

## COOP Champions: Rawand Al-Madmouj

This COOP News presents Ms Rawand Al-Madmouj, who worked as a national project officer for “Support for Women’s Economic Empowerment”, as a COOP champion. Rawand, who has an MA in economics, joined the ILO in 2008, working on entrepreneurial, cooperative and skills development activities under the MDG Joint UN country programme on “Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in oPt”, which included work on cooperative management training. Prior to joining the ILO she worked with UNCTAD and UNHCR and local organizations in SME development and capacity building.

In her current work, Rawand coordinated and oversaw promotion of women’s participation, empowerment and equality in cooperatives in the oPt (occupied Palestinian territory). She organized and conducted the first ToT workshop using ILO cooperative management tools adapted to the Palestinian context. This was followed by a capacity building programme targeting women-only cooperatives, and strengthening the capacity of the Ministry of Labour’s (MoL) Cooperative Department.

The Palestinian cooperative unions can benefit from the support of cooperative extension workers for enhancing their capacities to provide value added services to their members. Inactive membership still undermines the overall performance of Palestinian cooperatives and their ability to develop their social enterprises effectively. They lack the legal know-how to resolve membership issues and require support in that regard.

In mid-2013, with support from MoL and cooperatives movement, an assessment was undertaken on cooperatives on the basis of active/inactive membership among agricultural cooperatives, where majority of women cooperatives exist in. The assessment focused on 232 agricultural cooperatives,

and women’s participation in those cooperatives and the agricultural sector. A quantitative assessment for the agricultural cooperatives in oPt was concluded in December 2013, when the key findings and recommendations of the assessment were also presented to MoL and other stakeholders. Following to ILO interventions, the MoL Cooperative Department capacities have been strengthened to address cooperative membership issues, including gender mainstreaming.

Rawand underlines that cooperatives in oPt have the potential to play an important role in economic and social development, while their actual contribution remains limited due to many constraints. These include low membership coverage, limited scope of economic activities, insufficient financial resources, lack of proper enabling legal framework, poor management performance and restrictions imposed by the occupation on their operations, preventing them from building partnerships and commercial linkages at regional and international levels. There is very limited investment to support the creation of value chains for cooperative products which would increase income, create jobs and enhance local production.

>> See Action Brief ILO Initiatives on Promoting Women’s Participation in Cooperatives in oPt [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms\\_195164.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_195164.pdf)

>> See Policy Brief on Mainstreaming Gender Equality Concerns in Palestinian Cooperatives [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms\\_208250.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_208250.pdf)

>> See ICA article on Benefits of Women Led Coops in Arab States <http://ica.coop/en/media/co-operative-stories/benefits-women-led-co-ops-arab-states>

