

# 2014

## HUMANITARIAN NEEDS OVERVIEW

### OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

November 2013



Prepared by OCHA on behalf of the Humanitarian Country Team



## PRIORITY NEEDS

The nature and scope of humanitarian needs in oPt have changed little in recent years. The lack of political progress in the peace process, the compound effect of long-term policies linked to the prolonged occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, recurrent hostilities and internal Palestinian political divisions are the principal drivers of humanitarian needs and vulnerabilities. The context in the oPt is a protracted protection crisis with humanitarian consequences, driven by lack of respect for international law. Palestinians in the oPt face a range of serious protection threats related to these factors including threats to life, liberty and security, destruction or damage to homes and other property, forced displacement, restrictions on freedom of movement and on access to livelihoods, and lack of accountability and effective remedy. Over 2.3 million people, out of a population of 4.4 million in the oPt, are affected in relation to the following issues of concern:

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### 1 Restricted access to basic services

Access to basic healthcare, education and water and sanitation services remains severely restricted for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. An estimated almost 1 million people in oPt are unable to access more than 60 litres of water per day; in the West Bank, over 49,284 students enrolled in schools in Area C do not have safe, appropriate and protective educational facilities that meet minimum WASH standards; and in the Gaza Strip the shortage of health professionals, drugs and disposables and the deterioration of public health system affect 1.6 million people. Restricted access to services is primarily the result of physical and administrative obstacles to freedom of movement of people and service providers including checkpoints, the permit regime and designation of closed military or restricted areas; restrictions on repair, rehabilitation and development of essential service infrastructure; military operations or settler violence; and lack of investment due to the dire economic situation.

### 2 Food insecurity and declining resilience

Recent assessments indicate a significant rise in food insecurity in 2012 - 1.57 million Palestinians are currently deemed food insecure, up from

#### Assessment registry:

[http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ochaopt\\_survey\\_of\\_surveys.xls](http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ochaopt_survey_of_surveys.xls)

food insecurity levels surged from 44 percent in 2011 to 57 percent of households in 2012. Increased food insecurity stems from a decrease in purchasing power of Palestinian families which in turn is directly related to restrictions on access to land, water and economic markets, combined with reduced international aid and the PA's fiscal crisis.

### 3 Physical protection

Palestinian civilians across the oPt are subject to various threats to their physical safety and liberty, stemming from Israeli military and law enforcement operations, settler violence and the actions of Palestinian armed groups and security forces. In the West Bank, the number of civilian casualties resulting from actions of Israeli forces has increased in 2013, compared to 2012. The monthly average of Palestinian children injured in 2013 is more than double the monthly average for 2012; In addition, settler violence has impacted upon the lives of at tens of thousands of Palestinians in 2013. In the Gaza Strip, Israeli military operations and recurrent outbreaks of hostilities continue to pose a protection threats, including the use of forces in the the Access Restricted Areas placing civilians at risk/ There was also a marked increase in casualties due to ERWs in the first six months of 2013, particularly amongst children, following the November 2012 escalation in hostilities in Gaza and southern Israel.

### 4 Forced displacement

Thousands of Palestinian women, men, girls and boys throughout the oPt have been forcibly displaced or are at acute risk of forced displacement as a result of multiple factors including policies and practices related to the ongoing occupation, recurrent hostilities, violence and abuse. In the West Bank, an estimated 4,841 residential structures in 363 communities that are fully or partially in Area C are subject to demolition orders issued by Israeli authorities, and as a result some 25,000 people are estimated to be at risk of displacement. In the Gaza Strip, over 1,000 Palestinians remain displaced following the escalation in hostilities in November 2012 and thousands more are still displaced following previous Israeli military operations.



## IMPACT OF THE CRISIS

### HIGHLIGHTS

**oPt:** Latest SEFSec has shown a sharp rise in food insecurity levels in oPt from 27 percent to 34 percent, with an alarming increase in the Gaza Strip from 44 percent to 57 percent of households now considered food insecure.

**West Bank:** Marked increase in civilian fatalities and injuries caused by Israeli security forces, with a particularly sharp increase in the number of children injured, and rise in monthly average demolitions in 2013 compared to 2012.

**Gaza Strip:** Recent action by Egypt to counter insecurity in the Sinai, combined with only limited easing of restrictions imposed at legitimate crossing points from Israel, have compounded the humanitarian situation.

### Drivers and underlying factors

The nature and scope of humanitarian needs in the oPt have changed little in recent years. Recent humanitarian appeals in the oPt have underlined the lack of political progress in the peace process, recurrent hostilities, internal Palestinian political divisions and ultimately the compound effect of long-term policies linked to the prolonged occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as the principal drivers of humanitarian needs and vulnerabilities. It is well recognized that the context in the oPt is a protracted protection crisis with humanitarian consequences, driven by a lack of respect for international law. Palestinian women, men, girls and boys in the oPt face a range of serious protection threats related to these factors including threats to life, liberty and security (including physical and mental violence against children), destruction or damage to homes and other property, forced displacement and restrictions on freedom of movement and on access to natural resources and markets. Further, the psychosocial well-being of children, adolescents and families continues to deteriorate and is eroding individual and community coping mechanisms and resilience. While donors have generously contributed over the last years to humanitarian programmes aimed at alleviating the impact of these threats, the need for political action to ensure respect for human rights and international humanitarian law and a sustainable resolution to the conflict remains as urgent as ever.

In 2013, the humanitarian needs analysis regarding the West Bank has changed very little and the needs and vulnerabilities of the affected population have remained generally the same; however some indicators in 2013 are showing some degree of deterioration. In the Gaza Strip, largely related to the long-term restrictions imposed by Israel on the movement of people and goods through legitimate crossings with Israel, the economy and the population have become dependent upon the illegal tunnel trade under the border with Egypt, and the Egyptian-controlled Rafah Crossing has become the primary passenger entry and exit point to the outside world. However, the humanitarian situation has become ever more critical in recent months as a result of measures taken by the Egyptian authorities to counter illegal activities and insecurity in the Sinai, including restricting movement of people through the Rafah Crossing and closure of illegal tunnels under the border, which, combined with only limited easing by Israel of long-term restrictions on movement of people and goods via the legitimate crossings between Israel and the Gaza Strip, has reduced access to basic commodities, including fuel, and further restricted the freedom of movement of the population.

The PA fiscal crisis has also contributed to the prevailing humanitarian situation in the oPt, with resulting major cash flow problems affecting provision of basic services such as health, exacerbating the shortage of essential medicines, and, particularly in the Gaza Strip, disrupting power and fuel supplies. Extreme weather events also affected the population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 2013, with the winter storms in January causing large-scale flooding and damage to transportation and service infrastructure and livelihoods.

A number of the above factors also present challenges to the delivery of protection and humanitarian assistance in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Access for humanitarian agencies to populations in the oPt continues to be restricted by bureaucratic and physical impediments imposed by the Israeli authorities and, with respect to the Gaza Strip, by the Palestinian de facto authorities. The security situation also from time to time presents challenges to humanitarian access, such as during the hostilities in November 2012 in the Gaza Strip and southern Israel.

While the humanitarian situation in the oPt in 2013 is the result of multiple and often overlapping political and other factors, the principal drivers can be categorized as follows:

**Fragmentation of the occupied Palestinian territory due to restrictions on freedom of movement, including movement between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, between East Jerusalem and the rest of the West Bank, and within the West Bank:** Movement of people and goods to, from and within the oPt remains restricted by a combination of physical obstacles such as checkpoints, roadblocks and gates, and by bureaucratic constraints such as permits and the designation of closed military zones. As a result, the flow of both people and goods to and within the Gaza Strip, between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, within the West Bank (notably to the Jordan Valley) and into East Jerusalem is severely affected. The fragmentation also results in the separation of many Palestinian families due to the different identity documents and Israeli laws and policies that restrict the movement of Palestinians and limit the reunification of families.<sup>1</sup> Although there has been some easing of restrictions in recent years in some areas, the prevailing constraints continue to undermine access to basic services and livelihoods, and also limit the ability of humanitarian agencies to deliver assistance.

The cumulative impact of the restrictions on movement and access is severely curtailing the economic potential of the oPt, with resulting high levels of unemployment and increased food insecurity in a society where there is still significant economic reliance on the agricultural and manufacturing sectors. Ongoing Israeli restrictions have meant that the rate of private sector investment in the Palestinian economy has remained at around 15 percent of GDP for the past seven years, which is considered low by international standards. Manufacturing, usually a key driver of export-led growth, has stagnated since 1994, with its share of GDP falling from 19 percent to 10 percent by 2011.<sup>2</sup> The restrictions on mobility of persons and goods are the main basic causes of food insecurity in the oPt; specifically the inability to freely access most land and water resources in the country; the lack of free movement of people, goods and vehicles within and between different parts of the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip; and the inability to freely and predictably access international markets for goods and services. The restricted mobility of people and goods is hindering the agro-processing industry and the trading of local agricultural products to national and international markets. The declining productivity, competitiveness and sustainability of all farmers, herders and fishers are a key underlying cause of the crisis in oPt.

The Palestinian economy had in recent years seen strong growth however, this had been driven by donor budget support, some easing of Israeli movement restrictions and PA reform. As a consequence, the more than halving of foreign budget support as of 2012, has led to an economic slowdown, revealing the economy's dependence on donor-financed consumption, rather than sustainable sources of growth. The World Bank has reported that restrictions on movement and access imposed by Israel are the "most significant impediment to Palestinian private sector growth",<sup>3</sup> with restrictions on economic activity in Area C as particularly detrimental.<sup>4</sup> Most of the natural resources of the oPt are found in Area C, the only contiguous part of the West Bank, and restrictions on economic activity here, forestalls the large potential contribution of agriculture and exploitation of Dead Sea minerals to the economy.

**The ongoing imposition of the blockade, and related restrictions on the movement of people and goods, on the Gaza Strip, in addition to recent Egyptian security measures:** The longstanding restrictions imposed by Israel on the movement of people and goods to, from and within the Gaza Strip have continued to undermine the living conditions of 1.7 million residents. These restrictions have reduced access to livelihoods, essential services and housing, disrupted family life, worsened unemployment, and undermined people's hopes for a secure and prosperous future. The restrictions on external trade, including with Israel, and on transfers to and from the West Bank, prevent the realization of Gaza's economic potential, impacting employment, the basis of livelihood. Livelihoods are further undermined by the long-term imposition of restrictions on access to agricultural lands near the fence with Israel and to fishing areas off the Gazan coastline. Notwithstanding some improvements in 2013 with regard to increased access on land and at sea following the Egyptian-brokered ceasefire understanding between Israel and Hamas in November 2012, access to these key areas, and to traditional markets for agricultural produce in Israel and the West Bank, remains insufficient to effect a sustainable improvement in the agriculture and fishing sectors.

In a recent report to the UN Human Rights Council, the UN Secretary General noted that "Numerous statements made by Israeli officials in their professional capacities have made clear that the blockade is being imposed to apply pressure on the de facto authorities, and in response to acts committed by various groups in Gaza, including Palestinian armed groups, towards or in relation to Israel. However, the blockade and related restrictions target and

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<sup>1</sup> WCLAC, JCW, CWLRC, Falling through the cracks: How the Israeli Occupation Breaks Palestinian Families (August 2013).

<sup>2</sup> World Bank, Area C and the Future of the Palestinian Economy, 2 October 2013

<sup>3</sup> World Bank, Area C and the Future of the Palestinian Economy, 2 October 2013

<sup>4</sup> World Bank, Economic Monitoring Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, 25 September, 2013

impose hardship on the civilian population, effectively penalizing them for acts they have not committed. As such, these measures contravene article 33 of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (Convention IV) prohibiting collective penalties<sup>5</sup>.

Largely related to these long-term restrictions on the movement of people and goods to and from the Gaza Strip through Israeli-controlled crossings, the economy and the population in Gaza had become dependent upon the illegal tunnel trade, while Rafah Crossing had become the primary passenger entry and exit point to the outside world. Recent action by Egypt to counter illegal activities and insecurity in the Sinai have included imposing severe restrictions on movement of people through the Rafah Crossing and closing down illegal tunnels under the Egyptian-Gaza border. At the same time, there has been only limited easing of the ongoing restrictions on movement of people and goods through legitimate crossings between Israel and the Gaza Strip. Consequently, the prevailing humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip has deteriorated further.

**The existence and expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, which are illegal under international law:** Settlements, and related infrastructure, land expropriation, destruction of Palestinian property, forced displacement, restrictions on access to and use of land and resources, movement restrictions, and violence, are the primary driver of protection threats in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Since 1967, successive Israeli-governments have led and directly participated in the planning, construction and expansion of settlements, including through unwarranted amendments to local legislation, planning policies, support to and legalization of “outposts”, seizure of land, provision of infrastructure and public services, and benefits and incentives to settlers. Seizure of land for settlement building and future expansion has resulted in the shrinking of space available for Palestinians to develop adequate housing, basic infrastructure and services and to sustain livelihoods. These and related measures have contributed to physical insecurity, loss of land, resources, assets and livelihoods, forced displacement of families and communities, impeded access to services including education, and increased risk of arrest and detention of boys. In addition, as noted by the UN Secretary General, the “Israeli authorities continue to fail to prevent settler violence, protect Palestinians and their property, and ensure accountability for these criminal acts”<sup>6</sup>.

**Lack of accountability for violations of international law, discriminatory application of laws and law enforcement, and failure to uphold the rights of Palestinians:** Underpinning the lack of protection for civilians in the oPt is a lack of accountability at all levels in relation to various duty bearers for violations of international law, discriminatory application of laws and law enforcement, and failure to uphold the rights of Palestinians. With respect to Israel, this includes the failure to ensure effective investigations into deaths and serious injury of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and serious injury of Palestinians in the West Bank, resulting from actions of Israeli forces – both in the context of hostilities and in law enforcement operations. For example, a report by the UN Secretary-General issued in August 2013 noted serious concerns that neither Israel nor the de facto authorities have taken adequate measures to investigate credible allegations of violations of international law and to provide an effective remedy to victims following the November 2012 escalation in hostilities in Gaza and southern Israel<sup>7</sup>; to date, there is no information to suggest a criminal investigation has been opened by Israel into any incidents of civilian death, injury or property destruction.<sup>8</sup> This has contributed to a culture of impunity and fuels further violence and violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law. The failure to hold perpetrators accountable makes the possibility of repeated violations in the future more likely.

Impunity also includes the failure to adequately enforce the law in relation to violence perpetrated against Palestinians by Israeli settlers and to hold perpetrators of settler violence accountable<sup>9</sup>. The inadequacy of judicial review of the actions or omissions of the Israeli Military Commander of occupied territory, and lack of independence of the Israeli judiciary from political considerations and limitations, entrenching policies and practices which fail to uphold the Occupying Power’s obligations under international law is also of concern.

<sup>5</sup> Human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, Report of the UN Secretary General, 22 August 2013, A/HRC/24/30, p.8, para.22.

<sup>6</sup> Human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, Report of the UN Secretary General, 22 August 2013, A/HRC/24/30, p.9, para.25.

<sup>7</sup> Human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, Report of the UN Secretary General, 22 August 2013, A/HRC/24/30, p.4, para. 6.

<sup>8</sup> For example, on 11 April 2013, the Israeli Military Attorney General issued a public document indicating that it found no basis to open criminal investigations in relation to approximately 65 incidents during Operation “Pillar of Defence” (Update on accountability for reported violations of international law by Israel during the escalation of hostilities in Gaza and southern Israel between 14 and 21 November 2012, Protection Cluster, 21 May 2013).

<sup>9</sup> See for example, Update on Settler Violence in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Protection Cluster, October 2013.

A number of actions or omissions by Palestinian duty-bearers, particularly in the Gaza Strip, raise protection concerns and have a humanitarian impact. This includes the apparent failure by the de facto authorities in the Gaza Strip to open criminal investigations into violations of international law, including indiscriminate projectile attacks that have killed and injured civilians, or have fallen short and killed and injured Palestinians in Gaza; attacks against Israel that originated from built-up and populated areas within Gaza which placed nearby communities at increased risk of harm; and the extra-judicial and summary executions of alleged collaborators during the escalation of hostilities in November 2012.<sup>10</sup> The failure to hold perpetrators accountable makes the possibility of repeated violations in the future more likely. Palestinian armed groups in the Gaza Strip have also been responsible for the indiscriminate firing of rockets and other projectiles at Israel, and the use of civilian areas in the Gaza strip to launch attacks or to shield military forces or installations. Also of concern is the lack of action by Palestinian authorities in the Gaza Strip and West Bank to investigate, prosecute and address gender-based violence.

*Note on figures: as with previous Consolidated Appeal documents, the Humanitarian Needs Overview highlights figures pertaining to the vulnerable population in the oPt (i.e. Palestinian communities) who are deemed in need of humanitarian assistance. The HNO is designed to highlight key needs primarily in order to guide programming and response as part of the 2014 Humanitarian Programme Cycle. More comprehensive data on the crisis in oPt can be found in other reports by HCT members, in addition to reports by the UN Secretary General.*

## Scope of the crisis and demographic profile of the affected population

There are currently 4.42 million Palestinians living under Israeli occupation in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Gaza Strip. Of these, 2.72 million live in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and 1.70 million in the Gaza Strip<sup>11</sup>. Approximately 2.18 million are men, while 2.11 million are women.<sup>12</sup> Around 40 percent of the population is under 15 years old and the average annual population growth rate is 2.9 percent (with variations between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip),<sup>13</sup> one of the highest in the region. The population of registered refugees numbers approximately 2.2 million,<sup>14</sup> constituting 33 percent of the population in the West Bank and over 76 percent of the population in Gaza. Twenty-four percent of the West Bank refugee population lives in 19 refugee camps, and in Gaza 43 percent of refugees live in eight refugee camps.<sup>15</sup>

### **Vulnerable groups:**

**In Gaza:** farmers with land and others living and working in Access Restricted Areas (ARA), fishermen, refugees, unemployed youth and chronic poor living under the poverty line.<sup>16</sup>

**In the West Bank:** herders and Bedouin communities in Area C, farmers with land located on the western side of the Barrier, residents in the H2 area of Hebron, and camp-based refugees.

Geographic areas of special concern include those where the Palestinian Authority has limited access or coverage (Gaza Strip, Area C and East Jerusalem).

**oPt-wide:** children and adolescents, persons with disabilities, and older people

Particular groups are vulnerable to the effects of the crisis in different ways. While the risk of forced displacement affects communities across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, particularly vulnerable communities include some 11,000 Palestinians living in the seam zones (areas isolated by the Barrier); 2,300 predominantly refugee Bedouin and herders in the Jerusalem periphery such as in the “Maale Adumim / E1 bubble”; some 1,000 East Jerusalem Palestinians in the Al-Bustan area of Silwan; Palestine refugees living in Sheikh Jarrah; Palestinians living in the H2 area in Hebron; and the 86 Palestinian communities living in, or close by, Israeli-declared closed

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<sup>10</sup> According to media reports, DFA officials have stated that an investigation was opened related to the killing of alleged collaborators during the escalation, but insufficient information is available to verify this claim and/or determine if the investigation met international standards

<sup>11</sup> Figure is the total estimated population for 2013, as published by Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. West Bank estimates include East Jerusalem. “Estimated Population in the Palestinian Territory Mid-Year by Governorate, 1997-2016.” [http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/\\_Rainbow/Documents/gover\\_e.htm](http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_Rainbow/Documents/gover_e.htm)

<sup>12</sup> PCBS 2013

<sup>13</sup> PCBS 2013

<sup>14</sup> As of 30 June 2013, UNRWA Registration Statistical Bulletin, Second Quarter 2013. For formatting reasons, “registered refugees” in this table also includes the categories “registered persons” and “married to non-refugee family members”, which are usually tracked and reported separately by UNRWA. The number of people in these categories, which have been included in the overall “registered refugee” number in the table, was 157,470 in the West Bank and 63,923 in Gaza.

<sup>15</sup> As of 30 June 2012, UNRWA Registration Statistical Bulletin, Second Quarter 2012.

<sup>16</sup> According to the International Monetary Fund, Staff Report Prepared for the September 2013 Meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, as of 2011, 26 percent of Palestinians lived below the poverty line (NIS 2,293 per month), with 13 percent below the extreme poverty line (NIS 1,832).

military zones or “firing zones” (including 1300 people in Masafer Yatta and residents of the north Jordan Valley)<sup>17</sup>. The vulnerabilities of these communities relate to a number of factors including restrictions on freedom of movement, including access to agricultural land, access to basic services and the risk of demolition of homes and property.

In addition, 110 communities in the West Bank with a combined population of over 315,000 Palestinians who are vulnerable to settler violence – such as the six communities located close to Yitzhar settlement (Nablus governorate)<sup>18</sup> and the H2 area of Hebron. 135,000 Palestinians are at high risk.<sup>19</sup> Palestinians living in refugee camps and in communities where weekly demonstrations take place, face particular challenges relating to regular clashes between Palestinians and Israeli forces and to Israeli search and arrest operations. In 2013, the governorates with the highest prevalence of injuries caused by Israeli security forces were Hebron, Ramallah, Jerusalem and Bethlehem. In Hebron governorate, there has been a more than four-fold increase in injuries so far in 2013, compared to the same period in 2012.<sup>20</sup> In relation to the arrest, ill-treatment and torture of children, boys are at highest risk.

In the Gaza Strip, those living in the access restricted areas on land (areas located close to the fence with Israel) are particularly vulnerable to threats to their life, liberty, and security as a result of measures taken by Israel to enforce restrictions on access to these areas and the activities of Palestinian armed groups. Families living in, or individuals working in, areas near the fence in the north (east of Jabalia, Beit Hanoun and Beit Lahia) and middle area (around al -Burej, Deir-El-Balah) are at greatest risk.<sup>21</sup>

### **Children and adolescents (child protection)**

Conflict-related violence and settler violence have serious physical and psychological impacts on children and adolescents. Between 1 January and 30 September 2013 the monthly average of children injured in the West Bank by Israeli Security Forces was 118 - more than double the monthly average of 2012 (56) and four times the average for 2011 (37),<sup>22</sup> while in Gaza, children are the overwhelming majority of victims of ERWs. In the West Bank, arrest and ill-treatment of children (predominantly boys) in Israeli military detention also affects their psychosocial development and life prospects. The monthly average for 2013 shows that 215 children per month were in Israeli military custody, compared to 196 per month in 2012 (a 9.7 percent increase).

Children account for half of those displaced in the oPt, which results in psychosocial distress and negative coping mechanisms such as child labour and early marriage of girls, while access to services such as education is hampered by protection risks such as attacks by settlers on their way to school and damage/destruction of school infrastructure. Rising unemployment and poverty moreover, has contributed to drawing children into the labour market. Adolescents which make up one third of population are subject not only to the hardship of the prevailing political situation, but are also economically and socially marginalized; they have no productive outlets for their energy and are at a high risk of self-destructive behavior and negative influences. They are often highly politicized and factionalized, yet feel powerless - young boys are particularly targeted for arrests, political violence and harassment. School dropout rates, an alarming increase in substance abuse, social insularities and inflexibilities, early marriage and limited access to cultural and social facilities including health and sports are among the resulting key protection concerns for adolescents.<sup>23</sup>

The protracted occupation and related violence impacts upon the coping mechanisms and resilience of children, and West Bank requires ongoing support to ensure that it can respond to current humanitarian needs, and scale up as the situation changes.

### **Persons with disabilities**

<sup>17</sup> OCHA Factsheet, The Humanitarian impact of Israeli-declared “Firing Zones” in the West Bank, August 2012.

<sup>18</sup> Burin, Madama, Asira al Qibliya, Urif, Einabus and Huwwara.

<sup>19</sup> OCHA Humanitarian Atlas, 2012

<sup>20</sup> During the same period in 2012, governorates with the highest prevalence of injuries were Qalqilya, Ramallah, Jerusalem and Hebron.

<sup>21</sup> Protection Cluster database, including information from UN agencies and human rights NGOs working in Gaza

<sup>22</sup> Data provided by UNICEF

<sup>23</sup> The Palestinian Ministry of Women's Affairs National Strategic Plan to Combat Violence against Women (2011-2019):

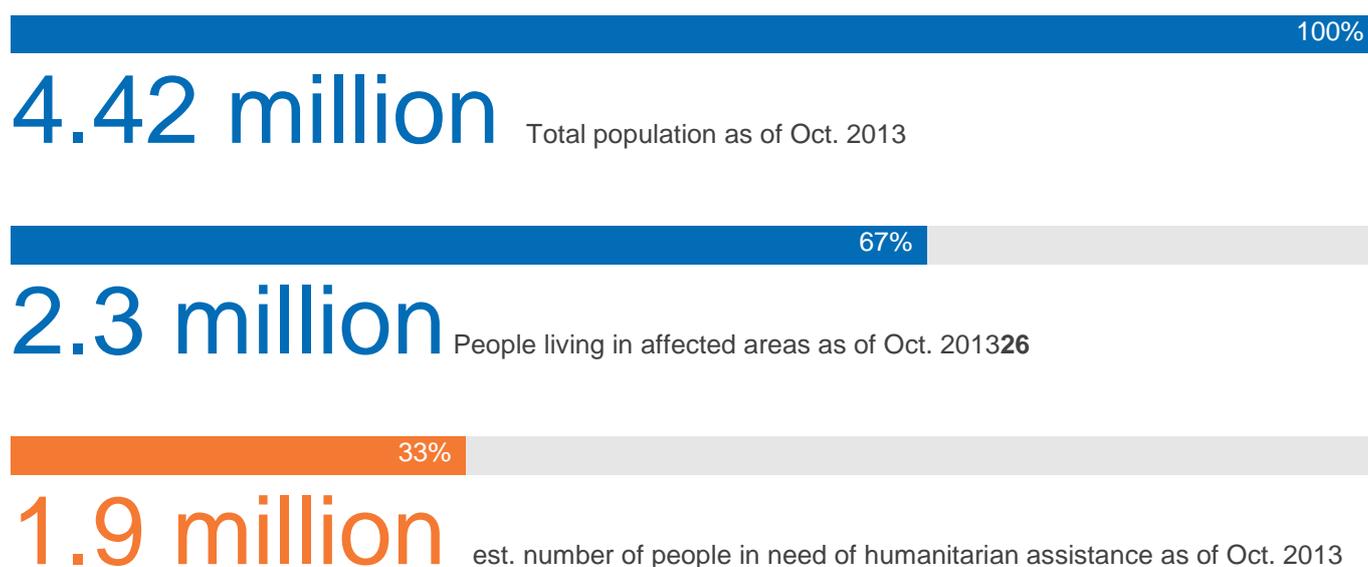
[http://saynotoviolence.org/sites/default/files/pa/\(ENGLISH\)\\_Palestinian\\_Authority\\_Nationalpercent20Strategy\\_to\\_Combat\\_Violence\\_Against\\_Women\\_2011-2019.pdf](http://saynotoviolence.org/sites/default/files/pa/(ENGLISH)_Palestinian_Authority_Nationalpercent20Strategy_to_Combat_Violence_Against_Women_2011-2019.pdf)

At least 6.9 percent of the Palestinian population<sup>24</sup> is living with disabilities. In this context, persons with disabilities face particular challenges in accessing livelihood opportunities as well as adequate health, education and social services. For example, limited school places and poor school infrastructure undermine access to education for children with disabilities, compounding underlying issues such as the lack of investment in specialized services to support disabilities.

### Older people

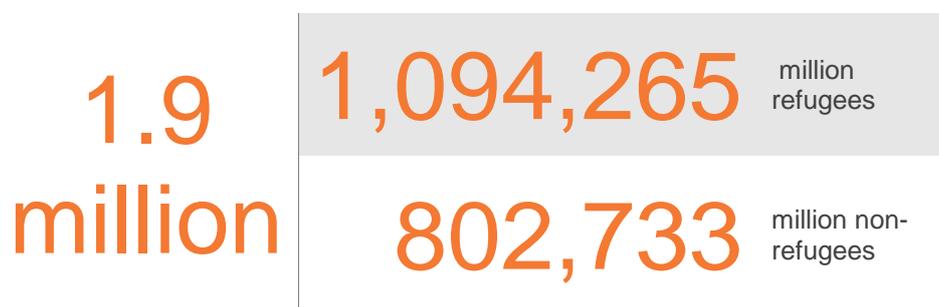
In relation to older people, the main gaps identified are access to and accessibility of basic services, and the lack of inclusion of older people and their needs in humanitarian service delivery. As a result, many older people are dependent on support provided by their family and community, which is not always appropriate or adequate to meet their needs.<sup>25</sup>

**Figure 1: Statistics of the population in need**



Source: PCBS; Food Security Sector extrapolated figures from SEFSec 2012

**Figure 2: Statistics of the population in need**



Source: Food Security Sector extrapolated figures from SEFSec 2012

<sup>24</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, National Disability Survey (2011).

<sup>25</sup> HelpAge, Needs assessment report with a special focus on older people in the Gaza Strip affected by the conflict (June 2012).

<sup>26</sup> Particular attention should also be paid to humanitarian needs in some West Bank refugee camps. Although refugee camps can be located in Area B or C, UNRWA remains the main provider of services to refugees.

**Figure 3: Key figures**

## Status of populations living in affected areas

The population in the oPt face a range of threats to their fundamental human rights – the persistent violations of international humanitarian and human rights law perpetrated by all duty bearers are generating a range of humanitarian needs and vulnerabilities. These are outlined as follows:

### *Threats to life, liberty and security*

Palestinian civilians across oPt are subject to various threats to their physical safety and liberty, stemming from Israeli military and law enforcement operations, settler violence and the actions of Palestinian armed groups and security forces.

### **West Bank**

In 2013, there was a marked increase in civilian fatalities and injuries caused by Israeli security forces: from 1 January to 30 September 2013, 15 Palestinian civilians were killed by Israeli security forces, including three children; another 3,240, including 1,062 children, were injured. Most injuries recorded in 2013 involved cases where people received medical treatment after inhaling tear gas (46 percent) or being hit by a rubber-coated metal bullet (40 percent). Approximately 75 per cent of Palestinian injuries occurred in the West Bank during clashes between Palestinians and Israeli security forces which erupted in the context of demonstrations. These demonstrations included those held in solidarity with Palestinian prisoners on hunger strike, demonstrations commemorating what Palestinians refer to as the 'An Nakba Day', and in regular protests against settlement and settler-related activity (e.g. Barrier construction, movement and access restrictions in close proximity to Israeli settlements, settler take-over of land, etc.). An additional 10 per cent of injuries were sustained in clashes during search-and arrest operations conducted by Israeli security forces. During this period OCHA recorded a slight increase in the number of such operations, compared to the 2012 monthly average. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the rise in the number of search-and arrest operations occurred in the context of the increasing number of demonstrations and related violent clashes. According to an IDF officer quoted in the Israeli media "in recent

months, not a single arrest has occurred without the residents responding – whether it's youths coming out of their houses and throwing stones at the forces, or the use of live fire".

A high proportion of the casualties were refugees. Of these totals, twelve of those killed and 459 of those injured were refugees.<sup>27</sup> This represents a significant increase compared to the whole of 2012 when there were four fatalities and 3,029 injuries recorded. There are also particularly serious protection concerns affecting children, including the arrest and detention of children for alleged security infractions (largely stone-throwing), ill-treatment and torture in military and police custody, and prosecution in juvenile military courts.<sup>28</sup> As at the end of August 2013, 185 boys, aged 12 to 17 years, were being held in Israeli military detention,<sup>29</sup> and at least 72 children reported being subjected to ill-treatment by Israeli security forces.<sup>30</sup> So far in 2013, there has also been an increase in incursions by Israeli security forces and resulting clashes, particularly in refugee camps. While the majority of operations take place outside camps in the West Bank, there has been an 80 percent increase in the number of operations in refugee camps, compared to the same period in 2012, which as a consequence, has drastically increased the number of injuries affecting camp residents (118 percent increase in injuries compared to the same period in 2012).<sup>31</sup> Preliminary findings of a survey among students and teachers in a sample of East Jerusalem schools seem to suggest that use of physical and verbal violence at school both by teachers and among students<sup>32</sup> has been influenced by the prevailing levels of violence and insecurity in the oPt context.

Violence by Israeli settlers against Palestinians and their property in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is directly linked to the presence of Israeli settlements and has the effect of restricting Palestinian access to land and resources. From 1 January to 30 September 2013, 310 incidents of settler-related violence were recorded, including 77 incidents resulting in casualties (during which 122 Palestinian civilians were injured by Israeli settlers and another 173 injured by Israeli forces), and 233 incidents resulting in property damage. This year, as of 31 August, 7,451 olive trees were destroyed or damaged.<sup>33</sup> The impact of settler violence includes physical insecurity; loss of land, resources, assets and livelihoods; physical injuries; psychosocial distress; impeded access to services; increased risk of displacement; and increased risk of arrest and detention of boys.

There has been a lack of accountability for the killing and injury of Palestinian civilians by Israeli security forces, a lack of effective action by Israeli security forces to prevent and protect Palestinians from settler violence and a lack of effective investigations by Israeli police into offences committed by Israeli settlers against Palestinians<sup>34</sup>.

### **Gaza Strip**

In the Gaza Strip, Israeli military operations and recurrent outbreaks of hostilities continue to pose a serious threat to life, liberty and security. The impact of the escalation of hostilities in the Gaza Strip and southern Israel in November 2012 continued into 2013. There was a marked increase in casualties due to ERWs in the first six months of 2013, particularly amongst children, who were the overwhelming majority of victims. An emerging issue of concern is the number of children injured as a result of small arms and other weapons stored or made within homes. Exposure to conflict-related violence in Gaza is affecting the psychosocial well-being of the population, in particular children and adolescents, as shown by recent rapid assessments.<sup>35</sup> Despite at least 180,000 children, adolescents and caregivers being reached in the first seven months following the November 2012 crisis, the demand for psychosocial interventions remains high.

The manner in which the ARAs are enforced by Israeli forces, including the use of live fire, also places civilians at serious risk.<sup>36</sup> While there has been a marked decrease in killings and injuries in the ARA on land to date in 2013 compared to 2012, the use of live ammunition by Israel to enforce the ARA continues to pose a serious risk: from 1 January to 30 September 2013, 4 Palestinians were killed and 41 injured in the ARA on land. There was an opposite trend at sea, with a significant increase in shooting incidents and injuries compared to 2012: from 1 January to 30 September 2013, nine Palestinian fishermen were injured in the ARA at sea, although there was a

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<sup>27</sup> UNRWA Operations Support

<sup>28</sup> UNICEF, Palestinian children in Israeli Military Detention, Observations and Recommendations, February 2013; UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, Concluding Observations on the second to fourth periodic reports of Israel (June 2013), paras. 35 and 36; Madaa Creative Center, The impact of child arrest and detention (2012); B'Tselem, The Illegal Behaviour of the Police toward Minors in Silwan Suspected of Stone Throwing (December 2010); ACRI, Violations of the Youth Law by the Police in East Jerusalem (March 2011).

<sup>29</sup> Over the past two and a half years, the number of Palestinian children in Israeli military detention at the end of each month has fluctuated around 200.

<sup>30</sup> UNICEF MRM Database on Grave Violations against Children.

<sup>31</sup> UNRWA Operations Support

<sup>32</sup> UNESCO/UNICEF survey among students and teachers in East Jerusalem conducted in 2011.

<sup>33</sup> OCHA 2013

<sup>34</sup> From 2003 to 2013, the Israeli Military Police Criminal Investigations Department opened over 179 investigations into the suspected killing of Palestinian civilians by Israeli soldiers, only 16 of which led to indictments and from 2005 to July 2013, only 8.5percent of Israeli police investigations into offences committed by Israeli settlers against Palestinians led to indictment.

<sup>35</sup> The Inter-Cluster Initial Rapid Assessment found that immediate priorities for humanitarian assistance included psychosocial support, ERW clearance/legal assistance and shelter. The Psychosocial Rapid Assessment conducted by the Child Protection Working Group and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Working Group surveyed a sample of 545 children and adolescents and revealed significant levels of emotional distress.

<sup>36</sup> For further analysis, see the six-monthly Protection Cluster Updates on the Access Restricted Areas in the Gaza Strip.

decrease in the number of fishermen detained (19). More recent developments along the maritime border with Egypt have further exacerbated physical risks for Gazan fishermen.<sup>37</sup>

### **Forced displacement**

Thousands of Palestinians throughout the oPt have been forcibly displaced or are at acute risk of forced displacement as a result of multiple factors including policies and practices related to the ongoing occupation, recurrent hostilities, violence and abuse. Forced displacement has a serious immediate and longer-term physical, socio-economic and emotional impact upon Palestinian families and communities. It deprives Palestinians of their home and land, often their main asset, and frequently results in disruption to livelihoods, a reduced standard of living and limited access to basic services. The impact on children can be particularly devastating. Additional impacts reported include negative coping mechanisms including child labour, early marriage of girls<sup>38</sup> and loss of community resilience.<sup>39</sup>

In the West Bank, forced displacement is triggered by multiple factors, including destruction of homes and other property, forced evictions, settler violence, movement and access restrictions, and, in relation to East Jerusalem, lack of civil documentation. The restrictions imposed by Israel on planning and zoning, in Area C and East Jerusalem, are a key factor in displacement. The prohibitively restrictive, planning system obstructs Palestinian development in Area C by impeding access to natural resources and livelihoods, and prevents rather than ensures the maintenance of order and safety. Over a period of decades, this has proved to be detrimental to the development of Palestinian communities. Rehabilitation of existing service infrastructure requires an Israeli-issued building permit which is almost impossible to obtain in these areas. Infrastructure built without a permit is subject to demolition by the Israeli authorities – for example at least 39 schools, serving approximately 4,561 children in Area C and in East Jerusalem, have been issued with verbal or written stop-work or demolition orders by Israeli authorities<sup>40</sup>. PA and development partners are unable to construct basic health clinics, making communities reliant upon expensive mobile clinic services for basic primary health care, while restrictions on rehabilitation, repair and construction of even basic water and sanitation infrastructure severely impedes access to adequate WASH services in many communities, reducing their resilience and increasing their risk of displacement – between 1 January and August 2013, 31 WASH structures were destroyed by the Israeli authorities.

In 2013, there was an increase in the monthly average of destruction/demolition of homes and other structures by the Israeli authorities in Area C, as compared to 2012: from 1 January to 30 September 2013, 521 Palestinian-owned structures (including 196 residential structures) were demolished in Area C and East Jerusalem, displacing 862 Palestinians, including 438 children, compared to 886 in all of 2012. Of the structures demolished in Area C and the West Bank between 1 January to 30 September 2013, 113 were refugee-owned, displacing 259 refugees (including 140 children).<sup>41</sup> There have also been a number of incidents in 2013 of large-scale demolitions affecting whole communities - such as in Tal 'Adasa, Az Zayyem, and Mak-hul. The number of people displaced so far in 2013 in East Jerusalem (248) is roughly fifteen times the figure for the parallel period in 2012 (17 people displaced), and is by far the highest since 2009.

In a recent report, the UN Secretary-General expressed particular concern that “the implementation of the proposed Israeli plans to transfer Palestinian Bedouin and herding communities in the Jerusalem periphery and Jordan Valley from their current locations and to evict Palestinians in the eight villages of the Masafer Yatta area for the enforcement of “Firing Zone 918” would appear to amount to individual and mass forcible transfer, contrary to Israel’s obligations under international humanitarian law”<sup>42</sup>.

In the Gaza Strip, 1,092 people remain displaced following the destruction or damage to their homes during the escalation in hostilities in November 2012 (in many instances, rehabilitation of damaged homes has been delayed

<sup>37</sup> In July 2013, the Egyptian navy prohibited fishing activity off the coast of Northern Sinai, including Rafah, for security reasons. Two violent incidents involving the Egyptian navy were recorded on 30 August and 14 September 2013, resulting in the injury of 3 fishermen, arrest of 5 others, and destruction of the engine and fishing nets of one boat.

<sup>38</sup> Kvinna till Kvinna, Inequalities facing Women living in Area C of the occupied Palestinian territories (October 2012).

<sup>39</sup> See, for example, UNRWA, Al Jabal: a study on the transfer of Bedouin Palestine Refugees (May 2013).

<sup>40</sup> Education Cluster Vulnerable Schools Matrix. August 2013.

<sup>41</sup> UNRWA Operations Support

<sup>42</sup> Human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, Report of the UN Secretary General, 22 August 2013, A/HRC/24/30, p.10, para.29.

due to Israeli restrictions on import of construction materials) and around 10,164 people remain in displacement following previous Israeli military operations (Pre-operation “Cast Lead” and operation “Cast Lead”).

### *Lack of economic access to food and erosion of livelihoods*

Despite the oPt being a net food importer, in recent years, local markets have only experienced temporary shortages of local or imported food as a consequence of recurrent hostilities and military action, or the intensified restrictions on movement of goods. Food insecurity in the oPt is not related to shortage of foodstuffs but predominantly to the lack of purchasing power (lack of economic access to food)– people do not have enough money to buy food for their families. The lack of purchasing power is related to unemployment and underemployment resulting from the cumulative impact of the prolonged occupation and specifically the restrictions on movement of persons and goods, including the inability to freely access land and water resources; the lack of free movement of people and goods within and between West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip; and the inability to freely and predictably access regional and international markets for goods and services, and the related macroeconomic crisis since 2000.<sup>43</sup> Starting from mid-2012, the impact of the PA fiscal crisis (resulting from a decrease by 30 percent of external budget support to the PA – down from USD 1.1 billion in 2011 to USD 774 million in 2012), coupled with the continuing negative consequences of the Israeli restrictions imposed on the Palestinian economy, have contributed to revert the steady improvements in food security recorded between 2009 and 2011. Such a de-development pattern has been further aggravated by the consequent rise of overall unemployment which has doubled since 1999, bringing the level to roughly double that of other countries in the region.<sup>44</sup> Of particular concern is high youth unemployment (age 15-29 years) which stood at 35 percent for the first half of 2013.

Another concern is the low female participation in the labour force and severe gender gap compared with males in the labour force, and unemployment rates - which is also rooted in social and cultural factors. During the first quarter of 2012 female participation was 17 percent of which 19 percent in the West Bank and 14 percent in Gaza Strip, compared to 69 percent for males; of which 71 percent in the West Bank and 66 percent in Gaza Strip. Moreover, in 2012 the unemployment rate reached 32 percent among females (up from 28 percent in 2011) compared to 22 percent among males.<sup>45</sup> Low female labour force participation rates and high unemployment are key contributory factors to the high economic dependency ratio at the household level in oPt (estimated to be 1:7).

The deteriorating economic situation is particularly reflected in the agricultural sector whose contribution to national GDP is now at 5 percent, down from 10 percent in 1999. The agricultural sector, representing 12 percent of employment, has suffered from a lack of access to an estimated 50 percent of the agricultural land across the oPt. This land remains uncultivated because of settler violence against Palestinian farmers; the creation of Israeli settlements and nature reserves over Palestinian private land; the dispossession of water springs; the lack of physical access resulting from the barrier; and restrictions on the ARAs along Gaza’s perimeter fence and in the sea. The continuing destruction and/or damage to productive assets have had a cumulative detrimental impact on the livelihoods of families and communities. Although women have increased their share of employment in the agricultural sector, this is mostly as unpaid subsistence farming workers - an indicator of the quality of women’s economic opportunities as paid jobs in this sector are shrinking.

The ongoing imposition of the blockade of Gaza is now in its seventh year. Its negative effects, along with those of related restrictions on the movement of people and goods have been further aggravated by Egypt’s closure of the illegal smuggling tunnels starting from mid-2013 and there has been a rise of late in the prices of some food commodities. The overall macro socio-economic situation - and labour market trends in particular - strongly affect levels of food security for the great majority of Palestinians.

In the West Bank, settlement expansion<sup>46</sup> and related activities - including settler agricultural activity - are increasingly absorbing Palestinian land and water resources<sup>47</sup> In the Gaza Strip, despite an improvement of the

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<sup>43</sup> WFP/FAO/UNRWA Socio-Economic and Food Security Survey, West Bank and Gaza Strip, Palestine, 2012

<sup>44</sup> The overall unemployment rate in the oPt was 22.3 percent in the first half of 2013, with the rate in the Gaza Strip (29.5 per cent) significantly higher than the West Bank (18.6 per cent).

<sup>45</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), “On the Eve of International Population Day, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) released the following statistical review on the status of the Palestinian Population”: [http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/\\_pcbs/PressRelease/int\\_Pop\\_2012e.pdf](http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/int_Pop_2012e.pdf)

<sup>46</sup> From 1997 to 2013, the total area used for Israeli agriculture in the West Bank grew by 35percent (with 40percent of this growth in areas around “religious” settlements); in 2013, 93,000 dunums are used for Israeli settler agriculture - see Kerem Navot, Israeli Settlers’ Agriculture as a Means of Land Takeover in the West Bank (September 2013). In comparison, the area cultivated by Palestinians in the West Bank declined from 1.7 million dunums in 1984 to 1.1 million dunums in 2010.

<sup>47</sup> From 1997 to 2013, the total area used for Israeli agriculture in the West Bank grew by 35percent (with 40percent of this growth in areas around “religious” settlements); in 2013, 93,000 dunums are used for Israeli settler agriculture - see Kerem Navot, Israeli Settlers’ Agriculture as a Means of Land Takeover in the West Bank (September 2013). In comparison, the area cultivated by Palestinians in the West Bank declined from 1.7 million dunums in 1984 to 1.1 million dunums in 2010.

situation in the ARA - following the 21 November 2012 ceasefire understanding - continued restrictions undermine the livelihoods of tens of thousands of Palestinians - including fishermen, farmers and herders. While restrictions are no longer enforced as frequently or as far beyond 300 metres from the fence, farmers and herders returning to newly accessible land are still facing significant physical and financial risks; a six-fold increase in the number of incidents of destruction, damage or confiscation of equipment has been recorded in ARA at sea. At sea, although the number of boats confiscated has decreased, access restrictions continue to prevent fishermen from accessing the most profitable fishing areas which are located beyond 8-nautical miles<sup>48</sup>.

The livelihood baseline profiles document released by FAO in September 2013 provides clear indications on the correlation between livelihood assets, sources of income, monthly expenditures and the level of resilience of 4 distinct livelihoods.

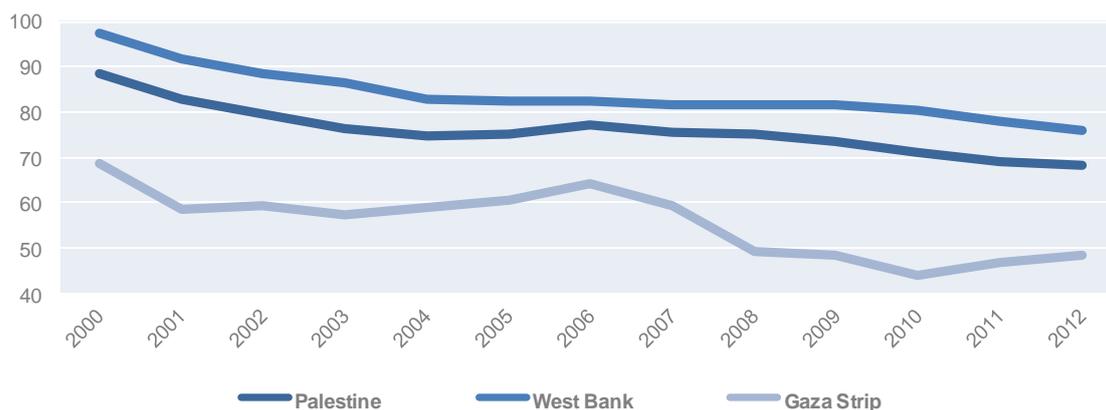
The main triggers of low resilience are described below for each category:

- **Urban and peri-urban livelihood (West Bank and the Gaza Strip):** This category relies largely on private sector employment. The progressive fragmentation of established economic patterns that has taken place since 2000, involving the breakdown of relations with Israel, between governorates and between urban and rural communities is the main cause of livelihood erosion and low resilience. In the Gaza Strip, the blockade has cut off the population from the West Bank and Israeli labour market, as well as from the capacity to trade their products.
- **Mixed farming and herding livelihood (WB):** This category tends to be more resilient compared to purely herding households since they are able to diversify their agriculture production and therefore their sources of income. However, the intermittent periods of drought or restrictions on grazing land have forced herders to cope by looking for alternative sources of income in other sectors, mainly the private sector.
- **Farming livelihood (West Bank and the Gaza Strip):** Low resilience households rely on a higher proportion of income sourced from agriculture, while medium and high resilience households depended modestly on agricultural production. Settler violence, restricted access to land (e.g. the ARA in Gaza) and water are directly impacting low resilience households who increasingly need to source their income from unreliable government wages and the private sector.
- **Herding livelihood (West Bank and the Gaza Strip):** Security is a significant threat to herders, particularly demolitions and displacement. Other major risks include failure of the rainy season, global fluctuations in cereal prices and animal diseases. A combination of these factors has resulted in livelihood erosion over the past six years, in particular forcing herders to search for additional sources of incomes mainly through the private sector and government wages.

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<sup>48</sup> Source: FAO and Fishermen Syndicate of Gaza.

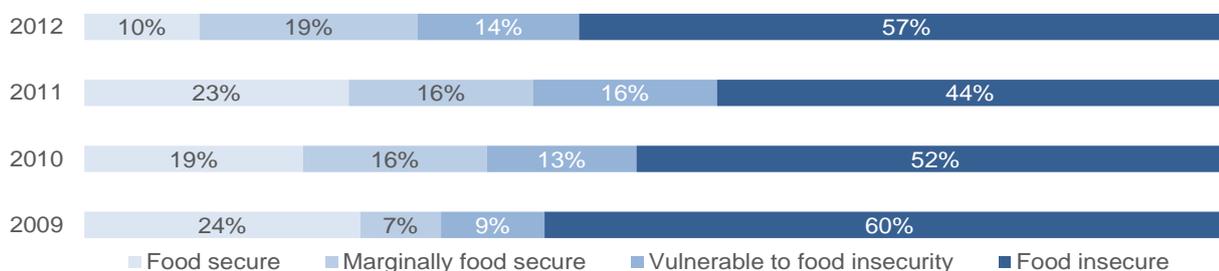
## Real average daily wage in Palestine, 2000–2012



## Rising food insecurity

The 2012 SEFSec has shown a rise in food insecurity in oPt - 1.57 million Palestinians are currently deemed food insecure, up from 1.26 million Palestinians in 2011. Food insecurity has risen faster in urban areas and refugee camps, while remaining relatively stable in rural areas. The biggest increase in food insecurity was in the Gaza Strip where food insecurity levels surged from 44 percent in 2011 to 57 percent of households in 2012. In addition, the share of food secure households in Gaza dropped from 23 percent to 10 percent of the oPt overall total.

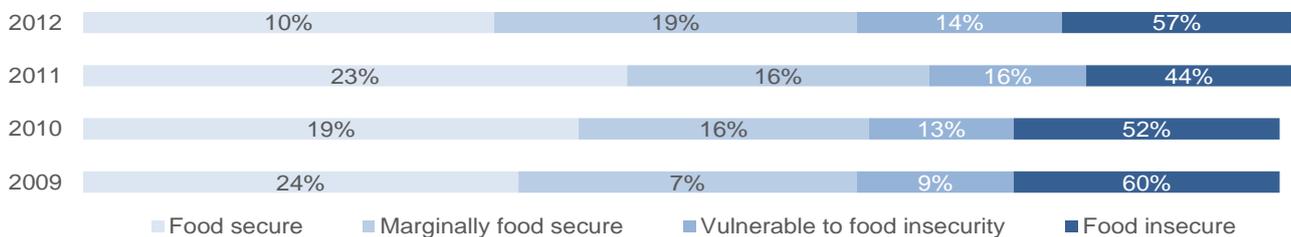
## Household food security levels in the Gaza Strip, 2009 – 2012



While Gaza continues to experience significantly high rates of food insecurity due to the blockade and related restrictions on the movement of people and goods, this should not take away from the West Bank which has also experienced a rise in food insecurity, from 17 percent of households to 19 percent in 2012, while the share of food secure households dropped from 45 percent in 2011 to 34 percent in 2012.

The SEFSec found that refugees are among the most food insecure – food insecurity in refugee camps reached 35 percent, up from 25 percent in 2009. In the West Bank, refugees are more food insecure than non-refugees (with 35 percent of refugee camp residents being food insecure) because of reduced access to economic opportunities and decreasing levels of assistance. However, in the Gaza Strip, despite facing harsher unemployment conditions, refugees faced somewhat lower levels of food insecurity, mainly as a result of the assistance they received.

## Household food security levels in the West Bank, 2009–2012



Eight percent of households in the Gaza Strip and nine percent of households in the West Bank are headed by females.<sup>49</sup> In Gaza, female-headed households received higher monthly average levels of assistance than other households, bringing their food insecurity levels to two percent lower than the rest of the population; however, 50 percent of the female population in Gaza is unemployed. In the West Bank, food insecurity levels of female-headed households remained six percent higher than other households, although 25 percent of women are unemployed in the West Bank.

### Access to basic services

#### West Bank

Access to basic services for many Palestinians throughout the oPt is constrained by a number of factors, in particular restrictions on freedom of movement and movement of goods.

For example, reaching schools and education spaces represents a serious challenge for thousands of school children, adolescents and teachers<sup>50</sup>, who have to travel long distances to school, are often confronted with delays and harassment by Israeli soldiers at checkpoints and are exposed to violence by Israeli settlers on their commute. As a result, children show psychosocial distress, high rates of school drop-out, and separation from their families in order to ease access to education. Girls, particularly, tend to drop-out when they must travel to a school outside of their immediate community—as is often the case with secondary education. Between January and June 2013, there were 29 documented attacks resulting in damage to educational facilities and disruption of schooling in the oPt, affecting 6,354 Palestinian children.<sup>51</sup> In 2013, as of the end of June, 51 incidents of denial of humanitarian access to education were documented in the oPt, directly affecting more than 13,064 Palestinian students.<sup>52</sup> In all of 2012, 55 such incidents were documented, directly affecting 498,434 children.<sup>53</sup>

Restrictions on freedom of movement and movement of goods and supplies are also impacting on access to health services. Based on data provided by Health and Nutrition partners, there are at least 160 vulnerable communities in Area C, the Seam Zone and East Jerusalem peripheries (with a total population of 189,532) who are in need of essential primary healthcare services, but experience various types of obstacles in accessing these. Although the status of health of Palestinians scores well on conventional indicators when compared with regional averages, the vulnerability of many communities to health hazards remains high. For example, during 2011-12, 77,815 applications for permits for patients, patient-companions and patient-visitors from the West Bank were denied or delayed<sup>54</sup> and access to East Jerusalem tertiary hospitals remains particularly difficult for Palestinians from the rest

<sup>49</sup> There can be additional households where women are de facto heads due to arrest, injury or disability of the male head of household.

<sup>50</sup> "Protection Issues Affecting Access to Education in the West Bank" Protection and Education Clusters March 2012

<sup>51</sup> Reported incidents do not cover attacks on schools occurring inside of Israel and affecting Israeli schoolchildren.

<sup>52</sup> Information provided by the MRM Working Group.

<sup>53</sup> MRM data, June 2013

<sup>54</sup> WHO 2013: Right to health: Barriers to health access in the occupied Palestinian territory 2011 and 2012

of the West Bank. In addition, approximately 11,000 Palestinians reside in the Seam Zones, where few health (and education) services are available.<sup>55</sup> These restrictions result in increased transportation and other indirect costs, difficulties in obtaining health care, and worsening of health status due to the delayed treatment.

Access to adequate water supplies ranks among the top concerns for vulnerable Palestinians in the West Bank and restrictions on movement of people and goods, transportation costs and the lack of traditional water sources have all contributed to the spiraling increase in the price and decrease in quality of water. The WASH Cluster Assessment indicates that in the West Bank, there are approximately one million people in 492 communities accessing/consuming less than (or equal to) 60 l/c/d which is far below the WHO recommendations of 100 l/c/d. Of these, 51,510 people in 151 communities access less than (or equal to) 30 l/c/d and therefore constitute high priority status. In the West Bank, acute water shortages are mostly due to Israel's continued unilateral control over water resources, and the limited water allocations for Palestinians. According to the findings of an inter-agency Vulnerability Profile Project conducted in 2013, approximately 312,827 people from 113 of 515 communities in Area C of the West Bank are not connected to the water network, primarily in Hebron, Jenin and Nablus. Unconnected households spend more than one-sixth of their income on procuring tankered water, the quality of which is not monitored. Settler activities also affect Palestinian access to WASH either through damage or destruction of infrastructure, or restrictions on accessing resources. Fifty-six springs have been identified as targeted by settler activities, 30 of which are under full settler control<sup>56</sup>. Such takeover of springs has contributed to the erosion of agricultural livelihoods, loss of household income and restrictions on access to locally available springs which were previously coping mechanisms for meeting daily water requirements.

### **Gaza Strip**

Restrictions on movement of goods and people into the Gaza Strip have created chronic problems with respect to the quality and availability of health, education and water, sanitation and hygiene services. These chronic problems have been compounded by recurrent hostilities which have resulted in destruction or damage to service infrastructure in education, health and WASH.

During the escalation in hostilities in November 2012, nearly 300 educational facilities including kindergartens, schools and tertiary education institutions, were damaged or destroyed, affecting approximately more than 275,000 students.<sup>57</sup> Although, the MoEHE and education partners have been able to rebuild 217 of the schools, the education sector is still struggling to recover as a result of the severe restrictions on the construction, rehabilitation and upgrading of nearly all educational infrastructures. Consequently, overcrowding is a serious challenge - 67 percent of MoEHE schools, and 74 percent of UNRWA schools operate on double shifts. Conflict-related stress also impacts on student performance in Gaza<sup>58</sup> as anxiety, depression and hopelessness affects the ability of children to learn<sup>59</sup> while lack of fuel and resulting electricity cuts, meant that in 2012 nearly 95 percent of primary school and preparatory school students in Gaza had insufficient electricity at home to complete their homework most of the time<sup>60</sup>. Lack of fuel has also affected WASH facilities in schools and the availability of public transportation needed to reach schools. Children with disabilities are most affected by the lack of transport, and their access to education has become very limited.<sup>61</sup> Access to education for children living in the Access Restricted Areas near the fence with Israel is of particular concern. Of the 80 schools identified by UNESCO and the MoEHE as most vulnerable according to protection-related indicators, the 12 MoEHE schools and one UNRWA school in the ARA face specific, recurrent threats. Schools in the ARA are subject to frequent Israeli incursions and activity by Palestinian armed groups, which disrupt the learning process and place children and teachers' at physical risk. Students attending these schools are at heightened risk of injury and even death as a result of military violence. Despite coping strategies such as verifying if school routes are safe, students and teachers still report signs of psychosocial distress.

Access to adequate housing is also problematic in the Gaza Strip - prolonged restrictions on import of basic construction materials have left many thousands of families living in over-crowded or inadequate housing. Although considerable reconstruction efforts have taken place following previous outbreaks of hostilities 744 non-refugee families (4,612 individuals) remain displaced and in temporary accommodation due to destruction of or severe damage to their housing due to the November 2012 escalation in hostilities in Gaza and southern Israel, operation "Cast Lead" and pre-"Cast Lead" operations. In the case of refugees, following further planned rehabilitation efforts,

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<sup>55</sup> The Impact of the Barrier on Health; OCHA 2010

<sup>56</sup> OCHA. (2012) How Dispossession Happens: The Humanitarian Impact of the Takeover of Springs by Israeli Settlers

<sup>57</sup> Breakdown by girls and boys is currently unavailable. Source: Humanitarian Monitor OCHA Monthly Report March 2013.

<sup>58</sup> UNICEF. "Investing in Public Education in Gaza. A case study." March 2013.

<sup>59</sup> UNESCO, Psychosocial Assessment of Education in Gaza and Recommendations for Response, Report on the findings of an assessment conducted by Kathleen Kostelny, PhD and Michael Wessells, PhD of the Columbia Group for Children in Adversity, September 2010.

<sup>60</sup> MoEHE

<sup>61</sup> MoEHE presentation for Gaza Education Cluster September 2013.

it is expected that 600 refugee families (of which 78 are female headed) will remain displaced by the start of 2014. Further, overcrowding is a major issue, and leads to increased protection concerns, including domestic and gender-based violence.

There has also been a gradual deterioration of the public health system in Gaza as a result of the prolonged restrictions on movement of people and goods, including the blockade imposed since 2007 and all communities in Gaza are considered vulnerable by Health and Nutrition partners. Child morbidities go undetected for years, leading to problems in other areas of life (including education), and there is a lack of access to secondary and tertiary health care, for example for poor refugee patients with special needs, such as high risk pregnancies who are not covered by the Palestinian Authority's insurance scheme. The inadequate treatment of medical wastage due to restrictions on the import of construction materials and equipment, together with insufficient financial resources, represent a serious health hazard, especially for communities living close to hospitals. Although the Israeli authorities have allowed increased imports of medical commodities, clearance processes for certain commodities such as equipment are slow and health infrastructure is inadequate due to damage/destruction during military operations and lack of materials to affect repairs and rehabilitation<sup>62</sup>. In recent months, the intermittent closure of the Rafah crossing, insecurity in the Sinai and the shutdown of most of the illegal smuggling tunnels under the border with Egypt has further disrupted the supply chain of essential medicines and medical disposables, exacerbating chronic shortages<sup>63</sup> that stemmed from budgetary restrictions faced by the PA and the political divisions between the PA and de facto authorities<sup>64</sup>. These shortages currently pose the biggest threat to the delivery of quality health care in Gaza, with frequent interruptions of treatment of life-threatening diseases.<sup>65</sup> As of August 2013, 145 types of drugs and 459 types of disposables were out of stock. Recent heightened fuel shortages also threaten to impact the functioning of hospitals with an increased need for referral of patients outside of the Gaza Strip. The functioning of East Jerusalem's six hospitals, which receive over 45 percent of all MoH referrals, has, however, been crippled by the PA's growing debt.<sup>66</sup> Although the proportion of permit approvals for medical referrals to the West Bank and Israel improved substantially in 2012 (92.5 percent), the result may be partly explained by self-selection of patients with some of them reportedly choosing not to apply to avoid denials, delays or security interviews<sup>67</sup>. Recent developments in Egypt have further impacted on referrals of patients through Rafah crossing and this has not been offset by the increase in passage through Erez.

Access to clean water and effective sanitation systems in the Gaza Strip is critical. Approximately 90 percent of Gaza's aquifer is unfit for human consumption due to seawater intrusion, the infiltration of raw or partially treated sewage and agricultural fertilizer. As a result, Gaza's 1.7 million inhabitants are exposed to serious public health risks. While WASH concerns in Gaza would still likely persist even if the long-term restrictions on movement of goods and people imposed by Israel were lifted, difficulties in importing materials have resulted in delays to major water and sanitation infrastructure projects, further adding to sewage infiltration into the aquifer. Between April and September 2013, only 709 truckloads of material necessary for the construction of WASH facilities entered Gaza. These imports only benefitted a handful of projects approved by the Israeli authorities. Basic operations in existing water and wastewater pumping stations and treatment plants are also strained as a result of lack of spare parts for repair and maintenance. The blockade has delayed entry of necessary spares and materials for wastewater systems, which are also affected by electricity fluctuations and a lack of operation and maintenance capacity. Approximately 89 million liters per day (MLD) of untreated or partially treated sewage is discharged into the sea each day with consequences for public health. Wastewater lagoons and sewage transmission lines in the Gaza Strip have been breached due to lack of capacity and lack of maintenance, resulting in sewage floods in some areas; half a million people are unconnected to sewage networks and therefore dependent on alternative means for excreta disposal such as the 40,000 cesspits. Stagnant water pools are also mosquito breeding grounds posing a further public health risk.

Provision of WASH services has come under further strain recently due to fuel shortages and increased electricity deficiencies. Israeli fuel through Kerem Shalom, while available, is three times the cost, and therefore largely unaffordable for service providers. This has resulted in insufficient fuel for generators used to operate water and wastewater pumping stations (and treatment plants) and for solid waste collection by municipalities. Illegal

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<sup>62</sup> HNC partner reports

<sup>63</sup> that the MoH in Gaza used to receive 30 percent of their needed drugs and 25 percent of their medical disposables through this border

<sup>64</sup> Shortages of Drugs and Disposables in Gaza; World Health Organization July 2011

<sup>65</sup> Shortages of Drugs and Disposables in Gaza; follow up reports World Health Organization February-July 2011

<sup>66</sup> WHO: Urgent Appeal. Growing PA Debt to East Jerusalem Hospitals. The debt continues to rise; 24 September 2013

<sup>67</sup> WHO 2013: Right to health: Barriers to health access in the occupied Palestinian territory 2011 and 2012

dumpsites pose a risk of communicable diseases. The result has been a further decline in water quality and supply, and in terms of sanitation systems in the Gaza Strip. In September 2013, access to running water was reported to have declined among 40 per cent of Gaza's population to six – eight hours, three times per week. Children (who represent 50 per cent of the population of Gaza), the elderly and the sick are particularly vulnerable without access to adequate safe water.

### **Gender-based violence**

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a key protection concern in the oPt. While the prevalence of GBV is strongly associated with situations of conflict, it is not conflict alone that underpins the perpetuation of such violence. In many countries around the world, violence and discrimination on the basis of sex or gender are enshrined in law. For example, while a number of laws protect the rights of Palestinian women, some religious and cultural constraints may interfere with their implementation. There is no specific law against domestic violence in oPt, nor is there a law against spousal rape. The Jordanian and Egyptian laws in effect in the West Bank and Gaza, respectively, contain similar provisions with regard to gender-based violence, which fall short of offering sufficient protection.<sup>68</sup> Nevertheless, GBV in all its forms, including sexual violence, domestic violence, early marriage and political violence has been exacerbated by the protracted protection crisis. Actions related to the policies and practices of the occupation such as home demolitions and displacement, violence by settlers and Israeli security forces, loss of community and social networks, and increased poverty impact on Palestinian society, gender and family dynamics, and exacerbate GBV in all its forms. Available research provides strong evidence that the public and military violence and domestic violence against women and children are linked. A study by UNIFEM in 2009 involving 1,100 women confirmed that there was an increase in the violence against the respondents in the aftermath of the war on Gaza in December 2008 through January 2009<sup>69</sup>. Similarly, following military confrontations, men and women reported reverting to risk taking behaviour including domestic violence against women and children as well as drug abuse. Communities that have experienced displacement reported higher incidence of those behaviours. Of particular concern is the increase of GBV cases reported and the limited multi-sectoral protection and response services available in Area C and East Jerusalem, and in the Gaza Strip,<sup>70</sup> as well as the reluctance to report GBV due to fear of stigma, social exclusion, so-called 'honour killings' or reprisals.<sup>71</sup> According to PCBS in 2011, more than 51 percent of women in the Gaza Strip who were ever married were subject to violence by their spouse, compared to 30 percent in the West Bank.<sup>72</sup> This overall percentage of violence in the Gaza Strip compared to the percentage in the West Bank indicates a clear gap and a real concern when it comes to women's protection in Gaza. Women with disabilities are more likely to experience gender based violence and have minimum access to adequate and fully accessible protection services<sup>73</sup>. Gender-based violence affects female access to education facilities, their well-being, and their ability to learn or teach. Despite recent attention to GBV, there is little evidence of an increased response capacity in dealing with victims of GBV. The limited coordination between the various service providers results in a fragmentation in the response capacity. The absence of capacity within service providers to respond to violence cases is reflected by the lack of a minimum package of GBV services within the health services, and the absence of standard operating procedures for handling violence cases in a compassionate manner. The lack of safe and confidential clinical support makes it even more difficult to overcome social attitudes and stigma amongst victims and practitioners.

### **Disaggregated gender impacts**

The ongoing occupation, recurrent hostilities and other factors which collectively and cumulatively are generating humanitarian needs and vulnerabilities in the oPt impact upon men, women, boys and girls in different ways. Gender analysis suggests that while Palestinian men and boys are more likely directly exposed to risks to physical security, women and girls are indirectly affected by the trauma of death, injury or detention of family member, and by the experience of high levels of anticipatory terror with the threat of night raids, arrest of children, settler violence, and risks for children at friction points near settlements. Women are also affected by the threat of home

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<sup>68</sup> UNICEF occupied Palestinian territory, Gender Equality Profile, 2011. <http://www.unicef.org/gender/files/oPT-Gender-Equality-Profile-2011.pdf>

<sup>69</sup> Hammami R. Et Als, Voicing the Needs of Women and Men in Gaza: Beyond the Aftermath of the 23-Day Israeli Military Operations, The UN Inter-Agency Gender Task Force (GTF), UNIFEM 2009

<sup>70</sup> Practitioners, service providers and organisations working in the area of GBV acknowledge that the phenomenon of GBV in the oPt is under-reported. In Gaza, UNFPA women's centres have observed an increased number of GBV cases. In a number of refugee camps, UNRWA is recording reported incidents of GBV and referring patients to medical services.

<sup>71</sup> According to data from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (see above note 69), only 0.7percent of married women exposed to violence by their husbands during the last 12 months went to a women's organization for counselling, with the majority preferring to remain silent or take refuge in her family's household. 71Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics: Violence against Women survey, 2011:

[http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/\\_pcbs/PressRelease/el3onf2011\\_E.pdf](http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/el3onf2011_E.pdf)

<sup>72</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics: Violence against Women survey, 2011: link to document

<sup>73</sup> Due to the lack of disaggregated statistics of gender based violence, there are not specific data on violence against women with disabilities.

Nevertheless their increased vulnerability is recognized in the National Strategic Plan of the PA Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA), MOWA, National Strategic Plan 2011-2019: link to document

demolition and the denial of residency rights, all of which negatively impacts their psychological well being.<sup>74</sup> The direct and indirect exposure to violence and other violations by the occupying power affects the ability of men and women to parent and protect children.

Women and girls also bear a disproportionate burden of vulnerability to food insecurity, lack of access to education and health services, and gender based violence (GBV). Women's roles within the households as care providers mean that they are generally impacted by the limited availability of services and resources. Water shortages significantly affect women's ability to carry out household chores and increase their care burden. In addition, the lack of sanitation facilities also impacts the safety, privacy and dignity of women and girls.<sup>75</sup> Constrained access to healthcare services also increases the time that women spend in caring for the sick and the elderly. The low labour force participation rate amongst women and their lack of access to assets limits their access to income, worsens the economic dependency ratio and increases their vulnerability to poverty and food insecurity and resilience. In the West Bank, the food insecurity level of female-headed HHs is six percent higher than other households<sup>76</sup>. Limitations on freedom of movement doubly impact girls and women's access to markets, services and opportunities. According to a study by Birzeit University (2008) "Long-term physical insecurity is interpreted, at least in some Palestinian communities as moral dangers, generating moral anxieties which result in restrictions on women and girls' mobility access to public space"<sup>77</sup>. This is particularly the case for young, unmarried, uneducated girls living in rural areas. A number of coping strategies show direct impact on women and girls. Recent data also shows an increase in the incidence of malnutrition among pregnant and lactating women as a result in changes in food consumption patterns. In vulnerable communities, girls are withdrawn from schools to be married at an early age. Special consideration should be given to the impact of displacement on women and girls, as their lives traditionally revolve around the private sphere of the home. Displacement often obliges families to live with extended families in overcrowded and unsuitable conditions, resulting in loss of privacy and autonomy for women, and a heightened risk of violence and sexual assault for women and children.<sup>78</sup> Disruptions to communities caused by displacement also result in loss of community support networks that women often rely on to cope with hardships.

Boys are also affected by gender-specific issues in education – notably, the drop-out rate for boys is higher than for girls due to (seasonal) labour, a higher risk of detention by Israeli forces and a higher risk of being exposed to violence by peers, parents and teachers. Men may also suffer from perceived failure to provide a safe haven for their families in accordance with traditional gender roles and social pressure not to publicly show emotions or weakness.

### ***Enhanced need for preparedness to respond to humanitarian crises***

The humanitarian landscape changes quickly in the oPt necessitating a high degree of preparedness, including contingency and business-continuity planning. The oPt is prone to a number of risks, including man-made and natural disasters; mainly earthquakes, weather hazards, (floods, droughts) as well as social and political unrest. Palestinian society is routinely exposed to long-term cross-boundary factors and risks, e.g. occupation, demographic changes, effects of climate change and chronic political, economic and societal fragility. Several recent assessments and evaluations on capacities in oPt to prepare and respond to emergencies have been carried out which highlight the need to strengthen preparedness and response capacity to improve institutional readiness. Furthermore, every cluster in the oPt has identified emergency preparedness and response strengthening as a priority for the coming years to ensure delivery of humanitarian assistance effectively and accountably as possible to its beneficiaries, humanitarian partners and donors.

A recent Disaster Risk Management assessment<sup>79</sup> highlighted the gaps in institutional disaster preparedness and response for emergencies, with particular emphasis placed on the need for urgent assistance in the four areas of disaster preparedness: recovery, relief, rescue and impact. This finding supports the Palestinian Civil Defense self-

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<sup>74</sup> WCLAC, Glimpses of Life under Occupation (October 2012). Also, women who experienced repeated unpredictable violence, either by Israeli security forces or settlers, exhibited chronic depression, dissociative symptoms, and other personality impairments.

<sup>75</sup> EWASH. (2011). Women's Access to Water and Sanitation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Fact Sheet 8.

<sup>76</sup> Socio-economic and food security survey 2012

<sup>77</sup> Institute of Women's Studies, "The Impacts of Israeli Mobility Restrictions and Violence on Gender Relations in Palestinian Society: 2000-2007", Birzeit University 2008: link to document

<sup>78</sup> NRC research on the Shelter situation in Gaza (2013) noted that 'Women reported a number of incidences of violence in the home, particularly related to living with extended family'.

<sup>79</sup> Solveig Thorvaldsdottir. "An Assessment of Disaster Risk Management in Palestine and Recommendations". March 2013

assessment that it lacks basic elements in preparedness.<sup>80</sup> The assessments have highlighted specific gaps: an organizational structure is needed to exchange information with the relevant agencies/organizations; coordination mechanisms and resource mobilization procedures should be improved; 'One UN' support should continue with operational requirements; and, impact operations require more planning.

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<sup>80</sup> Palestinian Civil Defense. "National Progress Report on the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2011-2013". Action n.5 of the HFA section strengthening disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels. UNISDR Preventionweb.

## RESPONSE CAPACITY

### Roles, responsibilities and linkages

| Cluster/sector name               | Relevant governmental institution  | Cluster/sector lead                   |
|-----------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| Coordination and Support Services | Ministry of Planning and Administrative Development  | OCHA                                  |
| Education                         | Ministry of Education and Higher Education   | UNICEF and SC                         |
| Health and Nutrition              | Ministry of Health   | WHO                                   |
| Food Security                     | Ministry of Agriculture , Ministry of Social Affairs and Ministry of Planning and Administrative Development   | FAO and WFP                           |
| Protection                        | Ministry of Social Affairs and Ministry of Planning and Administrative Development (social affairs department) | OHCHR, with UNICEF, NRC chairing SWGs |
| WASH                              | Palestinian Water Authority  | UNICEF                                |

In addition, UNRWA is mandated to provide assistance and protection to registered refugees in the oPt.

### National and local capacity and response

The Palestinian Authority has made significant progress in regard to institution building and the development of a sustainable Palestinian economy and has articulated a National Development Plan (PNDP) for 2014 to 2016, Palestinian institutions compare favorably with those in established states. It must be stressed however, that due to restrictions imposed by Israel the PA is still unable to exert full administrative control (including programming) over Gaza, Area C, the seam zones, and East Jerusalem, which all together represent the vast majority of the oPt territory and a significant part of the population.

#### *National NGO Representation (PNGO)*

Palestinian NGOs are represented by several umbrella bodies, including the Palestinian NGO network (PNGO) and the Palestinian NGO Development Centre (NDC) both of which are members of the HCT. These organisations support, consolidate and strengthen Palestinian civil society organizations through for example, technical and in some cases, financial support, information sharing and research and policy development support.

### International capacity and response

The cluster approach in the oPt was rolled out between late 2008 and early 2009 in the wake of Operation “Cast Lead” in the Gaza Strip and coordination arrangements were formalized in March 2009, following a decision between the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) and IASC. In addition to Coordination and Support Services, clusters/sectors active in oPt (sectors are marked with \* ) include Education, Food Security\*, Health and Nutrition\*, Protection and WASH. Accountability is ensured through systematic monitoring of cluster performance frameworks.

### ***Inter-Cluster Coordination Group***

At the field level, the RC/HC is responsible for designating Cluster Lead Agencies for all key humanitarian response sectors, in consultation with the HCT and the ERC. The Inter-Cluster Coordination Group, composed of cluster and sector leads in the oPt meets once a month in a meeting chaired by OCHA. Efforts are undergoing to increasingly make the inter-cluster forum the implementation arm of the HCT. In Gaza, leads of clusters and sectors meet regularly to exchange information, review trend analysis, agree upon issues of concern to be brought to the attention of the HCT, discuss joint approaches to multi-sectoral issues such as contingency planning and CAP and to agree upon common approaches to cross-cutting issues such as disability or gender. A wide range of humanitarian partners including UN agencies, INGOs and national NGOs actively participate in the Operation Coordination Group, held quarterly in Gaza. The group meetings aim at maintaining and increasing the level of humanitarian coordination as well as discussing major humanitarian challenges.

### ***The HCT***

The HCT in the oPt was established in July 2008. The HCT brings together actors involved at the country level in the provision of humanitarian assistance and protection to assess the humanitarian situation, agree on a common position and strategy with regards to providing assistance. The HCT is also the policy-making forum on issues related to humanitarian access in the oPt.

The HC serves as the chair of the monthly HCT meeting while OCHA provides the necessary secretariat support. The HCT is composed of representatives of UN agencies undertaking humanitarian activities in the oPt, representatives from the international NGO consortia (AIDA) and two representatives of national NGO networks (PNGO and NDC). The ICRC, IFRC, and MSF have a status of “active” observer.

The HCT is supported by and provides guidance to clusters/sectors and sub-clusters/sub-sectors and provides oversight to working level structures such as the Area C Task Force and the HCT Advocacy Group.

### ***The HCT Advocacy Working Group***

The inter-agency HCT Advocacy Working Group is tasked with coordinating common HCT advocacy, including common messages and joint activities. OCHA and AIDA co-chair the group which includes representation from all clusters and sectors as well as individual HCT members. In 2013, the AWG developed the first HCT advocacy strategy and action plan and elaborated a set of common advocacy messages for use of the HCT and its members, based on over-arching advocacy themes identified in 2011.

### ***International NGO Representation***

The Association of International Development Agencies (AIDA) is the membership body and coordination forum of over 85 international non-governmental and non-profit organizations (INGOs) in the oPt. AIDA provides forums for regular discussion on operational issues, coordinates joint actions, advocates on issues as agreed by members and organizes joint advocacy activities, provides a bridge between the INGO community and Palestinian civil society and NGOs, facilitates cooperation and coordination with the broader donor community and serves as a contact for external bodies requiring information about INGO activities in the oPt.

### ***EU Informal Humanitarian Policy Dialogue Forum (Friday Donor Group)***

OCHA and ECHO alternately host a monthly forum which brings together donors and humanitarian actors in the oPt including UN agencies and INGOs and NGOs. The meetings offer an opportunity to share updates on funding gaps affecting operations, discuss policy issues and share insights regarding the humanitarian context on the ground.

### ***Humanitarian Task Force***

Humanitarian actors in the oPt coordinate with developmental and other actors to ensure that humanitarian actions do not undermine or overlap with national and international longer-term development strategies, and that gaps in response are avoided. The Humanitarian Task Force for example brings together representatives from the PA, the donor community, and the HCT. In 2013 the aim is to strengthen the Humanitarian Task Force’s policy and guidance role.

# HUMANITARIAN ACCESS

## HIGHLIGHTS

In the Area C of the West Bank there has been a worrisome increase in attempts of Israeli authorities to obstruct delivery of humanitarian aid, at times resulting in confiscation belonging to aid organizations. INGO humanitarian space in Gaza is now being impeded upon by the de facto authorities following demands for compliance with administrative procedures, including taxation and a recently introduced travel policy requesting Palestinian staff working for UN, NGOs and other organizations to apply for a permit before entering or leaving Gaza.

Humanitarian organizations face a range of obstacles which hamper their ability to provide assistance and protection to Palestinians in need across the oPt. These obstacles primarily include physical and administrative restrictions on the access of (I)NGO and UN personnel, especially national employees; restrictions on the delivery of materials needed for humanitarian projects; and limitations on the implementation of projects that involve building, expanding or rehabilitating infrastructure in the Gaza Strip and Area C of the West Bank. Humanitarian operations of INGOs in the Gaza Strip are further hampered by the impact of counter-terrorism policies of key donor countries.

### *Gaza Strip*

One of the key factors impeding provision of humanitarian assistance in the Gaza Strip is the Israeli approval, coordination and verification process for international reconstruction projects which impedes the ability of humanitarian agencies to respond to urgent needs, increases project costs and ultimately prolongs the hardship of some of the most vulnerable people. Since 2010, Israel has eased some of its restrictions on the entry of a range of items classified as 'dual use' (which includes basic construction materials such as aggregates, steel bars and cement), thereby allowing entry of construction materials for international projects approved by Israel and the PA. However, it takes, on average, 12 months for a project to be rejected or approved. Currently, 74 percent of the value of international projects submitted to the Israeli authorities has been approved. Construction materials for the private sector, as well as the majority of Gaza's fuel largely came through the illegal smuggling tunnels under the border between Gaza and Egypt, however, the recent closure of the majority of these illegal tunnels from Egypt to Gaza, has had a severe impact on entry of affordable fuel, building materials and other commodities, which has led to an increase in the prices of certain construction materials.

In addition to ongoing restrictions on the entry of humanitarian goods into the Gaza Strip, (I)NGO and UN personnel continue to face difficulty in moving in and out of Gaza. All (I)NGO personnel as well as UN national personnel are required to obtain permits from the Israeli authorities to travel in and out of the Gaza Strip. Permit processing time for movement of international humanitarian personnel to the Gaza Strip improved in 2013, compared to 2012: from 22 days for INGOs and 13 days for UN in 2012, to 13 and 9 days respectively in 2013 compared to 2012. A more recent issue of concern has been restrictions imposed by the de facto authorities in Gaza which include requirements for exit permits for national staff, payment of VAT and income tax and provision of personal data, including salary information, for national staff. These restrictions are affecting INGOs in varying degrees. Many of these requirements are also in contravention of certain donor policies relating to counter-terrorism measures.

### *West Bank*

The removal of some physical barriers to movement of people between key urban centres in the West Bank, and between cities and many of their satellite villages in recent years has resulted in improved humanitarian access throughout large parts of the West Bank. However, physical and administrative restrictions continued to impede access for humanitarian actors to some of the most vulnerable Palestinian communities especially in the 'Seam Zone', firing zones and closed military areas, and other parts of Area C.

Incidents at West Bank checkpoints continue to obstruct and delay the movement of personnel and goods to the 'Seam Zone' areas of the West Bank and East Jerusalem. There was improvement in 2013 – there was a 10 percent decrease in the number of access incidents in 2013 (371) compared to the same period in 2012 (411). Over half of all incidents affecting UN staff took place when passing through Barrier checkpoints which control access to the Jerusalem area. By contrast, over half of all incidents affecting NGO staff involved delays at crossings between Israel and Gaza Strip, controlled either by Israeli or Gaza local authorities.

Humanitarian workers continue to face limitations on their ability to enter and work in East Jerusalem. National staff with West Bank ID cards need to apply for permits to access and work in East Jerusalem, which are typically valid for a limited period of time and permits may be turned down based on 'security grounds', delayed or not renewed in a timely manner.

### *Impediments to implementation of humanitarian projects in Area C and East Jerusalem*

In 2013, the implementation of humanitarian assistance projects that involve some form of construction or rehabilitation of housing or essential infrastructure in East Jerusalem and in Area C continued to be severely hampered by the planning and permit regime applied by the Israeli authorities in these areas.<sup>81</sup> The construction, expansion and rehabilitation of schools, medical clinics, shelters and water infrastructure require Israeli-issued building permits, which are only granted, if at all, after a complex and costly application process that often takes several years to complete. Humanitarian organizations providing assistance to Palestinians in Area C whose homes or other property have been demolished by the Israeli authorities, on the grounds that they do not have building permits, have come under increasing pressure from the Israeli authorities, resulting in confiscation of assistance and vehicles, harassment and arrest of personnel and demolition of donor-funded structures. In 2013, 98 donor-funded structures have been demolished.

## **ASSESSMENT PLANNING FOR 2014**

The process for developing the current Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) document has brought to light several challenges and gaps that will need to be addressed once the current planning cycle of the 2014 HPC is over. The HCT has identified that more work needs to be invested at the start of the humanitarian programme cycle on improving the coordination of needs assessments, data collection and joint analysis, moreover information management across clusters. This includes a stronger gender lens in the needs assessments, better identification of vulnerable groups, a more nuanced understanding of vulnerability and a stronger capacity to plan and monitor joint responses. To this end, shared benchmarks for the conditions that would trigger a certain type of humanitarian response are also needed as well as disaggregation and analysis of all certain data by location, social groups, sex and age. This will be a key priority to address after the current HPC process is over.

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<sup>81</sup> As an occupying power Israel has the obligation to allow for and facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid.

## Existing, ongoing and planned needs assessments as well as mapping activities of vulnerabilities in oPt

| Cluster(s)                         | Name/Type of Assessment   | Implementing Agencies    | Planned dates                                  | Geographic areas and population groups targeted  |
|------------------------------------|---|--------------------------|--|--|
| <b>Multi-sector</b>                | Area C Vulnerability Profile <sup>82</sup>  | OCHA                     | Completed                                      | 540 communities with any built up area in Area C of the West Bank  |
| <b>Education</b> <sup>83</sup>     | Survey into programming gaps and newly identified specific needs in communities within Firing Zones in Area C <sup>84</sup>   |                          | Ongoing  | Firing zones in Area C of the West Bank  |
|                                    | MoEHE assessment of vulnerable schools in Area C and adjacent areas and H2  | MoEHE                    | 2011 list of 187 schools to be updated in 2014 | West Bank  |
| <b>Food Security</b> <sup>85</sup> | Community and school based assessment on learning difficulties in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem and Gaza, including basic skills testing in Arabic and Mathematics to inform further responses for children with special needs. | UNICEF                   | Ongoing  | West Bank and the Gaza Strip   |
|                                    | Socio-Economic and Food Security Survey 2012  | WFP, UNRWA and FAO       | Completed                                      | Representative sample of West Bank and Gaza Strip households   |
| <b>Protection</b>                  | Household Economy Assessment  | Oxfam                    | Completed                                      | Gaza Strip and West Bank   |
|                                    | Assessment of farmers newly accessing lands since November 2012 in Gaza Strip   | PU-AMI                   | Ongoing  | Farmers in Gaza Strip: (Juhr El deek (Gaza); East of Al Magazi ( Middle Area); East of Al Burajj ( Middle Area); Abassan Al kabira ( Khan Younis); Khuzaa ( Khan Younis); Al Shouka – Sufa area ( Rafah governorate) |
|                                    | Small-scale assessment of fishermen affected by the ARA   | PU-AMI                   | Ongoing  | Fishermen in Al Mawassi  |
|                                    | Assessment of children aged 8 to 15 participating in the project "Supporting Education in Palestine", ( focus groups to be conducted to assess need for psychosocial support)   | Fares Al Arab Foundation | Not specified                                  | Gaza Strip   |

<sup>82</sup> The vulnerability profiling exercise is designed to highlight vulnerabilities and flag areas which may require further cluster assessments. Key informants were asked questions spanning needs across all clusters, with a focus on protection-related indicators, with a view to producing an overview of the situation of Area C communities. The full analysis has just been finalized and preliminary findings have partly informed the HNO. OCHA will continue to monitor protection indicators affecting these communities.

<sup>83</sup> In 2011 the Education Cluster developed a Vulnerable School Matrix (VSM), further updated in September 2013. The VSM includes all government, private and UNRWA schools in Gaza and West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The VSM includes basic school data on location, contact details and gender disaggregated population and identifies a number of vulnerabilities per school, such as proximity to checkpoints or closed military zones, settler and ISF violence, demolition and stop-work orders, and infrastructural needs. The matrix is updated regularly with new data from assessments and surveys and is meant to inform responses and help inform education related advocacy messages.

<sup>84</sup> OCHA is collecting information on behalf of the HCT from cluster coordinators on the effects of multiple demolitions and evacuations for military training on communities in the Jordan Valley to inform needs analysis and response. Results will be shared with development partners if, as expected, immediate needs extend to resilience assistance and development.

<sup>85</sup> Food Security needs analysis is informed by the latest SEFSec (conducted jointly by UNRWA, WFP, FAO and PCBS) and the Household Economy Assessment (led by Oxfam). The SEFSec survey is part of a broader monitoring system in Palestine led by PCBS that classifies households across four categories: food insecure, vulnerable to food insecurity, marginally food secure and food secure. . A revision of the SEFSec methodology is planned for early 2014, to be rolled out starting from 2015.

|                          |  |                      |                |   |
|--------------------------|--|----------------------|----------------|---|
|                          | Research into causes and effects of overcrowding   | NRC                  | November 2013  | Gaza Strip                                  |
|                          | ARA Research Report  | NRC                  | November 2013  | Gaza Strip                                  |
|                          | Women's HLP Research Report  | NRC                  | October 2013   | Gaza Strip                                  |
|                          | Assessment and Mapping of Legal Needs and Coverage, particularly for women and in HLP issues   | NRC                  | Early 2014     | Gaza Strip                                  |
|                          | Shelter survey Middle Area refugee camps   |                      |                |   |
|                          | Shelter survey in remaining refugee camps  | UNRWA                | By end of 2013 | Gaza Strip: Middle Area refugee camps       |
|                          | Shelter assessment to do minor rehabilitation through the PU-AMI Cash for Work programme   | UNRWA                | 2014           | Gaza Strip refugee camps except Middle Area |
|                          | Planned availability of 3,000 child-friendly NFI kits and possible inclusion of child hygiene kits   | PU-AMI               | Not specified  | Gaza Strip: Al-Shouka and Abassan Al Kabera |
|                          | Legal Coverage Survey assessing the prevalence of housing, land and property violations and the level of legal assistance provided to support those who experience these violations. | Save the Children    | Not specified  | West Bank                                   |
|                          |  | NRC                  | January 2013   | West Bank                                   |
|                          | Barriers to accessing legal assistance (follow-up assessment to the Legal Coverage Survey) to further investigate reasons why people do not or cannot access legal assistance        | NRC                  | December 2013  |   |
| <b>WASH<sup>86</sup></b> | Water quality survey   | WASH cluster and WHO | Not specified  | Gaza Strip                                  |
|                          | Survey of service providers in the West Bank   | PWA                  | 2013           | West Bank                                   |

<sup>86</sup> The WASH database of approximately 818 communities in West Bank (2,190,255 people) and 46 communities in Gaza (1,431,113) was created in 2010 through a consolidated needs analysis carried out by WASH cluster partners. The primary study was the WASH Monitoring Programme (WASH MP) carried out by the Palestinian Hydrology Group and UNICEF in 2009 over the entire oPt, which provided the necessary baseline figures for the list of critical humanitarian WASH indicators. Agency specific surveys (e.g. FAO-GVC, ACF) were used as 'comparators' for arriving at a common figure. The Palestinian Water Authority (PWA), the Gaza water utility, Coastal Municipalities Water Utility (CMWU) and field agencies in Gaza endorsed the various surveys and their recommendations (Governorate Report, Water Quality Monitoring Report etc.), which was mandatory for finalizing the WASH cluster specific indicators. OCHA datasets and community profiling in Area C in particular have also been used for correlation and verification.