

The Role of Economic Empowerment Services at the Ministry of Social Development in Improving the Quality of Life for the Poor Palestinians in the Gaza Strip

Ahmed Mohamed Saeed Al-Arabid

Department of Sociology and Social Work, College of Arts, Al-Aqsa University
Gaza, Palestine
Email: ah.alarabied [AT] gmail.com

ABSTRACT---- *The study aimed to identify the role of economic empowerment services at the Ministry of Social Development to improve the quality of life for poor families in the Gaza Strip in the objective dimension (economic, social and health) and in the subjective dimension (adjustment, family compatibility and community integration), where the study was applied to the development directorates of the Ministry of Social Development on a random sample Simple Consisting of (363)single, and the researcher used a questionnaire tool to reach the results of the study, The study reached a number of results, the most important of which are: The contribution of empowerment services to improving the economic, social and health quality of life for families was medium, ranging from 48% to 55.0%. The results of the study also showed that economic empowerment services contributed to achieving adaptation, Compatibility and family independence, in addition to community integration, all of which came in medium rates, ranging from 48% to 63%. In light of the previous results, the current study recommends increasing the expansion of successful small development projects to help heads of families To reduce poverty, as well as to follow up the mechanisms of coordination and cooperation between governmental bodies and private bodies interested in economic empowerment and the development of the functional and administrative apparatus.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The development process is continues within all backward and developed societies alike, as there is no society that claims to have reached the final stage development As long as there is a human aspiration, development programs exist. (Al-Samalouti, 1975, p. 467).

But, there are many challenges facing the human march and progress and impeding the human development that society seeks heer achieve well-being. Among these challenges facing humanity as a whole are issues of poverty, which in our time has become one of the most serious problems and challenges humanity is facing and it is a global phenomenon that is not limited to a specific society, creating deep disagreements. And devastating wars in which humanity was its first victim . (Al-Zaghal, 2002, p. 133).

Whereas, the World Bank estimates indicate that those who live on less than (1.25) dollars per person per day reach (1.29) billion people, and poverty rates in developing countries reached about (22%) for those who live on less than (1.25) dollars per person per day. (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 2020, 36)(

Turning to the Palestinian Indeed, we find that the conditions in Palestine are more severe than in the Arab countries, as the poverty rate according to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics among individuals during the year 2017 according to monthly consumption patterns reached 29.2% in the rate of (13.9% in the West Bank and 53.0% in the Gaza Strip) (the Central Bureau Palestinian Statistics, 2017).

One of the most serious negative effects of poverty is that it reproduces itself, that is, a new poor family arise from the first family in a vicious circle. In view of the above, the Palestinian National Authority makes many governmental efforts to confront poverty through multiple strategies to combat poverty by following the Development Millennium, Goals, among these policies And interventions developmental empowerment for the poor to contribute to the elimination of extreme poverty on the one hand, and to enable the poor to become self-reliant on the other hand. (Palestinian National Authority, 2015, p. 19).

that Empowerment as an as input is concerned with helping individuals to learn about their rights and earn skills that appoint them to challenge the life circumstances also Empowerment contains helping vulnerable groups, strengthening their situation, and helping them to participate in making and taking decisions related to solving their problems. (Abdul Latif, 2015, p. 956)

Therefore, the Ministry of Social Development, through the General Administration of Social Protection, implements the economic empowerment program, which aims to reduce poverty, empower the poor, and reaching a degree of reliance on themselves and improve their quality of life. and many studies have dealt with the issue of economic empowerment and improving the quality of the poor, including the study (Innocent 2019)

The study aimed to analyze the poverty reduction programs of the major governmental and non-governmental organizations targeting the rural poor in Lesotho (Southern Africa) and identifying the challenges that beneficiaries face in implementing their poverty reduction efforts. Where the study revealed that various economic empowerment programs have been implemented throughout across the country. Where the study revealed that various economic empowerment programs have been implemented throughout the country, and one of the main challenges was faced by the government and non-governmental organizations to seeking the poor helping process in rural areas is the Weakness of resources and its limitations, insufficient cooperation between institutions and weak participation of the target

the study (Adaileh 2019): The study aimed to identify the social, economic and subjective dimensions of small projects on the Jordanian family and to identify the obstacles that families face in implementing small projects. The results of the study revealed that the social dimensions the borrowers is achieve from establishment small projects are its high contribution to enhancing their social status among their families and local communities. As for the economic dimensions, they were represented in thinking of expanding the project to increase profit return and the experience in marketing the project's , and for the self-dimensions, the results confirmed the role and effectiveness of the projects in improving the conditions of the beneficiaries of the Productive Families Program in terms of increasing their independence and self-reliance and enhancing their self-confidence.

And the study (Al-Shahrani 2016), which aimed to identify the role of productive families in improving the quality of life, with regard to the subjective dimension, the objective dimension, and the obstacles in improving the quality of life for productive families , The results concluded that the productive families program in improving the quality of life for relation to the economic dimension, contributed to economic stability and the ability to save , to providing for family needs, and to live in dignity without needing others , As for the social dimension, the Productive Families Program contributed to improving the social level, changing life for the better, the ability to participate in social life, and not hesitating to provide expertise and experiences to others , Among the results related to the self-distance, the beneficiaries of the Productive Families Program feeling self-confidence, happiness, reassurance, and a sense of responsibility towards society, As for the difficulties facing the productive families program the absence of media support for the projects of productive families, the lack of a protective body for the rights of productive families, and the lack of a fixed place for productive families.

The study (Umm Kulthum and Sabah 2015) aimed to identify the role of NGOs in improving the quality of life for the poorest marginalized groups in Al-Buhaira governorate, as well as identifying the social and economic effects of NGOs for the poorest marginalized groups, The results of the research revealed that the level of the role of NGOs in improving the quality of life for the poorest marginalized groups is medium, whether on the social level in terms of enhancing social participation or from the economic side on the level of stability and economic independence.

And a study (Al Thalathiny 2013): It aimed to identify the effectiveness of small grants in enabling families suffering from extreme poverty by transferring assets to these families to start income-generating economic activities that help improve livelihood strategies and provide them with the skills, and the necessary experiences through a case study of the economic empowerment program for disadvantaged families (deb).and the study concluded that the project is considered the current main source of income for many families, who have achieved an increase in their income after obtaining the grant. They also felt more independent after the project and they can able to support themselves from their current income, Also Income-generating projects also need time until to get stability due to the political and economic conditions in the country.

The study (Al Nana'i 2011) aimed to determine the contributions of NGOs in achieving economic and social empowerment, developing the capacities of poor families, and identifying the obstacles they face in achieving this, the study concluded that NGOs have achieved empowerment for poor families through establishing the productive projects that generate monthly income, ensuring their continuity, providing soft loans, gaining families the ability to make decisions, and developing their skills in solving their problems, and educating them about their various rights.

And in the light of the prelude to the problem of the study presented above, which made it clear that the issue of poverty is a major and serious problem in the past, present and future, because of its negative repercussions affecting the individual, the family and society as a whole, and leaving its effects for a very long time, therefore, the current study tends to determine the role of economic empowerment services at the Ministry of Social Development in improving the quality of economic, social and health life for poor Palestinian families in the Gaza Strip, as well as determining the role of economic empowerment services at the Ministry of Social Development in improving adaptation and compatibility and improving the independence and social integration of poor Palestinian families in the Gaza Strip, and identifying the obstacles that

hinder an economic empowerment services at the Ministry of Social Development to improve the quality of life for poor families in the Gaza Strip.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study is considered a descriptive study, and the researcher used in this study the sample social survey of the beneficiaries, the study tool was applied to a simple random sample of families benefiting from economic empowerment services at the Ministry of Social Development in the Gaza Strip, consisting of (363) families, the data was collected through Directorates of Social Development in the Gaza Strip which number are five directorates, where the data was collected during the period from 27-2-2022 to 3-29-2022 AD, The researcher designed a study tool that includes the role of economic empowerment services at the Ministry of Social Development to improve the quality of life for poor families in the Gaza Strip (objective dimension) and the role of economic empowerment services at the Ministry of Social Development, to improve the quality of life for poor families in the Gaza Strip (the self-dimension), and finally the fourth axis, the obstacles to empowerment services, the questionnaire was presented to be judged by a group of professors specialized in social work, this is to make observations and make the necessary adjustments, and to ensure that the tool measures what it was set to measure, the stability of the tool was measured by applying stability coefficient for the beneficiaries by selecting 30 individuals who were targeted, and the tribal correlation coefficient was about 0.713% for the beneficiary families, and upon re-stability again, it was at a rate of 0.701%. The statistical analysis program (SPSS) was relied upon, and extract the results according to the statistical coefficients, percentages, multiple responses to calculate answers to questions that have more than one answer.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

First: What is the role of the economic empowerment services at the Ministry of Social Development to improve the quality of life for poor families in the Gaza Strip (the objective dimension).

a- Results of the question: What is the role of economic empowerment services in improving the economic life of poor families in the Gaza Strip?

Table (1) The role of economic empowerment services in improving the economic life of poor families in the Gaza Strip, n=363.

Phrase	responses		Order
	number	ratio	
The services helped me to train in a modern craft.	233	23.6	2
Granted me loans and grants on easy terms.	65	6.6	5
contributed pay off my accumulated debts.	210	21.3	3
contributed to increasing my own experiences to deal with difficult circumstances.	175	17.7	4
helped meet my family's daily expenses	304	30.8	1
score	987	%100.0	-

It is clear from the data of the previous table that economic empowerment services have contributed to improving the quality of economic life for families, its came in first place, helped me meet my family's daily expenses by 308%, and in the second place came, the services helped me to train in a modern trade, with a percentage of 23.6%, while it came in third place, it contributed to paying off my accumulated debts by 21.3%, and in fourth place, it contributed to increasing my own experiences to deal with difficult circumstances by 17.7%, finally, in fifth place, it granted me loans and grants on soft terms, at a rate of 6.6%. in view of the previous data, it is clear that the percentages were uneven, but the highest percentage was for the contribution of services for helping the family to meet its daily expenses, the researcher believes that the various economic empowerment services, the most important of which are projects and direct financial assistance, have a role in achieving financial stability for families benefiting from economic empowerment services, this result is consistent with the study (Doaa Al-Thalathini 2013), which confirmed that projects are the source of family income, and that these projects have achieved an increase in their incomes.

b- Results of the question: What is the role of economic empowerment services in improving the social life of poor families in the Gaza Strip?

Table (2): The role of economic empowerment services to improve the quality of social life , n=363.

Phrase	responses		Order
	number	ratio	
Its lowered my feelings of my inability of shoulder the social responsibility for my family.	210	23.2	2
The ability to share others on the various occasions.	76	8.4	5
My experience has increased in making sound decisions to face my social problems.	188	20.8	3
Contributed to social stability for me and my family.	154	17.1	4
Achieving the positive social relations within my family.	276	30.5	1
score	904	% 100.0	-

It is clear from the previous table that the role of economic empowerment services in improving the quality of social life of poor families from the point of view of the beneficiaries was as follows, the achievement of positive social relations within my family came in the first place, with a percentage of 30.5%, then it came in second place Its reduced my feeling of my inability to assume social responsibility for my family by a rate of 23.2%, in the third place my experience in making sound decisions to face my social problems has been increased by 20.8%, in fourth place, it contributed to social stability for me and my family, with a rate of 17.1%, finally, in fifth place is the ability to participate others in various events, with a rate of 8.4%.

In view of the data of the previous table, it is clear that the percentages were uneven, the researcher is attributing this to the fact that economic empowerment services may have achieved a state of social stability in light of families receiving relief and development assistance, which would be reflected in the internal stability of families, this result is consistent with the study (Al-Adaileh 2019), which confirmed that small projects for families have a role in enhancing social status, it also agrees with the study (Al-Zomar 2010), where the study confirms that the productive families program contributed to awareness and social participation.

c- Results of the question: What is the role of economic empowerment services in improving the healthy life of poor families in the Gaza Strip?

Table (3) The role of economic empowerment services to improve the quality of healthy life, n=363

Phrase	responses		Order
	number	ratio	
Going to the doctor as soon as any family member feels sick.	242	24.9	2
Doing my periodic medical examination to check on my health.	165	17.0	3
Obtaining health insurance services easily.	273	28.0	1
The ability to provide proper nutrition for me and my family.	135	13.9	5
1- The ability to cover the costs of treatment and medication.	158	16.2	4
score	973	% 100.0	-

It is clear from the previous table that economic empowerment services to improve the quality of healthy life for poor families as follows: where it came from in the first place to obtain health insurance services with ease, and it was by 28.0%, and in the second place going to the doctor as soon as any member of the family felt ill was at a rate of 24.9%, and in third place, doing periodic medical examination to check on my health, with a rate of 17.0%, it was followed in fourth place by the ability to cover the costs of treatment and medicines by 16.2%, finally, in fifth place is the ability to provide proper nutrition for me and my family, at a rate of 13.9%, looking at the data of the previous table, it is clear that the higher percentage came to obtain health insurance services with ease, the researcher is attributing this to the Ministry of Social Development is trying to remove obstacles, as well as to conclude agreements with the Ministry of Health so that the beneficiaries of economic empowerment services can obtain health insurance services.

Second: The role of economic empowerment services at the Ministry of Social Development to improve the quality of life for poor families in the Gaza Strip (the self-dimension).

a- What is the role of economic empowerment services to improve family adjustment and harmony for poor families in the Gaza Strip?

Table (4) : The role of economic empowerment services to improve family adjustment and harmony for poor families in the Gaza Strip, n=363.

Phrase	responses		Order
	number	ratio	
Paying more attention for my responsibilities towards my family.	320	26.7	1
Being able to talk to my children about their problems.	238	19.9	2
Increasing the cohesion and interdependence of my family members.	225	18.8	3
The ability to make the family decisions rationality.	198	16.5	5
Using the language of dialogue as a method to solve problems between my family members.	216	18.1	4
score	1197	%100.0	-

It is clear from the previous table that the concern for my responsibilities towards my family came in the first place, with a rate of 26.7%, it was followed in the second place at a rate of 19.9%, being able to talk to my children about their problems, while it came in the third place with a rate of 18.8%, increasing the cohesion and interdependence of my family members, and it came in fourth place with a rate of 18.1%, my using the language of dialogue as a method for resolving problems between members of my family, and finally in fifth place with a rate of 16.5%, the ability to make the family decisions rationality, by analyzing the previous data, it is clear that economic empowerment services have an effect on improving family adjustment and harmony, in varying proportions, the researcher attributes this to the fact that the economic empowerment services that families benefit from had a clear impact on the family's interest in carrying out its various duties towards their children.

b- What is the role of economic empowerment services to improve the independence and stability of poor families?

Table (5): The role of economic empowerment services to improve the independence and stability of poor families. n=363

Phrase	responses		Order
	number	ratio	
Increase sense of stability in my family life.	319	25.8	1
Preserving the cohesion and interdependence of my family.	265	21.4	2
The feeling of my importance as a head of a family among my family members.	242	19.6	3
The services reduced my feelings of inferiority in front of my family.	185	15.0	5
1- Independence in making decisions about the family and my surrounding environment.	226	18.2	4
score	1237	%100.0	-

It is clear from the previous table that economic empowerment services to improve the independence and stability of poor families were as follows: it came in the first place, Increase sense of stability in my family life by 25.8%, and in the second place maintaining the cohesion and interdependence of my family, with a rate of 21.4%, and in the third place is the feeling of my importance as a head of a family among my family members, with a rate of 19.6%, and in the fourth place, independence in making decisions related to the family and my surrounding environment, with a rate of 17.8%, finally, the services reduced my feeling of inferiority in front of my family members by 16.6%, by analyzing the previous data, it is clear that the economic empowerment services, whether relief or development, that families receive increased the sense of stability and family independence, this was confirmed by the study of (Al-Adaileh 2019) and (Al-Thalathini 2013). they emphasized that economic empowerment services contribute to increasing their independence and self-reliance and enhancing their self-confidence.

c- **What is the role of economic empowerment services in achieving community integration for poor families?**

Table (6): The role of economic empowerment services in achieving community integration for poor families n=363.

Phrase	responses		Order
	number	ratio	
I give advice to solve my neighbors problems.	232	21.9	3
The project allowed me to discuss general issues in society.	154	14.6	5
I feel that I have a social status.	264	25.0	1
I am interested in participating in volunteer work.	162	15.3	4
1- I follow everything that happens in the community.	246	23.2	2
score	1058	% 100.0	-

It is clear from the previous table that economic empowerment services to achieve community integration were as follows, where it came first I feel that I have a social status, and it came at a rate of 25.0%, it was followed in second place I follow everything that happens in the community with a rate of 2.23%, while third place came I give advices to solve my neighbor's problems with a rate of 21.9%, and in fourth place, I interest in participating in volunteer work. with a percentage of 15.3%,

finally, in fifth place, the project allowed me to discuss the general issues in society with a rate of 14.6%.

By analyzing the previous data, it is clear that the beneficiaries of empowerment services confirm their feeling that they have gained a social status in their societies, The researcher believes that the economic empowerment of families was reflected on their social reality by feeling their social status in front of the external environment in which they live, this was confirmed by the study (Murad Khamaysa 2012), which confirms that empowerment services have increased respect and appreciation from others and pushed them more to engage in society.

Third: Obstacles that hinder economic empowerment services at the Ministry of Social Development to improve the quality of life for poor families in the Gaza Strip.

a- **What are the administrative obstacles?**

Table (7) shows administrative obstacles, n=363.

Phrase	responses		Order
	number	ratio	
The complexity and inertia in the system of economic empowerment services provided.	386	28.2	1
Lack of cooperation between employees within the directorate.	254	18.6	2
Poor coordination between the Ministry and NGOs.	234	17.1	3
Officials' lack of interest in beneficiaries' complaints.	186	13.6	5
The spread of nepotism and wasta.	210	15.3	4
Procrastination in dealing with beneficiaries.	98	7.2	6
score	1368	% 100.0	-

It is clear from the previous table that among the administrative obstacles hindering economic empowerment services was the complexity and stagnation in the system of economic empowerment services provided, which ranked first with a rate of 28.2%, and procrastination in dealing with beneficiaries came in last place with a rate of 7.2%, by analyzing the previous data, it becomes clear that the administrative obstacles that impede economic empowerment services were in varying proportions, but, the beneficiaries unanimously agreed that the most important administrative obstacles are the complexity and inertia in the system of economic empowerment services provided, The researcher attributes this to the fact that the nature of government work tends to bureaucracy, routine, complexity, and stagnation, and the reason for this is due to a large number of auditors and beneficiaries of services, The current results are consistent with (Al-Zumar 2010 study), which confirms the irregularity of the monthly follow-up, as well as the weakness in training borrowers, And also the study (Innocent 2019), which confirms the insufficient cooperation between institutions and the weak participation of the target groups.

b- What are the economic obstacles?

Table (8) shows the economic obstacles, n=363.

Phrase	responses		Order
	number	ratio	
Lack of interest in developing economic empowerment services.	275	21.0	1
The lack of sufficient funding to continue providing services.	263	20.1	2
Lack of budget for economic empowerment services.	253	19.3	3
The high rate of poverty in the Gaza Strip.	224	17.1	4
The lack of necessary equipment to ensure the continuity of projects.	167	12.8	5
High illiteracy rate.	127	9.7	6
score	1309	%100.0	-

It is clear from the previous table that one of the economic obstacles is the lack of interest in developing economic empowerment services, which came in the first place with a rate of 21.0%, and in last place the high rate of illiteracy with a rate of 9.7%, by analyzing the previous data, it becomes clear that the economic obstacles that impede empowerment services were uneven, the researcher attributes this to the state of instability in the Gaza Strip, especially in light of the continuous blockade for more than 14 years by the Israeli occupation and the Palestinian division.

c- What are the social obstacles?

Table (9) shows social Obstacles, n=363.

Phrase	responses		Order
	number	ratio	
Not giving importance to the youth in the Palestinian society.	273	25.1	1
Increased desire to migrate from the Gaza Strip.	248	22.8	2
Failure to follow up the social problems of the poor in the Ministry of Social Development.	223	20.5	3
Inequality between men and women in the distribution of economic empowerment services.	154	14.2	5
Some negative customs and traditions.	189	17.4	4
score	1087	%100.0	-

It is clear from the previous table that among the social obstacles that impede empowerment services is not giving importance to young people in Palestinian society, and it came in first place with a rate of 25.1%, in the last place came the inequality between men and women in the distribution of economic empowerment services, with a rate of 14.2%, by analyzing the previous data, it becomes clear that the social obstacles came in varying proportions, the researcher attributes this to the high rate of poverty and unemployment and the inability to absorb graduates, whether from universities or vocational institutes, as well as the state of siege imposed on Gaza Strip, all these factors increase the lack of importance for youth and the desire to emigrate abroad.

4. CONCLUSION

After the researcher presented the results of the field research, the study concluded a set of results, where the results of the study showed that the contribution of empowerment services to improving the quality of economic, social, and healthier life for families was medium by a rate ranging from 48% to 55.0%, the results of the study also showed that economic empowerment services contributed to achieving adaptation, harmony, and family independence, in addition to social integration, all of it was average, by a rate ranging from 48% to 63%. the results of the study also showed that among the administrative obstacles that hinder economic empowerment services at the Ministry of Social Development to improve the quality of life for poor families was the complexity and inertia in the system of economic empowerment services at a rate of 28.2%. and the economic obstacles hindering economic empowerment services at the Ministry of Social Development to improve the quality of life for poor families was the lack of interest in developing economic empowerment

services at a rate of 21.0%. and social constraints that hinder economic empowerment services at the Ministry of Social Development to improve the quality of life for poor families is the lack of importance for youth in the Palestinian society by 25.1%.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Expanding successful small development projects to help heads of families to reduce various social problems and reduce poverty, which contributes to increasing community belonging.
2. Continuous cooperation and participation between the Ministry of Social Development and civil society institutions in order to provide services to all groups in need of assistance.
3. Paying attention to training programs by the Ministry of Social Development, in order to develop the skills of poor families who have the capabilities in order to transform these families from a developmental situation to a relief one.
4. Coordination and cooperation between governmental bodies and private bodies interested in economic empowerment, as well as providing permanent and stable financial support for the programs and projects of the Ministry of Social Development, especially economic empowerment services.
5. Developing the functional and administrative apparatus, seeking the assistance of experts and specialists in the field of economic empowerment services for all groups, as well as facilitating access to the necessary services for empowerment services.

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