

United Nations Common Country Analysis
for the Occupied Palestinian Territory

United Nations Country Team
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List of Acronyms

ACE	Action for Climate Empowerment
AHLC	Ad Hoc Liaison Committee
AIDS	Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
CAT	Convention Against Torture
CCA	Common Country Assessment
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CERD	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
COVID	Coronavirus Disease
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
CVA	Cash and Voucher Assistance
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
DRM	Domestic Revenue Mobilization
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
ECD	Early Children Development
ERW	Explosive Remnants of War
ESCWA	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FHH	Female-Headed Households
FSS	Food Security Sector
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GER	Gross Enrollment Rate
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
HDP Nexus	Humanitarian Development Peace Nexus
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HJC	High Judicial Council
HRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ICHR	Independent Commission for Human Rights
ICJ	International Court of Justice
ICT	Information & Communication Technology
IDF	Israeli Defense Forces
IEC	Israeli Electricity Corporation
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
ILO	International Labor Organization
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
ITC	International Trade Commission
JWC	Joint Water Committee
LACS	Local Aid Coordination Secretariat
LGBT+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and other
LGU	Local Government Unit
LNOB	Leave No One Behind
LWSC	Land and Water Settlement Commission
MCM	Million Cubic Meters
MHH	Male-Headed Households
MHPSS	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
MICS	Multi Indicator Cluster Survey
MSME	Micro, Small, and Medium-Sized Enterprises
MSNA	Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment
NCD	Noncommunicable Diseases
NDP	National Development Plan
NEET	Not in Employment, Education, or Training
NER	Net Enrolment Rate

NFNSP	National Food and Nutrition Security Policy
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NIP	National Investment Plan
NIS	New Israeli Shekel
NPA	National Policy Agenda
NUP	National Urban Policy
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OPCAT	Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture
OPT	Occupied Palestinian Territory
PA	Palestinian Authority
PCBS	Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
PICA	Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture
PLC	Palestinian Legislative Council
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PMO	Prime Minister's Office
PNECTP	Palestinian National Cash Transfer Program
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
PPPs	Public-Private Partnerships
PSS	Psychosocial Support Services
PWA	Palestinian Water Authority
PWD	Persons with Disabilities
RCO	Resident Coordinator Office
RDNA	Rapid Damage Needs Assessment
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
STIs	Sexual Transmitted Infections
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UN	United Nations
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDSS	United Nations Department of Safety and Security
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNMAS	United Nations Mine Action Service
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNROD	United Nations Register of Damage
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
UNSCO	United Nations Special Coordinator Office for the Middle East Peace Process
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UXO	Unexploded Ordnance
VAT	Value Added Tax
VNR	Voluntary National Review
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene
WEFM	World Economic Forecasting Model
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WPS	Women, Peace, and Security

Definitions

Area A, Area B, Area C: The 1995 Interim Agreement (“Oslo II”) divided the West Bank into three administrative areas—Area A, Area B, and Area C—in an arrangement that was intended to last until 1999, by which time a final status agreement was supposed to have been reached. The Interim Agreement granted the Palestinian Authority (PA) full jurisdiction over civil affairs in Areas A and B (comprising about 40 percent of the territory and 90 percent of the Palestinian population in the West Bank). The PA also assumed full responsibility for “internal security and public order” in Area A, while in Area B it is responsible only for public order, with Israel maintaining the “overriding responsibility for security for the purpose of protecting Israelis and confronting the threat of terrorism.” According to the Agreement, Area C (60 percent of the territory in the West Bank, containing all the Israeli settlements) is under full Israeli jurisdiction for civil and security matters apart from issues for which powers and responsibility have been transferred to the PA by agreement, for example, in education and health services. The Agreement also stipulated that despite the redeployment of its forces, “Israel shall continue to carry the responsibility for external security, as well as the responsibility for overall security of Israelis for the purpose of safeguarding their internal security and public order.”

East Jerusalem: Unilaterally annexed by Israel in 1980, East Jerusalem has a population of more than 350,000 Palestinians and more than 200,000 Israelis. For the United Nations, East Jerusalem remains occupied territory in which international humanitarian law applies.

Gaza border fence and access restricted areas: Since September 2000, Israel has unilaterally tightened restrictions in Gaza on Palestinian access to the sea and to land located near the fence with Israel, citing security concerns. Up to 35 percent of Gaza’s agricultural land and as much as 85 percent of its fishing waters have been affected by these access restrictions at various times. Continuing insecurity discourages farming activity in land located up to 1,000 meters from Israel’s perimeter fence. The Oslo Accords set the Gaza fishing zone at 20 nautical miles; however, Israel restricts the limit to between six and 15 nautical miles even during periods of calm, affecting fishing livelihoods. Numerous shelters and schools are located in or near the access restricted areas. Longstanding import restrictions imposed by Israel, citing security concerns, as well as lack of agreement and coordination between the Palestinian Authority (PA) and Israel, impede the implementation of projects for infrastructure, economic recovery, and employment.

Green Line: The 1949 Armistice line delineating the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip.

Hebron H1 and H2: The city of Hebron is divided into H1 and H2 under the 1997 Hebron Protocol. H1 covers approximately 80 percent of the city and is under Palestinian civil and security control. H2 is under Israeli military control and Palestinian civil control. In H2, approximately 33,000 Palestinians live alongside several hundred settlers. Israel imposes significant security measures on H2.

Israeli Settlements: Israeli settlements are civilian communities, associated infrastructure, and industrial areas established by Israel in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, since its occupation by Israel in 1967. The illegality of Israeli settlements has been repeatedly reaffirmed and condemned by the United Nations Security Council, the General Assembly, and other international bodies as a violation of international law. The International Court of Justice also found the settlements to be illegal in its 2004 advisory opinion. Israel continues to expand existing settlements, as well as build new ones, despite objections from the international community. The United Nations Secretary-General has recalled that the establishment and expansion of settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory,

including East Jerusalem, have no legal validity and are flagrant violations of international law. The total settler population is currently estimated at nearly 700,000, two-thirds living in Area C and the rest in East Jerusalem.

“Palestine,” “State of Palestine,” “Occupied Palestinian Territory”: In this report the terms “Palestine,” the “State of Palestine,” and “Occupied Palestinian Territory” are used depending on context. The term “Occupied Palestinian Territory” refers as a whole to the geographical area of the Palestinian territory occupied by Israel since 1967. The terms “Government of Palestine,” “Palestinian government,” and “Palestinian Authority” have been used interchangeably. Consequent to the adoption of resolution 67/19 by the United Nations General Assembly on 29 November 2012, Palestine was accorded the status of nonmember observer State in the United Nations. As a result, Palestine can be referred to as a State or Country, and its authorities can generally be identified as the Government of Palestine.

Seam Zone: The Seam Zone corresponds to areas in the West Bank situated between the West Bank Barrier and the Green Line.

West Bank Barrier: A barrier of 8-meter-high concrete walls, fences, ditches, razor wire, an electronic monitoring system, patrol roads, and a buffer zone. Israel constructed the Barrier beginning in 2002, with the stated aim of preventing violent attacks by Palestinians. The vast majority of the Barrier’s route deviates from the Green Line and runs within the West Bank, separating Palestinian communities from each other and aggravating the existing fragmentation of the OPT. In 2004, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) stated that the sections of the Barrier route which run inside the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, together with the associated gate and permit regime, violated Israel’s obligations under international law.

Figure 1: The West Bank (source: OCHA)

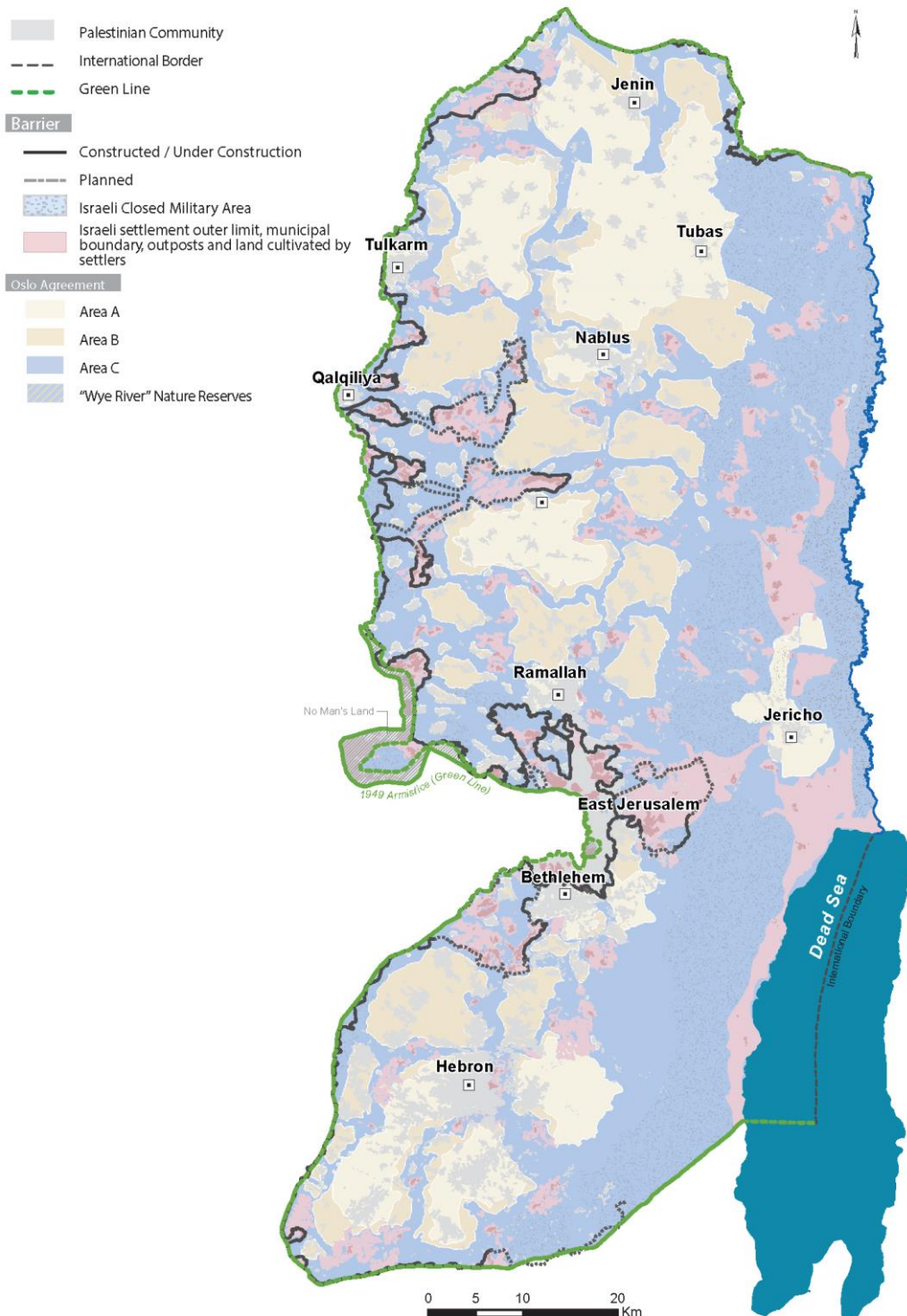
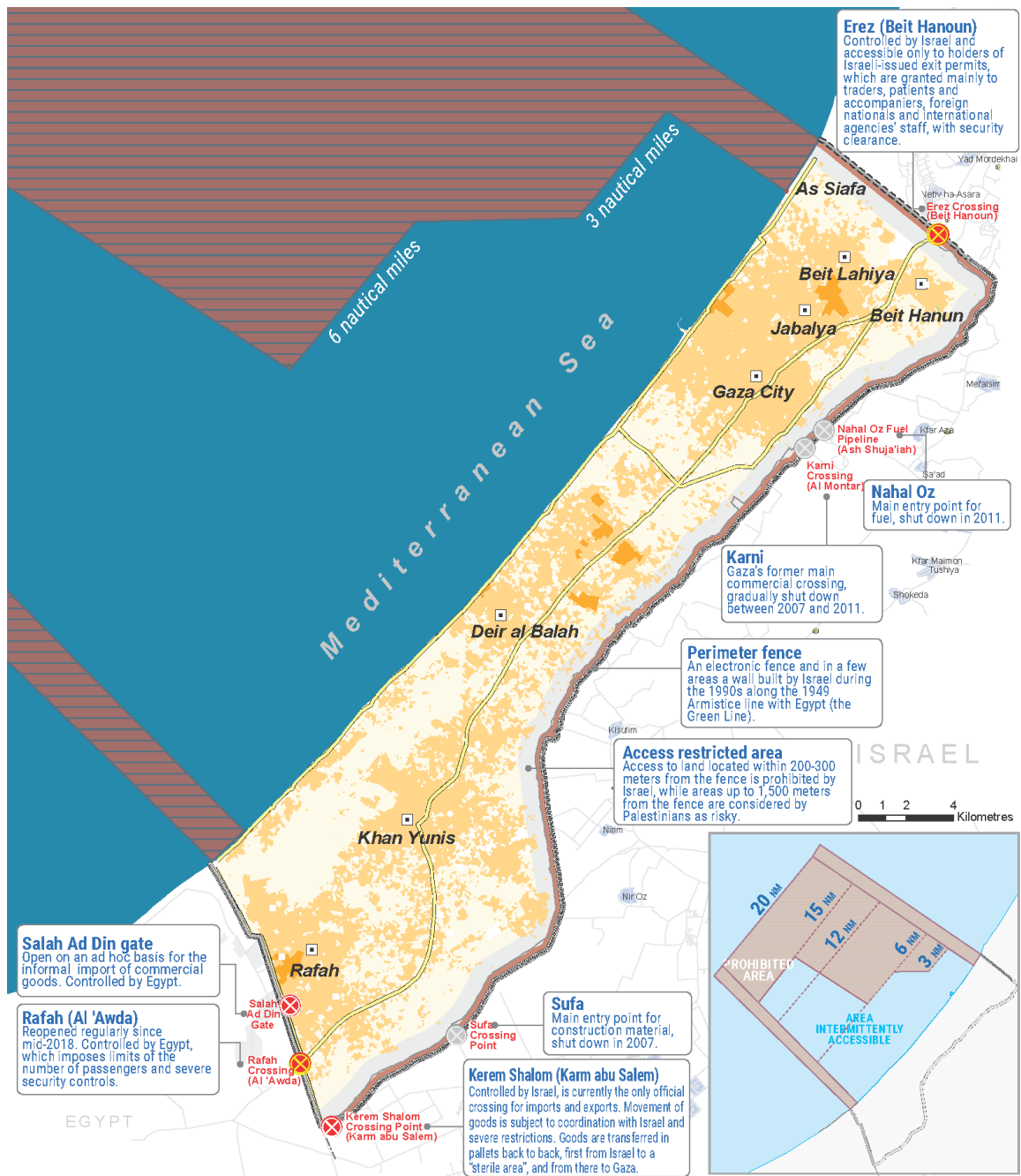


Figure 2: The Gaza Strip (source: OCHA)



Executive summary

This Common Country Analysis (CCA) evaluates the state of development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) after decades of uneven social and economic progress and institution building. The purpose of this publication is to serve as the knowledge base for the upcoming United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework.

The OPT is one of the most complex and challenging environments in which the United Nations operates. This Common Country Analysis identifies the principal barriers to achieving the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Israeli occupation, the internal Palestinian political divide, and recurrent conflict. These barriers result in significant challenges to good governance, the enjoyment of human rights, and gender equality; to building and maintaining peace; to generating economic growth and fiscal stability; and to human development. The CCA identifies several groups in Palestine facing multidimensional, intersecting, and overlapping vulnerabilities, among them women and girls, children and youth, the elderly, people with disabilities, LGBT+ persons, marginalized groups, refugees, and residents of Area C, H2, the Seam Zone, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip.

A holistic picture of social and economic development in Palestine depicts some achievements, notably on maternal and infant mortality rates, access to education, urban planning, and certain legal reforms. However, this CCA points to significant challenges to end poverty and hunger, improve health and education, reduce inequalities, reduce violence in homes and communities, empower women and girls, spur economic growth, address climate change, provide basic services including energy and water, establish strong and just institutions, and build a more peaceful future. The fiscal crisis facing the Palestinian Authority is an important constraint in achieving the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Drawing from the analysis, five of the most promising enablers for accelerating progress on the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals in Palestine are:

- Advancing peace
- Supporting good governance, effective institutions, and human rights
- Enabling private sector growth for employment, livelihoods, and poverty reduction
- Strengthening equitable access to high-quality basic services
- Building climate resilience, accessing natural resources, and leveraging food systems

The most direct route to achieving the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs remains a negotiated solution to the Israel-Palestinian conflict and the end to the Israeli occupation. Returning an internationally-recognized Palestinian government to the Gaza Strip would unlock additional international development assistance to Gaza and allow implementation of a greater number and wider range of interventions there. This would reduce humanitarian need and support a path towards negotiations and eventually peace.

Short of these goals, several policy changes by Israel would dramatically improve the humanitarian and development situation of Palestinians. Among the most important are easing the strict closure regime in Gaza, increasing access to land and natural resources in the West Bank, improving the circulation of goods and people within the West Bank including East Jerusalem, allowing greater

Palestinian development in Area C, resolving the “fiscal leakages” file, and improving human rights across OPT.

To accelerate their sustainable development outcomes, Palestinians and their institutions must also strengthen their efforts on governance and fiscal reforms, entrench the rule of law, improve human rights, create an inclusive and dynamic business environment, protect the most vulnerable, and empower women, girls, and youth.

1. Introduction

The Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) is one of the most complex and challenging environments in which the United Nations operates. Since 1947, the United Nations has had a continuous presence on the ground under a variety of mandates—mediating conflicts, peacekeeping, delivering humanitarian and development assistance, monitoring and reporting on human rights violations, and building institutions. Since 1967, the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip have been under Israeli military occupation.

The Oslo Accords signed between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel between 1993 and 1995 recognized the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as a single territorial unit; created a Palestinian Authority (PA) with limited self-governance over parts of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip; and established regulations governing the Israeli and Palestinian economic relationship. As part of the 1995 Interim Oslo II Agreement, the West Bank was further divided into three administrative areas, referred to as Areas A, B, and C. The Oslo Accords were supposed to lead to a permanent agreement by 1999, pending the conclusion of final status negotiations. Regrettably, the parties have yet to reach a final status agreement.

Since the creation of the Palestinian Authority (PA), the United Nations has delivered billions of US dollars in assistance to accelerate Palestinian social and economic development and strengthen Palestinian institutions, in support of the Middle East Peace Process and to help prepare the Palestinians for statehood. Consequent to the adoption of resolution 67/19 by the United Nations General Assembly on 29 November 2012, Palestine was accorded the status of nonmember observer State in the United Nations, with the support of 138 Member States. At present, 138 UN Member States recognize the State of Palestine. The State of Palestine has also been admitted to several United Nations intergovernmental bodies as a Member State, including UNESCO, UNCTAD, and ESCWA.

The Middle East Peace Process has made little progress for over two decades. Since the Camp David Summit in 2000 closed without an agreement, three rounds of official final status talks—in 2000-2001, 2007-2008, and 2013-2014—have not resolved the Israel-Palestinian conflict or ended the occupation. Instead, episodes of significant violence have recurred, causing loss of life, economic damage, and social and psychosocial trauma. The Second Intifada lasted between 2000 and 2005. Israel disengaged from Gaza in 2005, dismantling settlements and withdrawing settlers and security forces while still maintaining security control over Gaza. Following the 2006 elections in Palestine in which Hamas won a majority of seats in the Palestinian parliament, Hamas and its affiliates violently took control of the Gaza Strip using armed force in 2007, displacing the internationally recognized Palestinian Authority. Since Hamas' takeover, Israel has imposed a strict closure regime on movement and access of people and goods into and out of Gaza. Major armed conflict between Israel and Hamas and other militant groups in the Gaza Strip occurred in 2008-2009, 2012, 2014, and 2021.

Throughout the last 15 years, violence has been a constant reality in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, due to several drivers such as incursions and search operations by Israeli Security Forces, settler-related violence, violence accompanying evictions and demolitions, intra-Palestinian communal violence, and excessive use of force in law enforcement operations.

The overarching goal of the United Nations remains supporting Palestinians and Israelis to resolve the conflict and end the occupation in line with relevant United Nations resolutions, international law, and bilateral agreements in pursuit of achieving the vision of two States—Israel and an independent,

democratic, contiguous, viable, and sovereign Palestinian State—living side by side in peace and security within secure and recognized borders, on the basis of the pre-1967 lines, with Jerusalem as the capital of both States. As it works toward these goals, the United Nations leads international efforts to address the humanitarian impacts of the conflict and occupation and to advance sustainable development in Palestine. Despite the significant challenges, achieving these goals remains possible and there are still opportunities to build momentum toward finding a just and lasting solution to the conflict, ending the occupation, easing the humanitarian crisis, and achieving the sustainable development goals of the Palestinian people.

Table 1: Key Figures: The Occupied Palestinian Territory

	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
Population	3,154,418	2,136,507	5,290,925
Area (km ²)	5,655	365	6,020
GDP per capita, USD	4,197	1,208	2,923
Poverty rate	13.9%	53.0%	29.2%
Men’s labor force participation rate	73.6%	61.2%	68.9%
Women’s labor force participation rate	17.2%	17.3%	17.2%
Youth labor force participation rate (age 15-24)	31.7%	24.5%	28.8%
Men’s unemployment rate	12.4%	41.9%	22.4%
Women’s unemployment rate	28.9%	65.0%	42.9%
Youth unemployment rate (age 15-24)	27.8%	68.9%	41.7%
Physicians per 1,000 residents	3.25	2.71	3.03
Nurses per 1,000 residents	3.61	5.64	4.43
Teachers per 1,000 residents	12.31	10.20	11.46
Population under age 29 (%)	64%	69%	66%
Refugee population (%)	26.3%	66.1%	42.2%
Annual population growth rate	2.2%	2.9%	2.5%
Food insecure (%)	8.9%	64.4%	31.2%

Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. West Bank population data include East Jerusalem; other data exclude East Jerusalem. Poverty data are from 2017, the most recent official statistics available; other data are from 2020 or 2021.

The United Nations Country Team

Throughout the decades, the United Nations system, its multilateral partners, and Member States have remained fully committed to supporting the Palestinian people and their institutions. At present, the United Nations presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory encompasses development, humanitarian, and political components. The United Nations Country Team (UNCT), under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator, comprises all heads of UN Agencies, Funds, Programmes, Offices, and other entities working in and on the OPT. The UNCT ensures inter-agency coordination and decision making at the country-level on issues ranging from development assistance to issues pertaining to common or shared facilities and services. The main purpose of the UNCT is for these UN entities to plan and work together for tangible results that enhance the development prospects for the Palestinian people. The UNCT works closely with the Palestinian Authority and other development partners to ensure that its work is aligned with the PA’s National Development Plans and the global 2030 Agenda.

The United Nations system in the OPT is committed to innovating its advocacy and assistance. In January 2020, the UNCT formally adopted an “HDP nexus approach” to its humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding efforts. As a first step, the UNCT and HCT merged its data and analysis groups and worked collaboratively on several joint projects, including the Atlas of Sustainable

Development 2020, an assessment of the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 on Palestinian households, and the COVID-19 Development System Response Plan. In 2021, the UNCT and HCT conducted a Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment with an explicitly HDP-nexus-based approach. The humanitarian and development systems in OPT are working towards aligning their strategic planning exercises—that is, the new UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and Humanitarian Response Plans—including identifying collective outcomes and calibrating planning timelines. The overarching objective is to transform the work of the United Nations and partners to reduce humanitarian need, accelerate sustainable development, and build peace.

The United Nations Country Team in Palestine consists of 23 Agencies, Funds, Programmes, Offices, and other entities working in and on the OPT. Resident agencies include the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Labour Organization (ILO), Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), United Nations Office of the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), World Food Programme (WFP), and World Health Organization (WHO). Non-resident agencies include the International Trade Commission (ITC), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and United Nations Register of Damage (UNROD).

The Common Country Analysis: process, methodology, and approach

This Common Country Analysis (CCA) evaluates the state of development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory after decades of uneven social and economic progress and institution building. The purpose of this publication is to serve as the knowledge base for the new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) being developed in 2022, with implementation beginning in 2023.

The present CCA reflects the significant, global reforms that the United Nations development system has undertaken since 2015. This publication responds to the urgency of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by delivering integrated, forward-looking, and evidence-based joint analysis of the context for sustainable development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Under the new reforms, the CCA is no longer just a report prepared once at the start of the program cycle, but rather a signature function of the United Nations Country Team that generates tailored analytical products at the country level. It is part of a strategic pivot for the United Nations towards becoming the top source for independent, trusted analysis and policy support on sustainable development in the 21st century. This analysis will become the foundation for the design of the United Nations programmatic response through the Cooperation Framework. At the same time, the analysis can inform decision-making by the government and other stakeholders.

This new CCA is integrated. It connects analysis of issues for the achievement of each SDG, and across SDGs, in line with the overall commitment to leave no one behind, UN Charter values, and

international norms and standards. It reflects systems thinking, an approach that captures the interlinked relationships, resources, information, institutions, and capacities necessary to identify and address pathways to achieve the 2030 Agenda. This approach spans national borders, factoring in the regional and transboundary issues that impact the Palestinian development trajectory.

This report examines the underlying and structural factors affecting the lives and livelihoods of Palestinian women, men, girls, and boys, and addresses historical, current, and emerging political, security, social, economic, disaster, cultural, and environmental risks. As such, this publication draws upon expertise, information and knowledge across the development, peace and security, human rights, and humanitarian pillars of the United Nations system working in OPT. As the joint analysis of the development context by the United Nations, the CCA identifies the underlying structures and drivers of inequalities, vulnerability, human rights violations, and crisis. To the greatest extent possible, this CCA is data-driven and builds an evidence base sensitive to dynamic changes, while presenting evidence that is disaggregated by key geographic areas and demographic characteristics.

The CCA was drafted under the overall guidance of the Resident Coordinator, her office, and the United Nations Country Team. It marshals the considerable expertise of the United Nations Country Team, working across the development, peace, and humanitarian pillars. In developing this publication, the drafting team consulted multiple stakeholders from Palestinian civil society, the Palestinian Authority, and development partners. The CCA is intended to be a living document, updated annually, and there will be many opportunities for revision and refinement as the next UNSDCF is designed and then implemented in the coming years.

2. The development context: occupation, internal political division, and conflict

The prospects for sustainable development and achieving the 2030 Agenda in OPT are profoundly shaped by the Israeli occupation, the enduring intra-Palestinian political divide, and recurrent conflict. Reducing future humanitarian need and accelerating sustainable development remain, to a large extent, dependent on resolving these fundamentally political disputes. The following sections highlight some of the most challenging aspects of the development context.

Governance and the rule of law

The OPT is fragmented physically, economically, socially, and politically, posing significant barriers to good governance. It is divided into two physically-distinct geographic regions, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The West Bank is divided further into East Jerusalem and Areas A, B, and C. In the West Bank, a separation barrier, an average of 60 meters wide, separates many Palestinian communities from each other, and includes 8-meter concrete walls, fences, ditches, razor wire, an electronic monitoring system, patrol roads, and a buffer zone. The Gaza Strip is surrounded by a border fence and falls under a strict Israeli closure regime, severely limiting movement and access.

Political and jurisdictional fragmentation exacerbates a complicated legal framework. International human rights law and international humanitarian law apply across the OPT.¹ The human rights obligations of Israel within the OPT are indivisible from the jurisdiction and effective control exercised by Israel as the occupying power.² As such, the Government of Israel is a key duty bearer over the Palestinian population; however, the Government of Israel has not acknowledged this in any of its State Party reports to the international treaty bodies. Additionally, the State of Palestine is a party to most of the core international human rights conventions, and its human rights obligations extend to its jurisdiction, that is, the entirety of the OPT, including the zones where it lacks control (for example, East Jerusalem, Area C, H2, and Gaza).³ The *de facto* authorities in Gaza also bear human rights obligations, given their exercise of government-like functions and territorial control.⁴ This has created a situation of multiple legal frameworks including Palestinian laws, Israeli law in Area C, laws enacted during the Ottoman and British Mandate periods, and personal status laws, including the Egyptian Family Rights Law (1954) and the Jordanian Personal Status Law (1976) are still applicable in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, respectively.

The Israeli occupation, territorial fragmentation, and the practical limitations on the control the PA can exercise means that the location where people live also heavily determines the extent to which the State of Palestine can fulfill its human rights obligations, including service delivery, access to justice, promotion of the rights of women, and protection of vulnerable groups at risk of being left behind. The actual transfer of power to the PA under the Oslo Accords was limited, and Israel maintains control over most of the underlying determinants of individual rights for adequate standards of living. For example, Israel collects indirect and direct taxes and transfers them to the PA; these transfers are often subject to periodic political disputes by both parties. Israel also maintains control over internal boundaries, air space, sea, external security, movement of people and goods, residency, communications, and, in certain areas, infrastructure development and access to resources including energy, land, water, and other natural assets.

¹ A/HRC/34/38, para. 3

² A/HRC/34/38, para. 6

³ A/HRC/34/38, para. 5

⁴ A/HRC/8/17, para.9; A/HRC/34/38, para. 5

While the Israeli occupation is the major impediment to the exercise of the right to self-determination and effective Palestinian self-governance, Palestinian institutional weaknesses and the intra-Palestinian political divide also significantly hinder the equal enjoyment of rights and good governance by all Palestinians. The failure to hold any presidential or legislative elections since 2006 and re-seat a parliament has resulted in essential draft laws and regulations being either delayed indefinitely or being issued by presidential decree with attendant problems of legitimacy and of application and enforcement across the OPT, particularly in areas such as Gaza. In 2021, presidential, legislative, and Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) elections were scheduled, but, on 29 April 2021, President Abbas indefinitely postponed the elections “until the participation of Jerusalem and its people is guaranteed” by Israeli authorities.⁵ Elections were held in municipalities in the West Bank in 2012, 2017, and 2021-2022. Municipal elections were last held in Gaza in 2005.

Internal Palestinian governance deficits include—but are not limited to—a democratic and accountability deficit, insufficient respect for political and human rights and civil liberties, administrative and capacity gaps, discriminatory and inconsistent laws and practices, and a lack of transparency, particularly in law enforcement and the security sector. UN treaty bodies have continuously called on Palestinians to re-convene their legislature due to its crucial role in the implementation of UN conventions. Despite efforts by the PA, including the Palestinian Security Forces to address violations of international law, Palestinian security forces and the *de facto* authorities in Gaza continue to arbitrarily arrest and detain Palestinians, including on political grounds, with OHCHR having documented cases of ill-treatment and torture in detention by both Palestinian security forces in the West Bank and security forces in Gaza.⁶ Little progress has been observed in relation to actions carried out by the Palestinian authorities in the West Bank and Gaza to investigate and prosecute the perpetrators of violations linked to incidents of possible excessive use of force or allegations of torture and ill-treatment by Palestinian security forces.⁷ Strengthening effective local complaint mechanisms is one of the crucial obligations under the Palestinian accession to the international human rights treaties that can assist the right-holders in demanding their rights.

Some notable steps have nonetheless been taken by the government, including the announcement, in early 2022, of a broad reform agenda, discussed in the next chapter, and steps to reform the planning and budgeting processes. To enhance government effectiveness and raise the efficiency of public institutions, the current National Development Plan integrates budget planning and shifts to program-based budgets. The shift from itemized budgets to program- and performance-based budgets will enhance the linkage between the preparation of strategic plans and the government budget and the linkage between development spending and the recurrent government budget. The shift to program-based budgets allows linking financial allocations with the objectives and policies of the programs of the institution, which are prepared based on the strategic plan of the government institution, and thus the ability to evaluate the impact of public spending.

The Ministry of Finance has developed a special guide for preparing program-based budgets and for training cadres in ministries and government institutions to use it. The Council of Ministers also approved the formation of a planning and budgeting group at the decision-making level, headed by the minister, undersecretary of the ministry, or their equivalent in non-ministerial bodies. This group

⁵ Reuters. “Palestinian leader delays parliamentary and presidential elections, blaming Israel.” 30 April 2021.

⁶ See, for example, A/HRC/49/83, paras 51-54; A/HRC/46/63 paras. 60-64; A/HRC/49/25, para. 31-32.

⁷ See, for example, A/HRC/46/22, paras, 21-24; A/HRC/49/25, paras. 25-27.

is responsible for preparing both the strategic plan and the institutional budget, and it consists of all relevant administrative units in the ministry. To support the transition to program-based budgets and to enhance the linkage between planning and budgeting, a joint working group was formed from the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Finance support this process.

In addition, the government has adopted gender responsive budgeting practices. There are national programs directly addressing gender equality goals, such as the elimination of violence against women, social protection, women's economic empowerment, and women, peace, and security. In other programs, gender equality is mainstreamed in objectives and outputs targeting women and marginalized groups, as the case of the education and health sectors. Other sectors like infrastructure, transport, and economy have introduced some gender related programs, statistics, and analysis but have not fully integrated gender indicators and programs into their budgets. More work is needed to increase financing for gender priorities and improve data collection.

As noted in the following chapters, the United Nations and its partners are supporting these reforms.

Transparency and accountability

Lack of clear separation of powers as well as absence of checks and balances have contributed to low public confidence in the government, the judiciary, and security forces.⁸ In recent years, some legislation promoting transparency and accountability have been passed, including on the protection of whistle-blowers,⁹ controlling the receipt of gifts,¹⁰ and conflicts of interest. Moreover, the General Personnel Council and Ministry of Interior have implemented training courses for civil servants and security officials on good practices, and the PA has taken steps to promote transparency in public procurement.¹¹

However, general lack of transparency and accountability within the Palestinian government both at the national and local levels have eroded citizens' trust in their representatives and policy makers, demonstrated in several corruption perception indices published by various global and national expert organizations. For example, the results of Transparency International's Global Corruption Barometer, conducted most recently in 2016 and 2019, show that the public perceives a sharp increase in corruption and bribery in public institutions over time.¹² Moreover, 51 percent of Palestinians believe that the government is insufficiently addressing corruption, while 56 percent of Palestinians polled in 2019 were not satisfied with the levels of democracy.¹³ Around 17 percent of Palestinians report having paid a bribe to access public services, and 38 percent reported accessing public services using *wasta* or nepotism.¹⁴ *Wasta* in Palestine is especially used in getting access to utilities, such as water, and court services. This provides insight into how lack of ownership of public resources, often due to the occupation, could contribute to corruption. In addition, the World Bank's World Governance Indicators dataset for 2021 confirms the PA's limited capacity to control and counter corruption, and to effectively administer its territory.¹⁵

⁸ See, for example, PCPSR Opinion Poll 80, July 2021. Available at: <http://pcpsr.org/en/node/845>, and A/HRC/49/83, para. 33.

⁹ Council of Ministers. 2019. Resolution 7. "Whistleblowers and Witnesses Protection System."

¹⁰ Council of Ministers. 2019. Resolution 10: "Gift Accepting System" in public service positions.

¹¹ Council of Ministers. 2019. Resolution obliging all ministries, government institutions and municipalities classified (A) to use the unified public procurement portal.

¹² Transparency International. 2019. Global Corruption Barometer, Middle East and North Africa.

¹³ Transparency International. 2019. Global Corruption Barometer, Middle East and North Africa.

¹⁴ Transparency International. 2019. Global Corruption Barometer, Middle East and North Africa.

¹⁵ World Bank. 2021. Worldwide Governance Indicators.

The lack of transparency and accountability in public appointments weakens representation—the linkages between state institutions and the public. Senior officials, such as governors and ambassadors, extend their terms and remain in office, sometimes for decades. Moreover, lack of gender-responsive human resources is observed in public institutions, including the justice and security sectors, which may explain the low representation of women in these institutions, particularly in decision making positions. Women account for only 4 percent of police officers, 20 percent of public prosecutors, and 18 percent of judges, although these numbers are increasing.¹⁶ This is exacerbated by prevailing gender norms questioning women’s ability to lead: a 2017 study of male perspectives on gender equality in Palestine reported a minority (42 percent) of men surveyed thought there should be more women in positions of political authority.¹⁷ Decisions continue to be centralized in the hands of a few individuals, which fuels the creation of power centers in place of constitutional and official institutions.

The lack of accurate and transparent public information, especially on decisions taken by the Council of Ministers, prevents citizens, civil society, and the media from holding them to account. Despite some minor improvements, this is even more visible at the local government level, where most local governance units (LGUs), especially those in Area C, do not have an approved policy concerning publishing and disclosing information.

Despite the important developments that have accompanied the security sector reform process, one of which is controlling purchases and financial spending and the adoption of the National Mechanism for the Prevention of Torture, there are weaknesses in some areas of the legal system governing this sector. The lack of external oversight stemming from the absence of an effective legislative function presents one of the main threats to the professionalism and non-politicization of the security forces. Palestinian security institutions must build on previous reforms and continue upgrading and strengthening their accountability and professionalism.

Civic space

The United Nations has noted the shrinking of civic space and increasing restrictions on civil liberties, throughout the OPT. For example, on 19 October 2021, Israel designated six Palestinian civil society organizations as “terrorist organizations” under Israel’s Counter-Terrorism Law of 2016 and later declared them unlawful in the Occupied Palestinian Territory through a military order.¹⁸ On the 12 July 2022, 10 European States announced that “no substantial information was received from Israel that would justify reviewing our policy towards the six Palestinian NGOs on the basis of the Israeli decision to designate these NGOs as ‘terrorist organizations’”. On 18 August 2022, Israeli Forces broke into, searched, and sealed the offices of these six NGOs plus an additional NGO in Ramallah in Area A of the occupied West Bank. Their property was confiscated and destroyed and military orders closing the offices were left at the premises. In addition, Israel has also carried out arbitrary arrests and criminal prosecution of human rights defenders, including women human rights defenders, movement restrictions, searches and closures of civil society organizations, dispersal of peaceful assemblies, attacks against journalists and restrictions of online civic space.

¹⁶ PCBS. 2018. Women and Men in Palestine: Issues and Statistics.

¹⁷ UN Women. 2017. Understanding Masculinities: Palestine.

¹⁸ EU. 2021. Israel/Palestine: Statement by the Spokesperson on the listing of six Palestinian organisations as terrorist organisations. UNSCO. 2021. Briefing to the Security Council, November 2021.

The Palestinian Authority has also restricted the civic space for Palestinians and the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, including through the issuance of laws by decree restricting the freedom of association and space for non-governmental organizations; cases of security forces' unwarranted or excessive use of force against journalists and human rights defenders, as well as intimidation; gender-based violence and harassment during demonstrations; excessive use of force; arbitrary mass arrests and criminal prosecution of protesters and journalists.¹⁹ The position of the Palestinian Authority is that these incidents are not systematic and do not reflect government policy, and that the PA is making continuous efforts to prevent such incidents from recurring.

In Gaza, the *de facto* authorities have also restricted Palestinians' rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, with the targeting of journalists and persons criticizing the authorities in the online space through raids, arrests, and harassment. Restrictions imposed by the *de facto authorities* increasingly impede civil society in Gaza.

Peace and security

Many of the drivers of conflict and instability in the OPT are fundamentally political: the unresolved status of Palestine, the Israeli occupation, the status of Palestinian refugees, internal Palestinian divisions, increasing settlement expansion, demolitions, and the escalations of hostilities between Israel and armed groups in Gaza, rocket attacks from militants in Gaza, among others. The most direct route to achieving the development aims of the Palestinians remains a negotiated solution to the Israel-Palestinian conflict and the end to the Israeli occupation. Addressing these political questions will reduce future humanitarian need, accelerate development, and build peace.

The dominant political, security, humanitarian, and human rights trends have contributed to a pervasive sense of pessimism in the region and among the broader international community regarding the prospects of renewing meaningful negotiations in the near-to-medium future. At the same time, there is growing concern that—given the continuing occupation, the absence of a political process, and the negative trends on the ground—the window for achieving a two-State solution is closing.

As highlighted in various other United Nations reports, the expansion of Israeli settlements continues, in contravention of international law, including the advancement of new plans for future construction, including in politically sensitive locations in and around Jerusalem, such as E1 and Givat Hamatos. Settler organizations meanwhile continue to work actively to take over land and property in densely populated Palestinian residential areas in Hebron and occupied East Jerusalem—symbolically and religiously charged areas. In addition to the challenges they pose in terms of effective governance, access to land, and services and economic activity, large settlement blocs, outposts, and the fragmentation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem by the barrier and other infrastructure and restrictions continue to endanger the two-State solution by undermining the physical possibility of its realization and the realization of the legitimate Palestinian right to self-determination and sovereignty. The settler population in Area C and East Jerusalem continued to grow, albeit at declining rates, reaching at least 450,000 and 215,000, respectively, at present.

From January 2008 through March 2022, at least 6,011 Palestinians and 267 Israelis were killed in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.²⁰ The majority of these fatalities occurred during escalations

¹⁹ See, for example, A/HRC/49/83, paras. 33-36; A/HRC/49/83, paras 42-44

²⁰ OCHA has been collecting and publishing data on casualties and fatalities since January 2008. OCHA. Data on casualties. Accessed February 2022: <https://www.ochaopt.org/data/casualties>.

in Gaza in 2008-2009, 2012, 2014, and 2021. Among Palestinians killed, at least 4,029 were men, 612 women, 1,086 boys, and 268 girls.²¹ Among Israelis killed, at least 214 were men, 32 women, 15 boys, and six girls. In addition to the loss of life, other human costs are quite significant, such as disability and mental health disorders. Recurrent conflict has led to contamination of land by Explosive Remnants of War (ERW), the closure of crossings and restrictions on movement, destruction of infrastructure and housing, damage to health care facilities, loss of jobs and income, closure of schools and institutions of higher learning, destruction of production, and shortages in everything from food to essential medical supplies. Major infrastructure projects in Gaza and Area C, many implemented with considerable international development assistance, have been repeatedly damaged or destroyed. Hamas and other militant groups in the Gaza Strip have repeatedly launched rockets and incendiary balloons even during periods of relative “calm” in between conflict escalations, for example during spring 2020 and fall 2021. In 2021, the OPT saw the highest number of demolitions ever recorded and the highest number of children killed since 2014. The Committee to Protect Journalists has identified 15 journalists and media workers killed in the OPT since 2008: 14 Palestinians and one Italian.²²

In East Jerusalem, a persistent flashpoint, the annual number of demolitions of Palestinian-owned structures has consistently increased since 2017 and the threat of evictions is constant. Meanwhile, little progress has been made on advancing plans for addressing the housing and development needs of Palestinian residents. In many East Jerusalem neighborhoods, there have been long-standing protests and repeated clashes over these evictions and threats of evictions. In recent years, these clashes have often been accompanied and amplified by inflammatory statements and incitement by extremist elements on both sides, as well as attacks or alleged attacks against security forces and civilians.

Over the past few years, the Al-Aqsa compound in the Old City has been a site of repeated clashes between Israeli Security Forces and Palestinians. Inflammatory rhetoric from both sides has contributed to tensions. The United Nations remains deeply concerned about maintaining the status quo at the Holy Sites in Jerusalem and in the West Bank and has repeatedly called on political, religious, and community leaders on all sides to continue do their part to reduce tensions, uphold the status quo at the Holy Sites, and ensure their sanctity is respected by all. The UN welcomed statements by senior Israeli officials reiterating Israel’s commitment to upholding the status quo on the Holy Esplanade.

The most recent major conflict escalation occurred between 10 and 21 May 2021. Palestinian armed groups fired more than 4,300 rockets indiscriminately from Gaza, including from highly populated civilian neighborhoods, towards cities and towns across southern and central Israel. Israeli forces fired some 1,768 missiles and 2,455 shells into Gaza, also including highly populated civilian neighborhoods. Rockets and mortars from Gaza, in addition to killing and injuring Israelis and Palestinians, also caused significant damage to civilian objects, such as residential buildings, public facilities, and factories. In Gaza, Israeli strikes damaged residential and commercial buildings and infrastructure, particularly hospitals and health centers, water and sanitation facilities, and transport, energy, and

²¹ The sex of 16 fatalities was unavailable.

²² Committee to Protect Journalists. Database on Journalists Killed. Accessed online July 2022.

communications networks, while leaving ERW contamination that hinders reconstruction efforts and future infrastructure projects.

Throughout this period, the United Nations and key partners, including Egypt, were engaged in intensive mediation efforts to halt the conflict. On 20 May 2021, Israel and Hamas and other militant groups in Gaza agreed to a cessation of hostilities. Casualties were recorded on both sides, including 261 dead in Gaza according to OHCHR, including 67 children and 41 women. OHCHR confirmed 130 of the Palestinians fatalities as civilians.²³ In Israel, ten Israelis and residents, including one soldier, three foreign workers, four women, and two children were killed, according to OCHA.

The [Humanitarian Flash Appeal](#) issued on 27 May 2021 by the UN Humanitarian Coordinator identified USD 95 million in critical assistance needs for shelter, water and sanitation, health, education, protection, and other key areas. On 6 July 2021, the World Bank, United Nations, and European Union released the [Gaza Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment](#) (RDNA). According to this assessment, damages in Gaza were estimated at between USD 290 to 380 million, while economic losses reached up to USD 200 million. The social sector was hit hardest, significantly weakening the safety net of the most vulnerable. The immediate and short-term recovery and reconstruction needs were estimated between USD 345 to 485 million.

Another, if less intense, escalation occurred in August 2022, between Israeli military forces and Palestinian armed groups in the Gaza Strip, primarily the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. OCHA and OHCHR indicate that between 5 and 8 August, the Israel Defense Forces launched some 147 airstrikes against targets in Gaza. Palestinian militants launched approximately 1,100 rockets and mortars into Israel, many of which landed deep inside Israeli territory, with a large number falling short in Gaza. During the escalation, 49 Palestinians were killed, of whom 26 were civilians, including 17 children and four women; 360 were injured, including 151 children and 58 women, according to the local Ministry of Health. Hundreds of residential housing units were damaged, and ten houses were completely destroyed, along with damage to other civilian infrastructure. Seventy Israelis were injured, with damage to residential and other civilian structures in Israel.

On 7 August 2022, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and the Israeli Prime Minister's Office announced in separate statements that a ceasefire had been agreed. The ceasefire remains in place as of this writing. Egypt played a crucial role in securing the ceasefire, alongside the United Nations, together with very important support provided by Qatar, the U.S., Jordan, the Palestinian Authority, and others to de-escalate the situation. Together, these efforts combined helped prevent the outbreak of a full-scale war and allowed for the rapid delivery of much-needed humanitarian relief to the people of Gaza.

Exacerbated by previous trauma, these recurrent rounds of violence have serious impacts on disability and mental health, particularly among women and children. While all Palestinians in Gaza are impacted by these conflicts, hostilities and violence exacerbate gender-specific risks and vulnerabilities. For example, civilian men are more vulnerable to loss of life and injuries due to their larger engagement in the public sphere, including participation in the provision of first response services; fatalities among men result in "new widows," who are among the most vulnerable and least protected in society.²⁴

²³ A/HRC/49/83

²⁴ OCHA. 2021. Escalation of Hostilities and Unrest in the oPt: Flash Appeal. 27 May 2021. p. 10.

Beyond the human tragedy, recurrent conflict severely weakens an economy already reduced to a fraction of its potential from the years of Israeli closures and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. For nearly 15 years, the movement of people and goods into and out of Gaza has been under severe restrictions imposed by the Government of Israel, which it cited are for security concerns. Limited numbers of people (mainly medical patients, workers, merchants, and staff of international organizations) are eligible for exit permits via Israel, with the rest prohibited regardless of their security profile. These practices, in addition to multiple episodes of conflict, the internal political divide, and militant rule, have created a severe humanitarian and development crisis in Gaza. Prior to the May 2021 conflict, around 80 percent of the people in Gaza were already receiving some form of international assistance.

Given these compounding factors, the 2022 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) noted a deepening of the severity of humanitarian needs.²⁵ Around 2.1 million Palestinians across the OPT will require some form of humanitarian assistance in 2022, of whom 64 percent, or 1.3 million people, live in Gaza. Of these people, humanitarian partners will aim to assist 1.6 million. Implementation of the HRP will cost USD 510 million, with about 75 percent targeting needs in Gaza, and 25 percent other key focus areas in the West Bank, including Area C, H2, and East Jerusalem. To respond to the most urgent needs, the humanitarian community needs generous, predictable, and consistent funding—and political support from the international community. The 2022 HRP was formulated with the assumption that UNRWA would receive adequate funding; given the dependence of Palestinian refugees on UNRWA services, continued donor support to UNRWA is critical.

Public opinion polls have pointed to a steady increase in distrust between Israelis and Palestinians and a decreased belief in the attainability of a negotiated solution to the conflict.²⁶ On both sides, support for the two-State solution continues to decline, yet it remains the most desirable formula for a peaceful resolution of the conflict, significantly more than alternative options, such as confederation or a single democratic state. Incitement to violence, provocative actions, and inflammatory disinformation are pervasive and widely amplified by social media. Despite this challenging environment, modest peacebuilding activities between Palestinians and Israelis have continued at the grassroots level, led by civil society organizations from both sides.

Given the multiplicity of factors at play and their volatility, political scenarios for the next five years are highly unpredictable and vary widely depending on domestic events in Israel and Palestine, as well as on larger geo-strategic developments at the regional and global level. Just as many of the impactful events described in this chapter were unforeseen five years ago, it should be assumed that the next five years will also bring new, unanticipated challenges and opportunities.

The macroeconomy, economic governance, and fiscal matters

Over 25 years have passed since the signing of the “Protocol on Economic Relations” in 1994, also known as the Paris Protocol, which was intended to be five-year arrangement in preparation for the conclusion of final status negotiations. The Protocol consists of 11 articles on many aspects relevant to economic, trade and taxation policies, as well as policies that regulate importing, banking, insurance, standards, specifications, agriculture, water, energy, and petroleum. The Protocol remains the general framework that governs and predominately shapes and constrains Palestinian trade

²⁵ OCHA. 2021. Humanitarian Response Plan for 2022.

²⁶ Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research. Palestinian-Israeli Pulse Index. <https://www.pcpsr.org/en/node/680>.

relations, trade policy, macroeconomic policies, and fiscal policies—and the economic and fiscal relations between the PA and the Government of Israel.

In principle, the Paris Protocol was supposed to encourage economic cooperation, grow the economy, and strengthen the PA by delegating the authority to design economic policies and programs. In practice, the Protocol provides the PA with an extremely narrow space to pursue an economic policy independent of Israel. The Paris Protocol established a customs union between Israel and the OPT. In the wake of the second intifada, Israeli authorities tightened control over the flow of goods to, from, and within the OPT and via a stringent, closed trade regime imposed on Gaza. Palestinian external trade remains under the full control of Israel, which regulates the Palestinian economy, restricts the movement of people and goods, and results in asymmetric interdependency of the Palestinian economy on the Israeli economy. There is general consensus that the terms of Paris Protocol are outdated given the changes in the global, regional, and local economies in the past decades. UNSCO has repeatedly called on the Paris Protocol to be modernized.

A large body of scholarly research has chronicled the detrimental impact of the Protocol on Palestinian economic development, and the economic, political, and administrative dependency that the agreement created in practice. Most criticism has focused on the procedures for Israeli collection of clearance revenues on behalf of the PA and the subsequent transfer of these revenues each month from Israel to the PA, discussed below. However, the economic challenges associated with the Paris Protocol go far beyond just the clearance revenue issue. Some, but not all, of these challenges stem from the fact that the Protocol is outdated and belonged to a transitional period that was supposed to end in 1999. It no longer addresses the current economic context and the potential opportunities for growth. Economic and export growth has slowed considerably, and economic policy tools of the PA remain subject to Israeli priorities. No less important than the design of the Protocol is the unilateral and selective application by Israel of its basic conditions. For example, the free-trading relationship envisioned in the Oslo process remains unimplemented, and as noted below, regulations governing Palestinian workers in Israel and the settlements are inadequate but improving.

In addition to the general constraints on Palestinian trade, the timely and routine entry of goods, materials and equipment into Gaza continues to be severely impeded by a complex system for coordinating their entry and limited capacity on both sides to efficiently manage this system. Israeli permitting procedures are slow, costly, and arbitrary. The limited availability of key raw materials, production inputs, equipment, and spare parts, coupled with cumbersome protocols, exports restrictions and high shipping fees and transportation costs, present significant impediments for the private sector, hamper job creation and stunt economic growth. There are additional, specific restrictions on lists of goods that may not be imported into the OPT and particularly Gaza, ostensibly for security reasons, since they are classified by Israel as “dual-use” materials and equipment. Israel adopts, and imposes, a much stricter, unilateral definition of “dual-use” goods compared to prevailing international practices. Israel requires that Palestinian traders obtain a special permit from the Israeli authorities that allows the purchase and transport of any of these “dual-use” materials. Among other things, these arrangements constrain the Palestinian economy.

As of Q2 2022, around 210,500 Palestinians work in Israel and the Israeli settlements, most with official permits, but including tens of thousands of workers cross daily without official permits. The vast majority of these workers are men working in agriculture, fishing, and forestry; mining, quarrying, and manufacturing; and construction. Palestinian workers pay intermediaries for permits that enable them

to work legally in Israel. A Bank of Israel working paper conservatively estimated profits of NIS 122 million by these intermediaries in 2019.²⁷ The ILO calculated the estimated annual profits at NIS 427 million.²⁸ Despite an Israeli Government decision in 2016 to undertake an imminent reform of the work permit regime, some first steps toward implementation were only taken in December 2020 when reforms of the construction sector were implemented. These reforms aimed at delinking the permit quotas from employers and hence opening the possibility for Palestinian workers to change jobs and employers. This is an important move towards improving conditions. However, as of early 2022, permit brokers still appear to be operating and there is anecdotal evidence that broker practices now exist with respect to the new permits for Palestinian workers to enter Israel from Gaza. These practices are likely to continue unless a functioning and inexpensive job-matching facility is established for Palestinian workers and Israeli employers.

Israeli restrictions on land, alongside continued settlement activity, further undermine Palestinian economic potential. Settlements' municipal boundaries cover approximately ten percent of the West Bank and approximately 18 percent of the West Bank has been designated as a closed military zone for training, to which Palestinian access is restricted.²⁹ Areas designated by Israel as state lands and nature reserves in Area C also have access restrictions for Palestinians. A new phenomenon that bears watching closely is the establishment of Israeli-controlled "herding outposts" in Area C. In an increasing number of sites, settlers have closed grazing land long used by Palestinian pastoralists and built informal structures, effectively denying Palestinian access to the lands.

Such Israeli restrictions on Palestinian access to the productive assets in Area C limits Palestinian economic potential. A 2013 World Bank report,³⁰ for example, estimated that if businesses and farms were permitted to develop in Area C, Palestinian GDP would increase by as much as 35 percent, or USD 4.15 billion.³¹ The report found the highest direct impacts on the following six sectors, in order of significance: agriculture, minerals, mining, construction, tourism, and telecommunications. Irrigating unexploited lands in Area C, as well as accessing additional range and forest land, could deliver additional value added in the agricultural sector equivalent to 7 percent of GDP. A robust new mineral extraction industry on the Dead Sea could generate benefits to the Palestinian economy up to 9 percent of GDP, almost equivalent to the size of the entire Palestinian manufacturing sector. The mining industry could double in size, increasing value added by some 2 percent of GDP. Lifting the tight restrictions on the construction of residential and commercial buildings alone (excluding infrastructure projects) could increase West Bank construction sector value added by 2 percent of GDP. Improvements in the tourism and telecommunications sectors would together add another 1.5 percent of value added to GDP.

In addition to the direct benefits to these six sectors, the World Bank also found considerable indirect and spillover effects that would increase economic activity and improve Palestinian welfare. While the 2014 analysis and these estimates needs updating, they provide a clear picture of the potential for Palestinian economic growth if access and investment for Palestinians in Area C can be improved.

²⁷ Bank of Israel. 2019. Illegal trade in work permits for Palestinian workers in Israel. <https://www.boi.org.il/en/NewsAndPublications/PressReleases/Pages/25-9-2019.aspx>

²⁸ ILO. 2020. The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories. ILC.109/DG/APP/2020.

²⁹ OCHA. December 2021. [Humanitarian Needs Overview](#).

³⁰ World Bank. 2013. [Area C and the Future of the Palestinian Economy](#). Report No. AUS2922.

³¹ Here converted to 2022 US dollars.

Institutional fragmentation and years of political divide have made the Palestinian internal market and regulatory environment increasingly segmented. Market “micro-climates” arise, with entrepreneurs experiencing significantly different conditions and constraints depending on their location, whereby each of the various authorities that control these areas governs according to its own set of rules.

Van der Weide, et al. (2018) quantify the impact of road closure obstacles by the Israeli army on local GDP in the West Bank, proxied by nighttime lights.³² Their “back-of-the-envelope” calculation suggests that, from 2005 to 2012, market access constraints resulting from road closure obstacles reduced GDP per capita in the West Bank between 4.1 percent and 6.1 percent on average each year. In the medium to long run, lower economic growth rates have massive, negative welfare implications on Palestinian households.

Although acknowledging that the Israeli occupation and Paris Protocol are key determinants of the development trajectory, improving Palestinian internal governance would produce some significant beneficial effects. By and large, there is a key role to be played by the public sector to create an “enabling environment,” whereby the public bodies should intervene to establish the rules that define the space for private operators and provide those goods/services that private operators are not willing/able to produce. Palestine confronts weak institutional capacities to implement changes to policies and procedures and weak and ineffective administrative and regulatory functions.

The macro-fiscal crisis of the Palestinian Authority

The Oslo II Accords established procedures for Israeli collection of so-called clearance revenues (customs, VAT, and excise taxes) on behalf of the PA and the subsequent transfer of these revenues the following month to the PA. Depending on the year, around 65 percent to 75 percent of the PA’s total revenues come from such clearance revenues. In both 2019 and 2020, the transfer of these clearance revenues became subject to political disputes, and, in both years, such transfers did not take place for many months. Even accounting for these political disputes, the fiscal condition of the PA has dramatically worsened over the past few years, with revenues not keeping pace with expenditures. The PA also faces a tightening of direct budget support from donor countries. As a result, the PA has been operating on an austerity footing for several years. At present, roughly half of PA expenditures are allocated to cover to government employees’ salaries, including for PA employees in Gaza who are not working; other operating costs make up the bulk of the remaining expenditures. The PA faces recurrent annual budget deficits of hundreds of millions of U.S. dollars—sometimes higher—driven on the expenditure side by the wage bill, pensions, medical referrals, and net lending.³³ The fiscal space for increased development expenditures including on health, education, infrastructure, social protection, training, and the private sector is virtually non-existent.

In 2019, Israel implemented a law requiring the withholding of clearance revenues equal to the amount paid by Palestinian authorities to prisoners and detainees convicted or accused of security offenses against Israelis, to their families, and to families of Palestinians killed or injured in the context of attacks. In response to the Israeli withholdings, the PA refused to accept any clearance revenue less than the full amount owed to it. This dispute created an unprecedented fiscal crisis and the PA adopted emergency measures to cope with the loss of 65 percent of revenues, equal to some 15 percent of

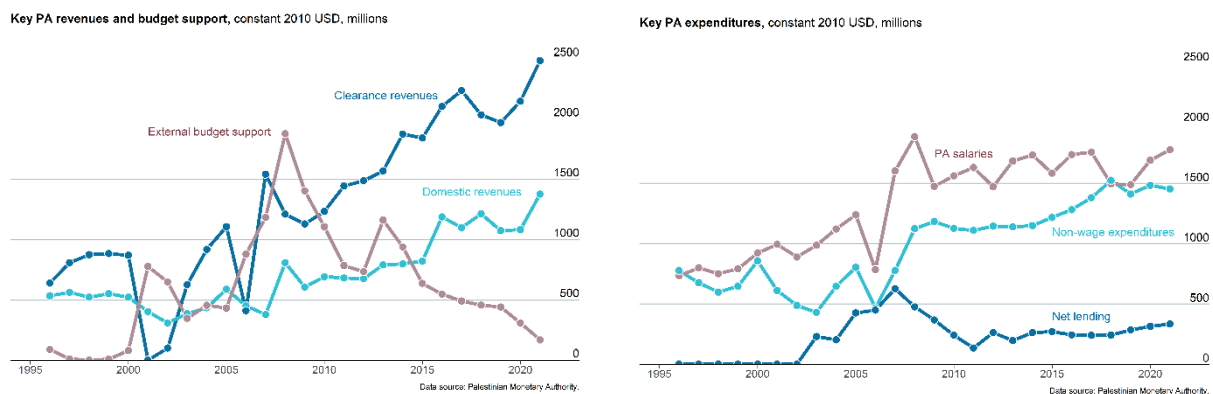
³² Roy van der Weide, Bob Rijkers, Brian Blankespoor, and Alexei Abrahams. 2018. “Obstacles on the Road to Palestinian Economic Growth.” World Bank Group. Policy Research Working Paper 8385.

³³ “Net lending” is the term created since the establishment of the Single Treasury Account in 2002 to refer to the sums deducted by Israel on the clearance revenues to repay the debts due to Israeli companies that provide electricity and water to municipalities and Palestinian distribution companies and utilities.

gross domestic product (GDP). In August 2019, following months of consultations, Israel and the PA agreed for the PA to receive approximately USD 568 million in reimbursed taxes levied by Israel on fuel. This measure temporarily relieved the liquidity crisis, but the underlying disagreement—the so-called “prisoner payment” issue—remains unresolved and the withholding of revenues continues. With respect to the “prisoner payment” deductions, the total amount deducted stood at USD 282 million for 2021, and, as of early 2022, the balance since 2019 has reached USD 450 million. Such deductions account for a large percentage of the PA fiscal deficit.

In 2020, another standoff over clearance revenues occurred. In Israel, proposals to annex parts of the West Bank were prominent in the lengthy election season and in the negotiations forming a short-lived Israeli government in May 2020. In response to this threat of annexation, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas announced that the Palestinian leadership considered itself “absolved of all the agreements and understandings” with the United States and Israeli governments, suspended security and civilian coordination with Israel, and called on Israel to assume its obligations as the occupying power. The halt in coordination meant that the PA refused to receive the revenues that Israel collects on its behalf. This action contributed to an 80 percent reduction in the PA’s overall revenues, forced the adoption of additional austerity measures by the PA on top of a budget already cut to the bone, and greatly amplified the social and economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Palestinians. Only in November 2020 did the resumption of coordination between Israelis and Palestinians finally lead to the transfer of over USD 1 billion in backlogged Palestinian clearance revenues in early December 2020. This transfer allowed the PA to compensate government employees for partially-paid salaries from May through November 2020 and put the PA’s COVID-19 response on steadier fiscal footing.³⁴

Figure 3: Fiscal situation of the Palestinian Authority



This arrangement for the transfer of clearance revenues puts the Palestinian Authority in a highly vulnerable position. This vulnerability is compounded by the Palestinian public’s dependence on highly variable international assistance, including through UNRWA, and by the rapid decline in external budget support to the PA, starting in roughly 2010 and reaching comparatively negligible amounts in 2021 and 2022.³⁵ This vulnerability can be mitigated to some extent by strengthening trading relationships between Palestinians and the wider region and beyond—which would require steps by the Israelis to facilitate such trade—as well as undertaking domestic tax reforms. For the medium

³⁴ UNSCO. 2021. Report to the Ad-Hoc Liaison Committee. 23 February 2021.

³⁵ The issue of external budget support to the PA and donor support to UNRWA is discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

term, at least, the fiscal stability of the Palestinian government will depend in large part on trade passing into or through its largest trading and logistics partner, Israel.

In the context of recurrent fiscal crisis, emergency measures—such as periodic loans from Israel to the PA, emergency budget support, or borrowing from Palestinian banks—have prevented a fiscal collapse but have also delayed reckoning with the drivers of the fiscal crisis and the structural impediments imposed on the Palestinian economy. Significant reforms and policy changes—by both Israel and the PA—must be implemented to address these structural challenges.

Macro-fiscal issues in the Gaza Strip

Given the lack of an internationally-recognized government in the Gaza Strip and a resulting lack of reliable data, assessing the fiscal and financial situation in the Gaza Strip is very challenging. The United Nations has been able to gather some indicative data, which is discussed below but must be used with extraordinary caution.

Since Hamas' takeover of the Gaza Strip in 2007, a robust 'parallel' or 'shadow' economy has emerged that operates largely outside of official supervision or recognized channels. Over time, this parallel economy has evolved and reoriented itself in response to political circumstances and the availability (and relative expense) of official channels. The activities underpinning this parallel economy have included smuggling from border tunnels, imports through the Rafah and Salah Ad-Din crossings with Egypt, black market commerce, 'taxes' collected from these activities, remittances through unregulated money changers, and finally direct transfers to the *de facto* authorities in the Strip. Thriving in the absence of intra-Palestinian reconciliation, this parallel economy directly challenges the legitimacy and capacity of the Palestinian Authority: it breaks the hierarchical linkages between the line ministries and civil servants in Gaza and the internationally-recognized government seated in Ramallah, it diverts revenues away from the public budget into private hands, it obscures public financial management, and, finally, it compromises the honest delivery of public services. The large informal sector particularly disadvantages women, who are more likely to be precariously and informally employed.

Hamas opened the Salah Ad-Din gate to goods in February 2018 and trade through Salah Ad-Din has been increasing consistently over time. The main types of goods that come through the gate appear to be cement; fuel, including diesel, benzene, and cooking gas; food; and other goods including different types of construction materials, consumer items, and tobacco. The number of trucks carrying fuel through Salah Ad-Din has increased at least eightfold since early 2018. The number of trucks carrying food and cement has also increased steadily over time. The types of goods imported are highly variable on a month-to-month basis. This variability is probably due to a combination of factors, including changes in local demand, changes in the supply of goods coming through the official Kerem Shalom crossing, and the resulting changes in relative prices. Trade passing through Salah Ad-Din is still far smaller than the trade passing through the Kerem Shalom crossing.

Another important component of the parallel economy in Gaza is the opaque public financial management by the *de facto* authorities. Trade through Salah Ad-Din is a key revenue source for the *de facto* authorities, but reliable data on such revenues are scarce. The *de facto* "Ministry of Finance" reported that it collects approximately USD 2.5 million in taxes every month from the goods that come in through Salah Ad-Din gate. According to local sources, the highest taxes are imposed on cigarettes

and on “dual use” items that are difficult or impossible to import via the official Kerem Shalom crossing. Hamas reportedly collects at least USD 0.62 per liter of fuel coming from Egypt.

Macroeconomic prospects in the near- to medium-term

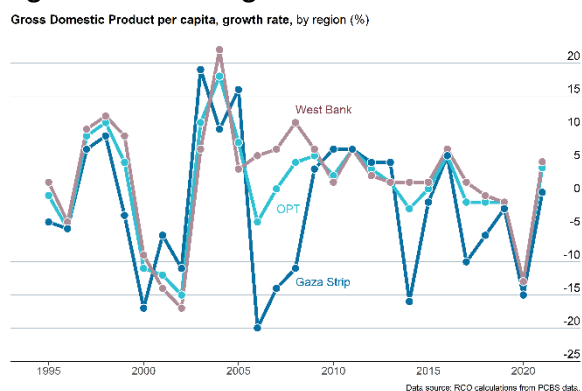
Macroeconomic and fiscal imbalances impact Palestinian livelihoods, economic growth, and decent work; the resulting vulnerabilities are multidimensional, dynamic, and dependent on scale and location, being variable across households and communities.

The indicators that best reflect this situation are the GDP growth rate, which is generally lower and completely detached from the economic cycles in neighboring countries,³⁶ and the unemployment rate (especially the hyper-unemployment in Gaza) disproportionately affecting the youth, women, and refugees, and intensifying the extent and depth of poverty and food insecurity. GDP growth rates are significantly affected by outbreaks of armed conflict, particularly in Gaza, as shown in the regional growth rates over time since 1994. This in turn creates a vicious cycle, whereby poverty and unemployment then contribute to the risks of future conflict and instability.

In 2020, GDP per capita contracted 13.5 percent in the West Bank and 15 percent in the Gaza Strip, due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the breakdown in coordination between Israel and the PA, which halted the transfer of clearance revenues for most of the year.³⁷ The recovery from the 2020 crises will be partial and slow. As shown in Figure 5, GDP growth in Palestine was expected to be 5.3 percent in 2021; GDP growth is forecasted at 3 percent in 2022 and 3.1 percent in 2023. Growth will decrease slightly towards the end of the decade to 2.3 percent. Such a slow pace will only allow the Palestinian economy to return to the 2019 level of productivity by 2023.

GDP growth will be fueled mostly by a surge in private consumption and investment in line with the revival of the economy following the COVID-19 pandemic and rebuilding of the buildings and infrastructure destroyed throughout the 2021 conflict. The changes to government consumption will play a negligible role. However, if the tax collection system could be improved to include the clearance revenues that are now kept by Israel, the government consumption should also increase.

Figure 4: Economic growth rates over time



³⁶ Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon observed similar increasing GDP per capita trends in the past 15 years, while WBGS remained erratically around its values of early 2000 (PCBS and FSS. 2016. Socio-Economic and Food Security Survey 2014).

³⁷ Calculations based on data from PCBS

Figure 5: Decomposition of GDP growth in Palestine 2020-2025 (percent)

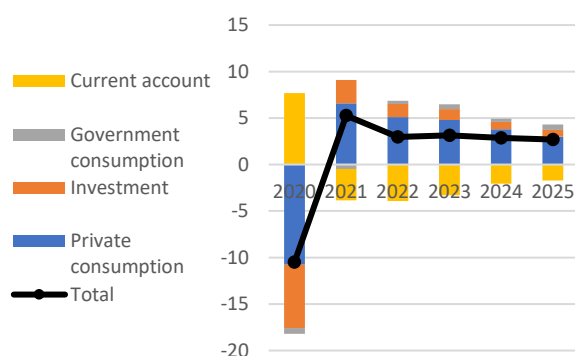
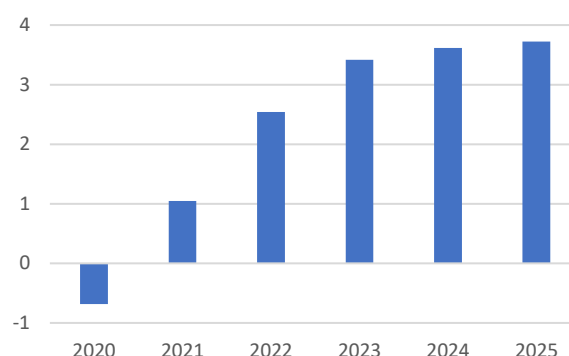


Figure 6: Inflation rate in Palestine 2020-2025 (percent)



Source: UN DESA WEFM model simulations

The inflation rate in Palestine is expected to stay moderate, at around 1.0 to 3.4 percent; Palestine does not have its own currency and the economy operates using Israeli shekels and US dollars. As such, Palestine has no independent monetary policy.

Regional and transboundary issues

Climate change, the environment, and natural resources

Natural resources, and particularly water, have been a longstanding source of tension between the parties. The importance of water is reflected in its classification as a final status issue.³⁸ Climate change, population growth, and depletion of resources are increasing pressure on the environment and natural resources, including but not only water. Flooding in the Gaza Strip is a recurrent problem, especially for agricultural land, with rainwater coming through the eastern parts to the sea. Moreover, the treatment of wastewater is another prominent challenge in the Gaza Strip. The construction of three new wastewater treatment plants has reduced pollution of both the sea and the Gaza coastal aquifer. Additional water and wastewater infrastructure is needed to keep pace with demographic growth and urbanization.

The West Bank and Gaza Strip are water-scarce and are vulnerable given their geopolitical setting. In 1995, the Oslo II Accord adopted a quantitative approach to the water problem, detailing the quantities to be allocated, but did not sufficiently consider the environmental, political, and socioeconomic developments that have affected water supply and demand in the region since that time. The increased population and the growth rates represent an increasing economic need for water and a dwindling resource. While the Palestinian population has almost doubled since 1995, water allocations have not kept pace.

The Oslo Accords set the quantity of internal renewable water resources that the PA could develop and extract in the West Bank. Internal renewable water resources are being overdrawn, particularly in Gaza, where the water quality from the aquifer has become unsuitable for domestic use and does not comply with WHO standards. While the initial quotas for ground water abstraction was set during the Oslo process, the Palestinian population has increased in the West Bank since then and as a result have access to less ground water per capita today. Moreover, reaching agreement on the drilling of

³⁸ The 1995 Interim Agreement clarified that the Palestinians had water rights, though the extent of such rights was not specified. In 1995, the parties agreed to coordinate the use of shared waters. Annex III, Appendix 1, Article 40 of the Interim Agreement (Oslo II) sets out these arrangements; they were (like other aspects) envisaged as temporary.

new wells into the West Bank aquifer needs to go through the Joint Water Committee (JWC) which has met very infrequently over the past years. Through a combination of declining aquifer yield and rapid population growth, the availability of these water resources for each Palestinian in the West Bank has fallen by nearly half. To offset the deficit between demand and the supply available from internal resources, the PA has increased water purchases from Israel. Dependence on purchased water has been growing and the need for further water purchases from Israel inevitably complicates matters; obtaining new water resources has become a transboundary and political issue. Water consumption by Israelis and Palestinians reflects evident inequality. In accordance with article 40 of the environmental provisions in the Oslo II accords entitled “water and sewage”, approximately 80 percent of the waters pumped from the aquifers in the West Bank were allocated for Israeli use, and the remaining 20 percent for Palestinian use. Water consumption and the treatment of transboundary wastewater are a significant portion of the monthly clearance revenue deductions made by Israel.

Groundwater abstraction in Gaza is at unsustainable levels, with three times more water being extracted than the sustainable yield. The result is a decline in groundwater level and a deterioration in quality, largely caused by seawater intrusion. Only 4 percent of the Gaza aquifer now meets drinking water quality standards. Part of the problem is that the population has responded to water scarcity by expanding the drilling of private wells, which the Palestinian Water Authority (PWA) has been unable to regulate inside Gaza. Quality of water in Gaza is also affected by contamination of groundwater by sewage. Even without considering the demands of agriculture, much of the allocation to municipal and industrial uses is unsustainable, which further depletes an already ruined aquifer.

Despite the efforts to improve water supply and sanitation services in recent years, the investment has been constrained by movement and access restrictions in Gaza. The political and security situation in Gaza has curtailed access to power, fuel, and spare parts and constrained investment and implementation of projects. The decline in water quantity available per person, inefficiencies in service delivery, and above all the plummeting quality of Gaza’s water resources have led to a steep decline in service quality. Inadequate wastewater treatment and disposal is also a growing environmental issue, with knock-on effects for different groups of women, girls, men, and boys and impacting progress toward multiple SDGs.

The OPT lies within the Mediterranean climatic zone, which is characterized as a hot, arid, and water-scarce region that has experienced an increase in temperatures over the past fifty years. Palestine is facing substantial environmental challenges due to its delicate environmental resources and its limited financial assets. These challenges are aggravated by many factors such as the scarcity of available water, deterioration of the water resources, land, and soil contamination, as well as desertification and unsustainable management of land, and air pollution. The inability to access, manage the natural resources sustainably and to enforce laws and instructions are making the threats of climate change more aggravated especially with the high population rate, poverty level, and food insecurity. Palestinians are denied access to Area C and areas near settlements, with major implications for farmers and pastoralists and disproportionate impacts on women as highlighted in Chapter 5.

The OPT is particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, with severe implications for its economy, living standards, and environment. Climate projections indicate that by mid-century, the temperature will increase by between 1.2°C and 2.6°C.³⁹

³⁹ UNEP. 2020. State of Environment and Outlook Report for the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

Between 1992 and 2015, the land area under artificial surfaces⁴⁰ increased from 1.4 to 4.3 percent, whereas the area under vegetation cover decreased.⁴¹ This change in land use increases vulnerability to extreme weather events, including flash floods. The proportionate increase in built-up areas in Gaza—from 8.25 percent in 1982 to 25 percent in 2010—has also reduced groundwater recharge.⁴² The percentage of land area under cultivation has decreased from 36.5 to 24.4 percent between 1997 and 2015.⁴³ Rangelands have been exposed to overgrazing for long periods of time, leading to the disappearance of plant species and to soil erosion. These pressures impact Palestinian agricultural productivity and increase tensions and violence, for example, over Palestinian access to freshwater springs and grazing areas in the West Bank that were previously accessed or are owned by them. Global evidence suggests that women will be and are usually among the most affected by water scarcity. In the OPT, women supply about 87 percent of the labor input in livestock production and 54 percent in plant production, mostly in rain fed agriculture.⁴⁴ Despite their major contribution to agricultural labor, many rural women carry out this work unpaid.⁴⁵

During the past decade, technological developments, including Israel’s development of desalination capabilities, have eased the status of water as a source of “zero sum” competition between the parties. Israel has increased its supply of freshwater via desalination: according to the Government of Israel, 585 million cubic meters of water per year are desalinated, and Israel also treats and reuses 75 percent of its wastewater for agriculture, industry, and gardening in Israel proper. This increased use of desalinated and treated wastewater has transformed Israel’s water security, making it far less dependent on conventional sources of renewable freshwater (aquifers and the Jordan River) than it was a decade or more ago.⁴⁶ However, extraction of water by Israel in the West Bank and transboundary wastewater treatment remains a very contentious issue between the parties.

Both parties increasingly recognize that pollution, environmental degradation, and climate change transcend boundaries and cannot be addressed through unilateral action. One serious example of transboundary pollution is the electronic waste (e-waste) business.⁴⁷ The amount of e-waste coming from Israel and processed in Palestinian communities is estimated to be 57,000 to 64,000 tons annually, supporting over 380 businesses, 1,000 jobs, and generating over USD 28.5 million per year. The illegal disposal and treatment of e-waste have led to environmental and health hazards affecting both Israelis and Palestinians, but especially children, infants, and pregnant women who are more susceptible to long-term harm from exposure. When active, burning sites release toxic black smoke that includes benzene, dioxins, mercury, and polychlorinated biphenyls. In the West Bank, researchers have identified a strong spatial association between such burn sites and childhood lymphoma. Unregulated industries in Gaza and intensive use of agricultural pesticides, along with the inflow of sewage into the coastal aquifer, has resulted in nitrate concentration of 300 mg/L: six times higher than World Health Organization recommendations. Chloride concentrations are also high. Scientists

⁴⁰ Artificial surfaces refer to built-up areas, including paved surfaces, residential housing, industrial areas, and so forth, but not including agricultural land.

⁴¹ UNEP. 2020. State of Environment and Outlook Report for the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

⁴² UNEP. 2020. State of Environment and Outlook Report for the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

⁴³ UNEP. 2020. State of Environment and Outlook Report for the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

⁴⁴ FAO. 2022. “Water efficiency, productivity and sustainability in the NENA regions (WEPS-NENA).” Accessed March 2022.

⁴⁵ FAO. 2022. “Water efficiency, productivity and sustainability in the NENA regions (WEPS-NENA).” Accessed March 2022.

⁴⁶ Israel claims its supply of conventional renewable freshwater is equal to approximately 1,800 MCM/year (see [here](#)). This figure is contested.

⁴⁷ For a description of the e-waste industry and its effects, see Davis, Akese, and Garb (2019), Davis and Garb (2019a), and Davis and Garb (2019b).

and officials are aware that these contaminants are long lasting and present particular risks to children and pregnant women.

There is some potential for confidence-building and inter-institutional cooperation through joint environmental and climate action, with benefits both for the environment and for peace. Resolving pollution, climate-related, and other environmental governance challenges requires enhanced cooperation between relevant Palestinian and Israeli authorities.

Regional power dynamics

Given their lack of sovereignty and dependence on international aid, Palestinians are particularly vulnerable to sudden shifts in regional and global power dynamics. For example, the approach of the United States toward Palestinians changed sharply between 2017 and 2021; among other things the U.S. ended its UNRWA funding and other development assistance to OPT, closed the U.S. consulate in East Jerusalem, and proposed a peace plan, titled "Peace to Prosperity: A Vision to Improve the Lives of the Palestinian and Israeli People" that was wholly rejected by the Palestinians. (The new U.S. administration has reversed some of these measures.) Arab partners have also reduced support to Palestinians in recent years as the regional dynamics shifted towards stronger ties between Israel and the Arab world, with strong Palestinian reservations on this development. The UN Secretary-General expressed hope that the normalization agreements would encourage Palestinian and Israeli leaders to re-engage in meaningful negotiations, however, no such progress has occurred to date.

Palestine's immediate neighbors and closest regional allies, Egypt and Jordan, have maintained their staunch support for the Palestinian national cause in the face of the prolonged absence of a political horizon. Egypt plays an important leadership role in the intra-Palestinian reconciliation process, maintaining the calm in Gaza and providing diplomatic support for advancing the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Egypt's efforts have included hosting multiple meetings of Palestinian factions to advance unity. Jordan has also been a consistent advocate for the two-State solution and has been a vocal opponent of Israel's policies in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem—in particular, given its special role, regarding the Holy Sites in Jerusalem—and in Gaza. It has also consistently advocated for increased support to UNRWA, emphasizing its crucial role in maintaining regional stability.

3. The national vision for sustainable development

Despite the extremely challenging context described above, the Palestinian government endorsed the 2030 Agenda and committed to achieving the 17 SDGs in line with its national development priorities, and in partnership with national and international development partners. Accordingly, the PA submitted its first Voluntary National Review (VNR) to the High-level Political Forum in 2018, which included an assessment of the progress made across all SDGs since 2015, and especially the policy gaps and challenges, while suggesting recommendations to improve the achievement of the SDGs. A VNR progress report was submitted in 2020, using data from 2018 and 2019. The government has also issued progress reports on the implementation of the SDGs.

Figure 7: Palestine’s National Vision as articulated in the National Development Plan 2021-2023

“Palestine is an independent Arab State with sovereignty over the West Bank and the Gaza Strip on the pre-June 1967 occupation borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital. Palestine is a stable democratic state that respects human rights and guarantees equal rights and duties for all citizens. Its people live in a safe and secure environment under the rule of law and it promotes equality between men and women. It is a state which values highly its social capital, social coherence and solidarity, and identifies itself with Arab Palestinian culture, humanistic values, and religious tolerance. It is a progressive state that values cordial relationships with other states and people in the global community. The Palestinian government is open, inclusive, transparent, and accountable. It is responsive to citizens’ needs, delivers basic services effectively, and creates an enabling environment for a thriving private sector. Palestine’s human resources are the driving force for national development. The Palestinian economy is open to other markets around the world and strives to produce high value-added, competitive goods and services, and, over the long term, to be a knowledge-based economy.”⁴⁸

National Policy Agenda: Putting Citizens First

The **2017-22 National Policy Agenda: Putting Citizens First** and its related sectoral and cross-sectoral strategies constitute the PA’s fourth national development plan since 2008. Previous national plans focused on building the institutions of the Palestinian state and enhancing institutional capacity. The National Policy Agenda (NPA) is a cross-cutting nationwide strategy aimed at providing all Palestinians with an improved standard of living, accessible, high-quality, and responsive services, as well as accountable, transparent public institutions that put citizens’ interests and needs first. It also aims at fostering job creation in the private sector and protecting the vulnerable. The NPA is centered on the National Vision above and is elaborated in three pillars with ten national priorities:

1. **Path to independence:** ending the occupation and achieving independence, national unity, and strengthening Palestine’s international status
2. **Government reform:** citizen-centered government and effective government
3. **Sustainable development:** economic independence, social justice and rule of law, quality education for all, quality health care for all, and resilient communities

To achieve these goals, and while directing public institutions towards the citizens they serve, the NPA aims at instituting a realistic policy and fiscal framework that keeps independence firmly at the center, while focusing public institutions on the citizens they serve. It established strategic directions to guide

⁴⁸ State of Palestine. 2021. National Development Plan, 2021-2023. Office of the Prime Minister.

planning to end the occupation and advance solid citizen-centered public institutions, through a collective effort by central and local governments, in partnership with civil society organizations, the private sector, academic institutions and international development partners. It also includes the continued provision of food assistance in support of poor and food-insecure non-refugee populations through national and local food security systems, including social safety nets, capacity strengthening and social protection to promote stabilization and gender equality. These latter activities are conducted in partnership with the Ministry of Social Development.

The National Development Plan (2021-2023)

In the last quarter of 2019, the government launched a comprehensive process to upgrade the National Policy Agenda (NPA) and the sectoral and crosscutting strategies that was preceded by a midterm review in coordination with all line ministries and government bodies. The update process involved also 40 other concurrent documents that were approved by the Council of Ministers under the title: “National Development Plan: Resilience, Disengagement, and Cluster Development towards Independence (2021-2023).”

The National Development Plan (NDP 2021-2023) is based on a vision grounded in: 1) ending the occupation; 2) excellent public service provision; and 3) sustainable development. Moreover, the NDP adopted a new development paradigm based on 1) cluster development to leverage the competitive advantage of each governorate and capitalize on economic advantages; 2) disengagement from the occupation and ending economic dependence, along with promoting and supporting national products to be competitive, as well as openness to the global market and improvement of the relations with the Arab region.⁴⁹

By launching the NDP 2021-2023, the government committed to: “Promote industrial, agricultural, and tourism production, reduce unemployment, fight poverty, and enhance the role of women and youth.” The government is focused on technical and vocational education and training, defending public rights, reinforcing transparency, supporting and building industrial parks, and establishing development-oriented entrepreneurial ventures, start-ups, and technology and business incubators. The government will also promote “investment in clean energy, water sources, and lay the ground for national collective action to strengthen the resilience of citizens by improving health, education, economy, social protection, and other basic services that are critical to people’s lives.”⁵⁰

The new development paradigm aims at bridging the gaps between different geographical zones, by opening rural areas, the Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem to specific investments, while offering financial facilities and concessionary loans to these areas. This requires contribution from the financial and business sectors and the donor community towards an inclusive economic development and the promotion of an enabling economic environment through the development of needed infrastructure. Moreover, the new vision of achieving sustainable development is anchored in the goal of disengagement from the occupation. Consequently, the NDP intends to account for socioeconomic distortions resulting from the occupation, using public-private partnership to reduce the Palestinian economy’s dependency on Israel, while transforming the economy from service-oriented to production-based.

⁴⁹ State of Palestine. 2021. National Development Plan, 2021-2023. Office of the Prime Minister.

⁵⁰ State of Palestine. 2021. National Development Plan, 2021-2023. Office of the Prime Minister.

Palestinian action plan for SDG attainment

In 2019, world leaders launched the “Decade of Action to Achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,” which aims to end poverty, promote justice, promote gender equality, mitigate the impact of the climate crisis, and build a safe, inclusive society that leaves no one behind.

Following its commitment to the 2030 global development agenda, and to enhance coordination and communication between the different stakeholders; the Palestinian Government identified twelve national SDG working groups responsible for leading and coordinating national efforts to pursue and implement interventions towards realizing the SDGs. The responsibility of the SDG working groups is to regularly track the progress of their specific goal(s). The national SDG working groups began their work by identifying the priority SDG targets for the State of Palestine during the years 2017-2022, by developing sector strategies and interventions to implement these priorities. While considerable progress is being made, the Palestinian Government is realizing the importance of prioritizing challenges as entry points to accelerate progress towards the SDGs until 2030.

An action plan has been developed to achieve these accelerators based on the analysis and collection of opinions and information provided by participants in the focus group discussions and workshops about these accelerators and the marginalized social groups that they touch and the relevant sustainable development goals, as well as possible interventions, obstacles and challenges facing those interventions, in addition to identifying stakeholders and the relationship The resources and available resources, and the necessary time period, which were divided into two phases: short and medium term, and long term.

The Palestinian Reform Agenda

In advance of the spring 2022 meeting of the Ad-Hoc Liaison Committee, the Palestinian government released a strategy titled **Reform Agenda: Economic and Financial Recovery, Strengthening Resilience, and Restoring Trust**. Reflecting the dire fiscal and governance crises facing the Palestinian Authority, the strategy, developed by the Prime Minister’s Office, outlines how the government intends to meet the needs and aspirations of the Palestinian people. The stated goal is a safe, democratic society that delivers quality services in harmony with citizens’ aspirations and in accordance with the international standards of integrity, efficiency, transparency, and justice.

The Reform Agenda aims to deliver economic and financial recovery, strengthen resilience, and restore trust amongst the Palestinian people by

- Delivering economic and financial recovery by supporting entrepreneurship and vocational education, investing in development
- Strengthening resilience and making people feel more economically secure by putting fiscal affairs in order, strengthening the rule of law, and introducing more comprehensive medical and social insurance
- Restoring trust via democratic renewal, stronger and more transparent institutions, and improving the government’s capability to deliver high quality responsive public services to citizens.

More specifically, the strategy consists of five programs of administrative, fiscal, economic, social, and security sector reforms:

1. **Administrative reforms:** consisting of (i) regularizing public administration and civil service and addressing the public wage bill; (ii) restructuring government functions, (iii) rolling-out e-

government service system and (iv) strengthening government information, data, and cyber security.

2. **Fiscal reforms** to improve the fairness, transparency, and efficiency of revenue collection and protect vital services such as health, education, infrastructure development, and support for the poor. Reform elements include: (i) reform of the government revenue system and rationalization of expenditures (e.g. wage bill, medical referrals, net lending, revenue collection) are planned to be; (ii) reform of the patient transfer system and health insurance; (iii) strengthening government systems to reduce net lending; (iv) improving the effectiveness of local government; (v) reforming the water and electricity sector; (vi) developing a system to combat money laundering and financial crimes; and (vii) optimizing the impact of international aid.
3. **Economic reforms** for economic and financial recovery, enhanced resilience, an improved business environment and employment promotion through better education and vocational skills. The reform package foresees promotion of the private sector, strengthened partnerships with Civil Society Organizations and optimized utilization of State and Waqf land.
4. **Social reforms** to support the poor and unemployed, operationalize social security, including for Palestinian works employed in Israel, improve education and training, and help ensure a better transition between education and employment, provide targeted assistance to Palestinians in Jerusalem, and support Palestinian culture.
5. **Security and public order reforms** to reduce crime consolidate community safety and enforce regulation of the transportation sector.

Implementation of the PA Reform Agenda

In its report laying out the Reform Agenda, the government publicly recognized the need to mobilize political, economic, and technical resources necessary to drive implementation forward. The government also recognized the importance of securing the support of the Palestinian people to see the strategy through to completion. The lack of Palestinian sovereignty means, however, that implementation will be challenging and dependent to a certain degree on actions from the Israelis and from international actors in support of the reform agenda. As noted elsewhere in this Common Country Analysis, this lack of sovereignty results in the limited access to natural, financial, and human resources, and creates distortions in the economy. At the AHLC meeting in May 2022, the Palestinian Authority called on Israel to take certain steps to ease the economic and fiscal crisis in support of the PA's reform agenda and, in parallel, called on international partners for the political, financial, and technical support necessary to stabilize the fiscal situation and implement the reform agenda.

4. Palestinian commitments under international norms and standards

In 2012, the General Assembly, through resolution 67/19, accorded Palestine Observer State status at the United Nations. Since 2014, the State of Palestine has acceded to seven core international human rights conventions and several additional protocols without reservations: The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and its three option protocols, The Convention against Torture (CAT), The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Palestine's accession to these human rights treaties provides clear legal obligations and responsibilities through a range of legal commitments on human rights, which touch almost every aspect of life and government activity in Palestine. These commitments are significant undertakings by a State. Investments by Palestine in building institutional and human capacities—to establish baselines and monitor and report on targets for progressive implementation of these commitments—can potentially make a valuable contribution to implementation of Agenda 2030.

To date, the government has submitted initial reports under seven of the international human rights treaties to the respective treaty committees. Three of the UN treaty bodies (CEDAW, CERD, CRC) have reviewed the submissions and provided their recommendations back to the government, which drafted some action plans on CEDAW and CERD to implement these recommendations. Palestine has also signed several additional protocols, notably to Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (OPCAT) and to the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights aimed at the abolition of the death penalty; the State of Palestine is now under a legal obligation to completely abolish the death penalty.

Following its accession to the international human rights treaties in 2014, the government should have published the treaties in the Official Gazette; so far, they have published only two treaties, CERD and CRC. This step is imperative, because for laws to become binding they must be published in the official gazette according to the Palestinian Basic Law. This is a serious gap in protection, for example, considering that there is still no clear definition of torture, discrimination, or Gender-Based Violence in Palestinian law. Encouragingly, civil society organizations showed strengthened capacity as right-holders to represent Palestinians before UN treaty bodies, drafting several shadow reports submitted to the committees. However, leadership from civil society organizations is not a substitute for national accountability. Without addressing the challenges that lead to the trend of limited engagement by State actors, it will not be possible for Palestine to uphold its commitments, with consequences for Palestinians' capacities to enjoy the benefits of national development.

The State of Palestine underwent a first review of the CRC committee in 2020. The Observations raised issues that, despite the challenging circumstances, could be improved: the legal and policy framework, the protection of children from violence, the situation of children with disabilities and the mental health of children, among others.⁵¹

Palestine has major gaps in its legal and policy frameworks for protection of fundamental labor rights, and for ensuring sound labor market governance and the rule of law in the world of work. The current

⁵¹ United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. 6 March 2020. CRC/C/PSE/CO/1.

labor law⁵² faces critical challenges as it is not responsive to economic and labor market changes. With respect to the rights to social protection, coverage of contributory social insurance remains extremely limited, depriving the government of an otherwise effective tool for mitigating lifecycle risks among its population. Today, only public sector workers benefit from social protection benefits, while most private sector workers are effectively not covered in case of old-age, disability or death, employment injury or maternity. According to official figures, private sector workers make up to 66 percent of the workforce, relative to 22 percent in the public sector and 12 percent in Israel and West Bank settlements.⁵³ Approximately 45 percent of total health care expenditure is through government systems and programs, while household contributions account for around 39 percent (most of this out-of-pocket expenditure at the point of service delivery). There is relatively high out of pocket spending by Palestinians due to gaps in public health care coverage and the relative unaffordability of private insurance. More than three-fifths (63 percent) of expenditure are towards curative services, with a fifth (19 percent) towards medical goods (mostly pharmaceuticals).⁵⁴ In the absence of a unified social security law, Palestine remains short of an effective and comprehensive social security system that extends coverage for all workers in the formal economy and their family members, as a means for providing income security, combating poverty and social exclusion.

In 2016, Palestine enacted Social Security Law No. 19 to extend coverage of social insurance to workers of the private sector, through a separate social security institution. However, widespread protests against the law erupted in the West Bank, including popular demonstrations in the streets and social media. In January 2019, the government temporarily suspended the law, pending further deliberations regarding the law's revision. Since the suspension in 2019, there has been no active legal basis nor a functional institution to administer such benefits. Currently, only around 35 percent of workers in the private sector receive some benefits in the form of severance pay, paid annual leave, and paid sick leave, in line with the prevailing labor law.

In 2019, Decree-Law No. 16 and 17 respectively dismissed judges above sixty years of age and established an Interim High Judicial Council (I/HJC) "tasked with reforming and developing the Judicial Authority and the Public Prosecution to ensure the rule of law, the independence of the judiciary, the right to access justice and the separation of powers." In the absence of democratic regulation, this move has come to symbolize the "polarization within the Palestinian political system" and the encroachment of the executive in judicial life in the broader context of the competition over PA resources. For instance, Decree-Law No. 17 of 2019 provides for the dismissal, early retirement or reassignment of any judge who menaces the "integrity and prestige of the judiciary and the public confidence in it" by the I/HJC upon recommendation of the President, thereby overtly promoting vertical linkages with judicial staff.

In January 2021, the president issued Decree-Laws No. 39, 40 and 41 (2020) regarding the establishment of civil (ordinary) courts, amendments to the Judicial Authority Law (2002), and establishment of administrative courts. The legislation was issued by the executive branch in the absence of a transparent process, including the lack of a consultation process, and in the absence of a legislative council. There were also decisions on the appointment, reassignment, and referral to retirement of Palestinian judges by the Interim High Judicial Council and through Presidential Decrees.

⁵² Labour Law No. (7) of 2000.

⁵³ ILO. 2018. Palestine Decent Work Country Programme 2018-2022.

⁵⁴ Data provided by the Palestinian Ministry of Health

The principle of the independence of the judiciary is stipulated under various instruments including the UN Basic Principles on the Independence of the Judiciary, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which the State of Palestine acceded to in April 2014. Article 14 of the Covenant stipulates the right to fair trial guarantees, including the right to a “fair and public hearing by a competent, independent and impartial tribunal established by law.” This includes the “procedure and qualification for the appointment of judges, and guarantees relating to their security of tenure until a mandatory retirement age or the expiry of their term of office, where such exist, the conditions governing promotion, transfer, suspension and cessation of their functions, and the actual independence of the judiciary from political interference by the executive branch and legislature” as elaborated by the Human Rights Committee in General Comment No. 32 paragraph 19. An independent and impartial judicial authority forms an integral component of a democratic Palestinian State that guarantees human rights to all within its jurisdiction.

Administration of child justice is regulated by Decree-Law No. 4 of 2016 on the protection of Palestinian juveniles which provides greater protection for children in contact and in conflict with the law and prescribe that child-friendly procedures and modalities are in place to implement the law. It recognizes children under the age of 18 years, as a person in need of protection, rehabilitation, and reintegration into society, rather than criminals deserving punishment. The aim is to ensure that all children coming into contact with the justice authorities, whether as alleged offenders, victims, witnesses or as parties to non-criminal law procedures have access to justice systems (both formal and informal) and are better served and protected by these systems, with full application of relevant international norms and standards.

Even though the work on the Family Protection Law began in 2004, the law has not been enacted. The most recent form of the proposed law, announced in December 2021, falls short of international principles and standards.

Since joining UNESCO as a full Member State, Palestine ratified the following eight UNESCO international conventions and two Protocols, and has been submitting regular reports on their implementation at the national level: the 1954 Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, the First and Second Protocol to the 1954 Convention, the 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, the 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, the 2001 Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage, the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, as well as the Convention against Discrimination in Education, and the International Convention against Doping in Sport.

Palestine agreed to the New Urban Agenda adopted at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) in Quito, Ecuador, on 20 October 2016. It was endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly at its sixty-eighth plenary meeting of the seventy-first session on 23 December 2016. The New Urban Agenda represents a shared vision for a better and more sustainable urban future. Palestine submitted its first national voluntary report towards the implementation of the New Urban Agenda in 2021 ahead of the High-level Meeting on New Urban Agenda on 28 April 2022.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ State of Palestine. 2021. Implementation of the New Urban Agenda. National report for the State of Palestine.

On women, peace, and security (WPS), a voluntary report on the implementation of the Security Council Resolution 1325 was submitted to the UN Secretary-General. Palestine adopted its second National Action Plan (2020-2024) for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in October 2020. Despite progressive actions adopted by the government and civil society to further the WPS commitments, women continue to be absent and excluded from many political processes which continue to be male dominated, including the reconciliation talks, ceasefire mediation, negotiations, among others. Women's political participation has also been affected by internal Palestinian political division.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ UN Women. 2021. Policy brief "A future at Stake: Recommendations to include Palestinian women and youth in political and peace processes."

5. Progress on the 2030 Agenda

The human development landscape

A review of Palestine’s human development landscape reveals certain areas of progress in the 25 years since the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, despite the significant barriers to sustainable development highlighted above. A holistic picture of social and economic development depicts both achievements, notably on maternal and infant mortality rates, access to education, urban planning, and certain legal reforms, but also significant challenges that remain to end poverty and hunger, improve health and education, reduce inequalities, empower women and girls, spur economic growth, address climate change, establish strong and democratic institutions, and build a more peaceful future. In 2020, the United Nations Country Team and the Prime Minister’s Office published a detailed [Atlas of Sustainable Development](#) in Palestine (Annex 1), which presented richly-detailed maps, visualizations, and spatial analyses of sustainable development indicators in the OPT at the end of 2019, prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. That publication established a benchmark for understanding progress on social and economic development and institution building, and readers are directed there for supplementary analysis of progress on specific SDG indicators.

With the principle of “leaving no one behind” as the primary focus, the following sections provide an overview of progress under the SDGs, categorized under the five pillars of the 2030 Agenda, namely: **People, Prosperity, Planet, Peace, and Partnerships**. More detailed analyses are available in the Voluntary National Review from 2018, the VNR progress report issued in 2021, and the Atlas of Sustainable Development for 2020. These sources, and this CCA, note various gaps in the available data. It is important to note the central role UNRWA plays in the delivery of services to Palestinian refugees, particularly in Gaza; continued progress on SDGs will therefore depend to a great degree on maintaining UNRWA funding in a tightening donor climate.

Sustainable Development Goals: People

SDG 1: No poverty

Poverty rates have risen significantly in Palestine over the past few years, particularly since 2020.⁵⁷ According to monthly consumption patterns, 29 percent of Palestinians lived in poverty in 2017⁵⁸ under the national poverty line. There was a significant regional income disparity, with 53 percent of the population in Gaza below the national poverty line in 2017, compared to 14 percent in the West Bank. Around 16.8 percent of the population was living in deep poverty in 2017, again with significant regional disparities.⁵⁹ Projections by the World Bank based on GDP per capita growth suggest that the poverty rate has been constantly increasing since 2016, reaching 28.9 percent in 2020, a significant increase of 7 percentage points in the past four years.⁶⁰ This represents approximately 1.4 million people living in poverty in 2020. The recent conflict in May 2021 has resulted in worse social conditions in the Gaza Strip.⁶¹ World Bank estimates suggest that the conflict has pushed poverty in Gaza to 59.3

⁵⁷ UNSCO. 2021. Report to the Ad-Hoc Liaison Committee, 23 February 2021.

⁵⁸ 2017 is the most recent year for official national poverty statistics. However, more recent information from different data sources is included in this section for reference.

⁵⁹ In 2017, the poverty line and deep poverty line for a reference household of five individuals (2 adults and 3 children) were, respectively, NIS 2,470 and NIS 1,974 (approximately USD 768 and USD 613 respectively). See: PCBS. 2017. Poverty Profile in Palestine.

⁶⁰ World Bank. 2021. Economic Monitoring Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee. 17 November 2021.

⁶¹ World Bank. 2021. Economic Monitoring Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee. 17 November 2021.

percent in 2021 (using USD 5.50 a day (2011 PPP) international poverty line).⁶² This is a 16.3 percentage point increase above the 2016-2017 values for Gaza.⁶³

Table 2: Official national poverty rates by area and demographic groups

Poverty⁶⁴		West Bank		Gaza Strip		OPT	
		2011	2017	2011	2017	2011	2017
Poverty rate		17.6	13.9	38.9	53.0	25.7	29.2
Deep poverty rate		7.6	5.8	21.0	33.7	12.7	16.8
Poverty⁶⁵		West Bank		Gaza Strip		OPT	
Refugee status of head of household		2011	2017	2011	2017	2011	2017
Poverty rate	Refugee	18.7	15.7	39.6	54.1	31.4	38.5
	Non refugee	17.5	13.1	37.1	51.1	21.7	22.3
Deep poverty rate	Refugee	7.7	7.6	20.5	33.5	15.4	23.0
	Non refugee	7.8	5.1	22.3	34.5	11.0	12.2
Poverty⁶⁶		West Bank		Gaza Strip		OPT	
Sex of head of household		2011	2017	2011	2017	2011	2017
Poverty rate	Male	17.5	13.5	39.4	53.0	25.9	29.2
	Female	22.5	18.6	29.7	54.0	25.0	30.6
Deep poverty rate	Male	7.6	5.5	21.4	33.6	12.9	16.6
	Female	10.8	10.4	15.8	37.6	12.6	19.6

Source: PCBS. Poverty Profile in Palestine. 2017.

Coverage of social assistance is widespread, with 40 percent of all Palestinian households receiving at least one type of social protection transfer. This coverage reflects the high levels of poverty and deprivation suffered that qualify households for benefits. The extent of a household's reliance on assistance can also vary depending on the sex of household head. For example, in the Gaza Strip, female-headed households (FHHs) show much higher levels of reliance on assistance and donations than male-headed households (MHHs). While 84.8 percent of FHHs and 79.8 percent of MHHs rely to some degree on assistance and donations, 40.2 percent of FHHs rely fully on this as their sole source of income, compared with 29.8 percent of MHHs. FHHs rely more on assistance and donations: 40 percent rely entirely on assistance compared with 30 percent of MHHs.⁶⁷ Female-headed households represent 11 percent of the total households in Palestine, but account to almost 20 percent of families suffering from extreme poverty, unable to fulfil the minimum required for food, clothing, and housing.⁶⁸

However, coverage of contributory social insurance is extremely limited, depriving the government of an otherwise effective tool for combating poverty. The share of Palestinian households receiving pensions is only 5 percent nationally. Furthermore, the adequacy of social transfers under individual programs and their efficacy in combating poverty when used alone is limited. The main government transfer, the Palestinian National Cash Transfer Program (PNCTP), accounts for just 15 percent of the individual poverty line, on average, with larger families enjoying much lower transfers per capita. Nearly half of beneficiary households who are covered by assistance programs remain poor after

⁶² World Bank. 2021. Economic Monitoring Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee. 17 November 2021.

⁶³ World Bank. 2021. Economic Monitoring Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee. 17 November 2021.

⁶⁴ Percentage of people living below the poverty line.

⁶⁵ Percentage of people living below the poverty line.

⁶⁶ Percentage of people living below the poverty line.

⁶⁷ Oxfam. 2020. Responsiveness of the Palestinian National Cash Transfer Programme to Shifting Vulnerabilities in the Gaza Strip.

⁶⁸ WFP. August 2020. WFP Palestine Country Brief. and PCBS. 2017. Poverty Profile in Palestine.

receiving a transfer, due to low transfer values. The social protection system also remains highly dependent upon shrinking external financing together with volatile government allocations. Total allocation to the social protection system declined by 25 percent between 2015 and 2018. Per-beneficiary expenditure has also been reduced during the period for all programs, putting into question the adequacy and resulting efficacy of interventions. Humanitarian safety net programs, initially conceived for emergencies, have become structural over time, and represent a significant part of the social protection system.

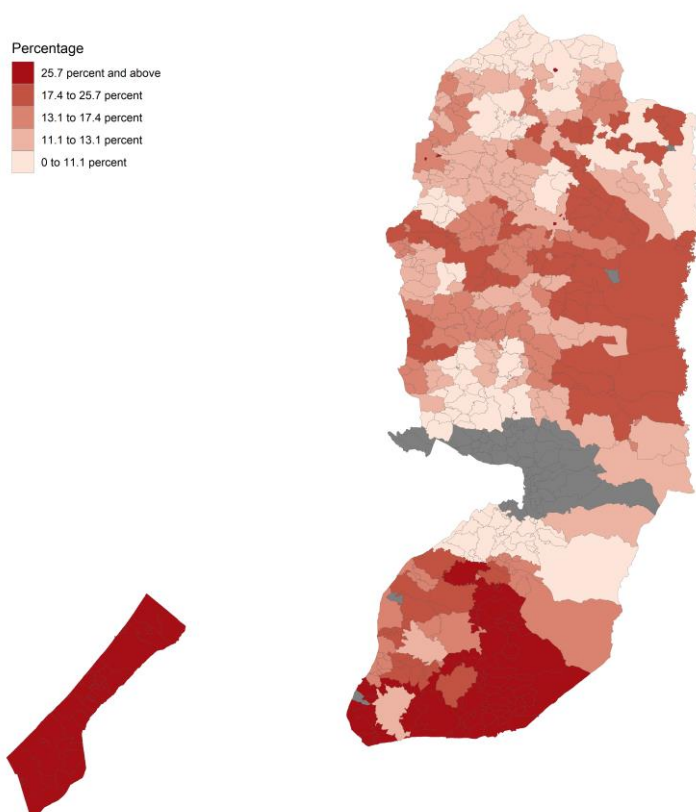
In 2019, the PNCTP in Palestine was scaled up to provide 80 percent of households in deep poverty with cash assistance. The Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) is also working to implement economic empowerment programs for the poor and marginalized and to improve targeting mechanisms and the national social registry. Despite such positive steps, due to funding constraints and technical delays, the PA has been unable to deliver several recent social protection payments to over 115,000 of the most vulnerable households across the OPT, including about 79,000 households in Gaza.⁶⁹ In the meantime, most households received non-cash assistance from various UN and non-UN actors in the form of food vouchers, rental subsidies, and health insurance. The government acknowledges the protection gaps in the PNCTP and seeks to develop a Social Protection Floor Policy in partnership with the UN. The MoSD continues to prioritize protection to Persons with Disabilities (PWDs), the elderly, the forcibly displaced, women survivors of violence, orphans, and other vulnerable groups through cash and non-cash assistance, waivers, and employment services. The United Nations agencies have continued to support the MoSD and national social protection reform efforts under a joint program titled “Towards a universal and holistic social protection floor for persons with disabilities and older persons in Palestine.” This contributed to informing the revised Social Development Sector Strategy 2021-2023, including reflecting new needs generated by the COVID-19 pandemic in the country, and ensuring focus on the most vulnerable people and on shock responsive social protection.

In the OPT context, cash and voucher assistance continues to bolster women’s social protection across the humanitarian-development peace nexus. Gender-responsive cash and voucher assistance can also serve as an entry point to deliver multisectoral and/or complementary programming, supporting progress toward SDG 1 targets as well as SDG target 5.2 (by helping to prevent and respond to gender-based violence). Despite areas of progress outlined above, social protection systems in Palestine are still not accessible enough to women, particularly those furthest behind, leaving them without social safety nets and basic services like old-age pensions, health insurance, and allowances for disability, maternity, and sick leave. This continues to underscore the need for gender and age-responsive social protection policies and programs to end poverty (SDG 1) in the OPT, enable decent work (SDG 8), and achieve gender equality (SDG 5), among other SDGs.

⁶⁹ UNSCO. 2021. Report to the Ad-Hoc Liaison Committee. 17 November 2021.

Figure 8: Spatial patterns of poverty

Percentage of individuals in poverty, by locality



Data source: World Bank Small Area Estimates, 2019

nearly a third of the population, about 1.78 million people, driven by high poverty and unemployment rates. This number was projected to have increased to 2 million, or 40 percent of the population, in early 2021. The number of food insecure Palestinians is divided between the refugee (70 percent) and non-refugee (30 percent) communities. Around 560,000 non-refugees are assessed to be food insecure in Palestine, with 66 percent of that total living in Gaza and 34 percent living in the West Bank.⁷⁰ In the Gaza Strip, the situation is especially concerning with 64.3 percent of the population assessed as moderately or severely food insecure.⁷¹

Childhood nutrition has shown some progress over time. Though the prevalence of undernutrition (stunting and wasting) is low at national level, a closer look reveals higher prevalence among vulnerable communities, with the prevalence of stunting among children under five years of age reaching up to 23 percent in certain Bedouin communities. Conversely, overweight is a diffused problem with a prevalence of 8.2 percent among children under five years of age. Sugar and sugar-rich food are among the food items most consumed and on daily bases among all households, indicating a lack of variety in diets and that empty calories are mainstays in Palestinian household diet, contributing to high overweight and obesity rates and several chronic non-transmissible diseases. Micronutrient deficiency is a key concern in the OPT, especially among the most vulnerable groups,

A key achievement under SDG 1 is that the update of the **Social Development Sector Strategy (2021-2023)** resulted in more focus on multidimensional poverty and strengthening social protection. The United Nations is supporting the Ministry of Social Development to integrate persons living with disability into the implementation of the National Social Registry, as well as other social protection reforms such as on Shock Responsive Social Protection. In general, if the financial situation of the government does not improve, households that are dependent on government assistance programs will be increasingly at risk.

SDG 2: Zero hunger

Even before the May 2021 conflict and the COVID-19 pandemic, food insecurity in Palestine affected

⁷⁰ WFP. September 2021. Palestine Country Brief.

⁷¹ PCBS and FSS. 2021. Socio-Economic and Food Security Survey 2020.

largely due to Palestinian household consumption patterns of energy dense, rather than nutrition dense, food and insufficient consumption of fruits and vegetables.

A concerted effort to enhance nutritionally balanced dietary intakes, complemented by food safety and consumer protection efforts, are of paramount importance to address the double burden of malnutrition.

Table 3: Malnutrition rates among children

	Region	2000	2004	2006	2010	2014	2019
Stunting among children below 5 years	West Bank	7.0%	8.6%	7.9%	10.7%	7.7%	8.5%
Stunting among children below 5 years	Gaza Strip	8.3%	11.0%	13.2%	9.8%	7.1%	9.0%
Stunting among children below 5 years	OPT	7.5%	9.4%	10.2%	10.3%	7.4%	8.7%
Underweight among children below 5 years	West Bank	2.6%	4.0%	3.2%	3.9%	1.5%	2.1%
Underweight among children below 5 years	Gaza Strip	2.4%	4.0%	2.4%	3.5%	1.3%	2.1%
Underweight among children below 5 years	OPT	2.5%	4.0%	2.9%	3.7%	1.4%	2.1%
Wasting among children below 5 years	West Bank	1.5%	2.1%	1.7%	2.7%	1.7%	1.7%
Wasting among children below 5 years	Gaza Strip	1.4%	1.4%	1.2%	3.6%	0.7%	0.8%
Wasting among children below 5 years	OPT	1.4%	1.9%	1.4%	3.2%	1.2%	1.3%

Source: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, multiple years

In the OPT, assistance is essential in ensuring food security in quantitative as well as qualitative terms⁷² through a blend of cash and in-kind intervention tools. In absolute terms, men are overwhelmingly the main touchpoint for cash and voucher assistance (CVA), though female headed households make up a larger share of recipients compared to their overall share of the population. For example, of households receiving government assistance, 78.8 percent are headed by a male family member and 21.2 percent are headed by a woman, though female headed households are only around 7 percent of the population.⁷³ Recent CVA studies in the Gaza Strip have demonstrated that beneficiaries have used cash to buy food and pay off debts.⁷⁴ Ongoing CVA in the Gaza Strip have highlighted the challenge of ensuring women obtain and control an equitable portion of resources received by a household, as patriarchal social structures favor men having the ‘final say’ on household finances.⁷⁵

The Palestinian food system plays a key role in activating economic growth, enabling social development, and promoting environmental sustainability. The food system accounts for about 9.6 percent of the GDP and 23 percent of total exports. Leveraging on the private sector, the food system plays a key role in generating sustainable employment and building sustainable livelihoods. Specifically, the food system is quite labor intensive in producing, processing, and distributing food. In this way it creates job opportunities and enhances livelihoods, especially for the most vulnerable segments of the population.

Farming represents a crucial coping strategy for Palestinian households at times of crisis, playing a key role in promoting food and nutrition security within a context characterized by pervasive risks, where more than one third of the population is food insecure. The development of the agri-food system in Palestine is also essential to create job opportunities and enhanced livelihoods for many Palestinians, especially those with lower levels of human capital. Lastly, agri-food production activities are

⁷² Romano, D., Stefani, G., Rocchi, B., Fiorillo, C. (2019). The Impact of Assistance on Poverty and Food Security in A Fragile and Protracted-Crisis Context: The Case of West Bank and Gaza Strip. *Bio-based and Applied Economics* 8(1): 21-61.

⁷³ OXFAM and AWRAD. 2020. Unpublished study on shifting vulnerability and the Palestinian National Cash Transfer Programme.

⁷⁴ Nuha J. Bashir. 2019. An Assessment of the Cash for Work Component of UN Women’s Project. UN Women Palestine.

⁷⁵ Interview with WFP Palestine. 1 March 2021.

instrumental to achieve healthy diets and better nutrition and, if properly managed, food system activities can dramatically contribute to climate resilience, sustainable production, and consumption practices, enhanced natural resources management, and ecosystems preservation. It is commendable that the national strategy for sustainable production and consumption has been developed and implemented. The Palestinian food system is also instrumental to achieve healthy diets and better nutrition for all. In November 2020, the government endorsed the national food and nutrition security policy for 2020-2030. In short, the agri-food system is essential in pursuing a variety of SDGs beyond SDG2 and in operationalizing the “nexus approach” to humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding efforts.

SDG 3: Good health and well-being

The health care system in Palestine struggles to provide adequate services for the population. Geographical barriers and sporadic outbreaks of violence have significant impacts on the provision of and access to health services. Health care provision in the Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, Area C, and Seam Zones is particularly challenging, with a multitude of restrictions including on access to specialized services, the construction of facilities, importation of medical supplies, equipment, and spare parts, and on the movement of patients and health staff. Recurrent conflict in the Gaza Strip have resulted in considerable loss of life, injury, permanent disabilities, and psychosocial trauma, while also eroding the capacity of health systems and infrastructure. In 2020, 198,797 adults (45 percent women and 55 percent men) were estimated to have moderate or severe mental health disorders while 299,979 children (50 percent girls and 50 percent boys) were believed to experience severe, moderate, and mild mental health disorders.⁷⁶

Child mortality figures for under-fives fell significantly between 2014 and 2019/20, from 22 to 14 deaths per 1,000 live births. However, 9 children per 1,000 live births died shortly after they were born (up to one month old). This represents an improvement from 2014, when 11 newborn children per 1,000 live births died within their first month. Across the OPT, boys’ chances of dying before they reach their fifth birthday are considerably higher than for girls (16.3 per 1,000 live births for boys compared to 12 per 1,000 live births for girls). Infant mortality rates for children born in refugee camps are significantly higher than for their counterparts from urban and rural areas. Around 17 per 1,000 live births in this group die before they reach the age of one, as compared to 12 per 1,000 live births across the OPT. This figure rises to 19 per 1,000 live births for all children up to the age of five.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Samah Jabr. 2021. “Assessment of MHPSS interventions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.” UNFPA.

⁷⁷ MICS 2019/20

Referrals of acute cases from Gaza have become a challenge, due to delays in receiving permits and approvals from both the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority. The range of specialized health services in Gaza is limited and there are large gaps in capacities to deliver proper services and to cover their cost. This leaves the majority of the Gaza population who need specialized health services unable to access proper and timely treatment.

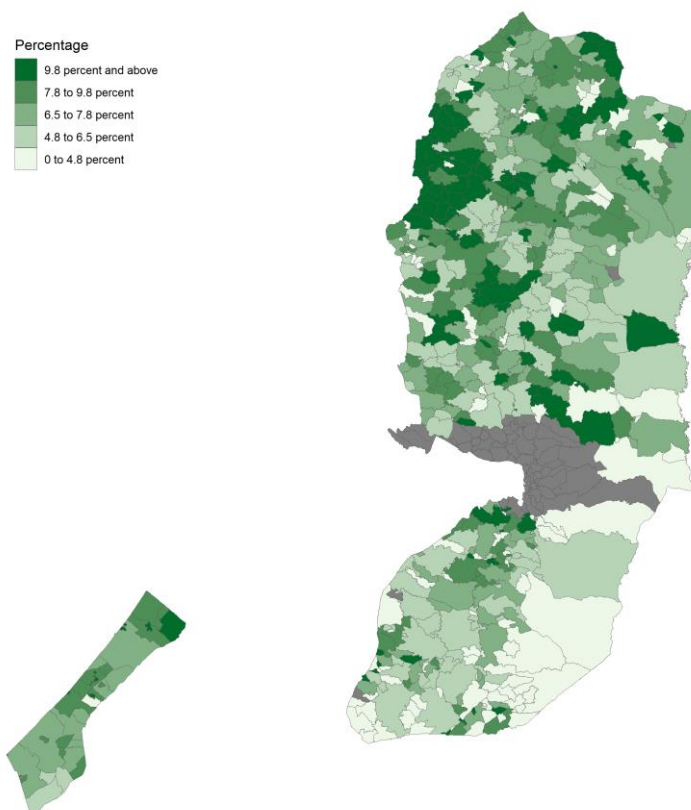
The Palestinian Ministry of Health is the main provider of primary health care in the West Bank, accounting for 72 percent of the 591 clinics in 2020.⁷⁸ Fiscal constraints and decisions to priorities other areas for spending have led to low expenditure on health care by the Palestinian government: annual per capita expenditure on healthcare in Palestine is USD 280, of which the PA pays one third.⁷⁹ (For comparison, in 2019, annual per capital expenditure on healthcare was USD 334 in Jordan, USD 663 in Lebanon, and well over USD 1,000 in the Gulf countries.)⁸⁰ Despite this, capacities of public hospitals and clinics were increased to ensure universal healthcare, including financial risk protection and access to quality healthcare services and medicines, along with COVID-19 testing and care.

Approximately 45 percent of total health care expenditure is through government systems and programs, while household contributions account for around 39 percent (most of this out-of-pocket expenditure at the point of service delivery). There is relatively high out of pocket spending by Palestinians due to gaps in public health care coverage and the relative unaffordability of private insurance. More than three-fifths (63 percent) of expenditure are towards curative services, with a fifth (19 percent) towards medical goods (mostly pharmaceuticals).⁸¹

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) present a major challenge to the Palestinian health sector and account for the largest proportion of morbidity and mortality. They account for 69 percent of mortality

Figure 9: Spatial patterns of chronic illness

Percentage of individuals with a chronic illness, by locality



Data source: PCBS, 2017 Census.

⁷⁸ Ministry of Health. 2020. Health Annual Report: Palestine 2019.

⁷⁹ UNCTAD. 2021. Report on UNCTAD assistance to the Palestinian people: Developments in the economy of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. 20 September 2021.

⁸⁰ World Bank. 2022. World Development Indicators. Accessed 2022.

⁸¹ Data provided by the Palestinian Ministry of Health

in Palestine. The main NCDs are cardiovascular diseases, cancers, strokes, and diabetes. Cardiovascular diseases remain the first cause of death, cancer ranks the second and strokes the third.⁸² The difference in access to treatment of NCDs in West Bank and Gaza Strip presents a significant gap. Gaza lacks the most basic NCD treatment, such as cancer care, and as a result is much more dependent on patient referrals outside Gaza.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Palestine had seen significant progress on maternal mortality rates. Maternal mortality dropped from 38 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births in 2009 to 19.5 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2019.⁸³ However, the estimated maternal mortality ratio in 2020 was 28.5 per 100,000 live births, an increase by 43.2 percent compared to 2019.⁸⁴ COVID-19 infection was a leading cause of death, contributing to 24.3 percent of all maternal deaths. However, the pandemic has also jeopardized maternal health outcomes more broadly than just from COVID-19 infections, reflected in increased maternal death due to direct obstetric causes as well. This increase is attributed to several factors including lockdowns, closure of antenatal care and high-risk pregnancy clinics, reluctance of women from seeking medical care due to fear from contracting the infection, relocation of health care providers to COVID-19 centers, financial hardship and shortage of medical equipment and supplies. The pandemic limited access to healthcare for women attending services in the public sector more than services in the private sector. This underlines the defect in the health system where more vulnerable populations are more severely impacted at times of crisis.

Child vaccination has seen substantial investments, particularly as a vaccine forecast was developed in cooperation with the United Nations covering the years 2020-2022 to secure needed vaccines.⁸⁵ The COVID-19 response has generated significant investments in public health infrastructure and vaccines.

Gender inequality affects the ability to access health (including but not limited to sexual and reproductive) information and services, particularly for women and girls—but also for men and boys. Gender-related barriers to access and use of health-care services continues to impede progress toward SDG 3 targets 3.7 and 3.8. In the OPT context, these barriers can include women’s lack of decision-making authority or control of finances; women’s gendered responsibilities in the home may prevent them from seeking care even when they have symptoms; inability to travel due to lack of funds or access to transport. Specific groups of women in Palestine face additional barriers such as language, culture, or stigma; gender-based violence and fear of violence and stigma and discrimination.

In terms of sexual and reproductive care, between 2014 and 2019/20 the level of teenage mothers (aged 15–19) has dropped from 48 to 43 per 1,000 women. The adolescent birth rate has increased in the West Bank (from 35 compared to 39 per 1,000 women) but dropped significantly in the Gaza Strip (from 66 compared to 48 per 1,000 women). In urban areas the figures have dropped (from 55 compared to 43 per 1,000 women) but they have risen in rural areas (29 compared to 44 per 1,000 women) and for those living in camps (29 compared to 39 per 1,000 women).⁸⁶ Several guidelines and protocols were developed and published including the Preconception National Guidelines to improve

⁸² UNCT and PMO. 2020. Atlas of Sustainable Development.

⁸³ UNCT and PMO. 2020. Atlas of Sustainable Development.

⁸⁴ MoH and UNFPA. 2022. National Maternal Mortality Report 2020. The following sentences are also drawn from that report.

⁸⁵ State of Palestine. 2020. Palestinian National Voluntary Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in 2020: Summary Report.

⁸⁶ MICS 2019/20

women's prenatal health, National Plan for Sexual and Reproductive Health in Crisis, the Emergency Obstetric Protocol, the Menopause Protocol, and Health Professionals Protocol for Covid-19 Infection and Pregnancy. Moreover, Palestinian health professionals were trained on the detection of gender-based violence using a protocol which was developed for this purpose.⁸⁷

Health care systems face challenges in providing effective, gender responsive services for children with developmental delays and disabilities. The package of services is not adequately tailored to meet the health care needs of children with disabilities and functional difficulties, especially young children. There are multiple gaps in the early identification, diagnosis of and interventions for children with developmental delays and disabilities. Children are often detected and diagnosed late and at times are unable to obtain an accurate diagnosis meaning that the critical window for appropriate intervention is missed. Access to therapeutic services, including speech, physical, and behavioral therapy are limited. Over 90 percent of families pay for services for children with disabilities and functional difficulties out of their pocket.

Data on the HIV situation and response in Palestine are sparse, due to the limited capacity of monitoring and evaluation systems. Existing HIV surveillance is mainly based on case reporting across different regions in Palestine. Analysis based on Palestinian Ministry of Health records reveals a cumulative case load of only 98 reported instances of HIV infection between 1988 and 2017, with male youth disproportionately affected.⁸⁸ Sexual transmission accounted for most reported cases (67 cases or 68.4 percent), either heterosexual relations (59 cases) or same-sex relations (8 cases each). A significant number of cases were also the result of blood transfusion.

The lack of systematic surveillance for HIV in Palestine means that these figures likely underestimate the true scale of HIV and associated risks. A major challenge lies in overcoming the social and cultural barriers that impede assessment of and response to HIV vulnerability in groups at high risk. Further information is urgently needed to better understand the determinants of the HIV epidemic in across the OPT.

The health aspects of pollution and environmental degradation are covered in the sections on SDG 11 and SDG 14 and above in Chapter 2.

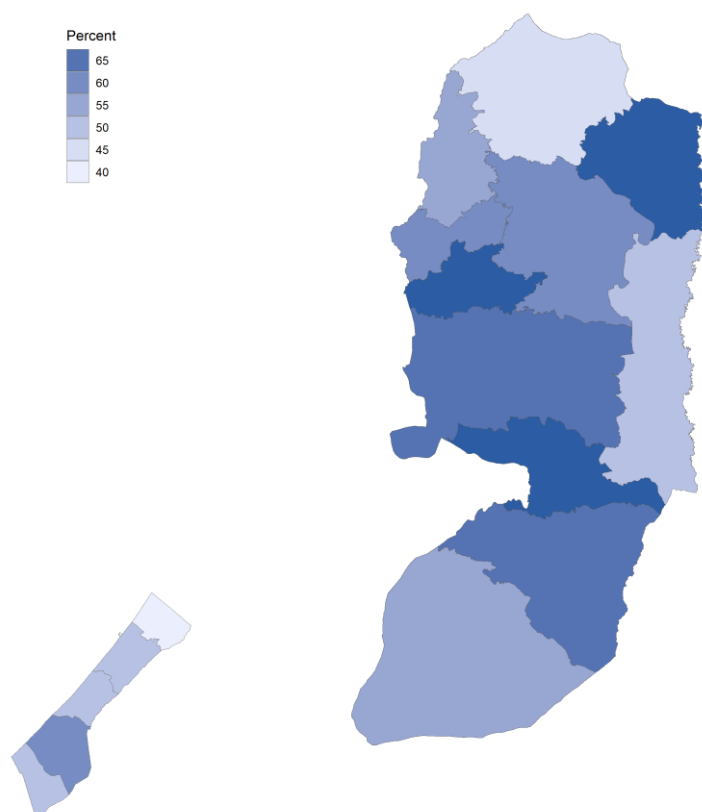
⁸⁷ State of Palestine. 2020. Palestinian National Voluntary Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in 2020: Summary Report.

⁸⁸ Hamarshah, O. (2020) HIV/AIDS in Palestine: A Growing Concern. (2020). International Journal of Infectious Disease 90: 18-20

SDG 4: Quality education

Figure 10: Spatial patterns of educational attainment

Percentage of male and female children who demonstrate foundational reading skills, by governorate



Data source: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2019/2020.

Palestine has one of the highest basic education enrollment rates in the region and has almost attained universal access to basic education. The MICS 2019/20 data shows the adjusted net attendance ratio for the basic education cycle at approximately 96.9 percent⁸⁹ (98.4 percent for girls and 95.4 percent boys) for the 2019-2020 academic year.⁹⁰ The target for 2023 by the Ministry of Education is to have a Net Enrollment Rate (NER) of 99.1 percent (99.9 percent girls and 98.4 boys). The Gross Enrollment Rate (GER) is equally high at 99.8 percent (100.7 percent girls and 98.9 percent boys) with a target of 102.8 percent (103.7 percent girls and 101.9 percent boys) for 2023⁹¹.

Despite progress made on access, the MICS 2019/20 report showed poor results against education quality indicators. Only 52.7 percent (57.3 percent girls and 47.8 percent boys) of children aged 7-14 years demonstrated foundational reading skills by successfully completing three foundational reading tasks and that 2.8 percent of basic school aged children (1.3 percent of girls and 4.3 percent of boys) are still out of school.⁹² There are large disparities between wealth quintiles, geographical location (see Figure 10), and gender.⁹³ The chance of a child from the poorest quintile to successfully complete three foundational reading skills is 25 percent lower than that of a child from the richest quintile. Almost 64.4 percent of children from the richest quintile demonstrated foundational reading skills compared to only 39.6 percent of the children from the poorest quintile. Disparities between the West

⁸⁹ According to the MOE administration record the percentage is 98.8. By all accounts, the figure is very high.

⁹⁰ Note that the MICS 2019/2020 survey was fielded in January 2020; therefore, the survey cannot capture any backsliding of education due to COVID-19 and the school closures. Learning loss, increasing dropout rates, and inequality in educational systems are the direct results of the COVID-19 pandemic on youth.

⁹¹ Ministry of Education. 2021. Results-based monitoring report of the Ministry of Education. "A high GER generally indicates a high degree of participation, whether the pupils belong to the official age group or not. A GER value approaching or exceeding 100% indicates that a country is, in principle, able to accommodate all its school-age population, but it does not indicate the proportion already enrolled. The achievement of a GER of 100% is therefore a necessary but not sufficient condition for enrolling all eligible children in school. When the GER exceeds 90% for a particular level of education, the aggregate number of places for students is approaching the number required for universal access of the official age group. However, this is a meaningful interpretation only if one can expect the under-aged and over-aged enrolment to decline in the future to free places for pupils from the expected age group." UNESCO. Institute of Statistics. Glossary: "Gross enrolment ratio." Accessed February 2022.

⁹² Ministry of Education. 2021. Results-based monitoring report of the Ministry of Education.

⁹³ Ministry of Education. 2021. Results-based monitoring report of the Ministry of Education.

Bank and Gaza are also reported (57.6 percent for West Bank and 47.0 percent for Gaza). Children from Gaza are more disadvantaged compared to their counterparts with 57.6 percent for the West Bank and 47.0 percent for Gaza in demonstrating foundational reading skills.⁹⁴ A similar trend for foundational numeracy skills is reported where only 45.8 percent of children aged 7-14 (45.8 girls and 45.8 boys) demonstrated foundational numeracy skills.⁹⁵

The low quality of education may be due to several factors, low number of school hours, lack of infrastructure in Area C, Jerusalem, and Gaza; poor working conditions for teachers and staff; lack of digital equipment; low quality curriculum; horizontal disparities; lack of teacher assessment mechanisms and performance incentives; and unsafe learning environments that are not conducive to learning. The COVID-19 emergency deepened pre-existing inequities, especially for children in poor households, children living in the Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, and other marginalized locations. Overall, these disparities threaten progress on the Sustainable Development Goals that aim to ensure inclusive and equitable education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Education in Palestine is mainly provided by the Palestinian Ministry of Education and UNRWA. UNRWA provides basic education to Palestinian refugee children. The agency provides access to basic education to around 47,000 students (of which 60 percent or 28,200 were girls) through 96 primary and preparatory schools in the West Bank. The UNRWA education program in Gaza is the largest of all UNRWA programs in its five areas of operation, serving 286,645 students (104,251 males and 96,861 females) from Grades 1 to 9 in the 2019/2020 school year.

In East Jerusalem, where the Palestinian Authority is unable to exercise jurisdiction, the responsibility for the delivery of education lies with the Israeli authorities, there is a shortage of more than 3,000 classrooms in the Israeli public system for Palestinian residents.⁹⁶ East Jerusalem schools are also facing increasing pressure by the Israeli authorities to replace the Palestinian curriculum with an Israeli one, compromising academic freedom and institutional autonomy, which in the context of a longstanding occupation, are essential components of the right to education and to the enjoyment of linguistic and cultural heritage.⁹⁷ There is also a shortage of qualified teachers due to many East Jerusalemite teachers seeking better pay and conditions in Israel. Many schools operate in private residential properties, which do not meet the minimum standards; nearly 60 percent of schools lack playgrounds, libraries, or science labs; at least half of the schools suffer from substandard physical conditions.⁹⁸

Similar challenges affect schools in Area C and H2, again, areas where the Palestinian Authority is unable to exercise jurisdiction. As of January 2022, a total of 54 schools across the West Bank have pending “stop work” or demolition orders, which place them at risk of being fully or partially demolished, due to lack of Israeli building permits which are nearly impossible to obtain.

⁹⁴ Ministry of Education. 2021. Results-based monitoring report of the Ministry of Education.

⁹⁵ Ministry of Education. 2021. Results-based monitoring report of the Ministry of Education.

⁹⁶ Ir Amim, 2019. The State of Education in East Jerusalem: Failing infrastructure. Note however that Ir Amim does not count Palestinian-run schools in East Jerusalem. If including Palestinian-run schools, the gap is approximately 1,000 classrooms.

⁹⁷ Riyada Consulting and Training. 2020. Mid-term evaluation: Support to Education in East Jerusalem Project. Submitted to UNDP. Note that in July 2022, the Israeli Ministry of Education suspended the permanent licenses of six schools in East Jerusalem, citing in appropriate content of the PA text books, If the licenses are revoked, two thousand students will not graduate from an accredited school.

⁹⁸ UNDP. 2020. East Jerusalem schools survey.

At least one third of the schools in Area C and H2 do not meet the minimum standards for safe learning environments; and 23 percent have no playgrounds.⁹⁹ In terms of school infrastructure, 96.4 percent of schools had access to the Internet and 94.6 percent had computers for pedagogical purposes.¹⁰⁰ Schools in Gaza are overcrowded, with an average of 38 students per classroom in 2020, including 41 students per classroom in the UNRWA system, and 57 percent of schools run double shifts adversely affecting the quality of education. (In comparison, there were 26 students per classroom in the West Bank.)

While Palestine has almost attained universal access to basic education, the same cannot be said for the pre-primary and secondary levels. According to the MICS, only 34.2 percent of the children aged 3-4 years are attending Kindergarten programs; only 26 percent of children from the poorest households attend Kindergarten compared to 44.5 percent of those from the wealthiest households.¹⁰¹ (Note, however, that the official age group for kindergarten in Palestine is 4-5 years, and the enrollment rate for 4-5 years is 62.3 percent.) Nevertheless, the Early Childhood developmental targets for children aged 3 to 5 years, as measured by ECD index, are improving. In 2019/20, 84 percent of children were found to be developmentally on track, these improvements have improved across genders, locations, and wealth quintiles.

As for secondary school level, 93.8 percent of children transition from basic to secondary school level. In 2019/2020, the secondary school adjusted net attendance ratio was at 74.5 percent (84.8 percent girls and 65.9 percent boys). The gender parity index for secondary school is 1.29 implying that far more girls than boys attend secondary school. School dropout rates are higher for boys than for girls, as adolescent boys are expected to contribute to household income in times of crises, with this being the main reason for boys to dropout. Early marriage for girls often entails their dropping out of schools because of family pressure and/or due to protection concerns. Girls who drop out are at high risk of early marriage, while boys at high risk of child labor or of participating in life-threatening activities. Alongside structural barriers, there is a need to better understand and analyze the driving forces behind dropouts from a gender perspective, including the role of discriminatory gender norms and attitudes. There is also 22-percentage point gap in the attendance of the richest and the poorest quintiles. The Ministry of Education estimates that 2.3 percent of secondary school children drop out before they complete grade 12.

The Palestinian education system has been supporting the integration of children with disabilities in formal education, with 68.4 percent of schools having adapted infrastructure and materials for students with disabilities. Nonetheless, among disabled children, approximately 22 percent of boys and 30 percent of girls (ages 6 to 15) have never enrolled in school.¹⁰² Evidence is limited but factors explaining this gender disparity could include girls' increased risk of school-related gender-based violence (GBV) and abuse, or studies that suggest boys with disabilities enjoy more mobility than girls with disabilities. More research is needed to understand gender-related barriers to formal education for boys and girls with disability. In general, stigma around disability remains a barrier to access, and Palestine still relies on a medical, rather than social, model for disability. Around forty percent of children with disabilities who are beyond elementary school age have not completed elementary

⁹⁹ UNDP. 2020. East Jerusalem schools survey.

¹⁰⁰ Ministry of Education Statistical Reports. 2019 and 2020. The following figures also draw from these reports.

¹⁰¹ MICS 2019/20

¹⁰² UNICEF. July 2018. State of Palestine Country Report on Out-of-School Children.

school education, while two-thirds of children with disabilities who are beyond basic education age has not completed this level (64.5 percent).¹⁰³

In terms of higher education, there are 51 recognized higher education institutions in Palestine (17 in the Gaza Strip and 34 in the West Bank).¹⁰⁴ During the academic year 2020/2021, there was a total of 214,765 students (132,586 females or 61.74 percent) in higher education institutions. There is no reliable current drop out and graduation rates from higher education institutions. Progress on technical and vocational education and training is discussed in SDG 8 below.

Non-formal education and youths and adults' life-long learning are also promoted. Palestine has come close to achieving the SDG 4 target for adult literacy, with the rate of literacy at 97.4 percent, with no significant differences by sex.¹⁰⁵ A National Strategy for Adult Education is currently in place, and 80 percent of its planned interventions have been implemented in collaboration with multiple partners, including communities.

SDG 5: Gender equality

The National Policy Agenda (2017-2022) affirmed the Palestinian government's commitment to promoting equality between women and men, eliminating all forms of discrimination against women and girls, and institutionalizing gender mainstreaming in policy making, planning, and budgeting. Women's civil society organizations have supported efforts by the government and partners to enhance gender equality and to end gender-based violence in Palestine, jointly with international organizations and the government. Reforms have been proposed to the labor law, family protection law, and local elections law that will improve the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, rendering the texts more gender responsive and equitable and better able to ensure equal opportunities and participation of women in all aspects of life. In some cases, these proposals remain stalled or fall short of international norms and best practices. Legislative frameworks remain in place that discriminate against women and girls (SDG 5.1). While discrimination is prohibited under article 9 of the Amended Basic Law, it remains critical to ensure a comprehensive definition of discrimination against women in line with Article 1 of the Convention. In this regard, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW committee) has already observed the deficiencies in the Palestinian context and recommended that local laws ensure that they are consistent with the human rights treaties to which the State party has acceded. The CEDAW committee also indicated that women and girls in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank are subjected to multiple sets of laws, which afford varying levels of protection, given that some laws perpetuate customary practices and traditions that discriminate against women. Such laws also allow for the continued violation of women's rights in matters of marriage, divorce, child custody and inheritance.

National authorities have made some progress in addressing legislative frameworks with a view to eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls (SDG 5.2). Critical articles in the penal code of 1960 applicable in the West Bank have been amended or abolished, including articles 340, 308, 99. The repeal of Article 340 removed exceptions that the judiciary could use to reduce punishments for so-called honor killings. Article 99 has been amended by Decree Law No. (5) of 2018, by adding a new paragraph that excludes crimes committed against women and children from pleading mitigation

¹⁰³ PCBS. 2020. Characteristics of Individuals with Disabilities in Palestine.

¹⁰⁴ Governmental (11), Public (17), Private (17) and UNRWA (4)

¹⁰⁵ MICS 2019/20.

measures. Article 308, which allowed rapists to escape prosecution if they married the victim, has been abolished; however, the crime of rape is rarely prosecuted in the OPT. The Ministry of Justice, in collaboration with the Ministry of Women’s Affairs and others, has led efforts to change the Legal Aid Law so that it better responds to the needs of women victims of violence.¹⁰⁶ Despite this, there is no progress in the draft legal aid law. To date, no laws specifically criminalizing domestic violence or providing protection have been endorsed, despite advocacy efforts led by women civil society organizations.¹⁰⁷

Violence against women, particularly by intimate partners, remains at an alarmingly high rate with 29 percent of ever-partnered women and girls (15 years and older) having been subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, of whom less than 1 percent sought legal and/or psychosocial support.¹⁰⁸ There are prevailing customs where many Palestinian families strip their daughters of their inheritance rights if they wed outside the extended family. The MICS 2019/20 found that 15.7 percent of women believe husbands are justified in beating their wives, highlighting the prevalence of patriarchal norms. Almost one in four women from the Gaza Strip believe this (24.2 percent), compared to one in ten women from the West Bank. There was an increase in domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic for reasons related to increased risk of spending longer time with an abusive husband or immediate relative and lack of operational services due to the lockdowns.¹⁰⁹ One helpline reported an increase of 57 percent in calls related to violence compared to pre COVID-19 emergency state.¹¹⁰

Harmful practices committed against women and girls, including child, early, and forced marriage, continue (SDG 5.3), although according to MICS 2019/20, child marriage declined from 24 percent in 2014 to 13 percent in 2019/20.¹¹¹ Femicide and so-called “honor killings” occur in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. National responses included establishing an inter-ministerial committee to

¹⁰⁶ See subsequent chapters for a review of Palestine’s commitments to international agreements related to gender equality, such as CEDAW.

¹⁰⁷ UNDP, UNFPA, UN Women, UN ESCWA, and State of Palestine. 2019. Gender Justice and the Law.

¹⁰⁸ PCBS. 2019. Violence Survey.

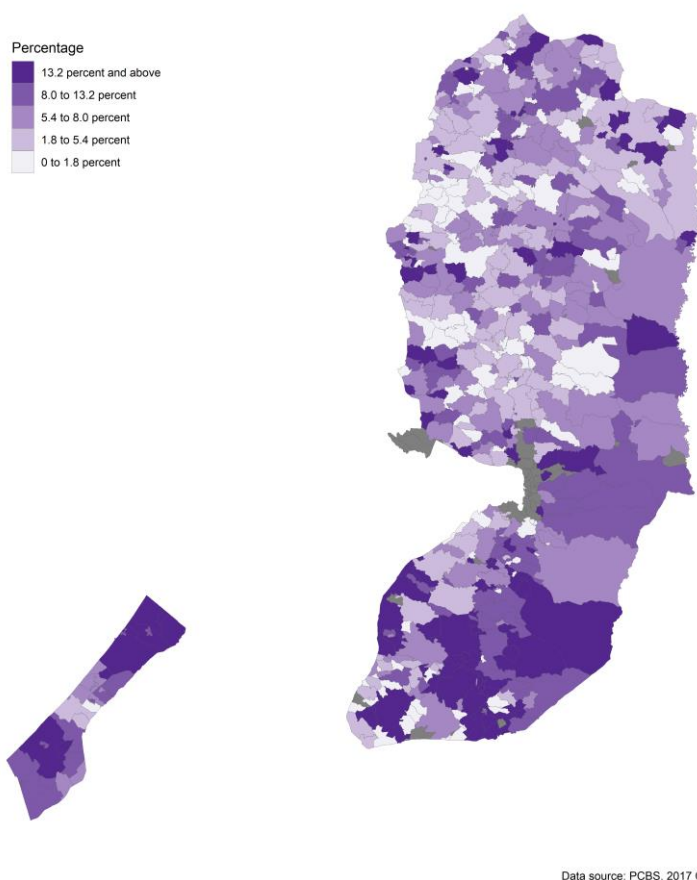
¹⁰⁹ UN Women. 2020. Rapid Assessment on COVID-19 and Domestic and Family Violence Services across Palestine.

¹¹⁰ UN Women. 2020. Impact of Covid-19 Crisis on the Access of Women Victims and Survivors of Violence to Justice and Security Services in Palestine.

¹¹¹ Measured as the percentage of women aged 20-24 who were married before the age of 18.

Figure 11: Spatial patterns in the marriage of girls

Percentage of women aged 20-24 years who were married before the age of 18



formulate a policy and action plan to address child marriage. There were interventions with the Chief Judge to minimize exceptions granted to marry girls and boys who are younger than 18 years. Female genital mutilation (SDG Indicator 5.3.2) is non-existent in Palestine.

Research undertaken in 2020 indicates that women in Palestine do less paid and decent work and significantly more unpaid care and domestic work (SDG 5.4).¹¹² Social expectations and discriminatory attitudes towards women's reproductive and caring role are widespread; women spend about 35 hours per week on unpaid care work, compared with around five hours for men.

Given the fact that women bear the major responsibility for cultivating the land, the burden of

transporting water to their lands is also borne by them. Restrictions related to social norms imposed on women often limit their ability to engage in activities or work alongside men who are not members of their family. Women are often denied fair participation in mixed-gender agricultural cooperatives.

Only 77.4 percent of young women and girls aged 15-19 years old used appropriate menstrual hygiene materials and had a private place to wash and change while at home. Furthermore, in relation to exclusion from activities due to menstruation, 14.8 percent of women and girls aged 15-19 years old reported that they did not participate in social activities, school, or work due to menstruation at some point in the last 12 months.

Provision of gender-responsive, disability-inclusive adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services is still underdeveloped in the OPT; it is neither inclusive to adolescent and youth with disability nor accessible to LGBT+ people or who are unmarried, due to the pressure of social norms. Access to sexual and reproductive health services and information, including family planning, is a critical human rights issue. The Ministry of Health and key stakeholders provide SRH services for married women and girls, antenatal, postnatal and preconception care, STIs testing including HIV/AIDS, response to GBV against women and girls, and psychosocial counselling. There is a need to ensure that integrated health services include non-discriminatory sexual and reproductive health

¹¹² UN Women. 2020. Policy Brief 4. The Care Economy in Palestine.

counselling.¹¹³ In addition, adolescents and youth in the OPT have little information and knowledge on SRH, expressing embarrassment to discuss SRH issues.¹¹⁴

With regards to women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life (SDG 5.5), women remain underrepresented. After the last Palestinian legislative elections in 2006, women held only 11.8 percent of parliamentary seats, although women hold 21.2 percent of elected seats in local government offices (SDG 5.5.1.). Women's representation in the police has increased from 3.5 percent in 2014 to 5.54 percent in 2021, and women held 22.2 percent of managerial positions in 2020.¹¹⁵

Sustainable Development Goals: Prosperity

SDG 7: Affordable and clean energy

While access to electricity in Palestine is very high (99.7 percent), energy supply remains unstable, insufficient, and cost inefficient, especially in Gaza, where only approximately half of electricity demand is met. Numerous initiatives to install solar power for basic service provision have taken place over the past years, yet power shortages in Gaza continue to impact the availability of essential services, particularly health, water, and sanitation and continues to have a major impact on the economy resulting in high production costs. In the West Bank, power shortages are regularly experienced, especially during peak winter and summer months.¹¹⁶ There are also pronounced differences between men and women in terms of energy needs and priorities, the roles they assume in society and households, and the gap in income and economic empowerment.

These frequent and prolonged power outages disproportionately affect female-headed households (FHHs), which have a lower rate of subscription to alternative energy sources. Only 4 percent of FHH have access to diesel generators compared to 11 percent in male-headed households (MHH), and 34 percent have access to rechargeable batteries compared to 42 percent in MHH. This disparity in accessing energy alternatives underlines an energy affordability aspect that appears to be especially prevalent in FHHs. Moreover, given that the supply of diesel fuel itself is also unreliable, Palestinians in Gaza, and FHHs in particular, often suffer the impacts of fuel supply disruptions. In addition, a UN study shows that such electricity shortages have intensified women's sense of insecurity, with up to 61 percent of women surveyed reporting a belief that, as a result, more women are now exposed to gender-based violence (GBV).¹¹⁷

Palestine relies on imports of Israeli electricity to meet demand; 94 percent of the electricity was imported from the Israeli Electric Corporation in 2018 and 88 percent was imported from the Israeli Electric Corporation in 2022. The renewable energy share in the total final energy mix in Palestine is 10.7 percent. Palestine has a high potential for solar energy, which is the only significant renewable resource in Palestine. The United Nations and donors have undertaken many solar projects, including for facilities such as schools, hospitals, and water treatment plants, which have the benefit of reducing operational costs and increasing sustainability because electricity prices are so high. There remain, however, challenges to constructing solar energy plants such as securing Israeli permits for

¹¹³ UNFPA. 2017. Youth in Palestine, Policy and Programme Recommendations to address demographic risks and opportunities.

¹¹⁴ UNFPA and Juzoor for Health and Social Development. 2020. "Impact of the COVID-19 Outbreak and Lockdown on Family Dynamics and Domestic Violence in Palestine."

¹¹⁵ State of Palestine. 2020. Palestinian National Voluntary Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in 2020: Summary Report.

¹¹⁶ UNCT and PMO. 2020. Atlas of Sustainable Development.

¹¹⁷ UNFPA. 2017. The Humanitarian Impact of Gaza's Electricity and Fuel Crisis on Gender-Based Violence and Services. New York: UNFPA.

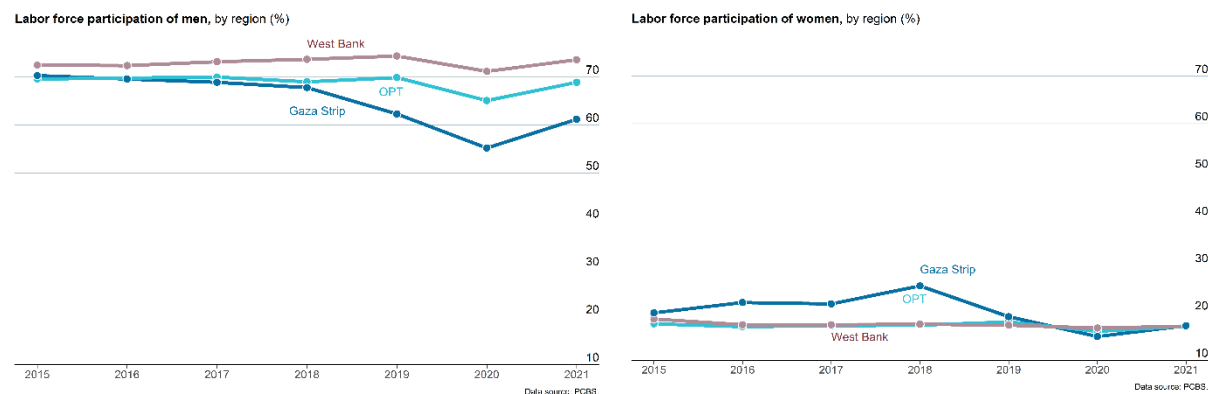
construction, supplying the generated electricity to the IEC managed grid for distribution, and the lack of transmission infrastructure. Moreover, restricted access to Area C in the West Bank, and limited availability of land in Gaza, are also contributing lower levels of solar energy production. While other renewable resources such as wind energy could be harvested in parts of the West Bank and offshore in Gaza it is almost non-existent across the OPT due to restrictions imposed by Israel.

SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth

The Israeli occupation and the Palestinian political divisions create significant distortions and negative impacts in the economy and labor markets. As a result, there are significant structural imbalances, namely a resource gap and a labor market imbalance, and high dependence on external sources of income including aid. These fundamental distortions, along with Israel’s control over the collection and disbursement of a large part of the PA’s fiscal revenues, perpetuate the high dependency of the Palestinian economy on Israel and donor support.¹¹⁸ Poor infrastructure, transportation, and road networks also limit access to local and external markets and the provision of essential public services, such as water, sanitation, and energy. The context creates various constraints to the growth of the Palestinian economy such as limited access to natural resources, primarily water and land, limited access to external markets, and infrastructure deficiencies and scarcity, felt in different ways by different segments of the population.¹¹⁹

The overall labor force participation rate in the OPT has fluctuated in recent years, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and other reasons: labor force participation, including both men and women, declined from 44.3 percent in 2019 to 40.9 percent in 2020 and then recovered to 43.4 percent in 2021.¹²⁰ Gender disparities in the labor force are a significant issue. Palestinian women have one of the lowest

Figure 12: Gender disparities in the labor force



rates of labor force participation in the world (17.2 percent) despite having one of the highest primary and secondary education enrollment rates in the region.¹²¹ Women entrepreneurs accounted for nearly 14.5 percent of women’s total employment; however, this rate has not increased significantly over the past 15 years.¹²²

Such gender-based disparities in labor force-related statistics are indicative of the multifaceted, gendered constraints faced by Palestinian women—including skilled and highly-educated women—in

¹¹⁸ UNCTAD. 2012. The Palestinian economy: Macroeconomic and trade policymaking under occupation.

¹¹⁹ USAID. 2017. West Bank and Gaza – Inclusive Growth Diagnostic.

¹²⁰ PCBS. 2021. Labor Force Survey and Statistics.

¹²¹ UNCT and PMO. 2020. Atlas of Sustainable Development.

¹²² UNCT and PMO. 2020. Atlas of Sustainable Development.

accessing decent employment opportunities. These include discriminatory legislation limiting women's choices in careers, sectors and occupations, as well as restrictive socio-cultural norms and traditional gender roles (i.e., considering men as primary breadwinners, while viewing women as care-providers).¹²³ Moreover, since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, women have more frequently lost their jobs and faced stronger relative reductions of their working hours in the Gaza Strip than in the West Bank, and women-owned businesses have been more severely impacted compared to men-led ones.¹²⁴

Palestinian women provide 87 percent of the labor required for livestock production and 54 percent for crop production, in addition to their mainstream gender roles of child rearing and taking care of the household.¹²⁵ In 2019, the agriculture sector employed 6.7 percent of the total of employed women and 5.9 percent of employed males. However, these statistics tend to under-represent women employment as they consider only the work devoted to produce for the market, while most of women's work in agriculture is devoted to production for household consumption. Traditions and customary practices in Palestinian society often deny women their right to claim an inheritance and their right to access and control land and natural resources. This in turn limits their ability to take out loans due to lack of collateral, which implies that even when they can obtain loans, they must pay higher interest rates than men.

Analysis of compliance with minimum wage regulations reveals that all workers in the public sector earn above minimum wage.¹²⁶ Nonetheless, there are major gendered pay gaps in the private sector. The reason is likely related to excess labor supply, with the number of job applicants far exceeding vacancies, which reduces wage bargaining power to the benefit of employers. More generally, low compliance with minimum wage regulations in the West Bank can be attributed to a lack of government enforcement. In particular, the Ministry of Labour has lacked sufficient human capital and logistical capacity to ensure high compliance rates and has not applied stringent penalties for violations. Inspectors often issue a warning and only use sanctions as the last option. Furthermore, the fine (USD 70 to 100 per employee paid below the minimum wage) is insufficient to deter non-compliance. Although most workers in the paid care sector enjoy some employment rights, coverage must be expanded in the private sector, particularly to address low pay among women. Such assessments of the quality of working conditions in paid care occupations are vital, both to ensure the quality of services as well as the well-being of women workers.”

Challenges related to the protracted Israeli occupation—including restrictions on movement of goods and people, and asymmetric economic interdependence—have an impact on the capacity of the Palestinian economy to absorb new labor market entrants, which drives the high unemployment rates particularly among skilled youth and graduates. While access to the Israeli labor market provides opportunities for youth to gain skills and find employment opportunity, it also increases the risk of “brain drain” from OPT to Israel due to the inability of the Palestinian labor market to reabsorb young workers.

¹²³ World Bank. 2018. Enhancing job opportunities for skilled women in the Palestinian territories.

¹²⁴ UN Women. 2021. A Feminist Economic Analysis on the Impact of COVID-19 in the Palestinian Economy.

¹²⁵ FAO. 2021. Country Gender Assessment.

¹²⁶ UN Women. 2020. Policy Brief No. 4: The Care Economy in Palestine: Towards Recognizing, Reducing, and Redistributing Unpaid Care Work.

Youth unemployment remains high and is particularly worrying when considering population growth and demographic dynamics. Between 2015 to 2030, the labor force size will increase by one million, from 1.3 million to 2.3 million, implying that around one million new jobs would need be created by 2030 just to maintain the current levels of unemployment.¹²⁷ In 2021, the unemployment rate of youth (aged 15-24 years) reached 41.7 percent (37.2 percent among young men and 64.5 percent among young women).¹²⁸ There are, again, stark regional differences: the overall youth unemployment rate was 68.9 percent in the Gaza Strip and 27.8 percent in the West Bank.¹²⁹ The unemployment problem is concentrated among educated youth, including university graduates. In 2021, the unemployment rate among youth (aged 18 to 29 years) holding an associate diploma or above reached 52.6 across the OPT (35.6 percent in the West Bank and 73.7 percent in the Gaza Strip).¹³⁰ In addition, according to 2021 statistics, 31.5 percent of the youth population aged 15 to 24 years are not in employment, education, or training (NEET).¹³¹ This is particularly concerning considering the growing number of youth-headed households from 9 percent in 2007 to 15 percent in 2017.¹³²

One in ten children aged 10-14 year were involved in child labor, with 2.1 percent of children aged 15-17 years old involved in child labor.¹³³ The MICS survey defines child labor as economic or household chores which surpassed the age-specific threshold. Of those engaged in work, 11.6 percent of children aged 15-17 and 6.4 percent of children aged 12-17 were involved in hazardous work, according to the MICS 2019/2020 survey. PCBS reported in 2020 that 3.6 percent of Palestinian children aged 10-17 were employed in the labor force alone.

In the Gaza Strip, the Israeli closure regime has led to cycles of economic decline and de-industrialization, with recurrent conflict imposing direct damages and losses on the people and economy. The overall youth unemployment rate was 63 percent in the Gaza Strip, compared to 23 percent in the West Bank.¹³⁴ The productive sectors in the economy of Gaza, encompassing agriculture, industry, trade and services, as well as the financial sector, are estimated to have sustained between USD 75-90 million in damages as a result of the May 2021 conflict.¹³⁵ Economic losses in Gaza from the May 2021 conflict—that is, losses in the economy arising from the temporary absence of the damaged assets—amounted to between USD 105-190 million.¹³⁶ International cash for work programs can address part of the economic impact, but cannot substitute for a robust and sustainable development trajectory.

The government has undertaken efforts to address unemployment and invest in technical education, support and encourage the private sector and entrepreneurial activities, and revive promising sectors such as the tourism sector, while ensuring that labor rights are in place. Analysis of compliance with minimum wage regulations reveals that all workers in the public sector earn above minimum wage.

In November 2020, the Palestinian Cabinet adopted its first National Employment Strategy, covering the period 2021-2025. The Strategy has been developed through extensive consultations among the

¹²⁷ UNFPA. 2017. Palestine 2030: Demographic Change: Opportunities for Development.

¹²⁸ PCBS. 2021. Palestinian Labor Force Survey Annual Report.

¹²⁹ PCBS. 2021. Palestinian Labor Force Survey Annual Report.

¹³⁰ PCBS. 2021. Palestinian Labor Force Survey Annual Report.

¹³¹ PCBS. 2021. Palestinian Labor Force Survey Annual Report.

¹³² PCBS. 2019. Press release on the occasion of International Youth Day.

¹³³ MICS 2019/2020.

¹³⁴ PCBS. 2020. Press release on the occasion of International Youth Day.

¹³⁵ World Bank, United Nations, and European Union. 2021. Gaza Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment.

¹³⁶ World Bank, United Nations, and European Union. 2021. Gaza Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment.

government, employers, and trade unions with the aim to address labor market challenges and promote policy coherence to achieve full and productive employment for jobseekers, particularly youth and women. It has three main pillars: promoting sound labor market governance, with a focus on enhancing active labor market policies; aligning education with labor market needs, notably via improved technical and vocational education and training (TVET); and promoting a resilient private sector and generating employment and self-employment opportunities, including incentivizing youth to engage in start-up entrepreneurship. The Strategy is viewed as critical for post-pandemic economic recovery and coordinating the efforts of the various national and donor stakeholders in the field of employment.

There is continued governmental support to the registration and organizational reforms of trade unions and employers' organizations. The government also undertook upscaling inspection activities to ensure enforcement of the Labor Law, implemented the Decent Work Program in cooperation with the ILO, and continued to provide legal aid to workers regarding their labor rights and social security in Israel. Despite that, there is insufficient data to assess the level of national compliance of labor rights based on the ILO standards and national legislation, including on freedom of association, collective bargaining, forced labor, child labor, equality of opportunity and treatment, tripartite consultation, labor administration, and labor inspection.

As technical education is positioned as a contributor to economic growth in Palestine, some TVET centers have been upgraded, with a focus on making curricula more market-oriented, and 1600 new trainees were registered. Reports state that 5,183 trainees have graduated from TVET centers. The government has established the National Authority for Vocational and Technical Education and Training, as well as the Nablus University for Vocational and Technical Education.

As noted above, as of Q2 2022, around 210,500 Palestinians work in Israel and the Israeli settlements, most with official permits, but including tens of thousands of workers cross daily without official permits. The vast majority of these workers are men working in agriculture, fishing, and forestry; mining, quarrying, and manufacturing; and construction. Palestinian workers pay intermediaries for permits that enable them to work legally in Israel. A Bank of Israel working paper conservatively estimated profits of NIS 122 million by these intermediaries in 2019.¹³⁷ The ILO calculated the estimated annual profits at NIS 427 million.¹³⁸ Despite an Israeli Government decision in 2016 to undertake an imminent reform of the work permit regime, some first steps toward implementation were only taken in December 2020 when reforms of the construction sector were implemented. These reforms aimed at delinking the permit quotas from employers and hence opening the possibility for Palestinian workers to change jobs and employers. This is an important move towards improving conditions. However, as of early 2022, permit brokers still appear to be operating and there is anecdotal evidence that broker practices now exist with respect to the new permits for Palestinian workers to enter Israel from Gaza. These practices are likely to continue unless a functioning and inexpensive job-matching facility is established for Palestinian workers and Israeli employers.

¹³⁷ Bank of Israel. 2019. Illegal trade in work permits for Palestinian workers in Israel. <https://www.boi.org.il/en/NewsAndPublications/PressReleases/Pages/25-9-2019.aspx>

¹³⁸ ILO. 2020. The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories. ILC.109/DG/APP/2020.

Starting in mid-2021, workers from Gaza were able to enter Israel and the West Bank for the first time since January 2020, though still in numbers far below those seen in the early 2000s.¹³⁹

SDG 9: Industry, innovation, and infrastructure

The manufacturing sector is the second-largest contributor to GDP in Palestine after the services sector, with more than 20,000 industrial establishments providing jobs to more than 100,000 workers. However, the sector share of employment stands at only 11 percent. Over the last two decades, the sector has suffered stagnation, limiting the economy's integration with modern production chains in regional and international markets.¹⁴⁰

The PA has been taking steps towards improving industrial capacity, encouraging investment and entrepreneurship, as well as improving access to communication services. Moreover, industrial parks were developed in five governorates across the West Bank and Gaza, hosting 79 medium- to large-scale enterprises. Employment in this sector comprised 12.8 percent of total employment, contributing an added value of 11.2 percent to GDP in 2020.¹⁴¹ Complementary activities to support industrial developments included the promotion of exports and efficient use of resources, which were delivered through information and awareness raising sessions on trade agreements and existing trade promotion facilities and services. Improving foreign trade patterns are highly dependent on continuing multilateral negotiations between Israel, Palestine, Jordan, and Egypt to improve the policy environment and the infrastructure of industrial estates and crossings. The restrictions on the entry of industrial materials and other inputs into the Gaza Strip severely constrains the potential for industrial growth.

While aggregate data cited above reflects gaps in the availability of disaggregated data related to industrial and infrastructure development, studies have shown manufacturing remains a male dominated industry with persistent gender gaps in the labor force participation and pay.¹⁴² In Gaza, 83 per cent of employed women worked in the services sector in 2016; the second highest sector for female employment was commerce, restaurants, and hotels at a mere 7.4 percent. In general, more people are employed in service activities in Gaza, with mining and manufacturing and construction absorbing a smaller proportion of the labor force. By comparison, the West Bank is slightly less segregated for females horizontally, with 11.3 percent of women working in mining, quarrying, and manufacturing, ranking second to services (66.7 percent of working females). However, the West Bank is also much less segregated for men, providing a variety of work opportunities.

Most of the industrial establishments in Palestine are considered micro or small enterprises, defined as employing fewer than ten workers. The proportion of small-scale industries in total industry value added is 17.6 percent, and 92 percent of industrial enterprises are micro or small.¹⁴³

Financial support is being provided to women-owned and women-led enterprises through the Solidarity Fund, as well as other donor-funded projects. The MSME National Helpdesk Scheme supports emerging needs and fosters business transformation and recovery in the COVID-19

¹³⁹ "In the 1970s and 1980s, Israel encouraged Gazans to work in Israel, with the number of those employed there reaching a peak of 46,000 in 1987. In 1991, following the Gulf War, Israel built a fence around the Gaza Strip, and began controlling the movement of workers to Israel. The number of Gazans working in Israel fell to 38,000 in 1991-1993, and to a few thousand in 1995-1996. Israel expanded employment of Gaza Strip residents to 26,000 in 2000." Etkes and Klor. INSS Insight No. 1542, December 22, 2021.

¹⁴⁰ UNCT and PMO. 2020. Atlas of Sustainable Development.

¹⁴¹ State of Palestine. 2020. Palestinian National Voluntary Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in 2020: Summary Report.

¹⁴² ILO. 2018. The Occupied Palestinian Territory: An Employment Diagnostic Study.

¹⁴³ UNCT and PMO. 2020. Atlas of Sustainable Development.

pandemic. The helpdesk is a one-stop shop for MSMEs to access information to inform investment decisions or seek guidance on developing services and production processes to meet local and international market needs, marketing and financial management services, financing opportunities, and legal advisory services. Other emergency support projects were established to support enterprises that have been impacted by the COVID-19 crisis. Despite low productivity, small and micro enterprises are important job creators and drivers of development.¹⁴⁴

The ICT sector accounts for 3.2 percent of the GDP and has the potential for growth to meet the growing demand from other sectors.¹⁴⁵ However, restrictions related to the occupation have stood in the way of achieving digital transformation. In addition to electricity, there is communication technology dependence since services have to be deployed through Israeli providers, placing the OPT among the last in the world to deploy 3G cellular technology, and leaving Gaza limited to the use of outdated 2G technology.¹⁴⁶ The OPT ranks at 123 on the ICT Development Index, well below the regional and global averages.¹⁴⁷ As a result, the telecommunications infrastructure is not capable of supporting the needs of a modern economy and meeting the demand for e-services such as e-banking and e-commerce that would help overcome restrictions on movement and access. The Palestinian economy annually loses hundreds of millions of dollars of income and fiscal revenue because of the constraints imposed on the ICT sector.¹⁴⁸

Measures were put in place to encourage investment in the ICT sector such as concessions and financial incentives for projects investing in research and development. E-governance remains a priority of the Palestinian Authority. Medium and high-tech industry comprised a value of 6.2 percent of total industry value in 2019; a figure that has potential to increase given the current developments and reforms in the telecom sector. The Palestinian government has launched an initiative for training coders and programmers, and 3,200 students have already been trained. More measures need to be put in place to utilize the ICT sector's potential towards bridging the digital divide, including the digital gender divide. For example, mainstreaming digital solutions into women's businesses and access to virtual marketplaces will not only empower Palestinian women-led MSMEs and help them flourish and grow their clienteles' base. It will also support their resilience, especially in the context of political instability that usually results in a series of closures and restrictions on the movement of people and goods, impacting the operation of businesses.

As illustrated above, industrialization, infrastructure, and innovation are not gender neutral, and policy action is required to tackle gender labor and pay gaps and promote the economic empowerment of women. Regarding infrastructure, a key requirement is to ensure that major projects in the OPT undergo an independent, comprehensive environmental and social impact assessment, including a gender impact assessment. Infrastructure strategies and plans, in particular in the transport and digital sectors, must include a gender dimension. Improved collection of gender-disaggregated data on SDG 9 indicators, which also have a strong environmental component – such as on modes of transport, manufacturing, and small-scale industries – is imperative, considering

¹⁴⁴ UNCT and PMO. 2020. Atlas of Sustainable Development.

¹⁴⁵ World Bank. 2021. Palestinian Digital Economy Assessment.

¹⁴⁶ UNCTAD. 2021. Report on UNCTAD assistance to the Palestinian people: Developments in the economy of the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

¹⁴⁷ World Bank. 2020. Economic Monitoring Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee. June 2020.

¹⁴⁸ World Bank. 2020. Economic Monitoring Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee. June 2020.

women as users, workers, or entrepreneurs. Much progress on SDG9 hinges on the rollout of 4G technology, and later 5G, across the OPT.

SDG 10: Reducing inequalities

Inequality in the OPT takes on different manifestations and dimensions, with intra-Palestinian inequality being shaped and driven by a wide range of intersecting factors—including but not limited to geographic location, refugee status, gender, age, and disability, as well as power and socioeconomic status. These issues are discussed in greater detail in the next chapter on vulnerability in the OPT.

Geographic disparities as one of the key drivers of inequality in the OPT translates into people facing specific and differentiated challenges, deprivations, and vulnerabilities based on their place of residence, and it is closely linked with and heavily influenced by the Israeli occupation policies and practices. As such, intra-Palestinian inequality of opportunities and outcomes is often characterized by significant gaps between Palestinians living in Areas A and B of the West Bank, and those living in Area C, as well as Palestinians in East Jerusalem and those living in the Gaza Strip.¹⁴⁹

Refugee status, gender, age, and disability also play a significant role in determining different manifestations of intra-Palestinian inequality. For instance, considering unemployment as a clear manifestation of inequality of opportunity, unemployment rates across the OPT are consistently and significantly higher for women than for men. Similarly, unemployment in the OPT disproportionately affects young people and university graduates.

Vertical inequalities remain a major challenge for achieving SDG 10. Trends from recent years indicate that income inequality is increasing in the West Bank and Palestine in general but declining in Gaza Strip. Inequality in Palestine affects more than half of the population, as the bottom 40 percent of the population consumed less than a quarter of total consumption in 2017 at the last year of survey.¹⁵⁰ Starting in 2022, the minimum wage will be raised from NIS 1,450 to 1,880 (approximately USD 455 to 590) based on an agreement between employers and workers' organizations facilitated by the Ministry of Labor. This initiative aims at a more equitable distribution of income; a measure that would help mitigate extreme poverty.¹⁵¹

Persons with disabilities (PWDs) are among the groups prioritized for reducing inequalities under SDG 10. In the OPT, disability plays a role in defining different manifestations of inequality. Based on the last census, unemployment amongst PWDs in the OPT is particularly high—reaching 37 percent in 2017. Moreover, women and children with disabilities often lack access to disability-friendly and inclusive services, such as for health services as well as justice and security services.¹⁵² In addition, the limited availability and use of disability-disaggregated data creates an extra barrier towards ensuring disability inclusion and eradicating disability-based inequalities. Nevertheless, the Ministry of Education adopted an Inclusive Education Policy and took steps to integrate PWDs in formal education, including through establishing resource rooms, teacher training, and community outreach activities. The Ministry of Public Works upgraded public facilities for accessibility for PWDs and renovated homes for accessibility in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Development. The

¹⁴⁹ State of Palestine. 2018. Palestinian Voluntary National Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

¹⁵⁰ UNCT and PMO. 2020. Atlas of Sustainable Development.

¹⁵¹ State of Palestine. 2020. Palestinian National Voluntary Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in 2020: Summary Report.

¹⁵² UN Women. 2020. "Gender Alert Analysis."

government continues to enforce its standing policy of a 5 percent quota of civil service posts for PWDs.

Women and girls with most types of disability experience different levels of vulnerability and marginalization due to a range of complex factors related to the composition of society, the prevailing culture, the structure of service delivery and discrimination on the basis of disability, violence, and gender. Significant obstacles and challenges remain in place, primarily in the form of the weak protection system for women and girls with disabilities; the absence of laws, legislation and public policy that would ensure their access to justice; limited service delivery to survivors of violence; failure to understand and respond to the special needs of women with disabilities survivors of violence; in addition to the fact that this vulnerable group is usually not integrated at the level of national and sectoral plans and overall policy directions in Palestine. While protection mechanisms are weak in the Palestinian territory in general, Gaza Strip faces more significant challenges related to women and girls survivors of violence. These include the higher disability rate due to the ongoing siege, the recurrent wars on Gaza and the deteriorating political and economic conditions, which in turn increase the risk of violence for women and girls with disabilities in this region.

In terms of legislations pertaining to SDG 10, a draft law for Persons with Disabilities has been developed, as well as a draft law on Protecting Families from Violence; both of which are ready for review and endorsement. Moreover, a legal framework for juvenile protection has been developed and is pending cabinet endorsement as well.

SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities

On Goal 11, Palestine has reported on various strategies, plans, and programs put in place in response to pressure from rapid population growth and urbanization on public services, infrastructure, and the environment. In this regard, key challenges included housing shortages, shrinking public space, rising property prices, the proliferation of informal settlements, demolitions and evictions, increased vulnerability to disasters, waste management, water drainage issues, congestion, and air pollution. Many of these issues are threats to public health, impacting SDG 3. Broadly speaking, these challenges are steeper in East Jerusalem, Area C, and the Gaza Strip. The government has highlighted the need to strengthen data and monitoring and referred to their lack of capacity in integrated urban planning mainly due to the geo-political situation on the ground. Alignment and attainment of Goal 11 targets with national priorities and interventions varies considerably.¹⁵³

Israel controls approvals for construction permits for the largest geographic areas of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem; demolitions and seizures of Palestinian-owned structures continue across these areas. Citing the absence of Israeli-issued building permits, which are almost impossible for Palestinians to obtain, Israeli authorities regularly demolish, seize, or force people to demolish structures and shelters, resulting in the displacement of women, men, girls, and boys.

Land settlement and registration pre-1967 by the Jordanian government covered only 34 percent of the West Bank, and the PA's Land and Water Settlement Commission (LWSC) has increased the coverage to 56 percent since its establishment in 2016, by completing the settlement of 1,316,085 dunums, 50 percent of which are located in Area C—and comprising more than 35 percent of the area slated for land settlement by LWSC in the West Bank. Nevertheless, the legal procedures associated

¹⁵³ Ministry of Local Government and UN-Habitat (2021). Status Report on the Achievement of Goal 11 in Palestine "Sustainable cities and Communities". <https://unhabitat.org/status-report-on-the-achievement-of-goal-11-in-palestine-sustainable-cities-and-communities>

with the land registration process are slow, noting that according to official records, since 2016, in addition to the 1,914,193.39 dunums settled before 1967 by the Jordanian government,¹⁵⁴ only 700,000 dunums of land in the West Bank have official deeds—land registration certificates, which increases land tenure insecurity conditions, recalling that land registration is hindered by Israeli Military Order No. 291 of 1968, which suspended land registration in the West Bank.

Despite accelerating population growth and stagnant economic growth, the housing sector remains a significant sector in Palestine due to its political and national significance. While there are no slums in the OPT, slum-like conditions do exist in several Palestinian neighborhoods, and informal housing exists, especially in the 27 refugee camps containing around 400,000 refugees across the OPT.¹⁵⁵ The main challenges facing the housing sector are the issues of unsuitable, unaffordable, and overcrowded housing. Currently, the Gaza Strip is facing a chronic shortage of 19,020 housing units, excluding the replenishment of the damaged housing units because of conflict. In the West Bank, the estimated needs are 27,168 units. The housing sector in East Jerusalem is currently in need of 15,600 housing units. Such scarcity of housing units, including affordable housing, is causing thousands of Palestinians to leave the city to live in the suburbs, outside the Separation Barrier.

Out of Palestine's overall housing stock, 3.2 percent are unsuitable, and 6.2 percent are overcrowded.¹⁵⁶ Though the OPT has a relatively low percentage of unsuitable housing units, the housing sector has not been well integrated into urban policies. Housing adequacy in Palestine has been also severely affected by the Israeli occupation including settlement expansion and housing demolition. The Housing Law is currently under development and there are proposals underway for several housing projects.

Transport modes in the OPT are limited to traditional transit modes, including personal vehicles, taxis, and small passenger minivans. These are negatively affecting the local Palestinian communities in terms of environmental degradation, public health deterioration, and pressure on land. Analysis of the distribution of the built-up area of the West Bank along the main public routes, shows that only 41 percent of the built-up area are within 500 meters, which entails convenient access to public transportation.

Public transportation is among the priority areas for the Palestinian government. In 2020, 77.1 percent of population had access to public transportation.¹⁵⁷ The aggregate data likely masks inequities in access to and use of public transport. For example, many men, women, girls, and boys with disabilities do not use public transport as it is not properly adapted for their needs. This includes transportation to school for disabled girls and boys, further hindering their access to education. Recent, small-scale studies have indicated that cultural and social pressures and the sense of exclusion and fear, shaped by gender norms, continue to pose significant limitations to public transport use by Palestinian women. However, there has not been a detailed analysis of the links between gender and transport in the OPT since a 2011 World Bank study in the West Bank underscoring the need for fresh research.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁴ Land registration certificates are issued by the Palestinian Land Authority for the land settled pre-1967 by the Jordanian government, but number of dunums registered out of the 1,914,193.39 dunums settled is not available.

¹⁵⁵ State of Palestine. 2020. Palestinian National Voluntary Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in 2020: Summary Report.

¹⁵⁶ Ministry of Local Government and UN-Habitat (2021). Status Report on the Achievement of Goal 11 in Palestine "Sustainable cities and Communities".

¹⁵⁷ State of Palestine. 2020. Palestinian National Voluntary Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in 2020: Summary Report.

¹⁵⁸ World Bank. 2011. Gender and Transport in the Middle East and North Africa Region: Case Studies from the West Bank and Yemen.

The Cabinet took decisions to develop the public transportation system further, and the government established a unified public transportation company in Jenin as a pilot project. The government is also revising travel routes and timetables to improve access to public transport in remote and under-served communities. Ensuring a clearer understanding of the transport needs and experiences of different groups of men, women, girls, and boys in the OPT will be important to ensure these types of policies and programs are gender-responsive and disability inclusive.

A national spatial plan is being developed for the entire OPT, and spatial plans have been developed for all governorates in the West Bank. Furthermore, National Urban Policy (NUP) is under development which aims to adopt the vision, objectives, and principles for urban development, as well as the commitment of the government to implement the NUP in Palestine over the coming decade, recalling that the future of Palestine is undeniably urban, where more than 77 percent of the population are living in urban areas.

In 2011, Palestine ratified the UNESCO 1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage and in 2018 adopted a comprehensive National Law for the protection of tangible cultural heritage. With the support of several partners and UN Agencies such as UNESCO, Palestine has completed the rehabilitation and maintenance of a number of historical places and cultural heritage sites, and inscribed three of them on the World Heritage List in an effort to protect its heritage and foster identity of communities living there.

Sustainable Development Goals: Planet

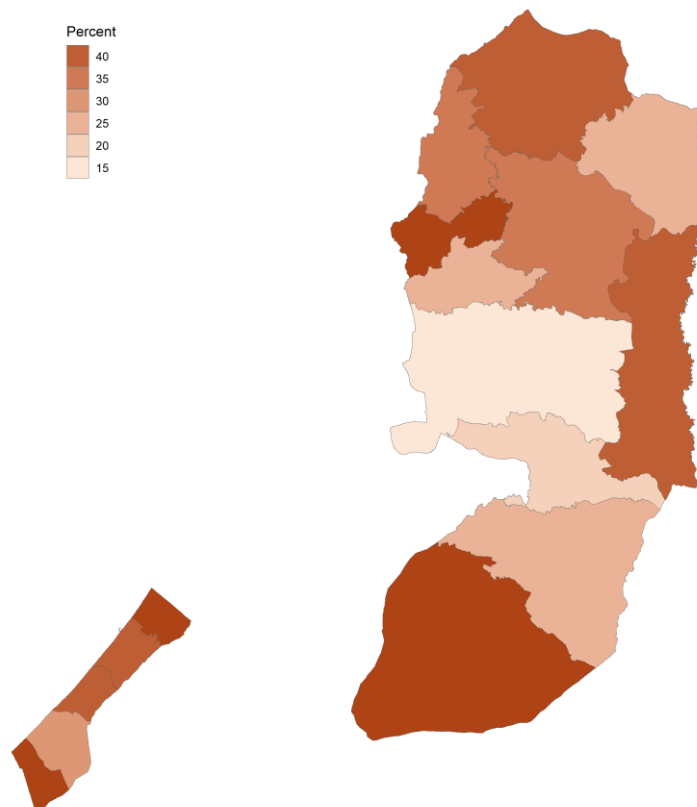
SDG 6: Clean water and sanitation

The OPT faces political and economic barriers to access water resources, which have enormously impacted various aspects of life including health and the economy.

Israel diverts water to the West Bank settlements, which can generate water shortages in the West Bank, notably in Jericho. There are also significant challenges with Palestinian water governance, including maintenance and operational capacities and sustainability, including low fee collection rates

Figure 13: Spatial patterns in access to clean drinking water

Percentage of household population with *E. coli* in household drinking water, by governorate



Data source: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2019/2020.

and the high cost of electricity. The average daily water consumption of Palestinians connected to a water network is 81.9 liters per capita per day (L/C/D), which is less than the optimal daily allowance of 100 or more L/C/D recommended by the World Health Organization, and about one-third of the water daily consumption rate in Israel.¹⁵⁹ Access to improved water sources is high in Palestine, with 99.8 percent of households having access to water piped into dwelling, a protected dug well, a protected spring, rainwater sources, bottled water, and public taps. The rates are above 99 percent in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip.¹⁶⁰

Water quality is a major concern, especially in Gaza. As for safely managed water resources,¹⁶¹ only 39.5 percent of households have access to safely managed water. This rate is 66.2 percent of households in the West Bank and only 4 percent of households in the Gaza Strip.¹⁶² In Gaza almost 25 percent of child morbidity cases are caused by water-borne diseases.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁹ Howard, et al. 2020. "Domestic water quantity, service level and health." World Health Organization; see also, UNCT and PMO. 2020. Atlas of Sustainable Development.

¹⁶⁰ MICS 2019/20.

¹⁶¹ Safely managed sources are defined as improved sources, used in the dwelling, available when needed and free from pollution (free of E-Coli bacteria) (SDG 6.1.1).

¹⁶² MICS 2019/20.

¹⁶³ OCHA. 2020. Humanitarian Needs Overview 2021. p. 38.

significant gender differentiated impact. Access to water for agricultural use also has significant implications for women working in agriculture (see previous section on SDG 2). Ensuring that women have equal access to water resources and are participating in the formulation of water policies and strategies is particularly important in the OPT, where water is scarce and contended between communities.

More positively, the proportion of the population using improved sanitation facilities is 98.8 percent, while the percentage of safely managed sanitation services is 67 percent.¹⁶⁴ The Palestinian Water Authority championed several initiatives to strengthen the governance of the water and sanitation sector, while ensuring the active participation in the process of identifying and prioritizing sector development needs.

Water and sanitation-related development assistance was around USD 114.3 million in 2019.¹⁶⁵ A total of 56 infrastructure projects in the water and sanitation sector were underway or completed in 2020, with a total value of USD 507 million. These projects were aimed at enhancing sanitation infrastructure, services, and the relevant institutional framework, including construction, development and rehabilitation of water resources and water infrastructures across the West Bank and Gaza, including water wells, water reservoirs, water networks, and carrier lines. Other projects included the completion and operation of two large-scale wastewater treatment plants in the Gaza Strip, the development and rehabilitation of wastewater infrastructure and associated networks, and rehabilitating water networks and rainwater drainage infrastructure in several communities.

The government has been undertaking infrastructure development works to increase the capacity of the sea water desalination plants in Deir Al-Balah, as well as the expansion of the Southern Gaza Desalination Plant in Khan Younis and Rafah in the Gaza Strip. In parallel, it has worked on developing national regulations for the conservation and protection of water resources. Unfortunately, there is no available data to assess change in water-use efficiency or in the extent of water-related ecosystems over time.

SDG 12: Responsible production and consumption

In 2017, the government launched a National Action Plan for Sustainable Production and Consumption to promote sustainability in the food and agriculture, construction, manufacturing, and tourism sectors, with water, energy, and environment and climate change as cross-cutting themes. The Action Plan has been integrated into the NPA and the NDP, and activities associated with it are being implemented in all productive and infrastructure sectors.¹⁶⁶

The OPT has a low ecological footprint compared to the region, estimated at 0.5 (gha) in 2013, the most recent data available. Nevertheless, it has a biocapacity deficit of -0.4 (gha), mainly due to the lack of access to natural resources, coupled with the rapid increase in material consumption due to an increase in population and urbanization.

Solid-waste management is a crucial development issue. Large amounts of hazardous waste produced in Israel, including sewage sludge, infectious medical waste, used oils, solvent, metal, and batteries are transferred to the West Bank in order to evade the high cost and stringent regulations of waste

¹⁶⁴ Data from UNICEF-WHO Joint Monitoring Programme, 2021, and MICS 2019/20. SDG 6 defines safely managed sanitation as a private improved facility where fecal wastes are safely disposed on site or transported and treated off-site; plus, a hand washing facility with soap and water.

¹⁶⁵ State of Palestine. 2021. Palestinian National Voluntary Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in 2020: Summary Report.

¹⁶⁶ UNCT and PMO. 2020. Atlas of Sustainable Development.

disposal in Israel.¹⁶⁷ Each year, Israel transfers thousands of tons of electronic waste for processing in the West Bank, giving rise to an increase in the informal electronic waste sector and other unregulated industries and negatively affecting human health, especially children, infants, and pregnant women who are more susceptible to long-term harm from exposure. While official data on transboundary waste movements of all types, including hazardous, solid waste and e-waste are not available for the OPT, there is mounting evidence of the harm to children, adolescents, and expectant mothers whose health is jeopardized by the processing of electronic waste.¹⁶⁸ Electronic waste burdens women unfairly and disproportionately, affecting their mortality/morbidity and fertility, as well as the development of their children. Potential adverse health effects include negative birth outcomes, such as stillbirth and premature births, as well as low birth weight and length. Exposure to lead from e-waste recycling activities has been associated with significantly reduced neonatal behavioral neurological assessment scores and reduced cognitive and language scores. Other adverse child health impacts linked to e-waste include changes in lung function, respiratory and respiratory effects, DNA damage, and impaired thyroid function.

Solid-waste management faces numerous challenges including the lack of adequate comprehensive legislation that encourages and enforces recycling and reuse, the lack of public awareness, the lack of an efficient data collection and management system, lack of equipment and modern infrastructure, the need for innovative solutions in waste separation and treatment, as well as the restrictions imposed by the Israeli occupation on the access to land and resources.¹⁶⁹

There are new medical waste systems that have been established recently in Gaza, in collaboration with the Joint Service Councils: one servicing Gaza and North and the second servicing the Middle and South. The two systems effectively contributed to the prevention of COVID-19 spread by treated contaminated waste (e.g., PPE from quarantine centers and COVID-19 hospitals). Feasibilities studies have been conducted for solid waste management, and institutional strengthening measures implemented in Gaza.

Regulatory oversight and monitoring of environmental risks and assessments of environmental risks are key routine activities that the Environmental Quality Authority and the Palestinian Water Authority (PWA) undertakes, and these activities include inspection of emission levels in industrial enterprises, testing of water quality extracted from artesian wells and various other water resources, and examining environmental risks and ensuring that environmental impact management plans are in place as prerequisite for licensure and registration of industrial and commercial enterprises.

Monitoring and managing hazardous waste is complicated by limited financial resources and a lack of control over territory and crossings. Only two of the seven landfills in Palestine are equipped to receive hazardous waste.¹⁷⁰ A National Plan for the Management of Medical Waste is currently under development, while a guidance manual on handling and management of dangerous waste in line with commitments under the Basel Convention has been developed. Currently, the Environmental Education Strategy 2020-2030 is under review.

¹⁶⁷ UNCTAD (2019). Report on UNCTAD assistance to the Palestinian people: Developments in the economy of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. TD/B/EX (68)/4. Geneva. 22 July 2019.

¹⁶⁸ UNEP (2020). State of Environment and Outlook Report for the Occupied Palestinian Territory 2020. Nairobi.

¹⁶⁹ UNCT and PMO. 2020. Atlas of Sustainable Development.

¹⁷⁰ UNCT and PMO. 2020. Atlas of Sustainable Development.

Palestine has joined five multilateral environmental agreements on hazardous waste and other chemicals, committing to safeguarding the environment and health. Compliance rates vary between the agreements to which Palestine is signatory, with the highest being the Montreal protocol (100 percent compliance) and the Basel Convention, which focus on hazardous waste and material depletion of the ozone layer, respectively, and the lowest being the Rotterdam (9 percent compliance) and Stockholm Conventions, which focus on hazardous chemicals and pesticides in international trade and on organic pollutants.

Public awareness campaigns and professional training activities were delivered to promote environmental awareness, waste reduction, recycling and reuse, and responsible consumption. Yet, there is no available data to assess the national recycling rate in Palestine. Neither has data been generated to assess food loss, food waste, or food waste per capita.

Issues related to food production and consumption are covered in the section on SDG 3, issues related to energy production and consumption are covered in the section on SDG 7, and issues related to industry are covered in the section on SDG 9.

SDG 13: Climate action

The OPT lies within the Mediterranean climatic zone that is characterized as a hot, arid, and water-scarce region experiencing an increase in temperatures over the past fifty years. It is one of the countries most vulnerable to climate change despite its negligible contribution to global emissions. Palestine is facing substantial environmental challenges due to its delicate environmental resources and its limited financial assets. These challenges are aggravated by many factors such as the scarcity of available water, deterioration of the water resources, land, and soil contamination, as well as desertification and unsustainable management of land, and air pollution. The inability to access, manage the natural resources sustainably and to enforce laws and instructions are making the threats of climate change more aggravated especially with the high population rate, poverty level, and food insecurity.

Climate projections indicate that by mid-century the temperature will increase by between 1.2°C and 2.6°C. The PA is committed to ensuring that its emissions pathway is in line with the objective of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and Paris Agreement to stabilize greenhouse gas emissions at a level that limits temperature increase to less than 2°C relative to pre-industrial levels. In 2017, the PA committed to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 12.8 percent by 2040 to the “business-as-usual” levels under a scenario where the Israeli occupation continues, and by 24.4 percent by 2040 under a scenario where the Israeli occupation ends (an independence scenario). The above-mentioned targets were revised in March 2021 were the emission reduction scenarios increased to 17.5 percent and 26.6 percent, respectively.

Palestine’s domestic priority is climate adaptation rather than mitigation. It is highly vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change but responsible for less than 0.01 percent of global emissions. Palestine’s emissions were 0.96 tons of CO₂ per capita in 2016 and 0.93 tons of CO₂ per capita in 2018, far less than the global average of 4.79 tons of CO₂ emissions per capita in 2016.¹⁷¹ The State of Palestine’s key climate goal is to reduce its climate vulnerabilities, primarily through increasing adaptive capacities, and, thereby, enhance the climate resilience of the national development process and local communities. The State of Palestine also supports the over-arching goal of Action for Climate

¹⁷¹ PCBS. 2020. Per Capita Emissions of CO₂ in Palestine and Selected Countries.

Empowerment (ACE) to empower all members of society to engage in climate action and, in 2021, committed to ensuring all climate action will be gender responsive and will be based on equity, ensuring equitable protection of disadvantaged groups in society.

In Palestine, women face a multitude of additional risks due to discriminatory social norms and practices that prevent them from participating fully in society and the economy. This hampers women's adaptive capacity and puts women and girls in the OPT at a high risk of suffering loss and damage from climate change. Although there is limited quantitative data on the gendered impacts of climate change in Palestine, there is some qualitative evidence that when disasters, such as floods, occur women are disproportionately affected¹⁷² The collection and analysis of data on the gendered impacts of climate change is a gap that needs addressing.

Palestine is prone to natural disasters and hazards including earthquakes, floods, droughts, and landslides, and its level of vulnerability, which would amplify the consequences of any disaster, is classified as high to very high.¹⁷³ The number of directly affected persons attributed to disasters per 100,000 was 42 in 2017.¹⁷⁴ In the OPT, the water shortages, environmental degradation, draught and desertification, along with landslides, and land and natural resources' depletion, which all go hand in hand with the political conflict, are considered to be the most significant anthropogenic disasters currently affecting the Palestinian people. In addition, natural disasters are considered a potential threat. Earthquakes in the region are considered a major hazard with low probability but high adverse impacts. Moreover, the rapid population growth rates and the way the cities are developing in the OPT is unsustainable; more than 50 percent of the Palestinian population live in what is defined as "hazard-prone" areas, including major urban centers. These areas are particularly vulnerable, because of their dependence on complex infrastructures.

Palestine joined Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction in 2015 and established the National Disaster Risk Management Center in 2017, under the Office of the Prime Minister. Since 2015, Palestine has been implementing a national disaster risk reduction strategy in line with the Sendai Framework. Action plans to strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters have been developed for the health, water, solid waste, public transportation, and gender sectors. Palestine's score of adoption and implementation of national DRR strategies in line with the Sendai Framework is 0.4 and the reported proportion of local authorities that have local disaster risk reduction strategies was 69 percent, according to 2018 reports.¹⁷⁵

SDG 14: Life below water and SDG 15: Life on land

Palestine suffers high pollution levels of wastewater discharged into the Mediterranean, but the level of wastewater pollution is highly dependent on the availability of electricity in Gaza and thus on political decisions mainly by Israel and the *de facto* authorities in Gaza. For example, when electricity rose from around 6 hours per day in Gaza in mid-2018 to 12 hours per day in late 2018 and 2019, the level of biochemical oxygen demand fell from 265 mg/liter to 148 mg/liter because wastewater treatment plants were able to run routinely. This level is still well above the international standard of 60 mg/liter of biochemical oxygen demand, increasing the risk of water-borne diseases and other

¹⁷² UN Women. 2020. Case study on 'The Impact of Flooding on Gender Roles in Substandard Housing in Gaza' in The Imperative of Mainstreaming Gender in Humanitarian Action in Palestine. <https://arabstates.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2021/02/the-imperative-of-mainstreaming-gender-in-humanitarian-action-in-palestine>

¹⁷³ UNCT and PMO. 2020. Atlas of Sustainable Development.

¹⁷⁴ UNCT and PMO. 2020. Atlas of Sustainable Development.

¹⁷⁵ UNCT and PMO. 2020. Atlas of Sustainable Development.

environmental hazards.¹⁷⁶ Inadequate sanitation infrastructure and electricity supply must be remedied to meet targets.

In relation to fishing, the political situation in Gaza undermines the potential of the fishing sector, including frequent changes in the permitted fishing limits by the Israeli government, in the context of conflict escalations. The fisheries sector in Gaza was a significant employer with more than 10,000 registered fishers in 2000. By 2019, this figure had dropped to 3,617, impairing the livelihoods of thousands of household members.¹⁷⁷

Several initiatives have been taking place under SDG 15 such as updating maps and finalizing boundaries of natural reserves in Palestine and developing a biodiversity conservation plan for Wadi Al-Makhrour in Battir, which is also a cultural landscape inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List.¹⁷⁸ A master plan for Wadi Gaza was developed in 2021. Soil erosion on the Gaza coast is critical and urgent.

The growth of litter and toxic substances in the oceans is not only damaging fragile maritime ecosystems but also affecting human health. Marine pollution poses serious health and environmental hazards, particularly during the summer when swimming in the sea is one of the few recreational activities available to women, men, girls, and boys in Gaza. Research shows that the greater the concentrations of fecal bacteria in seawater polluted by sewage, the greater the risk of gastrointestinal infections, as well as skin diseases and eye and ear infections, especially among girls and boys, the elderly, and people with weak immune systems. According to the World Health Organization, water-related diseases account for more than a quarter of all diseases and are the main cause of ill health for boys and girls in the Gaza Strip.¹⁷⁹ A lack of research and data on the impacts and implications of marine pollution on different groups of men, women, girls, and boys in Gaza currently hinders more detailed analysis—including gender analysis—and is a gap that needs to be addressed.

The proportion of forest area in Palestine is low, accounting for only 1.8 percent of total land area. During the past forty years, 77 percent of forest land destruction is attributed to Israeli settlements. The past decade witnessed increased protection of forest land in Palestine, which resulted in slow but steady growth in forests. The proportion of important sites for terrestrial and freshwater biodiversity that are covered by protected areas is only 4 percent, with a coverage of only 8.5 percent for mountain biodiversity, which is very low compared to the global average of 49 percent. One reason is that Palestinians do not have full access to the natural and cultural landscapes as the majority is under Israeli control.¹⁸⁰

A report on desertification in Palestine was developed, along with the sixth report on biodiversity in Palestine. The revision of the national biodiversity strategy was launched. Revenue generated and finance mobilized from biodiversity-relevant economic instruments stood at USD 54.05 million in 2018.¹⁸¹

Contamination from conflict-related explosive hazards is a threat to people and livelihoods in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In its initial Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention Article 7 transparency

¹⁷⁶ UNCT and PMO. 2020. Atlas of Sustainable Development.

¹⁷⁷ UNCT and PMO. 2020. Atlas of Sustainable Development.

¹⁷⁸ State of Palestine. 2020. Palestinian National Voluntary Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in 2020: Summary Report.

¹⁷⁹ OCHA. 2018. Seawater pollution raises concerns of waterborne diseases and environmental hazards in the Gaza Strip. 9 August 2018.

¹⁸⁰ UNCT and PMO. 2020. Atlas of Sustainable Development.

¹⁸¹ State of Palestine. 2020. Palestinian National Voluntary Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in 2020: Summary Report.

report, submitted in November 2018, Palestine reported 69 areas suspected to contain anti-personnel mines on the border with Jordan, covering a total area of 18.51km². All the mined areas were said to be under Israeli control. The PA liaises with the Israeli Government to agree and facilitate the clearance of minefields identified to be a risk to the population. Explosive remnants left from IDF exercises contaminate Firing Zones in Area C and impact particularly on the Bedouin community who often engage in unsafe coping mechanisms to mitigate the threat.¹⁸² The PA's ability to survey and clear remnants is limited by access and control in Area C. The PA is a signatory to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their destruction, and the Convention on Certain Weapons. In Gaza, ERW impact children, agricultural workers, and construction workers in particular. Sub-surface ERW contamination poses a risk and adds additional cost to reconstruction and redevelopment efforts. Unfortunately, there is no capacity to carry out a comprehensive survey of all ERW contamination in Gaza.

Sustainable Development Goal 16: Peace, justice, and strong institutions

Among the most important SDG16 targets for Palestine are those related to significantly reducing all forms of violence and related death rates; ending abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and all forms of violence against children (including forced child marriage); promoting the rule of law and ensuring equal access to justice for all; substantially reducing corruption and bribery; developing effective, accountable, and transparent institutions at all levels; ensuring responsive, inclusive, participatory, and representative decision-making at all levels; and ensuring the voice and activity of civil society and social activists and movements has the needed space and freedom. The peace and security, governance, and human rights context is discussed at length in chapter 2.

Armed conflict, low institutional capacity, weak accountability systems, and the Israeli occupation are major drivers of human rights violations in Palestine. The Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment (MSNA) conducted in 2021 found that nearly 1.8 million Palestinians, 64 percent in the Gaza Strip and 36 percent in the West Bank, experience or are at risk of experiencing conflict, violence, and displacement. Space for civil society in the OPT is increasingly restricted. Rights such as freedom of expression, association, and assembly are violated on a systemic basis by all duty-bearers, including Israel, the Palestinian Authority, and the de facto authorities in Gaza.¹⁸³

Palestinian political institutions face challenges in administrative capacity and popular legitimacy. Along with the lack of progress on the two-state solution and ending the occupation, the failure to hold national elections since 2006, restrictions on human rights, and lack of governance reforms are all behind the declining credibility of the Palestinian Authority and its leadership—domestically, regionally, and internationally—leading to reduced financing from donors and declining confidence of citizens in their government.¹⁸⁴ The absence of a functioning legislature has resulted in new legislation issued by decree often without transparency and national consultations. Several of the decree-laws appear to have extended the reach of the executive over the judiciary with serious concerns in relation to the separation of powers.

Palestinian authorities in the West Bank and Gaza have shown limited progress and commitment to investigate and prosecute the perpetrators of violations linked to incidents of possible excessive use

¹⁸² OCHA. 2022. Humanitarian Needs Overview.

¹⁸³ See, for example, A/HRC/49/83, paras 29-36.

¹⁸⁴ See, for example, PCPSR Opinion Poll 80, July 2021. Available at: <http://pcpsr.org/en/node/845>, and A/HRC/49/83, para. 33

of force or allegations of torture and ill-treatment by Palestinian security forces.¹⁸⁵ The position of the Palestinian Authority is that these incidents are not systematic and do not reflect government policy, and that the PA is making continuous efforts to prevent such incidents from happening again.

Palestinian institutions of self-government must continue to be reformed and strengthened, particularly with respect to the division of powers and checks and balances, the independence of the judiciary, the de-concentration of power in the executive, and reducing the over-empowerment of the security sector. Such reforms would address many of the concerns in the international community over alleged incidents arbitrary arrests, lack of fair trial guarantees, ill-treatment, and torture.

In the State of Palestine, women and girls experience multi-layered forms of discrimination and violence due to both external factors, such as the Israeli occupation, and internal factors such as socio-cultural traditions and harmful gender norms and practices. Rights violations occur in the private sphere, as well as in the public sphere, affecting marriage and divorce, child custody, reproductive health and domestic violence, access to education, and economic rights, including the right to decent work and to inherit and control land and other productive resources. Making the rule of law a reality for women poses challenges at every stage: from inadequate and gender-biased legal frameworks, to ineffective implementation of laws and constitutional guarantees; from lack of accountability/oversight systems to gender-blind budgets and infrastructures. The “justice chain,” the series of steps that a person must take to access the formal justice system, often breaks down for women. This is mainly due to lack of capacity within the justice and security sectors, discriminatory attitudes of service providers, and a lack of consideration of the barriers women face because of socio-political constraints (including prevailing social and gender norms), poverty and insufficient awareness. A high level of under-reporting and attrition impacts women’s criminal justice cases.

In terms of services provided by the international community, as of the third quarter of 2021, 20,404 adults and children of both sexes (14,774 females, and 5,630 males) from Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem benefited from legal aid services, in both the Palestinian and Israeli legal systems, including juveniles, women survivors of violence, and women in conflict with the law. In 2021, around 426 women from the West Bank, Gaza, and the Negev, including women in conflict with the law, women with disabilities (including elderly women), women users of drugs, and survivors of violence have received psychosocial support through UN programs. Separately, UN programs provided child protection and mental and psychosocial support services to more than 30,000 children, including over 14,000 girls.

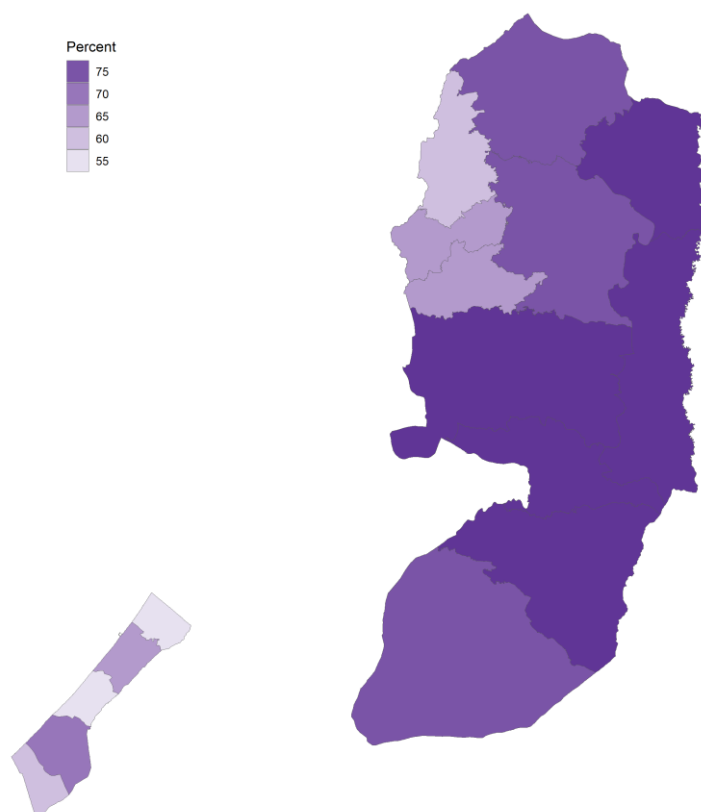
¹⁸⁵ See, for example, A/HRC/46/22, paras. 21-24; A/HRC/49/25, paras. 25-27.

Protective services were offered to over 900 child laborers and survivors and witnesses of domestic violence in 2020. Violence against children remains high. According to MICS 2019/20 data, 90.1 percent of children (under age 18) have experienced physical punishment or psychological aggression by caregivers.¹⁸⁶ Among 18 to 29-year-olds, 2.8 percent report experiencing sexual violence by the age of 18, though this figure is likely significantly underreported. Anecdotally, corporal punishment is relatively common in school and care settings. On the right to birth registration, the Palestinian Ministry of Interior has a system in place that ensures that all deliveries in hospitals and by midwives are officially reported. In 2019, 99.2 percent of children under 5 years of age were registered with a civil authority.¹⁸⁷

At the national level, the feeling of neighborhood safety is high in Palestine. In 2018, 92 percent of Palestinian adults reported feeling safe walking alone in their neighborhoods, an increase from 87 percent in 2016. Rates for women are lower and display geographic disparities. The proportion of survivors of violence who reported their victimization to competent authorities was 43 percent in 2016 (the most recent data), and police records indicate that 20 percent of reported incidents were in relation to physical assault and 59 percent were in relation to robbery and theft.¹⁸⁸

Figure 14: Spatial patterns of perceptions of safety among women

Percentage of women who feel safe walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark, by governorate



Data source: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2019/2020.

The perception of corruption remains high in Palestine, though few Palestinians report directly experiencing bribery when dealing with public officials. Experts believe that nepotism and cronyism constitute the most common manifestation of corruption in Palestine. Also, there is a high level of satisfaction with the last experience of public services across various sectors, according to 2018 data, where for the health, education, and administrative sectors 84 percent, 90 percent, and 94 percent of the population, respectively, reported being satisfied.¹⁸⁹

Measures to address crime included stepping up police efforts to combat trading of arms, money laundering, and counterfeiting operations, as well as strengthening of the Palestinian

¹⁸⁶State of Palestine. 2020. Palestinian National Voluntary Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in 2020: Summary Report.

¹⁸⁷ State of Palestine. 2020. Palestinian National Voluntary Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in 2020: Summary Report.

¹⁸⁸ UNCT and PMO. 2020. Atlas of Sustainable Development.

¹⁸⁹ UNCT and PMO. 2020. Atlas of Sustainable Development.

Monetary Authority capacity to monitor and trace financial transfers and identify money laundering risks. The Palestinian Anti-Corruption Commission launched its strategic plan in 2019 and stepped up its investigation and public awareness efforts. The number of complaints it received nearly doubled in 2020 compared to 2019, and it filed 155 files for public prosecution. Along the same lines, 114 monitoring reports on the conduct of public organizations were issued by the Audit and Administrative Control Bureau. On the legislative side, it has been proposed to revise the Civil Service Law so that the appointment and conduct of civil servants are done from an integrity and anti-corruption perspective. The policy of prioritizing appointment of people with disabilities continues to be in place, and 199 persons with disabilities were appointed in the civil service in 2020.¹⁹⁰

Sustainable Development Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals

The SDGs include ‘means of implementation’ as a goal (SDG 17) in recognition of the need to change policies and institutions if transformative change is to take place. Integral to strengthening the ‘means of implementation’ are commitments focusing on the mobilization of adequate resources, fair and equitable trade and technological progress for sustainable development and capacity building, delivered through partnerships based on accountability and solidarity, and adequate data to monitor implementation. In this respect, SDG 17 is key to the implementation of all the other goals in the OPT.

The government has sought to strengthen Palestine’s presence in international bodies, including to promote investment and development assistance. The Palestinian International Cooperation Agency (PICA) has participated in numerous bilateral and trilateral technical development assistance programs and has undertaken a mapping to identify resource centers that can offer development solutions and mobilize donor funding for budget support and implementation of priority programs and projects. Moreover, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) has invested in strengthening its organizational and institutional capacities to manage and disseminate statistics, and has launched several interactive portals, including one on SDGs.¹⁹¹ This includes the generation of sex-disaggregated data to serve policymaking, as well as implementation and reporting on international commitments including the SDGs, and women’s human rights treaties, conventions, and resolutions.

Improved generation and use of gender statistics can highlight data gaps across all SDGs, support progress on SDG Target 17.18 specifically, and address other SDG 17 targets where gender data gaps persist. As one example, limited research on the relationship between gender and macroeconomic, fiscal and trade policies in the OPT impedes analysis of how gender considerations can affect national efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda.

The Palestinian government actively seeks to establish partnerships, both locally and internationally, for diverse purposes. It has discussed and signed numerous cooperation and budget support agreements with bilateral and multilateral donors. The restructuring of the local aid coordination and aid management architecture, aimed at rendering development aid more effective, remains a work in progress. At the same time, more data are needed on the wide range of financial resources coming in and out of the OPT, the use of these resources to support sustainable development, and the impact of these flows on different groups of men, women, girls, and boys, particularly those furthest behind. Efforts are underway to improve and integrate medium-term planning and budgeting and strengthening accountability for budget administration and results.¹⁹² The Palestinian government has

¹⁹⁰ State of Palestine. 2020. Palestinian National Voluntary Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in 2020: Summary Report.

¹⁹¹ State of Palestine. 2020. Palestinian National Voluntary Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in 2020: Summary Report.

¹⁹² State of Palestine. 2020. Palestinian National Voluntary Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in 2020: Summary Report.

been active both at local and international levels to strengthen bilateral and trilateral cooperation, including South-South cooperation, on issues related to ICT.

The principal policy-level coordination mechanism for development assistance is led by the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC).¹⁹³ The AHLC is chaired by Norway and co-sponsored by the EU and the US, with the participation of the UN, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund. The AHLC seeks to promote dialogue between donors, the PA, and the Government of Israel. The AHLC format has been critical at mobilizing donor support since the start of the Oslo process.

¹⁹³ 2020 UN Country Results Report State of Palestine, 2021

6. Leaving no one behind: patterns of Palestinian vulnerability

In 2016, the Common Country Analysis for the Occupied Palestinian Territory assessed the landscape of Palestinian vulnerability. It argued that, while all Palestinians are vulnerable on account of the Israeli occupation, some appear to be structurally more vulnerable, and systematically at a greater disadvantage, than others. The 2016 CCA identified a set of 20 disadvantaged or vulnerable groups: adolescent girls; women exposed to gender-based violence; food-insecure households headed by women; children facing obstacles in accessing schools; children in the labor force; children subject to violence; out-of-school children; youth; the elderly; communities in Area C; Bedouins and herder communities living in Area C; Gaza residents without access to clean water or sanitation; Hebron H2 residents; persons living in the Seam Zone; persons with disabilities; individuals in need of urgent medical referrals; refugees living in abject poverty; refugees residing in camps; small-scale farmers, non-Bedouin herders, fisher folk; and the working poor.

These marginalized individuals and groups were found to be most impacted by one or more of the following five structural drivers of disadvantage and vulnerability in the Palestinian context: location, exposure to violence, economic factors, institutional and political factors, and socio-cultural norms including gender norms.

Regrettably, many of the patterns of Palestinian vulnerability and their drivers have not changed significantly since 2016. Virtually all Palestinians remain vulnerable to some degree. Palestinian vulnerability is multidimensional, intersectional, compounding, and driven by combinations of economic, social, cultural, security, geographic, legal, environmental, and institutional factors. Palestinians living in certain areas, such as Gaza, Area C, and Hebron, suffer greater and more multidimensional vulnerability, as do certain demographic groups, such as women and girls, the elderly, persons with disabilities, Bedouins, and other marginalized groups. The analysis in this chapter updates and refines the approach taken in the 2016 Common Country Analysis: it quantifies the multidimensionality and intersectionality of vulnerabilities across demographic groups and geographies, highlighting different drivers and characteristics of these vulnerabilities. By doing so, this chapter establishes a knowledge base for designing interventions and programs to reduce these vulnerabilities and build resilience.

To understand intersectionality in the context of Palestine, it is imperative to unpack it as a term and as an approach to addressing the vulnerabilities of the furthest left behind groups and those who are most at risk of marginalization and deprivation across multiple dimensions, such as health, education, and protection. Intersectionality can be a lens to see how the different aspects of status and identity interact, compound, and complicate vulnerability and marginalization for groups and individuals. Applying the intersectionality lens is essential to understand the depths of inequalities and the relationships among them for Palestinian individuals and households. The intersectional lens provides a more nuanced mapping of social vulnerability to overcome siloed categorization of vulnerable groups.

Using an intersectional lens means recognizing the drivers and historical contexts of certain vulnerabilities. In Palestine, the protracted occupation and recurrent crises and conflicts have created deeply rooted inequalities that have disadvantaged and excluded certain groups or individuals. These inequalities, such as poverty, sexism, geographical, or social exclusion intersect and deny people their rights and equal opportunities, and their impact extends across generations. These context specific and historical vulnerabilities combine and create intersecting forms of marginalization, discrimination,

and oppression, depending on the individual or certain group's context, as well as the existing power structures. Notably, they create multidimensional forms of vulnerability.

In protracted humanitarian and protection crises like the one faced by Palestine, humanitarian needs, development vulnerabilities, and conflict and insecurity are closely related, emphasizing the importance of working with an HDP nexus approach. For 2022, 2.1 million Palestinians are in need of some form of humanitarian assistance.¹⁹⁴ According to the Multisectoral Needs Assessment (MSNA) conducted in July 2021, 63 percent of Gaza residents (1.3 million) require some form of humanitarian assistance in 2022; the figure is 21 percent in the West Bank (0.75 million).¹⁹⁵

The following sections take an intersectional approach and highlight some of the most vulnerable geographies, demographic groups, and communities in Palestine. In many cases, vulnerabilities are multidimensional, with individuals and households facing multiple types of vulnerabilities at any given time. The analysis highlights that the groups discussed below should not be considered homogenous: social, health, cultural, economic, and other economic factors put some individuals and households within each group at higher risk of vulnerability. For instance, elderly women, particularly those with disability, are at higher risk of violence, neglect, and discrimination compared to others.

Measuring multidimensional vulnerability in the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Household needs and vulnerabilities across the OPT are widespread, overlapping, and often interconnected. By leveraging the nationwide data collected as part of the Multisectoral Needs Assessment (MSNA) in July 2021, REACH, UNDP, and the RCO, in consultation with the UNCT, developed a framework by which drivers of vulnerability can be identified according to multiple dimensions and across population groups, geographies, and household circumstances. A Vulnerability Assessment Framework was constructed for the purpose of examining multidimensional vulnerability experienced by Palestinian households.

From the hundreds of indicators available in the MSNA dataset,¹⁹⁶ 20 indicators were selected as best measuring aspects of vulnerability in OPT. These 20 indicators were then aggregated into eight household-level dimensions of vulnerability: education, employment, food security, health, protection, monetary resources, shelter and housing, and water and sanitation. The 20 indicators are listed with some descriptive statistics in Annex 4. Other relevant aspects of vulnerability discussed elsewhere in this Common Country Analysis, such as macrofiscal or climate vulnerability, could not be directly measured by a household level survey; the multidimensional analysis in this subsection therefore does not address these important issues. Nonetheless, even with the inevitable limitations of the MSNA data, the analysis below gives some startling and policy-relevant results.

Household vulnerability in OPT is not only widespread, but complex and multidimensional, with most households in both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank reporting vulnerability in more than one dimension.¹⁹⁷ Virtually all Palestinian households are vulnerable in some way: 95 percent of households are vulnerable in at least one dimension (98 percent of Gaza Strip households; 93 percent of West Bank households) and 81 percent of households reported vulnerability across at least two different dimensions (91 percent of households in the Gaza Strip; 75 percent of households in the

¹⁹⁴ OCHA. 2022. Humanitarian Response Plan.

¹⁹⁵ OCHA. 2022. Humanitarian Needs Overview.

¹⁹⁶ REACH. 2021. Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment for the OPT. Available at: <https://www.ochaopt.org/data/2021/msna>

¹⁹⁷ REACH, UNDP, and RCO. 2022. Vulnerability Assessment Framework in the OPT. Available at: <https://reach-info.org/opt/msna/vulnerabilities/>

West Bank). Although household vulnerability was higher in the Gaza Strip for all dimensions, levels of vulnerability reported in the West Bank were nevertheless high and variation can be observed. This vulnerability assessment therefore lends strong, quantitative support to the conclusion in the 2016 CCA that “every Palestinian living in the Occupied Palestinian Territory is vulnerable to some degree.”¹⁹⁸

At the national level, the most common vulnerabilities are employment vulnerability (50 percent of households) and health vulnerability (54 percent). Conversely, the least commonly reported vulnerabilities relate to food security and water, sanitation, and hygiene, with 28 percent of households considered vulnerable on those two dimensions. Table 4 shows the breakdown of reported vulnerability by dimension and location. Note that the level of vulnerability for each dimension is driven by the selection of the two to four indicators used to construct that particular dimension (see Annex 4); nonetheless, we believe that these indicators make sense substantively, align with other data sources such as the labor force survey and MICS survey, and reveal policy-relevant insights.

Table 4: Percent of households vulnerable, by dimension and location, 2021

	All OPT HHs	Gaza Strip HHs	West Bank HHs
Education Vulnerability	41%	47%	38%
Employment Vulnerability	50%	65%	40%
Food Security Vulnerability	28%	51%	14%
Health Vulnerability	54%	58%	51%
Monetary Resource Vulnerability	44%	57%	36%
Protection Vulnerability	36%	46%	30%
Shelter and Housing Vulnerability	35%	54%	24%
WASH Vulnerability	28%	30%	28%
Vulnerable on at least one dimension	95%	98%	93%

Source: MSNA dataset, calculations by RCO. West Bank figures include East Jerusalem.

Multidimensional vulnerabilities by geography

With these indicators, we can look at geographic variation and demographic variation in vulnerabilities and in combinations of vulnerabilities. For example, Table 4 shows that households in the Gaza Strip are more vulnerable on all eight dimensions compared to households in the West Bank. The starkest geographic divergences are seen in vulnerabilities in food security (Gaza Strip 51 percent vs. West Bank 14 percent), monetary resources (57 percent vs. 36 percent), and shelter and housing (54 percent vs. 24 percent). The other five dimensions show less divergences between the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Table 5 further disaggregates by geography and shows the prevalence of vulnerability in different geographic areas in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. More than 93 percent of households across all geographic areas were vulnerable on at least one dimension, except for East Jerusalem—where 70 percent of households were vulnerable. When looking at vulnerability on (any) two dimensions, households in each governorate in the Gaza Strip have more multidimensional vulnerability when compared to different geographic areas in the West Bank.

¹⁹⁸ UNCT. 2016. Common Country Analysis.

Table 5: Percent of households experiencing vulnerability, by location, 2021

	Not vulnerable	Vulnerable on at least one dimension	Vulnerable on at least two dimensions
West Bank (all)	7%	93%	75%
Area A & B	5%	95%	78%
Area C	6%	94%	73%
East Jerusalem	30%	70%	49%
H2	7%	93%	74%
Gaza Strip (all)	2%	98%	91%
Deir al-Balah	1%	99%	94%
Gaza	2%	98%	88%
Khan Yunis	1%	99%	94%
North Gaza	2%	98%	94%
Rafah	1%	99%	93%

Source: MSNA dataset, calculations by REACH.

How do different dimensions of vulnerability overlap? Tables 6 and 7 show the overlap of vulnerability in two dimensions, for both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. In the Gaza Strip (Table 6), the most commonly observed two-dimensional combination of vulnerabilities was 1) employment vulnerability and health vulnerability (46% of households in Gaza) and 2) employment vulnerability and monetary resource vulnerability (46% of households in Gaza). Overall, employment vulnerability had a higher degree of overlap with the other seven dimensions than any other combination in Table 6, which strongly suggests that the jobs and livelihoods crisis in Gaza is highly associated with the other forms of vulnerability measured in this framework.

Table 6: Two-dimensional vulnerability in the Gaza Strip

Dimensions	Education	Employment	Food Security	Health	Monetary	Protection	Shelter and Housing	WASH
Education	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Employment	35%	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Food Security	26%	44%	..	..	..	..	..	..
Health	25%	46%	32%	..	..	..	..	..
Monetary	27%	46%	33%	33%	..	..	..	..
Protection	24%	37%	30%	28%	28%	..	..	..
Shelter and Housing	28%	43%	34%	34%	33%	28%	..	..
WASH	16%	24%	17%	19%	18%	15%	18%	..

In the West Bank, the co-occurrences of vulnerabilities are much lower than in the Gaza Strip. The most common two-dimensional combination was health vulnerability and employment vulnerability at 28 percent of all households.

Table 7: Two-dimensional vulnerability in the West Bank

Dimensions	Education	Employment	Food Security	Health	Monetary	Protection	Shelter and Housing	WASH
Education	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Employment	16%	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Food Security	8%	11%	..	..	..	..	..	..
Health	19%	28%	10%	..	..	..	..	..
Monetary	14%	19%	10%	18%	..	..	..	..
Protection	15%	16%	8%	19%	12%	..	..	..
Shelter and Housing	12%	14%	6%	14%	12%	8%	..	..
WASH	15%	13%	7%	15%	12%	10%	9%	..

Multidimensional vulnerabilities by demographic group and status

Beyond geography, certain population groups had higher and more multidimensional vulnerabilities. Tables 8, 9, and 10 summarize vulnerability by refugee status, presence of disability in the household, and sex of the head of household.

Table 8: Percent of households vulnerable, by dimension and refugee status, 2021

	Refugee households	Non-refugee households
Education Vulnerability	45%	38%
Employment Vulnerability	56%	44%
Food Security Vulnerability	39%	20%
Health Vulnerability	60%	48%
Monetary Resource Vulnerability	49%	39%
Protection Vulnerability	43%	30%
Shelter and Housing Vulnerability	51%	27%
WASH Vulnerability	31%	26%
Vulnerable on at least one dimension	98%	92%
Vulnerable on two or more dimensions	89%	75%

Source: MSNA dataset, calculations by RCO and REACH.

Notably, non-refugee households were less vulnerable compared to refugee households across all dimensions. Overall levels of vulnerability were high for both non-refugee households (92 percent of households considered vulnerable in at least one dimension) and refugee households (98 percent of refugee households considered vulnerable in at least one dimension).

Table 9 demonstrates that disability is a significant driver of vulnerability. Households with a member with a disability were more likely to experience multidimensional vulnerability (96 percent) compared to households with no member of the household with a disability (79 percent). Except for education vulnerability, households with a member living with a disability were dramatically more likely to be

vulnerable across all dimensions compared to households without a disability present. Particularly notably vulnerability is observed in employment and health, both of which were far higher in absolute terms and in comparison to households without a disability.

Table 9: Percent of households (HH) vulnerable, by dimension and disability status, 2021

	HH with any member living with disability	HH with no member living with disability
Education Vulnerability	39%	42%
Employment Vulnerability	69%	43%
Food Security Vulnerability	39%	24%
Health Vulnerability	78%	45%
Monetary Resource Vulnerability	50%	42%
Protection Vulnerability	51%	31%
Shelter and Housing Vulnerability	43%	32%
WASH Vulnerability	35%	26%
Vulnerable on at least one dimension	99%	94%
Vulnerable on two or more dimensions	96%	79%

Source: MSNA dataset, calculations by REACH.

Gender and multidimensional vulnerability

The MSNA survey was specifically designed with gender dimensions in mind. First, numerous questions were fielded that specifically addressed the needs and vulnerabilities of women and girls, for example, related to protection and health. Second, more than 50 percent of the survey respondents were women. Third, the results can be disaggregated by the sex of the head of household. Using this latter feature, we can use the MSNA survey to assess some of the gender dimensions of vulnerability. The proportion of female-headed households considered to be vulnerable in at least one dimension (97 percent) and in multiple dimensions (82 percent) was slightly higher than male-headed households (94 percent and 80 percent, respectively).

Table 10: Percent of households vulnerable, by dimension and gender of head of household, 2021

	Female-headed household	Male-headed household
Education Vulnerability	24%	45%
Employment Vulnerability	67%	46%
Food Security Vulnerability	25%	28%
Health Vulnerability	68%	51%
Monetary Resource Vulnerability	35%	46%
Protection Vulnerability	37%	36%
Shelter and Housing Vulnerability	32%	35%
WASH Vulnerability	23%	29%
Vulnerable on at least one dimension	97%	94%
Vulnerable on at least two dimensions	82%	80%

Source: MSNA dataset. Calculations by REACH.

Using this vulnerability framework, the patterns between male-headed and female-headed households were somewhat less clear, reported in Table 10. On food security, protection, shelter, and

WASH vulnerability, differences between the two types of households were relatively small and within the margin of error. Male-headed households were significantly more vulnerable on education and monetary resources dimensions. Female-headed households were significantly more vulnerable on health and employment dimensions. While this finding requires further study that is beyond the scope of this CCA, this pattern may be explained by differential access to support networks and basic services—health, education, food, and cash support—experienced by female- and male-headed households. The UNCT will take this research forward in the next round of the MSNA in 2022.¹⁹⁹

The Annex provides further analysis of household vulnerability by the presence of elderly members and the presence of children, and further disaggregates by West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Overall, the results of the Vulnerability Framework Analysis paint a complex picture of intersecting and overlapping vulnerabilities, compounded by numerous factors and likely further exacerbated by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the hostilities which escalated in May 2021. Levels of vulnerability observed are relatively high across all vulnerability dimensions, locations, and population groups. Nevertheless, when considering vulnerability in the OPT context, it is important to keep in mind that certain population groups appear to be particularly vulnerable—notably households living in Gaza, refugee households, households with at least one member of their household having a disability, elderly member, or child.

Keeping in mind this quantitative information about the multidimensional vulnerability of Palestinians, the analysis now turns to more qualitative description of the vulnerable geographies, demographic groups, and communities, highlighting the specific and intersectional drivers of vulnerabilities.

Geographic, physical, and environmental vulnerabilities

Physical barriers like the West Bank barrier, obstacles inside the West Bank, closed and restricted areas in the West Bank, the fencing of Gaza and the nearby Access Restricted Areas, and the overall closure regime in Gaza create vulnerabilities by stunting economic growth, increasing unemployment, inhibiting the free movement of people and goods, impacting biodiversity and natural habitats, and impeding access to land, property and natural resources. Specifically, the most vulnerable geographies in Gaza are the Access Restricted Areas; in the West Bank the most vulnerable geographies include Area C, the Seam Zone, H2, and East Jerusalem.

In the West Bank, some 600 obstacles restrict Palestinian vehicles and pedestrian movement, including Israeli checkpoints, road gates, earth mounds, roadblocks, trenches, and earth walls. These barriers render the average trade cost per container for Palestinian firms greater than the cost for Israeli firms by a factor of 3, while the time cost is higher by a factor of 2 to 4. These restrictions are of greater negative significance than tariff barriers. These restrictions choke trade and investment by inflating costs and undermining competitiveness. For the same transaction, Palestinian importers pay three times the cost paid by Israeli importers, while Palestinian exporters pay twice the cost paid by Israeli exporters.

Physical fragmentation of the Palestinian territory is also a primary, though not the sole, determinant of poor infrastructure (e.g., lack of cold chain facilities for perishable products such as food,

¹⁹⁹ The UNCT-SWAP GES comprehensive report notes that the 2016 CCA lacked gender-inclusive analysis concerning WASH and equitable access to water resources and highlighted that “this is an important gender equality issue in the Palestine context, as investments in WASH reduce the burden of unpaid work on women and girls, and facilitate participation in education, employment, leisure activities and decision-making.” Having noted the need for additional quantitative work here, this CCA discusses the qualitative aspects of gender equality and women’s empowerment in the following sub-sections.

underdeveloped wholesale markets, and poor transportation and road networks) that translates into underdevelopment of value chains, limited access to local and external markets, and eventually marginalization and impoverishment of specific sectors such as farming and MSMEs.

The fragmentation of Palestinian areas is also a fundamental challenge to conservation of ecosystems, landscapes and habitat, threatening biodiversity, and cutting the natural ecological corridors. Furthermore, it severely undermines access to land and agricultural expansion: most land resources are in Area C, where infrastructure and urban development is limited. The systematic erosion of the agricultural productive base, as well as rangeland availability, has also been driven by settlement expansion in the West Bank and urban expansion, particularly in the Gaza Strip.

Poor infrastructure, transportation, and road networks also create vulnerabilities by limiting the deployment of essential public services, such as water, sanitation, and energy. In fact, limited access to natural resources, primarily water and land, in addition to infrastructure deficiencies and scarcity, also comprising those for the provision of electricity, together offer serious binding constraints to the growth of the Palestinian economy.²⁰⁰ In the OPT there are pronounced differences between men and women in terms of energy needs and priorities, the roles they assume in society and households, and the gap between them with regard to income and economic empowerment. These are outlined in detail under SDG 7 in Chapter 5.

Energy and water issues are intrinsically connected. All sources of energy require water throughout their lifecycle and energy is required to access water including pumping, transportation of water tanks, treatment of wastewater, and desalination. Practical issues include water management systems and water infrastructure to promote sustainable and efficient systems as well as the compliance with water allocation between Palestine and Israel agreed in the Oslo protocols.

Energy limitations are compounding the water and sanitation crisis. Energy supply and distribution is affected by limited availability of primary energy resources, financial constraints, the Israeli occupation, and other political considerations. Palestine is heavily dependent on Israel for meeting its energy requirements. Almost all petroleum products and most of electricity are imported from Israel and the possibility of diversifying the energy imports from other countries is currently not feasible. Moreover, the difficulty in accessing alternative sources of energy impacts the PA's fiscal sustainability and its capacity to ensure uninterrupted provision of basic services. This is true across the OPT but is especially critical for the Gaza Strip, whose isolation presents technical challenges in transporting, storing, importing, and exporting energy, which dramatically affects the limited response to the Gaza water crisis.²⁰¹

Socioeconomic vulnerabilities

The current economic development model in Palestine, focusing on budgetary and direct financial support from international sources as the main driver of growth, is not effective in promoting socioeconomic development, creating jobs, and reducing vulnerabilities. The current regime of internal and external closures and prevailing climate of political and economic uncertainty, combined with the fragmentation of the economy constrain private sector growth and bring about a heavy reliance of the economy on non-tradable sectors such as services, construction, the financial sector,

²⁰⁰ USAID. 2017. West Bank and Gaza – Inclusive Growth Diagnostic.

²⁰¹ The energy crises in Gaza and power cuts up to 18-20 hours a day has impeded the delivery of basic services in Gaza including wastewater collection and treatment as well solid waste collection services.

and public sector. Palestinian producers have become increasingly cut off from their traditional trading partners and lost much of their competitive edge. These, along with the overvaluation of the real exchange rate, twisted the economic structure in favor of the above-mentioned sectors that are not exposed to foreign competition. These sectors have limited scope to expand to a level required to generate the needed employment opportunities and have limited potential for job creation.

The Palestinian business environment is characterized by small-sized formal and informal enterprises, concentrating in low productivity sub-sectors, operating in fragmented production systems (in agriculture mixed-crop small holdings) exhibiting wide variability in performance, alternating between episodes of growth and decline. Much of the difference in productivity is due to the impact of the occupation and related restrictions on the movement of people and goods, resulting in a lack of access to land, water, and other natural resources, to cultural heritage sites, to equipment and materials, and to markets (both domestic and international) that, for example, severely impair construction and maintenance of infrastructure. Furthermore, small and informal firms are relatively more constrained than others by lack of finance that ultimately has resulted in disengagement from innovative and business upgrading activities.²⁰²

The domestic Palestinian marketplace is comprised of fragmented retail supply at shops and stalls and lacking adequate wholesale businesses. Traditional marketing strategies and fragmented trade chains reduce the profit margins for entrepreneurs and increase retail prices. This process of fragmentation is a key driver of marginalization and impoverishment of small-scale enterprises and farmers. The small scale of holdings and the weak organization of producers result in low bargaining power with input suppliers and produce buyers, as well as insufficient scale and planning to participate in markets beyond the local and informal sectors.

Within such a context, an important driver of economic vulnerability is the lack of labor opportunities and limited access to the job market. Generally, vulnerable individuals are those who are restricted in their capacity to work such as persons with disabilities and the elderly or those who cannot find employment such as the unemployed youth in Gaza. These individuals need alternatives to employment whether social protection systems, other productive activities (such as voluntary opportunities) or skills building to get into the workforce. Labor force statistics are discussed at length in other sections of this report.

Socioeconomic vulnerability intersects with other forms of vulnerability. Restricted access to services, like education and health, transportation, and social protection (including social insurance) add to the above vulnerabilities, further impeding access to work or restricting the legitimate ambition of individuals to conduct a dignified life. Children, youth, and women are particularly impacted by such vulnerabilities compounded, in some cases, by vulnerability to violence and structural inequitable social and gender norms and barriers.

Globally, strong civic participation is a driver of economic development, yet civic and political participation is a challenge in Palestine. Young men and women are not seen as capable to impact their present lives and future. The data shows that “less than 1 percent of the Palestinian youth work in decision-making positions.” The data for 2017 showed that 0.7 percent of youth work as legislators

²⁰² Notably, informal employment (i.e., persons working in the informal sector, as well as wage employees not having access to paid annual and sick leave, retirement, and end-of-service compensation) accounts for about 62 percent of total employed persons, with 66 percent in the West Bank and 51 percent in Gaza Strip. (PCBS. 2020. Press release on the occasion of International Workers Day.)

and senior management employees (0.8 percent in the West Bank and 0.7 percent in Gaza Strip).²⁰³ Only 19 percent of youth are currently involved in volunteerism and community work.²⁰⁴ The electoral system makes it difficult for young people who do not necessarily have the social and political prominence, nor the skillsets demanded, to actively engage.

Women and girls

Women and girls suffer greater discrimination and exclusion from political, social, cultural, and economic life. Despite high literacy levels among Palestinian women, they remain underrepresented in the workforce, national and local government, the police, the judiciary, and the public prosecution.²⁰⁵ Although the PA electoral law has been amended to raise the minimum quota for women's participation in the legislative elections from 20 to 26 percent, women continue to be underrepresented on electoral lists. A review of the electoral lists submitted in advance of planned elections in 2021 (since delayed indefinitely) shows that among the 36 lists, only one was headed by a woman. Women candidates were in second place on only seven of 36 electoral lists.²⁰⁶

Despite the lack of official data, women lost more jobs during the initial COVID-19 lockdown, according to reports by the Ministry of Labor and ILO's labor market assessment, issued in May 2021.²⁰⁷ According to workers representatives and recent focus group discussions during the first half of 2021, women also reported that they did not receive sufficient information on how to access available PA assistance.²⁰⁸

While gender-based violence (GBV) is prohibited and considered a crime under international law, GBV is still widespread in Palestine. Nearly one in three women has reported psychological, physical, sexual, social, or economic violence by their partners at least once during the past year. Women and girls in Palestine continue to experience various forms of violence due to the entrenched discriminatory social norms and traditions, discriminatory laws, and the prolonged Israeli occupation. The most common types of violence against women observed in Palestine include domestic violence, sexual harassment, child marriage, and femicide or gender-related killings. There have been inadequate responses and impunity for femicide and violence against women—underpinned by entrenched patriarchal attitudes and discriminatory practices.²⁰⁹ Women's rights organizations have come under attack on social media and other platforms by private actors and groups.²¹⁰

According to the latest survey on violence in 2019,²¹¹ 29.4 percent of ever-partnered women between the ages of 18-64 experienced violence in the twelve months preceding the survey: 37.5 percent in Gaza and 24.3 percent in West Bank.²¹² Among affected women, 56.6 percent experienced psychological violence, 17.8 percent physical violence, 8.8 percent sexual violence, 32.5 percent social violence, and 41.1 percent economic violence, with eight percent experienced the emerging issue of

²⁰³ PCBS. 2018. Statement on the occasion of International Youth Day.

²⁰⁴ PCBS. 2018. Statement on the occasion of International Youth Day.

²⁰⁵ See data above in the SDG5 section and the Atlas of Sustainable Development 2020, pp 21-25.

²⁰⁶ CEDAW has recommended a minimum standard of 30 percent representation of women in all state institutions, including in appointed and elected positions, in particular in local government, trade unions, senior leadership positions, the foreign service, and the judiciary.

²⁰⁷ ILO. Sept 2020. Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Labour Market in the Occupied Palestinian Territory: A forecasting model assessment.

²⁰⁸ UNFPA and Juzoor for Health and Social Development. 2020. "Impact of the COVID-19 Outbreak and Lockdown on Family Dynamics and Domestic Violence in Palestine."

²⁰⁹ A/HRC/46/63, para. 32. To address this, the CEDAW committee has recommended that members of the judiciary, including judges of sharia courts, legal professionals, and law enforcement officers, are trained on the Convention, and other related UN standards.

²¹⁰ A/HRC/46/63, para. 29..

²¹¹ PCBS. 2019. Violence Survey.

²¹² PCBS. 2019. Violence Survey.

cyber violence. These figures have likely worsened due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Data on women victims of violence outside these categories are needed for better analysis, including GBV against girls and women with disabilities, among others.

Particular attention should be given to the furthest left behind groups of women and girls victims and survivors of violence. In addition to the discriminatory laws and policies, research conducted by UN agencies, INGOs, and CSOs on protection, sheltering, and reintegration services to female victims and survivors of violence have identified two main issues. The first is that there are severe gaps and absence of specialized protection and reintegration services for the furthest left behind groups of female victims and survivors of violence. The second is that in cases where specialized services have been made available to female victims and survivors of violence, these have not been adapted to meet the needs of these groups. More specifically, the infrastructure is not adapted to the needs, the staff are not equipped to respond, and procedures and mechanisms are also not adapted.

In the OPT, abortion is criminalized under articles 321-325 of the Jordanian Penal Code of 1960, which is derived from colonial French and Ottoman laws.²¹³ According to this law, penalties apply to the woman seeking the abortion and all individuals and health care professionals who assist her in terminating the pregnancy.²¹⁴ Article 8 of Palestinian Public Health Law No. 20, which was passed in 2004, states that in the West Bank and Gaza, abortion is prohibited by any means unless necessary to save the pregnant woman's life, as proven by the testimony of two specialist physicians.²¹⁵ Written approval from the pregnant woman and her husband or guardian must also be provided, and these records are kept for a minimum of 10 years. In 2016, a mechanism was initiated by the Family Protection Prosecution, Ministry of Health, and Office of the Mufti to discuss abortion requests where they were dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Approved cases of abortion are restricted to situations in which pregnancy results from incest. Abortion is prohibited in cases of raped women with mental disabilities or young girls, unless their lives are in danger.²¹⁶ Negative and discriminatory perspectives and attitudes among service providers may be a result of the lack of adequate awareness and knowledge of the rights and needs of the excluded/furthest left behind groups.²¹⁷

It is important to understand how the vulnerability of women and girls intersect with other dimensions of vulnerability, like exposure to violence, socioeconomic deprivation, and disability. In OPT, girls and boys in disadvantaged and marginalized circumstances often face pressures to drop out of school, however, the reasons differ as outlined in the previous chapter (SDG 4).²¹⁸ Early marriage, influenced by harmful norms and stereotypes around gender roles, can be both a cause and consequence of girls' drop out. In addition, the security concerns of families during the commute to school drive dropout rates of girls. The presence of checkpoints and travel by public transport raise security and socio-

²¹³ Jordanian Penal Code No. 16 of 1960.

²¹⁴ Jordanian Penal Code No. 16 of 1960.

²¹⁵ Public Health Law. No. 20 (2005).

²¹⁶ As required by the Committee (CEDAW), Palestine needs to produce "data on the number of women and girls who have been detained and prosecuted for procuring an abortion." (COB, p39, c)

²¹⁷ CEDAW discusses 'Disadvantaged groups of women' and recommends that Palestine should "provide information, ... on the measures taken to ensure access to, among other things, employment, health care, water, sanitation and electricity for disadvantaged groups of women, such as women with disabilities, Bedouin women, older women and women heads of households, and on the situation of women in detention."

²¹⁸ UNFPA. 2020. Child Marriage Strategy.

cultural concerns experienced by girls and their parents, especially in Area C.²¹⁹ Palestinian girls who drop out of school are among the most vulnerable, since they tend to score lower for psychosocial well-being due to social isolation. Women and girls with disabilities face particular challenges, as 68 percent of the schools are not suitable or adapted to their needs, which further prevents their access to education.

Both quantitative and qualitative data serve to highlight the gender dimensions of social protection in OPT. An Oxfam report from 2020 found that female-headed households (FHHs) show much higher levels of reliance on assistance and donations than male-headed households (MHHs). While 84.8 percent of FHHs and 79.8 percent of MHHs rely to some degree on assistance and donations, 40.2 percent of FHHs rely fully on this as their sole source of income, compared with 29.8 percent of MHHs. FHHs are also exposed to higher levels of poverty and unemployment than their male counterparts.

More FHHs rely on two sources of assistance or more than MHHs (60 percent vs 40 percent). They make up a disproportionate number of national cash transfer recipients and other vulnerable HHs (i.e., new applicants) at 21.2 percent compared with 8.7 percent for the overall population in Gaza. Reported levels of social isolation are higher among FHHs than MHHs, though both assess the future risk of isolation equally. FHHs report higher levels of insecurity about the future than MHHs and higher levels of unhappiness.

Children and youth

As noted elsewhere in this report, Palestinian society is quite young, with 66 percent of the population under the age of 29. The vulnerabilities of children and youth is therefore a very large subset of the overall vulnerabilities of Palestinian society. Children and youth are at higher risk of monetary and multidimensional poverty; this poverty can have long term consequences for children and be transmitted to the next generation. Poverty can be manifested in different forms, including lack of access to health, education, and basic services, and is often associated with violence and neglect. As with other dimensions of vulnerability, the situation of children and youth in the OPT highlights the importance of taking an intersectional approach.

The State of Palestine ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 2014 and presented the first State Party report to the treaty body in Geneva in 2020. The CRC Committee provided Concluding Observations which gave important findings and observations which validate children's vulnerability in the State of Palestine. For example, the CRC committee were deeply concerned about persistent de facto discrimination against some groups of children, particularly against girls, specifically regarding custody, maintenance, and inheritance, and against children belonging to the Bedouin communities, primarily living in Area C, concerning access to services and protection from stigmatization and violence. The CRC concluded that in Palestine the minimum age of criminal sentencing, set at 12, should be raised to at least 14 years; the amendment of the Juvenile Protection Law in August 2021 accomplished this change in the West Bank; however, in the Gaza Strip, the Juvenile Offender's Ordinance (1937) remains applicable and sets it at 9 years of age. The CRC called on Palestine to prevent children's participation in violence and apply all feasible measures to ensure their protection from the effects of hostilities and to care for child victims. Additionally, the CRC stated

²¹⁹ According to the 2021 MSNA, some ten percent of households report that women and girls avoid areas near settlements, checkpoints, community areas and markets, and using public transportation because they feel unsafe. 31 percent of households in the West Bank and 19 percent in Gaza are concerned about the safety and security of girls. The disproportionate impact of these contextual factors on women and girls is underpinned by socio-cultural patriarchal norms, which continue to undermine women and girls' rights.

that: Palestine should “[p]romote non-custodial and non-judicial measures, such as diversion, probation, mediation, counselling, or community service, wherever possible, for all child offenders, and in cases where detention is unavoidable, ensure that detention conditions for children are compliant with international standards.”

Rates of early childhood education provide another example of multidimensional and intersectional vulnerability. In OPT, just over a third of children aged 3-4 years attend kindergarten (34.2 percent), but for children with functional difficulties, only 21.9 percent of children attend kindergarten. Only 26 percent of children from the poorest households attend kindergarten, compared to 44.5 percent of those from the wealthiest households,²²⁰ highlighting the intersectionality of socioeconomic status, disability, and childhood vulnerability.

While having a child-headed household is not legal, this remains a reality for a small number of households, with UNRWA having registered around 1,000 child-headed households. Due to the lack of livelihood opportunities of these households and the risk of protection violations, they are particularly vulnerable to being left behind.

Between 2014 and 2019/20 the rate of teenage mothers (aged 15-19) dropped from 48 to 43 per 1,000 girls. The adolescent birth rate has increased in the West Bank (from 35 compared to 39 per 1,000 women) but dropped significantly in the Gaza Strip (from 66 compared to 48 per 1,000 women).²²¹ More than one in seven women aged 20-24 (13.4 percent) was married under the age of 18. The figure is higher for women in the Gaza Strip (16.5 percent) compared to those in the West Bank (11.4 percent). Over half of women with no or basic education (50.8 percent) married under this age, compared to 2.3 percent of women with higher education. More than twice as many women from the poorest households (18.3 percent) married under 18 compared to those from the wealthiest households (7.5 percent).²²²

Nine out of ten children experience some form of violent discipline: 92.3 percent for boys; 87.9 percent for girls.²²³ Over one in five children (20.1 percent) experience severe physical punishment and 87.5 percent experience psychological aggression. Only 7.4 percent received non-violent discipline. More children experience severe physical punishment in the Gaza Strip (28.5 percent) than in the West Bank (13.7 percent). Children of refugees were significantly more likely to experience severe physical punishment (24.5 percent) compared to children of non-refugees (17 percent). Again, highlighting the multidimensionality of vulnerability in OPT, children from the poorest households are more than twice as likely to experience severe physical punishment (29.9 percent) than those from the wealthiest households (11.4 percent). Around 20 percent of mothers believe in corporal punishment.

Recurrent conflict and the protracted humanitarian crisis have created enormous distress and trauma among children and youth. It is estimated that some 678,000 children across the OPT are in need of child protection and MHPSS services.²²⁴ More than half (53 percent) of all children in Gaza are in need, and 12 percent of all children in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

²²⁰ MICS 2019/20

²²¹ MICS 2019/20

²²² MICS 2019/20

²²³ MICS 2019/20

²²⁴ OCHA. 2022. Humanitarian Needs Overview.

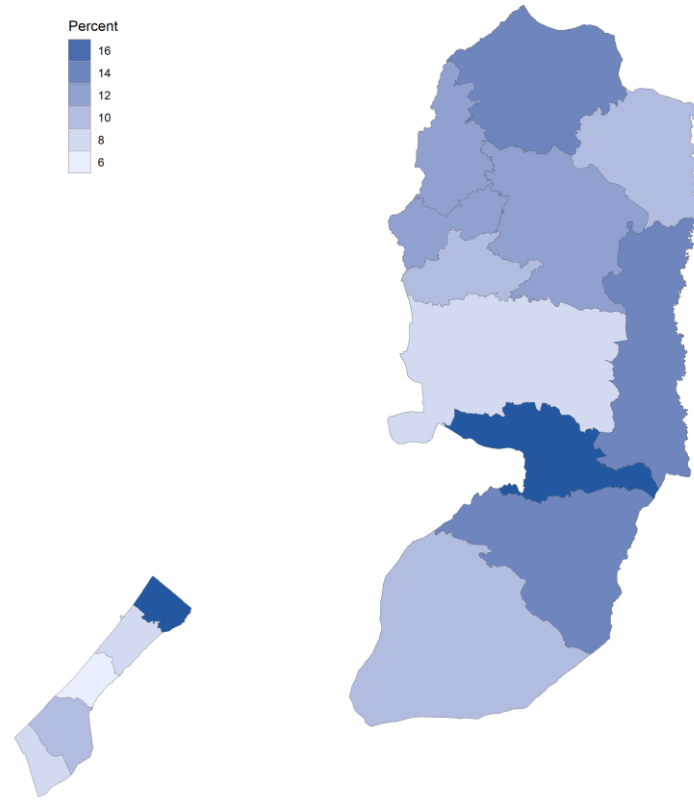
Poverty drives and intersections with the vulnerability of children and youth. As a result of poverty, producers and households are pushed to negative coping strategies such as using poorer food substitutes, selling valuable assets, removing children from school, imposing early or forced marriage, returning to subsistence agriculture, and reducing investment.²²⁵ Child labor is among the most negative coping practices; the MICS 2019/20 survey found that 7.3 percent of children aged 5-17 years old are involved in child labor.²²⁶

Moreover, 24.7 percent of children not attending school are involved in hazardous work.²²⁷ An attempt to increase access to livelihood assistance has created a trend towards extended families (large households can also qualify for more assistance). This trend can reinforce patriarchal systems, reducing the independence of women. Unable to provide for all the family, the male head of household may feel disempowered, a dynamic that may contribute to more domestic violence.²²⁸

Children are vulnerable to child labor in the agricultural sector, in Area C's agricultural areas, and Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Some West Bank Palestinian girls are vulnerable to exploitation for sex and labor in Israel after family members force them into marriages with older men; these girls experience physical and sexual abuse, threats of violence, and restricted movement. There is a vacuum of labor market governance in Israeli settlements, where PA labor inspectors have no authority and Israeli inspectors do not inspect.²²⁹

Figure 15: Spatial patterns in child labor and hazardous work

Percentage of children engaged in economic activities or household chores above thresholds, or working under hazardous conditions, by governorate



Data source: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2019/2020.

²²⁵ UNCTAD. 2021. Report on UNCTAD assistance to the Palestinian people: Developments in the economy of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. 20 September 2021.

²²⁶ Involvement in economic activities or household chores during the last week. The definition of child labor used for SDG reporting does not include hazardous working conditions, this is a change from the previous indicator definition.

²²⁷ MICS 2019/20

²²⁸ Said-Foqahaa, et al. 2020. Responsiveness of the Palestinian National Cash Transfer Programme to Shifting Vulnerabilities in The Gaza Strip. Oxfam Research Reports.

²²⁹ Work in the settlements tends to be mainly in agriculture, industrial undertakings, construction, and in tasks under Israeli municipal authorities. Much of it is informal employment in conditions, which tend to be poorly regulated and insufficiently monitored. Women are predominantly working in agriculture and industry, though some are engaged in domestic work in private households. The Report of the Director-General of 2019 states that, based on oral testimonies about recruitment practices, employer-worker relations and working conditions of Palestinians in the settlements, workers receive pay below the minimum wage, are hired in unregulated manner, and face

In the West Bank, many children are often forced to pass through several checkpoints and roadblocks and to go around Israeli settlements to reach their classroom. This can be especially difficult for adolescent boys, as they are more likely to be stopped and questioned by security forces on the way to school. In the 278 UNRWA schools across the Gaza Strip, 198 operate on a double shift; average class sizes for the 2021-2022 school year were 41.2 students per class, similar to the previous school year.

According to a study²³⁰ on Palestinian challenges and aspirations, and a study on youth, peace, and security, 79 percent of youth in the Gaza Strip and 70 percent of youth in the West Bank believe that their future is unsafe. They lack a sense of security, fear marginalization and exclusion, and face poverty. Instead of enjoying their ambitions and aspirations and for the future and working to achieve their goals, they are afraid of their future. Overall, 24 percent of Palestinian youth desire to emigrate, with significant regional disparities: 37 percent of youth in the Gaza Strip with to emigrate, compared to 15 percent in the West Bank.²³¹

Young people in Palestine exhibit a high degree of political disenchantment and apathy after many decades of political marginalization, which are compounded by geographical vulnerabilities and the fragmentation of Palestinian society. Young people do not have many entry points for being heard, or for participating in the political process. This has, over the years, led to a gap between the Palestinian Authority and the nation's youth. There are few services for engaging young people in political participation, policy processes and governance activities.²³² According to the 2015 PCBS survey, only 29 percent²³³ of Palestinian young people living in the West Bank express an interest in participating in a political event. The number in Gaza is significantly higher, at 57 percent.²³⁴ Jerusalemite youth face many social problems due to the political and legal context. Substance abuse, sexual harassment in the private and public spheres, restrictions on movements for females and smoking has increased during COVID-19, including areas inside East Jerusalem, such as Silwan, the Old City, and Shufat Camp.²³⁵ Across OPT, the lack of youth access to decision making is reflected also in broader civic life, with less than 1 percent²³⁶ of youth working in any decision-making position and less than 1 percent participating in volunteer work.²³⁷

Youth in Area C are more excluded in receiving health services due to the obstacles to access central health centers; youth with disabilities are furthest behind due to a lack of accessibility and incompatible health services. The disability vulnerability intersects with spatial vulnerability due to a higher shortage of available services. Despite efforts and policy development, persons with disabilities face difficulties accessing health care, especially women with disabilities and persons with mental disabilities. Lack of adequate infrastructure for the needs of persons with disabilities; lack of specialized medical staff in the areas of disability; lack of gender and age-responsive, disability inclusive mental health care services; and the difficult economic situation of persons with disabilities

incidences of child labor, especially in the agricultural settlements. The unregulated work of Palestinians in the settlements appears to exist alongside regulated or semi-regulated employment of Israeli and foreign workers. There is also a perception among Palestinian workers that wage differences exist in favor of foreign workers. See, ILO. The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories. 2021.

²³⁰ Interpeace. 2018. Palestinian Challenges and Aspirations: A study on Youth, Peace and Security-based on UN Resolution 2250.

²³¹ PCBS. 2018. Statement on the occasion of International Youth Day.

²³² UNFPA. 2021. Youth Vulnerability Assessment.

²³³ PCBS. 2015. National Youth Survey.

²³⁴ PCBS. 2015. National Youth Survey.

²³⁵ UNFPA. 2021. Gender-Based Violence Needs Assessment in East Jerusalem.

²³⁶ PCBS. 2015. National Youth Survey.

²³⁷ PCBS. 2019. Labor Force Survey and Statistics.

are all factors impeding their access to health care.²³⁸ The Bedouin youth population is among the most vulnerable groups in Palestine due to the scarcity of essential commodities such as water and electricity, food, and health services, including SRH awareness and mental health services.²³⁹ They are also highly exposed to domestic and occupation-related violence and displacement.²⁴⁰

Democratic and human rights-based civic education and civic skills development, with a focus on the practice of rights and responsibilities, would help to shape and nurture young people's attitudes and behaviors in relation to civic and political participation, yet such education is very limited - even non-existent. Without such opportunities, youth will continue to struggle to be actively and meaningfully engaged in policy processes.

Refugees

Refugees in the OPT are highly dependent on services provided by the United Nations, most importantly UNRWA, and on continued donor support to provide these services. Palestine refugees are as "persons whose normal place of residence was Palestine [between] 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948 and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict." UNRWA services are available to all those living in its area of operations who meet this definition, who are registered with the Agency, and who need assistance. The descendants of Palestine refugee males, including adopted children, are also eligible for registration. Nearly one-third of the registered Palestine refugees, or more than 1.5 million individuals, live in 58 recognized Palestine refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Gaza Strip, and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The remaining two thirds of registered Palestine refugees live in and around the cities and towns of the host countries, and in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, often in the environs of official camps. While most of UNRWA's installations such as schools and health centers are located in the Palestine refugee camps, a number are outside; all of the Agency's services are available to all registered Palestine refugees, including those who do not live in the camps.

As of June 2021, 1.49 million Palestine refugees were registered with UNRWA in the Gaza Strip and 877,501 were registered in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. These refugees are highly dependent on UNRWA for services, and ultimately on regular and sufficient donor support. UNRWA services encompass primary and vocational education, primary health care, relief and social services, infrastructure and camp improvement, microfinance, and emergency response, including in situations of armed conflict. Refugee individuals and households face structural barriers to socioeconomic development and deprivation due to their status.

In recent years, despite a steady deterioration in its funding situation, UNRWA has ensured the continuous provision of humanitarian support to more than one million Palestine refugees in Gaza and over 60,000 in the West Bank. During the COVID-19 pandemic, service delivery has continued under health and hygiene protocols with work modalities being adjusted as the epidemiological situation evolved.

During the first half of 2021 in Gaza, UNRWA commenced distribution of a unified food basket for all eligible refugee families to better manage resources in the context of rising need. Over 1.1 million refugees received food baskets during the first distribution round, including over 560,000 women and

²³⁸ State of Palestine. 2018. Palestinian Voluntary National Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

²³⁹ Heneiti, A. 2016. Bedouin Communities in Greater Jerusalem: Planning or Forced Displacement? *Palestine Studies*: Issue 65.

²⁴⁰ Anera. 7 June 2021. Situation Report from Palestine.

53,000 persons with disabilities. In the West Bank, UNRWA worked in partnership with WFP to provide emergency food parcels to over 37,000 individuals (6,510 families) in 86 refugee and non-refugee Bedouin and herder communities. In the West Bank, UNRWA also ensured that food parcels were provided to 3,622 families (633 women-headed households, 706 headed by persons with disabilities and 522 headed by people over 65 years) living under COVID-19 quarantine and in isolated communities. In addition, 5,507 families in home quarantine received hygiene kits, upgraded to respond to specific needs of women, children, and the elderly.

During the first half of 2021 in Gaza, UNRWA provided cash-for-work (CfW) to 7,355 refugees, mainly in unskilled short-term jobs (84.6 percent) whose wages benefited around 40,000 family members, and through which USD 3,953,516 was injected into the Gaza economy. Overall, 27.2 percent of CfW opportunities were awarded to youth, of whom 28 percent were young women and 40.4 percent were recent graduates. To mitigate the socioeconomic effects of COVID-19, UNRWA provided one-off multi-sectoral cash assistance of USD 40 per person to 114,608 individuals in Gaza (52.5 percent of whom were women) to help cover essential needs. Refugees determined as food insecure were prioritized, including families headed by women, older persons and persons with chronic diseases, families with orphans and persons with disabilities, and large families. In the West Bank, UNRWA provided e-card cash assistance to 23,903 abject poor Palestine refugees in and outside 19 refugee camps. Of the 3,352 refugee households supported, 126 were headed by women, 1,250 by persons with disabilities and 503 were headed by people over 65 years.

In Gaza, UNRWA's health program mitigated the spread of COVID-19 through a range of measures including a triage system in all its 22 health centers and the use of telemedicine that supported 385,994 medical consultations. During the second quarter of 2021, Gaza experienced a sharp rise in COVID-19, resulting in a high demand for telemedicine, a service that continued to operate during the May hostilities. In addition, UNRWA supported refugees with a critical need for secondary and tertiary care. During the first half of 2021, 10,393 patients (81 percent women) in need of non-COVID-19 health care were referred to a network of contracted hospitals. The Agency also played a major role in supporting the Ministry of Health vaccination campaign. In this regard, eighteen UNRWA health centers were designated as vaccination points, offering vaccinations to the public, including non-refugees. In addition, 396 surge staff were hired to support the implementation of COVID-19 measures.

In the West Bank, despite spikes in the pandemic when in person health services were partially suspended in some areas, rotation of staff and the recruitment of an additional 114 health staff (75 females and 39 males) allowed the Agency to maintain essential services. In total, 8,020 patients with suspected COVID-19 symptoms were directly referred to Ministry of Health facilities for further check-ups. Monthly home deliveries of essential medications were provided to 7,678 vulnerable refugee patients (4,230 females; 3,448 males, including 1,030 persons with disabilities), particularly patients with noncommunicable diseases (NCD). UNRWA also expanded mobile health services to cover 11 remote communities in Area C, providing access to health services for 54,253 individuals (26,583 females and 27,670 males), including 2,984 persons with disabilities who would otherwise have faced great difficulty in reaching medical facilities, particular under the COVID-19 movement restrictions. Medical consultations, including on COVID-19-related health issues, were provided through dedicated health advice phone lines, with 1,170 calls received during early 2021.

In Gaza, the EA supported the continued education of over 280,000 students (over 138,000 girls, 148,000 boys) in 278 schools, though COVID-19 lockdowns and the May hostilities posed enormous challenges. By way of response, UNRWA education programming provided a combination of blended and full remote learning. Printed self-learning materials were provided to all students and parents during the first quarter of 2021 and a Digital Learning Platform was launched in April 2021 in support of remote learning. UNRWA also continued to assist refugee children with disabilities in partnership with seven community-based rehabilitation centers who provided services to 45,867 students in all UNRWA schools in the West Bank.

In Gaza, Agency education and health program counsellors, trained on tele-consultation support, provided guidance for thousands of Palestine refugees suffering from anxiety and trauma. COVID-19 preventive measures limited face-to-face mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services, and, by way of response, counselling was provided remotely through toll-free lines assigned to each health center in Gaza. During early 2021, health counsellors provided remote PSS to 4,874 individuals (4,064 females, 810 males), including 30 persons with disabilities, and assisted 772 GBV survivors (736 females, 36 males), including seven persons with disabilities. Education counsellors provided guidance to parents through 785 parents' awareness sessions.

During the first half of 2021, 77 percent (358 out of 464 families) of Palestine refugee households impacted by protection threats in the West Bank were able to re-establish the physical safety and security of their residences after receiving emergency cash assistance from UNRWA. Similarly, 2,222 refugee households affected by demolitions and evictions were able to re-establish stable accommodation following support from the Agency. UNRWA continued to implement a range of advocacy interventions that responded to protection concerns caused by the occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and efforts to directly engage duty bearers, in particular the Israeli authorities, continued throughout this period.

Bedouin communities

Following 1948, many Bedouin took refuge in the West Bank, then under Jordanian rule. These communities are traditionally semi-nomadic agro-pastoralists now living in the rural areas around Hebron, Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Jericho, and the Jordan Valley, mainly in Area C.

The situation of Bedouin, roughly 27,000 persons, remains a major humanitarian issue. Most at risk are 7,000 Bedouin living in 46 small communities in the Jerusalem periphery, 60 percent of whom are children. Israeli authorities frequently demolish and confiscate donor-funded humanitarian structures—for example, shelters, goat pens, water tanks, schools, and solar panels. Displacement remains a constant threat and damages traditional cultural practices. From 2016 to 2021, 1,627 structures in Bedouin and herder communities were demolished, displacing 2,836 people, and affecting 28,758 people.²⁴¹

Bedouin and herder communities are among the highest at risk of food insecurity in Palestine. Most Bedouins live in Area C, where vulnerability and protection concerns are very high and access to natural resources is very limited, leading to higher food insecurity.²⁴² Israeli military firing zones have been established on land that has traditionally been occupied by some 6,200 Palestinians in 38 Bedouin or herding communities. The communities are among the most vulnerable in the West Bank

²⁴¹ OCHA. Data on demolition and displacement in the West Bank. Accessed February 2022: <https://www.ochaopt.org/data/demolition>.

²⁴² PCBS and FSS. 2021. Socio-Economic and Food Security Survey 2020.

in terms of access to an adequate standard of living, primary health services, water, and sanitation. Palestinian presence in the firing zones has been formally prohibited without prior coordination with the Israeli authorities, which is rarely granted, and Israel prohibits most Palestinian residential and infrastructure construction. Residents face restrictions on grazing livestock inside firing zones and Israeli authorities frequently carry out demolitions and confiscate Palestinian-owned property and livestock. The use of firing zones and military training areas may expose people to direct and indirect weapons use which is difficult to monitor and report. Besides the immediate effect of exposure to collateral impact of these weapons, military training leaves behind ERW contamination that significantly increases the risks for communities. Also, the no-notice nature of military exercises means these communities can be exposed to military grade weapons fire and explosives at any time without a reasonable opportunity to move to safety.

There is absence of an integrated policy on land use and access rights, which incorporates Bedouin communities into existing policies and projects that would allow extending the management reach of PA's institutions to deliver basic services to Bedouin communities.²⁴³

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and other individuals

Although the Palestinian Authority has ratified several international conventions that guarantee and ensure full respect of civil rights, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and other sexual and gender minorities (LGBT+) in Palestine face legal challenges and discrimination. Between 2018 and 2021, OHCHR took note of several human rights violations and trends targeting LGBT+ people, including arbitrary arrest and detention and questioning regarding the person's sexual orientation, sexuality, and membership in LGBT+ organizations. There were also reports of ill-treatment during arrest and detention, threats of violence including from family, community and security forces, and blackmail. In addition, there were reports of Palestinian security forces targeting CSOs working on LGBT+ issues by banning its activities, subjecting activists to arrests as well as maintaining a list of known activists.²⁴⁴ Key protection gaps for the LGBT+ community in Palestine include lack of shelters, lack of safe and specialized health and psychosocial services, denial of access to education and employment, limited access to legal aid as well as limited possibility of asylum for individuals at risk. Same-sex marriage is not legalized in Palestine, like all other countries in the region.

Discussion on LGBT+ issues remains taboo in Palestinian society. Sexual and gender diversity is commonly viewed as an illness, a perversion, a disgrace to one's family, and a matter of personal shame. Palestinians who identify as LGBT+ often face harsh homophobic or transphobic reactions from their families and members of their communities, ranging from stereotyping and exclusion to psychological and physical violence; and are often subjected to practices of so-called "conversion therapy." They are denied access to protection services by formal bodies and may receive limited support from their own communities.

The Global AIDS Strategy (2021-2026) calls for ensuring no one is left behind through grounding the AIDS response in human rights and gender equality, with a focus on key affected populations such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and other priority groups. The National Strategic Plan on HIV and AIDS (2010-2015) in Palestine acknowledged the presence of vulnerable populations and has

²⁴³ Ministry of Local Government and UN-Habitat. 2020. *Fostering Tenure Security and Resilience for Bedouin Communities in the so-called Area C of the West Bank, Palestine Policy Framework and Implementation Tools.*

²⁴⁴ See, for example, A/HRC/46/63, para 40; A/HRC/40/39, para 55.

identified people who inject drugs, men having sex with men, and female sex workers as key populations-at-risk of HIV.²⁴⁵

Elderly people

The number of elderly people in Palestine (defined by PCBS as persons aged 60 and older) reached approximately 283,000 individuals in mid-2021, representing about 5 percent of the total population. Approximately 187,000 elderly people live in the West Bank (6 percent of the West Bank population), while 96,000 elderly people live in the Gaza Strip (5 percent of the Gaza Strip population). There are slightly more elderly women than elderly men. The 2017 Census revealed that 16 percent of households have an elderly member (17 percent of households in the West Bank and 14 percent of households in the Gaza Strip). Between 2020 and 2050, the number of persons aged 60 and over is expected to almost quadruple in absolute numbers to approximately 1 million, and more than double in share to 11 percent of the population.²⁴⁶

Elderly people are subject to various intersectional and multidimensional vulnerabilities that leave them among the furthest left behind. In 2017, poverty rates among the elderly were reported at 27 percent. Neglect is the most prevalent type of abuse, reportedly experienced by 24 percent of elderly women and 19 percent of elderly men in 2019.²⁴⁷ Furthermore, the elderly suffer disproportionately from non-communicable diseases and disability, such as musculoskeletal disorders, diabetes, and kidney diseases, as well as sense organ disease. In terms of education, a gender gap exists as around 40 percent of elderly women are illiterate, compared to 10 percent of elderly men.

Elderly women were more vulnerable to violence than elderly men in the 2019 PCBS survey on violence.²⁴⁸ Around 8 percent of elderly people reported they were exposed to one form of violence by a family member who resides inside or outside of the house. Around 22 percent of elderly people reported that health negligence was the most common form of violence experienced (22 percent of elderly women and 19 percent of elderly men).

There is a strong correlation between age and disability prevalence, again highlighting the multidimensionality and intersectionality of vulnerability in the OPT. Disability rates are significantly higher among individuals aged 75 years and above, at 32.0 percent—28.9 percent among males and 34.1 percent among females. For comparison, among children, the percentage was 1.5 percent—1.8 percent among males and 1.3 percent among females.

For the elderly in Palestine, they rely primarily on traditional systems whereby their families are their main source of upkeep, care, and support. The physical and mental health of the elderly is negatively affected because of limited or no support systems, gaps in social protection and health services, and exposure to discrimination, conflict, violence, and abuse. The increasing shift toward nuclear family structures have left many elderly with weak social support systems. The lack of strategic or policy direction to stimulate and support the participation of elderly in all aspects of socioeconomic development render them among the groups furthest left behind. This leads to increased

²⁴⁵ Data are generally lacking. One round of Integrated Biological and Behavioral Surveillance was undertaken in 2010, with technical support from WHO, to determine the prevalence and associated risk behaviors, knowledge and attitudes for HIV, HBV, HCV among 199 injecting drug users in the East Jerusalem Governorate. Among the sample, no person tested positive for HIV, while five participants were infected with HBV (0.7%), while 84 participants (38.2%) tested positive for Hepatitis C. Heroin was the most common drug used by the sample (86.9%). Among the participants, 18.8% noted needle or syringe sharing. Palestine Ministry of Health (2011) HIV bio-behavioral survey among injecting drug users in the East Jerusalem Governorate, 2010. Ramallah: Palestine Ministry of Health.

²⁴⁶ UNFPA. 2021. Country profile: The rights and wellbeing of older persons in the State of Palestine.

²⁴⁷ UNFPA. 2019. Violence Against the Elderly: Palestine.

²⁴⁸ PCBS. 2019. Violence Survey.

marginalization and violation of their fundamental rights of living in dignity and independence, access to appropriate care and services, and protection from violence.²⁴⁹

UNFPA's recent study on the elderly concluded that religious and moral values and human rights system emphasize the need to provide integrated care for the elderly; this should be the duty of individuals, the government, and other institutions in Palestinian society. The concerns and problems of the elderly stem from society neglecting their needs and ignoring their rights. Most of these concerns center on fear of the future, anxiety about the deterioration of their health conditions, the inability to care for themselves, and the loss of independence.

Persons with disabilities

Persons with disabilities are vulnerable on health, functional, and social dimensions, and include persons with long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments. Disabilities interact with various other barriers that hinder full participation in society on an equal basis, and they are vulnerable on health, functional, and social dimensions. According to 2017 Census, the number of persons with disabilities in Palestine reached about 92,000, or 2.1 percent of the total population. Women and girls make up approximately 45 percent of the population with disabilities. Among persons with disabilities, 35.3 percent have a mobility disability, 21.7 percent a vision disability, 14.9 percent a communication disability, 14.7 percent a hearing disability, and 13.3 percent a remembering and concentration disability.²⁵⁰

Persons with disabilities face many challenges, including discrimination and the lack of enforcement of laws and legislation on the rights of persons with disabilities, particularly those related to the compatibility of public spaces with the needs of persons with disabilities and access to economic and public life. The prevailing societal behavior towards persons with disabilities, the inability of persons with disabilities to access and benefit from public services, limited social protection and economic opportunity, and limited programs for the training and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities are also challenges facing reducing poverty among persons with disabilities.

The 2017 Census indicated that the unemployment rate²⁵¹ among persons with disabilities was 37 percent (19 percent in the West Bank and 54 percent in Gaza Strip). According to the 2020 Labor Force Survey, the participation rate of women with disabilities in the Palestinian labor force was only 2 percent of women with disabilities, compared to 23 percent of men with disabilities.

Persons with disabilities are generally more at risk of violence of all types; the vulnerabilities of disabled persons intersect with other forms of vulnerability. 27 percent of persons with disabilities (18-64 years) who had never been married experienced violence at least once from a household member in Palestine in the past 12 months preceding the Violence Survey for the year 2019. The percentage varied considerably between the West Bank and Gaza Strip, as the percentage in the West Bank reached 19 percent compared to 35 percent in Gaza Strip. About one third of persons (18-64 years) with disabilities who have never been married experienced psychological violence, while almost one fifth experienced physical violence. Half of women with disabilities who are married or have been married suffer from psychological violence by their husbands.²⁵² Rape, sexual and physical abuse,

²⁴⁹ UNFPA. 2019. Violence Against the Elderly: Palestine.

²⁵⁰ PCBS. 2018. Population, Housing and Establishments Census 2017.

²⁵¹ That is, among those participating in the labor force who are aged 15 years and over.

²⁵² PCBS. 2019. Violence Survey.

forced marriage, deprivation of resources and services, as well as emotional abuse are the main forms of violence experienced by Palestinian women with disabilities.²⁵³

According to NGO providers, women with disabilities in Palestine are exposed to several types of violence, including physical, psychological, verbal, sexual, and economic, and violence from relatives and family members is common, including in relation to forced sterilization, forced medical intervention, humiliation and stigmatization, sexual harassment, sexual abuse, and rape (particularly for women with psychosocial and mental disabilities), abuse of social protection coverage and entitlements, deprivation from access to basic services or participation in public life, and deprivation from the use of or possession of assistive devices. Adults and children with disabilities moreover face additional barriers that limit their access to protection services, placing them at additional risk. In Gaza, 63 percent of persons with disability lack accessibility to mental health and psychosocial support services.²⁵⁴

Persons with disabilities in East Jerusalem were vulnerable to domestic violence and marginalization, especially children with disabilities, who were removed from the official family reunification process and documentation by their fathers due to their disabilities and, therefore, were denied access to the services provided by the Israeli authorities in this regard. Persons with disabilities without family reunification documents were the group affected the most and were most at risk of being denied their rights during the pandemic. Because of the disability, fathers sometimes refuse to register them in the reunification documents. This practice was observed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic in Palestinian society, with persons with disabilities being the most marginalized and stigmatized in general, and women and girls with disabilities suffering additional gender-based restrictions and marginalization.²⁵⁵

The participation of persons with disabilities in the public sphere, including in policy making and in the decisions that affects them, is very limited. Representation at the senior levels of government is low. Barriers to participation include lack of awareness by the political factions and the lack of reasonable accommodation measures. Socio-cultural limitations that aggravate the existing discriminatory context for persons with disability affect women more disproportionately than men.

According to the statistics of the Ministry of Education for the school year 2018-2019, there are 9,383 students with disabilities enrolled in the public schools, including 6,160 in the West Bank and 3,223 in the Gaza Strip, roughly split equally between males and females. Among the total number of enrolled students in both geographical locations, 303 had visual impairment, 2,257 had partial visual impairment, 197 had hearing impairment, 1,362 had partial hearing impairment, 2,847 had articulation disorders, 1,624 had physical disabilities, and 793 had mental disabilities. In terms of accessibility in schools, 60 percent of all schools had accessible toilets, including 65 percent of public schools, 73 percent of UNRWA schools, and 20.8 of private schools. In addition, 55.4 percent of all schools had ramps for persons with physical disabilities: 57.7 of percent public schools, 75.1 of percent UNRWA schools, and 25.9 of private schools.

In addition, the engagement of the Higher Council of Persons with Disabilities, as coordination and representative body, in directing the public policies associated with persons with disabilities' is limited. Between 2008 and 2018, the council held 15 meetings out of the 40 meetings required by its internal

²⁵³ UNFPA. 2019. Violence Against the Elderly: Palestine.

²⁵⁴ EducAid Italy. October 2020. Accessibility to Information and Services by People with Disabilities during COVID-19.

²⁵⁵ UNFPA. 2021. Gender-Based Violence Needs Assessment in East Jerusalem.

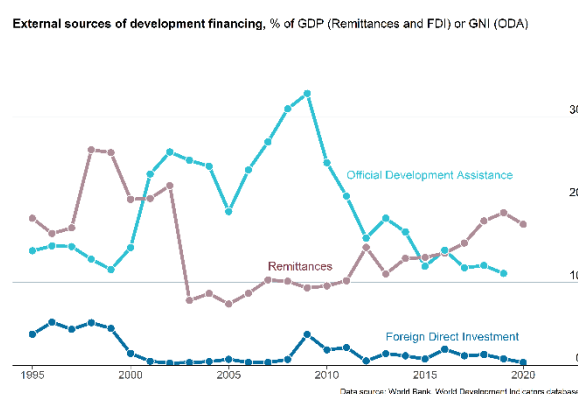
procedures. The Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR) documented 134 complaints from persons with disabilities in 2020 compared to 76 in 2019; among those 134, 80 complaints filed by the persons with disabilities themselves and the remaining were filed on their behalf. Most of these complaints were filed for men (79 cases); 18 were filed for women and 14 for children. These documented complaints are distributed into violations to 13 different clusters of rights with the highest top five related to: right to social security (19); right of those deprived of liberty to be treated humanely (14); and right to employment and entitlements in the public jobs (8); arbitrary detention (6); and right to obtain a public service (6).

7. The sustainable development financing landscape

Given the challenges outlined in this report, the deterioration of the sustainable development financing landscape is deeply concerning. The Palestinian economy has historically been a large recipient of donor assistance. According to the OECD, official development assistance²⁵⁶ peaked in 2009 at around 33 percent of Gross National Income but sharply declined thereafter. Since 2015, official development assistance has averaged around 12 percent of Gross National Income. Direct donor support to the Palestinian Authority's budget has also decreased, leading to an increase in the external debt of the PA over that same period.

Figure 16 shows different sources of development financing in the West Bank and Gaza Strip since 1995. Inflows of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to the Palestinian economy decreased by 50 percent over the 2015-2020 period. FDI inflows are also far lower than comparator countries in the region. For example, in 2019 foreign direct investment as a percent of GDP was only 0.71 percent in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, compared to 4.8 percent in Israel, 1.9 percent in Jordan, and 3.0 percent in Egypt.²⁵⁷ FDI flows are likely disproportionately aimed at male-dominated sectors because female employment is concentrated in sectors like health and education, which are primarily funded through government spending and through UNRWA.

Figure 16: Trends in development financing



Remittances are one of the largest sources of external financial flows to the State of Palestine, representing 16.1 percent of the country's GDP in 2020. Remittances have increased by 45 percent over the 2015-2020 period. Remittances, unlike FDI, probably support women and women-headed households and may play a role in preserving social cohesion and alleviating poverty, which is concentrated in female-headed households. Sex-disaggregated data on remittances are sparse, however, and require additional research to draw conclusions.

Foreign exports of goods and services rose by 9.9 percent over the 2015-2020 period, 4 percentage points higher than the global average. Exports of goods as a share of total exports have remained stagnant at 78 percent over the 2015-2020 period.

Globally, the donor climate is increasingly constrained, and mobilizing resources to support stabilization, reform, and sustainable development remains a key challenge for the PA and its partners. As a result, actors must consider all types of finance—public, private, domestic, international—and improve alignment and coherence of different types of financing sources. In the short to medium term, any emergency measures taken to shore up the fiscal situation of the PA should be met with concrete commitments from donors, the private sector, and financial institutions.

The principal policy-level coordination mechanism for development assistance is led by the Ad-Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC).²⁵⁸ The AHLC is chaired by Norway and co-sponsored by the EU and the US, with the participation of the UN, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund. The AHLC

²⁵⁶ Official Development Assistance (ODA) includes humanitarian assistance, according to the OECD definition.

²⁵⁷ Numbers drawn from the World Bank Data Bank, World Development Indicators.

²⁵⁸ 2020 UN Country Results Report State of Palestine, 2021

seeks to promote dialogue between donors, the PA, and the Government of Israel. The AHLC format has been critical at mobilizing donor support since the start of the Oslo process. The AHLC meets twice yearly, typically in Brussels and New York, and representatives are in constant contact locally as well.

At the local level, the current aid coordination architecture was agreed in 2017, with 15 sector working groups, donor advisory groups, an open development forum, a government coordination committee, and a joint liaison committee. This coordination architecture is supported by the Local Aid Coordination Secretariat (LACS). The LACS supports aid coordination in Palestine in providing coherent technical assistance and financial support to the Palestinian people based on national priorities and in line with the OECD-DAC Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness of 2005. The LACS was created following a decision by the Ad-hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC) in December 2005.

Over the years, the LACS has undergone various reforms to enhance aid effectiveness and coordination under Palestinian national leadership. At the end of 2019, the co-chairs of the LACS—Norway, UNSCO, and the World Bank—agreed with the PMO to transition the day-to-day management of the secretariat to the PMO. The co-chairs changed roles to “steering committee members.” In addition, a handful of additional sector working groups have been established in recent years. Whether due to COVID-19 or capacity issues, the LACS and the Aid Management System more broadly have not functioned as envisioned, with most of the work conducted by those working groups that are functioning and little interaction at senior policy levels. As part of its work on a new, forthcoming aid policy, the Prime Minister’s Office will again review the aid coordination architecture.

Notably, in 2022, the Prime Minister’s Office launched a new Aid Information Management System, an online portal which will track information on ongoing and planned projects from the government entities, donors, and implementing partners. The general objectives of the system are to (1) track and monitor the aids and financial funds flows, (2) to manage, maintain and automate the National Policy Plans by the PMO, (3) to manage, maintain and automate the Sectorial Strategic Plan to be provided by government institutions and line ministries, and (4) to automate the process of capturing related projects data (planned and ongoing projects) from relevant government entities, implementing agencies and/or funding agencies. The system should improve efficiency and coordination of donor activities in Palestine and to track and analyze the aid flows. It will enable donors, implementing agencies and government entities to define and share aid data. Integrated and creative approaches can link sustainable development financing to specific progress on the 2030 Agenda and SDGs. For example, achieving strong gender equality outcomes requires adequate and sustained financing. While there was an increase in development assistance from 2010 to 2018 to Palestine on gender equality and women’s empowerment (GEWE), peaking in 2017, support to programs specifically dedicated to GEWE as their principal objective has remained consistently low.²⁵⁹ Information is currently unavailable on the level of domestic investment; however, it should be available shortly with the publication of 2022 SDG reporting, which includes tracking on public allocations for gender equality and women’s empowerment (SDG 5.c.1). The assistance has mostly focused on social infrastructure and services, humanitarian aid, and production sectors. To achieve gender equality outcomes, it will also be important to look at diverse sources of financing. In another example, Palestine has been engaging in dialogues and policy reforms aiming at strengthening the food system development role as well as food security and nutrition even before the UN Food Summit. The Ministry

²⁵⁹ Gender-related aid data at a glance - OECD

of Agriculture, with the support of FAO, has formulated a comprehensive National Food and Nutrition Security Policy in Palestine 2030 (NFNSP) and a National Investment Plan for Food and Nutrition Security and Sustainable Agriculture 2020-2022 (NIP), endorsed by the Government of Palestine on 7 October 2020. The six priority components of the NIP were identified as specific pathways for the food system transformation: nutrition-specific investments; socio-economic inclusion of poor and vulnerable people; sustainable and inclusive agri-food value chains development; sustainable natural resources management in the context of climate change; consumer protection and food safety; territorial and co-responsibility approaches promotion. The NIP is a fundamental tool for ensuring country ownership, alignment of donors' interventions to the country priorities, higher coordination public and private interventions, and higher effectiveness and efficiency in use of resources. It is a good practice that may be adopted in other sectors as well.

The Palestinian government, private sector, and civil society agree on the positive role that innovation can play in addressing the challenges facing the implementation of the SDGs as well as boosting the economic status of the country which leads to resilience. This consensus needs to be turned into concrete, accelerated action.

The means of implementation are divided into financial and non-financial instruments. The financial means of implementation include public-private partnerships (PPPs), foreign direct investment (FDI), domestic revenue mobilization (DRM), and official development assistance (ODA). In turn, the non-financial means of implementation include global financial architecture and economic stability, systematic issues such as trade in goods and services, data collection and monitoring, transfer of technology and intellectual property rights, climate negotiation and outcomes, and overseas remittances, among others. Financial issues are one of the most critical challenges of implementation for achieving the SDGs, as the annual investment required for the economic infrastructure in the power, transport, water and sanitation, agriculture, buildings, telecommunications, industrial and forestry sectors is huge.

8. Multidimensional Risk Analysis

This multidimensional analysis presents some of the principal risks facing Palestinians and their institutions that hinder efforts to achieve the SDGs, to reduce inequalities and exclusion, and to meet human rights and other obligations. The analysis is based on the inter-disciplinary dimensions of the UN SDG-based Risk Framework which prioritize and cluster risk areas through an LNOB lens and facilitates risk informed planning. The analysis is rooted in a collaborative review by the UNCT through strategic guided discussions on context and conflict dynamics and how that could impact UN programming. The risk analysis captures dynamics at the subnational, national, regional, and global level. Ongoing risks in Palestine include political instability, conflicts and violent extremism, economic and financial instability, lack of access to quality services.

The table below assesses the likelihood of adverse events within each risk area, along with their potential impact should these adverse events occur. Reflecting the ongoing occupation, the continuing high risk of conflict, and the continuing humanitarian crisis, most risks are highly likely to occur (indeed many of them are already occurring) and will continue to have a high impact on the progress of sustainable development in the OPT. As evidenced in the previous UNDAF cycle, most of these risks will present significant potential barriers to the implementation of UN development programming in the coming years. The UNCT will address this operational risk environment when it designs its new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework in 2022.

Table 11: Multidimensional risk matrix

RISK AREAS	DESCRIPTION	SCOPE	LIKELIHOOD	IMPACT ON UN OPERATIONS
Democratic space (SDG 16, 17)	Risks to democratic and human rights institutions and to civil and political rights resulting from shrinking civic space, exclusion, repression, and intimidation, lack of respect for separation of powers	Impact of the Israeli occupation	High	High
		Human rights and IHL concerns		
		Shrinking space for civil society, for freedom of expression, assembly, association		
		Failure to hold PLC and Presidential elections, including in Gaza		
		Concentration of power		
		Exclusion of women, youth, and marginalized groups from political processes		
Political stability (SDG 16, 17)	Risks to the stability of established political and governmental structures in the territory resulting from politically-driven factors	Stagnant peace process and challenges to the Oslo framework	High	High
		Breakdown of factional relations		
		Inability to achieve Palestinian reconciliation, unity Government, or a government of national consensus. Loss of Government legitimacy		
		Weakening of Palestinian political institutions, leading to State instability and lack of trust		
		Conflict dynamics, pervasive violence, instability, perpetuation of conflict narratives		
		Breakdown in Israeli-Palestinian relations		
Economic stability (SDG 8, 9, 10, 17)	Risks to the economic, financial, and fiscal stability of the country which could impact governance, social cohesion, or people’s ability to satisfy their needs	Limited grassroots peacebuilding and confidence-building initiatives	High	High
		Fiscal collapse		
		Unrests and protests related to economic and fiscal instability		
		Collapsed or severely eroded public services		
		Breakdown in clearance revenue transfers from Israel		
		Aid dependency		
		Unemployment and poor livelihood		
Unemployment, spike in prices				
Justice and rule of law (SDG 16, 17)	Risks to the effective and comprehensive implementation and application of the principals of justice, the rule of law and accountability from issues	Increased discrimination and violation of workers’ rights, deteriorating wages and working conditions	High	High
		Lack of transparency and accountability, corruption		
		Insufficient and inconsistent legal and institutional frameworks		
		Lack of legitimate legislation and separation of powers		
		Shrinking space for civil society and human rights defenders		
		Failure to improve the quality and independence of justice services		
		Lack of trust in the justice and weakening rule of law		
Law and order breakdown				

Public health (SDG 3, 17)	Risks to the population, the economy and stability of the territory resulting from actual and emerging public health emergencies	COVID-19 pandemic continues or outbreak of a new pandemic	High	High
		Unequal access to quality health and developmental information and services		
		Children and mother mortality raise		
		Increase of malnutrition and malnourishment rates		
		Limited access to essential health services in Gaza Restrictions on medical transfers out of Gaza		
		Inability to cope with increasing violence and injuries		
Gender Equality (SDG 1, 2, 4, 5, 16)	Risks that prevent women and girls from fully enjoying their human rights and hinder the eliminations of all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres	Continued discrimination and gender-based violence (GBV), including early/forced marriage, intimate partner/family violence, sexual harassment, rape, incest, denial of resources, and psychological abuse	High	High
		Food insecurity and loss of livelihood for households headed by women, especially during conflicts and violent escalations		
		Continuation of socio-cultural patriarchal norms		
		Lack of progress on the national action plan to implement the concluding observations of the CEDAW Committee		
		Persistence of laws discriminating against women and girls		
Food security, land, and agriculture (SDG 2, 11, 17)	Risks to people, agriculture, and/or food production in the territory resulting from crop, food production, livestock, and land-related issues	Water shortages/lack of access to water; destruction of and damage to water systems	High	Medium
		Lack of inputs (e.g., fertilizers) and capital for food production		
		Land expropriation/Insecure property rights; weak land tenure security		
		Discriminatory planning and zoning		
		Reduced food imports/ transboundary disease shocks		
		Extreme weather events		
		Open conflict (war)		
		Food ERW/UXO resulting in lack of access to farmland		
		Closure/blockage of food commodity movements		
Environment and climate (SDG 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17)	Risks to the ecology of the territory, its ecosystem and its people resulting from issues associated with environment, climate, and natural resources	Water shortages/lack of access to water through drought/lack of river flow/Israeli expropriation of water resources	High	Medium
		Natural disasters, hazards, and extreme weather conditions		
		Water shortages in the basins for human and agricultural production		
		Reduction of agricultural productivity		
		Energy insecurity		
		Pollution		
		Lack of environmental sustainability and agrobiodiversity due to the military operations, settler activity and separation wall		
		Lack of affordable housing; and lack of affordable public transportation		
		Risk of Gaza aquifer pollution due to over-extraction and saltwater incursion		

Infrastructure and access to social services (SDG 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 17)	Risks to the population, the economy and stability in the territory resulting from inadequate and lack of public and private physical infrastructures and basic social services	Poor governance of key service sectors	High	Medium
		Recurring destruction and damage due to hostilities and Israeli occupation policies, including to cultural heritage sites		
		Restrictions on availability, use, and accessibility to transport, road, electricity, and telecommunications networks		
		Subsurface ERW contamination impacting reconstruction Disruption to quality and quantity of fresh water and for agriculture		
		Shrinking of the operational space available for humanitarian and development work; reduction and/or limited access and movement of staff and goods		
		Unequal access to services; poor quality of services		
		Lack of financial sustainability of key services		
Social cohesion, equality, and non-discrimination (SDG 1, 5, 10, 17)	Risks to social unity and equality resulting from direct and indirect discrimination, horizontal inequalities and demographic trends	Marginalizing actions against minorities	High	Medium
		Insufficient social protection level and exclusion; Increased fragmentation and inadequacy of social protection system		
		Discriminatory or ineffective economic and social policies		
		Polarization of extremism and hate speech		
		Demographic stress		
		Deterioration in social capital and trust Continuation of patriarchal social norms		
Regional and global influences (SDG 16, 17)	Risks to the integrity, stability, safety and prosperity of the territory and its people because of the actions of external actors, or the influence of external events	Regional actors take actions that heighten political and factional tensions within OPT	High	Medium
		Conflict spillover from Lebanon, Jordan, or Egypt		
		Transnational organized crimes		
		Transnational violent extremism		
		Reduced aid flows to the PA		
Internal security (SDG 16, 17)	Risks to the security of the territory, its people and infrastructure, and to the ability of the international community to operate effectively because of security issues	Lack of impartiality of security services, insufficient checks and balances	High	High
		Inability to prevent, manage and respond to violence and crime		
		Factional conflict, factional war, increase in violent attacks		
		Non-state armed groups active and operate freely		
		Recurring violations of human rights in law enforcement in East Jerusalem and Area C		
		ERW contamination and mine fields in the West Bank Excessive use of force or killings by security forces or other groups		
Displacement and migration (SDG 16, 17)	Risks to people and the stability of the territory resulting from pressures associated with displacement and/or migration	Instability and conflict related to refugee camps in Gaza and West Bank	High	Medium
		Migration and displacement in West Bank and Gaza due to lack of economic opportunities, instability, conflict, occupation, demolitions, and forced evictions		
		Brain drain from West Bank and Gaza Strip into Israel and elsewhere		

9. Pathways to achieving the 2030 Agenda

This Common Country Analysis identifies the principal barriers to achieving the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as the Israeli occupation, the internal Palestinian political divide, and recurrent conflict. These barriers, as noted in the introductory chapter, result in significant challenges to good governance and the enjoyment of human rights; to building and maintaining peace; to generating economic growth and fiscal stability; and to human development. The CCA also identified several particularly vulnerable groups in Palestine, among them economically disadvantaged households, women and girls, children and youth, the elderly, persons with disabilities, LGBT+ persons, marginalized groups, refugees, and residents of Area C, H2, the Seam Zone, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. The findings of the CCA also highlight the importance of building partnerships with national and international stakeholders to accelerate progress on specific SDGs. The UNCT, drawing from the analysis in the CCA, believes five of the most promising enablers for accelerating progress on the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals in Palestine are:

Advancing peace

Advancing peace remains the foundational opportunity for reducing humanitarian need, accelerating sustainable development, and building strong institutions in the OPT. The primary responsibility for advancing the Middle East Peace Process lies with the parties, but their partners can impart momentum to the formal peace process and can strengthen the enabling environment for peace. For example, international, national, and local actors can work in tandem to strengthen and maintain the conditions necessary for the two-State solution—among them, a growing, inclusive Palestinian economy and strong Palestinian institutions, underpinned by the rule of law. Maintaining a political horizon for the two-State solution also has significant humanitarian and development implications: it reduces the risk of conflict escalations, reduces communal tensions, and generates private sector and household investment. The reverse is also true: improving the impact of humanitarian and development assistance can provide avenues for conflict resolution, risk mitigation, and peacebuilding. Including marginalized groups, such as women and youth, in peacebuilding activities will be critical for these efforts to be viable. The UNCT's adoption of an HDP nexus approach in 2020 is an important step toward integrating peace considerations across humanitarian and development assistance to Palestinians and their institutions.

Supporting good governance, effective institutions, and human rights

This CCA outlines the significant challenges to governance, institution building, and the respect for human rights. The current context is a fragmented geographic, social, economic, and political landscape, whereby Palestinian households, firms, and communities are divided from one another and lack access to important resources necessary for Palestinian development. Important opportunities for accelerating the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals reside in protecting human rights and gender equality through strengthened legal, institutional, and human capacities. Improving and implementing a strong and rights-based legal framework to improve governance governing the public institutions, can improve accountability, transparency, and protection of the fundamental rights of everyone, including people most at risk of marginalization due to intersectionality of discrimination and vulnerability. Within the current context, this can only be achieved through reforms and political will. Critical components of this democratization process include increased space for civil society and the holding of national elections.

Enabling private sector growth for employment, livelihoods, and poverty reduction

At the individual and household level, one of the most important opportunities for reducing humanitarian need and accelerating sustainable development outcomes is to dramatically reduce unemployment and build sustainable livelihoods, particularly in Gaza and among women, youth, people with disabilities, refugees, and other vulnerable groups. Individuals and households able to find decent employment and livelihoods opportunities are far less dependent on humanitarian assistance to meet their basic needs, far more able to invest in their own human and social capital, and far more resilient in the face of shocks. Every decent work opportunity and sustainable livelihood generated in the OPT has multiplier effects on the overall development trajectory. It will be critical that these efforts are led by the private sector to generate sustainable growth over time. Enabling the private sector to take this role will be critical, for example, through an improved business climate, stronger rule of law, policy reforms, and investment incentives.

Strengthening equitable access to quality services

Significant barriers to sustainable development include the lack of regular, equitable, and high-quality provision of public goods and services, including health, education, social protection, water, and electricity. Too often, high-quality public goods and services do not reach certain areas where Palestinians live, including the Gaza Strip, Area C, and East Jerusalem. Nor do they reach certain sectors of Palestinian society, for example, women and girls, youth, Bedouin communities, people with disability, and older persons. Addressing the furthest left behind requires strengthening systems to provide comprehensive, regular, high-quality delivery of public goods, such as health and education, at adequate levels and tailored to the specific needs and vulnerabilities of underserved areas and groups. Targeting basic services would be facilitated by adopting an integrated and participatory spatial planning apparatus. Creative thinking on social protection and rationalized solutions can help create agile, transparent, and digitized solutions. By building resilient and high-quality systems, Palestinians' rights to health, education, and a decent life can be attained.

Building climate resilience, accessing natural resources, and leveraging food systems

The need for climate resilience and good management of natural resources are greatest in contexts affected by conflict and crisis like Palestine, where planning is difficult and access to natural resources are restricted. Palestinian economic growth and development would be greatly accelerated with greater access to the natural resources in the West Bank, including agricultural land, water, and areas promising for solar power generation, including in Area C. In the Gaza Strip, better access to clean water and to fisheries in the Mediterranean Sea would also generate economic growth and improve health outcomes. In leveraging these resources to develop a low-carbon, resource-efficient and socially inclusive economy, Palestinians can draw on relatively high levels of tertiary education, and high and growing human development indicators. Developing and strengthening inclusive policies and interventions that promote climate resilience, resilient infrastructure, sustainable food systems, climate-smart agriculture, clean energy and technologies, integrated water resource management, good governance in natural resources management, enhanced tenure security and good land governance, and the preservation of ecosystems provide key entry points. It will also be important to ensure that growth is not achieved at the expense of the environment and that investments in the green economy support women and men equitably. Addressing issues of pollution, sustainable consumption, and production are critical to achieve long term sustainable economic growth and development.

Concluding observations

The most direct route to achieving the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs remains a negotiated solution to the Israel-Palestinian conflict and an end to the Israeli occupation in line with relevant United Nations resolutions, international law, and bilateral agreements in pursuit of achieving the vision of two States—Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous, viable, and sovereign Palestinian State—living side by side in peace and security within secure and recognized borders, on the basis of the pre-1967 lines, with Jerusalem as the capital of both States. Among other benefits, returning an internationally-recognized Palestinian government to the Gaza Strip would unlock additional international development assistance to Gaza and allow implementation of a greater number and wider range of critical infrastructure projects there. This would reduce humanitarian need and support a path towards negotiations and eventually peace.

Short of these goals, several policy changes by Israel would dramatically improve the humanitarian and development situation of Palestinians. Among the most important are ending the strict closure regime in Gaza, increasing access to land and natural resources in the West Bank, improving the circulation of goods and people within the West Bank including East Jerusalem, allowing greater Palestinian development in Area C, and improving human rights across OPT.

To accelerate their sustainable development outcomes, Palestinians and their institutions must also continue governance and fiscal reforms, entrench the rule of law, improve human rights, create an inclusive and dynamic business environment, empower women, girls, and youth, and protect the most vulnerable and the environment.

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Annex 1: The Atlas of Sustainable Development 2020

The Atlas of Sustainable Development 2020 is available online:

https://unsco.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/atlas_of_sustainable_development_2020.pdf

Annex 2: The UNCT COVID-19 Development System Response Plan

The UNCT COVID-19 Development System Response Plan for the Occupied Palestinian Territory is available online:

<https://unsdg.un.org/resources/unct-covid-19-development-system-response-plan-occupied-palestinian-territory>

Annex 3: The 2022 Humanitarian Response Plan for oPt

The HCT Humanitarian Response Plan for 2022 is available online:

<https://www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-response-plan-2022>

Annex 4: MSNA vulnerability indicators, dimensions, and descriptive statistics

The Vulnerability Assessment Framework dashboard is online:

<https://reach-info.org/opt/msna/vulnerabilities/>

Figure 17: MSNA vulnerability indicators and dimensions

Indicator	West Bank	Gaza Strip	OPT
% of HHs with at least one child not enrolled in school during the 2020-2021 school year	23%	36%	28%
% of HHs that cannot access a functional basic and secondary school within a 30min walk from dwellings	4%	4%	4%
% of HHs reporting safety concerns in relation to their childrens' education	19%	17%	18%
% of HHs experiencing education vulnerability	38%	47%	41%
% of HHs with at least one adult (18+) unemployed and seeking work	18%	42%	27%
% of HHs who earned income from precarious or unstable sources in the 30 days prior to data collection	30%	46%	36%
% of HHs experiencing employment vulnerability	40%	65%	50%
% of HHs who reported they ate less	14%	51%	28%
% of HHs who reported they went the entire day without eating	5%	5%	5%
% of HHs experiencing food insecurity vulnerability	14%	51%	28%
% of HHs with at least one member who has a chronic disease	47%	49%	48%
% of HHs with at least one member who faced difficulties in accessing health services	13%	22%	16%
% of HHs experiencing health vulnerability	51%	58%	54%
% of HHs whose expenditure on food and water exceeds 80% of income	10%	10%	10%
% of HHs reporting a primary reason for taking on debt is basic household expenditures, education, food, or healthcare	30%	53%	38%
% of HHs experiencing monetary vulnerability	36%	57%	44%
% of HHs with any member reportedly experiencing psychosocial distress	21%	38%	27%
% of HHs with at least one child engaged in labor	5%	4%	5%
% of HHs in which women and girls avoid areas because they feel unsafe	10%	11%	10%
% of HHs experiencing protection vulnerability	30%	46%	36%
% of HHs living under critical shelter conditions	2%	14%	7%
% of HHs with household members sleeping in the living room	18%	36%	25%
% of HHs reporting risk of eviction	4%	7%	5%
% of HHs without a secure occupancy arrangement for their current shelter	4%	9%	6%
% of HHs experiencing shelter vulnerability	24%	54%	35%
% of HHs with limited access to a sufficient quantity of water for drinking and domestic purposes	18%	17%	18%
% of HHs affected by flooding	8%	12%	9%
% of HHs with limited access to improved solid waste services	6%	4%	5%
% of HHs experiencing WASH vulnerability	28%	30%	28%

Figure 18: MSNA vulnerability dimensions by geography and demographic group

Household Characteristic	Geography	Education	Employment	Food Security	Health	Monetary	Protection	Shelter	WASH
All households	Gaza Strip	47%	65%	51%	58%	57%	46%	54%	30%
	West Bank	38%	40%	14%	51%	36%	30%	24%	28%
	OPT	41%	50%	28%	54%	44%	36%	35%	28%
Female-headed households	Gaza Strip	28%	79%	43%	70%	63%	45%	52%	26%
	West Bank	22%	62%	19%	67%	26%	34%	25%	23%
	OPT	24%	67%	25%	68%	35%	37%	32%	23%
Male-headed households	Gaza Strip	50%	63%	52%	57%	56%	46%	54%	30%
	West Bank	41%	35%	13%	47%	39%	30%	23%	29%
	OPT	45%	46%	28%	51%	46%	36%	35%	29%
Households with any children	Gaza Strip	57%	63%	55%	53%	57%	47%	58%	31%
	West Bank	49%	33%	16%	40%	38%	28%	29%	30%
	OPT	52%	46%	33%	46%	46%	36%	41%	30%
Households with no children	Gaza Strip	12%	72%	39%	75%	55%	40%	38%	25%
	West Bank	19%	52%	11%	69%	34%	35%	15%	24%
	OPT	17%	57%	18%	71%	40%	36%	21%	24%
Households with any disability	Gaza Strip	46%	77%	61%	78%	61%	55%	60%	32%
	West Bank	35%	63%	24%	78%	42%	48%	32%	37%
	OPT	39%	69%	39%	78%	50%	51%	43%	35%
Households with no disability	Gaza Strip	48%	60%	47%	50%	55%	42%	51%	28%
	West Bank	39%	33%	11%	42%	34%	25%	21%	25%
	OPT	42%	43%	24%	45%	42%	31%	32%	26%
Households with any elderly	Gaza Strip	32%	76%	45%	87%	55%	44%	44%	22%
	West Bank	22%	57%	11%	76%	27%	38%	16%	27%
	OPT	26%	64%	23%	80%	37%	40%	26%	26%
Households with no elderly	Gaza Strip	51%	63%	52%	52%	57%	46%	56%	31%
	West Bank	41%	36%	15%	45%	38%	29%	25%	28%
	OPT	45%	46%	29%	48%	45%	35%	37%	29%
Refugee households	Gaza Strip	47%	66%	51%	60%	56%	46%	55%	30%
	West Bank	42%	44%	21%	60%	42%	40%	29%	33%
	OPT	45%	56%	38%	60%	49%	43%	43%	31%
Non-refugee households	Gaza Strip	49%	64%	51%	54%	60%	45%	50%	29%
	West Bank	36%	38%	11%	47%	34%	26%	21%	25%
	OPT	38%	44%	20%	48%	39%	30%	27%	26%