



Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS)

**STRATEGIC REVIEW OF FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY
IN PALESTINE, 2017**



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STRATEGIC REVIEW OF FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY IN PALESTINE, 2017

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Foreword by Dr. Nabeel Kassis, Director General of MAS

The Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute was honored to have had the opportunity to prepare this “Strategic Review of Food and Nutrition Security in Palestine”, at the request of the World Food Programme and for the benefit of all stakeholders involved in this sector. We assembled a team of sectoral experts who, along with MAS researchers, worked in close tandem with a consultation exercise that gathered all Palestinian and international, governmental, non-governmental and private sector institutional partners in the food security sector. I am pleased to note that the Review published here achieved its key objectives of undertaking a comprehensive review and mapping of the food security and nutrition situation, determining the progress that has been made in recent years in the legislative and policy framework and in the programmes of the government and international agencies, assessing the resourcing situation of the food and nutrition security sector, and proposing a set of prioritized actions required to meet response gaps and accelerate progress toward food security by all stakeholders.

The Review has confirmed that while the food security crisis in Palestine has abated since the heights of humanitarian emergencies of the past decade, the underlying fragility and distortions in food and nutrition security continue to pose grave risks to the social welfare of the Palestinian people, especially in the Gaza Strip, and to national economic security. While the Palestinian government and civil society have accorded food and nutrition security policy attention and the resources available, this is only one of a myriad range of socio-economic challenges in the broader context of ensuring basic needs of the poorest, strengthening livelihoods and resilience and building a productive economy that can assure food and good nutrition for all and confront the root causes of hunger, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals. The tasks in the coming years are daunting, yet it is clear from this Review what the different partners must do in order to tackle them in a concerted and systematic framework that embraces the issue of food and nutrition within the widest possible lens. While Palestinian public resources can cover some of the needs in this sector, they cannot compensate for the losses caused by occupation and lack of sovereignty, hence calling for sustained donor engagement.

Indeed, there is no cause today for complacency. Since this Review was completed, the first indicators of first Quarter 2017 fundraising for the 2017 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for Palestine have become available. The total HRP funding ratio so far this year for Palestine is at 13%, lower than in other countries in the region. The food security cluster funding ratio is at 14%, which is better than funding received to date for other HRP programmes. Total received funding for food security programmes in Q1 has been \$42m of a total \$300m appealed: \$34m for food assistance (22% funding ratio), \$7m cash based programmes (8% funding ratio), and \$0.4m livelihood support (0.4% funding ratio). These ratios are all below those registered in previous years, indicating flagging donor attention notwithstanding persistent chronic problems and raising alarm bells regarding possible socio-economic tensions in the short-term.

It is our sincere hope that this Review will help to energize Palestinian stakeholders in increasingly taking the lead in efforts in this sector and will encourage international partners to sustain their generous support of this sector. This is required for humanitarian considerations alone, if for nothing else. However, a renewed Palestinian national effort is called for, given food security’s pivotal position at the intersection of agricultural production and trade, food processing industry and food safety, household poverty and social protection, nutrition and public health, regional development disparities, and national economic security and food sovereignty.

Message by Daniela Owen, Country Director, WFP

WFP expresses its deepest appreciation to the Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS) for their expertise, research and insights on the state of food security and nutrition in Palestine. The findings and views of the report will be instrumental in supporting WFP shape its strategic orientations over the next five years and devise its operational programmatic response to meet national food security objectives and priorities, in close partnership with the Palestinian Authority. Since the recommendations and conclusions are beyond any single actor, we hope that the review will pave the way for a wider partnership-based approach and strengthened synergies with all national and international actors collectively engaged in advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and SDG 2 in Palestine.

Contents

Introduction - FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION IN PALESTINE	1
A. Background	2
B. Methodology	4
Chapter One - THE CONTEXT AND DYNAMICS OF THE FOOD SECURITY SITUATION IN PALESTINE	6
A. Macroeconomic and Demographic Context	7
B. Targeting SDG 2 in Palestine: A Regional and Global Perspective	9
C. Poverty, Unemployment and Links to Micro and Macro Food Insecurity	10
D. Strategic Economic Dimensions of Agricultural Production and Food Self-Sufficiency Issues in Achieving Macro Food Security	13
E. Resilience and Social Protection: Managing Public Goods Under Occupation and Conflict	15
Chapter Two - FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY ANALYSIS	21
A. Availability of Food: Domestic Production, Trade and Agricultural Sector Challenges	23
B. Access to Food: Household Income and Resources	29
C. Food Stability: Linkages to Market Deformation and Population Growth	33
D. Food Utilization in Palestine: Consumption, Nutrition and Public Health	35
Chapter Three - POLICY RESPONSE TO THE TWIN CHALLENGES OF POVERTY AND FOOD INSECURITY	42
A. National Policies on Food Security, Nutrition, Social Protection and Related Sectors	43
B. The Planning and Programming Framework of Food Security Sector Donors and Agencies	49
C. Analysis of the Legal Framework Affecting Food Security	51
D. Malnutrition and the Role of Government in Addressing Gaps in Nutritional Levels	55
Chapter Four - PROGRAMMATIC RESPONSE TO THE TWIN CHALLENGES OF POVERTY AND FOOD INSECURITY	65
A. Ministry of Social Development - Poverty Mitigation and Food Assistance Programmes	66
B. United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) Food Assistance Programmes	67
C. The World Food Programme Involvement in Palestine	68

D. United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and Food Security	69
E. The Programmes of Key Palestinian NGOs	70
F. Impact Evaluation: Food assistance or Cash, Empowerment and Targeting Issues	71
G. Financial Sustainability of Food Security and Nutrition Programmes	74
H. Assessment of Institutional Arrangements and Capacities	78
Chapter Five - CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION IN PALESTINE IN LINE WITH SDG2	84
A. Achieving SDG 2 in Palestine Under Occupation or Independence?	85
B. Opportunities to Improve the National Policy Framework for Food and Nutrition Security	87
C. Opportunities to Improve the Legal and Institutional Framework	91
D. Opportunities to Enhance Nutrition in Palestine, Especially for the Food Insecure	94
E. Opportunities to Improve the Design and Implementation of Programmes and Coordination among Stakeholders	97
References	100
Annexes	107
Annex 1 - Report of the Review Dialogue Facilitator and Rapporteur, Dr. Mohamed Nasr	108
Annex 2 - List of participants at Focus Group consultations	111

List of Tables:

Table 1:	Food Security Indicators in Palestine, 2013-2014 (percentages)	23
Table 2:	Food imports during 2010-2014 (constant 2004 US \$ thousands)	24
Table 3:	Import dependency ratio (IDR) in Palestine, 2010-2014 (constant 2004 US\$ million)	24
Table 4:	Patterns of change in the Size of Agricultural Land , in Dunums, Between 1968-2011	27
Table 5:	Flow of Food and Livestock to Gaza Strip through Crossings Between 2007-2016	29
Table 6:	Differences in Poverty Rate Before and After Assistance in 2011	31
Table 7:	Extent of Poverty Rate among Food Security Classifications in 2014.	31
Table 8:	Projected Global Price Indices for a Number of Food Items	34
Table 9:	Alignment of the UNDAF and the HRP with the National Policy Agenda 2017-2022	52
Table 10:	Non-Food Security Components of Humanitarian Assistance in Palestine (2006-2016)	75
Table 11:	CTP Beneficiaries in the West Bank and Gaza	76
Table 12:	Food Security Funding, 2006-2016	77

List of Figures:

Figure 1:	Evolution of Real GDP in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, 1994-2015 (million \$)	8
Figure 2:	Value added of the Agriculture Sector 1994-2015 (constant 2004 US\$ million)	23
Figure 3:	Evolution of Average Nominal Wages, Nominal Wages, CPI in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, 2000-2015	32
Figure 4:	Trend of Food Costs in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, 2005-2014	33
Figure 5:	Evolution of Unemployment Rate for Young Cohorts in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.	35
Figure 6:	Food Security Fund in 2016: Actual versus Requested per Project	78

List of Charts:

Chart 1:	Food Security Strategies and Policies	11
Chart 2:	A schematic diagram describing the suggested work strategy for food assistance programmes	97

List of Acronyms

CTP	Cash Transfer Programme
DEEP	Deprived Families Economic Empowerment Program
DIFD	Department of International Development
ESCWA	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FCS	Food Consumption Score
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GS	Gaza Strip
HDI	Human Development Index
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MoSD	Palestinian Ministry of Social Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
PMTF	Proxy Means Test Formula
PNA	Palestinian National Authority
PSNP	Productive Social Safety Nets Programme
SEFSec	Socio-Economic and Food Security Survey
SPSS	Social Protection Sector Strategy
SSNP	Social Safety Nets Policy
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees
VAM	Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping
WB	West Bank
WBGS	West Bank and Gaza Strip
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

Summary

In the National Policy Agenda (NPA) 2017-2022 the Palestinian Authority (PA) confirms its commitment to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by more than 150 world leaders at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit on 25 September 2015. SDG 2 aims to “End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture” by 2030. There is no hunger in Palestine in the same form that it dominates societies in many other developing countries; however, food and nutrition security as well as sustainable agriculture remains a persistent problem in the Palestinian socio-economic and developmental context. In 2014 (latest available data), as many as 27% of all Palestinian households suffered from food insecurity, about equally distributed between severely food insecure and Moderately food insecure households. While the prevalence of food insecurity is troublesome across the Palestinian territory, regional disparities create even more reason for worry. In the Gaza Strip the rate of food insecurity reached 47%, nearly triple the West Bank rate of 16%.

A. Food and Nutrition Insecurity in Palestine

Analysis shows that all four aspects of the global definition of food security – availability, access, stability, and utilization – are relevant in the Palestinian situation. With regards to food availability, food in the Palestinian market comes from two major sources: local agricultural production and imports, which are playing an increasingly more important role in meeting the Palestinian food needs in recent years. Between 2010 and 2014, the Import Dependency Ratio (IDR), reflecting the share of food consumed from import, rose noticeably while Palestinian agricultural production has continued to decline significantly, whereas food imports encounter major challenges by Israeli restrictions on trade facilitation. With respect to food accessibility, physical and social access are not major issues in Palestine. Nonetheless, economic access emerges as the main driver behind food insecurity in the Palestinian context. Food insecurity is closely related to poverty as the majority of poor Palestinians are food insecure. In terms of food stability, experience has shown that vulnerable Palestinian households are disproportionately disadvantaged when it comes to negative shocks caused by the continuation of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and blockade on Gaza. Moreover, vulnerable households are generally more exposed to potential food price rises in the international market as a result of their declining purchasing power. With regards to food utilization, or nutrition, Palestinians face certain problems, with around a third of households reporting insufficient dietary quantity, and almost as many reporting poor diet quality. Overweight and obesity (over-nutrition) is a form of malnutrition that is well established in Palestinian society. Deficiencies in the intake of certain vitamins and minerals, especially among vulnerable groups such as children and pregnant and lactating women, result in serious impact on child growth as well as the overall health of the Palestinian society. While stunting and wasting are not prevalent in Palestine, micronutrient deficiency and obesity are major concerns.

B. Policy Response to Food Insecurity and Poverty

In Palestine policy response to the twin challenge of food insecurity and poverty has been complicated. Despite a persistent demand to address food security and poverty through a developmental approach, on-the-ground implementation has been done through relief channels, which means managing the consequences of poverty and food insecurity rather than eliminating their root causes. The deteriorating

situation with regards to food security in addition to the high poverty and unemployment rates have necessitated the intervention of numerous local and international actors to undertake efforts on a variety of fronts in order to tackle the challenges of persistent poverty and significant food insecurity. The involvement of a wide number of stakeholders active in relief and development and the multiplicity of their roles contributes to strengthening the resilience of Palestinian society. However, their proliferation also constitutes a challenge in and of itself, whether in terms of defining and articulating a shared vision and policies or coordinating efforts related to planning, implementation, follow-up, and evaluation as well as ownership of the Food Security Sector (FSS) functions.

At the national policy level, the issue of food insecurity has been addressed in the National Policy Agenda(NPA) 2017-2022 as one of the areas of planned interventions. The focus though is limited to the fourth level of the NPA matrix, i.e., service provision, which shows that policy-makers do not perceive of food and nutrition security as an integrated system of national policies related to human household or national economic security. Additionally, the NPA does not address nutritional security or food security at any level, which confirms this observation. This approach reflects the absence of a clear national recognition of the multifaceted nature of the food and nutrition security challenge in Palestine, also manifested in the unclear distribution of responsibilities, powers, and roles among the concerned governmental bodies.

At the sectoral level, the National Strategy for the Agricultural Sector 2017-2022 considers food security as one of the underlying principles of its vision and as one of its top priorities, and includes a set of FSS interventions. Meanwhile, the Sectoral Strategy for the Development of Economy 2017-2022 does not give distinct attention to food security or agricultural production. In the National Strategy for Social Development 2017-2022, food security is one of the top priorities related to social protection and support of poor families, within a vision of “a Palestinian society that is well-knit, productive, and creative, which provides a decent life for all citizens, provides outlets for releasing their energies, and believes in protecting their rights, equality, justice, partnership and integration”.

C. Food Security Methodology Issues

One of the consequences of the absence of a national vision, control and ownership of the FSS in Palestine is the lack of a nationally driven methodology and criteria for measuring and assessing the status of food security. To compensate for this deficiency, the FSS has resorted to methods developed in-country; this is based on food security surveys that have been conducted periodically by the PCBS in the past six years since 2009, the last in 2014.

D. Legal and Regulatory Framework

The Palestinian legal system lacks explicit rules on the right to food protection. Moreover, there are no specific rules that guarantee food and nutrition security in Palestine. Nonetheless, Article (10) of the Basic Law of 2003 protects basic human rights and liberties and urges the Palestinian Authority(PA) to work without delay to become a party to regional and international declarations and covenants that protect human rights. Globally the International Law of Human Rights obviously acknowledges the right to food as a basic human right, and indeed links it to ensuring human dignity. The failure to ensure the application

of relevant international covenants intended to ensure the economic, social and cultural rights of the Palestinian people under occupation should remain at the forefront of consideration when designing PA and international responses to food insecurity in Palestine. This also applies in the case of food security, since Israel is the sole party managing foodstuff imports to Palestine. Nonetheless, the actual authority on the ground is also liable, particularly in emergency conditions caused by natural or human factors.

From a legal point of view, food security would not be ideally reached without demonstrating the implications of the right to adequate food. The latter includes the right of individuals to safe and appropriate food. In Palestine, the legal framework for food safety is fundamentally composed of: Public Health Law No 20 of 2004, Agriculture Law No 2 of 2003, the Palestinian Standards and Measurements Law No 6 of 2000, the Decree on the Law of Industry No. 10 of 2011, and the Consumer Protection Law No 21 of 2005. There is no umbrella food safety law yet, although proposals have been discussed at several junctures over the past years.

E. Policy Response to Malnutrition

In order to attenuate the effect of malnutrition, the Ministry of Health devised the first National Nutrition Policy and Strategy (MoH 2008), since updated. The goals of the plan include increasing diet diversity, food fortification and micronutrient fortification to fight deficiency, making sure that the nutrient needs of population at risk (eg. women and children) are met, advocating for the consumption of a well-balanced diet in terms of quantity and quality, improving the level of communication and coordination between stakeholders, empowering the Nutrition Department capacity, and raising nutrition awareness in Palestinian society.

F. Programmatic Response to Food Insecurity and Poverty

As said previously, food insecurity in Palestine is largely driven by lack of access to economic resources in which poverty, unemployment, and low earning capacity are the main factors. Crippled with fiscal deficit and lack of policy space, the PA has adopted social protection as a main policy to tackle food insecurity. Eligible poor households receive various social assistance packages, ranging from cash transfers to food assistance. In general, different local and international actors implement a wide array of assistance programmes, most of which aim at providing for the basic and most urgent needs of the poorest families. Undoubtedly, these programmes are vital to sustaining livelihoods, but there still remain serious concerns about the ability of current social protection schemes to reduce food insecurity in a sustainable or systematic manner. In Palestine, the existing safety net is still being developed and, while on balance effective, does not emerge from a coherent social services and protection policy framework. The programmes implemented are dependent on the availability of funding, which is largely external and increasingly under pressure from other priority areas and countries.

G. Main Agencies and Programmes

The MoSD, the largest provider of social protection in Palestine, provides regular cash assistance, subsidizes electricity bills for poor families, grants free health insurance cards, exempts children of poor families from public school fees, and provides cash assistance to families vulnerable to social, health and

economic shocks as well as orphans. In 2016, the Ministry provided cash assistance to 115,000 families, while in-kind food and voucher assistance is provided to about 217,000 people annually.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is the second largest social protection agency after the MoSD. It provides social assistance to registered refugees in addition to basic services and social assistance, including emergency food assistance, emergency cash assistance, and cash for work. The number of refugees in Palestine registered with UNRWA is 2.11 million: 1.3 million in Gaza and 0.81 million in the West Bank. More than half of them receive some sort of food assistance (emergency food assistance, emergency cash assistance, Cash-for-Work, or livelihoods). In 2016 the required funds for these program interventions amounted to \$181 million, while UNRWA received only \$94 million for them (52%).

The WFP is the main international organization providing food security assistance – in kind and food vouchers – for non-refugees in Palestine through CTP beneficiaries, distributed by the MoSD, non-CTP vulnerable households via Global Communities (WFP’s main NGO service provider), and herder and Bedouin communities in the West Bank via UNRWA. The WFP also cooperates with other agencies, mainly FAO, to enhance food security via development interventions where possible (livelihood projects). In 2016, the WFP provided assistance to 479,124 people: 51% in the Gaza Strip and 49% in the West Bank through (38%), in-kind food assistance (59%) voucher, and institutional feeding (3%).

FAO runs a two-component programme in Palestine: the humanitarian critical assistance for Palestinian producers and the development of local capacity and the enabling environment for increased productivity, competitiveness and employment in agriculture.

H. Impact Evaluation

There is no doubt that social assistance is vital for vulnerable household to cope with poverty. However, most of the assistance that poor household receive, whether channeled via cash, in kind, or in voucher, does not increase household’s ability to generate income. Therefore, the effect on poverty of such protective and preventive assistance is transitory and can only be empowering or transformative depending on sustainability and to the extent it is combined with other social development interventions (labour and microfinance tools).

The far-reaching message of this report is that if current economic and political conditions persist, the number of food insecure households is expected to increase and food security is expected to deteriorate more in the future. Therefore, more food security funding will have to be made available if it is to keep up with actual needs. This in turn means that if the reduction in food assistance funding persists, food security in Palestine can only deteriorate in the absence of other interventions.

A number of pertinent considerations may be noted regarding the motivations and preferences of donors in Palestine, as well as constraints, affecting their involvement in food security. Donors’ engagement with food security is premised on both humanitarian and developmental rationales, and they contend that food assistance should be temporary and respond to immediate needs, allowing people to move towards resilience and then development. Thus, it is often difficult for donor agencies to justify continued food

assistance in the Palestinian context which is not an emergency, despite clear existence of poverty pockets within highly populated cities and areas or social strata outside the reach of social protection programmes. As donors shift more of their resources allocated for the PA to developmental areas, support has also included programmes supporting the private sector and farmers in the West Bank and Gaza. However, the possibility of greater funding of such developmental assistance instead of food assistance is limited.

I. Main Recommendations

i. National Policy Framework

This Strategic Review came up with a series of recommendations for addressing food and nutrition insecurity in Palestine in order to achieve SDG 2 by 2030. The first and most important one is the necessity to develop a comprehensive national approach to food and nutrition security in Palestine, which would eliminate the current incoherence between the macro and sectoral policies and within sectoral policies and the absence of a clear national approach to food and nutrition security, the weak institutional structure, and the fragmented Palestinian management of the sector. This new approach should be based on an integrated system of national and sectoral policies related to social assistance, production and import policies; provision of strategic primary commodities; price policies; consumer rights and protection; promoting good nutrition and a culture of balanced consumption; agricultural policies and strategies that support small farmers and provide them with supporting services and funds; and policies related to ensuring provision of basic utilities to all communities.

ii. Institutional and Legal Framework

More efforts are needed to develop a comprehensive, effective social security system capable of meeting the interests and rights of all Palestinians, with focus on the most vulnerable and marginalized, such as the unemployed, the extremely poor and severely food insecure. Furthermore, Palestine should start effectively implementing existing preferential trade arrangements signed with other states, to the extent that is possible and in line with the supply and demand equilibrium. Food safety and quality is another important aspect of food and nutrition security in Palestine that needs to be dealt with at the legal and institutional levels.

In addition, the establishment of a permanent, systematic, empowered and well-structured national coordination body is of high priority in the short term and much overdue. Rooted in a vision of secure food as an element of national economic security at different levels, it would be possible to define the mandate of such a body to address a host of food-related issues, including production, trade, access for the poor, nutrition, and safety/quality in a manner that encompasses the multi-dimensional nature of food and nutrition security, and public health as well as economic production and growth in the Palestinian context of prolonged occupation. In the latter scenario, a special law would be needed to regulate such a council of institutions and its relation to concerned executive governance arms. In the light of this Review, it is timely to consider how a Palestine Food and Nutrition Council might be the best vehicle for pursuing several interrelated goals at once, and most efficiently.

iii. Nutrition

Food assistance programme should utilize the nutrition data available at the Ministry of Health as well as the data available at the WFP, UNICEF, the WHO, and FAO in order to design and implement interventions according to the nutritional (and not only caloric) needs of the benefitting population. Coordination must form the base of the pyramid comprised of all UN agencies and beyond delivering food assistance programmes in order to guarantee the delivery of nutritionally adequate food assistance, which starts at the highest levels, down to implementing local and international organizations and agencies, including the private sector. Another measure needed through redesigned programmes is enhancing nutrition education, raising awareness, and promoting an active lifestyle as required steps towards improving nutrition in Palestine. This affects not only the food insecure but also other poor social strata which may not be food insecure but are poorly nourished. A nutritional status assessment should be at the core of understanding individual, household, and population needs when designing programmes. In this exercise, both the nutrition needs of the food insecure households and the specific individual needs due to clinical reasons such as those with celiac disease must be taken into consideration.

iv. Design and Implementation of Programmes and Stakeholder Coordination

The first and foremost recommendation in this regard is the necessary gradual shift in the social protection schemes away from traditional food assistance modalities towards voucher and cash and employment generating programmes. Over time, food assistance should be limited to the extremely food insecure, including vulnerable communities in Area C through more careful targeting of extremely food insecure, mainly focusing on those households lacking non-financial and other assets. To increase the exit poverty rate and reduce dependence on food assistance in the long term, the PA could establish a national fund in close cooperation with international donors and the private sector, to provide soft loans to poor households as a means of empowering them via employment generating programmes.

In order to enhance the effectiveness of assistance programmes in reaching beneficiaries and to reduce leakage, it is necessary to integrate the existing targeting instruments into a coherent mechanism approved by all actors, with the MoSD targeting mechanism used in the cash transfer programme – which has proved effective in reducing exclusion leakage rates – serving as a model for this new mechanism. In addition, it is important to adopt a unified national portal for all actors in order to ensure non-duplication in the provision of assistance to target families, thus enhancing the effective use of resources by all parties, using geographical targeting, increasing the volume of assistance to poor families, and/or reducing/expanding coverage of poor and food insecure families. It is also critical to develop better common methods for monitoring, controlling and evaluating the implementation of various programmes to ensure their responsiveness to actual needs.

v. Hunger Gaps and Challenges

In conclusion, this Strategic Review of Food and Nutrition Security in Palestine has identified the following major gaps that need to be addressed in concert by all stakeholders in the coming period, as highlighted here:

- High import dependency increases vulnerability to price shocks.
- High levels of food insecurity in Palestine stem from lack of access to food, linked to poverty and lack of employment opportunities.

- Humanitarian assistance and social protection more generally have helped prevent a greater deterioration in the food security status of the Palestinian population.
- International best practice encourages shifting to a more system-based rather than programme-based approach, through better household profiling targeting, geographical targeting and greater reliance on cash transfers and consistency on the value of cash assistance.
- Taking advantage of evolving opportunities to phase out in-kind transfers and expand the cash-based modality, including through a gradual shift to direct cash assistance in a manner that ensures no entitled household is left behind.
- Targeting should be directed to the severely food insecure in order to achieve the greatest impact with priority given to food insecure households headed by women. There is a need to improve linkages between nutrition and food security design and outcomes.
- The potential for agricultural production and productivity to increase in the State of Palestine is limited and constrained by two sets of factors: measures linked to the conflict with Israel and agro-economic conditions.
- Palestine cannot achieve food sovereignty under the current situation of limited access to productive natural resources.
- There is also a consensus that more effort is required in regards to food safety, starting from laws and regulations through monitoring and implementation.
- National authorities need to assume full control over the food security sector through development of a national food security coordinating body.

INTRODUCTION



FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION IN PALESTINE

A. Background

The Palestinian territory has been subjected to a unique political, socio-economic and developmental situation because of 50 years of Israeli occupation. The political instability, Israeli control over Palestinian natural resources, the limitations on the movement of people and goods, the settlement expansion, the fragmentation of the West Bank, and the blockade on the Gaza Strip have together produced a largely distorted economy based on non-productive, non-tradable sectors such as services, finance, and public administration. Economic growth in recent years has been so meager that it has not been able to compensate the significant population growth typical for Palestine, leading to stagnant or even declining per capita income. Furthermore, the contribution of productive sectors including agriculture and manufacturing has been constantly dropping in past decades, with important socio-economic repercussions. This means that economic growth – as weak as it has been – has been driven by activities with low capacity to create employment, which has been one of the major causes of high unemployment (26.9% in 2016).

The low GDP per capita and the elevated unemployment have largely contributed to a high rate of poverty (25.8% poverty and 12.9% deep poverty in 2011). Poverty, in turn, has emerged as the main determinant of food and nutrition security for the Palestinian population. The context of food security in the occupied Palestinian territory is an exceptional one, driven by factors most of which remain beyond the control and power of the Palestinian Authority (PA) with its relevant agencies, the local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society, the private sector, international NGOs and specialized United Nations (UN) agencies, donors, and other stakeholders in the Palestinian Food Security Sector (FSS). While all four aspects of the widely-accepted definition of food security – availability, access, stability, and utilization – are relevant in the Palestinian situation, economic access to food has turned into the main driver of food insecurity in Palestine. Although Palestine is classified as a middle-income country, food insecurity is distressingly high – at 27%, about equally distributed between severely food insecure and marginally food insecure households. Importantly, in Palestine food insecurity is closely related to poverty as the most vulnerable socio-economic groups are those which face the highest rates of food insecurity. Utilization is another aspect which calls for attention in the Palestinian context as the majority of the Palestinian population does not enjoy a nutritious, well-balanced diet and a healthy lifestyle.

While trends in food and nutrition security are troublesome across the Palestinian territory, regional disparities are even more worrisome. As many as 47% of households in the Gaza Strip are classified as food insecure, compared to 16% in the West Bank. This divergence is in line with other social indicators such as the poverty rate, which stands at 38.8% in Gaza and much less – 17.8% – in the West Bank. This trend has resulted from the particularly dire economic situation in the Gaza Strip, characterized by stubbornly high unemployment and low income per capita. The blockade which has been continuing for ten years now has had its unmistakable impact on Gaza's development including economic growth, income generation, and job creation.

Numerous local and international actors have been involved in the FSS in Palestine for many years now, including public and private sector institutions, NGOs, civil society, and UN agencies. While their role in supporting the most vulnerable households and individuals and providing for their basic needs is undeniable, this can do only very little to improve the food security situation, reduce the vulnerability of these populations, and bring them out of poverty in any sustainable manner.

In recognition of the urgent need to act upon the food security situation in Palestine in a different manner and as part of its programming process, the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) commissioned the Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS) in January 2017 to act as the Lead Convener to lead a Strategic Review of Food and Nutrition Security in Palestine. This Strategic Review is meant to be an independent, analytical, and consultative exercise that identifies the key challenges which Palestine faces in striving to eliminate food insecurity and provides prioritized areas for action for all humanitarian and development partners including the WFP. MAS as the Lead Convener led the Strategic Review process in close consultation with the government as well as other FSS partners.

The core objective of the Strategic Review is to enable the Palestinian government to:

- Accelerate progress toward eliminating food insecurity and malnutrition in line with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2 to “End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture”; and
- Enhance the WFP’s engagement with government policies and national development goals by aligning the WFP’s orientation to national goals and priorities. In addition, the WFP will be better positioned in terms of its role in supporting the efforts of the government and the other partners in designing a feasible medium-term strategy to ensure progress toward achieving SDG 2. The findings and recommendations of this Review will feed into the WFP Country Strategic Plan (CSP) for 2017-2021.

To achieve these overall goals, the Strategic Review set a number of specific objectives including:

- To undertake a comprehensive review and mapping of the food security and nutrition situation, using all available data and information, taking into consideration the gender angle in the analysis, within the targets of SDG 2 and existing national food and nutrition security plans for all sectors of the population in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip;
- Determine the progress that has been made in recent years in the legislative and policy framework and in the programmes of the government and international agencies aimed at improving food security and nutrition. In particular, assess the impact of programmes targeting poor women and men, children, refugees, and other vulnerable groups, and identify gaps in the response, with focus on the institutional capacity to eliminate food insecurity;
- Provide an overview of the resourcing situation of the food and nutrition security sector, with special focus on rural food production and trade channels; and,
- Prioritize actions that will be required to meet response gaps and accelerate progress toward food security by all stakeholders, and to provide an overview of how these actions may be implemented and how they could be funded.

B. Methodology

The World Food Summit, convened in 1996 in Rome, produced a universally adopted definition of food security which remains in use to the present day, namely: “*Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life*”. Four aspects of food security were defined under this general definition:

- Food availability: The availability of sufficient quantities of food of appropriate quality, supplied through domestic production or imports (including food assistance);
- Food accessibility: Access by individuals to adequate resources (entitlements) for acquitting appropriate foods for a nutritious diet. Entitlements are defined as the set of all commodity bundles over which a person can establish command given the legal, political, economic and social arrangements of the community in which they live (including traditional rights such as access to common resources);
- Food stability: To be food secure, a population, household or individual must have access to adequate food at all times. They should not risk losing access to food as a consequence of sudden shocks (e.g. an economic or climatic crisis) or cyclical events (e.g. seasonal food insecurity). The concept of stability can therefore refer to both the availability and access dimensions of food security; and
- Food utilization: Utilization of food through adequate diet, clean water, sanitation and health care to reach a state of nutritional well-being where all physiological needs are met. This brings out the importance of non-food inputs in food security.

The research team embraced these four dimensions as the basis for identifying the existing gaps in food and nutrition security in Palestine which need to be addressed on the way of achieving SDG 2 and for designing the proposed interventions and policy changes. This research considered the targets defined under SDG 2 to be the benchmark against which the current state of food and nutrition security, national progress, and developmental plans were measured.

This Strategic Review is based on intensive methodology comprised of a mix of research methods which focused on analysis of the institutional and programming gaps in the Palestinian food and nutrition security context and juxtaposing them with regional and international best practices in the field. The review process took place over a period of four months: between January and April 2017 through the following steps:

1. First of all, the expert team undertook a comprehensive literature review which identified the main features and drivers of the current food security situation, the social and macro-economic context, key dimensions of the food and nutrition security challenges in Palestine, recent and current programmes, structures, resources, and strategies of various stakeholders as well as the government’s institutional and delivery capacity. Literature review of international best practices was also completed to identify the experiences of other countries with similar socio-economic conditions to Palestine in supporting and organizing the food and nutrition security sector and eliminating food insecurity for the entire population. The research team designed the specific

research questions to address the SDG 2 targets and the objectives above. These questions were later used to collect the necessary primary and secondary data through workshops, key informant interviews, and desk review.

2. Second, the Strategic Review relied on a rigorous consultation process in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, led by the Review Dialogue Facilitator and Rapporteur Dr. Mohamed Nasr (Birzeit University), which included all key governmental agencies (the Ministry of Social Development, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, and the Ministry of National Economy), major local NGOs and private sector representatives working in food and nutrition security, international NGOs and UN agencies, and donors. A total of six workshops which brought together over a hundred key stakeholders were conducted. During them the experts sought to explore and analyze the experiences of all relevant stakeholders in supporting food and nutrition security in Palestine; their views of the main gaps and areas of improvement with regards to the design and implementation of policies, laws, and programmes as well as the role of partners and coordination among them; and their take on the need for priority actions by various actors. Further details on the consultation process are provided in Annex 1: Report of the Review Dialogue Facilitator and Rapporteur, while Annex 2 lists all stakeholder participants in the focus group meetings conducted for this Review.
3. In addition, to complement these workshops and get more specific details, a number of interviews with key representatives of the government and non-governmental entities were conducted by the key experts.
4. On 3 April 2017 MAS convened a final validation focus group with national stakeholder representatives from line Ministries and other public agencies, key local NGOs, and the private sector. The workshop provided a platform for constructive discussion of and feedback on the research results, the main findings, and the major recommendations which had been shared with the participants in advance in the form of executive summaries.

The research team was able to achieve the expected outputs and produce the perceived results despite some limitations. The main limitations included some minor gaps in the availability of data as initially envisioned. However, through the primary and secondary data collection, the researchers gathered sufficient data and information to assure evidence-based conclusions and recommendations. Another limitation faced in the consultation process was the unresponsiveness of a few international stakeholders. Nonetheless, the research team met and talked with a wide variety of national and international stakeholders from all major groups to ensure that all relevant viewpoints have been taken into consideration. In conclusion, this report offers a representative, comprehensive strategic review of the current situation with respect to food and nutrition security in Palestine, which is based on a significant volume of literature and on the perspectives of stakeholders from all major partners in the FSS.

Chapter One

THE CONTEXT AND DYNAMICS OF THE FOOD SECURITY SITUATION IN PALESTINE



A. Macroeconomic and Demographic Context

The occupied Palestinian territory of the West Bank (including East Jerusalem annexed to Israel) and the Gaza Strip is located on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean covering a total area of 6220 km² (approximately 22% of the total area of historic Palestine). Enduring an occupation that has spanned 50 years, Palestinians live in geographically fragmented areas: Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, Areas “A” and “B” designated under the Oslo Accords under jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority (PA) and the remaining Area “C” of the West Bank under Israeli occupation. The total population, in 2015, amounted to 4.75 million: 2.9 million live in the West Bank (including over 320,000 in East Jerusalem) and 1.85 million in the Gaza Strip. Refugees make up about 44.8% of the population (27.1% of them in the West Bank and 67.3% in Gaza strip). The fertility rate in Palestine remains high, 4.1 births during the 2012-2013 period, though it has been declining, down from 6.1 in 1997. The Palestinian population is young, about 37% are under 20 years of age (PCBS, Various).

The occupied Palestinian territory real GDP (in 2004 prices)¹ in 2015 was \$7171.9 million with a per capita level of \$1744.5. The Palestinian labor market performs poorly. PCBS’s 2015 labor force survey documents a low labor force participation rate (LFPR) of 46%, owing to low female LFPR (19% versus 72% for males). In the same vein, the unemployment rate is high at 26%, and is even higher for young individuals (15 to 25 years) at 41%, which signals the limited capacity of the economy (mainly the private sector) to generate jobs for new labor market entrants. This has paved the way for the public sector to become the largest sectoral employer. In 2015, it employed about 22% of total work force. Still, crippled with a chronic fiscal deficit, the PA has heavily relied on international cash grants to finance its wage bill (Sarsour *et al* 2011).²

Profiling the economic characteristics at the national level hides stark regional differences, belying the label of Palestine qualifying as a “middle-income country”. Real GDP in 2015 amounted to \$5906 million in the West Bank versus \$1813 million in the Gaza Strip. The difference is more drastic at the per capita level (\$2,267 as oppose to \$996 in Gaza Strip). In terms of labor market outcomes, unemployment rate in Gaza Strip reached a high of 40% relative to 17% in the West Bank. Worse, the unemployment rate for the young is 61% in Gaza Strip relative to 28% in the West Bank. A prolonged trade blockade, recurrent war, humanitarian crises and political rift have taken a terrible toll on the Gaza Strip economy. The effect of these factors can be best illustrated by tracing economic performance over the past years.

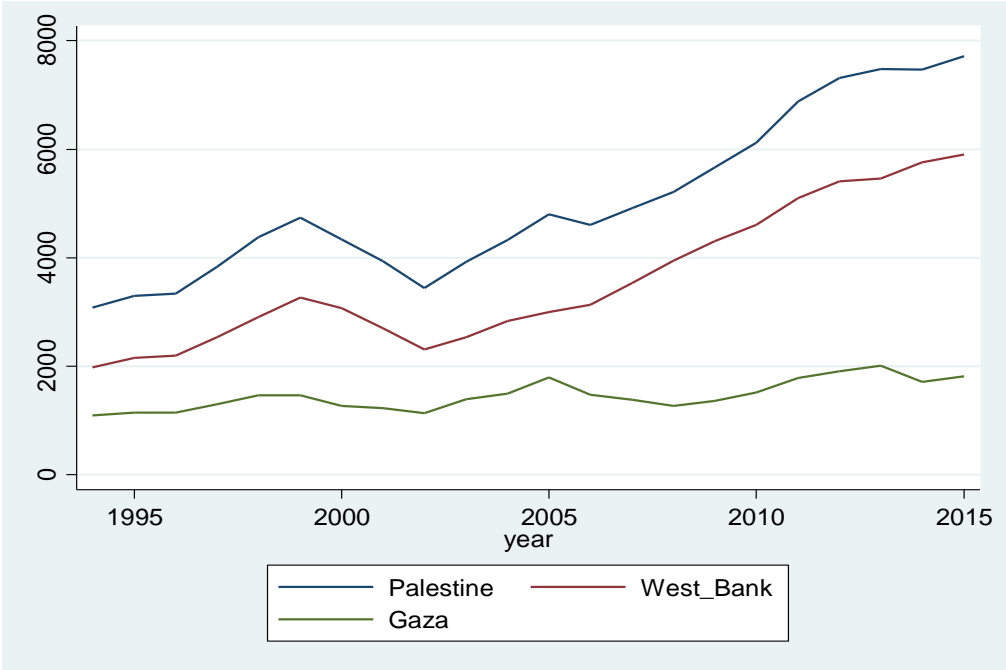
Figure 1 depicts changes in (real) GDP between 1994 and 2016. The first major shock that struck the Palestinian economy took place during the Second Intifada (between end of 2000 and 2004). The Israeli government retaliated with internal and external mobility restrictions. Notably, the restrictions substantially reduced the share of Palestinian workers in the Israeli labor market from 26% to 11% by the end of the Second Intifada, as the economy slipped into a deep recession. Real GDP dropped from \$4,336 million in 2000 to \$3,441 million by the end of 2002, most severely in the West Bank. With these shocks, Palestinian unemployment rose from 12% to 23% by 2004. As the shocks of the Second Intifada diminished and Israel gradually reduced mobility restrictions in the following years, real GDP has started to pick up and exhibit a steady increase in the West Bank. Nonetheless, Gaza Strip has not survived its

¹ Throughout the report, real GDP figures are used, evaluated based on 2004 prices

² By the end of 2013, the share of international grants made up 42% PA’s total expenditure.

economic recession. Since 2007, Israel put in place a comprehensive blockade, restricting mobility of goods in and out, banning workers' mobility to the Israeli labor market, as well as limiting fishing zones. While smuggling goods through underground tunnels with Egypt prevented a full collapse for a period, the well being of people in the Gaza Strip has worsened. The 2008, 2012, and 2014 conflicts destroyed or damaged thousands of houses, factories and public utilities, and restricting access to arable land. All these factors have severely handicapped the economy in Gaza Strip and have deepened the chronic recession.

Figure 1: Evolution of Real GDP in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, 1994-2015 (million \$)



Source: PCBS National Accounts data.

Real GDP in the West Bank grew at an annual rate of 5% during the 1994-2015 period. This rate is about 2 percentage points above the estimated annual population growth (2.6%). As a result, real per capita GDP increased from \$1,494.2 to \$2,267.2 by 2015. Still, the repercussion of the Second Intifada has been so persistent that it took until the end of 2005 for real GDP to catch up with its pre-2000 levels. Indeed, the West Bank labor market has not completely recovered, unemployment rate decreased but never regained its pre-2000 level. In the Gaza Strip, real GDP grew at 2%, below the population growth rate (3.3%). This translates into a per capita GDP reduced by one third in 15 years (from \$1,346.8 to \$996.3). Consistent with the regional divergence in real GDP, the unemployment rate doubled in the Gaza Strip.

The structure of the Palestinian economy is dominated by services. PCBS data for 2015 shows that, service activities made up about 63% of real GDP, relative to 13.5% for manufacturing, 7% for construction and about 3% for agriculture (see below on changes in the share of the agriculture sector). The same conclusion holds when considering employment distribution. By the end of 2015, the service sector employed 60% of the total work force, The manufacturing sector employed 13.4%, while the construction and agriculture sectors employ 18.6% and 7.8%, respectively.

B. Targeting SDG 2 in Palestine: A Regional and Global Perspective

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of 17 global goals with 169 targets between them. Spearheaded by UN member states and civil society they set the development agenda through to 2030. SDG 2 is Zero Hunger – to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture by 2030.

Globally, ending hunger by 2030 is feasible. IFPRI in a 2013 report (Fan et al 2013), citing the past experiences of China, Vietnam, Brazil and Thailand, argued that this could be achieved by 2025. The report identifies three pathways to achieving the goal: 1) agriculture-led; 2) social protection and nutrition intervention led; 3) a combination of both these approaches. Many of the objectives attached to SDG 2 also suggest ways in which the overriding goal of zero hunger can be achieved: address the nutritional needs of children, adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons; double the agricultural productivity and the incomes of small-scale food producers, especially women, indigenous people, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers including through secure and equal access to land and other productive resources; provide opportunities for non-farm employment; ensure sustainable food production systems to maintain ecosystems and adapt to climate change; maintain genetic diversity of plants, seeds and animals; increase investment in rural infrastructure and agricultural research and development; correct and prevent trade distortions in world agricultural markets; and adopt measures to ensure the proper functioning of food commodity markets, timely access to market information, develop food reserves and introduce measures to prevent food price volatility. As will be seen in the following sections, all of these measures are pertinent, and some are especially urgent, in the Palestinian case, despite the fact that hunger *per se* is not the issue and that the conditions of occupation and lack of sovereignty imply a host of unique constraints.

The above global measures are all relevant to Palestine's attempt to comply with SDG 2 by 2030. However, both the MENA region, and more specifically Palestine, face unique circumstances which mean that achieving SDG 2 poses particular challenges. Much of the region has limited agricultural potential due to climate and other agro-economic factors and has become progressively more dependent on food imports to meet domestic food consumption needs. Two models have been developed to predict future food demand and supply, the IFPRI IMPACT Model and FAO's Food Balance Model. Both predict that for Arab countries (excluding Sudan) food demand will grow substantially to 2030 and regional food production will not keep pace. Hence dependence on food imports will increase in the next twenty years. Palestine is no exception. Indeed, FAO, PCBS and the PA Ministry of Agriculture are engaged in preparing a report on SDG2 in the Palestinian context and suitable indicators to monitor progress in achieving them.

This means that efforts in the region and Palestine need to go beyond the simple three-pronged approach to zero hunger recommended by IFPRI which focuses on the agricultural sector and social protection. Improving and facilitating the process of food imports as well as earning foreign exchange to purchase such imports will be essential both to securing access to food and mitigating price increases and volatility for imported food. This requires economic diversification. In the case of Palestine the shift towards the production of tradable goods necessitates emphasis on restructuring the economy away from heavy

dependence on non-tradable and service orientated economy driven by an unsustainable public expenditure model heavily dependent on external support.

C. Poverty, Unemployment and Links to Micro and Macro Food Insecurity

Micro level food security entails a household and individual approach based upon the commonly accepted definition of food security adopted by international organizations at the World Food Summit in Rome in 1996: “Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.” (World Food Summit Rome 1996). The macro dimension of food security refers to a nation’s ability to secure adequate food supplies to meet the needs of its citizens. Macro or national aggregate food security is necessary but not sufficient to achieve micro level individual food security in that a nation may possess adequate food supplies but not all citizens may have access. Taken together these micro and macro concepts cover the key dimensions of food security, namely the three As: *Availability* (of food produced locally or imported); *Accessibility* (to resources to meet food needs); and *Affordability* (of basic food commodities at prices that all individuals can bear) as well as encompassing both supply and demand side issues.³ The World Health Organization (WHO) has added a fourth dimension, namely adequate food *Utilization* (that satisfies basic nutrition as well as access to adequate water and sanitation). The Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) adds a further dimension in the form of *Stability*, (of access to adequate food at all times without risk of shocks). Chart 1 outlines the key strategies that can be used to achieve food security at the micro and macro level and the main policies that can be used under each strategy. It will be used as a reference point throughout this paper.

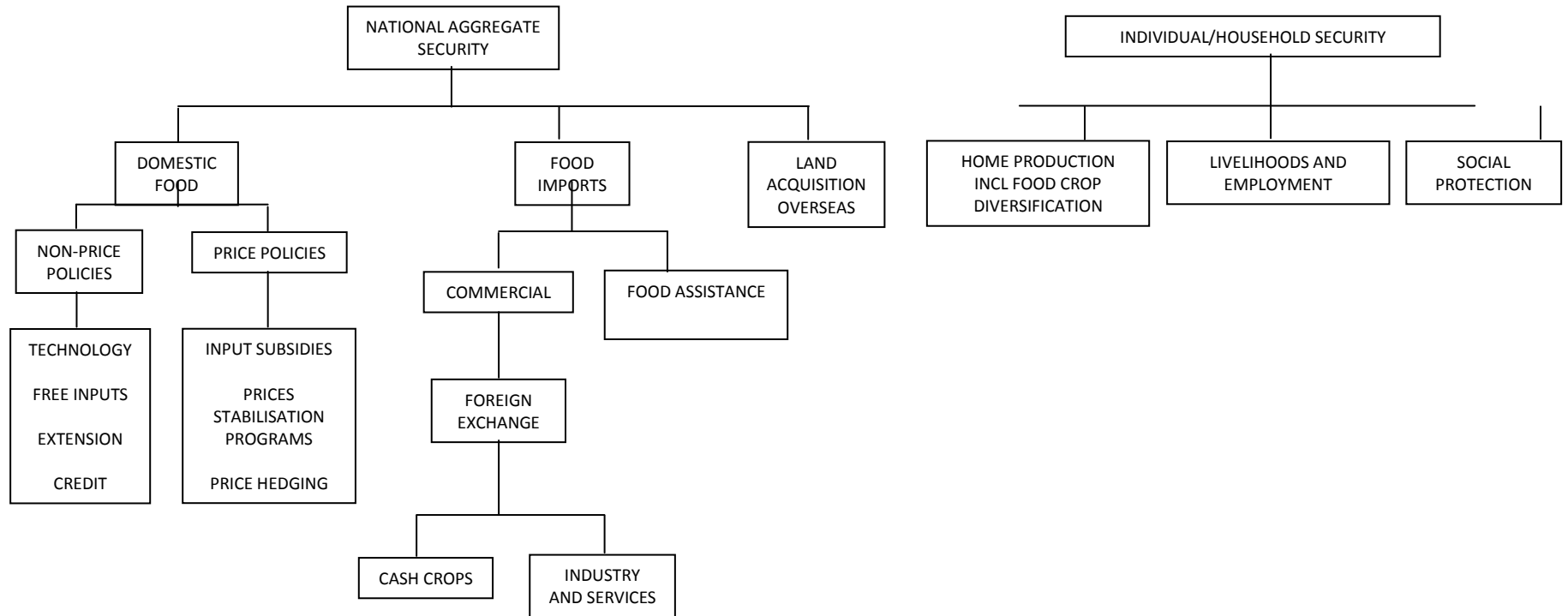
According to the 2014 Socio-Economic and Food Security Survey (SEFSec 2016)⁴ Palestinian food insecurity in 2014 was very high affecting 27 percent of households⁵ or 1.6 million people – ranging from severely food insecure to marginally food insecure. The situation differed markedly between Gaza Strip (GS) and West Bank (WB) – in the former 47 percent of households were classified as food insecure whilst in the West Bank the figure was much lower at 16 percent. This difference reflects the de-development of Gaza Strip with ten years of blockade, the closure of the tunnels to Egypt since 2013 and the cumulative impact of recent conflicts. This has led to a rapid decline in GDP, growing unemployment, increases in food prices (food prices increased by 12 percent between May and August 2014 due to the hostilities and collapse of the economy) and, hence, increased dependency on food assistance.

³ Accessibility and Affordability are in some treatments subsumed under Accessibility as they reflect the two sides of the same process: whether households have access to the needed resources and whether those resources are adequate to afford procuring food.

⁴ The Food Security Sector is an initiative co-led by FAO and the World Food Programme (WFP) in collaboration with UNRWA. It is a coordination system in Palestine consisting of a wide range of more than 40 stakeholder organizations dealing with food security, including line ministries, UN agencies and international and Palestinian non-governmental organizations (NGOs). It facilitates coordinated data collection, analysis, and response.

⁵ A more up-to-date estimate of food insecurity in Palestine provided by FAO 2016 in its report on global food security (<http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4830e.pdf>) produced a similar estimate of 27.6 percent of the Palestinian adults facing moderate to severe food insecurity with severe insecurity affecting 10.0 percent of the adult population.

Chart 1. Food Security Strategies and Policies



Source: Adapted from Harrigan 2014

In order to formulate an appropriate food and nutrition strategy to deal with this high level of food insecurity it is helpful to employ the analytic framework which encompasses the economic demand side and supply side of household food security in the abovementioned three As, so as to focus on the root causes of food insecurity. While not dismissing the significant influence on vulnerability of other dimensions (Availability, Utilization and Stability), it is clear that in Palestine the main issue is above all Accessibility and Affordability, particularly the former aspect.

Food insecurity in Palestine stems primarily from a lack of economic access to food that is closely correlated with poverty, although insufficient and unstable supply of food can also be a high risk at certain times because of effects of the occupation such as the Gaza blockade, conflict and movement restrictions. But most of the time markets have the capacity to meet food demand. In other words, there is a degree of macro level national food security (i.e. Availability) compared to pronounced micro level household insecurity. Hence food insecurity is rooted in the limitations of access to food as a sub-set of consumption poverty: the SEFSec survey found that on average severely food insecure households earned approximately one half of the daily per capita income of food secure households.

One of the major causes of poverty and associated food insecurity is unemployment. SEFSec (2016) confirmed that households who have access to more stable and higher income sources are more food secure especially those who derive income from the Israeli labor market or work for international organizations whilst those working in the primary sector (agriculture, livestock and fishing) are usually worse off in terms of food security: “Food security status is largely dominated by its access dimension (specifically by labor entitlement), which represents the most important determinant of food access. Data indicates that the more problematic a household’s labor status, generally featuring increased labor informality and precariousness, the more likely that household is to face food insecurity” (SEFSec 2016 p. 12).

Not only has unemployment more than doubled since the start of the second intifada in 2000 but it is likely to become even more of a problem in the future given the high rate of population growth - 2.9 percent per annum between 2010-2015 (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics 2014 cited in WFP 2016a p. 2) and the fact that Palestine has a younger population structure than the Arab states as a group (51 percent in Gaza Strip are under 18 years old). In 2014 alone the labor force grew at a rate of almost 9 percent and youth unemployment in GS stood at 68 percent in 2013-14.

Over the last decade and a half, the combination of low wages and increasing food and other prices has resulted in a fall in real wages – between 2006-2012 real average daily wages declined by around 25 percent partly due to a 24 percent price increase (with food price increases of over 35 percent) whilst the purchasing power of Palestinian workers has declined by 10.7 percent between 2005-2014 (PCBS Labour Force Surveys, various years). The average Palestinian household devoted 55 percent of its total expenditure in 2014 to food, making households highly vulnerable to income and price fluctuations (SEFSec, 2016). Hence, even when employment exists for a household it may not protect it from food insecurity.

The combination of adequate national food availability and micro level food insecurity is not an uncommon phenomenon at the global level (IFRPI 2016) and is often a direct result of conflict (Sen

1981). Within the Palestinian context it is largely the result of the socio-economic effects of the Israeli occupation. A key finding of the SEFSec report was that the multiple impacts of the Israeli occupation have major effects on Palestinian food security. The case of Gaza has been mentioned above, particularly the blockade. In the case of the West Bank, a host of other factors have affected Palestinian livelihoods: physical obstacles such as the Separation Barrier, checkpoints, and settler-only roads; administrative problems, as well as the fact that Israel controls Area C and limits access to water, along with demolitions of Palestinian homes and livelihood structures and the establishment of Israeli settlements. Other macro-shocks to the Palestinian economy include withholding of foreign assistance following the 2006 elections and subsequent political division, and Israeli withholding of clearance tax revenues it collects on behalf of the PA. Palestinian political division since 2006 has only compounded these constraints.

The effect of the conflict on food security can be seen by considering those groups who are most food insecure – farmers whose access to land and agricultural inputs has been affected by the barrier, mobility restrictions and the blockade; herders in the West Bank whose access to water and pasture was limited by Israeli restrictions and settlements; fishermen in Gaza Strip whose access to fishing water, fuel and spare parts was restricted; households whose salaries decreased as a result of losing their jobs in Israel or whose public sector salaries could not be paid fully or on time. In particular, the SEFSec report found clear evidence of a correlation between more restrictions on freedom of movement and access and the greater vulnerability to food insecurity. In summary, SEFSec concluded that lower occupational status and restrictions on movement are two of the most important underlying factors driving food insecurity in Palestine.

The Israeli occupation limits the policy space and policy effectiveness facing the PA in dealing with food insecurity. The ongoing occupation presents one of the most challenging environments in which to devise a food and nutrition strategy. However, there is still some scope to directly address the secondary level root causes of food insecurity if they are tackled together – poverty, unemployment and the vulnerabilities they create.

D. Strategic Economic Dimensions of Agricultural Production and Food Self-Sufficiency Issues in Achieving Macro Food Security

Although food insecurity in Palestine is mainly at the micro household level and predominantly stems from lack of economic access to food, this does not diminish the influence of the high risks of insufficient or unstable food supply at certain times. This applies both to Gaza Strip, where the blockade and conflict have dramatically affected imports as well as the production of food and other goods, while in the West Bank movement restrictions constrain economic activities and livelihoods, including in the food production sector. This hence requires consideration of macro level food security issues at the level of the State – how does Palestine secure enough food to feed its population? According to the schema presented in Figure 1 there are three ways in which this can be achieved: domestic food production; imports, including food assistance; and acquiring land overseas (Harrigan 2014). Palestine relies on the first and second which brings us to a consideration of agriculture and trade.

Although domestic food production (in the extreme self-sufficiency) and a trade-based food security strategy relying on imports are not mutually exclusive (since most countries rely on a combination of both

approaches to achieve macro national level food security), there has been much debate within the context of MENA on the relative merits of each approach (Harrigan 2014). The trade-based strategy is the one most favored for MENA by the international community and many scholars due to the region's poor agricultural potential (Breisinger et al 2011, 2012; ESCWA 2010; FAO 2008; Lofgren and Richards 2003; World Bank 2009). However, the trade-based approach has become less attractive to many governments in the region who have become acutely aware of their vulnerabilities to events in global food markets since the global food crisis of 2007/08 when the price of food imports escalated and export embargoes were used by many exporting countries. Within the region there is an emerging focus on "food sovereignty" at the macro level which places emphasis on power and control over national food supplies via domestic production and land acquisition despite the economic and resource cost (Harrigan 2014). Within the context of this on-going debate it is instructive to assess the reliance on domestic production versus imports to secure food supplies in Palestine.

To the extent that Palestine seeks to secure more of its food supplies via domestic production it will need to promote the development of the agricultural sector. The centrality of this, however, extends beyond macro level national food security. This is because agricultural development contributes to food security in four ways and at multiple levels: 1) It allows people to produce more food for own-consumption; 2) Improving agricultural productivity (not just in food crop production) increases the purchasing power of the rural poor via higher incomes from increased productivity enabling them to buy food and it raises other rural peoples' non-farm incomes by creating a more prosperous agricultural sector; 3) It can increase foreign exchange earnings via increased agricultural exports of crops in which Palestine has comparative advantage so providing foreign exchange to purchase food imports; 4) and it can increase domestic production of food and hence reduce the need for imports and mitigate domestic increases in food prices.

Even though Palestine is largely, if not completely, self-sufficient in vegetables, grapes, figs, olive oil, poultry, meat, eggs and honey, at the national level Palestine, like many other Arab states, is highly food insecure, relying on imports for 40 percent of its main food items and more than 95 percent of its cereals and pulses (Ameta 2015 p. 6). Even if domestic food production is promoted to enhance food security via support for the agricultural sector, Palestine will need to continue to rely heavily on imports to meet much of its food needs.

As with development of the agricultural sector as a route to food security, development of a trade-based food security strategy at the national level is severely restricted by the effects of occupation. Palestine has no control over most aspects of its international trade which is restricted and controlled by Israel. The effects of the occupation greatly increase transactions costs for Palestinian exporters and reduce investment incentives making the sector globally uncompetitive in most products. As a result, although the economy is very open this is driven by high levels of imports, the share of exports in GDP in 2012 was only 7 percent, one of the lowest in the world. Hence, Palestine suffers a chronic trade deficit.

As with the role that agriculture can play in enhancing food security, despite the constraints imposed by occupation on foreign trade there is much that Palestine can still do to enhance a trade-based food security strategy. The weak export sector is characterized by low value added, low technological content, and

weak backward and forward linkages with other economic sectors (UNCTAD 2015 p. 24). These are issues that can be addressed.

A more effective trade-based national food security strategy would require a structural shift in the composition of the economy which is heavily geared towards the non-tradable and service sectors – in 2013 tourism, financial services, health, education and transport comprise around 66 percent of GDP of which only tourism is a tradable sector earning much foreign exchange with manufacturing only 4% and agriculture only 5% (Ameta 2015). The service orientated economy is driven by an unsustainable public expenditure model, which is highly dependent on external support (Palestine has one of the highest levels of aid per capita in the world at US \$626 in 2013). The reliance on the non-tradable service and construction sectors will need to change for a more effective trade-based food security strategy. These are not dynamic sectors with potential for technological innovation and their capacity to expand is limited. There is a need for more of a focus on agriculture, manufacturing and technologically advanced areas.

There is potential synergy for the two approaches to food security at the national level – promoting agricultural livelihoods and a trade-based approach in that certain niche-based agricultural products can be developed for the export market to help earn foreign exchange for food imports. However, occupation brings particular risks to a trade-based food security strategy due to vulnerabilities not only to global food markets and global export markets but also vulnerabilities to the unpredictable effects of the occupation. For example, in the past many farmers in GS replaced their citrus groves for flower plantations for the flower export market. But the subsequent blockade damaged these exports whilst at the same time Israeli producers have flooded the Palestinian food market with their own citrus fruits produced under more favorable conditions which makes them cheaper. This has severely damaged the livelihood of many Palestinian farmers (Kurzom cited in MAS 2015).

The above discussion of strategic policy considerations has focused on the export side of a trade-based food security strategy. International best practice also suggests a range of policies that can be introduced on the import side to make the importation of food more efficient and thus reduce food costs (ESCWA 2010; World Bank 2009). This can range from: capacity building to help governments and private contractors take forward and hedge positions in global food markets; assistance for better monitoring of domestic food market conditions to improve food import planning (the FAO is well placed to assist in this respect); and improving the logistics of food importation which is particularly weak in MENA (Lampietti et al 2012) via infrastructure development, facilitation of port clearing, reduction in bureaucracy and transportation improvements. Although scope for Palestine is limited in terms of the last of these, the other areas offer promising avenues for reform.

E. Resilience and Social Protection: Managing Public Goods Facing Occupation and Conflict

The health and education status of the Palestinian population is above that of the comparator groups of other Arab states and the Medium Human Development Index (HDI) countries (SEFSec 2016 Tables 2.2 and 2.3).⁶ However, Gross Domestic Income per capita (US \$4,699 purchasing power parity) is well below the two reference groups. In addition, the poverty headcount ratio was 25.8 percent in 2011 using

⁶The Human Development Index, compiled by UNDP, measures comparative development of countries through a combination of indicators, grouping countries according to high, medium and low categories of HDI.

the national poverty line (38.8 percent in GS and 17.8 percent in WB). With high levels of poverty and food insecurity, social protection becomes a crucial policy issue.

Humanitarian assistance and social protection more generally has helped prevent a greater deterioration in the food security status of the Palestinian population, especially amongst refugees. Social transfers have become an important source of income for most households, accounting for 16 percent of household consumption and 31 percent amongst the poorest households. The main forms of assistance are cash allowances and food.

In its National Development Plan 2014-16 (and its more recent National Policy Agenda 2017-2022) Palestine has given high priority to social protection. In terms of poverty reduction, it runs four programmes, namely: cash assistance (the Palestinian National Cash Transfer Programme), whose beneficiaries are also entitled to other assistance such as health insurance, school fee waivers and cash grants for one-off emergency needs; food assistance (including a voucher scheme); emergency assistance; and the Deprived Families Economic Empowerment Program (DEEP). The Palestinian National Cash Transfer Programme is considered to be one of the most advanced of its kind in the region (World Bank 2012a) and the WFP food voucher programme has also been internationally praised. For refugees' families the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) runs the Social Safety Net Programme (SSNP) providing basic food and cash transfers to refugee households. This is supplemented by a cash for work programme which provides short term employment to food insecure refugees.

Social safety net targeting in Palestine is generally considered to be strong by regional standards. A Proxy Means Test Formula (PMTF) based on consumption variables has been used since 2010 and is now supplemented by a Food Consumption Score (FCS) index. The method is commonly adopted, with some slight variations, by a range of actors – Ministry of Social Development (MoSD), World Bank, WFP, and UNRWA with retargeting of beneficiaries carried out every two years. Palestine's PMTF targeting system has been much praised for its effectiveness in identifying the extreme poor and the poor (World Bank 2012a).

Even though Palestine is often praised for having one of the stronger social protection systems in MENA, the government still has limited institutional capacity, weak monitoring and evaluation capacity and faces difficulties coordinating multiple actors and avoiding duplication and fragmentation. Provision is fragmented across multiple providers – Palestinian Ministry of Social Development MoSD, UNRWA, international agencies, local and international NGOs, religious associations and family and friends. For example, studies by EU (2015) and ODI (2012) found that coordination between UNRWA, WFP and PNA ministries could be improved to avoid duplication of support. Fragmentation and coordination problems are made worse by the weak remit of the PA in Gaza. The government's Social Protection Sector Strategy (SPSS) 2014-16 aimed to integrate formal and informal social protection mechanisms to improve effectiveness but more still needs to be done. Informal mechanisms such as *hawala*, whereby communities and households deploy a wealth of traditional or informal mechanisms such as loans, risk sharing and remittances, often come under severe stress especially at a time of covariate shocks and social safety nets need to be designed to complement and promote these initiatives rather than using a top-down approach which does not engage with local beneficiaries.

The WFP describes Palestine in terms of social protection policy as having medium capacity within an unstable context “The PA remained politically, fiscally and technically weak and unable to assert full national sovereignty over social and development policy for all its population” (WFP 2016a p. 21). Experience from around the MENA region (World Bank 2012a; Devereux 2016) suggests that tackling the above issues is essential for an effective social protection strategy. SPSS 2014-16 is trying to address some of these issues by moving from a programme-based to a system-based approach, designed to help build links with partners, merge social protection initiatives, improve targeting and information gathering with the development of a centralized database via a computerized single registry of beneficiaries, avoid duplication and enhance transparency and accountability. A systems-based approach to social protection has been recommended by both WFP (2012) and the World Bank (2012b). WFP states that experience has shown that this is an over-riding lesson, i.e. to build a system before crisis hits as opposed to relying on a fragmented approach. This enhances coverage, performance and readiness:

A national system involves the progressive harmonization, connection and integration of various activities – assessments, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) – into a coherent policy framework, including clear institutional mechanisms, solid information management arrangements such as an integrated beneficiary database, and linkages to other initiatives. (WFP 2012 p. 7).

There has also been lack of consensus amongst stakeholders in Palestine regarding the most effective safety nets to ensure food security – vouchers, cash, food in-kind, employment schemes and school feeding programmes, with all approaches being used. Global best practice suggests cash transfers, particularly conditional cash transfers, are one of the most effective (Adato and Hoddinott 2009) and that extending cash transfers and possibly introducing conditionality should receive consideration in future food and nutrition strategy. Examples of highly effective conditional cash transfer programmes are Mexico’s PROGRESA Programme (formerly known as Oportunidades) (Skoufias 2005) as well as examples from other Latin American countries such as Brazil and Chile. Harvey (2007) has compared cash versus in-kind social safety net transfers using a list of criteria: cost-effectiveness; security risks; corruption and diversion risks; anti-social use; gender; choice; flexibility and dignity; market impacts; consumption/nutrition; targeting and skills and capacity building, whilst the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (UNDP et al: 2010, page 7) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF 2008 Appendix IV) offer useful analysis of the pros and cons of different safety nets based on global best practice.

International best practice also indicates that for cash transfers to have an impact on poverty the transfer needs to be set at a rate to meet immediate needs only in order to discourage aid dependency. However, there is a current lack of coherence in Palestine over cash benefit levels. The UNRWA monthly pay on its Job Creation Programme is above the minimum public sector salary within the PNA whilst the MoSD cash transfer is much lower than this under its National Cash Transfer Programme.

One of the most important lesson regarding effective social safety nets is the importance of good targeting (Coady et al 2002). Not only does this reduce inclusion and exclusion errors it also potentially reduces the fiscal cost by making safety nets more effective – more can be done with less. Food insecurity in Palestine is clearly related to certain household characteristics – female headed, unemployment of

household head, being a refugee, urban poor, small farmers and herders, living in a refugee camp, high dependency ratio, and having household member with a disability or chronic illness. Even though MoSD has been internationally praised for its targeting of social assistance programmes, more could be done to improve this. At present the Proxy Means Test Formula is based on different aspects of consumption including dietary diversity. Once selected households are then categorized only by size. Comparative experience indicates that a more refined approach is possible, for example by differentiating need within the beneficiary case load or by dividing beneficiaries under headings such as “deep poor” and “poor”. Likewise, household profiling could be used to target specific sub-groups of beneficiaries and to capture vulnerable groups via vulnerability analysis and mapping (VAM). There is also a need to improve targeting through geographic targeting and composite indicators to capture the new poor in times of crisis and conflict, who are unlikely to be targeted by the bi-annual PMTF despite a collapse in incomes, as they often retain a good asset base.

Although the above improvements to social protection in Palestine are all feasible, it is nevertheless important to acknowledge the effects of occupation which make Palestine unique in terms of social protection policy. The effects of the Israeli occupation have had a two-fold impact on Palestinian social protection policy, one positive and one negative. On the one hand, the limited opportunities to address poverty, unemployment and food insecurity via other routes such as the creation of growth and employment due to the occupation means that the PA has been forced to focus on social protection programmes as a route to food security. Within this limited policy space, the focus on social protection means that, although there is still scope for some improvements as detailed above, it has developed a relatively efficient and effective social protection system in terms of its ability to mitigate hunger and poverty. On the other hand, repeated crisis and conflict caused by occupation has limited the ability to bring a more developmental dimension to the social protection system and this has reduced its capacity to build long-term resilience.

Social protection is heavily geared towards meeting emergency, humanitarian and relief needs and protecting livelihoods in the context of chronic and protracted crisis rather than building livelihoods to foster resilience. It is difficult to achieve the combination of a humanitarian and developmental approach to social protection which is needed to build resilience since occupation bringing repeated shocks and crises which pull people back into poverty and create newly poor households all of which sap resources and channel them towards humanitarian needs. This has been acknowledged by WFP: “Enhancing resilience is particularly challenging in fragile states and conflict situations” (WFP 2015 p. 10).

However, resilience is crucial to sustainable food and nutrition security. Resilience has been defined as “The capacity to ensure that shocks and stressors do not have long-lasting adverse development consequences” (Food Security Information Network 2013). Resilience requires households to have the capacity to absorb shocks, adapt to shocks and transform their circumstances to give them a greater set of available circumstances (WFP 2015 p.5). The links between resilience and food security are two-way: food and nutrition security enhances resilience by making households better able to mitigate the damaging effects of shocks and stressors before, during and after crisis (WFP 2015) but improved resilience also means that shocks and stressors will have less of a negative impact on a household’s food security status. Resilience building requires an identification of vulnerabilities and addressing these vulnerabilities via a range of programmes with both a humanitarian and a longer-term developmental focus, including through

providing social protection via social safety nets, social security, and basic services in a predictable manner as well as via more developmental activities which build assets and promote sustainable livelihoods.

Building a development perspective into social protection is now regarded as best practice by many international organizations. The Committee on World Food Security is developing a plan of action for addressing food and nutrition security in protracted crisis and has stressed the need to integrate humanitarian and developmental approaches and actions in order to help build resilience. This has been echoed by WFP (2015) stating that building resilience means addressing the immediate causes and needs of vulnerability and food insecurity but also at the same time building the capacity of people and their governments to manage risks to livelihoods via developmental actions and projects “development can no longer be divided from humanitarian action” (WFP 2015 p. 8).

Likewise, WFP in its Strategic Plan 2017-21 (WFP 2016b) states that it will apply development-related tools and perspectives to its humanitarian responses to help build resilience and productive opportunities over the long-term, particularly in cases of protracted crisis (WFP 2016b page 6). Examples it gives of such activities are helping local communities to rehabilitate land, build or rebuild dams and wells, feeder roads and other assets via public works schemes. WFP’s use of productive social safety nets programmes such as food for work which are used to create community-based assets has been widely acknowledged as an effective resilience building tool. Given the significant infrastructure destruction in Palestine resulting from the occupation there is considerable scope to roll out such projects. The WFP approach acknowledges that the relationship between humanitarian and developmental work is two-way – humanitarian emergency responses need to support recovery and long-term development but development activities also need to reflect an understanding of risk, vulnerability and ways to protect vulnerable people in crisis (WFP 2016b page 31).

The type of actions to improve resilience recommended by FAO based on global experience include: improved disaster risk management via integrated systems of early warning; emergency preparedness; finance and risk-transfer tools such as weather risk insurance; vulnerability mapping and analysis; and community-based programming and support to social protection systems. Community risk reduction via micro-insurance, livelihood diversification, credit and savings also proved to be effective in building resilience and improving food security in Ethiopia. Globally WFP is promoting partnerships with the private sector to help deliver initiatives such as inclusive financial and insurance products. There is also a need to mitigate the effects and build resilience to climate change particularly since approximately 94 percent of cultivated land in Palestine is rain-fed and hence vulnerable to the vagaries of climate.

Evidence from elsewhere clearly supports the contention that Palestine needs to integrate a developmental perspective into social protection programmes and that such programmes need to have synergies with other developmental projects. An excellent example of this is Ethiopia’s Productive Safety Nets Program (PSNP), launched in 2005. The programme has two components: a rural public works scheme and a Direct Support cash transfers component for those unable to work. Research shows that the programme improves household food security only when households are considered that participate in both the PSNP and other complimentary food security programmes which explicitly target agricultural investments. This points to the need for synergy between social safety net programmes and rural development programmes

more generally and shows how joint programmes can improve food security and increase resilience by growing the asset base (GFDRE 2009; Gilligan et al 2009; Berhane et al 2011; Hoddinott et al 2012).

The scope to promote synergies between social protection and development projects has been severely eroded in Palestine over recent years. Much donor support is in the form of budget support to cover the PNA recurrent expenditure. The shift away from development assistance to emergency support has been particularly marked since the start of the second intifada. The importance of building resilience has been highlighted by the findings of the 2014 SEFSec survey (SEFSec 2016 Figure 5.1), which found that for many households, resilience is weakening and vulnerability increasing as they increasingly use adverse coping mechanisms to deal with shocks. A particular need for building resilience in Palestine is to prevent further erosion of assets and increasing indebtedness that have been used as negative coping mechanisms by many households. Building sustainable livelihoods is critical to the development of resilience. However, Palestine lacks a national framework for livelihood programming and there is a lack of clarity on how to re-build and promote livelihoods in a context of ongoing occupation and conflict. In this respect, DFID's Sustainable Livelihoods Framework suggests best practices for livelihood recovery and integrating relief and recovery approaches i.e. humanitarian and developmental work.

Both FAO and WFP (WFP 2016b) have recognized that good nutrition is a key component of resilience. Good nutrition promotes health and human capital development, which in turn assist with sustainable livelihoods. Coping strategies used by many households to deal with shocks, such as eating less frequent lower quality meals with cheaper less nutritious food and less high protein foods such as meat, fish, chicken and dairy have had a direct negative impact on nutrition. Like much of the rest of the MENA region Palestine is starting to suffer from the double burden of malnutrition due to micronutrient deficiency and a growing problem of an overweight and obese population. If not tackled the latter will lead to a growing incidence of non-communicable diseases such as diabetes mellitus, cardiovascular disease and hypertension. Work in the country's food and nutrition strategy needs to urgently address this issue and any general food and nutrition strategy needs to have a strong focus on the latter. The task now is to improve the linkage between nutrition and food security outcomes and to integrate the nutrition work into the national food and nutrition security strategy.

Chapter Two

FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY ANALYSIS



Since 2009, the PCBS has administered the “Socioeconomic and Food Security” survey (SEFSec, since 2013 in coordination with the Food Security Sector). To shed light on the extent and characteristics of food security in the occupied Palestinian territory, the methodology of the survey classifies households into four categories.⁷

- *Severely food insecure*: Households with a severe or significant consumption gap they cannot counter through economic means or coping mechanisms;
- *Moderately food insecure*: Households that face issues with either the quantity or quality of food consumed, which they cannot address due to limited financial means or without employing irreversible coping mechanisms;
- *Marginally food secure*: Households that are at risk of not being able to maintain sufficient food consumption, and households that have adequate financial means, but have not adapted their diet to an acceptable level;
- *Food secure*: Households that have sufficient food consumption, which they will be able to maintain while meeting their essential food and nonfood needs.

Table (1) presents the basic picture of the state of food security, using data from the last two surveys conducted (2013 and 2014).⁸ The results show that food insecurity remains a dire challenge for a large section of Palestinian people. In 2014, more than one quarter of the Palestinian households (close to 1.6 million individuals) were classified as food insecure, numbering about 1.6 million people. They are evenly divided between severely or moderately insecure, while marginally insecure represents about 15%.

The results show an improvement in food security in 2014 relative to 2013, but of a small magnitude. Table 1 also exhibits a sharp difference in the state of food security at the regional level. The share of food insecure households in Gaza Strip was 46% relative to 16.3% in the West Bank. Notably, food security in the West Bank substantially improved relative to 2013. More challenging for Gaza, the share of food insecure there increased by 2.2 percentage points. a tight siege, closure of underground tunnels with Egypt, and a devastating war in 2014, are the key contributing factors.

Researchers usually consider four factors to explain food security at a macro level:

- Food availability: whether food produced locally or imported;
- Food accessibility: reflecting access to adequate resources to meet appropriate dietary needs;
- Food stability: reflecting the extent to which access to adequate food is permanently secured with no risk of shocks; and
- Food Utilization – the consumption of food with adequate sanitation, clean water and health care.

⁷ These definitions are quoted from the “Socioeconomic and Food Security” survey report of 2014, page 33.

⁸ The food security findings in 2013 and 2014 are incomparable to those of previous years due to methodology differences in defining food security

Table 1: Food Security Indicators in Palestine, 2013-2014 (percentages)

Region	Year	Severely	Moderately	Marginally	Food
		Food Insecure (%)	food insecure (%)	Food insecure (%)	secure (%)
Palestine	2014	13.4	13.4	15	58.3
	2013	14.5	15.2	13	57.3
West Bank	2014	5.5	10.8	13.3	70.4
	2013	8.2	13.9	11.1	66.8
Gaza Strip	2014	28.4	18.3	18.3	35.1
	2013	26.6	17.9	16.5	39

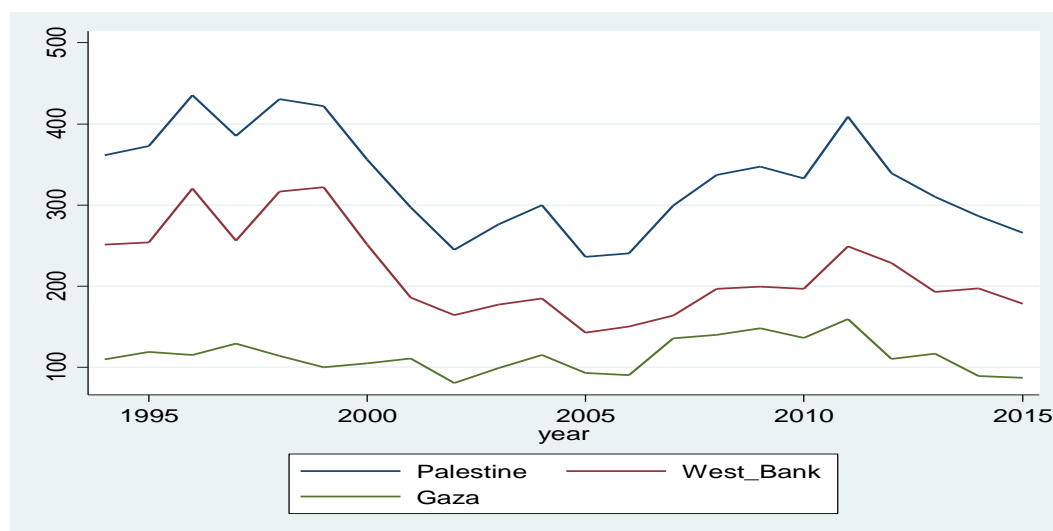
Source: Socioeconomic and Food Security 2014 report.

A. Availability of Food: Domestic Production, Trade and Agricultural Sector Challenges

i. Local agricultural production, food processing and food imports.

In 2015, most recent data, the total value added of the agriculture sector in the occupied Palestine was \$265.7 million, measured in constant prices of 2004. Agriculture production is disproportionately concentrated in the West Bank (\$178.2 million) relative to \$87.2 in Gaza Strip. Figure 2 depicts changes agricultural value added both nationally and regionally over the 1994-2015 period. The data exhibits a downward trend: in 2004 constant prices value added in 1994 was \$361 million (\$251 million in the West Bank and \$110 in Gaza Strip).

Figure 2: Value added of the Agriculture Sector 1994-2015 (constant 2004 US\$ million)



Mostly concentrated in the West Bank, the drastic decrease in agriculture production took place during the Second Intifada and the associated mobility restrictions. Although it picked up in the following years, agricultural production showed a declining pattern after 2011. Overall, the share in GDP of the agriculture sector declined from 12% to 3.4% during the 1994-2015 period. Recent data also provide insight on manufactured food. In 2014, the value added of this sector, at 2004 constant prices, amounted to \$184 million. Yet, over the 2010-2014 period, food production had varied considerably (see Table 2). Together, food processing and agricultural production have decreased over the past years.

To cope with the shortage in food production, Palestinians have resorted to import. In 2014, they imported \$678 million (in constant prices) worth of food. Most recent data shows that food imports have increased both nationally and in each region of the occupied territory(see Table 2). The decrease in 2014 is likely related to the restrictions that Israel imposed following the Gaza Strip conflict. Worth noting, data presented in Table 2 reflects registered imports shipped through border crossings. Another major source of food import for Gaza Strip were underground tunnels, which flourished for a brief period in 2011-2013, since when the Egyptian authorities have destroyed most of these tunnel. Palestinians in the Gaza Strip now continue to rely mainly on border crossings with Israel for food imports.

Table 2: Food imports during 2010-2014 (constant 2004 US \$ thousands)

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
West Bank	445,558.3	\$478,422.8	532,097.7	582,738.3	603,731.6
Gaza Strip	71,961.14	74,561.27	101,263.1	97,880.13	74,375.67
Total	517,519.5	552,984	633,360.8	680,618.4	678,107.3

Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics 2017. Foreign Trade Statistics.

To shed further light on the extent of food imports, the import dependency ratio (IDR) is a telling indicator (Table 3). The IDR reflects the share of food consumed from import and is calculated as follows: $IDR = \text{imports} * 100 / (\text{production} + \text{imports} - \text{exports})$. Table (3) shows that the IDR rose steadily from 53% to 65% during the 2010-2014 period. The food items for which the Palestinians are highly dependent on imports include mainly: cereals, meat (frozen or fresh), fruits, rice, wheat, sugar, vegetable oil, and sunflower oil (PCBS, 2015). Still, self-sufficiency is high in vegetables, olive oil, poultry meat, eggs and honey (see 2010-2011 PCBS' Census Agriculture).

Table 3: Import dependency ratio (IDR) in Palestine, 2010-2014 (constant 2004 US\$ million)

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Imports	517.5195	552.984	633.3608	680.6184	678.1073
Value added of agriculture	332.9	408.7	339.1	309.9	286.4
Value added of manufactured food	183.5866	127.7474	176.2322	200.5438	183.8369
IDR ratio %	0.53	0.55	0.60	0.62	0.65

Source: PCBS National Accounts.

Palestinian trade is subject to discriminatory treatment including disabling permit requirements and import bans of certain products under a restrictive Israeli dual-system. Manufacturing, agriculture, pharmaceuticals and IT sectors have all been badly affected by import restrictions. This makes it hard to develop an export-orientated economy to earn foreign exchange for food imports. Prior to the blockade the Gaza economy was largely export-orientated but exports to Israel have been banned and trade with the West Bank severely restricted as part of the blockade. The closure of the tunnels between Gaza and Egypt in 2013 also severely restricts trade. Some estimates suggest that the volume of tunnel trade may have exceeded that of officially registered trade (SEFSec 2016 note 10). Hence, exports now originate almost entirely from the West Bank. Israel, despite being a World Trade Organization (WTO) member, has refused to extend the WTO provisions on the Agreement on Trade Facilitation to cover Palestinian trade (UNCTAD 2015). Such a measure would help create efficient and transparent customs procedures, reduce document requirements and processing time ahead of shipping and strengthen customs and revenue collection by the Palestinian government. According to UNCTAD (2015) procedures for importing for Palestinians require four times more time than Israeli importers spend on similar activities. Palestinian export markets are also very undiversified. Israel remains the predominant trading partner, accounting for around 75 percent of total trade.

The far-reaching message of the discussion of food availability is that Palestinians are facing a chronic decline in food and agriculture production. This has left them with rising reliance on imports to satisfy their essential food consumption needs. So, as far as food availability is concerned, the Palestinians are only becoming more food insecure as the rise in imports expose them to price shocks in the international market. In the following section we shed light on the causes of the reduction in agriculture production and highlight the impact of lack of Palestinian sovereignty over agriculture resources.

ii. The challenge of agricultural survival in Palestine

A thriving agricultural sector is essential to any prospect for sustained food security in Palestine. However, the agricultural sector is currently facing severe challenges, requiring attention in the context of this Review. The main impediment to expanding the agriculture sector in Palestine is the system of restrictions that the Israeli occupation has put in place over the past decades. According to the Oslo accords, the West Bank was divided into three areas (A, B, and C). The PA fully controls Area A, which covers only 18% of the West Bank and encompasses cities and main populous areas. The PA assumes only civil administration control of Area B, which consists of 22% of the West Bank and includes rural areas. Israel fully controls the remaining Area C of the West Bank, which is sparsely populated with up to 300000 inhabitants, or at most 10% of the Palestinian population in the West Bank (OCHA 2011 and 2014). Israeli control spans security and many aspects of civil administration, including planning, construction, and infrastructure.⁹ This system of geographic division has evolved into a status quo for more than two decades.

The restrictions that Israel has orchestrated in area C affecting agriculture come in various forms. Israel has declared around 40% of Area C as state land, banning all kind of construction or economic activities. In the same fashion, Israel has designated 30% of Area C, mainly in the Jordan valley, as military zones

⁹ The PA is responsible for providing education and health services for Area C resident (seeB'Tselem's 2013).

and natural reserves.¹⁰ Nonetheless, the access of the remaining 30% of area C is highly restricted.¹¹ Effectively, less than 1% of the area C is currently available to Palestinians as built up area (World Bank 2013). With these restrictions in place, the Palestinians have lost their sovereignty over two thirds of their agriculture resources (UNCTAD 2015).

Further debilitating agriculture potential in Area C are mobility restrictions which have made it more difficult for farmers to access their land and increased the cost of transporting agricultural goods to local markets. Farming is even more difficult in land nearby Israeli settlements due to settler violence. Furthermore, the Separation Wall has devastated a large section of Palestinian farming, restricting access to grazing areas and to about 170,000 dunums of fertile land, which constitute 10% of the total cultivated area in the West Bank (see World Bank 2008). The restrictions on construction activities in area C have significantly contributed to expanding urbanization into agricultural land in area A and B. Available data shows that between 1993 and 2003, around 15% of the population in the West Bank built houses on their agriculture land (ARIJ 2015). One study (World Bank 2013) provides a lower bound estimate of the agriculture value-added potential in Area C in the absence of restrictions at around \$704 million, or about twice as much the agriculture value added in 2012.

Another factor that has hampered the agriculture sector is Israel's systematic tree uprooting policy in the name of security, whereby Israel uprooted more than one million trees in Gaza Strip and 600 trees in the West Bank during the Second Intifada (ARIJ 2015). Access to agriculture inputs is yet another detrimental factor. Israel has restricted the access to inputs and agriculture machinery with dual use, such as fertilizers, chemicals, and steel pipes, among other items. Testifying to the suboptimal use of fertilizers, Palestinian farmers use about 40% of the fertilizers' level that the Jordanian farmers use and often use lower quality fertilizers, lowering agriculture productivity (ARIJ 2015).

Shortages in water supply have also substantially reduced the potential of the Palestinian agriculture sector. For example, in 2011 the Palestinians have only been able to obtain 87 MCM per annum, out of the agreed share of 1358 MCM, from the aquifers and springs in area C. Restrictions on repairing and digging wells and building water reservoir are further obstacles. Since 1994, the Palestinians have been able to drill wells that provide only 13 MCM annually; less than the agreed allocation of 20.5 and well below the future need of the Palestinians (70-80 mcm) as stated in the Oslo Accords.¹²

The coping strategy that the PA has adopted to off-set water shortage in the West Bank is to directly purchase water from Israel. Between 1995 and 2010, the amount of purchased water grew by more than 100% (PCBS 2009). Still, this has not stopped the decline in the water supply per capita (World Bank, 2009), whereby most recent data shows that average water consumption in the West Bank is approximately 79 liters per person/per day, while it amounts to 287 liters in Israel (World Bank 2013).

In Gaza Strip, the prolonged blockade since 2007 and the recurrent conflicts have left the agriculture sector in ruin, a situation compounded by the ban on Palestinian farmers to access most of the agriculture and grazing land near the border with Israel. Scarce agriculture water is another contribution

¹¹ See Falah (2015) for a review of the economic and development restrictions in Area C.

factor as ground water has become increasingly unsuitable for agriculture use due to excessive contamination by untreated wastewater and unrepaired and damaged water infrastructure. The fishing industry has also paid a high price due to the occupation restrictions. Palestinian fisherman can no longer sail beyond 3 to 6 nautical miles offshore; down from 20 nautical miles as articulated in the Oslo Accords (see Food Security Sector 2014).

Table 4 exhibits over time the profound changes in land available for field crop, vegetables and fruit trees in the West Bank and Gaza Strip over the period 1968-2011. The data shows that the greatest decrease in size took place since 1990s following Area C restrictions put in place, whereby the Palestinians are unable to cultivate close to half a million dunums of agriculture land or utilize about a million dunums for range land and forestry.¹³

Table 4: Patterns of change in the Size of Agricultural Land , in Dunums, Between 1968-2011

		1968-1970	1978-1980	1984-1986	1990	2011
West Bank	Field Crop	955	530	439	588	221
	Vegetables	107	101	170	150	96
	Fruit Trees	670	983	1034	1055	613
	Total	1732	1614	1643	1793	930
Gaza strip	Field Crop	53	23	35	37	25
	Vegetables	20	39	40	48	34
	Fruit Trees	69	93	108	103	47
	Total	142	155	183	188	106

Source: UNCTAD (2015).

The potential for agricultural production and productivity to increase in Palestine is limited and constrained by two sets of factors: the effects of the occupation and agro-economic conditions. 31 percent of Palestinian land is agricultural but less than 5 percent of this is irrigated. In addition, three quarters of the 4.5 million population live in urban centers - in Gaza Strip only 3 percent of the population live in rural settings and agriculture only contributes only 5 percent to GDP. Agricultural infrastructure is weak and the sector has suffered from decades of policy neglect and destruction by Israel. By 2009, 46 percent of Gaza's agricultural land was inaccessible or out of production (Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture 2010). The restrictions on fertilizer imports create problems such as soil degradation and high cost use of inferior fertilizers which are often diluted, adulterated and smuggled. According to UNCTAD (2015) agricultural productivity had declined by 20-33 percent since the enforcement of restrictions on fertilizer imports. There are also restrictions on the importation of seedlings and improved varieties of livestock and seeds. The livestock industry is adversely affected by the fact that fodder brought in from Israel is often of poor quality with unreliable supplies and at high cost. Israeli flooding of the Palestinian market with cheap often sub-standard agricultural goods produced under more favorable conditions with Israeli government support undermines Palestinian production.

¹³ See UNCTAD (2015) for more information about the distribution of the agriculture land across A, B, and C areas for each district in the West Bank.

Despite the above constraints and narrow horizon, it is crucial to give more policy attention to the agricultural sector to enhance both national and household food security. There is some potential for agricultural expansion, for example by extending irrigation methods – 94 percent of cultivated land in rain-fed. The received orthodoxy for much of the MENA region is that there needs to be a structural shift within the agricultural sector away from low-value, low-yield and often water intensive products to high-value crops e.g. away from cereals and livestock to fruit trees, vegetables and horticulture (Breisinger et al 2011, 2012; ESCWA 2010; FAO 2008; Lofgren and Richards 2003; World Bank 2009). In addition, the sector is estimated to be operating at a quarter of its potential due to occupation restrictions, lack of water and under-investment (WFP 2013 cited in WFP 2016a). While the first two of these latter constraints may be difficult to address, under-investment is an area that could be tackled.

Although it makes only a small contribution to GDP the sector remains the third largest employer. It accounts for 15 percent of total formal employment (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics 2012). However, many more people work in the sector on an informal basis – it is estimated that 94 percent of agricultural workers are unpaid family workers (Palestinian Monetary Authority et al 2012) and it absorbs roughly 40 percent of the informal workforce. The 2010-11 agricultural census showed that 110,000 rural families depended on agriculture as a source of livelihood. The sector has also played a role as an important shock absorber. Prior to the second intifada employment in Israel was a major income source for many Palestinian families and remittances from workers in Israel reached 20 percent of gross national disposable income in 1999 and 2000 (UNCTAD 2011). However, following the second intifada Palestinian employment in Israel declined and many displaced workers joined the agricultural sector so reversing the previous declining trend in its share of employment. The combined effect of more agricultural workers and the constraints imposed by occupation meant that labor productivity fell by more than 50 percent between 1995-2011 resulting in a reduction in agricultural wages and incomes (UNCTAD 2015 p. 11). Hence there is an urgent need to rejuvenate the sector and protect agricultural livelihoods.

The schema in Figure 1 indicates that at the household level agriculture can promote micro level food security via own farm food production to meet families' food needs. However, own food production is only a small proportion of primary food in WBGS - 1.9 percent in 2008 (WFP et al 2008). In the rural areas of West Bank food production was only 12 percent of consumption. Hence the main sources of food are incomes derived from salaries or income generating activities. Figure 1 also shows that at the macro national level the sector can play a role in a trade-based food security strategy by helping to generate export revenue. However, in Palestine the sector's contribution to exports is limited, most of which was destined for Israel, mainly olives, olive oil, vegetables and cut flowers. Exports to regional and global markets must be transported through Israeli ports and land it controls which means that the competitiveness of Palestinian exports is highly dependent on Israeli policies of occupation and the high transactions costs these give rise to. This means that food sovereignty concerns are particularly pertinent to Palestine when considering a trade-based national food security strategy. To quote UNCTAD "While a shift in agricultural production from satisfying domestic markets towards foreign markets may support the weak export sector and generate foreign exchange earnings, it increases the vulnerability of the sector to Israeli policies since all exports are transported to or via Israel." (UNCTAD 2015 p. 10).

The above analysis suggests that the main role that the agricultural sector can serve in enhancing food security is at the micro level of supporting livelihoods. Although the sector operates under the constraints

of occupation, it does have potential. Despite sharing similar soil and climate, Palestinian agricultural output and productivity have lagged behind that of Israel and comparable countries in the region. Agricultural yields are on average half that in Jordan and 43 percent that in Israel and fertilizer use is 40 percent of that in Jordan. Much of this differential can be explained by the effects of occupation but Palestinian and donor neglect of the sector, both of which could be addressed, have played a role. “It is also important to note that part of the difference in productivity is related to technical, organizational and managerial factors, which are, to some degree, under Palestinian control. These include problems and inadequacies in such areas as the application of available modern agricultural systems and techniques by farmers, research, the securing of enhanced seed and crop varieties and livestock breeds with high productivity, veterinary services, plant protection, marketing, financing and post-harvest services” (UNCTAD 2015 p. 4)

B. Access to Food: Household Income and Resources

Researchers usually distinguish three elements of food accessibility, including physical, socio-cultural, and economic accessibility. Physical access reflects situations in which food is produced in one part of the country and that the lack of transport infrastructure precludes shipping food to other parts with food shortages, something that only occasionally arises in the Palestinian context. Economic access refers to the adequacy of economic resources, mainly income, to meet appropriate dietary need. As for the socio-cultural access, it commonly surfaces in cases of social conflict and civil wars such that food is not delivered to members of certain social classes.¹⁴

In Palestine, social access is not a significant issue for food security. It is less likely that physical access is a key factor. Although Gaza strip has been subject to a blockade, it has never experienced a serious shortage of food owing to the flow of goods through the Israeli crossings and in part the underground tunnels with Egyptian border (especially until 2012). When considering the flow of goods through the crossings with Israel, the data exhibits no serious shocks in physical accessibility even during the recurrent wars (see Table 5). In this section, therefore, we explore the economic dimension as the main element driving food accessibility in the occupied Palestine. To investigate the linkages between economic accessibility and food security we shed light on the affordability of food to Palestinians, focusing on a number of indicators including poverty rate, wages, and prices.

Table 5: Flow of Food and Livestock to Gaza Strip through Crossings between 2007-2016

Year	Number of Truck Loads		
	Food	Livestock	Total
2007	8,730	307	9,037
2008	14,502	492	14,994
2009	19,524	389	19,913
2010	19,206	499	19,705
2011	18,189	478	18,667

¹⁴ For more discussion on measurement of food accessibility See <http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/ERP/uni/FIMI.pdf>.

2012	17,099	1,190	18,289
2013	19,196	1,263	20,459
2014	21,682	1,322	23,004
2015	20,073	1,196	21,269
2016	23,265	1,260	24,525

Source: OCHA: http://data.ochaopt.org/Gaza_stripcrossing/index.aspx?id=5

i. Poverty Rates

Most recent data on poverty comes from two different sources. The first is PCBS's Living Standards in the Palestinian Territory Expenditure, Consumption, Poverty survey. This survey provides data on rate of poverty and socioeconomic characteristics of poor households between 2009 and 2011. The Second is PCBS's Socioeconomic and Food Security Survey.

From the 2009 survey, data shows that poverty rate in the occupied Palestine is high. It amounted to 25.8% in 2011 rising from 22.3% in 2009. Deep poverty rate also rose, though slightly, from 12.3% to 12.9%.¹⁵ At the regional level, the poverty gap is large and rising. During the same period, poverty rate in Gaza Strip rose from 33.7% to 38.8%, while it rose from 16.2% to 17.8% in the West Bank. The same conclusion also holds for the gap in deep poverty; rising from 19.9% to 21.1% in Gaza Strip, though it remained the same in the West Bank, around 8%.

Focusing on the 2011 survey, data collected on poor households show that poverty spread more among refugees (those living in refugee camps) with a rate of 35.4% relative to residents in urban (26.15%) and rural (19.4%) areas. The data also indicate that poverty is higher among large household. Households with 10 or more individuals account for about 50% of the total number of the poor, while households with two or three individuals only account for 9%. Weak labor market attachment is a main poverty contributing factor. The data shows that incidence of poverty rises (about 48.5%) among individuals whose household head is unemployed relative to 22% for those with employed household head.

Close to one third of poor households depend for basic needs on assistance, which have improved livelihoods for many poor households. Table 6 presents differences in poverty and deep poverty rates prior and after assistance. The data shows that assistance reduced the national poverty rate from 31.5% to 25.8% and that reduction of poverty and deep poverty is greater in Gaza Strip. Nonetheless, most of the assistance that poor households receive does not generate income, so the effect on poverty is generally transitory and can only be empowering or transformative depending on sustainability and to the extent it is combined with other social development interventions (labour and microfinance tools).

Using more recent data, the SEFSec indicates that poverty rate remains high. In 2014, national poverty rate amounted to 22% with a substantial regional gap; 37% in Gaza Strip versus 17% in the West Bank. The gap in deep poverty rates is also sizeable; 20% in Gaza Strip relative to 5% in the West Bank. Data from the SEFSec, in Table 7, shows that poverty and food insecurity are highly correlated. Nationally,

¹⁵ Poverty is measured based on household's expenditure on food, clothing and housing,

80% of the extremely food insecure are poor and that the percentage decreases for the moderately and marginally secured. Women-headed households are more food insecure than male-headed households.

Table 6: Differences in Poverty Rate Before and After Assistance in 2011

Region	Poverty Rate		Deep Poverty Rate	
	Before Assistance(%)	After Assistance(%)	Before Assistance(%)	After Assistance(%)
West Bank	20.2	17.8	9.7	7.8
Gaza strip	49.9	38.8	31.9	21.2
Total	31.5	25.8	18.2	12.9

Source: PCBS 2011 Living Standards in the Palestinian Territory: Expenditure, Consumption, Poverty survey

Table 7: Extent of Poverty Rate among Food Security Classifications in 2014.

		Extremely	Moderately	Marginal	Secure
West Bank	Deep poor	0.34	0.23	0.02	0.00
	Poor, but not deep	0.35	0.10	0.27	0.01
	Not-poor	0.31	0.67	0.71	0.99
Gaza strip	Deep poor	0.53	0.21	0.04	0.00
	Poor, but not deep	0.29	0.20	0.19	0.05
	Not-poor	0.17	0.59	0.78	0.95
Total	Deep poor	0.49	0.22	0.03	0.00
	Poor, but not deep	0.31	0.15	0.23	0.02
	Not-poor	0.20	0.63	0.74	0.98

Source: PCBS Socioeconomic and Food Security Survey

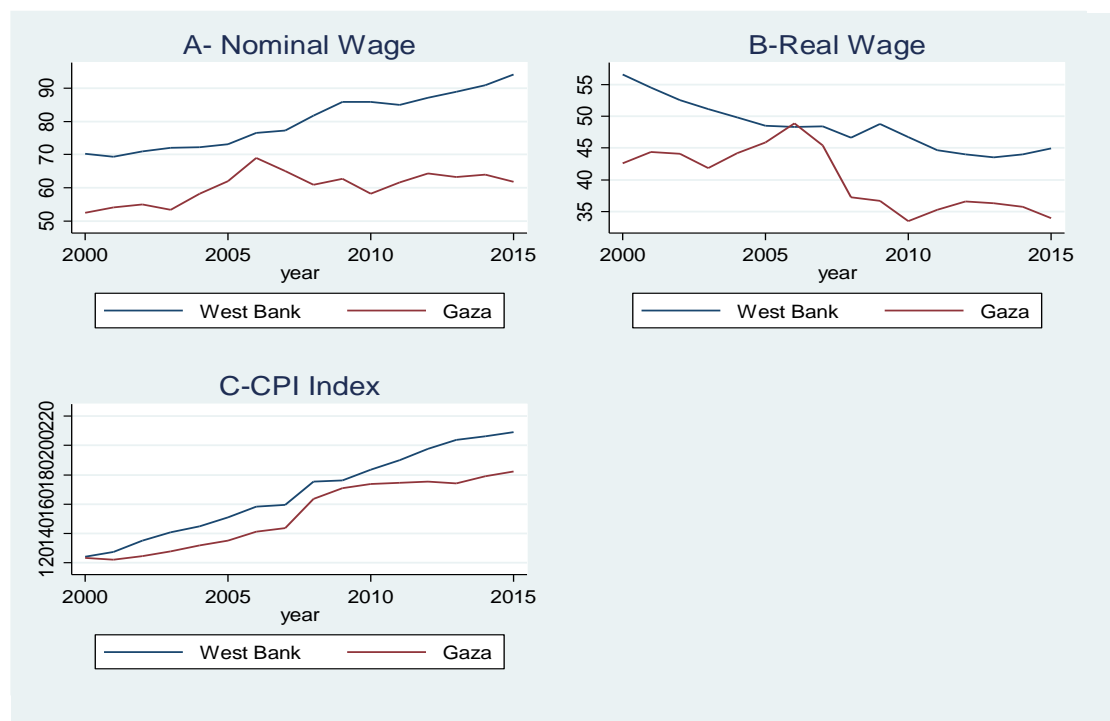
ii. Nominal Wages, Real Wages and Food Accessibility

Another important aspect to explore linkages between economic access and food security is wages. Over the past years, the Palestinian labor market has experienced shocks that impacted wages. Panel A of Figure 3 traces the evolution of nominal wages for the West Bank and Gaza Strip between 2000 and 2015.¹⁶ The data shows that average nominal wages followed a rising pattern over this period but accelerated only after the end of the Second Intifada. The picture in Gaza Strip is more drastic. Average wages grew sharply between 2003 and 2007, showing a strong convergence with the West Bank's.

¹⁶The sample used to calculate average wages exclude those working in the Israeli labor market.

Growth in average wages has not kept pace with inflation rate (Panel C).¹⁷ Panel B documents trend of real wages for the West Bank and Gaza Strip during the same period. The trend is downward sloping throughout the period for the West Bank. As for Gaza Strip, the fast growth rate prior to 2007 has mirrored an increase in real wages. But that did not last long; real wages dropped sharply, at a greater pace than in the West Bank, following the Israeli seize. All together, Gaza strip's decline in real wages reflects decrease in nominal wages and rise in prices. This provides evidence of a deteriorating purchasing capability of the Palestinians and emphasizes how political turmoil worsen their well being.

Figure 3: Evolution of Average Nominal Wages, Nominal Wages, CPI in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, 2000-2015



Source: PCBS labor force participation surveys and national accounts

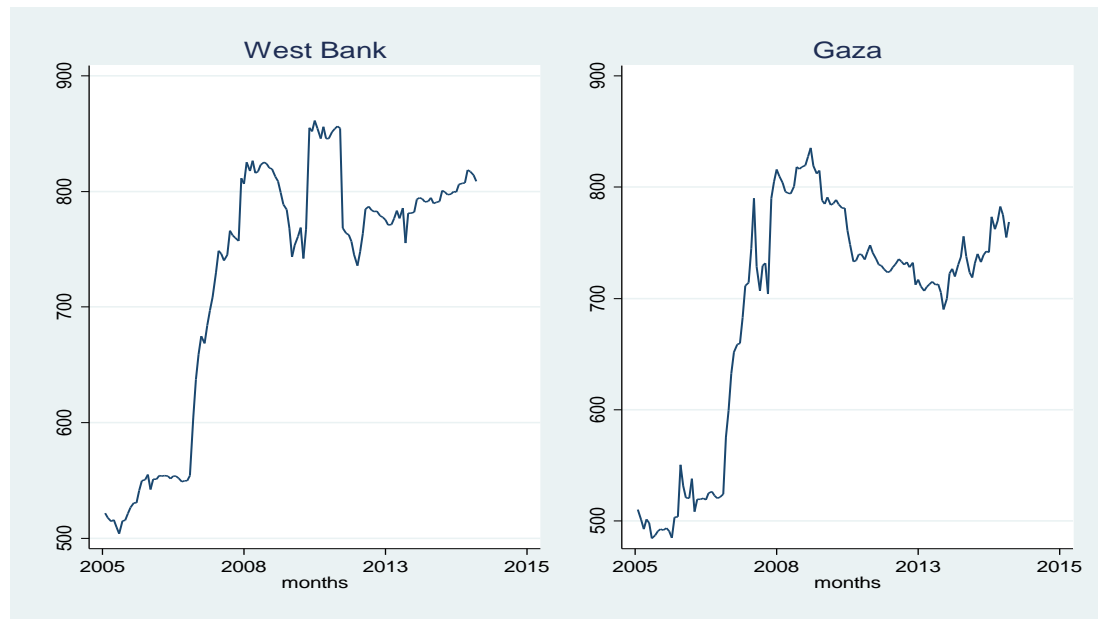
With a rising inflation rate, vulnerable workers are at a higher risk of food insecurity as their ability to buy food is diminishing faster than for higher earners, mainly in Gaza Strip. To show that, we calculate the cost of a food basket with main food items and trace how the cost changes per month between 2005 and 2014. We carried out this exercise for both the West Bank and Gaza Strip (see Figure 4). During this period, the cost of the food basket has risen from NIS 516 to NIS 806 in the West Bank and from NIS 494 to NIS 756 in Gaza Strip. The data show that the greatest rise in prices occurred between 2008 and 2010, mirroring shocks in international prices of food items.

To provide evidence on the deterioration in economic access to food for vulnerable workers, we compare the price growth rate of the food basket with the 25th wage percentile (P_{25}) with the rise in cost of food

¹⁷To calculate real wages for the West Bank and Gaza strip, we deflate average wages with their respective CPI, using 1996 as a reference year.

basket.¹⁸ For the West Bank, the 25th percentile wage grew annually at a rate of 2.8% (from NIS 40 to NIS 46), compared to an increase of 4.5% in food prices. Worse in Gaza Strip, the 25th percentile wage declined at a rate of 1% (from NIS 40 to NIS 35), compared to a 4.2% rise in food costs. The main conclusion of this comparison is that the purchasing power of vulnerable workers has decreased, with a greater pace in Gaza Strip. Consistently, the findings of the 2014 SEFSec (and the 2013 Survey) show that approximately 95% among the food insecure households faced shocks of high food prices.

Figure 4: Trend of Food Costs in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, 2005-2014.



Data Source: WFP.

C. Food Stability: Linkages to Market Deformation and Population Growth

Food stability refers to whether access to adequate food is permanently secured with no risk of shocks. In the previous sections, we showed that lack of economic resources has exposed over 1.6 million individuals to food insecurity. Over the past decades, vulnerable households have been disproportionately disadvantaged by a series of negative economic shocks caused by the continuation of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the blockade on Gaza Strip. With these constraints remaining in effect, we expect that the food security situation will deteriorate even more in the future.

Reliance on food imports can only further increase as a response of a shrinking agriculture sector and rising population size. The decrease in the purchasing power of vulnerable households will expose them to a greater risk of rising food price in the international market. Evidently, a study published by OXFAM (Willenbockel 2011) uses a simulation model (computable general equilibrium) to investigate the impact of global trade and trade agreement on food prices until 2030. The findings of his model show that

¹⁸P₂₅ is the wage level below which 25% of all workers earn.

average world market export price for several basic food items will be rising (see Table 9). The contributing factors of the price increase are a combination of population growth, limited expansion in agricultural land and slow growth agricultural productivity.

Table 8: Projected Global Price Indices for a Number of Food Items

Product	2020	2030
Wheat	28	75
Maize	31	73
processed rice	33	89
processed food, other than meat and rice	10	20
Livestock	22	67
processed meat	10	25

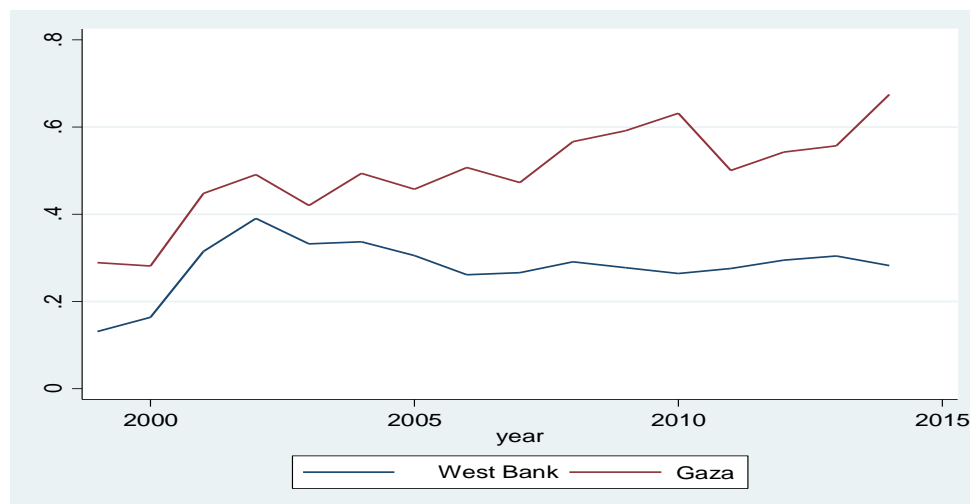
Source: Willenbockel 2011

To overcome the expected increase in food price, nominal wages must rise at a greater pace in the West Bank. Otherwise, economic access to food will deteriorate and food insecurity will exacerbate. As for Gaza Strip, food insecurity will surely deteriorate if the current declining trend in nominal wages persists. How much nominal wages will rise depends on the ability of the Palestinian labor market to accommodate excess labor supply. Increases in excess labor supply will ultimately limit the rise in wages. In this respect, increasing population growth is a key factor. According to PCBS, Palestinian population has increased from 2,783 thousand in 1997 to 4,682 thousand by 2015. For Gaza Strip the population had doubled by the end of 2015 (995 to 1,843 thousand) while increasing to a lesser extent in the West Bank (1,787 to 2,890 thousand). Even though fertility has decreased, the Palestinian population is projected to increase to 7 million by 2030 (3.1 million in Gaza Strip and 3.9 million in the West Bank).¹⁹

It is beyond the scope of this report to precisely project the capacity of the Palestinian economy to absorb future labor market entrants (mainly young cohort). However, we can depict a rough picture assuming that the economic and political status quo will persist. Figure 5 exhibits the evolution of unemployment rate of the young cohort, individuals younger than 26 years, in the West Bank and Gaza Strip during the 1999-2014 period. The data shows the unemployment rate increases at a greater pace in Gaza Strip. So for the West Bank, a persistent rise in unemployment (increases in excess labor supply) will limit the extent of growth in wages. As for Gaza Strip, it will take a full lifting of the blockade and reintegration with the West Bank economy, the ultimate detrimental factor, for nominal wages to pick up.

¹⁹ See Courbage *et al* (2016)

Figure 5: Evolution of Unemployment Rate for Young Cohorts in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.



Source: PCBS labor force surveys.

D. Food Utilization in Palestine: Consumption, Nutrition and Public Health

i. Food, nutrition and health, an overview

The European Society of Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition (ESPEN) (also known as the European Society of Clinical Nutrition and Metabolism) defines malnutrition as “a state in which a deficiency or excess (or imbalance) of energy, protein, and other nutrients causes measurable adverse effect on tissue/body form (body shape, size, and composition) and function, and clinical outcome”(Lochs, Allison et al. 2006). Malnutrition can take two dimensions, over nutrition and under nutrition. Over nutrition can be caused by excessive macronutrient intake resulting in obesity, and under nutrition can be caused by inadequate macronutrient and fluid intake resulting in weight loss and dehydration respectively.

Carbohydrate sources should be whole grains so not to deprive the body of dietary fiber and essential vitamins and minerals that are lost in the process of refining carbohydrates. The consumption of whole grains is beneficial for health as it can reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes and coronary heart diseases (Liu 2002). This could be attributed to the dietary fiber content that can help in glycemic control and its ability to improve the lipid profile. Dietary fibers can as well be obtained from fruits and vegetables in addition to different vitamins and minerals. A diet rich in dietary fiber can help in reducing low density lipoproteins cholesterol (LDL or the bad cholesterol) reducing the risk of cardiovascular diseases (Brown, Rosner et al. 1999). Carbohydrates commonly consumed in the Palestinian society can be found mainly in whole and refined grains and potatoes and sweets as well as table sugar.

Dairy products should not also be neglected considering their importance in the prevention of diseases of the bone such as osteoporosis (Bener, Hammoudeh et al. 2007). However, care should be exercised in the consumption of dairy products due to their saturated fat content which may increase the lipid profile in

the blood and increase the risk of cardiovascular diseases (Hu, Stampfer et al. 1999).²⁰ Dairy products commonly consumed in Palestine include white cheese, yoghurt, Labaneh (strained yoghurt), milk, and other dairy based products.

As in dairy products, animal fat is one that is rich in saturated fats, which is important for the synthesis of different hormones required for bodily functions, in addition to being part of the cell membranes. Overconsumption of saturated fats can increase the risk of cardiovascular diseases (Hu, Stampfer et al. 1999). Animal fat (as well as cholesterol) sources includes poultry, beef, and sheep (including goat), and eggs mainly provide cholesterol, and studies suggest that it does increase the good cholesterol, HDL, while it may not increase Cardiovascular Disease (CVD) risk.²¹

Fat sources should mainly be plant or fish based considering that they may have a positive effect on the lipid profile. Plant based fats can come from olive oil, nuts, and certain vegetables such as avocados. Cooking in plant based oil has been controversial due to the transformation of certain plant oils in the heating process and the production of aldehydes which are carcinogenic and is considered as indoor pollution (Katragadda, Fullana et al. 2010). Some plant oils maybe better than others on the latter aspect, but plant oils should not be reused or overheated while cooking/frying to the point of smoke production (smoke point) as this can contribute to the development of carcinogenic agents.

Proteins are essential for body maintenance, growth (in case of children), and recovery (in case of strenuous physical activity), proteins are made of amino acids. There are 20 amino with 9 of them being essential, meaning that we cannot synthesize them in the body while the rest are non-essential meaning we can synthesize them from other precursors in the body. In plant foods which provide us with the healthier plant based fats, not all 20 amino acids are available as with animal proteins (animal based protein include red and white meat such as poultry, red meat, and eggs, milk and dairy products, as well as fish). Plant based foods that provide us with proteins are mainly legumes, nuts, and although less whole grains. However, a combination of different types of plant based protein can provide us with the whole spectrum of amino acids. Although animal based proteins are of better quality in terms of the body ability to absorb it (higher bioavailability) and the presence of all amino acids, the risk is that when consuming animal proteins (except fish) we over consume fat and overconsumption of saturated fats and cholesterol becomes possible.

When consuming legumes and nuts we are consuming dietary fiber which can help in reducing total cholesterol and reduce the risk of cardiovascular diseases. In addition legumes and nuts contains plant sterols and stanols that too can help in the reduction of total serum cholesterol (Katan, Grundy et al. 2003). Plant sterol and stanols are similar to cholesterol in structure but do not have cholesterol effect on the lipid profile. Plant sterols and stanols mimic cholesterol and compete with it for absorption in the small intestine and have the upper hand resulting in their absorption and the excretion of the unabsorbed cholesterol and the reduction of dietary cholesterol absorption and its effect on blood lipid profile. Common legumes include chickpeas and bean, nuts in include walnuts, peanuts, pistachios, and almonds.

²⁰Although more research is required for such conclusion considering the outcomes are varied in different studies (Siri-Tarino, Sun et al. 2010)

²¹However further research is required to validate as overall it will have an adverse effect on the lipid profile and CVD risk (Weggemans, Zock et al. 2001))

ii. Food consumption in Palestine: diet quantity, quality, and the food items

SEFSec data reports on households' responses on dietary quantity, quality and food consumption patterns, covering a total of 8177 households, 5047 and 3130 from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip respectively (FSS&PCBS 2016).

Diet quantity

In the West Bank 36% of households reported insufficient dietary quantity in 2014, with no change compared to the year 2013 in which dietary insufficiency was reported at the same level. However, in the Gaza Strip 45% of households reported insufficient dietary quantity in 2013 compared to a less severe level of 33% in 2014. In Palestine as a whole food insufficiency reported by households improved between 2013 and 2014 from 46% to 34%. Although the latter suggests a numerical improvement, food insufficiency remained alarmingly high considering that 40% of Palestinian households suggested that their living standards deteriorated since the first half of 2014; especially in the Gaza Strip where such numerical improvement was witnessed up until the July 2014 conflict. Inequality between the food secure and the food insecure is more apparent in the West Bank than in the Gaza Strip. This could be due to the Gaza blockade that does not differentiate between any household, making its impact universal while in the West Bank economic and social inequality can be observed on daily basis between and within regions.

Diet Quality

Poor diet quality was more prevalent in the Gaza Strip with 33.5% reporting poor diet quality in the seven days preceding the survey, and 18.4% in the West Bank in the year 2014. In the West Bank no improvement occurred in 2014 compared to 2013 (18.3%) in terms of diet quality, while in the Gaza Strip poor diet quality was more apparent in 2014 (33.5%) compared to the year 2013 with almost a 9 percentage point difference (when it was 24.7%). This drop in diet quality could be associated with lack of accessibility or availability of varied food items due to the conflict.

Food items consumption

The SEFSec examined the average number of daily food item consumed in the seven days preceding the survey. Calories consumed were mainly obtained from carbohydrates being consumed on daily bases; at least six times in seven days in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in both 2013 and 2014 and regardless of household status with both food insecure and secure household showing similar trends (West Bank food insecure: 6.4times/week in 2013, in 2014 7.0 times/week; the Gaza Strip 6.9 times/week in 2013, and 7.0 times/week in 2014). The type of cereal whether whole providing vitamins and dietary fiber or refined with reduced nutritious quality lacking vitamins and dietary fiber is not indicated.

Sugar is the second food item that is consumed among all household regardless if they are food secure or not being consumed in at least six times/week equivalent to daily bases, suggesting that empty calories are a mainstay in Palestinian household diet (West Bank food insecure: 6.6 times/week in 2013, 5.8 times/week in 2014; the Gaza Strip 6.6times/week in 2013 and 6.3 times/week in 2014). Oil/fat consumption among household showed the same pattern as carbohydrates and sugar (West Bank food

insecure: 6.9 times/week in 2013, 6.5 times/week in 2014; the Gaza Strip 7.0 times/week in 2013 and 6.6 times/week in 2014). Whether the type of fat is unsaturated plant based or fish based, saturated such as animal based, or trans-fats such as that in margarine is not known despite the importance of these differences considering their impact on cardiovascular health. The fact that energy dense food are consumed every day of the week suggest a calorie intensive diet.

Dairy product items consumption was higher in food insecure households in the Gaza Strip (3.1 times/week in 2013, 3.9 times/week in 2014) compared to food insecure households in the West Bank (2.9 times/week in 2013, 2.7 times/week in 2014). Fruit consumption was higher in households (secure and insecure) in the West Bank in 2013, 4.1 and 1.7 respectively, compared to 2014 (1.4 and 0.6 respectively) suggesting increased prices or lack of availability for food insecure in 2013 and 2014 that prevented its daily consumption. This trend was also noted in the Gaza Strip where household consumption of fruits was less frequent than in the West Bank for both secure and insecure households; 2.6 times/week and 1.4 times/week in 2013 and 1.4 times/week and 0.6 times/week in 2014 respectively .

Vegetable consumption was also decreasing in both secure and insecure households in the West Bank (for food insecure households 4.6 times/week in 2013, 1.4 times/week in 2014) and the Gaza Strip (5.5 times/week in 2013, 0.7 times/week in 2014). Meat was consumed on most days of the week in food secure household twice more than food insecure households in both the West Bank (4.7 times/week in 2013, 4.5 times/week in 2014) and the Gaza Strip (4.2 times/week 2013, 4.0 times/week in 2014). There was higher consumption in meat across all households in the West Bank compared to the Gaza Strip. Despite pulses being a cheap nutritious item, they were the least consumed among all other food items not reaching even a frequency of twice a week, with a slight higher consumption in households in the Gaza Strip compared to those in the West Bank.

As can be seen from the above, there seems to be a widespread lack of nutrition knowledge, which translates to the type of food items consumed, for both food insecure and secure households. Although the role of food assistance programmes is to fight off the absence and low accessibility of food, they also have a responsibility in trying to improve the diet quality of those who benefit from food assistance programmes in an effort to improve their quality of life, promoting health and preventing disease.

iii. The state of nutrition

The State of Palestine Micronutrient Survey is a comprehensive survey carried out by the Department of Nutrition at the Ministry of Health (MoH) and the United Nations International Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF). During this project, pregnant women, lactating mothers, children up to 5 years old and adolescents were assessed for growth and micronutrient deficiencies. The sample included a grand total of 7200 with 1200 children 6-59 months old, pregnant women, lactating mothers, adolescent girls and boys respectively. The study was conducted under the supervision of the Institute of Nutritional Sciences at the University of Vienna, and financially supported by the European Union. Randomization included populations from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip with varied community type including city, village, and refugee camps. Recruiting was done at clinics for children, pregnant women, and lactating mothers or at school for school children and adolescents (MoH&UNICEF 2013).

Stunting is defined by UNICEF as "Moderate and severe - below minus two standard deviations from median height for age of reference population". According to UNICEF, stunting across Palestine for children age 6-59 months was 10.3%, compared to MENA region at 17.4%, Egypt at 21% and Jordan at 7.7%.²²In the Gaza Strip stunting prevalence was reported at 11% and at 9.5% in the West Bank. Wasting, another indicator of malnutrition, defined as minus two standard deviation below weight for height of the median population. In Palestine the prevalence of wasting was 4.5% with a prevalence rate of 5.5% in the Gaza Strip and 3.4% in the West Bank. The prevalence of Vitamin A deficiency in Palestine among pregnant and lactating women was recorded at 54.8% and 28.7% respectively, and among children 6-59 months at 72.9%. In adolescent children vitamin A Deficiency was higher in females, at 57%, compared to males at 42.6%.

During pregnancy Vitamin A is essential for proper fetal development and growth, in lactation vitamin A deficiency in a mother may increase the risk of vitamin deficiency in the nursing child (Stoltzfus 1994). If a pregnant woman is Vitamin A-deficient fetal growth will not be complete and can increase the risk of morbidity and mortality of the fetus. Infants, if exclusively breastfed will usually meet their needs of Vitamin A through breast feeding, however if the mother is deficient infants will most likely be deficient and their deficiency will manifest more as they grow in the absence of intervention. Vitamin A-deficiency increases the risk of infection due to its role in immune functions (Oomen, McLaren et al. 1964). Vitamin A sources includes yellow/orange colored plants (carotene form) such as mango, sweet potatoes, apricots, etc., and green leafy vegetables mainly spinach and animal based foods such as different types of fish, organ meats (mainly liver), and dairy products if not fat free. (Krause 2011, pp 63-66).

In the Palestine Vitamin D deficiency in pregnant and lactating women was 99.3% and 98.7% respectively, while the prevalence rate was recorded to be 60.1% for children between the age of 6-59 months, while in adolescent males it was much lower 51.9% that females 97.2%. Vitamin D is important for bone development being the main factor that increases the absorption of calcium allowing proper bone mineralization. In children if vitamin D is not sufficient it can lead to rickets (Wagner and Greer 2008) and to osteomalacia in adults who have vitamin D depletion (Basha, Rao et al. 2000), both of which conditions are characterized by soft bones. Osteoporosis, reduced bone density, may finally manifest resulting increased risk of fractures. Food sources of Vitamin D are scarce in the Palestinian diet except for eggs (egg yolk) as it is commonly found in canned tuna, salmon, seafood, and only in dairy products if fortified.

Vitamin E deficiency in pregnant and lactating women was 21.6% and 44.1% respectively, while the prevalence rate was recorded to be 64.3% for children between the ages of 6-59 months. In adolescent males it was higher at 72.7% than females 58.7%. Although across the globe today vitamin E deficiency is rare, it is prevalent in Palestine. Vitamin E is essential for health due to its role as an anti-oxidant (Traber and Atkinson 2007), which can help in neutralizing free radicals that can cause cellular damage; especially DNA. Vitamin E main food sources include nuts and oils.

²²MENA reference: UNICEF Data. Available at <http://data.unicef.org/topic/nutrition/malnutrition/> accessed on 2:00pm on 31/5/2017; Jordan Reference: UNICEF. Info by country: Jordan, available at https://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/jordan_statistics.html accessed on 2:25pm on 31/5/2017; Egypt Reference: UNICEF Egypt, Nutrition. Available at <https://www.unicef.org/egypt/nutrition.html> accessed on 2:20 pm on 31/5/2017.

Iron deficiency in Palestine in pregnant women was 17.1% with much higher prevalence in women of the Gaza Strip at 30.8% compared to 3.1% in the West Bank. As for lactating women Iron deficiency was 11.2% in Palestine, higher in the Gaza Strip at 19.7% compared to the West Bank 2.7%. Higher rates in iron deficiency among children between the ages of 6-59 months in the Gaza Strip were seen with a prevalence rate at 32.4% in the Gaza Strip compared to 8.9% in the West Bank and iron deficiency across State of Palestine recorded at 20.9%. Among adolescent males iron deficiency was 21.9% in State of Palestine and higher in the Gaza Strip compared to the West Bank at 28.5% and 15.4% respectively for males. Similar prevalence rates observed but lower in general among Gaza Strip and the West Bank adolescent females with rates of 6.1 and 15% respectively. Iron deficiency can contribute to many illnesses, resulting in mortality, disability, impaired cognitive development and reduced work productivity just to name a few (Stoltzfus 2003). Sources of iron include but are not limited to red meats and green leafy vegetables, and legumes. In legumes, green leafy vegetables, and plant based food they are less bioavailable and made more easily to absorb (bioavailable) when consumed with a Vitamin C source. Consuming plant food with tea or coffee can reduce iron absorption due to the inhibition of iron absorption by tannic acid in tea and caffeic acid in coffee (soft drinks containing caffeine as well)

Zinc deficiency in pregnant women in Palestine was 71.1% with higher prevalence in women of the Gaza Strip at 80.6% compared to 61.6% in the West Bank. As for lactating women Zinc Deficiency was 90.7% in Palestine as a whole. Among children between the ages of 6-59 months in the Gaza Strip Zinc deficiency was seen with a prevalence rate at 71% in the Gaza Strip compared to 39.5% in the West Bank with zinc deficiency across Palestine recorded at 55.6%. Among adolescent males Zinc deficiency was 72.5% in the State of Palestine being higher in the Gaza Strip compared to the West Bank at 79.3% and 65.9% respectively. The same trend was seen among adolescent females with lower rates of Zinc deficiency among the West Bank adolescent females compared to Gaza Strip adolescent females, with rates of 76.7% and 90.3% respectively with an average deficiency rate among adolescent females in Palestine at 83.6% (MoH & UNICEF 2013).

The fact that there is high prevalence rate in zinc deficiency in the Palestinian population suggest that a massive impact on child growth and overall health of the Palestinian population. Retarded sexual maturation of children, susceptibility to infection in immune compromised populations such as pregnant women, impaired wound healing in general, and loss of hair known as alopecia just to name a few of the many causalities that can be associated with zinc deficiency (Plum, Rink et al. 2010). Common sources of zinc are mainly nuts and shellfish.

Folate deficiency among pregnant and lactating women in Palestine was reported at 7.4% and 20.1% respectively, reflecting good prenatal care services. Among children aged 6-59 months the rate was low at 1.4%. Among adolescent males in Palestine it was recorded at 21% with higher rates in the Gaza Strip compared to the West Bank at 10.1% and 32% respectively. Overall adolescent female prevalence rate was better at 18.7% with better rates of 15.4% in the West Bank compared to 22% in the Gaza Strip). Folate is one of the important water soluble vitamins that have a major role in cell division with increased importance in the first trimester of pregnancy when the fertilized egg is going through hyperplasia, cell numbers increase, and a massive rate of cell division is taking place. Deficiency in this trimester can result in congenital malformations(Czeizel, Dudás et al. 2013). Folate sources include but are not limited to citrus fruits and beans.

Finally, Vitamin B12 deficiency was 62.8% in pregnant women, 20.6% in lactating women, and 10.9% among children 6-59 months old. Vitamin B12 deficiency among adolescent males was 29.8% across Palestine and higher in the Gaza Strip at 41.1% compared to the West Bank at 18.7%. The same trend was observed in adolescent Palestinian females with a rate of 25.1% in Palestine with the Gaza Strip having higher rates compared to the West Bank, 31.9% and 18.2% respectively. Vitamin B-12 is essential for neurological functions and red blood cells development. It is widely distributed in animal based foods. Deficiency can result in fatigue (Hu 2015) and reduced neurological function and many other symptoms (Stabler 2013). Vitamin B12 deficiency is usually related to common use of anti-acids, preventing the intrinsic factor (which requires an acidic environment to function) from binding vitamin B12 in the stomach to deliver it to the small intestine for absorption.

iv. The state of Palestinian health

The health profile of Palestine as presented by the PA Ministry of Health in its annual report suggests that chronic diseases have a toll on Palestinian society. Chronic diseases or non-communicable disease can be affected largely by the state of nutrition and lifestyle in the form of physical activity. Overweight and obesity can increase the risk of chronic diseases vastly as obesity has been connected in vast amount of literature to diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, cancers, hypertension and many other negative health outcomes.

According to the Ministry of Health, diabetes mellitus incidence rate per 100,000 was 201.3 and that of Cancer was 83.8. Diabetes Mellitus contributed to 6.8% from all deaths, while cancer to 13.8% of all deaths, and cardiovascular diseases to 27.8% of all deaths. These figures should raise alarm bells about the unhealthy lifestyle, including over nutrition, in Palestinian society alongside the deficiencies seen in children, pregnant women, and lactating mother as indicated in Micronutrient survey presented above.

The State of Palestine Steps survey 2010-2011 raised awareness on indicators that are substantial in the incidents of deaths from chronic diseases. Obesity defined as a Body Mass Index (BMI) ≥ 30 kg/m² was reported at 26.8%, with overweight ($25 < \text{BMI} \leq 29.99$ kg/m²) reported at 57.8% in Palestine. Substantial scientific evidence suggests a strong correlation between being overweight or obese with chronic diseases. Indicators that suggests a sedentary lifestyle and poor dietary habits that may promote the onset of chronic diseases were also reported with 35.8% and 24.7% reported to have a systolic blood pressure ≥ 140 mmHg and diastolic blood pressure ≥ 90 mmHg respectively. High blood pressure is a serious health condition that needs to be addressed, and an active life style with healthy, well balanced dietary habits may help in reducing its prevalence. These measurements may be related to the fact that 75% of the Palestinian population do not engage in regular vigorous physical activity and the fact that a potassium and dietary fiber rich diet is missing considering that 85.9% of the study population consumed less than 5 serving of fruits and vegetables per day.

Chapter Three

POLICY RESPONSE TO THE TWIN CHALLENGES OF POVERTY AND FOOD INSECURITY



Despite a persistent demand to address food security and poverty through a developmental approach, on-the-ground implementation has been done through relief channels, except for a limited number of cases. This means that managing the consequences of poverty and the food insecurity it promotes aims to mitigate their effects rather than eliminate their causes. This is mainly related to the conditions imposed by the occupation, such as lack of control over natural resources especially land and water, lack of control over physical borders and crossings (which means direct linkage with Israeli trade policies), extreme economic dependence on the Israeli economy, expansion of Israeli settlements, construction of the Separation Barrier, and ongoing blockade in the Gaza Strip, all of which constitute serious challenges to Palestinian development. Starting from this point, Palestine needs a nation-wide debate on national visions and public policies to address the twin challenges of poverty and food insecurity.

The deteriorating situation with regards to food security in addition to the high poverty and unemployment rates have necessitated the intervention of numerous local and international actors (whether governmental, non-governmental, UN agencies, or donors) to undertake efforts on a variety of fronts. The main goal of the implemented interventions has been related to tackling the challenges of persistent poverty and significant food insecurity.

The involvement of a wide number of actors working in relief and development and the multiplicity of their roles contributes to strengthening the resilience of Palestinian society. However, their proliferation also constitutes a challenge in and of itself, whether in terms of defining and articulating a shared vision and policies or coordinating efforts related to planning, implementation, follow-up, and evaluation as well as ownership of the Food Security Sector (FSS) functions. Concerted efforts in all of these areas are expected to strengthen the resilience of the people on their land, as well as to develop an approved common vision that combines relief and development.

This chapter analyzes the macro and sectoral policies guiding the Palestinian food and nutrition security sector, the programmes and resources deployed by the main players and the key gaps identified in different levels. The analysis focuses on: policy integration and relevance to a nationally endorsed approach; the legal framework affecting food security and related issues, the extent to which Palestinians control and manage the FSS; the capacities of national food security institutions; the programmes implemented by different FSS actors; and the responsiveness of the design and implementation of such programmes to the real needs of the population.

A. National Policies on Food Security, Nutrition, Social Protection and Related Sectors

i. National policy frameworks

Policies related to food and nutrition security in Palestine can be classified either as policies at the macro level (above-sectoral) or policies at the sectoral level. At the macro or above-sectoral level, the reference to food security in the National Policy Agenda (NPA) 2017-2022 (State of Palestine, 2016) as one of the areas of NPA interventions is an acknowledgement of PA policy-awareness of the significance of the problem of food insecurity. However, this focus is limited to the fourth level of the NPA matrix, i.e., service provision. The pertinent Policy Intervention “Ensure food security” is referred to under the National Policy “Meeting the Basic Needs of Our Communities” under National Priority 10: Resilient

Communities, under Pillar 3: Sustainable Development. This shows that policy-makers do not perceive of food and nutrition security as an integrated system of national policies related to human household or national economic security. Additionally, the NPA does not address nutritional security or food security at any level, which confirms this observation.

However, inclusion of food security in the framework of policy interventions related to “Meeting the Basic Needs of Our Communities” reflects the absence of a clear national recognition of the multifaceted nature of the food and nutrition security challenge in Palestine. Stakeholders consulted for this Review also highlighted the absence of such an approach, which is manifested in an unclear distribution of responsibilities, powers, and roles among the concerned governmental bodies. In addition, they agreed that there was weak national ownership of the FSS and a need for a leading body with the authority for follow-up, coordination, and networking among all local and international actors. This national policy reality has resulted in the emergence of different national stakeholders assuming partial, limited responsibilities in an attempt to coordinate with international organizations working within this domain, with the end-result of fragmented management and ownership of the sector.

At the sectoral level, the National Strategy for the Agricultural Sector (2017-2022) (State of Palestine, MoA, 2017) considers food security as one of the underlying principles of its vision and as one of its top priorities, and includes a set of FSS interventions. The Strategy’s defined vision is ‘a sustainable agricultural sector which is able to compete in domestic and foreign markets and which can effectively contribute to enhancing food security, supporting Palestinian citizens’ resilience on their land, and sovereignty over resources, which together contribute to an independent Palestinian state’ (page 30). However, the strategy links food security with its third strategic objective, which limits food security to agricultural production, under “Enhanced agricultural production, productivity and competitiveness, as well as enhanced contribution of agriculture to food security”.

As defined by the Strategy, achieving this strategic objective, on one hand, can enhance production, productivity and competitiveness of agricultural products. This will improve the agricultural sector position as an attractive economic sector for entrepreneurs and enhance its contribution to food security at the level of farmers by increasing their profitability as well as at the national level. On the other hand, this would lead to enhancing the role of agriculture as an economic sector by increasing its exports share, GDP share, and number of workers, especially in light of the high rates of unemployment.

Unlike the National Strategy for the Agricultural Sector, the Sectoral Strategy for the Development of Economy 2017-2022 (State of Palestine - Ministry of National Economy, 2017) has not given distinct attention to food security or agricultural production. The latter Strategy’s laid-out vision is based on ‘transition to an independent viable manufacturing (producer) economy able to compete and attract investments to achieve sustainable economic and social development’. This vision is to be achieved by four strategic objectives: The first objective focuses on the independence of the Palestinian economy; the second focuses on empowering business environment and attracting investments; the third focuses on developing the Palestinian industrial sector to increase its competitiveness; and the fourth focuses on regulating the local market and protecting consumers. Obviously, the Strategy’s main focus is on the development of the industrial sector, ignoring the agricultural sector, which reflects an incoherence between policies and objectives identified by the various sectoral strategies.

In the National Strategy for Social Development 2017-2022 (State of Palestine - MoSD, 2017), food security is one of the top priorities related to social protection and support of poor families. The Strategy's vision is "a Palestinian society that is well-knit, productive, and creative, which provides a decent life for all citizens, provides outlets for releasing their energies, and believes in protecting their rights, equality, justice, partnership and integration". The first strategic objective – "reduced poverty" – incorporates the endeavors to combat hunger and all kinds of deprivation and enhance the poor households' ability to secure the basic needs of life, including adequate healthy food, clothing, housing, medical care, education, personal care, transportation and social services. For the purpose of achieving these goals, the Strategy specified the following policies: organizing and coordinating cash and in-kind social assistance that aim at developing systemized social assistance rather than programmatic social assistance to ensure the sustainability of a rights-based approach, institutionalizing and developing the economic empowerment programme for poor households, including provision of financial resources, enhancing marketing, and strengthening relevant legislation.

According to the Strategy, this objective intersects with other related sectoral strategies and the sectors they cover, especially the strategy for managing public wealth, local economy, employment, education, health, agriculture, local government, water and wastewater. The objective of poverty reduction responds to poor households' access to proper infrastructure, education, health care, and social services.

The vision of the newly released Social Development Strategy describes the fundamental transition from protection and relief to social development. The Strategy specifies that this transition reflects an optimistic scheme for changing the developmental reality of the poor and marginalized groups and for promoting social cohesion. It also asserts the right of Palestinian people to development, as an integral part of international human rights standards, as well as full sovereignty over wealth and natural resources. Based on these pillars, the Strategy has adopted a customized concept of social development that pertains to the Palestinian context, which regards it as a societal change that: focuses on the empowerment of society; aims to improve and enhance the quality of life for citizens; ensures provision of social protection and basic services to the poor and vulnerable families which provide for decent life and work opportunities; and fosters and promotes integration of marginalized social groups.

According to the Strategy, transition from social protection to social development requires collaboration of efforts on a variety of fronts: continuing to enhance food security, integration of economic, political and social policies, and developing the roles and contributions of partners in the developmental process that aim to eliminate poverty. It also requires the development of emergency and crises support services for individuals and families and providing the poor and marginalized families with basic needs of education, health and housing, as well as working to change the culture of those families that foster depending on assistance. Within this framework, the Strategy emphasizes that the process of social development should be based on a conceptual and policy framework that incorporates economic, social, cultural, and environmental aspects. Accomplishing this mission requires combination of social and economic policies, which would guarantee collaboration of all actors in this field whether governmental, non-governmental, UN agencies, donors, and private sector.

Social development policies and interventions related to food security and poverty alleviation are clearly pronounced and expected to contribute to reducing the impact of poverty and food insecurity of the

extremely poor households, through assistance programmes of cash or in-kind (food) assistance. These programmes are designed to improve food security among targeted households and alleviate the impact of poverty on livelihood. However, their impact on enhancing food security as an integrated system linked to human and national security remains unclear, bearing in mind the absence of a clear national vision and ownership driving the agenda and function of the FSS.

On the other hand, the absence of a general national vision on achieving food security influences sectoral strategies and policies, as the treatment of food security in the NPA does not encourage establishing such links and synergies. This has fostered weak interrelations between sectoral policies and the emergence of divergent trends, which also reflect the weak institutional coordination among governmental bodies and the lack of integration. For example, the National Strategy for the Agricultural Sector focuses on agricultural production to improve food security, a trend which was not reflected in the National Strategy for Development of National Economy. On the other hand, the Social Development Strategy focused on combating poverty as a mechanism of enhancing food security, through both assistance and empowerment programmes. As well, the National Strategy for the Agricultural Sector did not address enhancing food security as an integral component of poverty reduction.

Regarding nutrition security, the Palestinian Ministry of Health (MoH) developed the National Nutrition Policy, Strategies & Action Plan in 2016 (State of Palestine - Ministry of Health, 2016). The strategy's key objective is to improve and maintain the nutritional status and welfare of the Palestinian people, by setting nine priorities. Each of these priorities has a number of goals, some of which establish the link between food and nutrition security in general. Notably, the key components of the nutrition strategy have not been adequately incorporated within the National Health Strategy (2017-2022) (State of Palestine-MoH, 2017). The latter strategy addresses issues related directly to primary, secondary and preventative health services, and does not focus on nutrition or food security issues. This suggests a lack of integration and coordination in the processes of drawing up policies and designing plans even at the sectoral level.

However, the need for an integrated (macro-sectoral and intersectoral) policy on food security in its broadest dimensions is not a new imperative. The (now outdated) National Strategy for Food Security (NSFS) (PNA-MOA, 2005), which was hardly pursued at the implementation level after its initial phase, emphasizes that there is a misconception about the possibility of improving food security by merely increasing food production and/or providing humanitarian assistance. The Strategy has also asserted that, despite the importance of these two aspects in the Palestinian context, food security is a holistic concept which touches on several sectors. Therefore, there is a crucial need to come with a unified vision and concept of food security at a national level, at the level of all actors, and at the society level.

In consultations with donor representatives conducted for this Review, it was stressed that they were awaiting a national document on food security and nutrition conditions and strategies. The time had come for the PA to fully own its development programmes and assert government leadership in this sector. While the Humanitarian Response Plan is an adequate framework for donor response to PA national priorities it is underfunded (and possibly over-reaching). Palestinian plans, including the NPA, can be generic containers into which every and any donor requirement can fit. This brings the issues of ownership and national guidance to the forefront. The question that increasingly preoccupies donors is whether they are present in Palestine to act as development practitioners or whether their involvement

risks morphing into building parallel systems and programmes to those of the PA, with the current structure and operation of the FSS a case in point.

ii. National food security data issues

One of the consequences of the absence of a national vision, control and ownership of the FSS in Palestine is the lack of a nationally approved methodology and criteria for measuring assessing the status of food security. To compensate for this deficiency, the FSS actors have adopted methods developed by some international organizations operating in Palestine. Nonetheless, the relevant national authorities have not been involved in the revision of the adopted methodology, which is expected in light of the unclear responsibilities among the relevant national authorities.

The lack of coherence between macro and sectoral policies and the lack of integration between sectoral policies are partially due to the absence of unified national database on food and nutrition security. Such a database should serve as a tool for collecting, analyzing and disseminating data on food security indicators, whether in terms of food availability, accessibility, and utilization, in relation to poverty issues, which include food production or imports, income, expenditure and purchasing power, food consumption and safety, nutrition indicators and others. Such a database could help identify gaps and thus contribute to decision-making and formulation of policies that aim to reduce food insecurity as well as combating poverty. It should be emphasized here that most of the data is available to many local or international partners, yet the absence of a national information system or a unified database limits using the available data.

The availability, applicability and currency of data are considered very important by all actors, especially donors and international agencies for programming purposes. The currency of the data available is problematic. Data for 2014 released in 2016, reflecting the post Gaza war situation and hence is not very representative of current situation. Accessibility issues in Palestine are not comparable to other countries. Specificities of the Palestinian context should overshadow other aspects of data, which should be up to date. Protracted food insecurity creates a major data challenge, affecting the extent to which needs for food assistance are protracted or in response to urgent situation, each case of which implies different data needs. Donors and agencies depend on national partners' data gathering and analysis, which despite all efforts some important data remain missing. The aid coordination database (DARP) is not considered to be user-friendly for donors to fill all the data requested. PCBS is considered a very reliable institution, but more can be done in this regard.

There is scope for better geographic mapping of food security data and more attention to livelihoods approach might be most appropriate. Gender disaggregated data are also necessary. Most stakeholders prefer to work with a standardized indicator that can be compared with international criteria. Palestinian specific context of data is important and a Palestinian generated indicator could add value or knowledge to the extent that it allows for more feasible comparisons and simplified donor programming for donors. The SEFSec database is humongous and incompatible with periodic or inter-country comparisons and needs better packaging and presentation of data. PA leadership in providing nationally owned indicators is crucial and overdue. The kind of data that's is needed includes: family/household/farmer level; macro level linked to government sector plans and budgets; food security data available at least every three

years; and data that facilitates donor decision making. National indicators should be linked to national policies. If it is recognized that data is nationally generated and owned, then donors will be better motivated to respond.

iii. Key Non-Governmental partners

A large number of NGOs are operating in Palestine, having established a tradition of socio-economic service prior to the establishment of the PA and becoming a partner in areas where the PA either couldn't or wouldn't always venture. Most Palestinian NGOs that work in development and relief were established as part of the liberation struggle of Palestine and to enhance the steadfastness of the Palestinian people. For instance, the Union of Agricultural Work Committees (UWAC) was established as a non-profit organization in 1986 in response to the vulnerable socio-political circumstance of farmers that resulted from occupation policies in confiscating lands and water in the early eighties and therefore directly harmed the interests of farmers and Palestinians²³. The Agricultural Relief Committees (PARC) was launched in late 1970s, aiming at filling the deliberate gap in provision of agricultural extension and developmental services induced by the Israeli occupation authorities (PARC, 2013). MA'AN Development Center was established in January 1989 informed by the necessity of creating independent, self-reliant initiatives that lead to the development of human resources for sustainable development, which incorporate values of self-sufficiency and self-empowerment²⁴. The NGOs mapping done by MAS in 2007 showed that the number of operating NGOs in Palestine was 1,495. Out of 1,381 active NGOs at the time, the main objective of 5.6% of NGOs was to contribute to agricultural development and the development of other sectors, and 9.8% main objective was assistance in kind, cash, services, healthcare, orphanages and other relief (MAS, 2007). While the current number of NGOs is estimated at around 1500, the basic features of their specializations with regard to food security have not shifted significantly.

The above three mentioned NGOs are the most prominent ones working in the food security sector and are mainly driven by development policies that focus on the protection of the agricultural sector as a key front in the confrontation with Israeli settlement, land confiscation and economic domination. For example, PARC aims to develop the agriculture sector, strengthen the resilience of farmers, reach out to the poor and marginalized groups and their CBO's, mobilize and develop the capabilities of rural people to control their resources, and to contribute to the establishment of a free and democratic Palestinian society based on the values of social justice (PARC, 2016). PARC identified as part of its goals and objectives the reduction of the food security gap at the national level and an increased contribution of the agricultural sector to national income (PARC, 2013).

Meanwhile, UAWC aims to reach a "Palestinian society that is food secured, enjoys social justice, holds on its land and lives in a democratic Free Palestinian State, enjoys sovereignty over his resources; where farmers both male and female, contribute effectively in all aspects of life". UAWC believes that the significance of agriculture and land for the Palestinian people goes beyond the economic dimension: with cultivation of agricultural products and the people's relationship to their land being deeply rooted in the Palestinian culture, protecting the status of the Palestinian farmer and reactivating their national role is an

²³ Source: UWAC's Website: <http://www.uawc-pal.org/UAWCAbout.php>

²⁴ Source: MA'AN's Website: <http://www.maan-ctr.org/page.php?id=51bay20922Y51ba>

integral part of the liberation struggle of Palestine.²⁵ MA'AN, as a pioneer community development and capacity building organization, works in the poorest and most marginalized areas to improve the quality of their lives and empower them to take a lead in developing their communities and achieving self reliance, steadfastness and sustainable development based on freedom, participation equity & equality, respect for human rights, democracy, and social justice. MA'AN determined some of its goals to improving the food security situation of the poorest and most marginalized sectors of the Palestinian society at the family and community level and to enhance community development and decrease poverty in rural and the most disadvantaged areas (MA'AN, 2016).

B. The Planning and Programming Framework of Food Security Sector Donors and Agencies

The WFP Strategic Plan 2017-2021 (WFP, 2017a) determined its vision is to ensure that countries are on track for achieving the 2030 Agenda, in particular SDG 2 on zero hunger. The Strategic Plan builds on WFP's well-recognized identity as the world's largest humanitarian organization. With this identity comes a responsibility for fulfilling commitments and expectations in emergency response and recovery in contexts of crisis and disruption, aiming to save lives through first-rate food assistance interventions designed and implemented in partnership with national governments, international agencies and other actors. The Strategic Plan affirms this critical dimension of WFP's work, ensuring that it is maintained and strengthened. By aligning WFP's work with the 2030 Agenda, the Strategic Plan also provides a coherent and transparent framework for WFP to make broader contributions towards the SDGs in several contexts, using the skills, capacities and competencies that WFP has built up through humanitarian action and development initiatives. The WFP Strategic Plan 2017-2021 has identified two strategic goals. First: support countries to achieve zero hunger. Second: partner to support implementation of the SDGs. In line with the two strategic goals, WFP has five strategic objectives, which relate to the elements of SDG 2 and SDG 17. First: end hunger by protecting access to food. Second: improve nutrition. Third: achieve food security. Fourth: support SDG implementation. Fifth: partner for SDG results (WFP, 2017a).

As articulated in the WFP Corporate Partnership Strategy (2014–2017), WFP aligns and integrates its food assistance capacities and programmes with interventions and investments of governments, other United Nations agencies and actors from the private sector and civil society. WFP will work with these partners to combine and leverage complementary strengths and resources (WFP, 2017a).

In the local level partnership and coordination, supporting enhanced food security is a task shared by WFP, the PA, UNRWA and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) with close links to activities of UNICEF and other partners. WFP works closely with the Government, NGOs (Global Communities, Ard El Insan) and United Nations partners (UNRWA) to successfully deliver food and cash-based assistance in Gaza and the West Bank. WFP co-leads, together with FAO, the Food Security Sector, which aims to strengthen food security analysis and response, and link humanitarian and development interventions for the PA (WFP, 2017b), WFP's primary partner in Palestine. WFP works with the Ministry of Social Development in the development and delivery of an integrated and needs-based National Food Safety net, reaching 214,000 people with food and CBT assistance (WFP, 2017b).

²⁵ Source: UWAC's Website: <http://www.uawc-pal.org/UAWCAbout.php>

FAO's global vision, adopted since 2009, is "a world free from hunger and malnutrition where food and agriculture contribute to improving the living standards of all, especially the poorest, in an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable manner". To achieve this vision, FAO determined three global goals. First: eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition, progressively ensuring a world in which people at all times have sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. Second: elimination of poverty and the driving forward of economic and social progress for all, with increased food production, enhanced rural development and sustainable livelihoods. Third: sustainable management and utilization of natural resources, including land, water, air, climate and genetic resources for the benefit of present and future generations.

At operational level, and to meet the three goals, FAO focus is on five main areas of work that were reflected in five strategic objectives. The first is to contribute to the eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition. The second is to increase and improve provision of goods and services from agriculture, forestry and fisheries in a sustainable manner. The third is to reduce rural poverty. The fourth is to enable more inclusive and efficient agricultural and food systems at local, national and international levels. The fifth is to increase the resilience of livelihoods to threats and crises.

The FAO WBGS Programme Framework contributes to the realization of the FAO global vision. It also supports the global goals as well as subsequent strategic objectives of the organization. As articulated in FAO WBGS Programme Framework document, the programme components and results contribute to the realization of all five global strategic objectives through its diverse portfolio of projects. FAO WBGS focuses on resilience and economic growth in its programme document 2014-2016 in alignment with the Agriculture National Sector Strategy 2014-2016: Resilience and Development (FAO, 2014). Over the past ten years, FAO has established partnership with the PA, and the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) in particular. In its 2009 strategy document, prepared following a request from the PA to develop and institutionalize the relationship with FAO, an appropriate framework and strategy for FAO assistance to the Palestinian agriculture sector was adopted (FAO, 2014).

FAO also partners with a number of local NGOs to implement its interventions and to assist in reaching its beneficiaries through a variety of agricultural activities. In addition, in 2013, FAO played a significant role in establishing integrated coordination platform on food security in the WBGS. The principle of shared responsibility and accountability between UN agencies, PNA and international and national NGOs was also agreed upon, an effort that was consolidated into the Food Security Sector currently coordinating food security response efforts (FAO, 2014).

UNRWA has identified four human development goals as the focus of the Agency's operations to fostering human development of Palestine refugees, which are: acquire knowledge and skills; lead long and healthy lives; achieve decent standards of living; and enjoy human rights to the fullest possible extent. UNRWA human development and humanitarian services encompass primary and vocational education, primary health care, relief and social services, infrastructure and camp improvement, microfinance and emergency response .

The UNRWA Medium Term Strategy (MTS) presents the Agency's strategic vision and objectives for its programmes and operations for the period 2016-2021, with the aim of maximizing its use of resources

and the impact of its operations in serving refugees. It reaffirms the Agency's commitment to advocating and providing for the human development and protection needs of Palestine refugees. The MTS has identified five strategic outcomes that UNRWA will work to accomplish over the strategic period with the assistance of regional, national and local partners. First, refugees' rights under international law are protected and promoted. Second, refugees' health is protected and the disease burden is reduced. Third, school-aged children complete quality, equitable and inclusive basic education. Fourth, refugee capabilities strengthened for increased livelihood opportunities. Fifth, refugees are able to meet their basic human needs of food, shelter and environmental health (UNRWA, 2016).

C. Alignment between PA and UN Food Security Policy and Programming Frameworks

In its Common Country Analysis (CCA), the UN Country Team in the oPt (2016) examined the state of development in Palestine after 50 years of the Israeli occupation. The report served a comprehensive analysis of development challenges in Palestine focusing on the most vulnerable groups, seeking to identify key drivers of their vulnerability and challenges they face. The CCA responded to the Government's NPA and served as the analytical basis of the UN's development strategy for Palestine, which was elaborated in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for the period 2018-2022. The CCA findings has been translated into action in the UNDAF for 2018-2022, which was aligned with the Palestinian government's development priorities outlined in the NPA 2017-2022.

In addition, the Humanitarian Country Team produced the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) (2016) that provides the Humanitarian Country Team's shared understanding of the crisis, including the most pressing humanitarian needs, and reflects its joint humanitarian response planning for the period January-December 2017. The HRP determined three strategic objectives, namely: protect the rights of Palestinians under occupation in accordance with International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and International Human Rights Law (IHRL), ensure acutely-vulnerable Palestinians under occupation in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank have access to essential services, and strengthen the ability of acutely-vulnerable Palestinian households to cope with protracted threats and shocks. Under each of these three objectives, a number of interventions were determined. The below matrix traces the alignment of the UNDAF and the HRP with the NPA 2017-2022.

Table 9. Alignment of the UNDAF and the HRP with the National Policy Agenda 2017-2022

NPA pillars	NPA priorities	NPA policies	UNDAF	HRP
Path to Independence	Nation Priority 1.1: Ending the Occupation; Achieving Our Independence	Mobilizing National and International Support		
		Holding Israel to Account	Outcome 1.1: Human rights mechanisms are increasingly engaged to hold Israel accountable for its obligations under international law.	Education Sector 1: Education sector has increased capacities to report, document and advocate on violations to strengthen advocacy and response
	Nation Priority 1.2: National Unity	One Land; One People	Outcome 1.2: A strong Palestinian national identity prevails	
			Outcome 1.3: The geopolitical fragmentation of the OPT is reversed	
		Upholding Democratic Principles	Outcome 2.1: State of Palestine adheres to inclusive democratic processes that ensure representative and people centered governance	
	Nation Priority 1.3: Strengthening Palestine's International Status	Broadening Palestine's International Participation		
			Expanding Palestine's Bilateral Relations	
Government Reform	Nation Priority 2.1: Citizen-Centered Government	Responsive Local Government	Outcome 2.3: All Palestinians are assured of responsive and enabling state functions at national and sub-national levels	
		Improving Services to Citizens		
	Nation Priority 2.2: Effective Government	Strengthening Accountability and Transparency		
Effective, Efficient Public Financial Management				
Sustainable Development	Nation Priority 3.1: Economic	Building Palestine's Future Economy	Outcome 3.1 Palestine's productive sectors are more diversified and have	
		Improving Palestine's Business Environment		

	Independence	Promoting Palestinian Industry	higher growth rates	
		Creating Job Opportunities	Outcome 3.2: Palestinians have greater access to decent productive jobs	
	Nation Priority 3.2: Social Justice and Rule of Law	Escaping Poverty	Outcome 4.2: All Palestinians, especially the most vulnerable have greater access to a unified, integrated, and shock-responsive social protection system	Shelter Result 1: Ensure access for women, girls, boys and elderly men to a basic level of adequate shelter
		Strengthening Social Protection		Food Security Result 2: Households suffering from lack of access to food are able to meet their basic food needs
				Shelter result 2: Mitigate the impact of displacement on Palestinians following conflict or demolition through continued access to shelter solutions
				Shelter result 3: Mitigate the risk and immediate effect of displacement due to natural disasters or conflict through preparedness and appropriate emergency shelter interventions
				Education result 3: All education stakeholders including parents, communities and children are better able to cope and respond to disaster and emergencies through DRR preparedness and psychosocial services, particularly in areas at risk of education-related violations and natural disasters
				Coordination Result 1: Support humanitarian actors and coordination mechanisms to ensure effective preparedness and delivery of response

				Coordination Result 2: Advocate to ensure vulnerable Palestinians receive the necessary protection and assistance.
		Improving Access to Justice	Outcome 2.2: All Palestinians are assured security, justice, rule of law and protection of human rights	Protection result 1: Increased respect for International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights Law and accountability for violations
		Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment	Outcome 2.4: State and national institutions promote and monitor gender equality and enforce non-discrimination for all	Protection result 3: GBV victims and survivors have access to multi-sectoral responses
		Our Youth; Our Future		
Nation Priority 3.3: Inclusive, Quality Education for All		Improving Primary and Secondary Education	Outcome 4.1: The Palestinian population, especially the most vulnerable, benefit from safe, inclusive, equitable and quality services.	Education Result 2: Vulnerable children in the Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem and the West Bank have access to safe and inclusive educational services
		From Education to Employment		
Nation Priority 3.4: Inclusive, Quality Health Care for All		Better Health Care Services		Health and Nutrition Result 1: Vulnerable communities in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank are ensured access to quality and affordable health services, and referral of victims of violence to protection organizations
		Improving Citizens' Health and Well-Being		
Nation Priority 3.5: Resilient Communities		Ensuring Community Security, Public Safety and the Rule of Law		Protection result 2: The effects of the occupation and conflict-related violence are prevented and mitigated
		Meeting the Basic Needs of Our Communities	Outcome 3.3: Palestine's infrastructure, and natural and cultural resources are more sustainably used and managed	WASH result 1: Ensure equitable access to basic WASH services in accordance with safety and dignity of the unserved, underserved and most vulnerable Palestinians under occupation in Gaza and the West Bank.

				Food Security Result 3: Improved coordination for preparedness and advocacy, activity implementation and information sharing
		Ensuring a Sustainable Environment		
		Preserving Our National Identity and Cultural Heritage		
		Revitalizing Agriculture and Strengthening Our Rural Communities	Outcome 3.4: Highly vulnerable producers benefit from market-led development	Food Security Result 1: The resilience and the productive capacity of vulnerable households are restored/enhanced and livelihoods protected
			Outcome 4.3: Vulnerable Palestinian communities and institutions are better equipped to cope with protracted threats and shocks	Health and Nutrition Result 2: Vulnerable communities in the West Bank and Gaza are better prepared to cope with the impact of current and potential new manmade and natural disasters
				WASH result 2: Strengthen WASH response capacity to cope with new and protracted emergencies, threats and shocks.

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D. Analysis of the Legal Framework Affecting Food Security

i. National legislation and international law

The Palestinian legal system lacks explicit rules on right to food protection. Simultaneously, there are no specific rules that guarantee food and nutrition security in Palestine. Nonetheless, Article (10) of the Basic Law of 2003 protects basic human rights and liberties and urges the PA to work without delay to become a party to regional and international declarations and covenants that protect human rights. Whereas a clean environment ensures the continual existence and survival of all life on Earth, including plants, water and animals, which ensure the availability of food sources in the country, Article (33) of the Basic Law, therefore, considers the enjoyment of a balanced and clean environment as a human right. And it considers the preservation and protection of the Palestinian environment from pollution for the sake of present and future generations as a national duty. Accordingly, the Basic Law of 2003 effectively acknowledges the right to adequate food by reference to basic human rights, since the right in question constitutes a fundamental human right in accordance with international accords as shown consecutively.

The International Law of Human Rights obviously acknowledges the right to food as a basic human right, and indeed links it to ensuring human dignity. Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that: 1. Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.²⁶ Furthermore, the preamble of the Paris Agreement on climate change makes specific reference to “safeguarding food security and ending hunger, and the particular vulnerabilities of food production systems to the adverse impacts of climate change” and also refers to a range of issues that are central to agriculture and protecting food production.

Article 11.1 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights obliges States parties to recognise “the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions”. This article also urges States Parties to take appropriate steps to ensure the realization of this right, including international cooperation. In recognition of the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger, article 11.2 of the same Covenant binds the states to take, individually and through international co-operation, the measures, including specific programmes, which are needed to: 1) improve methods of production, conservation and distribution of food by making full use of technical and scientific knowledge, by disseminating knowledge of the principles of nutrition and by developing or reforming agrarian systems in such a way as to achieve the most efficient development and utilization of natural resources; and 2) ensure an equitable distribution of world food supplies in relation to need. These principles and considerations are all equally pertinent in the case of Palestinian food and nutrition issues, and conform with the basic goals of food security policies and programmes in contexts of conflict or peace, economic decline or growth.

The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in General Comment No. 12 recognized the importance of adequacy and sustainability of food availability and access, and also defined the obligations

²⁶ See also article (6) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; articles (24, 27) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child; articles (12, 14) of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; Food Aid Convention, 1999, Universal Declaration on the Eradication of Hunger and Malnutrition, 1974, World Declaration on Nutrition, 1992, Declaration on the Right to Development, adopted by General Assembly resolution 41/128 of 4 December 1986. General Assembly Resolution 51/171, 1996 - Food and sustainable agricultural development, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Food/Pages/Standards.aspx>.

that States parties have to fulfill in order to implement the right to adequate food at the national level (UN 1999). These are: the obligation to respect existing access to adequate food – which requires States parties not to take any measures that result in preventing such access; the obligation to protect requires measures by the State to ensure that enterprises or individuals do not deprive individuals of their access to adequate food; the obligation to fulfill (facilitate) means the State must pro-actively engage in activities intended to strengthen people's access to and utilization of resources and means to ensure their livelihood, including food security. In all of these respects as well, it is clear that the obligations of Israel, the occupying power, certainly precede and exceed those of the PA within its scope of limited jurisdiction, and indeed this begs the question as to upon which party the obligation to ensure Palestinian household and macro-food security rightly falls. Whenever an individual or group is unable, for reasons beyond their control, to enjoy the right to adequate food by the means at their disposal, States have the obligation to fulfill (provide) that right directly. This obligation also applies for persons who are victims of natural or other disasters (UN, Economic and Social Council 1999).

The failure to ensure the application of these international covenants intended to ensure the economic, social and cultural rights of the Palestinian people under occupation should remain at the forefront of consideration when designing PA and international responses to food insecurity in Palestine. This also applies in the case of food security since Israel is the sole managing party of foodstuff flows to Palestine (imported goods). Nonetheless, the actual authority on the ground is also liable, particularly in emergency and disaster conditions caused by nature or human factors. All cases attributed to the occupation, directly or indirectly, as the defacto authority, remain the latter's responsibility.

In recognition of the persistence of food insecurity throughout the world, the UN (Human Rights Council) appointed a Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food to monitor the situation of the right to food throughout the world, undertake country visits, communicate with States and other concerned parties with regard to alleged cases of violations of the right to food (Human Rights Council 2007).

ii. Treatment of the concept of food security in related national laws

If fully and faithfully implemented, such measures as those provided for in existing laws reviewed here can be supportive of food security in Palestine, provided that the requisite regulations and pending decisions come into force.

Article 2/9 of the Palestinian Agriculture Law of 2003 obliges the Ministry of Agriculture to work on promoting the food security in order to implement the objectives of this Law. The Law itself addresses various matters related to food security including: Agricultural wealth, water sources, desertification, plants, natural resources, agricultural –animal diversity, sustainable use of resources and fisheries etc. To achieve of the goals of this Law and with the aim to develop and ensure the exploitation of agricultural resources in a sustainable manner, Article 3 of the Law established a set of measures including a Fund for the Compensation of Farmers for Natural Disasters²⁷ and Agricultural Loans Bank in

²⁷See Law decree #12 of 2013 Concerning the Agricultural Risks Prevention and Insurance Fund. This law established an independent fund specialized for compensations of natural disasters and agricultural insurances. This fund has two accounts; one for the compensations of natural disasters and the other for the agricultural insurances. The Council of Ministers supervises the work of the fund and allocates special annual operational and development allocations included with the State's annual budget.

accordance with special laws.²⁸ The former was promulgated in 2013, and the latter (Credit Corporation) was recently established.

In general, the provisions mentioned in the Law-by-decree No. 12 of 2013 concerning the Fund for agricultural risk prevention and insurance are fair and necessary in the Palestinian context fraught with risk. But these will not be applicable before issuing the executive regulations and instructions pass thereunder, as the Law authorized the council of this Fund the right to issue secondary legislation like determining the types of agricultural risks and damages that are compensable, the standards and mechanisms of compensation, the types of risks insured, the conditions of insurance along with its types and forms, the premiums that the farmers should pay, the principles of calculating the damages compensations, the principles of estimating the value of crops, and others. In all cases, the insurance premiums should be affordable to encourage all the farmers to engage in this kind of insurance. And the farmer should not be deprived from maturing compensations because of environmental disasters even if the compensations are not included among the clauses of the contract.

To date, the Agricultural Risks Prevention and Insurance Fund has delayed processing remediable damages. This requires an effective way to tackle the situation so as to not hamper or frustrate farmers. All of the requisite secondary legislation related to this Fund has yet to be issued or reviewed, while the current mechanism on customs fees and tax recovery, for producers who are beneficiary therefrom in accordance with the applicable laws, has not been revised or developed in a way that would accelerate the refund process.

In another relevant provision, the Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 243 of 2005 concerning the Protection of Fish regulates the fishing profession, licenses, the importing, exporting and marketing of fish, so as to enhance contribution of fisheries and fish farming in food security (article 2/8).

As for the legal framework affecting food processing industries, the Palestinian Law-by-decree on Industry No. 10 of 2011, Article 16 exempts industrial establishments, wholly or partially, from customs duties on the imports of machinery, equipment and spare parts in line with a regulation that should be issued by the Council of Ministers upon the recommendation of the Minister of National Economy. In addition, Article 17 of the law grant the cabinet to issue a regulation, upon the recommendation of the assistance Minister and other relevant bodies, to set out special prices for water, electricity and fuel used for the industrial purposes of the industrial establishments. Article 18/1 allows granting additional privileges, to be identified by the Minister of National Economy, to the industrial enterprises that produce goods for local consumption capable of competing with foreign goods from similar kind. Article 19 of the same law authorizes the Minister to issue the required decisions for the protection of national products. A draft Law on protecting Palestinian production, including industries is also under review, which would help to nurture infant food industries, an important step both in terms of overall industrial development as well as ensuring greater stability in Palestinian food processing and self-sufficiency. The draft regulates actions and measures taken against dumping, subsidies and special “countervailing” duties to offset trading partners’ subsidies to their exports, as well as emergency measures to limit imports temporarily, designed to “safeguard” domestic industries.

²⁸Law-Decree No. (8) for the year 2015 concerning the Palestinian Agricultural Credit Corporation.

The Public Health Law No. 20 of 2004 does not tackle the issue of food security explicitly; rather it deals, to some extent, with food safety issues, as highlighted below.

Similarly, there is no reference to food security in the Law-by-decree on Water No. 14 of 2014, which has an important indirect relevance to the agricultural and food production strategies, as well as public health considerations. The Law aims to develop and manage water resources in Palestine, to increase their capacity, to improve their quality, to preserve and protect them from pollution and depletion, and to improve the level of water services through the implementation of integrated and sustainable water resources management principles (Article 2). The law considers all Water Resources in Palestine public property, and grants the Water Authority the power to manage these resources in a manner that ensures justice and efficiency in distribution (article 3).

This Law, however, ensures all persons' right to receive an appropriate quality of water according to need and with a fixed and uniform price in line with a regulation to be issued by the Cabinet. Pursuant to Article 5, every person has the right to obtain his needs of suitable quality drinking water for utilization at specific prices set in accordance with the Tariff Regulation issued by the Council of Ministers According to the Law, Water Service Providers shall take the necessary measures to ensure this right and prepare the plans required for the development of services in this regard (Art. 5, 35). . Cabinet decision No. 1 of 2013 on Water Tariff Regulation sets out criteria for tariff calculation, whereby water and sewerage service providers identify the prices to be charged in accordance with the tariff criteria taking into account social justice and affordability considerations.

Article 8 sets out the responsibilities of the Water Authority, which should endeavor to achieve an equitable distribution and optimal use of water to ensure the sustainability of ground and surface water resources. Article 50 of this Law compels the Authority to collaborate with the relevant parties interested to formulate special mechanisms and methods to manage crises whenever there is aridity, flooding, or plague, whether caused by water or by a general pollution.

As for nutrition, the Council of Ministers issued Decision No. 14 of 2011 on regulation of the nutritionist profession. This regulation bans anyone from practicing the profession of nutritionist unless a license has been obtained from the Ministry of Health. A set of conditions and requirements for the license has been specified in the regulation. However, these fail to link nutrition with food security and do not provide for objective or systematic rules to adequately organize the profession.

As for supplying foodstuffs during state of emergency, a draft Law on Disaster Risk Management gives the National Center for Disaster Risk Management, recently established by a Cabinet decision, the power to coordinate international in kind assistance and grants under the supervision of the Prime Minister or his authorized delegate.

iii. National food safety legislation

From legal point of view; food security would not be ideally reached without demonstrating the implications of the right to adequate food. The latter includes the right of individuals to safe and appropriate food. In Palestine, the legal framework for food safety is fundamentally composed of: Public

Health Law No 20 of 2004, Agriculture Law No 2 of 2003, the Palestinian Standards and Measurements Law No 6 of 2000, the Decree on the Law of Industry No. 10 of 2011, and the Consumer Protection Law No 21 of 2005. There is no umbrella food safety law yet, although proposals have been discussed at several junctures over the past years. Ministry of Health is responsible for issuing import and export approvals, investigates outbreaks and has a High Committee for Food Safety, from members of the different ministries involved. Legislation related to animal and plant protection include the Agriculture Law which addresses issue related to agriculture quarantine, animal feed, livestock hygiene and slaughtering and fish in addition to several pieces of subsidiary legislation including the Control of Animal Health No. 8 of 2010, the Regulation of Animal Farms No. 383 of 2005, the Regulation of Chicken Hatcheries No. 380 of 2005 and Veterinary Quarantine No. 6 of 2010.

There are several regulatory weaknesses related to the regulatory framework for food safety including the fragmentation of the regulatory framework governing food safety, which is based on several pieces of legislation rather than an umbrella food safety law. The legal framework is thus not harmonized, uncoordinated and appears not to fulfill the requirements of modern food safety legislation in line with international standards. Further, the assessment reveals that the fragmentation of the regulatory framework results in functional overlap between authorities thereby compromising the effectiveness of monitoring, control and enforcement of food safety related measures.

The Ministry of National Economy has been working with international donors and national public and private institutions to strengthen and reform the status quo. On 26/8/2014, the Cabinet endorsed the National Quality Policy for Palestine. To ensure the smooth implementation of this policy, the Cabinet decided, on 3/2/2015, to establish a national steering committee for the implementation of the assistance policy, chaired by the Minister of National Economy and composed of representatives of the Ministries of Health, Agriculture, Public Works and the Palestine Standards Institution. The policy defines *the Quality Infrastructure* as the totality of the institutional framework (public and/or private) required to establish and implement standardization, metrology (scientific, industrial and legal), accreditation and conformity assessment services (inspection, testing and certification) necessary to provide acceptable evidence that products and services meet defined criteria, be they demanded by regulatory authorities (i.e. technical regulations) or the market place (i.e. contractually or inferred).²⁹

Accordingly, the Ministry of National Economy decided to establish a Committee on National Technical Regulations by a regulation to be issued by the Cabinet to enhance the coordination mechanisms among all competent authorities.³⁰ This Committee is to be chaired by the Ministry of National Economy and composed of the institutions involved in technical regulation setting each in their respective sphere.

The committee shall, *inter alia*: a) identify the priority needs of competent authorities and facilities operating in Palestine regarding the development of their technical capabilities; b) provide recommendations for competent authorities on the conditions and standards of product quality and safety and the requirements of the establishment of testing facilities and laboratories; c) review the national quality infrastructure and offer guidance for competent authorities regarding mechanisms of developing

²⁹ Ministry of National Economy, National Quality Policy for Palestine – February 2014, Ramallah, p. 8.

³⁰ Technical regulations: the document specifying the features of products or related operations one must comply with. It may include or address technical terms, symbols, packaging, the specification of distinctive features, labelling requirements that conform to the product or the method of production.

the national quality infrastructure; d) review international standards and best practices regarding technical regulations and standards of manufacturing, circulating, storing, transporting and distributing products and all associated operations, including the WTO Agreements on Technical Barriers to Trade ("TBT Agreement") and the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures ("SPS Agreement");³¹

iv. Relevant Comparative Experiences and Gaps in the Palestinian Legal and Policy Frameworks

Most comparative national legal systems address the concept of food security in various laws and regulations, but in general legal provisions, while at the same time enact legislation on food safety. Only few models have enacted special laws on food security.³² In Jordan, for instance, on 16 June 2015, the Food Law No. 30 of 2015 came into force. This Law established the Jordanian Food and Drug Institution as a sole authority entrusted to supervise imported and local food in all of its stages in order to ensure its safety and quality. The Law introduces a technical committee within the mentioned institution comprising of diverse members representing stakeholders, to lay down technical instructions for food quality and safety, and for the subsequent trading of food stuff as well as to issue control and oversight measures and risk assessment procedures (Article 10). The Law also establishes a high committee to: adopt the instructions and measures issued by the technical committee; put in place the plans and programmes required for controlling food quality and safety; adopt testing types for food products and conformity measures; select laboratories for laboratory testing and analysis (Articles 6, 8). The Law grants the Jordanian Food and Drug Institution several powers including: enforcing health measures and technical regulations, regardless of whether the food in question is locally produced or imported; banning circulation or import of any food before being tested and proven suitable and fit for human consumption and in conformity with the health safety terms; and carrying out inspections on places in which food is circulated (article 4).

In Egypt, Law number 1/2017 on establishing the National Food Safety Authority grants the authority the power to protect consumers' health and interests by ensuring that food stuffs, domestic and imported, are produced, consumed, distributed, and marketed in Egypt in line with the standards of food safety and quality as spelt out in national legislation. This law is similar to the Jordanian one except for the organizational structure of the authority. In the Egyptian case, the Authority management is distributed amongst the Board of Trustees, Board of Directors and the Executive Manager. No specific committees therefore are established.³³

³¹ Pursuant to the draft regulation of this committee, the committee may invite advisors and consultants, as it deems necessary, to its meetings in order to hear their views on all or part of the items placed on the agenda, without granting them the right to vote. The committee shall convene in its capacity as an appellate party to consider the appeals lodged by stakeholders against decisions taken by competent authorities regarding the applicability or availability of relevant technical regulations pertaining to the subject-matter of the dispute. The decisions taken by the committee shall be subject to appeal before the Supreme Court of Justice in accordance with the law.

³² See e.g., USA, Global Food Security Act of 2016, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/house-bill/1567/text>. Also, United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Food Security Act of 1985, at https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/PL_99-198.pdf. See also, Department of Food & Public Distribution, India, National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013, <http://dfpd.nic.in/nfsa-act.htm>; and Local Food Security Act (Government of New Brunswick, Canada) <http://www.gnb.ca/legis/bill/FILE/58/1/Bill-11-e.htm>.

³³ For more information see <http://www.nfsa.gov.eg>.

In Lebanon, the Food Safety Law no. 35/2015 has established the Food Safety Commission. The Law covers different steps of the food production process. Food control falls under the jurisdiction of this Commission, with a coordination mechanism between the Commission and relevant Ministries. The Law refers to international food safety agreements, particularly those related to sanitary and phytosanitary measures and technical barriers to trade. The Commission includes a board of directors comprising seven members assigned by the Council of Ministers. The commission is responsible for setting food safety policy, risk assessment, testing process, the norms and technical standards related to food, pesticides, fertilizers, and fodder. All ministries and competent authorities are required to report each month on food safety violations.

As previously mentioned, there is no systematic and coherent legal framework pertaining food security in Palestine. Nonetheless, it can be understood from various pieces of legislation that each regulatory body owns general powers to work on its respective area of competence in the field of food security. That is, nothing prevents those bodies from establishing work plans to address the subject matter as the majority of laws are silent. The silence in such a case might be useful as we can legally interpret it as an implicit authorization to deal with the matter.

A key concern has not been tackled by national legislation; operational management and coordination mechanisms amongst various bodies; a matter that is significantly required to mitigate the negative effects arising from the legal uncertainty as to the inclusion of food security in national legal system. For instance, the Ministry of National Economy supervises trade, including trade in foodstuff, and the Consumer Protection Directorate at this Ministry is responsible for implementing the consumer protection law 2005, including market surveillance. In contrast, the Ministry of Health is authorised by law to undertake market surveillance and to combat health hazards resulting from tradable products. The Ministry of Agriculture also exercises similar functions within its jurisdiction. In addition, the Palestine Standards Institute is empowered to establish and enforce standards for products quality.

This position entails overlap in powers and responsibilities among different bodies, as confirmed by stakeholders' consultations conducted for this Review. Accordingly, an efficient coordination mechanism across all players and stakeholders is needed that would clearly set work procedures for the overall dimensions of food security as a uniform and sustainable process. Roles of public entities, NGOs, including trade unions and consumer protection associations, international agencies and organisations need to be identified.

E. Malnutrition and the Role of Government in Addressing Gaps in Nutritional Levels

In order to attenuate the effect of malnutrition, the Ministry of Health devised the National Nutrition Policy and Strategy (MoH 2008). The goals of the plan include increasing diet diversity, food fortification and micronutrient fortification to fight deficiency, making sure that the nutrient needs of population at risk (eg. women and children) are met, advocating for the consumption of a well-balanced diet in terms of quantity and quality, improving the level of communication and coordination between stakeholders, empowering the Nutrition Department capacity, and raising nutrition awareness in Palestinian society. Strategies to reach these goals, range from identifying nutrition needs through the national nutrition surveillance system, putting strategies in place to prevent and treat micronutrient deficiencies such as

flour fortification and supplementation, fighting obesity and nutrition related non-communicable diseases, promoting breast feeding and appropriate weaning practices, growth monitoring of children, managing severe cases of malnutrition, and measures to promote food safety and quality.

Micronutrient supplementation of folic acid and iron during pregnancy and three months post-natal in addition to Vitamins A and D for infants (birth to 12 months) were part of the policy and strategy targeting mothers and newly born. However, to widen efforts to fight malnutrition the Ministry of Health pursued strategies that can reach a wider audience using a more universal approach. In 2006, a flour fortification programme was put in place, fortifying flour with ten micronutrients and these included Thiamin (B1), Riboflavin (B2), Niacin (B3), Pantothenic Acid (B5), Vitamin B6 (Pyridoxine), Biotin (B7), Vitamin B12 (Cobalamine), folic acid, iron, zinc, vitamin A and D. Despite such comprehensive approach in trying to reach a wider audience with a range of micronutrients in such a commonly consumed food ingredient, it can be seen from the data presented that earlier deficiencies still exist. The Palestinian Micronutrient Survey did present data on the adherence of bakeries in fortifying flour and it found out that in total of all the samples exposed to the iron-spot test, only 41% in the West Bank and 2% in the Gaza Strip were adequately fortified. To investigate if the medium (bread) was fortified, further testing of bread samples was carried out and 44% (n=1070) of the tested bread samples contained iron, and 51% in the Gaza Strip (n=604) (MoH&UNICEF 2013).

Another approach used by the Ministry of Health was salt iodization which was put in place in 1996 with potassium iodate being added to locally produced/packaged table salt to supply iodine and prevent goitre. Salt iodization was the approach of choice considering it is commonly used among Palestinian population. To evaluate if salt iodization was adequate and falling in the mandatory range for iodine fortification and in the range of 35-55mg/kg of salt, the Ministry sampled tests, documented in the State of Palestine Micronutrient Survey, revealed that of all tested samples in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip 9% and 3% were fortified respectively (MoH&UNICEF 2013). The report concluded that salt iodization in Palestine needs better inspection measurement, more thorough monitoring and supervision to ensure that it is done in the right way.

The role of National NGOs and the private sector in these endeavours is mainly in implementation, to ensure that bakeries and factories (private sector) carry out the fortification as directed for salt and flour. In addition, local health NGOs only carry out health education or project based on the type of funding provided by donors. It is important for national NGOs and the private sector to be involved in any nutrition intervention programme considering their experience in the lifestyle of the masses, accessibility to community resources, and large network with the different population in order to prevent morbidity and mortality related to over nutrition. While food assistance programmes can help in preventing hunger, mitigating the aftermath of disasters and making food available for those that do not have access to food, this alone does not guarantee proper nutrition that can promote health and prevent disease, both for food insecure and the population in general.

As can be seen from the data collected on food consumption patterns, there is no difference between secure and insecure household in the consumption of energy dense food items such as fats and carbohydrates. The main source of wheat for the majority of households was refined flour considering its popularity among the Palestinian population and commercial availability. The type of flour generally

marketed and refined does really influence its quality in terms of its nutritious content in vitamins and dietary fiber. Refined flour with its lack of dietary fiber and vitamins only provides calories making it an empty calorie, only providing energy. The other main source of calories among household was oils; vegetable oil although plant-based does provide a large number of calories as fats in general are the most energy dense with 9 kcal/1g of fat compared to carbohydrates and proteins which both provide 4 Kcal/1g respectively. Although the oil provided is vegetable based, many families opt to fry their foods in vegetable oil and if fried to high temperatures it may result in the release of carcinogenic substances (mainly acrolein). Sugar is the second food item that is consumed on daily bases among all households, suggesting that empty calories are a main stay in Palestinian household diet which can contribute to overweight, obesity, and several chronic diseases. With less than 25% of the Palestinian population involved in vigorous physical activity and the prevalence of high blood pressure, overweight and obesity, over-nutrition is a form of malnutrition that is well established in Palestinian society. These facts only augment the alarming statistics that suggest that more than 40% of deaths in Palestine are caused by cardiovascular disease.

Consumption of fruits and vegetables in Palestinian household is not sufficient and does not meet the five a day nutrition guidelines. A diet low in fruits and vegetables can increase the risk of many cancers and cardiovascular diseases, while increasing the risk of obesity. It can be seen from the data discussed above that simple sugars, refined grains, and empty dense calories such as fats, sweets, and other foods are in excess and contribute to obesity and its complications, and consequently increasing the risk of a wide range of chronic diseases. Fruits and vegetables provide micronutrients (vitamins and minerals) making the Palestinian population at risk of micronutrient deficiencies. Considering consumption patterns and the fact that nutrition in Palestine is energy dense rather nutrient dense, the outcomes of the State of Palestine micronutrient survey do not come as a surprise.

The State of Palestine Micronutrient survey confirms a range of important gaps in the state of Palestinian nutrition. Vitamin A deficiency is prevalent among pregnant and lactating women (exceeding 25%.) with more than 65% of children between the age of 6-59 months deficient in Vitamin A. Vitamin D deficiency was also prevalent, with most pregnant and lactating women reported to be deficient and more than 50% of children deficient as well. Vitamin D deficiency should be avoided at an early age as bone mineralization continues up to the early or late 20s and in case of deficiency, bone density will not reach its maximum increasing the risk of osteoporosis and fractures. Vitamin E deficiency also manifest in close to a quarter of pregnant women and more than 50% of children. Vitamin E is essential for health and can help in attenuating the effect of oxidative stress protecting cell damage and hence reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease, cancer, and many other diseases. Vitamin B12 deficiency is not as prevalent as other micronutrient deficiency, but it is prevalent in two thirds of pregnant women. Zinc deficiency is highly prevalent in Palestine (more than 50% of the population), which can result in retarded sexual maturation of children, susceptibility to infection in immune compromised populations such as pregnant women, and congenital malformation as the fetus develops and grows in the womb of during pregnancy. Last but not least iron deficiency is prevalent mainly in the Gaza Strip, iron deficiency can among other effects aggravate intestinal bleeding (due to many causes, such as feeding the newly born bovine milk or the presence of parasites in the intestine).

Chapter Four

PROGRAMMATIC RESPONSE TO THE TWIN CHALLENGES OF POVERTY AND FOOD INSECURITY



The preceding chapters have shown how food insecurity in Palestine is largely driven by lack of access to economic resources in which poverty, unemployment, and low earning capacity are the main drivers. Crippled with fiscal deficit and lack of policy space, the PA has adopted social protection as a main policy to tackle food insecurity. Eligible poor households receive various social assistance packages, ranging from cash transfers to food assistance. Undoubtedly, these social practices are vital to improve their livelihood. Still, there remain serious concerns about the ability of the current social protection scheme to reduce food insecurity. These include: the relevance of food and cash based assistance to help poor households exit poverty, linkages between food instability, a weak economy and population growth, and availability of necessary funding to meet current and future needs of food insecure households. This section focuses on current programmes addressing food security, modalities and impact.

In Palestine, an effective safety net based on clear-cut policies does not exist. The programmes implemented are wholly dependent on the availability of funding, which is largely external and increasingly under pressure from other priorities. In general, different local and international actors implement a wide array of assistance programmes, most of which aim at providing for the basic and most urgent needs of the poorest families. Others assist poor families by combining both relief and development components. According to national statistics, such programmes have helped to reduce the poverty rate, which (based on monthly consumption) was 31 percent in 2006, but thanks to assistance programmes, the rate after assistance dropped to 11 percent (PCBS, 2007). In 2010, the rate of poverty was 26 percent, with assistance reducing it to 17 percent (PCBS, 2011). Assistance-based poverty reduction has, no doubt, lowered food insecurity for beneficiary households. However, while providing cash or in-kind assistance contributes to reducing the effects of poverty and food insecurity, particularly under occupation, development interventions are still necessary, as they “constitute the only means to permanently limit poverty and hence limit the root causes of food insecurity” (Rabadi and Mataria, 2009).

The forms of assistance and targeting mechanisms used by different programmes are the main factors that determine the effectiveness and responsiveness of these programmes to community needs. In terms of forms, some programmes provide financial assistance, while others provide in-kind food assistance. One productive programme is the Ministry of Social Development’s cash transfers programme, which provides for the basic and urgent needs of the poorest and food insecure households. This programme also incorporates the World Food Programme’s periodic food assistance, UNRWA’s financial and in-kind assistance programmes, World Food Programme’s assistance programmes and other programmes run by international or local organizations, such as Zakat committees, charities and non-governmental organizations.

A. Ministry of Social Development: Poverty Mitigation and Food Assistance Programmes

The MoSD provides regular cash assistance, subsidizes electricity bills for poor families, grants free health insurance cards, exempts children of poor families from public school fees, and provides cash assistance to families vulnerable to social, health and economic shocks as well as orphans. In 2016, the Ministry provided cash assistance to 115,000 families, though its target was 120,000 families. The Ministry attributed this to the Ministry of Finance's cuts in the transfers programme. On the other hand, the MoSD’s food assistance depends entirely on funds from the World Food Programme. Seasonal food and in-kind assistance is provided to about 217,000 people annually. The number of people receiving

such assistance has remained the same for the past few years because of the limited funds from the WFP. The Ministry had at one point aimed to increase the target population to 600,000, but this was clearly too optimistic and probably unnecessary. To date, the Ministry has not conducted a study to measure the improvement in food security for poor households (State of Palestine - Ministry of Social Development, 2017).

The main social protection programme that the MoSD provides is the national cash transfer programme (CTP), which was formed as a part of the social protection strategy in 2010. The CTP started in the West Bank in 2010 and in Gaza in the following year with an aim to enhance poverty alleviation. The targeting mechanism to identify eligible (poor) households is based on using a score test, known as Proxy Means Test Formula (PMTF). Based on various consumption criteria, the PMTF classifies households into: extremely poor, including those consuming below extreme poverty line, poor (consuming between poverty line and extreme poverty line), and non-poor. Extremely poor households are deemed for cash assistance, while poor households are eligible only if proved to be associated with specific vulnerability character

The amount of cash assistance allocated to each eligible household is calculated to reduce household poverty gap by half. This is the difference between household consumption level, as estimated by the PMTF, and the extreme poverty line. Another determining factor is household size, which adjusts cash assistance to account for sizable households up to a maximum threshold. According to these criteria, eligible households are deemed to deserve cash assistance in the range between NIS 750 and NIS 1800 each quarter. By the end of 2016, the number of CTP beneficiaries amounted to 118,790 households with a total cash transfer of \$533 million. Owing to rising poverty rate, the share of beneficiaries from Gaza has outpaced the West Bank's, currently making up more than 60% of the total beneficiaries (see Table 10).

The MoSD has acknowledged that it has failed to develop a monitoring and evaluation system for the social protection sector and to implement the National Social Protection Strategy 2014-2016 as planned. However, the Ministry has built an initial system for evaluating and monitoring its anti-poverty programme with technical support and funding from the WFP. According to the Ministry, in 2017 a follow-up and evaluation system for other programmes will be built with support from the WFP and the European Union. In parallel, the MoSD will develop two new systems. The first is a monitoring and evaluation system for persons with disabilities. The second is a logical framework for combating poverty (State of Palestine - Ministry of Social Development, 2017). Certainly, the absence of monitoring and evaluation systems is one of the main challenges that impedes appropriate assessment of programme outcomes and restricts possible development of such programmes based on periodic reviews. Such systems are, thus, very much needed.

B. United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) Food Assistance Programmes

United Nations agencies have been providing food assistance to Palestine refugees ever since they first came within UNRWA's orbit after 1948, and indeed a Palestine refugee's identity is signaled by (proud) possession of a UNRWA Ration Card as much as other potent symbols of dispossession, such as the key to their pre-1948 houses and title deeds to their lost lands. Even as UNRWA has faced steady pressures over more than six decades to reduce its operations, first largely abandoning its "Works" programmes,

and squeezing its social service and “Relief” components, food assistance continues to be an important component of its purpose and role. Regardless of the incidence and scope of food insecurity among refugees, UNRWA has been unstinting in its efforts to remain true to its mission.

UNRWA is the second largest social protection agency after the MoSD. It provides social assistance to registered refugees in the occupied Palestine. UNRWA also provides basic services such education, health, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), and shelter repair.³⁴ UNRWA also provides various social assistance, including emergency food assistance, emergency cash assistance, and cash for work. The number of refugees in Palestine registered with UNRWA is 2.11 million: 1.3 million in Gaza and 0.81 million in the West Bank. More than half of them receive some sort of food assistance (emergency food assistance, emergency cash assistance, Cash-for-Work, or livelihoods). In 2016 the required funds for these program interventions amounted to \$181 million, while UNRWA received only \$94 million for them (52%).

UNRWA provided emergency food assistance to 157,152 refugee families (839,425 refugees) in Gaza during the first half of 2016. According to UNRWA data, 392,259 Palestinian refugees, living below the deep poverty line of USD1.74 per person per day, received 80 percent of their required daily caloric needs, while refugees living below the absolute poverty line of USD 3.87 per person per day received 43 percent of their caloric requirements. In the West Bank, UNRWA, in partnership with the WFP, provided food voucher assistance to 7,767 refugee food-insecure households (46,255 people) located outside camps. For lack of funds, this assistance covered only 30 percent of households in need of such assistance within the programme. UNRWA, in partnership with the WFP, also provided in-kind food assistance to 65 refugee and non-refugee Bedouin communities, or 34,660 people (UNRWA, 2016).

In Gaza, the UNRWA Job Creation Programme generated around 420 thousand employment days (equaling 2,947 full-time positions), with 7,793 people benefiting from short-term employment during the first half of 2016. UNRWA allocated USD 4,860,000 to this programme. In the West Bank, under a cash-for-work programme, UNRWA created short-term job opportunities for a total of 4,462 refugee households in 19 refugee camps, where each recipient received USD 420 per month for three months (UNRWA, 2016). In addition, a special cash for work programme offers three-month job opportunities to vulnerable refugees to support the refugee camp environment, such as minor maintenance and rehabilitation work and community support activities. In 2016, the programme engaged 10,000 refugees, mainly youth, women, and disabled, with a total budget of \$12.6 million.

C. The World Food Programme Involvement in Palestine

The WFP is the main international organization providing food security assistance for non-refugees in Palestine. It started operating in Palestine as early as 1991 in the wake of the first intifada and the impact of the Israeli closures during the first Gulf War, with an objective of enhancing food security through three pillars. The first is relief - to provide poor and vulnerable houses with urgent food needs. The second is resilience - to enhance livelihood and economic activities of marginalized and vulnerable households, while the third is preparedness - to strengthen national capacity for emergency in crises time. Relief is the main focus of WFP operations, especially since the humanitarian crises following the second intifada, the Gaza blockade and subsequent wars. WFP provides food assistance, in kind and food

³⁴ See <https://www.unrwa.org/resources/emergency-appeals/2016-opt-emergency-appeal>.

vouchers, to non-refugee households, including: CTP beneficiaries, distributed by the MoSD, non-CTP vulnerable households via Global Communities (WFP's main NGO service provider), and herder and Bedouin communities in the West Bank via UNRWA. WFP also cooperates with other agencies, mainly FAO, to enhance food security via development interventions where possible (livelihood projects).

The WFP's first strategy covered 2014-2016, with the goal of achieving food security in sustainable ways. According to the WFP evaluation report, the programme has made progress in relief and capacity-building in the Gaza Strip in response to crisis conditions, but could not achieve the second priority of resilience (WFP and Mokoro, 2016). "There was no reported or discernible evidence that sustainable enhancements to livelihood resilience had been achieved on any significant scale ... this is what the Palestinian context dictated" (WFP 2016a p. 44). Given the complexity and intangibility of a goal such as resilience, the WFP need not consider this as a failure; in any case, it is natural to assume that when international implementing agencies adhere to their strict boundaries of action, they would avoid interventions that are overly-ambitious and increase duplication with different agencies' programmes. In addition, the focus by each agency on its key areas of expertise increases the chances of successful interventions, which at the end of the day augers well for the target individuals and reduces competition over funds between actors.

The WFP targets (mostly) non-refugee families in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. In 2016, the WFP provided assistance to 479,124 people: 51 percent in the Gaza Strip and 49 percent in the West Bank. The assistance took three forms: vouchers (38 percent), in-kind food assistance (59 percent) and school feeding (3 percent). The assistance was distributed by different agents: the MoSD (42 percent), NGOs (51 percent) and UNRWA (7 percent).

Stakeholders from the Gaza Strip consulted for this Review reported a gap between the indicators of food and nutrition security and the programmes and projects implemented there, especially those implemented by international organizations. The goals of these programmes are not properly aligned with the pillars of food security and suffer from targeting shortcomings. There is a growing acceptance that the shift from food assistance in-kind to food vouchers is advantageous as it increases the efficiency of programmes and protects the dignity of families receiving assistance. On the other hand, they considered that, despite their large number, the programmes were based on the organizations' implementation priorities, not on the actual outcomes. The focus on the short-term implies an unsustainable impact, which requires reconsidering the design of these programmes to allow for increasing economic empowerment.

D. United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and Food Security

FAO runs a two-component programme in Palestine: the *humanitarian critical assistance* for Palestinian producers; and the *development of local capacity* and the *enabling environment* for increased productivity, competitiveness and employment in agriculture (FAO, 2014). Within the first component, FAO implements three types of interventions to increase access or recover sustainable livelihoods.. In the area of increasing access to sustainable livelihoods, FAO has assisted 9,417 families in 2016, including the construction or rehabilitation of rainwater harvesting wells, the reclamation of land by focusing on the route of the annexation wall, and distribution of drought-resistant seeds. FAO also assisted 10,043 Palestinians households in recovering sustainable livelihoods resources in 2016, including through the

rehabilitation of groundwater wells, aquaculture ponds in the Gaza Strip and agricultural water reservoirs in the West Bank. It also provided vulnerable groups of farmers and herders with animal feed, water reservoirs, fertilizers, pesticides and other production inputs, as well as the rehabilitation of green houses and animal pens, focusing on Area C. Within this component, 479 families received assistance through interventions to improve access to food in urban and semi-urban areas in the Gaza Strip, while 4,498 families in the West Bank and Gaza Strip benefited from protecting the sustainable livelihoods programme, including assistance allocated to diversify livelihoods and protect them against natural hazards (FAO, 2017).

The second component of the FAO programme involves three types of interventions. The first is aimed at building institutional capacity of agricultural policy, food safety, water and land management, disaster risk management and others. The second type of intervention focuses on cooperative institutional capacity-building in areas of competition, market access and job creation. Seventy-one cooperatives received assistance through this intervention in 2016. The third type of intervention seeks to enhance farmers' productivity through modern, water-saving agricultural technologies, improve quality and diversity of production, and increase farmers' access to local and foreign markets by boosting agricultural production up to international standards. Under this type of intervention, FAO assisted to 7,622 farmers in 2016 (FAO, 2017). While these interventions do not specifically target food insecure or the poorest communities, their overall impact on strengthening the resilience of the Palestinian agricultural sector, which is mainly small, rural, family based and poor, makes an indirect contribution to food security.

E. The Programmes of Key Palestinian NGOs

To develop and improve the productivity of agricultural land and access, PARC implemented a range of different activities in 2015 covering 6944 dunums owned by 6255 families, including 438 families headed by women. To develop connecting water sources for irrigation purposes, PARC succeeded in increasing water harvesting by 22,000m³ in 2015 serving more than 11,000 families. In terms of livestock, PARC did rehabilitation and maintenance of 225 poultry farms for broiler and layer chickens and production requirements, benefiting 225 families; distribution of 12 Shami goats to four families, restoration of 450 sheep barns to benefit 450 farmers, distribution of 93 animal production units to 93 beneficiaries, and distribution of 70 animal production units for 70 families. Through its activities, PARC was able to create temporary jobs and improved livelihoods for 1030 agricultural laborers (PARC, 2016).

In 2016, UWAC declared that 30,000 farmers and fishermen benefited from its 29 implemented projects in 2016 concentrated on areas classified as C in the West Bank and border areas in the Gaza Strip. The 29 projects included reclamation and rehabilitation of 1900 dunums of undeveloped and under the risk of confiscation lands that will result in increasing the beneficiaries' expected income by 25% in the long run, opening and rehabilitating 105km of agricultural roads, and increasing water harvest by 32,620m³. In terms of livestock development, UAWC supported establishing of a 1000 dunum pastoral land, and a demonstration sheep farm which benefits 200 farmers, in addition to providing vaccinations and vitamins to 24,000 heads of sheep, distributing 19 tons of forage seeds, rehabilitating 40 fishing boats and 80 fishing nets, and distributed 40 heads of Merino improved sheep breed. UAWC also provided farmers who were affected by difficult conditions with the needed support, presented food assistance for poor

families, which contributed to the reduction of poverty and unemployment and raising the level of food security in the targeted areas. (UWAC, 2017).

MA'AN succeeded in implementing or completing 69 development or relief projects in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 2015 divided into seven main programmes. Two of the main programmes are directly related to food and nutrition security. The first is the Food Security and Sustainable Agriculture Programme that aims to stabilize farmers in their lands, strengthen their resilience, improve food security at the family, community and national levels, promote self-reliance, and provide healthy and safe food. In this programme, 20 projects were implemented, resulted in reclamation and rehabilitation of 890 dunums for 627 families in the WBGS, establishing or rehabilitation of 92 greenhouses for 89 families, and rehabilitation of 17km of agricultural roads that serves 1662 dunums owned by 298 families. In the development of water for agriculture, the programme resulted in drilling and rehabilitation of 116 agricultural wells and collecting pond, construction and rehabilitation of 14 artesian wells, and maintenance of 1350m of water conveyor lines. In the livestock sector, the programme results were maintenance and rehabilitation of 239 sheep farms, maintenance and rehabilitation 136 chicken farms, and distribution of 493 sheep and 6648 chickens. The programme created around 60 thousand working days through its projects. The second programme is the Humanitarian and Emergency Assistance Programme, in which, 7 projects were implemented and resulted in distribution of 521,747 value-based vouchers, 62,392 of health tools and clothing value-based vouchers, 7,671 of food baskets, 1,075 hot meals for kindergartens children, and creating 39,559 working days through emergency projects (MA'AN, 2016).

F. Impact Evaluation: Food Assistance Modalities, Empowerment and Targeting Issues

There is no doubt that social assistance is vital for vulnerable household to cope with poverty. However, most of assistance that poor household receive, whether channeled via cash, in kind, or in voucher, does not increase household's ability to generate income. Therefore, the effect on poverty is transitory, depending on sustainability of assistance. Consistent with this argument, the EU funded an impact evaluation study to measure the contribution of the Palestinian CTP in 2013. The main conclusion was that: "The data suggests that most households were able bridge the poverty gap to meet many, but not all basic needs such as for food, basic education, housing and healthcare. While accessing these basic necessities may enable the progressive realization of human and economic development, we did not find evidence that households were able to move out of poverty and some households still lack some basic needs" (Hackstein et al, 2013, p. 4). Hence there is little doubt that current provision of social assistance serves to help disadvantaged households cope with poverty and food insecurity; as poor and extremely food insecure households have become more dependent on assistance, reduction in food security assistance would have dreadful consequences on them.

Beneficiaries of the MoSD's programmes consider assistance as valuable given their very difficult economic conditions, particularly the absence of breadwinners, chronic illness of breadwinners, and other adverse conditions. Many households report a persistent need for both cash and food assistance, stressing that assistance remains highly appreciated and important and should not be replaced wholly with cash assistance. For the neediest, food assistance secures basic food needs during the three-month cycle while money may be spent on other basic needs, such as medicine, education or debt coverage. assistance

recipients also highlight the importance of development assistance to grow their small businesses, which could contribute to self-reliance and poverty reduction. However, the surrounding social, economic and environmental conditions remain key limitations to such projects.

During consultations, households provided some feedback on assistance programmes, including limited assistance, especially cash, with households receiving only NIS 750 per quarter. From the households' point of view, this amount cannot meet the very basic needs and is not sensitive to the size of the family. In one of the example households with 10 members, four of them suffer from permanent disability and still it receives the same amount as the others. Some items of food assistance were reported as insufficient, such as oil, while many did not approve of excluding sugar from the food assistance basket.

Beneficiaries also note the relatively low quantity/value of assistance as juxtaposed against the high cost of living and the steady rise in prices. This may require aligning assistance with the consumer price index, in line with the policy of providing for the basic household needs. Besides, many households report high electricity and water bills, which drain a large part of the cash assistance provided to them. The cost of health services is another burden for the households, most of which have people with disabilities or individuals with permanent need of medication. Though all are covered by the public insurance system, these households highlighted that some drugs they need are not available in public medical facilities, which forces them to buy these urgently needed expensive drugs from commercial pharmacies.

A study by UNRWA (2011) suggests that cash-based assistance is more efficient than in-kind assistance. The shift is typically associated with reduction of administrative costs and giving poor households the flexibility to use funds in line with individual priorities. The study estimated that this shift could reduce the administrative cost to UNRWA in the West Bank alone from USD 1,489,000 per year to only USD 126,000. These findings led UNRWA to gradually shift to cash-based assistance. However, the reduction in administrative costs must not be the only factor driving the shift to cash-based assistance. UNRWA needs to consider another factor: the impact of this shift on beneficiary households. It is therefore essential for UNRWA to ponder carefully before pursuing such an approach to the full. It should first be assured that poor families can manage cash resources effectively and in a way that does not harm their nutritional status. Reducing poor households' reliance on food assistance through building their resilience in securing their needs based on financial assistance is generally effective and productive. However, the transition from food assistance to cash-based assistance requires proper planning, and the process should be gradual to ward off the adverse effects on the poor.

In terms of empowering programmes, some programmes targeting the poor combine relief interventions and development policies for empowering poor households, especially: the UNDP-administered Economic Empowerment Programme (whose management is supposed to be transferred to the Palestinian government); the programmes funded by FAO and implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture; the Employment Fund run by the Palestinian Ministry of Labor.

Within the Economic Empowerment Programme, for example, until the end of December 2015, poor families benefited from some 13,600 development projects, including 8,153 grants and 5,581 small funds. However, as evaluation studies have not been conducted, it is difficult to assess the cumulative reduction of poverty caused by these projects during 2014-2016. Data, which are only available for 2016, show that

of the 500 supported households, 50 families and 100 people with disabilities came out of poverty (State of Palestine - Ministry of Social Affairs, 2017). Assessments of the Deprived Families Economic Empowerment Program (DEEP), which provided vulnerable and marginalized families with grants and loans for entrepreneurship. Indicate that it has enhanced resilience by reducing risk and increasing savings as well as improving monthly incomes and living standards including food security, consumption, and social capital with 87 percent of the established enterprises operational (Sansour and Zahran 2011 cited in Ameta 2015).

Here, two important issues should be taken into consideration. First, the absence of recurrent monitoring and evaluation systems (as opposed to occasional in-house evaluations) makes it more difficult to measure the real impact of different programmes implemented by partners, which requires the development of such systems. Second, data for 2016 are encouraging, as development enabling interventions contribute significantly to taking households out of poverty and thus out of the population receiving assistance. It is therefore important to consider the best methods to improve such interventions. To reduce poor households' reliance on assistance and enable them to escape poverty and build self-reliance, it is possible to adopt programmes designed to build the capacity of the poor and help them build their own productive enterprises. This is the most effective way of reducing poverty and food insecurity. However, the shift from cash-based assistance to food assistance, or the other way around, requires proper planning and preparation, as such transition must be undertaken gradually to avoid negative impact on the poor if development interventions fall short.

A World Bank study (2004) defined targeting as a *means of increasing programme efficiency by increasing the benefit that the poor can get within a fixed programme budget*. The study identified the motivations for targeting in three key features: 1. Objective – the desire to maximize the reduction in poverty or, more generally, the increase in social welfare; 2. Budget constraints – a limited poverty combating budget; and 3. Opportunity cost – the tradeoff between the number of beneficiaries covered by the intervention and the level of transfers, so that the amount of the transfers going to needy households can be increased, while the non-poor households are excluded or at least their number is reduced.

Leakage and inclusion/exclusion of needy groups are the most important indicators for measuring the efficiency of mechanisms and criteria for targeting social assistance programmes. Leakage is the first culprit and is calculated by dividing the number of non-needy individuals receiving assistance by the total number of individuals receiving assistance. Exclusion, the second determinant, describes the proportion of poor people who do not receive assistance from the total number of the poor (Shalabi and Ladadweh, 2009). Data from the PCBS Poverty Report 2006 (2007) estimated leakage at 57 percent and exclusion at 29 percent, while the same report for 2009-2010 (2011) showed even higher rates of leakage (66 percent) and exclusion (43 percent). The results point out that targeting suffers from serious gaps, and therefore a large proportion of assistance was provided to non-poor individuals and a large proportion of the poor population did not receive assistance. However, a study by the World Bank (2012) showed that in 2012 the rates of leakage and exclusion in the cash transfer programme implemented by the Ministry of Social Affairs were only 22 percent and 24 percent, respectively.

Two factors can explain such a discrepancy in estimates. First, the PCBS Poverty Report data are based on calculating the relative poverty threshold, whereas World Bank data give estimates based on absolute

poverty because the social transfers programme targets the poorest in specific. Second, the Poverty Report data cover all types of formal and informal assistance (and thus leakage and exclusion), including assistance provided by individuals or families to other individuals or families. The latter form, usually provided to relatives and acquaintances without criteria, is highly susceptible to leakage errors. Nevertheless, the PCBS data may indicate that the targeting mechanisms used in the programmes implemented by local or international institutions, other than the MoSD's transfers programme, have some gaps, and therefore the methods of implementing such programmes should be reconsidered in order to narrow such gaps. Despite the low rates of leakage and exclusion in the MoSD's transfers programme, the World Bank believes that targeting mechanisms can be improved for further reduction of these rates.

Since 2012, when the World Bank evaluated the programme, the MoSD has begun to tackle this serious problem through several actions, which have supposedly reduced those rates during the last five years. The MoSD reports a set of measures to improve the performance of the transfers programme:

- The Ministry has created local social protection networks, which comprise public figures, local civil society organizations and local government units, whose responsibilities include, among other things, helping improve targeting.
- The Ministry has developed a monthly presentation system whereby social workers, in cooperation with local social protection nets, intensify visits to all beneficiary families for evaluation purposes.
- The Ministry has taken significant steps toward implementing the case management policy, aiming at designing need-based interventions for each poor family; i.e., building targeting mechanisms for each individual case in lieu of general targeting – a responsibility of social workers in cooperation with local partners (local institutions providing assistance to poor families).
- In 2016, the Ministry started to implement an electronic portal system for sharing databases with all local and international service providers.
- The Ministry of Finance has suspended MoSD assistance to all families receiving other government subsidies.
- Currently, the World Bank is reassessing the social transfers programme to measure its effectiveness and explore ways to improve it.

G. Financial Sustainability of Food Security and Nutrition Programmes

The far-reaching message of this report is that if current economic and political conditions persist, the number of food insecure households is expected to increase and food security is expected to deteriorate more in the future. Therefore, more food security funding will have to be made available if it is to keep up with actual needs. This in turn means if the reduction in food assistance funding persists, food security in Palestine will deteriorate in the absence of other effective interventions. In this section, we trace the changes in food security funding in recent years by exploring the funding trends of main food security players (MoSD, WFP, and UNRWA).³⁵

³⁵ In 2016, UNRWA and WFP received about 92% of total humanitarian fund made available to food security (Source: Food Security Sector, 2017) .

We first discuss the distribution of international humanitarian fund across clusters, which include food security; education; health and nutrition; protection; water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH); shelter; coordination and support services; and other clusters. Table 11 exhibits the share of each cluster relative to total humanitarian fund over the 2006-2016 period. The data show that the food security cluster receives the largest share of total humanitarian fund, as high as 77% in 2006. Nonetheless, the share of food security funding declined in recent years especially since 2013, reaching as low as 49% in 2015 and 58% in 2016. Food security funding is allocated to food assistance and livelihood. Food assistance is designed to meet basic food needs for poor and vulnerable households suffering from lack of access to food (food insecure). Actual funding available for food security programmes in 2016 was about \$159 million. About 79% of the funding was allocated to food assistance, 15% transferred as cash food vouchers, while the remaining was allocated to livelihood support (restoring and improving productive capacity, protecting assets, and enhancing resilience of food insecure households).

Table 10: Non-Food Security Components of Humanitarian Assistance in Palestine (2006-2016).

Year	Food Security (%)	Education (%)	Health & Nutrition (%)	Protection (%)	Water, Sanitation, & Hygiene (%)	Shelter (%)	Other Clusters (%)	Total (%)
2006	77	5	1	10	--	2	4	100
2007	75	3	12	0	2	0	8	100
2008	73	1	7	1	2	--	18	100
2009	63	3	4	5	3	10	11	100
2010	55	2	7	11	6	4	16	100
2011	68	2	6	9	4	3	8	100
2012	64	3	7	11	5	--	9	100
2013	69	3	4	13	2	--	8	100
2014	52	2	5	8	3	19	11	100
2015	49	2	3	9	5	26	6	100
2016	54	2	4	11	3	15	11	100

Source: Food Security Sector, 2017.

Among other clusters, shelter and protection needs have called for more funding in recent years. The shelter cluster addresses the urgent need of vulnerable households who have been displaced or at the risk of being displaced. Shelter support usually responds to house demolitions, carried out by the Israeli government, in area C and east Jerusalem. Still, disproportionate shelter funding is allocated to households in Gaza in the wake of war. In particular, during the 2014 war around 18,000 housing units were either completely or severely damaged, leaving close to 108,000 people homeless (OCHA 2014). The protection cluster aims at enhancing human rights with respect to International Humanitarian Law

(IHL) and International Human Rights Law (HRL). The main activities include provision of legal aid as well as child protection services, and monitoring and documentation of human right violation.³⁶

A comparison between required and actual funding over the past years, reveals serious gaps in resource availability and helps envision the extent to which food assistance, cash or in kind, may be envisaged for food insecure households in the medium term. We first discuss funding resources of the CTP and then discuss funding resources for the food security sector. Table 12 exhibits trend of the CTP beneficiaries and spending between 2010 and 2016. The data shows that the MoSD has managed to substantially expand the number of beneficiaries to 125,000 poor household by 2015; about 75% increase since 2010. With a poverty rate stuck at high levels, especially in Gaza, the share of beneficiaries in Gaza has increased over the past years, currently making up more than 60% of the total. In 2016, the rising trend of beneficiaries took a downward turn for the first time, decreasing to about 119,000 benefiting households. Sources from the MoSD suggest that the number is expected to decrease further to 112,000 by the end of 2017. The PA cut part of its 2016 funding by NIS 29 million and is expected to decrease further hitting a low of NIS 520 million in 2017.

Currently, the EU and the World Bank directly finance 50% of the CTP. The PA finances the rest, though part of it comes from international budget support which has declined from \$1,230 million in 2014 to \$762 million in 2016 (PMA, 2016). The dependence on external funding and the recent cut in cash transfer send clear messages about the ability of the PA to sustain its social protection commitments, much less assistance enhancing food security in crises time.

Table 11: CTP Beneficiaries in the West Bank and Gaza

Region	Number of CTP beneficiaries						
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
West Bank	34,526	48,024	47,975	47,998	46096	44603	43,410
Gaza	31,306	45,923	49,296	60,764	71096	78149	75,380
Total	67,842	95,958	99,283	110,775	119,206	124,767	118,790
Total value of CTP Transfer (\$)							
West Bank	113,481,113	174,279,750	176,467,547	175,024,677	164,311,902	163,968,165	147,757,466
Gaza	127,963,712	153,081,783	242,506,431	287,241,714	341,637,111	401,293,914	385,268,052
Total	241,444,825	327,361,533	418,973,978	462,266,391	505,949,013	565,262,079	533,025,518

Source: MoSD, 2017

WFP, among other agencies, has faced constantly declining resourcing levels. The main donor countries for WFP are USA providing about 49% of its funding followed by Canada (21%), EC (9%), Japan (9%) and multilateral (12%.) (WFP 2015). Actual food security funding has always been below required levels

³⁶ See Humanitarian Response Plan of 2017 more discussion about the activities of humanitarian activities across clusters. http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/humanitarian_response_plan_2017.pdf.

(see Column 2 of Table 13). In 2016, actual funding for food security amounted to \$159 million, which represents about 49% of the appealed sum. Figure 6 further decomposes the required versus actual funding across projects. Actual spending on food assistance makes up 60% of the requested amount, while livelihood support and cash based programmes make up only 18% and 22%, respectively. Another factor is the substantial variation in the ratio of actual to required funds in different years. The ratio declined from 70% in 2006 to 58% in 2007 and dropped even further from 80% in 2009 to 36% in 2010. Markedly, the trend has steadily declined after 2013 (Table 13). This speaks to the uncertainty of securing food security funds.

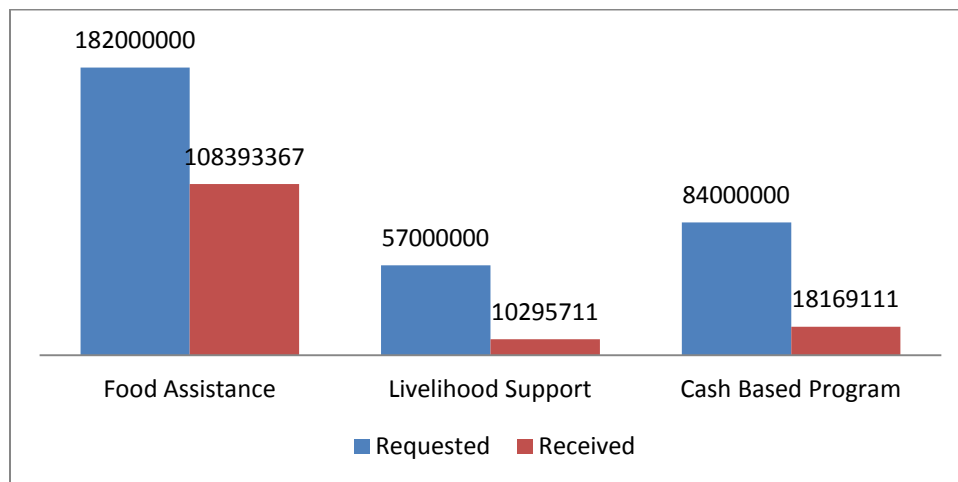
Table 12: Food Security Funding, 2006-2016

Year	Actual Funding of Food security	Actual to required funding Ratio	Total humanitarian Funds
2006	207,952,137	0.7	265,527,631
2007	188,785,670	0.58	250,510,495
2008	259,666,083	0.72	325,408,425
2009	370,276,591	0.8	562,439,233
2010	153,718,362	0.36	250,664,392
2011	200,865,447	0.52	290,890,791
2012	190,695,246	0.66	287,792,896
2013	180,680,657	0.69	260,363,539
2014	259,610,356	0.58	486,917,892
2015	195,733,846	0.61	389,624,078
2016	159,113,649	0.49	272,523,281

Data Source: Food Security Sector

Table 13 shows significant fluctuations in actual funding with substantial increase during war times in Gaza, mainly in 2008 and 2014. Markedly, funding available for food security decreased in the past two years (2015 and 2016) to a level below that of 2006. This can be explained by two factors. The first is related to shifting part of the food security fund to shelter services following the 2014 Gaza conflict. During this period, spending on shelter made up 16% to 27% of the total humanitarian funding. The second factor is related to the general decrease in the total humanitarian assistance. Despite the devastating effect of 2014 war on the livelihood of large section of Palestinians, total funding decreased to a level close to that of 2013, prior to the war. To cope with the decline in the food security funding, WFP and UNRWA have reduced rations and voucher values across most beneficiaries. The financial resources for WFP operations in Palestine declined from \$62 million in 2013 to \$45 million in 2016.

Figure 6: Food Security Fund in 2016: Actual versus Requested per Project.



Source: Food Security Sector, 2017.

It is expected that food security funding will further decrease in the short and medium run. Hence donors stress the need regularly updated information on food insecurity to help design more focused interventions that accommodate shifting priorities and available resources while maintaining impact. Regional conflicts and major famine crises in Africa are certainly creating new pressures on donor resource availability for the Palestinian food assistance needs, so the medium-term prospect for *more* than current levels of food assistance are dim. This pressure will undoubtedly oblige the PA to look elsewhere than existing donor resources to fund a social protection policy that will only get more costly in the future, even without renewed conflict or other critical factors. Local civil society organizations, which play a vital role in areas and sectors where the PA cannot or will not venture, suffer the most from donor assistance cuts since their programmes heavily depend on donors’ funds, and increasingly they are competing with international NGOs for rare resources. In addition to greater Palestinian corporate social responsibility interventions in support of local NGOs, addressing some of the PA financial disputes with Israel may be areas where more work can be done, with donor support, to resolve pending fiscal leakages. Such efforts could yield greater PA resources for poverty alleviation and food assistance programmes suited to a Palestinian definition of the problem and leadership in addressing it.

H. Assessment of Institutional Arrangements and Capacities

i. National Governmental Level

There are two groups of interacting factors that foster and frame weak institutional capacities. The first is related to the prolonged occupation of the Palestinian territory and the economic and financial constraints imposed by Israel on the Palestinian state and institutions as well as the novelty of the Palestinian institutions which have to respond to increasing public pressure for more and better services. The second group of factors, which closely correlate with the first, is the constant deficit in the general budget and the inability of the Palestinian public institutions to decrease dependence on external budget support in order to meet the needs of the Palestinian people. Meanwhile, institutions should work on building multiple national approaches that consider both relief and development aspects.

According to the NPA, sustainable development cannot be achieved without independence, and achieving long-term economic sustainability is not possible under the status quo: Israel's control over natural resources and Palestinian trade; the difficulty of building and rehabilitating infrastructure; and depriving Palestinians of exploiting investment opportunities in the so-called "Area C". Social sustainability cannot be achieved under the current state of a fragmented Palestinian society by the measures and procedures imposed by the Israeli occupation.

Following the eruption of the second intifada, there has been a decline in the role which the Palestinian government plays in providing social protection for poor and disadvantaged families, as well as in drawing up social assistance policies. This has coincided with a growing role for international organizations, designated by donors to distribute emergency assistance since the intifada. After 2006, the political and geographic division of the occupied Palestinian territory and the financial embargo placed by donors on the PA, and later on constraints on operations in Gaza, empowered international organizations, as well as international NGOs, further. This new reality had adverse effects on the Palestinian society by terminating some assistance programmes, including social assistance programmes; terminating reform programmes; and halting planning and systemization of developing the PA performance (Shalabi and Ladadweh, 2009). All these measures had consequences on institutional structure and capacity, and played a key role in weakening the Palestinian national control and ownership of the FSS and of the fight against poverty and food insecurity. The dependence on international institutions to implement relief and development programmes made these institutions the main player and the leader of this sector, and enfeebled the will and ability of national institutions to take the lead.

The Palestinian division has had adverse effects on efforts to draw a clear social policy and develop a strategy for combating poverty, which considers both the relief and development approaches, and that takes into account the different aspects of poverty, including severity, type, and resources available to the poor (Shalabi and Ladadweh, 2009). Considering the constant political and economic crises imposed by occupation and war, growing community needs have augmented the burden on state institutions working in areas of development or social care. Israeli policies have produced a fragile Palestinian society and have deepened economic crises, leaving Palestinian institutions unable to meet the needs of the community without external assistance.

In recent years, foreign assistance to Palestine declined sharply, which was accompanied by severe measures imposed by the Israeli occupation. The NPA reports that the contribution of external financing to GDP declined by 81% during the period 2008-2015. After reaching its peak in 2008, (32% of GDP), it decreased to only 6% in 2015. According to the NPA, this reduction undermined the Palestinian economy

and limited the PNA's ability to continue the implementation of reform programmes, which have been launched years ago, and paralyzed the PNA's plans to improve and systemize the performance of state institutions. However, the NPA assumes that foreign assistance will continue to play a major role in supporting public services until the end of occupation, even though some pronouncements by PA finance officials indicate an expectation that such funding is not assured. With a declared objective to eliminate the fiscal deficit altogether in coming years, further budget cuts therefore should be expected.

Similar to the effects of the 2006 boycott, declining external assistance during the last years might well have adversely impacted development prospects, especially with regards to developing coherent social and economic policies and national strategies for combating poverty and food insecurity based on combining relief and development. At the same time, dependence on international institutions in programme implementation hampers building the capacities of local institutions, especially if these programmes are not goal-driven by building the Palestinian state institutions.

The National Strategy for Food Security 2005 (PNA-MOA, 2005) identified a number of institutional enhancement measures to be implemented, which could provide elements for establishing a permanent institutional address for continued management of the FSS and related food and nutrition issues in Palestine. According to the 2005 strategy, the ownership of the FSS should be the responsibility of the Palestinian state, as the authorized party to draw public policies, develop national and sectoral strategies and plans for implementation, and also being the supreme supervisory body, working in partnership with the civil society, the private sector, as well as with various international actors. National ownership and management of the FSS may be achieved, according to the 2005 Strategy, by adopting appropriate institutional measures through designating a national framework responsible for steering and overseeing the sector, coordinating assignments of the different actors, and undertaking planning, monitoring and evaluation of the implemented policies, strategies and plans.

The National Strategy for Food Security and the National Nutrition Policy, Strategies & Action Plan have both highlighted the importance of establishing a National Council for Food Security. These Plans stress the importance of high-profile representation of all relevant parties (governmental bodies, civil society and private sector), which enjoy clear and specific powers and responsibilities, including coordination of efforts, both at national, sectoral, or local levels, and consultation and dialogue with donors, UN organizations and other international institutions operating in Palestine

ii. Donors' Engagement with Food Security and Social Protection in Palestine

From consultations conducted for the Review with donor representatives, a number of pertinent considerations may be noted regarding the motivations and preferences, as well as constraints, affecting their involvement in food security in Palestine. It is clear that donors engagement with the food security issue is premised on both humanitarian and developmental rationales. Some donors would prefer to give greater priority in their funding to development programmes and most are attempting to shift more programmes from humanitarian to development focus, but this is difficult as long as occupation persists. Nationally specified needs and priorities guide donors' allocation decisions. For many donors, programmes include Area C and poverty alleviation needs, based on examination of national global and sectoral plans. Palestinian and sectoral absorption capacity is always taken into consideration.

Food security is an international concern as much as it is a PA concern. However, donors contend that food assistance should be temporary and respond to immediate needs, allowing people to move towards resilience and then development. It is often difficult for donor agencies to justify to their political and institutional constituencies continued food assistance in the Palestinian context which is not an emergency, despite clear existence of poverty pockets within highly populated cities and areas or social strata outside the reach of social protection programmes. As donors shift more of their resources allocated for PA into developmental areas, now that the humanitarian crisis has passed, support has also included programmes supporting the private sector in the West Bank and Gaza, such as supporting farmers to grow vegetables. However, the possibility of greater funding of developmental food security assistance instead of food assistance is limited by both political and programming constraints.

Donors use different food assistance modalities, including in-kind food assistance, cash transfers, e-vouchers, etc, with a strong trend in favour of cash-based transfers. However, some donors emphasise the need to look at the impact of food assistance on the willingness of recipients to work and in terms of actual needs: prolonged status as a refugee or cash-transfer recipient, for example, can promote a sense of entrenched entitlement or uneven assistance that in turn fosters dependency, instead of empowering development.

There is not enough local production to ensure food security, hence imported food assistance is still seen as necessary. For example, one of WFP food assistance programmes entails the provision of five commodities: wheat, lentils, oil, chickpeas and salt. Only one Palestinian commodity (iodized salt) is found in this food assistance programme because this is the only product available locally. Wheat procured abroad and value added of milling is given to Palestinian processors, with inadequate links to Palestinian commodity supplies. But even if commodities are purchased locally, which would imply a cash injection into the domestic economy, the real developmental impact of such forms of food assistance programmes is very limited. In general donors do not see a major risk of food assistance distorting local industries. There could be some cases such as milk powder in Gaza competing with local dairy industries, but there are not so many industries or cases like that.

Donors also note competing priorities between PA Ministries for funding their sectoral programmes, and even conflicting statements by the same ministry about the needs of their sectors for funding. All donors are working on both humanitarian and developmental aspects, however there is a political dimension of the developmental aspect that calls for priorities to be defined by PA, not by donors and the international community. Nevertheless, developmental food security assistance increasingly takes the form of multiyear projects that target livelihoods (infrastructure/water) and less emergency food assistance. Humanitarian and developmental in the Palestinian situation go hand in hand, but humanitarian is usually of a short-term nature and impact.

Food security understood as agricultural development is increasingly viewed as a viable form of donor engagement with the sector, fostering links between the PA, agricultural NGOs and different donor agencies working at both the level of improved production and agricultural marketing. Increasingly, there is coherence between donor priorities in the agricultural sector and national goals adopted by the PA/MoA, as seen in this list of priorities identified by one donor for its forthcoming work in supporting agricultural growth and improved food security:

- Improved regulatory measures to support farmers and cooperatives
- Fair and affordable access to urban marketplaces for cooperative members to sell their products
- Protection of domestic food production over imports
- Development of an agriculture insurance industry, regulated by government, and that includes a government subsidy on all insurance products
- Complete the development of the food safety system
- Development of an agriculture extension system that reaches small farmers and cooperatives
- Improved access to agricultural land and water for irrigation

iii. International Partner Programme Design and Implementation

On the other hand, international institutions' programmes incorporate institutional capacity-building as one of their multi-components, especially the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Although they occupy an important position, these components need to be further developed, in a way that enables partner national institutions to manage their respective areas of work, at the policy-making level, the design and implementation of interventions, or monitoring and evaluation. In addition to incoherent national institutional arrangements, systematic institutional coordination among the different actors is weak, especially at the level of policy-making and programming. No doubt this drawback affects the effective implementation of interventions by different actors, due to duplication and overlapping programmes, with impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of these interventions. In 2014 a coordinating group was established (the Food Security Sector) managed by international institutions, another indication of insufficient national leadership in the food security sector, notwithstanding its overall constructive and informative role since then.

As shown earlier, major obstacles hinder coordinating the implementation of interventions that target combating poverty and improving food security, considering the absence of necessary Palestinian institutional capacities, the diversity in programmes, and the large number of local and international actors. Within designing and implementing interventions, weak coordination results in duplicated and fragmented interventions. A study by the European Union (EU, 2015) and another one by the International Development Institute (ODI, 2012) have indicated that there are assistance recipients who benefit from more than one programme provided by the Ministry of Social Development, UNRWA and the World Food Programme. To avoid such duplication of assistance, coordination should be enhanced.

Another study (Humphries, 2013), which examined the mechanisms of coordination among international actors in providing humanitarian assistance (including Palestine), showed that sectoral coordination in humanitarian assistance has increased its overall effectiveness, and that it is a positive change in humanitarian relief works, despite being criticized. The study also revealed that there are several coordination-related challenges that must be addressed, including: the absence of a body that steer coordination efforts, with focus on the neutrality of the leading institutions; separation between the coordination leadership and the programmes of the institutions; and lack of experience and capacities of authorized individuals. There is also a significant difficulty in partnering among all actors in the sector due to their large number, in addition to the inadequate number of human resources, especially among small enterprises, which has generated their feeling of lacking ownership of coordination mechanisms.

Also, this coordination approach does not have sufficient mechanisms to enhance accountability to the targeted groups.

Another challenge to good coordination is the competition over funding from the different local and international actors. Stakeholders consulted in the Gaza Strip stressed that there are many institutions that have the same role and responsibilities operating in the sector, especially civil society institutions, complicating coordination and harmonization efforts. This obstacle is due to the absence of integration and coordination between institutions in the provision of services, especially in strengthening and building the capacity of the agricultural sector. In addition, competition between these generally small institutions for funding has negative effects on their effectiveness and on the institutional fabric of the sector as a whole.

Furthermore, representatives of some Palestinian NGOs have described competition between local and international institutions as unfair, whereby some international institutions favor commissioning international NGOs to implement their programmes as they have more sophisticated managerial and technical capacities and hence more ably qualify for international tenders. This in fact has an important effect on the viability and sustainability of local NGOs. National stakeholders have underlined the need for local NGOs to play a bigger role in implementing programmes and interventions, which would maintain their sustainability, as well as contribute to job creation and enhance the economic and social sustainability of Palestinian society.

In the same context of improving coordination, the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) has built assistance systems and developed databases for the Ministry's mandates and services. The Ministry's specialized databases include detailed data for about 200,000 households, including indicators on inclusion, economic empowerment, child protection and a survey of the disabled, in addition to university exemptions. Databases were also linked with other partner institutions such as the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, and the Ministry of Interior. The MoSD has also worked on compiling a manual of procedures which includes 52 services, and created its own application and information forms for emergency assistance, food assistance, and health insurance. Other forms related to provision of services were developed as well (State of Palestine- MoSD, 2017). These achievements can be useful in enhancing coherence in programmes and coordination among other actors. For instance, the Ministry database can serve as a basis for building a comprehensive database for poor and food insecure households at a national level, to be used by all actors to avoid duplication in the provision of services.

Palestinian government agencies are not solely responsible for the absence of a national vision and integrated policies for food and nutrition security, nor for the weak national ownership of the sector. International actors also have contributed to this dilemma by stepping into the vacuum sometimes too willingly guided mainly by their own perceptions and programming agendas. In general, the inability of the Palestinian government to reduce reliance on budget support funding has exaggerated the influence of donors and international organizations on public policy-making in a range of areas, especially those which touch public finance and/or donor funding. In most countries, not only Palestine, international actors now design their programmes based above all on their own visions and policies, but as elsewhere this runs the risk of weakening the capacity and will of national institutions in designing and implementing programmes and providing leadership, direction and pace to international support.

Chapter Five

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION IN PALESTINE IN LINE WITH SDG2



A. Achieving SDG 2 in Palestine Under Occupation or Independence?

The preceding analysis has revealed the complex and challenging landscape of the security and nutrition in Palestine. In the Palestinian context especially, food security is indeed a catch-all sector at the intersection of agricultural production and trade, food processing industry and food safety, household poverty and social protection, nutrition and public health, regional development disparities, and in the broadest sense, of essential national economic security and food sovereignty. It is also a sector that implicates all development partners: government, civil society and academia, the private sector, international agencies and donors. Food and nutrition in Palestine is, par excellence, an issue whereby a set of distinct inter-linked challenges demand a comprehensive and integrated response.

A persistent crisis in the Palestinian food sector may be discerned in terms of the different dimensions of macro and micro food insecurity, poor nutrition, institutional incoherence and stakeholder fatigue. These shortcomings have been created and fostered by a range of factors, especially emergency humanitarian needs generated by repeated conflict and the prolonged Israeli occupation, critical developmental failures in building a productive agricultural sector, restrictions on trade, and denial of sovereignty to the Palestinian people to determine their future and be responsible for their fate. The ultimate result is that the poorest and most vulnerable Palestinians in both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank have borne the brunt of these man-made failures and inadequate responses.

Hence it is not surprising that a certain conflation between food insecurity and poverty/unemployment has emerged, whereby many of the poor are food insecure and almost all of the food insecure are poor. It follows from the facts that social protection programmes have come to rely heavily on food assistance and that food security funding has become an inseparable part of social protection, that any reduction in the food can only be perceived as a retreat on the social protection front. This is a major, possibly unintended, consequence of what began as a humanitarian response well over a decade ago never fully transforming into a developmental empowerment tool, and an attendant legacy of expectation that food assistance will continue to be in high demand regardless of the changing, underlying causes of insecurity.

Despite the allocation of \$2.4 billion to mitigating the Palestinian food security crisis over the past decade in programmes managed by the PA, the NGO community, generous donors and dedicated international agencies, an alarmingly high proportion of the Palestinian people are not only still poor, but continue to face significant barriers to accessing adequate food and enjoying a nutritious, healthy diet. While the agricultural sector in Palestine is in principle capable of providing for a high degree of self sufficiency in much of the food requirements of Palestinians, and the Palestinian food processing industry has exhibited great promise in recent years, under the constraints of occupation Palestine is increasingly dependent on external sources for its food and can only produce around one-third of those needs.

It is therefore clear that on the one hand, the current situation reflects an existential crisis that can only get worse as long as the status quo and the root causes of occupation and its restrictions persist, factors that go beyond the reach of cash transfers, livelihoods projects and non-sovereign institutions to mitigate adequately, much less resolve. On the other hand, the evidence from this Review confirms that food assistance and cash transfers to the poorest Palestinians have indeed alleviated the crushing burden of extreme poverty, however insufficiently, and that even under the dire circumstances of occupation,

confronting settlement expansion and blockade on Gaza, with the right interventions and even limited resources, resilient Palestinian farmers can achieve greater productivity, marketing and indeed self-sufficiency.

So certainly, the scale of the challenge is daunting, the burdens of mobilizing, planning and distributing funds to ensure that people eat enough and eat healthily are great, and the frustrations of not always seeing enough or even visible achievements in combating poverty are continuous. But these discouraging factors cannot deter continued, and even intensified, efforts which are better targeted, better coordinated and better led, to achieve the SDGs in the particular Palestinian context, especially SDG 2: “ending hunger, achieving food security and improved nutrition, and promoting sustainable agriculture”.

Tackling hunger and food insecurity in Palestine requires a comprehensive policy package to achieve zero hunger by 2030 which moves beyond merely promoting agriculture and improving social protection programmes. Although there is considerable scope to improve Palestine’s social protection programmes, addressing poverty and poor labour entitlement will require the generation of more employment, with a focus on women and youth. But employment creation alone will not be enough. The goal of achieving zero hunger will also depend on the ability to create high quality employment, arrest the decline in real wages, and improve labour productivity. Livelihood promotion can also be achieved via the development of self-employment and small and medium enterprises. Hence, achieving SDG 2 cannot be separated from Palestine’s broader development agenda. Such a holistic approach is in keeping with the SDGs at a global level which no longer separate food, livelihoods and management of natural resources but also take an holistic and more integrated approach in which achieving zero hunger will require more than simply boosting food production and improving social protection.

Palestine’s ability to achieve zero hunger by 2030 and the policy space available to approach SDG 2, will be highly contingent on whether there is a solution to the conflict with Israel and the creation of a viable Palestinian state. The ability to create employment, address poverty and lack of labour entitlements, diversify the economy, boost agricultural production and rural livelihoods and improve the efficiency of food imports will continue to be adversely affected by the effects of the occupation. Under this scenario, the emphasis will need to be placed on improving social protection, although not to the exclusion of policies in these other areas. Continued high levels of external support to the Palestinian population is not a truly sustainable solution as required by the SDGs and makes Palestine both dependent on and highly vulnerable to the vagaries of international development and humanitarian assistance.

The ending of occupation and the creation of a viable Palestinian state will greatly enhance the ability to achieve zero hunger by 2030 in a truly sustainable and sovereign manner. It would free up resources, particularly in the agricultural sector, enable greater employment creation, enhance and facilitate international trade, and provide the new state with independent and predictable revenue sources essential for the development of a viable domestically driven social protection system. Likewise, the end of occupation would allow a trade-based macro food security strategy as well as improve micro level food security by helping to reduce the cost of imported food. Similarly, an end to occupation would entail lifting the blockade of Gaza and general trade restrictions imposed by Israel which to date have made it difficult for Palestine to develop the type of diversified export-orientated economy which is much needed not just to help finance food imports but also for job creation and poverty reduction.

The policies and strategies that Palestine should prioritise over the next fifteen years to achieve zero hunger clearly depend on which of the above two scenarios materialise regarding the occupation and how much policy space is available. Whatever the outcome of the peace process, Palestine will face unique challenges to achieving SDG 2 - either in recovering from conflict and past occupation and building a new viable nation state or in dealing with the continued effects of occupation.

The preceding analysis identified a range of weaknesses in the food security and nutrition sector regarding which a wide consensus of stakeholder and expert opinion exists (despite different vantage points, mandates and jurisdictions), as well as ideas about how to improve performance and outcomes, many of which have been suggested in the preceding chapters. The following sections summarize the most evident and necessary elements of a coherent treatment of food insecurity and poor nutrition in Palestine today in accordance with household needs, development priorities, the realities and constraints of prolonged occupation and the contingency of possibly even more critical pressures in the coming years, both on the donor and recipient side of the food security.

B. Opportunities to Improve the National Policy Framework for Food and Nutrition Security

In general, all stakeholders engaged in the consultation process stress the importance of and necessity to develop a comprehensive national approach to food and nutrition security in Palestine. The current incoherence between the macro and sectoral policies and within sectoral policies is ascribed in large to the absence of a clear national approach to food and nutrition security, the weak institutional structure, and the fragmented Palestinian management of the sector. All of these factors resulted in overlapping of responsibilities and powers, and partial national management of the sector. Thus, a new framework should be based on a national vision that addresses well-measured insecurity indicators, through an integrated system of cross-sectoral policies that embrace combating poverty at the strategic level while establishing a solid connection between relief and development. The related policies need to focus on strengthening people's resilience in face of the occupation and also on creating a broad but concrete partnership between the local governmental and non-governmental sectors (civil society and the private sector) and international partners (UN agencies, iNGOs, and donors).

A holistic approach to food and nutrition security embedded in a National Development plan is in keeping with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The latter do not separate food, livelihoods, and management of natural resources but take a more comprehensive approach in which achieving zero hunger will require more than simply boosting food production or ensuring free trade. It will also entail increased incomes via improved livelihoods, the creation of resilient food systems and markets.

Furthermore, this new approach should be based on an integrated system of national and sectoral policies related to social assistance, production and import policies, provision of strategic primary commodities, price policies, consumer rights and protection, promoting good nutrition and a culture of balanced consumption, agricultural policies and strategies that support small farmers and provide them with supporting services and funds, as well as policies related to ensuring provision of basic utilities to all communities, especially water, waste, energy and environmental protection.

In light of the absence of a nationally approved and adopted food and nutrition security strategy, the current schemes of food assistance provided to food insecure households are at best coping mechanisms. Instead, the success in sustainably reducing food insecurity hinges on empowering poor and vulnerable households to exit poverty which as demonstrated above is the main driver of food insecurity in the Palestinian context. Undoubtedly, such an immense endeavor requires a solution to the conflict. Still, this report proposes a number of recommendations for policies to work towards reducing the severity of poverty, vulnerability and thus food insecurity in the occupied Palestine.

Given the assessment in previous sections, it is clear that such a food and nutrition security strategy for Palestine cannot simply focus on the separate areas of food, nutrition and agriculture. It needs to be integrated into an overall national development plan in a holistic manner in order to tackle poverty and unemployment. Lessons from other countries indicate that this has clear institutional implications. Countries that focus their food and nutrition strategy on the Ministry of Agriculture and develop an institutional structure whereby the Ministry is the main executing body with the Minister of Agriculture for example chairing an inter-ministerial food security steering committee tend to devise weak strategies and face implementation difficulties. This has been the case in Jordan. On the other hand, an institutional structure whereby the food and nutrition strategy is led by the highest level of government, such as the Prime Minister's, the President's Office, or the Ministry of Planning, often devise a more effective, holistic, multi-agency strategy and have stronger leadership and implementation capacity, as in Yemen, where the strategy is led by the Ministry of Planning with international cooperation support. Indeed, in the light of the recommendations emerging from this Review, the multi-dimensional and intersectoral nature of the food and nutrition security challenge demands a national response coordinated and led at the highest political levels.

An important element of success of any food and nutrition strategy in Palestine must be to tackle the labor entitlement failure. Within the schema presented in Chart 1, this aspect falls into the strategy of livelihoods and employment under the objective of enhancing individual and household food security. Despite the high level of unemployment, wage labor is the main source of income on which families depend. Hence unemployment has a major impact on food security. As demonstrated by the fact that households with an unemployed household head face higher rates of food insecurity than those with an employed household head. To generate more employment, the economy will need to move away from heavy reliance on the non-tradable sectors such as services, construction, the financial sector, and public sector employment towards manufacturing, agriculture, and tourism. There is only limited scope to expand these sectors to a level required to generate the needed employment opportunities as they are less dynamic than the manufacturing and agricultural sectors, with less scope for technological innovation, hence they have limited potential for job creation.

Given the gendered and geographical dimensions of food insecurity plus the high rate of women and youth unemployment and the low rate of entrepreneurship activities among women, any employment generation strategy should pay particular attention to the need to create employment opportunities for youth and women and to focus on the Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, and Area C. Within the employment creation strategy, there is a further need to promote small businesses as a source of livelihoods and employment. Directly related to the need to provide and assure proper income for the most vulnerable groups, the Palestinian government must enforce minimum wage compliance mainly in the West Bank,

where economic conditions are way more favorable than in the Gaza Strip. Evidence to date shows weak enforcing capacity, resulting in a low compliance rate. While it is possible that an increase in unemployment could result from full enforcement of minimum wage, boosting the income of those minimum wage earners who constitute the so-called “working poor” is important for their food security. Another policy measure to assure that vulnerable households’ income suffice to cover their basic food needs is for the PNA, through the MoA and the MoNE, to eliminate monopoly practices affecting trade in foodstuffs and undertake rigorous planning to avoid seasonal shortages, in order to reduce spikes in the prices of staple foods.

Such policies are needed because creating employment alone will not be enough. The SEFSec survey showed that employment on its own does not protect families from food insecurity. Informal and/or irregular employment of heads of households is a frequent characteristic of food insecurity. For example, households where the head is employed in agriculture are more food insecure as those employed in the construction sector in the Gaza Strip. Hence creating temporary and low paid jobs will not alone address the food security implications of poor labor entitlement. Instead, pro-poor inclusive growth creating the right type of jobs along with policies to increase labor productivity to pull up wages is needed. This will entail engaging the private sector in reviving the productive sectors and making them competitive, geared towards export markets, including food exports.

In addition to creating employment and livelihood opportunities to address income poverty so as to enhance micro-level food security, Chart 1 indicates two other strategies that must be incorporated into a comprehensive food and nutrition strategy: namely improving social protection as a direct way of mitigating poverty and food insecurity and boosting households’ own food production. With regards to households’ own food production, Palestine needs to develop food production among poor people through eliminating the major obstacles which they face, including access to land, poor infrastructure, limited knowledge of modern means of agro-food production, and others. A set of incentives are also required such as money lending, tax exemption, and allocation of government land to support food production and the agricultural sector. Otherwise, Palestine might face the extra challenge of ensuring that the population has access to basic foodstuffs at stable prices that preserve the living standards of the low-income groups. There is even scope to promote home-based food production amongst urban households since urban poor households are particularly prone to food insecurity. Jordan provides a good example of successful policies in this respect.

Even though PA development plans, including the most recent NPA, continue to emphasize the goal of building a sustainable and internationally competitive agricultural sector, policy neglect and under investment in agriculture need to be urgently addressed as part of the national food and nutrition strategy. The limited aid funding for development projects has focused on the main cities in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip under full Palestinian control at the expense of projects in East Jerusalem and rural areas as well as on institution building rather than infrastructure development. This is partly because the wide spread destruction of donor financed infrastructure since the start of the second intifada has made donors reluctant to reinvest in this sector. But there has also been an indifference to development expenditure by both the PA and its donors and an even greater neglect of the agricultural sector. In terms of private investment related to agriculture, the emphasis has been more on industrialized agribusiness than on agricultural production itself. While export-oriented industrial zones could help in exporting agricultural

products and promote agriculture (e.g. Jericho Agricultural and Industrial Park - JAIP), placing industrial zones in areas better suited to agricultural expansion risks jeopardizing the livelihoods of farmers via land dispossession. This equally applies to using agricultural land to build houses and factories.

In order to reverse negative trends in agriculture, the PA and donors need to urgently invest in rebuilding agricultural infrastructure, alongside a range of other policy interventions, including: strengthening and establishing farmers' cooperatives; normalizing production and transport costs; targeting smallholder farmers with veterinary services, packaging, cold storage, transportation and marketing; and introducing more appropriate technology such as energy and water saving and waste water recycling. More efficient water use in the sector is also needed via farmers' water management schemes, water harvesting, water conservation, possible increases in water tariffs, and rehabilitation of water infrastructure. Other options for agricultural renewal that have been pursued in regional and other contexts include establishing a state-supported agricultural development bank to share risks, provide credit and insurance, support marketing, and fund and guarantee investments in agricultural and water-related infrastructure. Lack of access to credit, which is the result of the high risks to lending due to the effects of the occupation, lack of collateral, and lack of suitable financial products for small farmers, poses a severe constraint to the sector. Many of these activities will help not only to develop livelihoods but to improve resilience; support services along with insurance in agriculture, livestock and fishing sectors could help mitigate the effects of natural disasters such as droughts, frost, and animal disease and so help build resilience.

The received orthodoxy for much of the MENA region is that there needs to be a structural shift within the agricultural sector away from low-value, low-yield and often water intensive products to high-value crops e.g. away from cereals and livestock to fruit trees, vegetables and horticulture. Such a shift would also bring more nutritional value in the home market, e.g. fruit and vegetables and needs to be considered when devising strategies for the agricultural sector within the remit of the national food and nutrition strategy, which is also in line with the recommendations on the nutrition side of food security.

In implementing its 2017-2022 Agricultural Strategy, the MoA needs to embed food security considerations and the importance of the sector in terms of livelihoods needs to be stressed. So that food security can be promoted, there needs to be a particular focus on the role the sector can play in addressing poverty and food insecurity amongst highly vulnerable groups such as women-headed households, herders and fishermen. A comprehensive strategy is required for the sector covering the whole production chain – agricultural production, processing and marketing.

At the more central level, under a situation of ongoing financial stress, the PNA needs to reconsider its expenditure priorities. At the moment, the largest share of government spending is allocated to security, far exceeding international standards. In order for the PNA to be more effective in combating poverty, the government budget must seriously consider the economic benefits and social imperatives of allocating more funds to social protection. Despite the high poverty rate in Palestine, currently only 10% of the government spending is allocated to MoSD programmes.

In order to better inform policy making and programming, all stakeholders stressed the importance of involving all partners in reviewing the existing methodology for measuring and assessing food security, and to amend, change, or maintain these methods as may be needed, and to update data periodically, such

that data serves users in the donor community as well as the PA. Above all, indicators of food and nutrition security should reflect the Palestinian national understanding of the problems faced and consensus around the policies that are needed to address them in line with international standards and best practices. As well, the importance of developing a unified national database on food and nutrition security linked to social protection databases is overdue, to provide information and data related to food security and to contribute to establishing knowledge-based policy-making, plan designing, monitoring and evaluation system.

In summary, an improved policy framework requires:

- Developing an integrated food and nutrition security national approach that incorporates a national vision and a holistic policy system, while ensuring coherence between macro and sectoral policies, on the one hand, and within sectoral policies, on the other;
- Linking the national approach to food and nutrition security to the strategic fight against poverty, which should be based on solid correlation between relief and development, in order to enhance resilience in the face of the occupation and an effective partnership between governmental and non-governmental actors (civil society and the private sector) and international partners;
- Adopting a national measurement methodology with indicators for regular monitoring appropriate to the Palestinian food and nutrition security sector;
- Building a food security information system that contributes to policy formulation, planning, monitoring and evaluation;
- Linking international agencies programmes and interventions in a consistent manner with national figures, priorities, and policies.

C. Opportunities to Improve the Legal and Institutional Framework

As evident in the sub-section analyzing the current legal framework provisions, a lot can and should be done to rationalize and improve the legal and regulatory setup with relation to food and nutrition security in Palestine. Following are some specific recommendations on how to address the most pressing issues. Above all, new legislation needs to be enacted in the context of existing Laws or draft Laws to regulate national and international assistance programmes, to manage foreign food assistance, and to control and coordinate foodstuff distribution among the institutions working in the field.

Social security systems play a vital role in reducing poverty and increasing food security accessibility worldwide. Permanent and sustainable programmes targeting unemployed persons as well as marginalized and vulnerable groups positively contribute to the stability of food and nutrition security. Except for assistance programmes carried out by the MoSD and sporadic projects, there are neither national formal programmes nor legal instruments that regulate the management of such programmes in the Palestinian context. Moreover, only recently a Law on social security has come into effect, so technically speaking, the Palestinian social security system is not yet operational, and the Law does not pay the required attention to unemployment. Thus, more efforts are needed in this regard to develop a comprehensive, effective social security system capable of meeting the interests and rights of all Palestinians, with focus on the most vulnerable and marginalized people, such as the unemployed and the extremely poor.

Furthermore, Palestine should start effectively implementing existing preferential trade arrangements signed with other states, to the extent that is possible and in line with the supply and demand equilibrium. Palestine has the advantage of a number of bilateral and multilateral free trade agreements with regional and international counterparts, which provide duty-free treatment for most industrial and agricultural products, fish and other marine products. If implemented in full, these arrangements could contribute to greater and less costly food availability in Palestine through the flow of products into the Palestinian market. Meanwhile, Palestine should continue working on expanding its agricultural export capacity, despite the various restrictions imposed by Israel, as this is expected to have a positive impact on incomes (through enhanced manufacturing and agricultural sectors) and on food availability (through the imports channel). However, at the same time, the competent authorities in Palestine are required to set out certain legal limitations (in line with international laws as well) on exporting basic food products so as to secure food availability requirements, particularly in emergency circumstances. The draft law on the protection of national production is also recommended to be issued to upgrade the legal framework regulating the national food processing industry in order to eliminate the currently existing unfair practices.

A state of emergency requires concrete regulations, including aid management. Emergency is a state resulting from unexpected events that calls for urgent assistance or relief. Recently, The National Center for Disaster Risk Management was established by a Cabinet's decision, and a Draft Law on Disaster Risk Management is in the pipeline. The latter grants the National Center the power to coordinate with the concerned government agencies and service providers from the private sector and civil society in the development of response plans and suitable solutions and alternatives in cases of disasters and emergencies for the sake of ensuring continuity of service provision to individuals. The draft also mandates the Center to coordinate international assistance and grants related to disaster risk management under the supervision of the Prime Minister or his/her authorized delegate. The recommendation here is to speed up the process of finalizing and enacting the draft law in order to activate the work of the newly established National Center for Disaster Risk Management as soon as possible, which is very much needed in a volatile context like the Palestinian one.

Meanwhile, increases in food prices in Palestine accompanied by the high share of household expenditures on food have significantly worsened the food security situation of households.³⁷ Although Article (21) of the Basic Law has adopted the principles of a free market economy and thus guarantees freedom of economic activity, this article itself allows the law to define the rules governing its supervision and their limits. Accordingly, national laws may set maximum prices for basic foodstuffs. It is advisable that this matter be carefully handled in the context of the draft Competition Law. The latter allows for price fixing for basic goods and services, without giving a definition thereof. Thus, the draft law should be further developed in order to provide the required definitions and specifications as well as having to be enacted in due course. In addition, the government should provide the necessary legislation to secure the quality of products at internationally competitive prices.

Food safety and quality is another important aspect of food and nutrition security in Palestine, and it needs to be dealt with at the legal and institutional levels. There are several regulatory weaknesses in the related framework including its fragmentation, which is based on several pieces of legislation rather than an umbrella of a food safety law. The legal framework is thus unharmonized and uncoordinated and fails

³⁷ http://www.arij.org/files/admin/Chapter_1.pdf.

to fulfill the requirements of modern food safety legislation in line with international standards, including *Codex Alimentarius* standards. New principles, therefore, on sanitary and phytosanitary matters among others should be introduced and extended to food safety and quality in the overall process of food production and the subsequent trade in foodstuff including withdrawal from the market in the context of surveillance and law enforcement.

In addition, it has been noted that there is an overlap among public institutions working in the field in terms of powers and responsibilities in relation to food safety and quality and market surveillance. Consequently, all bylaws, regulations, and decisions referred to above have to be issued and efficiently enforced. In addition, a coordination mechanism to organize and allocate the work of the competent ministers and bodies working in the field needs to be institutionalized.

The establishment of a permanent, systematic, empowered and well-structured coordination body (national committee, council, or alike) is of high priority in the short term, and much overdue. Rooted in a vision of food as a concept of national economic security at different levels, it would be possible to define the mandate of such a body to address a host of food-related issues, including production, trade, access for the poor, nutrition and safety/quality in a manner that encompasses the multi-dimensional nature of food and nutrition security, and public health as well as economic production and growth in the Palestinian context of prolonged occupation. In the latter scenario, a special law would be needed to regulate such a council of institutions and its relation to concerned executive governance arms. The failure to establish a Food Security Higher Council as envisaged in 2005 is not a reason to not revisit this proposal and, in the light of this Review, to consider how a Palestine Food and Nutrition Council might be the best vehicle for pursuing several interrelated goals at once, and most efficiently.

In summary, the main national institution and capacity building measures suggested are:

- Strengthen national ownership of the food and nutrition security sector to enable proper development of policies and interventions, as it is solely the State of Palestine (being the high supervisory authority) that should have the powers to design public policies and develop national and sectoral strategies and plans, provided it works in partnership with civil society institutions, the private sector and international organizations;
- Establishing national control over the food and nutrition security sector requires the existence of a competent national coordinating and supervisory body, delegated with clear powers and responsibilities. It should involve all relevant national parties to manage the Palestinian food and nutrition security sector, coordinate the efforts of the actors, and carry out planning, monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of national policies, strategies, and related plans;
- Defining the powers and responsibilities of the concerned government agencies to avoid overlap or conflict of different policies and interventions;
- Supporting Palestinian institutional capacity-building by international organizations operating in Palestine in line with international strategies which prioritize supporting national control within recipient countries. It is also important to effectively coordinate between different international bodies to ward off duplication or conflict of activities and interventions.

D. Opportunities to Enhance Nutrition in Palestine, Especially for the Food Insecure

While the importance of nutrition should be emphasized at the national policy level, specific programmes are expected to be the most effective tools and mechanisms for delivering needed outputs in this regard. The predominant consumption of energy dense food, the prevalence of overweight, obesity and chronic diseases, and the low level of vigorous activity – altogether building the health profile of Palestine – must be considered when designing and implementing food assistance programmes. In specific, nutrition, nutrition education, and lifestyle modification strategies must become part of food assistance programmes as the most effective approach to reducing the burden of disease. The ultimate goal of food assistance programmes should be not only to feed but also to promote health, which will enhance the social responsibility component of these programmes. Thus, nutrition should be at the core of food assistance programmes.

First of all, any food assistance programme should utilize the nutrition data available at the Ministry of Health as well as the data available at the WFP, UNICEF, the WHO, and FAO in order to design and implement interventions according to the nutritional (and not only caloric) needs of the benefitting population. In specific, some of the available data included: from the WHO (growth charts providing valuable information on the nutritional needs of children; utilization of food assistance programmes by different populations); UNICEF (micronutrient deficiencies in pregnant, lactating, children 6-59 months, and adolescents); and FAO (farming and food production rates with fluctuations due to environmental and conflict-based origins).

Coordination must form the base of the pyramid comprised of all UN agencies and beyond delivering food assistance programmes in order to guarantee the delivery of nutritionally adequate food assistance. Furthermore, coordination must start at the highest, Ministerial, levels and go all the way down to implementing local and international organizations and agencies, including the private sector. Consultations highlighted the need to coordinate more efficiently between local and international actors – including potentially through a systematic alliance/consortium and pooling of resources between local and international NGOs and UN agencies – to overcome together challenges stemming from political, economic, and financial obstacles in order to deliver nutritionally beneficial interventions. Chart 2 below suggest a work strategy for food assistance programmes that would ensure adequate consideration of nutrition and public health issues.

Another measure which needs to be taken through redesigned programmes is enhancing nutrition education, raising awareness, and promoting an active lifestyle as required steps towards improving nutrition in Palestine. This is not a matter for only the food insecure, but affects other poor social strata which may not be food insecure but are poorly nourished. The fact that the majority of Palestinian households do not consume enough fruits and vegetables and instead opt for energy dense foods such fats and carbohydrates, in addition to the fact that the Palestinian population is not involved in sufficient physical activity, must inform any effective food assistance programmes. Areas that can be improved include: nutrition status assessment, nutrition education, and physical activity promotion.

With regards to nutritional status assessment, this must lie at the core of understanding individuals, household, and population needs when designing programmes. In this exercise, both the nutrition needs

of the food insecure household and the specific individual needs due to clinical reasons such as those with celiac disease must be taken into consideration. As indicated earlier, the WHO carried out massive trainings for health professionals across the globe on the new growth standards for assessing child growth and nutrition. Such health professionals can be found in local NGOs, private and governmental clinics, and staff of the Ministry of Health and specifically the Department of Nutrition to carry out an assessment of the nutritional status.

In addition, screening of adults for overweight and obesity through evaluating body mass index is a simple, non-invasive, and quick method. Data from the WFP and FAO on those that are in need on food assistance programmes can be augmented by such anthropometric measurements carried out by local NGOs staff to evaluate the type of food items and nutrients that need to be provided to guarantee the wellbeing of such population. Further, local health NGOs, local governmental or private clinics, and those operating on the ground in such areas may be supported in the collection of biochemical data in terms of lipid profiles, complete blood count in coordination with UNICEF and WHO to collect blood samples for analysis and to understand factors that can contribute to morbidity and mortality. Dietary data collected using questionnaire such as the food frequency questionnaire can as well be used in investigating the type of food items consumed by a household to analyze individuals dietary intake and nutritional needs and act upon them. Such information can be used to design the food assistance parcels in a way that guarantees meeting the nutritional needs of household to promote health and prevent disease.

Food assistance programmes which just provide food parcels and prevent hunger are only important in acute conditions such as wars, environmental disasters, and famine and are thus short lived and not sustainable as they can affect negatively the nutritional status and health of beneficiaries. In Palestine food availability is not the main issue; instead, the issue is access to food due to economic factors. Data presented earlier in this report shows that differences in the consumption patterns of households are insignificant with respect to their food security status. Food parcels must be designed in a way which addresses the specific nutritional needs of each recipient household and its members. For example, the needs of individuals with chronic diseases such as celiac disease need to be taken into consideration. The food parcels should also provide for a balance between macro and micro nutrients to eliminate micronutrient deficiencies in line with the national plan. Last but not least, the parcels should include pamphlets with nutrition education information.

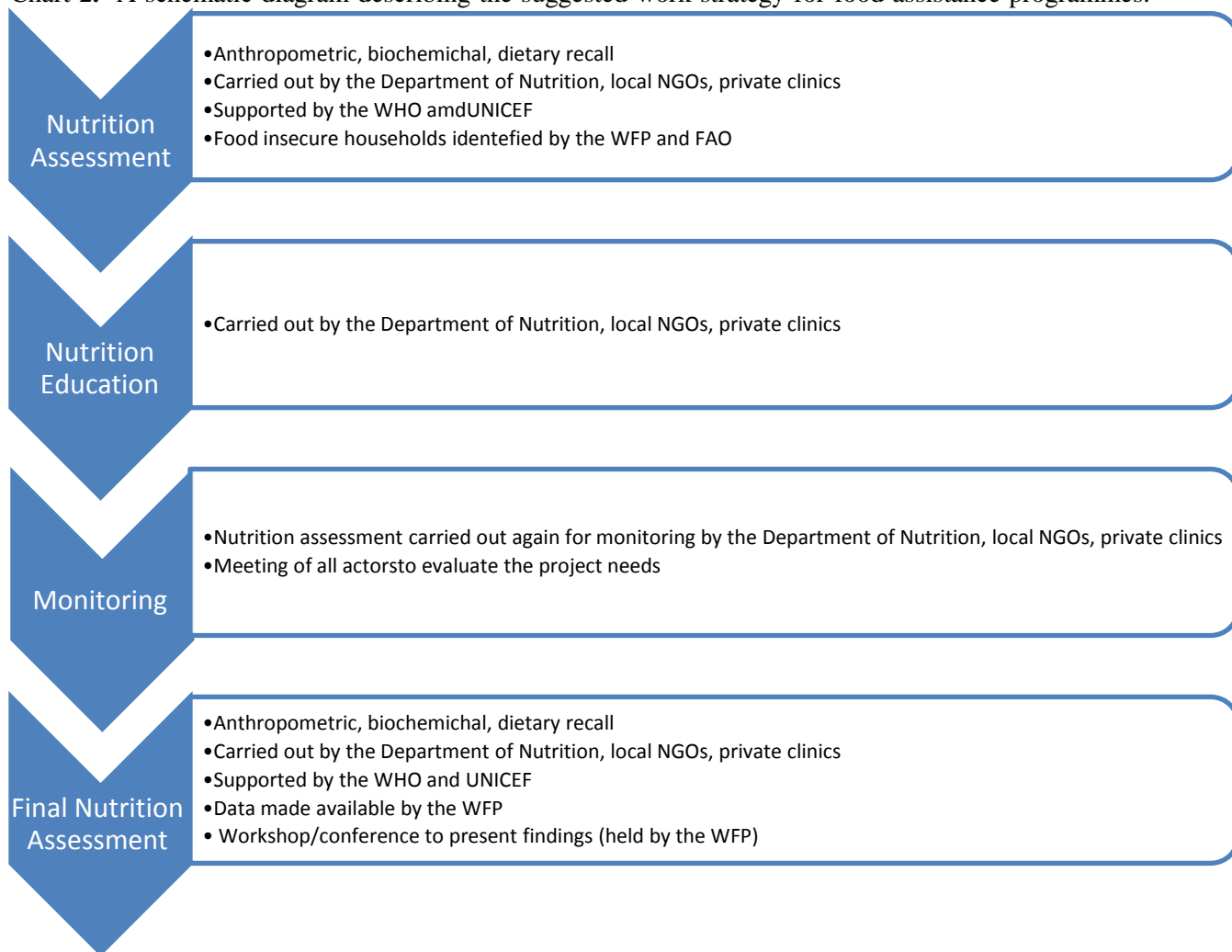
The food consumption patterns data augmented with health profile data suggest that nutrition education must be of high priority for the health sector and food assistance programmes. Consequently, food assistance programme can be used as a mechanism for spreading nutrition awareness and education from below the social pyramid, with focus on physical activity, well balanced nutrition, and a healthy lifestyle. The implementing mechanisms could include workshops and educational programmes in coordination with local NGOs and clinics which already work on the importance of nutrition for health as well as pamphlets in the food parcels. Such programmes must be designed by nutrition experts capable of drafting nutritional scientific and clinical information to use accessible language and modalities that can be transferrable and well absorbed by the public. Nutrition education should be provided to all recipient households and should be organized by groups: children, adolescents and adults, including women of child bearing age, pregnant women, and lactating women.

The third component of restructuring food assistance programmes in a way that meets the nutritional and health needs of the Palestinian population – physical activity – is complementary for the success of any nutrition programme. National and international NGOs and the private sector can join forces in promoting physical activity among a wide spectrum of populations. Advocacy to increase involvement in physical activity must include fun activities for children and information on the benefit of physical activity for physical and mental health for adults. Ideas for exercise routines that can be done at home for those who feel the surrounding environment is not supportive may be provided by experts. Although it is unorthodox for food assistance programmes to advocate physical activity, nutrition alone does not guarantee the prevention of diseases, especially chronic diseases, while research on physical activity indicates its importance in reducing the risk of hypertension, diabetes, obesity, and cardiovascular diseases.

With regards to roles and responsibilities, the Department of Nutrition at the Ministry of Health, local NGOs, and the private sector should take center stage in any nutrition education and lifestyle advocacy programme and must be involved in the design of the food parcel. These stakeholders also have to play an active role in monitoring activities, including gathering nutritional data such as food consumption pattern, nutritional status, and lifestyle behavior to evaluate if their programmes are in line with the Palestinian National Nutrition Strategy and Plan in improving the state of nutrition in Palestine. Meanwhile, UN agencies (the WFP, FAO, UNICEF, and the WHO) must work together in providing food assistance programmes while engaging local Palestinian bodies such as the Department of Nutrition at the Ministry of Health, national NGOs, and the private sector which can provide in depth insights considering their understanding of the on ground circumstances. Communication, cooperation, and sharing of information and expertise among UN agencies, the Department of Nutrition at the Ministry of Health, international NGOs, national NGOs, and the private sector must be the new approach of food assistance programmes to ensure that food assistance not only provides food but also helps in the fight against malnutrition, whether over nutrition or under nutrition.

Another important recommendation, related to monitoring and evaluation, is to carry out periodic nutrition status assessments to compare the outcomes of the programmes based on the initial status of the beneficiaries and to identify the remaining needs of recipient households. The Department of Nutrition at the Ministry of Health, national NGOs, and the private sector must be closely involved in conducting these assessments, should be comprehensive including anthropometric, biochemical, and dietary recall techniques.

Chart 2. A schematic diagram describing the suggested work strategy for food assistance programmes.



E. Opportunities to Improve the Design and Implementation of Programmes and Coordination among Stakeholders

While the setting up of an appropriate policy framework which addresses all aspects of food and nutrition security, supported by properly drafted, enacted and implemented laws and regulations, is vitally important in the Palestinian context, the analysis in the preceding sections of this report shows that there is also space for reforms within the local and international food security programmes – both at the design and implementation level – in order to increase their efficiency and effectiveness, while not necessarily putting an additional financial burden on the government and the donors.

The first and foremost recommendation in this regard is the necessary gradual shift in the social protection schemes away from the traditional food assistance towards voucher and cash and employment generating programmes. Over time, food assistance should be limited to the extremely food insecure and Vulnerable communities in Area C through more careful targeting of extremely food insecure, mainly focusing on those households lacking non-financial assets and other assets. This will help in coping with the recent reduction in food security funding which is expected to continue in the future. An example of

such programme is the UNDP's Deprived Families Economic Empowerment Program (DEEP). DEEP, implemented in close cooperation with the MoSD, aims at alleviating poverty beyond food assistance and temporary employment projects. The employment generation model of the programme is based on engaging vulnerable households in self-employment and microenterprise development. Scaling up the DEEP programme and establishing new successful ones is expected to help increase the exit poverty rate which will in turn enhance food and nutrition security and reduce dependence on food assistance in the long run. In this respect, it is recommended that the PNA establishes a national fund in close cooperation with international donors and the private sector, which provides soft loans to poor households as a means of empowering them via employment generating programmes.

In the meantime, however, the shift to cash/voucher payments and reform of inclusion criteria for recipients should above all ensure that any refocusing, better targeting or reduction of coverage of current welfare and food assistance payments is thoroughly verified and justified beforehand. Direct checks of the actual living conditions of recipients is a prerequisite for deciding changes in coverage, so that entitled persons do not suffer bureaucratic processing delays or classification errors that could leave needy people even worse off. Food assistance and cash transfer payments to the poor have become effectively entrenched, acquired rights, which can only be renounced if fully justified and demonstrated to be no longer required.

In order to enhance the effectiveness of assistance programmes in reaching the beneficiaries and to reduce leakage, it is necessary to integrate the existing targeting instruments into a coherent mechanism approved by all actors, with the MoSD targeting mechanism used in the cash transfer programme – which has proved effective in reducing exclusion leakage rates – serving as a model for this new mechanism. In addition, it is important to adopt a unified database for all actors in order to ensure non-duplication in the provision of assistance to target families, thus enhancing the effective use of resources by all parties, increasing the volume of assistance to poor families, and/or reducing/expanding coverage of poor and food insecure families. Therefore, it is critical to develop methods for monitoring, controlling and evaluating the implementation of various programmes to ensure their responsiveness to actual needs.

The main policy recommendations regarding programme designing and implementation may be summarized as follows:

- Gradual transition from relief-based assistance to poor-families enabling assistance, with the project for the empowerment of economically disadvantaged families serving as a model for study and development;
- Support a shift from in-kind food assistance to voucher and cash assistance, to ensure on the one hand that poor and food insecure households can manage cash resources effectively and on the other that the most food insecure are able to enjoy the necessary nutrition for healthy lives;
- Incorporate current targeting methods into a single mechanism approved by all actors, with the targeting mechanism used in cash transfer programme by the MoSD serving as a model and a go-point; and using geographical targeting for prioritization
- Enhance the effectiveness of targeting by adopting a unified database for all actors in order to ensure non-duplication in the provision of assistance to target families, thus enhancing the

effective use of resources by all parties, increasing the volume of assistance to poor families, and/or expanding coverage;

- Give priority to local NGOs in implementing programmes and interventions, so as to maintain NGOs' capacities, efficiency, and sustainability;
- Develop the current methods of monitoring, controlling, and evaluating the implementation of various programmes to ensure their effectiveness and responsiveness to needs.

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ANNEXES



Annex 1

Report of the Review Dialogue Facilitator and Rapporteur, Dr. Mohamed Nasr

A. Introduction

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) commissioned the Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS) as a Lead Convener to conduct a national “Strategic Review of Food and Nutrition Security in Palestine”. The Strategic Review is intended to enable the government of Palestine to accelerate progress toward eliminating food insecurity and malnutrition, in line with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2.

In addition to desk review of existing literature on Palestine and international best practices, the Strategic Review relied heavily on intensive, in-depth consultations with all relevant stakeholders – national and international – in order to look into and analyze the current situation as well as the existing needs and response gaps; the involved partners, their current roles and institutional capacities; and the present policies and programmes.

B. Planning and Preparation for the Consultation Workshops

To serve the purposes of the Strategic Review, MAS assembled a team of specialized senior experts from academia, civil society, and the food sector. The Rapporteur and the research team met on regular basis throughout the implementation of this project to discuss the research objectives and deliverables, progress made, and next steps as well as to plan and prepare for the consultation workshops. Based on the Terms of Reference, major stakeholder groups (including the government, local NGOs and representatives of civil society, the Palestinian private sector, international NGOs, UN agencies, and donors) were identified and the most relevant representatives of each category were identified. In addition, specific sets of questions were prepared by the team and the Rapporteur for each group to investigate and assess their own perspectives on their engagement with food security issues in Palestine and to consult on the findings of the Strategic Review, at a more advanced stage. The series of focus groups/workshops is presented in the list below, and a list of all individual participants is available in Annex 2:

Workshop.	Date	Parties
1.	6 February 2017	Project Launch (All Stakeholders)
2.	20 February 2017	National Stakeholders (Government, NGOs, and Private Sector)
3.	28 February 2017	International Stakeholders (INGOs and UN Agencies)
4.	6 March 2017	All Stakeholders in Gaza (Local and International)
5.	14 March 2017	Donors
6.	3 April 2017	National Stakeholders (Government, NGOs, and Private Sector)

Invitation letters were sent to identified participants in each group well in advance of the date of the workshop, describing the nature of the project, the objectives of the workshop, and the expected outcome.

C. Consultation Workshops

The Strategic Review was launched on 6 February 2017 at a ceremony which was attended by numerous government officials, representatives of local and international NGOs, the private sector, UN agencies, donors, and the press. Welcoming remarks were delivered by Dr. Nabeel Kassis, Director General of MAS, followed by a short presentation by Dr. Mohamed Nasr, the Review Dialogue Facilitator and Rapporteur, demonstrating the purpose of the Review, its goals and methodology. Opening statements were made by Ms. Daniela Owen, WFP Country Director in Palestine, Dr. Mohammad Abu Hmaid, Deputy Minister of Social Development, and Mr. Abdullah Lahlooh, Deputy Minister of Agriculture.

Following the launch of the Strategic Review, three consultation focus group workshops were organized. These workshops were moderated by the Review Dialogue Facilitator and Rapporteur, Dr. Mohamed Nasr, and were attended by members of the research team. At the beginning of each workshop, the Rapporteur provided a brief project overview and the objectives of the workshop to the participants. The specific discussion questions were presented in a Power Point format, where each slide was composed of a set of questions pertaining to one specific issue addressed by the Strategic Review, and participants were invited to discuss the issue at hand, in an organized, systematic manner. The sessions were recorded (except for the donors workshop, for confidentiality reasons) to ensure that the entire discussion and all expressed opinions were duly registered. The questions presented during these three workshops covered the following topics:

- Dimensions of food security and nutrition
- Food security indicators
- Food security and nutrition policies and design of programmes
- Implementation of food security and nutrition programmes
- Laws and regulations
- National institutional capacity
- Role of partners and coordination among them
- Impact of food assistance on the Palestinian economy

The first workshop was held on 20 February 2017 and brought together more than 40 representatives and experts from Palestinian governmental agencies and non-governmental and private sector organizations. The second workshop was held on 28 February 2017 and was attended by about ten representatives of international NGOs, UN agencies, and the Food Security Sector (FSS). The third workshop was held on 6 March 2017 to consult with Gaza stakeholders through a video conference, bringing together 15 persons representing the government, local and international NGOs, and the private sector in Gaza.

On 14 March 2017, MAS hosted a fourth consultation focus group with representatives of donor countries of food security and nutrition in Palestine. The meeting was attended by five donor representatives. The discussion was organized based on the chapters of the Strategic Review and covered the issues as the previous workshops.

Finally, as the experts prepared summaries of their analysis and recommendations and before the final report was prepared, a select group of national partners, mainly government, NGOs, and private sector

institutions involved in food security, were invited to a consultation workshop to validate the outcomes. Prior to the meeting, executive summaries of the preliminary results, conclusions, and recommendation were sent to the invitees, together with invitation letter, to enable them to prepare their comments and suggestions prior to the meeting. The meeting was held on 3 April 2017 and was intended by around 15 stakeholders. The feedback and comments which were received during this final workshop contributed to refining the analysis and consequent recommendations and played an important role in the preparation of the final report.

After each workshop, the Rapporteur collected and consolidated feedback and input from attending stakeholders and prepared a summary report including the focus group meetings deliberations and attendance. The report was then submitted to the Project Coordinator, who forwarded it to the WFP.

D. Conclusions

The stakeholder consultation process was very successful in meeting the expected outcomes as outlined in the Terms of Reference. The workshops provided an important platform for constructive discussion of the main issues in the food and nutrition security sector in Palestine as well as expert feedback on the research analysis and, importantly, validation of the research outcomes. The discussion in the workshops was lively, highly informative, and very productive. Active participation by key stakeholders helped in identifying the challenges that hinder achieving food security, the role of international agencies and NGOs, and an evaluation of the programmes and interventions that have been adopted in Palestine. The output of these workshops has fed significantly into the final report.

Annex 2

List of participants at Focus Group consultations

Name	Position	Institution
Dalia Amleh	Engineer of Environment	The Environment Quality Authority (EQA)
Iyad Qumsieh	General Manager	PalPay
Laila Abu Nada	Agricultural engineer	Care International
Mohammad Sabe'	International's Food Security Programme Manager	CHF International - Gaza
Hanne Kristotterse	ACO	LACS
Mousa Al-Halaika	Acting Director of Nutrition Department	Ministry of Health
Riyad Attari	Administrative Manager	Palestinian Youth Union (PYU)
Nida' Amr	Administrative Manager	Ministry of Education
Haneen Salem	Administrative Manager	Ministry of Education
Ayman Sawalha	Advisor to the Minister	Ministry of Social Development (MOSD)
Sana' Khaznadar	Assistant of Deputy Minister	Ministry of Social Development
Thaer Fakhoury	Cooperative's Developer	Arab Centre for Agriculture Development (ACAD)
Abdullah Lahlouh	Deputy Minister	Ministry of Agriculture
Salah Lahham	Deputy Programme	World Food Programme (WFP)
Mohsen Abu Ramadan	Director	Arab Centre for Agriculture Development (ACAD)
Sami Khader	Director General	Maan news
Hussam Hallahq	Director General	West Bank Salt Company
Khaled Barghouthi	Director General for Combating Poverty	Ministry of Social Development (MOSD)
Zaghloul Samhan	Director general of Policies and Planning	The Environment Quality Authority (EQA)
Mustafa Khawaja	Director General of Registers and Statistical Monitoring Directorate	Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS)
Hasan Ashqar	Director of Planning	Ministry of Agriculture
Abd Yaseen	Director of Programmes and Projects	Economic and Social Development Center (ESDC)
Maher Taba'	Director of Public Relations and the Media and STEP	The Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Gaza

	project contact person	
Ayman Rabi	Executive Director	Palestinian Hydrology Group (PHG)
Mohammad Hasasneh	Executive Director	Land Research Center
Bassam Abu-Ghalyoun	Executive Director	Palestinian Food Industries Union (PFIU)
Jennifer Bloom	First Secretary	Representative Office of Canada
Anas Musallam	Gaza Operations Coordinator	Food Security Sector (FSS)
Hadeel Ekhmais	Head of Climate Change Department	The Environment Quality Authority (EQA)
Suzan Totah	Head of nutrition and canteens department	Palestinian Ministry of Education
Lina Bahar	Head of Nutrition Monitoring Department	Ministry of Health
Azzam Saleh	Head of Programme	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
Peter Holtsberg	Head of Programme	World Food Programme (WFP)
Noha Al Shareef	Head of Projects and Programmes Department	Agricultural Development Association (PARC)
Mohammad Tarawa	Head Of consumer protection Department	Ministry of National Economy (MoNE)
Firas Taneineh	journalist	Maan news
Ibraheem Abu Kamesh	Journalist	Alhaya news
Mohammad Alwan	Journalist	Al-Quds news
Amal Daoud	Manager	Welfare Association
:Abed Al Dayem Awwad	Manager	AL Salam Mills COM
Tariq Awwad	manager	AL Salam Mills COM
Amjad Al Shawwa	Manager	Palestinian None governmental Organizations network
Jihad Khateeb	Manager	Palm dates Cluster
Hosni Barakat	Operations Coordinator	Food Security Sector (FSS)
Mohammad Mansour	Photographer	-
Dawood Hammoudeh	Policy Director	Palestinian Farmers Union (PFU)
Walid Husary	President	The Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Gaza
Issa Elshatleh	Programme Director	Arab Centre for Agriculture Development (ACAD)
Rula Khalaf	Programme Officer	World Food Programme (WFP)

Rawand Za'areer	Project Assistant	Juhoud for Community and Rural Development
Samhan Samhan	Project Manger	Palestinian Hydrology Group (PHG)
Nidal Attawneh	Quality Assurance Manager	Gloden Wheat Mills
Tahseen Saadat	Representative	Union of Palestinian Farmers' Associations
Safa' Bsees	Rural Development Department	Ministry of Agriculture
Mohsen Khaznadar	Secretary	The Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Gaza
Thameen Hijawi	Senior Advisor	Norway Representative Office (NRO)
Genia Helou Raad	Senior Advisor	Consulate General of Belgium
Ayman Daraghmeh	Senior Advisor	Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC)
Razan Salah	the General Administration of School Health	Palestinian Ministry of Education
Kram Satri	Translator	-
Omar Tabakhna.		Union of Agricultural Work Committees (UAWC)
Mohammad Al-Ghafari	Journalist	Alhadath
Marco Ferloni	Food security sector coordinator	Food Security Sector (FSS)
Rana Hannoun	Economist	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
Pirro-Tomaso Ferri	Programme & Planning officer	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
Samah Helou	Programme policy officer	World Food Programme (WFP)
Ra'ed Hanania	Programme Officer	Global Communities
Naser Qadous	Programme Manager	ANERA
Abdelrahim Shawahneh	Head of Mission	Islamic Relief
David Makin-Taylor	Food Security and livelihoods Coordinator	Action Against Hunger (ACF)
Hazem Khweis	Aid Development Assistance Specialist	USAID