



**PUBLIC SERVICES
INTERNATIONAL**

External Evaluation

of the

**ST-PSI Women's Development Project –
2018-2024**

Implemented by: Public Services International (PSI)
Supported by: Fackförbundet ST

Prepared by: Jenny Grice and Hind Akil Haidar





THE GLOBAL UNION
FEDERATION OF WORKERS
IN PUBLIC SERVICES



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TO UNION

LO, TCO & SACO SWEDEN

Thank you.

A big thank you to all who gave their time to share with us their impressions of the Programme and how it has benefited their trade unions organisationally and politically, and themselves personally. Particular thanks to the drivers of the project both in PSI, Lebanon and in ST, Sweden.

Jenny and Hind, 26 November 2025



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Executive Summary

The SWANA Gender Equality Project, implemented by PSI in partnership with Fackförbundet ST (ST), has worked with close to 40 public sector trade unions across eight SWANA countries from 2018 to 2024. These countries were: Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia.

The project aimed to address gender inequality and gender-based violence (GBV) in public services by strengthening women's participation and leadership in unions, advancing gender-responsive policies and collective bargaining, and advocating for legal and policy reforms aligned with international labour standards.

Jenny Grice and Hind Akil Haidar were tasked with carrying out a qualitative evaluation of the project, more particularly to assess achievements, gather stakeholder perspectives, and document lessons learned and good practices from the project cycles, particularly from the trade union participants themselves.

We scrutinised reports and interviewed participants in the programme to establish whether the project had achieved its objectives.

The report outlines how the evaluation was carried out, details its key achievements and judges that the project was a success.

It then takes a step back and takes a deeper look into the project itself to uncover the reasons for its success so that these positives can be used in other projects.

It identifies the effective strategies, tools and approaches that were used to ensure success. Good practices and examples from the project are also explored. Many lessons were learned along the way and these too are useful pointers for other similar projects to take note of.

We identified the challenges that the various trade unions faced, but also extracted the enabling factors that trade unionists shared with us that helped the project to overcome these challenges.

Respondents shared their trade unions' future needs and priorities, showing their commitment to continue with the project's key objectives.

01

Introduction

PSI



The SWANA Gender Equality Project, implemented by PSI in partnership with Fackförbundet ST (ST), has worked with about 40 public sector trade unions across eight SWANA countries from 2018 to 2024. These countries were: Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia.

The project aimed to address gender inequality and gender-based violence (GBV) in public services by strengthening women's participation and leadership in unions, advancing gender-responsive policies and collective bargaining, and advocating for legal and policy reforms aligned with international labour standards.

PSI SWANA's regular annual reports and updates have provided detailed quantitative information over time which shows how women's involvement in trade unions in the region has increased: women's membership has grown; more women are in leadership positions than before the project started; in the vast majority of cases, planned activities have been implemented with higher numbers than budgeted. In the majority of the trade unions in those countries, the key objectives have been attained.

The project is ST's second-longest-running project. ST was keen to find out what made this project successful and what lessons could be learnt from it which could be carried across to future similar projects.



Left: Haifa from Lebanon, AFRECON25 - GBV Workshop

This report is not a quantitative report that repeats figures from the reports. It seeks to go beyond these numbers. Instead, we undertook a three-pronged probe to examine what led to the success behind the project through the eyes of:

- the PSI overall coordinators in Lebanon,
- the two ST staff members tasked with overall coordination of the project, and
- some of the actual trade union participants across many of the countries in the project.

02



4.2 Interviews with PSI staff in Beirut, and 2 from ST Sweden

Jenny Grice carried out the following interviews to gather more in-depth information about the project, why it was carried out, how the project was implemented, what the project hoped to achieve against what it achieved, as well as the difficulties, challenges and surprises that were encountered in the programme.

1. Najwa Hanna, PSI SWANA, Beirut
2. Chahnaz el Zein, PSI SWANA, Beirut
3. Karin Brunzell, ST, Sweden
4. Magnus Runsten, ST, Sweden

Interviews with Hanna and el Zein provided us with a rich picture of the project and how the project activities were adapted to the particular situations in each country. Such adaptations hinted at very experienced coordinators and facilitators.

Interviews with representatives of Swedish funders, ST, Brunzell and Runsten, gave us a good sense of the strengths and depths of knowledge of the two PSI coordinators, Hanna and el Zein.

4.3 Questionnaire administered to participants

A short questionnaire with 17 questions was developed and made accessible online for project participants. (See Appendix 1 for the questionnaire)

A contacts sheet of 28 unionists was shared by PSI holding 1-3 representatives from each country under the project. We emailed all of them a detailed description on the efforts of this report and asked them to complete the questionnaire which would be followed with an interview whether on-line or in-person to most participants. We received about a 30% response rate, after which our PSI colleagues reached out individually to these contacts asking them to complete the questionnaire.

Eighteen participants (14 women and 4 men) completed the questionnaire. The questionnaire was initially intended to gather information and feedback from all participants including those whom we were unable to interview due to time restraints. Hind Akil Haidar was able to do follow-up interviews with most of those who had completed the questionnaire, enabling us to enrich our understanding. (See 4.4 below)

Those who responded represented 7 of the 8 countries involved in the project; no-one from Morocco responded to the questionnaire.

The sample size was very small so it is not possible to use this snapshot as a general picture of the influence of the project on all participants. Nevertheless, the fact that there are no negative views from participants is a positive sign.

Table 1 summarises who the respondents were and what they said.



Najwa Hanna - PSI - AFRECON25 - GBV Workshop.

Table 1

Summary of responses received from participants who answered the questionnaire

PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS	
Countries where respondents came from	Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Tunisia
Gender	<p>12 women:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2 members (1 on women's committee; 1 on executive committee) - 4 shop stewards - 4 national leaders - 2 PSI leaders, national and regional leader <p>5 men:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 regional leader - 3 national leaders - 1 leader and PSI leader
Age	6 respondents fell into the 36-50 age group; 11 in the 51-65 age group
Years in the union	All more than 10 years
VIEWS ON SOME ISSUES	
Support for the women's quota	The majority of the men and women strongly supported the quota system, some arguing that it should be a 50% quota, not a 30% quota. Reasons given were because of male dominance and the patriarchal nature of Arab societies; quotas allow women to be adequately heard and their problems addressed. Several respondents felt that quotas were temporary measures: they were necessary initially until women were sufficiently empowered, and thereafter other measures could be introduced.
(continues on the next page)	

Table 1 (continued)	
Positive response to the different training programmes	All respondents said they had benefited from the training and felt more confident implementing tasks related to the training that they had undergone. Detailed individual responses are given below.
Individual responses from some respondents on the training they completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “the workshops and activities helped me to become a union leader.” • [after attending the workshops] “I held a training workshop for members on the law on violence against women and harassment” • “Training with PSI was highly effective, and the benefits were significant across cultural, moral/psychosocial, and educational levels” • “I undertook important experiences that affected my lived reality. I ran for President of the General Union; at the community level, I fought to participate by standing for the Legislative Council elections and advocating for the creation of a dedicated workers’ seat in the legislature.”
Are unions prioritising gender equality issues with employers?	15 respondents said “Yes” 1 respondent said “to some extent” 1 respondent said “No” (There was no comment to amplify this)
Are unions prioritising GBV at work?	All respondents answered in the affirmative
Do you participate in trade union and civil society protests?	- 7 said ‘yes’ from 6 countries: Jordan, Tunisia, Palestine, Iraq, Lebanon, Egypt. The Algerian respondent said ‘No’. - 10 said trade union protests only.
Follow Union social media	Most accessed to least accessed social media: 1. Facebook 2. Website 3. Whatsapp 4. YouTube, Instagram 5. Tiktok The majority look once a day
Follow PSI social media	Most accessed to least accessed 1. Facebook 2. Website 3. Instagram One person said they don’t follow; at the other extreme, another person said they “follow all the social media channels where PSI posts”

4.4

Interviews with participants in the programme from the different countries involved in the project



Tunisia, November 13–15, 2022; pictures from Casper Hedberg.

Interviews were conducted, either face-to-face or online, with 17 participants (13 women and 4 men) representing 13 of the 33 trade unions involved in the project (approximately 40%), covering six of the eight participating countries detailed in the 2023 report. Table 2 details the countries and the trade unions from where the respondents came. Their views are incorporated into the report.

Almost all the respondents held national leadership positions (General Secretary, President, Executive Committee member or National Coordinator) in their unions and some also in their federations; others were PSI national coordinators as well. Several also served on various committees e.g. women, youth, climate or recruitment. Only a few were ordinary trade union members. The vast majority had belonged to their trade unions for more than 10 years.

No-one from Algeria or Morocco was interviewed since they never responded despite repeated requests.

Table 2

Individuals interviewed face-to-face or online as well as those who responded to the Questionnaire

Country	Trade Union
Egypt	Solidarity Union of Workers at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina
	General Union of Real Estate Tax Workers
Iraq	General Union of Electricity Workers
Jordan	Independent Syndicate for the Department of Statistics Employees
	Independent Trade Union of Workers in Municipalities – Northern Jordan
	Independent Union of Health Sector Workers in Jordan
Lebanon	Syndicate of Employees and Workers of the Lebanese Regie for Tobacco
	NSSF Employees' Union
	Syndicate of Employees and Workers of the Port of Beirut
	Syndicate of Social Workers in Lebanon
Palestine - Gaza	General Union of Workers in Health Services
Palestine - West Bank	Health Services Union (West Bank)
Tunisia	UGTT



4.5 Possible Shortcomings of the Report



Project on gender equality for women workers.

We attempted to investigate aspects of the project from all angles. However, the following disclaimers are mentioned:

1. With the questionnaire, PSI leadership guided us as to who to approach; the process was not done randomly or scientifically. Not all participating trade unions responded; no trade union from Algeria completed it.
2. While we attempted to conduct more in-depth face-to-face or online interviews with some members of the participating trade unions, this proved difficult because time was very short. PSI recommended interviewing specific individuals and subsequently followed up with them to ensure they were comfortable with the interview process. This turned out to be a lengthy process and in some instances, time ran out.
3. There were also difficulties with applying for visas for the various countries.
4. We have not analysed whether finances were used efficiently and effectively as this was not a requirement of the Report.

Despite these shortcomings, we believe that the interviews we carried out have given us a fair sense of the project, its achievements and how trade unions benefited. The full text of these interviews is also available to share with the project coordinators to glean more information from what we discovered, should they require it.



Key Findings

Summary of project achievements against objectives



PSI Regional Workshop on Planning for Women project 2018-2022 in Arab Countries; 27-28 March 2017 in Padova Hotel, Beirut, Lebanon.

5.1 Project objectives

The project aimed to address gender inequality and gender-based violence (GBV) in public services by:

- strengthening women's participation and leadership in unions,
- advancing gender-responsive policies and collective bargaining, and
- advocating for legal and policy reforms aligned with international labour standards.

The Union to Union (UtoU) Project 60574 which operated from 2018 until 2024 was a continuation of an earlier project that had begun in 2014. The project has been funded through Union to Union (UtoU) (formerly known as LO-TCO Biståndsnämnd) with support from Fackförbundet ST, the Swedish Union for Civil Servants.

The project had sought to:

- grow women's membership
- promote gender equality,
- grow and develop the PSI Arab Women's trade union network,
- build leadership capacities of women trade unionists among PSI SWANA region affiliates (introduce quota system),
- promote women's leadership in trade unions and increase their leadership campaigning capacities.

The objectives of the project from 2018 until 2024 were to continue to carry out these earlier plans but also to focus on amending gender discriminatory laws in the SWANA region. To achieve this, women in trade unions would be given organisational and campaigning skills. These skills would enable them to influence their trade unions to implement national campaigns against gender discrimination in the law.

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5.2 ACHIEVEMENTS



Judging from the annual reports and from interviews with Hanna, el Zein, Brunzell and Runsten, as well as with trade union participants in the project across many of the countries, the majority of these objectives were achieved, in some countries more so than others. Often, the difficult political situations, exacerbated by war in some countries, interfered with the programme and prevented it from being carried out (e.g. Palestine). (see 9.2 below)

Despite this, the project achieved numerous successes across the different countries involved in the project.

Table 3 reproduces information given in PSI's annual report for 2022 which demonstrates how the percentage of women at the highest decision-making levels of the unions increased between the years 2018 and 2022. (We were not able to find more recent statistics in the reports)

The vast majority of trade unions now have higher percentages of women on their Executive Committees. Many trade unions have secured this through the adoption of the quota system. Those trade unions that have not secured a quota show fewer women in leadership positions; an exception is the Social Work Specialists Syndicate in Lebanon. Twenty-two of the 35 trade unions now have quotas in place. By 2022, women held more than 30 per cent of the executive positions in 15 of the 35 trade unions. Women are now a strong force in the leadership of their trade unions.



PSI Sub Regional Workshop on Advanced MENA Women leadership training-campaign evaluation and network assessment; 17-18 October 2016 in Casablanca, Morocco.

Table 3



Percentage of women holding Executive Committee positions, 2018, 2020, 2022 in their unions and which ones have adopted a quota for women

	Country	Union	EC*	2014 % women in EC	2016 % women in EC	2018 % women in EC	2020 % women in EC	2022 % women in EC	Quota
1	Lebanon	Electricite du liban	12	0	0	0	0	16.6%	No
2		Port of Beirut	12	0	0	0	0	16.6%	No
3		Regie of tobacco	12	16.6%	20%	20%	20%	30%	Yes
4		Kadischa electricity	12	0	0		0	16.6%	No
5		Middle East Airlines	12	8.3%	16.6%	0	16.6%	16.6%	No
6		Social Security	12	8.3%	16.6%	8.3%	16.6-25%	30%	No
7		Trade union of workers in the Water sector	12			0	0	8%	No
8		Social Work Specialists Syndicate	9					90%	No
9	Iraq	South Electricity Iraq	10	20%	30%	10%	30%	40%	Yes
10		General TU of workers in Electricity	10				--	40%	Yes
11	Algeria	SNAPAP	7	42.8%	50%	30%	50%	50%	Yes
12		SNATEG (electricity & gas)	7		50%	0	50%	--	Yes
13	Egypt	Health trade union	45	20%	30%	30%	30%	30%	Yes
14		RETA (Real Estate Tax Union)	43	25%	29%	20%	29%	30%	Yes
15		Bibliotheca of Alexandrina	15					33%	
16	Morocco	Union Syndicale des Agents et Fonctionnaires des Services Publics	15			25%	30%	35%	Yes

(continues on the next page)

* EC: Executive Committee
(Unions in italic have no data from 2014-16)

Table 3 (continued)

	COUNTRY	Union	EC*	2014 % women in EC	2016 % women in EC	2018 % women in EC	2020 % women in EC	2022 % women in EC	Quota
17	Palestine	Public services WB	18	16.6%	30%	20%	30%	35%	Yes
18		Health WB	9	30%	30%	20%	30%	35%	Yes
19		Health Gaza	9	20%	40%	8.3%	40%	40%	Yes
20		Public Services Gaza	9	No data	30%	0	30%	30%	Yes
21		Municipalities Gaza	9	0	20%	0	20%	20%	Yes
22	Jordan	General Trade Union for workers in Electricity	9	0	0	0	0	22.2%	No
23		GTU for pharmaceutical and health professions	9			0	22.2%	22.2%	No
24		GTU for Petro-Chemical workers	9			0	0	16%	No
25		Independent Synd. for the Department of Statistics	11			11.1%	28%	28%	TBC
26		Independent TU of Workers in North Municipalities	12				--	15%	No
27		Independent Union of Workers in Health Sector					--	40%	Yes
28		Tunisia	Justice	9	11.1%	0		0	
29	Agriculture		9	11.1%	11.1%	0	11.1%		Yes*
30	Finances		9	22.2%	33.3%	0	33.3%		Yes*
31	Municipalities		9	22.2%	22.2%	11.1%	22.2%		Yes*
32	Water		9	0	0	0	0	11.1%	Yes*
33	Electricity		9	0	0	0	0	11.1%	Yes*
34	Public work and housing		9	0	0	0	0	11.1%	Yes*
35	Health		9	11.1%	11.1%	11.1%	11.1%	11.1%	Yes*

Table 4

Summary of Achievements as against the Objectives of the project



1. Strengthening women's participation and leadership in unions

i) Significant rise in women's union participation and leadership

- Women's membership increased, women's committees were created, and unions across the region adopted gender quotas.
- The percentage of women leaders grew substantially, with women becoming more vocal in meetings and more active in union decision-making.
- This surge in activism is visible across Lebanon, Iraq, Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, and Algeria, where women have overcome social and religious constraints to lead openly.
- Women's involvement also had personal impacts, empowering survivors of domestic violence to rebuild their lives and rise to national-level union leadership (Lebanon).

ii) Gender-responsive union structures

- Unions revised bylaws to build gender-fair internal structures (Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan).
- Gender desks and gender committees were formed and monitored by PSI.
- Integration of gender and anti-harassment awareness became routine in union activities (Iraq and others).
- Cross-country learning deepened through WhatsApp groups and PSI networks.

iii) Organising and representation across sectors

- Women workers in informal agriculture were actively organised into unions (Egypt).
- Women negotiated practical solutions—transportation for meeting attendance and OHS protections for agricultural workers (Tunisia).

iv) Major union wins influenced by women leaders

- Jordan's 8-day municipal strike won permanent contracts for 6000 workers, relocation rights for women, and an employee savings fund—demonstrating strong women's leadership in industrial action.

2. Advancing gender-responsive policies and collective bargaining

i) Mainstreaming gender equality in union policy

- Gender, anti-discrimination, and anti-harassment topics were integrated into core union activities in multiple countries.
- Codes of conduct addressing harassment, ethics, and GBV were developed or signed in Lebanon, Egypt, and Jordan.
- A dedicated committee to address workplace violence and harassment was established (Jordan).

ii) Collective bargaining and social dialogue

- Unions negotiated collective agreements covering non-discrimination, maternity protection, workplace safety, and C190-aligned protections.
- Active social dialogue is taking place in at least six countries.
- Capacity-building workshops strengthened skills in negotiation, communication, and bargaining, producing visible improvements in union performance.

iii) Occupational health and safety (OHS)

- Research connected gender equality to public health and safety (West Bank).
- A draft OHS law was developed in Iraq.
- Women unionists secured OHS provisions for women agricultural workers (Tunisia).

iv) Emerging gender-responsive themes

- Some unions expanded their agendas to include gig-worker rights and environmental labour issues (Iraq).
- Swedish unions reported increased awareness of gender issues affecting SWANA-origin members due to the project.

3. Advocating for legal and policy reforms aligned with international labour standards

i) Promoting global standards

- Women were trained on international standards, especially C190, and are leading ratification and enforcement campaigns (Tunisia, Iraq).

ii) Legal and policy reforms

- Unions, often working with civil society and social movements, succeeded in amending discriminatory laws—most notably Lebanon's social security laws and the removal of a discriminatory family benefits provision.
- Persistent pressure by unions forced governments and employers to convert contract workers to permanent positions (West Bank).

iii) Strong national campaigns

- Unions led or joined national-level campaigns for gender equality in Lebanon, Tunisia, Jordan, Morocco, and Algeria.
- Jordan's unions forced the Minister of Municipal Affairs into negotiations after a nationwide strike—one of the strongest examples of policy-level influence.

4. Continuation of earlier project goals (2012–2018)

Growing membership, developing regional women's networks, and strengthening leadership

- Women's membership and leadership grew steadily, supported by gender committees, gender desks, and PSI regional networks.
- Quotas and gender-responsive bylaws institutionalised women's roles in union governance.
- Solidarity networks strengthened across the region through experience sharing, campaigns, and collective learning.
- Training and leadership development translated into higher confidence, stronger public speaking, and more women leading negotiations and campaigns.

06

Effective Strategies

Tools and approaches used in the project

We have highlighted below the strategies, tools and approaches which we feel have impacted the success of the project. These views have been gleaned from reports and interviews.

6.1 Skilled, passionate and transparent coordinators of the project

ST officials, Runsten and Brunzell, stressed the absolute importance of having trustworthy, honest and transparent coordinators in a project if it was going to be successful. "If the coordinators are not totally transparent," Brunzell said, "the project will fail."

In this case, Hanna and el Zein, as coordinators of the project and both with a depth of experience and knowledge, elicited a great deal of respect from the funders. They were transparent and skilled and Hanna's diplomacy and el Zein's fighting spirit "complemented each other's styles effectively."

The efficacy of the coordinators was echoed by participants in the project who had nothing but respect and admiration for both coordinators/facilitators.

Many participating trade unionists in the project described positively how the project had helped them.

Khalil (Lebanon) has partnered with PSI for 25 years.

Much of who I am as a trade unionist, I owe to PSI. They didn't just train us — they built a new generation of leaders.
Khalil, Lebanon



Haifa (Lebanon) echoed this view, describing PSI's approach as practical and empowering.

After so many years, PSI came into my life like a light. It reminded me that our work can truly make change.
Haifa, Lebanon

For Hanna and el Zein, doing this job "is not work, it's our beliefs", says el Zein; their passion is an important driver of the project.



6.2 Participatory learning

In discussions with Najwa Hanna and Chahnaz el Zein, both stressed the importance of using active, participatory learning methods in the learning process and how these can help to change the behaviour of participants and empower them.



We use participatory training methods – we make small groups, we let them discuss in small groups, present results of the discussion, they are involved in the workshop... up to 2-3 days.

At the beginning, we ask them their expectations... at the end of the workshop we compare what they say at the beginning and what they have at the end. Usually they are very happy; they feel they learn a lot not only from us, they learn from each other.

And their behaviour, it's changed... I think it's the most important thing, you can see how they behave after the workshop. If we have a president, a woman from his union, at the beginning, the women are shy to speak and they accept everything that the president says. After one or two days, you see they are more strong, they stand up, they discuss with him, they say, 'no it's wrong'. It's very important, this behaviour change, it's not because of us, it's because of them.

Chahnaz el Zein, PSI, Lebanon



AFRECON25 Ghana - November 2025



Right: Khalil from Lebanon - AFRECON25 Ghana, November 2025

6.3 EFFECTIVE AND REGULAR PLANNING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION MEETINGS

While many participant trade unions praised PSI for its project, the well-written and informative annual reports written by the PSI SWANA coordinators gave us a detailed picture of the project and its solid educational foundations.

A dominant aspect in these reports is the methodical approach to rolling out the programme. Care has been taken to ensure that knowledge and training skills were combined, together with 'Training of Trainers' programmes. In this way, those who gained knowledge were empowered to take action and with their new facilitator skills, they were able to pass on their knowledge and skills to others in their trade unions.

In the interviews, the 'Train the Trainer' training is frequently mentioned. Many share how valuable this was.

A large part of what I've become as a trade unionist today, I owe to PSI. Around 2005, they launched a Training of Trainers (TOT) programme, which developed our knowledge and skills in leadership, negotiation, and advocacy. Through these programmes, I became one of PSI's certified trainers in union education.
Khalil, Lebanon

A mark of the project's success is the gradual uptick in activities between 2018 and 2024 undertaken by the individual unions as well as the increasing number of women in leadership positions.

6.4 OWNING THE PROJECT

Many projects never gain traction because project participants never take ownership of it.

In this case, the project arose from "the needs of the women workers in public services in the Arab sub-region," explained Hanna. At an initial strategic plan in Tunisia in 2013, women workers indicated that they wanted the project to "address challenges that they are facing... That's why there is a belonging between women workers in the sub-region and the project. When the issue is part of your skin, of your body, it's different," she said.

Numerous trade union participants testified how the project has helped their organisation.

Samira (**Gaza**) said:

The project created a revolution in women's world in the labour market and in unions. It broke barriers and forced union leaders to include women at every level. **Samira, Gaza**

And she said it had a more profound effect on women themselves:

When we used to meet to amend labor laws, no-one mentioned women. Now women call employers and sit with unionists to discuss those amendments. **Samira, Gaza**

In the West Bank, Jouwairiya explains how PSI does not impose programmes but regularly "asks what we need, listens, and tries to meet our requests as much as possible."
In neighbouring Jordan, Bassem said

working with PSI was a turning point—it opened our eyes to union issues, connected us with other trade unionists, and helped us link local workers' struggles to international labour standards. **Bassem, Jordan**

Wegdan (**Egypt**) described how "PSI didn't just fund workshops—it built a long-term learning process that produced confident, skilled unionists."

With this confidence, PSI's affiliates in Egypt now present research, run campaigns, and represent Egypt in regional and global meetings. Fellow Egyptian trade unionist, Sherif said

PSI helped us transition from reactive to strategic actors. And that's the biggest difference PSI made—it let us speak with our own voice. We designed, budgeted, and implemented projects locally. PSI provided the framework, but we supplied the content and leadership. That's why I say PSI didn't just train us—it transformed us. We went from dependency to ownership. **Sherif, Egypt**

This new model changed how they see the world. PSI connected them with unions across continents—people facing the same challenges but solving them differently. It expanded their perspective and made them more strategic and enabled them to adapt the overarching objectives of the project and develop their own programmes to suit their particular circumstances.

6.5 BUILDING SUPPORTIVE AND SUSTAINABLE STRUCTURES



The PSI project goes beyond occasional workshops. Hanna and El Zein have worked diligently to ensure that participating trade unions feel a strong sense of ownership over the project. The structures established by PSI provide ongoing support to the programme.

In every country, there are local coordinators (some women, some men) who liaise with PSI's Lebanon office. All these local coordinators come together in a National Coordinating Committee (NCC) in their country. The NCC works together with PSI to evaluate activities and to plan for the next year. Hanna and el Zein help with materials and sometimes training and keep in constant contact with workshop organisers in the lead up to the workshop to ensure that it is well-prepared. They also run 'Train the Trainer' workshops to train those in the project countries to run the workshops themselves, always using participatory methods.

The result is that in each country, there is a core of women (and some supportive men) with knowledge and skills, many of whom have been elected into leadership positions in their trade unions. Where PSI's budget has been insufficient to cover a particular workshop, these women have motivated their trade union to cover the balance. This has helped to set the project on a sustainable trajectory.

Participating trade unions elaborated on how PSI has helped them to develop sustainable structures.

Intisar (Iraq) described how her union's capacity-building since 2020 is a result of PSI. PSI support provided structure, international solidarity, and legitimacy. Continuous online and in-person training during COVID-19 transformed isolation into a period of growth for Iraqi unionists. Through PSI, Intisar strengthened her negotiation skills, gender sensitivity, and strategic campaigning skills so that she in turn was able to provide online training to over 300 young members, mostly women, during the pandemic. She introduced them to the fundamentals of unionism and labour rights. PSI also amplified visibility for independent unions, protecting them from political isolation.

[PSI] doesn't just train; they recognise potential and stand behind you. With PSI, I know I have an international backbone. Intisar, Iraq

Egyptian trade unionist, Sherif, gives credit to what he terms 'PSI's new coordination model', where unions themselves design and evaluate their programmes to ensure better programme outcomes.

This PSI approach he says, is all about integration:

All activities—on gender, climate, public services, and workers' rights—feed into one another. We also ensure that each event includes both men and women, aligning with PSI's 50/50 principle.

When I compare this to older unions, even those critical of us acknowledge that PSI-affiliated unions are different: more professional, data-driven, and focused on real issues rather than slogans. Sherif, Egypt

His union conducted studies on precarious employment, GBVH, and violence against women, which created real awareness across the labour movement. These studies gave independent unions intellectual credibility and changed how civil society and even government officials view them.

According to Jouwairiyah (West Bank), all union activities in recent years have been coordinated through PSI. The partnership has provided both technical and moral support—offering visibility, credibility, and structured tools for organising. PSI's workshops on gender equality, negotiation, and international standards helped institutionalise equality principles within union work.

PSI didn't just train us; it changed how we think. We now use rights-based language and stand stronger in negotiations. Jouwairiyah, West Bank

She described PSI as the main driver behind her personal and professional growth. Before PSI, her influence was limited to her institution; afterwards, she became a national voice advocating for women and health workers.

6.5 Building supportive and sustainable structures (cont'd.)



And she's developing men's and women's leadership capacity collectively:

I want alternatives ready if anything happens to me. I'm proud to create women leaders who can continue after me.

Jouwairiyah, West Bank

In Jordan, Bassem says PSI's programmes enhanced women's confidence and participation, particularly in rural areas where cultural resistance was high. The union began holding training sessions during working hours to enable women with family duties to attend. Women now show greater willingness to speak out and mentor each other.

The first real change was that women started speaking up—they found their voice. Bassem, Jordan

Similarly, three women union members interviewed in Tunisia, are a testament to the strength of PSI's training of trainers programme. They were not personally trained by PSI. However, they had been trained and mentored by Souhair (Tunisia) who herself had transferred the skills and knowledge she had acquired through PSI's regional programmes.

They credited Souhair's training sessions—held locally and adapted to their context—for introducing key ideas around gender equality, communication, and union organising. Through her mentoring, they learned how to document violations, speak publicly, and communicate with management. One participant, who works in a municipal service, said that before Souhair's sessions, she "didn't even know what a grievance mechanism was." Afterwards, she successfully intervened in a dispute over unfair shifts for women workers.

Another explained that she learned how to write formal complaints and letters to her union, skills she now shares with younger colleagues. The third highlighted how Souhair's insistence on including women in decision-making "changed how we speak in meetings—we no longer wait for permission."

Although their learning came indirectly, all three said PSI's influence was visible in Souhair's methods—interactive, participatory, and focused on linking everyday problems to broader rights frameworks. They described the training as a safe space to analyse power relations and recognise gender-based discrimination in their workplaces.

Mirna (Lebanon) shared how

PSI taught us that change is not just about demanding rights—it's about building the structures to sustain them.

Through decades of regional instability, Mirna maintained union continuity and credibility while advancing women's rights in public service. Her integration of gender equality into institutional governance, cross-sector collaboration, and mentorship of new leaders demonstrates how PSI's approach nurtures sustainable change.



We are planting seeds for the next generation of women who will not need to fight for a seat—they will already have it. Mirna, Lebanon

6.6 BUILDING PROGRAMMES TO ENCOURAGE ACTION AND CHANGE

Many trade union education programmes invest in extensive and repeated training with little to show for it. Across the countries where the project was active, participant unions gave numerous examples of successes and actions they have carried out. The views from several participants provide insights into this:

Azzam (**Jordan**) explained how the PSI training

changed how we think about our role. We stopped waiting for change and started building it. PSI taught us how to plan a campaign, set realistic goals, and speak the language of social dialogue. Their support transformed us from an isolated local union into a regional reference for independent organising.

Khalil and Haifa (**Lebanon**) put it this way:

PSI didn't just support unions — it gave us a compass. In a country where decisions are made without people, we learned how to make our voices matter.

Egypt displays other examples of PSI-supported achievements. According to Rasha, PSI helped them to:

- **broaden women's participation** with a 50/50 gender balance policy in training.
- conduct a **study on the economic cost of GBVH** which they could then use in national advocacy.
- through PSI's Social Dialogue Project, secure inclusion of a **legal definition of violence and harassment** in the new labour law for the first time.
- **develop leadership and organising capacity**, especially for women and youth.
- **strengthen digital organising** and cross-union solidarity.

All these interventions have helped improve their standing in society.

Before PSI, we were treated as troublemakers. Now we're seen as professionals working for social justice.
Rasha, Egypt

Wegdan (**Egypt**) described how PSI's approach to union training was all about awareness and empowerment. Before that, traditional union training in Egypt was services-focused: loans, discounts and social aid. PSI's training turned this on its head. If you "raise awareness, services will follow," she said, "without awareness, you just have dependency."

6.7 Project flexibility to adapt and change

Many projects fail because they are inflexible and are unable to change if obstacles appear. A number of challenges threatened this project's trajectory; in all cases, the organisers were able to make changes so that the project could continue.

6.7.1 Including men in the project

The project initially was only for women. This enabled women to build their capacity, gain confidence and empower themselves. However, a few years into the project (2020), it was realised that resistant male leadership could become an obstacle to the project's advancement.

Given the overarching influence of patriarchy and tradition across the region and how these detrimentally affected women's active role in trade unions, it was important to include men in the programme so that they themselves could understand the discrimination women were facing and, together with women, change their attitudes and develop solutions.

Men needed to understand why for example in Lebanon, women were resigning from their jobs because child care was more expensive than their salary and it was easier for them to step back into their societal role than fight to keep their jobs.

Brunzell praised the project and the men involved for the significant development and positive changes in their perspectives that had resulted from their active participation.

Moreover, according to El Zein:

It's very important to include male leadership in workshops, not only women. The women need the support of the executive board [of the trade union] to support the campaign to amend discriminatory laws. They cannot do it alone without the men.

6.7.2 Adapting to COVID-19

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck, the coordinators were faced with new challenges. There was, for example, rising violence against women, socio-economic crises across countries and health and safety dangers for those forced to go to work.

This was particularly prevalent for women who were working in the lowest-paying jobs like agriculture and textiles, who had no access to resources beyond the minimal financial compensation they received for their labour.

The project responded by intensifying awareness workshops on safety and health at work. To monitor and support women in this situation, trade unions negotiated and then established gender desks and hotlines where workers could find help, advocated for support from relevant government ministries, and used social media to promote the campaign. All these new learnings (e.g. social media) provided a new arena for trade unions to build on after the end of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Another important organisational benefit of COVID-19 was how quickly some trade unions shifted to platforms like Zoom/Microsoft Teams to communicate. PSI trained participants on how to use these platforms so that workshops could continue online.

However, this was not possible across all areas of the project. Poor access to the internet, especially in rural areas, detrimentally affected many, while digital illiteracy meant others battled to move to the new ways of working.

Trade unionists in **Egypt** (Sherif and Dalia) specifically mentioned that many of their members were not "comfortable with digital tools" while the lack of stable internet, poor technical infrastructure and proper devices prevented others from fully embracing these new tools.

6.8 ST's supportive role

ST viewed their role as supportive and facilitative rather than directing project content. This allowed local unions to design their own programmes and direction.

ST kept in regular monthly contact with PSI, ensuring that they were continuously updated on progress and challenges. The ST officials also tried to attend at least one event or workshop annually to stay closer to the project.

ST's communications experts were also brought in to share their ideas in a training session with the unions. This proved to be very useful for the unions involved.

6.9 Building links between women in the region

ST's Runsten emphasised the significance of bringing together women and men from various trade unions and countries through regional workshops. It enabled women to learn from each other, to get support from one another and to know that they were part of something bigger.

In **Lebanon**, Nisreen, describes how this aspect of the programme allowed her to feel part of a regional movement for gender justice. Through these exchanges, Lebanese women unionists developed stronger advocacy skills and gained confidence to speak publicly and negotiate within their unions.

Several women spoke of regional conferences and cross-country travel as key moments in their leadership journeys. These gatherings offered them exposure, built their confidence, and a sense of belonging to a broader movement that extended beyond their national contexts.

Samira (**Gaza**) described her first regional conference in Lebanon as a transformative experience that expanded her worldview and reinforced her commitment to union work. The opportunity to leave Gaza, engage with peers, and feel part of a wider struggle strengthened her motivation during a period of internal union challenges.

Even the participating men in the project felt the same:

Beyond the technical side, PSI also built a sense of solidarity and community among unions. Through joint training and events, friendships formed — we became like one family. Even outside work, we still stay connected. PSI created that network. Khalil, Lebanon

These important linkages have continued through the use of social media, especially WhatsApp and have enabled trade unionists to keep in easy contact with each other in a relatively cost-effective way.

In **Egypt**, after many workshops, the participants created a WhatsApp group. Now, if any woman has a problem in her union/workplace, they ask each other for advice. In 2024, they had more than 5-6 Zoom meetings. El Zein set up and sent the Zoom link, they would choose the topic and they would meet for two to three hours. They discussed issues like: ILO C190, social care/ security e.g. maternity leave etc; how to help someone who was unfairly dismissed. This group has enabled them to seek help from each other and to find solutions to common problems.

6.10 Building internationalism, sisterhood around women's issues

Building regional solidarity was important for PSI, but so too was international solidarity.

At the start of the project, Hanna asked Brunzell from ST if she knew any women who could serve as inspiring speakers at one of their workshops—role models who could openly share their struggles and successes.

Brunzell successfully persuaded Britta Lejon, chair of the Swedish Union of Civil Servants (ST) and a former minister in Sweden's Social Democratic government, who herself had faced significant challenges as a woman leader. Another younger trade union leader accompanied her to attend the workshop.

a lot of the women actually had been crying when Britta told her story... There are people still talking about that meeting, how it opened their minds that this could actually be possible, this is something a woman can do. It's not going to be easy, it's no one who's going to carry you. We have tried to hold on through the whole project [the idea of] sisterhood, how important it is to support each other.

One of the SWANA trade unionists attending the workshop was heard to exclaim: "ah, you have the same problems as us."

This internationalism was duplicated in Sweden where Swedish trade union members were constantly updated on the progress of the project, what was being done and the situation that women lived under in the region.

6.10 (cont'd.)

ST also shared information on their refugee project in the SWANA region and this provided new knowledge about the situation of refugees in the SWANA region, and enriched Swedish members knowledge of the issue. Those members who had been refugees themselves before they landed in Sweden were shown a new internationalism aspect of the trade union to which they belonged.

Lina (**Jordan**) says that through PSI's training programmes on gender equality, occupational safety, GBVH prevention, and social dialogue, she expanded her understanding of how global labour standards can be adapted to national contexts. She explained that PSI's consistent support helped strengthen independent unions and build networks of women leaders across sectors.

The workshops made us realise that women are not alone in their struggles; we are connected to a global movement. Lina, Jordan

When **Lebanon** experienced Covid-19, the Beirut explosion and its economic collapse, Nisreen (**Lebanon**) saw that PSI's solidarity went beyond just training. She recalled PSI's rapid assistance where it facilitated links with European unions, such as Swedish partners, who organized **fundraising** to help Lebanese unionists purchase medicines and sustain social support services.

She noted that PSI's engagement also fostered inter-union cooperation across countries, helping Lebanese unions feel part of a larger, resilient community. This regional solidarity allowed them to exchange strategies, strengthen governance, and promote ethical and gender-sensitive leadership.

PSI taught us the meaning of collective struggle and stood by us when we had nothing—even sending medicine and funds after the explosion. Nisreen, Lebanon

6.11 PSI gives legitimacy to participating trade unions

Many participating trade unions in the project are not officially recognised by the government. This limits their rights and makes them vulnerable to state repression. Not all governments are supportive of trade union activism. Several trade unionists from participating unions expressed their appreciation for the support and legitimacy that their affiliation with an international body like PSI provides.

Bassem (**Jordan**) believes this international link amplifies their voice and protects their independence:

We face legal, financial, and political pressure every day. They tried to intimidate us, but PSI's global presence gave us legitimacy—the government thinks twice before silencing a union that has international allies. PSI made us believe that solidarity has no borders—and that independence is our strongest tool. Bassem, Jordan

Egypt's Rasha described PSI's support in this way:

PSI helped us stay visible, capable, and united when the system wanted us invisible. Rasha, Egypt

Her colleague, Wegdan, described how PSI's public statement supporting her union

gave us real legitimacy with the government. Officials started taking our demands seriously because they knew an international federation was watching. That statement helped us move the issue forward faster than we could have on our own. Wegdan, Egypt

During the **Jordan** interviews, Bassem explained that a formal PSI statement backing their work on workers' rights and GBVH significantly strengthened their bargaining power; the Jordanian ministry and government representatives became more responsive and cooperative. The PSI statement acted as an external pressure point, giving the union the credibility and visibility needed to make progress on the issue they were negotiating.

Others interviewed spoke of how attending PSI regional events had also increased their standing in their own trade unions. Returning from these conferences often shifted how male leaders perceived them, giving their voices more weight in internal decision-making. One participant reflected: "When we return from regional conferences, we are taken more seriously... it feels like our voice is heard more." Lina, Jordan

Good practices / examples

7.1 Gender transformation and leadership within the unions

When the project began, there were few women's committees in the trade unions involved in the project and few women were represented in leadership positions in the trade unions, even though women membership in these trade unions varied from 45% to 70% and averaged 60%.

Interviews with participating unions reflect the strong impact of the PSI programme. Not only were the training sessions effective, women also credited personal mentorship as being responsible for major leadership shifts.

Lina (**Jordan**) shared how, during one of the PSI regional conferences, she met a senior woman trade unionist from outside Jordan who became an important mentor in her development. The woman immediately reached out to her after the workshop session, telling her she had strong presence and potential, and encouraging her to speak more during the plenary discussions.

Lina recalled that the woman “kept an eye on her” throughout the conference, informally guiding her, pulling her into conversations, and introducing her to other union leaders from the region. The mentor shared her own experiences navigating patriarchal resistance, and told Lina not to wait for permission to lead. Lina said that this was the first time someone from outside her union recognised her abilities so directly.

According to Lina, the mentor continued contacting her after the conference, checking in on her progress and urging her to apply for training and leadership opportunities. Lina described this relationship as a turning point:

She believed in me before I believed in myself. She pushed me to speak, to take space, to see myself as a leader. It changed how I understood my role inside the union.

Lina, Jordan

In the **West Bank (before October 2023)** Jouwairiyah detailed how, through PSI support, the union had organised numerous training sessions on women's leadership and negotiation skills. Jouwairiyah highlighted collective bargaining as the most transformative skill for women.

After the training, she coached nurses and staff during strikes, teaching them how to negotiate effectively. PSI's capacity-building shifted women's confidence from passive participation to active leadership.

At first women came quiet and shy. Through workshops and meetings, they started speaking up, understanding laws, and defending their rights—even in rooms full of men.

—Jouwairiyah, West Bank

7.1 (cont'd.)

She emphasised practical achievements: equal overtime pay, child allowances for widows and divorced women, maternity leave, and reduced hours for pregnant workers. These advances helped normalise equality between men and women in workplaces.

Lina (**Jordan**) detailed how PSI projects helped them promote gender equality and encouraged other women to step into leadership roles. She believes that inclusive representation must translate into real influence over decision-making processes.

Although the cultural expectation that women should prioritise family over public engagement remains a major barrier, PSI's interventions have helped shift perceptions. “When women see another woman negotiating, they start to believe they can do it too,” Lina says.

Mirna's (**Lebanon**) journey reflects a gradual but steady transformation of women's roles in union structures. She transitioned from being the only woman in the room to leading a formal committee and mentoring the next generation. Her leadership opened doors for women to engage in negotiation, strike coordination, and public campaigns.

She stressed that women face dual resistance—from men who fear sharing power and from women hesitant to challenge traditional norms. PSI's regional work provided both legitimacy and strategy, equipping women with practical tools for organising, policy drafting, and dialogue.

Empowerment is not a workshop; it's continuity, mentorship, and accountability. Mirna, Lebanon

Rasha is recognised as a trailblazer for women in Egypt's public-sector unions. She reinstated a 30% women's quota within her union's bylaws in 2019, countering its removal from the national law.

She was the first woman to perform field inspections—a task previously reserved for men—creating a precedent for women's access to technical roles within the Real Estate Tax Authority.

She mentors younger women, notably a former shy participant who has become Assistant Treasurer and a confident trainer, illustrating a replicable mentorship model within the union. She promotes women-only training and insists on gender balance in all workshops and elections.

7.2 GBV advocacy

Interviews with participating trade unions provide evidence of how they have transformed PSI's training into on-the-ground action.

Since 2015/16, Iraq's General Union of Electricity Workers has run a spirited campaign to urge its government to ratify C190. Intisar described how she organised awareness campaigns using hashtags, sit-ins, and slogans like “No to harassment”. She backed this up with letters and petitions to successive prime ministers and contacted multiple Ministers of Labour and Members of Parliament.

During occasions like International Women's Day and Labour Day, they organised women's empowerment markets. Each woman vendor displayed a banner reading “No to Violence – Ratify Convention 190.”

Awareness through creativity, you attract people to an event, and they leave knowing about women's rights. Intisar, Iraq

Despite persistent campaigning, the ratification remains stalled in Parliament; however, they continue their lobbying efforts to advance the process.

Fear of retaliation remains a major barrier to reporting GBV. Women said stigma, surveillance, and employer power mean workers still hesitate to report harassment.

Women whisper their stories to us, but they're afraid to file a complaint. Mirna, Lebanon

Attempts have been made in **Jordan** to counter GBV. Under PSI's guidance, trade unionists from three different trade unions have co-established the **Haq Committee (see Box)**—a joint body between these three unions, to address gender-based violence and harassment in the workplace. Bassem (**Jordan**), described how PSI's approach shifted the perception of GBVH from a personal issue to a workplace rights concern, redefining it as part of occupational safety and health.

However, they are still tackling the law itself where the perpetrator, if found guilty, has to pay a fine to the state, and not to the victim. They are demanding a clearer compensation mechanism that ensures victims do not lose their jobs or rights.

How the Haq committee in Jordan is tackling GBV



In mid-2025, three trade unions established the Haq Committee to handle GBV cases. They ran two awareness workshops with around 40 participants (men and women included) from the three unions. The different forms of violence and harassment were explained to them using training materials from the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and other international organisations.

From there, each union appointed a focal point [a person] with a dedicated phone number. This number was included in posters and leaflets that were distributed among members, informing them of this facility. Complaints are recorded in special logbooks kept by each union, classified, and reviewed. Complaints are investigated and documented, and evidence is collected. Meetings are then held with employers and relevant authorities; when necessary, cases are referred to legal advisers or pro bono lawyers. (There are limited financial resources, external experts are only brought in when needed.) Some issues are resolved internally through coordination with management, while others proceed to legal action.

Challenges

The structure is still new and very few complaints have been received. They feel that possible reasons could be due to workers' fear of reporting or lack of awareness.

Success story

A senior employee laid a complaint regarding harassment and threats at a hospital. The case was addressed through official communication with authorities, multi-party meetings, and the use of evidence and witnesses, leading to the perpetrator's forced retirement.

What next?

The structure is well established; now the unions are putting more effort into strengthening communication, awareness, and complaint-handling mechanisms to effectively deal with GBV.

In Lebanon, Mirna describes how they first established a Women's Committee to represent women in the union. This Committee then developed a code of conduct and accountability framework addressing harassment, absenteeism, and ethics, integrated within the trade union's internal policies.

From there, they mobilised women to participate in PSI's gender and leadership programmes and transformed them from passive members into active negotiators.

At PSI's SWANA women's gatherings, they shared their experiences and helped to replicate women's committees in neighbouring countries. She credits their success to PSI:

We learned to move from emotional reaction to structured advocacy. That's the PSI difference. Mirna, Lebanon



Mirna from Lebanon in the middle - Najwa Hanna PSI to her right - 2016 in Casablanca Morocco

7.2.1 Establishment of gender-sensitive grievance mechanisms

Union women in Palestine, Jordan, and Tunisia described introducing clearer, safer channels for reporting workplace grievances, especially GBV-related cases. These mechanisms range from anonymous complaint boxes to designated women who have been trained at PSI workshops to take up complaints. This process has allowed women to report harassment without fear of retaliation, increasing trust in the union as a protective institution.

7.3 Practical negotiation coaching and strike leadership

Building on PSI training, women have led bargaining teams, coordinated strike logistics, and supported workers in high-pressure negotiations. Jouwairiyah's (West Bank) coaching of nurses during strikes is a strong example, but similar practices appeared in other interviews: women taking responsibility for documenting violations, drafting demands, and leading delegations to ministries.

7.4 Linking personal realities to collective action

Women unionists often blended activism with caregiving responsibilities to dismantle the narrative that leadership is incompatible with family life. Rasha (Egypt) attended training with her son, other women described negotiating with spouses, shifting household responsibilities, or supporting each other with childcare during union meetings. This normalisation of women leaders' lived realities strengthens union inclusiveness.



Project on gender equality for women workers - Morocco 2024.



Lessons Learned

Respondents shared many lessons they had learnt. These are the ones we felt to be most important.

8.1 Navigating ways to avoid social conservatism

On the West Bank, socially conservative norms and patriarchal expectations continue to limit open discussion of women's rights. International conventions like CEDAW remain controversial, "they see it as immoral and far from religion," says Jouwairiyah.

Instead, guided by PSI, the unions have honed in on C190. In this way, "we can speak "indirectly, under the title of 'non-discrimination' and 'decent work'" and get across the same point, says Jouwairiyah.

Similarly, she says, "If I say 'gender', the door closes. If I say 'decent work', the conversation opens."

Women also learned that going into meetings as a group changed outcomes.

When I went alone, they ignored me. When we went as women together, they couldn't push us aside.

— Palestine participant

8.2 Unions are stronger when they focus on tangible wins, not symbolic statements

Women said trust grew when unions delivered real improvements.

When women saw real changes—not slogans—they started joining and staying. Jouwairiyah, West Bank

8.3 Using social media

Communication with trade union members is always a challenge. Several trade unions are creating efficient ways of communicating, coordinating, and running awareness campaigns for their members across the country through digital networks.

This proved useful during restrictions on physical gatherings e.g. during COVID-19.

It is also essential in many countries in the region where the government imposes restrictions on trade unions' operations and movements.

In **Jordan**, Bassem described his trade union's tree-structured information network using Facebook and WhatsApp groups for each municipality, allowing rapid and accurate information sharing during strikes.

These platforms also help counter government misinformation and maintain a connection with members across Jordan. The union's strategic use of digital media strengthened public support, particularly during the 8-day national strike when they combined transparency, public apology messages, and community cleanup initiatives to gain credibility.

Bassem also highlighted the role of online training during COVID-19. He created a video tutorial to help members use Zoom and supported hybrid training for women through PSI.

Social media became our lifeline—it connected 99 municipalities and kept the movement united despite distance and restrictions; online learning reduces cost and distance.

Bassem, Jordan

Trade unions in **Egypt** also make use of Facebook and WhatsApp, says Rasha. These tools help bridge distance and bypass restrictions, keeping members informed and connected.

8.3 (cont'd.)

Across all countries, it became clear that Facebook and WhatsApp are the primary social media tools used to communicate news and updates. Cheap data plans and smartphone penetration, particularly in Iraq, Egypt and Tunisia, made WhatsApp organising possible. Through this medium, women coordinated strikes, monitored GBV cases, and exchanged tactics across cities.

We organised whole campaigns from our phones. Rasha, Egypt

Nevertheless, activists insisted that WhatsApp/Facebook networks were not enough. In-person meetings were still essential:

Online keeps us connected, but trust is built when we sit together. Bassem, Jordan

8.4 Youth engagement is critical but often overlooked

The majority of the unionists we interviewed were experienced trade unionists. Several young unionists expressed frustration that they are ready to lead but are not given structured roles.

The youth are ready, but the union still sees them as helpers, not leaders. Dahlia, Egypt

Although young people are not joining unions in large numbers, Jouwairiyah (**West Bank**) emphasised that her leadership model intentionally creates space for both women and youth to grow, ensuring the union does not depend on one generation alone. "I prefer to build teamwork among everyone — women, men, and youth — at the same level. I always tell them: if anything ever happens to me, there should be strong alternatives ready to lead."

8.5 Women's Leadership flourishes when they are not the only woman in the room

Several women said that their confidence increased dramatically when another woman was present.

The moment another woman entered the room, I felt half the burden fall off my shoulders. Mirna, Lebanon

8.6 Women leaders carry double or triple burdens—but they also innovate

Women balanced activism, care work, and resistance by adapting creatively.

I brought my son to the training because I refused to disappear from the union every time a problem happened at home. Rasha, Egypt

8.7 Intersectional Issues are emerging and require more intentional support

Across interviews, women emphasised that inequality is shaped not only by gender but also by class, geography, marital status, and caregiving responsibilities. Many unionists noted that rural women, informal workers, contract workers, widows, and divorced women face distinct forms of exclusion that require tailored strategies.

Not all women face the same barriers, so not all women can enter through the same door. Lina, Jordan

Unionists gave several examples of how they are trying to reach these women.

- In the **West Bank**, Jouwairiyah explained how her union supported widowed and divorced women in securing child allowances and equal overtime pay, and how they negotiated the regularisation of more than 500 contract women in government hospitals.
- In **Tunisia**, women unionists described negotiating transportation for agricultural women workers to attend meetings — a basic intervention that immediately increased rural participation.
- In **Egypt**, unions began organising informal agricultural workers and women in precarious employment who had never interacted with formal union structures before.

Despite these efforts, leaders across the region highlighted that marginalised women still struggle with self-confidence, time poverty, and community judgment, and need more targeted outreach, safe spaces, and continuous capacity-building to participate equally.



09

Contextual Challenges and enabling factors

Unions are operating under difficult circumstances. This section identifies these challenges both in their unions and within society.

9.1 Internal challenges within the union

- The neutrality of some male leadership in relation to gender inequality and the lack of will to bring a change in their unions to ensure women participate hinders the advancement of women.
- Jealousy among women makes it harder for new leaders to rise. Men sometimes help women more than women help each other.
- Some trade unions suffer from politicisation and party control which restricts independence. This reduces women's motivation and ambition in union work.

9.2 External challenges

Many women in trade unions, and trade unions themselves, are challenged by societal norms and political contexts.

- Cultural barriers e.g. beliefs that women should prioritise family over public engagement, prevent women from joining the union and/or actively participating in the union; women face difficulties balancing family and union responsibilities
- The growth and endurance of extremist groups that do not believe in gender equality and may promote discriminatory policies if they succeed in winning the elections and forming the Cabinet
- Employers refusal to acknowledge gender inequality and GBV issues
- The weak capacity of unions to influence national policies

Challenges extend beyond women's and cultural issues to limitations on the rights of trade unions to exist and organise. There is also state repression and monitoring of trade unionists in numerous countries involved in the project.



Juweiria from Palestine, second from right - 2016 in Casablanca Morocco

9.2 (cont'd.)

- In **Iraq**, the law does not allow trade union activity in the public sector including electricity. Unions are tolerated but not legally protected: they are not allowed to hold meetings inside workplaces.
- In **Jordan**, there are restrictive laws placed on independent union registration, limited financial resources.
- In **Egypt**, some trade unions' refusal to re-register with government, led to continuous obstruction—they were denied registration, their bank accounts were frozen, and access to their funds was blocked. Independent unions are often portrayed as politically subversive, and face security monitoring, administrative delays, and bans on public meetings or venue rentals. Nevertheless, unions remain defiant.

They think stopping our accounts will stop us. Instead, we found new ways to serve our members—and that's how independence survives.

Rasha, Egypt

9.2.1 War and political instability

The SWANA region is unstable politically. Trade unions in Yemen had to withdraw from the project in 2018 because of war in their country.

In Gaza and the West Bank, the ongoing genocide since October 2023 has killed close to 70 000 people and shattered people's lives.

On the West Bank, economic collapse, salary suspensions, and deteriorating security have crippled union activity. Workers often wait months for partial wages, and public institutions struggle to function.

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We can't go to factories or companies anymore. People are just trying to survive. **Jouwairiya, West Bank**

Despite this, she says PSI continues to shine a light:

...our economy has collapsed, but PSI helps us stay standing—mentally, professionally, and collectively. **Jouwairiya, West Bank**

Less hopeful is Samira in **Gaza** where displacement, devastation, and chaos have led to the collapse of social order, the spread of armed militias, and rising gender-based violence. Families are scattered; communities live in famine-like conditions where food, water, and medicine are unattainable. She herself is living in a tent.

Initially, PSI and the Palestine Federation redirected project funds to provide emergency relief, distributing approximately 8,000 Euros as food baskets and cash assistance to affected workers in Gaza. While on-the-ground organising was nearly impossible, PSI's continued presence and solidarity offered both legitimacy and protection:

Our role on the ground was small, but PSI's presence gave us strength and made us feel we weren't forgotten. **Samira, Gaza**

Trade unions, with the help of international solidarity, wanted to establish a shelter camp for workers' families — tents, aid, and other essentials. But the sheer scale of the devastation soon became overwhelming, Samira said.

Maybe we succeeded in the first three months of the war but after that, unfortunately, we failed because the displaced multiplied. The tragedy increased; everyone was lining up in the streets. Samira, Gaza

And women, she stressed, suffered the most. Many have been detained, raped, killed, or forced to beg and bake for survival. The humanitarian crisis has merged with a psychological one, leaving deep trauma and fear.

The genocide ended one kind of war and started others — wars of hunger, poverty, and humiliation. But Gaza's women are still standing. What we need now is not pity, but partnership. Samira, Gaza

This picture is all too familiar across Lebanon, Yemen and Iraq, where people have faced similar crises that have limited what unions could achieve.

We plan as much as we can, but the country's crisis decides everything. Intesar, Iraq

9.3 Enabling factors - Why the Project Succeeded

Across nearly every interview, participants described specific conditions, actions, and dynamics that contributed to the project's success and shaped the progress achieved in women's leadership, GBV awareness, and gender-responsive union reforms. These enabling factors were not incidental; they formed the backbone of how change became possible within challenging political, social, and economic contexts across the SWANA region.

They operated at multiple levels:

- **Institutional**, through union bylaws, committees, and leadership structures.
- **Programmatic**, through PSI's approach, training methods, and long-term accompaniment.
- **Contextual**, through crises, legal windows, and evolving social attitudes.
- **Personal**, through the individual determination, lived experiences, and solidarity of women unionists.

The following section synthesises these factors into two parts:

- **Cross-regional enabling factors** that appeared consistently across countries; and
- **Country-specific factors** that uniquely shaped outcomes in particular national contexts. Together, they illustrate not only what the project achieved, but how those achievements became possible.

9.3.1 Cross-Regional (SWANA) Enabling Factors

1. Continuous, Hands-On PSI Support

PSI's approach of constant follow-up, informal WhatsApp check-ins, and accessible staff was repeatedly described as the backbone of success. Unionists said this style created accountability, energy, and the feeling that someone "had their back." PSI did not rely on one-off workshops; it sustained pressure and encouragement over the years.

They didn't leave us alone. PSI kept pushing us to move, not just attend. Mirna, Lebanon

2. Skills-Based Training that created real competence

Participants stressed that training was practical: negotiations, campaigning, communication, organising, understanding C190, and using legal arguments. This made women feel equipped, credible, and ready to challenge leadership structures. Many said these skills directly led to promotions or winning elections.

When women learned to negotiate properly, they started leading discussions themselves. Bassem, Jordan

3. COVID-19 Digital Shift Expanding Women's Access

COVID-19 unexpectedly democratised participation. PSI adapted its programme and offered online training across the region. Women with childcare duties, restricted mobility, rural distance, or social limitations could finally join online training. Many said this was the first time they consistently participated. The online format accelerated their growth and union visibility.

COVID was the only time I could attend everything. Online training finally included us. Haifa, Lebanon

9.3.1 (cont'd.)

4. Supportive Male Allies

Across countries, a common enabling factor was the presence of engaged male leaders willing to push quotas, open space in meetings, or defend women's initiatives. Their endorsement often protected women from backlash inside patriarchal structures.

If the president didn't support us, none of this would have passed. Khalil, Lebanon

5. Women's Committees Provide Safe and Strategic Spaces

Forming women's committees enabled members to build collective strength, coordinate campaigns, and speak as a unified bloc, not as isolated individuals. These committees later became central actors in C190 work, anti-harassment codes, and bylaw reforms.

The committee gave us a voice. As individuals, we were ignored; as a group, we were heard. Nisreen, Lebanon

6. Regional Networks and Peer Learning

The Arab Women's Network and cross-country WhatsApp groups were repeatedly mentioned as catalysts for motivation, strategy-sharing, and emotional support. Seeing women from other countries win reforms created a sense of possibility and competitiveness.

7. Shifts in Social Acceptance toward Women Leaders

Several respondents described improvements in how communities, workplaces, and unions view women in leadership. Younger generations and crisis contexts helped normalise women's presence in public roles. This shift reduced resistance and made it easier for women to speak up.

People are accepting women leaders more now. When I speak, they actually listen. Intisar, Iraq

8. Logistical Support (Transportation, Timing, Childcare)

Small structural changes like providing transportation to meetings, adjusting meeting times, allowing hybrid attendance, were essential for women's sustained engagement. Without these changes, participation would have remained symbolic and limited.

When they provided transport, women finally came. Before that, most couldn't attend at all. Samira, Gaza

9. Personal Empowerment Through Union Involvement

Many women described their union work as life-changing. Some left abusive homes, rebuilt their identities, or overcame fear. Personal empowerment nurtured political empowerment and strengthened leadership commitment.

The union gave me courage. I left an abusive marriage and built a life for my kids. Mirna, Lebanon

10. Legal Literacy and use of International Standards

Training on C190, CEDAW, and ILO frameworks gave women concrete tools to challenge leaders, ministries, and employers. They gained legitimacy by speaking in legal terms rather than emotional appeals.

Once I learned the international standards, no one could dismiss my arguments anymore. Rasha, Egypt

11. PSI's International Legitimacy and Protection

Being connected to an international federation empowered women to confront male-dominated leadership and resist political interference. PSI's presence made unions, municipalities, and ministries take them seriously.

When PSI supported us, authorities couldn't silence us. Bassem, Jordan

12. Normalising GBV Discussions in Union Spaces

Women credit PSI for integrating GBV into every workshop, committee agenda, and union activity. This continuous exposure broke the taboo around harassment and violence, creating reporting pathways and policy reforms.

Before this project, no one even said the word harassment. Now we work on it openly. Intisar, Iraq

13. Structural Union Reforms (Quotas, Bylaw Changes, Gender Desks)

Bylaws and internal systems were rewritten in several unions, institutionalising women's roles and embedding gender equality. These structural anchors outlast political turnover.

After the quota [was] passed, leadership had to include women. It wasn't optional anymore. Haifa, Lebanon

14. Longevity of the Programme (2012–2024)

A major enabling factor was the long duration of the programme. Cultural change in unions takes time. Participants said the slow buildup allowed ideas to settle, leaders to shift, and new generations to emerge.

15. Solidarity and Emotional Support from a Regional Sisterhood

Friendships and emotional solidarity across countries reduced fear and burnout. Many women stayed active because they felt part of a regional sisterhood that encouraged resilience.

Knowing women in other countries had my back made all the difference. Samira, Gaza

9.3.2 Country-Specific Enabling Factors

1. Local-Level Union Flexibility (Jordan, Tunisia, Lebanon)

Municipal or branch-level unions operated with more autonomy than national federations. This enabled faster adoption of OHS policies, transportation agreements, and gender committees without bureaucratic obstruction.

At the municipal level, we could change things quickly. National leadership didn't block us. Bassem, Jordan

2. Crisis Contexts Created Leadership Vacuums (Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine)

Economic collapse, occupation, and war weakened old power structures. Women stepped in to fill gaps in organising, negotiations, and service delivery. Their competence, not gender, became the deciding factor.

When the system collapsed, it was the women who kept the union alive. Intisar, Iraq

3. Strong Histories of Feminist or Civil Society Activism (Tunisia, Morocco, Lebanon)

Many women entered unions with activist backgrounds in feminist groups, political organising, or community work. This experience made them bold and articulate, accelerating their rise.

I started out as the head of the workers' committee at the hospital. I defended employees, advocated for workers' rights, and secured benefits for them. Jouwairiyah, West Bank

4. Favourable Legal or Political Windows (Tunisia, Jordan, Lebanon)

Legal debates, especially around C190, OHS, municipal rights, and contract workers, created openings that unions used strategically. PSI trained women to act during these windows.

When C190 became a national topic, it opened doors for us to push harder. Haifa, Lebanon

6. Presence of Progressive HR or Municipal Directors (Tunisia, West Bank)

Some local officials actively collaborated with unions on transportation, anti-harassment policies, and OHS reforms. Their cooperation accelerated implementation.

Our municipal director supported us every step of the way. Jouwairiyah, West Bank

7. Pressure from Women Workers themselves (Jordan, Egypt)

Workers demanded representation, especially in agriculture and municipalities. Their push forced unions to elevate women organisers and improve gender committees.

Women workers wanted leaders who understood their problems. They pushed us forward. Rasha, Egypt

8. Impact of Union Elections (Jordan, Lebanon, Tunisia)

Several women gained influence through internal elections, where PSI's campaigning and communication training paid off. Election cycles became strategic entry points for gender reforms.

I won the election because the training taught me exactly how to campaign. Mirna, Lebanon

9. Male Absence Due to Conflict or Migration (Iraq, Palestine)

In contexts where men were absent due to war, migration, or displacement, women assumed leadership out of necessity, gaining visibility and organisational capacity.

When men disappeared, women did the work. We had no choice. Intisar, Iraq

10. Demographics: Female-Dominant Public Sectors (Lebanon, Tunisia, Jordan)

Health, education, and agricultural sectors already had high numbers of women workers, making female leadership more natural and harder to dismiss.

Most of the sector is women. So of course we must lead. Haifa, Lebanon

10 Future Priorities and Needs

Although not a specific task of this evaluation team, we did ask trade unionists in the project to set out their future priorities and needs. These are included in **Table 5**, broken down by country. Some of these plans propose programmes outside of their own countries.

These detailed ideas indicate that trade unions have a plan and a vision, all good signs of union independence.

TABLE 5: Future PRIORITIES AND NEEDS of trade unions in the project

Egypt	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Climate justice and the green economy training that exposes greenwashing in the name of sustainability. "They extract from our countries under the banner of green energy. It's exploitation with a new name." – Wegdan. And link this to other areas like gender and migration. 2. Migrant workers' rights; migrant labour is unregulated and exploited 3. Training on how the international system works – internal mechanisms of the ILO and UN 4. PSI must continue its international solidarity role in the face of the decline in union freedoms across Egypt and the Arab region with ongoing cross-country mentorships where unionists from PSI affiliates can share their strategies. International recognition of trade unions must be tied to internal democratic governance, gender equality and independence. 5. A digital library of resources on areas like C190, GBVH measures, climate and just transition, anti-privatisation and resistance to IMF policies, poverty and its effects on education etc. Resources must be accessible e.g. "We need PDFs, short clips, and voice-over content for those who don't read easily. Education must fit the reality of the worker." 6. Establish a Youth and technology programme inside PSI-SWANA covering digital literacy, youth leadership and online organising targeting young workers and women entering the labour movement with regional youth ambassadors. 7. Develop digital safety manuals and secure communication channels, especially for those countries where harassment of trade unions is high.
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(continues on the next page)



Table 5: Priorities and Needs (continued)	
Iraq	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Legal reform enabling union work in the public sector. 2. Specialized programs for women and youth, including leadership and economic empowerment. 3. Training on social dialogue and negotiation. 4. Regional exchange visits for experience-sharing beyond online training. 5. Support for campaigns promoting C190 and OHS law adoption. 6. Inclusion of climate and environmental themes in future PSI projects.
Jordan	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enhancing women's and youth participation through specialised leadership and motivation programs e.g. advocacy and communication. 2. Sustaining and institutionalising women's committees within unions. 3. Legal and technical support to review and reform Jordanian labour laws, ensuring fair compensation and protection for GBVH victims and continued monitoring of the Haq Committee's effectiveness. 4. Expanding PSI collaboration through regional exchanges and peer learning. 5. Developing a second line of leadership to ensure union sustainability and intergenerational transfer of skills. 6. Financial and logistical aid to organise field trainings, particularly in remote municipalities. 7. Continuous updating of training materials to align with international labour standards and UN conventions. 8. Renewal of the Migrant Workers Project to address new legal restrictions and protect vulnerable groups. 9. Continued PSI assistance in amplifying women's voices and maintaining international visibility for independent unions.
(continues on the next page)	



Table 5: Priorities and Needs (continued)

Lebanon	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Policy advocacy and international leverage - PSI's global credibility helps unions challenge government decisions before the IMF, World Bank, and national authorities. 2. Capacity-building for youth and women targeting leadership and negotiation training to ensure generational continuity in the movement. 3. Research and data support e.g. Technical and analytical tools to measure inflation, wage erosion, and social inequality for use in collective bargaining. 4. Public relations and outreach 5. Advanced legal and advocacy training for women on C190, GBVH case management, and negotiation. 6. Expanding the Women's Committee beyond the Regie to national coverage within CGTL. 7. PSI-supported coordination with public institutions and ministries to institutionalise gender equality frameworks. 8. Funding and technical support for the newly established Ethics Committee and Mental Health and Wellbeing Committee, which require resources to sustain operations. 9. Advocacy support to pressure the Lebanese government to approve the long-pending license to practice the profession, shelved since 2007. 10. Visibility and communication support to professionalize their online presence, campaigns, and outreach to younger unionists.
Palestine	<p>Given the current crisis, the two trade unionists emphasised immediate and long-term needs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mental health and psychosocial support for health workers traumatised by war; psychological and social rehabilitation centres for working women and union members. 2. Economic recovery initiatives — especially small projects for women in crafts and agriculture. 3. Digital literacy training — many members still cannot use Google Meet, Zoom, or Drive. 4. Continuous leadership and gender-sensitivity capacity-building to maintain active participation despite economic collapse. 5. Training a new generation of women unionists from the ground up. 6. Reconstruction of homes and access to clean water. 7. Continued international advocacy and visibility for Gaza's women within the global labour movement.
Tunisia	<p>The interviews were done with 3 agricultural research workers, not trade union leaders. Their needs may not reflect exactly what their trade union desires.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Local follow-up training to reinforce what Zdiri had workshopped with them. 2. Legal and institutional support for women facing retaliation or dismissal after raising workplace issues. 3. Financial and logistical help to replicate peer-to-peer awareness sessions in other areas.

10.1 Common needs

The most common need of trade unions from five different countries is continued PSI support with education and advocacy around issues such as C190, OHS etc. (Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine). These are summarised in **Table 6**.

Given the repressive nature of many SWANA regimes, it is not surprising that the second most common need is for PSI's valued political support and legitimacy and the international solidarity that PSI brings. Four countries endorsed this need (Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine). Many trade unionists elsewhere in the report, have attested to the value of this legitimacy. (see 6.11 for more)

Trade unionists from three countries (Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon) expressed a need for more women and youth programmes that would empower them to become leaders.

Other topics that won the support of two countries were: climate justice and the environment (Egypt, Iraq); the continuation of regional exchange visits that encourage peer learning (Iraq, Jordan); and continued teaching on the international system and how international bodies like the UN, ILO etc. function. (Egypt, Iraq) Trade unions from two countries expressed a need for their migrant workers projects to continue (Egypt, Jordan) while trade unions from two other countries are keen to continue with communications and digital literacy support (Lebanon, Palestine).

Table 6: Common needs identified by trade unions in more than one country

1. Continued PSI support for education, advocacy and campaigns around C190, OHS, etc. (Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine).
2. Continued PSI political support and legitimacy through international solidarity on issues affecting trade unions in the SWANA region. (Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine)
3. Women and youth programmes (Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon)
4. Climate justice and the environment (Egypt, Iraq)
5. Regional exchange visits, peer learning (Iraq, Jordan)
6. International system, what it offers (e.g. UN, ILO etc) and how to use it (Egypt, Iraq)
7. Migrant workers project (Egypt, Jordan)
8. Communications, digital literacy support (Lebanon, Palestine)

Conclusion

This qualitative evaluation was conducted to assess achievements, gather stakeholder perspectives, and document lessons learned and good practices from the project cycles of the SWANA Gender Equality Project. Implemented by PSI in partnership with ST, PSI worked with close to 40 public sector trade unions across eight SWANA countries from 2018 to 2024. These countries were: Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia (Yemen had to drop out of the project because of war).

The project aimed to address gender inequality and gender-based violence (GBV) in public services by strengthening women's participation and leadership in unions, advancing gender-responsive policies and collective bargaining, and advocating for legal and policy reforms aligned with international labour standards.

This report has highlighted **effective strategies, tools and approaches (Section 6)** that the project used that contributed to its success:

1. Experienced, effective and passionate facilitators and coordinators, Hanna and el Zein, employed solid participative educational methods and strategies.
2. Regular reviewing of the programme, ownership of it by trade union participants and ongoing support given to them encouraged the trade union participants to take action.
3. When crises interrupted the programme, participant trade unions found ways to adapt and move on. In some countries, extreme crises, like wars, halted the programme.
4. The programme succeeded in uniting women in the region and opened their eyes to the importance and value of international solidarity. PSI itself lent legitimacy to all the unions involved, on a personal as well as a political level.
5. Respondents in the interviews detailed how the programme had built their confidence, knowledge and skills and enabled them to grasp leadership positions, take part in negotiations and tackle gender challenges.

The trade union respondents gave us numerous examples (**Section 7**) of how their lives had changed through the programme and what actions they had been involved in:

1. Some had been mentored by other women, others described successful actions they had driven in their union and why.
2. Many trade unions are acting on issues of GBV, several of them creating innovative campaigns to amplify the initiative.



Many lessons (**Section 8**) have been learnt during the programme and trade union respondents keenly shared these learnings. Some of these are reproduced below:

- Words are important in negotiations – using neutral terms like ‘C190’ and ‘decent work’ opened doors while ‘CEDAW’ and ‘gender’ closed doors.
- Securing wins gained far more members than slogans
- Social media and online methods of communication were important tools to keep connected, particularly during COVID
- Women carry immense burdens and are stronger when they are not alone in the room
- Youth also need to be engaged.

In **Section 9** we examined the contextual challenges and enabling factors. Research tells us that the region is one of the most gender-unequal regions in the world and that many trade unions are operating under repressive conditions. Despite this, trade unionists were on the whole positive and felt empowered by the strides they had made in their trade unions and in their countries around gender and other issues.

Respondents identified many enabling factors that contributed to the success of the programme that we had not acknowledged in other sections. Some applied right across the region, while others were country-specific. Common enabling factors were:

- Support and legitimacy given to them by PSI and its SWANA coordinators
- Skills-based training that really empowered them to take action on issues like international standards, to argue for a women’s quota and to discuss GBV openly in union spaces
- Supportive trade union women’s committees that gave them a safe space where they could build their confidence and get emotional support; regional committees helped them strategise and learn from each other
- Supportive male allies helped them to drive for quotas in their unions
- The shift in social acceptance of women leaders had enabled them to speak out
- Logistical support e.g. with transport to union meetings, meetings held during working hours, childcare provided at meetings, had all helped to encourage women to participate more in trade unions
- The length of the project had helped to entrench the ideas in people’s minds
- The project personally empowered women, nurturing their political empowerment and strengthening their leadership commitment. Some of them found the courage to leave their abusive marriages.

We asked trade unions to identify their future priorities and needs and outline these in **Section 10**. Many of these issues were common across trade unions. It was clear from respondents and from these future priorities that they identified, that the project has helped them to strategise and focus their efforts and direct them towards future achievable and relevant goals. Respondents stressed that they are committed to continuing with the project in their own trade unions.

Examining the project as a whole, we see these positive signs:

- women are increasing in numbers in trade unions, women’s committees are present in trade unions, some trade unions have established gender desks, women’s numbers in executive committees of their trade unions have increased dramatically and women are making their voices heard;
- PSI workshops have built participants’ capacity on issues like negotiations, collective bargaining, communication and social dialogue
- almost all participating trade unions have secured women’s quotas in their trade unions
- GBV is being acted on: in some countries, GBV is combined with OHS; GBV committees are established; GBV codes of conduct have been negotiated in some workplaces as well as in trade union structures themselves, while others are still negotiating
- social dialogue and negotiations are taking place in six of the eight countries of the project and respondents credited PSI training with empowering them to do so
- trade unions have been trained on C190 and are actively engaging with governments (sometimes alongside social movements) around discriminatory laws, using tools such as C190. Some have successfully helped to change the discriminatory laws in their countries, while in other countries, they are still negotiating
- women in some trade unions have negotiated for transport to attend union meetings, ensure that meetings happen during working hours and that childcare is provided
- some trade unions have succeeded in introducing gender mainstreaming into their unions
- women feel part of a regional movement through the PSI-SWANA network and part of an international global movement through PSI.

The project, we believe, has successfully planted the seeds of women’s empowerment in the minds of participants; these seeds are beginning to grow, and we expect them to continue flourishing.

Appendices

12.1 Appendix 1

Questionnaire administered to project participants



استبيان موجّه إلى منتسبي/ات المنظمة النقابية العالمية للخدمات العامة في منطقة جنوب غرب آسيا وشمال أفريقيا

Questionnaire for PSI (Public Services International) affiliates in the SWANA region

دعمت المنظمة النقابية، ST، وبدعم من النقابة السويدية Union to Union منذ عام 2014، وبتصويل من نقابتكم/ن في بناء هياكل مُركزة على النساء وتمكينهن. وقد قدّم المشروع (PSI) العالمية للخدمات العامة عبر سلسلة من ورش العمل دعمًا وتدريبًا في المجالات الآتية:

التخطيط للحملات وتنظيمها؛ بناء القيادة النسائية؛

مثل: اتفاقية منظمة العمل الدولية رقم) تعزيز معارف قيادات النقابات بالمعايير الدولية الحامية للعاملات؛ تمكين النساء بمهارات(CEDAW 190، واتفاقية القضاء على جميع أشكال التمييز ضد المرأة – سيداو الاتصال والتواصل.

في فهم كيف أثر هذا العمل فيكم/ن PSI اختتم المشروع في ديسمبر/كانون الأول 2024، وترغب وندعمكم/ن.

نشكر لكم/ن تخصيص الوقت لاستكمال هذا الاستبيان؛ إذ ستساعدنا إجاباتكم/ن على تكوين صورة أوضح عن تجربتكم/ن، وقد نستخدم النجاحات والقصص الواردة فيه لإلهام مشاريع مستقبلية تدعمكم/ن وتدعم نقابتكم/ن.

ومع مستشارتين خارجيتين لإعداد تقرير نوعي ختامي للمشروع PSI إشعار البيانات: ستشارك إجاباتكم/ن مع قد يشارك مع ممولين/مانحين محتملين. لن تُدرج أي معلومات مُعرّفة بالهوية في التقرير؛ وستعرض النتائج بصورة مُجمعة أو مُعمّاة.

*** Indicates required question**

1. Email *

2. Full Name | الاسم الكامل

(Your name and email may be used by the external evaluators to contact you for any follow-up questions about your story and experience.)

قد يستخدم المقيمون الخارجيون اسمكم وبريدكم الإلكتروني للتواصل معكم في حال وجود أسئلة إضافية حول قصتكم وتجربتكم.

Information in English

Since 2014, **Public Services International**

(PSI)—with funding from **Union to Union** and

support from the Swedish trade union **ST**—has

helped your trade union build **women-centered structures** and empower women members.

Through workshops, the project provided support and training on:

- planning and organising campaigns; building women's leadership; strengthening trade union leaders' knowledge of international standards that protect women workers (e.g., **ILO Convention 190, CEDAW**); empowering women with communication skills.
- The project concluded in **December 2024**, and PSI would like to understand how this work has affected and supported you.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your responses will help us build a clearer picture of your experience and may help us share your successes and stories to inform future projects that support you and your union.

Data notice: Your responses will be shared with

PSI and **two external consultants** preparing a

qualitative end-of-project report to be shared

with potential funders and donors. **Personally**

identifying information will not appear in the

report; findings will be presented in aggregate or

anonymized form.

3. What country do you work in?

*** في أي بلد تعمل/ين؟** Dropdown

Mark only one oval.

- Egypt | مصر
- Iraq | العراق
- Jordan | الاردن
- Lebanon | لبنان
- Morocco | المغرب
- Algeria | الجزائر
- Palestine (Gaza or West Bank) | فلسطين
- Tunisia | تونس
- Others | غيرها

4. Gender | الجندر *

Mark only one oval.

- Female / انثى
- Male / ذكر
- Other:

5. Age | العمر *

Mark only one oval.

- 18-35
- 36-50
- 51-65
- 66+

6. Marital status | الحالة الاجتماعية *

Mark only one oval.

- Married / متزوج/ة
- Single / اعزب/عزباء
- Other:

7. Name of trade union you belong to (present)

*** اسم النقابة العمالية التي تنتمي/ن إليها (حالياً)**

8. How long have been a member of the trade union you mentioned above? منذ متى وأنت عضو/ة في النقابة العمالية التي ذكرتها أعلاه؟

Mark only one oval.

- 0-5 years | سنوات
- 6-10 years | سنوات
- more than 10 years | أكثر من عشر سنوات

9. What role do you have in your trade union? ما هو الدور الذي تؤديه في نقابتك العمالية؟

Tick ALL the ones that describe you. *

اختر جميع الأدوار التي تنطبق عليك.

Check all that apply.

- Member | عضو/ة
- Shop steward / workplace leader | مندوب نقابي / قائد في مكان العمل
- Regional leader | قائد إقليمي
- National leader | قائد وطني
- PSI leader | قائد في PSI
- Other:

10. Which trade union committees do you sit on? | الى أي لجان نقابية تنتمي/ن؟ *

Check all that apply.

- Women's committee | لجنة المرأة
- Organising and mobilising committee | لجنة التنظيم والتعبئة
- Executive Committee | اللجنة التنفيذية
- Other:

11. Do you support the 30% quota for women's leadership in the trade unions in the SWANA region. *

Rate out of 5: 5 - completely support; 1 - completely disagree |

هل تؤيد نظام الكوتا بنسبة 30% لتمثيل المرأة في القيادة النقابية في منطقة الشرق الأوسط وشمال أفريقيا؟: قيم من 1 إلى 5

أؤيد بالكامل = 5 : أعارض بالكامل = 1

1 2 3 4 5

12. Elaborate on your rating above

(optional question)

يرجى توضيح سبب اختيارك لهذا التقييم (سؤال اختياري).

13. What PSI workshops have you attended? أي ورش عمل حضرتها مع PSI ؟ *

Check all that apply.

- Women's Leadership training | تدريب القيادة النسائية
- Campaign planning | تخطيط الحملات
- Training of trainers on C190 | تدريب المدربين حول الاتفاقية C190
- Training on organising and mobilising | تدريب على التنظيم والتعبئة
- Training on how to achieve gender equality in the workplace and in decision making structures in the trade union | تدريب حول كيفية تحقيق المساواة بين الجنسين في مكان العمل وفي هياكل اتخاذ القرار في النقابة
- Communication skills | مهارات التواصل
- International standards related to gender equality e.g. C190, CEDAW etc | المعايير الدولية المتعلقة بالمساواة بين الجنسين مثل CEDAW و C190 وغيرها
- None | لم احضر اي تدريب مع PSI
- Other:

14. How has the PSI training helped you? كيف ساعدك/ي؟ *

Tick the ones you agree with. | اختر جميع الإجابات التي تنطبق عليك/ي

Check all that apply.

- I am more confident in my role as a trade union leader | أصبحت أكثر ثقة في دوري كقائدة/ة نقابية
- I can organise and mobilise others to join the union | أستطيع تنظيم وتعبئة الآخرين للانضمام إلى النقابة
- I can plan an effective union campaign around gender equality | أستطيع التخطيط لحملة نقابية فعالة حول المساواة بين الجنسين
- I can educate other union members on C190, international standards to support gender equality and gender discriminatory laws | أستطيع توعية أعضاء النقابة الآخرين حول الاتفاقية والمعايير الدولية الداعمة للمساواة بين الجنسين و C190 والقوانين التمييزية على أساس النوع الاجتماعي
- I can negotiate gender equality issues and for better working conditions for women workers with my employer | أستطيع التفاوض مع صاحب/ة العمل حول قضايا المساواة بين الجنسين وتحسين ظروف العمل للعاملين والعاملات
- Other:

15. Please share below any experiences you'd like to share with us concerning the project with PSI (positive or negative)

- optional question.

يرجى مشاركة أي تجارب (سواء كانت إيجابية أو سلبية) تود/ين مشاركتها معنا بخصوص المشروع مع PSI - سؤال اختياري

16. My trade union is prioritizing gender equality issues with employers. *

نقابتي تعطي الأولوية لقضايا المساواة بين الجنسين في تعاملها مع أصحاب العمل.

Check all that apply.

- Yes | نعم
- No | كلا
- I don't know | لست ادري
- Other:

17. My trade union is prioritizing tackling gender-based violence with employers. *

نقابتي تعطي الأولوية للتصدي للعنف والتحرش القائم على النوع الاجتماعي في تعاملها مع أصحاب العمل.

Mark only one oval.

- Yes | نعم
- No | كلا
- I don't know | لست ادري
- Other:

18. Do you participate in trade union protests and civil society protests in your country? *

Tick the ones that describe you.

هل تشارك/ين في احتجاجات نقابية واحتجاجات المجتمع المدني في بلدك؟ اختر جميع الخيارات التي تنطبق عليك.

Check all that apply.

- Trade union protests only | احتجاجات نقابية فقط
- Trade union and civil society protests | احتجاجات نقابية واحتجاجات مجتمع مدني
- None | لا شيء مما سبق

19. Do you follow your trade union's social media? * | هل تتابع/ين وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي الخاصة بنقابتك؟

Check all that apply.

- Facebook | فيسبوك
- Instagram | انستغرام
- Twitter (X) | تويتر المعروف ب اكس
- Website | الموقع الالكتروني
- WhatsApp | واتساب
- Youtube | يوتيوب
- Tiktok | تيك توك
- I don't follow | لا اتابع
- Other:

20. How often do you check your trade union's social media? * | كم مرة تتحقق/ين من وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي الخاصة بنقابتك؟

Mark only one oval.

- Once a day | مرة في اليوم
- Once a week | مرة في الاسبوع
- Only when I receive notification | فقط عند استلام إشعار
- Occasionally | نادرا
- Never | أبدا

21. Do you follow PSI on social media? *

(PSI) هل تتابع/ين على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي؟

Check all that apply.

- Facebook | فيسبوك
- Instagram | انستغرام
- Twitter (X) | تويتر المعروف ب اكس
- Website | الموقع الالكتروني
- I don't follow | لا اتابع
- Other: