

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON WOMEN-LED MICRO, SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES IN PALESTINE

UN Women Palestine Office conducted a flash online survey on the impact of COVID-19 on women-led MSME's employing up to 95 employees. The online survey was administered between 17-27 March 2020. In total, 301 women entrepreneurs from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip responded to the survey. The results are a summary of 301 women respondents across Palestine.

95%
of Palestinian women reported that their businesses are being negatively impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic

27%
of women's businesses were shut down

“ Due to the current situation, my sales were hugely affected with almost no demand on the soap that I produce due to mobility restrictions. I was waiting for Ramadan to come and March as two main seasons to sell my products, now I ended up with no income to support my family. I am trying now to produce hygienic soap products that can be tested and marketed to respond to the Coronavirus crisis.”

Ms. Huwaida Abo Yacoub, soap factory owner from Nablus and has seven children.

73%
of women reported that they could only sustain their businesses during the current situation from one to four months

53%
of women reported that they are considering laying off their employees

“ I invested all my savings in buying raw materials, that are stuck in storage houses located in Hebron, for Ramadan season; due to the current situation, I cannot access these materials even to produce alternative products and support my family. I am thinking now to produce protective materials and equipment, such as masks, from the Coronavirus for the services providers who serve in the field, however, because of the loss of all my savings, I cannot buy related raw materials with no access to finance in such circumstances. I have loan payments that are even now postponed, ending up with no alternatives to cover our costs of living.”

Ms. Wesal Hijazi, from Silwad, Ramallah district, owns a fashion design workshop.

The most affected sectors are the food products (26%), followed by the embroidery sector (20%) and the childcare services (11%), while the least affected sectors are ICT, furniture and wood (2%)

42%
of the Palestinian women-led MSME's witnessed a decrease in demand, while 9% of them reported movement restrictions and 7% reported childcare limitations to be able to continue operating

Action Points for government, civil society, private sector and international stakeholders

- Ensure availability of sex- and age- disaggregated data and that all interventions are informed by gender analyses/ gender-based livelihoods and risk analyses.
- Monitor and mitigate against new and possibly increased threats against women's engagement in economic activities and continue to focus on programming that builds women's economic resilience for this and future shocks, with specific emphasis on female heads of households and other at-risk groups, in all economic recovery efforts.
- Support service providers in providing equitable and responsive services for women entrepreneurs and small producers to ensure the safety of women and hygienic production practices, in addition to safe delivery of their products, especially essential providers of food and pharmaceuticals.
- Ensure women entrepreneurs benefit equally from the emergency procurement actions and financial service provision, including taxation, guaranteed loans, and specific MSME's packages.
- Promote and support women's engagement and leadership in policy and decision making during the crisis to reflect and address the rights and needs of women, including the furthest left behind and most marginalized groups of women (e.g. the female heads of households, the working poor, women with disabilities, and rural women), and ensure that women's capacities are equally recognized and integrated, equally to men, in any economic recovery plans.