



# ASSESSING THE ROLE OF SOCIAL PROTECTION TO ADDRESS THE CRISIS IN THE GAZA STRIP AND WEST BANK

## Briefing note on the Occupied Palestinian Territory

### INTRODUCTION

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The population of the Gaza Strip is facing a humanitarian catastrophe of unprecedented proportions, with serious repercussions in the West Bank. As of 1 July 2024, approximately 1 200 Israeli and foreign nationals have been killed in Israel and 37 900 Palestinians killed in the Gaza Strip. Additionally, 87 060 Palestinians have been reported injured, including women and children.<sup>1</sup> Hostilities continue to involve the besiegement of the entire population of the Gaza Strip (2.23 million people).

In the most recent analysis, released in June 2024, despite increases in the amount of food and non-food commodities allowed into the northern governorates, and a scaled-up nutrition, water sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and health sectors response, the situation in Gaza remains catastrophic with a high and sustained risk of Famine across the whole Gaza Strip. The prolonged nature of the crisis means that this risk remains at least as high as at any time during the past few months.<sup>2</sup>

The report concluded that between 1 May and 15 June, 95 percent of the population in the Gaza Strip, representing 2.15 million people, faced high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 – Crisis or above). Of these, 29 percent faced emergency acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 4 – Emergency), while 15 percent nearly 343 000 people, experienced catastrophic levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 5 – Catastrophe/ Famine). The report projected that, between 16 June and 30 September 2024, it is likely that 96 percent of the population will experience high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3), with

33 percent of the population facing emergency acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 4), and 22 percent nearly 495 000 people, facing catastrophic food insecurity (IPC Phase 5).<sup>3</sup>

In terms of quantity, food consumption gaps have been alarmingly high, especially in the Gaza Strip's northern governorates, where almost 88 percent of the households interviewed between December 2023 and February 2024 had a poor food consumption score, 92 percent experienced severe or very severe levels of hunger, and nearly two-thirds reported spending entire days and nights without eating at least ten times in the four weeks prior to the survey.<sup>4</sup> While food consumption outcome indicators improved in all areas in March and April, the most recent data from late May and early June 2024 indicates a reversal and a general deterioration in food consumption. This pattern underscores the highly volatile nature of the food security situation and the ongoing high risk of serious deterioration of food consumption in the near future. Moreover, despite the improvements in food consumption, approximately 85 percent of respondents in the Northern governorates still declare facing safety risks to access food.<sup>2</sup>

Up to 1.7 million people (over 75 percent of the population) have been displaced across the Gaza Strip, many multiple times.<sup>3</sup> Nearly 815 000 people have been displaced from Rafah since 6 May 2024, with an additional 100 000 displaced in the northern Gaza Strip following evacuation orders issued by Israeli authorities.<sup>5</sup>

In the West Bank, 521 Palestinians have been killed since 7 October 2023, including 126 children<sup>6</sup>, and more than 5 000 Palestinians have been injured, including 790 children who have been injured by Israeli forces or settlers.<sup>7</sup> The year 2023 was the deadliest year for Palestinians in the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) since the United Nations began recording casualties in 2005.<sup>8</sup> In addition, since 7 October 2023, 1 964 Palestinians, including 865 children, have been displaced by home demolitions carried out or ordered by Israeli authorities because they did not have requisite building permits, which are almost impossible to obtain, and on punitive grounds.<sup>7</sup>

UN Secretary-General António Guterres<sup>9</sup> and other key actors<sup>10</sup> have made repeated appeals for swift, secure and reliable humanitarian access and peace. Social protection can support such actions, serving as a critical element within a comprehensive, multifaceted strategy for achieving the “humanitarian–development–peace nexus” in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. In the Gaza Strip, however, the main priority is an immediate and sustainable ceasefire to facilitate a massive scaling up of delivery of humanitarian aid to reduce famine.

Given the dire circumstances in the Gaza Strip, it is no longer feasible to rely on national social protection systems like the Palestinian National Social Registry and the Palestinian National Cash Transfer Programme (PNCTP) for emergency assistance due to the collapse of the market and escalating inflation. Nevertheless, once a ceasefire is in place it will be imperative to enhance coordination among various development and humanitarian actors and continuously reinforce the social protection system. This is vital to ensure its resilience in effectively responding to shocks, such as conflict, in the long term, particularly once a sustainable ceasefire is in place.

Social protection also plays a critical role in safeguarding access to basic needs, including food, and livelihoods in the West Bank, especially in the agricultural sector, where people face significant vulnerability due to occupation, land expropriation and conflict-related violence.

## CONTEXT

The current crisis is leading to widespread destruction of the agrarian economy in the Gaza Strip, with long-term implications for Palestinian agrifood systems in both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. As of 20 May 2024, 57.3 percent (8 660 ha) of all croplands in the Gaza Strip have been damaged, with the Governorate of Khan Younis having the largest area of damaged cropland (2 340 ha; 55.1 percent)<sup>11</sup>. Of the affected areas, 5 233 ha (59.1 percent) of orchards and other trees<sup>i</sup>, 1 675 ha (52.2 percent) of vegetables and 1 751 ha (59.3 percent) of field crops were damaged.<sup>13</sup> In addition, 537 home barns, 256 agricultural warehouses, 143 farm stores, 194 animal shelters and 1,053 farms have been destroyed (rabbit, dairy, cattle, sheep, turkey, broiler, pigeon/other bird farms).<sup>14</sup> Along with 1 049 agriculture wells used for irrigation, mostly in the governorate of Gaza.<sup>15</sup> Israel has also dismantled around 70 percent of the Gaza Strip’s fishing fleet.<sup>16</sup> Around 60 to 70 percent of meat and dairy livestock in the Gaza Strip have been either killed or prematurely slaughtered to meet the dire food needs stemming from the conflict since 7 October 2023.<sup>17</sup>

This destruction has significantly affected vital sources of employment and livelihoods.<sup>18</sup> According to November 2023 data from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, approximately 44 percent of the population of the Gaza Strip have lost their sources of local agricultural production used for household consumption.<sup>19</sup> As of December 2023, unemployment reached 79.3 percent in the Gaza Strip.<sup>20</sup> Electricity cuts have disrupted food production, affecting refrigeration, crop irrigation and crop incubation devices, thereby halting production activities. Consequently, there has been a notable increase in prices, with the consumer price index for food and soft drinks rising by 76 percent.<sup>21</sup> Due to food scarcity, some households are turning to consuming unsafe wild foods such as mallow and animal fodder.<sup>4</sup> In the West Bank, approximately 95 000 dunums<sup>ii</sup> of olive groves have remained unharvested due to violence and access restrictions, putting many olive-dependent households at risk of losing their livelihoods for the year.<sup>22</sup> In addition, restrictions by the Israeli occupation authorities<sup>23</sup> prevented 161 000 out of 171 000 Palestinian workers from the West Bank from working in Israel in January

i The land area estimate for the class “orchards and other trees” includes trees in agriculture, orchards and plantations, and is different from the class “tree horticulture”<sup>12</sup>

ii A dunum is a unit of land measurement commonly used in the Near East, including in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. It is generally considered to be around 1 000 square metres or approximately 0.1 hectare.

2024,<sup>24</sup> leading to an important loss of income. Additionally, violence in the West Bank and its impact on supply chains, production capacities and workers' access to their workplaces have led to loss of an additional 140 000 jobs.<sup>23</sup>

Even before 7 October 2023, more than 1.5 million people already required food security and livelihood assistance in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. This represented 53 percent of the population in the Gaza Strip and 11 percent in the West Bank.<sup>25</sup> Elevated poverty rates, mainly driven by unemployment due to the Israeli blockade, have been a key factor of food insecurity in the Gaza Strip. In 2022, two-thirds of the population of the Gaza Strip were already living in poverty and nearly 80 percent of youth in the Gaza Strip were unemployed.<sup>26</sup> Since 2007, Israel has severely restricted the movement of goods and people to and from the Gaza Strip by air, land and sea.<sup>27</sup> Significant transaction costs resulting from restrictions of movement, access and trade in both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank under the occupation are the most immediate impediment to Palestinian economic growth, followed by energy and water insecurity.<sup>28</sup> In the last decade, the situation has been exacerbated by high food prices and recurring economic shocks, including the 2011 uprisings, the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine, all of which have affected Palestinians' food purchasing power.

Agriculture serves a pivotal function in both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank by directly affecting the economy, fostering resilience and fundamentally shaping the roots of Palestinian society, culture and identity. The agrifood sector accounts for approximately 6.4 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), of which agriculture accounts for 3.6 percent.<sup>29</sup> In 2020, agriculture employed 6.4 percent of the population aged 15 years old and above, mainly engaging rural Palestinian women of working age in unpaid labour.<sup>30</sup> Agricultural producers are primarily small-scale farmers, herders and fisherfolk.<sup>29</sup> While Palestine is heavily dependent on imports to meet domestic demand for agricultural products, particularly cereals and animal feed, it is largely self-sufficient in vegetables, grapes, figs, olive oil, meat, eggs and honey,<sup>29</sup> all fundamental elements of a healthy, diverse diet. Fishing is also important in the Gaza Strip and serves as a major source of nutritional diversity.<sup>31</sup> Livestock production, often as a secondary activity and particularly important for women, accounts for 45 percent of total agricultural value, followed by fruits and vegetables and olive oil.<sup>29</sup>

Prior to 7 October 2023, prolonged restrictions on access to the sea and land, on markets for inputs (including import restrictions on critical agricultural equipment) and on exports took a significant toll on agricultural activities in Palestine, exacerbating the vulnerability of agricultural livelihoods. In the West Bank, agriculture-dependent communities – particularly Bedouin and herders in Area C<sup>iii</sup> – faced challenges accessing water, grazing land and animal health services.<sup>32</sup> In the Gaza Strip, up to 35 percent of agricultural land was inaccessible due to Israeli military restrictions,<sup>28</sup> and restrictions on access to fishing areas have undermined the fisheries sector.<sup>29</sup>

In the West Bank, rising tensions and the increase in settler violence are inhibiting the agricultural sector, particularly during the recent olive harvest, the most important crop.<sup>33, 34</sup> Concentrated primarily in the West Bank, olive trees cover more than 50 percent of all croplands in Palestine. Olive production supports the livelihoods of over 75 000 farmers and 100 000 seasonal jobs, contributing 15 percent of agricultural GDP in 2020.<sup>35</sup> Severe restrictions on movement and fear of settler attacks have historically hindered commercial activities in the West Bank,<sup>36</sup> a situation which has worsened since 7 October 2023.

## THE STATUS OF THE SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEM

The social protection system in Palestine is multifaceted, comprising various components managed by different entities with varying degrees of coordination. At the national level, the Palestinian National Authority (PA) oversees the system through its Ministry of Social Development (MoSD). The flagship programme is the PNCTP, which targets the most vulnerable segments of the population. In addition to the efforts of the PA, religious bodies also play a role in providing social protection. For example, initiatives such as Zaka<sup>iii</sup> are offered by a religious state-led body. While these actions may be limited in scope, they still contribute to the overall social protection landscape. Humanitarian actors are also crucial in providing support to the Palestinian population. The UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is a significant player in this regard, aiding Palestinian refugees across various domains,

iii Zakat is the third of the five main pillars of Islam and constitutes a donation that Muslims must make to support the needy and vulnerable.

including education, health care and social services. Several other humanitarian organizations operate in Palestine, including the World Food Programme (WFP), providing assistance aimed at meeting the needs of vulnerable individuals, refugees and non-refugees alike. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), in partnership with the MoSD, co-leads a coordination mechanism in the OPT: the Social Protection and Cash and Voucher Assistance Thematic Working Group (SPCVA TWG). This initiative aims to facilitate multi-layered communication among humanitarian and development actors.<sup>37</sup>

Over the last decade, the PA has enhanced its national social protection system to enable the vulnerable and poor households to enjoy a dignified life and have access to good job opportunities.<sup>38, 39</sup> In this it has prioritized children, women and girls, persons with disability, elderly, youths and residents of the marginalized areas. The national social protection system is also considered by the PA as an essential means to ensure food security and to protect and promote rural livelihoods of small farmers, fishers and herders (including Bedouin communities in Area C of the West Bank). However, it encounters significant hurdles because of its heavy reliance on external funding and the unpredictability of its allocations.<sup>37</sup>

The PNCTP reaches more than 115 000 impoverished families in Palestine and provides quarterly cash aid to enhance consumption needs.<sup>40</sup> The determination of eligibility for the scheme relies on a proxy means test formula, which, unfortunately, leads to high exclusion and inclusion errors.<sup>37</sup> To mitigate this risk, the MoSD and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics currently integrate a multidimensional poverty dimension into the formula to ensure better access to uncovered poor populations (e.g. rural populations such as Bedouin). In parallel, the MoSD is completing a national social registry and case-management system with details on nearly 200 000 households, which serve as a unified mechanism for rapidly identifying potential beneficiaries, particularly during crises.<sup>40</sup> Additionally, it developed simplified forms to swiftly register potential new beneficiary households during crises.<sup>41</sup> Complementary support is provided to PNCTP beneficiaries in the form of school-fee waivers (200 000 children) and free medical insurance.<sup>37</sup>

Beyond the PNCTP, the PA also aims at supporting livelihoods and facilitating the creation of jobs, including in the agrifood sector, through the National Economic Empowerment Institution (PNEEI). In 2019 the PNEEI established the Deprived Families

Economic Empowerment Programme, instituted by the Islamic Development Bank and the United Nations Development Programme and managed by the MoSD, which offers grants to persons covered by the PNCTP and loans to other poor, vulnerable and marginalized families.<sup>42</sup> However, the coverage of this initiative remains limited.

Zakat has a long-standing tradition of assisting the most vulnerable people in Palestine by providing cash, food, health care and education services. The voluntary scheme is overseen by the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, which is responsible for managing the various Zakat committees in charge of collecting and delivering benefits throughout Palestine. Following the political split between Hamas and Fatah in 2007, Hamas took control of the branch of the Ministry in the Gaza Strip, converting it into its own Ministry of Awqaf. Similarly, Fatah consolidated Zakat under centralized power. Thus, Zakat is now considered highly politicized, leading to a decrease not only in public trust but also to a decline in voluntary contributions in both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Eligible individuals opt for “private Zakat/informal social protection” to support family or neighbours.<sup>37</sup>

WFP complements the PNCTP by offering humanitarian assistance to around 380 593 individuals who are food insecure, primarily through cash-based transfers. In 2022, WFP broadened its collaboration with the MoSD to streamline operations and jointly identify beneficiaries of the PNCTP using the proxy means test formula in conjunction with the food consumption score and the coping strategy index.<sup>43</sup>

In parallel to the national social protection system, UNRWA provides services that encompass education, health care, social services, camp infrastructure and improvement, microfinance and emergency assistance to Palestinian refugees. UNRWA provides access to basic needs for Palestinian refugees through their Social Safety Net Programme (SSNP) in the form of in-kind food assistance and cash-based transfers. The Programme reaches 390 443 Palestinian refugees in both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, providing modest financial support to households deemed eligible based on national poverty lines and the proxy means test formula.<sup>44</sup>

A significant portion of the Palestinian population received social assistance in 2021. In the Gaza Strip, approximately 35 percent of Palestinians benefited from the MoSD programmes, while 70 percent received humanitarian assistance. In the West Bank, 19 percent

received humanitarian assistance and 10 percent received support from MoSD.<sup>36</sup> Contributory social protection schemes also exist in Palestine, but these are limited: as of 2021, only civil servants and members of the security forces – representing only 5 percent of the population – benefited from social security through the Palestinian Pension Agency.<sup>36</sup>

The prevalence of multiple social transfers in households underlines the extent of deprivation and overlap between actors. It also underscores the need for coordinated efforts between MoSD, UNRWA and humanitarian actors in planning and allocating resources effectively. Indeed, humanitarian interventions have often been misaligned with the NCTP, resulting in fragmentation and inefficiency within the national social assistance sector.<sup>37</sup>

In addition, recurrent fiscal crises in the PA have diminished its adequacy and effectiveness. This has significantly restricted the impact of its programmes on poverty and hunger of rural populations, with almost half of social assistance recipients remaining below the poverty line even after receiving transfers.<sup>37</sup>

## REDUCING HUNGER AND RURAL POVERTY WITH SOCIAL PROTECTION

On 17 April 2024, humanitarian actors launched a second phase of the Flash Appeal for the Occupied Palestinian Territory<sup>45</sup> aimed at raising the funds needed to address the most pressing needs of 3.3 million people in Palestine. However, conflict continues to place severe limitations on the ability of the social protection system and the humanitarian community to provide life-saving assistance in the Gaza Strip. The Food Security Cluster, co-led by FAO and WFP, is coordinating with various humanitarian and development partners, UN Agencies, local authorities and local/international organizations to address food security needs during and after this crisis in Palestine.

### The Gaza Strip

Since October 2023, humanitarian agencies disbursed cash transfers to nearly 185 000 households in the Gaza Strip.<sup>41</sup> A substantial portion of these recipients were sourced from the MoSD social registry as well as to the list of displaced households produced by the MoSD teams in Gaza and are covered by the national

social protection system.<sup>41</sup> Since October 2023, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) transferred humanitarian multipurpose cash assistance to almost 567 360 people, among which 277 182 children. It also implemented a digital cash transfer solution, reaching 66 398 people, including 32 350 children, through three rounds of payments from 14 May to 27 May 2024. The initiative used digital e-wallets to distribute funds, benefiting 12 234 families, with high redemption rates observed.<sup>46</sup> However, disruptions in the food value chain and market, as well as price volatility, liquidity shortages, ATM and bank branch disruptions, limited electricity and connectivity, affecting cash-based assistance programmes.<sup>2</sup>

Concerning in-kind humanitarian support, access to the Gaza Strip remains severely constrained, frequently limited to short and intermittent periods. Between March and late April, food supplies to the northern governorates increased, although exact figures varied among sources. However, from early May to early June, there was a reversal in humanitarian delivery trends to southern and middle governorates due to the closure of the Rafah border crossing.<sup>2</sup> Airdrop operations of ready-made meals along the Gaza Strip coastline commenced on 26 February 2024. These efforts have been sporadic and small scale, covering only a limited coastal area and often requiring individuals to retrieve food pallets for themselves. Airdrops lacking ground coordination can pose risks, as exemplified by incidents on 8 March 2024 that resulted in the deaths of eight civilians.<sup>1</sup>

As of 26 June 2024, access constraints continue to severely hamper the delivery of essential humanitarian assistance and services.<sup>47</sup> Constraints on humanitarian action throughout the Gaza Strip include direct strikes on humanitarian convoys with explosive weapons, detention of humanitarian staff, road closures, checkpoints and related blockages or delays on main transportation corridors.<sup>48</sup> As of 21 June, 12 out of 17 bakeries supported by humanitarian partners across the Gaza Strip were operational, six of them in Deir Al Balah, four in Gaza city and two in Jabalya<sup>49</sup>. All bakeries in Rafah have shut down.<sup>49</sup> From 1 June to 23 June 2024, out of 86 planned humanitarian assistance missions to northern Gaza, Israeli authorities facilitated 42 (49 percent). The remaining 44 (51 percent) were denied, impeded, or cancelled due to logistical, operational, or security reasons.<sup>6</sup> As of May 2024, a daily average of 97 humanitarian trucks entered the south of the Gaza Strip, a figure significantly lower than the average of 500 trucks that entered the Gaza Strip daily before the escalation.<sup>2</sup>

In addition, the recent escalation of military activity in southern and northern regions, alongside various issues at border crossing points (Kerem Shalom and Rafah), is poised to precipitate a humanitarian catastrophe.<sup>47</sup>

UNICEF has moved 807 truckloads of food into the Gaza Strip since 21 October 2023, bringing in critical supplementary foods.<sup>50</sup> As of 20 June 2024, UNRWA continued to distribute flour in the southern governorates. To date, a total of 380 225 families (nearly 1.9 million people) have been reached, of whom 367 768 families have received two rounds of flour and another 300 978 families have received three rounds.<sup>6</sup> WFP was able to provide food parcels, wheat flour or hot meals to more than 1.4 million Gazans inside UN shelters and within host communities.<sup>51</sup> WFP currently targets soup kitchens to ensure its fast-depleting stocks serve as many people as possible.<sup>43</sup> In April alone, WFP provided bakeries with 940 MT of ingredients for bread production.<sup>2</sup> FAO and WFP, with the financial support of the Government of Italy, have recently launched the Food for Gaza initiative to address the recovery and help restart key activities of the affected agrifood systems and provide farmers with emergency agricultural aid for food production.<sup>10</sup>

## The West Bank

In line with the Flash Appeal, UN and non-UN stakeholders are actively planning or implementing activities to ensure a coordinated approach to the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, particularly for food security and nutrition, and the preservation of agricultural livelihoods, including by leveraging the national social protection system in the West Bank.

The MoSD continues to deliver its PNCTP to the most vulnerable, with the support of the European Union.<sup>41</sup> In addition, WFP has initiated the expansion of its food voucher scheme to reach 161 000 people, in coordination with the MoSD. OXFAM and the American Friends Service Committee are addressing the essential food requirements of workers from the Gaza Strip who are stranded in the West Bank, focusing on Jericho and Ramallah. Similarly, the International Labour Organization (ILO) provided emergency income support for Gazan workers ousted from their jobs in Israel and stranded in the West Bank without any form of social protection.<sup>52, 53</sup> Taawon,<sup>iv</sup> in partnership with The Union of Charitable Societies,

distributed 400 food vouchers in Jenin. FAO plans to distribute critical agricultural inputs to farmers and livestock holders.<sup>22</sup> Countries and international institutions have pledged additional aid funds for Palestinians, including those in the West Bank, e.g. EUR 118 million from the European Union and USD 10 million from the World Bank.<sup>54, 55</sup>

Various actors, such as ILO, Oxfam and UNICEF, continue assist the MoSD in both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank in enhancing the coordination between the national social protection system and the humanitarian response and in strengthening the shock-responsiveness of social protection mechanisms.<sup>41</sup>

## RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Social protection interventions and a humanitarian cash response aligned to the national social protection system are urgently required to preserve access to food and other basic needs, ensure minimum income and protect all livelihoods in the West Bank. Similar interventions will be required to restore access to food and basic needs and contribute to the rehabilitation of all basic systems, including agrifood, in the Gaza Strip once a ceasefire is in place. Given the dire situation in the Gaza Strip, leveraging the MoSD social protection system to provide emergency support at this stage is no longer a viable option due to collapsing markets and escalating inflation.

In case of a ceasefire, short- and medium-term social protection responses to the crisis in the Gaza Strip could include the following:

- Cash for work, cash for assets and other productive safety net interventions (cash+) could be designed and implemented to restore basic services and infrastructure such as schools, hospitals, roads, lands, water and irrigation systems and other assets destroyed during the current conflict. Such interventions could facilitate the rehabilitation of the overall agrifood systems by supporting local actors along specific value chains.
- Once markets are again at least partially functioning, multipurpose humanitarian cash interventions will be necessary to ensure access

iv <https://www.taawon.org/en>

to basic needs, including food, health care and housing. Targeted beneficiaries would be mainly internally displaced persons, persons with disabilities, orphans, women and youth. Necessary coordination with other sectors, such as health and education, will be required for optimizing the impacts of the interventions on the ground.

- ▶ Humanitarian cash interventions will be used to restore the social protection system in the Gaza Strip as they will contribute to rebuilding the social registry and the delivery mechanisms of the PNCTP and other relevant social protection interventions in the territory. Rebuilding a social protection system in the Gaza Strip will be essential in the medium term to rebuild the social contract between the PA and its citizens.

Short- and medium-term responses in the West Bank could include the following:

- ▶ Advocate for increased financing of the PNCTP in West Bank to cover additional basic needs resulting from the Israeli ban on Palestinian workers and settler violence in the West Bank.
- ▶ Improve the adequacy and the responsiveness of the PNCTP for anticipating potential future shocks on livelihoods and for ensuring access to minimum income and basic needs, including food, health and education.
- ▶ Ensure a greater alignment between humanitarian cash interventions and the PNCTP through the use of coordination mechanisms, such as the SPCVA TWG, to ensure the timeliness and comprehensiveness of the support to affected Palestinian populations.
- ▶ Preserve and promote the agricultural livelihoods of vulnerable populations in the West Bank, which are highly vulnerable to land expropriation and conflict-related violence. This includes complementing existing social safety interventions with conditional cash transfers and agricultural support to increase the incomes of families engaged or willing to engage in agriculture.

Long-term responses in both the Gaza Strip and West Bank could include the following:

- ▶ Continue bolstering the resilience and sustainability of the PA social protection system to withstand

financial crises and shocks while also ensuring effective coordination with development and humanitarian actors, through the SPCVA TWG. Efforts are needed to further align humanitarian and development initiatives towards the streamlining of the flagship PNCTP to improve its impact, cost-effectiveness, operational efficiency and responsiveness.

- ▶ Improve the national social protection system's ability to respond effectively to shocks by enhancing its capacity, including financial, for both vertical and horizontal responses during crises. This will include establishing protocols for accessing contingency financing and sustainable financing mechanisms for social protection, utilizing resources from both domestic and international sources. Similarly, the dialogue should be continued between the MoSD and other key stakeholders, like the Ministry of Agriculture, the PNEEI and the UNRWA to address the fragmentation of programming, particularly in the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and within the agriculture sector.
- ▶ Institutionalize streamlined methods for targeting and selecting beneficiaries to prevent errors and duplications. Efforts are needed to improve the systematic crosschecking of multipurpose cash-assistance beneficiary lists with social protection records to avoid duplication of beneficiaries. This can be achieved by utilizing the newly developed national social registry, with development and humanitarian actors routinely providing information back to the MoSD on those covered. Efforts also should be heightened to reduce exclusion errors through the adoption of the proxy means test formula and additional indicators that encompass broader definitions of poverty or other criteria, including those associated with food security and nutrition. Similarly, there is a need to progressively include the increasing number of persons with disabilities in the Gaza Strip within the national social registry. In addition, a dedicated sub registry for vulnerable and poor farmers should be established to provide adequate life-saving and life-sustaining support.<sup>v</sup>
- ▶ Strengthen economic inclusion and poverty exit strategies and programmes to be associated with the PNCTP. In the long term, efforts should be made to continue linking PNCTP with a broader range of

<sup>v</sup> FAO has key expertise in designing and developing farmers' registries for policy interventions and making them interoperable with social registries for streamlining exchange of information.

active labour-market and livelihood interventions, including reconstruction public works, to promote economic inclusion and poverty exit/graduation and to ensure the financial sustainability of PNCTP through the PNEEI.

- ▶ Establish a social insurance and lifecycle system for private-sector workers. Over time, connections between non-contributory and contributory social protection systems should be established by leveraging a more diversified funding base, including general tax revenues and social contributions for social insurance.

Within this framework, FAO has a specific niche in enhancing the social protection system and its coherence with the agriculture sector for eliminating chronic hunger, malnutrition and rural poverty. FAO is fully committed to in its endeavours to protect and revitalize agrifood systems and agriculture-based livelihoods for the Palestinian people. This commitment entails integrating social protection with sustainable agricultural interventions to foster solutions for enhanced economic inclusion, resilience and food and nutrition security. This is pursued through specific pathways.

- ▶ In the immediate term, FAO is completing the distribution of 500 tonnes of fodder purchased in Cairo for about 2 900 beneficiaries. This is the first time much-needed animal fodder has entered the Gaza Strip since the escalation of hostilities. The procurement of other inputs, including fodder (5 500 tonnes), water tanks, animal shelters, veterinary kits, vaccines, greenhouse materials, seeds and fertilizers, is ongoing. In the West Bank, FAO will protect the resilience of vulnerable farmers and herders affected by increased violence and movement restrictions by providing emergency assistance through unconditional and conditional cash transfers and additional agricultural support.

- ▶ In the medium and long term, FAO will work in both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank with partners, including ILO, UNICEF, WFP, World Bank, UNRWA and Oxfam to:

- improve coordination between the MoSD, humanitarian actors and other key stakeholders such as the Ministry of Agriculture and the PNEEI to address the fragmentation of social protection and development and humanitarian assistance programming within the agricultural context and
- establish a dedicated sub registry for vulnerable and poor farmers to provide adequate life-saving and life-saving and life-sustaining support.<sup>57</sup>

- ▶ In the medium and long term, FAO stands ready to implement productive safety net interventions to improve food security and nutrition and provide minimum income to Palestinians engaged in agrifood systems. This entails facilitating access to basic needs for food-insecure households working in farming, herding and fishing through unconditional cash transfers. It also involves delivering conditional cash transfers to vulnerable farmers, herders and fishers to ensure their access to agricultural inputs. Such measures will also contribute to revamping the production of nutritious foods, including fresh vegetables, eggs, meat and dairy, and to reconstructing vital food value chains such as that for olives. These interventions will also aim at providing a response to the loss of and damage to agricultural infrastructures caused by the ongoing conflict while stimulating the local economy during the recovery phase.



## NOTES

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**Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations**

Rome, Italy

Required citation: FAO. 2024. *Assessing the role of social protection to address the crisis in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank – Briefing note on the Occupied Palestinian Territory*. Rome.



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