

# **National Plan of Action for Palestinian Children 2004-2010**



**Action Today for a Better Future**

**July 2004**



## **Secretariat of the National Plan of Action for Palestinian Children**

In 1995, the President approved the creation of a Steering Committee for the National Plan of Action for Palestinian Children and declared April 5th to be the Palestinian Child Day. The Steering Committee is composed of a number of governmental and non-governmental institutions (Ministry of Planning, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Information, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Labor, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Detainees Affairs, the Palestinian Broadcasting Corporation, the Palestinian NGO Network, UNICEF, UNRWA, and Sweden as the sponsor of Palestinian children). It aims at realizing the main mission of the National Plan of Action for children. In 1996, the Secretariat of the National Plan of Action for Palestinian Children (NPA) was created under the guidance of the Steering Committee. Since that time and up to date, work is going on planning for programs under the National Plan of Action in the fields of health, education, culture, protection, information, recreation, and psychosocial health.

**The National Plan's vision is centered** around ensuring a decent life for Palestinian children, where they can enjoy physical health with living, environmental and psychological conditions that provide them with security and stability, enjoy their childhood and right to learning and recreation, be able to think and act creatively and take initiatives, be aware of humanitarian values and the sense of belonging nationally, regionally and internationally, be able to express themselves and participate in decision-making.

**The Plan's goals ensure** a comprehensive and integrated vision and strategies for child survival, development, protection and participation; participation in formulating national policies; identifying, developing and prioritizing research on issues and subjects of interest to Palestinian children; developing and monitoring legislation related to the rights of the child in coordination with the Palestinian Legislative Council; and focusing on issues of national and international awareness of concern for the National Plan of Action for Palestinian Children.

**The Plan strives** to ensure the principle of the child's optimal interest; educating all social groups of their duties and obligations towards children's rights and needs and seeking to realize with them child protection in armed conflicts and his/her right to access health services, education, social and recreational services; forming active national coordinating committees to support the formal and legal bodies, development bodies, psychological well being, child protection from violence, disability, landmines and unexploded ordnance, as well as creative activities and media programs; encouraging scientific studies and research and provision of statistics in order to develop policies and plans that respond to children's needs.

For correspondence and further information:

**Secretariat of the National Plan of Action for Palestinian Children**

*Ministry of Planning-AL-Balooch Area-Al-Bireh*

*Tel: +972-2-2402178/1, Fax: +972-2-2402180*

*PO Box: 38144 Jerusalem*

*e-mail: npapal@palnet.com*

*Website: npasec.gov.ps*

## **All rights reserved**

The National Plan of Action for Palestinian Children is the fourth plan in a series of national plans of action for children in Palestine, which is considered a major task for the NPA Secretariat in terms of planning at the national level. The National Plan of Action is also considered the national reference point for planning at all levels aiming at promoting the status of Palestinian children.

### **Plans of action previously issued;**

- ▲ Agenda for Social Renewal 1996-2000
- ▲ The National Plan of Action for Palestinian Children 1999-2001
- ▲ Emergency Plan 2001-2003

*The Plan of Action is available in Arabic and English*

in case of quotation, please cite this publication as follows:

**Ministry of planning / Secretariat of the National Plan of Action for Palestinian Children, 2004.**  
*The National Plan of Action for Palestinian Children 2004-2010. Ramallah - Palestine.*



## Acknowledgement

The NPA Secretariat would like to extend gratitude to all individuals and groups who actively contributed to the development of this Plan of Action, mainly the following:

- ▲ Children and families who participated in a number of studies utilizing participatory research techniques and aiming at identifying their needs and views in different aspects of their lives. These studies have been the most valuable reference for developing the Plan's general outline.
- ▲ Members of the steering committee of the National Plan of Action for Palestinian Children for their leading role in all planning stages and for active contributions they made in the workshops on developing the logical frameworks.
- ▲ Governmental organizations, NGOs, international and UN agencies that actively participated in workshops held in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in order to develop the general outline for the 7-year plan 2004-2010 and workshops held to develop programs and projects for the first three years of the plan 2004-2006 (a list of participating institutions is attached at the end).
- ▲ Academic researchers who contributed to the Palestinian child's situation analysis, namely: Dr. Walid Khatib in the area of health, Ms Layla Batran in the area of culture, Mr. Wahid Jubran in the area of informal education, Mr. Tahsin Yaqin in the area of media, Ms. Dima Samman in the area of formal education, Ms. Dahab Musleh in the area of protection, and Ms. Jennifer De Piazza in the area of Intifada and its impact on children.
- ▲ The NPA Secretariat also would like to express thanks to researchers and academics who helped enrich the situation analysis with their comments and suggestions, particularly Ms. Reema Kilani, Dr. Samia Hleileh, Dr. Asaad Ramlawi, Dr. Nadim Adeili, Dr. Fateen Masad, Mr. Mahmoud Abdul-Hadi, Dr. Ahmad Harb, Ms. Monica Awad, Mr. Mahmoud Shuqeir, Mr. Zakariya Mohammed, and Mr. Aref Hijjawi.
- ▲ We also would like to thank Ms. Sarah Harb for her efforts in following up with, reviewing and providing valuable comments on the researchers' papers.
- ▲ Thanks are also due to Mr. Tarek Abdel-Ghany and his team from Cooperation for Development for facilitating part of the workshops and developing logical frameworks for the Plan's programs and projects for the first 3 coming years.
- ▲ We also appreciate the effort of the NPA Secretariat's staff in making this work a success at the national level in technical and administrative terms. In particular, we thank Ms. Dahab Musleh for her work as the coordinator of the planning process, for facilitating part of the workshops and developing logical frameworks. Ms. Iman Nijem has also participated as a program coordinator in facilitating part of the workshops and developing logical frameworks, as well as developing the chapter on children's voice. Thanks are also due to the rest of the staff, both management and finance, for their contribution and support to the planning process.

This plan would not have been made possible without financial support provided by the government of Sweden through the Swedish International Development Agency - SIDA. Through their consistent aid we were able to hold numerous planning, coordination, and capacity building exercises with governmental and non-governmental agencies in order to produce this long term strategic plan. We also would like to thank UNICEF-OPT for its generosity in supporting the workshops with the required stationary and hospitality and document printing.

While appreciating all efforts made in developing this National Plan of Action for Palestinian Children, the NPA Secretariat hopes that the Plan will contribute to improving the status of Palestinian children to reach the aspired level as reflected in its strategic objectives.

**Dr. Cairo Arafat**  
*Director of the NPA Secretariat*



## Foreword <sup>d</sup>

This may be one of the most difficult times the Palestinian people go through. Nevertheless, the Palestinian people are insisting to proceed in the achievement of their national dream represented in the establishment of their independent State. Through perseverance, persistence and coordination among all parties, the Secretariat for the National Plan of Action for the Palestinian Children / Ministry of Planning has been able to face the challenges and work on the formulation of a national plan and strategy that improve the reality of the Palestinian children. Since its inception, the Secretariat has been seeking to achieve the best interests for the Palestinian children by providing and implementing the rights, which the United Nations Convention on the rights of the child set forth including and most important of which is the child's right to life and survival, protection from all forms of violence and abuse, right to growth and development and to freedom of expression and participation based on four main principles: the best interest of the child, non-discrimination, survival and growth, and freedom of expression.

This plan is the fruit of tireless work and continuous efforts made by the Secretariat represented in the Steering Committee that includes among its members a number of governmental and non-governmental organizations, UNICEF, UNRWA and Sweden as the sponsoring party for the Palestinian child. Through coordination and working side by side with all the organizations operating in the field of childhood.

I seize this opportunity to thank, in my name and on behalf of the Secretariat, all those who participated in the preparation of this plan as partner organizations and persons of expertise who have not saved any efforts to reach conclusions and results that we hope to be at the level of challenge facing us. Finally, we hope to put this effort within the reach of the decision-makers at all levels in order to translate it to actual steps. We also hope from all supporting parties and countries to take this work into consideration due to its importance in developing the future of the Palestinian society.

Thanks go to all for their cooperation and support to the National Plan of Action for the Palestinian Children.

**Dr. Samih Al-Abid**

*Deputy Minister of Planning*

*Head of the Steering Committee / Secretariat for the National Plan of Action for the Palestinian Children*



# OUTLINE

<b>I. Introduction</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>II. Situation Analysis</b>	<b>13</b>
A. Historical Background on the Al-Aqsa Intifada	14
B. Summary of the Effect of the Intifada on the Palestinian Society and on Children	16
C. Child Health	22
D. Child Education	37
▲ Formal Education	37
▲ Non-formal Education	45
E. Children in need of Special Protection	50
▲ Poverty Stricken Children	51
▲ Refugee Children	57
▲ Child laborers	61
▲ Children in Conflict with the law	62
▲ Children Exposed to Public and Private Violence	64
▲ Israeli Violence Against Palestinian Children: Detention, Imprisonment, and Torture	66
F. Child Culture	68
G. Child Media	72
<b>III. The Socioeconomic Status in the Palestinian Territory</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>IV. Voice of Children</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>V. Planning Framework</b>	<b>101</b>
<b>VI. Development of Child Programs</b>	<b>113</b>
A. Health	115
B. Psychosocial Wellbeing	135
C. Education	163
D. Non-formal Education	206
E. Children in Need of Special Protection	250
F. Culture	328
G. Media	353
H. Advocacy	374
I. Monitoring	405
<b>Annex 1: Agencies Involved in the Planning Process</b>	<b>428</b>



## Chapter 1

# Introduction

## Introduction





# Introduction

**Children** represent the past, present and future of all societies. As adults we carry with us the experiences, events and challenges that we faced as children that either enhanced or decreased our capacity and ability to meet our full potential. We, now represent the parents, civil society and decision makers taking action on behalf of our children. Similarly, in our everyday lives children are at the focus of our efforts. In our society they represent over half of the population. We must not only *think* about their needs and rights we must *strive and take actions* towards ensuring that these rights and needs are met because they are essential human rights for children. However, children oftentimes lack the resources and capacity to fulfill their own needs and rights. Hence, it is our responsibility and obligation as adult members of society to protect, guarantee and ensure their rights are met.

In everyday affairs, we must take into account the needs, rights and voices of children in order to ensure that the government and civil society take the appropriate actions and steps that will allow children to grow within an environment that provides for their physical, psychological, social, cognitive and emotional well being. In the best of situations this requires that all parties from the community and civil society to Palestinian Legislative Council members to take action on laws, policies, services, and endeavors that will guarantee children their right to survival, development, protection and participation. This is no small task. Whether one lives within an affluent society that is not hampered by war or within a developing country that is continually facing violence, war and occupation, it is the responsibility of the government to put together a comprehensive national plan that provides a vision and direction for children's planning and rights. Through this plan the government and civil society can begin the national task of setting up the appropriate legal, policy, and service provisions necessary to ensure the objectives of the plan is met.

The role of the international community in ensuring that all countries (particularly those that are lacking the resources and abilities or faced with war and occupation) are supported in achieving these goals and rights for children has been clearly obligated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. This legal document that has been ratified by almost all countries of the world provides a comprehensive set of legal standards and minimum requirements for protecting and providing for the well being of children and stipulates that this is a shared responsibility of all countries.

The current National Plan of Action is built upon the goals and objectives that were laid out in the 1<sup>st</sup> National Plan of Action for Palestinian Children (1996-2000), the 2<sup>nd</sup> National Plan of Action for Palestinian Children (1999-2001) and the Emergency Plan of Action for Palestinian Children (2001-2003). All three planning documents took into account the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, national priorities and laws, and adopted a rights based perspective that centered on the importance of improving legislation, policies, services, protection, research, monitoring and advocacy on children's rights as core goals. These national plans have provided a vision of what are the basic components of children's needs and rights within Palestine. They have also been instrumental in providing an overall framework of initiatives that are supported and endorsed by the government. It allows all parties interested in working for children's well being to focus on a central national agenda that emphasizes building a strong and durable infrastructure within the country that can provide for the well being of children.

This is no small task even in the best of circumstances. In our case the challenge that lies before us is large and complicated. The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) has the basic responsibility of ensuring children's health, education, protection, development, and social well being. However, the PNA only came into existence in 1994. Although the PNA did prioritize children's issues and rights the lack of strategic long term planning was difficult because ministries had only been recently formulated, capacity within the country was

still weak, and there were few “national planners” who had the experience and expertise to do such work. However, over the years the ministries and civil society agencies have acquired a greater capacity to gather and utilize available information and experience in planning, implementing and monitoring/evaluating services and initiatives for children. This knowledge has been harnessed through the presence of partner agencies working together in developing the comprehensive national plan of action for Palestinian children (2004-2010).

It is important to note that the continued Israeli occupation (1967- ) and high levels of violence that have occurred since 2000 have taxed the abilities and resources of the local population to meet the needs and rights of children. This has been most notable concerning the inability of the Palestinian population to protect their children from bombings/shellings, imprisonment, curfews, closures, and prevention of access to basic health, educational, and social services. Prior to this point in time, national plans had focused on *developmental strategic planning*.

With the continuing emergency and crisis situation existing within the Occupied Palestinian Territory it has become imperative to take into consideration emergency/relief-based planning in conjunction with developmental planning perspectives. Keeping a balanced approach in such situations is a key planning approach that has been adopted in this new plan of action for Palestinian children. Crises and emergency situations may be defined as the point at which radical change becomes necessary- that is, when the status quo has become unsustainable. Where extreme social inequalities exist, or where fundamental freedoms are systematically denied, armed conflict may ensue; and this generally causes still greater social and economic hardship for those who are already vulnerable like children.

Palestinian children currently live in what are called difficult and emergency circumstances. The prevailing political, economic and socio-cultural situation is unstable, and more often than not, deteriorating. Because of the Israeli military occupation that governs nearly every aspect of Palestinians’ lives- adults and children alike- and because of the specific policies and goals of this occupation, the overwhelming context of Palestinian children’s lives is one of obstacles, human rights violation and brutality. This situation severely restricts their physical and mental space, material resources, and time necessary to contemplate the positive achievements and possible sources of optimism about children’s lives.

Development and relief interventions are different ways in which agencies can help women and men to determine their own part in bringing about social justice and equity, whether at the household, local, national, or international level. Thus the fundamental criteria for long-term development work and for effective emergency relief efforts are the same. It is to ensure that short- and long-term interventions strengthen people’s existing capacities without undermining their potential to sustain themselves equitably in the future. It must take account of the distinct needs and perceptions of women as well as men, and of different social groups. If emergency remains strictly defined in terms of material inputs, such as food aid and medical relief, it runs the risk of weakening and undermining people’s existing capacities.

This plan focuses on identifying strategic goals that need to be met for ensuring children’s rights. The strategies that will be employed to facilitate reaching these goals will have to be adjusted taking into account the overall situation (atmosphere, resources, constraints, and capacities) that exist on an annual basis. The key issue to be agreed upon is what exactly are the *priority strategic goals* that should be highlighted and guaranteed. The *means* of achieving these goals will have to vary depending upon what the exact situation is. However, there should be no compromising upon the strategic goals. Hence, if ensuring child survival is prioritized then whether we are talking about protection of children from bombings/shellings, or giving vaccines, or safeguarding them from infectious epidemics will be determined as a priority goal because we want to ensure children’s right to survival. In each of the above situations, the strategies may differ, however in the long run we will use the means and resources available to us to ensure that are children’s well being is safeguarded.

The government in cooperation with non-governmental agencies and the international community will achieve this by:

- ▲ Adopting and endorsing the National Plan of Action for Palestinian Children (NPA) 2004-2010 as a national development plan for children that should be prioritized within the overall national agenda. The NPA (national plan of action) represents a joint effort of governmental, non-governmental, and UN agencies working together to successfully develop an integrative and holistic national plan for the well being of Palestinian.
- ▲ Supporting the outcomes of the UN Special Session on Children 2002 and the goals, principles and guidelines that were identified in the World Fit for Children. The NPA and affiliated partners in planning, implementing, advocating, monitoring/evaluating children's services and programs acknowledge and support this document and have incorporated it into the entire planning process.
- ▲ The NPA was developed in line with basic principles of creating a better world for children, ensuring sustainable development, taking into account the best interests of children, safeguarding the principles of democracy, equality, non-discrimination, peace and social justice and universality, indivisibility, interdependence, and interdependence of all human rights for all children under the age of 18 years. The NPA also upholds the basic laws and policies existing within the country and works towards ensuring that these laws are executed in the best interests of children and the belief that the family is the most basic and important institution available to nurture, care and provide for the development of children.
- ▲ The NPA clearly stipulates a cooperative and collaborative role between governmental, non-governmental, UN agencies and the international community in safeguarding the wellbeing and protection of Palestinian children.
- ▲ Seeking and allocating sufficient resources (either internally or externally) to support the goals and objectives outlined in the NPA according to high standards of accountability at all levels.
- ▲ Providing children with sufficient and appropriate opportunities to voice their opinions and share in planning, implementing and evaluating children's programs by allowing them decision making powers and ensuring that there is equitable representation of children by gender, age, and geographical coverage (including children living in poverty, disability, and other marginalized groups.)
- ▲ Measuring the effectiveness of the NPA by identifying indicators and baseline data in order to measure achievements and attainment of target objectives against measurable and objectively verifiable indicators.
- ▲ Ensuring the endorsement of the NPA by the PNA cabinet of ministers, so as to adopt the plan as *the* national children's plan that will be adopted for implementation along with the Socio-economic Stabilization Plan for 2004/5 and future incorporation into long term national plans.

In the following chapters, a detailed discussion follows on the situation of Palestinian children, baseline information and indicators relevant to their well being, the planning framework and process, and detailed assessments of children's health, education, protection, non-formal education, cultural and media situation with clear and measurable strategic goals, objectives, and target actions.



## Chapter 2

# Situation Analysis

## Situation Analysis



# Situation Analysis

**A** **Historical Background on the Intifada** The twentieth century began with overall government in the Middle East region controlled by the Turkish Ottoman Empire. Following the 1914-1918 World War, the former Empire was broken up and became composed of distinct Arab states, many of which were administered by Great Britain under the Mandate System adopted by the League of Nations. Palestine was the only Mandate territory that never became a fully independent state as anticipated given the intended interim nature of the Mandate System. While the directive of the British Mandate in Palestine was intended to be limited to “the rendering of administrative assistance and advice”, the British Government had already firmly asserted its commitment to the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people—a commitment which was codified in the form of the 1917 ‘Balfour Declaration’.<sup>1</sup>



The period of the British Mandate, lasting until 1947, was characterized by large scale Jewish immigration mainly from Eastern Europe. This sea of immigrants was met with increasing anxiety by Palestinians who had been relegated to the status of second class citizens under the mandate which referred to them as part of the ‘non-Jewish communities’, and recognized their civil and religious rights, yet excluded recognition of their political rights—including the right to independence.<sup>2</sup> Palestinian resistance to the immigration and demands for independence finally culminated in a rebellion in 1937. Following years of violence from both sides and having failed to affect its stated policy objectives in the territory, a frustrated British Government in 1947 turned the problem over to the United Nations, the successor to the League of Nations.

Set out in United Nations General Assembly Resolution 181 of 1947, the UN proposed the partition of the territory into two independent States. The UN adopted this recommendation, thereby setting the stage for an Arab Palestinian State alongside a Jewish State, and the internationalization of the city of Jerusalem. However, outside of the process envisioned by the drafters of Resolution 181, and after key supporters of the resolution backed away from its implementation by force, the State of Israel was unilaterally proclaimed in 1948. This event remains in the collective consciousness of all Palestinians wherever they may live as, Al-Nakba, or ‘the catastrophe’. The violence that erupted following the proclamation, known as the 1948 War, resulted in Israel expanding to occupy 77 percent of the territory of Palestine, and the majority of the city of Jerusalem. Additionally, Egypt and Jordan occupied the remaining portion (the West Bank and Gaza Strip) of what would have been the Palestinian Arab State had it been established under Resolution 181.

Over half of the indigenous Palestinian population fled or were expelled at this time, creating the foundations for the massive Palestinian diaspora that exists today. They and their descendents comprise the bulk of the current Palestinian refugee population, and number over 5 million—constituting two-thirds of the Palestinian people and the single largest refugee population in the world today except for the Afghan refugee population.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL). ‘History of the Palestine Problem’. website: <http://www.un.org/depts/dpa/ngo/history.html>

<sup>2</sup> Badil Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights. ‘Historical Overview: Palestinian Refugees’. website: <http://www.badil.org>

<sup>3</sup> US Committee for Refugees. ‘World Refugee Survey 2003’. p. 6

This population was displaced and expelled in 1948 through tactics that violated fundamental principles of international law, including, indiscriminate military attacks on civilians (including those fleeing areas of conflict), massacres, looting, destruction of property (including entire villages), and forced expulsion. Israeli military forces also issued 'shoot to kill' policies to 'prevent infiltration', or the return of refugees to their homes.<sup>4</sup> Following armistice agreements in 1949 between Israel and its Arab neighbors, expulsion and internal transfer of Palestinian Arabs continued. Moreover, Israel adopted a series of laws concerning citizenship and nationality preventing Palestinian refugees from returning to their homeland, and 'abandoned property laws' which allowed property forcibly left by Palestinians to be transferred to full Jewish control.<sup>5</sup>

A second mass exodus of Palestinians resulted from the Six-Day War of 1967, which exposed many of the same violations of international law as were committed during the 1948 War. Israel occupied the remaining territory of Palestine, including portions of Jerusalem (subsequently annexed by Israel) not already under its control, and replaced the previous Egyptian and Jordanian administrations in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank respectively with Israeli military occupation. An estimated half a million Palestinians left en masse.

An international community stirred to action responded through the UN Security Council with Resolution 242 of 1967, which called upon Israel to withdraw from the territories occupied during the 1967 conflict.<sup>6</sup> However, despite this Security Council resolution, and subsequent efforts on the part of the United Nations General Assembly, including, the 1974 Resolution 3236 recognizing the inalienable right of Palestinian people to self-determination, national independence, sovereignty, and return; the 1975 establishment of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian people; and the conferring of observer status in the General Assembly on the PLO, Israel did not capitulate and events on the ground continued to take a violent course.<sup>7</sup>

The two decades following the Six-Day War were characterized by severe turbulence and violations of international law affecting both Palestinians living within the occupied territories and those in Diaspora communities in neighboring countries. Within the occupied territories, Israeli settlements were being constructed in the newly occupied lands, and house demolitions, revocation of residency rights, and deportations continued—each constituting a breach of Israel's obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention.<sup>8</sup> Among other events affecting the Palestinian Diaspora, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the massacre of several thousand Palestinian refugees in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps of Beirut by Lebanese Christian Phalangists allied with Israel, were among the most insidious.

Following this continuous violence and lack of action on the part of Israel to comply with previous Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, the intifada, or 'uprising' began in 1987 to resist the Israeli occupation. Methods employed by Israeli military forces to suppress the uprising resulted in injury and heavy losses of life to the Palestinian civilian population.

After five years of bloodshed, the international community reengaged in the conflict in a substantive way with a peace conference on the Middle East in October 1991. The stated objective of the conference was to lay the foundation for a lasting and comprehensive peace settlement through negotiations between Israel and the Arab States, and between Israel and the Palestinians. The negotiations culminated in the mutual recognition between the Government of the State of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as the representative of the Palestinian people, and the signing by both parties of the 1993 Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government. Outcomes of the signing of the 1993 Declaration and the subsequent implementation agreements (collectively known as the Oslo Accords) included: the partial withdrawal of Israeli forces, the elections to the Palestinian Council and the Presidency of the Palestinian Authority, the partial release of prisoners, and the establishment of Palestinian administration in certain geographic areas deemed to be under Palestinian self-rule.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Badil Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights, op.cit

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL), op.cit

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> Badil Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights, op.cit

<sup>9</sup> United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL), op.cit



## **B** The Effect of the *Intifada* on Palestinian Society, and on Children The Post Oslo Period: A Prelude to *Intifada*

The period immediately following the signing of the Declaration of Principles (DOP) in 1993 and the Gaza-Jericho Agreement in 1994, was characterized by increasing optimism in the international community, and cautious optimism by Palestinians. Optimism in the international community was evidenced



primarily through a shift away from relief efforts and toward future oriented development and capacity-building initiatives in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. For the citizenry of Palestine, prominent among the important results of the Oslo Accords was the creation of the Palestinian Authority (PA) in 1994. The birth of the PA meant the transfer of power in the spheres of education, culture, health, social welfare, and information away from Palestinian civil society institutions that had previously provided for the bulk of services in these sectors, toward the consolidated national policy and planning jurisdiction of the PA.

However, sustained natural population growth, ever expanding social needs, shifts in donor emphasis and level of financial commitment, and restrictions placed on development in the interim agreements made between Israel and the PLO, coupled with the delicate power negotiations taking place between civil society and the PA, proved to be difficult obstacles to overcome. Although there were periods of moderate economic growth in the 1990's, changes either in real economic indicators, or in the general health and wellbeing of Palestinian citizenry were not characterized by longevity. Throughout the 1990's, GNP grew on average by a mere 2.5%, and by early 2001, the World Bank reported that unless the economy grew by 4.9% annually, the proportion of people living in poverty would increase inexorably—due to population growth alone. In order to reverse this likelihood and reduce the number of poor, GNP would need to grow by a daunting 6.9% annually.<sup>10</sup>

Following decades of occupation with impunity, and despite seven years of peace process, many key issues affecting the daily lives of Palestinians remained unresolved. Namely, despite the regime of semi-autonomy that was set up under Oslo, Palestinians had control over a mere 18% of their land—land which was effectively composed of isolated islands unto themselves—with no control over borders, security, or water. Likewise, there was no movement toward the final achievement of an independent state, and military occupation persisted in the majority of the West Bank and Gaza. Settlements, which are illegal under international law, increased by 60% in both size and population between 1993 and 2000, land confiscations and demolition of homes and income generating private assets such as olive groves remained common, and systematic violence and collective punishment measures including internal and external closures and curfews continued.

Throughout this time period Israel continued—despite numerous UN resolutions, and entreaties by the International Committee of the Red Cross, and international legal and human rights scholars—to categorize the West Bank and Gaza as 'administered areas' rather than occupied territories, thereby refuting the application of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. It is also significant to note that despite continued degradation in the lives of Palestinians throughout the Oslo period, Israel signed and ratified numerous human rights conventions in the 1990's. These conventions include the International Covenant on Economic, and Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), the Convention on the Elimination of

<sup>10</sup>World Bank. 'Poverty in the West Bank and Gaza'. January 2001. p. 31

All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT).

### **The Intifada**

In Jerusalem in late September 2000, Israeli defense minister, and now Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, along with 1,500 heavily armed Israeli security forces, arrived at the *Haram Al-Sharif*. The following day, Israeli security forces responded to Palestinian protests against Sharon's visit to the holy site with excessive force, including, firing tear gas, rubber-coated metal bullets, and live ammunition at protestors and worshipers alike. This chain of events, occurring amid a climate of despair over the impotency of the peace process, and resulting in the death of six Palestinians and the injury of 200, triggered the intifada (Arabic for uprising).

The first 33 months of the intifada have been characterized by some of the most severe and sustained mobility restrictions on people and goods since 1967. Violence against Palestinian civilians, carried out in contravention of the most fundamental principles of humanitarian law, including proportionality, distinction, and the required due consideration of means and methods of warfare, has been pervasive. A ubiquitous mark has thus been left on the Palestinian economy, the social, cultural, and educational life, and the psychological consciousness of the Palestinian people—with particularly egregious long-term effects on the children who inherit this legacy and who will one day be responsible for the growth and prosperity of the nation once statehood is achieved.

The mobility restrictions include internal closures from village to village and city to city within the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem, and closure of international crossings between the occupied territories and Jordan and Egypt. This closure regime has effectively divided the West Bank alone into 50 distinct noncontiguous entities with movement between them difficult and frequently life threatening.

The ultimate form of closure is the policy of curfew, which has isolated entire populations of cities and villages to their homes. Curfews have lasted anywhere from a few hours to 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Residents in areas under curfew can never be sure when they will happen or how long they will last. Anyone leaving their residence, even for the most urgent of needs risks severe injury as IDF soldiers are authorized to shoot-to-kill any violators. During the course of 2002, some 688,000 Palestinians in 39 towns, villages, and refugee camps in the West Bank were confined to their homes under curfew for varying numbers of days. In Gaza, some areas in the north have been under curfew since July 2001 where residents are permitted to enter and leave the area only for four hours out of the day—between 6:30 and 8:30 a.m. and 2:00 and 4:00 p.m.<sup>11</sup>

### **The Cost of the Intifada**

As of the writing of this report in November 2003, military occupation of Palestinian self-rule areas continues and movement of people and goods remains highly restricted. There are more than 100 checkpoints and 300-400 ditches and earth mounds preventing travel on key thoroughfares between cities and villages. Although the number of people under curfew has declined, there were still 390,000 civilians under curfew from November 2002-April 2003 with certain areas such as Hebron, Jenin, and parts of Gaza, frequently under tighter or continuous curfew.<sup>12</sup> Further, the cost of IDF incursions and military campaigns in the last seven months alone as measured in Palestinian lives is an average of 80 deaths per month.<sup>13</sup>

The cost of mobility restrictions to the Palestinian economy has been staggering. A 2002 World Bank evaluation of the Palestinian economy indicated that there was little that could be done to turn the economy around while it remained subject to unpredictable restrictions and periodic shut-down. In 2002, the unem-

<sup>11</sup> OCHA, 'Humanitarian Plan of Action for the Occupied Palestinian Territory,' United Nations Technical Assessment Mission. October 2002. p. 5

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. p. 5

<sup>13</sup> OCHA, 'Humanitarian Action Plan for the Occupied Palestinian Territory 2003: Mid-Year Review'. May 2003. p. 1

ployment rate reached 53% of the workforce, a rate that would tear apart the very fabric of society in a less resilient nation. The Gross National Income (GDP plus remittances from abroad) in 2002 was 40% less than in 2000, amounting to GNI losses in the first 27 months of the intifada totaling US\$5.4 billion, or a total opportunity cost now equivalent to one full year of Palestinian wealth creation.<sup>14</sup> Further, due to the a combination of declining GNI and high population growth (4.35% per annum), real per capita income in the second year of the intifada was only half of the September 2000 level. While private sector investment could cushion some of the blow to the economy, bank credit to the private sector has all but dried up. In aggregate, total investment in the Palestinian economy has fallen to US\$140 million in 2002 from pre-intifada levels of US \$1.5 billion—a difference of US\$1.360 billion.<sup>15</sup>

In an economy dogged with unflagging unemployment and reduced demand, the PA fiscal budget has been overwhelmed. Attempts to stimulate demand while maintaining needed social welfare provision have been occluded in large part due to the Israeli government decision in December 2000 to withhold taxes collected on the PA's behalf.<sup>16</sup> Thus, during a time of great need, PA monthly revenues dropped from US\$91 million in late 2000 to US\$19 million by mid-2002—a difference of US\$72 million per month.<sup>17</sup>

However, due in large measure to emergency donor support to the PA budget, which accounted for half of the PA budget in 2002, the Palestinian economy still functions. Approximately 125,000 people receive a regular monthly salary from the PA and provide essential services to the population—amounting to the employment of 1/3 of all those employed in the West Bank and Gaza and half of all wages earned in the West Bank and Gaza.

### What the Numbers Mean for the People

The devastation of the Palestinian economy, through measures carried out in contravention of Israel's binding obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law, and the resulting loss in livelihood, is the primary cause of a deepening humanitarian crisis in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Sixty percent of the Palestinian population are now living under the US\$2 per day poverty line, as compared with 21% in 2000—indicating that the number of poor has tripled to just under 2 million from a pre-intifada level of 637,000.<sup>18</sup> Female-headed households, representing 9% of Palestinian households, constitute more than half of the poorest Palestinian households with 30% falling below the poverty line.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, average daily consumption of a poor person in both the West Bank and Gaza is well below the US\$2 mark and has dropped from a pre-intifada level of US\$1.47 per day to US\$1.32.<sup>20</sup>

The deterioration of Palestinian health and nutritional status has been steadily monitored since September 2000. While the PA continues to provide for the healthcare needs of the Palestinian people, in light of the competing burdens the PA must negotiate, there are far fewer funds available for healthcare, as well as education, and development initiatives. Thus, as indicators of the prevailing socioeconomic conditions, it is to be expected in a society where by late 2002 the median monthly income had dropped by 52%, where people are no longer able to afford the same basket of food items, where over half a million people are now fully dependent on food aid, and where per capita food consumption is down by 30% in three years, that malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies such as chronic malnutrition and anemia, are increasing in prevalence.<sup>21</sup>

Data analysis from a 2002 nutritional assessment conducted by Johns Hopkins University and Al-Quds University concluded that the household income level in Palestine was strongly associated with the presence of acute and chronic malnutrition as well as anemia. Study findings predictably showed that a signifi-

---

<sup>14</sup> World Bank. 'Two Years of Intifada, Closures and Palestinian Economic Crisis'. March 2003. p. 1

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. p. 2

<sup>16</sup> As of November 2002, an estimated US\$95 million in tax clearances have been turned over to the PA from the GOI, with an estimated US\$680 million still owed in arrears.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. p.1

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. p. 3

<sup>19</sup> Christian Aid. "Losing Ground: Israel, Poverty and the Palestinians". January 2003. p. 37

<sup>20</sup> World Bank. 'Two Years of Intifada, Closures and Economic Crisis'. op.cit. p.3

<sup>21</sup> Christian Aid. op.cit. p. 3

cant proportion of children in the West Bank and Gaza are chronically malnourished, with acute malnutrition in Gaza reaching 13.3% of the population—a level comparable to that of Zimbabwe (13%) and Congo (13.9%).<sup>22</sup> Moreover, the study found that anemia in both children and women of reproductive age was a severe endemic problem.<sup>23</sup> Survey results of health care clinics from the Johns Hopkins and Al-Quds University study also indicated that healthcare providers cite ‘family economic problems’ as the primary cause of malnutrition. Consistent with the findings from the clinic survey, a market survey from the same report concluded that the same factors that were depressing the economy—curfews, closures, military incursions, border closures, and checkpoints—affected the availability of key high protein foods which are necessary to prevent anemia, and protein-energy malnutrition in infants, young adults, and reproductive age women.<sup>24</sup> Finally, the overall conclusion of the study clearly indicated that the conflict and its economic consequences have created a state of food insecurity that is worsening chronic malnutrition in children, decreasing macronutrient consumption in women, and rendering acute malnutrition intractable despite interventions.<sup>25</sup>

Mobility restrictions have also made it difficult and often impossible for health care professionals to report to work on a regular basis, thus leading to an overall decrease in immunization levels, dangerous limits on care for patients suffering from chronic disease, and mothers seeking pre and post-natal care. Women and children are particularly vulnerable to restrictions affecting their ability to seek healthcare given the fact that 46.1% of the population is under the age of 15, and Palestinian women have an average of five children during their lifetime.<sup>26</sup>

The provision of emergency healthcare has been hampered by acts of non-compliance by the IDF with its legal obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention, and with commitments made by the GOI to the UN Secretary General’s Humanitarian Envoy Catherine Bertini in August 2002 pertaining to the free passage of humanitarian goods and emergency healthcare vehicles. On average, 60 ambulances faced delays at checkpoints each month from Jan-May 2003, one quarter of these were denied access through checkpoints all together, and 15 ambulances were fired upon during the month of March 2003 alone.<sup>27</sup>

Both increased incidence of water-born illnesses in communities and the inability of those suffering from them to seek and receive care for these highly treatable conditions are also a result of mobility restrictions. A March 2003 study conducted by the Palestinian Hydrology Group (PHG) and funded by the European Commission Humanitarian Office (ECHO) and Oxfam-GB on the water, sanitation, and hygiene situation in the West Bank and Gaza supports this assertion. The study, based on research conducted in 615 communities in the West Bank and Gaza, observed the following water, sanitation and hygiene related problems: strong evidence of water related disease, inaccessibility to nearest public health center, lack of funds to pay for wastewater evacuation, a high percentage of families unable to afford to pay water bills, destruction of water and sanitation infrastructure, dependence on water tankers for fresh water, limited supply of water, no access to water networks, and curtailed or completely cut off water supply from Mekorot—Israel’s national water company which is the main water source for between 201 and 213 communities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.<sup>28</sup> Thus, due to the insidious effect of the regime of closures and curfews, the provision of water and sanitation services has become expensive, dangerous, and often impossible. For example, there are over 200,000 Palestinians living in rural communities relying on water brought in by tank.<sup>29</sup> However, those transporting water in tankers have reported having difficulty accessing water sources, forcing them to risk their lives in order to gain access to alternate sources. This and other factors lead to increased costs of up to NIS40 (US\$8-10) per cubic meter—costs that are passed on to the consumers of water.<sup>30</sup> Thus, consum-

<sup>22</sup> CARE. ‘Nutritional Assessment of the West Bank and Gaza Strip’. Conducted by Johns Hopkins University/Al-Quds University and financed by USAID through CARE International. September 2002

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. p. 34

<sup>24</sup> CARE. ‘Humanitarian Update on West Bank and Gaza’. website. [www.careinternational.org](http://www.careinternational.org). April 2003.

<sup>25</sup> CARE. ‘Nutritional Assessment of the West Bank and Gaza Strip’. op.cit. p 34

<sup>26</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. website: <http://www.pcb.org>. 2003

<sup>27</sup> OCHA. ‘Humanitarian Action Plan for the Occupied Palestinian Territory 2003: Mid-Year Review’. op.cit. p.3

<sup>28</sup> Palestinian Hydrology Group. ‘Water and Sanitation, Hygiene (WaSH) Monitory Project: Impact of the Current Crisis, Technical Report #7’. March 2003. p10

<sup>29</sup> OCHA. ‘Humanitarian Action Plan for the Occupied Palestinian Territory’. op.cit. p. 37

<sup>30</sup> Palestinian Hydrology Group. op.cit. p. 11

ers who are either unable to pay for their water, or who have given up on a water tanker that never arrives, are forced to make use of contaminated water sources from which they are exposed to illnesses, for which they may subsequently be unable to attain treatment.

It is also significant to note that the construction and completion of Israel's 'Separation Wall', in addition to further damaging the livelihood of an estimated 95,000 Palestinians residing in 27 towns and villages who will be caught between the 1967 Green Line and the Wall, will also have real water and sanitation repercussions.<sup>31</sup> The first segment of this Wall, already well underway, will be composed of 145 kilometers of electric and barbed-wire fences, trenches and walled structures. The Palestinian Hydrology Group reported that during the construction of this first phase, 30 groundwater wells would likely be affected, while at least 15 villages will be separated from their land by the wall.<sup>32</sup>

### Children and the *Intifada*

Under *jus in bello*<sup>33</sup> children are afforded both the general protection of all civilians *hors de combat*<sup>34</sup>, as well as special protections. Children are also protected by the binding obligations of various international human rights treaty regimes including the UN Charter, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). In addition, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), one of the most universally accepted human rights instruments, complements and more precisely defines provisions in both international humanitarian law and general human rights law related to children. The protections in the CRC include, among other rights, the right to survival, protection, health, development, and education. Despite this formidable body of codified international law, children are paying a disproportionately high price in the current conflict.

### Final comments addressed to Israel

The UN Child Rights Committee has addressed final comments to the Israeli government in regard to the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Children (CRC) and the Israeli violations of the CRC in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT). These comments were developed upon the presentation of the alternative report by a delegation from the Palestinian Child Coalition to the Committee in Geneva in June 2002. The report addressed all Israeli violations to the rights of Palestinian children, as stipulated in the UN CRC, during the period from the start of the enforcement of CRC in 1991 and up to the date when Israel submitted its preliminary report to the Child Rights Committee in 2000. The Palestinian delegation has organized a number of activities to accompany the presentation of the report. These included seminars, lectures, and meetings with various institutions. These activities have been successful in raising the level of international awareness of the Israeli violations to the rights of the Palestinian children, particularly through the Swedish press.

The Coalition's decision to submit an alternative report was not made discretely, but was rather based on the article 45 of the CRC that ensures NGOs the right to submit alternative reports to the periodic reports submitted by states.

Of the 1.5 million Palestinian children (53% of the population), 405 Palestinian children have been killed in the current conflict, 7,000 have been injured, and about 500 of those injured are likely to experience permanent disabilities as a result.<sup>35</sup> Between 170 and 375 Palestinian children are now being held in Israeli military or civil detention, with some under the age of 18 being held in detention among the detained adult population. Many children are held without charge, access to legal representation, parental visits or notification of the child's whereabouts, without adequate food or access to bathroom and shower facilities, and are subject

---

<sup>31</sup> OCHA. 'Humanitarian Action Plan for the Occupied Palestinian Territory 2003: Mid-Year Review'. op.cit. p 2

<sup>32</sup> Palestinian Hydrology Group. op.cit. p.12

<sup>33</sup> *jus in bello* refers to the laws governing the conduct of warfare which are part of codified international humanitarian law

<sup>34</sup> *hors de combat* refers to those persons not taking direct part in hostilities

<sup>35</sup> UNCHR. 'Question of the violation of human rights in the occupied Arab Territories including Palestine'. Report of the Special Rapporteur of the CHR, Mr. John Dugard. March 2002.



to both physical and psychological torment and abuse.<sup>36</sup> These are clear violations of the rights of the child under numerous international law regimes to which Israel is bound.

The Palestinian educational system, despite a decade of exertions to improve it, is now seriously compromised. In aggregate, closures, curfews, and the daily threat of injury to innocent civilians from military forces are leaving a deleterious effect on the quality and quantity of education for an entire generation. Some 226,000 children and 9,300 teachers have been unable to reach their regular schools, and 580 schools have been closed due to curfews, closures, or Israeli military order, thereby severely disrupting the curriculum.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, despite the best efforts of flexible and creative teachers and school administrators, the school environment is hardly conducive to learning. Teachers report that students are distracted, classrooms are overcrowded, and the level of student violence has increased.

The psychosocial health of Palestinian children has been the subject of several recent studies that report a disturbing percentage of children with noticeably altered behavior patterns. The Palestinian Ministry of Health reported that there has been a 105% increase in new cases at mental health clinics since October 2000, and that children under 18 constitute a majority of these.<sup>38</sup> Further, in 2003 UNICEF reported that 75% of parents have noticed behavioral changes and greater emotional problems in their children compared with one year ago, including problems sleeping, being afraid, and finding it hard to concentrate.<sup>39</sup> These findings are hardly surprising given the severe disruptions of normal childhood activity that characterize the daily lives of Palestinian children. For example, children have limited opportunities for hobbies, sports, and other leisure activities, and are often confined to their homes where parents report that children are watching increasing amounts of T.V. Further, children along with their parents are isolated from the support systems and joy of grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, and friends whom they can no longer physically reach. One of the most telling recent studies conducted by Save the Children UK and Save the Children Sweden revealed from interviews with Palestinian children, that because of the uncertainty, fear, and violence that dominate their lives, many could not envision a future.<sup>40</sup>

## Conclusion

The international community, on the level of relief and development, has for many years faced the moral dilemma of stepping up assistance to the West Bank and Gaza Strip and simultaneously 'financing the occupation' or discontinuing operations and insisting that Israel fulfill its obligations under international law. However, faced with the present humanitarian emergency and despite the valid misgivings about 'financing the occupation', severe handicaps in delivering assistance, including, the death of aid workers while carrying out their duties, tremendous transaction costs, and limited access to areas in need over the last two years, the humanitarian community has remained steadfast in its commitment to the 'humanitarian imperative'. This is evidenced by the steep increase in donor disbursements over the past two years. Donor disbursement doubled in 2002, totaling US\$1,051million—up from a pre-intifada level of US\$929 million. However, as the UN noted in its 2003 Mid-Year Review of the Humanitarian Plan of Action for the Occupied Palestinian Territories, because the single largest cause of the current humanitarian crisis is the continued disrespect for the principles of humanitarian law, despite the best intentions of the international donor community, real long term changes in economic indicators, and consequently in the daily lives of the Palestinian people, cannot be achieved through the influx of aid, in any amount.

If donor disbursements were doubled to US\$2 billion—something which there is no reason to believe is feasible - the poverty rate would only fall to some 54% (down from the current 60%) by the end of 2004.”- The World Bank<sup>41</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Defence for Children International (DCI). 'Palestinian Children in the Judicial System'. website: www.dci-pal.org. June 2003

<sup>37</sup> OCHA. 'Humanitarian Action Plan for the Occupied Palestinian Territory'. op.cit. p. 41

<sup>38</sup> Quoted in Save the Children Sweden and Save the Children UK 'Growing up under Curfew: Safeguarding the Basic Rights of Palestinian Children'. March 2003. p. 20

<sup>39</sup> UNICEF. 'Mid Year Update of the Humanitarian Appeal-Occupied Palestinian Territory'. 2003. p. 2

<sup>40</sup> Save the Children-UK, and Save the Children-Sweden, 'Education Under Occupation: Palestinian Children Talk About Life and School'. March 2002. p. 37

<sup>41</sup> World Bank. 'Two Years of Intifada, Closures and Palestinian Economic Crisis'. op.cit. p. 3.

**C Child Health** A child's health encompasses his or her complete physical, mental, and social well-being, and it is also a right under international law. Provision of the necessary health services to fully encompass that right has regrettably not been a consistent feature in the lives of Palestinian children. Generations throughout the last 84 years have weathered a UN administrator, displacement and refugee status through forced migration, Jordanian and Egyptian administrators in the West Bank and Gaza respectively, another forced migration, and what is now a decades' long occupation characterized by jurisdictional shifts in healthcare provision between Israel, Palestinian civil society, and the Palestinian Authority. In fact, one might say that the only constant has been the omnipresence of change. Thus, the development and sustainability of health services for Palestinian children has been, and remains severely handicapped despite the noteworthy efforts of resourceful and dedicated international and local healthcare agents and tremendous donor support.



### **Final comments addressed to Israel**

The UN Child Rights Committee has addressed final comments to the Israeli government in regard to the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Children (CRC) and the Israeli violations of the CRC in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT). These comments were developed upon the presentation of the alternative report by a delegation from the Palestinian Child Coalition to the Committee in Geneva in June 2002. The report addressed all Israeli violations to the rights of Palestinian children, as stipulated in the UN CRC, during the period from the start of the enforcement of CRC in 1991 and up to the date when Israel submitted its preliminary report to the Child Rights Committee in 2000. The Palestinian delegation has organized a number of activities to accompany the presentation of the report. These included seminars, lectures, and meetings with various institutions. These activities have been successful in raising the level of international awareness of the Israeli violations to the rights of the Palestinian children, particularly through the Swedish press.

The Coalition's decision to submit an alternative report was not made discretely, but was rather based on the article 45 of the CRC that ensures NGOs the right to submit alternative reports to the periodic reports submitted by states.

***If donor disbursements were doubled to US\$2 billion - something which there is no reason to believe is feasible - the poverty rate would only fall to some 54% (down from the current 60%) by the end of 2004." - The World Bank***

## **Historical Geopolitical Context of Palestinian Healthcare (1920-1994)\***

### Healthcare during the British Mandate Period (1920- 1948)

- ▲ Health services were provided by the Government Department of Health under the British Civil Administration.
- ▲ Some hospitals and health clinics were provided for the Arab population, but British colonial policy aimed to limit the investment in social services. Thus most poor Palestinians had limited access to healthcare.

### Healthcare under Jordanian and Egyptian Rule (1948-1967)

- ▲ Healthcare in the West Bank and Gaza Strip came under Jordanian and Egyptian authority respectively,

thus leading to the emergence of two separate healthcare regimes, plus the third regime of UNRWA healthcare, which provided services exclusively to refugees in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

- ▲ Health services provided by all three parties at this time were rudimentary and mainly curative.
- ▲ A small private sector emerged that included charitable organizations operating hospitals, diagnostic centers, and primary healthcare facilities.

#### Healthcare under Israeli Administration (1967-1994)

- ▲ Healthcare for the Palestinian territories was taken over by the Israeli Civil Administration during this period, but under the Ministry of Defense, not the Ministry of Health.
- ▲ Healthcare during this period was deliberately kept underdeveloped through severe budgetary restrictions, referrals to Israeli doctors rather than Palestinian doctors, and restrictions on licensing for new healthcare initiatives, thereby creating almost complete dependence on the Israeli health system.
- ▲ Palestinians were also not given the opportunity to participate in decision making for the sector at high levels—further disempowering them.
- ▲ During this period, UNRWA was developing its healthcare infrastructure with relative autonomy.
- ▲ The private sector continued to operate hospitals and provide alternatives for healthcare provision, but was subject to Israeli military rules and licensing restrictions that prohibited advances in development of the sector.
- ▲ During this time period, a strong popular grassroots health movement associated with Palestinian political movements emerged (late 1970's). The goal of these small organizers was to fill in the gaps in an underserved population. They focused their efforts on particularly marginalized communities through the efforts of scores of volunteers and mobile clinics. They provided preventive care, health education, and community participation in addressing local health issues, in addition to curative services.
- ▲ Source: Giacaman, Rita., Abdul-Rahim, Hanan F., and Wick, Laura. 'Health Sector Reform in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT): Targeting the Forest or the Trees?'. Institute of Community and Public Health, Birzeit University. 2003

#### Healthcare in Palestine Since 1994

The Ministry of Health was established in 1994 and was saddled with the daunting task of overhauling the schizophrenic healthcare system. Between 1994 and mid-1999, US\$353 million was contributed by donors to the Palestinian healthcare sector. In 2002, eight years after the provision of healthcare was turned over to the PA, there were 609 primary healthcare centers (508 in the West Bank and 101 in the Gaza Strip) run by various agents. While the Palestinian health infrastructure consists mainly of the Ministry of Health, UNRWA, and NGOs, there are hundreds of general practitioners, pediatricians, and dentists who provide services to children in the private sector. The private sector also operates 20 hospitals (15 in the West Bank and 2 in the Gaza Strip), which account for 10% of all hospital beds in Palestine. However, few families make use of private care facilities due to both the high cost and the fact that UNRWA, the MOH and NGOs offer reduced rate or no fee services. While many healthcare indicators improved during the years after the creation of the Palestinian Authority, the pace of improvement was slow, the sector did not develop cohesively, it was and still remains very dependent on foreign aid, and in many cases, the ability to send patients abroad. The dependence of the healthcare sector was evidenced during the first two months of the intifada when over 440 severely injured Palestinians were referred to other Arab and European countries for treatment.<sup>42</sup>

#### The Ministry of Health (MOH)

The Ministry of Health assumes the most dominant role in providing primary healthcare services in general and in providing healthcare specific to children. In 2002, three hundred and seventy-three (61.6%) primary healthcare centers were administered by the MOH. Even though it has expanded its reach, there are still gaps in coverage, particularly in Gaza, in more rural locals in both the West Bank and Gaza, and in the quality of services provided to children.

<sup>42</sup> Defence for Children International-Palestine Section. A Generation Denied. 2001. p. 94

Efforts to make primary healthcare given to children comprehensive and accessible have been made by the Ministry. For example, The MOH has created a file monitoring system that tracks all aspects of a child's health from the age of one to three years. The Ministry is also working with schools to ensure that these files, once created, follow that child throughout his or her education. Additional efforts include the full equipping of Ministry-run mother and child clinics with standard medical and administrative equipment, medications, and vaccines.

### **Make sure your child has a file**

A "file for every child" is a means developed by the Palestinian Ministry of Health as part of its efforts to promote early detection of disability among the Palestinian children between 0-3 years. These files are filled out by nurses and physicians that have been trained filling the files and on early detection of disability according to a special guide that MOH makes available to each district along with the files. Each file contains general data on the child such as family members, family medical history, pregnancy history, date of birth, parents' concerns, the child's physical and mental development, nutrition, routine physical examinations, vaccinations, hemoglobin tests, and referrals to specialists or hospitals.

Common problems in MOH clinics include the environment and the number of staff. Several MOH mother and child clinic are in need of additional resources to provide sufficient ventilation and heating. Related to the staffing of MOH primary healthcare facilities, there are pediatricians in only five health directorates. In each directorate, one physician and one nurse assume the responsibility of supervising all clinics specializing in mothers and children.

Concerning MOH healthcare in schools, all government schools are provided with in-school healthcare through the MOH. The MOH has a West Bank team of ten and a Gaza Strip team of six who travel to schools to provide free comprehensive preventive screening at the first grade level, spinal cord testing for girls in the sixth grade level, and eye testing for seventh through tenth grade students. Dental examinations are also given to students in the first, seventh, and tenth grades. These teams also work with school staff, depending on their needs, on raising health awareness and education in the schools. Finally, the MOH teams also monitor the condition of the natural environment around the school.

The MOH supervises 20 hospitals (9 hospitals in the West Bank and 11 in the Gaza Strip). The number of beds designated for children in these hospitals represents 19.4% of all beds in hospitals allocated to children. Services provided for children include: intensive care units for newborns, intensive care units for children, and standard pediatrics units. Treatment for children is free until the age of three, as is the case for primary healthcare. After the age of three, fees for services rendered to children are taken up in the health insurance system. It is significant to note, however, that only 55.5% of the population of the Palestinian territories is covered by any kind of health insurance.<sup>43</sup>

A 2002 survey conducted by the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation queried poor beneficiaries of a number of healthcare providers. Of the MOH, the poor complained of the low quality of diagnosis and shortage of medications, in addition to poor treatment from medical personnel.<sup>44</sup>

## **UNRWA Healthcare**

All UNRWA healthcare services are administered free of charge to Palestinian refugees. UNRWA, like the MOH, administers healthcare to mothers and children through mother and child clinics. The Agency runs 51 health centers (34 in the West Bank and 17 in Gaza), most of which are located in refugee camps. Services and facilities available at UNRWA clinics include: preventive care (vaccination and standard monitoring of

---

<sup>43</sup> UNICEF. 'The Situation Analysis of Palestinian Children, Young People & Women in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.' August 2000. p.43

<sup>44</sup> The Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation. 'National Report on Participatory Poverty Assessment (Voice of the Palestinian Poor). July 2002. Report website: [www.pppap.org](http://www.pppap.org)

early childhood development), treatment, lab work, radiology (six clinics in the West Bank are equipped for radiology, with two more under construction), dental care, and health education. UNRWA also runs school healthcare programs in its own schools. Unfortunately, UNRWA only has three health teams consisting of one doctor and one nurse to staff all UNRWA schools. In 2001, one of UNRWA's newest initiatives was inaugurated, a psychosocial counseling program, which included a counseling component for children. Among other elements, UNRWA's strength as a primary healthcare provider relative to the MOH includes better coverage for children from three to six years of age, the provision of preventive iron doses for children under six months old, and blood testing for children less than one year in age.

UNRWA only operates one hospital. However, a new ward for children was recently established in Qalqilia for refugee children living in the surrounding locale. Additionally, UNRWA has contracts with 11 hospitals administered by other agencies to allow their beneficiaries access to services in these hospitals through a special system of referral. Through these contracts, medical care, including surgery when required, is provided for children of all ages. After treatment in these hospitals, UNRWA covers 70% of the bill in normal cases and 90% in special hardship cases.

Perception among UNRWA beneficiaries about the services they received indicated that rather than being necessarily satisfied, people went there because "UNRWA clinics are the only place where we can get treatment."<sup>45</sup> Moreover, researches conducting the survey of patients were told by UNRWA staff that patients needing surgery were particularly vulnerable due to difficulty obtaining a referral to a hospital and because often times treatment is not available locally and treatment abroad may not be accessible financially or physically due to Israeli restrictions.<sup>46</sup>

## NGO Healthcare

Throughout the early years of the occupation, while the provision of healthcare to children was (and remains), as a point of law, the responsibility of the occupying power, numerous national societies and organizations emerged to provide treatment to the underserved Palestinian population. Societies like Union of Palestinian Medical Relief Committees (UPMRC) have been adapting to the volatile situation on the ground in the West Bank and Gaza for over twenty years. They helped to lay the groundwork for an independent national health system that would endeavor to comprehensively address the healthcare needs of Palestinian communities within the context of occupation long before the Palestinian Authority. There are four leaders in the NGO community for the provision of healthcare to children. Together these NGOs supervise more than 185 health centers (145 in the West Bank and 40 in the Gaza Strip) in the Palestinian territories. However, the majority of the clinics supported by the NGO community do not offer comprehensive primary healthcare services. The following is a brief description of the four leaders:<sup>47</sup>

### Union of Palestinian Medical Relief Committees (UPMRC)

The ingenuity and resourcefulness of the Palestinians behind institutions like UPMRC is evidenced through their institution's development. In the case of UPMRC, they began as a group of volunteer healthcare professionals and a few mobile clinics that sought to address the emergency medical care needs of marginalized Palestinian populations. Their work eventually expanded over time as resources became available to include primary and preventive health care that can now be accessed in over 25 permanent health care centers (21 in the West Bank and 4 in the Gaza Strip), and specialized facilities throughout the West Bank and Gaza.<sup>48</sup> UPMRC centers provide treatment, early childhood development monitoring (free of charge), health education for mothers, psychosocial and nutrition support and preventive examinations. Nineteen of its centers are equipped with laboratories and 11 are equipped with dental care facilities. UPMRC coordinates its programs and services with international and intergovernmental organizations such as Save the Children and UNICEF, as well as with the Ministry of Health.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> It is also important to note that the NGO community, as a whole, operates 29 hospitals (20 in the West Bank and 9 in the Gaza Strip), accounting for 34% of all hospital beds in the Palestinian territories.

<sup>48</sup> Union of Palestinian Medical Relief Committees (UPMRC). 'Into the Third Decade: Building a Palestinian Health Movement'. 2002



## Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS)

The PRCS operates 25 primary healthcare centers (21 in the West Bank and 4 in the Gaza Strip). With the exception of one center in Ramallah and one center in Gaza City, all centers are located in villages. The physicians in all of these clinics are general practitioners, not pediatricians. Like the MOH, UNRWA, and the other NGOs, the PRCS also offers early childhood development monitoring, and all of its centers are equipped with laboratories for carrying out basic tests. PRCS centers also offer psychosocial support and rehabilitation services for the disabled. The PRCS does offer other special child health programs, but they are integrated within seven MOH centers staffed by PRCS, but using MOH protocol. Medicines are also available through the PRCS at cost and many hardship cases are exempt from paying any fees. In the school system, the PRCS provides health and first aid education for children as well as hemoglobin and blood tests. A 2002 survey of PRCS beneficiaries conducted by the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation revealed appreciation and satisfaction with their services. However, beneficiaries did note that there were gaps in service including the availability of ambulances, doctors not being on duty in the evening hours, and the availability of x-ray and other equipment for proper diagnosis.<sup>49</sup>

## The Union of Health Workers Communities (UHWC)

UHWC is a member of the national coordinating committee for children's health and is an active partner with the MOH in several locations where child healthcare is administered. The Union operates 24 primary healthcare facilities (18 in the West Bank and 6 in Gaza). These centers provide treatment services for children, including monitoring of child development up until age four. UHWC also carries out health education activities directed at mothers. However, only six UHWC centers provide comprehensive preventive services. Concerning school health, UHWC works alongside the MOH and MOE in supporting school health initiatives.

## Union of Health Care Committees (UHCC)

The majority of UHCC's 20 centers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are located in villages. Each of its clinics is equipped with one physician and one nurse. Services range from early Results from the earlier mentioned survey conducted by the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation on the perception of healthcare among the poor indicated that public services in the area of primary maternal and child health are praised overall.

## Child Health Indicators

### ▲ Infant Mortality Rate

The infant mortality rate is low in the Palestinian territories in comparison with other developing countries. In 2002, the rate was 20.5% per 1000 infants compared with 22.9 in 2001 and 22.7 in 2000. The main causes of infant mortality were reported to be premature births, followed by respiratory infections, congenital malformations, sudden clinical death, and infectious diseases.<sup>50</sup>

### ▲ Child Mortality Rate (children under age five)

There has been a recent drop in the mortality rate of children under five in the Palestinian territories. In 2000 the child mortality rate was 290.5 per 100 thousand children and in 2002 it stood at 223.3 per 100 thousand children. The main causes of child mortality are congenital malformations, pneumonia, respiratory infections, and infectious diseases.<sup>51</sup>

### ▲ Child Mortality Rate (children aged 5-19)

The mortality rate in this age group of children has increased since 2000—particularly as a result of intifada-related violence. The 2002 rate was 66.6 children per 100 thousand children (48.5 males and 18.1 females), up from the 2000 rate of 36.4 per 100 thousand children. The primary causes of death were reported to be Israeli violence, followed by traffic or other accidents, tumors, cerebral palsy, congenital deformations, and finally, pneumonia.<sup>52</sup>

---

<sup>49</sup> The Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation. op.cit

<sup>50</sup> Department of Information Systems. "Ministry of Health Draft Report". 2002

<sup>51</sup> Ibid

<sup>52</sup> Ibid

#### ▲ Malnutrition

Conclusions from a 2002 nutritional assessment requested by the Minister of Health and conducted by a team from Johns Hopkins University and Al-Quds University under the auspices of CARE International declared that there is a “concerning prevalence” of acute malnutrition in the West Bank and that the Gaza Strip faces a “distinct humanitarian emergency” due to the prevalence of Global Acute Malnutrition.<sup>53</sup> The table below lists select indicators related to malnutrition from this nutritional assessment.<sup>54</sup>

Nutritional Parameters	Location	Prevalence	Location	Prevalence
Global Acute Malnutrition <sup>55</sup> (6-59 month olds)	West Bank	4.3%	Gaza Strip	13.3%
Chronic Malnutrition <sup>56</sup> (6-59 month olds)	West Bank	7.9%	Gaza Strip	17.5%
Global Anemia <sup>57</sup> (6-59 month olds)	West Bank	20.9%	Gaza Strip	18.8%

Other results from the assessment indicated that four out of five children (in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip) had iron and zinc deficiencies that cause anemia and immune deficiency respectively, and over half of the children in the Palestinian territories have inadequate caloric and vitamin A intake.<sup>58</sup>

The Johns Hopkins University and Al-Quds University team formed several conclusions related to the efficiency and effectiveness of the healthcare provision related to the prevalence of malnutrition based on the information gathered through surveys with 1,104 Palestinians randomly selected in addition to a survey of 68 clinics geographically linked to the former. Important among the conclusions from this clinic survey was the assertion that healthcare providers may not be adequately identifying and diagnosing malnutrition in the community for the following four reasons:

- ▲ Children in the age group 2-3 years are not monitored sufficiently to make the diagnosis of malnutrition or anemia;
- ▲ Only 60% of preschool children have anthropometric measurements taken and if they do, only 60% of malnourished cases are recognized;
- ▲ Clinic managers underestimate the magnitude of the malnutrition problem in their community, further limiting their ability to detect and manage the problem; and
- ▲ Most clinics lack protocols or guidelines for assessing and diagnosing malnutrition cases.<sup>59</sup>

### Infectious Disease

The weakened state of a child’s immune system, particularly when influenced by factors such as the lack of clean water, overcrowded living conditions, poverty, lack of sewage disposal, and incomplete immunization can lead to a whole host of other diseases.<sup>60</sup> While the MOH has engaged in an aggressive immunization program and other preventive measures to combat infectious diseases in the Palestinian territories, coverage levels are not 100%. Infectious diseases remain one of the most important causes

<sup>53</sup> Johns Hopkins University and Al-Quds University. ‘Rapid Nutritional Assessment for the West Bank and Gaza Strip.’2002 .p.11

<sup>54</sup> The Johns Hopkins University/Al-Quds University nutritional assessment included a survey of 1,004 randomly selected households in the Palestinian territories.

<sup>55</sup> Acute malnutrition, or wasting, reflects inadequate nutrition in the short-term period immediately preceding the survey.

<sup>56</sup> Chronic malnutrition, or stunting, is an indicator of past growth failure, thus implying a state of longer term undernutrition. Chronic malnutrition may lead to serious irreversible growth and development delays.

<sup>57</sup> Anemia refers to the reduced oxygen carrying capacity of the blood due to a decrease in the mass of red blood cells. Iron, folic acid and dietary protein are necessary for hemoglobin and red blood cell production. Anemia can lead to impaired learning and growth development in children as well as decreased immunity from infectious diseases.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. p. 7

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. p. 11

<sup>60</sup> Defence for Children International-Palestine Section. op.cit. p. 95

of child mortality. In 2002, death due to infectious diseases accounted for 42.4% of mortalities in children less than five years of age, 35.5% among infants, and 5.1% among children from five to nineteen years of age. The following is a select list of infectious disease indicators for the Palestinian child population.<sup>61</sup>

▲ Since 1982, there have been no reported cases of diphtheria or leprosy and there has been no trace of plague or malaria for a considerable length of time.

▲ There have been very few cases of measles and tetanus.

▲ Due in part to effective vaccination campaigns since 1992, cases of tuberculosis and hepatitis B continue to decline.

▲ Mumps and rubella cases are registered predominantly in the child population above ten years of age due to the fact that vaccinations in this area only started in 1987.

▲ Hepatitis A is endemic in Palestine, as in all other areas of the Middle East.

▲ Chickenpox and parasitosis are endemic in Palestine.

▲ Prevalence of bacterial and viral meningitis are improving

#### ■ Meningococcus Meningitis:

▲ 2000, 3.6 per 100 thousand children

▲ 2002, 3.9 per 100 thousand children

#### ■ Bacterial Meningitis:

▲ 2000, 11.8 per 100 thousand children

▲ 2002, 7.9 per 100 thousand children

▲ Viral Meningitis:

▲ 2000, 59.9 per 100 thousand children

▲ 2002, 13.2 per 100 thousand children

▲ Brucellosis remains endemic in Palestine, but indicators are improving thanks to the efficiency of the national programs to combat the disease.

▲ No cases of polio have been registered since 1984.

▲ Increased incidence of water-borne diseases such as scabies, skin infections, shigellosis, and diarrhea

As previously mentioned, an enormous amount of effort and money has been spent on improving these indicators, yet many of them, particularly in the area of malnutrition remain sedentary. Prominent among the reasons for this is that the Palestinian healthcare industry seems destined for 'quick fix' solutions mandated by both by international donors and international and local policy makers who take biological and medical indicators such as those listed above and divorce them from their social and environmental determinants in favor of investing in narrowly focused technical and administrative solutions.<sup>62</sup> This often ends in shortsighted solutions that are not grounded in a rights-based approach to healthcare development.

### Impact of the *Intifada* on Health

While the Palestinian territories are characterized by many of the typical health problems related to its status as a developing nation, there are specific negative outcomes in child health that are directly attributable to the Israeli occupation and the escalation in violence of the last three years. Israeli collective punishment has prevented those seeking health services to be able to reach these services and those in the medical profession looking to provide treatment from reaching those in need. Mobility restrictions, in addition to the destruction of health facilities, power lines and water filtration facilities, continue to impede needed improvements in the national health infrastructure. For example the smooth coordination and distribution of medical supplies

---

<sup>61</sup> The Source of all infectious disease data is the Department of Information Systems, Ministry of Health Draft Report. 2002

<sup>62</sup> Giacaman, Rita., Abdul-Rahim, Hanan., and Wick, Laura. op.cit p. 3



and equipment such as vaccines among hospitals and clinics is a process that cannot be guaranteed through no fault of the hospital or clinic staff. In addition to the checkpoints, closures, curfews, and other delays that are likely to hold up this process, a February 2003 UN World Health Organization report provided the example of nine facilities that were forced to suspend immunization clinics for two or more days in the prior two weeks—a quarter of them sighting power outages. Similarly, another component of the health infrastructure that has been identified as a problem area is follow-up. The diagnosis and follow-up process for possible cases of infectious disease, for example, can also be occluded when a regional health clinic cannot physically transport a sample to a laboratory for diagnosis. These are just a few examples, but for the same reasons, there are numerous other direct healthcare consequences that have been widely reported, including but not limited to the following: the disruption of prenatal, postnatal, and medical screening; an increase in the number of still births when expectant mothers are not able to reach hospitals; disruptions in the referral system that most severely affect patients with cancer, renal failure, and other chronic conditions that require maintenance therapy; and reduced ability for those requiring surgery to reach hospitals.<sup>63</sup>

That said, it is important to reiterate that Israel, as an occupying power, is responsible under international humanitarian law to ensure that the healthcare needs of the Palestinian

Circumstances Surrounding Death (top four)	Number of Children/Percentage
Air and Ground Attacks	67/34.8%
Gunfire Opened Randomly	50/26%
Clashes	30/15.6%
During Assassination Attempt	19/9.9%

people are met according to the terms of the Fourth Geneva Convention. For example, under articles 20 and 56, Israel is obliged to secure the access of medicine, medical services and medical personnel, yet 75% of healthcare professionals are unable to report to work regularly.<sup>64</sup> Moreover, although Israel has not included the status of Palestinian children in any areas covered by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in its periodic report to the CRC treaty monitoring body, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, Israeli is specifically violating article 24 which proclaims the right of every child “to the enjoyment of the highest standard of health and facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation.” Finally, while Israel continues to deny that it has any responsibility vis-à-vis its actions in the occupied Palestinian territories under the Fourth Geneva Convention and the CRC, nowhere do the feats of intellectual gymnastics by which Israel devises support for its lack of culpability under these regimes—often citing this technicality and that technicality of the wording of these treaties—seem more like nonsense on stilts than when one examines the death and injury toll among Palestinian children.

### CHILD DEATHS 2002<sup>65</sup>

Defence for Children-Palestine documented the death of 192 children below the age of 18 in 2002. These children were killed as a direct result of the Israeli presence in the Palestinian territories. The tables below illustrate the most common injury locations, type of weapon causing the injury (and subsequent death), and the circumstances surrounding those injuries.

<sup>63</sup> Defence for Children International-Palestine Section. *op.cit.* 37

<sup>64</sup> Refugees International. ‘Human costs of non-compliance with the fourth Geneva Convention’. March 2003. Reliefweb website: [www.reliefweb.org](http://www.reliefweb.org)

<sup>65</sup> Defence for Children International-Palestine Section. ‘Breakdown of Palestinian Child Deaths in 2002’. website: [www.dci-pal.org/statistics](http://www.dci-pal.org/statistics)

Analyzing the collected data DCI observed the following trends in Israeli violence toward Palestinian children:

- ▲ The number of child deaths as a direct result of the Israeli army and settler presence in the Palestinian territories doubled in 2002;
- ▲ The number of child deaths in 2002 exceeded all records of Palestinian child deaths documented by Defence for Children International since 1996 (when they began operating);
- ▲ A higher percentage of the children killed are young children, with 43.2% of all children killed in 2002 under the age of 12;
- ▲ In 2002, the absolute number of child deaths under the age of eight quadrupled from the previous year;
- ▲ The use of 'deadly force' against children increased dramatically, as indicated by the 45% of children who were killed through air and ground attacks by IDF soldiers attempting to assassinate adults; and
- ▲ 84.4% of children were killed in situations where there was no confrontation occurring at the time of death.

Type of Weapon Causing Death (top five)	Number of Children/Percentage of Children
Live Bullets	99/35.9%
Exploding Artillery	12/16.1%
Heavy Artillery	31/16.1%
Unexploded Ordinances (UXO)	12/6.3%
Missiles	13/6.8%

Location of Injury (top four)	Number of Children/Percentage
More than one location	82/42.8%
Head	41/21.4%
Chest	24/12.5%
Back	8/4.2%

Although no aggregate data for 2003 was available, DCI statistics from the first quarter of 2003 show the trends observed above are largely unabated.<sup>66</sup> The total number of child deaths (September 2000 to mid-June 2003) now stands at 459.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Defence for Children International-Palestine Section. 'Breakdown of Palestinian Child Deaths, end-Sept. 2000 to mid-June 2003'. website: [www.dci-pal.org/statistics](http://www.dci-pal.org/statistics)  
<sup>67</sup> Ibid

## CHILD INJURIES 2002<sup>68</sup>

In addition to the 192 documented child deaths from 2002, DCI recorded the injury of 2,524 Palestinian children as a direct result of the Israeli presence in the Palestinian territories. The tables below illustrate the most common injury locations and the type of weapon causing the injury.

Type of Weapon(top five)	Number of Children/Percentage of Children
Shrapnel*	619/24.5%
Live Bullets	497/19.7%
Beating	451/17.9%
Fall	410/16.2%
Steel Bullets	202/8%

Location of Injury (top five)	Number of Children/Percentage
Limbs	906/35.9%
More than one location	502/19.9%
Bruises	340/13.5%
Head	339/13.4%
Asphyxiation	89/3.5%

\*These cases include the number of children who have died from shrapnel, live bullets, machine guns, and rockets fragments or from exploding cans.

By the first quarter of 2003, DCI documented the injury of 679 children.<sup>69</sup> Although no comprehensive data was available, if the number of injuries continues at this rate throughout 2003, the number of child injuries will exceed that of 2002.

In addition to the trauma associated with sustaining such injuries, there has also been a tremendous increase in the number of disabled children in Palestine. The UN Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights noted in his March 2002 report that approximately 500<sup>70</sup> of the children injured since the start of the intifada were likely to experience permanent disabilities as a result.<sup>71</sup> These children will join other children in being amongst the most vulnerable members of Palestinian society irrespective of provisions in both international human rights law under article 2 of the CRC and Palestinian Basic Law 4 specifying the rights of disabled persons. Even though disabled Palestinians had acquired heightened recognition, during the first intifada and under Palestinian domestic legislation in the 1990s, rights and service provision to disabled children have suffered serious setbacks.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Defence for Children International-Palestine Section. 'Breakdown in Palestinian Child Injuries, 2002'. website: [www.dci-pal.org/statistics](http://www.dci-pal.org/statistics)

<sup>69</sup> Defence for Children International-Palestine Section. 'Breakdown of Palestinian Child Injuries, 2002.' website: [www.dci-pal.org/statistics](http://www.dci-pal.org/statistics)

<sup>70</sup> The UN Special Rapporteur made this estimate on the basis of data indicating that approximately 7,000 children had been injured between September 2000 and the issue of his report.

<sup>71</sup> Quoted in Save the Children Sweden and Save the Children UK. 'Growing Up Under Curfew: Safeguarding the basic rights of Palestinian Children'. March 2003. p. 28

<sup>72</sup> Save the Children Sweden and Save the Children UK. 'Growing Up Under Curfew: Safeguarding the basic rights of Palestinian Children'. op.cit. p. 28

Treaty technicalities or not, the principles of distinction, proportionality and choice of means and methods of warfare (enshrined in the Fourth Geneva Convention) are widely accepted as part of international customary law. The number of child deaths and injuries, the weapons causing death and injury, and the circumstances surrounding the majority of the injuries as described above, clearly indicate that Israel does not consider itself to be bound by these fundamental principles.

### Summary of Problem Areas in Child Health

The list below summarizes some of the problem areas that decision makers should consider in future policy making. In general, future policy directives should emphasize an approach to healthcare that is part of a single cohesive strategy, that targets the health needs of the population in consultation with that population, sets up a resource base through which implementation can be monitored and evaluated, and which gives due consideration to the environmental and social factors that shape healthcare delivery on the ground.

- ▲ Coordination among healthcare providers has not reached adequate levels;
- ▲ There is a lack of clear national policy mandates that place individual health interventions as part of an overall strategic framework to strengthen the public health infrastructure;
- ▲ National insurance schemes do not cover all children in the three to six age group and they do not cover all procedures for school-aged children;
- ▲ Children with special needs and disabled children are particularly left out of national insurance schemes;
- ▲ There is a paucity of qualified personnel working in healthcare and a lack of child specialists;
- ▲ There is a lack in the diversity of treatment that is available in the Palestinian territories as a whole;
- ▲ 'Quick-fix' solutions are often implemented that do not give due consideration to the relevant social and environmental context or a rights-based approach to healthcare development;
- ▲ Child health information systems are inadequate and require redesigning and updating;
- ▲ There are disparities in the number of healthcare facilities among geographic regions;
- ▲ The sector suffers from weak follow-up and referral systems among all healthcare agents;
- ▲ Nutritional surveillance systems following trends in malnutrition and food security are weak;
- ▲ Efforts at caregiver education to combat chronic malnutrition are insufficient; and
- ▲ There is a lack of food fortification strategies to combat anemia and macronutrient deficiencies.

### Psychosocial Health

Until recently, the subject of psychosocial health of war-affected populations has been a low priority among the matrix of competing needs that governments as well as international aid organizations negotiate when developing their strategic response to a complex humanitarian emergency. One now finds increasing budget allocations for psychosocial programming and subsequent implementation of programs on the ground. As a logical accompaniment to this phenomenon there has been a heightened interest in academic research in this area specifically analyzing the impact of living in a war zone as a function of other risk factors in a child's social environment.<sup>73</sup> The psychosocial health of Palestinian children is a subject that has been the focus of a good deal of research, particularly following the first intifada in 1987.

Among the notable research initiatives focusing on the Palestinian territories was a study initiated in 1989 to examine the behavioral consequences of the experience of political violence on Palestinian children in the context of the functionality of their families and a series of specific vulnerability factors (gender, age, and community context).<sup>74</sup> Using a 'risk accumulation' model as the backbone of their study, the authors, Garbarino and Kostelny, found that:

---

<sup>73</sup> Garbarino, James and Kostelny, K., 'The Effect of Political Violence on Palestinian Children's Behavior Problems: A Risk Accumulation Model'. *Child Development*. Vol. 67. Number 1. January/February 1994. p.33

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.* p 41

“As the number of risks related to political violence and family negativity increased, the level of child symptomatology also increased significantly. Political violence exerts a significant effect, but family negativity exerts a greater influence, and when coupled with political violence reveals a very serious ‘clinical’ impact.”<sup>75</sup>

Their results showed that most children who had repeated exposure to intifada-related violence (up to three exposures) were not in need of clinical interventions if they were found to be part of a functional family. These findings support the widely acknowledged premise that several factors, including the type, degree and duration of stressful events, in addition to a child’s subjective understanding of the events and the child’s developmental stage all contribute to determining the severity of the child’s reaction to events—not necessarily the simple occurrence of a traumatic event or even a series of traumatic events in isolation. However, Garbarino and Kostelny found that exposure to intifada-related violence, when compounded with exposure to ‘family related risk’<sup>76</sup>, was generally enough to put the child over the threshold indicating a need for clinical intervention.

While we cannot assume that present circumstances are a perfect reflection of the circumstances of the first intifada, of particular importance to decision makers within the context of the current intifada are the study findings related to the ‘community context’—one of the three vulnerability factors measured by the study. The ‘community context’ measured the relationship between five indicators of socioeconomic status (living conditions, father’s educational level, father’s employment status, mother’s educational level, and mother’s employment status) against communities with low and high levels of violence respectively, and with the behavior problems displayed by children in those communities. While no correlation between low socioeconomic status and the amount of behavioral problems a child manifested was found, the study did indicate that children whose families were of a low socioeconomic status were more exposed to violence and thus more exposed to ‘intifada-related’ risk. The authors additionally noted “given the overall correlation between family dysfunction and lower socioeconomic status observed in most societies, we can predict that the most vulnerable children...are most likely to be found among low-income populations.”<sup>77</sup> In summary, among other findings from this study, the authors concluded that prevalence of exposure to intifada-related violence, coupled with negativity in the family and family dysfunction—the latter which is strongly correlated with socioeconomic status in all societies—accumulated enough risk in Palestinian children to push many of them into the range for clinical intervention.

It is well document that Israel’s stepped-up regime of collective punishment since the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa intifada has brought with it unprecedented violence directed at the Palestinian civilian population—including the child population—and unprecedented levels of poverty. These circumstances have at best made it difficult to be a carefree child, and at worst have lead to a striking increase in the number of children requiring psychosocial interventions. This is evidenced by Ministry of Health data reporting that there has been a 105% increase in new cases at mental health clinics since October 2000, and that children under 18 constitute the majority of the new cases.<sup>78</sup> A 2003 NPA Secretariat study conducted to gain insight into how Palestinian children themselves see their situation reported that almost half of the sampled children (1,266 children in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were surveyed) had experienced directly intifada-related violence, or witnessed and accident befalling an immediate family member.<sup>79</sup> Other select findings from this study are indicated in the box below.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. p.41

<sup>76</sup> Family related risk was defined in the study as one of the following: physical violence directed at the child by the mother, physical violence in the family directed at the mother, verbal aggression in the family directed at the mother by the father, maternal depression, and physical violence directed at the child by someone other than the mother.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. p.43

<sup>78</sup> Quoted in Save the Children Sweden and Save the Children UK ‘Growing up under Curfew: Safeguarding the Basic Rights of Palestinian Children’. March 2003. p. 20

<sup>79</sup> Arafat., Dr. Cairo. ‘A Psychosocial Assessment of Palestinian Children’. Secretariat for the National Plan of Action for Palestinian Children. July 2003. p.5

### *Children on their situation...*

- 93% reported not feeling safe and exposed to attack—fearing not only for themselves but also for their family and friends.
- Almost 50% felt that their parents could no longer meet their care and protection needs
- 32% reported that their father was unemployed
- 11% reported that their fathers only worked part-time
- 16% reported that they are living in homes with 11 or more people, 51% living with 7-10 people, and the remaining 33% reported living in households with six or less people
- 84% reported the need to move out of their homes either temporarily or permanently since the start of the intifada.
- 84% felt that their homes were no longer a safe place.

The NPA Secretariat study also surveyed 449 parents from 270 households. Discussions with parents revealed that the violence and unpredictable external events are wearing them down and severely undermining parental confidence in being parents, and their control inside the home. Select indications from parents can be found in the box below.

### *Parents on their situation vis-à-vis their children...*

- 89% of parents reported symptomatic traumatic behavior amongst their children, including, nightmares and bedwetting, increased aggressiveness and hyperactivity, as well as a decrease in attention span and concentration.
- 50% felt unable to meet their children's needs under present circumstances—even though they felt that the responsibility for their care was theirs.
- 25% admitted not spending time with their children because they are stressed or burdened by other concerns.
- 100% felt that their ability and capacity to protect their children decreased since the start of the intifada.
- 12% considered their homes to be safe from danger.

Thus, while comments from children and their parents cannot be used as constitutive evidence of the scope of psychological damage to Palestinian children in lieu of more quantitative studies on the second *intifada* and children's psychosocial wellbeing, the perceptions of children and their parents, when taken in aggregate seem to again fit Garbarino and Kostelny's 'risk accumulation' paradigm from the first *intifada*.

## **Future Psychosocial/Mental Health Interventions: Targeting the Strengths of Children and Their Parents**

If one accepts that Palestinian children are susceptible to developing a broader range of negative developmental and behavioral outcomes as a result of the accumulation of risks in their lives, what can be done given the current status of healthcare in the Palestinian territories? As indicated above, Palestinian children like children in other war zones around the world still have difficulty finding institutional support. There are a variety of reasons for this, but among them is that many of these children are already part of a more vulnerable or marginalized group in society—the experience of which is usually intensified in times of war. The

psychosocial healthcare sector also suffers from many of the myriad problems faced in other sectors of the healthcare infrastructure. Primary among these difficulties is a lack of psychosocial professionals and facilities. The NPA Secretariat pointed out in its 1999 'Agenda for Social Renewal' that there were fewer than 20 psychiatrists, 15 psychologists and 100 professional social workers for a population of 2.3 million, and most of these professionals were working out of city centers not widely accessible to a great many Palestinians.<sup>80</sup> Interviews with parents from the 2003 NPA Secretariat study may indicate that the scarcity of psychosocial assistance that existed in 1999 has changed little in three years despite the great investments in the Palestinian health infrastructure since 1994. Seventy-two percent (72%) of surveyed parents said that they [and their families] had no access to counseling services, and of the 28% who said they did have access to counseling, only 12% said that the services were suitable/appropriate.<sup>81</sup>

### **Israeli violence... a psychological war on children**

Since the start of the Intifada, the Palestinian people are going through severely adverse socio-economic conditions. As other social groups, children have been affected in various aspects, mainly the change in their behaviors and occurrence or increase of psychological problems. Therefore, the Secretariat of the National Plan of Action for Palestinian Children held in 2000 a national conference for children that made a number of recommendations stressing the need for a preventive psychosocial program to assist children and their families and reduce the impact of crises resulting from the Israeli violence. The NPA Secretariat in cooperation with Save the Children US and partnership with 8 specialized Palestinian institutions developed a special program for psychosocial support.

Partners in this program identified a methodology for joint action in regard to planning and monitoring. The program was targeted at children and those influencing them, such as parents and teachers. Ten messages were identified to be addressed to these three target groups based on studies assessing the needs of children and families and based on the experience of the involved institutions in this field. Messages stressed the need for children to express their feelings, the need to identify and meet their physical, psychological and social needs and the importance of maintaining relations with friends, regularly attending school and participating in extracurricular activities. Messages also focused on the level of psychological and behavioral management of children in cases of dangers, shelling or invasions, as well as the level of personal protection.

An evaluation was made to assess the impact of the psychosocial support program on children. It was noticed that there was an increase of 15.79% in children's ability to express their feelings, an increase of 39.33% in children's knowledge of ways to handle dangerous situations, in addition to a significant increase of 31.82% in children's knowledge of ways to solve problems and reach mutual understanding.

### **Recommendations for Future Psychosocial Interventions**

▲ Given the high correlation that Garbarino and Kostelny articulated between the simultaneous occurrence of chronic 'intifada-related' risk and 'family negativity' or 'family-related risk', and negative psychosocial outcomes a child exhibits, it behooves policy makers to invest in empowering parents. The NPA Secretariat study highlighted that parents were taking note of changes in their children, they were aware of the possibility that their children could be experiencing psychosocial challenges, and that they spend a good deal of time talking with their children. All this is evidence that the parents surveyed are caring and attentive parents. However, many of the same parents also reported being stressed and feeling a lack of control over their children. Thus, building on the strengths exhibited by parents, policy makers should prioritize assist-

<sup>80</sup> UNICEF, p. 51

<sup>81</sup> Arafat, Dr. Cairo, p. 32.

<sup>82</sup> Arafat., Dr. Cairo, p 39



ance to parents (both mothers and fathers) to help them in developing strategies for dealing with their own stresses in order to be more available to help their children through difficulties.<sup>82</sup>

▲Despite the risk factors in their lives, the NPA study showed Palestinian children to be resilient, and while negative about the future ‘situation’, they remained positive about their individual personal growth and development. Children were adamant about the role of school in life not only for their future, but also as a means of socializing and a venue in which they can express themselves where other venues for such expression are not necessarily available. Additionally the large majority of children could identify positive actions they could take to improve their situation within the context of the occupation and the intifada. In addition to education, they continue to channel their energy into positive, constructive, and peaceful activities, with only a small minority inclined toward violent ideation.<sup>83</sup> Given these characteristics, decision-makers should endeavor to capitalize on the resilience and positive attitudes of the children. Psychosocial programming and services in the school context should be expanded and opportunities for child-centered social and cultural activities should be encouraged.

## Conclusion

Healthcare stakeholders in the Palestinian territories have the burden of building a health infrastructure within a complex and interwoven historical matrix of stops and starts. In addition, the more recent legacy of this country presents a continuum of de-development and perpetual conflict. This underlying context—both historical and contemporary—lends itself to two critical insights. First, as the World Bank and the United Nations, among other observers, have noted that this context explains the dominant root cause of the health problems faced by Palestinian children today—mostly notably malnutrition, exposure to infectious disease, disability from injury, psychosocial problems, and death. Related to this, and of particular importance to the international community, the PA and aid agencies, is submission to the inextricable link between politics today and health tomorrow.

Ultimately, in the absence of political and economic solutions to the current conflict, short-term health interventions will continue to be needed and longer-term development initiatives will continue to face the vicious and counterproductive cycle of stops and starts. This is, however, not a warrant to be prostrate before the political process. With an eye toward the future state of Palestine, the struggle for the recognition and fulfillment of the right to health, along with all other children’s rights, also has an internal component, or a Palestinian domestic counterpart, which requires time and consistent, dedicated work by a civil society and the PA for germination.

---

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. p.45



## D Child Educationa.

### a. Formal Education

Any discussion of education in Palestine should clearly set out the framework of extraordinary circumstances, both historical and contemporary, that define and set limits on the fulfillment of a child's right to education. Likewise, it is important to clearly delimit the legal basis for this 'right' to education, and the parties responsible under international law to provide for this right.

Starting with the latter, the right to education is codified in numerous international human rights law instruments. Primary among these instruments are the following:



#### ■ The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)

While the UDHR is not a legally binding document, there is a broad measure of support among international legal scholars for the assertion that the UDHR has attained legally binding status as part of customary international law.<sup>84</sup>

### The Universal Declaration of Human Rights—Article 26

#### Article 26 (1)

Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

#### Article 26 (2)

Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

#### Article 26 (3)

Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

#### ■ The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)

Developed after the UDHR, the ICESCR along with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) was drafted to transform the principles of the UDHR into binding, detailed rules of law. On the subject of education, Articles 13 and 14 codify and expand on the provisions related to education that are laid out in the UDHR.

<sup>84</sup> Customary international law is one of the sources of international law as defined by the Statute of the International Court of Justice. Customary law is found in the actual practice of states in reference to international law and the belief manifested in their practice, that they are legally bound to act in the manner illustrated by that practice.

■ **The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)**

The ICCPR also provides for a state's obligations with regard to the provision of education that ensures the religious and moral education of children in conformity with the convictions of parents through Article 18 (4).

■ **The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)**

Articles 2, 4, 28, and 29 of the CRC outline the basic rights of children to education. Article 2 upholds the principle of non-discrimination in education based on the child's background, place of residence, or language. Article 28 provides that education at the primary and secondary level should be available for all children on the basis of equal opportunity, and further notes that primary education should be available at no charge for all children. Article 29 stipulates that the nature of education that is provided to children must be directed toward development of the child's personality, talents, preparing the child for active life as an adult, fostering respect for basic human rights, and developing respect for the child's own cultural and national values and those of others. Article 4 makes states aware that after becoming party to the treaty, they will be required to take "appropriate legislative, administrative, and other measures" for the implementation of the rights recognized in the Convention.

International law governing occupation is primarily codified in the Fourth Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.<sup>85</sup> Therein, one finds specific obligations the occupying power must meet as regards the education of children; namely, a high contracting party to the Fourth Geneva Convention must observe the following:

**The Fourth Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War—Article 50**

*Article 50*

- *The occupying power must facilitate the proper working of all institutions devoted to the care and education of children*
- *The occupying power must make arrangements for the maintenance and education, if possible by persons of their own nationality, language and religion, of children who are orphaned or separated from their parents as a result of the war*

Recalling that human rights are applicable in times of both peace and war and that Israel is a state party to the CRC, the ICESCR, the ICCPR, and the Fourth Geneva Convention, and that the Fourth Geneva Convention is, in the opinion of the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross, the primary humanitarian law instrument that governs the conduct of the current conflict, Israel's legal obligations vis-à-vis Palestinian children and their right to education are clear.

**Background on Education in Palestine**

Historically, the education sector in Palestine has suffered from a schizophrenic identity. Shifting from one locus of control to another, having been controlled for a period of time in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip by Jordanian and Egyptian administrations, respectively, and then by occupation authorities, resulted in a fundamental lack of coherence—the effects of which are still felt today.<sup>86</sup> While the provision of education along with the management of a host of other sectors was formally turned over to the PA by Israel as a result of the Oslo Process, Israel's de facto control over the Palestinian territories, in addition to the inherited problems, including but not limited to a deteriorating physical infrastructure and lack of qualified teachers, have severely handicapped its capabilities.

---

<sup>85</sup> Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions of 1949, Relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflict is also applicable in situations of occupation, but Israel is not a high contracting party to this Protocol.

<sup>86</sup> Angell, Ami M. 'The Impact of the Al-Aqsa Intifada on the Primary and Secondary Education Systems of Palestinian Children in the West Bank'. October 2003. p. 15

An initial donor investment windfall was devoted to the education sector following Oslo amounting to 10% of a \$3 million investment in the peace process for the Palestinians. UNESCO was brought in to assist in the creation of the Ministry of Education and the development of the education system. Badly needed new schools were constructed, norms and standards in curriculum development were established, teachers were trained, furniture and salaries for the central ministry staff were provided, and expertise was lent in the areas of building planning and management within the education system.<sup>87</sup> In 1998 in consultation with UNESCO, a five-year medium term education development plan was started along with a functional audit covering three levels of the Palestinian educational structure, including, the central ministry, districts, and individual schools. A draft of the five-year plan was reviewed a year later (1999) with parents, political and social activists, leaders, education officials, principals, teachers, students, and officials from the Ministry of Planning, Finance, Higher Education (later joined with the Ministry of Education to become the Ministry of Education and Higher Education) and Labor. In 2000 a modified version of the draft was distributed to over 200 representatives from international organizations and to Palestinians from academic and social institutions for discussion at a workshop. Based on recommendations from this workshop, the plan was curtailed to be more realistic and pragmatic given the constraints of the situation. By August of that year, the Ministry of Education had also implemented the recommendations of the functional audit that UNESCO had conducted in 1998. A second international workshop was planned for October 2000 to present the final draft of the Plan to the local and international communities, but due to the deteriorating political situation and the situation on the ground in the Palestinian territories in September 2000, this workshop never took place.

After studying the impact of donor investment in Palestinian education during the post-Oslo period, the World Bank noted that increased enrollment and adequate class densities evidenced the investment pay-off. It was further noted that polls of Palestinians indicated that that the administration of the education system was the PA's most effective sector.<sup>88</sup> However, while it was widely acknowledged that Palestinians were making great strides in improving education, those international organizations that were partners in this planning process acknowledged that:

“...[Education] gives people capabilities to overcome their problems. It fuels economic growth and can dramatically improve health and gender equality. However, international experience shows that education cannot achieve these aims when weak macro-economic policies and external shocks produce economic stagnation”.<sup>89</sup>

The economic stagnation that characterizes the Palestinian territories is well documented by the World Bank and the United Nations. Further, the cause of this economic stagnation, which has had such an odious effect on education in Palestine, has also been clearly identified as the continued disregard for international law by the Israeli government.

### Impediments to Education during the Intifada

The following pages will enumerate the efforts that have been made by Palestinians to improve the quality of education despite exceptionally difficult circumstances, but it is important to first briefly describe the impediments that handicap their efforts related to the Israeli presence in the Palestinian territories.

#### ◀ Closures

Israeli imposed closures of a general nature cause enough problems for the education process, but there is also a special Military Order, number 854, forbidding anyone, including students, from entering schools. The duration of the latter, when imposed, is usually from one to two months. According to a 2002 UNICEF study, one month after the school year began in 2002, 226,000 children and 9,300 teachers were unable to reach their schools due to prolonged curfew or closures.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>87</sup> UNESCO. 'Developing Education in Palestine: a Continuing Challenge'. UNESCO website: [www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org)

<sup>88</sup> Save the Children UK and Save the Children Sweden. 'Education Under Occupation: Palestinian Children Talk about Life and School'. March 2002. p.16

<sup>89</sup> Ibid. p. 16

<sup>90</sup> Levy, Gideon. 'The Other Children of War'. Ha'aretz. Jerusalem. Monday, September 2, 2002.

### ↙Curfews

Curfews can last from a few hours up to days and even months. During curfew, students, teachers and school administrators are unable to leave their houses except at designated times to get food or other necessities.

### ↙Checkpoints

The West Bank alone has been divided into hundreds of distinct units that are separated by military checkpoints through which students often have to travel on a daily basis. Here, they face degrading or humiliating treatment at the hands of Israeli soldiers and they may witness or themselves be victims of Israeli violence.

### ↙School Day Interruptions

Physical impediments that disrupt the school day include: Israeli shelling, the conversion by Israeli forces of schools into military or detention facilities<sup>91</sup>, disruption due to gun fire and physical damages to school property that render buildings unsafe for students and staff. Moreover, one cannot neglect the significance of the less tangible impediments to normal schools days, which include the effect on the classroom environment and individual learning from the psychological turmoil that students experience as a result of the violence.

### ↙Student Injury or Death Going to and from School

According to the Ministry of Education, since September 2000, 132 students have been killed and 2,500 injured on their way to or from school.<sup>92</sup>

## Providers of Formal Education in Palestine

### ■ The Government

The government supervises the majority of schools in the West Bank and Gaza Strip with the exception of Jerusalem schools, the majority of which are supervised and funded by the Israeli authorities. The remaining Jerusalem schools were funded by the Islamic Waqif Department before 1967 and since 1994 have been transferred to the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education. In total, government schools represented 68% of Palestinian schools in the 2002-2003 school year.

### ■ UNRWA

UNRWA operates schools exclusively for refugees, the majority of which are located in refugee camps. UNRWA has two separate administrations for education, one in Gaza and one in the West Bank (including Jerusalem). It operated 26% of all Palestinian schools in the 2002-2003 school year. However, it is important to note that UNRWA schools offer education only up to the 9th grade.

### ■ Private Operators

Private operators include associations, charitable organizations, schools associated with religious denominations, institutions and private individuals. Privately operated schools account for 6% of all Palestinian schools.

## Progress Areas in Palestinian Education

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MOEHE), in cooperation with UNRWA and the private sector, have been working diligently to attain the standards agreed upon in the development plan it designed with UNESCO. Among the areas targeted for improvement are the following:

---

<sup>91</sup> Note: These actions by the Israeli military are violations of Article 56 of the Hague Convention of 1907 prohibiting "all seizure of, destruction or willful damage of institutions dedicated to education".

<sup>92</sup> Palestine Monitor. 'School Children Attacked in Village Near Hebron'. website: [www.palestinemonitor.org](http://www.palestinemonitor.org)

## School Location

The choice of location for a school should not only be suitable in terms of design requirements as well as educational and safety needs, but should also allow the maximum number of students in the surrounding area physical access to the school. Unfortunately, school locations in neither the West Bank nor Gaza have been selected according to these specifications and are instead predominantly chosen based on the availability of land. West Bank schools in particular are located far away from many students' places of residence as one often finds a heavy concentration of schools in one local while others are totally neglected. Students in a number of villages also suffer from the non-existence of transportation to their schools.

The physical environment that surrounds many schools also leaves much to be desired, with schools being situated next to workshops and garages for repairing cars, vegetable markets and main streets—all of which can be noisy distractions and can expose children to environmental pollution. Moreover, some school buildings are completely surrounded by other buildings, thereby blocking natural sunlight from coming into the school. Other schools are located in close proximity to Israeli settlements—potentially exposing children to violence in addition to producing anxiety that is distracting to students and teachers.

The MOEHE is attempting to follow a more scientific approach in selecting sites for schools and has drawn-up a school map showing the location of all schools in an attempt to identify communities deprived of educational facilities. Unfortunately, the scarcity of land in locations identified as being adequate when taking into consideration the above factors continues to form an obstacle.

### **An environmental problem... creates a recreational area**

The scene of used tires in the streets has become part of the past in the village of Deir Ibzei' in Ramallah District North to Jerusalem, as this scene has been replaced by a decorative recreational area that families and children visit regularly in evening times for fun and recreation. This recreational area was established in the playground at Deir Ibzei' school, where the school administration joined efforts with the village population to reuse the used tires by coloring them and arranging them in a useful way for recreation. This way the school managed to offer a safe and enjoyable space and create a model recreational area for the lowest possible cost.

This joined activity has been effective in promoting a sense of responsibility in the families towards schools and children. By playing with sand and structures made from these tires, boys and girls were able to relieve their stresses. As a ritual, all students started to attend school early seeking some play and enjoyment of the recreational area.

It is worth noting that this project was developed in cooperation with the Ramallah Department of education, the Child Care Center, Road and Environment Safety Center (RESC), Ministry of Local Government and other involved institutions.

## Crowding

The result of trying to provide access to education for all school-age children in a situation where land is either unsuitable or scarce, and where there is lack of resources available to provide the necessary number of schools to accommodate all children, is that one finds overcrowding. Crowding in Palestinian schools is a result of these factors as well as a natural increase in population growth and an increase in enrollment rates among school-age children. The combined average number of students per classroom in government, UNRWA, and private schools in the 2002-2003 school year was 34.6. The average at each of govern-



ment, UNRWA, and private schools was 35.4, 45.4, and 23.6 respectively.<sup>93</sup> While these numbers may not seem extraordinarily high, crowding varies from one educational level to another (primary to secondary), from region to region and from school to school. Crowding is highest in areas where schools are the most accessible to students and where a paucity of land prevents the building of other educational facilities.

## School Dropouts

The aggregate dropout rate in Palestinian schools was 1.17% (11,003 students) in the 2001-2002 school year. The phenomenon of students dropping out of school can be found throughout all strata of Palestinian education (primary through secondary school), in all schools, regardless of their type, in all localities, and among both boys and girls. Dropout rates tend to be lower in primary school and rise during secondary school—reaching a peak at the level of 10<sup>th</sup> grade.

### Students drop-out of school for any one of the following or other reasons:

- ▲ Economic reasons;
- ▲ Lack of value added incentive for finishing school in terms of the salary differences between graduates and non-graduates;
- ▲ Family problems;
- ▲ Problems with academic achievement;
- ▲ Psychological factors;
- ▲ Political reasons (such as arrest by occupation forces);
- ▲ Parents prefer to keep children at home due to fear for their safety; and
- ▲ Dislike of the educational environment (including overcrowding, poor discipline, and maltreatment by teachers).

To combat the dropout problems that might be within the power of the Ministry to improve upon, the MOEHE has made efforts to improve the school environment, including developing an educational counseling center for students in government schools and encouraging parent involvement through parent associations. To assist those students who have already dropped out of school, the MOEHE is planning a high school equivalency program with a special curriculum prepared in consultation with the Ministry of Youth and Sport and the Ministry of Social Affairs for students between the ages of 15-18. The program will also work with regional youth and community centers to identify career options and involve the child in local community events to reduce their social isolation. This program is to be initiated in the 2003-2004 school year. The Ministry has also launched an awareness campaign to education citizens about the consequences of dropping out of school in cooperation with UNICEF. An additional awareness campaign was launched with the participation of other ministries for parents on how they can help their children through difficulties they face due to the effect of the *intifada* as it relates to their education.

## Teachers

The teaching profession suffered greatly under the administration of occupation forces that were responsible for recruitment and payment of teacher salaries. During this time period the teaching profession was subjected to the following and other methods of interference:

- ▲ Salaries were set deliberately low, which resulted in a so-called 'brain drain' such that individuals who were willing and able to go abroad left Palestine or left the public sector in favor of working in the private sector where salaries were higher;

---

<sup>93</sup> Ministry of Education and Higher Education Database. 2003

- ▲ Israeli authorities intentionally recruited teachers holding lower educational and professional qualifications; and
- ▲ Israeli authorities, unconcerned with the quality of education being delivered, both neglected teacher training and forced teachers to teach subjects in which they were not specialists.

This stifling of the teaching profession is the root of the current problems faced by the MOEHE in reforming the sector. A UNICEF study from August 2000 found that only 45% of teachers are qualified.<sup>94</sup> The MOEHE has given the issue of teachers high priority in its development plans by recruiting teachers holding university degrees and by developing criteria for teachers to help them measure and reform their techniques in light of innovations taking place in their fields of specialization—particularly in the area of the sciences. Despite the Ministry's efforts, there is still much work to be done, as teacher moral is low, salaries are low, and student to teacher ratios remain high—the latter further exasperating an already challenging teaching environment.

### Vocational and Technical Education

There are several secondary vocational schools that aim to prepare qualified persons to provide Palestinian society with technicians and a skilled labor force. Four streams of study are available to students choosing this educational path, including, industry, agriculture, commerce, or hotel management. Students join vocational schools after the 10th grade at which point they study a general curriculum for one year before moving on to a year of specialized education in their chosen area of interest. Although vocational and technical schools have largely been associated with less accomplished students, at the end of the two years, students take an exam in order to be awarded a certificate that qualifies them to enroll in community colleges or universities. There are currently 24 vocational or technical schools throughout the West Bank and Gaza that are administered by either the private sector or the MOEHE and serve approximately 3.3% of the students at the secondary level.<sup>95</sup>

### Pre-School Education (ages 4-5)

Kindergartens developed in Palestine prior to the establishment of the PA in a non-organized manner that was inconsistent with the population growth. They existed mainly in the West Bank and there were no monitoring mechanisms concerning the curriculum, the equipment, the safety environment, or the health and nutrition standards. After the establishment of the PA it worked to encourage private sector involvement in developing standards in these areas to be monitored by the PA. The MOEHE has itself established three kindergartens and is working in conjunction with UNICEF on training on average of 250 teachers a year for work in kindergartens. However, it is important to note that this education is not a free education and thus is only accessible by children of higher income families.

Although not part of the original five-year plan for educational development, the following programs are initiatives that the MOEHE is developing in response to the needs that have arisen in the conflict of the last three years.

### School Rehabilitation Program for Wounded Children

Children who have missed more than a week of school due to an injury from violence related to the conflict, along with their parents, are offered access to this holistic initiative. Parents and students will have the opportunity for advice and counseling as regards the students academic, physical, and psychological needs. Whether the student is in a rehabilitation center or at home, two teachers (covering literary and scientific subjects) visit the student if he or she is in grades 1-4. If the student is in grades 5-11, teachers covering all of the major subject matter, including Arabic, English, science, mathematics and the social sciences visit the child to tutor him or her. Wounded students who are in the 12th grade are tutored by specialized teachers.

<sup>94</sup> UNICEF. 'Situation Analysis of Palestinian Children, Young People & Women in the West Bank and Gaza Strip'. August 2000. p.64

<sup>95</sup> Ibid. p.65

## Educational Counseling Programs

To meet the increasing psychosocial needs the Palestinian child due to the current conflict and the fallout in their daily lives and the lives, of their families and friends, the MOEHE has devoted extensive financial and human resources to the training of personnel in this field. The number of educational counselors rose from 440 in the 1999-2000 school year to 540 in the 2002-2003 school year and annual expenditures on this program are on the order of USD 40,000.<sup>96</sup>

The MOEHE is currently working on the following other initiatives:

### School Health Program

This is a joint program between the MOEHE and the Ministry of Health to provide healthcare to students in schools, which includes but is not limited to: dental hygiene and eyesight tests and a vaccination program. As the education process has often been occluded in Palestine do to curfew, closures and sieges, the goal of this program is to develop long-term, flexible distant learning and teaching techniques.

### The Inclusive Education Program

One hundred and fifty Palestinian schools have been rehabilitated to accommodate students with special needs. Although the demand exceeds the current capacity, hearing, sight impaired, and mentally challenged students, along with students with physical or motor now have access to the general education system. Teachers have also been given extensive training on how to integrate these students in a natural way while tending to their special learning needs. UNRWA schools are not yet equipped to deal with special needs students and private schools have limited capabilities in this area.

### Additional MOEHE plans include:

- ▲ Plans to offset days lost due to closures and curfews that will allow teachers to finish the curriculum according to established syllabi. Students will make up time during physical education classes, during afternoons or during holidays.
- ▲ Establishing alternative communications links to offset curfews and closures and transportation problems. Alternative strategies include technology such as video conferencing.
- ▲ Development of a unified Palestinian curriculum to be followed by government, UNRWA and private schools. This effort has been underway since 2000. During the 2002-2003 school year, the curriculum for 1st grade through 4th grade and from 6th grade to the ninth grade had been developed. Work should be concluded for the reaming grades by the 2004-2005 school year.

## Conclusion

The provision of the right to education in Palestine is dictated by unique challenges. Some are related to the fact that the education system is being built from scratch, and others are related to the violence and economic stagnation that grip the Palestinian people as a consequence of Israel's contravention of its international law obligations. It is, however, notable that despite all of these obstacles, children—the holders of this right—are steadfast in their pursuit of this and other rights. Children taking part in a Save the Children UK and Save the Children Sweden study on education under occupation indicated that they identify school as a major venue in which their rights are realized. Given the circumstance under which these children go to school on a daily basis, reflections such as these by children provide a glimpse into their strong constitutions and their resilience. However, alongside these perceptions, children from the same study also recognized that neither schools nor the PNA have the power to guarantee their protection from Israeli military forces while at school.<sup>97</sup> That is, school is a place where children feel that many of their most important rights—

---

<sup>96</sup> Ministry of Education and Higher Education, School Health Department Database. op.cit.

<sup>97</sup> Save the Children UK and Save the Children Sweden. 'Education Under Occupation: Palestinian Children Talk about Life and School'. March 2002. p.40

beyond simply the right to education—are realized, yet, they feel that nobody in their lives has the power to protect these rights. The survey results also indicated that no child was conscious that the Israeli authorities were responsible for implementing these rights. We, as policy makers in Palestine, and in the international community, while continuing to build and provide for the schools that children literally feel ‘house’ their rights, must also do everything possible to take Israel to task as the responsible party under international law for protecting those rights.

## b. Non-Formal Education

The education of a child is not only a matter of formal classroom-based learning. Education takes place in many different locations and through many different people who influence and shape a child’s worldview. Indeed, it might be argued that the learning that takes place outside of school, is in fact an equal if not a more important factor in determining who that child will grow-up to be. In Palestine, this assertion of the utmost importance as 53% of the total population is estimated to be below the age of 18. Further, the youth population—those between the ages of ten and twenty-four—represent 32% of the population.<sup>98</sup> Further, projections on the future demography of Palestine indicate that the percentage of youth relative to the total population will remain fixed until 2025, at which point it is expected to increase to 32.2% of the population.<sup>99</sup>



With such a high percentage of children and youth in Palestine, non-formal education offers Palestinian children the same benefits as it would any child in any other society. However, given the consistent disruptions to formal education specifically, and children’s daily lives, generally in Palestine, due to the political situation, non-formal education offers important opportunities to compensate for losses in the formal education sector, it helps children to cope with their changing realities and the chance to simply be kids.

### As such, characteristics of non-formal education can be described in the following manner:

- ▲ Students contribute to its activities in a voluntary and optional manner;
- ▲ Activities are short, practical and concentrated on children’s lives;
- ▲ No grades are administered for participation;
- ▲ Largely conducted by local community institutions with local resources; and
- ▲ Activities are not necessarily state-supported or supervised.

### The objectives of this sector include:

- ▲ Playing a role in providing for the psychosocial needs of children;
- ▲ Giving children productive, age appropriate, and fun activities to fill their free time; and
- ▲ Giving children opportunities to express themselves and develop analytical, social and life skills and talents.

## The Development of the Non-Formal Education Sector in Palestine

Before the establishment of the PA, NGOs were providing non-formal education opportunities to Palestinian children. Since 1994, the PA and its ministries have taken on a dominant role in this sector, either by directly providing activities, or by supervising the work of other organizations.

<sup>98</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. 2002  
<sup>99</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. 2001

## Institutions Providing Non-Formal Education

### ■ The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MOEHE)

While providing for formal education is the MOEHE's primary mandate, goals as to the provision of non-formal education were set forth in the MOEHE's five-year development plan (2000-2005). Related to these goals, a special directorate, the Directorate General of Student Activities, was established within the MOEHE to provide for non-formal education. The MOEHE focuses its non-formal education activities primarily in the culture and arts sector.

### ■ The Ministry of Youth & Sport

The Ministry of Youth & Sport provides non-formal education through its Department of Children and Scouts, which aims to enhance children's knowledge and skills and develop their intellectual and emotional potential to encourage their participation as members of Palestinian society, and to foster a child's feeling of enjoyment, ease, and participation in social and sporting activities.

### ■ The Ministry of Culture

Among the primary goals of the Ministry of Culture is to promote the fulfillment of children's right to participation. The Ministry does this by working to provide children with the opportunity to participate in television programs through support for and development of child-to-child TV programs. The Ministry also works to provide children with more age-appropriate Arabic entertainment programs and to raise children's awareness about their rights.

### ■ Non-Governmental Organizations

There are numerous NGOs working in the field of non-formal education, some having been established before the PA, and some having recently been established. Notable among the NGOs established prior to the PA are Tamer Institute for Community Education, Ishtar Productions and Theater Training and Al-Qasaba Theater. Among those NGOs recently established are the Khalil Sakakini Center and the Child Center of the Jericho Municipality. While each of these organizations is housed in the West Bank, the A.M Qattan Center for the Child will be inaugurated in 2003 in Gaza.

### ■ United Nations Organizations

UNICEF and UNDP are very active in the provision of non-formal education in Palestine. UNICEF, for example, supports summer camps, entertainment programs for children, and the production of children's magazines.

## Non-Formal Education in Palestine

### ■ Cultural and Arts Activities

Cultural and arts activities available to Palestinian children are varied, but they do not reach out to a large segment of the population. They include the following:

- ▲ Short story, speech, and essay writing, writing and reciting poetry, and poetry competitions;
- ▲ Courses, workshops, seminars and lectures on the arts and culture for children
- ▲ Drama and theater shows;
- ▲ Cinema shows and music performances;
- ▲ Art exhibitions, and studio art workshops for kids; and
- ▲ The production of bulletins, magazines and periodicals on artistic and cultural topics and events for children.



As previously mentioned, the MOEHE is the primary agent in this domain of non-formal education. It provides original opportunities for children to experience and engage in the arts and cultural spheres and supports the work of other organizations doing so. The MOEHE sponsors an annual 'National Reading Week', organizes creative writing competitions, cultural evenings and designs programs to give Palestinian children the chance to meet and speak with children from other cultures through internet and video conferencing technology. The Directorate General of Student Activities within the MOEHE also carries out various other activities, including, organizing studio art workshops, drama productions, art exhibitions, cinema events, and entertainment shows. The Directorate also offers children the opportunity to develop their capacities in music.

Other actors in the field of arts and culture for children include the Ministry of Culture and Tamer Institute who work together on numerous collaborations. An example of one such collaboration is the establishment of the Children's Literature Resource Center, which works to develop children's libraries in both the West Bank and Gaza, and to develop opportunities for children's activities in these libraries.

A positive trend we are witnessing in the arts in culture sector of non-formal education for children is an increasing specialization of organizations. For example, Ishtar Production, an NGO that has been working in Palestine for a number of years, specializes in drama and theater, while one of the newer NGOs, the Popular Arts Center, specializes in dance, debka and singing.

### **Social Domain**

Unlike in the arts and culture sector of non-formal education, we have not witnessed specialization of organizations working in the social domain. Additionally, there is often some measure of confusion and overlap between non-formal educational activities that could be categorized either as part of the arts and culture or the social domain. Although these two factors have led to a lack of substantive information available on non-formal education for children in the social domain, there are many activities that can be classified within this sector. Among other things, these activities might include: tours, student gatherings, conferences or volunteer work. The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) has conducted some research and analysis in this area indicating that 88% of children from ten to seventeen years old are involved in some form of social activities and that Palestinian children spend on average of 12% of their day engaging in social or entertainment activities.

### **Scouting Domain**

Despite a few years of growth and prosperity in the scouting domain in the late nineteen nineties, scouting activities in Palestine have degenerated as a result of the intifada to the extent that most scouting activities offered by schools, clubs, societies have ceased. As this is one of the primary domains available within Palestine from which the objectives of non-formal education can be carried out, it needs re-activation and restoration.

## **Children's voice... self-expression**

People's problems and worries are numerous and all are searching for their livelihood and almost nothing else. This is in addition to the psychological stress caused by the Israeli occupation and siege. In result, few Palestinian families really listen to what their children want.

Based on the right of children to expression and participation, the Ministry of Youth and Sport's General Directorate of Pioneers implemented a project of a radio program aimed at helping children develop their personalities, gain confidence and raise their cultural awareness and knowledge.

The radio program has an entertainment and educational character, where 80 pioneers from the different parts of Palestine were familiarized with technical aspects and management of radio programs in Studio Amwaj under the supervision of radio specialists.

Broadcast hours were chosen to suit the targeted age group of pioneers, i.e. 3-4 PM. The program included several sections - sports, entertainment, rights, computer and Internet, reaching over 18 sections selected by children themselves.

Over the year, 48 episodes were produced and aired on weekly basis. The radio program was successful in developing pioneers' ability to work as a team, as well as providing them with a potential for self-expression through a media program.

## **Sports Domain**

There are numerous actors working in the sports domain of non-formal education. The Directorate General of Clubs and Youth Centers, the Directorate General of Scouts and the Childhood Directorate General of the Ministry of Youth and Sport support and develop competitions, championships, festivals, and training courses. Additionally, The Directorate General of Students Activities of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education organizes various sporting activities. The Directorates of the Ministry of Youth and Sport and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education organize events individually and among other clubs, associations, youth centers, and NGOs. The Ministry of Youth & Sport, for example, supervises 370 youth clubs and 29 children's clubs (9 in the West Bank and 20 in the Gaza Strip). While the Ministry of Youth and Sport supervises the activities provided by these clubs, individual NGOs manage and execute the events.

## **Summer Camps**

Summer camps are the most popular and common category of non-formal education for children in Palestine. Summer camps include a series of organized and planned activities during the summer holiday from school that mostly take place outside of the cities and may be exclusively during the day or may also include over-night stays. The objective of summer camp activities is to fill children's free time with various sport, entertainment, art, and cultural activities which can foster within a child initiative, independence, happiness, cooperation, life skills, leadership, innovation, the spirit of volunteerism, respect for pluralism, understanding of their rights and duties, and strong value systems.

Until recently the organization of this domain with copious actors operating largely independent from one another was disorganized. The sector lacked standards, monitoring mechanisms, a unifying philosophy among the many actors, was staffed by unqualified individuals, was inefficiently and inappropriately administered and managed, and failed to involve either children or their parents in a substantive way in the planning process. In order to improve upon these deficiencies, the Ministry of Youth and Sport, in cooperation with UNICEF, organized two workshops in 2000 on summer camps involving all summer camp operators entitled 'Ambitious Reality'.

### **Children with special needs participating in summer camps**

During summer 2003, about 40,000 students participated in 206 summer camps. Various activities were offered, including remedial education to compensate for school days lost due to frequent curfews and closures during the previous year. The summer camps also provided various kinds of sports, cultural, health and environmental activities,

These camps were organized by MOEHE in cooperation with UNICEF in the northern and southern parts of the country with the aim of creating a pedagogical philosophy that responds to children's intellectual and psychological needs. Students with special needs were integrated within these camps, as specialized cadres were provided to work with them and programs were developed to help them adapt.

These activities were offered extensive coverage through different local and Arab media. The camps were evaluated by the staff of the MOEHE General Directorate of Student Activities and the district Departments of Education, as well as observers from UNICEF.

Two outcomes resulted from the workshops. The 'National Declaration on Summer Camps' was the first outcome, and represented a tremendous qualitative step forward for Palestinian summer camps. This declaration set forth the goal of ensuring that camps are a safe place for children and youth where they can learn, play and acquire social skills. Additionally, the Declaration set forth training requirements for camp organizers as well as goals for cooperation among governmental and non-governmental organizations and standards for evaluation of the camps. The second outcome of the workshops was the formation of a National Committee for Summer Camps. The primary function of this committee is to ensure respect for and compliance with the content of the National Declaration. Since its formation, the Committee has worked assiduously to include children and their parents from varying social and geographical locations, including those from marginalized communities, in the process of improving the summer camp network. The Committee has also published and distributed a training guide for implementation in all summer camps in 2003 and a guide on national standards for summer camps. Due in large measure to increased organization and coordination of the Committee, it is expected that the number of participants in summer camps in the 2003 summer camp season will reach 120,000—a number that is double the number of participants in the 2002 summer camp season and triple that of the 1998 season.

### **Effect of the Intifada on Non-Formal Education:**

The intifada has had pernicious effect on all areas of non-formal education for many of the same reason. For example, in the area of summer camps, where prior to 2000, many summer camps were organized to include the participation of students from diverse locals within Palestine in the same camps for day and oftentimes-overnight activities, camp organizers are no longer at leisure to do this. Both parents and camp organizers worry for their children's safety either traveling to and from camps or while they are actually in residence at the camps due to the unstable political situation. Trends in camp participation reflect both this fear and the continuing challenges of physical mobility posed by closures and curfews. For example, UNRWA reported that the number summer camp participants declined from 14,380 in 2001 to 7,897 in 2002. Additionally the actual content of camp activities is now much more focused on stress and trauma relief. Although this is a positive trend to the extent that it indicates a child-centered approach to programming, it also reflects the increase in psychosocial needs of the child population in Palestine as a direct result of the enduring conflict situation that pervades their daily lives. Similarly, the Ministry of Youth and Sport reported a tremendous drop in the participation of both boys and girls in sporting activities relative to numbers prior to the intifada. Their statistics comparing child participation in the 1999-2000 school year with the 2002-2003 school year indicated a 50% and 70% drop in the participation of boys and girls respectively. They noted that this drop was most likely explained by the fact that most sporting activities require playgrounds or other facilities that may have either been damaged or are difficult or dangerous to reach.

### **Other Issues in the Implementation of Non-Formal Education:**

The violence of the last three years and the occupation are the primary causes for stunting of the non-formal education sector in Palestine—as is the case for all other sectors related to the health, well being, protection and development of children. Further, there are some obstacles such as the lack of priority given to funding

non-formal education in the donor community, or the paucity of qualified staff in the field of non-formal education that are beyond the control of individual actors or simply take time to develop. However, there remains areas of this sector in which improvement is a matter of national policy, planning, and coordination among the various agents. The following are such areas that can and should be identified as priority concerns for policy makers in non-formal education:

- ▲ coordination and dialogue could be enhanced between organizations interested in or already working in non-formal education;
- ▲ research should be conducted on the effects of non-formal education on Palestinian society and on the effectiveness and performance of the institutions working in this field;
- ▲ an information database should be established for researchers to monitor the effectiveness of the sector over time;
- ▲ lobby groups should be formed to elicit support for non-formal activities and the institutions involved in delivering those activities;
- ▲ children should be allowed more participation in putting forward the goals and content in all areas of the non-formal education sector; and
- ▲ equity of opportunities should be given more of a priority, particularly as relates to the inclusion of girls and disabled children.

## **E** Children in Need of Special Protection

### **Introduction**



In 2002, the countries of the world met for a United Nations special session on children to reaffirm their commitment to the principles of the 1990 Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols and to completing the unfinished agenda of the 1990 World Summit for Children. Among the lessons learned in the previous decade, nations declared "...policies must address both the immediate factors affecting and excluding groups of children and the wider and deeper causes of inadequate protection and rights violations." One hundred and eighty one nations officially adopted the outcome document, 'A World Fit for Children'. One out of four priority areas of action identified in this document was the [protection] of children against abuse, exploitation and violence' and numerous categories of potential abuse, exploitation and violence against children were identified. Of the categories identified in 'A World Fit for Children', Palestinian children in the following categories are particularly vulnerable: child laborers; children in conflict with the law; child victims of abuse, neglect, violence or exploitation at home, in school or in other institutions charged with their care; child refugees; and child victims of Israeli violence, including arrest, detention/imprisonment, and torture.

Chronic poverty was identified in the 'World Fit for Children' as "the single biggest obstacle to meeting the needs, and promoting the rights of the child."<sup>100</sup> The document also

---

<sup>100</sup> United Nations. 'A World Fit for Children'. 2002  
<sup>101</sup> Ibid

notes that “children are the hardest hit by poverty because it strikes at the very roots of their potential for development—their growing bodies and minds.”<sup>101</sup> As a Palestinian child’s probability of being in one or more of the five categories of vulnerability identified above is likely to increase if that child is living in poverty, this analysis will begin with the status of child poverty in Palestine.

## a. Child Poverty

*Even in the best of circumstances*, children are marginalized because they lack access to and control of resources, no decision-making powers, and their voices are not always heard within society. Poor children are even more marginalized as a group because the poverty seeps into all aspects of their lives. *Even under the best of circumstances* governments in countries the world over are challenged to ensure the myriad rights to which their children are entitled, including the right to life, survival, and development. In the United States of America, for example, despite its enormous wealth, it has not ratified the Convention of the Rights of the Child guaranteeing its children the above and other rights, and the child poverty rate is among the highest in the developed world. According to figures from the 2000 United States Census, 12.4 million American children (persons under the age of 18) live in poverty.<sup>102</sup>

Palestine, like America, has not ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child<sup>103</sup>. Unlike in America, there is no welfare state in Palestine and there is no constitution to ensure proper governmental transparency, oversight, or redress. Palestinians have limited control over their land, water and other natural resources, and 43% of the total population is refugees. A wall twice the height of the Berlin Wall and 650 kilometers (403 miles) in length is being built throughout the country isolating thousands from employment, land, family, schools, hospitals, and resources, and the entire population of 3.4 million people—approximately equivalent to the population of the U.S. State of Connecticut (3.4 million) and slightly less than the population of the Republic of Ireland (3.9 million)—have lived for decades under military occupation. In Palestine, like in America, children are living in great poverty. Children under the age of 18 comprise more than half of the population and over 66% of these children are living under the poverty line.<sup>104</sup>

### The Definition of Poverty

There is a lack of consensus among experts from different academic domains about what indicators of poverty are the most useful. Some rely more on indicators of ‘absolute’ poverty, which are commonly calculated through the establishment of a minimum threshold of consumption required to meet one’s basic physiological needs. Others tend to place more emphasis on notions of exclusion, powerlessness, inequality, and stigma, or on ‘relational’ poverty. One finds differences among poor people about what it means to be ‘poor’, as well as differences in opinion among poor children and poor adults, and differences between the non-poor and the poor about what causes poverty. That said, analysts in most countries in the develop-



<sup>102</sup> The Annie E. Casey Foundation. ‘Children at Risk: State Trends 1990-2000’. Report from the Population Reference Bureau website: [www.prb.org](http://www.prb.org). p12

<sup>103</sup> Although the Palestinian Authority does have limited international legal personality, it is not able to sign international treaties as it is a government without a state. In order to sign an international treaty, statehood must have been attained.

<sup>104</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. 2002



ing world today use some composite of absolute and relational poverty to allow policy makers insight into the causes of and potential solutions for poverty.

Although it gets very little coverage in the media, poverty in the Palestinian territories is as characteristic of the conflict as suicide bombings or helicopter attacks in civilian areas. However, while daily fear of violence is a shared characteristic between Israelis and Palestinians, poverty, as a direct result of this conflict, is primarily the burden of the latter.<sup>105</sup> Almost three-quarters of Palestinians now live under the US\$2 a day poverty line as set by the UN, half the population needs extra food to meet daily requirements, and a quarter of all children are anemic.<sup>106</sup>

## Roots of Palestinian Poverty

### Selected events...

#### Period: The UN Partition to the 1948 War

- The 1947 UN Partition separates historic Palestine carving out 54% of the land for the Jews and 46% of the land for Palestinians
- The 1948 War resulted in Israel gaining 78% of historic Palestine and Palestinians retaining a mere 22%
- As a result of the 1948 War:
  - Both the West Bank and Gaza are flooded with Palestinian refugees (750,000)
  - The West Bank lost access to its coastline and ports losing a substantial outlet to relations with the west
  - Palestinians are stripped of farmland—particularly in the West Bank
  - The industry, agriculture and development of the western West Bank are neglected by its Jordanian administrators who hope to make the eastern West Bank the focus of economic activity
  - By 1967, the West Bank's industrial sector had shrunk from contributing 12% to 9% of the areas GDP

#### Period: After the Six-Day War

- In contravention of the peremptory norm of international law against the acquisition of territory by war, Israel announces that for strategic, economic and political reasons it will not give back the territories it had occupied
- East Jerusalem was effectively annexed (in 1980 it was declared to be part of Israel's unified capital)
- Land confiscations, settlement, the establishment of highways to integrate the territories into Israel while by-passing Palestinian towns and villages, and the seizure of water resources for the benefit of Israelis on both sides of the 1949 Armistice Line abound
- Israel has a free trade area in the Palestinian territories
- Palestinians are restricted in what they are allowed to export to Israel with the exception of a few agricultural goods
- Palestinian families became dependent on migrant employment inside Israel and in Israeli settlements
- The average number of Palestinian workers with permits who made their living by working in Israel or Israeli settlements exceeds 100,000 in the 1980s
- Limited opportunities at home encourage tens of thousands of young Palestinians to leave for the Gulf region where they can earn relatively high wages and send it back to their families. At its peak in the 1980s, 100,000 workers lived abroad sent remittances home.
- Many émigrés never came back –with them went their ideas and drive
- Between 1967 and 1987, Israel levies taxes on the Palestinian territories, which are two and a half

---

<sup>105</sup> Christian Aid. 'Losing Ground: Israel, Poverty and the Palestinians'. January 2003. p 5

<sup>106</sup> Ibid. p.5

times greater than the amount of money Israel invests in the Territories. In 1987 alone, while Israel spent US\$240 million on services and projects in the Territories, it collected US\$393 million in taxes

- Widespread discontent is felt throughout the Palestinian territories which sets the stage for the emergence of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO)

#### **Period: The Gulf War (1991)**

- Israel imposes greater restrictions on movement between the Palestinian territories and Israel and within the Palestinian territories, including the complete closure of critical thoroughfares
- Unemployment increases dramatically due to the inability of workers to physically access job markets
- The Palestinian economy relies on foreign earnings to make up half of its GNP
- A 'security fence' is built around the Gaza Strip which still remains in 2003
- The number of workers able to access Israeli for employment is halved
- By December 1991, one out of every three Gazans is unemployed

#### **Period: The Madrid Conference**

- Bilateral negotiations take place centered on UN Resolution 242 and 338, but do not yield the desired 'land for peace'
- March 30, 1999—High levels of violence prompt Israel to impose closure on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip
- Israel separates (through barriers) the Palestinian territories into four distinct areas: East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip, Northern West Bank, and Southern West Bank
- Closures fragment communities, with over 100 checkpoints, both along the 1949 Armistice Line and deeper into Palestinian areas further disrupting the movement of goods and services

#### **Period: The Eve of Oslo**

- Analysts now define the Palestinian economy as being in a state of "de-development"
- Agricultural and industrial sectors are weak and remain handicapped by barriers and closures
- The Palestinian territories have chronic trade deficits, myriad trade restrictions, production is increasingly small in scale, and there is tremendous unemployment

#### **Period: The Oslo Accords (1993-1994)**

- For the first time, formal negotiations take place between the PLO and the Israeli Government as a method for achieving peace
- An interim period is established to pave the way for a final status agreement.
- The Palestinian territories are separated on paper through the interim agreements into Area A (Palestinian administration), Area B (Palestinian administration, and Israeli military control) and Area C (Israeli military control)
- This separation was meant to facilitate the gradual turning over of agreed upon Palestinian land to full Palestinian control
- Closures and military checkpoints that had already been established were never removed and in effect, by 1999, when final status talks were supposed to occur, Israel retained control over 82.8% of the Palestinian territories

#### **Period: The Paris Protocol (Economic Agreements)**

- Amid the climate of the Oslo Accords, the two parties in 1994 came to an economic agreement
- Palestinians were free to oversee banking systems and manage foreign currency reserves, but not allowed to mint their own currency

- Taxes paid by Palestinians were to be remitted to the Palestinian treasury
- VAT on imports from Israel was to be remitted to the Palestinian Authority by Israel
- A quasi customs union was set up between the two parties
- There was to be free movement of labor for Palestinians into Israel
- Free movement was compromised by the closures and checkpoints that remained
- Palestinians were allowed to import basic food stuffs, certain processed foods, essential consumer products and some capital equipment for the textile, construction and agricultural sectors
- 526 specific items remained prohibited for import
- Israel maintained control over all borders and ports
- Israel stipulated restriction on the import of poultry, eggs, potatoes, cucumbers, tomatoes, and melon from Palestinian producers

#### Period: The Demise of Oslo

- Donors—particularly European governments—contribute funds to help establish the new Palestinian Authority
- Important infrastructure was created with donor funds and the beginning of national health, education and fiscal policies were put in place
- Key elements of Israeli policy remained despite the agreements that had been made—namely, closures, trade restrictions and expansion of settlements
- The Oslo process had been fundamentally flawed in that there were gross inequities that were never addressed
- Mention of the obligations of the occupying power under the Fourth Geneva Convention for the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War was never mentioned in the Oslo Accords, thus leaving Palestinians vulnerable without the primary instrument of international law which is so fundamental to any dispute over their rights as persons under an alien occupation

Source: Christian Aid. 'Losing Ground: Israel, Poverty and the Palestinians'. January 2003. p.12-18

While this is not a comprehensive rendering of the myriad contributing factors to the current poverty levels in the Palestinian territories, its purpose is to provide for the reader a snapshot of the infrastructure of de-development that has germinated along with the conflict and is now firmly entrenched. Other factors come into play alongside the continuing conflict in the period following the Oslo Accords, including the limitations on Palestinian development due to the management of the state apparatus by the Palestinian National Authority and its ministries and the criteria and strategies set for aid by international donors. These will be discussed in a later section but it is important to make the point that whether one is analyzing absolute or relational aspects of poverty the effects of protracted war and military occupation cannot be excluded from the analysis.

### Indications of Poverty

The following is a list of selected economic, health and nutritional, and food security indicators since September 2000 which when aggregated provide clear evidence of a nation gripped by poverty.

#### Economic Indicators<sup>107</sup>

##### GNP

- ▲ GNP grew on average of 2.5% throughout the 1990's (World Bank 2001)
- ▲ GNP between 1999-2000 had a negative growth rate at - 9% (Palestinian Monetary Authority, cited in

---

<sup>107</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, \* indicates the data source is the World Bank (2003) and \*\* indicates the data source is Christian Aid (2003)

Birzeit University Human Development Report 2002. p. 137)

- ▲ The World Bank reported in 2001 that unless GNP grew on average of 4.9% annually, the proportion of people living in poverty would increase inexorably due to population growth alone\*

#### GNI (GDP plus remittances from abroad)

- ▲ In 2002 GNI was 40% less than in 2000\*
- ▲ GNI losses in the first 27 months of the intifada totaled US\$5.4 billion\*
- ▲ The total opportunity cost to the Palestinian economy since the start of the *intifada* is equivalent to one full year of Palestinian wealth creation (as of early 2003)\*

#### Per Capita Income

- ▲ Per capita income in 2001, as a result of plummeting GNI and rapid population growth (4.5% per annum), was half of the 2000, or pre-*intifada* level\*

#### Unemployment

- ▲ In 2002, unemployment reached 53% of the workforce\*

#### 'Absolute' Poverty Indicators

- ▲ 60% of all Palestinians are now living under the US\$2 per day poverty line\*
- ▲ The number of poor has tripled to just under 2 million from a pre-*intifada* level of 637,000\*

#### Average Daily Consumption

- ▲ The average daily consumption of a poor person in the Palestinian territories has fallen and is now well below the US\$2 poverty line. It has dropped to US\$1.32 from a pre-*intifada* level of US\$1.47\*

#### Dependency on Food Aid

- ▲ Half a million people are now fully dependent on food aid\*\*

#### Per Capita Food Consumption

- ▲ Per capita food consumption is down by 30% since 2000 \*\*

#### Female-Headed Households

- ▲ Female-headed households represent 9% of Palestinian households
- ▲ They constitute more than half of poorest households in the Palestinian territories, with 30% falling below the poverty line \*\*

#### Median Monthly Income

- ▲ By 2002, median monthly income had dropped by 53% \*\*

#### Health and Nutritional Indicators of Poverty<sup>108</sup>

- ▲ Malnutrition among Palestinian children under age five in the Gaza Strip and West Bank has reached emergency levels and ranks among the highest in the world
- ▲ 9.3% of children in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank suffer from acute malnutrition and 13.2% show indications of chronic malnutrition<sup>109</sup>
- ▲ 22.5% of Palestinian children suffer from chronic malnutrition
- ▲ Chronic malnutrition rates in Palestinian children are equivalent to those found in Chad and Nigeria and higher than rates in Bangladesh and Somalia
- ▲ The overall malnutrition level in the West Bank and Gaza Strip "is considered an emergency by most

<sup>108</sup> Unless otherwise indicated all 'Health and Nutritional Indicators of Poverty' are from CARE. 'Nutritional Assessment of the West Bank and Gaza Strip'. Conducted by Johns Hopkins University and Al-Quds University, September 2002

<sup>109</sup> Acute malnutrition is an indication of inadequate nutrition in a short-term period, while chronic malnutrition reflects poor nutritional levels over weeks, months or years

<sup>110</sup> The Washington Post. 'Palestinian Children in Crisis: Report Shows Malnutrition Levels Among the World's Highest'. Moor, Molly and Anderson, John Ward. August 2002. Quotation is from Gregg Greenough of Johns Hopkins University a primary researcher for the CARE 'Nutritional Assessment of the West Bank and Gaza Strip'.

humanitarians and public health officials”<sup>110</sup>

- ▲ Anemia among Palestinian children under five climbed to 19.7% by 2002, with higher rates found in the Gaza Strip. Anemia impairs learning, growth development and decreases immunity from infectious diseases
- ▲ Families sight “economic problems” as the primary cause of malnutrition.

## Food Security<sup>111</sup>

- ▲ 53% of Gaza and West Bank households reported they have been forced to borrow money to pay for food in recent weeks
- ▲ 17% of households said they had to sell possessions or assets to buy food
- ▲ Food deliveries and availability have been severely curtailed by the security situation
- ▲ More than half of wholesalers and just under half of retailers reported shortages of infant formula and powdered milk

It is difficult to quantify the extent to which Palestinian capacity for development and poverty reduction has been ravaged. Many of the effects are latent and the result of the interaction between policies, politics, actions and inaction over time, which have been directed by a multitude of institutional actors, both local and international. What is clear is that capacity has degenerated, and that most commentators place the lion’s share of responsibility at the feet of the Israeli Government. However, the Palestinian Authority and the international community also bear some responsibility.

## The Palestinian National Authority

Despite the obvious setbacks that the PNA faces due to repeated destruction of government institutions and infrastructure, three primary criticisms can be fairly leveled at the PNA concerning its conduct in the area of poverty alleviation and development. First, out of necessity in the period 1994 and the establishment of the PNA, when service provision to the Palestinian population was in the hands of the Israeli occupation authorities, pluralism in civil society and civil society institutions thrived. Looking to centralize authority, when the PA was established, it brushed aside these vibrant institutions, including a range of creative NGOs that had formerly managed the bulk of the development work.<sup>112</sup> An additional criticism is that the PNA failed to place poverty reduction at the center of its agenda. The PA choose instead to allocate what critics argue to be a disproportionate amount of the budget to security, and to projects in sectors and in a fashion mandated by the demands of the Oslo process or by international donors. In so doing, it further alienated itself from the NGO community and left marginalized populations out of its strategic policy mix, such as rural women.<sup>113</sup> Adding to this problem of sectoral prioritization within the PA, one can add the problem of cronyism, lack of transparency, accountability and corruption. Christian Aid noted in their 2003 report, ‘Losing Ground: Israel, Poverty and the Palestinians’ that there is a clear link between the lack of accountability in the PA and a lack of development. The report went on to say that, for example, the Palestinian Legislative Council has been unable to properly monitor the PA budget and that the PA has a history, as recorded by the PA’s own audit office, of misappropriating massive sums of money.<sup>114</sup> Finally, related to the problem of corruption, the PA has—by taking the calls by the World Bank and others for a free-market economy as the path to developmental salvation to an extreme—introduced monopolies in sectors such as oil and construction. These unregulated and unaccountable monopolies subsequently control major sectors of the Palestinian economy—a scenario that is hardly beneficial to an impoverished population that then has fewer choices and higher prices.<sup>115</sup> If these are the end results of developmental strategies, given the history of de-development in the Palestinian economy, they may in the end lead to further socio-economic and class inequalities—thereby undermining any notions of ‘equity’ in the calculus of Palestinian development and poverty reduction.

<sup>111</sup> Unless otherwise indicated all ‘Food Security’ data are from CARE. ‘Nutritional Assessment of the West Bank and Gaza Strip’. Conducted by Johns Hopkins University and Al-Quds University. September 2002

<sup>112</sup> Christian Aid. *op.cit.* p. 49

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.* p.49

<sup>114</sup> Christian Aid noted that such a misappropriation occurred in 1997, and amounted to US\$340 million, or nearly half of the PA budget.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.* p. 49



## The International Community

By the end of 2000, aid disbursements to the PA since 1994 amounted to US\$4.87 billion. International aid had contributed to the construction of government buildings, schools, employment creation, and national infrastructure—the ‘bread and butter’, if you will, for a functioning Palestinian economy and administration. Since 2000, while much of this aid was poorly spent by the PNA, government buildings have been bulldozed, schools abandoned following aerial bombardments or seizure by military authorities, and damage to the physical infrastructure including roads, water and sewage, municipal buildings, orchards and homes from September 2000 to the end of 2001 alone, came to US\$305 million.<sup>116</sup> While the international community and aid agencies are neither driving the tanks that destroy, nor cheering the disappointments of the development process, they seem incapacitated in a perpetual state of indecision about what to do and what their role is. On the one hand, millions of dollars are spent on development projects geared not only toward alleviating present and future poverty, but toward the development of a functional, democratic Palestinian authority, and on the other, they either turn their head when the Israeli government destroys that development, or they follow it with yet more aid. International law is clear on the responsibility of the 160 signatories of the Geneva Conventions who agreed to “respect and ensure respect” for the Convention in “all cases of partial or total occupation”. International law is clear, but impoverished Palestinians—including impoverished Palestinian children—may not have enough time to give the international community in order for them to be clear. As the Johns Hopkins and Al-Quds University research team astutely noted in their 2002 nutritional assessment, the average Palestinian household indicated in February 2001 that they had a remaining 17 months of financial reserves for consumption spending, and that interval expired in July 2002. The research team concluded that this may indicate that households are currently at the end of their reserves for basics such as food and water.<sup>117</sup> This statement is supported by a survey of Palestinians in 2002, where 58% of those surveyed said they can barely manage, or they have nothing else to rely on financially, and an additional 9% said that they could cope only for a few more months.<sup>118</sup> It must also be noted that the international community continuing on as it is—continuing to fund development only to have it destroyed again—are likely to increase the poverty rate rather than reduce it.

“Under closure, every additional billion in foreign aid will only pull down the poverty rate by about 9 percentage points.”

**(World Bank Country Director for Palestine, Nigel Roberts March-2003)**

## b. Refugee Children

Palestinian Refugees: Who are they, where do they come from, and where do they live?

The Palestinian refugee population number over 5 million, or two-thirds of the Palestinian people, and they represent the single largest refugee population in the world save the Afghan refugee population.<sup>119</sup> Persons categorized as Palestinian refugees are persons who fall into one of the following three categories:

- 1) Palestinians displaced in 1948 outside the areas of historic Palestine that became the state of Israel;



<sup>116</sup> Ibid. p. 50

<sup>117</sup> Johns Hopkins University and Al-Quds University. ‘Rapid Nutritional Assessment for the West Bank and Gaza Strip.’ 2002 .p.15

<sup>118</sup> Bocco, Riccardo. ‘International and Local Aid During the Second Intifada’. Report V. The Graduate Institute of Development Studies. The University of Geneva. December 2002. p.23

<sup>119</sup> US Committee for Refugees. ‘World Refugee Survey 2003.’p. 6

- 2) Internally displaced Palestinians who remained within the areas that became the state of Israel; and
- 3) Palestinian refugees displaced for the first time in the 1967 war from the West Bank and Gaza Strip.<sup>120</sup>

While a vast number of Palestinian refugees live in other countries and not within the West Bank and Gaza Strip, roughly 13% of the 5 million refugees live in the 27 official camps, with another 18% living outside these camps but still situated in the 140 square kilometers of the Gaza Strip (370 square miles) combined with the 5,600 square kilometers of the West Bank (2,000 square miles). It is also worth noting that in Gaza, where over 65% of the inhabitants are refugees, there are over 2,100 inhabitants per square kilometer—making it one of the most densely populated areas of the world.<sup>121</sup>

## International Protection and Palestinian Refugees

Over the last 50 years, Palestinian refugees have essentially been denied the minimum international legal protections available to all other refugees.<sup>122</sup> The United Nations established a special regime to facilitate the implementation of durable solutions for Palestinian refugees in 1949 through the UN Conciliation Commission for Palestine (UNCCP). UNCCP carried out several major initiatives aimed at refugee property compensation and/or restitution, but ceased functioning in 1966 for all intents and purposes. Its archival material, including studies of land values and compensation schemes, went into the UN archives where it remains to this day.<sup>123</sup> One year after the formation of UNCCP, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) was established to facilitate relief and works programs for Palestinian refugees until the refugees were able to exercise their right to return home. Since 1949, UNRWA has provided shelter, water, basic food, sanitation services, primary health care and other relief and social services to refugees and their descendents. Its mandate is extended on a regular basis (generally every three years) by the UN General Assembly.

Together, UNCCP and UNRWA were to have provided protection and assistance to the Palestinian refugees in the same measure as other refugees around the world who receive protection and assistance. While UNRWA does provide a significant amount of protection in the area of day-to-day economic and social rights, there is still a huge gap in the scope of protection afforded to Palestinian refugees.<sup>124</sup> The absence of a comprehensive protection regime, particularly in the areas of physical security, is a violation of Article 1D of the 1951 Refugee Convention.<sup>125</sup> <sup>126</sup> Related to this, a commission of inquiry for the UN Commission on Human Rights noted in a March 2001 report (E/CN.4/2001/121), that “no other refugee community in the world is so excluded.”<sup>127</sup> It should also be noted that refugee children are accorded the right to protection and humanitarian assistance under Article 22 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in addition to the rights they are accorded as civilians, children, and as refugees under the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949.

## Why Do Palestinian Refugee Children Require Special Protection?

Reproductive aged women and children under 15 represent two thirds of registered Palestinian refugees.<sup>128</sup> In addition to the special consideration to which Palestinian children, and indeed all children, are entitled with regard to protection and rights, refugee children face additional protection problems because of the nature, causes, and consequences of displacement. In addition to the direct impact of the conflict, these children who are engaged in the dynamic processes of development, must also contend with the fact that their probable impoverishment as a result of their or their families' original displacement and the perpetual

---

<sup>120</sup> Badil Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights. website. [www.badil.org](http://www.badil.org).

<sup>121</sup> Giacaman, Rita., Abdul-Rahim, Hanan., and Wick, Laura.' Health Sector Reform in the Occupied Palestinian Territories: Targeting the Forest or the Trees'. Institute of Community Public Health, Birzeit University. 2003. p 4

<sup>122</sup> Badil Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights. op.cit

<sup>123</sup> Ibid

<sup>124</sup> Ibid

<sup>125</sup> Article 1D, 1951 Refugee Convention: This Convention shall not apply to persons who are at present receiving from organs or agencies of the United Nations other than the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees protection or assistance. When such protection or assistance has ceased for any reason, without the position of such persons being definitively settled in accordance with the relevant resolutions adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations, these persons shall ipso facto be entitled to the benefits of this Convention.

<sup>126</sup> Badil Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights. 'A Climate of Vulnerability - International Protection, Palestinian Refugees and the al-aqsa Intifada One Year Later'. September 2001. p.2

<sup>127</sup> Defence for Children International-Palestine Section. A Generation Denied. 2001. p 129

<sup>128</sup> UNICEF. 'The Situation Analysis of Palestinian Children, Young People & Women in the West Bank and Gaza Strip'. August 2000. p.74

state of conflict, puts them at a higher risk of becoming child laborers, children in conflict with the law, the victims of neglect, abuse or violence, or being injured or killed in the conflict.

### The Situation of Child Refugees and their Environment

Prolonged closures and curfews continue to oppress the largely unskilled labor force of the refugee camps that relies heavily on wage labor due to a lack of land-based forms of earning a livelihood. High population growth, high dependency ratios, and lack of employment make it exceedingly difficult for families to absorb shock after shock, and forces them to deplete any savings they may have been able to accumulate and to rely upon the means and kindness of family, friends, and on international assistance. It is worth noting that recent studies indicate that one's status as a refugee in Palestine is no longer among the most significant indicators of poverty because poverty is becoming endemic throughout Palestine.<sup>129</sup> However, the positioning of the general population on the same stratum with the refugee population as measured by poverty does not in anyway diminish the innate vulnerabilities of refugee children—vulnerabilities that demand continued monitoring and analysis. General characteristics of the Palestinian refugee population that contribute to their particular vulnerability include high birthrates, short birth intervals, and a high prevalence of anemia.<sup>130</sup>

Since the beginning of the *intifada* in September 2000, the protection of refugee children has been further compromised. Despite their legally protected status under international law, refugee camps have increasingly been a target of Israeli military attack. Numerous refugee camps are in close proximity to Israeli military installations, settlements or by-pass roads putting adults and children at risk of injury from these attacks. Further, due to the make-shift and provisional nature of the infrastructure and high population density of camps, they are less resilient to attack. Over 60% of Palestinians killed in the first year of the *intifada* (September 2000 and September 2001) were refugees.<sup>131</sup> The total number of refugee children killed as a direct result of *intifada* related violence is not available at this time, but DCI-Palestine reported that 16 out of 77 refugees killed by Israeli forces between September 2000 and January 2001 were refugees under the age of 18.<sup>132</sup> In addition to the death of refugee children, scores of children have been handicapped and there is a marked increase in the number of children suffering from psychological trauma. Israeli military attacks in residential areas of the Palestinian territories, including, the shelling of refugee homes, has unfortunately also been a distinctive feature of the violence of the last three years. Damage estimates for residential property shelled in West Bank camps alone (as of January 2001) amounted to US\$605,402.<sup>133</sup> Damage to schools, health clinics and water and electricity facilities have also been widespread. The closure and curfew regimes have left refugees without access to schools, health facilities and places of work. Another area of deprivation in the lives of refugee children is one that is often forgotten, but which is fundamental to childhood—the ability to play. Refugee children in the Palestinian territories have very few safe and suitable venues in which to play or rest.

### Service Provisions for Child Refugees

It is difficult to disaggregate data on UNRWA health programs, primary health care, assistance towards health care costs, sanitation and environmental health programs, and education and relief programs for the purposes of assessing the level of assistance given to children. UNRWA data are captured by household or type of service not by category of recipient.<sup>134</sup> Moreover, the agency has been operating with several handicaps. Namely, UNRWA has had continues funding shortfalls, the pace of population growth and developments in PA governmental regulations outstrip their capabilities, and Israeli curfews, closures, and attacks constantly threaten their ability to assist their beneficiaries while protecting their own staff members—the

<sup>129</sup> Bocco, Riccardo. 'Executive Summary: Palestinian Public Perception of Their Living Conditions –The Role of International and Local Aid during the second Intifada'. Report V. Graduate Institute of Development Studies, University of Geneva. December 2002. p.5

<sup>130</sup> UNICEF. op.cit. P.75

<sup>131</sup> Badil Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights. 'A Climate of Vulnerability –International Protection, Palestinian Refugees and the al-Aqsa Intifada One Year Later'. op.cit. p. 2

<sup>132</sup> Defence for Children International-Palestine Section. op.cit. p.130

<sup>133</sup> Ibid. p. 131

<sup>134</sup> UNICEF. op.cit. p.74

majority of whom are Palestinian and many of whom are themselves refugees. In the last three years, UNRWA has had to issue a number of emergency appeals to support temporary job creation measures in addition to food and cash subsidies for its beneficiaries.<sup>135</sup> In 2001, UNRWA was forced into making the policy decision to distribute rations—marking the first time that the agency took this policy alternative (except for distributions targeting hardship cases) since the 1980's.<sup>136</sup> To assist children and the families of children who suffer from psychological trauma related to the conflict, UNRWA has recruited some 57 counselors who are working with subcontracted NGOs.<sup>137</sup> UNRWA has also organized recreational programs, workshops, and lectures for refugee children and youth on coping mechanisms for their current situations. Due to UNRWA's failure to acquire all of the funds requested in its appeals and the resulting necessary austerity measures, UNRWA has been unable to meet the needs of all children related to their education. Schools are functioning on a shift system (to accommodate the abundance of students), classrooms are overcrowded, UNRWA schools are not yet equipped to deal with special needs students, and facilities are inadequate. The Israeli imposed closures and curfews also prevent children, teachers, and administrators from reaching schools, resulting in the loss of numerous class days. In the healthcare arena, while UNRWA operates 52 primary health care facilities in the West Bank and Gaza serving over 3.5 million patients per year, there are still service shortages. This is partially explained by UNRWA funding shortfalls, in addition to the mobility restrictions already mentioned which prevent UNRWA health professionals from reaching their places of employment as well as patients from reaching UNRWA clinics. UNRWA has subsequently reported a marked drop in the number of infants registered for preventative care, the number of children brought in for care, the number of immunizations, and disruptions in the ability to transport medical supplies from place to place.<sup>138</sup>

While indicators of the vulnerability of the general population of the Palestinian territories continue to converge toward those of the refugee population, it has been observed that aid continues to favor the refugee population. A 2002 study conducted by the Graduate Institute of Development Studies at the University of Geneva and funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, UNDP, UNICEF, UNRWA and the World Food Program surveyed 1,370 Palestinians living in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip about their living conditions and their perceptions of international and local aid. Survey results indicated that the three most common forms of assistance, food aid, cash assistance and employment assistance are heavily weighted toward those living in refugee camps.<sup>139</sup> Food was the primary type of assistance reported to have been received by refugees, and UNRWA was identified as the main provider. Among those refugees falling below the poverty line, 91% of those surveyed reported that they received some type of assistance from UNRWA.<sup>140</sup> Of the all Palestinians surveyed in the study, the level of satisfaction with the aid provided among refugees was significantly higher than among non-refugees.<sup>141</sup>

## Conclusion

Data such as that described above on the situation of Palestinian refugees reinforces the assertion that UNRWA is providing a significant amount of assistance to meet the day-to-day protection needs of refugees. However, this does not in any way lessen the need for a comprehensive protection regime to which each and every refugee has a right under international law.

---

<sup>135</sup> Ibid. p.128

<sup>136</sup> Ibid. p.128

<sup>137</sup> Ibid. p.131

<sup>138</sup> Ibid. p.131

<sup>139</sup> Bocco, Riccardo. op.cit. p. 108

<sup>140</sup> Bocco, Riccardo. 'Executive Summary: Palestinian Public Perception of Their Living Conditions –The Role of International and Local Aid during the second Intifada'. Report V. Graduate Institute of Development Studies, University of Geneva. December 2002. p.18

<sup>141</sup> Ibid. p. 21

## c. Child Labor



The issue of child labor has garnered heightened attention since the codification of the Convention on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor of 1999 which gave more specific form to Article 32 relating to child labor of the 1990 Convention on the Rights of the Child. One hundred and forty-three states ratified the former convention, making it the fastest convention to be ratified in the history of the International Labor Organization.

There is no universally accepted definition of 'child labor' as international organizations, NGOs, governments, trade unions and interest groups tend to each have their own definition. Additionally, UNICEF, for example, also makes the distinction between 'child work' and 'child labor', the former not being objectionable and the latter, objectionable. As UNICEF put it in their 1997 State of the World's Children Report:

"Children's work needs to be seen as happening along a continuum, with destructive or exploitative work at one end and beneficial work—promoting or enhancing children's development without interfering with their schooling, recreation and rest—at the other. And between these two poles are vast areas of work that need not negatively affect a child's development."

As generally accepted, 'child labor' includes work done by children that harms them or exploits them either physically, mentally, morally, or by interfering with schooling, recreation, or rest.

### Child Labor in Palestine

A handful of studies have been undertaken in the past ten years to diagnose the scope and causes of child labor in Palestine. The first was a UNICEF study, 'Working Children in the Gaza Strip', in 1996, followed by a 1997 Defense for Children International-Palestine Section report titled 'Children's Employment in the West Bank', and a 1998 Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics statistical study of child labor among 5-17 year olds at the national level. These studies were unfortunately not as prescriptive as they might have been. Among other problems, these studies were not comprehensive in their geographic coverage, thus it is difficult to formulate national policies based on their results. Moreover, these studies tended to concentrate on quantitative data rather than qualitative data. They did, however, provide enough evidence that children in Palestine are being exploited through child labor and that there was a need to do more in depth research and analysis in the area.

In 2000, amid a deteriorating political situation, the escalation in violence, and the subsequent increase in unemployment and poverty rates throughout the West Bank and Gaza, Palestinian children were statistically more likely to be subjected to child labor due to the clear link between poverty and child labor. Studies in countries around the world link poverty with the number of desirable outcomes in other areas of a child's life.<sup>142</sup> Palestinian children themselves indicated this link, for example, in a 2003 survey conducted on children and poverty when they told researchers "I hope that I find a job so that I can help my family". Statements like this indicate the domino effect that poverty has in the lives of children.

In addition to poverty, there are numerous other common reasons why a child might become a laborer, including, family expectations and traditions, abuse, lack of good schools, lack of other services like health

<sup>142</sup> The Annie E. Casey Foundation. p.11



care, public opinion that downplays the risk of early work for children and limited choices for women. However, a collaborative study conducted in 2002/3 by BZU Development Study Program, Unicef, and the NPA Secretariat indicated that families cited economic problems as a primary cause of children joining the labor force. At the same time the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) was also engaged in a statistical survey that included workforce participation. Interestingly enough, this 2002 survey indicated that the number of children between the ages of 10-17 participating in the workforce had in fact dropped to 2.7% compared to 5.5% in 2000 despite the fact that poverty was increasing among the population. This apparent discrepancy between the Birzeit University/NPA Secretariat study and the PCBS study might be explained by the fact that there are fewer jobs available in the labor market in general, thus children might have less opportunities for work even though they might be seeking work.

The NPA Secretariat/Birzeit University study, 'Palestinian Children in the Labor Market', was undertaken to provide qualitative data that could be used to guide decision-makers in Palestinian ministries and NGOs whose work either directly or indirectly impacts upon children in order to design strategies for alleviating the suffering of child laborers. Other preliminary results from this study indicated that the majority of working children are males living in cities that are between the ages of 10-17 and who come from families with larger than average family sizes. Most of the children who participated in the research left school for work in the service sector. This study did not adequately address the particular vulnerabilities of the Palestinian girl-child, particularly those engaged in work in the home—a category of child labor that is often neglected.

### **Strengths and Problem Areas in Dealing with Child Labor:**

The Palestinian Legislative Council and other institutional actors have had some degree of success in putting the issue of child labor on the map in Palestinian legislation. The Palestinian Child Law, which is awaiting executive approval by President Arafat, includes provision for the protection of children from child labor in a similar format as is found in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.<sup>143</sup> A minimum age is set for employment (15 years of age)<sup>144</sup>, and there is a general prohibition on any work that exploits children or interferes with the child's education, or threatens the child's physical or mental well-being<sup>145</sup>. Areas that will require further legislation and awareness raising among the public and among Palestinian ministries responsible for implementation of the law include the punishment of those who chose to exploit children for child labor.

Currently efforts are underway to intervene in preventing child labor. With the passing of the law, the Ministry of Labor and Ministries of Social Affairs, Education and UNRWA have begun to seek out child laborers and assist them in reintegrating into normal childhood and education rather than working. More intensive efforts need to be taken to ensure that child labor is halted and children are not exploited.

### **d. Children in Conflict with the Law**

The issue of children in conflict with the law became prominent in Palestine in the wake of the first intifada of 1987. Following the creation of the Palestinian Authority in 1994, the Ministry of Social Affairs issued its first report on the issue of juvenile delinquency in 1997. The report indicated that the number of juvenile delinquents multiplied by 12 in 1997 in comparison with the 1996 figure. It was noted in the report that this drastic increase might be explained by the fact that



<sup>143</sup> Palestine is not a state party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, but it is seen as an authoritative guide to the rights of children and the protection duties of the state and caregivers.

<sup>144</sup> Palestinian Child Law: Chapter II, Article 14

<sup>145</sup> Palestinian Child Law: Chapter IIX, Article 43

this generation of children would have been ten years of age and younger during the first intifada (1987). These children's lives had been severely disrupted by the violence of this period and the subsequent socio-economic degeneration. Many of these children, for example, dropped out of school as a result of the sustained school closures that continued for two years, and many of them lost parents or care givers due to death or imprisonment. These factors along with many others including the general lack of routines that characterized their normal lives created a multiplier effect for these children and in some cases for their children that helps to explain the dramatic rise in juvenile delinquency today.

While today the size of the phenomenon is small in Palestine relative to many other countries, it cannot be underestimated given the lessons of the first intifada. That is, if in fact both the first intifada and the peripheral changes in society such as high unemployment and increasing poverty cannot be separated from the causes of juvenile delinquency, then the issue requires heightened research and analysis in order to prevent an equivalent increase following the present intifada. Other factors, which contribute to juvenile delinquency in Palestine that may or may not be directly related to the intifada, include divorce, polygamy, family quarrels, chronic disease in the family, and ineffective or inappropriate methods of child rearing.

### Agencies Active in the Area of Children in Conflict with the Law

Among the primary actors working in the area of juvenile delinquency is the Ministry of Social Affairs. The Ministry of Social Affairs established a special directorate to take care of juvenile issues. The Directorate monitors juveniles who are considered to be susceptible to becoming delinquents due to risk factors in their lives, and also works to rehabilitate juveniles who have already been in trouble. The Ministry also recruits specialists both to work with juveniles and to reform administrative structures. Specialists work with the police to protect the legal rights of juveniles and to monitor the treatment of children in reform institutions

In addition to the Ministry of Social Affairs, there are three other governmental institutions working with children in this area: *Dar Al-Amal* Institute for boys in Ramallah, *Al-Rabee* Institute for boys in Gaza, and *Dar Al-Fatayat* for girls in Bethlehem. These institutions run rehabilitation programs to help juveniles depend on themselves and reintegrate into society after leaving the institution.

### Positive Steps and Problem Areas in Protection of Children In Conflict with the Law

One of the greatest strides Palestinians have made in this area is in providing legal protection and rights for children who have been accused of a crime. The Palestinian Child Law<sup>146</sup> in articles 67-69 of Chapter XI, sets a minimum age for criminal liability (below 19 years of age), forbids cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment of children, requires treatment of a child to be appropriate to his or her age and developmental stage, describes the right of the child to rehabilitative assistance, obliges the state to prevent juveniles from taking part in criminal activity, and requires the state to use detention only as a last resort. While these are strong legal provisions, the child law places a good deal of responsibility on the State for implementation of the provisions therein. Implementation of this law will take a good deal of time and will require secondary legislation that is not at present forthcoming.

Having not yet been signed into law, implementation of assistance both of a preventative nature and of a rehabilitative nature still suffers from a number of problems. Prominent among them is a lack of a comprehensive national policy directly addressing the treatment and prevention of delinquency in children. Related to this, there is a substantial lack of financial and qualified human resources required for the work needed in the area of children in general in Palestine and this sector of that work is no different. If more resources were available it would assist in addressing some of the other problems in this area, such as: a lack of community awareness about the reasons for delinquency and means by which it could be prevented, and about the importance of the community role in helping juveniles reintegrate into society, a lack of reliable analytical studies on the phenomenon of delinquency in Palestine, and a lack of record keeping to be used in monitoring and research.

<sup>146</sup> The Palestinian Child Law is awaiting final executive approval by President Arafat as of January 2004.

## e. Children Exposed to Public & Private Violence

Violence not directly related to the intifada<sup>147</sup>, or the occupation, of a public or a private nature, including violence in the home or violence in school or other institutions is much less chronicled in the Palestinian territories. Data is scarce in this sector and tends toward the anecdotal. Perhaps because of the largely unpredictable nature of life during the intifada or under occupation, in addition to the absence of resources, policy in this area also tends toward hindsight rather than prevention.



While there is a lack of quantitative data on the current exposure of children to public and private violence not directly related to the *intifada*, as UNICEF stated, "...the absence of data does not mean the absence of a problem".<sup>148</sup> Those working at the ministerial and NGO level in child protection and rights in Palestine, having recognized the validity of this statement, have pushed for creation of a Palestinian Child Law codifying a comprehensive regime of protection and prevention. These agents have in fact created a document that represents a great leap forward for children's rights in Palestine in this area. While the Palestinian Basic Law (A 29 (4)) prohibits beating or harsh treatment of children by Parents, a child's rights to protection in the home as well as in other environments is more comprehensively addressed in the Child Law. The Law also names a specific office within the Ministry of Social Affairs, the 'Childhood Protection Department' as the body responsible for ensuring that children are not exposed to violence in the public or private domains and for overseeing the care of children who have been exposed to violence.<sup>149</sup>

Unfortunately, at this time, the law has not yet been signed and ratified by President Arafat. Further, when and if it becomes law, it will require considerable effort in order to properly implement its provisions. It will require both financial resources and expertise at the level of government policy making, within the judiciary system, and at the level of actual service provision—all of which are likely to remain areas of scarce resources until both plurality in the domestic political environment and the peace-process in the international political environment are revived.

In the meantime, research remains limited, service delivery remains largely focused on the aftermath of violence perpetrated against children, and it is probable that only a fraction of children who are exposed to violence are known and have access to services. The latter is partially explained by the fact that particularly in cases where violence occurred in the family, people tend to try to hide these events.

### Areas of Violence and Care for Victims

Citing a 1994 survey of 400 students (aged 18-40) from Birzeit University, the UNICEF 2000 Situation Analysis reported that the most common forms of violence, in order of prevalence, were the following: physical violence (beating/torture), verbal violence, deprivation of rights (such as access to education), sexual violence, emotional violence, suppression of opinion, restriction of freedom, divorce, exclusion from the political sphere, and murder.<sup>150</sup> The survey also indicated that these students thought the best place to go for help was their extended families (42.6%).<sup>151</sup> Although this survey was not a survey of children in the

<sup>147</sup> This section of the Situation Analysis will not focus on violence related to the intifada as this will be thoroughly covered in other sections.

<sup>148</sup> UNICEF. 'The Situation Analysis of Palestinian Children, Young People & Women in the West Bank and Gaza Strip'. August 2000. p. 77

<sup>149</sup> Child protection is covered in Chapters VIII-X of the Palestinian Child Law.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid. p. 78

<sup>151</sup> Ibid. p.78

traditional sense (under the age of 18), it does indicate the presence of public and private violence in Palestinian society.

The Ministry of Social Affairs has also collected some data through the work of their staff with children. The Ministry has implemented a number of programs for children in the area of child protection, including, the Alternative Family Program, the Parental Education Program, The Program for Social and Psychological Support of Victims of Israeli Violence and the Program for the Protection of Children Suffering from Hardship. Additionally, the Ministry has established a specific directorate for this sector, the General Directorate for Children and Families. The Ministry has recruited 25 counselors who staff the above named programs, but unfortunately, a high ratio of children to counselors remains. Although MOSA counselors have compiled lists of common forms of violence to which the children with whom they work have been subjected, the data is problematic. For example, some of their categories are unclear, such as the title 'psychological problems'. The cause of a child's referral to services is unclear using this categorization. Were the psychological problems caused by violence in their lives or other reasons?

### **Towards improving the life of your children**

Ten messages aimed at promoting child growth and development are being addressed to parents within a parental education program managed by the MOSA General Directorate of Family and Childhood in cooperation with UNICEF. The program aims at raising parents' awareness of their roles and responsibilities towards their children through the following messages: promoting accord between both parents, helping our children learn, responding to questions by our children, helping our children feel responsible, understanding our hyperactive children, fighting against school dropout, avoiding psychological abuse, protecting our children from sexual abuse, and saying yes to life... no to drugs.

Within this program, 750 meetings have been held with the participation of about 3700 parents and adolescents and 150 parental groups have been formed in marginalized areas through community awareness campaigns. To achieve satisfactory results, 100 educators have been trained on how to convey these messages to the community and how to facilitate discussions about them. In addition, 100 volunteers from university graduates and staff of public institutions and NGOs have received training on organizing discussion sessions. Educators and volunteers have been working in pairs, with one of them taking the role of a moderator and the other the role of a reporter.

The communities have exhibited a great willingness to participate in the program and interest in the issues addressed. A positive atmosphere has prevailed in the meetings facilitating exchange of experiences. These observations were confirmed through a questionnaire that was administered by a random sample of the participants prior to and after the program in order to measure its impact on the targeted audiences. Two educational brochures named "messages to parents" and "safety certificate" have been distributed to the participants and received with great enthusiasm.

Local community structures, including societies, clubs and schools, have contributed to the program's success and ensured its sustainability. Meetings involving adolescents and parents have offered an opportunity to discuss parents' methods of upbringing their children. Such meetings have encouraged parents to rethink the way how they treat their children and change their behaviors in accordance with the child's stage of development.

## Summary of Problems Facing Sector

- ▲ Lack of research in this area quantifying the problem
- ▲ Absence of clear/efficient protection system
- ▲ Absence of shelters for victims of violence
- ▲ Family attempts to hide abuse
- ▲ Insufficient staff
- ▲ Lack of specialization among staff
- ▲ Difficulty physically reaching vulnerable children in order to assist them
- ▲ Lack of funds to support the development of the sector
- ▲ Too few counseling centers to meet the demand (three out of four MOSA protection centers have been closed due to lack of financing)
- ▲ Palestinian children lack a legal protection regime in the Palestinian domestic legal system until the Palestinian Child Law is signed and ratified
- ▲ The Palestinian Child Law, if signed and ratified, will require extensive secondary legislation and financial and human resources in order to ensure proper implementation
- ▲ There is a need for awareness raising among policy makers both about the law (when it becomes law) and about the potential for children to be exposed to violence
- ▲ There is a need for awareness raising among the general population both about the risks of violence toward children and about the services that are available to families and children for preventive as well as protection purposes.

## f. Israeli Violence Against Palestinian Children: Detention, Imprisonment, and Torture

This section of the Situation Analysis will focus on children who have been imprisoned or detained by Israeli authorities and their treatment in captivity. Other areas of Israeli violence against children including death and injury are included in other sections of the Situation Analysis.

There is a formidable body of international law safeguarding the rights of children deprived of their liberty— all of which have been systematically and routinely contravened by Israeli functionaries. These international



legal regimes include the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice, and the UN Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty. Among other provisions provided under international law, children are guaranteed to the following: the right to not be arbitrarily arrested; the right to be informed of the reason of arrest; the right of access to lawyers; the right to inform or have informed their families of their arrest and place of detention; the right to be brought promptly before a judge; the right to challenge the lawfulness of detention; the right to

have access to the outside world; and the right to be treated with humanity and respect for the inherent dignity of a human being.



Throughout the course of 2002 and 2003, Defense for Children International (DCI) reported that 750 and 500 minors (children below the age of 18) respectively, were arrested. Instead of the international law regimes listed above, the law stipulating the treatment of these children once they are in the Israeli detention system is a convoluted and mind-boggling construction of Israeli law, both military and civil. That is, among other factors, an arrested child's treatment depends on his or her age, place of arrest, and place of detention. For example, if a child from the West Bank or the Gaza Strip is arrested and is under the age of 16, he or she will probably be sent to a detention facility administered by the Israeli Prison Authority, which applies military orders. Under military orders an adult is an individual who has attained the age of 16, thus, that child will be treated as an adult. However, if a child below the age of 16 from the West Bank or the Gaza Strip is arrested, he or she will probably be sent to a detention center run by the Israeli Prison Authority, which applies Israeli domestic law.<sup>152</sup> Israeli domestic law abides by the international law standard of 18 as the age of majority. Similarly if a child is arrested in East Jerusalem, the child will be treated as a juvenile at arrest if he or she is below the age of 18 because Israeli domestic law applies in East Jerusalem. This is just a snapshot of the complexity of this legal regime that includes over 1,500 military orders that only apply to residents of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Once in the system, children face an abyss that the outside world—including loved ones and lawyers—have great difficulty breaching. There are no specialized facilities, courts, or personnel for children with the singular exception of Telmond Prison where DCI reports the detention/imprisonment of 70-350 children. Children often have no access to lawyers or family visits, are detained for long periods of time and often without charge and are commonly deprived of education, proper nutrition, healthcare, bathing and bathroom facilities, and recreation. There is widespread evidence of children being detained not only among adult populations, but also among adult criminal populations—a strict violation of the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (adopted by the UN Economic and Social Council-1957). DCI statistics from 2002 also indicate that not only is the practice of detaining/imprisoning children on the rise, but younger children (14 and under) constitute an increasing number of the cases. This is partially as a result of Israeli Military Order 132 of 1999 that allows for the arrest of children aging from 12 to 14. DCI's experience working with detained children also indicates that sentences are becoming more severe. The longest sentence ever administered to a child stood formerly at 3 years. However, DCI reported in 2002 that at least 17 children were sentenced to detention of between 5-10 years.<sup>153</sup>

In addition to the degradation already mentioned, children are also subject to the infamous and legalized practice of torture at the hands of their Israeli captors, despite Israel being a state party to the Convention against torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Moreover, although in 1999 the Israeli Supreme Court outlawed four specific torture methods for security detainees, a 1999 Amnesty International report declared, "Torture and ill-treatment continued to be officially sanctioned and used systematically during interrogation of security detainees."<sup>154</sup> DCI confirmed the continued practice of torture in a 2000 statement declaring that every single detained/imprisoned child on whose behalf they have worked testified to some form of torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.<sup>155</sup> Ill-treatment and torture begin the moment the child is apprehended and continue through the interrogation and his or her confinement. This treatment can include beatings, verbal abuse, sexual assault, sleep or food deprivation, withholding of bathroom facilities, 'position abuse', violent shaking, cold or hot water thrown on them (during the winter and summer respectively), numerous measures to degrade the child such as having a sac placed over the head that has been drenched with urine or feces, and psychological torments such as the threat of sexual assault directed at a female relative (during an arrest at the home, for example). Torture is also often used as a technique to illicit a 'confession' from the child. Further, if the child gives a 'confession', he or she will most probably be given a copy of that confession in Hebrew—a language most Palestinian children cannot read—for signature.

<sup>152</sup> Defence for Children International-Palestine Section. *A Generation Denied*. 2001. p. 145

<sup>153</sup> Defence for Children International-Palestine Section. 'Campaign to Release Palestinian Child Prisoners'. website: [www.dci-pal.org](http://www.dci-pal.org)

<sup>154</sup> Amnesty International Quoted in: Defence for Children International-Palestine Section. *A Generation Denied*. 2001. p. 152

<sup>155</sup> Defence for Children International-Palestine Section. *op.cit.* p. 153



## Problems of Political Will and Assistance for Child Detainees

As one would expect, children subjected to this treatment during their formative developmental years - if and when they emerge from detention/imprisonment—do not escape unscathed. In addition to the psychosocial implications for these children, they face difficulties finishing their education, finding employment and generally relating to people who do not share their experience.

Leading agencies in this area are the Ministries of Detainees and Ex-detainees Affairs and Social Affairs, the Secretariat for the National Plan of Action for Palestinian Children, Defense for Children-Palestine Section, and Unicef. Unfortunately limited human and financial resources are allocated for this needy and marginalized group of child detainees whose numbers are increasing annually. Specialized expertise on appropriate social and legal interventions pertaining to child detainees and ex-detainees is lacking and requires support in order to ensure their rights are protected. Furthermore, there is a need to work with the international community in putting pressure on the Israeli Government to abide with international humanitarian law. The Palestinian National Authority should also place the issue of child detainees on the political agenda during negotiations calling for an immediate and unconditional release of all Palestinian child. The Palestinian National Authority should also ensure that proper laws, policies and resources are made available to protect children's rights and in particular those of child detainees.

## **F** Child Culture

Article 31 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child provides that all children have the right to participate freely in cultural life and the arts, and state parties shall respect and promote this right by encouraging the provision of equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational, and leisure activities.

Palestine has a diverse cultural heritage of which Palestinians are proud. It was, in the early twentieth century, the home of a rich community of scholars, journalists, historians, writers, musicians and artists. Bethlehem was the birthplace of the first Arab movie in 1926, and in the 1940's Palestine touted numerous movie houses. Palestinians were also innovators and precursors in the field of children's literature, as the first Arab publishing house specializing in children's literature, '*Dar al fata al Arabi*' was Palestinian. Moreover, Palestinian history is replete with a folk culture that includes joyous oral traditions, spiritual and religious traditions, dance, and music.

Palestine's unique history post-1948 has however threatened to rob generations of Palestinians of the opportunity to enjoy their right to participate in both the modern and historical cultural and artistic life of their nation. In fact, with the events of 1948 and the perceived threat to their very existence as a people, the dissemination of Palestinian culture took on a new and urgent function—the preservation of the now fractured Palestinian national identity. In addition to the urgency Palestinians felt in passing on what was now an intangible culture to younger generations, in 1967 with the onset of the Israeli Occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, culture became a vehicle for resisting the occupation. Whether through books, magazines, films, or theater, each of these mediums was now dedicated to the political struggle or plight of Palestinians.

With the onset of the Oslo Process and the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, there came a renewal of hope for a better future and culture regained its importance by recovering its original dimensions. Culture as an expression of national identity moved beyond serving the function of resistance to occupation toward the formulation of a multi-dimensional and complex identity. This time period was characterized by a revitalization of interest in human rights, philosophy, education, morality, and the arts—all of which came to express the diversity and richness of Palestinian culture.

In addition to the destruction of the economic, healthcare, and educational infrastructures, the re-occupation of the Palestinian territories during the second intifada also meant the systematic destruction of the culture. Due among other things to the regime of closures and curfews imposed by the Israeli military and the subsequent physical impossibility of reaching cultural events, culture in Palestine must still serve as a tool to protect both the national identity and to preserve important artistic and cultural ties with the international community. Once again, artists, poets, writers, and theater and musical performances now tend to stress themes related to the political situation, freedom and liberation.

Despite the situation and the inclination to 'take the joy' out of these cultural activities, many within the Palestinian Authority (PA) and within non-governmental agencies are working hard to protect the achievements of the 1990's which included the promotion of joyous cultural and entertainment events offering children the opportunity to freely express themselves and access international cultural influences and partnerships.

### **The Development of a Children's Culture Infrastructure**

Prior to the establishment of the PA there were a few NGOs working in the area of children's culture, but they were geographically spread out. Those that were in more centralized locations and that had expertise in proposal and grant writing were able to access the international donor community to support their activities, but such organizations were not in the majority.

After the PA was created, its mandate within the sphere of children's culture was not to create cultural events, but to support the organizations already doing so through creating a positive climate for cultural development and by contributing to the development of human resources, infrastructure, and services. In order to do this, the PA set up regional offices in each of the Palestinian directorates. These offices played an important role in facilitating the recognition of regional cultural activities, institutions, and individuals. They also coordinated several activities planned by larger NGOs situated in more central locations. These smaller, regional offices having acquired a stronger skills base in planning, development, and program planning and implementation, were then encouraged to expand into more underserved locals through small NGOs already working in the identified areas.

### **The First National Plan of Action for Children's Culture**

Although not working exclusively in the area of children's culture, the creation of the NPA Secretariat in 1995 by the PNA as a coordinating body between governmental ministries, NGOs, and international organizations working for or with children, was another important step forward for children's culture. One of the tasks before this body was to create a National Plan of Action for Palestinian Children that included a strategic plan for the promotion and development of children's culture in Palestine according to the realities of the situation faced by both children and those who provided cultural outlets for children.

The first National Plan of Action for children's culture was developed through a series of workshops with twenty-two institutions working in this field. Participants in the workshops first agreed on a frame of reference or general principles or beliefs that would guide their work in setting out goals in the area of children's culture. The group agreed upon the following fundamental principles:

- ▲ All children have a right to life, growth and development to the utmost of his or her potential;
- ▲ All children should get equal chances and opportunities;
- ▲ A child's first years are essential for the development of his or her intelligence, personality and behavior; and
- ▲ It is important to recognize the role that older children (13-17 years) can play in working with younger children.

The established goal or hope for the Palestinian children as the outcome of future programming in children's culture was that Palestinian children would be "citizens of the world, culturally and environmentally aware, rich with positive economic and social values, behaviors, and basic life skills, and that they would be happy, critical, and finally, creative. Workshop participants agreed that this would be accomplished through programming that:

- ▲ offered children a view of other cultures and peoples;
- ▲ deepened children's awareness of health and environmental issues;
- ▲ enhanced the development of positive human values;
- ▲ enhanced the development of life skills; and
- ▲ instilled joy in children

Strategies for developing programming in line with the above included:

- ▲ Recognizing that working with children means working with the sphere of individuals who surround and influence children, including the family, educators, and the media;
- ▲ Ensuring that local communities participate in the planning process; and
- ▲ Continued support from the Ministry of Culture for the work of NGOs through the creation of a positive climate for cultural development.

After the adoption of the first National Plan of Action for Children's Culture, a string of 60 libraries were established in different regions of Palestine and two cultural centers were created in Nablus and Khan Yunis. After the establishment of the libraries, it soon became clear that having nice libraries did not mean that children would become good readers and that if this was the stated goal, the means employed had to be part of a larger more holistic process involving numerous institutions. The two cultural centers, while boons to their communities, were meant to be pilot centers that would extend their reach to smaller cultural centers in the country. This was not a realistic aspiration for the centers given the political situation and the regime of closures, curfews and roadblocks.

## **The Second National Plan of Action for Children's Culture**

Enriched by the lessons learned from the first experience, a second series of workshops was organized and the statements on goals, strategies, actions, and foundational principles were re-approved in order to begin the process of creating the second National Plan of Action for Children's Culture. This priority of the second plan was developing children's reading in Palestine through developing children's literature. The outcome of this was the creation of the Developing Palestinian Children's Literature (DPCL) program. This was a national program that was developed by 15 experts in the field with the participation of others through regional workshops and a main national workshop in Ramallah in 1998. Those who shaped the DPCL believed in the importance of developing, and making available quality children's literature as it can play an important role in shaping the Palestinian child's personality, strengthening his or her national identity, developing creativity, and enhancing his or her skills in participation and expression, and in widening the child's horizons. The DPCL program also stressed the importance of making children's literature available to each Palestinian child regardless of his/her locality, gender, social, psychological, or physical situation.

The principles laid down in the DPCL were embodied in the subsequent launch of the "Children's Literature Project". This project systematically tackled the main sectors of dissemination for children's literature, namely, libraries, schools, kindergartens, parents, and more generally through the media and larger society. The Project sought to work at a grass-roots local level with the hope that successes at the local level would create a snowball effect.

There were several outcomes of the Children's Literature Project, one of which was the creation of the Resource Center for Children's Literature. This Center has succeeded in coordinating efforts that lead to the acceptance of Palestine to the International Board of Books for Youth (IBBY). It has also organized several meetings, training sessions, round-table discussions on children's literature and the functioning of libraries, and published a newsletter. Of these activities, the Center devoted considerable resources to developing the skills of writers and illustrators, including 252 hours of training for young illustrators. In large part due to the efforts of the Center, children's books produced in Palestine today are much nicer, much richer in their content, and although they still tackle national identity and resistance, they also deal with issues of diversity, gender, tolerance, friendship, joy, and fantasy.

This improvement in the quality of books does, however, not reflect an equivalent development in the publishing of children's literature. Existing publishers of children's literature are mainly found in the NGO sector (Ogarit, Tamer, ECRC etc...) and they have few resources with regard to commercial distribution mechanisms and their efforts are entirely dependent on donor funding cycles. The Ministry of Culture and the Resource Center initiated discussions on the need for further investment in the publishing of Palestinian children's literature, but due to the deterioration of the political situation, increased Israeli aggression throughout the Palestinian territories, and the resulting impact on the Palestinian economy, these dialogues have not born fruit.

Despite the problems related to the political situation that have affected the possibility of getting a viable children's literature publisher off the ground, the library sector has flourished since the creation of the original 60 libraries by the MOC. There are now 73 children's libraries that have been established by the MOC and they have succeeded in laying a foundation for real development of this sector as well as minimum standards for service delivery, including directions as to the training given to librarians, the quality of books, and necessary equipment and furnishing for libraries. Children who used to visit the libraries to photocopy texts for their school homework are now coming to read and participate with pleasure in cultural activities. Further, despite an initial drop in attendance at libraries during the first four or five months of escalated violence, libraries are now reporting steadily increasing attendance, with some even reporting attendance figures double or triple of those before the *intifada*. This can partially be explained by the fact that while under the present circumstances parents often feel afraid to let their children leave the house, parents seem to view libraries as secure places for their children.

One area where the expectations of the new libraries have fallen short is the organization of these libraries into networks. The expectation was that children would make visits between different libraries and that the libraries would organize joint activities and festivals. This expectation has been lowered for the time being given the realities of the situation on the ground, but libraries are maintaining strong links in their own communities and are keeping up a minimal measure of communication among libraries.

Efforts to enhance children's literature within the context of formal education have been slow to start. While training of teachers in schools and kindergartens has not yet commenced, an introductory meeting was held with teachers to introduce them to the ideas and goals behind the eventual training. The response from teachers was resoundingly positive and left no doubt as to the benefit to be had from the training once it is carried out. Many of the teachers discovered children's literature through this training and all of them agreed that the large scope of activities that will be included in the training would help them improve the quality of the time they spend with their students. School libraries—a necessary precondition of offering the training program—have been established in numerous schools.

## Successes and Problems Facing Children's Culture

While many problems have been raised in this piece, it is important to emphasize, with an eye towards further future development, the considerable strides that have been made given the extraordinary circumstances under which those working to improve the children's culture infrastructure have persevered. In Palestine, children's books are still being published, Children's Day is still a fun-filled day for both children and their families, children have previously unimaginable access to libraries, and Palestine still hosts musicians (10 performances with foreign participation on average per year), storytellers, writers, and other artists and intellectuals are still coming to perform, train or just meet in Palestine. Finally, libraries, summer camps and other cultural organizations are maintaining a cadre of cultural activities that allow children to express themselves, relieve stress, enhance creativity and nurture their imaginations. Finally, in the realm of codification of the Palestinian child's right to participate in culture of the nation, the forthcoming Palestinian Child Law has provided children with the right, free from discrimination, to fully participate in cultural activities of their choosing.<sup>156</sup>

Some of the barriers facing children's culture can be summarized as follows:

- ▲ The two previous National Plans of Action for Children's Culture have not covered the entirety of the cultural sector to which children have a right to access;
- ▲ There are funding shortages with budgets for specific projects far exceeding the available funds;
- ▲ Accurate data about the quantitative importance of cultural activity is poor;
- ▲ Donors tend to cut their support for cultural activities that are seen as discretionary in favor of more urgent material funding priorities; and
- ▲ Culture in Palestine is still widely viewed as a service that has to be offered rather than paid for, which makes it difficult to create a sustainable independent cultural sector, even for areas within that sector, which have the potential to be lucrative, such as case for books and film productions.



### Child Media

Articles 12, 13, and 14, respectively, of the Convention on the Rights of the Child provide for the child's right to form and express his or her own views, the right to freedom of expression, including the right to impart information and ideas of all kinds orally, in print, through art or through the media, and the right to freedom of thought. In addition, article 17 of the CRC recognizes the particular role of the media in helping to fulfill the above and other rights:

### The Convention on the Rights of the Child—Article 17

States Parties recognize the important function performed by the mass media and shall ensure that the child has access to information and material from a diversity of national and international sources, especially those aimed at the promotion of his or her social, spiritual and moral well-being and physical and mental health. To this end, States Parties shall:

- (a) Encourage the mass media to disseminate information and material of social and cultural benefit to the child and in accordance with the spirit of article 29;
- (b) Encourage international co-operation in the production, exchange and dissemination of such information and material from a diversity of cultural, national and international sources;
- (c) Encourage the production and dissemination of children's books;
- (d) Encourage the mass media to have particular regard to the linguistic needs of the child who belongs to a minority group or who is indigenous;
- (e) Encourage the development of appropriate guidelines for the protection of the child from information and material injurious to his or her well-being, bearing in mind the provisions of articles 13 and 18.

---

<sup>156</sup> Cultural Rights are provided for under Section VI of the Palestinian Child Law

Thus, a child's right to expression and information through the media is one of a multitude of areas where state parties to the CRC are required, preferably through their respective National Plans of Action, to take steps toward full implementation of the Convention. The present document is part of that process for Palestine though it does not yet have the international legal personality required to allow it to become a state party to the CRC.

### **The Development of Child Media in Palestine**

Since the advent of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) in 1994, it has established various institutions and commissions to work in the realm of both public and private media. However, as is the case in other sectors of the state apparatus such as trade, and industry, the PA inherited a media apparatus that was weak and lacking in expertise due to their prior subordination to the whims of the Israeli military presence in Palestine that stunted its growth.

Throughout the decades' long military occupation, the Palestinian media suffered heavily. Israeli occupation forces deliberately deprived the Palestinian people of access to their rights to freedom of speech and expression in available media outlets while also blocking the establishment of Palestinian institutions to fulfill these rights. Palestinian journalists or members of media teams were subjected to torture, deportation, and expulsion while media corporations/institutions were forcibly shut down either on a temporary or a permanent basis. Further, any media that was slated for publishing was subject to the final approval and censure of the Israeli military.

While Israeli military occupation remains, following the Oslo process and the establishment of the PA, media in Palestine, not without many bumps along the way, gradually began to play a significant role in establishing and shaping some measure of Palestinian national sovereignty. Several newspapers, magazines and radio and TV stations were launched. Moreover, the Palestinian media apparatus began to specialize in several domains—one of which was the domain of children.

The impetus for the development of specialized media including child media came largely through dialogue between local and international media agents who had been largely cut off from each other in the years before the Oslo Accords. This dialogue led to a 1995 media conference held in Gaza, the outcome of which was a broad acceptance by media agents of 'Children First' as a media priority. Following these events, children's media witnessed remarkable progress that is evidenced by the publication of child-related supplements accompanying daily newspapers, in addition to programs on various issues in the field of childhood and maternity and children's rights on the state-run local TV and radio stations.

### **Child Media Actors In Palestine**

Recognizing that children consume what they hear and often see and read messages from children rather than adults, a core group of institutions exist in Palestine that are highly engaged in the process of enabling the participation of children through communications medium. There are two significant actors who coordinate and direct children's media efforts in Palestine with a variety of non-governmental organizations as well as governmental organizations:

1. The Women and Children's Media Directorate of the Ministry of Information
2. The Ministry of Planning represented by the Secretariat for the National Plan of Action for Palestinian Children (NPA Secretariat).

The NPA Secretariat is a parastatal-governmental organization working under the umbrella of the Ministry of Planning and is engaged in policy formulation, strategic planning using a rights-based approach, and research among governmental, non-governmental, and international organizations working for or with children. They work with all parties to advocate for children at the national and international level in order to



raise awareness about the daily reality that Palestinian children face in life under occupation and to promote the fulfillment of the rights of these children. Although the NPA Secretariat is not a media institution, it has developed a media strategy in cooperation with the Ministry of Information and UNICEF and with the participation of other child-related NGOs and Ministries.

The establishment of a Women and Children's Media Directorate within the Ministry of Information was an important step in advancing the scope, reach, and effectiveness of children's media in Palestine. The Directorate implemented several media programs and supervised the training of child media specialists. Devoting much of its efforts to raising awareness about children's issues and monitoring violations of children's rights, the Directorate launched a three-year media campaign in all mediums, which included monthly appeals, the publication of a book, posters, reports, and articles. The Directorate also recognized the importance of building the local human resources infrastructure in media. Thus, it has offered numerous training courses on media.

In a joint venture between the afore mentioned NPA Secretariat and the Women and Children's Media Directorate, a Children's Information Center was established. Having also identified a paucity of information resources available to both international and local researchers and media agents seeking information about Palestinian Children, the Center provides original audio, visual and written materials. The Center also promotes training of media personnel along with other organizations specializing in children's issues and produces written, audio, and visual materials for child consumption.

Other governmental organizations not primarily focused on media, but have nonetheless devoted resources towards cultivating media related to their work with children and their families include the following:

■ **The Family & Children's Department of the Ministry of Social Affairs**

This department is represented in the media through the media division of the Ministry of Social Affairs. However, it has published some materials independently, including, letters to parents in cooperation with UNICEF

■ **The Childhood Directorate General and Scouts Directorate General of the Ministry of Youth and Sport**

Outside of its regular press representation through the media division of the Ministry of Youth and Sport, these two directorates produce a bulletin for children called 'Sawa...Sawa' or "Together". In addition the Scouts Directorate General publishes a special bulletin for older boys and young children called "Scouts". This is a periodic release written by children and which emphasizes child innovation and opinions. The Scouts Directorate also produces a TV program on Palestinian TV dealing with youth and children's issues.

■ **The Ministry of Education and Higher Education**

Focused specifically on children, this ministry consists of a directorate, and several sub-departments and divisions that specialize in different functional areas such as school health and kindergartens. The media for this ministry is disseminated to the local and international press through the media department of the Ministry, which publishes press releases on education and a monthly journal in which children have a significant participatory role. The Ministry also publishes a quarterly magazine titled 'Childhood World'.

■ **The Ministry of Health**

The media department of the Ministry of Health is responsible for generating media related to the work of each of the departments within the Ministry. Notable among its media accomplishments is a audio-visual piece they produced titled "Health for All", a program discussing maternity and childhood and which was broadcasted on Palestinian TV.

#### ■ The Palestinian Broadcasting Corporation (PBC)

The PBC produces original content for children as well as broadcasts content from abroad for children. Among the original content broadcasted by the PBC is a weekly one and a half-hour long program produced by PYALARA made by children (12-20) for children. It also broadcasts programs to raise awareness about particular issues faced by women and children.

In the non-governmental sector, there are numerous stakeholders working in child media:

#### ■ Al-Quds Educational TV

Al-Quds Educational TV broadcasts different programs for children and the caregivers of children on a daily basis tackling different issues affecting children such as modernity, civil society and education. It produced 70 sessions of the popular '*Iftah ya simisem*' or 'Open Sesame' in 1996 and is now in the process of producing a second part to this program.

#### ■ Tamer Institute for Social Education (Tamer)

Tamer publishes a media and literature postscript in '*Al-Ayam*' daily newspaper every two weeks that is written and edited by children.

#### ■ Palestinian Youth Association for Leadership and Rights Activation (PYALARA)

PYALARA publishes youth newspaper, "Youth Times", that is focuses on media and education and is published in English and in Arabic. Established in 1998, the paper has a distribution of twenty thousand copies and reaches one hundred thousand children and youth. PYLARA also produces a weekly program "Raise Your Voice", for children and youth that reaches two hundred and fifty thousand viewers and is projected to reach half a million viewers in the near future.

#### ■ Amwaj TV

Amwaj TV produces a weekly two-hour program for children titled 'The World is Ours'.

#### ■ Al-Quds Newspaper

Al-Quds Newspaper publishes a weekly 'Children's Page'. While the publication shows great potential, the Newspaper is working on improving this publication to make it more 'child friendly'.

### Strengths of Palestinian Child Media

PYLARA conducted a survey of 104 children between the ages of 10 and 16 during a recent International Broadcast Day for Children in which they expressed the following areas of priority in the media:

- ▲ Rights
  - ▲ Education
  - ▲ Other children's opinions
  - ▲ Entertainment
  - ▲ Programming that helps children to understand the events taking place around them in a language they understand
  - ▲ Children discussing school drop-out
  - ▲ Programs discussing fear and childhood
  - ▲ Programs allowing Palestinian children to meet children from other countries
- Information about places to go for assistance for poor families.

Giving due consideration to the voices of children, the strengths of the child media sector at present broadly include: an interest in the local issues affecting Palestinian children; a focus on programming that fosters identification with cultural identity; programming that provides entertainment and joy to children; programming that is educational; and programs that guide children in appropriate behavior in different situations. In addition, Palestinian media has been very successful at providing 'From Child to Child' media opportunities, thereby meeting one of the priority goals applicable to all areas covered by the CRC—the participation of children. Moreover, the Palestinian Child Law, a new piece of Palestinian domestic legislation awaiting final ratification by President Arafat, obligates states to take appropriate measures to ensure that the mass media plays a constructive role in guiding children in all areas of their lives.<sup>157</sup> The Law also declares a child's right to demand, receive, transfer, and disseminate all information, and it requires the state to allocate a portion of its programming and resources to ensure the enjoyment of this right.<sup>158</sup>

## Problem Areas in Palestinian Child Media

While remarkable progress has been made in child media in Palestine, as in all other sectors, many obstacles remain, including the following:

- ▲ Lack of experience in child media personnel;
- ▲ Private sector media tends to focus on financial gain rather than benefit to the child;
- ▲ Lack of financial support to public sector media;
- ▲ Shortages of information available for journalists seeking to produce media on children;
- ▲ No practical application in either the private or public sector of the 'Children First' slogan;
- ▲ Lack of technical development in media—especially visual media concerning engineering and aesthetics;
- ▲ Projects are largely ad-hoc based on the availability of funding which stunts capacity building in the sector;
- ▲ Lack of unified vision for child media;
- ▲ Lack of training that is applied and the results of which are measurable;
- ▲ Limited opportunities for exchange between international and local media; and
- ▲ A diversity of information is available, but is not appropriately documented and cataloged for easy use by media agents.

In raising the profile of Palestinian children in international media, the following problems exist:

- ▲ Limited language abilities of local media staff;
- ▲ Limited expertise in framing issues in an appropriate attractive way for an international audience; and
- ▲ Lack of objectivity in reporting aimed at international audiences.

In conclusion, the situation of Palestinian children is complicated by occupation, by the relatively new establishment of governmental institutions and services, coordination between service agencies, and ongoing violations that they are faced with on a regular basis. This overview provides insight into the particularities of their situation and should be used as a guide for understanding children's issues and identification of priority areas of concern

---

<sup>157</sup> Palestinian Child Law, Article 26 (2)

<sup>158</sup> Palestinian Child Law, Article 33 (2)