



# Palestine Situation Report

December 10, 2021

## Background

The immediate background to the current period of economic recovery, reconstruction, and sporadic violence is summarized in Anera's last [Situation Report \(September 16\)](#). Information on Anera's work on food insecurity in Gaza is available in Anera's blog post, [Combating Food Insecurity in Gaza and Lebanon](#).

## Overview

According to the World Bank's most recent report, Palestine shows signs of economic recovery as business activity continues to improve in the West Bank. Gazans, however, face high rates of unemployment and the deterioration of social conditions as the economy remains stagnant. The economic growth in the West Bank can be attributed to the easing of COVID-19 restrictions following an increase in vaccinations and a decline in daily new cases, which also led to an increase in consumer confidence. In Gaza, unemployment has risen to an estimated 59.3%, which is higher than unemployment during the COVID-19 peak in 2020.<sup>1</sup>

## Social and Material Well-Being

According to an October 2021 ACAPS report on the social impacts of the humanitarian situation in Gaza following the May hostilities, the conflict disrupted Palestinian livelihoods and support systems and led many to resort to negative coping strategies.<sup>2</sup>

Gendered expectations and behaviors intensified in Gaza as a result of the May escalation in addition to the COVID-19 pandemic. Typically, young men in Gaza face pressure to financially support their families — both before and after marriage. The increasing lack of economic opportunities prevents many men from meeting this expectation. As a result, the frustration levels of men are rising, which increases the risk of violent behavior, including gender-based violence. Pressure for boys to dropout of school in order to earn an income is also more common as a result of the limited economic opportunities.<sup>3</sup>

For women, the May hostilities increased the risk of child or forced marriage due to the inability of many households to meet their basic needs. Many women had to adapt to new roles in the household due to injuries or death, leaving them responsible for financially supporting their families. On the other hand, many other women face increased restrictions on their movement imposed by their families. In addition, the

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<sup>1</sup> [Economic Monitoring Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee | World Bank Group](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Palestine- Social Impacts of the humanitarian situation | ACAPS](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Ibid.](#)

prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence increased during the first COVID-19 lockdown, according to initial reports.<sup>4</sup>

As a result of ongoing restrictions on economic activities, imports and exports, and mobility, Palestinians also face a lack of economic opportunities, limited income, and reduced ability to absorb shocks at the household level. During the second quarter of 2020, which coincided with the first COVID-19 lockdown, 96,000 Palestinians lost their jobs. The May hostilities further disrupted livelihoods and income for Gazans, many of whom lost their place of work, home, and assets in the bombings.<sup>5</sup>

### **Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH)**

An October UN report estimated that in the West Bank, 660,000 Palestinians face limited water access. Around 420,000 Palestinians consume under 50 liters of water per capita per day on average, compared to the recommended consumption of 100 liters by the World Health Organization. The report revealed that roughly 14,000 Palestinians in Area C of the West Bank lack access to a water network and water infrastructure, putting them at high risk of water scarcity. In Gaza, only 10% of residents have access to clean drinking water. Existing infrastructure is deteriorating, and one-third of all water under the Palestinian Authority leaks out from pipelines and water grids in the West Bank.<sup>6</sup>

### **Livelihoods**

Every year from October to November, the olive harvest takes place in Palestine. Between 80,000 and 100,000 Palestinian families depend on the harvest for their income, which includes more than 15% of employed women. During successful years of olive production, the industry is worth up to \$191 million. This past year, the International Committee of the Red Cross reported that at least 9,300 olive trees in the West Bank were destroyed. In addition, West Bank farmers whose land falls in restricted areas need permits from the Israeli government in order to access their land. In these areas, many farmers can only access their land for a few days a year. Out of those who applied for permits in 2020, only 24% were granted approval. Settler attacks also limit the olive harvest. In 2020, settler attacks resulted in at least 26 injuries and 1,700 vandalized olive trees. By October 4, 2021, UNOCHA reported that at least 365 attacks occurred against Palestinians. In response, the Union of Agricultural Work Committees organized a campaign to protect farmers in high risk areas.<sup>7</sup> Between October 12 and 17, 58 additional attacks occurred.<sup>8</sup>

### **Reconstruction**

In response to the May 2021 hostilities on Gaza, the Ministry of Public Works and Housing, along with the Qatar Committee for Reconstruction of Gaza and other international bodies established a reconstruction plan for Gaza in September. The first phase of reconstruction, which began in October, aims to rebuild 1,000 residential

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<sup>4</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>6</sup> [UN calls for water equity between Israelis and Palestinians | The Jerusalem Post](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Infographic: Palestine's olive industry | Al Jazeera News Network](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Settler attacks wreak havoc on Palestinians during olive harvest | Al Jazeera News Network](#)

homes damaged in the conflict. Gaza faces many challenges in the process of reconstruction, including the blockade on the Gaza Strip that prevents building materials from entering into Gaza. Agreements with Egypt are allowing construction equipment to enter through the Rafah border crossing. Israel also agreed to allow building materials to enter into Gaza for the purpose of reconstruction. However, whether parties will continue allowing necessary materials to enter into Gaza is unclear, putting the reconstruction process at risk of being halted at any time. According to the plan, reconstruction is set to be completed by the end of 2022. It is critical that reconstruction takes place as planned, as economic recovery is dependent on its successful implementation.<sup>9</sup>

### COVID-19

Between the beginning of the pandemic and December 10, there have been 463,573 cases of COVID-19 and 4,827 deaths in Palestine. On average, 352 new infections are reported daily, which is equal to 14% of the peak daily cases. So far, Palestinian health centers have administered 3.12 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines, which is enough for 33.3% of the population to be fully vaccinated.<sup>10</sup>

In order for Palestinians to work in West Bank settlements and within the Green Line, they will now be required to present a Green Pass. The Green Pass is issued to those who meet one of the following criteria: 1) they have received three doses of a COVID-19 vaccine; 2) they have received a second dose or recovered from COVID-19 within the past six months (meaning those who received a second dose over six months ago and don't meet the other criteria are ineligible), or 3) they recovered from COVID-19 more than six months ago and received one or more vaccine doses. According to an Israeli official, they plan to begin a campaign aimed at providing a third vaccine dose to Palestinians working in Israel and the settlements.<sup>11</sup>

## Anera's Response

### WASH

In response to Gaza's ongoing water crisis, Anera is installing reverse osmosis (RO) desalination units at healthcare facilities, schools, and community centers. The RO units provide safe, potable water at a low cost to address the limited accessibility and high salinity of water in Gaza. Anera recently installed six RO units in three different Gaza governorates and is in the process of installing two more at healthcare facilities. In addition, Anera conducts a long-term WASH program, funded by Islamic Relief USA. Through the WASH IV program, Anera is rehabilitating water and sewage networks, repairing wells, and installing stormwater drainage systems that direct water to Gaza aquifer. In addition, Anera is conducting health awareness sessions to teach best practices to prevent water-borne illnesses despite the difficult circumstances. Currently, Anera has three ongoing projects under the WASH program that will benefit more than 20,000 Gazans upon their completion in January 2022. Through the WASH emergency response, Anera serves 89 families at the household level by installing solar hot water

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<sup>9</sup> [Gaza reconstruction to start by October after \\$1bn pledged | Al Jazeera News Network](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Palestinian territories: the latest coronavirus counts, charts and maps | Reuters](#)

<sup>11</sup> [Israel to require proof of vaccination from Palestinian workers | Haaretz](#)

units and rehabilitating kitchens and toilets. By the end of the program in August 2022, WASH IV will directly benefit more than 70,000 Gazans.

### **Livelihoods**

In response to the damage caused to the agriculture sector by the May hostilities, Anera launched a rooftop gardens project with funding from Humanity First UK. Through the program, Anera is providing eight families with rooftop hydroponic gardens.

Hydroponic gardens require no soil, which enables them to be built on rooftops and grow without the use of Gaza's heavily-polluted soil. The project targets vulnerable and food insecure families in order to provide them with fresh produce for their families to consume. In addition, rooftop gardens enable beneficiary families to earn additional income by selling surplus produce.

In addition, Anera's ongoing livelihood support program, Women Can, provides economic and livelihood opportunities to vulnerable Palestinian women heads-of-household. With funding from Islamic Relief USA, Women Can 2.0 began in September 2020, and it has since helped to empower 113 women in the West Bank by training them on COVID-19 awareness, social empowerment, and starting and running a business during a pandemic. Anera also provided the materials and equipment the women needed to get started or to grow their businesses. Since the beginning of the first Women Can program in September 2019, Anera has provided 222 women livelihood opportunities. Women Can 2.0 will allow Anera to target a total of 122 additional women, 30 of whom reside in Gaza.

### **Medical Donations**

In response to the chronic lack of essential medications in both Gaza and the West Bank, Anera has worked with several donors to ship much needed medicines to partners in the field. Anera's medical aid donors have shipped significant quantities of psychiatric medications, including anticonvulsants, to Anera's distribution center in Gaza. The two types of the aforementioned medication are severely needed in Gaza due to chronic supply shortages. Anera also distributed a shipment of psychiatric medications among patients in the West Bank, through the Treatment and Rehabilitation Center for Victims of Torture. The shipment contained citalopram, which was unaffordable for patients of the treatment center.

In addition to medicines, a large quantity of masks have been offered for both Gaza and the West Bank. Due to COVID-19, masks continue to be highly needed for both regions, and the need will only increase with the advent of the new COVID variant. A minimum of 840,000 masks have been offered for both regions.

In November, Anera completed the procurement of urgently-needed supplies for the Central Blood Bank Society (CBBS), which is the only free standing blood bank in Gaza. With support from Penny Appeal USA, Anera responded to the May hostilities by supplying CBBS with 1,500 single blood bags, 900 double blood bags, and 4,800 blood tests, which are estimated to cover the supply needs of CBBS for at least three months.

### **Education**

In August, Anera launched its back-to-school program to support kindergarteners' return to in-person classes. Through the program, Anera is making alterations and upgrades to classrooms in 10 kindergartens across Gaza. Anera will also provide supplies for the kindergartens, including reading and literacy packs for 1,000 children. The goal of these activities is to enable children to overcome social, emotional, and cognitive difficulties resulting from the conflict in Gaza, to build resilience, and to develop coping mechanisms. Anera has also completed construction of three new preschools in the West Bank communities of As Sammu, Abu Dis, and Deir Qaddis. The schools provide stimulating, inspiring learning environments for young children who otherwise might not be able to attend preschool at all.

### **Food Security**

On October 1, Anera launched the Food Security and Livelihood Assistance program, funded by IRUSA. Through the program, Anera will increase the access to food security and basic needs for vulnerable Gazans, restore agricultural activity for 240 families, and rehabilitate livestock barns for 100 families. So far, Anera has distributed \$70 food vouchers to 2,500 families, who can use the vouchers at local stores to meet their families' food and nutrition needs. In the coming weeks, Anera will begin rehabilitating livestock barns and greenhouses. The program will serve a total of 15,620 vulnerable Gazans.