financial benefits for them and their children, in addition to maternity and paternity leaves that provide the



Group photo with Mr. Hashim Shawa after a workshop.

husband with three paid days off to support the mother during labor and delivery until she regains her health and strength. These efforts are within the comprehensive and unique framework of the Bank's sustainable strategy: Palestinian women inside the Bank are distinctive employees capable of achievements and innovative change.

Women dealing with Bank of Palestine ... a success story

We began our work by organizing meetings and business groups in all Palestinian governorates, cities, and rural areas, with the participation of women from all sectors, including businesswomen, housewives, employees, and women from rural areas, in collaboration with Palestinian institutions that support women. These meetings indicated limitations in knowledge about the available banking services, the trust in the financial and banking institutions, and

the awareness about resources that could be utilized to advance the existing businesses or establish new successful businesses with the available means and resources. These meetings also determined the necessary policy that the Bank had to adopt to achieve its goal of empowering women and supported more effective planning for the next phase. Consequently, the next phase aimed to advance a group of employees who were selected to work with Palestinian women, teaching them how to deal with Palestinian women as business professionals and provide them with services that meet their needs in all fields and sectors.

In addition to the Bank's efforts to provide a comprehensive program, it launched a group of awareness and training sessions to enhance women's skills in managing the administrative and technical aspects of new businesses, through launching non-financial advisory programs designed for Palestinian women.

• Felestineya Program for Banking Awareness

This program aims to raise awareness among Palestinian women concerning the economic sectors and their components, as well as the financial services provided by Bank of Palestine. The program aims to reach 1,000 women on an annual basis. Throughout the past year, 900 Palestinian women benefited from this program through 33 workshops conducted in all Palestinian governorates. In addition, the Bank launched a Facebook awareness page to provide women with useful tips in the fields of health, nutrition, parenting, and career development; in a short period, the page gathered around 50,000 followers.

• Mini MBA Program

This program was launched in partnership with the International Finance Corporation in order to

advance women and businesswomen's management and planning skills and enhance their capabilities in financial management and marketing, in addition to improving their leadership skills and connecting them with local and international experts. The program is implemented in collaboration with the Business Women Forum and Ernst & Young.

• Best Business Plan Competition for Women

In addition to the above-mentioned awareness programs, the Bank collaborated with the Business Women Forum to launch a competition for the best business plans of Palestinian women. This competition is the culmination of the Bank's women's awareness programs that aim to equip Palestinian women with the competence to manage their new businesses that contribute to the advancement and development process and increase productivity.

- **Credit Facilitations Programs for Palestinian Women**

Because the Bank supports women at each step of the way through its comprehensive programs, a group of credit facilitations was developed for Palestinian women to help them start their own businesses; these distinctive programs meet their needs and are compatible with their ability to pay loans; several programs are offered.

- ***Felestineya* Gold Loans**

Felestineya Gold Loans aim to provide personal financing for women through a loan with a 100 percent value as the value of gold guaranteed. This loan provides women with maximum benefit from the value of guarantee and meets their personal needs through financing.

- ***Felestineya* Gold Loans for Women in Business**

Felestineya Gold loans for Women in Business aim to meet women's business needs, designed with attractive terms. This program finances women's businesses through a loan with 100 percent value as the value of gold guaranteed. This loan has multiple uses and can serve different types of business, for example, financing the working capital, long-terms loans, machines, and venue of work.

- ***Felestineya* Collateral-Free Loans for Women in Business**

Bank of Palestine offers *Felestineya* Collateral-Free Loans for Women in Business as a product designed with attractive terms and no guarantees, to meet the needs of women entrepreneurs who can benefit from the non-financial advisory services and other programs offered to women by the Bank. The loan aims to finance women's businesses with a total amount that ranges from US\$ 1,000 to US\$ 20,000, with a personal guarantee but no other guarantees. Women who want to benefit from this program are requested to register their businesses at the Chambers of Commerce or at the Ministry of Economics; accordingly, the *Felestineya* Collateral-Free Loan for Women in Business is a good incentive for women to become active participants in the economic system.

In order to encourage women who want to start their own businesses and register their businesses in the Chambers of Commerce, the Bank, through an agreement with the Federation of Chambers of Commerce, will cover the annual registration fees for all women's businesses in 2016. Accordingly, the Bank's efforts have led to a comprehensive cycle of services, awareness programs, effective communication, and sustainable development for Palestinian women, society, and economy. May God grant us success.



Felestineya



palwoman