

On Tuesday July 31st, 2018, the Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development and in cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce and Industry/Ramallah, conducted a policy dialogue to discuss the role of women's projects in supporting the development of local economy as part of the project "Support to women's economic participation in the local development of Ramallah and Tulkarem" which is being implemented in partnership with the cooperation of Catalan Agency for Development (ACCD) and Movimiento por la Paz (MPDL) that aim to Contribute to increase women 's economic participation in local Palestinian markets in Ramallah and Tulkarem. The event included representatives of women's cooperatives, and a group of business women who own and manage individual economic projects across the West Bank.

Mrs. Ni'ma Assaf, Field Coordinator at PWWSD, commenced the event by pointing the importance and main pillars of the project including its partners, goals and activities in addition to the role of CSOs and CBOs in supporting the empowerment of Palestinian women through providing them with assistance to enhance their self-generating economic projects with special focus on women living in rural and marginalized areas. Mrs. Assaf went on to indicate the role in which PWWSD plays in supporting women's empowerment programs through the implementation of practical and theoretical training workshops, awareness-raising meetings, and by creating networks through which women cooperatives can market and sell their products.

Mr. Salah Ihsan, a representative of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry presented the participants with an overview of the ways in which the Chamber of Commerce can provide support to local women's projects by implementing training and educational programmes in the fields of business management, marketing and finance, and packaging (of locally-made food products). The Chamber of Commerce may also liaise with community-based organizations in Palestine that are able to provide financial support to these women in order for them to be able to participate in regional and international exhibitions.

Ms. Amal Balan, Agricultural Consultant at PWWSD, addressed the importance of executing theoretical and practical training for working women which can be seen done through her own personal work with local women cooperatives in Ramallah (Zahrat Shuqba Cooperative and Deir al Sudan Charity Association for Women) and Tulkarem (Bal'ah Consumer Cooperative and the Anabta Association for Local Cooperatives). Ms. Balan stressed that practical training enhances quality production and ensures that it falls under Palestinian standards and specifications.

The women participants from these local cooperatives presented the audience with their most significant experiences and accomplishments whether as part of individual projects or as members of local cooperatives and charities. Ms. Rana al Hasan, representative of Zahrat Shuqba Cooperative, described the challenges in which she and other members face and which mainly stem from the local community who do not support the products produced by women's cooperatives. Ms. Iqbal Omar, representative of Deir al Sudan cooperative, reviewed the ongoing projects run by the cooperative and which include the locally produced honey project, Palestinian embroidery project, and the local- food project; Ms. Omar proudly spoke of her past and latest achievements, the latest being her winning second place in the Palestinian

Embroidery Contest held by the Ministry of Culture as part of the Handicrafts Exhibition that took place during July 2018.