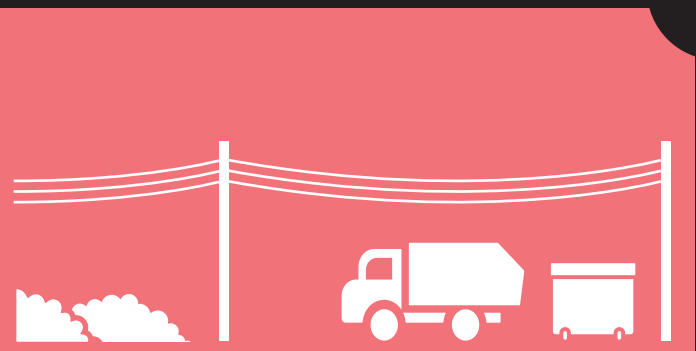




State of Palestine  
Ministry of Local Government

# Implementation of the New Urban Agenda

National Report for the State of Palestine





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October 2021

## Disclaimer

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## Foreword

Despite the fact that the State of Palestine is merely a non-member observer state at the United Nations, it signed on and committed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in September 2015, and thereby also adopted Goal 11 – “Make Cities and Human Settlements Inclusive, Safe, Resilient and Sustainable” as well as the New Urban Agenda in October 2016. Thus, the State of Palestine has voluntarily recognized, and is committed to promoting sustainable urbanization and cities as transformative forces for development.

The urban population in Palestine today is estimated at 77 per cent which is considered among the highest in the region. In dealing with this reality and associated challenges, we believe in the important role of the New Urban Agenda in underlining the linkages between good urbanization and job creation, livelihood opportunities, and improved quality of life, which should be included in every urban renewal policy and strategy. The New Urban Agenda is also a vehicle for incorporating our national policies, such as the National Policy Agenda (2017-2022), the National Development Plan (2021-2023), the Economic Cluster Plans for the Governorates and the different sector strategies.

Pursuant to the previous submission of the 2018 Voluntary National Report documenting the efforts made by the Palestinian government on the Sustainable Development Goals, this report is the first voluntary report on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. In so doing, we are proud of our strategic partnerships with local and international organizations, including UN-Habitat, which played a central part in supporting government and local government units alike.

Eng. Majdi Al Saleh  
Minister of Local Government

## Acronyms

GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HLP	Housing, Land and Property Rights
LGU	Local Government Unit
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoLG	Ministry of Local Government
MoNE	Ministry of National Economy
NDP	National Development Plan
NSP	National Spatial Plan
NUA	New Urban Agenda
NUP	National Urban Policy
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OPT	Occupied Palestinian Territory
PA	Palestinian Authority
PCBS	Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
PMA	Palestinian Monetary Authority
PMO	Prime Minister's Office
PPPD	Per Person Per Day
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNRWA	The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees

# Table of Contents

A. Geo-political background and barriers before the New Urban Agenda.....	7
B. Implementation of the New Urban Agenda.....	9
Part 1: Transformative Commitments .....	10
1. Sustainable Urban Development for Social Inclusion and Ending Poverty .....	10
1.1: Social inclusion and ending poverty.....	10
1.1.1 Eradicate poverty in all its forms.....	10
1.1.2 Address inequality in urban areas by promoting equally shared opportunities and benefits.....	11
1.1.3 Enhance social inclusion of vulnerable groups (women, youth, older persons and persons with disabilities and migrants) .....	13
1.1.4 Ensure access to public spaces including streets, sidewalks and cycling lanes.....	14
1.2 Access to adequate housing .....	15
1.2.1 Ensure access to adequate and affordable housing.....	15
1.2.2 Ensure access to sustainable housing finance options.....	16
1.2.3 Establish security of tenure.....	16
1.2.4 Integrate housing into urban development plans.....	17
1.3 Access to basic services.....	17
1.3.1 Provide access to safe drinking water, sanitation and solid waste disposal .....	17
1.3.2 Ensure access to safe and efficient public transport systems .....	21
1.3.3 Provide access to modern renewable energy .....	22
2. Sustainable and Inclusive Urban Prosperity and Opportunities for All .....	24
2.1 Inclusive Urban Economy.....	24
2.1.1 Achieve productive employment for all including youth employment.....	24
2.1.2 Strengthening the informal economy .....	25
2.1.3 Support small and medium-sized enterprises.....	26
2.1.4 Promote an enabling, fair and responsible environment for business and innovation .....	27
2.2 Sustainable Prosperity for All .....	27
2.2.1 Developing technical and entrepreneurial skills to thrive in a modern urban economy .....	27
2.2.2 Developing urban-rural linkages to maximize productivity.....	27

3. Environmentally Sustainable and Resilient Urban Development.....	29
3.1 Resilience, Mitigation, and Adaptation of Cities and Human Settlements .....	29
3.1.1 Minimize urban sprawl and loss of biodiversity.....	29
3.1.2 Implement climate change mitigation and adaptation actions .....	30
3.1.3 Develop systems to reduce the impact of natural and human-made disasters.....	30
Part 2: Effective Implementation .....	31
4. Building Governance Structure: Establishing a Supportive Framework.....	31
4.1 Building the urban governance structure: establishing a supportive framework .....	31
4.1.1 Decentralize to enable subnational and local governments undertake their assigned responsibilities .....	31
4.1.2 Develop legal and policy frameworks to enhance the ability of governments to implement urban policies .....	31
4.1.3 Implement participatory, age- and gender-responsive approaches to urban policy and planning .....	32
4.1.4 Achieve women’s full participation in all fields and all levels of decision-making.....	32
4.2. Planning and Managing Urban Spatial Development.....	33
4.2.1 Implement integrated and balanced territorial development policies.....	33
4.2.2 Integrate housing into urban development plans.....	33
4.2.3 Include culture as a priority component of urban planning .....	33
4.2.4 Strengthen the role of small and intermediate cities and towns.....	34
4.2.5 Implement sustainable multimodal public transport systems including non-motorized options .....	34
4.3. Means of Implementation.....	34
4.4. Capacity Development.....	34
4.4.1 Expand opportunities for city-to-city cooperation and fostering exchanges of urban solutions and mutual learning .....	36
4.4.2 Build capacity of all levels of government to work with vulnerable groups to participate effectively in decision-making about urban and territorial development.....	36
4.5 Information Technology and Innovation.....	36
Bibliography.....	38

# A. Geo-political background and barriers before the New Urban Agenda

## Introduction

In 2015, the State of Palestine committed to the attainment of the Agenda for Sustainable Development by the year 2030 – a blueprint for achieving sustainable development through working towards the attainment of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as an urgent call for action that recognizes that the ending of poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve the environment. The purpose of this report is to track progress towards Palestine's implementation of the New Urban Agenda (NUA).

The report covers the period from 2016 until June 2021, changing variably depending on the available data for each target and/or indicator. It also captures the impact of COVID-19 on the attainment of the NUA. The report aims to act as a tool for the public, policy makers as well as development actors involved in the urban development sector to share a common knowledge base and set a common agenda towards the advancement of the NUA in order to support the transformation into safer and more inclusive cities in Palestine.

The various protracted and latest political, health and socio-economic challenges caused an unprecedented fiscal crisis and simultaneously imperiled progress on the implementation of the NUA. This has made their achievement more urgent and necessary to transit from the humanitarian trap towards sustainable development while making sure to leave no one and no place behind. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that cities are at the forefront in the fight against the pandemic in addition to their importance in mitigating any future threats by building long-term societal, economic and environmental resilience against recurring natural and manmade catastrophes. Additionally, the Israeli escalations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip have further devastated the economy and reversed efforts that were made towards establishing a more sustainable urban environment in Palestine. It is estimated that the economic cost of violence as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Palestine reached 13 per cent in 2018; depending on the stability (or lack, thereof) of the political situation, this figure is expected to be significantly higher in periods with intense escalations in conflict (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), 2021). However, and despite these challenges, the State of Palestine has made notable strides with regards to fostering people-centered planning and integrated national and sub-national spatial policies in addition to supporting the local government sector so as to improve citizens' engagement and representation.

The Palestinian government's National Development Plan (NDP) (2021-2023) and its priorities are directly aligned with Goal 11. The NDP's priorities are also reflected in the Palestinian governments' sector strategies for local government, housing and public works, transportation, environment, land, culture, youth and gender equality. The NUA works as an accelerator to Goal 11.

This report was prepared with the participation of various government, municipal, and national and international non-governmental organisations. Report preparation and all meetings and consultations conducted were supervised by the Ministry of Local Government (MoLG).

## Geo-Political and Economic Context

The Palestinian people have been subjected to years of occupation that has resulted in the dispossession and displacement of the Palestinian people, wherein the majority of the population have become refugees. According to the latest figures by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) in 2020, there are around 13.7 million Palestinians in the world, 5.2 million reside in the OPT: West Bank, including East Jerusalem and Gaza Strip (3.1million and 2.1 million, respectively); another 1.6 million of Palestinians live in Israel; 6.2 million live in Arab countries; and approximately 738,000 live in other countries. OPT is a state under occupation according to the United Nations General Assembly Resolution No. 67/19 of the year 2012 and has acquired a permanent observer state in the United Nations General Assembly in 2011. OPT consists of two physically separated landmasses, namely the West Bank and the Gaza Strip with a total area of 5,650 km<sup>2</sup> and 365 km<sup>2</sup>, respectively.

The Palestinian government faces the unique challenge of integrating physical spaces that have been forcibly separated.



The Israeli occupation has kept the OPT physically and socially separated, increasingly so since the signing of the Oslo Accords in the mid-1990s. After Oslo, a new complex legal and planning scheme was created, one for the West Bank and another for the Gaza Strip, while leaving the issue of authority over East Jerusalem for future negotiations, effectively leaving it under the control of the Israeli occupation through its illegal annexation in 1980. The Gaza Strip was physically cut off from the West Bank but was largely under Palestinian administrative and planning control. Despite the fact that the Oslo Accords included a provision requiring a safe passage route from the Gaza Strip to the West Bank to enable free movement between the two sides, Israel never allowed it to be implemented. Thus, while the Palestinian Authority (PA) has theoretically total civil authority over the Gaza Strip, since 2005, it has not had effective control over its borders, economic development, and infrastructural development.

The West Bank, under the Oslo Accords, was divided into three geopolitical classifications: Areas A, B, and C. Area A makes up 17.7 per cent of the West Bank and consists of the Palestinian city centres (excluding major parts of the city of Hebron), is under Palestinian civil and security control; Area B makes up 18.3 per cent of the West Bank and consists of the Palestinian built-up areas outside Area A, is under Palestinian civil control and Israeli security control; and Area C makes up 61 per cent of the West Bank and consists of rural and agricultural lands, and is under Israeli civil and security control. The Nature Reserve area makes up 3 per cent of the West Bank area and is still under Israeli control which is in contradiction to the interim agreement signed between the PA and Israel. It is important to note that there is no contiguity to these classifications, and therefore Areas A and B are scattered all over the West Bank. These area classifications were meant to be temporary, with land being phased into total Palestinian control by the end of the five-year interim period as designated by the Oslo Accords, and was set to end with final status negotiations in 1999.

Not only did the final status negotiations not take place, thereby maintaining the geopolitical classifications leaving East Jerusalem under Israeli legal and administrative control with the PA having no authority and forbidden from operating within its municipal boundaries, but the Israeli authorities intensified the establishment of illegal Israeli settlements across the West Bank and the displacement of Palestinians with illegal Israeli settlers.

Palestine is therefore characterized by the presence of two contradictory planning schemes that aim at exploiting its natural resources to serve two different peoples: the Palestinians and the illegal Israeli settlers. Lack of sovereignty over land, including the fertile lands of the Jordan Valley and other areas rich with natural resources in Area C, has denied the Palestinian people their rights to regulate land use, curb the increased urbanization and overcrowdedness of Areas A and B, and manage their own resources, without exceeding their carrying capacity. While the comprehensive plans of the Israeli authorities in the State of Palestine have been geared by political factors, aiming at changing the demographic characteristics in Area C – where annexation plans of the Jordan Valley and settlements blocks were announced, illegal settlement activity continues at a rapid pace, and policies and actions ensure a coercive environment, evidenced by the confiscation of Palestinian land, demolition of Palestinian property and resulting displacement now at their highest levels since 2016 (UNHCR, 2021), and daily settler violence on Palestinians, including their infrastructure, agriculture and livestock. Latest data from 2021 shows that there are 693,432 Israeli settlers in the West Bank, 237,263 of whom are in East Jerusalem, compared to a total of 146,436 settlers in 1993 (PCBS, 2021); more than a quadruple fold increase in less than three decades. Demolitions of Palestinian construction (e.g. houses and public and private assets) witnessed a surge in both East Jerusalem and Area C of the West Bank during the same period. The PCBS estimates that 19 per cent of all demolitions occurred in East Jerusalem, 79 per cent in Areas C, and about 2 per cent of the demolitions were in Areas A and B (PCBS, 2020).

Israel unilaterally started building a Separation Barrier/Wall in 2002 in the West Bank. The Barrier's route separates Palestinian communities and farming land from the rest of the West Bank and contributes to the fragmentation of the OPT. The inclusion of Israeli settlements behind the Barrier is the single most important factor behind the deviation of the route from the Green Line, including occupied East Jerusalem. The International Court of Justice in its 2004 Advisory Opinion, established that the sections of the Separation Barrier which run inside the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, together with the associated gate and permit regime, violate Israel's obligations under international law (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 2013).

In addition to the above geopolitical challenges, the PA also faces a serious fiscal crisis made worse with the COVID-19 pandemic. International aid to the PA's budget has significantly plummeted in recent years reaching USD 488 million in 2020, 20 per cent less than in 2019 and the lowest in over a decade (The World Bank Group, 2021). This was compounded with the punitive measures imposed by the Israeli government of withholding clearance tax revenues on various occasions. Such revenues constitute the main source of funds for the Palestinian budget, around 70 per cent, that covers current expenditures including the salary bill and other recurrent spending. On the macro level, the Palestinian economy witnessed a decline in GDP of 12 per cent during 2020 compared to 2019 (PCBS 2021) as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated full and partial lockdowns, crippling the economy.

Housing, land, and property rights are the driving force behind the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including the most recent escalations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, stemming from the battle for sovereignty over strategic areas in East Jerusalem. The periodic escalations further devastate the economy and reverse efforts that were made towards a more sustainable urban environment in Palestine.

## B. Implementation of the New Urban Agenda

The following sections document the progress that the State of Palestine, including Local Government Units (LGUs), have made in previous years pertaining to the implementation of the NUA mainly in the following thematic areas:

- Social inclusion and ending poverty
- Access to Adequate Housing
- Access to Basic Services
- Inclusive Urban Economy
- Sustainable Prosperity for All
- Resilience, Mitigation and Adaptation of Cities and Human Settlements
- Building the Urban Governance Structure: Establishing a Supportive Framework
- Planning and Managing Urban Spatial Development
- Sustainable Management and Use of Natural Resources
- Means of Implementation

The selection of the above areas and their corresponding indicators was done with a view that the current report on the implementation of the NUA is directly connected with the Status Report on the Achievement of Goal 11, which has been prepared and annexed along with this report (urban profiling). Since many city-level indicators are not available, other national and sub-national indicators have been utilized for this analysis.

# Part 1: Transformative Commitments

## 1. Sustainable Urban Development for Social Inclusion and Ending Poverty

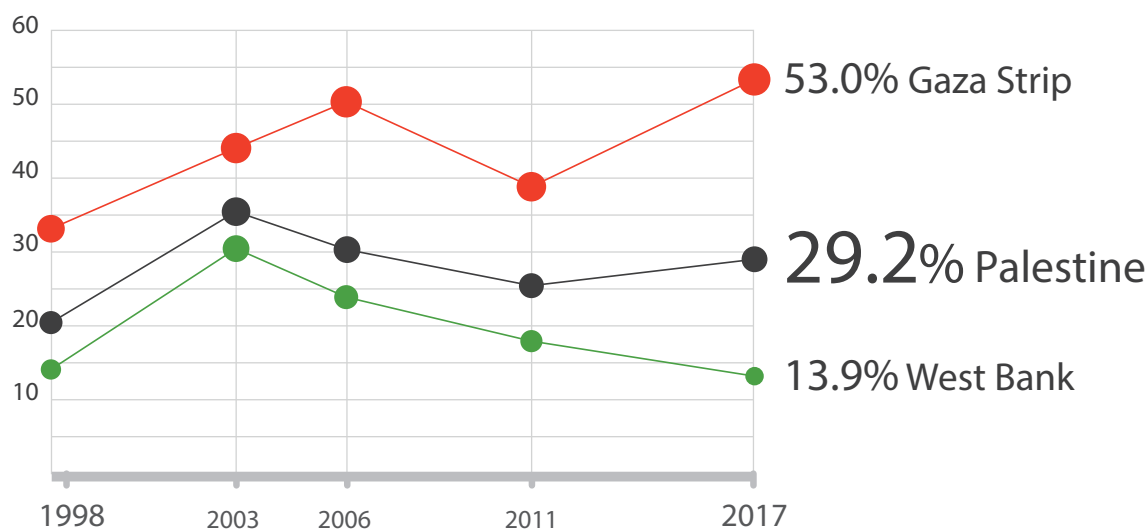
### 1.1. Social inclusion and ending poverty

#### 1.1.1 Eradicate poverty in all its forms

##### 1.1.1.a Proportion of population below the international poverty line, by sex, age at national urban level

Poverty is one of the main symptoms as well as causes of under development in Palestine. By 2020, 29.2 per cent of the Palestinian population were living below the poverty line (including 13.9 per cent in the West Bank and 53 per cent in the Gaza Strip). Additionally, 16.8 per cent of Palestinians are living below the deep poverty line (including 5.8 per cent in the West Bank and 33.8 per cent in the Gaza Strip). According to the estimation of consumption and poverty for localities (small area estimation); the highest poverty rate in the West Bank is experienced in Qalqiliya governorate where poverty averages 20.7 per cent. In the Gaza Strip, the highest poverty rate is experienced in Rafah governorate, with an average of 55.7 per cent. When looking at the poverty rates by community type, it is not surprising to witness that poverty is the highest in refugee camps, where 45.4 per cent of the population are living below the poverty line, and 29.3 per cent are living below the deep poverty line. This is followed by urban areas, where 29.4 per cent are living below the poverty line and 16.7 per cent are living below the deep poverty line. Finally, 18.7 per cent of rural populations are living below the poverty line, and 9.7 per cent are living below the deep poverty line. When looking at the gendered experiences of poverty, it is noticed that female poverty rates are slightly higher than male's, standing at 29.7 per cent and 28.8 per cent, respectively. (PCBS, 2020)

Poverty rates in Palestine have been volatile since 1998, rising sharply during each period of conflict and recession and recovering slowly afterwards.



Source: United Nations Country Team (UNCT) and Prime Minister's Office (PMO) (2020). Atlas of Sustainable Development, 2020. pp. 1.

Additionally, 76 per cent of Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem and 83 per cent of the children live below the Israeli-defined poverty line.

Main challenges:

Poverty is an interconnected and multi-faceted challenge, and above all, it is directly linked to the political context as the State of Palestine is still under and subject to the Israeli occupation. The main challenges that the PA faces

when attempting to address high poverty levels are as follows:

- The continuation of the Israeli blockade and military attacks on the Gaza Strip, including destruction of public and basic services infrastructure.
- Israeli control over borders and prohibition of free travel of Palestinians from the Gaza Strip to the West Bank, including East Jerusalem and vice versa.
- Israeli control over Area C (more than 61 per cent of the West Bank) including control over natural resources.
- Continuation of the Israeli illegal settlement activities in the West Bank including East Jerusalem and the implementation of a strict and discriminatory construction permit regime, the erection of military checkpoints cutting Palestinian urban and rural centers, and the construction of the Separation Barrier.
- Israel's policy of upholding and deducting Palestinian tax money that directly impacted the PA's ability to finance its budget.
- Significant decrease of foreign aid support, partially due to alterations in the international political scene, and partially due to the global economic impact that COVID-19 has had on world economies.

Despite these challenges, the PA identified poverty eradication as a policy priority within its National Policy Agenda (2017-2022) and the NDP (2021-2023) since it has a direct relation with the living conditions and social cohesion of citizens. Substantial resources have been allocated by the PA and resource partners to address rising multidimensional poverty in Palestine:

- Development and implementation of a social safety net targeting 110 thousand vulnerable families with a yearly budget of USD 130 million.
- Implementation of an economic empowerment program by supporting income generation projects, where 27,827 households benefited from this program, and among them 15,000 were able to secure independent income and 50,000 were able to secure new jobs.

## 1.1.2 Address inequality in urban areas by promoting equally shared opportunities and benefits

### 1.1.2.a Unemployment rate by sex, age, persons with disabilities and by city

Unemployment in Palestine is a major issue, especially in the Gaza Strip, and is a major cause for income poverty. By the end of 2020, the unemployment rate in Palestine was reported at 26 per cent; of which, 16 per cent in the West Bank and 47 per cent in the Gaza Strip. Looking at the global rate of unemployment which amounted to 6.47 per cent in 2020, it is noticed that unemployment rates in Palestine are well above the global average. In fact, the unemployment rate in the Gaza Strip is one of the highest in the world. Additionally, Table (1), demonstrates that women's unemployment rates are significantly higher than men's unemployment rate, both at national level and at district level (West Bank and the Gaza Strip). It is also witnessed that unemployment within refugee camps (36 per cent) is higher than both urban and rural unemployment, which stand at 23.9 per cent and 15.5 per cent, respectively. Also, within these classifications into urban, rural and refugee camps, the same trend is witnessed where women's unemployment is higher than men's at all classification levels.

Unemployment is also the highest for younger age groups which are between the ages of 15 and 29 (refer to Table 2). Within each of these three groups, female unemployment is higher than male unemployment. However, with higher age groups, female unemployment tends to fall, and interestingly, male unemployment starts to exceed female unemployment. Nonetheless, even within older age groups, unemployment rates in Palestine continue to significantly exceed the global average.

Table 1: Unemployment rate, disaggregated by area and sex

	Total unemployment	Female	Male
Palestine	23.4	37.4	20.1
Urban	23.9	38.0	20.7
Rural	15.5	28.6	12.1
Camps	36.0	52.0	31.9
West Bank	14.9	27.4	12.0
Urban	14.1	26.1	11.4
Rural	15.5	28.6	12.1
Camps	23.2	40.6	19.8
Gaza Strip	43.1	60.4	39.0
Urban	42.4	60.5	38.3
Rural	-	-	-
Camps	47.6	59.4	43.9

Source: PCBS (2021)

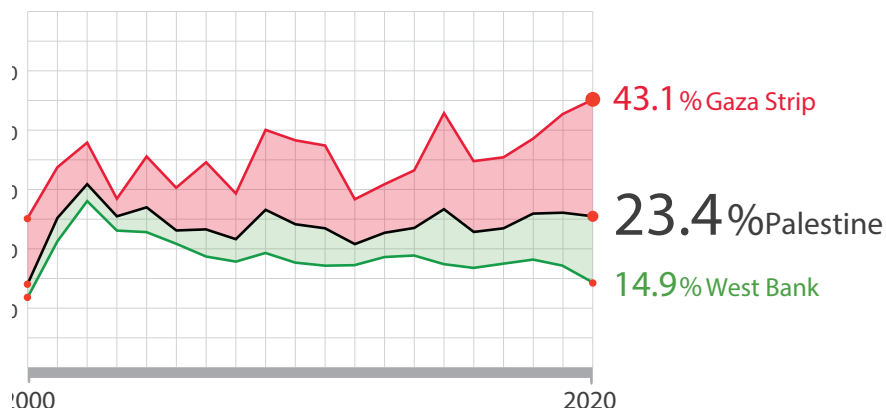
Table 2: Unemployment rate, disaggregated by age and sex

Age group	Total	Female	Male
15-19	12.7	0.7	24.2
20-24	40.3	17.9	61.8
25-29	54.3	24.0	83.2
30-34	57.4	25.7	88.1
35-39	55.9	22.8	89.1
40-44	53.2	20.6	85.6
45-49	51.3	18.8	82.7
50+	28.8	7.9	49.8
Total	40.8	15.7	65.2

Source: PCBS (2021)

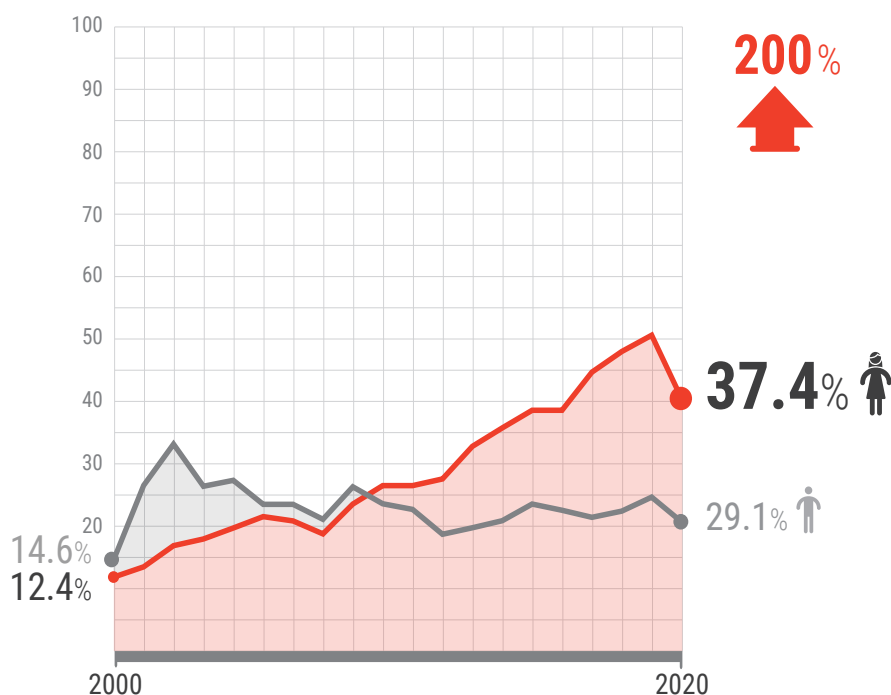
Despite the rise in women’s labor force participation, women are more likely to become unemployed than men. The unemployment rate among Palestinian women has almost doubled over the past two decades.

Unemployment rates in Palestine by region, 2000-2020



Source: UNCT and PMO (2020). Atlas of Sustainable Development, 2020. pp. 39, and PCBS (2021).

## Unemployment rate in Palestine, by sex



Source: UNCT and PMO (2020). Atlas of Sustainable Development, 2020. pp. 39, and PCBS (2021).

Additionally, the Israeli occupation of Palestine has directly shaped informal housing and high-density communities. As a consequence, to the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians refugees were expelled from their homes and settled in refugee camps close to urban centres in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. These refugee camps are considered informal, irregular and inadequate housing as they are currently over-crowded, poorly serviced, and with unclear and insecure tenure rights. In 2018, the percentage of the population of refugees in Palestine reached 42 per cent of the total population (where 26 per cent of the population in the West Bank and 66 per cent in the Gaza Strip are refugees) (PCBS, 2019). The conditions in refugee camps are difficult, where over 35 per cent of the inhabitants of refugee camps live in poverty, and around 45 per cent are unemployed. The situation in these camps is only getting worse, with population rates growing at 3.5 per cent annually over the past 10 years, compared to the annual population growth rate in Palestine, which stands at 2.3 per cent per annum.

### 1.1.2.b Gini coefficient at national/ city /urban levels

The Gini coefficient is an important measure of income or wealth inequality in any given country. In Palestine, the latest measure of the Gini coefficient was in 2017 which estimated it at 40.98 per cent. According to PCBS, Gini coefficient was estimated at 37.4 percent in 2017, which represents a slight increase in income inequality when compared to the Gini coefficient of 40.23 per cent in 2011. According to the World Bank, this increase in inequality was significantly witnessed within refugee camps in specific, where the Gini coefficient increased by 4 per cent between 2011 and 2017. However, if we look at consumption inequality rather than income inequality, we see a decline in the consumption Gini coefficient from 40.3 per cent in 2011 to 34.0 per cent in 2017. this entails a large discrepancy (6.98 per cent) between income inequality (an index of 40.98 per cent) and consumption inequality (an index of 34.0 per cent) (Ayyash, Sek, & Sadeq, 2020).

### 1.1.3 Enhance social inclusion of vulnerable groups (women, youth, older persons and persons with disabilities and migrants)

#### 1.1.3.a Women recognized legal right to property inheritance and ownership

Palestinian laws and legislations do not discriminate against women with regards to legal right to property inheritance and ownership. The recent wide scale land settlement project in the West Bank revealed that ownership of properties by women exceeded 30 per cent. At present, the Palestinian Land and Water Settlement Commission (LWSC) with technical

support from UN-Habitat is piloting the utilization of the Social Tenure Domain Model (STDM) and other gender evaluation criteria tools. STDM is a pro-poor, gender responsive, participatory, and affordable land information system that is based on both a process and a software, which is free and open source, where all data collected and stored are owned by the users. The STDM methodology is based on recording and analyzing the social tenure relationship of people and land as well as the social services/amenities that the inhabitants of a certain location can access. The STDM methodology supports the concept of the continuum of land rights – recognition of legitimate forms of tenure ranging from formal to informal land rights.

1.1.3.b Presence of national legislation forbidding discrimination in housing, access to public facilities and social services on the basis of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

National legislation forbids discrimination in housing, access to public facilities and social services on the basis of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. The main challenge to freedom of travel and access to housing is Israel's imposed policies and regulations forbidding Palestinians to travel from the West Bank and to Gaza and vice versa, including Palestinians' inability to change their accommodation from one area to the other. Palestinians living in East Jerusalem are also facing a strict planning regime that doesn't provide them with adequate spaces that could be utilized for housing.

### 1.1.4 Ensure access to public spaces including streets, sidewalks and cycling lanes

1.1.4.a Ensure access to public spaces including streets, sidewalks, and cycling lanes

Public spaces and facilities in urban and rural centers are relatively low in Palestine. This is mainly due to various factors, such as rapid urbanization and limited availability of land due to the inability of urban centers to expand beyond Area A and B that fall under the PA planning jurisdiction and ownership complexities. Additionally, the majority of land parcels in cities are privately owned, making it difficult to set aside land for public space usage. Planning regulations in Palestine have not been successful in facilitating the provision of public spaces in Palestinian cities, because the primary focus is on building design, elevation, heights, setbacks, parking, etc., with little focus on the design and integration of urban public spaces. Additionally, no planning policies are currently mainstreamed within the Palestinian spatial planning system that plan, design, manage, implement, and maintain public spaces in Palestinian cities and towns.

MoLG in partnership with UN-Habitat is working on identifying and addressing weaknesses in current approaches to planning and design of public spaces in Palestine, as well as weaknesses in current legislation and regulations and the absence of policies and guideline for providing safe and inclusive public spaces, especially at the local government level, to adequately recognize, respond to and prevent violence against women in public spaces in Palestine. A recent public space assessment done in five urban areas across the West Bank and Gaza Strip showed that the available public spaces are relatively low and varies considerably from one place to another.

Table 3: Public spaces assessment in selected urban areas

City	Khan Younis	Jericho	Nablus	Jenin	Bethlehem
Population	258,911	25,794	190,447	62,373	70,049
Area of open public space (km <sup>2</sup> )	0.9	0.4	0.4	0.2	2
% of urban land	1.70	1.1	1.3	0.9	6
Per capita open public space (m <sup>2</sup> )	3.5	15.5	2.1	3.2	28.6
% of land within 5 minutes walking distance	19	6	NA	13	26
% of land within 10 minutes walking distance	46	19	NA	38	67
Street connectivity (street length per km <sup>2</sup> )	13	11	17	13	12
Street connectivity (# of streets intersection per km <sup>2</sup> )	156	167	215	187	115
<b>Typology of public spaces</b>					
Public gardens	42	15	15	NA	NA
Plazas	35	37	13	NA	NA

Commerical axes	29	21	34	NA	NA
Playgrounds	15	NA	24	NA	NA
Public transport markets	4	5	5	NA	NA
Waterfront related public spaces	4	15	NA	NA	NA
% of public spaces owned/managed by LGU	92	76	3	55	74

Source: UN-Habitat (2021)

## 1.2. Access to adequate housing

### 1.2.1 Ensure access to adequate and affordable housing

1.2.1a Median amount of money spent on housing and transportation per household as a percentage of the median annual household income of tenants

1.2.1b Ratio of the median free-market price of a dwelling unit and the median annual household income

1.2.1c Percentage of people living in unaffordable housing

Despite accelerating population growth and stagnant economic growth, the housing sector remains a significant sector in Palestine due to its political and national significance. While there are no slums in Palestine, the main challenges facing the housing sector are the issues of unsuitable, unaffordable and overcrowded housing. There is also a crucial need to integrate the housing sector into national and local urban policies, improve regulatory frameworks and prioritize policy objectives related to the expansion of affordable housing so as to reduce financial burden on citizens, control urban sprawl and hence have better control over land.

Another challenge to housing adequacy is the existence of an Israeli planning regime controlling the macro planning space of the West Bank through the expansion of illegal settlements, the construction of bypass roads across the West Bank and the demolition of Palestinian houses and livelihood structures, violating international humanitarian and human right laws. In East Jerusalem, Israeli policies are directed towards creating impossible conditions for Palestinian citizens to build new housing units, this includes but is not limited to zoning policies, forcible evictions, weak municipal services, made worse by policies that threaten residency rights of those that live or work outside the municipal boundary.

Based on the latest expenditure and consumption survey conducted in Palestine in 2017, the average Palestinian household spends 18.5 per cent of its income on transportation, up from 14.7 per cent in 2011, This percentage has dropped again to 14 per cent in 2020; it also spends 8.7 per cent of its income on housing, the same as in 2011. Here, however, it is worth noting that Palestinian non-consumption expenditure increased from 5.2 per cent in 2011 to 6.2 per cent in 2017. This classification of expenditure includes interest on loans (including mortgages), which may be a significant cost for Palestinians who have borrowed money from financial institutions to afford suitable housing and means of transportation (PCBS, 2017). In fact, based on the Palestinian Monetary Authority's (PMA) Financial Stability Report, the credit portfolio of housing and mortgage almost doubled between 2015 to 2019, from USD 1,081 million to USD 2,015.7 million (PMA, 2020). In total, the financial depth index, which is the ratio of credit granted by banks to nominal GDP, is on a steady rise. Therefore, it is estimated that a large proportion of Palestinian society are living in unaffordable housing, which is exemplified by the large increase in the number of housing loans and mortgages obtained to support families to own homes. This, coupled with the fact that between 30-50 per cent of Palestinian borrowers pay 50 per cent of their income on housing loans, demonstrates that housing in Palestine is highly unaffordable, especially when considering the global standard of 30 per cent maximum spending on housing.

In East Jerusalem, Palestinians are suffering from informal housing due to the Israeli occupation, although they represent 38 per cent (a total of 341,400 people) of the total population of the Jerusalem (MAS, 2020). The Israeli Jerusalem Municipality spends less than 16 per cent of its budget on Palestinian neighbourhoods (MAS, 2020). At the same time, Palestinian citizens are facing various policies aimed at forcing Palestinians outside the city to maintain a Jewish majority. These restrictions impact every aspect of Palestinian life, e.g., housing, education, economic development, health, mobility and accessibility, public space, etc.

Palestinians living in East Jerusalem are facing the restrictive planning system of the Jerusalem Municipality in terms of obtaining permits for residential or commercial establishments, despite the continuous expansion of Israeli settlements



in the same area. As a result, Palestinian communities in East Jerusalem are turning into overcrowded urban centres with high population density, inadequate infrastructure, and scarcity of housing units. Scarcity continues to put enormous pressure on the affordability of housing in East Jerusalem. Between 2007 and 2012, the average house price increased by more than 192 per cent, compared with average wages in East Jerusalem increasing by only 12 per cent during the same period. At the same time, financial support for the purchase of land and property is limited, and only reaches approximately half the average apartment price (International Peace and Cooperation Center, 2013).

The worsening situation in Palestinian urban centres is exacerbated by the lack of a political solution to the situation of Palestinian refugees residing in the OPT, as well as the continuous Israeli military operations on the Gaza Strip and shelling of residential units leaving thousands of Palestinian civilians homeless. Finally, it is worth noting that in 2020, it was estimated that 300,000 Palestinians are in need of humanitarian assistance, especially in the shelter and Non-Food Items sector (ESCWA, 2021).

## 1.2.2 Ensure access to sustainable housing finance options

### 1.2.2.a Mortgage debt relative to GDP

There are 13 registered banks operating in Palestine and all offer mortgages (PMA, 2021). The mortgage related credit constituted 7.58 per cent of GDP in 2020, almost double the share of 3.96 per cent of GDP in 2015 (PMA, 2021).

Table (4): Real estate credit and GDP

Year	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
Residential real estate credit (in USD thousand million)	1,178.8	1,051.5	1,023.1	849.5	763.3	553.2
GDP (in USD thousand million)	15,561.0	17,134.0	16,277.0	16,128.0	15,405.0	13,972.0
%	7.58	6.14	6.29	5.27	4.96	3.96

Source: PMA (2021)

Based on the mortgage related credit in 2020, it represents 11.7 per cent of the total credit provided by the banking sector. Notwithstanding the fact that banks differ in terms of their credit situation and risk assessment policies, the latter per cent is considered relatively low which is mainly due to banks' requirements and conditions for offering mortgages as banks prefer to offer low ceilings for short periods and at strict guarantees. Among these guarantees, banks request that:

- The residential unit should have a title that can be transferred to the borrower.
- The borrower should have life and apartment insurance policies.
- Borrower's wage should be transferred to his/her account at the same bank.
- Co-borrowers sign on the loan agreement and their wages are also transferred to the same bank.

Specialized subsidized or public housing programs are needed, especially to marginalized groups. Such programs can only be supported by the government and other development agencies.

## 1.2.3 Establish security of tenure

1.2.3.a Proportion of total adult population with secure tenure rights to land with (a) legally recognized documentation; and (b) who perceive their rights to land as secure, by sex and type of tenure.

1.2.3.b Proportion of cities with slum upgrading programmes.

1.2.3.c Number of cities having annual budget allocations addressing any of the 5 slum deprivations and inclusive public spaces in known slum areas. Percentage of cities that have integrated housing policies and regulations in their local development plans.

The basic law in Palestine (Article 23) refers to the right to adequate housing for every citizen. Palestinian legislation recognises women's unrestricted right to ownership and does not discriminate in land or property registration or housing construction. However, access to housing, resources and land in Palestine is mostly obtained through inheritance, and the prevalent patriarchal culture does not necessarily provide a conducive environment for legislations relating to women's inheritance to be adopted (Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC), 2014). In total, 54 per cent of the West Bank has undergone land settlement and registration of land processes, where owners of 30 per cent of the West Bank (1,914,193.39 dunums) have secure tenure rights through the registration of land by the government of Jordan before 1967, with an additional 24 per cent (1,124,050.295) completed by the LWSC since 2016. With regards to the latter, 67 per cent and 33 per cent of parcels are owned by men and women, respectively.

## 1.2.4 Integrate housing into urban development plans

### 1.2.4.a Percentage of government expenditure dedicated to housing and community amenities

The Government of Palestine approved the National Development Plan: Resilience; Disengagement, and Cluster Development towards Independence (2021-2023) that was prepared by the Prime Minister's Office. The plan outlines three main pillars, 10 national priorities and 33 national policies.

Within the third main pillar "Sustainable Development", the national priority "Resilient Communities", and the national policy "Meeting the Basic Needs of Our Communities", the plan focuses on the need for low-cost social housing and reducing the costs of construction. While preparing the Spatial Development Strategic Framework (SDSF) for Jerusalem Governorate, a housing development programme for youth and low-income families was proposed as an economic sector intervention, with a budget of USD 117 million; this represents about 12 per cent of the total budget for Jerusalem's SDSF, USD 952 million, that will be implemented until 2030.

## 1.3. Access to basic services

### 1.3.1 Provide access to safe drinking water, sanitation and solid waste disposal

#### 1.3.1.a Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services

Water, a basic human need, is an expensive resource in Palestine, costing 8 per cent of citizen's monthly expenditures, which is more than double the global average of 3.5 per cent. The water supply in Palestine is determined largely through negotiated agreements with Israel for groundwater abstraction (internal resources) and imports of additional supply (The World Bank Group, 2018).

- Around 91 per cent of Palestinians access water via water networks.
- Yet, 34 per cent of the localities connected to these networks are dependent on Israeli water sources.
- More than 20 per cent of connected Palestinian localities also suffer from water pollution (UN-Habitat, 2016).
- 96 per cent of the water in the Gaza Strip, provided from its sole aquifer, has been deemed unfit for human consumption due to high salinity (The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)).

Specifically, the total percentage of the population with access to clean water has been declining, from 61.9 per cent in 2010, to 59.1 per cent in 2017; this is due to the significant decline in access to clean water in the Gaza Strip, which has fallen from 13.7 per cent in 2010 to 11.3 per cent in 2017, compared to 90.1 per cent and 94.7 per cent in the West Bank, respectively (PCBS, 2014-2017). Furthermore, it is witnessed that there are significant variations in access to water when comparing different community types, where:

- Urban access to drinking water has fallen from 59.6 per cent in 2010 to 54.1 per cent in 2017;
- Rural access to drinking water has increased from 79.6 per cent in 2010 to 93.6 per cent in 2017; and
- Refugee camps' access to drinking water has fallen from 47.1 per cent in 2010 to 40.6 per cent in 2017.

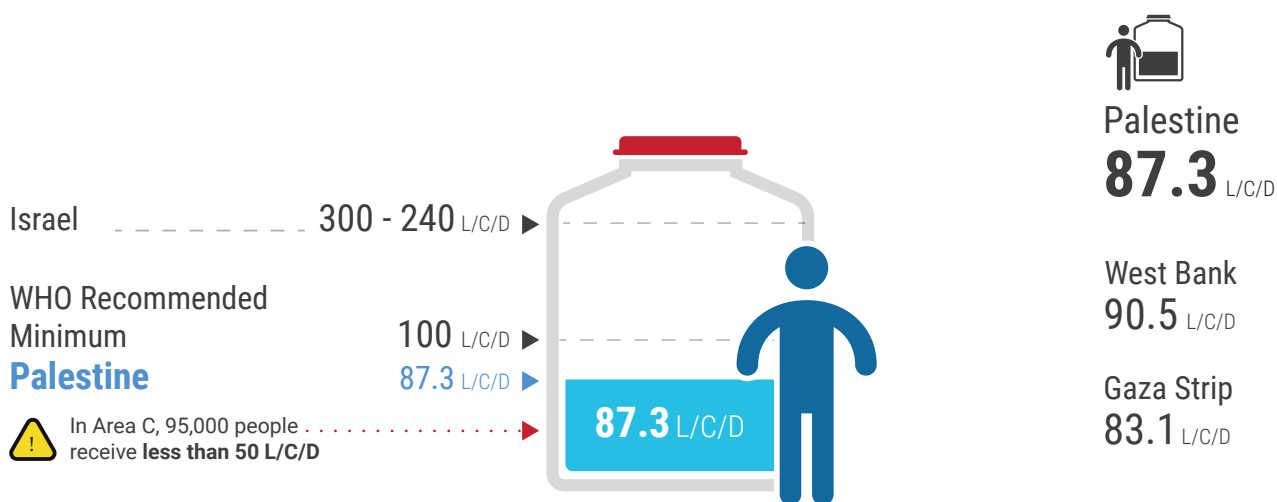
Looking at this at a governorate level, it is witnessed that there are huge variations between governorates in the West Bank and cities in the Gaza Strip:

Table (5): Access to water, by governorate

	2010 (%)	2014 (%)	2017 (%)
Jenin	70.4	87.3	90.7
Tubas & Northern Valleys	59.1	100	97.6
Tulkarem	99.7	99.5	99.1
Nablus	94.1	97.3	97.9
Qalqilia	99.5	100	99.8
Salfit	100	100	99.8
Ramallah & Al Bireh	96.9	98.7	99.1
Jericho and Al Aghwar	90	97.4	94.3
Jerusalem	99	99.8	99.3
Bethlehem	97.8	99.5	99
Hebron	82.7	95.7	87.8
North Gaza	19.7	16.8	14.4
Gaza	8.3	3.9	10.8
Deir Al Balah	4.4	3.2	6.3
Khan Yunis	20.5	20.8	14.2
Rafah	18.8	12.6	8.9

Source: PCBS (2014-2017)

Additionally, it is worth mentioning that the majority of communities in Area C are not connected to a water network, and people have to purchase expensive tanked water. Furthermore, water infrastructure without building permits are often destroyed in these areas, increasing the communities' vulnerability in terms of potential displacement, exacerbated poverty, illness and disease (OCHA, 2019).

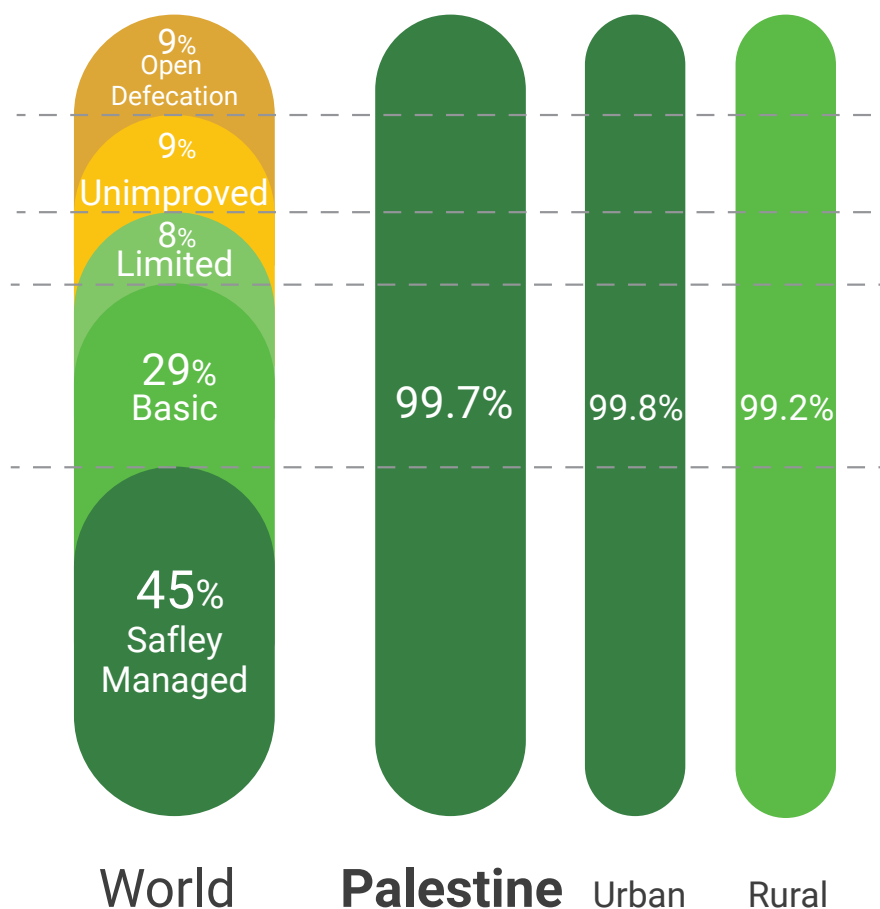


Source: UNCT and PMO (2020). Atlas of Sustainable Development, 2020. pp. 28.

### 1.3.1.b Proportion of population using safely managed sanitation services

Only 53.9 per cent of Palestinian communities are connected to a wastewater network, compared to the global average of 82 per cent that includes basic and limited methods of safely managing wastewater. In the Gaza Strip, the connection rate stands at 83.5 per cent and the remaining population rely on on-site services. In the West Bank, access to sewer networks stands only at 38.4 per cent and the rest of the citizens are using cesspits, which are emptied by vacuum tankers, that usually dump their contents in open areas, valleys, sewage networks, and/or dump sites, thereby increasing the risk

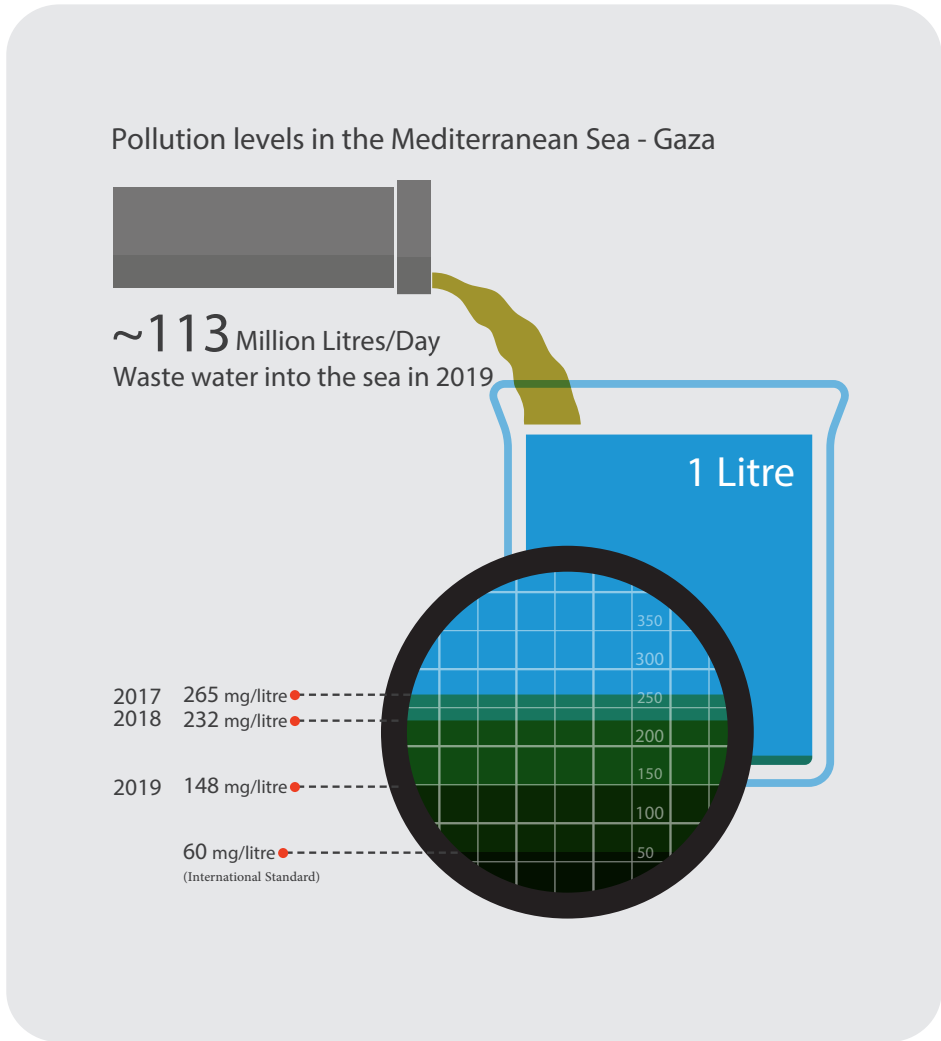
of groundwater contamination and posing serious environmental and health threats to the affected populations and residents of Palestine. The highest connection rates are within urban settings, including urban refugees (PCBS, 2015).



Source: UNCT and PMO (2020). Atlas of Sustainable Development, 2020. pp. 30.

Region and Locality Type	Wastewater Disposal Method				
	Total	Others	Tight Cess-pit	Porous Cesspit	Wastewater Network
Palestine	100	0.8	13.5	31.8	53.9
Urban	100	0.8	11.1	28.1	60.0
Rural	100	1.2	29.3	61.5	8.0
Camps	100	0.0	2.6	4.2	93.2

The electricity deficit and the long-standing shortage of adequate sanitation infrastructure continues to exacerbate the environmental problem of discharging poorly treated sewage into the sea in the Gaza Strip. The pollution levels of the wastewater discharged into the Mediterranean reached 148 mg/liter of Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD), during 2019, which is about 2.5 times more than the international standards of 60 mg/liter of BOD.



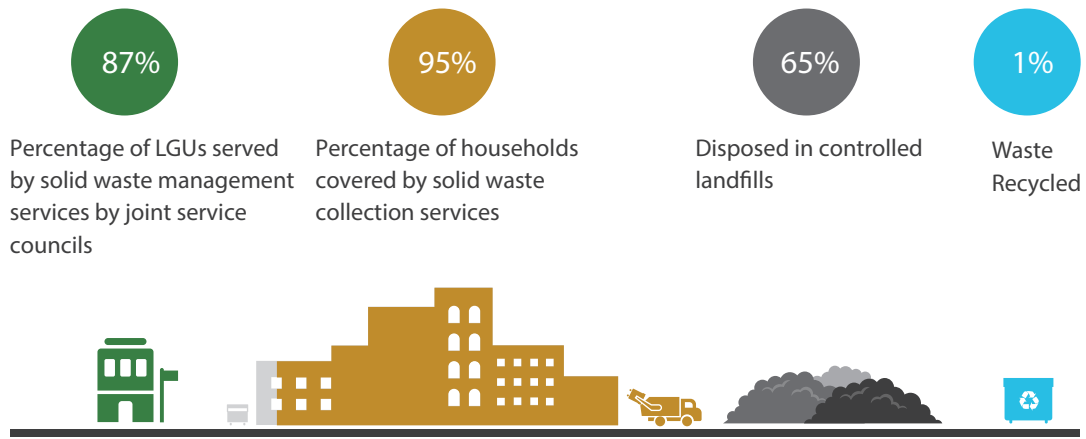
Source: UNCT and PMO (2020). Atlas of Sustainable Development, 2020. pp. 65.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that by 2020, an estimated 1,900,000 Palestinians are in need of assistance in the water and sanitation hygiene sectors (WASH) (ESCWA, 2021).

#### 1.3.1.c Proportion of municipal solid waste collected and managed in controlled facilities out of total Municipal Solid Waste generated by cities

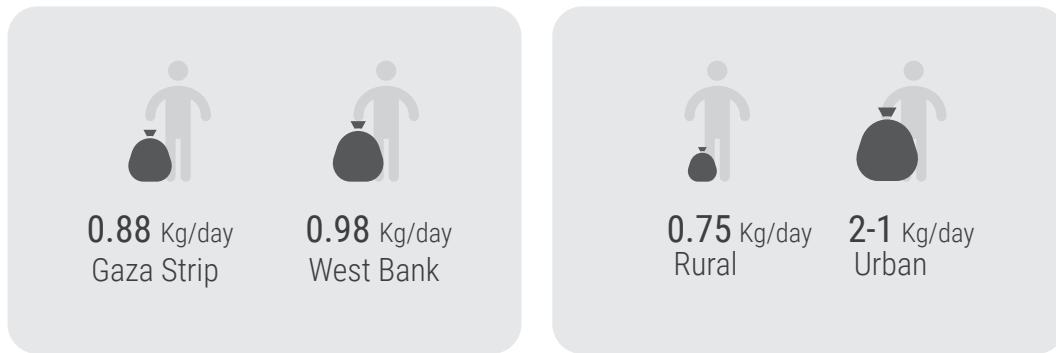
Despite growing urbanization rates in Palestine, most communities (around 88 per cent) have good access to solid waste collection services. However, despite high collection rates, the problem in Palestine resides with the waste disposal, where only 48 per cent of the local communities are disposing collected waste in approved dumping sites. Furthermore, uncollected waste is often disposed off in open dumps and informal incineration sites, which is the case for 25 per cent of communities in the West Bank (UN-Habitat, 2016).

With rapidly growing urbanization, the generation of solid waste, and specifically organic waste, is expected to increase, which is problematic if the issue of open dumping is not addressed (UN-Habitat, 2017). The amounts of solid waste generated in Palestine (including East Jerusalem) are expected to grow at 4 per cent annually, triggered by growing urbanization and consumption rates. During 2019 alone, 1.5 million tonnes of municipal waste was generated, amounting to around 4,333 tonnes per person. This is an average of 0.9 kg per person per day (PPPD) of waste production; of which, average waste generation is 0.98 kg PPPD in the West Bank, compared to 0.88 kg PPPD in the Gaza Strip; this is lower than the world average of 1.2 kg PPPD.



Source: Ministry of Local Government, Solid Waste Databook 2019 ,2019.

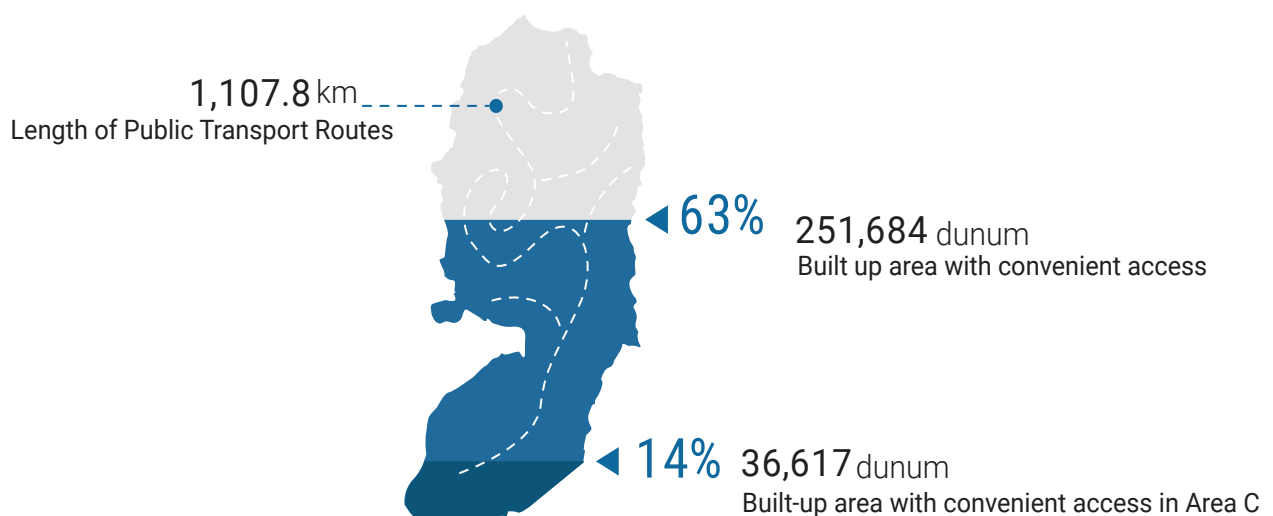
Waste generation per capita **0.9** Kg/day



Source: UNCT and PMO (2020). Atlas of Sustainable Development, 2020. pp. 59.

### 1.3.2 Ensure access to safe and efficient public transport systems

## General information on public transportation



Source: Ministry of Transportation (2021), Raw Data

### 1.3.2.a Percentage of commuters using public transport

The transport modes in Palestine are limited to traditional transit modes including personal vehicles, taxis, and small passenger minivans. These are hugely affecting the local Palestinian communities, in terms of social disintegration, environmental degradation, public health deterioration, and pressure on land. In terms of policy and planning, mobility and transport planning in Palestine, similar to other developing countries, is highly fragmented and the majority of sectoral plans for traffic and infrastructure networks are not aligned among the different administrative units whether in the relevant ministries or the LGUs. Furthermore, the carrying capacity of the road network is weak; most travelers attempting to move throughout the West Bank are forced to compete with trucks, commercial traffic, and other travelers on a crumbling two-lane highway choked with vehicles of all types. There is simply not enough capacity to move people and goods efficiently through the territory.

The Qalandyia Airport, which is the only airport in the West Bank, located only 9.5 km north of Jerusalem, has been inaccessible to the Palestinian population since 1967. In addition, following the Oslo Agreements and the agreed-upon Arafat International Airport that was constructed in 1998; 36 km east of Rafah city in the Gaza Strip, and 2.8 km<sup>2</sup> in area, residents of the Gaza Strip enjoyed just two years' freedom of travel before Israel ordered Palestinian aerospace closure in October 2000. Following this, in December 2001, Israel decided on the complete de-capacitating of the Palestinian Airport, by bulldozing the main runway (El-Atrash, Salem, & Jad, 2009).

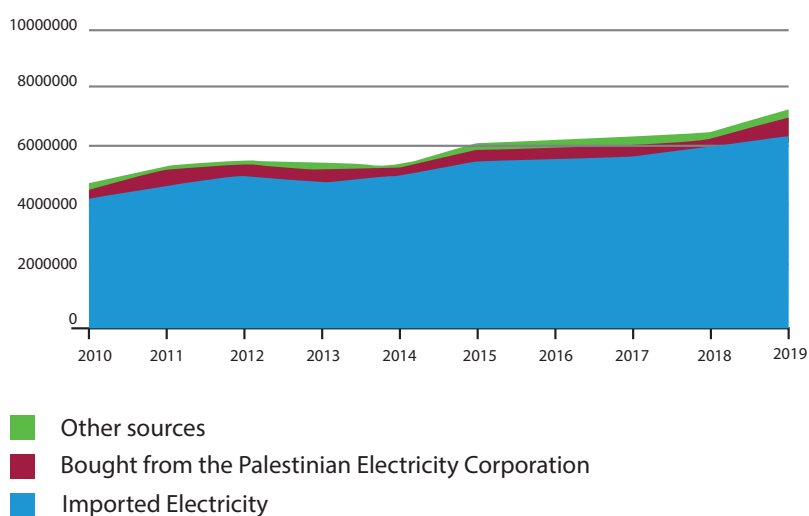
The Palestinian government endorsed the Road and Transportation Master Plan of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 2018. The Master Plan has the overall objective to promote the achievement of a vision for the future of the Palestinian transport sector; in particular, it aims to incorporate equally West Bank and Gaza Strip into a single and united framework, through the definition of a multi-modal transport network and a multi-phased development strategy.

### 1.3.3 Provide access to modern renewable energy

#### 1.3.3.a Renewable energy shares in the total final energy consumption

Today, Palestine has no domestic power production capability to meet the needed demand, relying instead on imports from external parties. Reports show that about 95 per cent of the electricity consumed in the West Bank is supplied by the Israeli Electric Corporation and the remaining comes from Jordan. In Palestine, household coverage with electricity reaches 99.9 per cent. However, 35.8 per cent of households have access to electricity with regular intermittence, including 0.4 per cent in the West Bank and 87.7 per cent in Gaza. The residential sector accounts for the largest share of electricity consumption in Palestine, standing at 60 per cent, which indicates the importance of concentrating energy efficiency measures in that sector. On the other hand, the industrial sector consumes only 13 per cent of electricity, though industrial demand for electricity has increased by almost 400 percent since 2010.

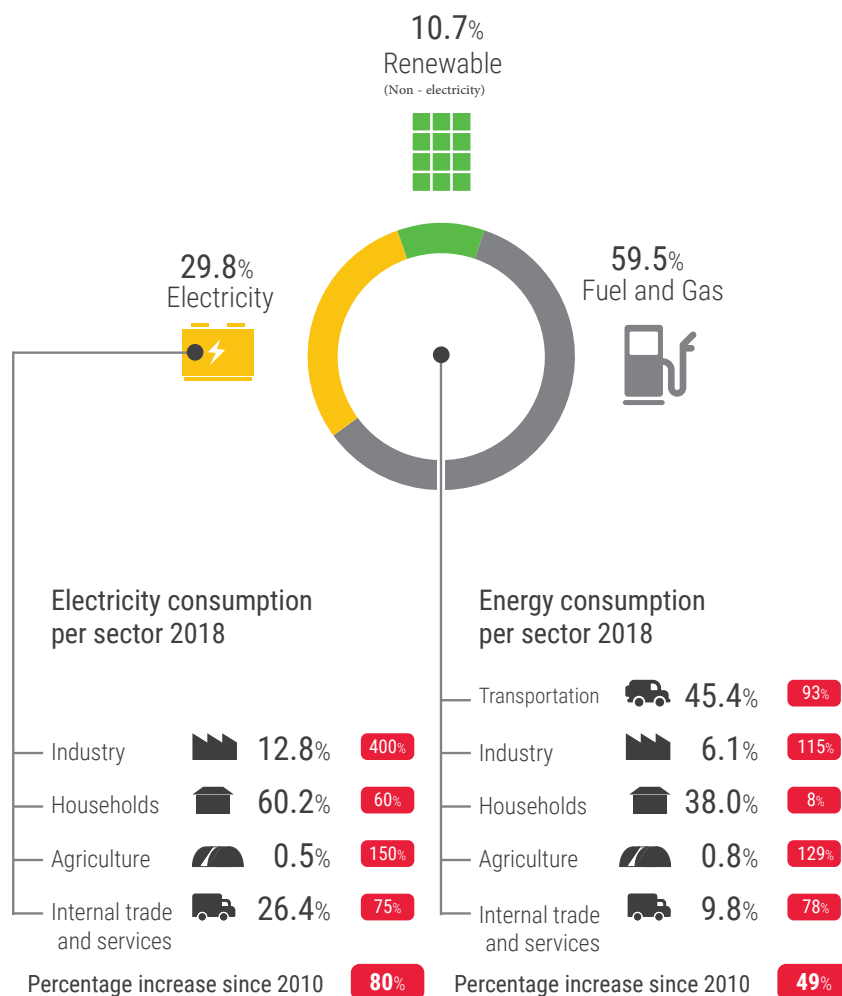
#### Amount of electricity available in Palestine (MWh.hr)



Source: PCBS (2020)

Most of the electricity available in Palestine is generated from fossil fuel, and only a negligible amount of electricity is locally generated by small solar farms (less than 1 per cent) despite the fact that the West Bank is an ideal location for the deployment of solar photovoltaic (PV) technologies. Solar energy is the only significant renewable resource in Palestine, which is located in a sun-drenched region. The West Bank and Gaza Strip rank among the world's top locations for construction of solar systems, with substantial potential for solar electricity in Area C. The average Global Horizontal Irradiation values are high, at 5.2 kWh/m<sup>2</sup> daily or over 1,900 kWh/m<sup>2</sup> annually; this is over twice as high as in Germany, the world leader. The largest existing operating solar field is located in Tubas, and it is around 3.5 MW. The PA is enabling the regulatory environment in order for renewables to be more supportive of commercial solar PV developments. The Palestinian private sector for renewable energy could have a role; today, there exists 2 Palestinian renewable energy associations, and a small number of Palestinian renewable energy developers, exist and are operating in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip (PCBS, 2021). Nevertheless, there are challenges facing the PA in optimizing the potential for the solar energy sector. In Area C, these challenges are associated with securing Israeli permits for construction, the lack of a power purchase agreement, and the lack of transmission infrastructure hinder progress in this sector. On the other hand, the Gaza Strip has more limited solar potential due to space constraints but could play a vital role in increasing energy security and act as an electricity safety net. The World Bank and Palestinian Energy and Natural Resources Authority (PENRA) estimate that if such obstacles were removed, renewable energy development in Palestine could go far beyond the current policy targets of 130 Megawatts (MW) in 2020.

On the other hand, and in addition to reforming the energy sector as a whole and specifying the roles of the policy, regulatory, purchasing and distributing bodies, the PA issued a law on renewable energy (Renewable Energy Law 14, 2015) aiming at fostering investments in the sector.



Source: UNCT and PMO (2020). Atlas of Sustainable Development, 2020. pp. 32.



The main priorities in the energy sector are:

- Elimination of electricity deficit in the Gaza Strip. In 2019, less than half of the Gaza Strip's electricity needs were met. The ongoing power shortage has severely impacted the availability of essential services, particularly health, water and sanitation, and undermined the Gaza Strip's fragile economy.
- Reduce reliance on purchased electricity from Israel (representing 8 per cent of total imports) so as to reduce cost of electricity.
- Increase share of renewable energy.
- Elimination of power disruption in the West Bank.
- Upgrade the existing legal and regulatory framework for investment in energy-efficient and renewable energy systems.
- Promote energy-efficient appliances in residential and industrial sectors.
- Develop and retrofit the transmission and distribution systems and adopt smart grid technologies so as to increase efficiency and reduce power loss.

## 2. Sustainable and Inclusive Urban Prosperity and Opportunities for All

### 2.1. Inclusive Urban Economy

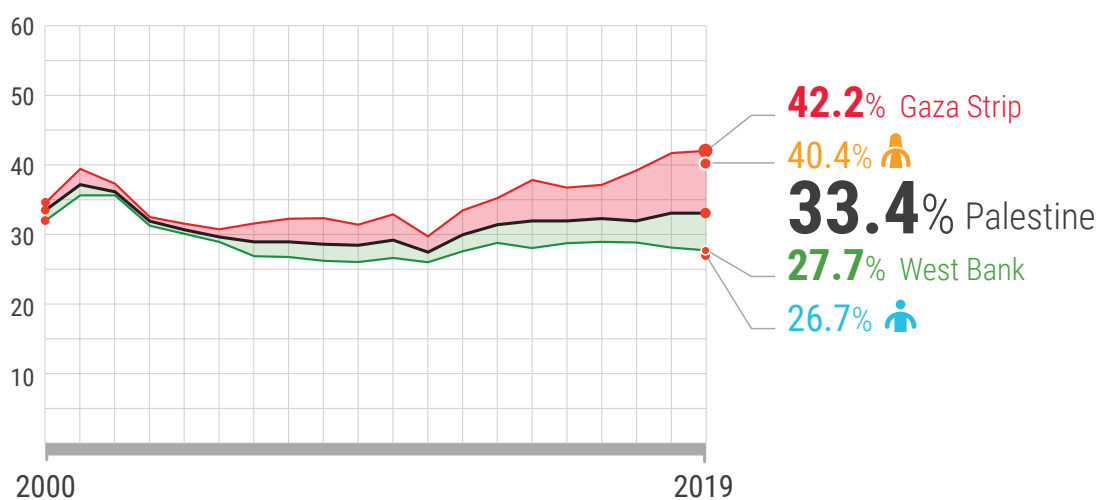
#### 2.1.1 Achieve productive employment for all including youth employment

##### 2.1.1.a Proportion of youth (aged 15-24 years) not in education, employment or training.

In Palestine, youth make up the majority of the population, where around 23 per cent of the population is between the ages of 18 - 29 or around 1.13 million people at a sex ratio of 105 males per 100 females. Additionally, around 15 per cent of Palestinian households are headed by youth, an increase of 6 per cent compared to 2007 (9 per cent); this percentage is higher in the Gaza Strip (17 per cent) than in the West Bank (14 per cent). These variables demonstrate that youth's socioeconomic conditions are changing, which is further exemplified by the fact that around 39 per cent of Palestinian youth were not in education, employment or training in 2017; this is an increase of 4.5 per cent compared to 2010 (34.5 per cent). Youth unemployment in Palestine is also significantly high, standing at 45 per cent in 2018 (36 per cent among males and 70 per cent among females).

Whereas youth unemployment remained almost the same in the West Bank, it increased in the Gaza Strip (from 53 per cent in 2008 to 69 per cent in 2018); this could be attributed to the political and socio-economic difficulties that have faced the Gaza Strip since the time of its blockade in 2007.

Youth not in Employment, Education or Training, 2000-2019



Source: UNCT and PMO (2020). Atlas of Sustainable Development, 2020, pp. 39.

### 2.1.1.b Annual growth rate of real GDP per employed person

Table 6 demonstrates that the annual growth rate of real GDP per employed person has improved between 2010 and 2018 in general terms. This is a measure of labor productivity and therefore provides indication of the efficiency and quality of human capital which are involved in the Palestinian labor force. As a trend, labor productivity has been increasing and decreasing over the past 8 years, but overall, significant improvement in labor productivity is witnessed.

Table (6): Annual growth rate of GDP per employed person

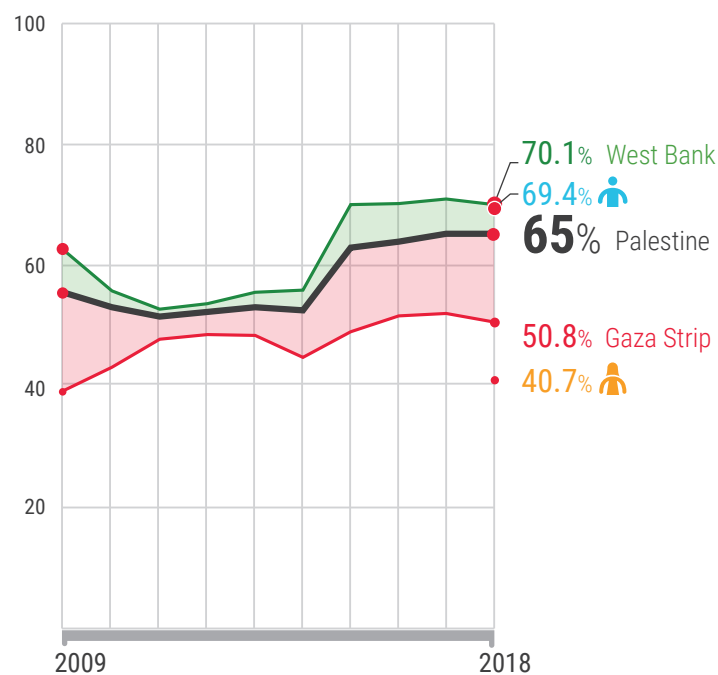
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Palestine	1.2	-3.80	2.60	3.20	-2.60	-0.40	7.90	1.90	3.50
West Bank	-0.60	0.60	2.80	3.34	-3.30	3.20	9.50	3.10	1.10
Gaza Strip	6.80	-12.40	3.10	4.00	-7.00	-8.20	5.00	-5.30	6.00

Source: PCBS (2020)

### 2.1.2 Strengthening the informal economy

#### 2.1.2.a Proportion of informal employment in non-agriculture employment, by sex.

Proportion of informal employment in non-agriculture employment, by sex

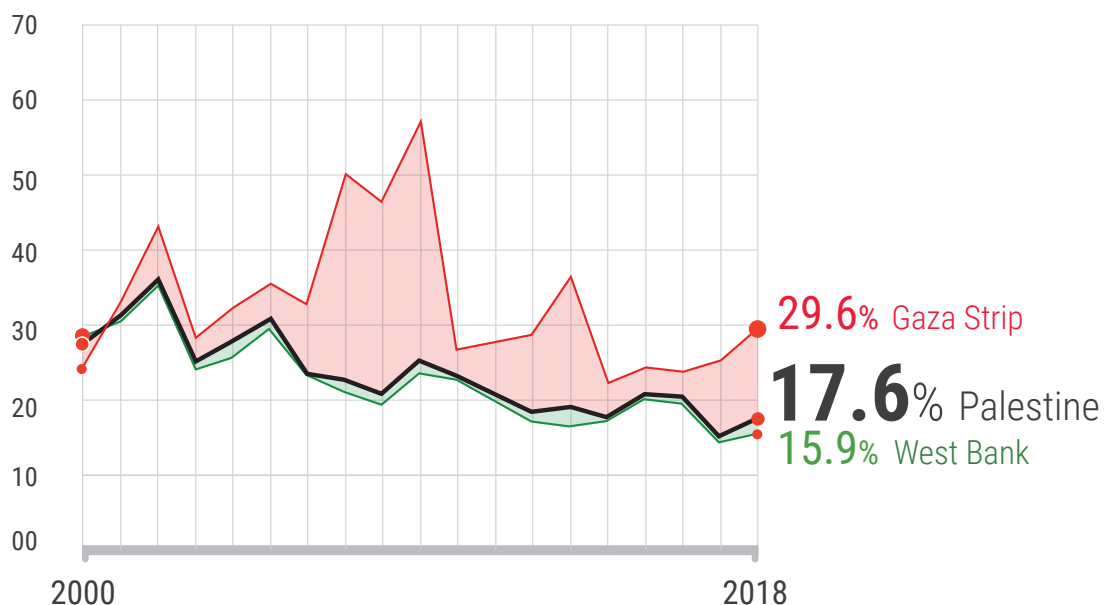


Source: UNCT and PMO (2020). Atlas of Sustainable Development, 2020. pp. 36.

The size of the informal sector in Palestine is relatively large. It is estimated that its share of the GDP is more than 70 per cent. Almost 50 per cent of the enterprises in Palestine are considered informal, with the domestic trade sector forming the largest contributor (constituting almost 62 per cent of all informal businesses), followed by agricultural activities. The percentage of employed persons in the informal sector in Palestine reached about 62 per cent of the total employed persons; out of which 67 per cent are males and 36 per cent are females (66 per cent in the West Bank and 51 per cent in Gaza Strip) (MoLG, 2016).

Although it is a large contributor to the GDP, the informal economy in Palestine has negative impacts, as it promotes tax evasion, productivity losses, and high deficits, all factors that contribute to a lower-level quality of public services (Sabra, Eltalla, & Alfar, 2015); (European Training Foundation, 2014); (PCBS, 2020).

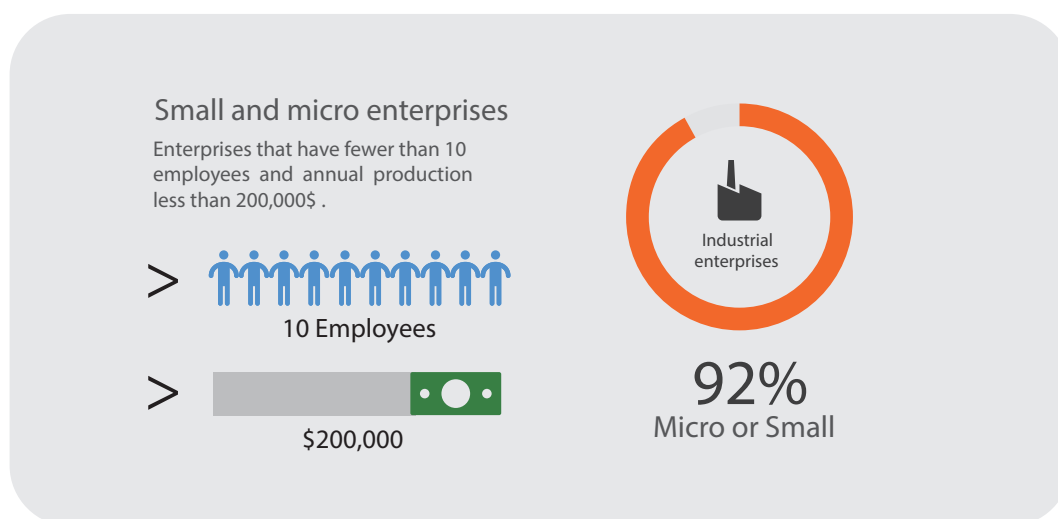
## Proportion of small-scale industries in total industry value added



Source: UNCT and PMO (2020). Atlas of Sustainable Development, 2020. pp. 46.

### 2.1.3 Support small and medium-sized enterprises

#### 2.1.3.a Small and medium-sized enterprises percentage share of GDP



Source: UNCT and PMO (2020). Atlas of Sustainable Development, 2020. pp. 46.

Around 7 per cent of Micro, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (MSMEs) (92 per cent in the West Bank and 27 per cent in Gaza) were shut-down during the first lockdown period (March – May 2020) due to the pandemic. In a recent survey conducted by the Ministry of National Economy (MoNE) and the PCBS on a sample of 2,600 establishments, 63 per cent of businesses reported disruptions in supplies, 89 per cent faced a decline in cash flow evidenced by an increase in returned cheques, and 14 per cent had to let go of their employees.

Approximately 95 per cent of women-led businesses reported being negatively impacted by the pandemic, 27 per cent had to shut down their projects as of July 2020, according to a United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) survey on the impact of COVID-19 on women-led MSMEs in Palestine. A gender assessment study conducted by CARE Palestine in April 2020 found that women are three times more likely than men to report not being able to work at all due to COVID-19. About 90 per cent of women are unable to access financial services compared to 73 per cent of men (WCLAC; AIDA; Mercy Corps; GAPS UK , 2021).

## 2.1.4 Promote an enabling, fair and responsible environment for business and innovation

### 2.1.4.a Number of days to register a new business in the country

While there is no estimation on the number of days it takes to register a new business, it is worthy to mention that all procedures for the registration of companies (whether ordinary, shareholding, foreign shareholding, non-profit, civil or holding) can be registered at the MoNE and/or its branch offices. Detailed information on the registration process is available at the website of the Palestinian Investment Promotion Agency which plays a key role in supporting new local and foreign investments in Palestine.

## 2.2. Sustainable Prosperity for All

### 2.2.1 Developing technical and entrepreneurial skills to thrive in a modern urban economy

#### 2.2.1.a Annual number of vocational and technical individuals trained

Palestine is classified as a factor-driven economy; it exhibits a low early-stage entrepreneurship rate - the proportion of the adult population who are involved in early-stage entrepreneurial activity is around 9 per cent. The rural-urban distribution of early-stage entrepreneurs in Palestine is more skewed in favour of rural localities where almost 14 per cent live in rural areas.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) runs eight Vocational Training Centres in the UNRWA fields of operation that accommodate approximately 7,000 trainees each year.

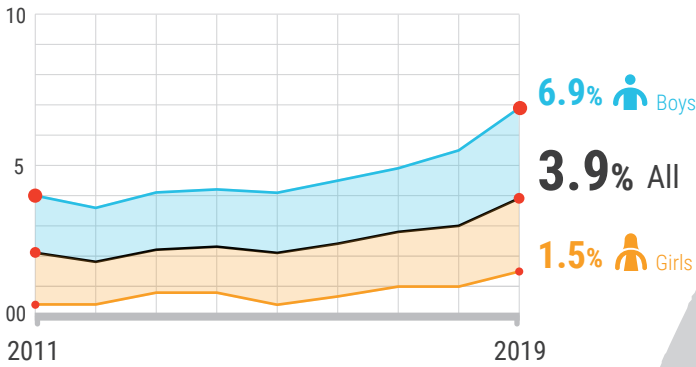
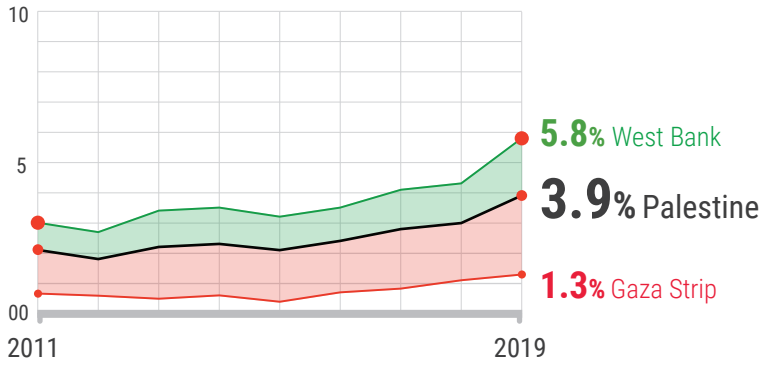
### 2.2.2 Developing urban-rural linkages to maximize productivity

2.2.2.a Does the country have a National Urban Policy or Regional Development Plan that (a) responds to population dynamics, (b) ensures balanced territorial development, and (c) increase in local fiscal space.

The National Urban Policy (NUP) process was launched in 2021 in Palestine with technical support from UN-Habitat and financial assistance from the European Union. The project aims at supporting the formulation of the NUP for independent Palestine within the 1967 boundaries and with provisions for connectivity between the West Bank, including occupied East Jerusalem and Gaza Strip under the framework of the National Spatial Plan (NSP) for Palestine. The formulation process of the NSP, under coordination of MoLG, is set up in a broad multi-sectorial framework, gathering additional line ministries as primary actors, including the Ministry of Transportation, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Environment Quality Authority, and others. Provisions for direct involvement of a number of additional key actors in government and civil society are meant to ensure a genuine participatory dialogue throughout the process. The NSP aims at assessing feasible and desirable scenarios, in terms of economic transformative processes, of the changing relative importance of sectors in GDP growth of the impending urbanization process of expected increasing demand for housing and services etc. The NUP will support sectorial ministries in programming needs, demand at independence, and producing sector plans accordingly. A collective effort will then be undertaken to translate the analysis and the adopted strategic focus into a spatial dimension, contributing to a baseline for Palestine as envisaged under the NSP. A sector-by-sector analysis of the required preparedness mechanisms and for related sector reform is also one of the intended results of the NUP. A programme of public consultations involving communities, including women and youth at local level is a key instrument of the NUP methodology. To be clear, NSP will support the NUP development and the other way around.

UN-Habitat supported spatial planning efforts in the State of Palestine, for 84 local outline and two cluster plans targeting about 90,000 people. These plans have enhanced social cohesion among communities in Area C and allowed for spatially sound infrastructure investment driven by local priorities, with a focus on women and youth groups. The plans have been adopted by local authorities and based on availability of funds social infrastructure projects will be implemented in the near future.

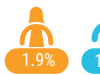
Enrollment in rates in vocational education



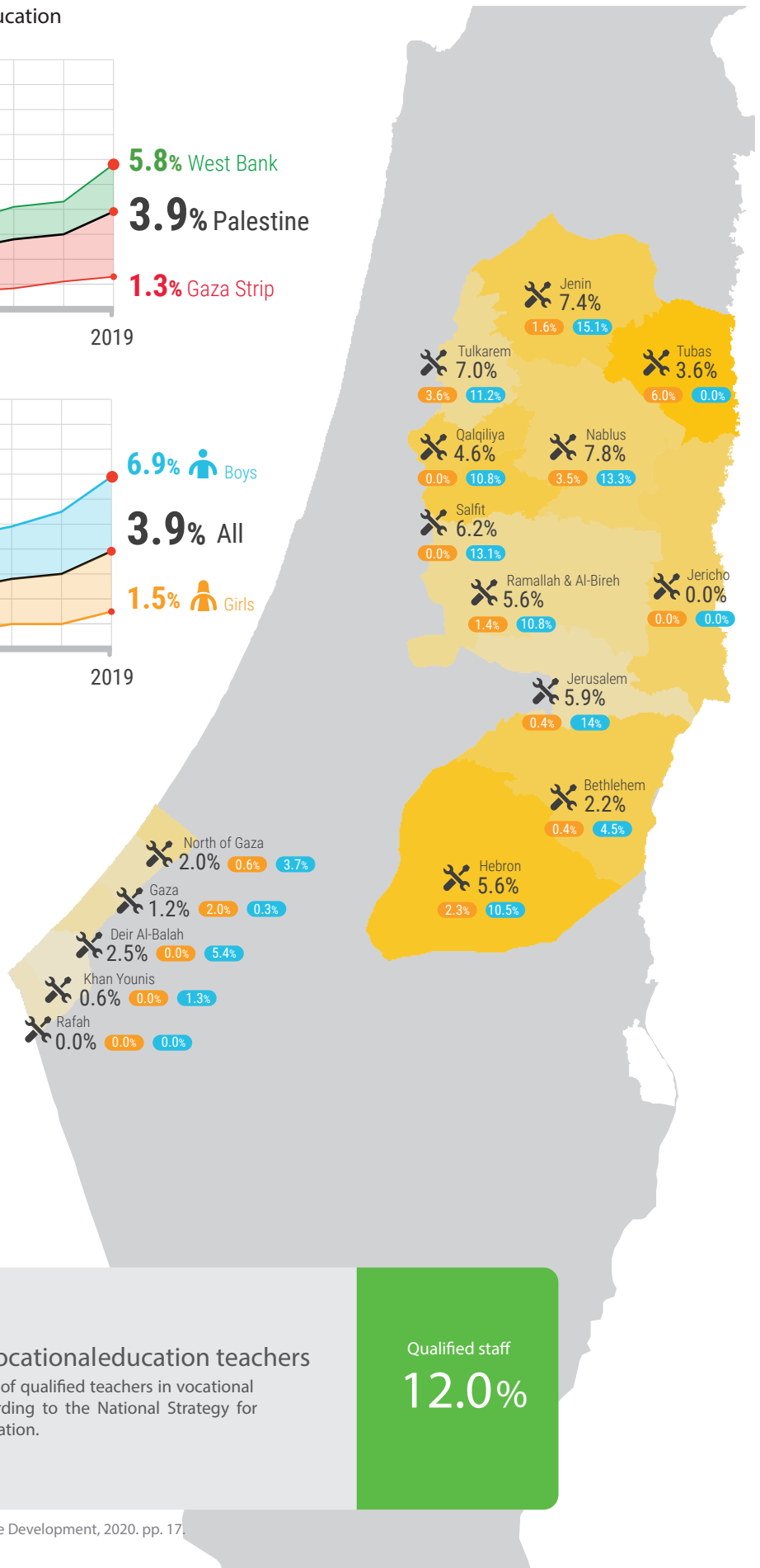
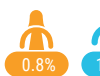
Palestine **3.9%**



West Bank **5.8%**



Gaza Strip **1.3%**



**Qualified vocational education teachers**  
The percentage of qualified teachers in vocational education according to the National Strategy for Vocational Education.

Qualified staff  
**12.0%**

Source: UNCT and PMO (2020). Atlas of Sustainable Development, 2020, pp. 17

## 3. Environmentally Sustainable and Resilient Urban Development

### 3.1. Resilience, Mitigation, and Adaptation of Cities and Human Settlements

#### 3.1.1 Minimize urban sprawl and loss of biodiversity

##### 3.1.1.a Ratio of land consumption rate to population growth rate

The growth population rate has dropped from 3.3 to 2.5 per cent between the years (2007-2017), while the land consumption in the same period has increased by 2 per cent in the built-up area of 2017 in comparison to the built-up area of 2007.

##### 3.1.1.b Proportion of land under protected natural areas

According to the NSP, the total number of lands under protected natural areas is 512,257.4 dunums, which is 8.5 per cent of the overall area of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

#### 3.1.2 Implement climate change mitigation and adaptation actions

With rapidly growing urbanization in Palestinian cities, there is immense environmental pressure, which has manifested through high air pollution, water pollution and scarcity, visible impacts of climate change and a general reduction in urban livability and quality of life.

The Palestinian government has made significant steps in improving the legal and institutional environment of the disaster risk management's activities. In specific, the Palestinian government has approved the following decrees related to the agricultural, environmental and institutional sectors:

Year	Decree
2013	The Palestinian Agricultural Disaster Risk Reduction and Insurance Fund (PADRRIF) was established via a Council of Ministers decree.
2015	The Palestinian Agricultural Credit Corporation was established via a Council of Ministers decree.
2016	The Palestinian Authority launched their National Adaptation Plan (NAP) which was developed in line with the guidelines of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
2017	The Palestinian Disaster Risk Management (DRM) System was developed which dictates the procedural guidelines for establishing a disaster risk management system in Palestine and the roles of the different stakeholders involved.
2020	Establishment of the National Disaster Risk Management Centre (NDRMC) as an independent center reporting to the Prime Ministers' Office.
2020	Finalization of the DRM decree.
2020	Finalization of the national framework of DRM; national strategy of DRM in process of formulation by NDRMC and its partners.

In Palestine, there is only one local government that adopted local disaster risk reduction strategies in light of Sendai Framework, namely Nablus City. Ramallah City has developed a resilience strategy based on four main pillars but not entirely based on the Sendai framework.

##### 3.1.2.a Percentage of local governments that adopt and implement local disaster risk reduction strategies in line with national strategies.

Currently, 68.8 per cent of LGUs retain and apply strategic plan that addresses DRM. At the governorate level, all governorates in the West Bank and Gaza Strip have governorate-wide DRM strategies with involvement of various public, LGUs, and CSOs.

### 3.1.2.b Annual mean levels of fine particulate matter (e.g., PM2.5 and PM10) in cities (population weighted)

With rapidly growing urbanization in Palestinian cities, there is immense environmental pressure which has manifested through high air pollution, water pollution and scarcity, visible impacts of climate change, and a general reduction in urban livability and quality of life. Most of the Palestinian population is exposed to polluted air, which is defined as air pollution levels that exceed Particulate Matter (PM) 2.5, according to the guidelines of the World Health Organization (WHO). This is a result of the growing population and limited availability of environmentally friendly alternatives in living, transport and industrial operations. Generally, the Palestinian population rely heavily on motor vehicles, where there are more than 170,000 motor vehicles in the country which carry outdated or inefficient clean fuel technologies, all producing exhaust fumes further contributing to high air pollution rates. Furthermore, the improper management of solid waste can also increase pollution in all of its kinds, specifically through the inevitable production of leachate in landfills, which has serious potential environmental negative consequences, in terms of soil and groundwater pollution and odours. This problem is further exacerbated by the illegal incineration of solid waste, which immensely increases air pollution.

Neither government authorities nor LGUs track the levels of the fine PM as part of a comprehensive system, although authorities including major municipalities acknowledge the importance of monitoring air pollution including the levels of the fine PM especially at proximity of industrial zones and quarries, in addition to various topographic locations so as to provide specific and macro-level indications about the impact of factories and transborder activities.

### 3.1.3 Develop systems to reduce the impact of natural and human-made disasters

#### 3.1.3.a Does the country have a multi-hazard monitoring and forecasting system?

#### 3.1.3.b The number of cities that have / percentage of urban population that is covered by multi-hazard early warning systems

Among the challenges the Palestinian people facing are natural disasters. Such disasters can cause enormous losses and negative consequences on economic. In the OPT, the water shortages, the environmental degradation, draught and desertification, along with landslides and the land and natural resources' depletion, which all go hand in hand with the political conflict, are considered to be the most significant anthropogenic disasters currently affecting the Palestinian people. In addition, natural disasters are significantly considered a potential threat. Earthquakes in the region (due to the fact that the OPT is directly affected by the seismically active zones of the Jordan-Rift Valley and the Mediterranean Sea) are considered a major hazard with low probability but high adverse impacts. Moreover, the future looks not so promising; due to the rapid population growth rates and the way the cities are developing in the OPT. More than 50 per cent of the Palestinian population live in what is defined as "hazard-prone" areas, including major urban centres. These areas are particularly vulnerable, because of their dependence on complex infrastructures. Lastly, the lack of knowledgeable professionals and technical capabilities in the OPT is another reason for the current chaotic situation, regarding disaster sound management.

According to the WASH Cluster vulnerability mapping assessment in 2021, more than 8,500 households in Gaza were affected by flooding events in the last three years; 1,300 of these households were exposed to severe damage to their private and public structures and assets, particularly in Gaza and North Gaza governorates (WASH Cluster, 2021).

The mainstreaming of risk reduction into the spatial planning interventions has been weak at the different planning levels, especially at the national level. The protection plan that was adopted by the Palestinian Cabinet in 2012 and then in 2019 under the NSP for the State of Palestine did not at first consider parameters related to potential risks and disaster-prone areas. According to experts, factoring in such layers of constraints will result in different outputs and designations in the protection plan that would ultimately change the future of spatial development and its patterns, especially in the urban areas.

The Palestinian government has launched a widescale multi-hazard risk assessment project supported by the World Bank. The project aims at preparation of risk profiles and mapping and local resilience plans including resilience planning for critical infrastructure.

## Part 2: Effective Implementation

### 4. Building Governance Structure: Establishing a Supportive Framework

#### 4.1. Building the urban governance structure: establishing a supportive framework

##### 4.1.1 Decentralize to enable subnational and local governments undertake their assigned responsibilities

4.1.1.a Is supervision of local authorities exercised in accordance with such procedures and in such cases as provided for by the constitution or by law?

The NDP (2021-2023) prioritizes decentralization in the provision of services at the local level by LGUs to support public policy No. 7 – empower responsiveness of LGUs to people's needs. Palestinian LGUs are largely dependent on service fees and charges to cover their operational expenditures, not to mention critical capital investments. Although Palestinian municipalities and village councils are responsible for providing critical public services, they have not been assigned sufficient revenue sources. On average, charges and service fees account for 50-70 per cent of total revenues, mostly from public utility services, such as electricity and water. The property tax could provide a large potential revenue source for municipalities, but collection needs to be extended to all LGUs and should be decentralized from the Ministry of Finance (MoF) at least to the largest municipalities. This has been recently prioritized by the government where a cabinet decision stipulated that the collection of property tax will be piloted in eight large municipalities in the West Bank. Finally, establishing a fiscal transfer mechanism that effectively addresses imbalances is long overdue and requires highest attention from both the MoLG and the MoF. Formal commitments to decentralization have not yet been materialized due to many factors, including geo-political complexities, weak political will, and the economic crisis (UNISPAL, 2017).

It is also worth noting that while more than 54 per cent of the population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip reside in 11 municipalities, there are over 100 municipalities with fewer than 25,000 residents, with the smallest municipality consisting of only 2,500 residents (The World Bank Group, 2014). As such, when considering decentralization and devolution of powers within the Palestinian context, it's important to do that in correspondence to the geo-demographical considerations.

##### 4.1.2 Develop legal and policy frameworks to enhance the ability of governments to implement urban policies

4.1.2.a Quality of law

As far as the legal framework is concerned, the most relevant laws are:

- The Law for Local Bodies No. 1 for the year 1997 describing the rules of the law in 40 articles focusing on the main responsibilities of the MoLG, the tasks of LGUs and the duties they have to undertake.
- The (draft of the amended) Law for LGUs which focuses on decentralization and restructuring of LGUs based on policies reflecting a decrease in the huge number created during the time of the PA. It also focuses on LGUs' formation, election mechanisms, appointments, tasks and funding sources.

The Palestinian President issued several presidential decrees to amend the related legislations, the last of which was in early 2016, on the amendment of Law No. 1 of 1997 for Local Authorities. Lastly, it is important to also refer to the issue of refugee participation that is still being debated among the Palestinian leadership, especially since the local elections law does not explicitly deal with the issue of refugee voting, especially those in the Diaspora. Refugees can cast their votes in presidential and legislative elections. Nevertheless, most of the non-registered refugees in the OPT, who are not living in refugee camps and therefore not served directly by UNRWA, have the right and duty to elect representatives in the areas they are living in nowadays. This situation is further complicated with the facts that many of the refugee camps in the OPT are located within the municipal jurisdiction or master plan area of LGUs, making them benefit from the services provided by these LGUs, without considering them when estimating the needed level and scope of services to be provided at the municipal level.

In Palestine, legislation on land use throughout 2019 was revised and evaluated to verify how functional and appropriate they are with respect to the existing situation of each targeted communities. National and local government officials had



their knowledge and skills enhanced on evidence-based law-making, basic drafting principles and understanding quality criteria in legislation. The fit-for-purpose regulatory-focused interventions, especially at the local level, have helped in shaping the policy interventions at the national level. Efforts now are mainstreamed towards developing specific guidelines for rural planning in the West Bank.

### 4.1.3 Implement participatory, age- and gender-responsive approaches to urban policy and planning

4.1.3.a Proportion of cities with a direct participation structure of civil society engagement in urban planning and management, which are regular and democratic

By the end of 2019, in Palestine, through its participatory spatial planning interventions in the Gaza Strip, UN-Habitat supported the provision of several awareness raising sessions on Housing, Land and Property rights (HLP) targeting the vulnerable groups, especially women, in nine marginalized localities across Gaza Strip. The sessions aimed at providing the community members with greater knowledge on HLP related matters focusing on land and tenure issues. Moreover, UN-Habitat supported the provision of individual legal counseling services to help and protect residents in need of legal counseling and support them to attain their rights. In the West Bank, efforts focused throughout 2019 on developing the capacity of the LWSC in terms of good land governance and the acceleration, mainstreaming, and policy support in land-focused indicators under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In 2019, through its support to MoLG, UN-Habitat Palestine introduced city-region plans initiatives that aim at better linking the rural areas with the main urban centers, where a revisited hierarchy for social services has been proposed to respond to the geo-political conditions on the ground. About 1.8 million Palestinians are covered by the city-region plans in Jerusalem, Ramallah & Al-Bireh, Hebron Tubas, Qalqilia and Bethlehem Governorates

### 4.1.4 Achieve women's full participation in all fields and all levels of decision-making

4.1.4.a Proportions of positions (by sex, age, persons with disabilities and population groups) in public institutions (national and local legislatures, public service, and judiciary) compared to national distributions

Palestinian women's participation in decision-making structures and capacities continues to be significantly lower than men's. On a national level, women make up only 5 per cent of the Palestinian Central Council, 11 per cent of the Palestinian National Council, and 14 per cent of the Council of Ministers. As for women's participation in the civil sector, 44 per cent of public employees are women; however, if we look at women's ranks as Director General or higher within these public institutions, they make up only 13 per cent of these higher decision-making levels (PCBS, 2020). Specifically, women make up only 7 per cent of Deputy Minister levels, 6 per cent of Assistant Deputy Minister level, 12 per cent of Director General levels; and 24 per cent of Director levels (PCBS 2018).

At the local level, only 20 per cent of seats are held by women in local governments in the West Bank; this is the highest in Bethlehem (with 21 per cent representation for women) and lowest in Tubas and Jerusalem (with 16 per cent representation for women in each governorate). Overall, with regards to women's participation in managerial positions, it is found that women's participation has been gradually declining, falling from 23.1 per cent in 2000 to 20.2 per cent in 2019. This drop is attributed to a decline in women's participation in managerial positions in the West Bank from 25.9 per cent in 2000 to 16.6 per cent in 2019. By contrast, women's labor force participation in the Gaza Strip has continued to rise, from 15 per cent in 2000 to 38.9 per cent in 2019 (UNCT and PMO, 2020).

Furthermore, women's labor force participation continues to be low, averaging 18.1 per cent in Palestine (17.4 per cent in the West Bank and 19.2 per cent in the Gaza Strip); this is well below the averages in the Middle East and North Africa of 22 per cent, as well as the global average of 38 per cent. Women entrepreneurs only account for 14.5 per cent of women's employment as well.

## 4.2. Planning and Managing Urban Spatial Development

### 4.2.1 Implement integrated and balanced territorial development policies

4.2.1.a Does the country have a National Urban Policy or Regional Development Plan that (a) responds to population dynamics, (b) ensures balanced territorial development, and (c) increase in local fiscal space

The NUP process was initiated in 2021 in Palestine and will help in implementing a balanced territorial approach in reference to the NSP that aims at assessing feasible and desirable scenarios, in terms of economic transformative processes, of the changing relative importance of sectors in GDP growth, and of the impending urbanization process of expected increasing demand for housing and services etc.

## 4.2.2 Integrate housing into urban development plans

4.2.2.a Proportion of urban population living in slums, informal settlements or inadequate housing

Palestinian refugees resulting from the 1948 and 1967 wars are living in 19 camps in Palestine run by UNRWA with 828,328 refugees. These refugee camps are associated with high degrees of informality. In Area C of the West Bank, the Israeli military has forcibly displaced 2,841 Palestinians including 1,435 children, with 13,152 others affected since 2016. Additionally, there is a trend of high internal migration from Area C to Areas A and B for seeking access to better basic services, jobs and homes, given that Israeli policies in Area C make it difficult for communities to build and have adequate infrastructure, where only 2 per cent of permits to build were approved between 2009 and 2018. This is exacerbated by the fact that the demolitions of homes and infrastructure by the Israeli occupation has intensified in recent years. Internal migration is found to be at 10.8 per cent in the Gaza Strip and 8.9 per cent in the West Bank including a clear predominance of women, which is more accentuated in the West Bank compared to Gaza Strip (58 and 43.5 men per 100 women, respectively) (PCBS, 2020).

In Jerusalem, divided into East and West by the pre-1967 border (1949 Armistice border) and “reunified” by Israel in 1981, Palestinians are not allowed to return to their homes or purchase property in West Jerusalem, and only have residency status in East Jerusalem and are under threat of losing their residency if they cannot prove that Jerusalem is their centre of life. Palestinians in East Jerusalem also face high taxes and fines, and limited construction permits, while Jewish persons are allowed to reclaim or confiscate homes in East Jerusalem.

## 4.2.3 Include culture as a priority component of urban planning

4.2.3.a Total expenditure (public and private) per capita spent on the preservation, protection and conservation of all cultural and natural heritage, by type of heritage, level of government, type of expenditure and type of private funding

The State of Palestine was admitted as a full member State of The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in November 2011, which allowed for accessing and ratifying UNESCO’s conventions in the field of culture, among them is the UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972 World Heritage Convention). Since the ratification of this convention, the PA managed to inscribe three cultural heritage sites on the World Heritage List. Additionally, as a custodian on the holy sites in Jerusalem, the Kingdom of Jordan inscribed the Old City of Jerusalem as a World Heritage List in 1981.

The four sites on the World Heritage List were also inscribed on the World Heritage List in Danger due to risks that threaten the Outstanding Universal Values of the sites according to the World Heritage Committee decisions. On 2 July 2019, the Church of Nativity, after substantial restoration, was removed from the list of world heritage sites in danger, which is a significant achievement for the PA responsible for the conservation and management of the property.

Furthermore, a tentative list which is an inventory of those properties which each State Party intends to consider for nomination for Palestine was put together, covering 14 sites across the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

## 4.2.4 Strengthen the role of small and intermediate cities and towns

4.2.4.a Does your country have a National Urban Policy or Regional Development Plan that (a) responds to population dynamics, (b) ensures balanced territorial development, and (c) increase in local fiscal space.

During the development of urban growth scenarios for five main Palestinian urban areas, MoLG, with support from the World Bank, targeted 13 towns within the urban area of Nablus City, two towns within the urban area of Ramallah and Al-Bireh cities, five cities and towns within the urban area of Bethlehem City, and four towns within the urban area of

Hebron city, in terms of joint spatial and strategic planning, capacity development, and enhancing sustainable development, through implementing demand-driven interventions.

## 4.2.5 Implement sustainable multimodal public transport systems including non-motorized options

### 4.2.5.a Proportion of population that has convenient access to public transport, by sex, age and persons with disabilities

Based on data from the Ministry of Transportation, the current length of public transportation routes in the West Bank is 1107.8 km<sup>1</sup>. The total built-up area with convenient access is 251,684.6 dunums, which is 67.3 per cent of the total size of the West Bank. Within this area, the built-up area with convenient access in Area C, home for 300,000 Palestinians, is 36,616.7 dunums which constitutes 14.5 per cent of the total built-up area with convenient access to public transportation in the West Bank. MoLG estimated the built-up area in the Palestinian territories to be 749,769 dunums.

The convenient access area, in which the population has convenient access to the public transport systems, can be calculated using a Geographic Information System (GIS) software, namely ArcGIS, by creating a polygon buffer zone of 500 meters width from the public transport routes (each side). The convenient access area was found to be 1,231,808 dunums. When intersecting the convenient access area with the built-up area, this results in an intersection area of 406,786 dunums, that presents 54.25 per cent of the built-up area of the Palestinian territories.<sup>2</sup>

As reported by the Household Expenditure and Consumption Survey (PCBS, 2017), the average household monthly expenditure is USD 1,318 in Palestine (USD 1,613 in the West Bank and USD 784 in Gaza Strip). Accordingly, Palestinians are spending about 14 per cent of their income on transportation (16 per cent in the West Bank and eight per cent in Gaza Strip). The percentage of spending on transportation by Palestinian household is considered high compared to the 5 per cent global standard of affordability (UNCT and PMO, 2020).

## 4.3. Means of Implementation

The State of Palestine was the first country submitting its national report to the Habitat III Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, during which the NUA was signed off. At the Habitat Conference, Palestine was the Vice President showing high commitment and political will to sustainable urban development and housing issues. MoLG is the mandated governmental body to follow on the NUA in cooperation with other national institutions, including the Ministry of Public Works and Housing, the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, the Environment Quality Authority, and others. To avoid new bureaucratic layouts, MoLG decided to use the National Committee of Goal 11 in place to support the implementation of the NUA in Palestine.

## 4.4. Capacity Development

In line with the commitment of the NDP 2021-2023, the PA institutions support advancing the PA citizen engagement agenda across the board to improve governance, institutional development and close collaboration with citizens. Participatory citizen engagement and feedback mechanisms are already existent. The PA is committed to continue providing training and capacity building to utilities and municipalities/local governments to assist them in inculcating a citizen engagement strategy in their strategic outlook and day-to-day operations.

### 4.4.1 Expand opportunities for city-to-city cooperation and fostering exchanges of urban solutions and mutual learning

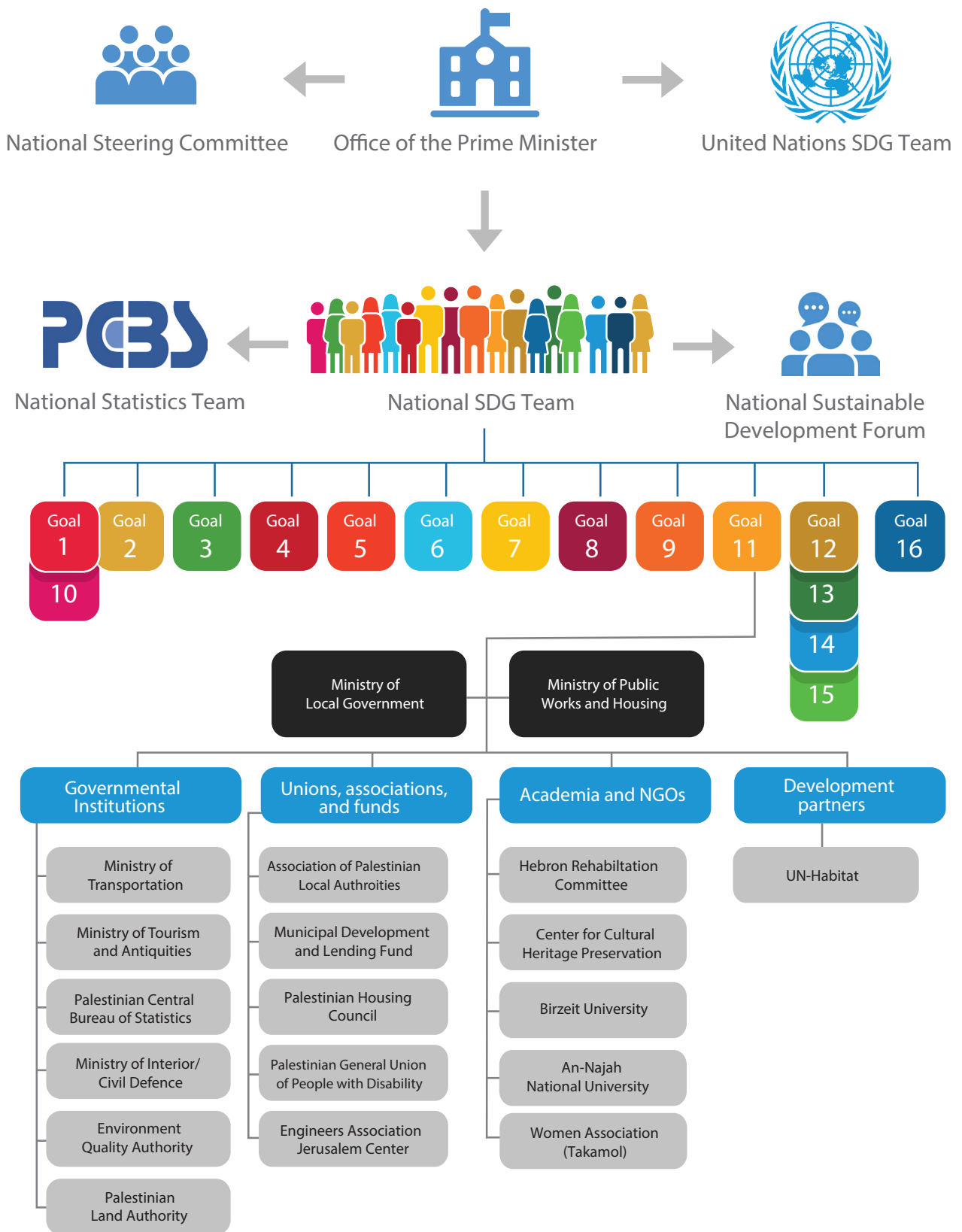
#### 4.4.1.b Number of public water and sanitation utilities participating in institutional capacity development programmes

There are seven joint service councils for managing water and wastewater utilities in the West Bank. These councils are targeted with institutional capacity development programmes by the MoLG.

### 4.4.2 Build capacity of all levels of government to work with vulnerable groups to participate effectively in decision-making about urban and territorial development

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<sup>1</sup> The convenient access area was only calculated for the West Bank. The public transport routes in Gaza Strip were not identified.



#### 4.4.3.a Proportion of cities with a direct participation structure of civil society engagement in urban planning and management, which are regular and democratic

In line with the 2011 policy paper on promoting and institutionalizing public participation in local government units' affairs endorsed by MoLG, all LGUs are requested to form "public participation" committees, which are approved in a council formal meeting. The LGUs are requested to inform MoLG of the formation of these committees in preparation for MoLG's approval. Along this, there are a set of policy priorities including promoting sound public participation concepts and practices in LGU's affairs; gradual implementation of public participation activities at different levels; and institutionalizing oversight over the implementation of public participation practices identified by MoLG. All these policies aims to enhance and institutionalize public participation in LGUs' affairs; promote good governance practices in LGUs' affairs; strengthen levels of trust between citizens and public institutions, citizens and LGUs; develop means of communication that provide an opportunity for citizens to access information and provide feedback on LGUs' affairs, and participate in the LGU planning and decision-making processes; increase the effectiveness of LGUs' services in terms of responsiveness to local needs and priorities and ensure fairness in service delivery distribution; raise the awareness of citizens and institutions on their role in supporting local development; increase citizens' sense of loyalty, responsibility and commitment to the community and promote the community's sense of ownership in public achievements and properties, and the need to safeguard them; enhance the local community's cohesion and the sense of uniting around public goals; and support initiatives and contributions of citizens and institutions to serve the public interest and contribute to local development.

The planning process in Palestine puts the needs of the people as its priority. Public participation on all levels targeting all parties is highly encouraged in the Palestinian context and provides more understanding of the people's needs and visions. A clear embodiment of public participation in Palestine is the preparation of Master Plans where local communities and related parties are the core of the planning process as they participate in all stages of the planning process from the start of the preparation of the master plans until the advertisement for public objections and final approval. This approach of planning is applied in both Areas A, B and also C, where the local community is the decision maker. Up until now, 249 Local Outline Plans were prepared and approved in Areas A and B, while only five Local Outline Plans are approved by the Israeli authorities in Area C.

## 4.5 Information Technology and Innovation

For the past decade, the PA has included e-government as a national priority in all its main policy documents and strategies. With varying degrees of relevance and depth, Information Community Technology – as applied to the public sector – has progressively gained importance and is now fully integrated in all Palestinian efforts to develop a modern, efficient, and well-functioning government administration. Digital technology will not only multiply the positive contribution that individual sectors are already making, but also catalyze the synergies across various sectors of the Palestinian economy (OECD, 2011).

The Ministerial Committee for e-government, established under the impetus of President Abbas, produced a first comprehensive e-government Strategic Plan in 2005. The document was part of the PA's vision "to provide a better life for our citizens by being a government that: empowers citizens to participate in government; connects citizens, the private sector and institutions to drive economic growth and meet community challenges; and delivers real public value through citizen-centric government services."

With the recently approved NDP 2021-2023, the PA, with support from the World Bank, will support the development and implementation of an e-government system and facilitate the use of digital technologies for COVID-19 response, recovery, and resilience. Furthermore, interactive digital education content will be provided to enable high-quality teaching and learning (e.g., Arabic, English, Math, Sciences, digital skills) during and in the aftermath of COVID-19 crisis (The World Bank Group, 2021). In 2018, MoLG endorsed the Strategic Framework towards Electronic Municipalities (2019-2023) to provide smart electronic municipal services to enhance the quality of life of citizens (MoLG, 2018).



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## Annex: Urban Profile



# Introduction

In 2015, the State of Palestine committed to the attainment of the Agenda for Sustainable Development by the year 2030 – a blueprint for achieving sustainable development through working towards the attainment of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as an urgent call for action that recognizes that the ending of poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve the environment. The purpose of this Goal 11 Status Report is to report on progress towards Palestine's achievement of Goal 11, which aims to "Make Cities and Human Settlements Inclusive, Safe, Resilient and Sustainable".

The Goal 11 Status Report covers the period from 2015 until June 2021, changing variably depending on the available data for each target and/or indicator. It also captures the policy priorities of the Palestinian government and the impact of COVID-19 on the attainment of all targets and related indicators. The report aims to act as a tool for the public, policy makers as well as development actors involved in the urban development sector to share a common knowledge base and set a common agenda towards the advancement of Goal 11 in order to support the transformation into safer and more inclusive cities in Palestine.

The various protracted and latest political, health and socio-economic challenges caused an unprecedented fis-

cal crisis and simultaneously imperilled progress on Goal 11 and the other goals. This has made their achievement more urgent and necessary to transit from the humanitarian trap towards sustainable development while making sure to leave no one and no place behind.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that cities are at the forefront in the fight against the pandemic in addition to their importance in mitigating any future threats by building long-term societal, economic and environmental resilience against recurring natural and manmade catastrophes. Additionally, the Israeli escalations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip have further devastated the economy and reversed efforts that were made towards establishing a more sustainable urban environment in Palestine. It is estimated that the economic cost of violence as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Palestine reached 13 per cent in 2018; depending on the stability (or lack, thereof) of the political situation, this figure is expected to be significantly higher in periods with intense escalations in conflict (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), 2021). However, and despite these challenges, the State of Palestine has made notable strides with regards to fostering people-centred planning and integrated national and sub-national spatial policies in addition to supporting the local government sector to improve citizens' engagement and representation.

The Palestinian government's National Development Plan (NDP) 2021-2023 and its priorities are directly aligned with Goal 11. The NDP's priorities are also reflected in the Palestinian governments' sector strategies for local government, housing and public works, transportation, environment, land, culture, youth and gender equality.

The Goal 11 Status Report was prepared in participation of various government, municipal, and national and international non-governmental organisations. Report preparation and all meetings and consultations conducted were supervised by the Ministry of Local Government (MoLG).

The report covers 10 targets and 15 related indicators which fall under Goal 11; the majority of which were measured at the local level and progress reported at the national level. The report also lists the policy priorities of the Palestinian government for the upcoming period, which are based on the results and the needed policy change, and are crucial to advance the attainment of Goal 11 by the year 2030.

## Geo-Political and Economic Context

The Palestinian people have been subjected to a century of occupation that has resulted in the dispossession and displacement of the Palestinian people, wherein the majority of the population have become refugees. According to the latest figures by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) in 2018, there are more than 13.05 million Palestinians in the world, 4.91 million reside in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT): West Bank, including East Jerusalem and Gaza Strip (2.95 million and 1.96 million, respectively); another 1.57 million of Palestinians live in Israel; 5.85 million live in Arab countries; and approximately 717,000 live in other countries. OPT, defined as the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and the Gaza Strip, is a state under occupation according to the United Nations General Assembly Resolution No. 67/19 of the year 2012 and has acquired a permanent observer state in the United Nations General Assembly in 2011. OPT consists of two physically separated landmasses, namely the West Bank and the Gaza Strip with a total area of 5,660 km<sup>2</sup> and 365 km<sup>2</sup>, respectively.

The Palestinian government faces the unique challenge of integrating physical spaces that have been forcibly separated. The Israeli occupation has kept the OPT physically and socially separated, increasingly so since the signing of the Oslo Accords in the mid-1990s. After Oslo, a new complex legal and planning scheme was created, one for the West Bank and another for the Gaza Strip, while leaving the issue of authority over East Jerusalem

for future negotiations, effectively leaving it under the control of the Israeli occupation through its illegal annexation in 1980. The Gaza Strip was physically cut off from the West Bank but was largely under Palestinian administrative and planning control. Despite the fact that the Oslo Accords included a provision requiring a safe passage route from the Gaza Strip to the West Bank to enable free movement between the two sides, Israel never allowed it to be implemented. Thus, while the Palestinian Authority (PA) has theoretically total civil authority over the Gaza Strip, since 2005, it has not had effective control over its borders, economic development, and infrastructural development.

The West Bank, under the Oslo Accords, was divided into three geopolitical classifications: Areas A, B, and C. Area A makes up 17.7 per cent of the West Bank and consists of the Palestinian city centres (excluding major parts of the city of Hebron), is under Palestinian civil and security control; Area B makes up 18.3 per cent of the West Bank and consists of the Palestinian built-up areas surrounding Area A, is under Palestinian civil control and Israeli security control; and Area C makes up 61 per cent of the West Bank and consists of rural and agricultural lands, and is under Israeli civil and security control. The Nature Reserve area makes up 3 per cent of the West Bank area and is still under Israeli control which is in contradiction to the interim agreement signed between the PA and Israel. It is important to note that there is no contiguity to these

classifications, and therefore Areas A and B are scattered all over the West Bank. These area classifications were meant to be temporary, with land being phased into total Palestinian control by the end of the five-year interim period as designated by the Oslo Accords, and was set to end with final status negotiations in 1999.

Not only did the final status negotiations not take place, thereby maintaining the geopolitical classifications leaving East Jerusalem under Israeli legal and administrative control with the PA having no authority and forbidden from operating within its municipal boundaries, but the Israeli authorities intensified the establishment of illegal Israeli settlements across the West Bank and the displacement of Palestinians with illegal Israeli settlers.

Palestine is therefore characterized by the presence of two contradictory planning schemes that aim at exploiting its natural resources to serve two different peoples: the Palestinians and the illegal Israeli settlers. Lack of sovereignty over land, including the fertile lands of the Jordan Valley and other areas rich with natural resources in Area C, has denied the Palestinian people their rights to regulate land use, curb the increased urbanization and overcrowdedness of Areas A and B, and manage their own resources, without exceeding their carrying capacity. While the comprehensive plans of the Israeli authorities in the State of Palestine have been geared by political factors, aiming at changing the demographic

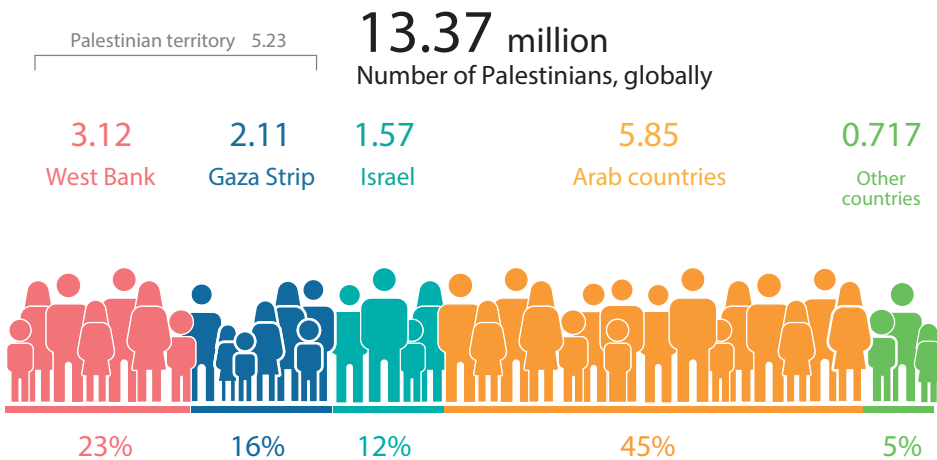
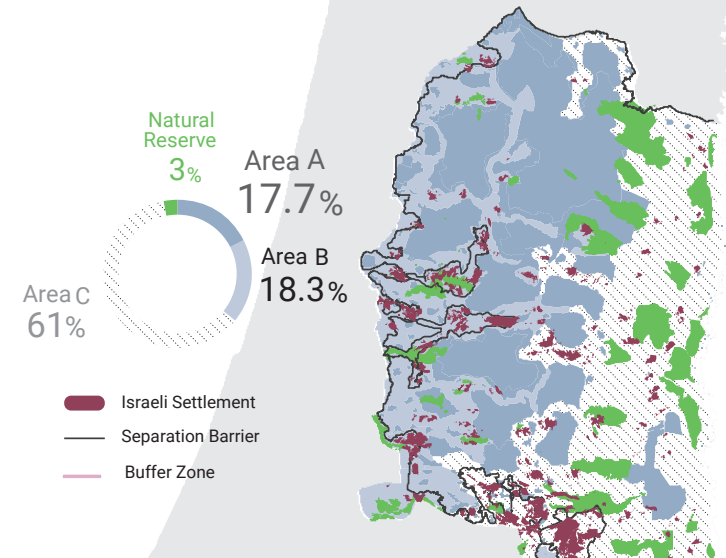
characteristics in Area C – where annexation plans of the Jordan Valley and settlements blocks were announced, illegal settlement activity continues at a rapid pace, and policies and actions ensure a coercive environment, evidenced by the confiscation of Palestinian land, demolition of Palestinian property and resulting displacement now at their highest levels since 2016 (United Nations Human Rights Commissioner (UNHCR), 2021), in addition to daily settler violence on Palestinians, including their infrastructure, agriculture and livestock. Latest data from 2019 shows that there are 661,600 Israeli settlers in the West Bank, 220,000 of whom are in East Jerusalem, compared to a total of 116,300 settlers in 1993 (UNHCR, 2021); more than a quadruple fold increase in less than three decades. Demolitions of Palestinian construction (e.g. houses and public and private assets) witnessed a surge in both East Jerusalem and Area C of the West Bank during the same period. The PCBS estimates that 19 per cent of all demolitions occurred in East Jerusalem, 79 per cent in Area C, and about 2 per cent of the demolitions were in Areas A and B (PCBS, 2020).

Israel unilaterally started building a Separation Barrier in 2002 in the West Bank. The Barrier's route separates Palestinian communities and farming land from the rest of the West Bank contributing to the fragmentation of the OPT. The inclusion of Israeli settlements built in the West Bank is the single most important factor behind the deviation of the barrier's route from the Green Line, including occupied East Jerusalem.

The International Court of Justice in its 2004 Advisory Opinion, established that the sections of the Separation Barrier which run inside the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, together with the associated gate and permit regime, violate Israel's obligations under international law (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 2013).

In addition to the above geopolitical challenges, the PA also faces a serious fiscal crisis made worse with the COVID-19 pandemic. International aid to the PA's budget has significantly plummeted in recent years reaching USD 488 million in 2020, 20 per cent less than in

## Geopolitical map

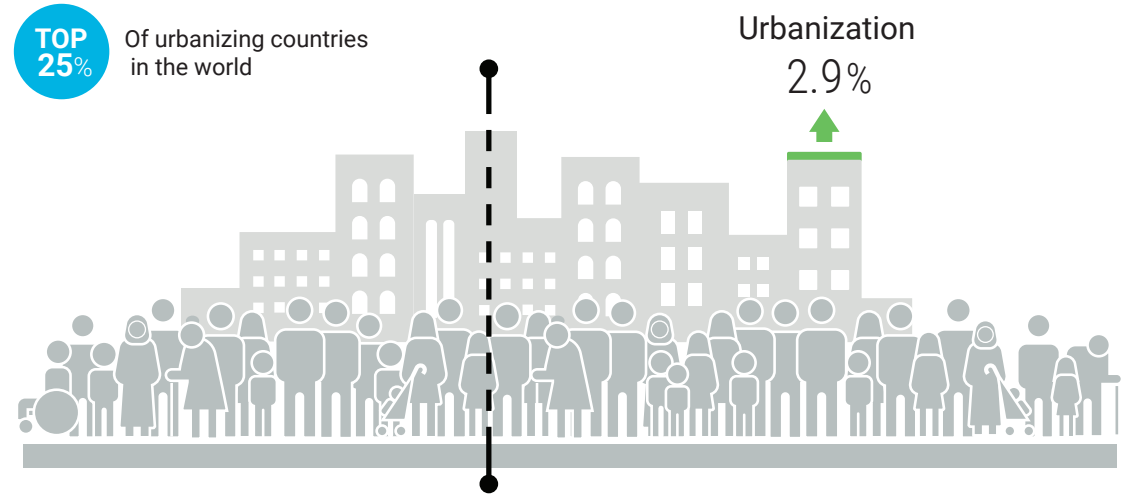


2019 and the lowest in over a decade (The World Bank Group, 2021).

The fiscal crisis was compounded with the punitive measures imposed by the Israeli government of withholding clearance tax revenues on various occasions. Such revenues constitute the main source of funds for the Palestinian budget, around 70 per cent, that covers current expenditures including the salary bill and other recurrent spending. On the macro level, the Palestinian economy witnessed a decline in GDP of 12 per cent during 2020 compared to 2019 (PCBS, 2021) as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated full and partial lockdowns, crippling the economy.

Housing, land, and property rights are the driving force behind the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including the most recent escalations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, stemming from the battle for sovereignty over strategic areas in East Jerusalem. The periodic escalations further devastate the economy and reverse efforts that were made towards a more sustainable urban environment in Palestine.

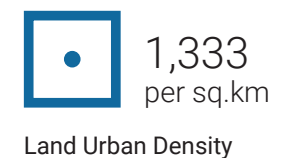
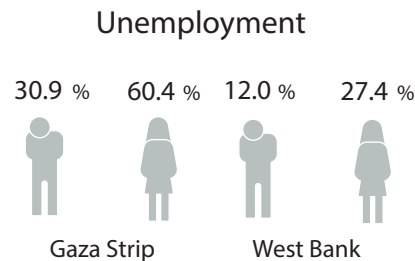
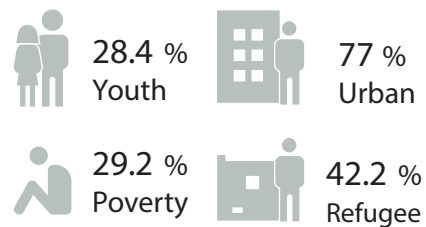
## State of Palestine: Key Facts



**40%**  
(2.11 million)  
Gaza Strip

**5.23 million**  
Total population project 2021

**60%**  
(3.12 million)  
West Bank



## Goal 11 Targets and Indicators



### Target 11.1

By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums.

11.1.1 Proportion of urban population living in slums, informal settlements or inadequate housing. [Tier I]



### Target 11.2

By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons.

11.2.1 Proportion of population that has convenient access to public transport, by sex, age and persons with disabilities. [Tier II]



### Target 11.3

By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries.

11.3.1 Ratio of land consumption rate to population growth rate [Tier II]

11.3.2 Proportion of cities with a direct participation structure of civil society in urban planning and management that operate regularly and democratically [Tier III]



### Target 11.4

Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage

11.4.1 Total expenditure (public and private) per capita spent on the preservation, protection and conservation of all cultural and natural heritage, by type of heritage (cultural, natural, mixed and World Heritage Centre designation), level of government (national, regional and local/municipal), type of expenditure (operating expenditure/investment) and type of private funding (donations in kind, private non-profit sector and sponsorship). [Tier III]



### Target 11.5

By 2030, Significantly reduce the number of deaths and number of people affected and substantially decrease the direct economic losses relative to global gross domestic product caused by disasters, including water-related disasters with a focus on protecting the poor and people in vulnerable situations

11.5.1 Number of deaths, missing persons and directly affected persons attributed to disasters per 100,000 population [Tier II]

11.5.2 Direct disaster economic loss in relation to global GDP, damage to critical infrastructure and number of disruptions to basic services, attributed to disasters [Tier I]



### Target 11.6

By 2030, reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management

11.6.1 Proportion of urban solid waste regularly collected and with adequate final discharge out of total urban solid waste generated, by cities. [Tier II]

11.6.2 Annual mean levels of fine particulate matter (e.g PM 2.5 and PM 10) in cities



### Target 11.7

By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities

11.7.1 Average share of the built-up area of cities that is open space for public use for all, by sex, age and persons with disabilities. [Tier III]

11.7.2 Proportion of persons victim of physical or sexual harassment, by sex, age, disability status and place of occurrence, in the previous 12 months. [Tier III]



### Target 11.a

Support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning.

11.a.1 Proportion of population living in cities that implement urban and regional development plans integrating population projections and resource needs, by size of city [Tier III]



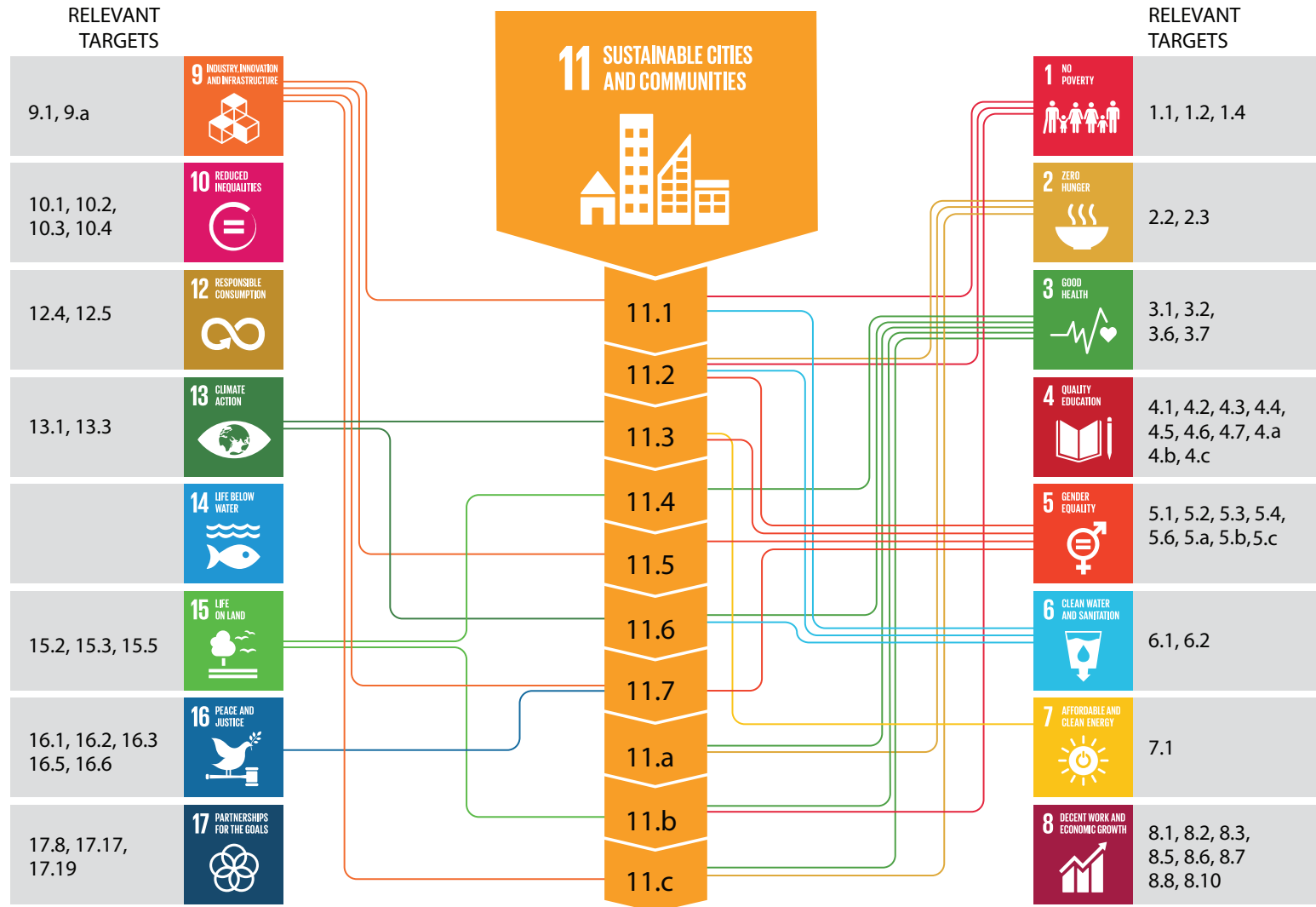
### Target 11.b

By 2020, substantially increase the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, resilience to disasters, and develop and implement, in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 holistic disaster risk management at all levels.

11.b.1 Number of countries that adopt and implement national disaster in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 a. [Tier I]

11.b.2 Proportion of local governments that adopt and implement local disaster risk reduction strategies in line with national disaster risk reduction strategies [Tier II]

## Interlinkages between SDG 11 and other SDGs



Source: United Nations (2018).



## 11.1 Safe and Affordable Housing

Ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums

Despite accelerating population growth and stagnant economic growth, the housing sector remains a significant sector in Palestine due to its political and national significance. While there are no slums in Palestine, the main challenges facing the housing sector are the issues of unsuitable, unaffordable and overcrowded housing. There is also a crucial need to integrate the housing sector into national and local urban policies, improve regulatory frameworks and prioritize policy objectives related to the expansion of affordable housing to reduce financial burden on citizens, control urban sprawl and hence have better control over land.

Another challenge to housing adequacy is the existence of an Israeli planning regime controlling the macro planning space of the West Bank through the expansion of illegal settlements, the construction of bypass roads across the West Bank and the demolition of Palestinian houses and livelihood structures, violating international humanitarian and human right laws. In East Jerusalem, Israeli policies are directed towards creating impossible conditions for Palestinian citizens to build new housing units, this includes but is not limited to zoning policies, forcible evictions, weak municipal services, made worse by policies that threaten residency rights of those that live or work outside the municipal boundary.

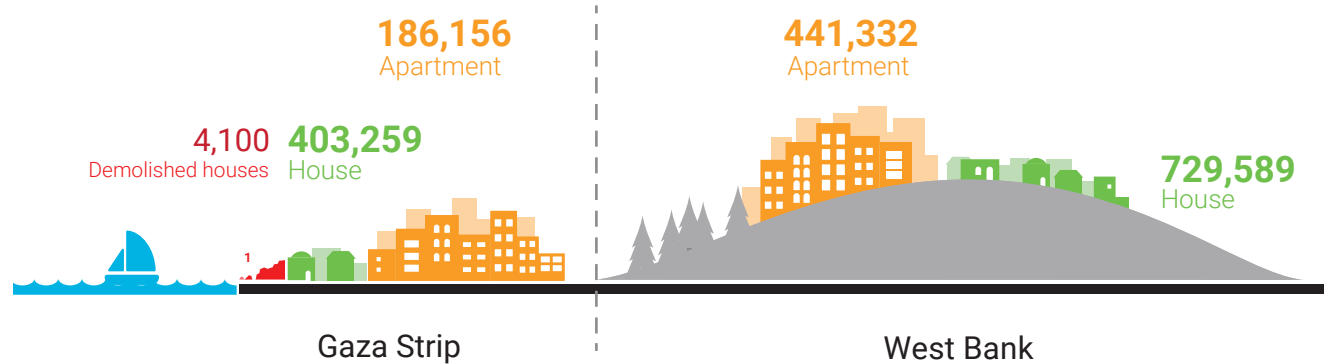
The worsening situation in Palestinian urban centres is exacerbated by the lack of a political solution to the situation of Palestinian refugees residing in the OPT, as well as the continuous Israeli military operations on the Gaza Strip and shelling of residential units leaving thousands of Palestinian civilians homeless.

### Urban population living in slums, informal settlements or inadequate housing



Source: PCBS (2018).

## Building and housing units in Palestine



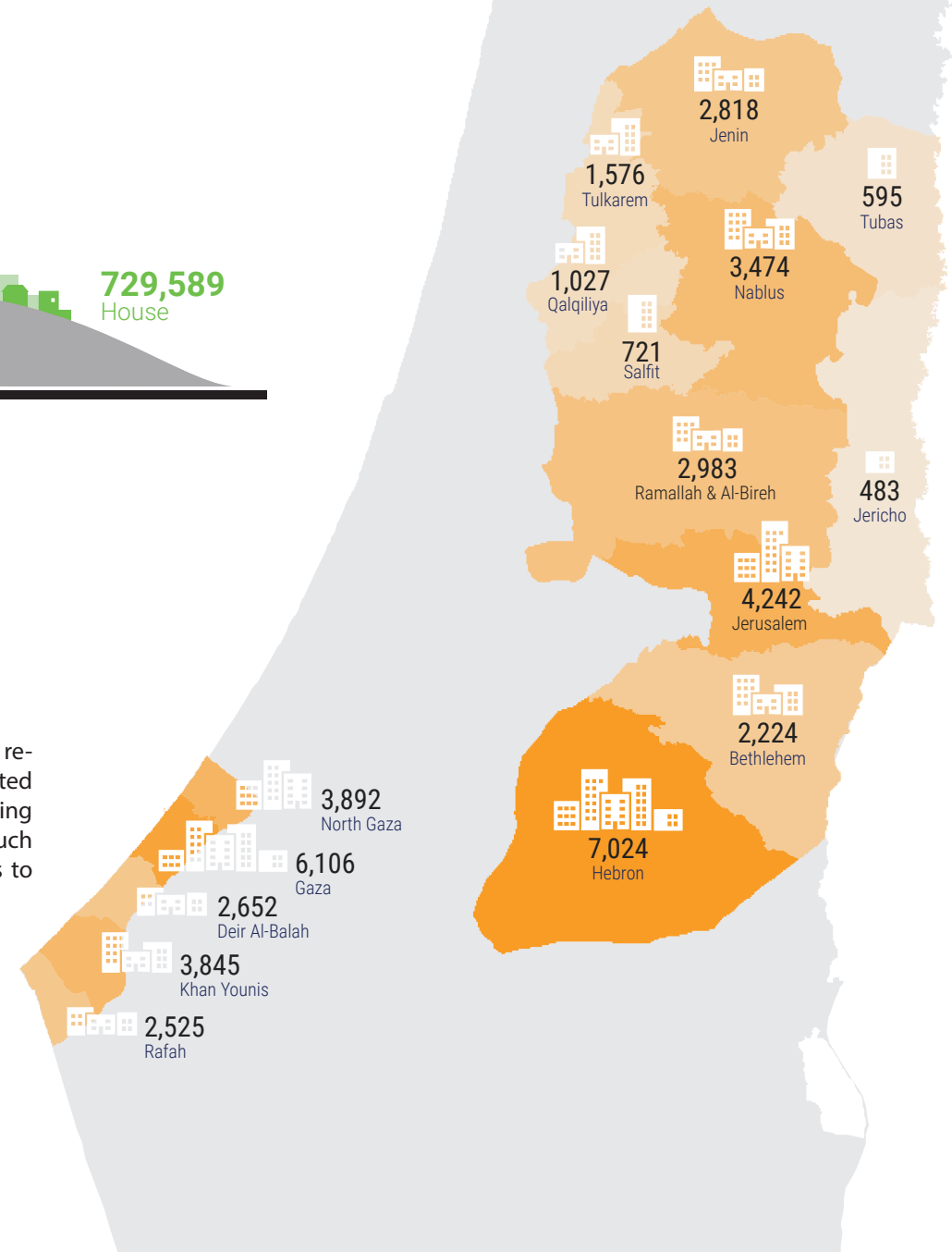
## Housing needs in Palestine in 2020



Currently, the Gaza Strip is facing a chronic shortage of 19,020 housing units, excluding the replenishment of the damaged housing units as a result of conflict. In the West Bank, the estimated needs are 27,168 units. The housing sector in East Jerusalem is currently in need of 15,600 housing unit and 3,500 unit every year (International Peace and Cooperation Center (IPCC), 2020). Such scarcity of housing units, including affordable housing, is causing thousands of Palestinians to leave the city to live in the suburbs, outside the Separation Barrier.

<sup>1</sup> Additionally, it is worth noting that in 2020, it was estimated that 300,000 Palestinians are in need of humanitarian assistance, especially in the shelter and Non-Food Items sector (ESCWA, 2021).

Sources: Ministry of Public Works and Housing (2019), Records. PMO and UNCT (2020). Atlas of Sustainable Development. pp. 52..



## Housing Affordability

### Average household monthly expenditure

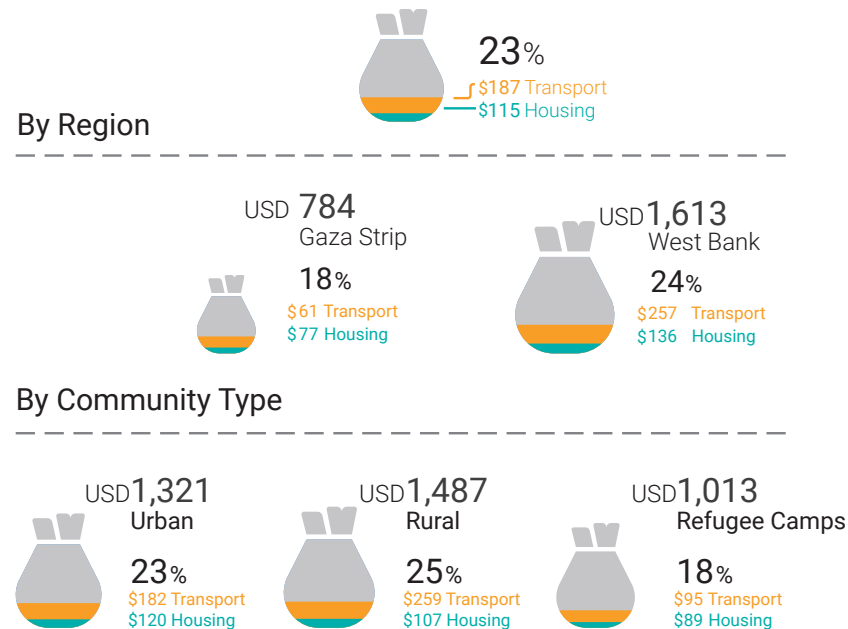
In Palestine, 38.8 per cent of households live in houses and 59.2 per cent live in apartments. In terms of ownership, 87.7 per cent of households live in owned housing units and 7.9 per cent live in rented housing units. While the relatively high percentage of households living in owned housing units may, at a first glance, indicate a

trend of affordability, the reality is that households opt to own housing (primarily apartments) because of the high cost of rental housing (comparable to the monthly loan payment), despite the high housing cost and strict mortgage financing.

Due to artificial land scarcity phenomenon, Palestinians are left with no option but to build within the PA's planning jurisdictions, that represent less than 40 per cent of the mass area in the West Bank. This results in weak urban conditions and over-crowdedness, especially in urban centers and main cities.

### Average household monthly expenditure

USD 1,318 Palestine



### Overcrowded Housing



Sources: PCBS (2018) and PMO and UNCT (2020), Atlas of Sustainable Development, pp. 52.

Source: PCBS (2019)

## Proportion of unsuitable housing units out of the overall housing stock in Palestine



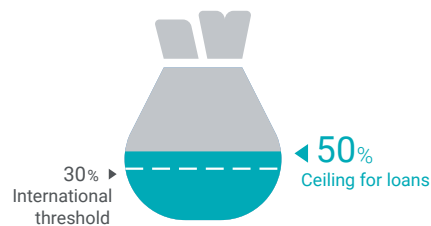
Source: PCBS (2018)

Despite the low rate of unsuitable housing in Palestine in general, the housing sector is in need of modernization. This is the result of many internal and external factors, including limitation on importing construction materials in the Gaza Strip, along with the traditional construction methods that do not integrate environmentally-sustainable aspects.



©UN-Habitat (2019). Imneizel, Hebron, Area C, West Bank, Palestine

Adequate and affordable housing is key for sustainable development and social equity. The housing sector needs better integration into urban policies. Inadequate urban planning and weak regulatory frameworks have left little room for government to maneuver against speculation over land, urban sprawl and spatial segregation. Housing adequacy in Palestine has been also severely affected by the Israeli occupation including settlements expansion and housing demolition.



## Affordability

Palestine Monetary Authority allowed ceiling for loans - up to 50 per cent of monthly income

Ministry of Public Works and Housing indicates that cases ranges between 30 - 50 per cent of loans to own houses in Palestinian banks



## Housing cost

West Bank

500 - 700 USD per sq.m

Interest rate

5 - 6.5%

Tukey

375 - 550  
USD per m<sup>2</sup>

Algeria

8%

India

250  
USD per m<sup>2</sup>

Jordan

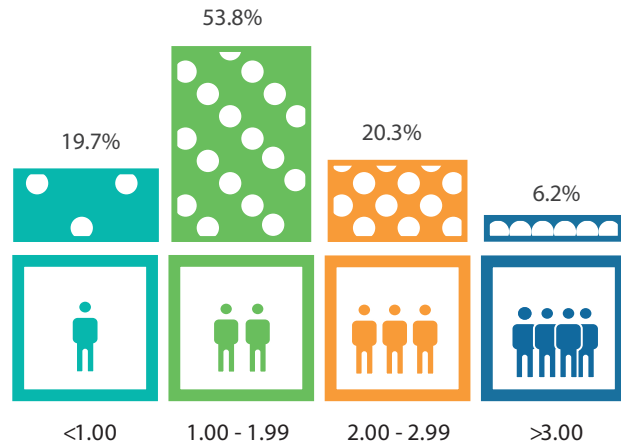
8%

Kuwait

4.1%

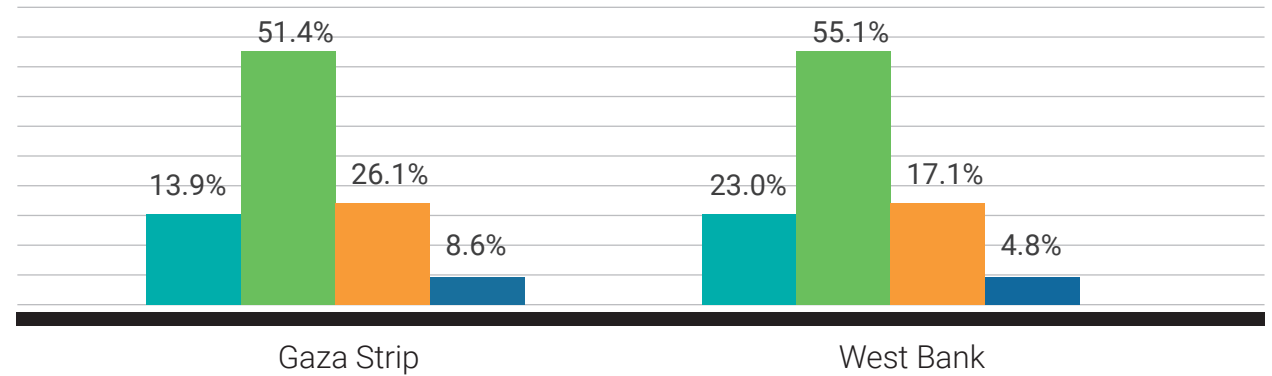
Sources: Office of the Quartet Representative  
The World Bank Group (2020)

# Housing Density

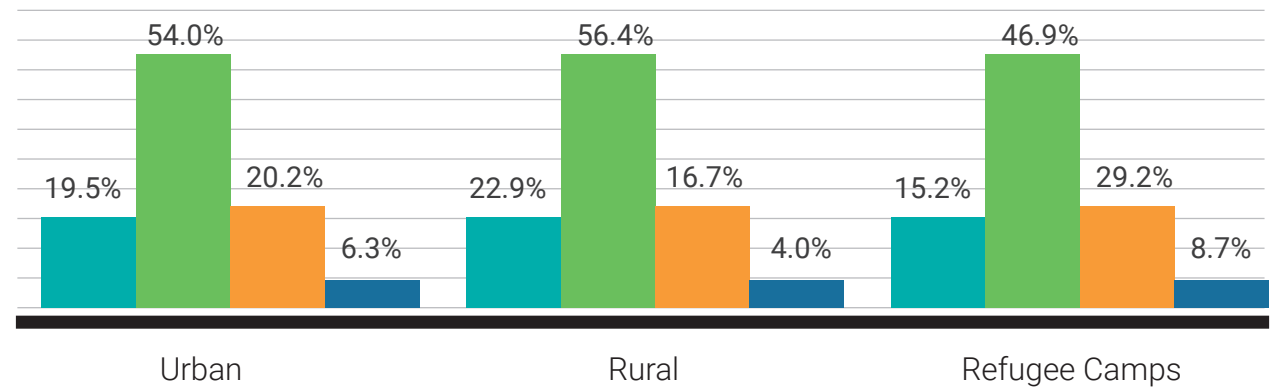


Source: PCBS (2019)

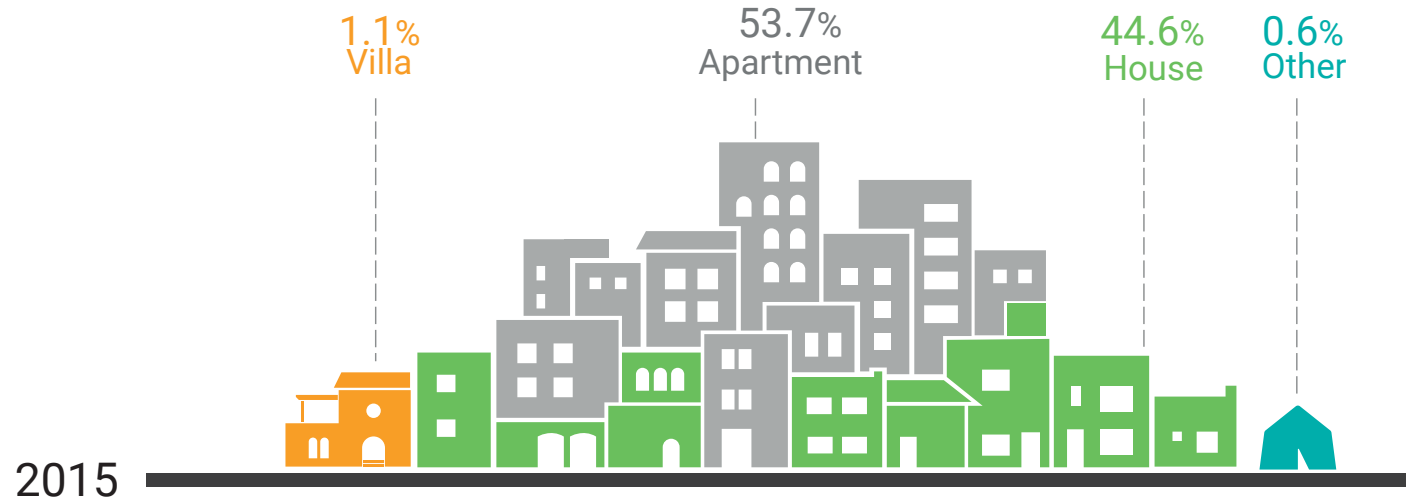
## By region



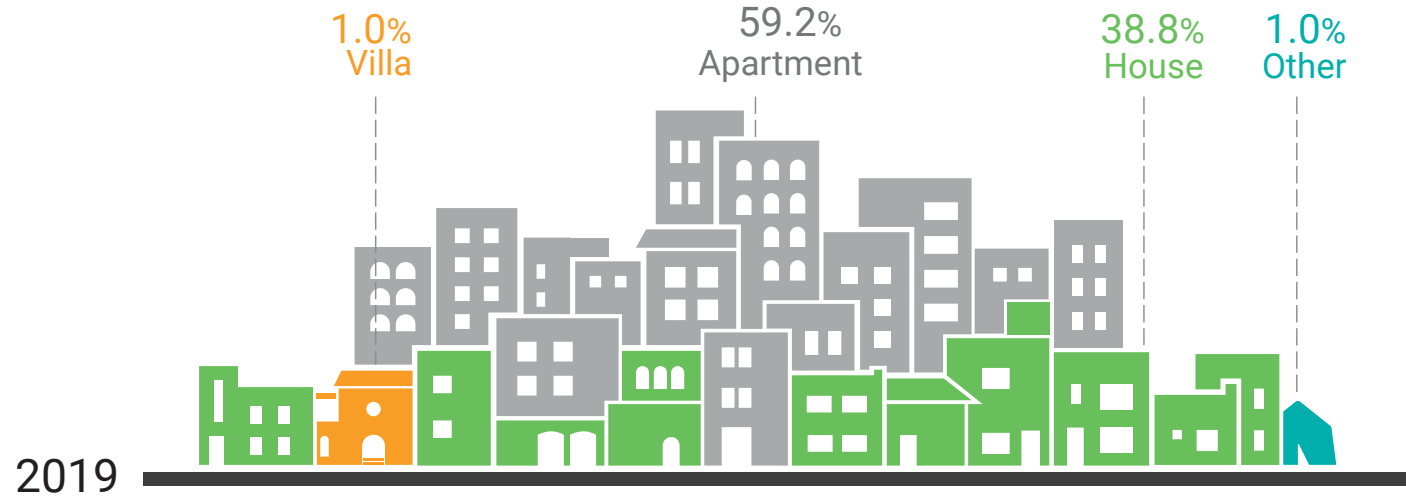
## By community type



## Percentage distribution of household in Palestine by the type of housing



Source: PCBS (2015)



Source: PCBS (2019)

## East Jerusalem

East Jerusalem is suffering from informal housing due to the Israeli occupation, although Palestinians represent 38 per cent (a total of 341,400 people) of the total population of Jerusalem. The Israeli Jerusalem Municipality spends less than 16 per cent of its budget on Palestinian neighbourhoods. Additionally, 76 per cent of Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem and 83 per cent of the children live below the Israel-defined poverty line (Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute, 2020).

At the same time, Palestinian citizens are facing various policies aimed at forcing Palestinians outside the city to maintain a Jewish majority. These restrictions impact ev-

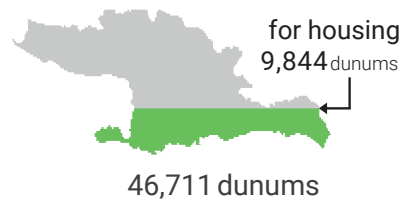
ery aspect of Palestinian's lives, e.g., housing, education, economic development, health, mobility and accessibility, public space, etc.

This dim situation is compounded by bureaucratic processes that make it almost impossible and extremely expensive for Palestinians to get a building permit. One of these tools that are employed to discriminate against Palestinians is the system of statutory spatial planning and housing. The latter is associated with land registration, including proof of ownership, accepted by the Israeli law. In occupied East Jerusalem, at least a third of all Palestinian homes lack Israeli-issued building permits, potentially placing over 100,000 residents - 180 Palestinian households - at risk of displacement, particularly

in the Old City, Silwan and Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhoods (United Nations Country Team and the Prime Minister's Office (UNCT and PMO), 2020).

Revoking residency is another measure used by the Government of Israel to reduce the Palestinian population in the city; specifically, since 1967, over 14,500 Palestinians have had their Jerusalem residency revoked by the Israeli authorities (OCHA, 2017).

## East Jerusalem



5.2

Household size  
(compared to 3.4 in  
West Jerusalem)



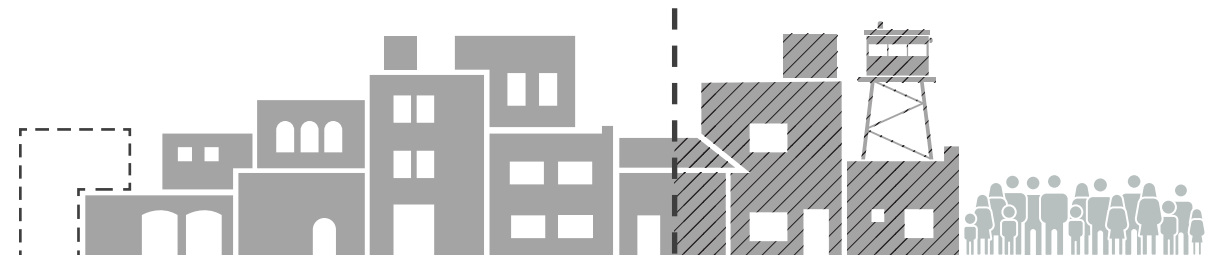
192 %

Housing prices  
(between 2007 - 2012)

## Housing Shortage

15,600 Units

3,500 Unit/Year



1/3 of homes in East Jerusalem lack building permits, potentially placing over 100,000 residents at risk of displacement

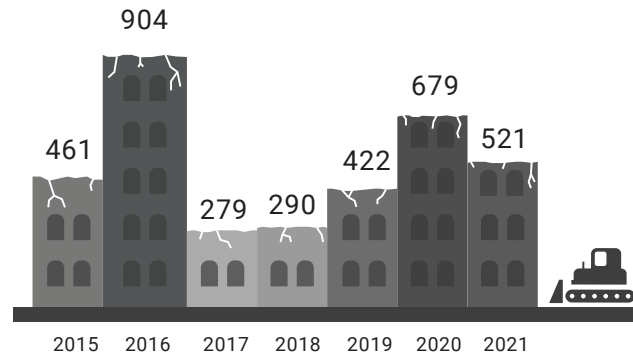
At least 180 Palestinian households in East Jerusalem are at risk of imminent forced displacement due to settler activities, particularly in the Old City, Silwan and Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhoods

Sources: IPCC (2013) and (2020)

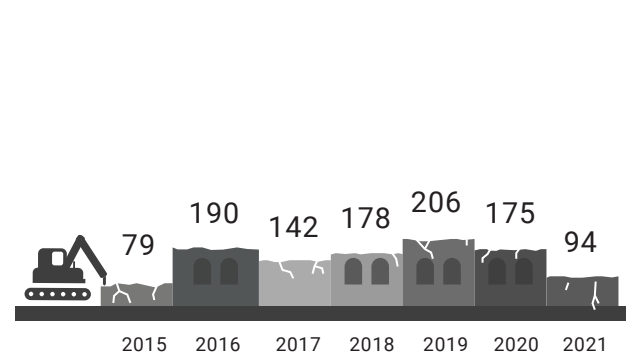
### Demolitions in Area C and East Jerusalem

Area C is home to approximately 300,000 Palestinians, where building any residential or public facility is not permitted by Israel, and the Israeli authorities impose a strict planning regime that demolishes new Palestinian construction. This also applies to East Jerusalem.

#### Demolished structures in Area C



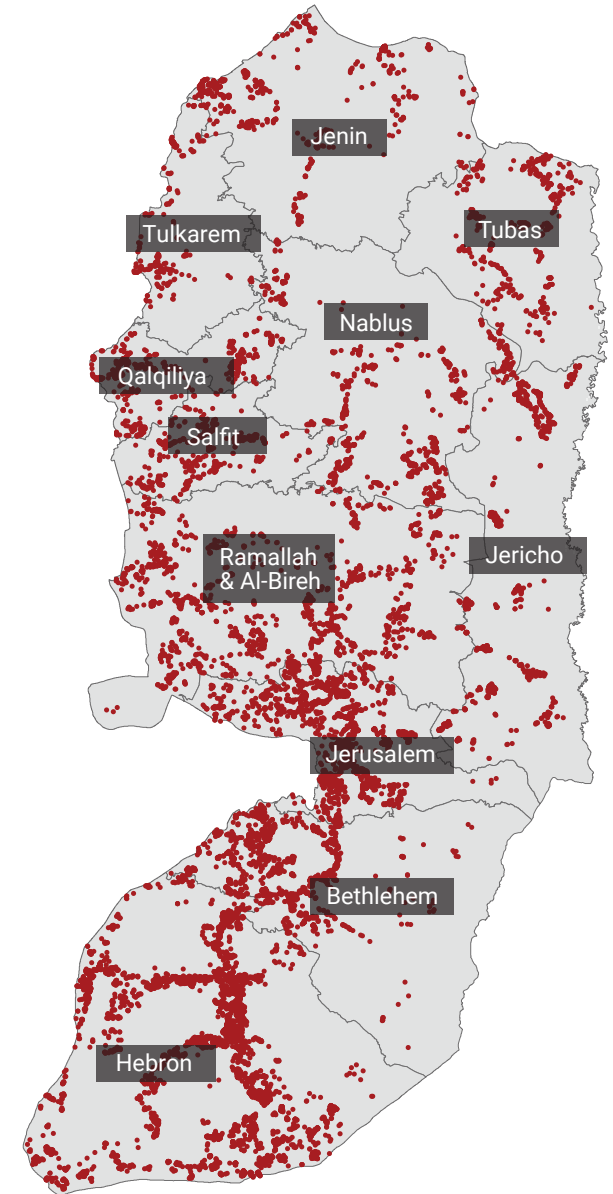
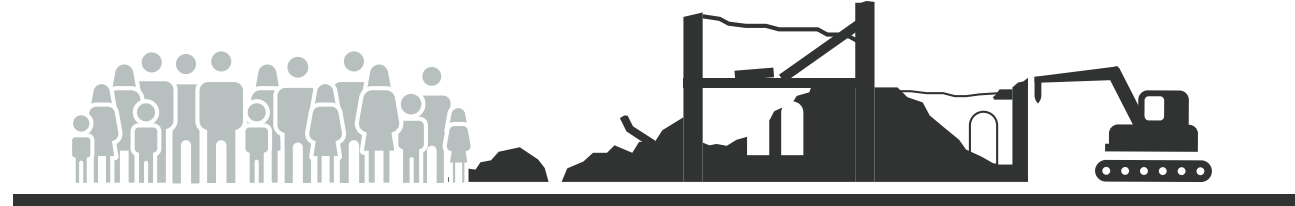
#### Demolished structures in East Jerusalem



1,694  
Displaced

6,200  
Affected

1,046  
Demolished



Source: OCHA OPT (2021)



## Refugee camps

The Israeli occupation of Palestine has directly shaped informal housing and high-density communities. As a consequence, to the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees were expelled from their homes and settled in refugee camps close to urban centres in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. These refugee camps are considered informal, irregular and inadequate housing as they are currently over-crowded, poorly serviced, and with unclear and insecure tenure rights. In 2017, the percentage of the population of refugees in Palestine reached 42.2 per cent of the total population (26.3 per cent of the population in the West Bank and 66.1 per cent in the Gaza

Strip are refugees) (PCBS, 2019). When compared to other Arab countries in the region, this is the highest rate where refugees form 29.1 per cent, 20.4 per cent, 3.3 per cent, 2.4 per cent, 0.9 per cent and 0.7 per cent of the populations in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Sudan, Yemen and Iraq, respectively (ESCWA, 2021).

The conditions in refugee camps are difficult, where over 35 per cent of the inhabitants of refugee camps live in poverty, and around 45 per cent are unemployed. The situation in these camps is only getting worse, with population rates growing at 3.5 per cent annually over the past 10 years, compared to the national annual population growth rate in Palestine, which stands at 2.4 per cent per annum. Some camp populations have grown

exponentially such as Aqbet Jaber in Jericho whose population grew by 85 per cent, and Shu'fat Refugee Camp in Jerusalem whose population grew by 54 per cent. The population density in some camps exceeds 50,000 persons per km<sup>2</sup> (including Al-Shati' and Jabalya camps in the Gaza Strip), compared to the national average of 847 persons per km<sup>2</sup>, the Arab region average of 410 persons per km<sup>2</sup>, and the global standard of 25 persons per km<sup>2</sup> (UN-Habitat, 2016).



Gaza Strip

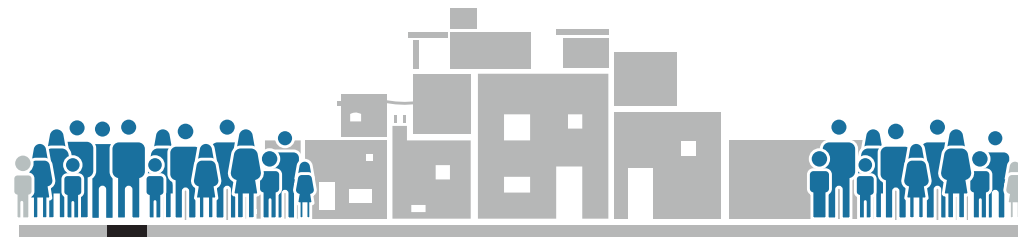
8 Refugee camps  
250,535 Refugees

Palestine

27 Refugee camps  
390,155 Refugees

West Bank

19 Refugee camps  
139,620 Refugees



Densities in some of the refugee camps, such as Al-Shati' and Jabalya camps in Gaza reach 50,000 persons per km<sup>2</sup>

**%96** of refugee camps residents are urban

## The Gaza Strip

Despite the high percentage of urbanization (87 per cent), the Gaza Strip continues to face repeated military attacks by the Israeli authorities that have caused enormous damage to private and public infrastructure. In December 2008, the Israeli army launched a series of air strikes on targets in the Gaza Strip destroying schools, hospitals, mosques, government buildings, and other buildings. In January 2009, Israel began the ground invasion in the Gaza Strip and the war lasted 22 days. More than 1,200 Palestinian were killed in this war and tens of thousands of homes and other buildings and infrastructure were destroyed leaving over 50,000 persons without an appropriate shelter (UN-Habitat, 2015). In July 2014, the Israeli army launched a military operation in the Gaza Strip which lasted for seven weeks of air strikes and ground operations. The war has killed more than 2,100 Palestinians and displaced more than 500,000 per-

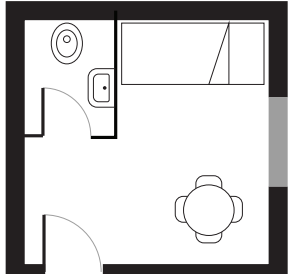
sons at the height of conflict. That is, at the time, around 27 per cent of the Palestinian population in the Gaza Strip were internally displaced; compared to the regional level, this is very close to the country with the highest number of internally displaced persons as a percentage of the total population, namely Syria, where 35 per cent of its population are currently displaced (ESCWA, 2021). It had also destroyed more than 13,000 homes and affected another 100,000, in addition to damaging 261 schools and 77 health facilities. Moreover, the war has severely affected an already deteriorated infrastructure, water, electricity and sanitary systems. The war has also targeted and destroyed more than 220 industrial facilities and caused more than USD 200,000 million losses in the agricultural sector (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2014). It is estimated that the recent conflict in 2021 has impacted around 4,100 housing units, where the total damage range of USD 130 – 160 million. Around 1,600 units were totally destroyed and

2,500 partially damaged; at the peak of the conflict, around 113,000 Palestinians were temporarily displaced. Gaza Governorate has been impacted the most, with 62 per cent of total damage falling within its boundaries, followed by North Gaza at 17 per cent and Deir Al-Balah at 13 per cent. Units in apartment buildings make up 91 per cent of all damaged housing units (the World Bank Group, 2021).

©UN-Habitat (2014). Destroyed home in the Gaza Strip, Palestine.

According to the Multi Sector Needs Assessment (MSNA) (Reach, 2021), since 2014, 63 per cent of households reported that their shelter had been damaged or destroyed, of which 31 per cent reported experiencing shelter damage in 2021. 85 per cent of these households report that they have “no capacity” to repair their shelters. Additionally, 50 per cent of households in the Gaza Strip reported that as a result of the 2021 escalation, their typical monthly income decreased. It was also recorded that 14 per cent of households in the Gaza Strip have at least one member with physical or mental difficulty, of them, 33 per cent report that disability is preventing access to basic services.





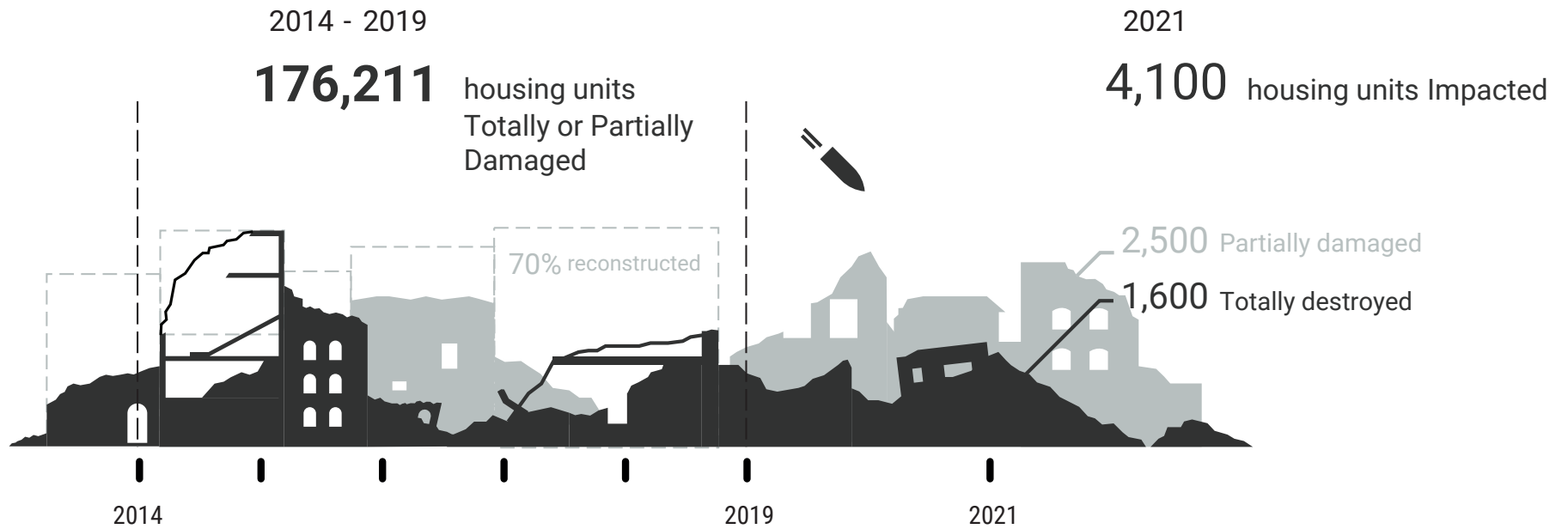
**36.2%** of families live in dwellings less than 120 square meters

**53.6%** of families live in dwellings of one or two rooms at most



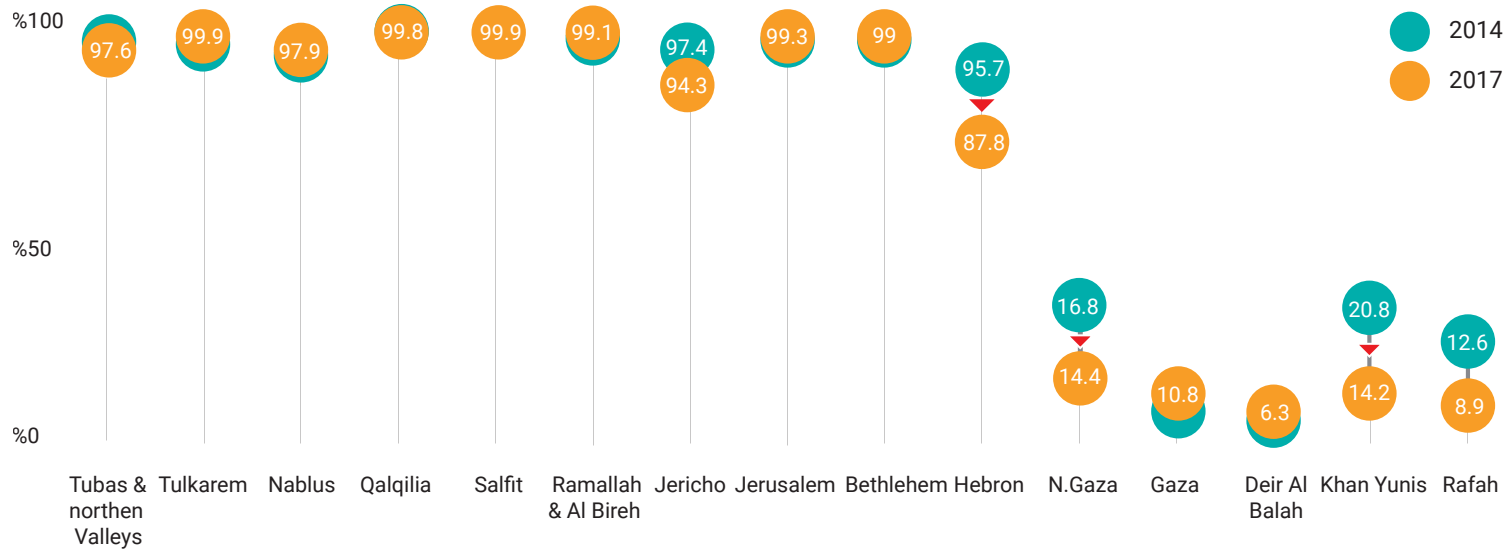
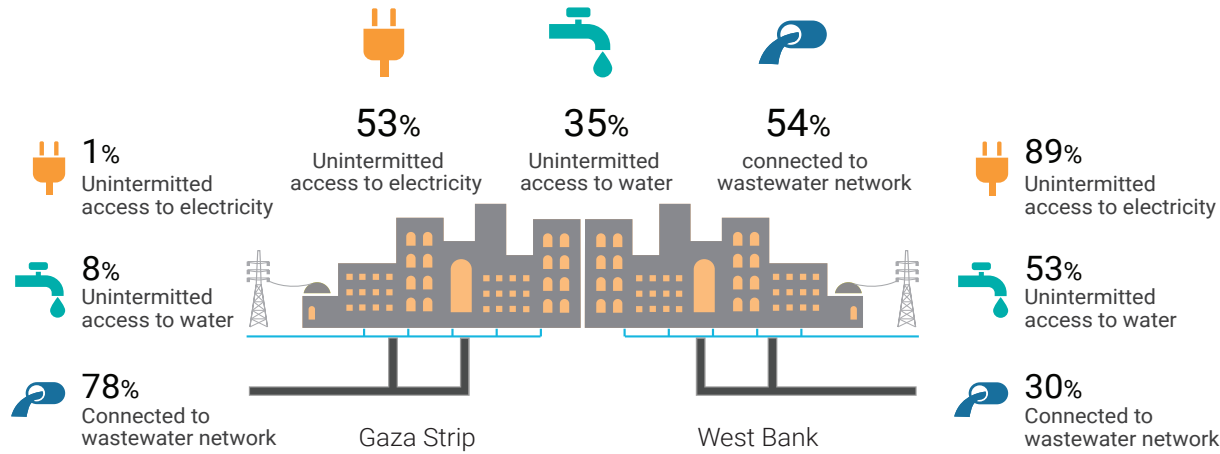
Gaza Strip is considered one of the highest urban congested places on earth, with a population of 2.1 million, including 1.4 million refugees

Source: AlMezan Center for Human Rights (2018)

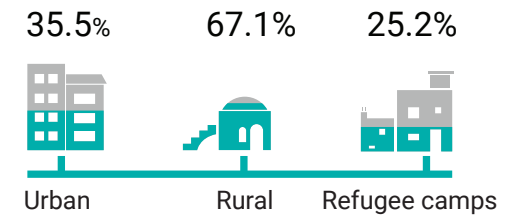


Source: OCHA OPT (2021)

## Access to services<sup>2</sup>



### Access to water more than once per week



<sup>2</sup> By 2020, an estimated 1,900,000 Palestinians are in need of assistance in the water and sanitation hygiene sectors (WASH), ESCWA (2021).

Sources: PCBS (2014-2017) and (2019)



## POLICY PRIORITIES:

- Assess the state of the existing housing stock, with attention to health and safety standards, climate adaptation, sustainable and circular reuse of abandoned or underused spaces and buildings, access to water and sanitation, disaster resilience, fire and earthquake safety and connectivity.
- Support the development, funding and regulation of the housing sector to enable all citizens to acquire affordable housing especially those in vulnerable conditions.
- Reform and update policy, legal framework and building codes, and incorporate human rights-based approaches, climate change and pandemic response.
- Adopt a national definition to “affordable housing” and roll-out a fit-for-purpose national housing policy for the State of Palestine, building on the basic law in Palestine (article 23) that refers to the right to adequate housing for every citizen.
- Encourage the establishment of national “Housing Observatories” (Union for the Mediterranean, 2021) that will provide policy support in defining national housing strategies in line with international quality standards, including UN-Habitat’s Practical Guide for Conducting Housing Profiles, in close collaboration

with local authorities, civil society and private sector (UN-Habitat, 2011).

- Improve capacity of relevant government bodies with regards to data collection and analysis pertaining to real estate appraisal.
- Encourage local authorities, especially municipalities to incorporate national housing strategies into city development plans and strategies (e.g. Strategic Development Investment Plans) and to seek partnerships especially with the Municipal Development Lending Fund (MDLF) for implementation of these strategies.
- Advocate for planning rights, access to natural resources, and increasing the issuance rate of building permits in Area C and East Jerusalem.
- Increase uninterrupted access to water, sanitation and electricity in urban and rural centres, mainly in the Gaza Strip.

## IMPACT OF COVID-19 AND GOVERNMENT RESPONSES:

The emergence of the COVID-19 crisis in Palestine has exacerbated the existing deteriorating situation of Palestinians through continued lockdowns and restrictions on movement and economic operations. The worsening conditions of Palestinian households has significantly impacted the Palestinian housing sector – the decline in people’s purchasing power has limited their ability to cover housing loan payments and monthly rents.

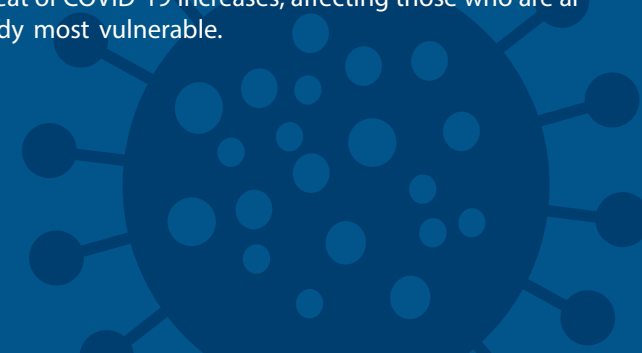
In fact, according to MSNA estimates in 2021, 36 per cent of households report losing their job permanent-

ly or temporarily as a result of the COVID-19 crisis; the highest percentages were reported in East Jerusalem (50 per cent), Areas A and B (43 per cent) and Area C (34 per cent) which can be attributed to the restrictions in the West Bank. Furthermore, 62 per cent of households report that their monthly income has decreased as a result of the COVID-19 crisis (53 per cent in the Gaza Strip and 68 per cent in the West Bank).

Furthermore, the prices of housing units are expected to increase as a result of the increase in the costs of construction material, shipping and transportation.

The pandemic has also affected citizens’ ability to pay their monthly bank payments including those related to payments of housing loans. In order to mitigate these challenges, the Palestinian government has requested from Palestinian banks to implement flexible loan collection terms, such as the extension of grace periods. The MSNA (Reach, 2021) reported that 68 per cent of households report that their debt has increased as a result of the COVID-19 crisis.

The housing crisis has also contributed to the COVID-19 crisis due to overcrowding and poor living conditions putting people at a greater risk of contracting the virus. Without adequate housing during quarantine, lacking proper hygiene and sanitation systems, and with high levels of overcrowding in many Palestinian urban areas, especially in the Gaza Strip and refugee camps, then the threat of COVID-19 increases, affecting those who are already most vulnerable.



## 11.2 Sustainable Transportation

Provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all

The transport modes in Palestine are limited to traditional transit modes including personal vehicles, taxi's, and small passenger minivans. These are negatively affecting the local Palestinian communities in terms of social disintegration, environmental degradation, public health deterioration, and pressure on land. Similar to other developing countries, mobility and transport planning in Palestine is highly fragmented and the majority of sectoral plans for traffic and infrastructure networks are not aligned in the different administrative units, neither on the national or local level. Land under PA administrative control and classified as Areas A and B are separated by land under Israeli administrative control classified as Area C. Israeli authorities approach road development with the goal of maximising efficiency for the illegal Israeli settlers, while keeping Palestinians as far away from the illegal Israeli settlements and controlling their movement, whereby minimal numbers of roads and entrances to cities and villages are allowed for ease of imposing closures on Palestinians by the Israeli occupation forces when needed. This results in weak carrying capacity and increased demand on small, one to two lane highway roads between cities, where private, public and heavy commercial vehicles do not have safe or efficient movement of people and goods.

The Qalandiya Airport, which is the only airport in the West Bank, located only 9.5 km north of Jerusalem, has been inaccessible to the Palestinian population since 1967. In addition, following the Oslo Agreements and the agreed-upon Arafat International Airport that was

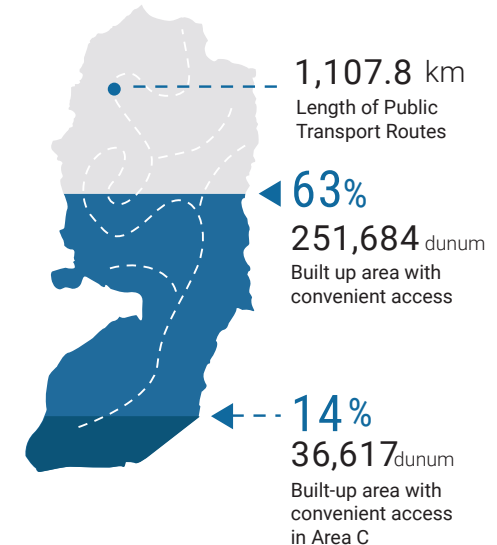
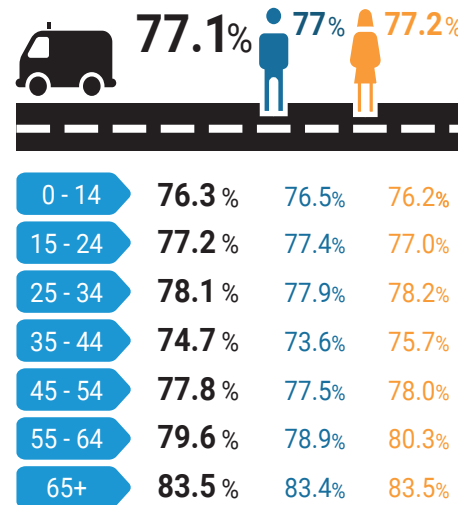
constructed in 1998; 36 km east of Rafah city in the Gaza Strip, and 2.8 km<sup>2</sup> in area, residents of the Gaza Strip enjoyed just two years' freedom of travel before Israel ordered Palestinian aerospace closure in October 2000. Following this, in December 2001, Israel decided on the complete de-capacitating of the Palestinian Airport, by bulldozing the main runway.

The Palestinian government endorsed the Road and Transportation Master Plan of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 2018. The Master Plan has the overall objective

to promote the achievement of a vision for the future of the Palestinian transport sector; in particular, it aims to incorporate equally West Bank and Gaza Strip into a single and united framework, through the definition of a multi-modal transport network and a multi-phased development strategy.

### General information on public transportation

#### Proportion of population that has convenient access to public transport



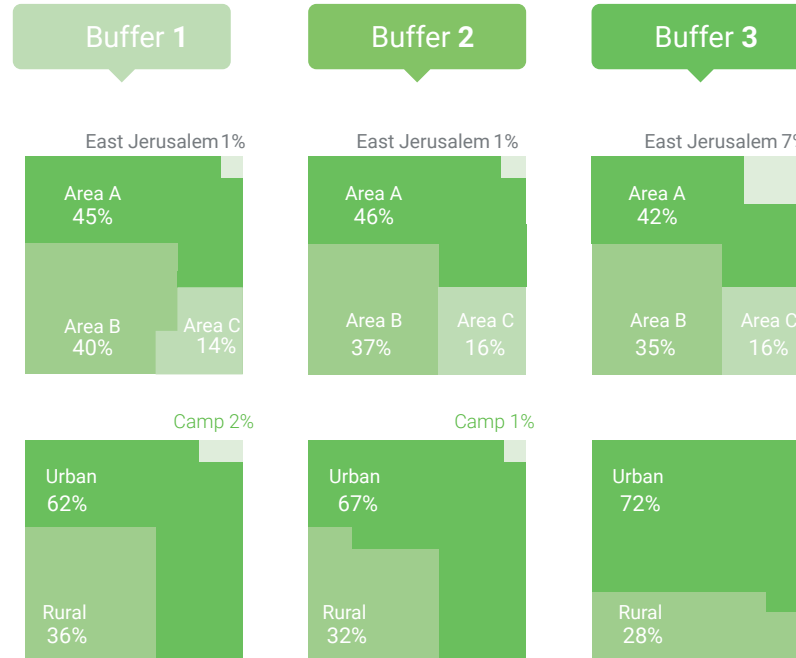
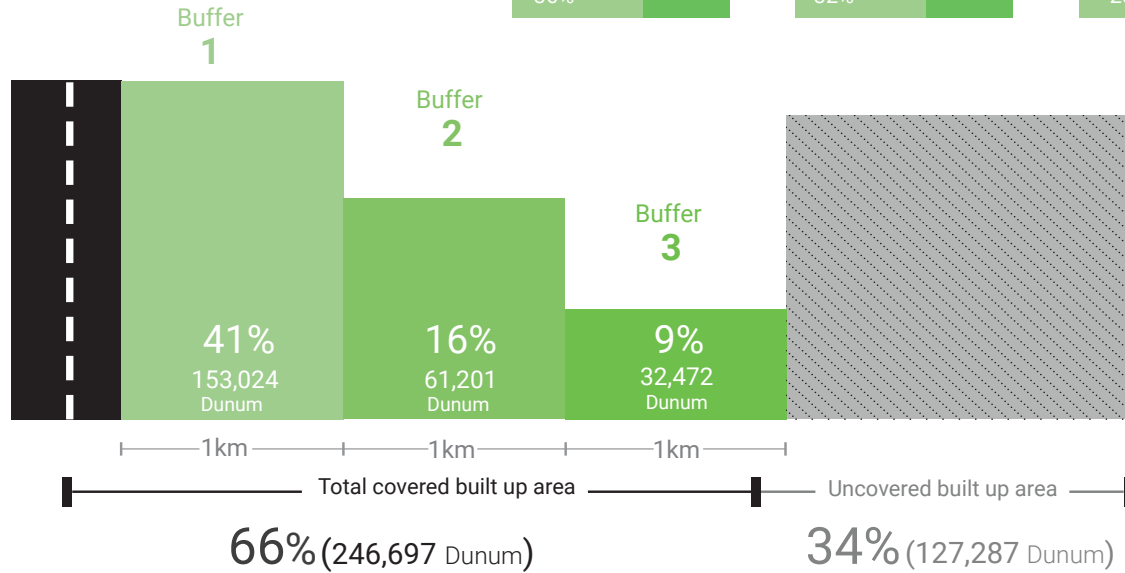
Source: Ministry of Transportation (2021), Raw Data

## Convenient access to public transportation

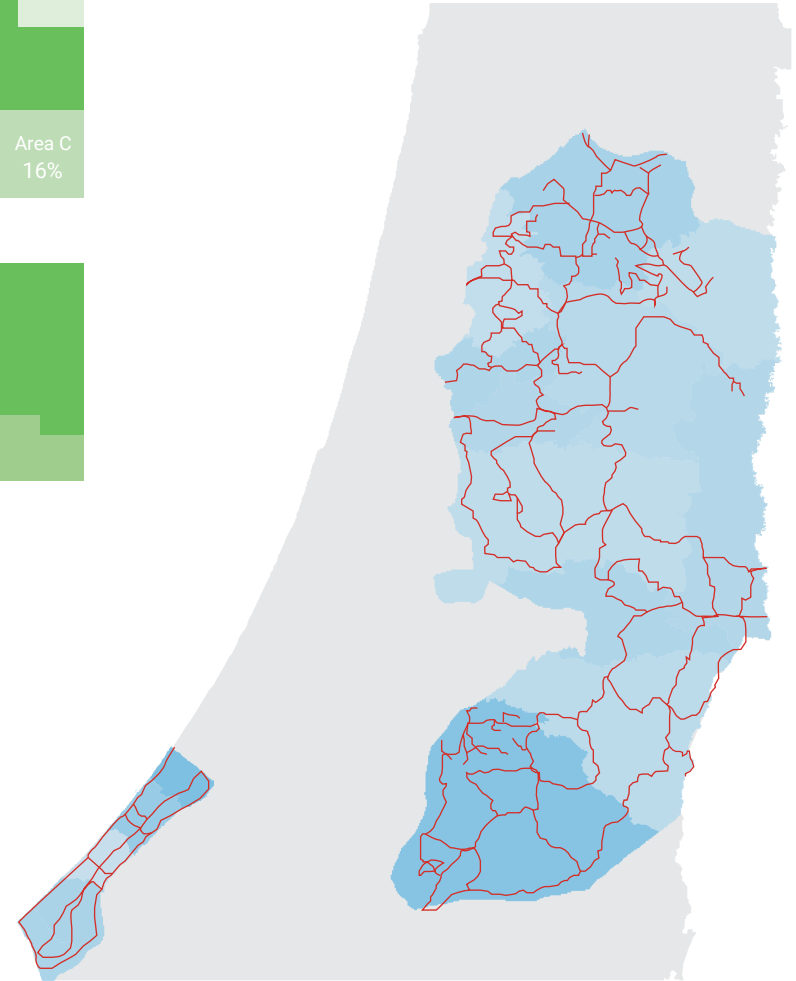
According to PCBS, using data from a perceptions survey in 2021, 77 per cent of Palestinians perceive that they have access to affordable transportation.

Analysis of the distribution of the built up area of the West Bank along the main public routes, shows that 41 per cent of the built up area are within 500 meters, which entails convenient access to public transportation.

## Public routes



## Road transport network



Source: Ministry of Transportation (2016), Raw Data.

### Procedural and infrastructural delays imposed by Israel

Since its occupation of the West Bank in 1967, the Israeli authorities have imposed obstacles on the movement of Palestinians inside the West Bank. They have restricted the movement between main cities and rural areas and have restricted the access of Palestinians from the West Bank to East Jerusalem and Israel. Based on a recent study (The Applied Research Institute - Jerusalem (ARIJ), 2019), these obstacles resulted in two types of traffic delays: infrastructural delays, and procedural delays. The infrastructural delays are caused by the Israeli-built infrastructure in the West Bank that elongates the travel time and/

or forces Palestinian vehicles to change routes. The Separation Barrier, Israeli settlements, and the bypass roads are the main infrastructure obstacles in the West Bank. Procedural delays are caused by the Israeli security measures at the checkpoints within the West Bank as well as access points to East Jerusalem and Israel.

Inside cities and villages, the lack of financial resources for infrastructure upgrade and for land acquisition has resulted in outdated road networks and transport modalities. This also caused an absence of major infrastructure interventions, including tunnels, and bridges, and the absence of sustainable mobility solutions including city buses, bus rapid transit, trams, cycling routes, and

transit-oriented development.

In 2002, the Israeli authorities started building the Separation Barrier inside the West Bank with a total length of 771 km along the West Bank. The Separation Barrier isolates about 12 per cent of the West Bank's total land area. The bypass road network is a road system that is constructed by the Israeli authorities to facilitate the movement of the Israeli settlers without entering the Palestinian urban centers (PCBS, 2020).

### Annual losses arising from the separation barrier and Israeli checkpoints

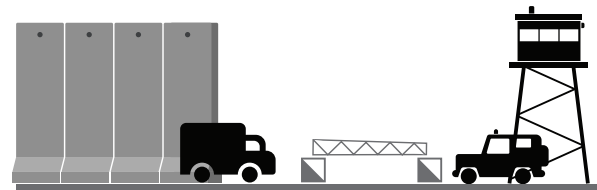
-  Fuel 81 million liters
-  CO<sub>2</sub> 196,000 tons
-  Economic 274 millionUSD
-  Time 60 millionhours

### Infrastructural delays

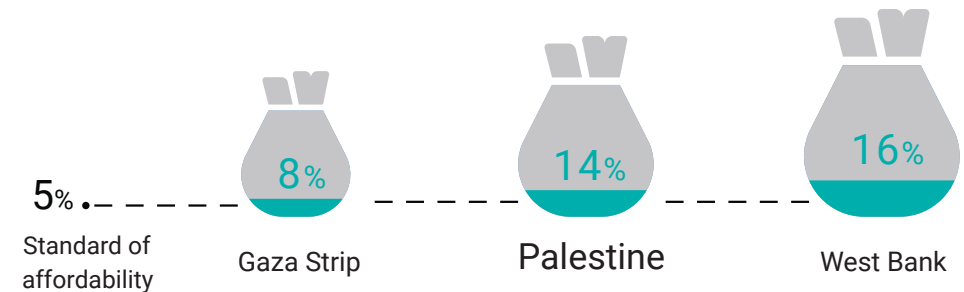
Cause: the Separation Barrier and the bypass roads

### Procedural delays

Cause: Israeli security measures at checkpoints within the West Bank as well as access points to East Jerusalem and Israel



### Affordability of public transport



Source: PCBS (2017)



## Managing Traffic Congestion in Ramallah City

The city of Ramallah is located in the centre of the West Bank and is considered the administrative centre of the PA. Due to its hosting of the majority of ministries, other public institutions and major companies; it is estimated that around 12,000 vehicles enter the city from its four entrances every morning.

The traffic congestion during rush hours is also compounded by the increase in the number of registered

vehicles in the city from 20,601 in 2007 to 82,898 in 2019. In order to mitigate this reality, and as part of the World Bank's funded Integrated Cities and Urban Development Project, the Ramallah Municipality in partnership with its neighbouring municipalities of Al-Bireh and Betunia, are joining efforts to plan for solutions to support public transportation. The project is jointly implemented by the MoLG and the MDLF over a period of four years. The project aims to assist participating urban areas to enhance their capacity to plan for sustainable urban growth. The project is supporting the urban planning of five leading Palestinian urban areas including Ramallah-Al-Bireh,

Bethlehem, Hebron, Nablus, and Gaza City through their intra-urban area coordination mechanisms. The project intends to respond to the needs of growing population (representing 28 per cent of the total population of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and includes 30 Local Government Units (LGUs) -16 municipalities and 14 village councils), and private sector for more sustainably and efficiently planned urban spaces and infrastructure.

©Media Clinic (2021). Ramallah, Palestine.





## POLICY PRIORITIES:

- Improve regulation of public and goods transport sector especially within main urban centres, where traffic congestions are increasing quickly creating many socio-economic and environmental challenges to the urban environment.
- Improve digital services and the institutional development of the Ministry of Transport to support solution-oriented interventions, such as accelerating service provision.
- Endorse and implement the Uri public transport plan within a larger integrated multi-modal transit system, including regional railroad as its backbone. A rail-based system would deliver reliable and efficient transportation through the West Bank and save time, energy, and money for the residents.
- Implement the national plan to improve public transport in 18 routes in the West Bank.
- Institutionalize the ICUD in developing public transport inside and outside urban centers, allocation of spaces inside urban centers for public transportation, adoption of traffic plans, foster public-private partnerships with public transport operators and provision of light buses.
- Pressure the Israeli authorities to halt settlement expansion and construction of Israeli settlers' only bypass roads that cut territorial connectivity of Palestinian land.
- Pressure the Israeli authorities to refrain from ob-

structing the construction of new connecting roads (urban-urban, urban-rural and rural-rural) that reduce cost and time of transport for Palestinians.

- Support municipalities in allocating public transport nodes outside major urban centers so as to reduce traffic congestion inside urban centers and reduce cost of transport.

## IMPACT OF COVID-19 AND GOVERNMENT RESPONSES:

The successive periods of lockdown and the obstruction of public and private transportation have directly affected the mobility of people within urban centers and their access to public services and spaces, work, and nature/open spaces. While the reduced number of passengers allowed in public transportation vehicles to limit the spread of the virus, increased the financial burden on public transportation operators.



Direct Weekly Losses: USD 3 million

Annual Losses: USD 162 million

Source: PCBS (2020)

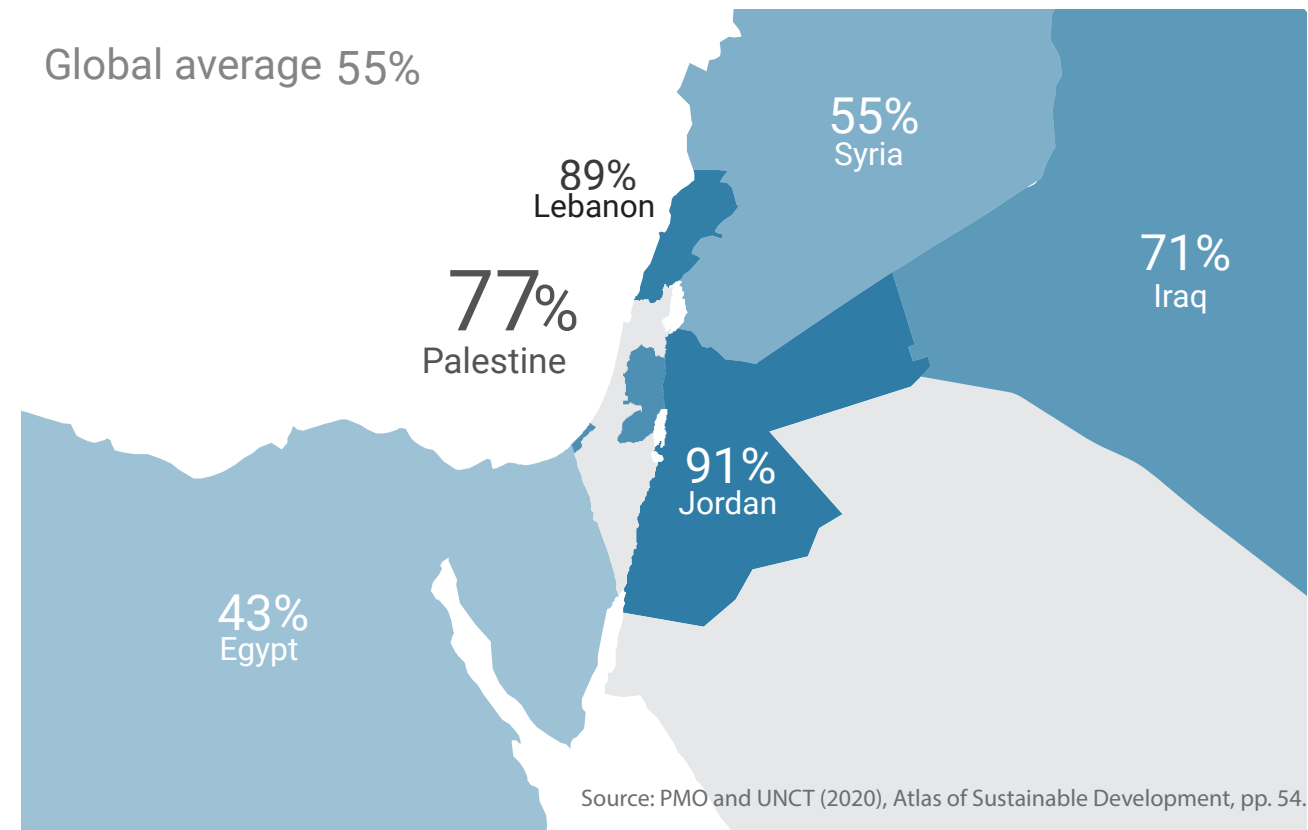
## 11.3 Sustainable Urbanization

Enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries

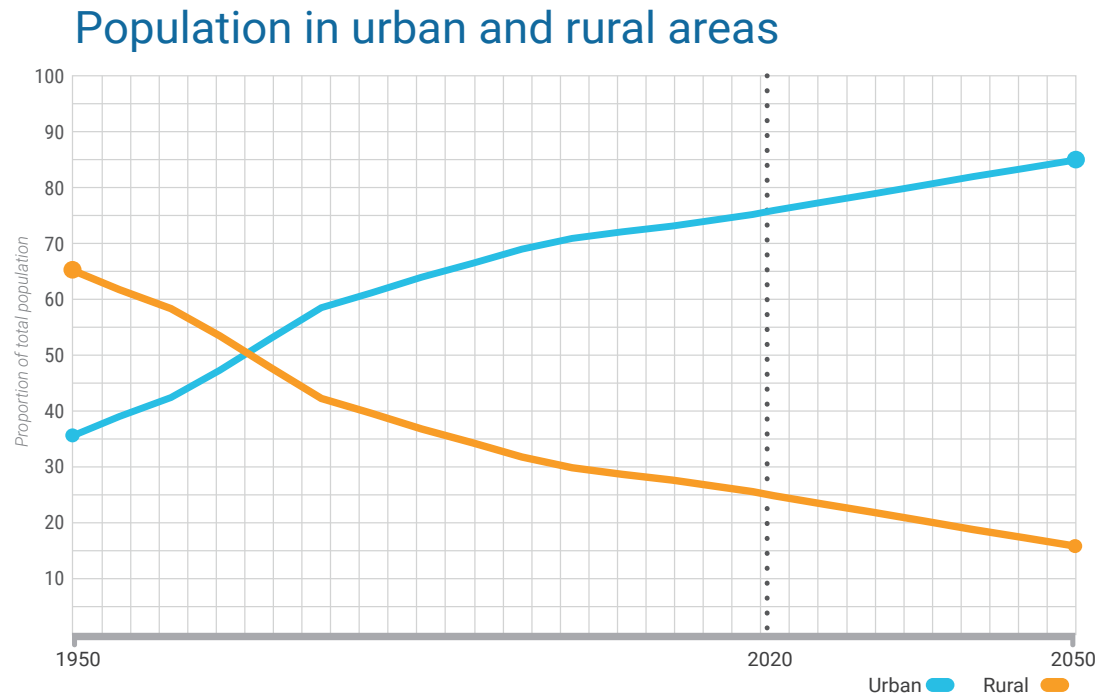
Upon the occupation of the OPT by Israel in 1967, thousands of Palestinians were displaced from their homes to other areas inside and outside Palestine, joining Palestinian refugees from the 1948 war.

The phenomenon of artificial land scarcity resulting from the Oslo land classifications causing spatial fragmentation, combined with rapid urban growth and uneven development within Palestine, have tremendously increased pressure on local authorities with regard to their abilities to represent citizens' needs and control urban growth via an effective planning regime. The establishment of the PA and the subsequent process of state building, fuelled urbanization in Palestine, combined with high demographic growth rates and spatially concentrated development with limited space to expand. The urban population in Palestine today is estimated at 77 per cent (excluding urban refugee camps) and considered among the highest in the region. According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) (2016), it is expected that the population in Palestine will reach 6.9 million people by 2030, of which 5.3 million will be in urban areas.

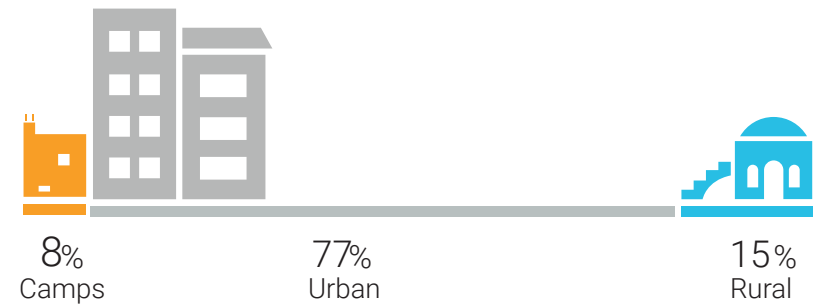
Population living in urban areas, regional comparison (2020)



## Percentage of population in urban and rural areas



Overall, the urbanization trends have witnessed an unprecedented increase of 138 per cent during 1967 and 2007, with the first half of this period (1967 - 1987) witnessing more than 2.7 times the increase during the second half of the same period (1987 - 2007). This overall increase in urbanization trends for Palestinians in the West Bank resulted in an increase of almost 150 per cent for the communities of population of more than 38,000 capita and for the communities of population ranging between 2,500 and 9,000 capita. It also caused a decrease of almost 50 per cent for the communities of population less than 2,500 and for communities of population ranging between 12,000 and 16,000 capita. This entails that the high out-flux (immigration) rates outside of the West Bank caused by Israeli practices post the first Intifada have been coupled with a silent in-flux (migration) from the small rural communities to the big urban communities (El-Atrash, 2014).

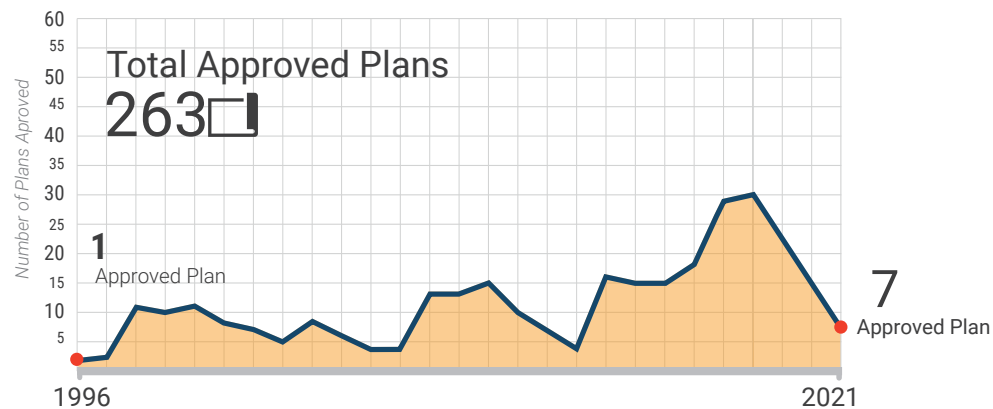


Source: PMO and UNCT (2020), Atlas of Sustainable Development, pp. 54.

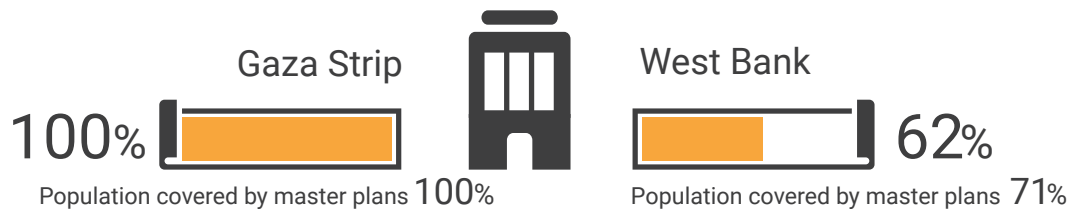
Source: PCBS (2017).

## Participation of civil society

In Palestine, LGUs are regularly elected for a period of four years. In 2012 and 2017 elections were conducted for 272 and 326 LGUs respectively. It is planned that the upcoming elections will be held later this year, in 2021, focusing only on village councils and municipal council (category C) that are majorly rural in nature, covering more than 40 per cent of the West Bank's population. The regularity of elections at the local government level significantly contributes to strengthening the accountability of the elected councils before their citizens, and act as a powerful platform for representing citizens' needs and monitoring councils' actions. Despite improvement in the participation of women with the mandating of a quota that has now reached 30 per cent, the engagement of civil society organisations (CSOs) with LGUs in planning including representation of persons with disabilities (PWDs) needs to be improved. The latter observation was also consistent with a mapping study of civil society in Palestine (TRANSTEC, 2015).

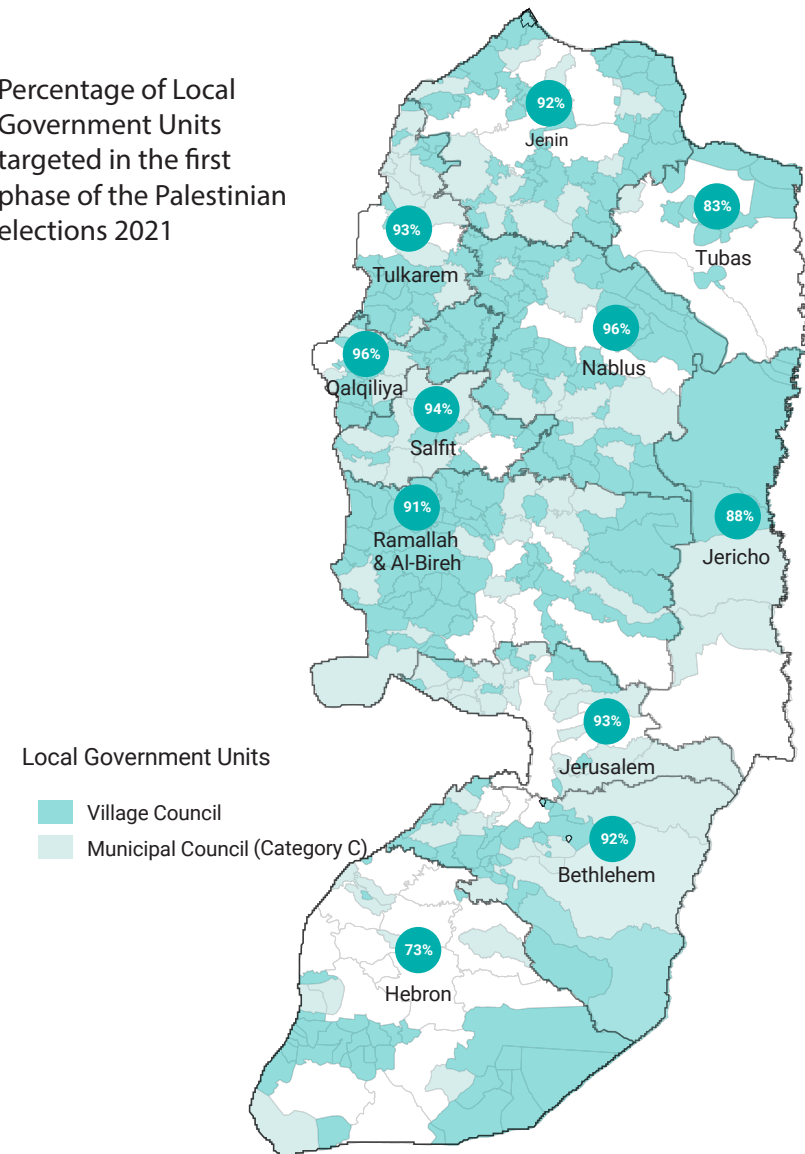


### LGUs covered by master plans



Sources: PMO and UNCT (2020), Atlas of Sustainable Development, pp. 55 and MoLG (2021).

Percentage of Local Government Units targeted in the first phase of the Palestinian elections 2021



Source: MoLG (2021), Raw Data.

## Land Settlement in Palestine

The PA, through the Land and Water Settlement Commission (LWSC), has embarked on a national land settlement programme aimed at expediting the process of land registration in all of the West Bank. This process is extensively based on public participation and consultation at a community level to make sure that all land related disputes are resolved effectively. The results of this programme will, contribute to improved planning and representation of citizens' needs.



**56%**

**Settled area**

33% is owned by women  
(within the areas settled by LWSC)

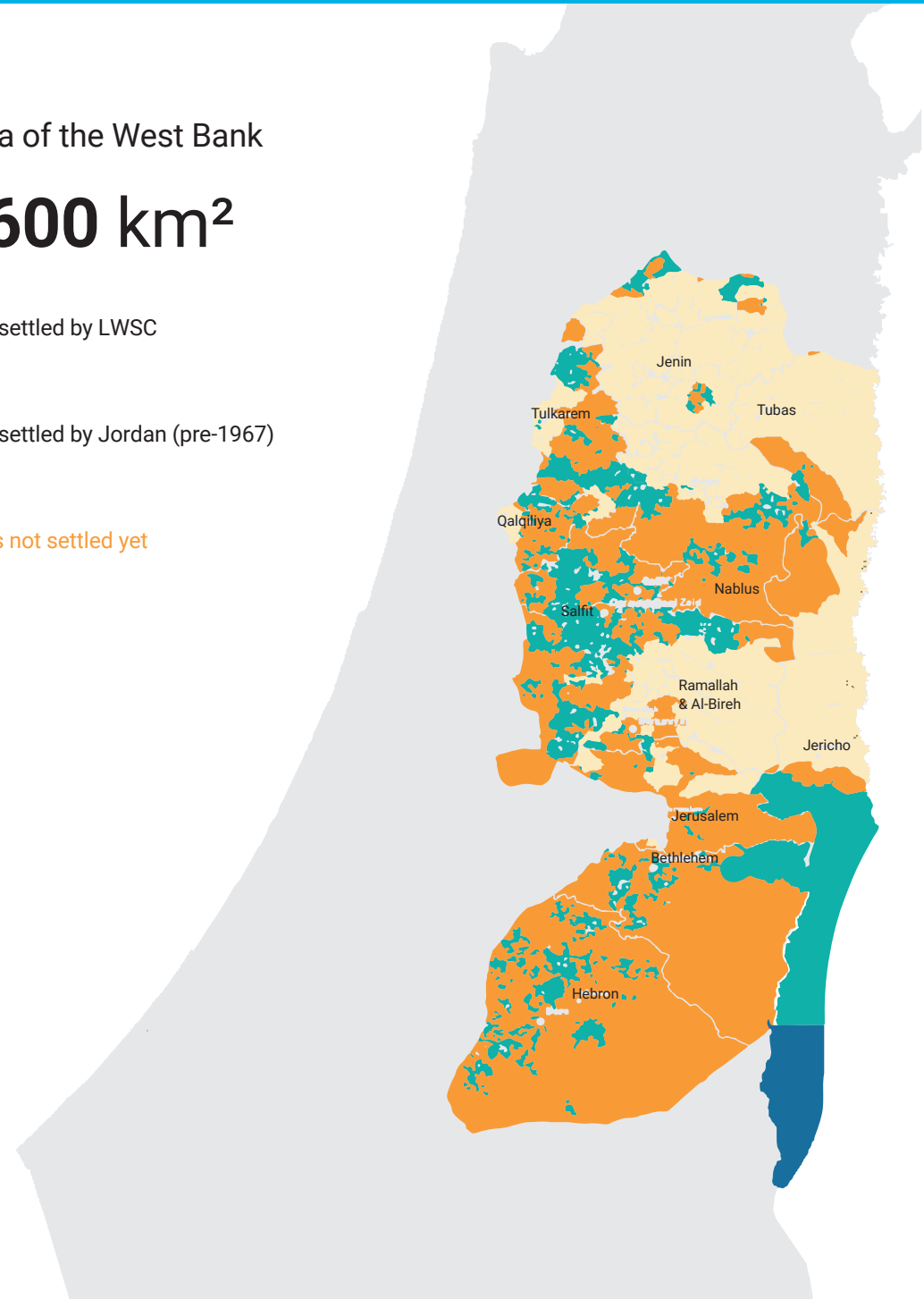
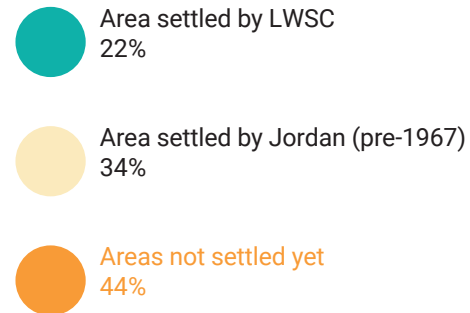
**44%**

**Unsettled**

Source: LWSC (2021), Raw Data

Total area of the West Bank

≈ **5,600 km<sup>2</sup>**

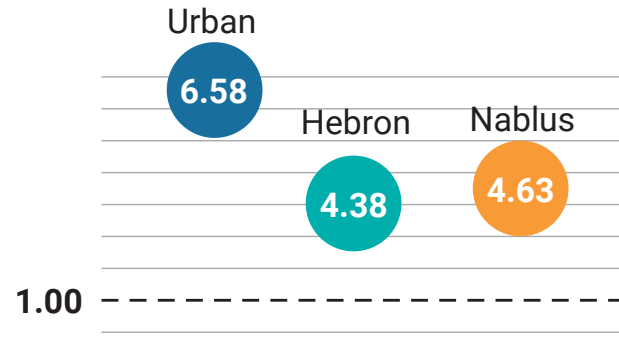


## Land-Use Efficiency

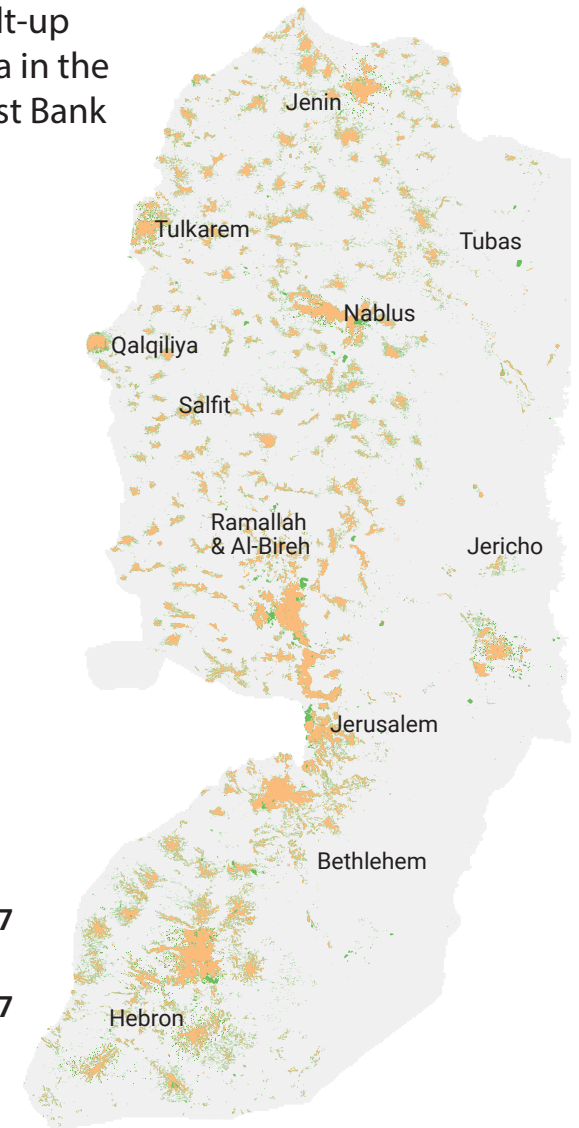
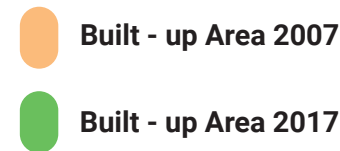
Ideally, this indicator, land consumption rate to population growth rate should be equal to 1, suggesting that the rate at which the city appropriated land from other uses to urbanized functions is equal to the rate at which its population grew. In other words, as population grew in a city over the analysis period, there is an almost equivalent increase in new developments around the city. The figures below show that Palestinian cities and communities are inefficient in terms of land use functioning as there are more new development and appropriation of land than population growth. This alludes to unsustainable development within Palestinian cities and communities.

The integration of secondary indicators is recommended to help explain the actual growth patterns within urban areas. Looking at the land consumption per capita for the Palestinian cities of Hebron and Nablus, between the years of 2007 and 2017, shows that there was a 13.6 and 19.6 per cent average decrease in the amount of space occupied by each person, respectively.

## Land-use efficiency ratio



## Built-up area in the West Bank



Source: MoLG (2021), Raw Data.



## POLICY PRIORITIES:

- The regulatory frameworks related to planning and local governance need to be updated to respond to the current needs of the Palestinian people without compromising future aspirations. This should include the harmonization of prevailing practices between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and enabling the environment to expand planning jurisdiction to the areas under full Israeli control, in East Jerusalem and Area C of the West Bank. This should result in better linking planning at the local, regional, and national levels.
- Mainstream public participation policies in local and national planning and local governance to increase inputs into decision-making processes and increase conditions for accountability. This would include promoting for the representation of citizens, including women, youth, elderly and PwDs in LGUs' planning in addition to engagement of CSOs with LGUs.
- Introduce new tools and methodologies to the urban planning craft in Palestine that would move from the traditional land-use and physical planning towards urban growth scenarios and modelling techniques to achieve sustainability in terms of socio-economic and environmental interventions.
- Institutionalization of Joint Services Councils (JSC) and support their service-provision operations main-

ly with regards to spatial planning.

- Capitalize on the achievements of the land settlement programme by supporting nation-wide land administration coordination, including introduction of innovative forms of land tenure (e.g. community land trusts) and coordination of fiscal instruments and land-based financing to influence land use and land availability for development (e.g. development exaction).
- Mainstream access to finance, urban management, gender responsiveness, climate action, risk reduction, participatory approaches, etc.
- Support the integration of the National Spatial Plan (NSP), National Urban Policy (NUP) and regional planning initiatives.

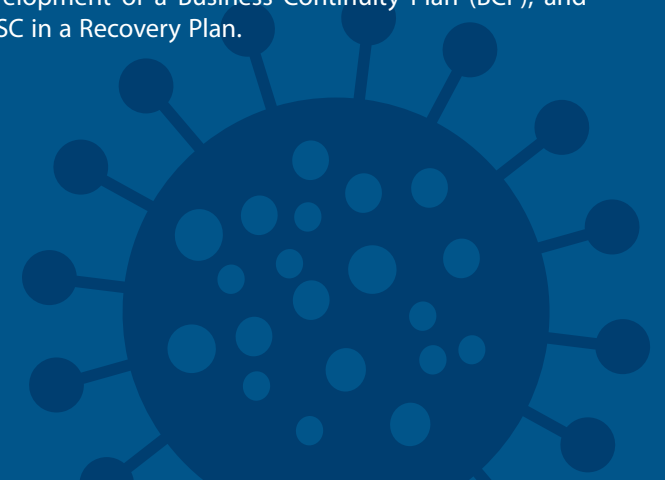
## IMPACT OF COVID-19 AND GOVERNMENT RESPONSES:

According to an online survey targeting 286 LGUs across the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip that was commissioned by the MoLG with technical assistance from UNDP to assess the impact of COVID-19 crisis on LGUs' staffing, budget, functions and services provided; the following findings were observed:

- Despite significant financial constraints, LGUs have proven to be crucial actors on the frontline of ensuring emergency response, maintaining essential service provision and meeting the emerging needs of citizens in light of the COVID-19 crisis;

- Despite low collection of service fees, most LGUs stepped up efforts to ensure continuity of basic service provision (e.g., water and electricity);
- 79 per cent of LGUs provided new services and/or increasing existing services to respond to emerging needs of citizens and implement emergency measures on the ground (including sterilization, movement control, and quarantine centers);
- 59 per cent of LGUs provided in-kind and/or financial assistance to citizens in need (including food parcels, medicines, hygiene kits, etc.); and
- 31 per cent of LGUs coordinated with relevant authorities and supported citizens through the process of applying for social protection assistance (e.g., Ministry of Social Development and Ministry of Labour).

As a result of the pandemic, several activities were halted; most notably, capacity building programmes involving the MoLG, the LWSC, and LGUs were delayed. Additionally, several planning projects involving communities and urban centers were also rescheduled as LGUs were primarily engaged in provision of services during the pandemic. In response, UN-Habitat supported MoLG in the development of a Business Continuity Plan (BCP), and LWSC in a Recovery Plan.





## 11.4 Cultural and Natural Heritage

### Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage

©UN-Habitat. Jerusalem, Palestine.

The State of Palestine was admitted as a full member State of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in November 2011, which allowed for accessing and ratifying UNESCO's conventions in the field of culture, among them is the UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972 World Heritage Convention). Since the ratification of this convention, the PA managed to inscribe three cultural heritage sites on the World Heritage List. Additionally, as a custodian on the holy sites in Jerusalem, the Kingdom of Jordan inscribed the Old City of Jerusalem as a World Heritage Site in 1981.

All four sites were also inscribed on the World Heritage List in Danger due to risks that threaten the Outstanding Universal Values of the sites according to the World Heritage Committee decisions. On 2 July 2019, the Church of Nativity, after substantial restoration, was removed from the list of World Heritage List in Danger, which is a significant achievement for the PA responsible for the conservation and management of the property.

Furthermore, a tentative list which is an inventory of those properties which each State Party intends to consider for nomination was put together for Palestine, covering 14 sites across the West Bank and Gaza Strip.



# UNESCO World Heritage List



THE OLD CITY OF JERUSALEM  
JERUSALEM



The Birthplace of Jesus:  
CHURCH OF NATIVITY  
AND THE PILGRIMAGE ROUTE, BETHLEHEM



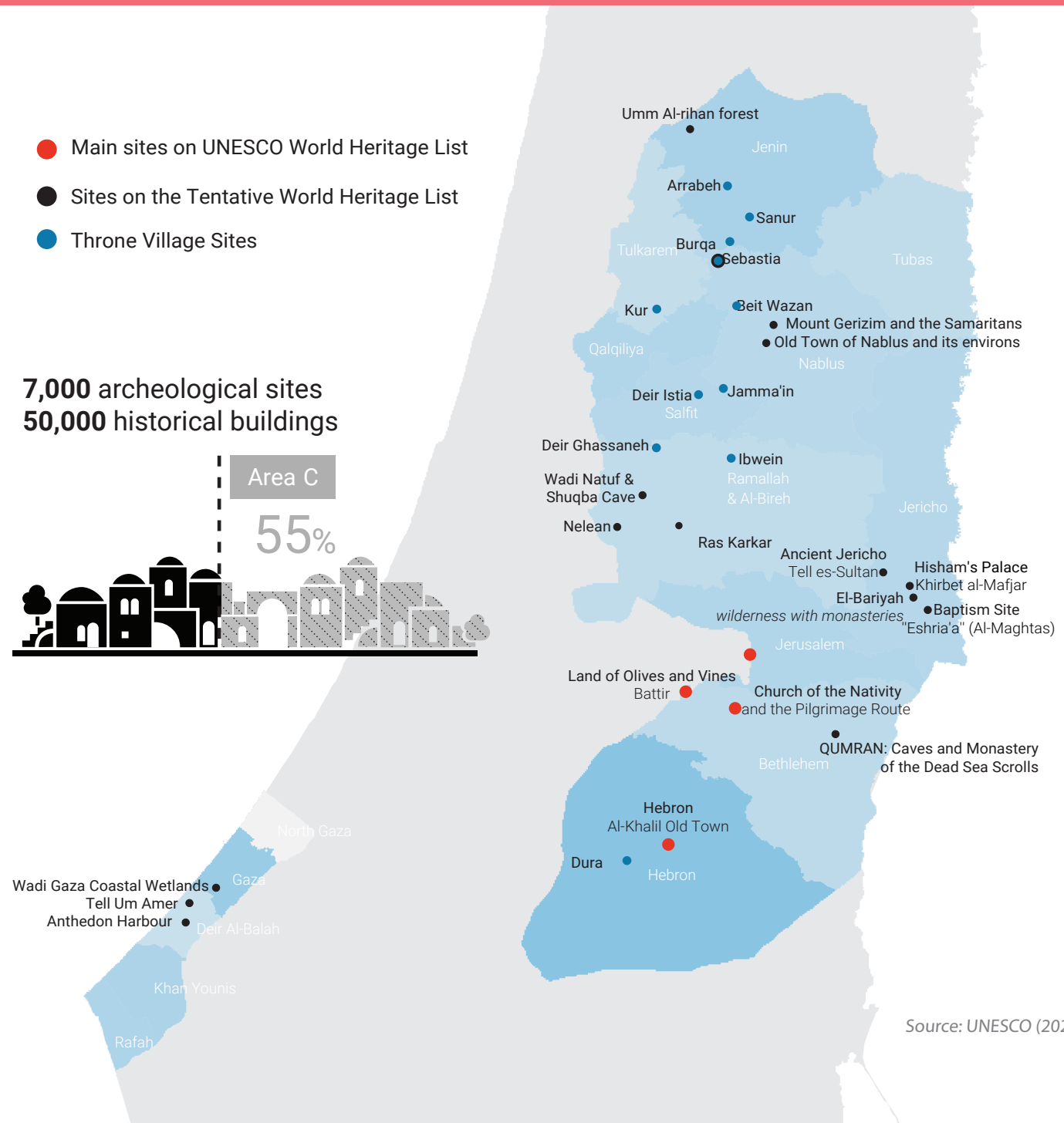
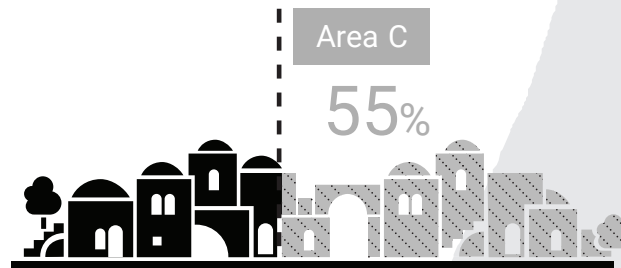
AL-KHALIL OLD TOWN  
HEBRON



LAND OF OLIVES AND VINES  
CULTURAL LANDSCAPE  
OF SOUTHERN JERUSALEM, BATTIR

- Main sites on UNESCO World Heritage List
- Sites on the Tentative World Heritage List
- Throne Village Sites

7,000 archeological sites  
50,000 historical buildings



Source: UNESCO (2021).

## Expenditure per capita on natural and cultural heritage preservation

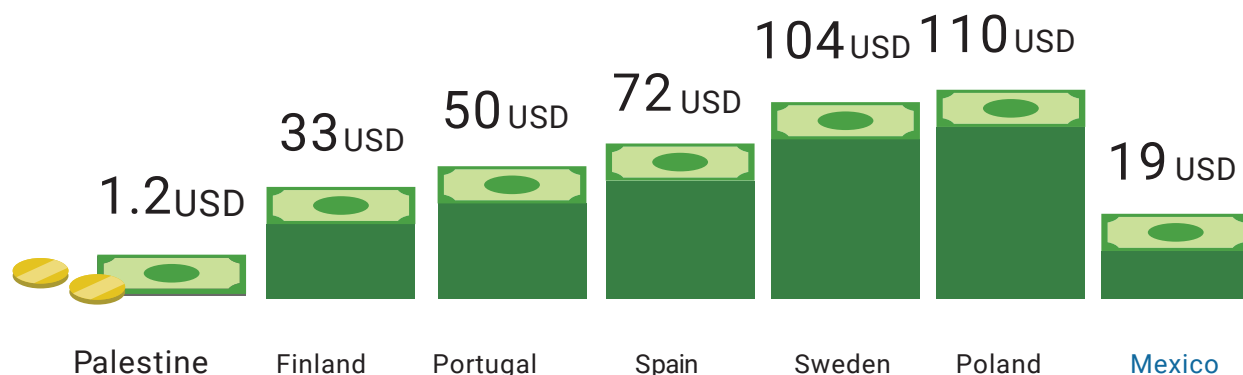
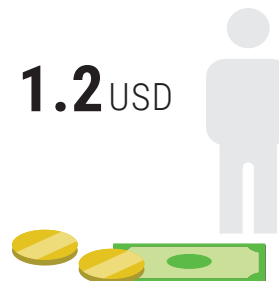
Total spending between 2020-2013  
All external funding, project-based

45,563,000 USD



Spending per capita

1.2 USD



European countries (2019)

Latin American countries (2019)

## Israeli excavations in Jerusalem

The Old City of Jerusalem, identified as a World Heritage Site in 1981, was occupied by Israel in 1967 and annexed in 1980 in violation of United Nations Security Resolution 476 (1980) on the Status of Jerusalem. The Palestinian narrative in the city is compromised as the Israeli and Jewish only narratives are promoted among tourists. This is compounded by the conducted excavations and tunnels under the Old City and forcible displacement of Palestinians from the Old City and surrounding neighbourhoods inside East Jerusalem. United Nations organisations have warned against such Israeli actions, and in 2007, UNESCO called for an end of these violations: "The Government of Israel should be asked to comply with its obligations regarding archaeological excavations and heritage conservation in World Heritage sites such as the Old City of Jerusalem, and in particular, those adopted by the World Heritage Committee in July 2006 on this matter." (UNESCO, 2007).

## Dar Al Consul

Located at the heart of the Old City of Jerusalem, the Dar Al-Consul complex is literally layered with history – its foundations dating from Mamluk times, its arched halls once housing the Prussian Consulate, and its rooftop currently home to multiple Palestinian families. But as the fortunes of the Old City have waned, trapped by political instability and paralyzed by mass tourism, the complex and its environment have experienced sustained disinvestment and its inhabitants face dwindling opportunities. With the support of UN-Habitat and the European Union, the Custodia Terrae Sanctae sought a strategy to simultaneously revive this underperforming real estate asset while providing a civic amenity to the surrounding community.

The Dar Al Consul rehabilitation project contributed to the improvement of the living conditions of 13 resident families in the Old City, along with two residential courtyards and open spaces mostly benefitting old-aged

families. Additionally, the project resulted in the establishment of a new innovative Palestinian civic and commercial hub (more than 1 dunum in area) with living heritage value created inside the Old City, demonstrating a modern layer of diverse uses, following eco-friendly development principles and completion of major structural and safety support to the complex. In addition to Palestinian youth in East Jerusalem having access to an innovative knowledge and career guidance hub.

©UN-Habitat. Dar Al Consul, Jerusalem, Palestine.





## POLICY PRIORITIES:

- Extend the protection and rehabilitation of all other national heritage sites outside Areas A and B.
- Update national records of sites before and after the year 1700.
- Improve coordination with LGUs to protect sites inside urban and rural centers.
- Call upon and pressure the Israeli to return archaeological items confiscated post 1967 war.
- Conduct new excavations by tapping the resources available at Palestinian universities and the private sector.
- Improve data collection related to cultural and natural heritage sites, to support in decision making and management of the sites.
- Conduct heritage conservation assessment to identify potential sites for regeneration, reuse, and development, using the UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (UNESCO, 2011).

## IMPACT OF COVID-19 AND GOVERNMENT RESPONSES:

Total number of international arrivals to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (excluding East Jerusalem) increased from 432,000 visitors in 2015 to 688,000 visitors in 2019, and total international tourists expenditures increased from USD 606 million to USD 869 million in the same years (The World Bank Group, 2019). The pandemic has caused a complete halt to both international and domestic tourism in Palestine.

According to official statistics, the tourism sector has lost around USD 1,150 million (PCBS, 2020) due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, national priorities of Palestine have moved towards the provision of health and basic services for their population and fighting the spread of the COVID-19 virus through enforcing closure of all public spaces and banning of gatherings, including in cultural heritage sites.



## 11.5 Impact of Natural Disasters

Significantly reduce the number of deaths and the number of people affected and substantially decrease the direct economic losses relative to global gross domestic product caused by disasters

Among the challenges the Palestinian people facing are natural disasters. Such disasters can cause enormous losses and negative consequences on the economy. In the OPT, the water shortages, environmental degradation, draught and desertification, along with landslides, and land and natural resources' depletion, which all go hand in hand with the political conflict, are considered to be the most significant anthropogenic disasters currently affecting the Palestinian people. In addition, natural disasters are significantly considered a potential threat. Earthquakes in the region (due to the fact that the OPT is directly affected by the seismically active zones of the Jordan-Rift Valley and the Mediterranean Sea) are considered a major hazard with low probability but high adverse impacts. Moreover, the rapid population growth rates and the way the cities are developing in the OPT is unsustainable; more than 50 per cent of the Palestinian population live in what is defined as "hazard-prone" areas, including major urban centres. These areas are particularly vulnerable, because of their dependence on complex infrastructures. Lastly, the lack of knowledgeable professionals and technical capabilities in the OPT is another reason for the current chaotic situation, regarding sound disaster management.

According to the WASH Cluster vulnerability mapping

assessment (2021), more than 8,500 households in the Gaza Strip were affected by flooding events in the last three years; 1,300 of these households were exposed to severe damage to their private and public structures and assets, particularly in Gaza and North Gaza governorates.

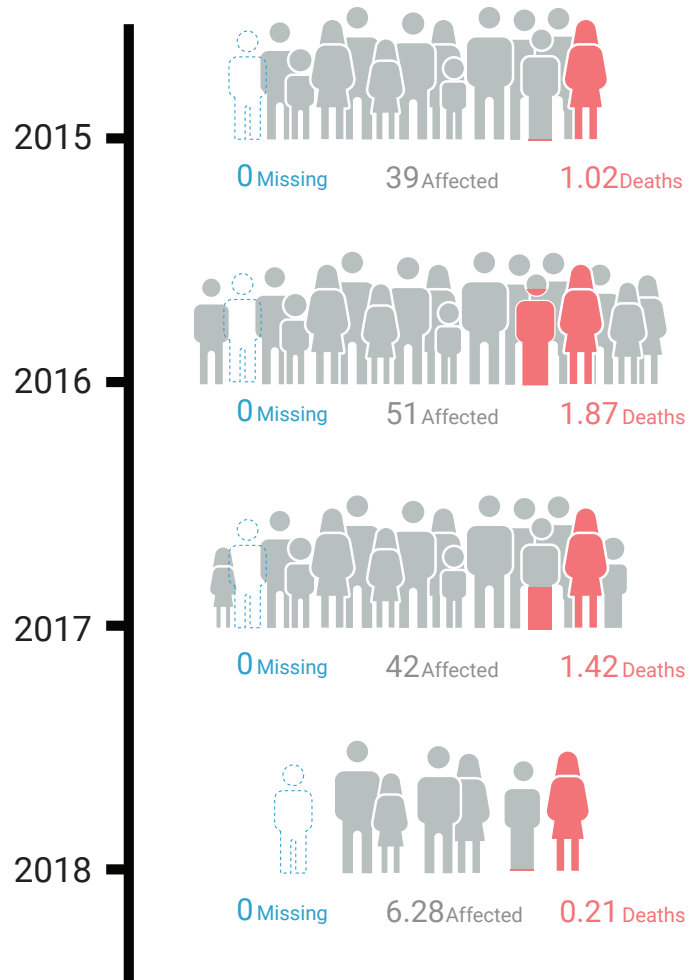
The mainstreaming of risk reduction into the spatial planning interventions is weak at the different planning levels, especially at the national level. The protection plan that was adopted by the Palestinian Cabinet in 2012 and then in 2019 under the NSP for the State of Palestine does not yet consider parameters related to potential risks and disaster-prone areas. According to experts, factoring in such layers of constraints will result in different outputs and designations in the protection plan that would ultimately change the future of spatial development and its patterns, especially in the urban areas.

Although not considered natural disaster related casualties, it is important to mention the gravity of human loss and injuries resulting from the Israeli occupation.



©Palestine Studies (2016). Earthquake, Nablus, 1927.

## Natural Disasters



Source: OCHA OPT (2021)

## Civil casualties due to Israeli occupation



Source: OCHA OPT (2021)

In 2018, due to the occurrence of disasters, there were 915 interruptions in basic services, 20 interruptions in educational services, and 895 interruptions in other services.

## Resilient Ramallah

Supported by the Rockefeller Foundation, the city of Ramallah was chosen among the first 33 cities worldwide to join the “Resilient Cities Network” (Ramallah Municipality, 2018). In addition to building partnerships and exchange of experiences among the network, the participation of Ramallah City entails the formulation and implementation of a resilience strategy that strengthens its ability to manage risks, including: sudden changes in climate, the spread of diseases, urban expansion, decaying

infrastructure, the rapid development in means of communication and information technology, natural disasters, wars, conflicts, social and psychological difficulties, rising poverty, and others. The strategy included also the neighbouring cities, namely Al Bireh and Beitunia, and the National Disaster Risk Management Center (NDRMC) oversees the risk management component of the project.

© Media Clinic (2021). Ramallah, West Bank, Palestine







## POLICY PRIORITIES:

- Institutionalization and support of the NDRMC.
- Improvement of internal coordination and institutional capacity at various fronts, e.g., central government-LGUs, LGUs-CSOs and LGUs-private sector.
- Strengthen the capacity of LGUs in risk assessment and mitigation.
- Support LGUs in decentralisation efforts in line with national priorities, diversifying their sources of revenues (e.g., public private partnerships, land-based financing), and reduce their financial reliance on the central government.
- The promotion of a more productive use of public revenue, focusing on social returns on investment, locally or globally, rather than expenditures.
- Enhanced risk management to reduce the cost of response to international crises.
- Building requirement for natural hazards by ensuring that the NUP under preparation, along with the NSP should incorporate building requirements in earthquake-prone areas and prioritise areas where climate action is immediately needed.

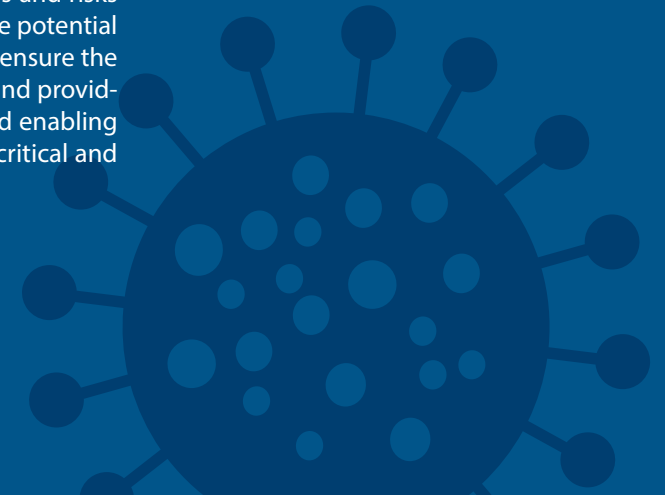
## IMPACT OF COVID-19 AND GOVERN-

## MENT RESPONSES:

Like other countries worldwide, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 has impacted the lives of Palestinians in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip. The pandemic has impacted all aspects of Palestinian lives, particularly the economy and health. With the appearance of the first cases of COVID-19 in late March 2020, the Palestinian government began imposing full lockdowns and closures to contain the pandemic. By end of July 2021, 345,444 Palestinians had suffered from COVID-19, and 3,869 were reported dead (COVID-19 in Palestine, 2021).

Health systems are being challenged by increasing demand for care of people with COVID-19, compounded by fear, stigma, misinformation and limitations on movement that disrupt the delivery of health care for all conditions (World Health Organization (WHO), 2021). Domestic violence and gender-based violence have also increased as a result of lockdowns in addition to elevated stress and anxiety among family members (UNFPA, 2020).

With UN-Habitat's support, the MoLG took the initiative to prepare a BCP to address the contingencies and risks associated with the pandemic and other future potential disasters in Palestine. The aim of the BCP is to ensure the continuity of the MoLG's work in supporting and providing guidance and financial means to LGUs and enabling them to maintain and sustain the delivery of critical and vital services to their citizens.



## 11.6 The Environmental Impact of Urbanization

Reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management

### Urban solid waste collected

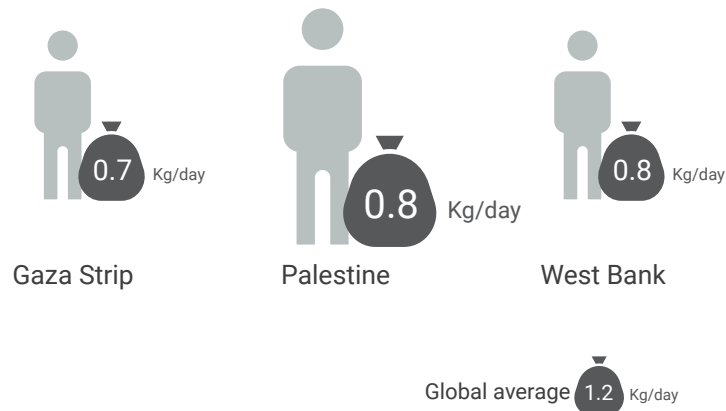
The fragile ecosystem in the OPT is threatened by increasing population growth and limited natural resources. The urban environment in Palestine is reeling under immense environmental pressure evident in water scarcity, climate change, and overall weakened urban livability and quality of life amid rapid urbanization and urban sprawl. Palestinians also are denied access to water resources of the Jordan Valley, which is becoming highly affected by pollution, especially due to the increase of

salts and nitrates with an increase of more than eight times in eight decades (PCBS, 2010), mainly because of the excessive Israeli pumping of groundwater that led to increased salinity. Moreover, water quality is deteriorated due to infiltration of sewage, solid waste leachate and agricultural chemicals.

In addition, poor land use and spatial development patterns and zoning in Palestine have contributed to unsustainable urban sprawl and encroachment on agricultural land and sensitive environmental areas. This has led to a

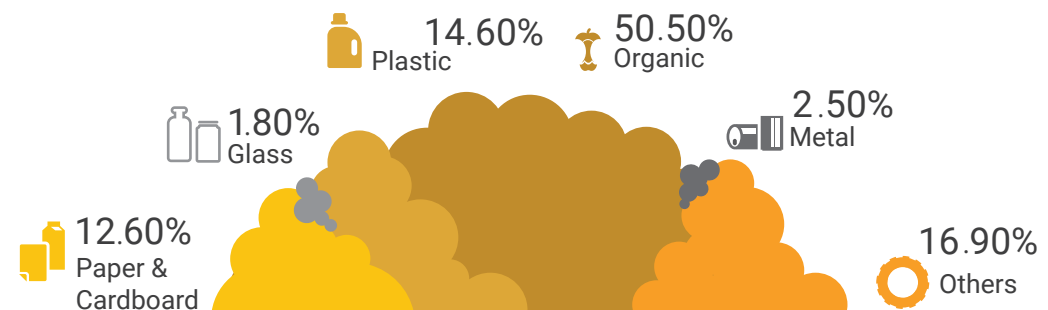
decline in agricultural lands available for farming. Therefore, Palestinian farmers are excessively using fertilizers and pesticides that negatively affect the soil fertility and increase water pollution. In the West Bank and Gaza strip, there are more than 19 types of pesticides that are currently being used while they are banned by international standards for their health impacts (PCBS, 2010).

### Waste generation per capita



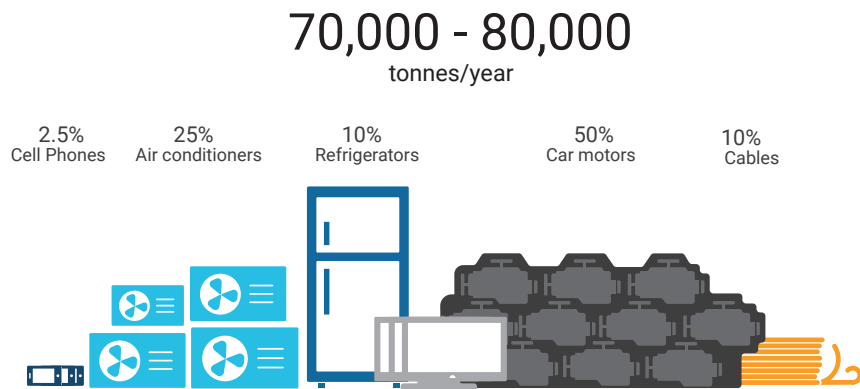
Source: PMO and UNCT (2020), Atlas of Sustainable Development, pp. 59.

### Solid Waste Composition in the West Bank



Source: PMO and UNCT (2020), Atlas of Sustainable Development, pp. 60.

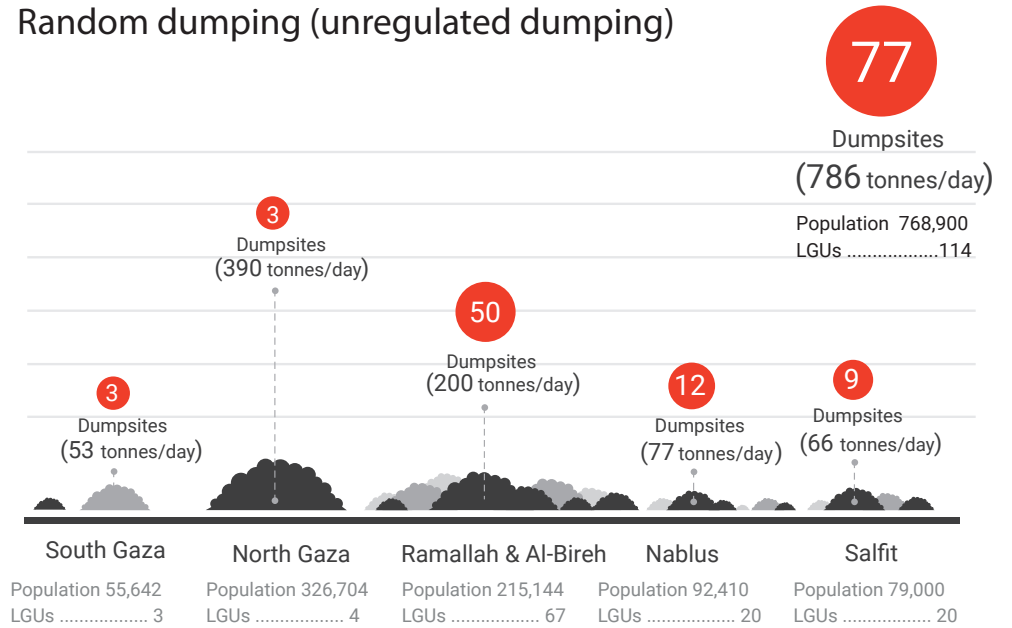
## E-waste



Locations: Beit Awwa, Idhna, Deir Samit, Al Kum and Beit Maqdam in Hebron governorate

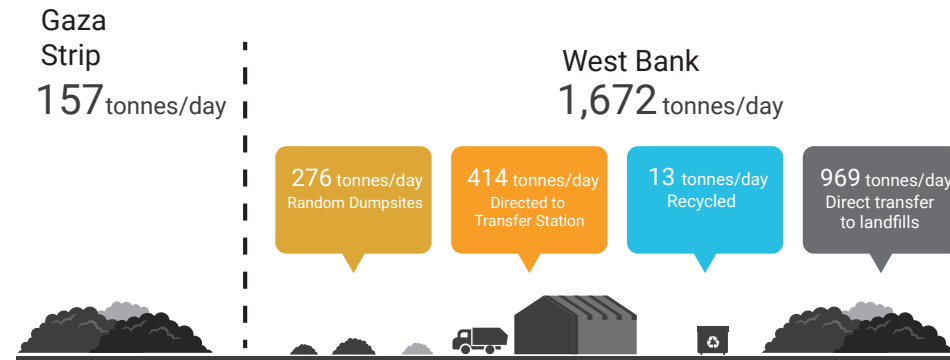
90% of e-waste comes from Israel

## Random dumping (unregulated dumping)



Source: PMO and UNCT (2020), Atlas of Sustainable Development, pp. 60.

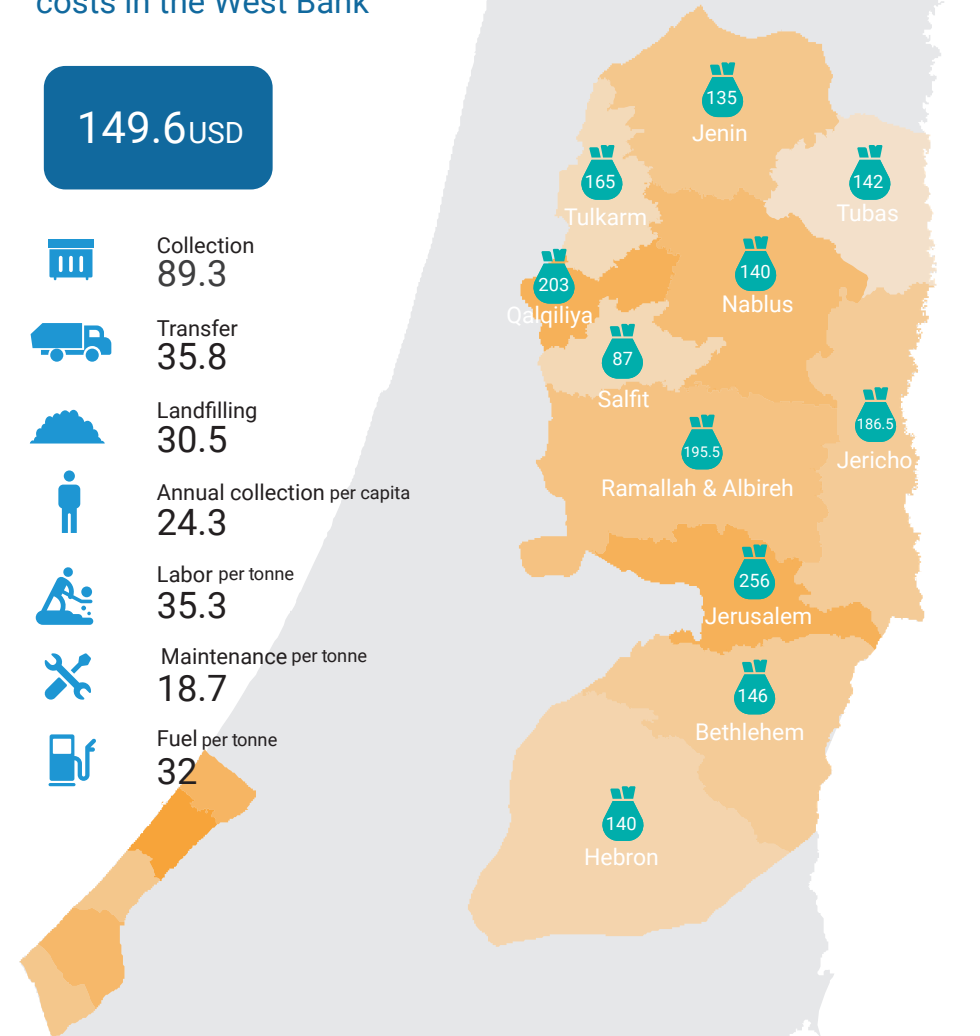
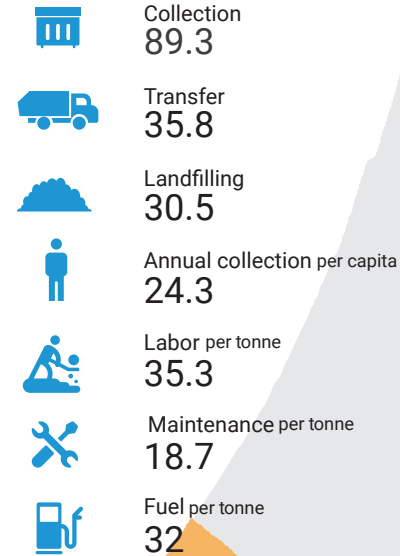
## Total solid waste collected by Joint Service Councils



Source: PMO and UNCT (2020), Atlas of Sustainable Development, pp. 60.

## Solid waste management costs in the West Bank

149.6 USD



Source: MoLG (2019).

## Solid Waste Management challenges

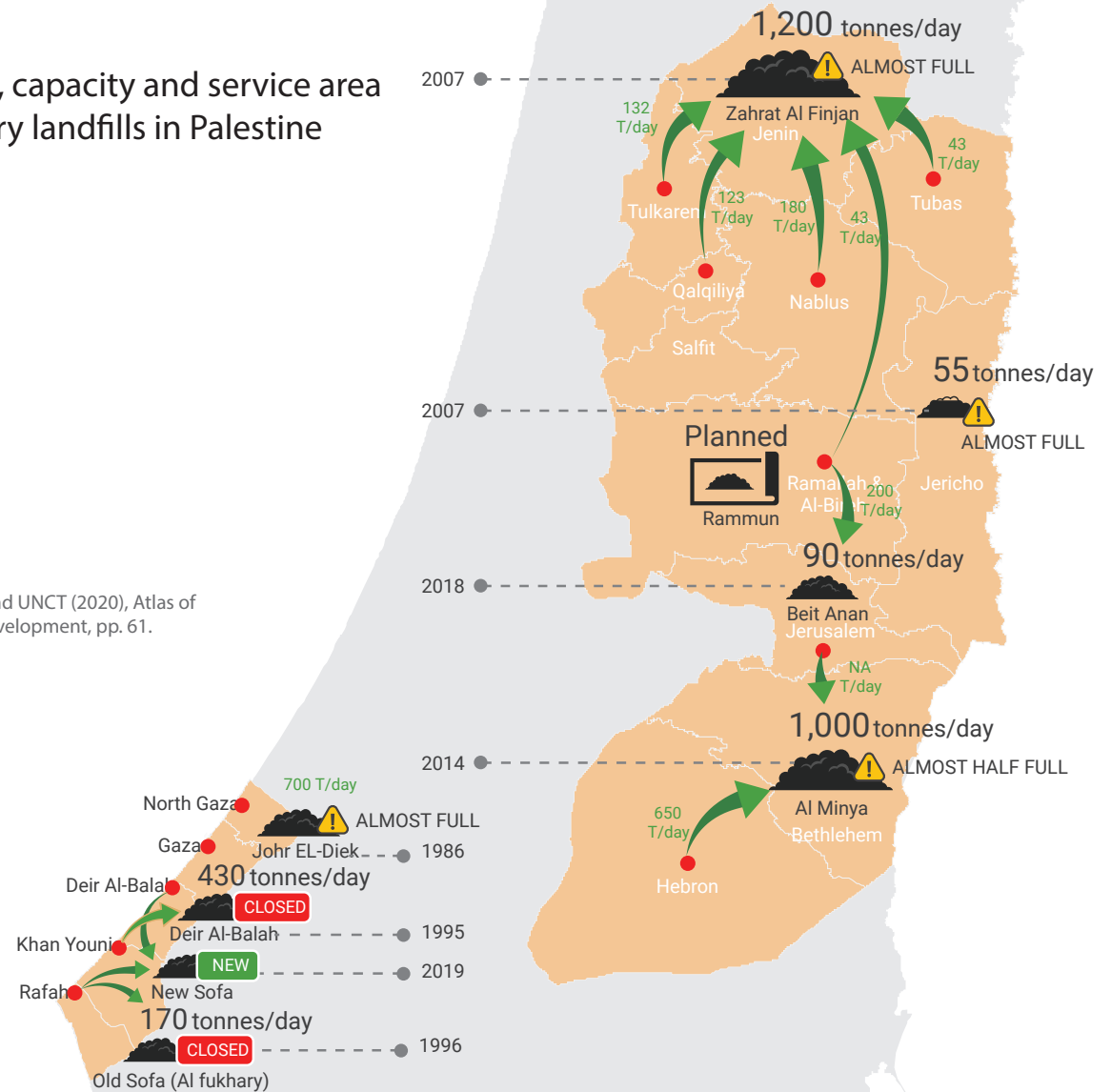
The lack of Palestinian control over Area C (more than 60 per cent of the West Bank) is exacerbated with the existence of about 200 Israeli settlements across the West Bank. These settlements, of 661,600 Israeli settlers, often release large quantities of untreated hazardous waste into the surrounding Palestinian environment in violation of many international treaties. In September 2016, Afaq Magazine revealed that Israeli toxic organic and non-organic waste is dispersed over thousands of dunums west of the Jordan River and north of Jericho. Furthermore, the study indicated that more than half of the electronic waste (e-waste) generated in Israel is disposed of in the West Bank (Karzam, 2016).

Another challenge facing the quality of environment in Palestine is the growing practice of the illegal and perilous burning of e-waste in order to extract raw materials such as copper from wires; a community and business practice that is spreading toxins at alarming rates in many areas, such as Idhna in Hebron (ARIJ, 2012), a population of around 22,000, in which 100 dunums of land are utilized for this practice and employ around 1,000 persons. E-waste workshops drastically impact urban living, rural landscape, water resources, agricultural lands and public health.

In the Gaza Strip and as a result of the various waves of Israeli attacks on Palestinian public and private infrastructure, municipal and government authorities and international partners are facing various challenges in dealing with removal and disposal of rubble of demolished public and private structures.

## Location, capacity and service area of sanitary landfills in Palestine

Source: PMO and UNCT (2020), Atlas of Sustainable Development, pp. 61.



## Bethlehem Joint Services Council

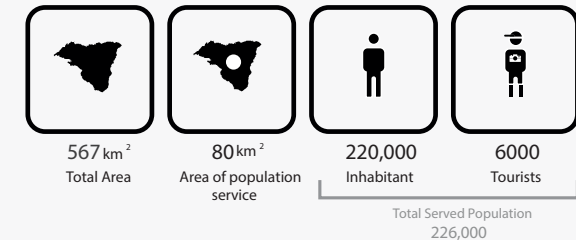
As part of its efforts to support the continuation of Solid Waste Management (SWM) services in Bethlehem Governorate, the first Palestinian area that was affected by COVID-19, UN-Habitat, with funding from Al-Waleed Philanthropies, provided financial and technical support to the Bethlehem JSC and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) to ensure that solid waste collection and management services continue in the governorate, including refugee camps. This support focused on the distribution of personal protective equipment to guarantee on-the-job safety for JSC SWM workers during the pandemic. In three refugee camps of Bethlehem Governorate alone (Aida, Dheisheh and Beit Jibrin), during the months of September, October and November 2020, the JSC has

transported and disposed to Al Minya landfill approximately 1,068 tonnes of waste.

The JSC also conducted a Solid Waste Management Assessment (pre- and post-COVID-19) of Bethlehem Governorate to determine the extent to which the pandemic has affected the continuation of these services and to explore the challenges related to SWM in the governorate. The assessment indicated that the total municipal solid waste collected and managed in controlled facilities increased from 93.1 per cent in 2019 to 97 per cent in 2020, mainly due to the reduction in waste generated in Bethlehem City as a result of the severe fall in touristic activities (from 204 tonnes/day in 2019 to 189 tonnes/day in 2020). Therefore, whilst the solid waste collection and management services were largely affected during the initial lockdowns imposed on Bethlehem governorate

in March 2020, this problem was quickly overcome through the support provided to UNRWA and the JSC to ensure the continuation of these activities whilst ensuring the protection of SWM workers.

## Bethlehem Governorate Key Facts

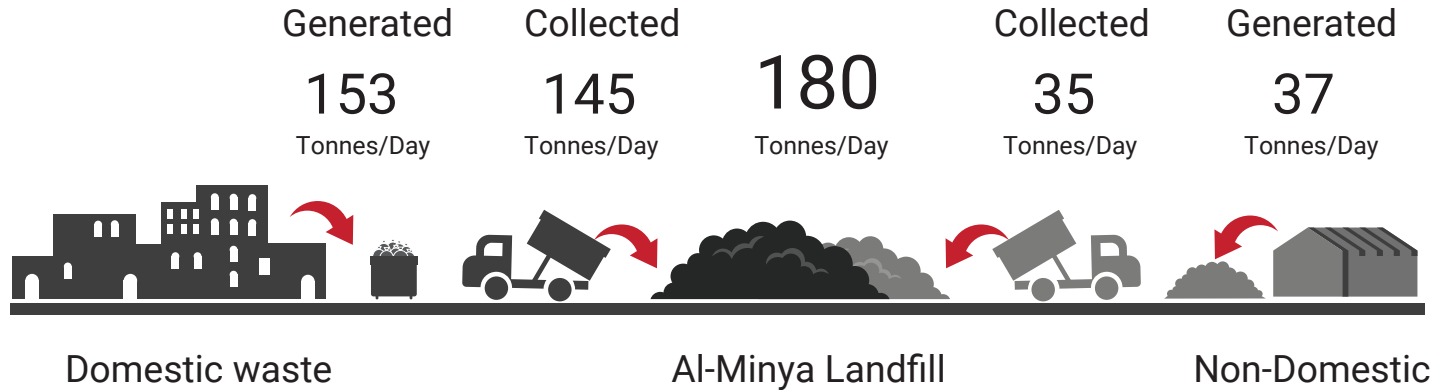


## Waste collection in Bethlehem Governorate, 2020

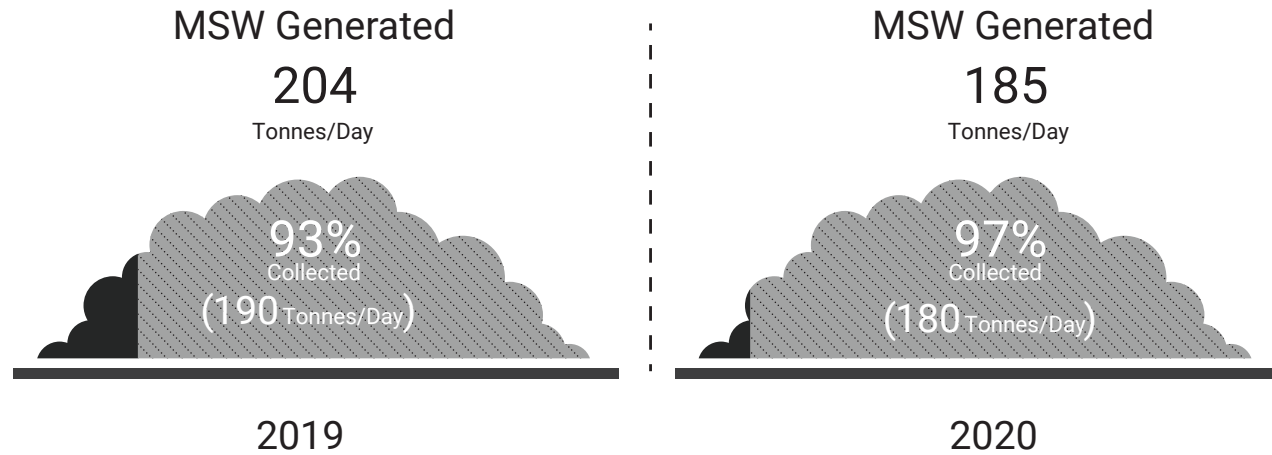


Source: Bethlehem JSC for SWM (2020).

### Waste flow in Bethlehem Governorate, 2020



### Total Municipal Solid Waste collected and managed in controlled facilities in Bethlehem Governorate



Source: Bethlehem JSC for SWM (2020).

## Mean levels of fine particulate matter

With rapidly growing urbanization in Palestinian cities, there is immense environmental pressure which has manifested through high air pollution, water pollution and scarcity, visible impacts of climate change, and a general reduction in urban liveability and quality of life. Most of the Palestinian popula-

tion is exposed to polluted air, which is defined as air pollution levels that exceed Particulate Matter (PM) 2.5, according to the guidelines of the WHO. Air pollution in Palestine is very high as a result of the growing population and limited availability of environmentally friendly alternatives in living, transport and industrial operations. Neither government authorities nor LGUs track the levels of the fine PM as part of a comprehensive system. None-

theless, authorities including major municipalities acknowledge the importance of monitoring air pollution including the levels of the fine PM especially at proximity of industrial zones and quarries, in addition to various topographic locations so as to provide specific and macro-level indications about the impact of factories and transborder activities.

### Pollution in the Gaza Strip

In the Gaza Strip, for instance, there are 500 industrial facilities operating, which contribute to high air pollution in addition to disposing their waste in poor sewage systems, the ground or the sea (therefore also contributing to both soil and water pollution). The air pollution levels are also exacerbated by the Israeli raids and bombardments of the Gaza Strip, which result in high destruction and exposition to hazardous materials. Generally, the Palestinian population also rely heavily on motor vehicles that carry outdated or inefficient clean fuel technologies, all producing exhaust fumes further contributing to high air pollution rates. Furthermore, the improper management of solid waste increases

all forms of pollution, specifically through the inevitable production of leachate in landfills, which has serious potential environmental negative consequences, in terms of soil and groundwater pollution and odours. This problem is further exacerbated by the illegal incineration of solid waste, which immensely increases air pollution.

### Measuring fine particulate matter in Nablus City

A pilot project has been implemented by An-Najah National University in Nablus City to monitor fine PM. The report indicates that there is a significant PM problem in the city of Nablus, where average concentrations almost daily exceeded the 24 hour WHO guidelines for both PM 2.5 and PM 10. The

report has also recommended that additional studies in other regions using a denser sensor network in an area-wide coverage should be performed to identify more area-specific pollutant levels, local source strengths, and possible remediation recommendations. The figures show that the levels of PM 2.5 in the city of Nablus are lower than the City of Amman, Jordan (Abdeen, et al., 2014).





## POLICY PRIORITIES

- Improve capacity of JSC's in SWM with the aim of improving the quality of services in a cost-effective manner.
- Improve waste reduction, recycling, composting and public awareness.
- Incorporate policies that reduce the negative impact of urbanisation on the environment.
- Introduce wide monitoring of air, water and soil quality.
- Engage schools and universities in awareness raising and clean-up efforts.
- Encourage environmental spatial planning in design and implementation of infrastructure for the delivery of environmental basic services, using concepts of circular economy.
- Incorporation of ecosystems-based approaches in the design and assessment of environmental basic services projects.

## IMPACT OF COVID-19 AND GOVERNMENT RESPONSES:

Despite the multi-sectoral impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated mitigation measures, LGUs continue their efforts in collecting and transferring solid waste in all urban and rural centers. While traditional sources of revenue of LGUs were hampered, the continuation of service provision caused a serious financial crisis and budget deficit for the majority of LGUs.

Moreover, since the start of the pandemic, LGUs faced an increase in quantities of health-care waste, including those related to COVID-19, e.g., testing kits, gloves, masks, sheets, etc. This has revealed the need to allocate specialized facilities to dispose of medical waste.



## 11.7 Access to Public Spaces

Provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities

High quality, safe, inclusive and accessible green and public spaces are a key anchor for inclusive cities. When properly planned and designed, especially with a gendered lens, and built around major public destinations. Public spaces build local economies, civic pride, social connection and human contentment; they serve as “safety valves” for a city, where people interact as civic equals, gather to celebrate, grieve, honour, remember, exult and protest (UN-Habitat, 2021).

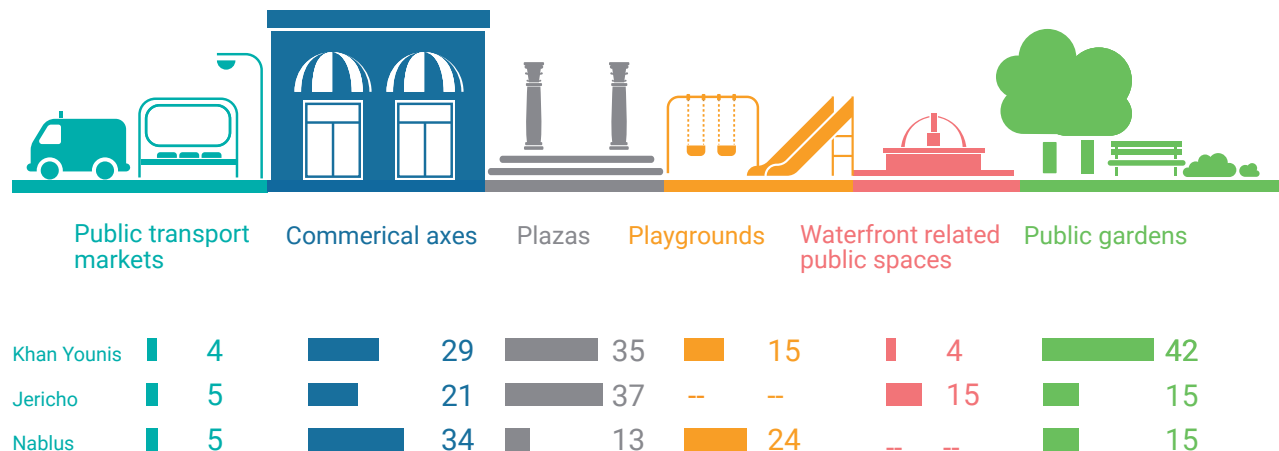
in Palestine. This is mainly due to various factors, such as rapid urbanization, limited availability of land due to limitations on urban centers to expand beyond Areas A and B, and ownership complexities. Additionally, the majority of land parcels in cities are privately owned, making it very difficult to set aside land for public space usage (UNCT and PMO, 2020). Planning regulations in Palestine have not been successful in facilitating the provision of public spaces in Palestinian cities, because the primary

focus is on building design, elevations, heights, setbacks, parking, etc., with little focus on the design and integration of urban public spaces. Additionally, no planning policies are currently mainstreamed within the Palestinian spatial-planning systems that plan, design, manage, implement, and maintain public spaces in the Palestinian cities and towns.

©UN-Habitat. East Jerusalem, Palestine.

Public spaces in urban and rural centers are relatively low

### Typology of public spaces



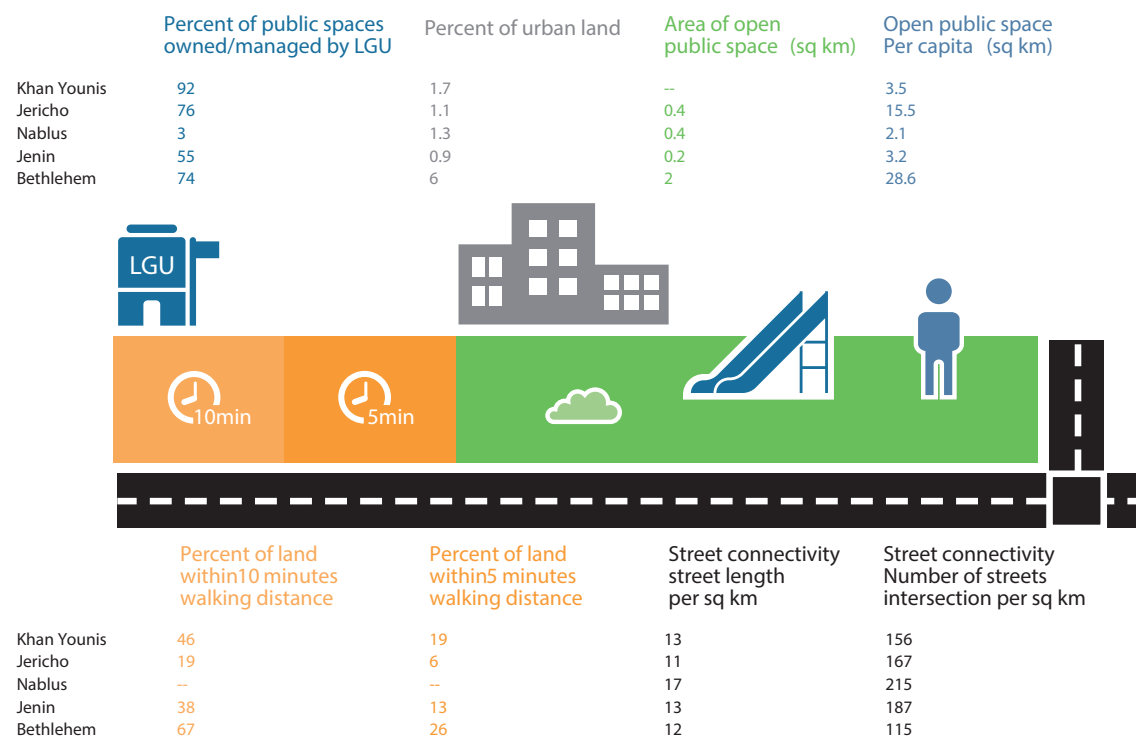
Source: UN-Habitat (2021)



In Area C, Palestinians are unable to safely enjoy public spaces. According to the MSNA (Reach, 2021), in the West Bank 12 per cent of households are using the following coping strategies to avoid Israeli settler violence: withholding children from travel (6 per cent); withholding adult family members from travel (4 per cent); and adding security measures to the shelter (2 per cent). Additionally, 44 per cent of the most commonly report-

ed types of threats or violent acts included: menacing behaviour (threats, pointing of weaponry and firing of weaponry), 20 per cent included obstructing access to areas in the vicinity (farm or pasture lands), and 15 per cent included occupation of all or part of shelter.

## Average share of open spaces in cities



Source: UN-Habitat (2021)

## The Placemaking Toolkit

This is a toolkit for communities and designers to design and implement public spaces and buildings in Palestine, developed by UN-Habitat and funded by the European Union and endorsed by MoLG providing information and ideas to communities and designers about how they might make use of their assets and create “people places” in towns and villages that contribute to improved living conditions for all people who live in these communities.

A few municipal efforts to utilize lands owned by the municipality have succeeded in creating public open spaces in the neighbourhoods of their cities, and they have come in the form of small parks and gardens. Although the number of these initiatives is still small, they have succeeded to meet some of the respective communities’ basic needs for public spaces.

These placemaking interventions can be an applicable model with positive effects by which people can design and implement better public spaces in their own environment. The placemaking approach envisages and utilizes the emotional capital of belonging. On the other hand, it also utilizes local and financial capital in localities where people are living with limited resources and spaces. It builds a deep connection between local people and their land, because people become empowered and encouraged to use and interact with their surrounding places, which they own.

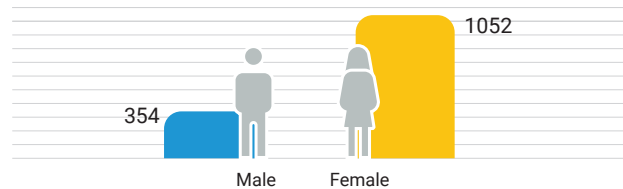
(UN-Habitat, 2020)

## People who are victims of physical or sexual harassment

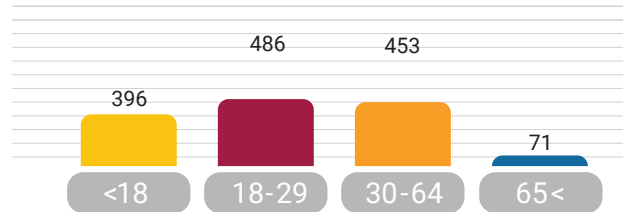
Proportion of persons victims of physical or sexual harassment by sex, age, disability status and place of occurrence in the previous 12 months (July 2020 - June 2021)



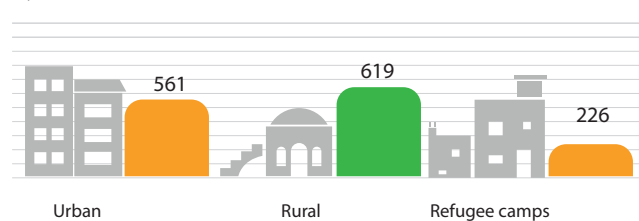
by sex



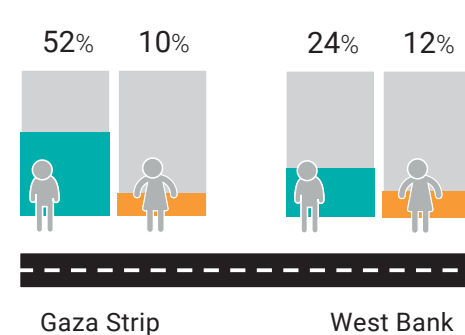
by age



By place of occurrence



Children facing violence on the street



## POLICY PRIORITIES:

- Improvements and interventions at the city, neighbourhood and block level such as green and public spaces, pocket parks, street theatres, and playgrounds can be developed at present and do not require waiting for new planning and development initiatives.
- Elaborate and adopt an evidence-based and inclusive public space policy in Palestinian cities and communities.
- Monitor and enforce allocation of public spaces in urban and rural centers.
- Advocate for the right of Palestinians to safely access public areas, including in Area C.

## IMPACT OF COVID-19 AND GOVERNMENT RESPONSES:

Anecdotal evidence show that the existence of public and green spaces inside urban and rural centers play an important role in reducing stress and anxiety to all members of the society. Furthermore, the pandemic revealed the need for public spaces that could be utilized during natural disasters noting that the government and local authorities had to utilize existing public spaces, often not suitable, to provide additional health care facilities.

The use of public spaces is restricted when lockdowns are active since the onset of the pandemic; however, it is still important to have open and green spaces that allow for more walkable streets and to invest in greening cities for reduced CO<sup>2</sup> emissions and better air quality, to positively impact people's health and well-being and reduce COVID-19 mortality. UN-Habitat developed key messages on COVID-19 and public spaces as part of its COVID-19 response programme (UN-Habitat, 2020).

Source: Palestine Police Force (2021).

Source: PCBS (2019). Preliminary Results for the Violence Survey in Palestine.

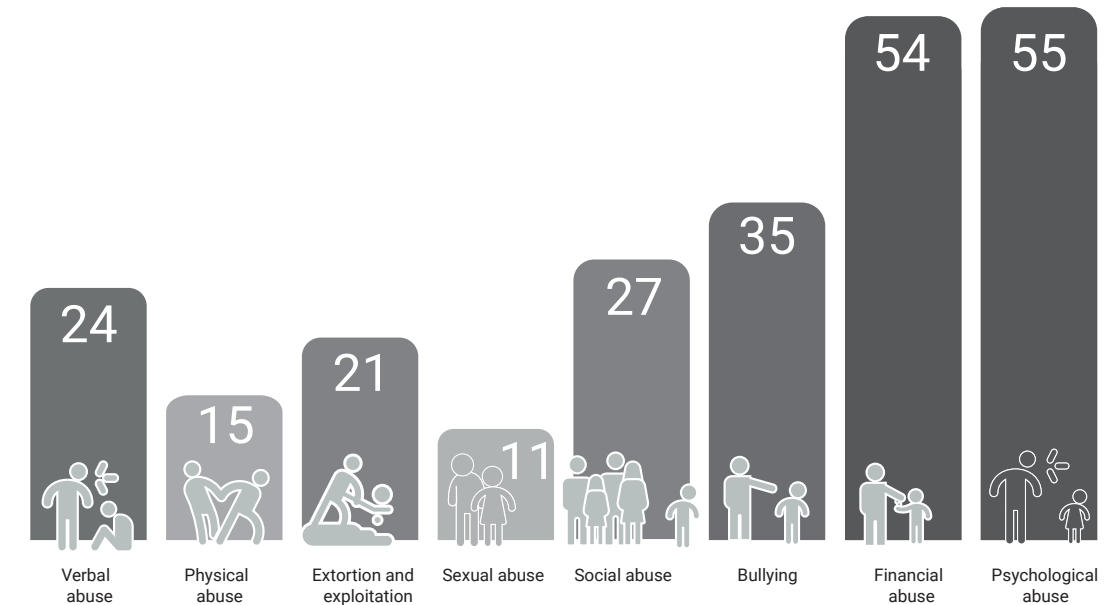
## HAYA Programme

The “HAYA” Programme “Eliminating Violence Against Women in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip” is a five-year joint programme (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment, UN-Habitat, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and UNFPA) funded by the Government of Canada with an overall programme objective of building just and secure communities for women and girls in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Under this programme, UN-Habitat focuses on identifying and addressing weaknesses in current approaches to planning and design of public spaces in Palestine, as well as weaknesses in current legislation and regulations and the absence of policies and guidelines for providing safe and inclusive public spaces, especially at the local government level, to adequately recognize, respond to and prevent violence against women in public spaces in Palestine. This is done through working with schools, where students from both genders are engaged in participatory awareness raising sessions on issues of safety and inclusivity of public spaces. An initiative to design and implement interventions on safe and inclusive cities was launched in 11 schools across the targeted municipalities, engaging 165 male and female students aged 12 to 14 years old and including 10 students with special needs (3 males and 7 females). Five public spaces interventions have already been implemented by students in cooperation with LGUs in three cities.

Source: UN-Habitat (2020)

## Case study on COVID-19 lockdowns and violence against women

percent of women respondents reporting the following during COVID-19 lockdown:



Per cent of victims resorting to family to seek support **24%**

Source: UNFPA (2020)

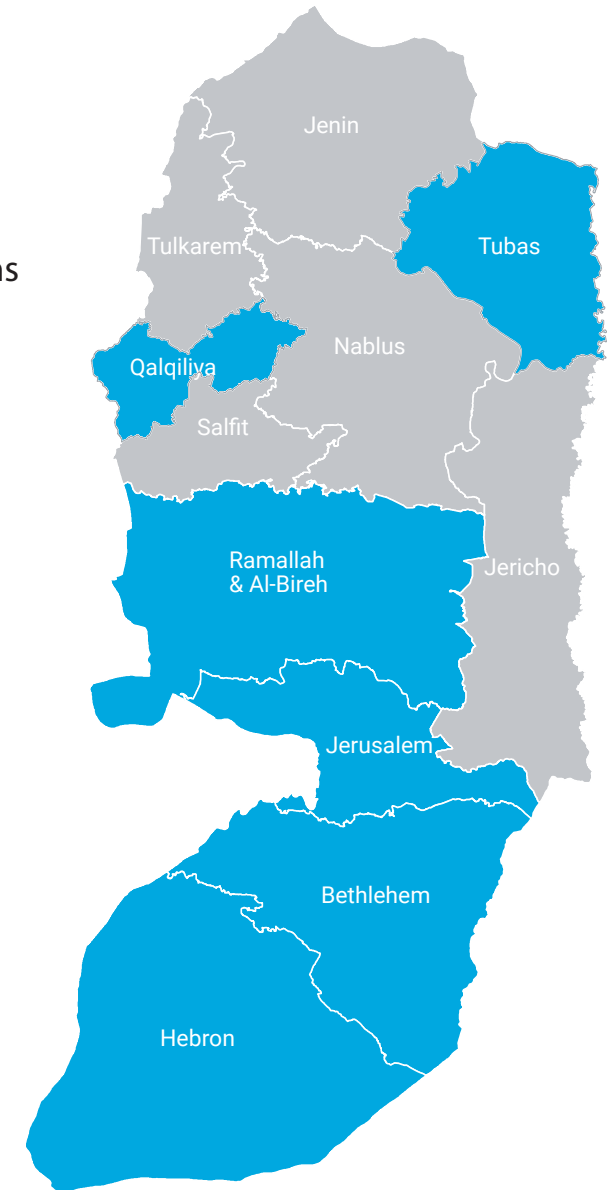
# Strong National and Regional Development Planning

National urban policies or regional development plans



The Palestinian government, led by the MoLG, is implementing the NSP of the State of Palestine, and is currently formulating the NUP building on the Spatial Development Strategic Frameworks, also known as city-region plans for Hebron, Ramallah and Al-Bireh, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Qalqilia and Tubas (covering 1.8 million Palestinians) prepared using an extensive participatory process with key stakeholders (MoLG, 2020). These plans aim at fostering urban and rural development linkages from a spatial perspective, whilst also accommodating for population growth and examining fit-for-purpose arrangements for social services.

Regional  
development plans  
(city-region plans)



# Policies for inclusion, resource efficiency and disaster risk reduction

## Adopt and implement national disaster risk reduction strategies

In 2017, a guide for Disaster Risk Management (DRM) was developed and involved four major components: (i) a National Disaster Risk Management Platform (NDRMP) headed by the Prime Minister; (ii) a National Technical Team comprised of technical representatives of the NDRMP; (iii) NDRMC acting as the Secretariat for the NDRMP; and (iv) NDRMP members are expected to participate in DRM activities and each actor is to establish a DRM focal point, a manager and a unit to perform or lead the DRM activities and work closely with the NDRMC. In 2020, the Palestinian government completed drafting of a disasters risk reduction (DRR) law and is currently formulating a national strategy for DRM in partnership with public, non-governmental and international partners.

Proportion of local governments that adopt and implement local disaster risk reduction strategies

Currently, 68.8 per cent of LGUs retain and apply DRR strategies. At the governorate level, all governorates in the West Bank and Gaza Strip have governorate-wide DRM strategies with involvement of various public, LGUs, and CSOs.

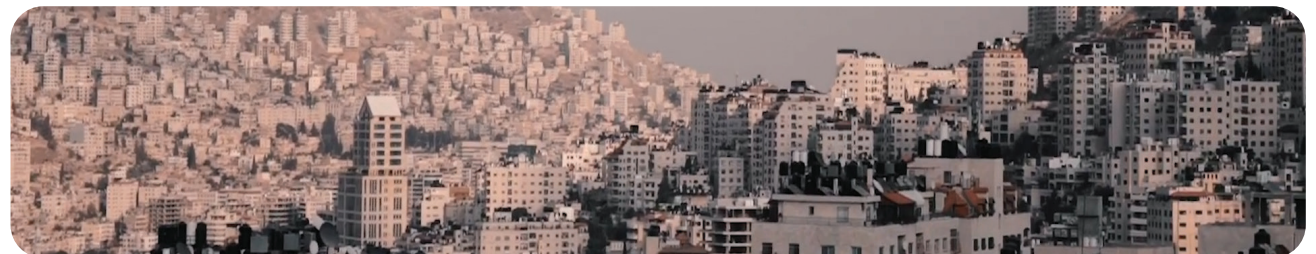
Nablus City - The first Palestinian city to join United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction Campaign

The City of Nablus, located around 60 kilometres north of Jerusalem and with a population of more than 168,000, was the first Palestinian city to join the "Making Cities Resilient" campaign launched in 2010 (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) (2013). This campaign addresses issues of local governance and urban risk and invites local governments to commit to a list of 10 essentials aimed at reducing disaster risks in their communities. This campaign has enlisted over 1,300 local governments around the world.

The United Nations Secretary-General's Special Representative for Disaster Risk Reduction at the time, Margareta Wahlström, visited An-Najah National

University in Nablus, which houses the Urban Planning and Disaster Risk Reduction Center, the only specialized research centre in the field of natural risk reduction and disaster management in Palestine. She praised the efforts made by the university in DRR studies and research, contribution to the development of a comprehensive risk local and national level assessment, and outreach work to contribute to communities' "self-reliance and resilience". Furthermore, the City of Nablus is among the 20 cities worldwide to achieve sustainability and resilience through the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction during the period 2015 - 2030 at the national and local level (An-Najah University , 2017).

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## POLICY PRIORITIES:

- Developing improved emergency response policies to enhance the mechanisms used to strengthen the integrated system of DRR in Palestine as well as increasing performance effectiveness.
- On the local level, the empowerment of LGUs in engaging with communities and the promotion of a coherent approach towards resilience is essentially needed.
- Shelter and house retrofitting programmes need to be designed and launched at the local level with focus on public health considerations, and energy efficiency measures (improvement of building codes, introduction of natural cooling systems, and retrofitting and energy renovation programmes), as well as resilience measures (fire safety and risks related to seismic activity).

## COVID-19 AND THE DISASTER RISK REDUCTION POLICY

The pandemic is global, but the risk facing Palestine is indeed extremely high on the local level given the lack of capacities to effectively respond to the crisis. On the national level, there is an absence of unified policies to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic and to mitigate its impacts.

## Leaving no one and no place behind

“Leaving no one behind (LNOB)” is one of the fundamental principles of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This guiding principle aims at identifying vulnerable groups, communities and individuals, or those at risk of being left behind. LNOB is a political commitment, and it deepens focus on the inequalities, including multiple forms of deprivation, disadvantage, and discrimination, and why they are left behind, looking at root causes. In Palestine, governmental institutions have mainstreamed their commitment to LNOB into national plans and programmes. Like in other countries, PwDs, older persons, children, youth, women, persons living in poverty, especially extreme poverty; more relevant to the Palestinian context, Bedouin and pastoral communities are commonly identified as being the most vulnerable (UNDESA, 2018). In its Voluntary National Report 2018, Palestine highlighted the role of the principle of LNOB in their international cooperation and partnership efforts. Following a rights-based approach to LNOB, Palestine reported on rights enshrined in their constitutions or in international norms and standards to achieve sustainable development that can't be at-

tained without ending the military occupation on the ground (PMO, 2018).

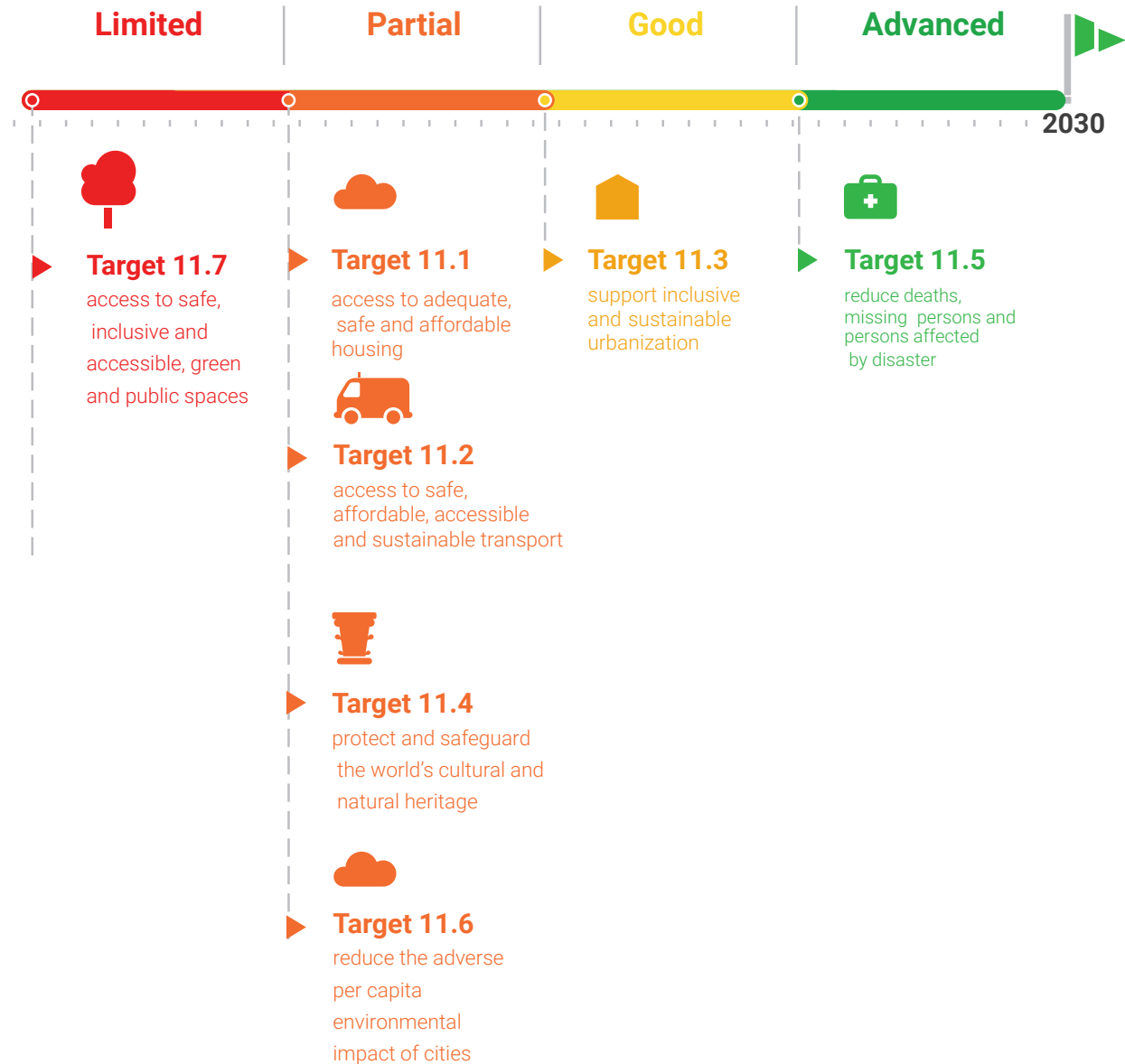
On Goal 11, Palestine reported on various strategies, plans, and programmes put in place in response to pressure from rapid population growth and urbanization on public services, infrastructure and the environment. In this regard, key challenges included housing shortages, shrinking public space, rising property prices, the proliferation of informal settlements, increased vulnerability to disasters, waste management, water drainage issues, congestion, and air pollution. Palestine highlighted the need to strengthen data and monitoring and referred to their lack of capacity in integrated urban planning mainly due to the geo-political situation on the ground.

Alignment and attainment of Goal 11 targets with national priorities and interventions varies considerably. The illustration provides an overview based on anecdotal evidence collected during the consultations done with national and local stakeholders, along with data analyzed.



The pledge to LNOB can be powerful drivers of transformational change. Early efforts to implement the pledge suggest three mutually reinforcing “levers” are required: i. Examine: disaggregated and people driven data and information; ii. Empower: civic engagement and voice; and iii. Enact: integrated, equity-focused SDG policies, interventions and budgets. These levers seem to fit the context of the OPT as well. Integrated approaches are needed to move all three “levers” forward simultaneously in the OPT by improving what is known about who is left behind, where they are and why; empowering marginalized populations to act and claim their rights; and building the capacity of governments to adopt equity-focused and rights-based SDG targets, policies and budgets, which are inclusive and accountable.

Finally, it is important to establish a communication strategy in Palestine that produces materials for a wider range of stakeholders, making ample use of digital communication tools, including digital platforms for online knowledge-sharing on policy challenges and good practices in integrating groups that are most likely will be left behind.



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