



UNITED NATIONS
PALESTINE



United Nations **Common Country Analysis** for the Occupied Palestinian Territory



United Nations Country Team
November 2022



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FOREWORD

On behalf of the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) for the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), I am pleased to introduce the 2022 Common Country Analysis (CCA) of the state of sustainable development in the OPT after decades of uneven social and economic progress and institution building. The purpose of the CCA is to serve as the knowledge base for the new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) and its implementation scheduled to begin in January 2023. The CCA will be 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 Palestinian Authority and other stakeholders.

The report examines the underlying and structural factors affecting the lives and livelihoods of Palestinians and addresses historical, current and emerging political, security, social, economic, disaster, cultural and environmental risks. As such, this publication draws on expertise, information and knowledge across the development, peace and security, human rights and humanitarian pillars of the United Nations system working in or on the OPT. 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.

In developing this publication, the drafting team consulted multiple stakeholders from Palestinian civil society, the Palestinian Authority, development partners and others. I wish to thank my UN colleagues – inside the OPT, across the region, and at headquarters – who provided inputs and peer review for this publication. I also wish to thank our Palestinian friends and colleagues, the national and international experts, and other stakeholders who provided helpful comments and criticism. Under the UN development system reforms, the CCA is intended to be a living document, updated regularly.

Lynn Hastings
United Nations
Resident Coordinator

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AHLC	Ad Hoc Liaison Committee
AIDS	Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
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
CVA	Cash and voucher assistance
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
DRR	Disaster risk reduction
ERW	Explosive remnants of war
ESCWA	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FDI	Foreign direct investment
FHH	Female-headed household
FSS	Food Security Sector
GDP	Gross domestic product
GER	Gross enrolment rate
GNI	Gross national income
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
HDP Nexus	Humanitarian-development-peace nexus
HH	Household
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
ICT	Information and communication technology
IEC	Israeli Electricity Corporation
I/HJC	Interim High Judicial Council
ILO	International Labour Organization
LACS	Local Aid Coordination Secretariat
LGBT+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and other
LWSC	Land and Water Settlement Commission
MHH	Male-headed household
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
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NIP	National Investment Plan
NIS	New Israeli Shekel
NPA	National Policy Agenda
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
OPT	Occupied Palestinian Territory
PA	Palestinian Authority
PCBS	Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
PMO	Prime Minister's Office
PNCTP	Palestinian National Cash Transfer Program
RCO	Resident Coordinator's Office
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UN	United Nations
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
UNSCO	Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
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 (covering about 40 per cent of the territory and 90 per cent 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 per cent 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 per cent of Gaza’s agricultural land and as much as 85 per cent 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 metres from Israel’s perimeter fence. The Oslo Accords set the Gaza fishing zone at 20 nautical miles; however, Israel restricts the limit to between 6 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.

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 per cent 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 Israeli 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 to 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 (OPT), 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.

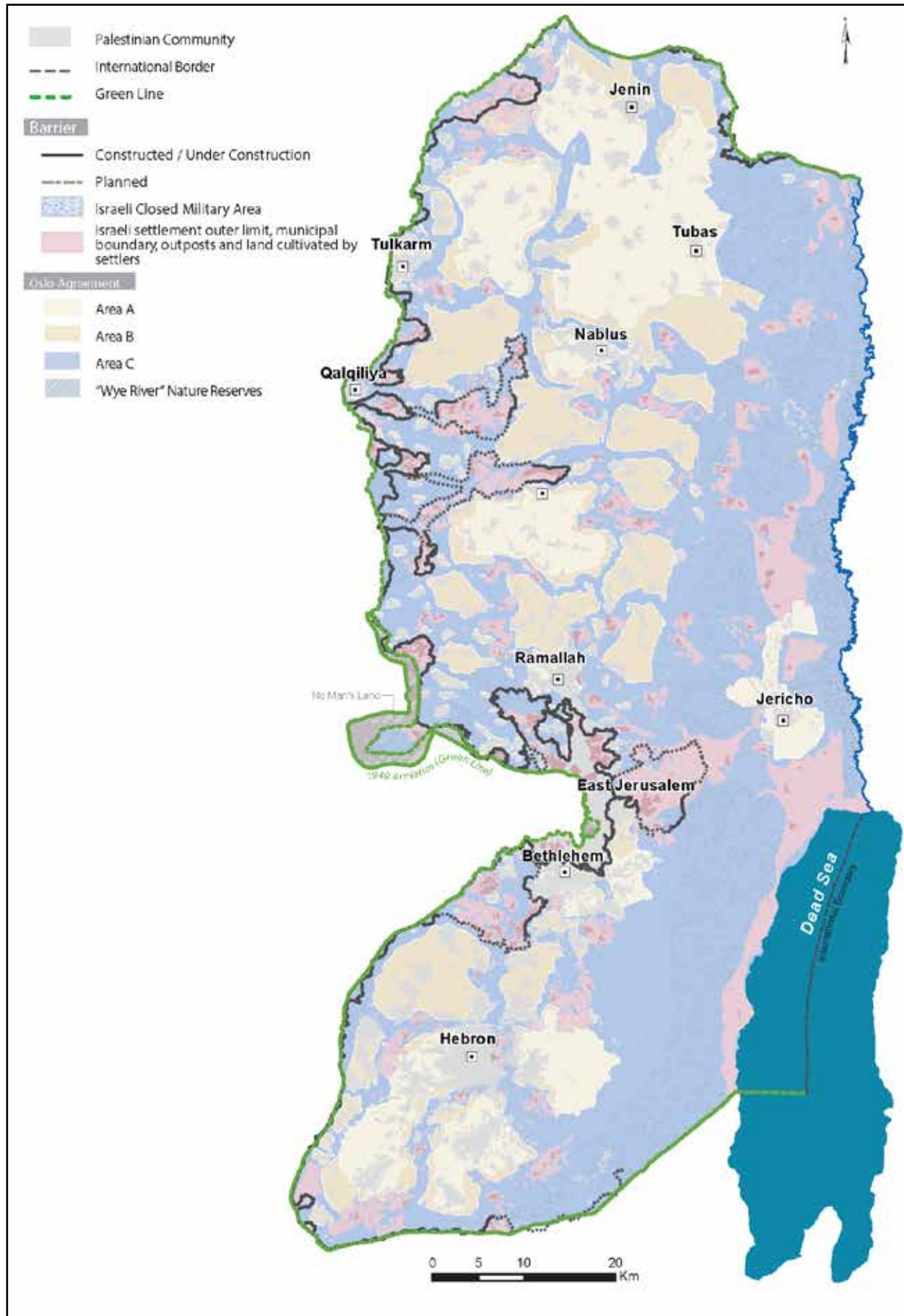
“Palestine,” “State of Palestine,” “Occupied Palestinian Territory”: In this report, the terms “Palestine”, “State of Palestine” and “Occupied Palestinian Territory” are used depending on context. The term “Occupied Palestinian Territory” refers as a whole to the geographical area of the Palestinian 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 non-member 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.

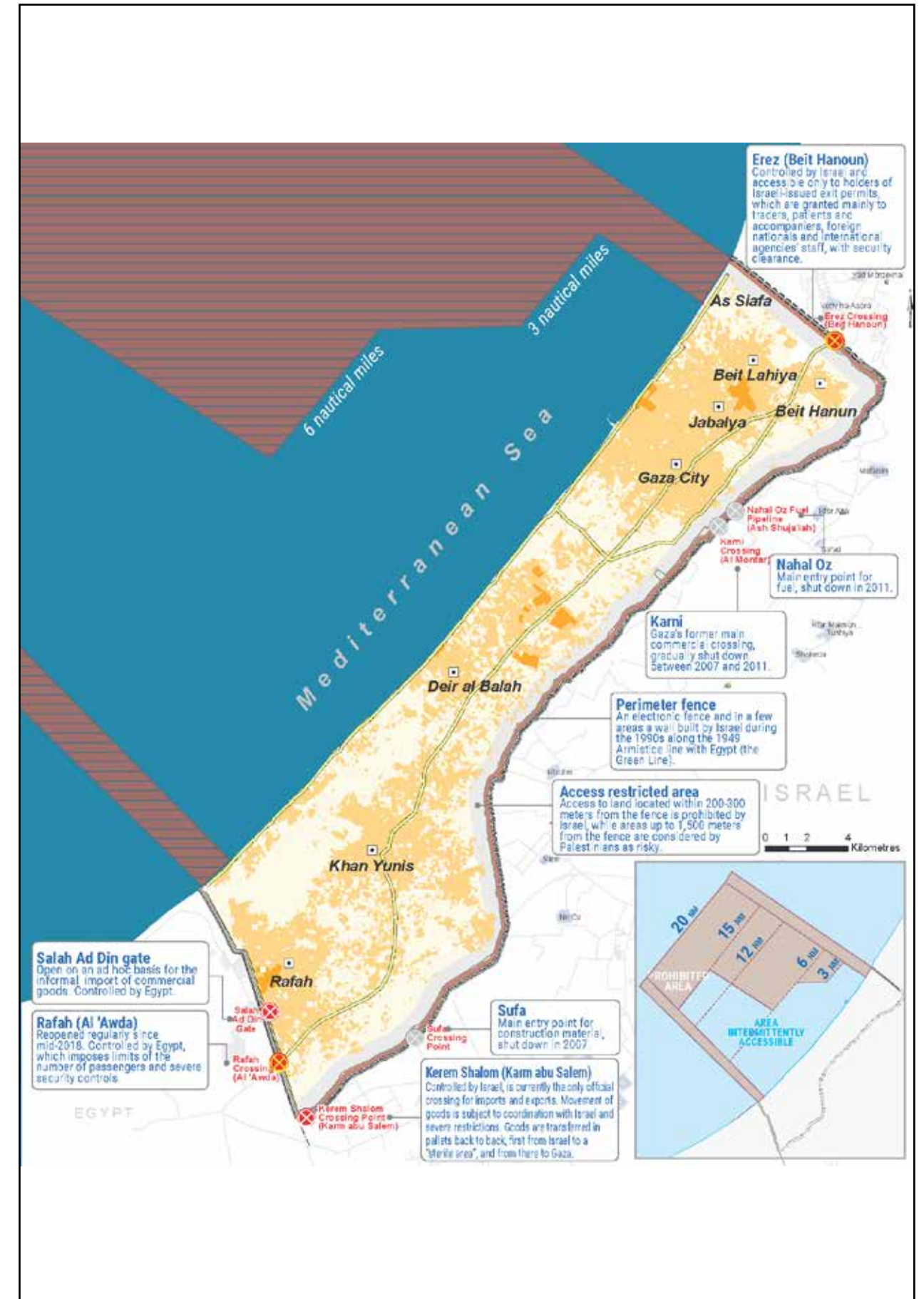
West Bank Barrier: A barrier of 8-metre-high concrete walls, fences, ditches, razor wire, an electronic monitoring system, patrol roads and a buffer zone. Israel constructed the Barrier beginning in 2002, with the stated aim of preventing violent attacks by Palestinians. The vast majority of the Barrier’s 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 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 map



Data source: OCHA

Figure 2: The Gaza Strip map



Data 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) as the Israeli occupation, the internal Palestinian political divide, and recurrent conflict. These barriers result in significant challenges to good governance; to 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.

These include 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 documents the urgency of working collectively in Palestine 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 a serious 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 Israeli-Palestinian conflict and an end to the Israeli occupation. In addition, 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.

Short of these goals, several policy changes by Israel would dramatically improve the humanitarian and development situation for Palestinians. Among the most important steps 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 the 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

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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 Agreement (Oslo II), 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 non-member observer State in the United Nations, with the support of 138 Member States. At present, 138 United Nations 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 the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (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 Israeli-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 took control of the Gaza Strip using armed force in 2007, displacing the internationally recognized Palestinian Authority. Since the takeover by Hamas, 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 also been a constant reality in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The manifestations include 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 is to support Palestinians and Israelis to resolve the conflict and end the occupation in line with relevant United Nations resolutions, international law and bilateral agreements. The vision is for 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 towards 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, it is still possible to achieve these goals and there are still opportunities to build momentum towards 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 labour force participation rate	73.6%	61.2%	68.9%
Women's labour force participation rate	17.2%	17.3%	17.2%
Youth labour 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. Currently, 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 United Nations 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 those pertaining to common or shared facilities and services.

The main purpose of the UNCT is for these United Nations entities to plan and work together for tangible results that enhance 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 innovation in its advocacy and assistance. In January 2020, the UNCT formally adopted an “HDP nexus approach” to its humanitarian, development and peace efforts. As a first step, the UNCT and the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) merged their 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 and 2022, the UNCT and HCT conducted two Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessments with an explicitly HDP nexus approach. The humanitarian and development systems

in the OPT are working towards aligning their strategic planning exercises – the new United Nations 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 its 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), Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine 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, 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.

This 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 programme 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 CCA is 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.

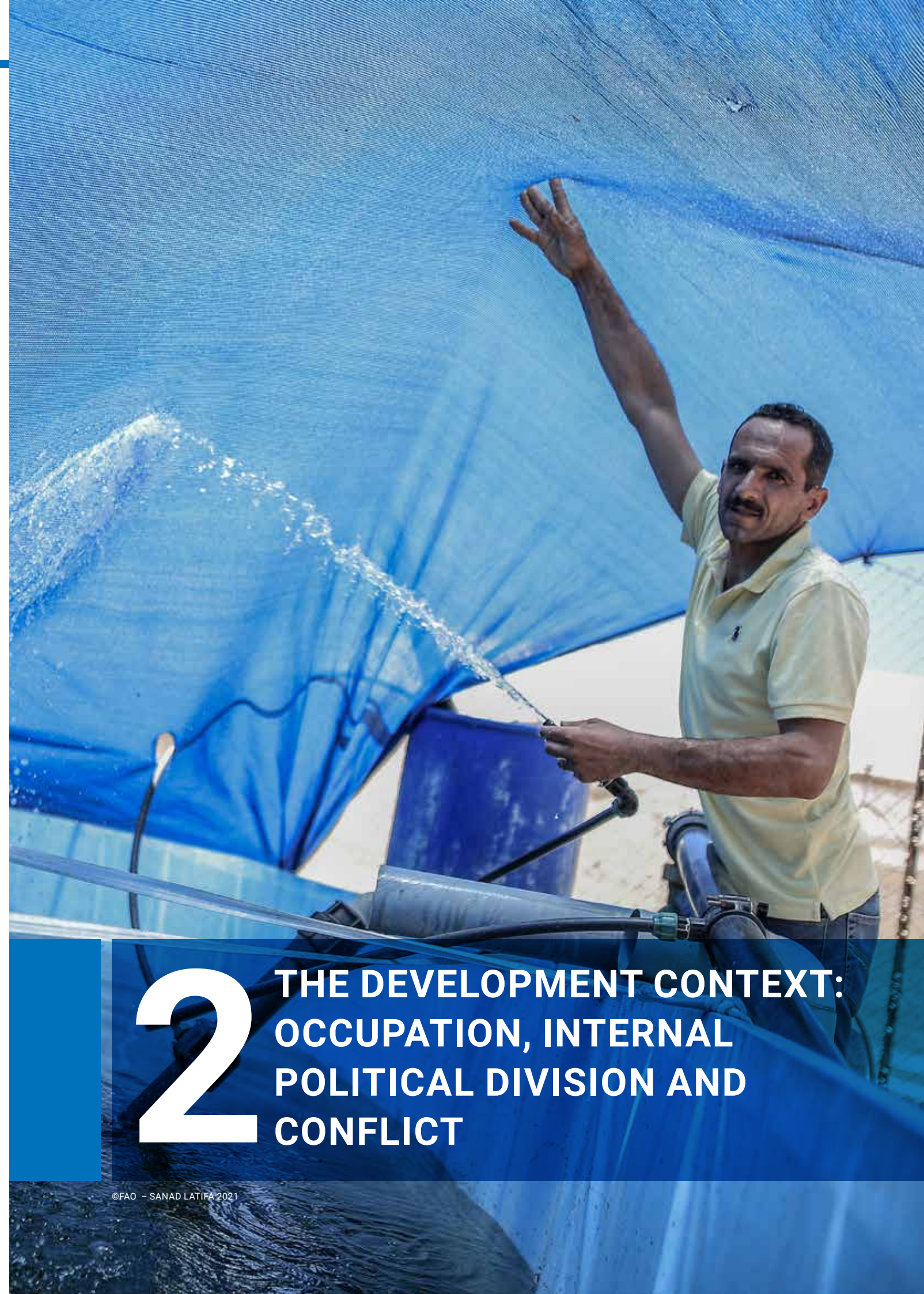
This new CCA is integrated. It connects analysis of issues for the achievement of each SDG and across SDGs, in line with the overall commitment to leave no one behind, to United Nations Charter values, and to international norms and standards. It reflects systems thinking, an approach

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 on expertise, information and knowledge across the development, peace and security, human rights and humanitarian pillars of the United Nations system working in and on the OPT. As the joint United Nations analysis of the development context, 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. 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 for achieving the 2030 Agenda in the 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 barrier averaging 60 metres wide separates many Palestinian communities from each other and includes 8-metre 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 responsibility 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, i.e. 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, and laws enacted during the Ottoman and British Mandate periods. In addition, personal status laws are still applicable, including the

Egyptian Family Rights Law (1954) in the Gaza Strip and the Jordanian Personal Status Law (1976) in the West Bank.

The Israeli occupation, the territorial fragmentation and the practical limitations on the control the PA can exercise mean that where people live also heavily determines the extent to which the State of Palestine can fulfil its human rights obligations. These include 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.

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 to re-seat a parliament has resulted in essential draft laws and regulations either being 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 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. United Nations treaty bodies have continuously called on Palestinians to re-convene their legislature due to its crucial role in the implementation of United Nations 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 rights 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

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

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, paras. 31–32.

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

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 programme-based budgets. The shift from itemized budgets to programme- and performance-based budgets will enhance linkages between the preparation of strategic plans and the government budget and linkages between development spending and the recurrent government budget. The shift to programme-based budgets allows financial allocations to be linked with the objectives and policies of the institution's programmes, which are prepared based on the strategic plan of the government institution. It thus makes it possible to evaluate the impact of public spending.

The Ministry of Finance has developed a special guide for preparing programme-based budgets and for training executives in ministries and government institutions to use it. The Council of Ministers has also approved the formation of a planning and budgeting group at the decision-making level, headed by the minister, the undersecretary of the ministry, or their equivalent in non-ministerial bodies. This group 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 programme-based budgets and to enhance connections between planning and budgeting, a joint working group was formed from the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Finance.

In addition, the government has adopted gender-responsive budgeting practices. There are national programmes 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 programmes, gender equality is mainstreamed in objectives and in outputs targeting women and marginalized groups, as is the case in the education and health sectors. Other sectors such as infrastructure, transport and economy have introduced some gender-related programmes, statistics and analysis but have not fully integrated gender indicators and programmes into their budgets. More work is needed to increase financing for gender priorities and to 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 an absence of checks and balances, has contributed to low public confidence in the government, the judiciary and security forces.⁸ In recent years, some legislation has been passed to promote transparency and accountability, including in relation to protecting whistle-blowers,⁹ controlling the receipt of gifts,¹⁰ and conflicts of interest. Moreover, the General Personnel Council and the Ministry of Interior have delivered 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, a general lack of transparency and accountability within the Palestinian government – both at the national and local levels – has eroded citizens' trust in their representatives and policymakers. This has been 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 per cent of Palestinians believe that the government is insufficiently addressing corruption, while 56 per cent of Palestinians polled in 2019 were not satisfied with the levels of democracy.¹³ Around 17 per cent of Palestinians report having paid a bribe to access public services, and 38 per cent 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 Worldwide Governance Indicators dataset for 2021 confirms the PA's limited capacity to control and counter corruption, and to effectively administer its territory.¹⁵

The lack of transparency and accountability in public appointments weakens representation – the ties 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 have low representation of women in these institutions, particularly in decision-making positions. Women account for only 4 per cent of police officers, 20 per cent of public prosecutors and 18 per cent 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 per cent) 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 centres 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 improvements, this is even more visible at the local government level, where most local governance units, 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 to upgrade and strengthen 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 OPT through a military order.¹⁸ On 12 July 2022, nine European States announced that "no substantial information was received from Israel that would justify reviewing our policy towards the

12 Transparency International, *Global Corruption Barometer Middle East & North Africa 2019* (2019).

13 Transparency International, *Global Corruption Barometer Middle East & North Africa 2019* (2019).

14 Transparency International, *Global Corruption Barometer Middle East & North Africa 2019* (2019).

15 World Bank, *Worldwide Governance Indicators* (2021).

16 PCBS, *Women and Men in Palestine: Issues and Statistics* (2018).

17 UN Women and Promundo-US, *Understanding Masculinities: Results from the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) – Middle East and North Africa* (Cairo and Washington, D.C., 2017).

18 European Union, Israel/Palestine: *Statement by the Spokesperson on the listing of six Palestinian organisations as terrorist organisations*, (28 October 2021); UNSCO, *Briefing to the Security Council on the Situation in the Middle East* (30 November 2021).

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 State of Palestine, Council of Ministers, Resolution 7: "Whistleblowers and Witnesses Protection System" (2019).

10 State of Palestine, Council of Ministers, Resolution 10: "Gift Accepting System" in public service positions (2019).

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

six Palestinian NGOs on the basis of the Israeli decision to designate these NGOs as ‘terrorist organisations.’” 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.

The Palestinian Authority has also restricted the civic space for Palestinians and the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. This has included 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 journalists and persons criticizing the authorities in the online space being targeted with 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. They include 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, such as rocket attacks from militants in Gaza. The most direct route to achieving the development aims of the Palestinians remains a negotiated solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and an 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. This includes the advancement of new plans for future construction, including in politically sensitive locations in and around Jerusalem, such as E1 and Givat Hamatos. Meanwhile, settler organizations 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. Large settlement blocs, outposts, barriers, and other infrastructure fragment Palestinian society and pose challenges in terms of effective governance, access to land, public services and economic activity. They also

continue to endanger the two-State solution by undermining the physical possibility of its attainment and the realization of the legitimate Palestinian right to self-determination and sovereignty. The settler population in Area C and East Jerusalem has continued to grow, albeit at declining rates, reaching the present size of at least 450,000 in Area C and 215,000 in East Jerusalem.

From January 2008 to June 2022, at least 6,055 Palestinians and 274 Israelis were killed in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.²⁰ Most of these fatalities occurred during escalations in Gaza in 2008–2009, 2012, 2014 and 2021. Among Palestinians killed, at least 4,058 were men, 617 women, 1,096 boys and 268 girls.²¹ Among Israelis killed, at least 222 were men, 31 women, 15 boys and 6 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), 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 in spring 2020 and autumn 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 1 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 to address the housing and development needs of Palestinian residents. In many East Jerusalem neighbourhoods, 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 of Jerusalem 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 sites, and ensure their sanctity is respected by all. The United Nations 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 neighbourhoods, 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 neighbourhoods. Rockets and mortars from Gaza, in addition to killing

²⁰ OCHA has been collecting and publishing data on casualties and fatalities since January 2008. See OCHA, *Data on casualties*. Available at <https://www.ochaopt.org/data/casualties> (accessed November 2022).

²¹ The sex of 16 fatalities was unavailable.

²² Committee to Protect Journalists, *Database of Journalists Killed* (accessed July 2022).

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

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 centres, water and sanitation facilities, and transport, energy and 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, with 261 dead in Gaza according to OHCHR, including 67 children and 41 women. OHCHR confirmed 130 of the Palestinian fatalities as civilians.²³ In Israel, 10 Israelis and residents – including 1 soldier, 3 foreign workers, 4 women and 2 children – were killed, according to OCHA.

The [Humanitarian Flash Appeal](#) issued on 27 May 2021 by the United Nations 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](#). According to this assessment, damages in Gaza were estimated at USD 290–380 million, while economic losses reached up to USD 200 million. The social sector was hit hardest, significantly weakening the safety net for the most vulnerable. The immediate and short-term recovery and reconstruction needs were estimated at USD 345–485 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 4 women) and 360 were injured (including 151 children and 58 women), according to the local Ministry of Health. Hundreds of residential housing units were damaged, and 10 houses were completely destroyed, along with damage to other civilian infrastructure. In addition, 70 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 is still in effect at the time of writing. Egypt played a crucial role in securing the ceasefire, alongside the United Nations – together with very important support provided by Qatar, the United States, Jordan, the Palestinian Authority and others to de-escalate the situation. These combined efforts helped to 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 are having 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 then result in “new widows,” who are among the most vulnerable and least protected in society.²⁴



Beyond the human tragedy, recurrent conflict is severely weakening an economy already reduced to a fraction of its potential by 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, citing 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. Around 80 per cent of the people in Gaza receive 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 required some form of humanitarian assistance in 2022; 64 per cent of them – 1.3 million people – live in Gaza. Humanitarian partners aimed to assist 1.6 million of these people. Implementation of the HRP will cost USD 510 million, with about 75 per cent targeting needs in Gaza, and 25 per cent 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

23 A/HRC/49/83

24 OCHA, *Escalation of Hostilities and Unrest in the oPt – Flash Appeal* (27 May 2021), p. 10.

25 OCHA, *Humanitarian Response Plan OPT 2022* (2021).

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



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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 a 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 relations, trade policy, macroeconomic policies and fiscal policies – and 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 programmes. 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 the Paris Protocol are outdated given the changes in global, regional and local economies in the past decades. UNSCO has repeatedly called for 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 from Israel to the PA each month, as discussed below. However, the economic challenges associated with the Paris Protocol go far beyond the clearance revenue issue. The Protocol 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, although 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 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.

The Israeli closure regime has severely weakened economic ties between the West Bank and Gaza. After the closures were imposed, truckloads of commercial goods exiting Gaza dropped from an average high of 961 truckloads per month to only two truckloads on average per month by 2009.²⁷ Following the 2014 escalation of hostilities, commercial transfers from Gaza to the West Bank resumed and, from March 2015, exports to Israel also resumed. In August 2021, exports to Egypt started for the first time, boosting the monthly average of exports to 787 in the first five months of 2022, still below the pre-2007 average. What was once a common market encompassing the Gaza Strip and the West Bank are now two distinct markets. In recent years, exports from the Gaza Strip to any foreign destination accounted for only 1 to 2 per cent of the value of all Palestinian exports. The impact on Gaza’s economy has been catastrophic. Before 2007, Gaza’s economic output accounted for approximately one-third of the overall Palestinian GDP.²⁸ After fifteen years of closures, militant rule, and recurrent conflict, Gaza’s contribution has dropped to less than 18 per cent of overall GDP in 2019 and 2020.²⁹

In recent years, one significant transformation of the Israeli-Palestinian economic relationship has been the dramatic increase in the number of Palestinian workers crossing into Israel and the settlements. As of the second quarter of 2022, around 210,500 Palestinians worked in Israel and the Israeli settlements, most

²⁷ While truckloads are an imperfect measure of trade volume, in the absence of better data truckloads are used as a proxy for Gaza’s access to the West Bank and foreign markets.
²⁸ Excluding East Jerusalem.
²⁹ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. National Account Data, various years.

with official permits, but also including tens of thousands of workers who cross daily without official permits.³⁰ This represents a 50 per cent increase in the number of commuters since 2019. The vast majority of these workers are men working in agriculture, fishing, and forestry; mining, quarrying, and manufacturing; and construction. As of the second quarter of 2022, roughly a quarter of the West Bank labour force worked in Israel and the settlements. In March 2022, the Government of Israel announced a goal of 20,000 worker permits for Palestinians to exit Gaza to access markets in Israel. As of mid-September 2022, around 15,500 permits had been issued for Gaza-based workers, traders, and businessmen to commute to Israel. This new flow of remittances has helped many households in Gaza pay off debts, make essential purchases, buy more food, and obtain medical treatments. Over the longer term, with greater numbers of permits, Gaza should begin to see significant macroeconomic impacts, including on the unemployment and poverty rates.

The Israeli government has taken steps to regularize the working conditions in Israel and the settlements. In past practice, Palestinian workers paid intermediaries for permits that enabled them to work legally in Israel. A Bank of Israel working paper conservatively estimated profits of NIS 122 million by these intermediaries in 2019.³¹ The ILO calculated the estimated annual profits at NIS 427 million.³² 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 in 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. Other reforms are also ongoing. For example, as of June

2022, the Israeli government is rolling out electronic payments for Palestinian workers to bring their wages back to the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Finally, as of June 2022, Israel is converting permits for Gaza commuters to proper worker permits, which grant important labour protections compared with “financial needs” permits.

Israeli restrictions on land, alongside continued settlement activity, undermine Palestinian economic potential. Settlements’ municipal boundaries cover approximately 10 per cent of the West Bank, and approximately 18 per cent of the West Bank has been designated as a closed military zone for training, to which Palestinian access is restricted.³³ Areas designated by Israel as state lands and nature reserves in Area C also have access restrictions for Palestinians. A new phenomenon that needs close monitoring 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,³⁴ for example, estimated that if businesses and farms were permitted to develop in Area C, Palestinian gross domestic product (GDP) would increase by as much as 35 per cent, or USD 4.15 billion.³⁵ 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 per cent of GDP. A robust new mineral extraction industry on the Dead Sea could generate benefits to



the Palestinian economy of up to 9 per cent 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 per cent 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 per cent of GDP. Improvements in the tourism and telecommunications sectors would together add another 1.5 per cent 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 need updating, they provide a clear picture of the potential for Palestinian economic growth if access and investment could be improved for Palestinians in Area C.

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, as 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 night-time lights.³⁶ 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 by an average of between 4.1 per cent and 6.1 per cent each year. In the medium to long run, lower economic growth rates have massive, negative welfare implications for Palestinian households.

Although acknowledging that the Israeli occupation and the Paris Protocol are key determinants of the development trajectory, improving Palestinian internal governance would also produce significant beneficial effects. By and large, there is a key role to be played by the public sector in creating an “enabling environment”. This would involve the public bodies intervening to establish the rules defining the space for private operators and to provide those goods/services that private operators are not willing/able to

³⁶ Roy van der Weide and others, *Obstacles on the Road to Palestinian Economic Growth*, World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 8385 (World Bank Group, 2018).

³⁰ PCBS, Q2 2022, Labor Force Survey.

³¹ Bank of Israel, *Illegal trade in work permits for Palestinian workers in Israel* (2019). Available at <https://www.boi.org.il/en/NewsAndPublications/PressReleases/Pages/25-9-2019.aspx>

³² ILO, *The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories*. ILC.109/DG/APP/2020 (2020).

³³ OCHA, *Humanitarian Needs Overview 2022* (2021).

³⁴ World Bank, *Area C and the Future of the Palestinian Economy* (2013). Report No. AUS2922.

³⁵ Here converted to 2022 US dollars.

produce. Palestine is confronted with 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 “clearance revenues” (customs, value added tax and excise taxes) on behalf of the PA and the subsequent transfer of these revenues to the PA the following month. Depending on the year, around 65 per cent to 75 per cent 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 there were many months when the transfers did not take place. 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 salaries of government employees, including 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 US dollars and sometimes even higher, driven on the expenditure side by the wage bill, pensions, medical referrals and net lending.³⁷ 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 offences against Israelis,

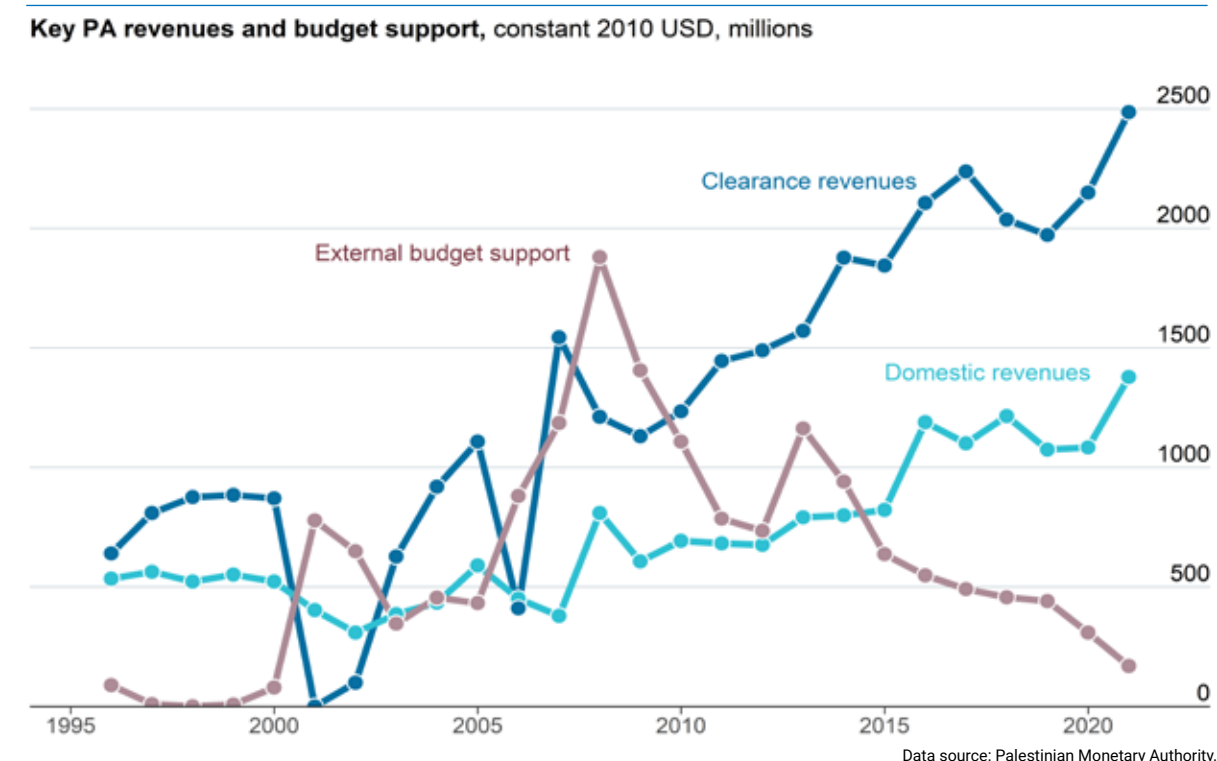
to their families and to families of Palestinians killed or injured in the context of attacks. In response to the Israeli withholdings, the PA refused to accept any clearance revenue less than the full amount owed to it. This dispute created an unprecedented fiscal crisis and the PA adopted emergency measures to cope with the loss of 65 per cent of revenues, equal to some 15 per cent of 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 for 2021 stood at USD 282 million, 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, there was another stand-off over clearance revenues. In Israel, proposals to annex parts of the West Bank were prominent during 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 per cent reduction in the PA’s overall revenues, forced the PA to adopt additional austerity measures 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 the resumption of coordination between

Israelis and Palestinians in November 2020 finally led 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 to November 2020 and put the PA’s COVID-19 response on steadier fiscal footing.³⁸

Figure 3: Fiscal situation of the Palestinian Authority



³⁷ “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.

³⁸ UNSCO, Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (23 February 2021)



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 since around 2010 in external budget support to the PA, which amounted to comparatively negligible amounts in 2021 and 2022.³⁹ This vulnerability could 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. It could also be mitigated by undertaking domestic tax reforms. For the medium 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. However,

they 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, it is very challenging to assess the fiscal and financial situation in Gaza. 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 Gaza. 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 various 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 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 goods that come in through the 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 litre of fuel coming from Egypt.

Macroeconomic prospects in the near- to medium-term

Macroeconomic and fiscal imbalances are impacting 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.

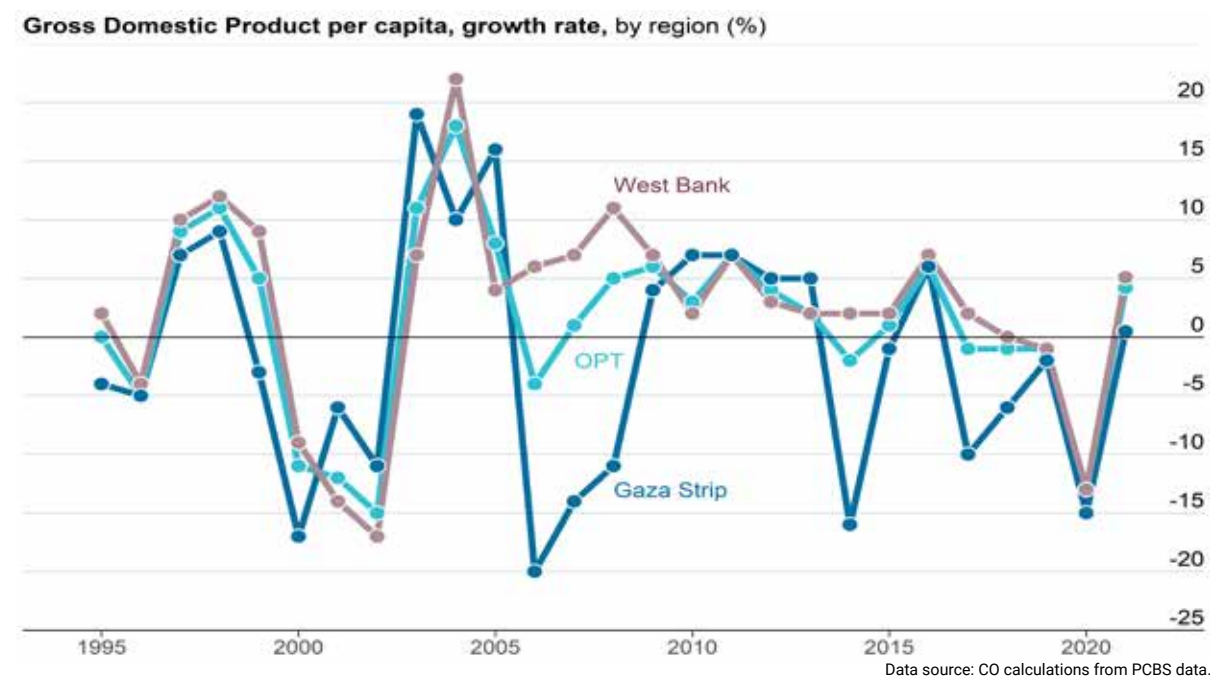
The indicators that best reflect this situation are the GDP growth rate, which is generally lower and completely detached from the economic cycles in neighbouring countries,⁴⁰ and the unemployment rate (especially the hyper-unemployment in Gaza) which disproportionately affects youth, women and refugees, and intensifies 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 by 13.5 per cent in the West Bank and 15 per cent 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

³⁹ The issue of external budget support to the PA and donor support to UNRWA is discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

⁴⁰ Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon observed similar trends of increasing GDP per capita over the past 15 years, while the West Bank and Gaza Strip fluctuated around its values of early 2000. PCBS and FSS, *Socio-Economic & Food Security Survey 2014* (2016).

Figure 4: Economic growth rates over time



transfer of clearance revenues for most of the year.⁴¹ 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 per cent in 2021, 3 per cent in 2022 and 3.1 per cent in 2023. Growth will decrease slightly towards the end of the decade, to 2.3 per cent. Such a slow pace will only allow the Palestinian economy to return to the 2019 level of productivity by 2023.

GDP growth will be fuelled mostly by a surge in private consumption and investment, reflecting the revival of the economy following the COVID-19 pandemic and the

reconstruction of 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, government consumption should also increase.

The inflation rate in Palestine is expected to stay moderate, at around 1.0 to 3.4 per cent. 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.

Figure 5: Decomposition of GDP growth in Palestine 2020–2025 (per cent)

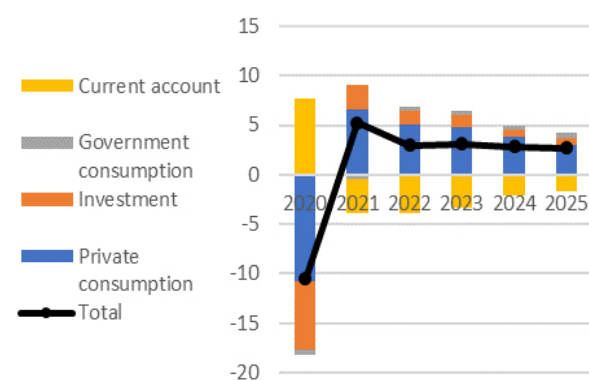
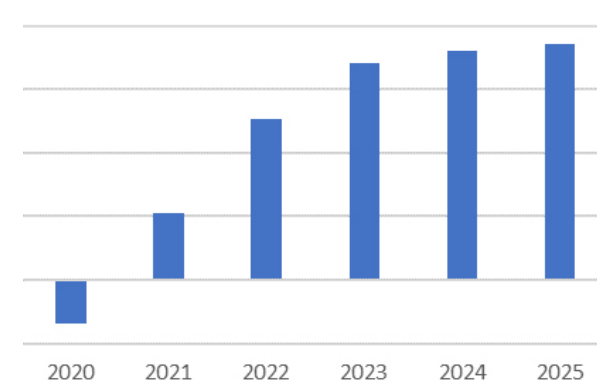


Figure 6: Inflation rate in Palestine 2020–2025 (per cent)



Source: UN DESA WEFM model simulations

41 Calculations based on data from PCBS.

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.⁴² 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 Gaza. 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 Accords adopted a quantitative approach to the water problem, detailing the quantities to be allocated. However, it 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. Moreover, agreement on drilling new wells into the West Bank aquifer needs to go through the Joint Water Committee – which has met very infrequently over recent years. Through a combination of declining aquifer yield and rapid population growth, the per capita availability of these water resources for Palestinians 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. There has been growing dependence on purchased water 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 per cent of the waters pumped from the aquifers in the West Bank were allocated for Israeli use, and the remaining 20 per cent for Palestinian use. Water consumption and the treatment of transboundary wastewater account for 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 per cent 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 has been unable to regulate inside Gaza. Quality of water in Gaza is also affected by contamination of groundwater by sewage.

42 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.

Even without considering the demands of agriculture, much of the allocation to municipal and industrial uses is unsustainable, which is further depleting 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 towards 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 50 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 water resources, land and soil contamination, desertification and unsustainable management of land and air pollution. The inability to access and manage natural resources sustainably, and to enforce laws and instructions, are aggravating the threats of climate change – 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.⁴³

Between 1992 and 2015, the land area under artificial surfaces⁴⁴ increased from 1.4 to 4.3 per cent, whereas the area under vegetation cover decreased.⁴⁵ 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 per cent in 1982 to 25 per cent in 2010 – has also reduced groundwater recharge.⁴⁶ The percentage of land area under cultivation decreased from 36.5 to 24.4 per cent between 1997 and 2015.⁴⁷ 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 per cent of the labour input in livestock production and 54 per cent in plant production, mostly in rain-fed agriculture.⁴⁸ Despite their major contribution to agricultural labour, many rural women carry out this work unpaid.⁴⁹

Over the past decade, technological developments – including Israel's development of desalination capabilities – have somewhat 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



metres of water per year are desalinated. Israel also treats and reuses 75 per cent of its wastewater for agriculture, industry and gardening in Israel itself. This increased use of desalinated and treated wastewater has transformed Israel's water security, making it less dependent on conventional sources of renewable freshwater (aquifers and the Jordan River) than it was a decade or more ago.⁵⁰ 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.⁵¹ 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 and 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, have resulted in nitrate concentration of 300 mg/L: six times higher than World Health Organization recommendations. Chloride concentrations are also high. Scientists 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.

50 Israel claims its supply of conventional renewable freshwater is equal to approximately 1,800 million cubic metres per year (see [here](#)). This figure is contested. 51 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).

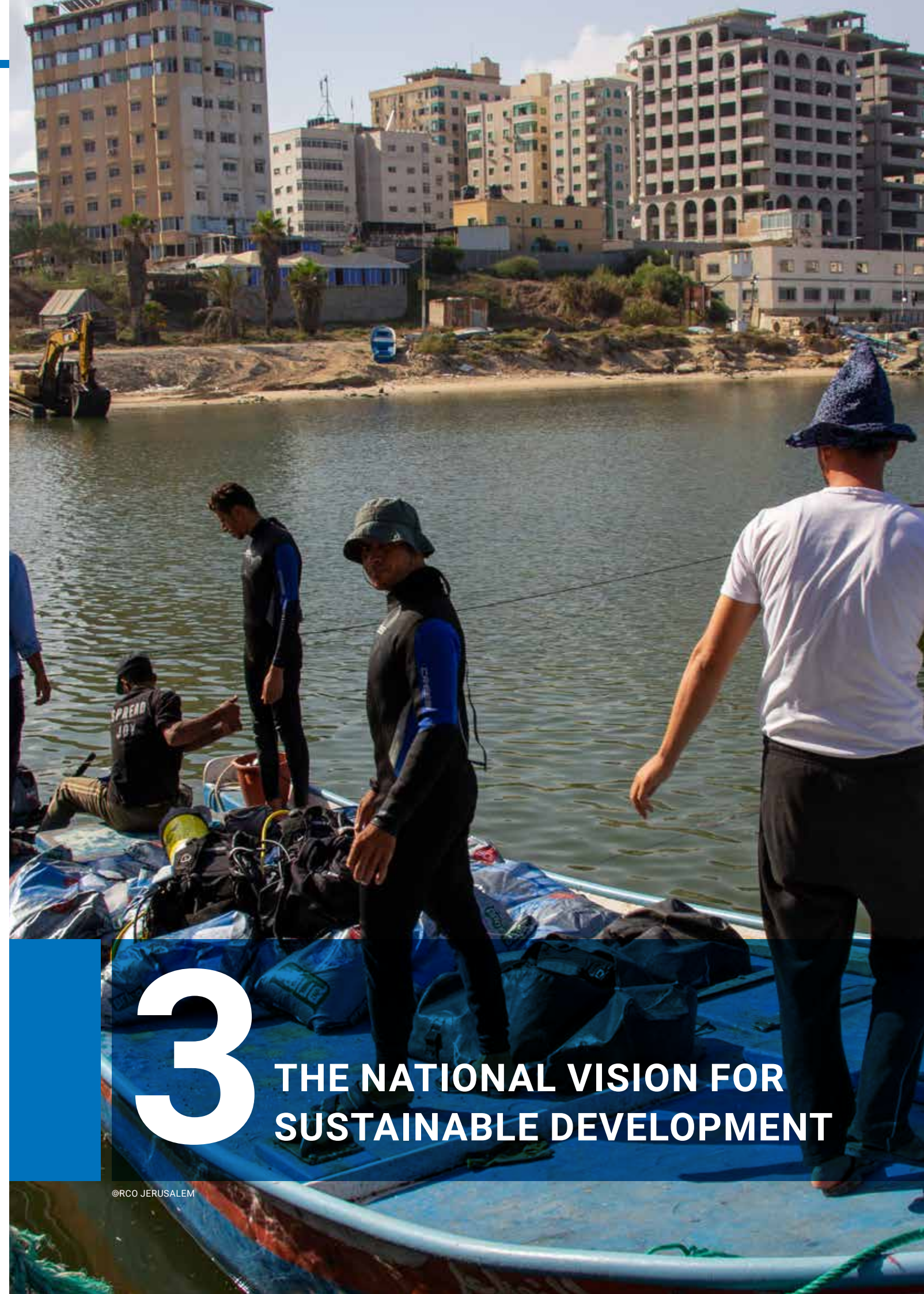
43 UNEP, *State of Environment and Outlook Report for the Occupied Palestinian Territory 2020* (Nairobi, 2020).
44 Artificial surfaces refer to built-up areas, including paved surfaces, residential housing, industrial areas, etc., but not including agricultural land.
45 UNEP, *State of Environment and Outlook Report for the Occupied Palestinian Territory 2020* (Nairobi, 2020).
46 UNEP, *State of Environment and Outlook Report for the Occupied Palestinian Territory 2020* (Nairobi, 2020).
47 UNEP, *State of Environment and Outlook Report for the Occupied Palestinian Territory 2020* (Nairobi, 2020).
48 FAO, *Water efficiency, productivity and sustainability in the NENA regions (WEPS-NENA)* (accessed March 2022).
49 FAO, *Water efficiency, productivity and sustainability in the NENA regions (WEPS-NENA)* (accessed March 2022).

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 United States' approach towards Palestinians and the Middle East Peace Process changed sharply between 2017 and 2021; among other things, it ended its funding for UNRWA and other development assistance to the OPT, closed the US 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 US 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 to this development. The United Nations Secretary-General has 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 neighbours 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 to advance 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

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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. This

included an assessment of progress made across all SDGs since 2015, and especially policy gaps and challenges, while suggesting recommendations to improve attainment 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 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.”⁵²



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⁵² State of Palestine, Office of the Prime Minister, *National Development Plan, 2021–2023* (2021).

National Policy Agenda: Putting Citizens First

The **National Policy Agenda 2017–2022: 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 and accessible, high-quality and responsive services, as well as accountable and transparent public institutions that put citizens’ interests and needs first. It also aims to foster job creation in the private sector and to protect the vulnerable. The NPA is centred on the national vision above and is expressed as 10 national priorities structured under 3 pillars:



To achieve these goals, the NPA aims to establish a realistic policy and fiscal framework that keeps independence firmly at the centre, while focusing public institutions on the citizens they serve. It established strategic directions to guide planning to end the occupation and advance solid citizen-centred 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.

National Development Plan 2021–2023

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

The 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, and 2) disengagement from the occupation and end to economic dependence, which should be accompanied by promoting and supporting national products to be competitive, as well as openness to the global market and improved relations with the Arab region.⁵³

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, bolstering 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, pay attention to 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.”⁵⁴

The new development paradigm aims to bridge the gaps between different geographical zones, by opening rural areas, the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem to specific investments, while also offering financial facilities and concessionary loans to these areas. This requires contribution from the financial and business sectors and the donor community towards 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.

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 12 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 progress towards 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 period 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 of opinions and information collected from participants in the focus group discussions and workshops. The aspects covered include the accelerators and the marginalized social groups that they touch, the relevant SDGs, possible interventions along with obstacles and challenges facing those interventions, identifying stakeholders and their relationships, resources needed and available, and the necessary time period, which was divided into two phases: short and medium term, and long term.

Palestinian Reform Agenda

In advance of the spring 2022 meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC), 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 through:

- Delivering economic and financial recovery by supporting entrepreneurship and vocational education and 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 and 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 programmes 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 an 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) reforming the government revenue system and rationalizing expenditures (e.g. wage bill, medical referrals, net lending, revenue collection), (ii) reforming 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 boosted employment through better education and vocational skills. The reform package targets promotion of the

⁵³ State of Palestine, Office of the Prime Minister, *National Development Plan, 2021-2023* (2021).

⁵⁴ State of Palestine, Office of the Prime Minister, *National Development Plan, 2021-2023* (2021).

private sector, strengthened partnerships with civil society organizations and optimized use of State and Waqf land (Islamic endowments).

4. **Social reforms** to support the poor and unemployed, operationalize social security (including for Palestinian workers employed in Israel), improve education and training, 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 by the Israelis and by international actors in support of the reform agenda. As noted elsewhere in this Common Country Analysis, the lack of sovereignty results in 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. In parallel, it also 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

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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 Optional Protocols, the Convention against Torture, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. 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 the 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 United Nations 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 the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and 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, it has 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, considering for example that there is still no clear definition of torture, discrimination or gender-based violence in Palestinian law. Encouragingly, civil society organizations have shown strengthened capacity as rights holders to represent Palestinians before United Nations 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 led 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 by the CRC committee in 2020. The concluding observations identified issues that could be addressed, despite the challenging circumstances, including the legal and policy framework, the protection of children from violence, the situation of children with disabilities and the mental health of children.⁵⁵

Palestine has major gaps in its legal and policy frameworks for protection of fundamental labour rights, and for ensuring sound labour market governance and the rule of law in the world of work. The current labour law⁵⁶ faces critical challenges as it is not responsive to economic and labour 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 the event of old age, disability or death, employment injury or maternity. According to official figures, private sector workers account for up to 66 per cent of the workforce, relative to 22 per cent in the public sector and 12 per cent in Israel and West Bank settlements.⁵⁷ Approximately 45 per cent of total health care expenditure is through government systems and programmes, while household contributions account for around 39 per cent (most of this is 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 per cent) of expenditure is for curative services, with a fifth (19 per cent) for medical goods (mostly pharmaceuticals).⁵⁸ 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 and combating poverty and social exclusion.

In 2016, Palestine enacted Social Security Law 19 to extend coverage of social insurance to workers in 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 on social media. In January 2019, the government temporarily suspended the law, pending further deliberations regarding revision of the law. Since the suspension in 2019, there has been no active legal basis, nor a functional institution, to administer such benefits. Currently, only around 35 per cent of workers in the private sector receive any benefits in the form of severance pay, paid annual leave and paid sick leave, in line with the prevailing labour law.

In 2019, Decree-Laws Nos. 16 and 17 respectively dismissed judges above 60 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 into 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 – by the I/HJC upon recommendation of the President – of any judge who threatens the "integrity and prestige of the judiciary and the public confidence in it", thereby overtly promoting vertical linkages with judicial staff.

In January 2021, the president issued Decree-Laws Nos. 39, 40 and 41 (2020) regarding the establishment of civil (ordinary) courts, amendments to the Judicial Authority Law (2002) and the 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 for retirement of Palestinian judges by the I/HJC and through presidential decrees.

The principle of the independence of the judiciary is stipulated under various instruments, including the United Nations 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 be guaranteed a fair trial, including the right to a "fair and public hearing by a competent, independent and impartial tribunal established by law." The United Nations Human Rights Committee, in General Comment No. 32 on Article 14 (paragraph 19) elaborates that the requirement of independence refers to "the procedure and qualification for the appointment of judges,

⁵⁵ United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (6 March 2020). CRC/C/PSE/CO/1.
⁵⁶ Labour Law No. (7) of 2000.

⁵⁷ ILO, *The Palestinian Decent Work Programme 2018-2022* (Beirut, 2018).
⁵⁸ Data provided by the Palestinian Ministry of Health.

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". 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 prescribes that child-friendly procedures and modalities are in place to implement the law. It recognizes children under the age of 18 years as persons 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 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 work began on the Family Protection Law 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 has 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

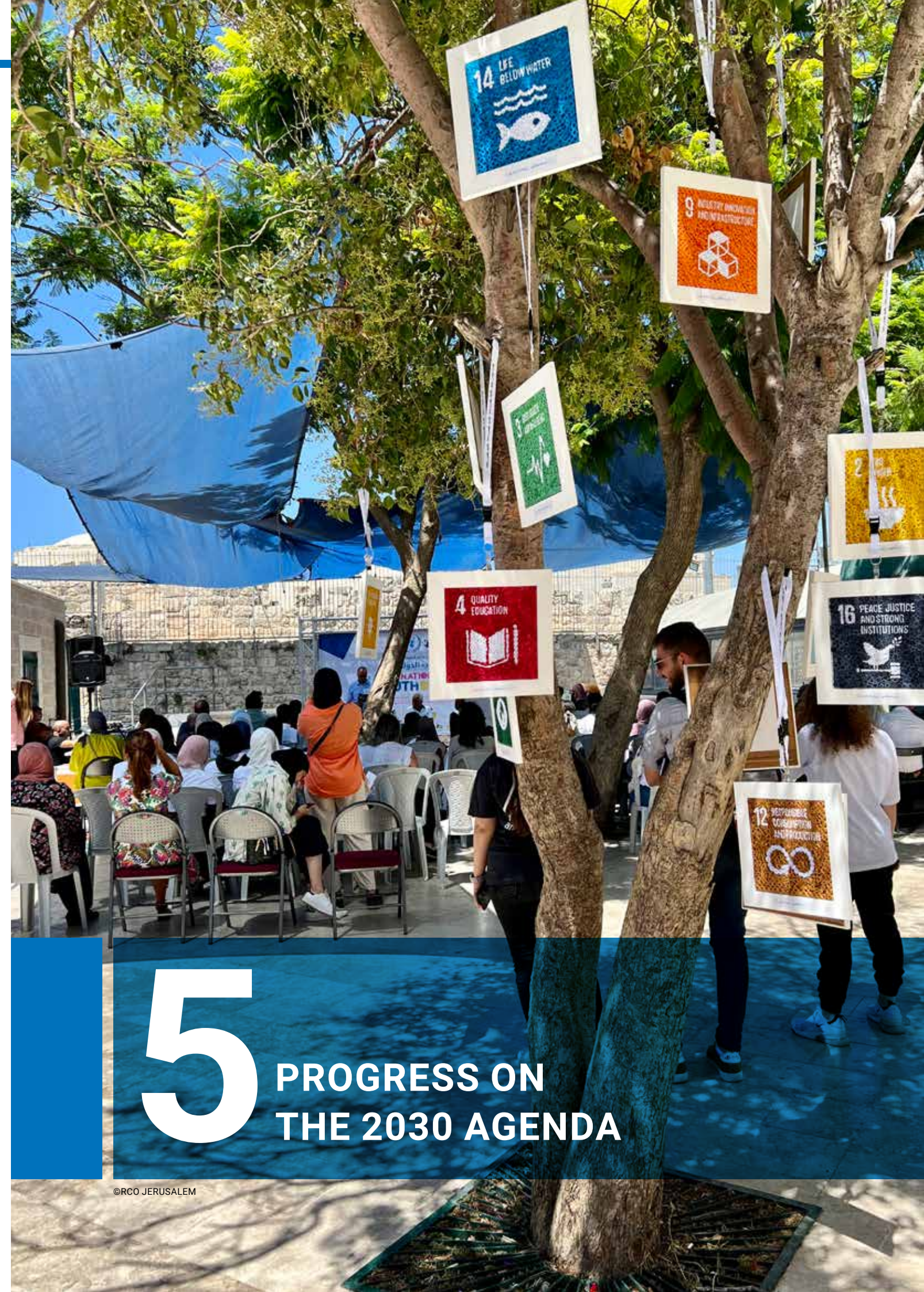
the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, the 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, the 2001 Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage, the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, 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 implementation of the New Urban Agenda in 2021, ahead of the High-Level Meeting on the New Urban Agenda on 28 April 2022.⁵⁹

On women, peace and security (WPS), a voluntary report on the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 was submitted to the United Nations Secretary-General. Palestine adopted its second National Action Plan (2020–2024) for the implementation of 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 and negotiations. Women's political participation has also been affected by internal Palestinian political division.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ State of Palestine, Ministry of Local Government, *Implementation of the New Urban Agenda. National report for the State of Palestine* (2021).

⁶⁰ UN Women, *A Future at Stake: Recommendations to include Palestinian women and youth in political and peace processes*. Policy brief (Palestine Country Office, 2022).



5 PROGRESS ON THE 2030 AGENDA

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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). This 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: **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 high degree on maintaining UNRWA funding in a tightening donor climate.

Sustainable Development Goals: People



Poverty rates have risen significantly in Palestine over the past few years, particularly since 2020.⁶¹ According to monthly consumption patterns, 29 per cent of Palestinians lived in poverty (under the national poverty line) in 2017⁶². There was significant regional disparity in income, with 53 per cent of the population in Gaza below the national poverty line in 2017, compared to 14 per cent in the West Bank. Around 16.8 per cent of the population was living in deep poverty in 2017, again with significant regional disparities.⁶³ 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 per cent in 2020, a significant increase of 7 percentage points in four years.⁶⁴ 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.⁶⁵ World Bank estimates suggest that the conflict has pushed poverty in Gaza to 59.3 per cent in 2021, using the USD 5.50 a day (at 2011 purchasing power parity) international poverty line.⁶⁶ This is a 16.3 percentage point increase above the 2016–2017 values for Gaza.⁶⁷

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

Poverty ⁶⁸		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
Poverty ⁶⁹		West Bank		Gaza Strip		OPT	
		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
Poverty ⁷⁰		West Bank		Gaza Strip		OPT	
		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

Data source: PCBS, Poverty Profile in Palestine (2017).

Coverage of social assistance is widespread, with 40 per cent of all Palestinian households receiving at least one type of social protection transfer. This coverage reflects the high levels of poverty and deprivation that qualify households for benefits. The extent of a household's reliance on assistance can also vary depending on the sex of the head of household. 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 per cent of FHHs and 79.8 per cent of MHHs rely to some degree on assistance and donations, 40.2 per cent of FHHs rely fully on this as their sole source of income, compared with 29.8 per cent of MHHs.⁷¹ Female-headed households represent 11 per cent of total households in Palestine, but account for almost 20 per cent of families suffering from extreme poverty, unable to fulfil the minimum required for food, clothing and housing.⁷²

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 per cent nationally. Furthermore, the adequacy of social transfers under individual programmes, and their efficacy in combating

poverty when used alone, is limited. The main government transfer, the Palestinian National Cash Transfer Programme (PNCTP), covers on average just 15 per cent of individuals below the poverty line, with larger families receiving much lower transfers per capita. Nearly half of beneficiary households who are covered by assistance programmes remain poor after receiving a transfer, due to low transfer values. The social protection system also remains highly dependent on shrinking external financing, together with volatile government allocations. Total allocation to the social protection system declined by 25 per cent between 2015 and 2018. Per-beneficiary expenditure has also been reduced during the period for all programmes, calling into question the adequacy and resulting efficacy of interventions. Humanitarian safety net programmes, 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 per cent of households in deep poverty with cash assistance. The Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) is also working to implement economic empowerment programmes for the poor and marginalized and to improve targeting mechanisms and the national social registry.

68 Percentage of people living below the poverty line.

69 Percentage of people living below the poverty line.

70 Percentage of people living below the poverty line.

71 Oxfam and AWRAD, *Responsiveness of the Palestinian National Cash Transfer Programme to Shifting Vulnerabilities in the Gaza Strip* (2020).

72 WFP, WFP Palestine Country Brief (August 2020) and PCBS, Poverty Profile in Palestine (2017).

61 UNSCO, Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (23 February 2021).

62 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.

63 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, Poverty Profile in Palestine (2017).

64 World Bank, Economic Monitoring Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (17 November 2021).

65 World Bank, Economic Monitoring Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (17 November 2021).

66 World Bank, Economic Monitoring Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (17 November 2021).

67 World Bank, Economic Monitoring Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (17 November 2021).



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.⁷³ In the meantime, most households received non-cash assistance from various United Nations and non-United Nations 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 United Nations. The MoSD continues to prioritize protection to persons with disabilities, 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 programme titled “Towards a universal and holistic social protection floor for persons with disabilities and older persons in Palestine.” This helped to inform the revised Social Development Sector Strategy 2021–2023, including by reflecting new needs generated by the COVID-19 pandemic in the country and by ensuring focus on the most vulnerable people and on shock-responsive social protection.

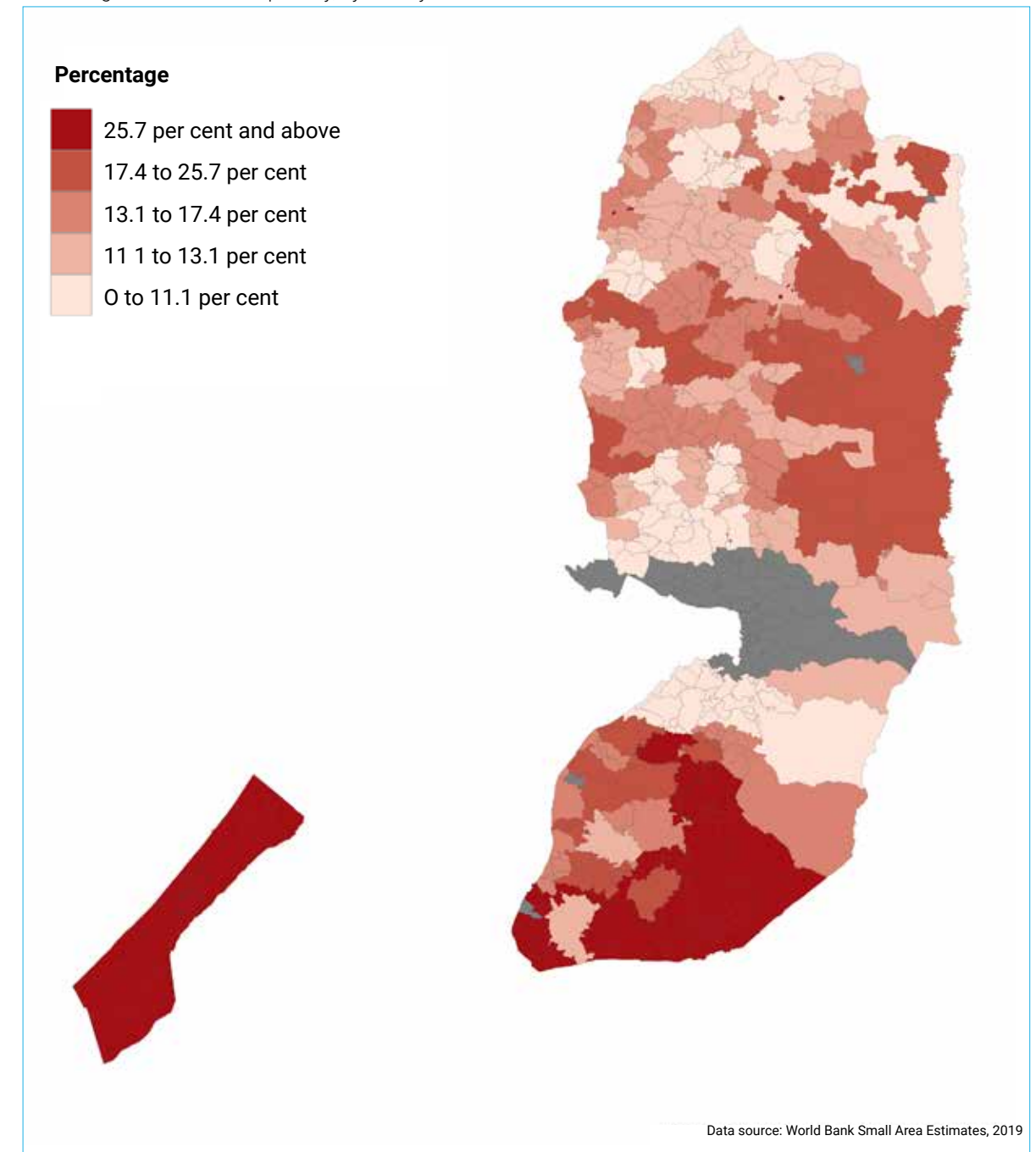
In the OPT context, cash and voucher assistance continues to bolster women’s social protection across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. Gender-responsive cash and voucher assistance can also serve as an entry point to deliver multisectoral and/or complementary programming, supporting progress towards 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 adequately accessible 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 programmes in the OPT, to end poverty (SDG 1), enable decent work (SDG 8) and achieve gender equality (SDG 5), as well as contributing towards other SDGs

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 on strengthening social protection. The United Nations is supporting the Ministry of Social Development to integrate persons with disabilities into the National Social Registry, as well as with other social protection reforms

such as to shock-responsive social protection. In general, if the government’s financial situation does not improve, households dependent on government assistance programmes will be increasingly at risk.

Figure 8: Spatial patterns of poverty

Percentage of individuals in poverty, by locality



⁷³ UNSCO, Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (17 November 2021).

**SDG 2
ZERO HUNGER**

Even before the May 2021 conflict and the COVID-19 pandemic, food insecurity in Palestine affected 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 per cent of the population, in early 2021. The number of food insecure Palestinians is divided between the refugee (70 per cent) and non-refugee (30 per cent) communities. Around 560,000 non-refugees are assessed to be food insecure in Palestine, with 66 per cent of that total living in Gaza and 34 per cent living in the West Bank.⁷⁴ In the Gaza Strip, the situation is especially concerning, with 64.3 per cent of the population assessed as moderately or severely food insecure.⁷⁵

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 5 years of age reaching up to 23 per cent in certain Bedouin communities. Conversely, overweight is a widespread problem, with prevalence of 8.2 per cent

among children under 5 years of age. Sugar and sugar-rich foods are among the food items most consumed on a daily basis among all households. This indicates a lack of variety in diets and that empty calories are mainstays in Palestinian household diets, 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, largely due to Palestinian household consumption patterns of energy-dense rather than nutrient-dense food, along with 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.

In the OPT, assistance is essential to ensure food security, in quantitative as well as qualitative terms,⁷⁶ 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), although 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 per cent are headed by a

male family member and 21.2 per cent are headed by a woman, while overall female-headed households represent only around 7 per cent of households.⁷⁷ Recent CVA studies in the Gaza Strip have demonstrated that beneficiaries have used cash to buy food and pay off debts.⁷⁸ Ongoing CVA in the Gaza Strip has highlighted the challenge of ensuring that women obtain and control an equitable portion of resources received by a household, as patriarchal social structures favour men having the “final say” on household finances.⁷⁹

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 per cent of GDP and 23 per cent of total exports. In leveraging the private sector, the food system plays a key role in generating sustainable employment and building sustainable livelihoods. Specifically, the food system is quite labour-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 instrumental to achieving healthy diets and better nutrition. If properly managed, food system activities can also 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 achieving 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 to pursuing a variety of SDGs beyond SDG2 and in operationalizing the “nexus approach” to humanitarian, development and peacebuilding efforts.

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

74 WFP, WFP Palestine Country Brief (September 2021).

75 PCBS and FSS, *Socio-Economic & Food Security Survey 2020* (2021).

76 Donato Romano, and others, “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*, vol. 8, No. 1 (2019), pp. 21-61.



77 Oxfam and AWRAD, Unpublished study on shifting vulnerability and the Palestinian National Cash Transfer Programme (2020).

78 UN Women, *An Assessment of the Cash for Work Component of UN Women's Project* (2019).

79 Interview with WFP Palestine, 1 March 2021.



**SDG 3
GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING**

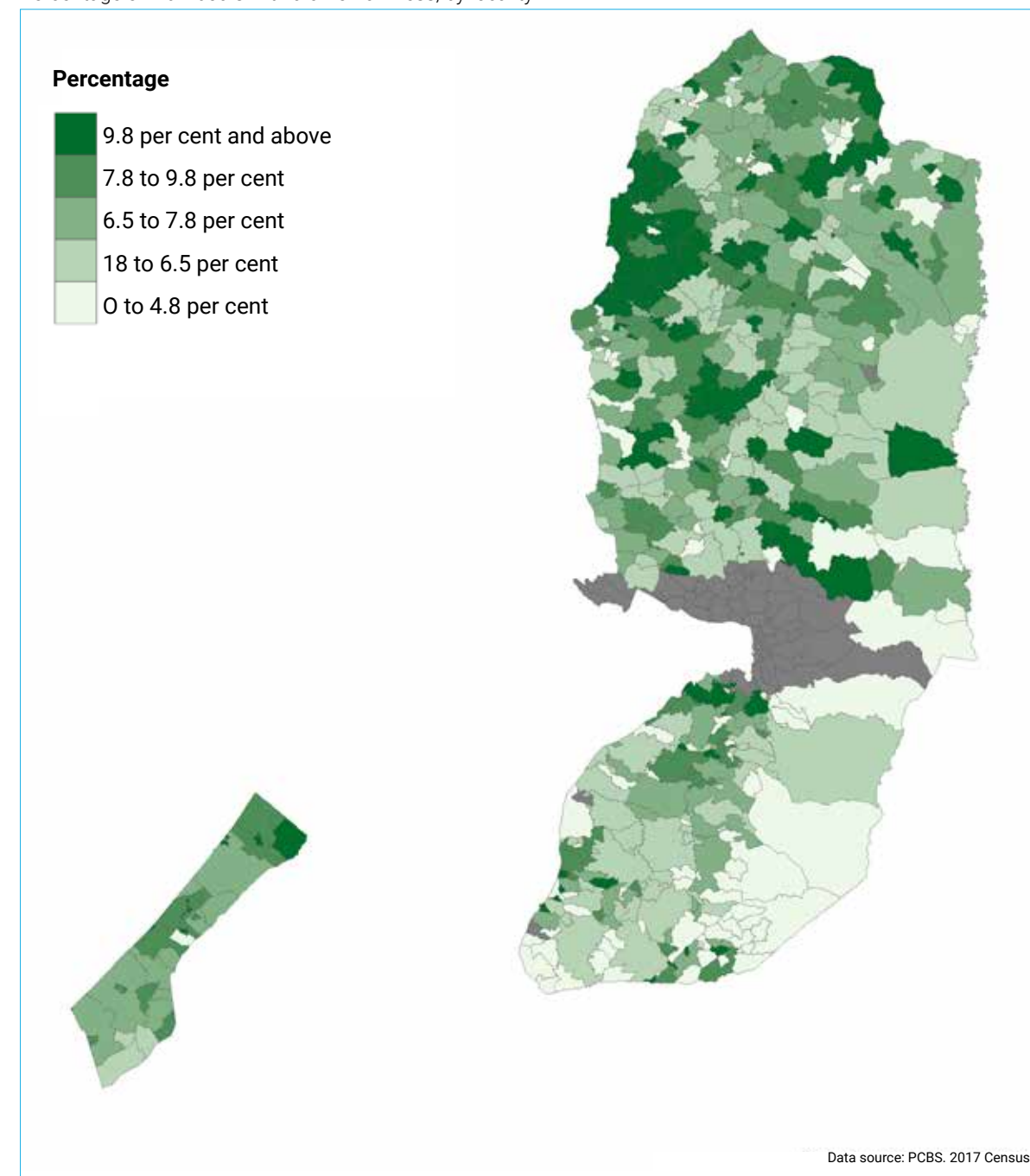
The health care system in Palestine struggles to provide adequate services for the population. Geographical barriers and sporadic outbreaks of violence have significant impacts on provision of and access to health services. Health care provision in the Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, Area C and the Seam Zones is particularly challenging. Here, there are a multitude of restrictions, including on access to specialized services, construction of facilities, importation of medical supplies, equipment and spare parts, and movement of patients and health staff. Recurrent conflicts 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 per cent women and 55 per cent men) were estimated to have moderate or severe mental health disorders, while 299,979 children (50 per cent girls and 50 per cent boys) were believed to experience severe, moderate or mild mental health disorders.⁸⁰

The under-5 mortality rate fell significantly between 2014 and 2019/2020, from 22 to 14 deaths per 1,000 live births. Of these, 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, risks for boys 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 year, 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.⁸¹

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

Figure 9: Spatial patterns of chronic illness

Percentage of individuals with a chronic illness, by locality



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 per cent of the 591 clinics in 2020.⁸² Fiscal constraints and decisions to prioritize other areas for

spending have led to low expenditure on health care by the Palestinian government: annual per capita expenditure on health care in Palestine is USD 280, of which the PA pays one third.⁸³ (For comparison, in 2019 annual per capital expenditure on health care was USD 334 in Jordan, USD 663 in Lebanon and well over USD 1,000 in the Gulf countries.)⁸⁴ Despite this, capacities of public hospitals

80 Samah Jabr, *Assessment of MHPSS interventions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip* (UNFPA, 2021).
81 MICS 2019/2020.

82 Ministry of Health, *Palestine Health Annual Report 2019* (2020).
83 UNCTAD, *Report on UNCTAD assistance to the Palestinian people: Developments in the economy of the Occupied Palestinian Territory* (2021).
84 World Bank, *World Development Indicators*. Accessed 2022.

and clinics were increased to ensure universal health care, including financial risk protection and access to quality health care services and medicines, along with COVID-19 testing and care.

Approximately 45 per cent of total health care expenditure is through government systems and programmes, while household contributions account for around 39 per cent (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 per cent) of expenditure is for curative services, with a fifth (19 per cent) for medical goods (mostly pharmaceuticals).⁸⁵

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 per cent of mortality in Palestine. The main NCDs are cardiovascular diseases, cancers, strokes and diabetes. Cardiovascular diseases remain the first cause of death, cancer ranks second and strokes third.⁸⁶ There is a significant gap between access to treatment of NCDs in West Bank and in the Gaza Strip. 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 2019.⁸⁷ However, the estimated maternal mortality ratio in 2020 was 28.5 per 100,000 live births, an increase of 43.2 per cent compared to 2019.⁸⁸ COVID-19 infection was a leading cause of death, contributing to 24.3 per cent of all maternal deaths. However,

the pandemic has also jeopardized maternal health outcomes more broadly than just through COVID-19 infections, as reflected in increased maternal death also due to direct obstetric causes. This increase is attributed to several factors, including lockdowns, closure of antenatal care and high-risk pregnancy clinics, reluctance of women to seek medical care due to fear of infection, relocation of health care providers to COVID-19 centres, financial hardship and shortage of medical equipment and supplies. The pandemic limited access to health care for women attending services in the public sector more than services in the private sector. This underlines the defect in the health system whereby more vulnerable populations are more severely impacted at times of crisis.

Child vaccination has seen substantial investments, particularly through a vaccine forecast for 2020–2022 developed in cooperation with the United Nations to secure needed vaccines.⁸⁹ The COVID-19 response has generated significant investments in public health infrastructure and vaccines.

Gender inequality affects ability to access health information and services (including but not limited to sexual and reproductive health), 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 towards 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 which may prevent them from seeking care even when they have symptoms, and 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 2019/2020 the level of teenage mothers (aged 15–19 years) dropped from 48 to 43 per 1,000 women. The adolescent birth rate has increased in the West Bank (from 35 to 39 per 1,000 women) but dropped significantly in the Gaza Strip (from 66 to 48 per 1,000 women). In urban areas, the figures have dropped (from 55 to 43 per 1,000 women) but they have risen in rural areas (29 to 44 per 1,000 women) and for those living in camps (29 to 39 per 1,000 women).⁹⁰ Several guidelines and protocols were developed and published, including the Preconception National Guidelines to improve women's prenatal health, the National Plan for Sexual and Reproductive Health in Crisis, the Emergency Obstetric Protocol, the Menopause Protocol and the Health Professionals Protocol for Covid-19 Infection and Pregnancy. Moreover, Palestinian health professionals were trained to detect gender-based violence using a protocol developed for this purpose.⁹¹

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 early identification, diagnosis and interventions for children with developmental delays and disabilities. Children are often detected and diagnosed late and are sometimes unable to obtain an accurate diagnosis, meaning that the critical window for appropriate intervention is missed. Access to therapeutic services – including speech, physical and behavioural therapy – are limited. Over 90 per cent of families pay for services for children with disabilities and functional difficulties out of their own 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.⁹² Sexual transmission accounted for most reported cases (67 cases or 68.4 per cent), whether 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 HIV surveillance 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 across the OPT.

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



85 Data provided by the Palestinian Ministry of Health.

86 UNCT and PMO, *Atlas of Sustainable Development* (2020).

87 UNCT and PMO, *Atlas of Sustainable Development* (2020).

88 MoH and UNFPA, *National Maternal Mortality Report 2020* (2022). The following sentences are also drawn from that report.

89 State of Palestine, *Palestinian National Voluntary Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in 2020: Summary Report* (2021).

90 MICS 2019/2020.

91 State of Palestine, *Palestinian National Voluntary Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in 2020: Summary Report* (2021).

92 Hamarsheh, O., "HIV/AIDS in Palestine: A growing concern", *International Journal of Infectious Diseases*, vol. 90 (2020), pp. 18–20.



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**SDG 4
QUALITY EDUCATION**

Palestine has one of the highest basic education enrolment rates in the region and has almost attained universal access to basic education. MICS 2019/2020 data show the adjusted net attendance ratio for the basic education cycle at approximately 96.9 per cent⁹³ (98.4 per cent for girls and 95.4 per cent for boys) for the 2019/2020 academic year.⁹⁴ The Ministry of Education target for 2023 is a net enrolment rate of 99.1 per cent (99.9 per cent for girls and 98.4 for boys). The gross enrolment rate (GER) is equally high at 99.8 per cent (100.7 per cent for girls and 98.9 per cent for boys), with a target for 2023 of 102.8 per cent (103.7 per cent for girls and 101.9 per cent for boys)⁹⁵.

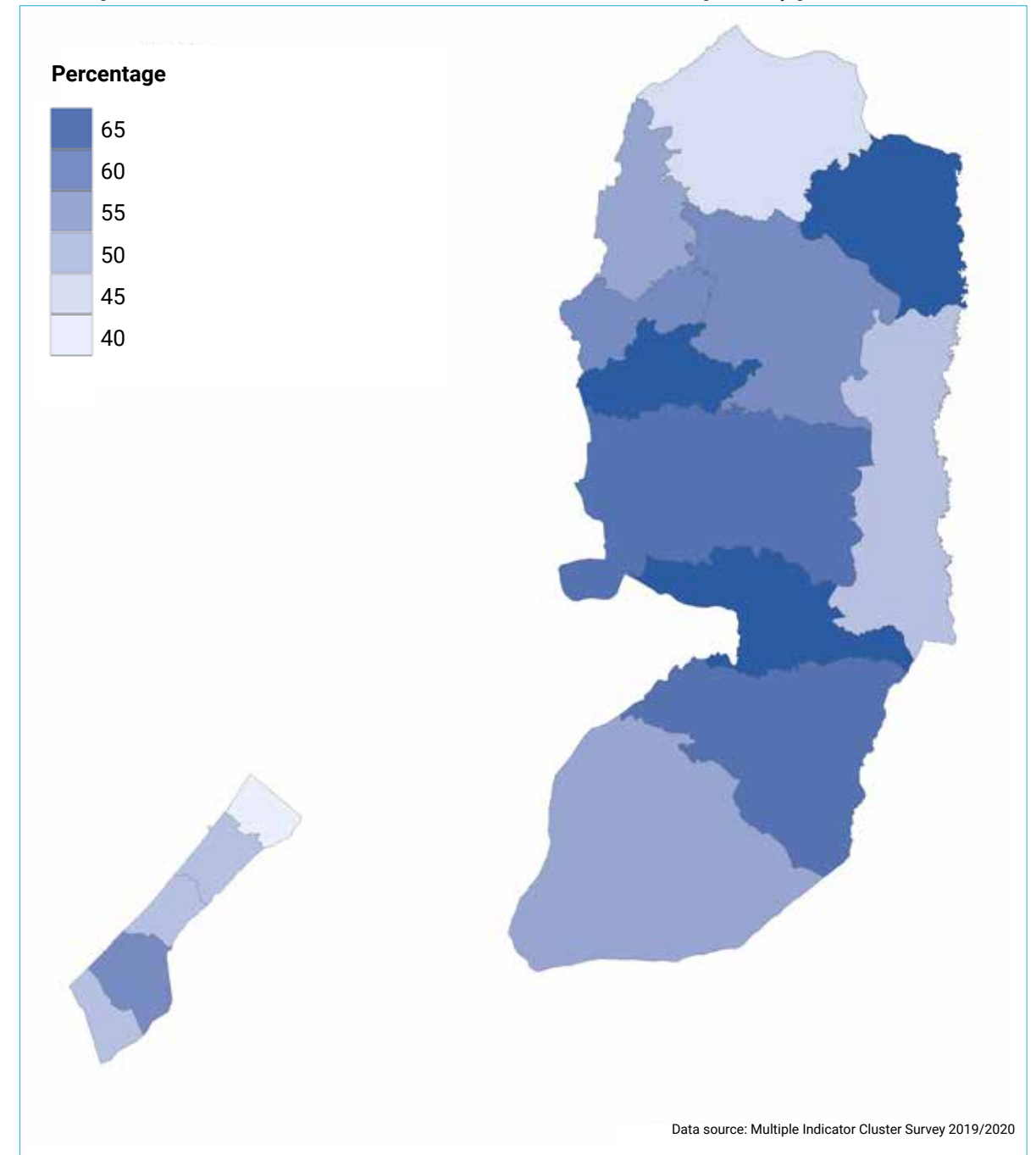
Despite progress on access, the MICS 2019/2020 report showed poor results against education quality indicators. Only 52.7 per cent of children aged 7-14 years (57.3

per cent of girls and 47.8 per cent of boys) demonstrated foundational reading skills by successfully completing three foundational reading tasks. In addition, 2.8 per cent of basic school-age children (1.3 per cent of girls and 4.3 per cent of boys) are still out of school.⁹⁶ There are large disparities between wealth quintiles, geographical locations (see Figure 10), and gender.⁹⁷ The chance of a child from the poorest quintile successfully completing three foundational reading skills is 25 per cent lower than that of a child from the richest quintile. Almost 64.4 per cent of children from the richest quintile demonstrated foundational reading skills, compared to only 39.6 per cent of children from the poorest quintile. Disparities are also reported between the West Bank and Gaza: 57.6 per cent of children from the West Bank but only 47.0 per cent of children from Gaza demonstrated foundational reading skills.⁹⁸ A similar trend is reported for foundational numeracy skills: only 45.8 per cent of children aged 7-14 (equal for boys and girls) demonstrated foundational numeracy skills.⁹⁹

93 According to the Ministry of Education administration record, the percentage is 98.8. By all accounts, the figure is very high.
 94 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.
 95 Ministry of Education, Results-based monitoring report of the Ministry of Education (2021). "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.
 96 Ministry of Education, Results-based monitoring report of the Ministry of Education (2021).
 97 Ministry of Education, Results-based monitoring report of the Ministry of Education (2021).
 98 Ministry of Education, Results-based monitoring report of the Ministry of Education (2021).
 99 Ministry of Education, Results-based monitoring report of the Ministry of Education (2021).

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

The low quality of education may be due to several factors. These include a low number of school hours and 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, and children living in the Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem and other marginalized locations. Overall, these disparities threaten progress on the Sustainable Development Goals 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 for around 47,000 students (of which 60 per cent or 28,200 are girls), through 96 primary and preparatory schools in the West Bank. The UNRWA education programme in Gaza is the largest of all UNRWA programmes 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 and responsibility for 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.¹⁰⁰ 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.¹⁰¹ 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 per cent of schools lack playgrounds, libraries or science labs; at least half of the schools suffer from substandard physical conditions.¹⁰²

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.

At least one third of the schools in Area C and H2 do not meet the minimum standards for safe learning environments, and 23 per cent have no playgrounds.¹⁰³ In terms of school infrastructure, 96.4 per cent of schools had access to the Internet and 94.6 per cent had computers for pedagogical purposes.¹⁰⁴ Schools in Gaza are overcrowded, with an average of 38 students per classroom in 2020 (41 students per classroom in the UNRWA system), and 57 per cent of schools run double shifts adversely affecting the quality of education. (By 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 per cent of children aged 3-4 years attend kindergarten programmes (only 26 per cent of children from the poorest households compared to 44.5 per cent of those from the wealthiest households).¹⁰⁵ (Note, however, that the official age group for kindergarten in Palestine is 4-5 years, and the enrolment rate for 4-5 year-olds is 62.3 per cent.) Nevertheless, the early childhood developmental targets for children aged 3-5 years, as measured by the Early Childhood Development Index, are improving. In 2019/2020, 84 per cent of children were found to be developmentally on track; these improvements have been seen across genders, locations and wealth quintiles.

As for secondary school, 93.8 per cent of children transition from basic to secondary school level. In 2019/2020, the secondary school adjusted net attendance ratio was 74.5 per cent (84.8 per cent for girls and 65.9 per cent for 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 drop out. Early marriage for girls often entails them dropping out of school because of family pressure and/or due to protection concerns. Girls who drop out are at high risk of early marriage, while boys are at high risk of child labour or of participating in life-threatening activities. Alongside structural barriers, there is a need to better understand and analyse the driving forces behind dropout from a gender perspective, including the role of discriminatory gender norms and attitudes. There is also a 22-percentage point gap in attendance between the richest and the poorest quintiles. The Ministry of Education estimates that 2.3 per cent 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 per cent of schools having adapted infrastructure and materials for students with disabilities. Nonetheless, among disabled children, approximately 22 per cent of boys and 30 per cent of girls (aged 6 to 15 years) have never enrolled in school.¹⁰⁶ Evidence is limited but factors explaining this gender disparity could include girls’ increased risk of school-related gender-based violence 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 disabilities. In general, stigma around disability remains a barrier to access, and Palestine still relies on a medical, rather than social, model for disability. Around 40 per cent of children with disabilities who are beyond elementary school age have not completed elementary school education, while two thirds (64.5 per cent) of children with disabilities who are beyond basic education age have not completed this level.¹⁰⁷

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).¹⁰⁸ During the academic year 2020/2021, there was a total of 214,765 students (132,586 or 61.74 per cent of them females) in higher education institutions. There are no reliable current rates for dropout or graduation from higher education institutions. Progress on technical and vocational education and training is discussed under SDG 8 below.

Non-formal education, and life-long learning for young people and adults, are also promoted. Palestine has come close to achieving the SDG 4 target for adult literacy, with a rate of 97.4 per cent and no significant differences by sex.¹⁰⁹ A National Strategy for Adult Education is currently in place, and 80 per cent of its planned interventions have been implemented in collaboration with multiple partners, including communities.



106 UNICEF, *State of Palestine Country Report on Out-of-School Children* (2018).
 107 PCBS, *Characteristics of Individuals with Disabilities in Palestine* (2020).
 108 Governmental (11), Public (17), Private (17) and UNRWA (4).
 109 MICS 2019/2020.

100 Ir Amim, *The State of Education in East Jerusalem: Failing infrastructure* (2019). Note however that Ir Amim does not count Palestinian-run schools in East Jerusalem. Including Palestinian-run schools, the gap is approximately 1,000 classrooms.
 101 Riyada Consulting and Training, *Mid-term evaluation: Support to Education in East Jerusalem Project* (2020). Submitted to UNDP. Note that in July 2022, the Israeli Ministry of Education suspended the permanent licences of six schools in East Jerusalem, citing inappropriate content of the PA text books. If the licences are revoked, 2,000 students will not graduate from an accredited school.
 102 UNDP, *East Jerusalem schools survey* (2020).
 103 UNDP, *East Jerusalem schools survey* (2020).
 104 Ministry of Education Statistical Reports (2019, 2020). The following figures also draw from these reports.
 105 MICS 2019/2020.



SDG 5 GENDER EQUALITY

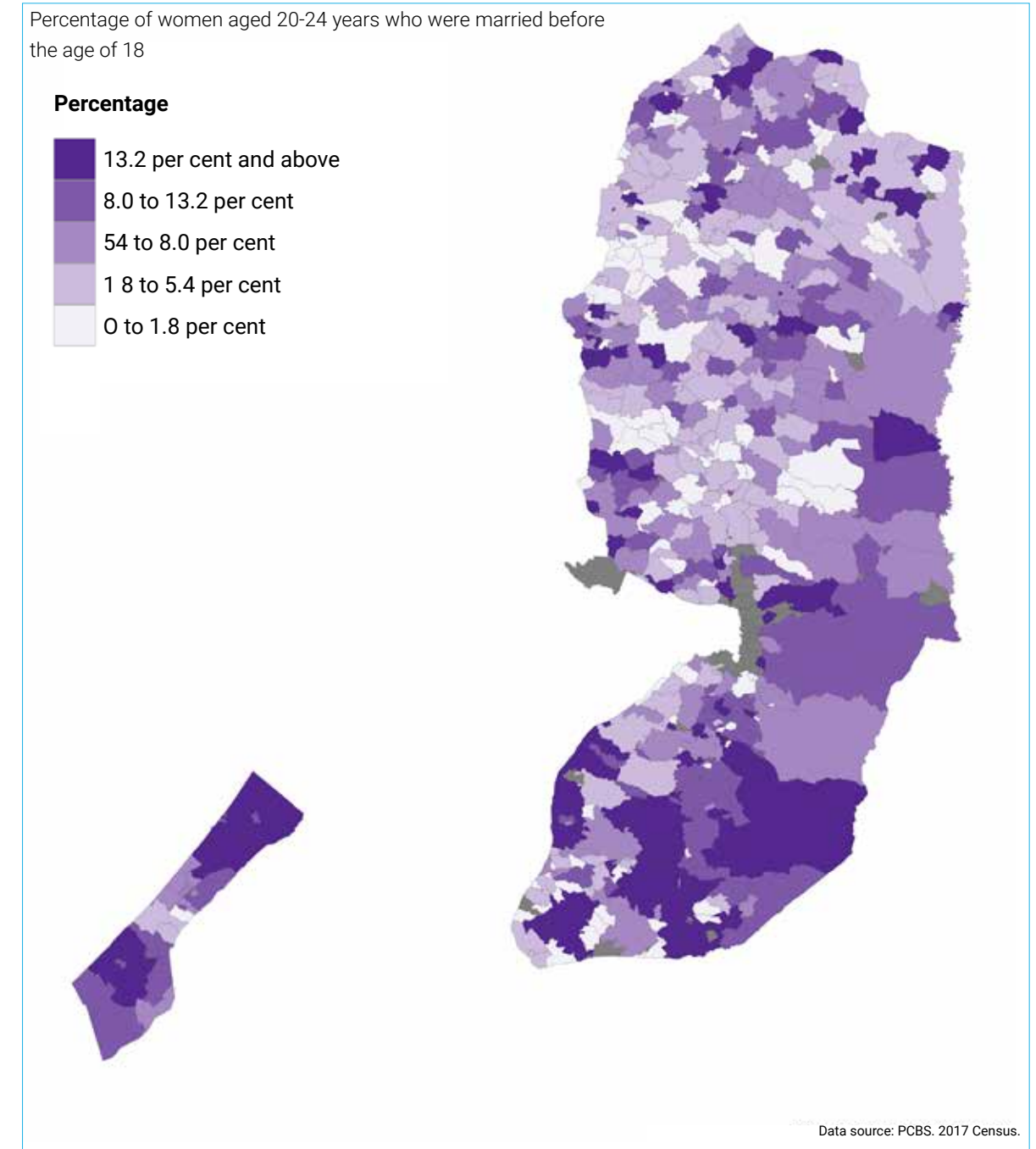
The National Policy Agenda 2017–2022 affirmed the Palestinian government’s commitment to promoting equality between women and men, eliminating all forms of discrimination against women and girls, and institutionalizing gender mainstreaming in policymaking, planning and budgeting. Women’s civil society organizations have supported efforts by the government and partners to enhance gender equality and to end gender-based violence in Palestine, in partnership with international organizations and the government. Reforms have been proposed to the labour law, family protection law and local elections law. These will improve implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), by 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 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 and 99. The repeal of Article 340 removed exceptions that the judiciary could use to reduce punishments for so-called “honour killings”. Article 99 has been amended by Decree-Law No. 5 of 2018, through adding a new paragraph that excludes crimes committed against



Figure 11: Spatial patterns in the marriage of girls



women and children from pleading mitigation 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.¹¹⁰ 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.¹¹¹

Violence against women, particularly by intimate partners, remains at an alarmingly high rate. Among ever-partnered women and girls (15 years and older), 29 per cent

¹¹⁰ See subsequent chapters for a review of Palestine’s commitments to international agreements related to gender equality, such as CEDAW.

¹¹¹ UNDP, UNFPA, UN Women and ESCWA, *State of Palestine: Gender Justice & the Law* (2018).

have been subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, and less than 1 per cent of these women have sought legal and/or psychosocial support.¹¹² There are prevailing customs whereby many Palestinian families strip their daughters of their inheritance rights if they wed outside the extended family. The MICS 2019/2020 found that 15.7 per cent 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 per cent), 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.¹¹³ One helpline reported a 57 per cent increase in calls related to violence compared to prior to the COVID-19 emergency.¹¹⁴

Harmful practices committed against women and girls, including child, early and forced marriage, continue (SDG 5.3), although according to the MICS 2019/2020, child marriage declined from 24 per cent in 2014 to 13 per cent in 2019/2020.¹¹⁵ Femicide and so-called “honour killings” occur in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. National responses have included establishing an interministerial committee to 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).¹¹⁶ 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 that women bear the major responsibility for cultivating the land, they also bear the burden of transporting water to their land. 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 per cent of young women and girls aged 15-19 years 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 per cent of women and girls aged 15-19 years 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 disabilities, nor accessible to LGBT+ people or those who are unmarried, due to the pressure of social norms. Access to SRH 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; testing for sexually transmitted infections including HIV/AIDS; response to gender-based violence against women and girls; and psychosocial counselling. There is a need to

ensure that integrated health services include non-discriminatory SRH counselling.¹¹⁷ In addition, adolescents and youth in the OPT have little information and knowledge of SRH, expressing embarrassment about discussing SRH issues.¹¹⁸

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 per cent of parliamentary seats, although women hold 21.2 per cent of elected seats in local government offices (SDG 5.5.1.). Women’s representation in the police has increased from 3.5 per cent in 2014 to 5.54 per cent in 2021, and women held 22.2 per cent of managerial positions in 2020.¹¹⁹

Sustainable Development Goals: Prosperity



While access to electricity in Palestine is very high (99.7 per cent), the energy supply remains unstable, insufficient and cost-inefficient, especially in Gaza, where only approximately half of electricity demand is met. There have been numerous initiatives to install solar power for basic service provision over the past years, yet power shortages in Gaza continue to impact the availability of essential services – particularly health, water and sanitation – and continue 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.¹²⁰ 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 in 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 per cent of FHHs have access to diesel generators, compared to 11 per cent in male-headed households (MHHs), and 34 per cent have access to rechargeable batteries, compared to 42 per cent in MHHs. 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 United Nations study shows that such electricity shortages have intensified

¹¹² PCBS, Violence Survey (2019).

¹¹³ UN Women, *Rapid Assessment on COVID-19 and Domestic and Family Violence Services across Palestine* (2020).

¹¹⁴ UNDP/UN Women/UNICEF, *Impact of Covid-19 Crisis on the Access of Women Victims and Survivors of Violence to Justice and Security Services in Palestine* (2020).

¹¹⁵ Measured as the percentage of women aged 20-24 years who were married before the age of 18.

¹¹⁶ UN Women, *The Care Economy in Palestine. Policy Brief 4* (2020).

¹¹⁷ UNFPA, *Youth in Palestine, Policy and Programme Recommendations to address demographic risks and opportunities* (2017).

¹¹⁸ UNFPA and Juzoor for Health & Social Development, “Impact of the COVID-19 Outbreak and Lockdown on Family Dynamics and Domestic Violence in Palestine”, Research Paper (2020).

¹¹⁹ State of Palestine, *Palestinian National Voluntary Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in 2020: Summary Report* (2021).

¹²⁰ UNCT and PMO, *Atlas of Sustainable Development* (2020).

women's sense of insecurity, with up to 61 per cent of women surveyed reporting a belief that, as a result, more women are now exposed to gender-based violence.¹²¹

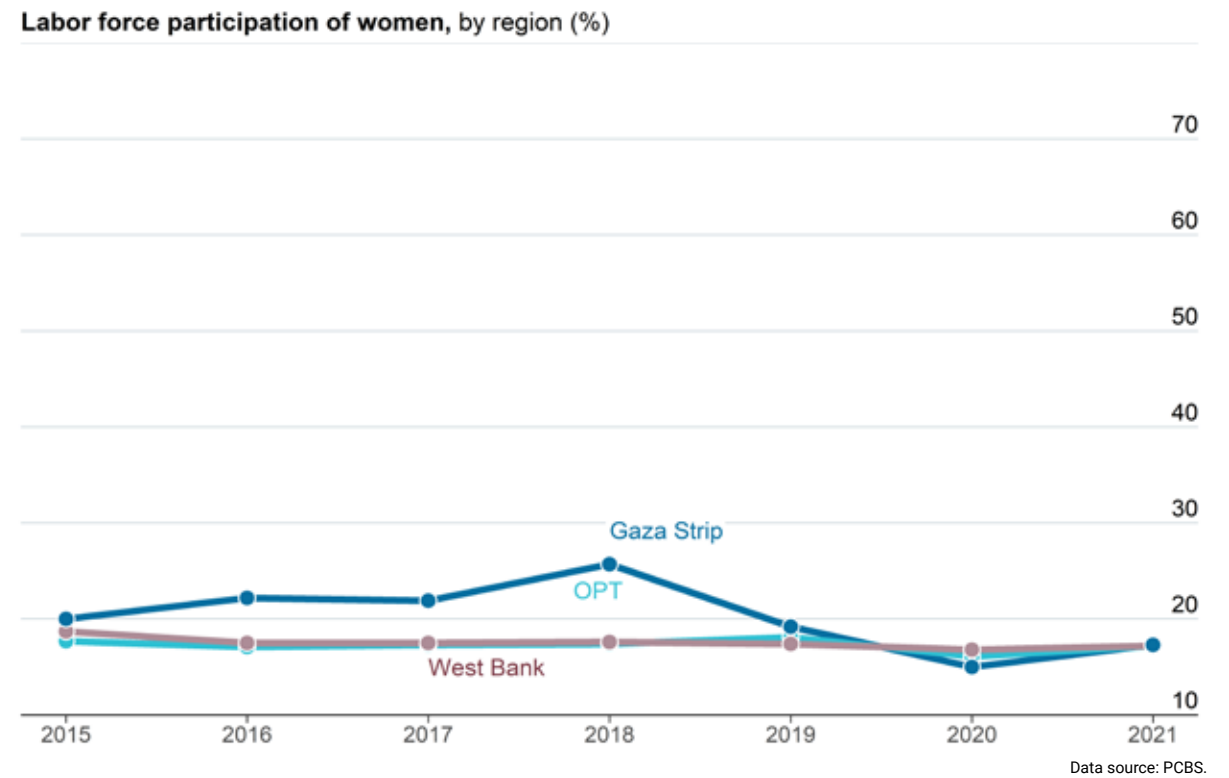
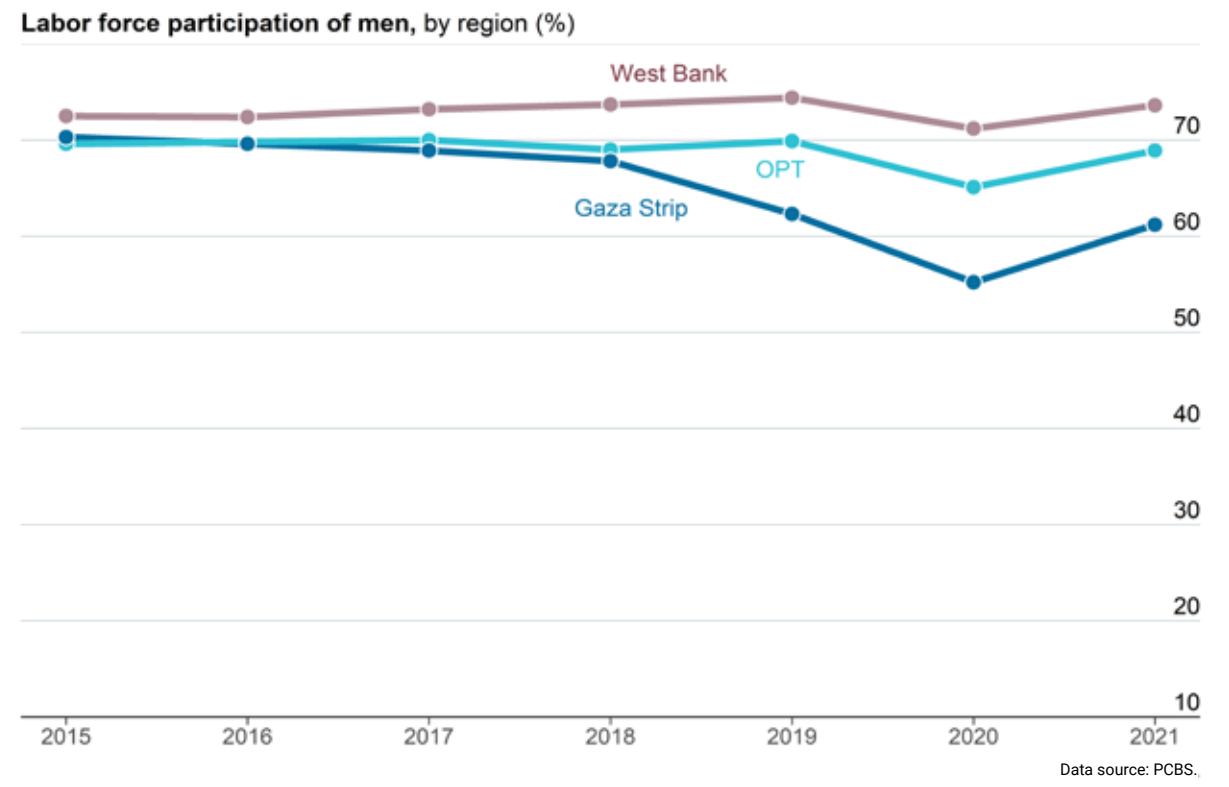
Palestine relies on imports of Israeli electricity to meet demand; 94 per cent of electricity was imported from the Israeli Electric Corporation (IEC) in 2018, and 88 per cent in 2022. The renewable energy share in the total final energy mix in Palestine is 10.7 per cent. Palestine has high potential 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; these have the benefit of reducing operational costs and increasing sustainability because electricity prices are so high. However, there are still challenges to constructing solar energy plants, such as securing Israeli permits for construction, supplying the electricity generated 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 limiting levels of solar energy production. While wind energy is another renewable resource that could be harvested in parts of the West Bank and offshore in Gaza, it is almost non-existent across the OPT.

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 labour markets. As a result, there are significant structural imbalances – namely a resource gap and a labour 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 on donor support.¹²² 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 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.¹²³

The overall labour force participation rate in the OPT has fluctuated in recent years, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and other reasons: participation, including both men and women, declined from 44.3 per cent in 2019 to 40.9 per cent in 2020, then recovered to 43.4 per cent in 2021.¹²⁴ Gender disparities in the labour force are a significant issue. Palestinian women have one of the lowest rates of labour force participation in the world (17.2 per cent), despite having one of the highest primary and secondary education enrolment rates in the region.¹²⁵ Women entrepreneurs accounted for nearly 14.5 per cent of women's total employment; however, this rate has not increased significantly over the past 15 years.¹²⁶

Figure 12: Gender disparities in the labour force



Such gender-based disparities in labour force-related statistics are indicative of the multifaceted, gendered constraints faced by Palestinian women – including skilled and highly-educated women – in accessing decent employment opportunities. These include discriminatory legislation limiting women's choices in careers, sectors and occupations, as well as restrictive sociocultural norms and traditional gender roles (i.e. considering

121 UNFPA, *The Humanitarian Impact of Gaza's Electricity and Fuel Crisis on Gender-Based Violence and Services* (New York, UNFPA, 2017).
 122 UNCTAD, *The Palestinian economy: Macroeconomic and trade policymaking under occupation* (2012).
 123 USAID, *West Bank and Gaza – Inclusive Growth Diagnostic* (2017).
 124 PCBS, *Labour Force Survey and Statistics* (2021).
 125 UNCT and PMO, *Atlas of Sustainable Development* (2020).
 126 UNCT and PMO, *Atlas of Sustainable Development* (2020).

men as primary breadwinners, while viewing women as care providers).¹²⁷ Moreover, since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, women have more frequently lost their jobs and faced stronger relative reductions in 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.¹²⁸

Palestinian women provide 87 per cent of the labour required for livestock production and 54 per cent for crop production, in addition to their mainstream gender roles of child-rearing and taking care of the household.¹²⁹ In 2019, the agriculture sector employed 6.7 per cent of the total of employed women and 5.9 per cent of employed males. However, these statistics tend to underrepresent women's 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.¹³⁰ Nonetheless, there are major gendered pay gaps in the private sector. The reason is likely related to excess labour 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 USD 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, to ensure both the quality of services and 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 labour market entrants, which drives the high unemployment rates particularly among skilled youth and graduates. While access to the Israeli labour market provides opportunities for youth to gain skills and find employment, it also increases the risk of “brain drain” from the OPT to Israel, due to the inability of the Palestinian labour market to reabsorb young workers.

Youth unemployment remains high and is particularly worrying when considering population growth and demographic dynamics. Between 2015 and 2030, the labour force will increase from 1.3 million to 2.3 million, implying that around 1 million new jobs will need be created by 2030 just to maintain the current levels of unemployment.¹³¹ In 2021, unemployment among young people (aged 15–24 years) reached 41.7 per cent (37.2 per cent among young men and 64.5 per cent among young women).¹³² Again, there are stark regional differences: the overall youth unemployment rate was 68.9 per cent in the



Gaza Strip and 27.8 per cent in the West Bank.¹³³ The unemployment problem is concentrated among educated youth, including university graduates. In 2021, the unemployment rate among youth (aged 18-29 years) holding an associate diploma or above reached 52.6 across the OPT (35.6 per cent in the West Bank and 73.7 per cent in the Gaza Strip).¹³⁴ In addition, according to 2021 statistics, 31.5 per cent of the youth population aged 15-24 years is not in employment, education or training.¹³⁵ This is particularly concerning considering the growing number of youth-headed households, which increased from 9 per cent in 2007 to 15 per cent in 2017.¹³⁶

One in ten children aged 10-14 years, and 2.1 per cent of children aged 15-17 years, were involved in child labour.¹³⁷ The MICS survey defines child labour as economic or household chores which surpassed the age-specific threshold. Of those engaged in work, 11.6 per cent of children aged 15-17 years and 6.4 per cent of children aged 12-17 years were involved in hazardous work, according to the MICS 2019/2020 survey. The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics reported in 2020 that 3.6 per cent of Palestinian children aged 10-17 years were employed in the labour 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 per cent in the Gaza Strip, compared to 23 per cent in the West Bank.¹³⁸ The productive sectors in the Gaza economy – encompassing agriculture, industry, trade and services, as well as the financial sector – are estimated to have sustained USD 75-90 million in damages as a result of the May 2021 conflict.¹³⁹ Overall economic losses in Gaza from this conflict – that is, losses in the economy arising from the temporary absence of the damaged assets – amounted to USD 105-190 million.¹⁴⁰ International cash for work programmes 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, to support and encourage the private sector and entrepreneurial activities, and to revive promising sectors such as tourism, while ensuring that labour rights are in place.

133 PCBS, Labour Force Survey (2021).
 134 PCBS, Labour Force Survey (2021).
 135 PCBS, Labour Force Survey (2021).
 136 PCBS, Press release on the occasion of International Youth Day (2019).
 137 MICS 2019/2020.
 138 PCBS, Press release on the occasion of International Youth Day (2020).
 139 World Bank, United Nations and European Union, *Gaza Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment* (2021).
 140 World Bank, United Nations and European Union, *Gaza Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment* (2021).

127 World Bank, *Enhancing job opportunities for skilled women in the Palestinian territories* (2018).
 128 UN Women, *A Feminist Economic Analysis on the Impact of COVID-19 in the Palestinian Economy* (2021).
 129 FAO, *Country Gender Assessment* (2021).
 130 UN Women, *The Care Economy in Palestine: Towards Recognizing, Reducing, and Redistributing Unpaid Care Work*. Policy Brief No. 4 (2020).
 131 UNFPA, *Palestine 2030: Demographic Change: Opportunities for Development* (2017).
 132 PCBS, Labour Force Survey (2021).

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 government, employers and trade unions. It aims to address labour market challenges and promote policy coherence to achieve full and productive employment for jobseekers, particularly youth and women. It has three main pillars: (i) promoting sound labour market governance, with a focus on enhancing active labour market policies; (ii) aligning education with labour market needs, notably via improved technical and vocational education and training (TVET); and (iii) 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 for registration and organizational reforms of trade unions and employers' organizations. The government has also upscaled inspection activities to ensure enforcement of the labour law, implemented the Decent Work Programme in cooperation with the ILO, and continued to provide legal aid to workers regarding their labour rights and social security in Israel. Despite this, there is insufficient data to assess the level of national compliance with labour rights based on the ILO standards and national legislation, including on freedom of association, collective bargaining, forced labour, child labour, equality of opportunity and treatment, tripartite consultation, labour administration and labour inspection.

As technical education is positioned as a contributor to economic growth in Palestine, some TVET centres have been upgraded, with a focus on making curricula more market-oriented, and 1,600 new trainees have been

registered. Reports state that 5,183 trainees have graduated from TVET centres. 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 the second quarter of 2022, there are around 210,500 Palestinians working in Israel and the Israeli settlements; most have official permits, but 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 2019.¹⁴¹ The ILO calculated the estimated annual profits at NIS 427 million.¹⁴² Despite an Israeli Government decision in 2016 to undertake an imminent reform of the work permit regime, the first steps towards implementation were only taken in December 2020, with reforms to the construction sector. These reforms aimed to delink the permit quotas from employers and hence open 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.

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.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ Bank of Israel, *Illegal trade in work permits for Palestinian workers in Israel* (2019). Available at <https://www.boi.org.il/en/NewsAndPublications/PressReleases/Pages/25-9-2019.aspx>

¹⁴² ILO, *The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories*. ILC.109/DG/APP/2020 (2020).

¹⁴³ 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 (22 December 2021).



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's share of employment stood at only 11 per cent in 2020. Over the last two decades, the sector has suffered stagnation, limiting the economy's integration with modern production chains in regional and international markets.¹⁴⁴

The PA has been taking steps towards improving industrial capacity and encouraging investment and entrepreneurship, as well as improving access to communication services. Moreover, industrial parks have been developed in five governorates across the West Bank and Gaza, hosting 79 medium to large enterprises. Employment in manufacturing comprised 12.8 per cent of total employment and contributed added value of 11.2 per cent to GDP in 2020.¹⁴⁵ 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. Improvements to 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 entry of industrial materials and other inputs into the Gaza Strip severely constrains the potential for industrial growth.

While the aggregate data cited above reflect 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 labour force participation and pay.¹⁴⁶ 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 per cent. In general, more people are employed in service activities in Gaza, with mining, manufacturing and construction absorbing a smaller proportion of the labour force. By comparison, the West Bank is slightly less horizontally segregated for females, with 11.3 per cent of women working in mining, quarrying and manufacturing, ranking second to services (66.7 per cent of working females). However, the West Bank is also much less segregated for men, providing a variety of work opportunities.

Most industrial establishments in Palestine (92 per cent) are considered micro or small enterprises, defined as employing fewer than 10 workers. The proportion of small-scale industries in total industry value added is 17.6 per cent.¹⁴⁷

Financial support is provided to women-owned and women-led enterprises through the Solidarity Fund, as well as other donor-funded projects. The Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSME) National Helpdesk Scheme supports emerging needs and fosters business transformation and recovery in the context of the COVID-19 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. It is also an opportunity to access 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.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁴ UNCT and PMO, *Atlas of Sustainable Development* (2020).

¹⁴⁵ State of Palestine, *Palestinian National Voluntary Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in 2020: Summary Report* (2021).

¹⁴⁶ ILO, *The Occupied Palestinian Territory: An Employment Diagnostic Study* (2018).

¹⁴⁷ UNCT and PMO, *Atlas of Sustainable Development* (2020).

¹⁴⁸ UNCT and PMO, *Atlas of Sustainable Development* (2020).



The information and communication technology (ICT) sector accounts for 3.2 per cent of GDP and has the potential for growth to meet the increasing demand from other sectors.¹⁴⁹ However, restrictions related to the occupation have stood in the way of achieving digital transformation. There is dependence not only in electricity, but also in communication technology, 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.¹⁵⁰ The OPT ranks at 123 on the ICT Development Index, well below the regional and global averages.¹⁵¹ 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.¹⁵²

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 for the Palestinian Authority. Medium and high-tech industry represented 6.2 per cent 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 to train coders and programmers, and 3,200 students have already been trained. More measures need to be put in place to harness the potential of the ICT sector in 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 to flourish and grow their client 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, industry, infrastructure and innovation are not gender-neutral, and policy action is required to tackle gender gaps in labour and pay and to 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. It is imperative to improve collection of gender-disaggregated data on SDG 9 indicators that also have a strong environmental component – such as on modes of transport, manufacturing and small-scale industries – considering women as users, workers or entrepreneurs. Much progress on SDG 9 hinges on the rollout of 4G, and later 5G, technology across the OPT.

149 World Bank, *Palestinian Digital Economy Assessment* (2021).

150 UNCTAD, *Report on UNCTAD assistance to the Palestinian people: Developments in the economy of the Occupied Palestinian Territory* (2021).

151 World Bank, *Economic Monitoring Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee* (June 2020).

152 World Bank, *Economic Monitoring Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee* (June 2020).

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. These include but are 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 disparity – 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. It is closely linked to and heavily influenced by the Israeli occupation policies and practices. As such, intra-Palestinian inequality in 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, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip.¹⁵³

Refugee status, gender, age and disability also play a significant role in determining different manifestations of intra-Palestinian inequality. For instance, 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 in achieving SDG 10. Trends from recent years indicate that income inequality is increasing in the West Bank and Palestine in general, but declining in the Gaza Strip. Inequality in Palestine affects more than half of the population, while the bottom 40 per cent of the population accounted for less than a

quarter of total consumption in 2017 (the last year surveyed).¹⁵⁴ Starting in 2022, the minimum wage will be raised from NIS 1,450 to NIS 1,880 (approximately USD 455 to USD 590), based on an agreement between employers and workers' organizations facilitated by the Ministry of Labour. This initiative aims at a more equitable distribution of income, a measure that would help mitigate extreme poverty.¹⁵⁵

Persons with disabilities are among the groups prioritized for reducing inequalities under SDG 10. In the OPT, disability plays a role in determining different manifestations of inequality. Based on the last census, unemployment amongst persons with disabilities in the OPT is particularly high – reaching 37 per cent 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.¹⁵⁶ 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 has adopted an Inclusive Education Policy and taken steps to integrate persons with disabilities in formal education, including through establishing resource rooms, teacher training and community outreach activities. The Ministry of Public Works has upgraded public facilities to improve accessibility for persons with disabilities and renovated homes for accessibility in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Development. The government continues to enforce its standing policy of a 5 per cent quota of civil service posts for persons with disabilities.

Women and girls with most types of disability experience different levels of vulnerability and marginalization. This is due to a range of complex factors related to the composition of society, the prevailing culture, the structure

153 State of Palestine, *Palestinian Voluntary National Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda* (2018).

154 UNCT and PMO, *Atlas of Sustainable Development* (2020).

155 State of Palestine, *Palestinian National Voluntary Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in 2020: Summary Report* (2021).

156 UN Women, *Gender Alert: Needs of Women, Girls, Boys and Men in Humanitarian Action in Palestine* (2020).

of service delivery and discrimination on the basis of disability, violence, and gender. Significant obstacles and challenges remain, 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 for survivors of violence; failure to understand and respond to the special needs of women with disabilities who are survivors of violence; and the fact that this vulnerable group is usually not integrated into national and sectoral plans and overall policy directions in Palestine. While protection mechanisms are weak in the Palestinian territory in general, Gaza faces more significant challenges related to women and girls who are 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 also pending cabinet endorsement.

SDG 11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

On Goal 11, Palestine has reported on various strategies, plans and programmes 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, 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 has referred to its lack of capacity in integrated urban planning mainly due to the geo-political situation on the ground. There is considerable variation in alignment and attainment of SDG 11 targets with national priorities and interventions.¹⁵⁷

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 by the Jordanian government before 1967 covered only 34 per cent of the West Bank. The PA's Land and Water Settlement Commission (LWSC) has increased the coverage to 56 per cent since its establishment in 2016, by completing the settlement of 1,316,085

dunums (1,316 km³), 50 per cent of which are located in Area C. This comprises more than 35 per cent of the area slated for land settlement by the LWSC in the West Bank. Nevertheless, the legal procedures associated with the land registration process are slow. According to official records, alongside the 1,914,193 dunums (1,914 km³) settled by the Jordanian government pre-1967,¹⁵⁸ since 2016 only an additional 700,000 dunums (700 km³) of land in the West Bank have official deeds (land registration certificates). This increases the insecurity of land tenure and reflects the fact 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 neighbourhoods, and there is also informal housing, especially in the 27 refugee camps across the OPT which contain around 400,000 refugees.¹⁵⁹ 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 housing units damaged because of conflict that need replenishing. 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 per cent of units are unsuitable, and 6.2 per cent are overcrowded.¹⁶⁰ Although 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 per cent of the built-up area is within 500 metres, which implies convenient access to public transport.

Public transport is among the priority areas for the Palestinian government. In 2020, 77.1 per cent of the population had access to public transportation.¹⁶¹ 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 transport 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 been no 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.¹⁶²

The Cabinet has taken decisions to further develop the public transport system, and

¹⁵⁸ Land registration certificates are issued by the Palestinian Land Authority for the land settled pre-1967 by the Jordanian government, but data are not available on the number of dunums registered out of the 1,914,193 dunums settled.

¹⁵⁹ State of Palestine, *Palestinian National Voluntary Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in 2020: Summary Report* (2021).

¹⁶⁰ Ministry of Local Government and UN-Habitat, *Status Report on the Achievement of Goal 11 in Palestine, "Sustainable Cities and Communities"* (2021).

¹⁶¹ State of Palestine, *Palestinian National Voluntary Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in 2020: Summary Report* (2021).

¹⁶² World Bank, *Gender and Transport in the Middle East and North Africa Region: Case Studies from the West Bank and Yemen* (2011).

¹⁵⁷ State of Palestine, Ministry of Local Government and UN-Habitat, *Status Report on the Achievement of Goal 11 in Palestine, "Sustainable Cities and Communities"* (2021).



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Sustainable Development Goals: Planet



SDG 6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION

The OPT faces political and economic barriers to accessing 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, low fee collection rates and high cost of electricity. The average daily water consumption of Palestinians connected to a water network is 81.9 litres per capita per day. This is less than the optimal daily allowance recommended by the World Health Organization (100 litres) and about one third of the daily water consumption rate in Israel.¹⁶³ Access to improved water sources is high in Palestine, with 99.8 per cent of households having access to water either piped into their dwelling or from a protected dug well, a protected spring, rainwater sources, bottled water or public taps. The rates are above 99 per cent in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip.¹⁶⁴

However, water quality is a major concern, especially in Gaza. Only 39.5 per cent of households have access to safely managed water resources:¹⁶⁵ 66.2 per cent of households in the West Bank and only 4 per cent of households in the Gaza Strip.¹⁶⁶ In Gaza, almost 25 per cent of child morbidity cases are caused by waterborne diseases.¹⁶⁷

The irregular supply of water also increases women's workloads and forces them to develop a range of coping strategies. In addition, availability of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities in educational and health facilities has 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 per cent, while the percentage of safely managed sanitation services is 67 per cent.¹⁶⁸ The Palestinian Water Authority has championed several initiatives to strengthen governance of the water and sanitation sector, while ensuring 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 2019.¹⁶⁹ 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 aimed to enhance 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 (water wells, water reservoirs, water networks, carrier lines, etc.). Other projects included the completion and operation of two large-scale wastewater treatment plants in the Gaza Strip, the development and rehabilitation of wastewater

¹⁶³ Guy Howard and others, *Domestic water quantity, service level and health* (World Health Organization, 2020); see also UNCT and PMO, *Atlas of Sustainable Development* (2020).

¹⁶⁴ MICS 2019/2020.

¹⁶⁵ 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).

¹⁶⁶ MICS 2019/2020.

¹⁶⁷ OCHA, *Humanitarian Needs Overview 2021* (2020), p. 38.

¹⁶⁸ Data from UNICEF-WHO Joint Monitoring Programme (2021) and MICS 2019/2020. SDG 6 calls for safely managed sanitation – as a private improved facility where excreta is safely disposed of on site or transported and treated off-site – plus a handwashing facility with soap and water.

¹⁶⁹ State of Palestine, *Palestinian National Voluntary Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in 2020: Summary Report* (2021).

the government has established a unified public transport 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 programmes 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, a National Urban Policy is under development. This will frame the vision, objectives and principles for urban development, as well as the government's

commitment to implement the National Urban Policy in Palestine over the coming decade, given that Palestine's future is undeniably urban, with more than 77 per cent of the population living in urban areas.

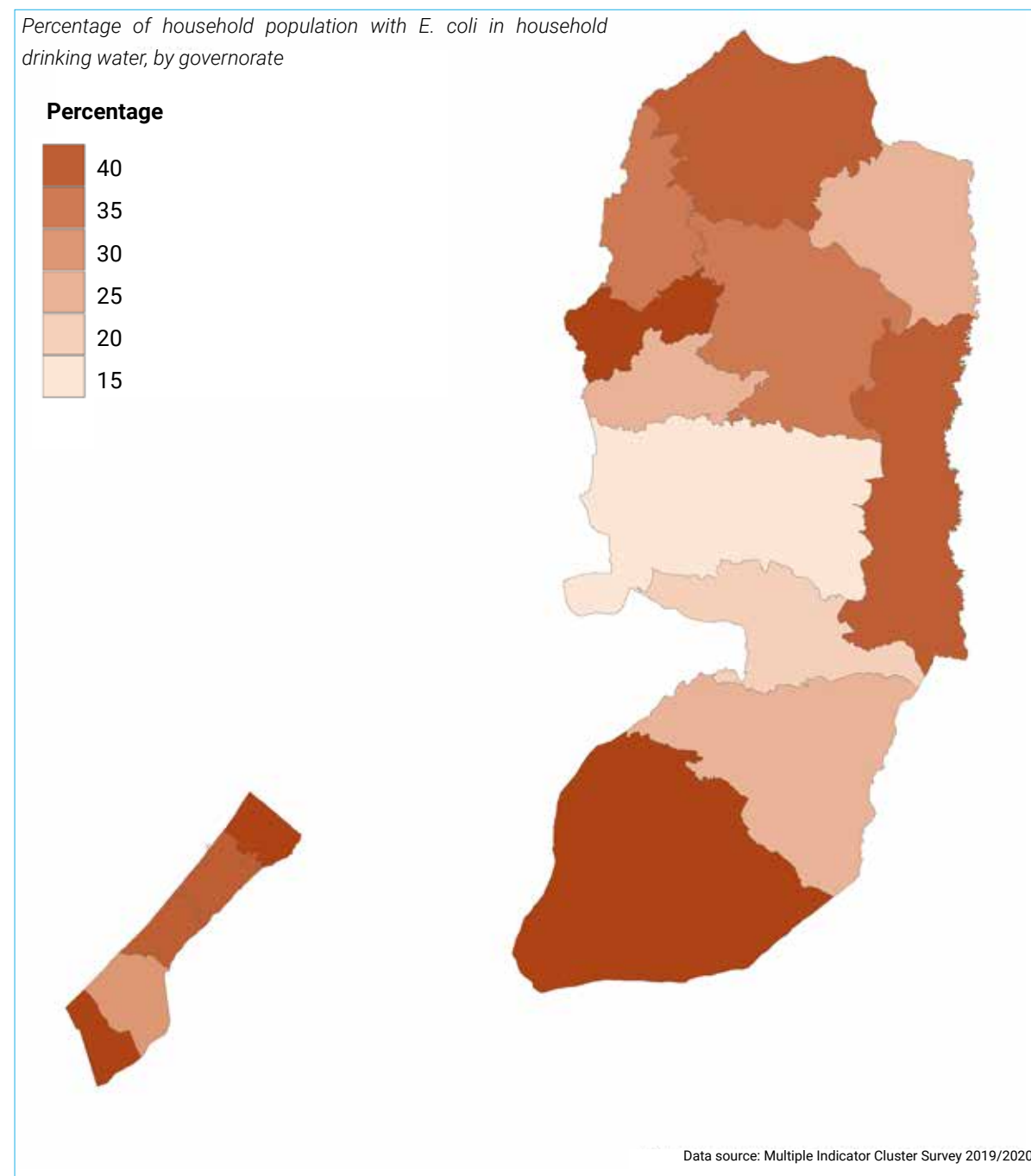
In 2011, Palestine ratified the UNESCO 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, and in 2018 it adopted a comprehensive national law for the protection of tangible cultural heritage. With the support of several partners and United Nations agencies such as UNESCO, 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 the identity of communities living there.

infrastructure and associated networks, and the rehabilitation of water networks and rainwater drainage infrastructure in several communities.

The government has been undertaking infrastructure development works to increase the capacity of the seawater desalination plants in Deir Al-Balah, as well as expansion

of the Southern Gaza desalination plant for 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 are no data available to assess changes in the efficiency of water use or in the extent of water-related ecosystems over time.

Figure 13: Spatial patterns in access to clean drinking water



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, environment and climate change as cross-cutting themes. The action plan has been integrated into the National Policy Agenda and the National Development Plan, and activities associated with it are being implemented in all productive and infrastructure sectors.¹⁷⁰

The OPT has a low ecological footprint compared to the region; it was estimated at 0.5 global hectares (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 costs and stringent regulations for waste disposal in Israel.¹⁷¹ 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 for children, infants and pregnant women, who are more susceptible to long-term harm from exposure. While there are no official data available for the OPT on transboundary waste movements of all types (including hazardous, solid waste and e-waste), there is mounting evidence of the harm to children, adolescents

and expectant mothers, whose health is jeopardized by the processing of electronic waste.¹⁷² 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 behavioural and neurological assessment scores and reduced cognitive and language scores. Other adverse child health impacts linked to e-waste include changes in lung function and respiratory effects, DNA damage and impaired thyroid function.

Solid waste management faces numerous challenges, including a lack of adequate comprehensive legislation to encourage and enforce recycling and reuse, lack of public awareness, 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 access to land and resources.¹⁷³

New medical waste systems have recently been established 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 preventing the spread of COVID-19 through treated contaminated waste (e.g. personal protective equipment from quarantine centres and COVID-19 hospitals). Feasibilities studies have been conducted for solid waste management, and institutional strengthening measures have been implemented in Gaza.

Regulatory oversight, monitoring and assessments of environmental risks are

¹⁷⁰ UNCT and PMO, *Atlas of Sustainable Development* (2020).
¹⁷¹ UNCTAD, *Report on UNCTAD assistance to the Palestinian people: Developments in the economy of the Occupied Palestinian Territory* (2019).
¹⁷² UNEP, *State of Environment and Outlook Report for the Occupied Palestinian Territory 2020* (Nairobi, 2020).
¹⁷³ UNCT and PMO, *Atlas of Sustainable Development* (2020).



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 **SDG 13
CLIMATE ACTION**

The OPT lies within the Mediterranean climatic zone, which is characterized as a hot, arid and water-scarce region experiencing an increase in temperatures over the past 50 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 scarcity of available water, deterioration of water resources, land and soil contamination, desertification and unsustainable management of land, and air pollution. The inability to access and manage natural resources sustainably and to enforce laws and instructions are aggravating the threats of climate change, 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 and Paris Agreement to stabilize greenhouse gas (GHG) 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 GHG emissions by 12.8 per cent by 2040 relative to “business-as-usual” levels under a scenario where the Israeli occupation continues, and by 24.4 per cent by 2040 under a scenario where the Israeli occupation ends (an independence scenario). The above-mentioned targets were revised in March 2021, when the emission reduction scenarios increased to 17.5 per cent and 26.6 per cent, respectively.

175 PCBS, *Per Capita Emissions of CO₂ in Palestine and Selected Countries* (2020).
 176 UN Women, *The Impact of Flooding on Gender Roles in Substandard Housing in Gaza. In The Imperative of Mainstreaming Gender in Humanitarian Action in Palestine: Six Case Studies from Gaza* (2020).
 177 UNCT and PMO, *Atlas of Sustainable Development* (2020).

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 per cent 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 2016.¹⁷⁵ 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 of local communities. The State of Palestine also supports the over-arching goal of Action for Climate Empowerment to empower all members of society to engage in climate action. In 2021, it committed to ensuring that 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 affected.¹⁷⁶ 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.¹⁷⁷ The number of people directly affected by disasters was 42 per

key routine activities undertaken by the Environmental Quality Authority and the Palestinian Water Authority. These activities include inspecting emission levels in industrial enterprises, testing the quality of water extracted from artesian wells and various other water resources, examining environmental risks and ensuring that environmental impact management plans are in place as a prerequisite for licensing and registration of industrial and commercial enterprises.

Monitoring and management of 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.¹⁷⁴ A national plan is currently under development for the management of medical waste, while a guidance manual has been developed on handling and management of dangerous waste in line with commitments under the Basel Convention. Currently, the Environmental Education Strategy 2020–2030 is under review.

Palestine has joined five multilateral environmental agreements on hazardous

waste and other chemicals, committing to safeguarding the environment and health. Compliance rates vary between these agreements, being highest for the Montreal Protocol on substances that deplete the ozone layer (100 per cent compliance) and the Basel Convention on hazardous waste and material. Compliance is lowest for the Rotterdam Convention on hazardous chemicals and pesticides in international trade (9 per cent compliance) and the Stockholm Convention on organic pollutants.

Public awareness campaigns and professional training activities have been delivered to promote environmental awareness, waste reduction, recycling and reuse, and responsible consumption. However, there are no data available to assess the national recycling rate in Palestine. Neither have data been generated to assess food loss, overall 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.

174 UNCT and PMO, *Atlas of Sustainable Development* (2020)



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 **SDG 14
LIFE BELOW WATER**

 **SDG 15
LIFE ON LAND**

Palestine suffers high pollution levels from 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 availability 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/litre to 148 mg/litre because wastewater treatment plants were able to run routinely. This level is still well above the international standard of 60 mg/litre of biochemical oxygen demand, increasing the risk of waterborne diseases and other environmental hazards.¹⁸⁰ Inadequate sanitation infrastructure and electricity supply must be remedied to meet targets.

In relation to fishing, the political situation in Gaza is undermining the potential of the fishing sector; this includes the Israeli government making frequent changes to the permitted fishing limits, in the context of conflict escalations. The fisheries sector in Gaza was once 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.¹⁸¹

Several initiatives have been taking place under SDG 15. These include 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.¹⁸² A master plan for Wadi Gaza was developed in 2021. Soil erosion on the Gaza coast is a critical and urgent issue.

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.¹⁸³ 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 per cent of total land area. Over the past 40 years, 77 per cent of forest land destruction is attributed to Israeli settlements. The past decade has witnessed increased protection for forest land in Palestine, which has resulted in slow but steady growth in forests. Only 4 per cent of important sites for terrestrial and freshwater biodiversity, and only 8.5 per cent of important sites for mountain biodiversity, are covered by protected areas, which is very low compared to the global average of 49 per cent. One reason is that Palestinians do not have full access to the natural and cultural landscapes as the majority is under Israeli control.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁰ UNCT and PMO, *Atlas of Sustainable Development* (2020).
¹⁸¹ UNCT and PMO, *Atlas of Sustainable Development* (2020).
¹⁸² State of Palestine, *Palestinian National Voluntary Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in 2020: Summary Report* (2021).
¹⁸³ OCHA, *Seawater pollution raises concerns of waterborne diseases and environmental hazards in the Gaza Strip* (9 August 2018).
¹⁸⁴ UNCT and PMO, *Atlas of Sustainable Development* (2020).

100,000 in 2017.¹⁷⁸ The most significant anthropogenic disasters currently affecting Palestinian people in the OPT are considered to be water shortages, environmental degradation, drought and desertification, along with landslides and depletion of land and natural resources, which all go hand in hand with the political conflict. In addition, natural disasters are considered a potential threat. Earthquakes are considered a major hazard in the region, with low probability but high adverse impacts. Moreover, the rapid population growth rates and the way cities are developing in the OPT is unsustainable; more than 50 per cent of the Palestinian population live in what is defined as “hazard-prone” areas, including major urban centres. These areas are particularly vulnerable, because of their dependence on complex infrastructures.

Palestine joined the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction in 2015 and established the National Disaster Risk Management Centre in 2017, under the Office of the Prime Minister. Since 2015, Palestine has been implementing a national disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategy in line with the Sendai Framework. Action plans have been developed to strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters, focusing on health, water, solid waste, public transport and gender. Palestine’s score for adoption and implementation of national DRR strategies in line with the Sendai Framework is 0.4, and the proportion of local authorities that have local DRR strategies was 69 per cent, according to 2018 reports.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁸ UNCT and PMO, *Atlas of Sustainable Development* (2020).
¹⁷⁹ UNCT and PMO, *Atlas of Sustainable Development* (2020).

A report has been developed on desertification in Palestine, along with the sixth report on biodiversity. A revision of the national biodiversity strategy has been launched. Revenue generated and finance mobilized from biodiversity-relevant economic instruments stood at USD 54.05 million in 2018.¹⁸⁵

Contamination from conflict-related explosive hazards is a threat to people and livelihoods in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. In its initial transparency report under Article 7 of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, submitted in November 2018, Palestine reported 69 areas suspected to contain anti-personnel mines on the border with Jordan, covering a total area of 18.51 km². 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 Israeli Defense Force exercises contaminate firing zones in Area C and particularly impact the Bedouin community, who often engage in unsafe coping mechanisms to mitigate the threat.¹⁸⁶ 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, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction, and the Convention on Certain Weapons. In Gaza, explosive remnants of war (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.

 **SDG 16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS**

Among the most important SDG 16 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 per cent in the Gaza Strip and 36 per cent 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.¹⁸⁷

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 contributing to the declining credibility of



the Palestinian Authority and its leadership – domestically, regionally and internationally. This is leading to reduced financing from donors and declining confidence of citizens in their government.¹⁸⁸ The absence of a functioning legislature has resulted in new legislation being issued by decree, often without transparency or national consultation. Several of the decree-laws appear to have extended the reach of the executive over the judiciary, raising serious concerns in relation to the separation of powers.

Palestinian authorities in the West Bank and Gaza have shown limited progress and commitment in investigating and prosecuting the perpetrators of violations linked to incidents of possible excessive use of force or allegations of torture and ill-treatment by Palestinian security forces.¹⁸⁹ 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.

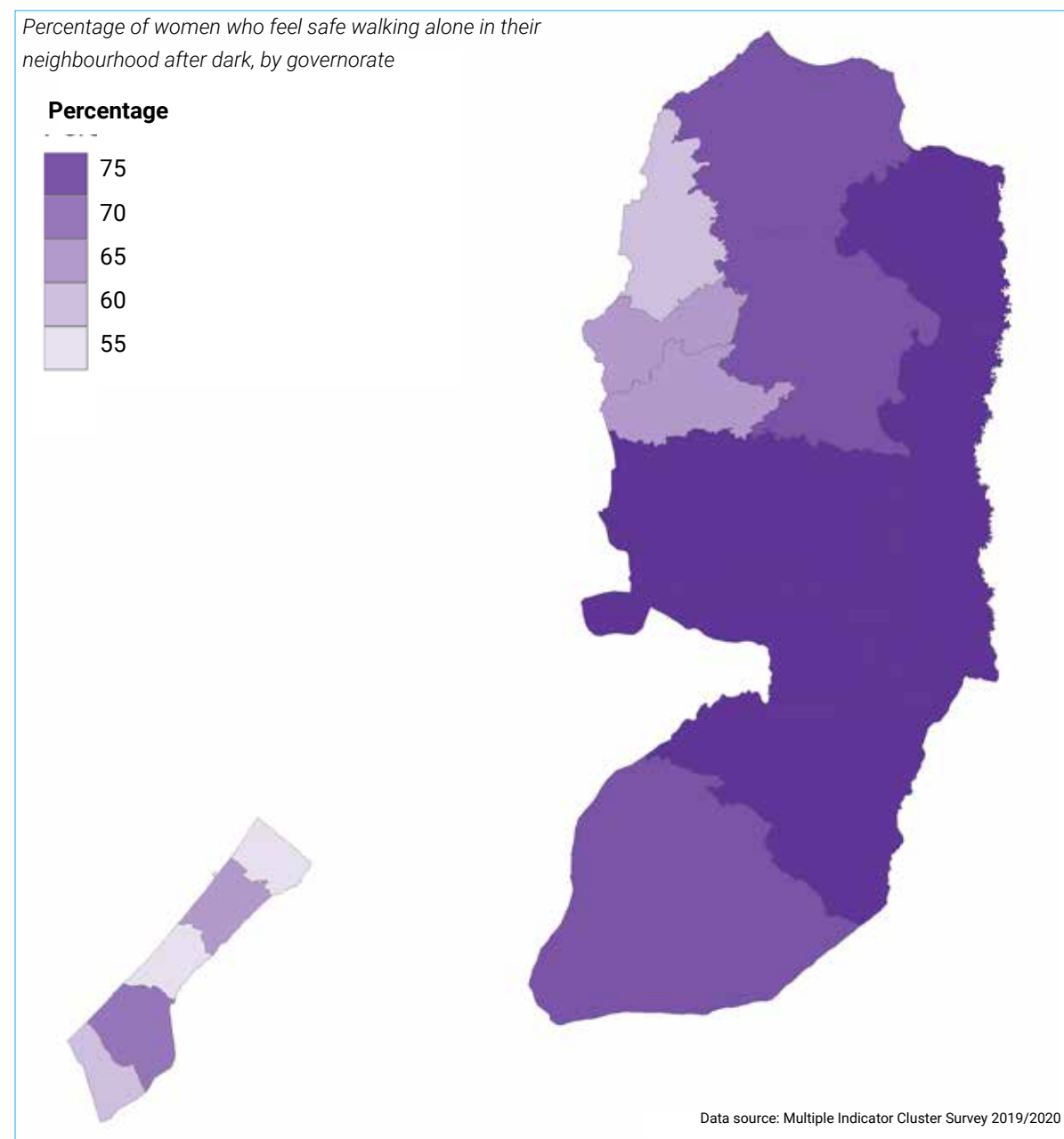
Palestinian institutions of self-government must continue to be reformed and strengthened, particularly with respect to the division of powers and checks and balances, the independence of the judiciary, the de-concentration of power in the executive, and reduction in over-empowerment of the security 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 sociocultural 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

¹⁸⁵ State of Palestine, *Palestinian National Voluntary Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in 2020: Summary Report* (2021).
¹⁸⁶ OCHA, *Humanitarian Needs Overview 2022* (2021).
¹⁸⁷ See, for example, A/HRC/49/83, paras. 29-36.

¹⁸⁸ See, for example, PCPSR Opinion Poll 80 (July 2021). Available at: <http://pcpsr.org/en/node/845>, and A/HRC/49/83, para. 33
¹⁸⁹ See, for example, A/HRC/46/22, paras. 21-24; A/HRC/49/25, paras. 25-27.

Figure 14: Spatial patterns of perceptions of safety among women



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, a lack of consideration of the barriers women face because of sociopolitical 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. These included 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 United Nations programmes. Separately, United Nations programmes have provided child protection and mental and psychosocial support services to more than 30,000 children, including over 14,000 girls.

Protective services were offered to over 900 child labourers, and survivors and witnesses of domestic violence, in 2020. Violence against children remains high. According to MICS 2019/2020 data, 90.1 per cent of children (under age 18) have experienced physical punishment or psychological aggression by caregivers.¹⁹⁰ Among 18 to 29-year-olds, 2.8 per cent report experiencing sexual violence by the age of 18, although 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 per cent of children under 5 years of age were registered with a civil authority.¹⁹¹

At the national level, the feeling of neighbourhood safety is high in Palestine. In 2018, 92 per cent of Palestinian adults reported feeling safe walking alone in their neighbourhoods, an increase from 87 per cent 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 per cent in 2016 (the most recent data).

Police records indicate that 20 per cent of reported incidents were in relation to physical assault and 59 per cent were in relation to robbery and theft.¹⁹²

The perception of corruption remains high in Palestine, although few Palestinians report directly experiencing bribery when dealing with public officials. Experts believe that nepotism and cronyism constitute the most common manifestations of corruption in Palestine. According to 2018 data, there is a high level of satisfaction with the latest experience of public services across various sectors: for the health sector 84 per cent, education sector 90 per cent, and administrative sector 94 per cent of the population reported being satisfied.¹⁹³

Measures to address crime included stepping up police efforts to combat trading of arms, money laundering and counterfeiting operations, as well as strengthening the capacity of the Palestinian Monetary Authority 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. Similarly, 114 monitoring reports on the conduct of public organizations were issued by the Audit and Administrative Control Bureau. On the legislative side, there are proposals to revise the civil service law to apply an integrity and anti-corruption perspective to the appointment and conduct of civil servants. The policy of prioritizing the appointment of people with disabilities continues, and 199 persons with disabilities were appointed to the civil service in 2020.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁰ State of Palestine, *Palestinian National Voluntary Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in 2020: Summary Report* (2021).

¹⁹¹ State of Palestine, *Palestinian National Voluntary Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in 2020: Summary Report* (2021).

¹⁹² UNCT and PMO, *Atlas of Sustainable Development* (2020).

¹⁹³ UNCT and PMO, *Atlas of Sustainable Development* (2020).

¹⁹⁴ State of Palestine, *Palestinian National Voluntary Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in 2020: Summary Report* (2021).



SDG 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 implementation of all the other goals in the OPT.

The government has sought to strengthen Palestine’s presence in international bodies, including with the aim of promoting investment and development assistance. The Palestinian International Cooperation Agency has participated in numerous bilateral and trilateral technical development assistance programmes. It has also undertaken a mapping to identify resource centres that can offer development solutions and mobilize donor funding for budget support and implementation of priority programmes and projects. Moreover, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics has invested in strengthening its organizational and institutional capacities to manage and disseminate statistics, and has launched several interactive portals, including one on SDGs.¹⁹⁵ This includes the generation of sex-disaggregated data, to serve policymaking as well as implementation and reporting on international commitments such as the SDGs, women’s human rights treaties, conventions and resolutions.

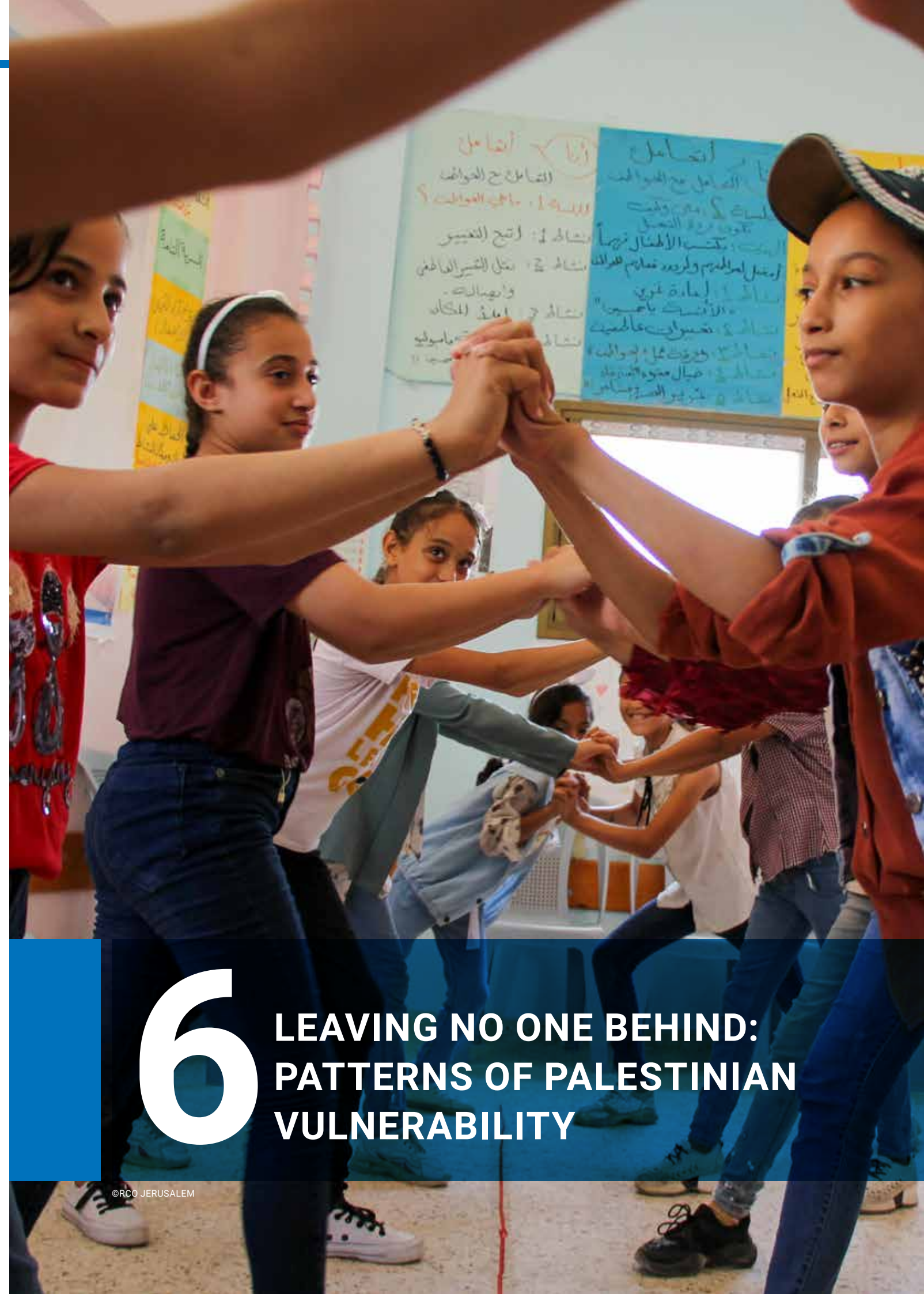
Improved generation and use of gender statistics can highlight data gaps across all SDGs, support progress on SDG Target

17.18 specifically, and address other SDG 17 targets where gender data gaps persist. As one example, the currently limited research into 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. Restructuring of the local architecture for aid coordination and aid management, 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 to strengthen accountability for budget administration and results.¹⁹⁶ The Palestinian government has 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).¹⁹⁷ The AHLC is chaired by Norway and co-sponsored by the European Union and the United States, with the participation of the United Nations, 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 for mobilizing donor support since the start of the Oslo process.

¹⁹⁵ State of Palestine, *Palestinian National Voluntary Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in 2020: Summary Report* (2021).
¹⁹⁶ State of Palestine, *Palestinian National Voluntary Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in 2020: Summary Report* (2021).
¹⁹⁷ 2020 UNCT Country Results Report – State of Palestine (2021).



6

LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND: PATTERNS OF PALESTINIAN VULNERABILITY

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In 2016, the Common Country Analysis (CCA) 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 labour 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 sociocultural 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 CCA: 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 programmes 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 groups furthest behind 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. It is essential to apply the intersectionality lens 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 context of the individual or particular group, as well as the existing power structures. Notably, they create multidimensional forms of vulnerability.

In protracted humanitarian and protection crises such as the one faced by Palestine, there is a close relationship between humanitarian needs, development vulnerabilities and conflict and insecurity, emphasizing the importance of taking a humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach. In 2022, 2.1 million Palestinians were in need of some form of humanitarian assistance.¹⁹⁸ According to the Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment (MSNA) conducted in July 2021, 63 per cent of Gaza residents (1.3 million) require some form of humanitarian assistance in 2022; this figure is 21 per cent for the West Bank (0.75 million).¹⁹⁹

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 factors put some individuals and households within each group at higher risk of vulnerability. For instance, elderly women, particularly those with disabilities, 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 MSNA in July 2021, the REACH Initiative, UNDP and the Resident Coordinator's Office (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,²⁰⁰ 20 indicators were selected as best measuring aspects of vulnerability in the 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.²⁰¹ Virtually all Palestinian

¹⁹⁸ OCHA, *Humanitarian Response Plan 2022* (2021).

¹⁹⁹ OCHA, *Humanitarian Needs Overview 2022* (2021).

²⁰⁰ REACH, *Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment for the OPT* (2021). Available at: <https://www.ochaopt.org/data/2021/msna>

²⁰¹ REACH, UNDP and RCO, *Vulnerability Assessment Framework in the OPT* (2022). Available at: <https://reach-info.org/opt/msna/vulnerabilities/>

households are vulnerable in some way: 95 per cent of households are vulnerable in at least one dimension (98 per cent of Gaza Strip households; 93 per cent of West Bank households) and 81 per cent of households reported vulnerability across at least two different dimensions (91 per cent of households in the Gaza Strip; 75 per cent of households in the 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”.²⁰²

Table 4: Percentage of households (HHs) 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 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 per cent versus West Bank 14 per cent), monetary resources (57 per cent versus 36 per cent), and shelter and housing (54 per cent versus 24 per cent). The

At the national level, the most common vulnerabilities are employment vulnerability (50 per cent of households) and health vulnerability (54 per cent). Conversely, the least commonly reported vulnerabilities relate to food security and water, and sanitation and hygiene, with 28 per cent 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 substantive sense, align with other data sources such as the labour force survey and MICS survey, and reveal policy-relevant insights.

other five dimensions show less divergence 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 per cent of households across all geographic areas were vulnerable on at least one dimension, except for East Jerusalem where 70 per cent 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.

Table 5: Percentage 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%
Areas A and 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 combinations of vulnerabilities were 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 (28 per cent of all households).

202 UNCT, Common Country Analysis 2016.

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 geographical variations, 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: Percentage 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 per cent of households considered vulnerable in at least one dimension) and refugee households (98 per cent 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 per cent) compared to households with no member of the household with a disability (79 per cent). 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 notable 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: Percentage of households (HHs) vulnerable, by dimension and disability status, 2021

	HHs with any member living with disability	HHs 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. Firstly, numerous questions were fielded that specifically addressed the needs and vulnerabilities of women and girls, for example, related to protection and health. Secondly, more than 50 per cent of the survey respondents were women. Thirdly, 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 per cent) and in multiple dimensions (82 per cent) was slightly higher than male-headed households (94 per cent and 80 per cent, respectively).

Table 10: Percentage 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, as 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 resource

dimensions. Female-headed households were significantly more vulnerable on health and employment dimensions. While this finding requires further study beyond the scope of this CCA, the 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 2022.²⁰³

The Annex 4 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, and households with at least one member with 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.

Geographical, physical and environmental vulnerabilities

Physical barriers (such as 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 the movement of Palestinian vehicles and pedestrians, 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. The 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, although not the sole, determinant of poor infrastructure (e.g. lack of cold chain facilities for perishable products such as food, underdeveloped wholesale markets, and poor transport and road networks). It 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 the 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 by urban expansion, particularly in the Gaza Strip.

Poor infrastructure, transport 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 (including those for the provision of electricity) together present serious binding constraints to the growth of the Palestinian economy.²⁰⁴ 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. Likewise, energy is required to access water – including for pumping, transport 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 compliance with the water allocation between Palestine and Israel agreed in the Oslo Protocols.

Energy limitations are compounding the water and sanitation crisis. The supply and distribution of energy 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 electricity are imported from Israel, and it is currently not feasible to diversify energy imports from other countries. 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 especially critical for the Gaza Strip, whose isolation presents technical challenges in transporting, storing, importing and exporting energy, dramatically affecting the limited response to the Gaza water crisis.²⁰⁵

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 the prevailing climate of political and economic uncertainty, combined with the fragmentation of the economy, constrain private sector growth and make the economy heavily reliant on non-tradable sectors such as services, construction, the financial sector and the public sector. Palestinian producers have become increasingly cut off from their traditional trading partners and lost much of their competitive edge. This, along with the overvaluation of the real exchange rate, has twisted the economic structure in favour 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 employment opportunities needed and have limited potential for job creation.

²⁰³ The UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard 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.

²⁰⁴ USAID, *West Bank and Gaza – Inclusive Growth Diagnostic* (2017).

²⁰⁵ The energy crises in Gaza and power cuts up to 18-20 hours a day have impeded the delivery of basic services in Gaza, including wastewater collection and treatment as well solid waste collection services.

The Palestinian business environment is characterized by small formal and informal enterprises. These are concentrated in low productivity sub-sectors, operate in fragmented production systems (in agriculture, mixed-crop smallholdings) exhibiting wide variability in performance, and alternate 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). Among other things, this severely impairs the construction and maintenance of infrastructure. Furthermore, small and informal firms are relatively more constrained than others by lack of finance, which has ultimately resulted in disengagement from innovative and business upgrading activities.²⁰⁶

The domestic Palestinian marketplace is comprised of fragmented retail supply at shops and stalls and lacks 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 the 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 labour opportunities and the 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. Labour force statistics are discussed at length in other sections of this report.

Socioeconomic vulnerability intersects with other forms of vulnerability. Restricted access to services such as 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 inequitable structural 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 of impacting their present and future lives. The data show that less than 1 per cent of Palestinian youth work in decision-making positions. The data for 2017 showed that 0.7 per cent of youth work as legislators and senior management employees (0.8 per cent in the West Bank and 0.7 per cent in the Gaza Strip).²⁰⁷ Only 19 per cent of youth are currently involved in volunteerism and community work.²⁰⁸ 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.²⁰⁹ 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 per cent, 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.²¹⁰

Despite the lack of official data, women lost more jobs during the initial COVID-19 lockdown, according to reports by the Ministry of Labour and ILO's labour market assessment, issued in May 2021.²¹¹ According to workers representatives and 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.²¹²

While gender-based violence is prohibited and considered a crime under international law, it 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 prolonged Israeli occupation. The most common types of violence against women

²⁰⁹ See data above in the SDG 5 section and UNCT and PMO, *Atlas of Sustainable Development* (2020), pp 21-25.

²¹⁰ CEDAW has recommended a minimum standard of 30 per cent 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.

²¹¹ ILO, *Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Labour Market in the Occupied Palestinian Territory: A Forecasting Model Assessment* (2021).

²¹² UNFPA and Juzoor for Health & Social Development, "Impact of the COVID-19 Outbreak and Lockdown on Family Dynamics and Domestic Violence in Palestine", Research Paper (2020).

²⁰⁶ 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 per cent of total employed persons – 66 per cent in the West Bank and 51 per cent in the Gaza Strip. PCBS, Press release on the occasion of International Workers Day (2020).

²⁰⁷ PCBS, Statement on the occasion of International Youth Day (2018).

²⁰⁸ PCBS, Statement on the occasion of International Youth Day (2018).



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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.²¹³ Women’s rights organizations have come under attack on social media and other platforms by private actors and groups.²¹⁴

According to the latest survey on violence in 2019,²¹⁵ 29.4 per cent of ever-partnered women aged 18-64 years had experienced violence in the 12 months preceding the survey: 37.5 per cent in Gaza and 24.3 per cent in the West Bank.²¹⁶ Among affected women, 56.6 per cent had experienced psychological violence, 17.8 per cent physical violence, 8.8 per cent sexual violence, 32.5 per cent social violence and 41.1 per cent economic violence, with 8 per cent having experienced the emerging issue of cyber violence. These figures have likely worsened due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For better analysis, data are needed on women victims of violence outside these categories, including on gender-based violence against girls and women with disabilities.

Particular attention should be given to the groups left furthest behind – female victims and survivors of violence. In addition to the discriminatory laws and policies, research conducted by United Nations agencies, international NGOs and civil society organizations on protection, sheltering and reintegration services for female victims and survivors of violence has identified two main issues. The first is that there are severe gaps and an absence of specialized protection and reintegration services for the groups left furthest behind, 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, they 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.²¹⁷ According to this law, penalties apply to the woman seeking the abortion and to all individuals and health care professionals who assist her in terminating the pregnancy.²¹⁸ 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.²¹⁹ 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.²²⁰ 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/groups left furthest behind.²²¹

It is important to understand how the vulnerability of women and girls intersects with other dimensions of vulnerability, such as exposure to violence, socioeconomic deprivation and disability. In the 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).²²² Early marriage, influenced by harmful norms and stereotypes around gender roles, can be both a cause and a consequence of girls dropping out. In addition, security concerns of families about the commute to school drive dropout rates for girls. Checkpoints and travel by public transport raise security and sociocultural concerns for girls and their parents, especially in Area C.²²³ 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 per cent 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 the 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 per cent of FHHs and 79.8 per cent of MHHs rely to some degree on assistance and donations, 40.2 per cent of FHHs rely fully on this as their sole source of income, compared with 29.8 per cent of MHHs. FHHs are also exposed to higher levels of poverty and unemployment than their male counterparts.

More FHHs rely on two or more sources of assistance than MHHs (60 per cent versus 40 per cent). They make up a disproportionate number of national cash transfer recipients (i.e. new applicants), at 21.2 per cent

compared with 8.7 per cent for the overall population in Gaza. Reported levels of social isolation are higher among FHHs than MHHs, although both groups 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 per cent of the population under the age of 29 years. The vulnerabilities of children and youth therefore account for 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 it 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 its first State Party report to the treaty body in Geneva in 2020. The CRC Committee provided Concluding Observations which presented important findings and observations validating children’s vulnerability in the State of Palestine. For example, the CRC Committee was 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 the minimum age

213 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 United Nations standards.

214 A/HRC/46/63, para. 29.

215 PCBS, Violence Survey (2019).

216 PCBS, Violence Survey (2019).

217 Jordanian Penal Code No. 16 of 1960.

218 Jordanian Penal Code No. 16 of 1960.

219 Public Health Law No. 20 (2005).

220 As required by the CEDAW Committee, Palestine needs to produce “data on the number of women and girls who have been detained and prosecuted for procuring an abortion”. (Cob, p. 39, c)

221 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.”

222 UNFPA, Child Marriage Strategy (2020).

223 According to the 2021 MSNA, some 10 per cent of households report that women and girls avoid areas near settlements, checkpoints, community areas and markets, and using public transport, because they feel unsafe. 31 per cent of households in the West Bank and 19 per cent 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 sociocultural patriarchal norms, which continue to undermine the rights of women and girls.



for criminal sentencing in Palestine should be raised from 12 years to at least 14 years. An amendment to the juvenile protection law in August 2021 accomplished this change in the West Bank; however, in the Gaza Strip, the Juvenile Offenders Ordinance (1937) remains applicable and sets this at 9 years of age. The CRC called on Palestine to prevent children's participation in violence, to apply all feasible measures to ensure their protection from the effects of hostilities and to care for child victims. Additionally, the CRC stated 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 the OPT, just over a third (34.2 per cent) of all children

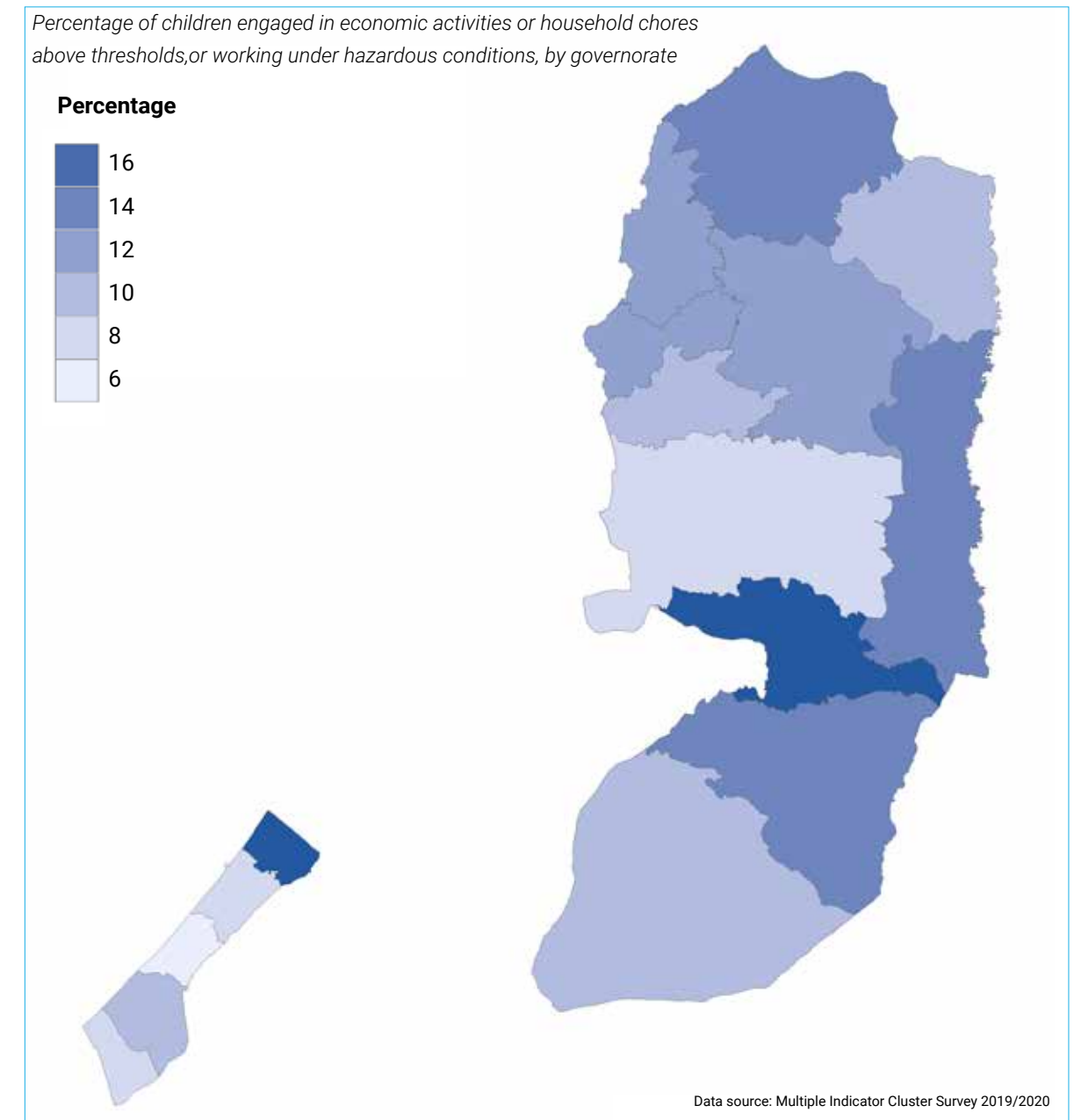
aged 3-4 years attend kindergarten, but only 21.9 per cent of children with functional difficulties. Only 26 per cent of children from the poorest households attend kindergarten, compared to 44.5 per cent of those from the wealthiest households,²²⁴ highlighting the intersectionality of socioeconomic 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 for these households and the risk of protection violations, they are particularly vulnerable to being left behind.

Between 2014 and 2019/2020, the rate of teenage mothers (aged 15-19 years) dropped from 48 to 43 per 1,000 girls. The adolescent birth rate has increased in the West Bank (from 35 to 39 per 1,000 women) but dropped significantly in the Gaza Strip (from 66 to 48 per 1,000 women).²²⁵ More than one in seven

²²⁴ MICS 2019/2020.
²²⁵ MICS 2019/2020.

Figure 15: Spatial patterns in child labour and hazardous work



(13.4 per cent) of women aged 20-24 years were married under the age of 18. The figure is higher for women in the Gaza Strip (16.5 per cent) than for those in the West Bank (11.4 per cent). Over half (50.8 per cent) of women with no or basic education married under the age of 18, compared to 2.3 per cent of women with higher education. More than twice as many women from the poorest households (18.3 per cent) married under the age of 18 compared to those from the wealthiest households (7.5 per cent).²²⁶

Nine out of ten children experience some form of violent discipline: 92.3 per cent of boys and 87.9 per cent of girls.²²⁷ Over one in five children (20.1 per cent) experience severe physical punishment and 87.5 per cent experience psychological aggression. Only 7.4 per cent receive non-violent discipline. More children experience severe physical punishment in the Gaza Strip (28.5 per cent) than in the West Bank (13.7 per cent). Children of refugees were significantly more likely to experience severe physical punishment (24.5 per cent) compared to children of non-

²²⁶ MICS 2019/2020.
²²⁷ MICS 2019/2020.

refugees (17 per cent). Again, highlighting the multidimensionality of vulnerability in the OPT, children from the poorest households are more than twice as likely to experience severe physical punishment (29.9 per cent) than those from the wealthiest households (11.4 per cent). Around 20 per cent 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 mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services.²²⁸ More than half (53 per cent) of all children in Gaza are in need, and 12 per cent of all children in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

Poverty drives and intersects 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.²²⁹ Child labour is among the most negative coping practices; the MICS 2019/2020 survey found that 7.3 per cent of children aged 5-17 years are involved in child labour.²³⁰ Moreover, 24.7 per cent of children not attending school are involved in hazardous work.²³¹ An attempt to increase access to livelihood assistance has created a trend towards extended families (large households can 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.²³²

Children are vulnerable to child labour in the agricultural sector, in agricultural areas in Area C, and in Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Some West Bank Palestinian girls are vulnerable to exploitation for sex and labour 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 labour market governance in Israeli settlements, where PA labour inspectors have no authority and Israeli inspectors do not inspect.²³³

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 study²³⁴ of Palestinian challenges and aspirations, and a study of youth, peace and security, 79 per cent of youth in the Gaza Strip and 70 per cent 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 for the future and working to achieve their goals, they are afraid of their

future. Overall, 24 per cent of Palestinian youth desire to emigrate, with significant regional disparities: 37 per cent of youth in the Gaza Strip wish to emigrate, compared to 15 per cent in the West Bank.²³⁵

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.²³⁶ According to the 2015 survey by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, only 29 per cent²³⁷ 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 per cent.²³⁸ Jerusalemite youth face many social problems due to the political and legal context. There has been an increase in substance abuse and smoking, sexual harassment in the private and public spheres, and restrictions on movements for females during COVID-19, including in areas inside East Jerusalem such as Silwan, the Old City and Shufat Camp.²³⁹ Across the OPT, the lack of youth access to decision-making is also reflected in broader civic life, with less than 1 per cent²⁴⁰ of youth working in any decision-making position and less than 1 per cent participating in volunteer work.²⁴¹

Youth in Area C are more excluded from receiving health services due to the obstacles to accessing central health centres. Youth

with disabilities are furthest behind, due to a lack of accessibility and incompatible health services. 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. Factors impeding their access to health care include 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 for persons with disabilities.²⁴² 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 sexual and reproductive health awareness and mental health services.²⁴³ They are also highly exposed to domestic and occupation-related violence and displacement.²⁴⁴

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 behaviours in relation to civic and political participation. However, 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.

228 OCHA, *Humanitarian Needs Overview 2022* (2021).

229 UNCTAD, *Report on UNCTAD assistance to the Palestinian people: Developments in the economy of the Occupied Palestinian Territory* (2021).

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

231 MICS 2019/2020.

232 Oxfam and AWRAD, *Responsiveness of the Palestinian National Cash Transfer Programme to Shifting Vulnerabilities in The Gaza Strip* (2020).

233 Work in the settlements tends to be mainly in agriculture, industrial undertakings, construction and tasks under Israeli municipal authorities. Much of it is informal employment in conditions that tend to be poorly regulated and insufficiently monitored. Women predominantly work in agriculture and industry, although some are engaged in domestic work in private households. The Report of the Director-General of the ILO in 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 an unregulated manner, and face incidences of child labour, especially in the agricultural settlements. The unregulated work of Palestinians in the settlements appears to exist alongside regulated or semi-regulated employment for Israeli and foreign workers. There is also a perception among Palestinian workers that there are wage differences in favour of foreign workers. See ILO, *The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories* (2019).

234 Interpeace, *Palestinian Youth Challenges and Aspirations: A study on Youth, Peace and Security based on UN Resolution 2250* (2017).

235 PCBS, Statement on the occasion of International Youth Day (2018).

236 UNFPA, *Youth Vulnerability Assessment* (2021).

237 PCBS, *Palestinian Youth Survey* (2015).

238 PCBS, *Palestinian Youth Survey* (2015).

239 UNFPA, *Gender-Based Violence Needs Assessment in East Jerusalem* (2021).

240 PCBS, *Palestinian Youth Survey* (2015).

241 PCBS, *Labour Force Survey and Statistics* (2019).

242 State of Palestine, *Palestinian Voluntary National Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda* (2018).

243 Ahmad Heneiti, *Bedouin Communities in Greater Jerusalem: Planning or Forced Displacement?* *Jerusalem Quarterly*, Issue 65 (2016).

244 Anera, *Palestine Situation Report* (7 June 2021).



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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 defined as “persons whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 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” (UNRWA.org). Nearly one third of the registered Palestine refugees, 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 centres 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 (UNRWA.org).

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, UNRWA commenced distribution in Gaza 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 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 female-headed households, 706 headed by persons with disabilities and 522 headed by persons over 65 years of age) 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, UNRWA provided cash-for-work to 7,355 refugees in Gaza, mainly in the form of unskilled short-term jobs (84.6 per cent), wages for which benefited around 40,000 family members, and through which USD 3,953,516 was injected into the Gaza economy. Overall, 27.2 per cent of cash-for-work opportunities were awarded to youth, of whom 28 per cent were young women and 40.4 per cent were recent graduates. To mitigate the socioeconomic effects of COVID-19, UNRWA provided one-off multisectoral cash assistance of USD 40 per person to 114,608 individuals in Gaza (52.5 per cent 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 by persons over 65 years of age.

In Gaza, UNRWA’s health programme mitigated the spread of COVID-19 through a range of measures. These included a triage system in all of its 22 health centres and the use of telemedicine to support 385,994 medical consultations. During the second quarter of 2021, Gaza experienced a sharp rise in COVID-19, resulting in high demand for telemedicine, a service that continued to operate during the May 2021 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 per cent 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, 18 UNRWA health centres 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 and 3,448 males, including 1,030 persons with disabilities), particularly patients with non-communicable diseases (NCDs). 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). This included 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 UNRWA Emergency Appeal has supported the continued education of over 280,000 students (over 138,000 girls and 148,000 boys) in 278 schools. COVID-19 lockdowns and the May 2021 hostilities posed enormous challenges, but in response UNRWA education programming provided a combination of blended and fully 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 to support remote learning. UNRWA also continued to assist refugee children with disabilities, in partnership with seven community-based rehabilitation centres which provided services to 45,867 students in all UNRWA schools in the West Bank.

In Gaza, UNRWA education and health programme counsellors, trained in teleconsultation, 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; in response, counselling was provided remotely through toll-free lines assigned to each health centre in Gaza. During early 2021, health counsellors provided remote psychosocial support to 4,874 individuals (4,064 females, 810 males) including 30 persons with disabilities, and assisted 772 survivors of gender-based violence (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 per cent of Palestine refugee households (358 out of 464 families) 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. 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 agropastoralists 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 per cent 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.²⁴⁵

Bedouin and herder communities are among those at highest 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.²⁴⁶ 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 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 weapon use, which is difficult to monitor and report. Besides the immediate effect of exposure to collateral impact from these weapons, military training leaves behind ERW contamination that significantly increases risks for communities. In addition, the no-notice nature of military exercises means these communities can be exposed to military grade weapon fire and explosives at any time, without a reasonable opportunity to move to safety.

There is no integrated policy on land use and access rights that incorporates Bedouin communities into existing policies and projects, and that would allow extension of the management reach of PA institutions to deliver basic services to Bedouin communities.²⁴⁷

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 noted 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 of 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 civil society organizations working on LGBT+ issues by banning their activities, subjecting activists to arrests and maintaining a list of known activists.²⁴⁸ 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, and limited possibility of asylum for individuals at risk. Same-sex marriage is not legalized in Palestine, as is the case in all other countries in the region.

Discussion of 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 so-called "conversion therapy" practices. 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 anchoring 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 Palestine National Strategic Plan on HIV and AIDS 2010–2015 acknowledged the presence of vulnerable populations and identified people who inject drugs, men who have sex with men, and female sex workers as key populations at risk for HIV.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁷ Ministry of Local Government and UN-Habitat, *Fostering Tenure Security and Resilience for Bedouin Communities in the so-called Area C of the West Bank, Palestine. Policy Framework and Implementation Tools* (2020).

²⁴⁸ See, for example, A/HRC/46/63, para. 40; A/HRC/46/63, para. 55.

²⁴⁹ Data are generally lacking. One round of Integrated Biological and Behavioral Surveillance was undertaken in 2010, with technical support from WHO, to determine prevalence and associated risk behaviours, knowledge and attitudes for HIV, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C among 199 people who inject drugs in the East Jerusalem Governorate. Among the sample, no person tested positive for HIV, while five participants were infected with Hepatitis B (0.7%), and 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, *HIV bio-behavioral survey among injecting drug users in the East Jerusalem Governorate, 2010* (Ramallah:

²⁴⁵ OCHA, *Data on demolition and displacement in the West Bank*. Accessed February 2022. <https://www.ochaopt.org/data/demolition>.

²⁴⁶ PCBS and FSS, *Socio-Economic & Food Security Survey 2020* (2021).

Elderly people

The number of elderly people in Palestine (defined by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics as persons aged 60 and over) reached approximately 283,000 in mid-2021, representing about 5 per cent of the total population. Approximately 187,000 elderly people live in the West Bank (6 per cent of the West Bank population), while 96,000 elderly people live in the Gaza Strip (5 per cent of the Gaza Strip population). There are slightly more elderly women than elderly men. The 2017 Census revealed that 16 per cent of households have an elderly member (17 per cent of households in the West Bank and 14 per cent 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 one million, and more than double in share to 11 per cent of the population.²⁵⁰

Elderly people are subject to various intersectional and multidimensional vulnerabilities that place them among those left furthest behind. In 2017, poverty rates among the elderly were reported at 27 per cent. Neglect is the most prevalent type of abuse, reportedly experienced by 24 per cent of elderly women and 19 per cent of elderly men in 2019.²⁵¹ Furthermore, the elderly suffer disproportionately from non-communicable diseases and disability, such as musculoskeletal disorders, diabetes and kidney diseases, as well as sense organ diseases. In terms of education, there is a gender gap: around 40 per cent of elderly women are illiterate, compared to 10 per cent of elderly men.

Elderly women were more vulnerable to violence than elderly men in the 2019 survey on violence by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics.²⁵² Around 8 per cent of elderly people reported that they were exposed to

one form of violence by a family member who resides inside or outside of the house. Around 22 per cent of elderly people reported that health negligence was the most common form of violence experienced (22 per cent of elderly women and 19 per cent of elderly men).

There is a strong correlation between age and the prevalence of disability, again highlighting the multidimensionality and intersectionality of vulnerability in the OPT. Disability rates are significantly higher among individuals aged 75 years and over, at 32 per cent – 28.9 per cent among males and 34.1 per cent among females. For comparison, among children the percentage was 1.5 per cent – 1.8 per cent among males and 1.3 per cent among females.

The elderly in Palestine 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 towards nuclear family structures have left many elderly with weak social support systems. The lack of strategic or policy direction to stimulate and support participation by the elderly in all aspects of socioeconomic development render them among the groups left furthest behind. This leads to increased marginalization and violation of their fundamental rights to live in dignity and independence, access appropriate care and services, and receive protection from violence.²⁵³

A recent UNFPA study on the elderly concluded that religious and moral values and the 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 centre on fear of the future, anxiety about deterioration of their health conditions, inability to care for themselves, and loss of independence.

Persons with disabilities

Persons with disabilities include those 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 render people vulnerable in health, functional and social terms. According to the 2017 Census, there were about 92,000 persons with disabilities in Palestine – 2.1 per cent of the total population. Women and girls make up approximately 45 per cent of the population with disabilities. Among persons with disabilities, 35.3 per cent have a mobility disability, 21.7 per cent a vision disability, 14.9 per cent a communication disability, 14.7 per cent a hearing disability, and 13.3 per cent a remembering and concentration disability.²⁵⁴

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. Challenges to reducing poverty among persons with disabilities also include prevailing societal behaviour towards them, the inability of persons with disabilities to access and benefit from public services, limited social protection and economic opportunity, and limited programmes for the training and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities.

The 2017 Census indicated that the unemployment rate²⁵⁵ among persons with

disabilities was 37 per cent (19 per cent in the West Bank and 54 per cent in Gaza Strip). According to the 2020 Labour Force Survey, the participation rate in the Palestinian labour force for women with disabilities was only 2 per cent, compared to 23 per cent 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 per cent of persons with disabilities (aged 18-64 years) who had never been married had experienced violence at least once from a household member in Palestine in the 12 months preceding the Violence Survey for 2019. The percentage varied considerably between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip: 19 per cent in the West Bank compared to 35 per cent in Gaza. About one third of persons (aged 18-64 years) with disabilities who had never been married had experienced psychological violence, while almost one fifth had experienced physical violence. Half of women with disabilities who were married or had been married had suffered psychological violence by their husbands.²⁵⁶ Rape, sexual and physical abuse, forced marriage, deprivation of resources and services, as well as emotional abuse, are the main forms of violence experienced by Palestinian women with disabilities.²⁵⁷

According to NGO providers, women with disabilities in Palestine are exposed to several types of violence, including physical, psychological, verbal, sexual and economic violence. 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

Palestine Ministry of Health, 2011).

250 UNFPA and HelpAge International, *Country profile: The rights and wellbeing of older persons in the State of Palestine* (2021).

251 UNFPA, *Violence Against the Elderly: Palestine* (2019).

252 PCBS, *Violence Survey* (2019).

253 UNFPA, *Violence Against the Elderly: Palestine* (2019).

254 PCBS, *Population, Housing and Establishments Census 2017* (2018).

255 Among those participating in the labour force who are aged 15 years and over.

256 PCBS, *Violence Survey* (2019).

257 UNFPA, *Violence Against the Elderly: Palestine* (2019).

possession of assistive devices. Moreover, adults and children with disabilities face additional barriers that limit their access to protection services, placing them at additional risk. In Gaza, 63 per cent of persons with disabilities lack access to mental health and psychosocial support services.²⁵⁸

Persons with disabilities in East Jerusalem were vulnerable to domestic violence and marginalization. This especially affected children with disabilities, who were removed from the official family reunification process and documentation by their fathers due to their disabilities and were therefore denied access to the services provided by the Israeli authorities in this regard. Persons with disabilities without family reunification documents were the group most affected and were most at risk of being denied their rights during the pandemic. Because of their disabilities, 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.²⁵⁹

Participation by persons with disabilities in the public sphere, including in policymaking and in the decisions that affect 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 lack of reasonable accommodation measures. Sociocultural limitations that aggravate the existing discriminatory context for persons with disabilities affect women disproportionately compared to men.

According to Ministry of Education statistics for the school year 2018/2019, there are 9,383 students with disabilities enrolled in the public schools – 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 students enrolled 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 per cent of all schools had accessible toilets (65 per cent of public schools, 73 per cent of UNRWA schools and 20.8 per cent of private schools). In addition, 55.4 per cent of all schools had ramps for persons with physical disabilities (57.7 per cent of public schools, 75.1 per cent of UNRWA schools, and 25.9 per cent of private schools).

In addition, the Higher Council for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, as coordination and representative body, has limited engagement in directing public policies associated with persons with disabilities. Between 2008 and 2018, the council held 15 out of the 40 meetings required by its internal procedures. The Independent Commission for Human Rights documented 134 complaints from persons with disabilities in 2020 (compared to 76 in 2019); of these, 80 complaints were filed by persons with disabilities themselves and the remainder 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 top five related to: right to social security (19), right of those deprived of liberty to be treated humanely (14), right to employment and entitlements in public jobs (8), arbitrary detention (6), and right to obtain a public service (6).

²⁵⁸ EducAid Italy, *Accessibility to Information and Services by People with Disabilities during COVID-19* (2020).
²⁵⁹ UNFPA, *Gender-Based Violence Needs Assessment in East Jerusalem* (2021).



7 THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FINANCING LANDSCAPE

Given the challenges outlined in this report, the deterioration in the sustainable development financing landscape is deeply concerning. The Palestinian economy has historically been a large recipient of donor assistance. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), official development assistance (ODA)²⁶⁰ peaked in 2009 – at around 33 per cent of gross national income (GNI) – but sharply declined thereafter. Since 2015, ODA has averaged around 12 per cent of GNI. Direct donor support to the Palestinian Authority's budget has also decreased, leading to an increase in the external debt of the PA over the 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 per cent over the period 2015–2020. FDI inflows are also far lower than for comparator countries in the region. For example, in 2019 FDI was only 0.71 per cent of GDP in the West Bank and Gaza

Strip, compared to 4.8 per cent in Israel, 1.9 per cent in Jordan, and 3.0 per cent in Egypt.²⁶¹ FDI flows are likely disproportionately aimed at male-dominated sectors, because female employment is concentrated in sectors such as health and education which are primarily funded through government spending and through UNRWA.

Remittances are one of the largest sources of external financial flows to the State of Palestine, representing 16.1 per cent of the country's GDP in 2020. Remittances have increased by 45 per cent over the period 2015–2020. Unlike FDI, remittances probably support women and female-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 additional research is required to draw conclusions.

Foreign exports of goods and services rose by 9.9 per cent over the period 2015–2020, 4 percentage points more than the global

average. Exports of goods as a share of total exports have remained stagnant at 78 per cent over the period 2015–2020.

Globally, the donor climate is increasingly constrained, and it remains a key challenge for the PA and its partners to mobilize resources to support stabilization, reform and sustainable development. As a result, actors must consider all types of finance – public, private, domestic and international – and improve alignment and coherence between 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.

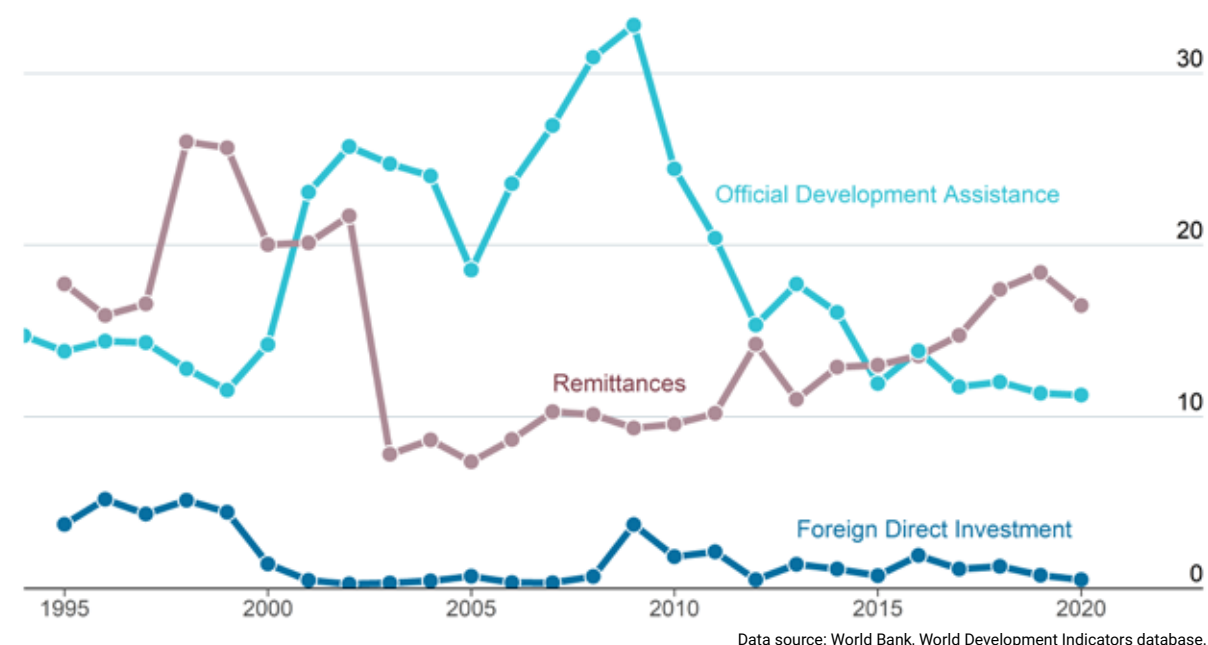
The principal policy-level coordination mechanism for development assistance is led by the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC).²⁶² The AHLC is chaired by Norway and co-sponsored by the European Union and the United States, with the participation of the United Nations, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The AHLC seeks to promote dialogue between donors, the PA and the Government of Israel. The AHLC format has been critical for mobilizing donor support since the start of the Oslo process. The AHLC meets twice yearly, typically in Brussels and New York, and representatives are also in constant contact locally.

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 to provide 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 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 Prime Minister's Office (PMO) to transition the day-to-day management of the secretariat to the PMO. The roles of the co-chairs changed 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 broader aid management system 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 from government entities, donors and implementing partners on ongoing and planned projects. The general objectives of the system are to (1) track and monitor the flows of aid and financial funds, (2) manage, maintain and automate national policy plans by the PMO, (3) manage, maintain and automate the Sectorial Strategic Plan to be provided by government institutions and line ministries, and (4) automate the process of capturing data on related projects (planned and ongoing) from relevant government entities, implementing agencies and/or funding agencies. The system should improve efficiency and coordination, in donor activities in Palestine and in tracking and analysing 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 development assistance to Palestine on

Figure 16: Trends in development financing
External sources of development financing, % of GDP (Remittances and FDI) or GNI (ODA)



²⁶⁰ Official development assistance (ODA) includes humanitarian assistance, according to the OECD definition.
²⁶¹ Numbers drawn from the World Bank databank, World Development Indicators.

²⁶² 2020 UN Country Results Report – State of Palestine, 2021.

gender equality and women's empowerment increased from 2010 to 2018, peaking in 2017, support to programmes specifically dedicated to this has remained consistently low.²⁶³ 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 had been engaging in dialogue and policy reforms aimed at strengthening food system development, as well as food security and nutrition, even before the United Nations Food Systems Summit. The Ministry of Agriculture, with the support of the FAO, has formulated a comprehensive National Food and Nutrition Security Policy 2030 and a National Investment Plan for food and nutrition security and sustainable agriculture (NIP 2020–2022), endorsed by the Government of Palestine on 7 October 2020. The six priority components of the NIP were identified as specific pathways for transformation of the food system: nutrition-specific investments; socioeconomic 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; promotion of territorial and co-responsibility approaches. The NIP is a fundamental tool for ensuring country ownership, alignment of donors' interventions with country priorities, better coordination between public and private interventions, and greater effectiveness and efficiency in the use of resources. It represents good practice that may also be adopted in other sectors.

The Palestinian government, the private sector and civil society agree on the positive role that innovation can play in addressing the challenges to implementation of the SDGs, as well as in boosting the economic status of the country, leading 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 instruments include public-private partnerships, foreign direct investment, domestic revenue mobilization and official development assistance. 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. Financial issues are some of the most critical challenges to implementation for achieving the SDGs, as huge annual investment is required for economic infrastructure in the sectors of power, transport, water and sanitation, agriculture, buildings, telecommunications, industry and forestry.



8

MULTIDIMENSIONAL RISK ANALYSIS

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²⁶³ OECD, "Gender-related aid data at a glance".

This multidimensional analysis presents some of the principal risks facing United Nations operations to assist Palestinians and their institutions. These risks may 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 interdisciplinary dimensions of the United Nations SDG-based risk framework, which prioritize and cluster risk areas through the lens of leaving no one behind and facilitate 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 United Nations 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, and 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 they 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 progress in sustainable development in the OPT. As evidenced in the previous United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) cycle, most of these risks will present significant potential barriers to the implementation of United Nations 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.



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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 Human rights and international humanitarian law concerns Shrinking space for civil society, for freedom of expression, assembly and association Failure to hold Palestinian Legislative Council and Presidential elections, including in Gaza Concentration of power Exclusion of women, youth and marginalized groups from political processes Stagnant peace process and challenges to the Oslo framework Breakdown of factional relations	High	High
Political stability (SDG 16, 17)	Risks to the stability of established political and governmental structures in the territory, resulting from politically driven factors	Inability to achieve Palestinian reconciliation, unity government or a government of national consensus; further 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 Limited grassroots peacebuilding and confidence-building initiatives Fiscal collapse	High	High
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	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 livelihoods Unemployment, spike in prices Increased discrimination and violation of workers' rights, deteriorating wages and working conditions	High	High

Risk areas	Description	Scope	Likelihood	Impact on UN operations
Justice and rule of law (SDG 16, 17)	Risks to the effective and comprehensive implementation and application of the principles of justice, the rule of law and accountability from issues	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	High	High
Public health (SDG 3, 17)	Risks to the population, the economy and stability of the territory resulting from actual and emerging public health emergencies	Continuation of COVID-19 pandemic or outbreak of a new pandemic Unequal access to quality health and developmental information and services Rise in child and maternal mortality Increase in 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	High	High
Gender Equality (SDG 1, 2, 4, 5, 16)	Risks that prevent women and girls from fully enjoying their human rights and hinder the elimination of all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres	Continued discrimination and gender-based violence, including early/forced marriage, intimate partner/family violence, sexual harassment, rape, incest, denial of resources and psychological abuse Food insecurity and loss of livelihood for households headed by women, especially during conflicts and violent escalations Continuation of sociocultural 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	High	High
Food security, land and agriculture (SDG 2, 11, 17)	Risks to people, agriculture and/or food production in the territory resulting from issues relating to crops, food production, livestock and land	Water shortages/lack of access to water; destruction of and damage to water systems 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) ERW/unexploded ordnance resulting in lack of access to farmland Closure/blockage of food commodity movements	High	Medium

Risk areas	Description	Scope	Likelihood	Impact on UN operations
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 Natural disasters, hazards and extreme weather conditions Water shortages in the basins for human and agricultural production Reduction in 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; lack of affordable public transport Risk of Gaza aquifer pollution due to over-extraction and saltwater incursion	High	Medium
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 lacking public and private physical infrastructure and basic social services	Poor governance of key service sectors Recurring destruction and damage, due to hostilities and Israeli occupation policies, including to cultural heritage sites Restrictions on availability, use and accessibility of transport, road, electricity and telecommunications networks Subsurface ERW contamination impacting reconstruction Disruption to quality and quantity of fresh water, including for agriculture Shrinking of the operational space available for humanitarian and development work; reduction and/or limited access and movement for staff and goods Unequal access to services; poor quality of services Lack of financial sustainability of key services Marginalizing actions against minorities	High	Medium
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	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	High	Medium

Risk areas	Description	Scope	Likelihood	Impact on UN operations
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	<p>Actions by regional actors that heighten political and factional tensions within the OPT</p> <p>Conflict spillover from Lebanon, Jordan or Egypt</p> <p>Transnational organized crime</p> <p>Transnational violent extremism</p> <p>Reduced aid flows to the PA</p>	High	Medium
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	<p>Lack of impartiality of security services; insufficient checks and balances</p> <p>Inability to prevent, manage and respond to violence and crime</p> <p>Factional conflict, factional war, increase in violent attacks</p> <p>Non-state armed groups being active and operating freely</p> <p>Recurring violations of human rights in law enforcement in East Jerusalem and Area C</p> <p>ERW contamination and minefields in the West Bank</p> <p>Excessive use of force or killings by security forces or other groups</p>	High	High
Displacement and migration (SDG 16, 17)	Risks to people and to the stability of the territory resulting from pressures associated with displacement and/or migration	<p>Instability and conflict related to refugee camps in Gaza and West Bank</p> <p>Migration and displacement in West Bank and Gaza due to lack of economic opportunities, instability, conflict, occupation, demolitions and forced evictions</p> <p>Brain drain from West Bank and Gaza Strip into Israel and elsewhere</p>	High	Medium

9 PATHWAYS TO ACHIEVING THE 2030 AGENDA



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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. As noted in the introductory chapter, these barriers 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 identifies several particularly vulnerable groups in Palestine, including 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. Drawing on the analysis in the CCA, the UNCT believes the five priorities below are some of the most promising enablers for accelerating progress on the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs in Palestine.

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 – including 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 towards 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 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 development. Important opportunities for accelerating progress on the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs 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 for the governance of public institutions could improve accountability, transparency and protection of the fundamental rights of everyone, including people most at risk of marginalization due to the 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 livelihood 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. It will be critical to enable the private sector to take on this role, 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 disabilities and older persons. Supporting those left furthest behind will require systems strengthening 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 the adoption of an integrated and participatory spatial planning framework. Creative thinking on social protection and rationalized solutions can help to create agile, transparent and digitized solutions. Building resilient and high-quality systems will enable Palestinians to enjoy their rights to health, education and a decent life.

Building climate resilience, accessing natural resources and leveraging food systems

There is greatest need for climate resilience and good management of natural resources in contexts affected by conflict and crisis such as in Palestine, where planning is difficult and access to natural resources is restricted. Palestinian economic growth and development would be greatly accelerated through greater access to natural resources in the West Bank, such as 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 on high and rising human development indicators. Key entry points are to develop and strengthen 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. 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. It is critical to address issues of pollution, sustainable consumption and production 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 Israeli-Palestinian conflict and an end to the Israeli occupation. This needs to be in line with relevant United Nations resolutions, international law and bilateral agreements in pursuit of 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 the 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/>

Table 12: MSNA vulnerability indicators and dimensions

Indicator	West Bank	Gaza Strip	OPT
% of HHs with at least one child not enrolled in school during 2020-2021 year	23%	36%	28%
% of HHs that can not access a functional basic and secondary school within a 30 mins walk from dwellings	4%	4%	4%
% of HHs reporting safety concerns in relation to their children's 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 HH who reported they ate less	14%	51%	28%
% of HHs who reported they went 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 debts 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 area they feel unsafe	10%	11%	10%
% of HHs experiencing protection vulnerability	30%	14%	36%
% of HHs living under critical shelters conditions	2%	36%	25%
% of HHs with household members sleeping in the living room	18%	7%	5%
% of HHs reporting risk of eviction	4%	9%	6%
% 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%

Table 13: MSNA vulnerability dimensions by geography and demographic group

Household characteristics	Geography	Education	Employment	Food Security	Health	Monetary	Protection	Shelter and Housing	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%	165%	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%	34%	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%



