



שדולת הנשים בישראל

لهيبي النساء في إسرائيل

The Israel Women's Network

We Keep Running, but Are We Getting “Somewhere Else”?

Women in Israel in 2010

A Shadow Report Submitted to the Beijing +15 Conference

New York, March 2010

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Alice looked round her in great surprise. ‘Why, I do believe we’ve been under this tree the whole time! Everything’s just as it was!’

‘Of course it is,’ said the Queen: ‘what would you have it?’

‘Well, in *our* country,’ said Alice, still panting a little, ‘you’d generally get to somewhere else – if you ran very fast for a long time, as we’ve been doing.’

‘A slow sort of country!’ said the Queen. ‘Now, *here*, you see, it takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast as that!’

-- Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There*

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About the Israel Women's Network

The Israel Women's Network (IWN) was established in 1984 as an independent, non-partisan and non-profit organization. The IWN promotes the status of women in Israel in all fields by initiating legislation and monitoring its enforcement, as well as through education, research and extensive public and political work. IWN members and activists maintain diverse political perspectives, yet are united in their determination to improve the status of women. We seek to promote women's rights and help Israel to finally become an egalitarian state and society with equal rights and status for all, irrespective of gender.

The Israel Women's Network is proud to be a consulting NGO to the United Nation's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) since 2006.

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1. Introduction

The Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, known as the Beijing Conference, produced a Platform for Action. The Platform for Action identified 12 critical areas that stand out as priorities for the advancement of women. It calls on governments and civil society to take strategic action in these critical areas.

This report reviews the current status of women in Israel¹ in most of these critical areas 15 years after the Beijing conference. It follows up on the Israel Women's Network's report submitted to the Beijing +5 and +10 conferences² and emphasizes the changes and developments of the past 5 years. Each area is reviewed in light of the strategic objectives mandated by the Beijing Platform for Action.

This report raises some of the most significant issue pertaining to women in Israel in 2010. While many important subjects are not included in this report, many appear in the most recent compendium published by the Israel Women's Network in 2007 and will be reported on in the next publication in 2011.

1.1 Collecting Data According to Sex

In January 2009, the amendment of the Statistics Ordinance (2008) came into effect. Clause 7A states that,

The collection and processing of statistics relating to individuals and the publication of the results by the Bureau in accordance with section 7, shall include statistics by sex, unless the Statistician has determined, regarding a specific matter, that there are circumstances that justify not doing so.

This clause obliges all public organizations that regularly collect, process and publish data related to individuals as part of a general publication process meant to serve statistic purposes, unless stated otherwise. This important law was initiated by the Israel Women's Network and the Women's Budget Forum and has vastly improved accessibility to information pertaining to women. However, the law is open to interpretation and in many cases, gathering specific data regarding women compiled by minor research organizations is a difficult undertaking.

1 This report refers only to Israeli women and does not address infringements of women's rights in the Palestinian Territories.

2 The report submitted to the Beijing +10 conference was written By Ruth Suhami and Adv. Tziona Koenig-Yair

2. Education and Training

2.1 Strategic Objective: Ensure equal access to education

The Israel Women's Network's perspective on the situation in Israel:

The amendment to the Women's Equal Rights Law (1951) in 2000 states that "Any woman and man have the equal right to an existence in human dignity, including equality...in education..." In recent years, women in Israel are shown to be slightly more educated than men according to all indices measuring education levels, from kindergarten to academia. In 1985, 42% of all women and 40% of men over the age of 15 had 13 years of education.³ The percentage of educated youths rose significantly in 1980-2007, especially in the Arab sector and particularly among Arab female pupils. In 1980, only 56.6% of Arab female pupils had access to education, compared with 87.5% in 2007.⁴ In 2009, 2.9% of Arab female students left high school, twice the percentage of their Jewish counterparts (1.6%). Furthermore, Arab female students are more likely to leave school in 9th grade, while Jewish female students are more likely to leave school in 11th grade.⁵

2.1.1 Matriculation Certificate Entitlement

Consistent to the trend of women being more educated than men in Israel, data from the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) for 2007 show that women lead in all indices measuring matriculation certificate entitlement and meeting university admission requirements. Nationality, however, significantly affects entitlement. In 2007, 60.2% of Jewish female students were entitled to a matriculation certificate, compared with only 51.5% of their Arab counterparts. The percentage of Arab male students entitled to a matriculation certificate is a mere 35.4%, attesting to a large gap between Arab female and male students.

2.1.1.1 Matriculation Certificate Entitlement and Higher Education

In the Hebrew education system,⁶ large differences were not noted between male and female students in terms of advanced level subjects studied for the matriculation certificate. The percentage of female Hebrew speakers who study a foreign language (English) is slightly higher than that of male Hebrew speakers, while an equal percentage of female and male Hebrew speakers study advanced mathematics. However, in terms of other sciences, female students tend to study biology and male students prefer physics and computers. This corresponds with data for female Arabic speakers, yet the gap between female and male Arabic speakers who study biology is even more pronounced. In terms of grades earned, no differences were noted between Arab female and male students in the sciences.⁷

Entitlement to a matriculation certificate, however, does not guarantee meeting admission requirements for higher education. This is underlined by the gap between the percentage of students (male and female, Jewish and Arab) entitled to a matriculation certificate versus the percentage of students that meet university admission requirements. The percentage of female pupils that met university entrance

3 Tamir, Tal (2007). *Women in Israel 2006 - Between Theory and Reality*. The Israel Women's Network.

4 Central Bureau of Statistics. (2009) *Society in Israel: Report No. 2*. Page 108 (Hebrew)

5 Central Bureau of Statistics. (2009) *Statistical Abstract of Israel 2009*, Table 8.31

6 Several education systems exist in Israel, serving speakers of various languages, as well as Jewish Orthodox groups.

7 Central Bureau of Statistics. (2009) *Society in Israel: Report No. 2*. Page 123 (Hebrew)

requirements is larger than the percentage of male pupils: 52% of Jewish female pupils (compared with 43.5% of Jewish male students) and 39% of Arab female students (compared with only 26.9% of Arab male students) met university admission requirements.⁸

2.1.2 Higher Education

2.1.2.1 Admission

Admission to academic institutions in Israel is based mainly on Psychometric Evaluation Test (PET) results. Whether this test constitutes a significant barrier for minority groups in Israel is currently being publicly debated. The CBS' data for 1991-2006 show that Jewish students score 100 points higher than Arab students on the PET. Jewish men score 40-50 points higher than Jewish women, while Arab men score 20-30 points higher than Arab women.⁹

2.1.2.2 Representation

Female students once constituted half of the undergraduate student body, but in recent years they have grown to approximately 55% (55.8% in 2008). However, a clear division according to sex occurs in terms of subjects studied. An especially large percentage of all para-medical students were women (80.4%), as well as in education and teaching-related subjects (80.6%). However, in subjects attributed to males such as engineering and architecture, women were a mere 25.9%. In prestigious subjects such as electrical engineering, mechanical engineering and computer engineering, female students are less than 10%. Interesting exceptions are food, biochemical and biotechnology engineering, where female students are 70% of the student body.¹⁰

Female students are also the majority among Masters students. In 2008, 57.2% of all Masters students were women. This figure has been consistent for the past three years, and applies to PhD students, of which women were 52.7%.¹¹

2.1.2.3 The Gender Equality Council

In 2009, the IWN established the first internal body within universities to promote equality. The Gender Equality Council includes male and female students and promotes social gender equality. The Council works with students and lecturers in higher education institutions, creates and fosters cooperation with student and junior lecturer organizations and university administrations. It aims to chart a course of action for raising awareness of gender, equality and social justice.

2.2 Strategic Objective: Eradicate illiteracy among women

The Israel Women's Network's perspective on the situation in Israel:

There is a tendency in Israel to regard illiteracy as non-existent, and indeed, Israel is rated 27 of 182 countries in terms of illiteracy and other welfare indices.¹² However, cases of illiteracy in Israel are affected by sex and nationality, and most illiterate persons in Israel are women. In 2008, 2.4% of all Jewish women over 15 were uneducated (1.2% of Jewish men), and 8.5% of all Arab women (2.5% of Arab men). Thus, Arab women are more than four times more likely than Jewish women to have no education whatsoever.

8 Central Bureau of Statistics. (2009) *Statistical Abstract of Israel 2009*, Table 8.23

9 Central Bureau of Statistics. (2009) Press Release: *Psychometric Entrance Test Examinees 1991-2006* (Hebrew)

10 Central Bureau of Statistics (2009). *Society in Israel: Report No. 2*. page 130 (Hebrew)

11 Central Bureau of Statistics (2009). *Statistical Abstract of Israel 2009*, Table 8.50

12 *Statistical Annex 2009*. United Nations Development Programme. Page 171

2.3 Strategic objective: Improve women's access to vocational training, science and technology, and continuing education.

The Israel Women's Network's perspective on the situation in Israel:

In December 2009, Israeli professor Ada Yonath won the Nobel Prize for Chemistry. So far, 9 Israelis have received the Nobel Prize and Professor Yonath is the first female Israeli recipient. Professor Yonath voiced her hope that more Israeli women would be encouraged to engage in the sciences.¹³

2.3.1 The Council for Advancement of Women in Science and Technology

The Council for Advancement of Women in Science and Technology was established in 2000 and focuses on 2 main goals: increasing the number of women in science and technology, and promoting equal opportunities for women in the sciences. The Council is comprised of volunteer committees who focus on the education system, academia, industry and the public and governmental sector.

2.4 Strategic objective: Develop non-discriminatory education and training.

The Israel Women's Network's perspective on the situation in Israel:

2.4.1 Stereotyping in Textbooks

The Ministry of Education recognized the necessity of actively promoting gender equality. In 2001, the Minister of Education appointed a committee to evaluate the content and messages concerning gender equality in school textbooks and teaching materials. The Israel Women's Network's Executive Director chaired this committee. The committee submitted its interim report to the Minister of Education in October; it found that numerous studies and reports show that Israeli textbooks and schools promote gender stereotypes that hinder the goal of achieving gender equality in society.

In March 2002, the committee issued its final report according to which 96.4% of Israeli textbooks do not meet the suggested committee standards in at least one aspect of gender stereotyping and discrimination. The report also noted that textbooks designed for adolescent student, a formative age for identity, contained the most cases of gender stereotyping.¹⁴ Minister of Education, Ms. Limor Livnat implemented the committee's suggestions. In 2009, all textbooks approved by the Ministry of Education were inspected for gender stereotyping. However, many schools still use textbooks that aren't approved by the Ministry of education and it is impossible to ensure they do not include gender stereotypes.

2.4.2 Teaching Faculty

2.4.2.1 School Faculty

Past experience has proven that when women assume positions traditionally occupied by men, these positions rapidly lose their prestige and decline sharply in salary. Traditionally, in both the Arabic and Hebrew education system most educators were men; women have steadily entered both systems and are now a majority, especially in the Hebrew system and particularly in elementary schools. In the Hebrew school system, this process began in the late 1940s, after the State of Israel was established while in the Arabic system the process began in the 1980s. During the academic school year 2008/9, women occupied

13 Lanir, Naama and Daniel Edelson. (December 10th 2009) [Ada Yonath to Ynet: Children Now Want to Study Chemistry](#)

14 *Gender Stereotypes in Textbooks in the Education System in Israel*, Interim Report of the Committee for the Examination of Gender Stereotypes in Textbooks, October 2001. (Hebrew)

87.6% of all teaching positions in the Hebrew education system, and 75.1% of all teaching positions in the Arabic education system.¹⁵ In both systems, the higher the school's academic level, the lower the percentage of women educators. In 1991-2008, the number of women in teaching positions in the Arabic education system increased by 24%, compared with a mere 1% in the Hebrew education system.¹⁶

2.4.2.2 Academic Faculty

While the majority of academic degree recipients (B.A, M.A and Ph.D.) are women, women are not a majority among academic faculty. Moreover, among universities' senior faculty - the highest position in academia - they are a glaring minority. In the academic school year 2007/2008, women were a mere 25% of senior faculty in universities, while the percentage was slightly higher in academic colleges (33.4%) - still a substantial minority.¹⁷ A comparative survey conducted in 2004 found that 24.6% of academic faculty in Israel are women, 10% lower than the EU's average, and placed Israel in the very last place among participating countries.¹⁸

2.5 Strategic Objective: Allocate sufficient resources for and monitor the development of educational reforms.

The Israel Women's Network's perspective on the situation in Israel:

The Ministry of Education has initiated programs addressing gender issues in a number of schools. However, this is insufficient and data indicate that gender differentiation among pupils continues. For more information, see the chapter [The Girl Child](#).

15 Central Bureau of Statistics. (2009) *Statistical Abstract of Israel 2009*. Table 8.6

16 Central Bureau of Statistics. (2009) *Society in Israel: Report No. 2*. P. 140 (Hebrew)

17 Central Bureau of Statistics. (2009) *Statistical Abstract of Israel 2009*. Table 8.42

18 Truan, Yehuda. (2008) *Underrepresentation of Women in Academic Faculties*. The Knesset Research and Information Center. (Hebrew)

3. Women and Economy

3.1 Strategic Objective:

Promote women's economic rights and independence, including access to employment, appropriate working conditions, and control over economic resources.

The Israel Women's Network's perspective on the situation in Israel:

Women's participation in the Israeli civil labor force is constantly increasing, having reached 51.3% of all women in 2008 (46.3% in 1998), compared with 62% of all men. 92% of all employed women are salaried employees, compared with 83% of all employed men; women are 48% of all the salaried employees in Israel. Women are 52% of all salaried workers employed in contract positions¹⁹ (more about contract positions later). 5% of Israeli women are self-employed, accounting for 32.5% of independently-run businesses (more about self-employed women later).²⁰

In 2008, women comprised 47.2% of academic professionals (compared with 40% in 1988) and 31.5% of all managers (compared with 14.7% in 1988). 34% of hi-tech workers were women (88,300 women). In practice, in 2008 and concurrent with the previous two decades, approximately half of the women in Israel were employed in traditionally feminine occupations characterized by low wages: educators in elementary schools and kindergartens, social counselors, caretakers, secretarial workers, sales clerks and assistants, models, other secretaries, cleaners in buildings, kitchen and laundry workers. In each of these occupations (except sales clerks and assistants, and models) women are 70% or more of all employees.²¹

63.5% of all the women employed in 2008 typically worked full time (35 weekly hours or more), and 36.4% worked part time (less than 35 weekly hours). Of all women who generally worked part time, 18.3% did not chose to but were unsuccessful in finding full time work or a complementary position.²²

3.1.1 Anti-discrimination Legislation

Israeli legislation prohibiting discrimination in employment and wages is fairly advanced. However, experience shows that legislation in itself is not sufficient in ensuring equal opportunities. Gender-based discrimination is the most common type of employment discrimination in Israel, since women are discriminated against not only as women but also as mothers. In order to advocate and supervise the enforcement of existing legislation, the IWN promotes the Employment Equal Opportunity Commission. For more information, see Institutional Mechanisms for Advancing Women.

Israeli law prohibits an employer from discriminating against a woman in hiring, working conditions, promotion, dismissal and payments for retirement. In 2004, IWN successfully initiated an amendment to the law forbidding discrimination on the grounds of pregnancy.

3.1.2 Equal Pay

The Male and Female Workers Equal Pay Law (1996) requires an employer to pay a female employee wages equal to those of a male employee in exchange for equal, essentially equal, or equivalent work. Unfortunately, this law has not been enforced, and women's income is still lower than men's.

19 Central Bureau of Statistics. (2009) Press Release: *Selected Data for International Women's Day 2009*.

20 A letter to Knesset Member Alex Miller (December 6, 2009) *Self-employed Women and Immigrants* by Sarah Zwebner, The Knesset Information and Research Center.

21 Central Bureau of Statistics. (2009) Press Release: *Selected Data for International Women's Day 2009*

22 Ibid

Men's average monthly wages are higher than those of women across all economic sectors and women earn 64% of men's wages on average.

The gap narrows but does not disappear when women's hourly wages are compared with men's - women's wages comprise 84% of men's wages.²³ As mentioned earlier, women in Israel are more educated than men. While education is a mobilizing factor in terms of wages, it does not eliminate the gap between women and men's wages. A man with 16 years of education earns 72 NIS on average, while a woman with comparable education earns only 55.4 NIS on average.

The largest gap in gross income per hour exists in the category the CBS refers to as agents, sales workers and service workers. In 2007 men employed in these occupations earned 36.2 NIS per hour, while women in the very same occupation earned a mere 27.3 NIS (75.4%). The smallest gap in gross hourly income was noted among unskilled workers: men earned 26.2% NIS per hour while women earned 23.4 NIS, or 89.3%.²⁴

The following table clearly reflects the differences in hourly and monthly wages between men and women according to general types of occupation in 2007:

Wages	Total Average	Academics	Associate Professionals & technicians	Managers	Agents, sales & service workers	Unskilled workers
Men						
Monthly	9,267	15,775	9,937	18,527	6,688	4,354
Hourly	48.2	80.8	56.3	83.1	36.2	26.2
Women						
Monthly	5,949	9,587	6,261	13,175	3,804	3,011
Hourly	40.5	63.4	46.9	72.7	27.3	23.3

(Based on Central Bureau of Statistics. (2009) *Annual Statistical Review of 2007*. Table 12.41)

Large differences in salary between women and men are not a concern only for the IWN. In October 2009, it was reported one of the main reasons Israel was not accepted as a member state of the OECD.²⁵

3.1.3 Dismissal Due to Pregnancy

While Israeli law prohibits the dismissal of a woman during pregnancy, maternity leave and 45 days following maternity leave, employers dismiss pregnant women in various pretexts. According to the law, an employer who wishes to dismiss a pregnant woman employed for a minimum of 6 months must receive a permit from the Minister of Industry, Commerce and Employment. The Employment Equal Opportunities Law protects pregnant women who have worked under 6 months, and such a dismissal constitutes forbidden discrimination.

Data show a worrying trend in employer requests to dismiss a pregnant woman. Data supplied by the Commissioner for the Employment of Women Law at the Ministry of Industry and Commerce show that in 2008 1,609 requests to dismiss or reduce the positions of pregnant women, as well as women

23 Central Bureau of Statistics. (2009) Press Release: *Selected Data for International Women's Day 2009*

24 Ibid

25 For example, see Gad, Lior and David Regev. (October 22, 2009) *Why We Didn't Join OECD because of Discrimination Against Women and Arabs*. Ynet. (Hebrew)

undergoing fertility treatment were filed, a 26% increase in relation to 2007. In January - February 2009, 252 requests were submitted, an 88% increase compared with the same period during the previous year. The sharp rise is attributed to the global economic crisis, noting that during the first five months following the economic crisis the number of requests rose 80%.²⁶

In 41.0% (660) of the cases, dismissal permits were approved. In many cases, pregnant women are fired but no request for a permit is even submitted. Some employers fire women who return from maternity leave, or refuse to hire women because they are pregnant or mothers.

The IWN operates a phone line to provide counseling for work-related discrimination against women. In 2009, 90.4% of the calls dealt with discrimination and dismissal during pregnancy/fertility treatments, and during and just following maternity leave. A sample survey conducted by the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor in 2006²⁷ showed that less than half of all women (43.9%) are familiar with the law defending their rights, the Employment of Women Law (1954). 92.6% of women said they were concerned they would be fired when pregnant. However, 89.5% of the women noted no changes in their employer's attitude or changes in their job. 26,000 women (17%) were told that if they were to receive a job they would not be able to become pregnant in the coming months or year. In 2009, the IWN's legal department dealt with 19 cases of discrimination due to pregnancy/fertility treatments.

3.1.4 Employment through Personnel Agencies

Disadvantaged social groups, such as people with little education, immigrants, low-wage earners, young people and women are over-represented among temporary or contract position workers employed through personnel and service contractors. The social-economic structure in Israel compels many women to seek employment through personnel and service contractors, which perpetuates women's inferior status in the workforce. Employment through such companies creates a relationship between worker, service contractor and the contractor's customer, in which the service contractor and the contract worker have a work contract, and the contractor and its customer have a separate contract for supplying manpower or services. The relationships between the service contractor's customer and the contract worker are subject to change according to the terms of employment.

According to reports published by Adva Center, Information on Equality and Social Justice in Israel, many of service contractor workers are employed in the civil service. Their inferior salary conditions are the outcome of the system of public personnel tenders. According to this system, the cheapest bids are considered and workers' employment conditions are not stipulated in the tender or considered by the tender committees selecting service contractors. Contract workers earn low salaries, are deprived of various benefits, and their employee rights are infringed - such as overtime pay, annual vacation, sick days, convalescence pensions, etc. Most contract workers do not stand up for their rights, either because they are not aware of their rights or because they fear dismissal and difficulty finding work after they are known as workers who stand up for their rights and might sue an employer.²⁸

In January 2008, after an 8 year deferment, service contractors are obliged by law to grant workers permanent status after 9 months of employment. The law continues to enable breaches such as transferring workers to another service contractor or dismissal after 9 months. In 2007, 161,900 employees worked

26 Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor. (March 17, 2009) Press Release. (Hebrew)

27 Alfassi, Michal (2008) *Pregnant Women at Work*. Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor, Department of Research and Economics. Jerusalem. (Hebrew)

28 Dagan-Buzaglo Noga. (2007) [The Right to Work](#). Adva Center.

for personnel agencies or service contractors, 5.7% of the workforce. 54.6% of these employees were women. The number of workers employed by personnel agencies or service contractors has risen.²⁹

3.2 Strategic Objective: Facilitate women's equal access to resources, employment, markets, and trade.
The Israel Women's Network's perspective on the situation in Israel:

3.2.1 Self-Employment

In 2009, 5% of all women were defined as self-employed or entrepreneurs. Women are 32.5% of all self-employed workers in Israel. The most common field is community, social and other services, and a quarter of self-employed women work in this field (25.1%). The next field, following a large gap, is defined as business services, accounting for 8.1% of self-employed women.³⁰

Several support centers operate, some of them sponsored by the government, encouraging entrepreneurship and the self-employed, such as *A Business of One's Own*, a program run by Economic Empowerment for Women, as well as the movement Sister, and others. Women entrepreneurs continue to face many obstacles. Society is still very unsupportive of independent women by large: banks are more reluctant to approve loans to women; women are not taught business skills; there are few special programs for women entrepreneurs; very few role models exist; women typically encounter low or no tolerance when facing business failure; and not enough economic incentives for such women or institutional or other support networks exist.

3.2.2 The State as Employer

The State is the largest employer in Israel's labor market and its employment rates are growing annually. According to the report submitted by the Civil Service's Department for the Integration and Advancement of Women, the majority of State employees are women - 67% in 2007, as in previous years.³¹

The distribution of civil service employees shows that women work mainly in administration (45%) and as nurses (22%). Since 2006 there has been a 3% rise in the percentage of female engineers, and the percentage of female technicians has declined 3%. As in previous years, women are an unequivocal majority in the following professions in the civil service: biochemists – 86%; social workers – 83%; nurses – 84%; legal professionals – 72%; attorneys – 68% and administrators – 64%. Representation of women is lower among medical doctors - 35%, engineers - 44% and technicians - 41%.

Though women are a majority in these fields in the civil service, they are significantly under-represented in jobs with higher pay grades. In the highest pay grade (A) Women are a mere 34% among the top pay grade positions in the civil service (grade A) - comparable to those of CEOs, vice-CEO and directors of large hospitals.³² More about women in high-ranking positions in the chapter [Women in Decision Making and Key Positions](#).

29 Central Bureau of Statistics. (2009) *Society in Israel: Report No. 2* (Hebrew)

30 A letter to Knesset Member Alex Miller (December 6, 2009) *Self-employed Women and Immigrants* by Sarah Zwebner, The Knesset Information and Research Center.

31 Shahal-Rosenfeld, Talila. (2009) *Report for the Department for the Integration and Advancement of Women on Due Representation of Women in the Civil Service in 2008*. The Civil Service Commission. (Hebrew) These data do not include security system workers.

32 Ibid

As mentioned earlier, the State employs many women through manpower and service contractors, thus increasing the percentage of women employed by the State.

In terms of representation in government offices, women were a majority in most government offices. In 2008, approximately half of female civil service employees were employed by the Ministry of Health (49.8%), 12.3% by the Ministry of Justice and 7.5% by the Ministry of Finance.

We at the Israel Women's Network expect the State as an employer to lead policies promoting equality and fairness both in terms of employment conditions and representation. We expect the State of Israel to abide by its laws and provide an example for the rest of the labor market.

3.3 Strategic Objective: Promote harmonization of work and family responsibilities for women and men.

The Israel Women's Network's perspective on the situation in Israel:

3.3.1 Working Life Balance

According to a study conducted in 2006, 20.4% of all salaried employees take work home at an average of 10 hours every week. The majority of them are women (55%) and therefore the large majority is parents (75%).³³

In the competitive labor market, it is difficult to balance work and family. Given this difficulty, the IWN has made creating a social and economic change in this area its goal. The IWN believes that altering employment patterns in the Israeli labor market will encourage more women to join the workforce, increase equality in employment between women and men, and enable working parents to balance their careers and their families. The IWN recently developed a program for implementing principles and arrangements for flexible employment trends in Israel and is currently planning a country-wide campaign.

3.3.1.1 Recognizing Child-care for Tax Purposes

For the past two decades, the IWN has promoted formal legislation that will render child-care expenses are deductible for tax purposes. Child-care expenses are a prominent and significant obstacle for working mothers, in terms of their participation in the labor market and full or part time positions. Studies show that the tax system is especially effective in changing economic behavior among women, especially mothers of young children. For 2 decades, law proposals concerning including child-care expenses as work-related expenses and tax deductible have been submitted and deferred. Opponents claim the law is unfeasible because of its high cost. Yet a study conducted regarding the direct costs of the law vis-à-vis its value to the labor market found economic growth will exceed the State's income from taxes by far.³⁴ In fact, there is significant proof that recognizing child care for tax purposes is a significant step towards supporting economic growth.

In 2008, the first vote (of 3) regarding the law proposal was approved by parliament. In 2009, the Supreme Court accepted lawyer Vered Pery's claim that child-care expenses are tax deductible, as they are incurred in the production of taxable income. Despite this precedential and historical ruling, the Israeli parliament passed a law proposal repealing this extraordinary achievement, invalidating future recognition of child-care expenses for tax deduction purposes. Given this recent detrimental legislation, the IWN has decided to promote this issue using all means possible, and even petitioned the High Court of Justice; the appeal is currently being debated in court.

33 Toshav-Eichner, Nirit. (2006) *Who Is Still Working at Home?* Info sheet on labor. The Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor (Hebrew)

34 The study was conducted by financial and economic consulting firm Giza, Singer, Even in 2008

4. Women and Poverty

4.1 Strategic Objective: Review, adopt, and maintain macroeconomic policies and development strategies to address the needs and efforts of disadvantaged women.

The Israel Women's Network's perspective on the situation in Israel:

4.1.1 Access to Information

The National Insurance Institute's annual Report on Poverty is the most reliable official resource regarding poverty in Israel. The most recent report refers to 2008 (published in October 2009) does not provide data according to sex.³⁵ According to the amendment of the Statistics Ordinance, which came into effect in 2009, public agencies that do not supply statistics according to sex violate the law.

4.1.2 Governmental Economic policy

The economic policy of the Israeli government is based on free-market principles. The government presented its rationale for cutbacks of welfare allowances: such cutbacks will force the poor to join the labor force and thus improve their economic status to rise above the poverty line.

4.1.2.1 Income Support

According to the National Insurance Institute, the number of recipients of income support continued to decrease in 2008 and reached 110,000 families by the end of the year, compared with 114,000 at the end of 2007 and a record 159,000 in just the second quarter of 2003.³⁶

The majority of income support and old-age pensions recipients are women - 56% and 68.8% respectively.³⁷ The developments in 2008 were influenced by the impact of strict legislation introduced in mid 2003 regarding the income support system, and by the implementation of the Integration of Benefit Recipients in Employment Law (temporary order) in August 2005. This law transfers the responsibility for performing the employment test – an essential condition for eligibility for income support allowances - from the State to privately-run organizations. For more information about the program, see *The Government's Plan* on this page.

4.1.2.2 Child Allowances

In 2008, child allowances allegedly rose in comparison with 2007 (because they were updated according to the increase in the consumer price index of the previous year). But a continuous decrease in child allowances, which began with large cutbacks in 2002, continued in 2008 due to several economic plans.³⁸ In 2005, a family with 5 children received about half the total allowance they received in January 2002.³⁹

4.1.2.3 The Government's Plan

In 2004-2007, the Israeli government operated the welfare-to-work program known as *Mehalev*.⁴⁰ Its sole goal was to lower the number of income support allowance recipients by integrating them in the workforce. When the program began, controversy was voiced regarding the method of compensation and

35 National Insurance Institute of Israel. (2009) *Annual Report for 2008*.

36 Ibid Page 115

37 Central Bureau of Statistics. (2009) *Statistical Abstract of Israel 2009*. Table 7.18

38 National Insurance Institute of Israel. *Annual Report for 2008*. Page 159

39 Tamir, Tal. (2007) *Women in Israel 2006 - Between Theory and Reality*. The Israel Women's Network.

40 The program was also called the *Wisconsin Program* after a similar program implemented in the US.

implementation, particularly for special population groups. The program was considered unsatisfactory regarding integrating special groups who face barriers, such as mental illnesses, single-parents, men and women caring for a sick or hospitalized child. Being a single-parent or caring for sick children or elderly persons are characteristic of women, making the program even less accessible for women.

Following wide public criticism, the *Mehalev* program was altered and renamed *Employment Lights*.⁴¹ This program is based on private operators who accompany participants in the employment process. Participation is obligatory in several parts of Israel and the State's intention is to implement the program country-wide. *Employment Lights* differs from its predecessor, *Mehalev*, in that recipients of income support over the age of 45 are not obliged to participate in the program.

Employment Lights enables people without previous experience in the labor market to gain experience, in the hope that they will be able to secure jobs. Yet many social agencies, including the Israel Women's Network, view the program as controversial. Criticism of this program focuses on the following points:

- The program does not provide an alternative to the unstable labor market, in which people must choose between working at the minimum wage or less and receiving the equivalent as welfare benefits.
- Assigning jobs at the bottom of the labor market fails to enable participants to break out of the cycle of poverty.
- The program is quick to assign participants to entry-level jobs without matching positions to participants' skills. This is due to the high compensation the agencies receive for each job placement completed.
- Recipients of income support are obliged to participate and comply with job assignments, while commercial agencies are authorized to revoke State welfare benefits.
- The program receives vast sums that could be utilized in creating new jobs or preventing existing workplaces from closing.

4.1.2.4 Policy Results

The government's economic policy did not help reduce poverty in Israel, on the contrary: poverty in Israel is growing. According to the National Insurance Institute's poverty report for 2008, 23.7% of the population lived below the poverty line in 2008. The report also shows that in the same year more than 105,000 people fell below the poverty line. Poverty hit 19.9% of the households in Israel, substantially worse than 18.1% in 2002. In 2007, according to various indices of the severity of poverty, poor families actually became poorer.⁴² The ratio of the income gap which reflects the extent of a family's poverty (in relation to the formal poverty line), which was 33.8% in 2006, reached 34.3% in 2007. The high rates of poverty among non-working people of working age continue to rise: in 2006, 66% of these families were poor; in 2007, 70%.

According to a report published by the CBS,⁴³ compared with all EU countries, Israel is most likely to have the highest rates of population at risk for poverty. Of the general population in Israel, women are the group at greatest risk for poverty.

4.1.2.5 The Implications for Women

Despite the amendment of the Statistics Ordinance, accurately depicting the situation of women affected by poverty is a difficult undertaking because of incoherent, complex or lack of data. However, it is evident that in 2005-2006, more than 20% of all women over 15 (over 500,000 women) were defined as living in conditions of poverty.⁴⁴

41 The *Mehalev* program officially ended July 31 2007; *Employment Lights* began August 1 2007.

42 National Insurance Institute of Israel. (2007) *Annual Report on Poverty and Social Gaps*. Page 6

43 Central Bureau of Statistics. (2009) *Society in Israel: Report No. 2*. 2009 (Hebrew)

44 Tamir, Tal. (2007) *Women in Israel 2006 - Between Theory and Reality*. The Israel Women's Network.

In 2009, 5.7% of women at the age of employment (25-45) were unemployed, compared with 5.1% of unemployed men.⁴⁵ Besides figures pertaining to wages and unemployment, data collected pertaining to how poverty is experienced paints a drearier picture for women. Women's reports of poverty are consistently high according to various indices. For example, in 2007, 23% of Israeli women reported they did not buy food due to poverty, compared with 18% of men.⁴⁶ Two special population sub-groups are more vulnerable to poverty in Israeli society: Arab women and single mothers.

4.1.3 Arab Women

The poverty rate among Arab households reached 49.4% in 2008.⁴⁷ In 2008, 11.4% of Arab women in the civil workforce were unemployed, compared with 6.1% of Jewish women. 42.8% of Arab women worked part time, compared with 37.5% of Jewish women.⁴⁸ Besides the cultural barriers Arab women encounter, several structural barriers amplify and sustain the culture barrier.

The principle example is the lack of public transportation in, to and from Arab cities. Because the State does not invest sufficient funds in urban public transportation in Arab cities, women without access to private means of transportation are forced to stay home. In a report published by Palestinian Israeli feminist organization Kayan, 85% of Arab women reported they would use public transportation if it were accessible.⁴⁹ As a result of Kayan activists' work, the Ministry of Transport and Road Safety has committed to setting up public transportation in Arab villages and cities in Israel. To this date, while progress has been made, implementation of the decision is not evident yet.

4.1.4 Single-parent Families

In 2009, 5.9% of all families in Israel with children under 17 were single-parent families. Women head about 94% of all single-parent families in Israel.⁵⁰ According to the National Insurance Institute's poverty report for 2008, 28.8% of single-parent families fell below the poverty line, and the condition of these families dramatically worsened.⁵¹ Only 10% of mothers who head single-parent families willingly chose this model of parenthood, and 54% are single-parents as a result of divorce.⁵² The latter are particularly vulnerable to cuts in child allowances, unemployment benefits and income support allowances.

4.1.5 Legislation Detrimental to Impoverished Women

Most of the rights granted to single-mothers grounded in the Single-parent Families Law (1992) are realized through benefits and allowances distributed by the National Insurance Institute. Until 2008, this law was a double-edged sword for women who sought to extract themselves from the cycle of unemployment. The law previously determined that single-mothers (as all recipients of income support) pursuing an education or training professionally in order to increase their chances of employment were not eligible for income support. Thus, single mothers were forced to choose between a possible future and independently-earned income and a guaranteed current income from welfare. In July 2008 an exception was adopted, whereby a single-parent may study and receive income support. However, this exception applies only to two years of study and is limited to undergraduate studies.

45 Central Bureau of Statistics. (2009) *The Labor Force Survey*, Table 12.1

46 Central Bureau of Statistics. (2009) *Society in Israel: Report No. 2*. (Hebrew)

47 National Insurance Institute of Israel. (2008) *Annual Report on Poverty and Social Gaps*.

48 Central Bureau of Statistics. (2008) *Statistical Abstract of Israel*, Tables 1.22, 8.1.

49 Kayan. [Mobility Among Arab Women in Israel](#). 2007

50 Central Bureau of Statistics (2009) Press Release: *Family day - Families and Households in Israel*.

51 National Insurance Institute of Israel. (2008) *Annual Report on Poverty and Social Gaps*.

52 Central Bureau of Statistics (2009) Press Release: *Family day - Families and Households in Israel*.

The Alimony Law (1972) states that single mothers who work and earn more than the maximum set by the National Insurance Institute (minimum wage) are not eligible for child-support from the National Insurance Institute. A bill proposed during the 17th Knesset (Israeli Parliament) session (2006-2008) promoted by the Israel Women's Network advocates changing the criteria for child-support. The proposed change is deducting the sum of the average salary from the income of employed woman (after deducting obligatory payments). The proposal aims to ensure women are encouraged to work, unhindered by the fear of losing much needed child-support allowances.

4.1.6 The Israel Women's Network's Involvement

The Israel Women's Network operates two projects to assist women to emerge from the cycle of unemployment: *Eshet Chayil* (literally Woman of Valor) and *Zinuk* (Jumpstart). *Eshet Chayil* reaches out to women aged 30 - 50 from low income families all over Israel and offers women unemployed for long periods ways to learn skills, drawing on their abilities, as well as finding fulfilling and rewarding employment. *Eshet Chayil* operates in over 20 locations all over Israel, focusing on immigrant women from the Caucus and Bukhara (the former Soviet Union), as well as Israeli-born women. Over 1,000 women have participated in the program over the past 5 years, and successful placement is estimated at 70%.

In 2009, *Eshet Chayil* grew and now offers its services to Arab, as well as immigrant women from Ethiopia. The program now includes men – for the first time in the IWN's history – as part of the new *Avi Chayil* program. *Eshet Chayil* is operated jointly by the IWN and JDC Israel, and funded in part by the State. In 2010, *Eshet Chayil* will be transferred to the direction of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services. *Zinuk* (Jumpstart) empowers and assists young women at risk in finding employment. For more information regarding the program, see the next chapter, *The Girl Child*

5. The Girl Child

5.1 Strategic Objective: Take all necessary measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and the girl child and remove all obstacles to gender equality and the advancement and empowerment of women.

5.2 Strategic Objective: Promote people-centred sustainable development, including sustained economic growth, through the provision of basic education, life-long education, literacy and training, and primary health care for girls and women

The Israel Women's Network's perspective on the situation in Israel:

5.2.1 Access to Information

The normative period of adolescence, especially among the Jewish population in Israel, is considered shorter than in most Western countries. Adolescence in Israel allegedly ends when military service begins, at the age of 18. Perhaps it is because adolescence is relatively short that information regarding this period is missing or inaccessible. For example, the CBS' social survey includes data regarding men and women over 20. Lack of information is detrimental to the capacity of creating an effective work plan for promoting and empowering adolescent girls. The exception to this rule is the Israel National Council for the Child's annual report on children and youth in Israel. This chapter is based on information published in this report.

5.2.2 Young Women and Education

In 1980-2007, the percentage of youths who stayed in school rose, especially among Arab youths and particularly among Arab young women. In 1980, only 56.6% of Arab young women were in school, compared with 87.5% in 2007.⁵³ In 2009, 2.9% of Arab young women left school (secondary school), twice the percentage of Jewish young women (1.6%). Arab young women also tended to leave school earlier than their Jewish counterparts. The peak of school dropout rates among Arab young women was in the 9th grade, compared with 11th grade among Jewish young women.⁵⁴

For more information regarding young women and education see [Education and Training](#)

5.2.3 Young Women in the Workforce

In 2008, 12.1% of all girls and 11.8% of all boys aged 11-15 worked and studied; the most popular job was babysitting (43.3%). In 2008, 5,411 youths complained to the Union of Working and Studying Youths of exploitation or of employment in illegal terms, yet only 19 charges were pressed against employers of youths that year.⁵⁵

In 2008, 91.8% of all young women, Jewish and Arab, aged 15-17 were in school, 0.6% worked and did not study, while 7.6% did neither. The percentage of Arab young women who neither studied nor worked (13.5%) was more than twice the percentage of Jewish young women (5.5%).⁵⁶ 13.8% of Jewish women aged 18-24 both worked and studied, compared to only 3.7% of Arab women. 36.3% of Jewish women and 56.3% of Arab women neither worked nor studied.⁵⁷

53 Central Bureau of Statistics. (2009) *Society in Israel: Report No. 2*. P. 123 (Hebrew)

54 Central Bureau of Statistics. (2008) *Statistical Abstract of Israel*, Table 8.31.

55 The National Council for the Child. (2009) Selected data from the *Annual Report on Children in Israel – 2009*. (Hebrew)

56 Central Bureau of Statistics (2009). Press Release: *Selected Data for International Children's Day*. (Hebrew)

57 Central Bureau of Statistics. (2009) *Statistical Abstract of Israel 2009*, Table 12.31. Refers to persons aged 15-34 according to work, studies, age, sex and population group.

5.2.4 Under-age Marriage

Israel is a signatory of the Beijing Declaration, and a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which refers to child marriage. However, Israel has a procedure to authorize exceptional cases, enabling minors under the marriage age to marry. 56.8% of requests submitted in 1997-2007 were authorized. In 2007, 3,843 girls under 18 were wed but the number is probably much higher than the number of cases reported. The number of Muslim girls wed before they were 18 was twice the number of the Jewish girls, and 4 times higher among Muslim girls aged 16-17. In 2000-2008, 46 complaints were filed for violation of the Israeli Marriage Age Law (1950). Only half the complaints led to criminal proceedings; in comparison, only 3 cases led to criminal proceedings for illegal marriage of a male minor.⁵⁸

5.2.5 Girls and Young Women at Risk

5.2.5.1 State Services

An important change was recently made and the maximum age for single young women treated by the Ministry of Welfare and Social Services was changed. For a long period, only young women 18 and under were treated by the Ministry's Division for Children and Youth at Risk and later by the Division for Families. The Ministry wisely realized that the unique attributes of single young women under 25 cannot be addressed by a division caring for families, and these young women are now treated by the Division for Children and Youth At Risk.

In 2007, 12,500 children at risk aged 0-6 were enrolled in State-subsidized daycare centers.⁵⁹ In 2008, 60.4% of youths living in Youth Protection Authority centers (away from their families) were boys and 39.6% were girls. 44.1% of all children suspected to be victims of abuse were girls. In 2008, 41% of the girls treated by the Ministry of Welfare and Social Affairs' Service for Women and Girls were aged 13-15, and 2.7% were 12 years-old. 58.4% of the children reported missing were girls. In 2008, 82.2% of youths who attempted suicide were girls.⁶⁰

5.2.5.2 Violence

Fewer young women are involved in violent incidents than young men, both as perpetrators and as victims. In the Arab sector, the percentage of young women who perpetrated violence was 15%, compared with 49% of young men – a significant gap. Similar data regarding victims of violence was recorded: 22% of all Arab young women compared with 39% of all Arab young men.⁶¹

5.2.5.3 Drugs, Alcohol and Cigarettes

Teenage girls are less likely to consume drugs, alcohol and cigarettes than teenage boys are. Still, the numbers are fairly high: 6% of all teenage girls use drugs and 21% drink alcoholic beverages at least once a month. 11% of teenage girls smoke, compared with 19% of teenage boys. Alcohol consumption and cigarette smoking increases among both Israeli-born and immigrant girls from the former Soviet Union as they grow older.⁶²

58 The National Council for the Child. (2009) Selected data from the *Annual Report on Children in Israel – 2009*. (Hebrew)

59 Fichtelberg-Bermetz, Osnat. (2008) *Integrating children at risk in the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Labor's Daycare facilities*. The Ministry of Trade, Industry and Labor, Research and Economy Administration. (Hebrew)

60 The National Council for the Child (2009). Selected data from the *Annual Report on Children in Israel – 2009*. (Hebrew)

61 Kahan-Strawczynski, Paula, Viacheslav Konstantinov and Liat Yurovich. (2006) *Adolescent Girls in Israel: An Analysis of Data from Selected Studies*. Brookdale Institute, Jerusalem.

62 Ibid

5.2.5.4 Teenage Girls and Fertility

In 2008, 1,665 minors gave birth, of which approximately 20.2% (336 women) were Jewish and 74.7% (1,629 women) were Muslim. In 1990-2007 the number of women (per 1,000) who requested an abortion declined. The decline did not include 15-19 year-olds; in this age group abortions were estimated at 10 in every 1,000. In 2007, 2,811 young women under 19 - most of them single and Jewish - requested abortions. Most were unmarried women, and 420 women had a second abortion or more.⁶³ 25% of all young women reported having unprotected sex, with a significant gap between immigrant groups: 56% of all young women from the former Soviet Union and 67% of young women from Ethiopia.⁶⁴

Data processed by the Association of Rape Crisis Centers in Israel show that 45% of counseling and support hotline callers were minors: 21% aged 12 or under and 25% aged 13-18.⁶⁵

5.2.6 Child Asylum Seekers and Children of Migrant Workers

Approximately 2,800 children of migrant workers and asylum seekers live in Israel and receive various services from the State. 1,800 are children of migrant workers and 1,000 are child asylum seekers, of which 122 are in Israel without a legal guardian.

Children of migrant workers and asylum seekers are not eligible for State-subsidized daycare, even if they are at risk. According to a report published by MESILA, the Aid and Information Center for the Foreign Community in Israel, most migrant worker families are headed by single-mothers who work most of the day in jobs entailing physical labor. Approximately 700 children are cared for in daycare facilities that are unsafe and unsuitable for babies and toddlers, run by migrant workers. These young children are both physically and emotionally neglected, and their development is impeded. A large part of children of migrant workers are children at risk.⁶⁶

5.2.7 Emotional Welfare

Adolescent women have a more negative perception of their physical and mental health, and of the physical and emotional symptoms they experience compared with young men. There is strong correlation between age and negative perception of health and self-esteem; as girls get older, the more negative their self-esteem. Young women's overall sense of general welfare is more negative. One third of young women feel helpless (always, often or occasionally), compared with a quarter of all young men. Only 59% of young women reported feeling self-confident, compared with 71% of young men. 80% of young women reported being happy (either very or fairly happy), compared with 85% of young men. Loneliness is more characteristic of immigrant young women from the former Soviet Union and Ethiopia than of Israeli-born women. Loneliness is also more common among Arab young women than among Jewish young women.⁶⁷

63 The National Council for the Child. (2009) Selected data from the *Annual Report on Children in Israel – 2009*. (Hebrew)

64 Kahan-Strawczynski, Paula, Viacheslav Konstantinov and Liat Yurovich. (2006) *Adolescent Girls in Israel: An Analysis of Data from Selected Studies*. Brookdale Institute, Jerusalem.

65 Lotan Almagor, Orly. (2009) *Violence against Women – Compilation of Data for 2009: Addressing the Phenomena According to a Comparative Survey*. The Knesset Information and Research Department. (Hebrew)

66 Weissblei, Etti. (2009) *The Authorities' Treatment of Children of Migrant Workers and Asylum Seekers*. The Knesset Research and Information Center. (Hebrew)

67 Kahan-Strawczynski, Paula, Viacheslav Konstantinov and Liat Yurovich. (2006) *Adolescent Girls in Israel: An Analysis of Data from Selected Studies*. Brookdale Institute, Jerusalem.

5.2.8 The Israel Women's Network's work

5.2.8.1 Zinuk (Jumpstart)

Zinuk (Jumpstart) is a new employment program for young women aged 18 – 25 supported in adolescence by welfare service and now struggling to contend with difficult life circumstances. The program began in 2005 as a pilot and was officially announced in 2007. The program includes group workshops and individual counseling, helping participants develop personalized career plans according to personal qualifications and capacities, including professional and/or academic education, as well as job placement.

Approximately 50% of the program's alumni are pursuing careers in various professions, such as accounting, administration, dental assistance and practical engineering. Approximately 30% of the program's graduates were accepted to colleges and universities and are now busy with their undergraduate studies. The program's alumni have been integrated in a variety of fields, including education, economics, business administration and law. In addition, the majority of *Zinuk* participants have been integrated in workplaces which provided them with opportunities for personal, professional and economic development.

5.2.8.2 Warm Houses

Warm Houses are day centers for underprivileged young women (ages 13-21). The project, sponsored by the Ministry of Welfare, addresses the unique issues that affect this age group. The Israel Women's Network will be launching this year a special series of workshops on awareness, empowerment and leadership for young women in *Warm Houses*. For more information about workshops in *Warm Houses*, please read about the *Nemesh* program, the foundation for these workshops.

5.3 Strategic Objective: Promote girls' awareness of and participation in social, economic, and political life.

The Israel Women's Network's perspective on the situation in Israel:

5.3.1 Nemesh - Leadership, Education and Training for Young Women

In 2001, the IWN initiated the unique and innovative *Nemesh* program - Leadership, Education and Training for young women. *Nemesh* is dedicated to developing leadership skills among female youth by empowerment, as well as changing perspectives and attitudes of 10th grade students to gender equality. The program provides information on issues pertaining to social inequality and stereotyping, and raises self-awareness. The program aims to nurture leadership among young women and encourage them to plan professional careers. At the Beijing +10 conference in 2005, the IWN devoted its session to *Nemesh* and its achievements.

Unlike other projects, *Nemesh* operates in schools and is supported by the educational system, thereby ensuring students' participation. The IWN brings in specially trained facilitators to lead the course. This unique project is offered in conjunction with the Ministry of Education, participating schools and local authorities.

In some schools, activities have been extended to include male students as well in separate groups. In 2003-2004 the program was launched in Arab communities and so far, 25,000 girls have graduated the program. In 2009-2010 *Nemesh* will operate 200 groups in dozens of schools country-wide. This year, ten unique workshops for girls in *Warm Houses* will begin to operate across the country.

Over 85 groups operate in schools across the country in the Arab Sector. In addition, a special *Nemesh* project intended for Arabic speakers currently operates in Jaffa in cooperation with the Smiling Children Foundation. A similar project will soon commence in East Jerusalem, granting mothers the opportunity to join the *Nemesh* program together with their daughters.

Nemesh is constantly subject to evaluation. Findings show that in general that the students do not have knowledge or previous experience in the subjects included in the program. The most significant contribution of the program was found to be broadening awareness of gender equality and empowering females to assume leadership roles. The IWN is currently conducting a comparative survey between young women who participated in *Nemesh* and young women who have not had access to its benefits.

In recent years, the Ministry of Education's department responsible for gender equality has begun to run an additional program addressing gender-related issues. This program is operated by the Israeli Center for Human Dignity in schools.

6. Human Rights of Women

6.1 Strategic Objectives Mandated by the Beijing Platform for Action:

Promote and protect the human rights of women through the full implementation of all human rights instruments, especially the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

Ensure equality and non-discrimination under the law and in practice.

The Israel Women's Network's perspective on the situation in Israel:

6.1.1 Female Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Israel⁶⁸

The number of asylum seekers in Israel has risen significantly in the past few years. In 2005, 1,000 applicants sought asylum in Israel, while in late 2009, the number reached approximately 18,000. Most asylum seekers are African nationals from Sudan, Eritrea, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Ghana, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Chad and Ethiopia. Roughly 70% of all asylum seekers are Sudanese and Eritrean nationals, and are granted certain temporary protection given the dire political circumstances in these countries.

Approximately 15% of all of asylum seekers are women. Most arrive alone, while some 30% come with their partners, and occasionally with their children. Some 1,200 refugee children are accompanied by either 1 or both parents, and roughly 200 minors are unaccompanied. As a rule, women and children are arrested after crossing the border into Israel. They cross on foot through Israel's southern border with Egypt, which is not demarcated by a fence or wall. Upon their arrest, women and children are detained in a facility by the border constructed for this purpose. There, the authorities analyze their status and their eligibility for release.

Every woman registered as an asylum seeker receives a temporary permit for 1-3 months, attesting to her legal status in Israel. This document protects asylum seekers from detention on grounds of illegal residence. The document, called a "Conditional Release Visa," is not a work permit, but thanks to the good will of the Israeli authorities allows them to work (though not without difficulties) and refrain from fining their employers. For women from Eritrea and Sudan, who are granted protection in Israel, the need to regularly renew their permits makes it difficult to find work or remain in the same workplace for more than a few months. Lack of stability is detrimental to the individual's sense of security, quality of life and possibility to adapt and build a life in Israel.

Besides women who arrive alone, other women come to Israel with their husbands. The principle of allowing families to be united is not always fully enforced in Israel, and as a result, families may be involuntarily divided with one partner detained while the other is not. Occasionally, it is difficult for partners to track each other, and in some cases one partner stands to be deported. In the absence of clear regulations, cases such as these do not draw the appropriate attention of decision makers, and families of asylum seekers and refugees may find themselves irreversibly separated. In tradition-based cultures like Sudan and Eritrea, a woman living alone in a country of asylum is perceived as more vulnerable by the community. Thus, earning a living or finding shelter can be problematic in cases where the cultural codes of the country of origin are entirely different than those in the country granting asylum.

⁶⁸ Data regarding women refugees and asylum seekers compiled by Ms. Sharon Harel of the United Nation's High Commissioner for Refugees

Women asylum seekers with children encounter various difficulties in their relationship with the Israeli authorities on all matters relating to their children. The Ministry of Interior, responsible registering asylum seekers, has hitherto refrained from issuing formal documentation for minors. As a result, accompanied minors are not listed on their parents' documents and do not possess separate documents of their own. This creates a number of obstacles in cases where a child is in need of medical treatment or must register for kindergarten or school.

Most of the services women require, such as health, welfare and education, are currently provided by humanitarian aid or human rights organizations assisting migrant populations. Some women receive psychological treatment, but due to linguistic difficulties treatment can be cumbersome, as many require interpretation. Only few local municipalities assist vulnerable women, and most of them do not implement the International Refugee Convention Israel is party to.

A worrying phenomenon presently on the rise involves women traveling alone who arrive in Israel pregnant as a result of acts of rape they suffer by smugglers in the Sinai Peninsula. There have been cases of women who are victims of other acts of physical harm or taken hostage by smugglers in Egypt, who demand ransom from their families. Finally, unofficial figures suggest large numbers of women suffered violence, torture and sexual exploitation in their countries of origin (by members of the society or the government) or the country of asylum, by members of their communities.

Israel is often resistant to gender-related persecution claims of asylum seekers. Several cases that were discussed by the National Status Granting Body for refugees have been rejected.

6.1.2 Female Migrant Workers⁶⁹

It is estimated that over 225,000 migrant workers currently live in Israel. This figure includes approximately 118,000 legal migrant workers, 97,000 migrant workers who stayed in Israel past the date of their work permit's validity and approximately 10,000 refugees who joined the labor market.⁷⁰ Most migrant workers who entered Israel with work permits are women (55%). In 2008, the three main countries of origin which account for 56% of migrant workers are Thailand, the former Soviet Union and the Philippines. Women are the large majority among migrant workers from the former Soviet Union (90%) and the Philippines (88%).⁷¹ Women are a significant minority among migrant workers deported from Israel (28.5%).

One of the central issues related to the structural disadvantage of migrant workers, male and female, is the binding arrangement created and enforced by the State. This system binds the migrant worker in Israel to her specific employer on her work permit. According to this system, a migrant worker resigning for any reason loses her residency permit. In this manner, the State strengthens and exacerbates the fear and difficulty of a worker to leave her employer. In 2006 this difficulty was alleviated to a certain degree, and migrant workers were allotted 90 days to seek a new employer and request a new work permit while retaining a residency permit.

The State chose not to recruit migrant workers in their country of origin or to use organizations such as the International Organization for Migration. Rather, this task was left to private manpower companies

69 This chapter was written with the assistance of Att. Hanny Ben Israel of Kav Laoved - Workers' Hotline in Tamir, Tal (2007). *Women in Israel 2006 - Between Theory and Reality*. The Israel Women's Network.

70 Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor. (May 17, 2009). *Data Regarding Migrant Workers in Israel 2008: Employed, Arrested and Deported*. (Hebrew)

71 Central Bureau of Statistics. (July 30, 2009) Press Release: *At the end of 2008: 115,000 Foreign Workers who Entered with Work Permits, and 107,000 who Entered as Tourists*.

interested only in financial gain. Thanks to the State's expressed disregard, these companies created an unchecked market, with the sole interest of charging steep commissions from the workers. In this manner, the State contributes to strengthening the economic dependency of migrant workers on their employers and increasing their economic disadvantage. Female migrant workers are hurt as women in two regards: the right to become pregnant and as victims of sexual assault.

6.1.2.1 Pregnancy

According to the Ministry of Interior's procedures, a migrant worker does not in fact have the right to become pregnant and raise her child in Israel. If a migrant worker gives birth, she is permitted to remain in Israel (but not work) for three months following the birth, after which she must leave Israel immediately. In late 2009, the procedure was changed and such a worker is now allowed to return to work in Israel after a certain period, though unaccompanied by her child. Despite this change, the procedure is brutal; the State chose a workforce consisting of young women at the age of fertility to care for its elderly and disabled but does not permit young women with families to stay and work.

In practice, many migrant workers gave birth in Israel and settled in the country without a residence permit, creating what the State regards as the refugee children problem, which in turn led to a fierce public debate. The State seeks to deport the families of migrant workers, while critics of this policy claim the State may not deny access to residency and citizenship to people the State allowed to reside with legal status for so long. Many human rights organizations call on Israel to guarantee the legal rights of children who grew up and went to school in Israel, claiming deportation is tantamount to cultural exile.⁷²

6.1.2.2 Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse of migrant workers, especially care-givers or housekeepers by their employers, is apparently very common. This phenomenon is frequently linked to the vulnerability of these workers due to the combination of the following factors:

6.1.2.3 Inherent Economic, Social and Political Weakness

Migrant workers who come to Israel from developing countries do so because of dire economic circumstances, and in order to assist their families financially. Workers pay thousands of dollars in fees to manpower companies in their country of origin in order to arrange work, transportation and a residency permit in Israel. Many female migrant workers borrow funds at a high interest and use their personal property as collateral to pay the expensive fees. These loans are supposed to be paid back with the wages the worker earns in Israel. Because of these fees, workers are highly dependant on their employers, and this in turn affects the responses of migrant workers sexually assaulted by employers.

6.1.2.4 Weak Social Status

Migrant workers are vulnerable because they are strangers in Israel. Migrant workers are not familiar with local culture, do not speak Hebrew and sometimes speak only limited English. They are not familiar with Israel law, and some may even think their employers' sexual conduct is not a criminal offence. Migrant workers fear dismissal and losing their residency permit if they complain to the police or the Immigration Authority, which are perceived as negative by migrant workers (especially if they lack a residency permit). They also fear losing a place to live, as these workers live with their employers and many cannot afford to pay rent. Besides these factors, many countries of origin do not have diplomatic missions in Israel (such as Nepal), and workers have no formal recourse.

⁷² From the Association for Civil Rights in Israel's website. (January 25, 2010)

6.1.3 Trafficking in Women for the Sex Industry⁷³

The scope of trafficking in women for prostitution in Israel has dramatically changed over the past decade and is a fascinating test case for the local and global struggle against exploitation of women. Trafficking in women in Israel was initially completely ignored by all authorities responsible (the police, State Prosecutor, courts and the Ministry of Welfare).⁷⁴ Only severe international criticism regarding the Israel's treatment of the matter resulted in swift action against trafficking in humans. In June 2001, the United States published the first T.I.P (Traffic in Person) report. Israel was ranked in the third tier – among countries which did not make any effort to eradicate trafficking in humans.⁷⁵

The Parliamentary Inquiry Commission for Eradicating Trafficking in Women and Assisting Trafficked Victims began its work in 2000 (thanks to the preliminary findings of the aforementioned T.I.P report) and passed several legislative amendments to combat human trafficking. In December 2002, the Commission submitted an interim report, choosing to focus on legal aspects and promote the struggle against human trafficking using comprehensive legislation. In 2002 it was also decided to establish a shelter for foreign female trafficking victims and the police allocated many resources to combat trafficking in women.

The decisive legal point was approving the anti-trafficking law in 2006, which included trafficking for slavery, labor, organs and more. The law introduced an arrangement for seizing convicted traffickers' funds and property and determined a fund be set up, funded by convicted traffickers' capital and the fines imposed on traffickers. The fund would be used to combat and prevent trafficking, rehabilitate trafficking victims and compensate victims who did not receive compensation determined by the court from the trafficker. Israeli legislation also made groundbreaking progress by requiring judges who do not award victims of trafficking compensation to state their reasons.

All these actions address foreign women only. A shelter serving trafficked women has been established and legal assistance is granted, procurers and traffickers are questioned and tried. The outcome of these actions is a vast decline in the scope of trafficking in women. In 2002-2008, many female trafficking victims were deported or willingly returned to their countries of origin. Data attesting to this decline is evident in the number of police records for human trafficking.

6.1.3.1 (Lack of) Legal Status

According to Rita Chaikin, coordinator of Isha l'Isha Haifa Feminist Center's project targeting trafficking in women and prostitution,⁷⁶ most trafficking victims who stayed in Israel are single-mothers who lack legal status, or are mothers to children fathered by Israelis. These women are generally not eligible for citizenship, though their children allegedly are (as children of Israeli citizens). While most of these women manage to leave the world of prostitution, they were involved in violent or unstable relationships with Israeli men. After breakups, these women are left without rights, though their children are Israeli-born of Israeli fathers. These women are especially vulnerable and underprivileged because they are not eligible for citizenship. Most of these women are unable to leave Israel because of court proceedings initiated by the children's father or his family. Counteracting these proceedings requires a long-term procedure in court, while these women do not speak the language, are permanently struggling financially and lack the strength to decipher the bureaucracy. Others are unwilling to leave Israel because social-economic

73 Based in part on the work of Adv. Nomi Levenkron in Tamir, Tal (2007). *Women in Israel 2006 - Between Theory and Reality*. The Israel Women's Network. Page 358-368 (Hebrew)

74 Trafficking in women in its current form began in Israel in the early 1990s

75 The US State Department's 2008 report (June 2009) placed Israel in the 2nd tier.

76 Rita Chaikin, coordinator of Isha l'Isha Feminist Center's project targeting trafficking in women and prostitution, assisted in writing this part of the report.

circumstances in Israel provide better lives for their children than in their countries of origin.

Clearly, given the unique characteristics of these women and the hardships of making a living, these women are at high risk and the chances they will return to prostitution are relatively high. These women lack residency rights and must deal with all financial problems alone, unsupported. They do not receive child allowances from the National Insurance Institute because this body does not grant benefits to alien women, even if their children are Israeli citizens. These women cannot afford private health insurance, and many suffer from neglect; they are also unable to find legal work because most lack a residency permit.

As a result of the State's policy of deporting alien women in Israel to their countries of origin, traffickers ceased to bring women into Israel, and human trafficking was significantly reduced. Because the demand for sex services did not diminish, pimping and procuring services are thriving and have brought immigrant and underprivileged women to prostitution in the past few years.

6.1.4 Israeli Women in Prostitution⁷⁷

Israeli law now regards women involved in prostitution as victims that may not be incriminated, seeking instead to indict pimps, traffickers and brothel owners. Although women involved in prostitution are considered victims, their rights are not clearly defined. Testifying on behalf of the prosecution in cases of criminal offences against them seems to be the extent of their rights. Israeli courts do not address the magnitude of the violence, rape, theft and battery women involved in prostitution suffer and do not readily rule compensation for victims. In the few cases fines have been imposed, the proceedings have gone to the State treasury, given the general belief that prostitution is a victimless crime or at most a transgression of public morality.

6.1.4.1 State-funded Assistance

In 1975, Israeli Minister of Justice appointed a committee to assess various aspects of prostitution in Israel and submit its conclusions and recommendations. The report was published in 1977 and its conclusions regarding preventing women from reaching prostitution and assisting women in prostitution seeking rehabilitation were never implemented. In 2006, the matter of Israeli women involved in prostitution was again publicly debated and the Knesset Committee for the Advancement of Women devoted two sessions to addressing prostitution (June 2006 and January 2007).

During the committee's second session, the Prime Minister pledged 15 million shekels for assisting women to leave prostitution. The funds were dedicated to establishing the following:

- therapeutic hostels for women and girls involved in prostitution
- temporary emergency housing for women and girls
- a therapeutic shelter for assisting women and girls in leaving prostitution
- a rehabilitation center for women
- training for social workers to specialize in treating and rehabilitating women and girls and assisting them in leaving prostitution
- publishing materials on leaving prostitution
- taking preventative steps targeting women and girls before entering prostitution

The main outcome is two State-run centers for women in prostitution in Tel-Aviv and Haifa, where

⁷⁷ Based on Tamir, Tal (2007). *Women in Israel 2006 - Between Theory and Reality*. The Israel Women's Network. and on Rita Chaikin's work as coordinator of Isha l'Isha Feminist Center's project targeting trafficking in women and prostitution.

women receive therapy, support and accompanied by social workers. Tel Aviv and Haifa now each have an emergency apartment for women in prostitution. The project is based on inter-ministerial assistance involving the Ministry of Welfare and Social Services, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education.

6.1.4.2 Obstacles

But despite the State's investment in rehabilitating women involved in prostitution, these women encounter bureaucratic obstacles: the National Insurance Institute refuses to pay them income support allowance since they allegedly have an income from prostitution and evade paying taxes. The police do not treat pimping and brothel managing cases seriously, and their approach towards women in prostitution ranges from disregard to humiliation.

In 2008, former head of the Sub-committee on Trafficking in Women Zehava Galon attempted to pass a law proposal for incriminating prostitution clients. The proposal was supported by thirty Knesset Members from all house parties but parliament was dissolved before the law proposal was approved and legislated. In December 2009, Knesset Member Orit Zuaretz resubmitted the law proposal and it is now awaiting discussion in the Knesset's House Committee.

7. Violence against Women

7.1 Strategic Objectives Mandated by the Beijing Platform for Action: Take integrated measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women.

The Israel Women's Network's perspective on the situation in Israel:

7.1.1 Domestic Violence

According to a report submitted to the Knesset by its Information and Research Center,⁷⁸ in January-September 2009, 11,652 cases domestic violence were investigated by police and 4,614 were concluded. Approximately half of the files initiated and dealt with by police during this period were concluded: half due to lack of evidence and a third due to lack of interest to the public. Data from 2009 on police cases concluded corresponds with data regarding 2008. In January-September 2009, a quarter of the complaints of domestic violence were filed by immigrants: 18% from the former Soviet Union, 2.3% from Ethiopia and 4.7% from other countries. As in 2008, in 2009 Arab women filed 11.8% of all complaints, while Arabs are 20% of the population in Israel. This gap apparently results from under-reporting domestic violence in the Arab sector.

In November 2009 1,838 convicts and 709 detainees were held in prison facilities for domestic violence. 60% were Jews and 40% were members of other faiths (mainly Arabs). The percentage of non-Jews in the population is 25%, therefore their percentage among Israelis convicted of domestic violence is higher than their part in the population. Two-thirds of domestic violence convicts were reconvicted⁷⁹ and 16% were convicted for the sixth time or more.⁸⁰ These data attest to a trend, yet it is plausible that the number of women hurt by domestic violence is larger, given that many cases go unreported.

7.1.2 Gender-based Homicide

Gender-based Homicide refers to cases of homicide driven by sexism; it refers to women murdered by their partners, relatives and women in prostitution who are murdered. The authorities do not distinct between gender-based homicide and any other murder motive, therefore there is no formal data regarding gender-based homicide. Furthermore, women in prostitution who are murdered are not perceived as victims of gender-based homicide but as victims of criminal activity. No formal or informal record of women in prostitution murdered exists.

According to Israeli Police,⁸¹ 36 women were murdered in 2008, 34 in 2007, 46 in 2006 and 42 in 2005. In 2008, 36 women were murdered - 7 of Russian origin and 1 of Ethiopian origin. In 2006, 46 women murdered - 30 Jews, 15 Arabs, 7 of Russian origin and 6 of Ethiopian origin. These figures include all women murdered that year, and do not necessarily refer to gender-based homicide. The only formal data collected address women murdered by their partners: 9 in 2009; 11 in 2008; 13 in 2007; 16 in 2006 and 12 in 2005.⁸²

78 Lotan Almagor, Orly. (2009) *Violence against Women – Compilation of Data for 2009: Addressing the Phenomena According to a Comparative Survey*. The Knesset Information and Research Department. (Hebrew)

79 The previous convictions were not necessarily for domestic violence, yet the current conviction is.

80 Lotan Almagor, Orly. (2009) *Violence against Women – Compilation of Data for 2009: Addressing the Phenomena According to a Comparative Survey*. The Knesset Information and Research Department. (Hebrew)

81 According to Chief Superintendent Ilana Zangilevitch, Department of Strategic Research and Statistics, Israel Police. January 2010

82 Ibid and Lotan Almagor, Orly. (2009) *Violence against Women – Compilation of Data for 2009: Addressing the Phenomena According to a Comparative Survey*. The Knesset Information and Research Department. (Hebrew)

The organization L.O Combat Violence against Women, Women's Aid Centers records victims of gender-based homicide (but not including women in prostitution) based on information published by the press. According to the organization's records, 13 women were victims of gender-based homicide in 2009, and 15 in 2008.⁸³ Comprehensive data regarding gender-based homicide is essential for addressing the problem and promoting viable solutions.

7.1.3 Services Provided by the Ministry of Welfare and Social Services

7.1.3.1 Regional Centers for the Treatment and Prevention of Violence Against Women

The Ministry of Welfare and Social Services now offers treatment in 84 centers and departments for treating domestic violence, compared to 70 such centers in 2008. These centers treat men, children and the elderly, as well as women. The centers treat women who suffer violence, violent men, and children and elderly persons subject to violence. In 2008, 68% of the people treated in centers were women, 26% were men, 6% children and 4% elderly persons; 23% were immigrants and 12% were from the Arab sector. The Ministry operates 3 centers for Ultra-orthodox Jews, 4 for mixed populations of Jews and Arabs, 17 solely for the Arab sector, 1 for the Bedouin population and 2 for the Druze population. 18 centers have an Amharic-speaking social worker on staff for the Ethiopian sector and 20 have a Russian-speaking social worker on staff. In these centers, 377 therapeutic groups for domestic violence are operated, half for women and a third for men. The centers offer therapy at a minimal fee (for eligible candidates).⁸⁴

7.1.3.2 Shelters for Battered Women

13 shelters for battered women and their children currently operate in Israel, nationwide. The shelters are operated by NGOs and supervised by the Ministry of Welfare and Social Services. The number of shelters has increased from 6 in 1993 to 13 in 2008. In 2008, the 13 shelters operated by the Ministry treated 692 women with 1,016 children, similar to 2007.⁸⁵

7.1.3.3 Halfway Housing

Halfway housing is another means of treating battered women and their children. The housing is part of the rehabilitation process, a transition stage from the protection, support and treatment the shelter provides to independent life in the community. This transition is accompanied by social workers and includes occupational training. Currently 14 such houses operate, 10 are funded by the Ministry of Welfare and Social Services. In 2008, the 14 houses were used by 46 women and 77 children.⁸⁶

7.1.3.4 The National Hotline for Preventing Domestic Violence and in Support of Children At Risk

In 2008, the national hotline operated by WIZO – The Women's International Zionist Organization received 4,097 complaints, of which 2,990 (73%) dealt with violence against women, compared with 2,438 complaints in 2007. 42% complained of physical and emotional violence, 39% of physical violence, 5% of financial-based violence and 3% of sexual violence.⁸⁷

83 Based on information published on the [L.O Combat Violence Against Women, Women's Aid Centers website](#). (February 2010)

84 Lotan Almagor, Orly. (2009) *Violence against Women – Compilation of Data for 2009: Addressing the Phenomena According to a Comparative Survey*. The Knesset Information and Research Department. (Hebrew)

85 Ibid

86 Ibid

87 Ibid

7.1.4 Sexual Violence

It is widely recognized that formal statistics of sex offences in Israel and in the world do not reveal the problem's full magnitude. Many offences are not reported – particularly not to the police. Police data showed that 3,372 sexual offense cases were investigated in 2008, the majority (1,661 cases) referred to coerced indecent acts.⁸⁸ In January-September 2009 police made 850 arrests for sexual offenses, compared with 1,117 in all of 2008. There are currently 1,135 convicts and 196 detainees accused of sexual offences in prison facilities. Approximately 50% of convicted sexual offenders have previously served time in prison and approximately 6% are serving their 6th sentence or more.

According to the Rape Crises Centers Association, its centers received 7,793 new complaints in 2008, compared with 8,729 complaints in 2007 and 8,862 complaints in 2006. 88% of all new complaints in 2008 (6,926) were filed by women. The most frequent complaint (30%) was rape and attempted rape. The Association's data also show that approximately 45% of complainants were minors: 21% were 12 or under, and 25% were aged 13-18.⁸⁹

7.1.4.1 Sexual Violence and Senior Government Officials

Sexual assault made headlines in Israel in 2006 following the involvement of 2 senior public personas in sexual assault cases: former President Moshe Katsav and former Knesset Member Haim Ramon. Mr. Ramon served as Minister of Justice when he was charged with committing an indecent act without consent. Mr. Ramon resigned from his post and in 2007 was convicted and sentenced to community service and compensate the plaintiff. The court did not find moral turpitude in his actions - a decision women's organizations protested. In May 2007, after finishing community service, Mr. Ramon returned to politics and served as Deputy Prime Minister. This appointment invoked the wrath of feminist organizations, followed by a public campaign.

In January 2007, an indictment draft against the former President was submitted for rape, sexual harassment, coercion of an indecent act, and statutory rape by an authority figure. In January 2007 Mr. Katsav was authorized a leave of absence until he formally resigned in July 2007. In June 2007 a plea bargain was signed by Mr. Katsav and the Attorney General. The IWN and many NGOs protested the plea bargain primarily due to the discrepancy between the indictment draft which referred to rape charges and the plea bargain's relatively minor offenses Mr. Katsav admitted to.

The IWN and the Movement for Quality Government demanded the plea bargain be revoked on the grounds of it being extremely unreasonable and damaging the public interest and public ordinance. The IWN also claimed that the plea bargain is detrimental to the principle of equality because the standards for evidence necessary for the President's indictment were raised due to his eminence, and as a result a plea bargain was signed. The State was accused of infringing victims' rights to voice their views about the plea bargain, handled by the State Prosecutor. Mr. Katsav's case is still being debated in court.

In response to these two affairs, a coalition of women's organization was formed entitled *Security for Women Hurt by Sexual Violence by Senior Government Officials*. The coalition was organized by Coalition of Women for Peace with the participation of the IWN. The Coalition focused its work on creating public discourse regarding the effects of senior official perpetrating sexual violence.

88 According to Chief Superintendent Ilana Zangilevitch, Department of Strategic Research and Statistics, Israel Police. January 2010
89 Lotan Almagor, Orly. (2009) *Violence against Women – Compilation of Data for 2009: Addressing the Phenomena According to a Comparative Survey*. The Knesset Information and Research Department. (Hebrew)

7.1.4.2 Sexual Harassment

According to The Prevention of Sexual Harassment Law (1998), sexual harassment is any of the following behavior: blackmail by way of threats, indecent acts, repeated propositions of a sexual character to a person, where that person has shown to the harasser that he is not interested in the said propositions, repeated references directed towards a person, which focus on his sexuality, where that person has shown to the harasser that he is not interested in the said references, an intimidating or humiliating reference directed towards a person concerning his sex, or his sexuality, including his sexual tendencies. In this last clause, even a single incident constitutes sexual harassment.

According to police data, 239 sexual harassment cases were investigated in 2008, an increase compared with previous years (175 cases in 2005).⁹⁰ The Association of Rape Crises Centers reports it received 977 complaints of sexual harassment in 2008, 14% of all complaints its centers received.⁹¹ A study conducted by the Research and Economy Section at the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor showed that only 66% of female salaried employees aged 20-45 are aware of the law preventing sexual harassment.⁹² A study conducted by the Women's Affairs Advisor to the Chief of Staff found that 14% of female soldiers reported they experienced sexual harassment at least once, meaning one of every seven female soldiers.⁹³

7.2 Strategic Objective: Eliminate trafficking in women and assist victims of violence due to prostitution and trafficking.

Trafficking in women is discussed in detail in the section on [Human Rights of Women](#) in this report.

90 According to Chief Superintendent Ilana Zangilevitch, Department of Strategic Research and Statistics, Israel Police. January 2010

91 Lotan Almagor, Orly. (2009) *Violence against Women – Compilation of Data for 2009: Addressing the Phenomena According to a Comparative Survey*. The Knesset Information and Research Department. (Hebrew)

92 Alfassi, Michal (2008) *Awareness of Female Salaried Employees Age 20-45 to the Law Preventing Harassment in the Workplace*. The Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor, Department of Research and Economics. Jerusalem. (Hebrew)

93 Schriker, Shelly and Yael Topel. (2007) *Sexual Harassment in the IDF – A Study among Female Soldiers and Officers in Compulsory Service*. Research Branch, Women's Affairs Advisor to the Chief of Staff.

8. Personal Status Laws

8.1 Strategic Objective: Give priority to promoting and protecting the full and equal enjoyment by women and men of all human rights and fundamental freedoms without distinction of any kind as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinions, national or social origins, property, birth or other status;

The Israel Women's Network's perspective on the situation in Israel:

Marriage rates in Israel are high: 44,685 women were wed in 2006, 91% (40,884) for the first time. 13,349 couples got divorced that year. The average age of brides marrying for the first time is as follows: Jews - 25.5; Christians – 24.4; Muslims - 22.1; Druze – 22.6. The average age of women in Israel marrying for the first time (24.7) is lower than in the EU (28.1).⁹⁴

Women in Israel are subjected to various types of discrimination illegally, yet personal status laws themselves discriminate against women and are anchored in legislation. Israeli law grants judicial authority to religious courts in all matters pertaining to matrimony and divorce. Because according Jewish law, women and men do not have equal rights in marriage and divorce, Israeli law does not grant women equal rights in personal status laws.

8.1.1 Jewish Women and Matrimony⁹⁵

Jewish citizens are obliged by law to wed and divorce according to Jewish law in its Orthodox interpretation. In the past years, more and more couples avoid marrying by the Jewish Orthodox ceremony and many chose to travel abroad in order to marry in a civil court, comprising approximately 11% of all Jewish couples.⁹⁶ However, even couples who refused to marry in the State according to Jewish law and marry abroad are not exempt from structural inequity. Jewish couples who marry abroad (like their counterparts who married according to Jewish law) are permitted to divorce only in a religious court and not in a civil court.

2 courts are authorized to address personal status matters in Israel: family courts and religious courts. All Israeli citizens are obligated to marry and divorce according to religious law according to their religious affiliation. As stated, matrimony and divorce are under the sole jurisdiction of religious courts. Other matters pertaining to personal aspects such as custody, guardianship, inheritance and alimony are under the jurisdiction of both family courts and religious courts. The State's decision to accord matrimony and divorce proceedings to the sole jurisdiction of the Orthodox Rabbinical court (for Jews) contradicts democratic principles and conventions Israel is party to, according to which the State views women and men as equals.

Also, assigning marriage and divorce to the jurisdiction of rabbinical courts does not require these courts to operate according to an Orthodox interpretation of Jewish law. Rather, rabbinical courts should be open to progressive movements too, such as the Conservative and Reform movements, which interpret Jewish law differently. Granting Orthodox interpretation of Jewish law a monopoly in rabbinical courts and among its judges is a political statement detrimental to many women.

94 Central Bureau of Statistics. (2009) Press Release: *Selected Data Published for International Women's Day 2009*

95 Yakir Englander in Tamir, Tal. (2007) *Women in Israel 2006: Between Theory and Reality*. Israel Women's Network.

96 Halperin-Kaddari Ruth and Inbal Karo. (2009) *Women and Family in Israel - Statistical Bi-annual Report*. The Rackman Center for the Advancement of the Status of Women. Bar Ilan University. Page 33 (Hebrew)

8.1.1.1 Prohibited Marriages

Another important issue is the problem of prohibited marriages. Many couples in Israel are prohibited from marrying at all. These include marriage of male *Cohens* (descendants of Jewish priests) to divorced women, Jews to non-Jews, same-sex marriages, and bastards (According to Jewish law, a bastard is a child born to a married woman and fathered by a man other than her husband).

In the past few years, law proposals have addressed legalizing *civil unions* (rather than civil marriage or plain marriage) that are unsanctioned by religious courts through civil courts. The proposal to allow civil unions as an alternative to the Orthodox marriage ceremony is a compromise between a legal alternative for institutionalizing a couple's relationship and religious authorities who object to civil marriages. These proposals seek to preserve the existing arrangement whereby religious marriages are only Orthodox, and establish a new legal authority that will address the needs of couples who are not permitted or do not wish to marry in a religious court. In July 2009, the government proposed a law enabling civil union only for people lacking religious affiliation. This law does not solve the range of problems religious marriage poses for women. This law is currently awaiting an additional discussion, and given the current coalition, it may be approved soon.

8.1.2 Jewish Women Denied a Religious Divorce

According to the interpretation of Jewish law, divorce is considered valid only when voluntarily delivered by the husband and not as the result of coercion. As such, husbands hold the bargaining chips and may refuse to deliver the divorce for any reason (in order to abuse her, to obtain financial benefits) rendering her a woman who is refused a divorce. The exact number of women who are refused divorce in Israel is unknown and often depends on the definition. Rabbinical courts define as such women the court has required the husband to grant a divorce to but he refuses. In 2007, rabbinical courts intervened and imposed divorces on only 18 men.⁹⁷

Women's organizations report that while thousands of women' husbands refuse to grant them a divorce, the rabbinical courts does not force them to do so. These women are considered married by Jewish and Israeli law, meaning they are trapped: they no longer live with their husbands but are unable to move forward, re-marry, and start over. This is particularly problematic for ultra-Orthodox women as they strictly adhere to religious law.

8.1.2.1 Jewish Women Unable to Receive a Divorce

Another problem originating in Jewish Law is that of the abandoned women, a woman whose husband is not present (missing, left the country) or who is not legally competent to deliver a divorce (insane, comatose). The only solution for these women is to have the rabbinical court terminate the marriage, an option which the rabbinical courts avoid at all costs. A famous example is the wife of missing navigator Ron Arad, who has been missing in action for nearly 24 years.

97 Halperin-Kaddari Ruth and Inbal Karo. (2009) *Women and Family in Israel - Statistical Bi-annual Report*. The Rackman Center for the Advancement of the Status of Women. Bar Ilan University. Page 74 (Hebrew)

8.1.3 Arab Women and Marriage⁹⁸

Arab citizens of Israel are divided into several religious communities: Muslims, Druze, and Christians. The State has permitted the essence of religious prohibitions and permits regarding marriage to dominate citizens' affairs. Its intervention in these matters is only through criminal sanctions, but it refrains from intervening in the essential matters of religious law. Problems occur for women in terms of religious laws mostly pertain to wedding minors and polygamy. The number of female Muslim minors wed was over twice the number of their Jewish counterparts; among 16-17 year-olds it was 4 times higher.⁹⁹ There is no exact data concerning polygamy in Israel. According to estimates, 20-36% of families in Bedouin society are polygamous. While Bedouin society is undergoing processes of modernization, the rate of polygamy is not declining and the phenomenon perseveres even among young and educated people.¹⁰⁰

98 Adv. Tagrid Jahashan in Tamir, Tal. (2007) *Women in Israel 2006: Between Theory and Reality*. Israel Women's Network.

99 The National Council for the Child (2009). Selected data from the *Annual Report on Children in Israel – 2009*. (Hebrew)

100 Lotan Almagor, Orly. (2006) *Polygamy among the Bedouin Population in the Negev*. *The Knesset Information and Research*

9. Institutional Mechanisms for Advancing Women

9.1 Strategic Objective: Create or strengthen national mechanisms and other government bodies.

The Israel Women's Network's perspective on the situation in Israel:

9.1.1 The Women's Affairs Advisor to the Chief of Staff

Israeli law requires Israeli men and women to serve in the IDF. In 2008, 58.5% of all Israeli young women at the age of army service served in the IDF. In the summer of 2001 the Women's Corps was abolished and replaced by the Women's Affairs Advisor to the Chief of Staff. The advisor deals with various issues pertaining to women in the IDF, from research and information regarding women's military service to setting policies for dealing with sexual harassment. The advisor is very important for female soldiers, and yet since the post's establishment, military and civilian representatives have repeatedly called for its abolition, and its budget has decreased. The IWN repeatedly joins the struggle to protect the Women's Affairs Advisor and preserve its role in promoting the interests of female soldiers.

9.1.2 Deputy Minister for the Advancement of Young People, Students and Women

In 2009 and for the first time in Israel, a female Deputy Minister for the Advancement of Young People, Students and Women was appointed. The Deputy Minister is Knesset Member Gila Gamliel. The IWN hopes that this constitutes a step towards appointing a female minister charged with women's affairs.

9.1.3 The Knesset Committee on the Status of Women

Parliament's Committee on the Status of Women was established in 1992 and became one of the permanent committees of the Israeli parliament in 1996. It has been highly instrumental in promoting important legislative measures and in raising awareness of women's concerns. Besides facilitating dozens of legislative measures, the committee also contributes on a more informal level to women's coalition building and coordinating activities promoting social change. It invites experts and NGO representatives to voice their opinions and report on their work, and has shown an ongoing commitment to the promotion of women's rights.

In 2006-2009, the Committee dealt with 20 laws that were passed in the Israeli parliament, constituting 4.3% of all legislation approved during this period.¹⁰¹ The Committee on the Status of Women has operated a sub-committee since January 2005 dealing with the prevention of trafficking in women. More about the sub-committee's work in the next paragraph. The Israel Women's Network evaluates and reports about the work of the committee and the members of Parliament who take part in its work. More about the Parliament Gender Monitor at the end of this chapter.

101 Central Bureau of Statistics. (2009) *Statistical Abstract of Israel 2009*. Table 10.5

9.1.4 The Sub-committee on Trafficking in Women

The sub-committee on Trafficking in Women was founded in June 2000 by Knesset Member Zehava Galon as the Parliamentary Inquiry Committee on Trafficking in Women. The inquiry committee finished its work in December 2004 and in January 2004 became a sub-committee. As part of its work, several legislative amendments were passed. The committee's work is described in the section on [Human Rights of Women](#) in this report.

9.1.5 The Unit for Integration and Advancement of Women in the Civil Service

The Unit for Integration and Advancement of Women in the Civil Service was established in 1996, following an amendment in 1995 to the law requiring the Civil Service Commission to employ all necessary means to achieve adequate representation of both sexes in the civil service. The Unit supervises the work program for promoting women in the Civil Service, directs the appointees in charge of ranking women in the ministries as part of the law's implementation, and handles complaints by women regarding injustice, gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment. This Unit is also responsible for supervising women's status in various governmental offices, and is currently preparing a database of women capable of serving as directors of government companies.

The Israel Women's Network, in conjunction with the Civil Service Commission and other organizations, awards the Advanced Employer Badge to businesses promoting women and tailoring workplaces to accommodate women and their promotion to senior positions. For more information, please see [Women and Economy](#). Though the Unit for Integration and Advancement of Women in the Civil Service is dedicated to achieving due representation of women, it does not do enough to enforce this obligation in government-issued employment tenders. More about the lack of enforcement of adequate representation in [Women in Decision Making and Key Positions](#).

9.1.6 The Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women

The Authority was established in 1998 by law and is authorized to follow government and local authorities' activities regarding women's status, advise the government on enforcing laws promoting women's status and act to implement the decisions adopted at CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women). The Authority is not an independent body within the government, but is affiliated with the Prime Minister's Office, and the appointment its director is a political appointment.

9.1.7 The Commission for Equal Employment Opportunities

The Commission for Equal Employment Opportunities operates under the authority of the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor. It was founded in 2008 after the Equal Opportunities Law (1988) was amended in 2005. The amendment establishes – for the first time in the Israel – an authority protecting women and workers suffering from discrimination in the Israeli labor market. The Commission is relatively powerful, and has the power to file civil claims in addition to criminal claims against employers who discriminate against workers, and the authority to oblige employers to submit data, including paycheck information, regarding their employees.

The Israel Women's Network was key in establishing the Commission, and its former Executive Director, Adv. Tziona Koenig-Yair was appointed the State's first Commissioner for Equal Employment

Opportunities. The Commission is a success in the Feminist struggle for female workers' rights, and their protection from discrimination in the labor market.

9.1.8 The Unit for Gender Equality

The Unit for Gender Equality operates under the auspices of the Ministry of Education. Formally, the unit was founded in 2002, yet it began its work a few years earlier. Its sole goal is to create a promote gender equality in the educational system in Israel. Its programs reach out to various audiences in the Ministry of Education. Some programs are operated conjointly with organizations in the field, such as the cooperation with the Israel Women's Network regarding the *Nemesh* program. For more about *Nemesh*, please read the chapter entitled [The Girl Child](#). Most programs operate on a short-term basis for several meetings and are extra-curricular. The exception is the promotion of the program for gender studies in social studies for the *Bagrut* (matriculation exams).

9.2 Strategic Objective: Integrate gender perspectives in legislation, public policies, programs, and projects The Israel Women's Network's perspective on the situation in Israel:

The law on the Implications of Gender in Legislation (2007) stipulates that every law proposal or amendment pertaining to matters of equality between the sexes or to any matter pertaining to the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women (mentioned at the beginning of the chapter) be subject to the Authority's professional assessment. The Authority will assess the various law proposal's projection on women in Israel. According to the Authority's 2008 report, it evaluated hundreds of law proposals and assessed 64 law proposals and submitted them to the House Committee.

The difficulties in the law's implementation arise due to lack of manpower and an inadequate budget, especially given the short time allotted to submitting an assessment. It is necessary to stress the problem of implementing this law. The Authority is part of the Prime Minister's Office and is therefore not an independent body.

9.2.1 Amendment of the Statistics Ordinance

In 2008, the Statistics Ordinance was amended and took effect in 2009. This law requires the Central Bureau of Statistics to refer to sex when conducting and publishing statistic operations relating to individuals. The law inadvertently amended the Women's Equal Rights Law (1951) and extended the requirement to address sex when data is collected, processed and published by government offices, local councils and State-run companies. The law was amended thanks to the Women's Budget Forum's suggestion, that data should be supplied according to sex in budgets presented. The IWN has and continues to be a member in the Women's Budget Forum, which initiated and promoted the amendment. A year after the amendment, accessibility to information pertaining to women has vastly improved, especially in terms of the Central Bureau of Statistics. However, research institutions (apart from the Bureau) are still far from satisfactory.

9.2.2 Women's Budget Forum

In 2004, a new coalition of NGOs (which included the IWN) was formed by the Adva Center in order to promote the idea of gender-budgeting in Israel and influence the government to take women's needs, preferences and priorities into consideration when planning its budget. The Women's Budget Forum has been a model of organizational cooperation for raising public awareness to gender issues and influencing parliamentary work to promote women.

9.2.3 The Parliament Gender Monitor: Promoting Women in Parliament

The IWN's Research and Information Center monitors the work of Knesset Members and assesses their contribution to promoting women. Four parameters guide its assessment of parliamentary work: submitting law proposals, putting forth parliamentary queries, agenda suggestions and committee membership (on the Committee on the Status of women and the Sub-committee on the Trafficking in Women). Since the 18th Knesset has been in session (February 2009), the Monitor has begun to review law proposals detrimental to women. The Monitor's findings are reported in the media and encourage Knesset Members to promote women's rights.

10. Women in Decision Making and Key Positions

10.1 Strategic Objective: Take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making.

The Israel Women's Network's perspective on the situation in Israel:

10.1.1 Women in Parliament, Government and Local Authorities

There is pronounced inequality in women's participation in the political system in Israel. In the national political arena, women's representation in the Knesset was 9% when the State was established and declined over the following years. Women's representation in the various governments throughout the years has been lower, at times with no representation whatsoever.¹⁰² In the local political arena, women's representation has always been very low. However, data show a continuous increasing trend in women's participation in local politics. Hence, gender constitutes a barrier to politics. There are still few female cabinet ministers in Israel. 3 deputy ministers are women in the current government, and 2 government ministers out of 30 are women. These figures reflect women's minor influence of the public agenda.

The percentage of women represented in the Knesset fluctuated up until the 15th Knesset (1999-2003), never reaching even 10%. Data show an increasing trend in women's representation in the Knesset. The percentage of women in the 15th Knesset (1999-2003) reached 12.5%, exceeding 10% for the first time, followed by 15% during the 16th Knesset (2003-2006), and rose to 19% in the current and 18th Knesset (elected in 2009) - 23 women.¹⁰³ Women are under-represented in the Knesset in comparison to the percentage of women in the population (51%), and compared to both developed and developing countries. Only one woman has served as Knesset Chairperson:¹⁰⁴ Ms. Dalia Itzik. Ms. Itzik is the only Israeli woman who came close to presidency when she served as President instead of former President Katsav in an interim capacity in 2007. More about the Katsav affair in the chapter on [Violence against Women](#).

Knesset committees are an important site for decision making and influencing Knesset Members. In general, men chair Knesset committees. Only 3 women chair committees, compared with 16 men, during the current Knesset. Men chair the most prestigious Knesset committees: the Finance Committee, the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee and the Constitution, Law and Justice Committee.

There are 2,122 local authorities council members in Israel, 244 of them (11.4%) are women.¹⁰⁵ 10 women have served as mayors (3 are currently in office) since the establishment of the State.

10.1.2 Women in Key Positions in the Civil Service

The majority of civil service employees are women – 65% in 2008. While women are a majority, they are significantly under-represented in senior positions in the civil service. Women are a mere 34% among the top pay grade positions in the civil service (grade A) - comparable to those of CEOs, vice-CEO and directors of large hospitals. This percentage declines to 11% in 2008 if legal positions are excluded: a mere 9 women in 84 senior positions. The percentage of women rises as the position grade drops. In the next grade (grade B) women hold 26% of the positions, and 32% of grade C positions. And yet

¹⁰² According to the Knesset website, during the Knesset's 13th, 18th and 23rd sessions no women were part of the government, And only 1 deputy Minister. During the 14th, 15th and 27th sessions, there was 1 women in government.

¹⁰³ In January 2010

¹⁰⁴ Knesset Member Dalia Itzik in 2006-2009.

¹⁰⁵ According to data provided by Ms. Linda Sasson of the Union of Local Authorities in Israel are true for the 2008 elections

this representation does not correlate with their representation on average in the civil service. The gap between men and women is gradually closing in the higher ranks, yet at an excruciatingly slow pace: 1% in 2008.¹⁰⁶

Despite this depressing data, historical change is occurring. In September 2006 Justice Dorit Beinisch was appointed Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, one of the most important positions in the civil service. The legal system is an exception for the better in terms of women in key positions, in relation to the rest of the civil service.

10.1.3 Women Directorates

In 1993 the Government Company Law (1975) was amended thanks to pressure and initiatives on the part of the IWN. The amendment calls for due representation of women in directorates. Following the amendment, the percentage of women in directorates rose from 7.16% in 1993 to an incredible 43% in August 2009.¹⁰⁷ However, the law does not affect companies traded in the stock exchange. The IWN is currently promoting a law proposal for due representation of women in directorates of these companies.

10.1.4 Women in Key Military Positions

Women are required by law to perform military service. In 2008 more than half (58.5%) of Israeli women were drafted.¹⁰⁸ Because the military is renowned for being a principle channel for social mobility, the Israel Women's Network battled for years to open positions and promotion possibilities to women.¹⁰⁹ Over the past decade, many positions have opened to women, yet the majority of women still serve in feminine jobs or in jobs men do not perform at all – serving in a mere 15% of all military professions. In terms of top-ranking positions, women still encounter a glass ceiling. This is made clear in the transition from the rank of Major (battalion or air-force squadron executive officer) and Lieutenant Colonel (battalion or air-force squadron commander). In 2008, 23% of the Majors were women, while 12.5% of Lieutenant Colonels were women. While the percentage of women represented in key military positions has risen, there is still a gap between the representation of women and men, alluding to a glass ceiling in the transition between the aforementioned ranks: in 1999, 19.2% of the Majors were women, 7.3% of Lieutenant Colonels were women. In the following rank, Colonel, the underrepresentation of women is even more pronounced: only 4.4% in 2008.

10.2 Strategic Objective: Increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership.

10.2.1 UN Resolution 1325 and the 2005 Amendment to the Women's Equal Rights Law

In October 2000, the UN adopted resolution 1325, calling on parties involved in conflicts to abide by international humanitarian laws protecting women and ensuring their rights. The resolution calls on UN member countries to ensure women are duly represented in national and international decision-making mechanisms in terms of conflict management and resolution. Following the resolution and as a result of complementary local and global trends, Israel amended the Women's Equal Rights Law in 2005 (4th amendment).

106 Shahal-Rosenfeld, Talila. (2009) *Report for the Department for the Integration and Advancement of Women on Due Representation of Women in the Civil Service in 2008*. The Civil Service Commission. (Hebrew)

107 The Government Companies Authority. (2009) *Populating Government Companies' Directorates*.

108 Women's Affairs Advisor. (2009) *Women's Service – A Survey and Central Activities 2008*. (Hebrew) Israel Defense Forces.

109 Supreme Court Petition on behalf of Alice Miller is the classic example for the IWN's work promoting women to key positions in the IDF. As a result of this court case, women were allowed to be pilots, one of the most prestigious military positions.

The law amendment calls for due representation of women on public committees and committees involved in shaping national policies. The law now refers to due representation of women from a wide range of social groups, women who do not belong to predominant social groups in Israeli society, such as Arab women, Jewish women of North African or Asian descent and immigrant women, reflecting different agendas and interests, and different degrees of critical discourse. This law was passed thanks to NGOs, especially women's organizations,¹¹⁰ similar to the archetype – the UN resolution. 2 Knesset Members submitted the law proposal to the Knesset,¹¹¹ which was signed by most female Knesset Members, expressing the power of the women's coalition in the Knesset, whose members united in the interest of a comprehensive and cross-party (Labor, Likud, Shinui, Meretz and Mafdal) law and succeeded in asserting their influence.

Amendment of the Israeli law led to the establishment of the International Women's Commission (IWC), given the ongoing hostilities of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The IWC is comprised of Israeli, Palestinian and international women who promote a just peace based on international law, human rights and equality in order to realize mutually secure and sustainable peace and coexistence.

10.2.2 Due Representation

The Israel Women's Network's legal department is a watchdog for due representation in Israel. In 2007, the IWN won the High Court of Justice case which revoked a discriminatory appointment in the civil service's Department of Customs. The most recent related court case was a won by the IWN in April 2009, a precedent regarding lack of implementation of the principle of due representation, which appears in the Women's Equal Rights Law. The case began when a search committee at the Prime Minister's Office was appointed to recommend the most suitable candidate for the Israel Anti-drug Authority Director-General. The committee ranked Ms. Yael Aran the most suitable candidate, followed by Mr. Yair Geller. Mr. Geller was chosen to fill the position, contrary to the committee's recommendation and without regard for the principle of due representation.

The IWN's petition to the High Court of Justice claimed that given that the committee named Ms. Aran as the most suitable candidate in terms of education and relevant experience, the State must appoint her and/or enforce the principal of due representation in order to create a balance between women and men in directorate positions, when the majority are men. The IWN also claimed the State should have appointed Ms. Aran not only according to the law, but because the committee found her skills superior to those of the other (male) candidates.

In an unprecedented ruling, all 3 Justices agreed that that the principle of due representation was disregarded in the appointment process. The Justices overruled the decision to appoint Mr. Geller and instructed the Prime Minister to reconsider the candidates, taking into consideration the requirement of ensuring due representation for women, as stated by law. In the verdict, Justice Edmond Levi responded to the data presented initially in the State's response to the petition:

In comparing the candidates' qualifications, the Prime Minister and the Director General of his office did not operate according to the law and did not consider whether gender was at the basis of the gap that was presented, therefore justifying a different decision. The law, significant in shaping decision makers' awareness, was not given sufficient weight in the decision making process.¹¹²

110 Isha L'Isha Feminist Center in Haifa is a noteworthy. The Center ran a program intended to revive the law and promote its implementation, track down women for public committees and national policy teams.

111 Yuli Tamir (Labor) and Eti Livni (Shinui), previous Chairwomen of the Committee for the Advancement of Women.

112 Yael Aran vs. the Israeli Government. High Court of Justice Case 3755/08

After the High Court repealed the appointment, the Prime Minister's Office added insult to injury and reappointed the same candidate. The IWN appealed the appointment a second time, expanding the appeal to claim discrimination against the female candidate because of her sex. However, this time the judges rejected the appeal.

10.2.3 The Israel Women's Network's Work

10.2.3.1 Leadership Training

IWN runs many leadership and empowerment courses encouraging women to assume positions of public leadership. These courses are held in the center of the country and in the peripheral areas. The leadership courses target Arab and Jewish women. Approximately 60 women participate in the courses annually.

10.2.3.2 Municipal and Local Government Forum

In order to promote women locally, the IWN established a Municipal and Local Government Forum that meets every 2 months. Forum members include some 40 women from municipal and local councils country-wide. Forum meetings are intended for networking and discussing matters pertaining to local government. Together with the Municipal and Local Government Forum, the IWN has offered professional training to prepare for local council elections in November 2008.

11. Summary

This report examines many issues significant to women in Israel in 2010, painting a picture of their status and the covert and overt discrimination against women. The report's title, *We Keep Running, but Are We Getting "Somewhere Else"*, reflects the essential condition of Israeli women today. Changes, improvement and a great deal of work is being undertaken by civil society organizations and State authorities to prevent discrimination and promote women, but they are declarative for the most part and mostly ineffective. While the law prohibits paying men and women different wages for the same work, women earn 36% less than men. This example is especially poignant given that women are more educated than men, yet consistently earn less than men do. This is nothing short of scandalous in Israel of 2010.

There are also cases in which discrimination is anchored by law or deeply rooted, such as personal status laws controlled by religious law which structurally harm women. Attempts to change these laws and practices stand few chances of success.

There are groups of women in Israel who are hurt twofold either because they are affiliated with a minority group or due of their life circumstances. Significant examples include Arab women, refugee women and women in prostitution. Arab women suffer from structural discrimination because of their sex and their national affiliation. The high percentage of Muslim female minors wed attests to the low status of Arab women (when compared to Jewish female minors wed: more than twice the number of Muslim female minors, and among minors aged 16-17 four times). Most cases of polygamy were noted among Muslims (estimated at 20-36%), as well as high poverty rates - 11.4% of Arab women were unemployed, compared with 6.1% of Jewish women and 42% worked part-time, compared with 37.5% of Jewish women. Arab women, as other women in minority groups in Israel, are more exposed to gender-based homicide; in 2006 Arab women were the victims of half the cases of gender-based homicide.

This report is submitted to the World Conference on Women, Beijing +15 and its goal is to inform United Nation members on the manners in which Israel has implemented the Beijing Declaration and curbed discrimination against women. International pressure has proved successful in the past, such as in the struggle against trafficking in women in Israel, and we hope that this report will serve as infrastructure for international pressure to eliminate discrimination and promote women in Israel.

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2010