



Status Report on the **Achievement of Goal 11** in Palestine

“Sustainable Cities and Communities”



Status Report on the Achievement of Goal 11 in Palestine

“Make cities and human settlements
inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable”

October 2021

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Foreword



As part of the State of Palestine’s continuous commitment to the Agenda for Sustainable Development and guided by our National Development Plan 2021-2023, the Economic Cluster Plans for the governorates and the sector strategies, the Ministry of Local Government continues to formulate national and sector-related policies and is committed to work on issues related to spatial planning, local governance and urban management, with emphasis on the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda.

The situation in Palestine and its manifestation vis-à-vis Goal 11 is unique; the continuous Israeli occupation and, inter-alia, the illegal settlement expansion is a direct and vivid reality that stand against our efforts to make our cities and communities more inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. In addition to these protracted challenges, the Palestinian government, as is the case globally, had to rearrange its priorities so as to confront the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic had, and is still having, a direct impact on our urban and rural population in addition to impacting socio-economic development. It is still putting at risk public welfare, employment and livelihoods, food security, social cohesion, financial and fiscal stability, and institutions, especially in light of the increasingly accelerated urbanization rates in Palestine, where more than 77 per cent of the population are living in

urban centres in the Gaza Strip and West Bank, including occupied East Jerusalem.

Despite these challenges, we remain focused and committed to improve the lives of our people; and we, along with our national and international partners, strive to improve the conditions of our cities and towns to achieve harmonious urbanization.

Pursuant to the previous submission of the 2018 Voluntary National Review which documented the efforts made by the Palestinian government on achieving the SDGs, this report is the first voluntary report documenting the status of Goal 11 in Palestine. In so doing, we are proud of our strategic partnerships with local and international organisations, including UN-Habitat that played a central role in supporting the government and local government units alike.

Eng. Majdi Al Saleh
Minister of Local Government

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of stylized, overlapping loops and lines, positioned below the name and title of the Minister of Local Government.

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Acronyms

ARIJ	Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem (ARIJ)	NDP	National Development Plan	UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
BCP	Business Continuity Plan	NDRMC	National Disaster Risk Management Center	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
CSO	Civil Society Organisation	NDRMP	National Disaster Risk Management Platform	UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
DRM	Disaster Risk Management	NSP	National Spatial Plan	UNHCR	United Nations Human Rights Commissioner
DRR	Disaster Risk Management	NUP	National Urban Policy	UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
ESCWA	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia	OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs	UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees
GDP	Gross Domestic Product	OPT	Occupied Palestinian Territory	WHO	World Health Organization
JSC	Joint Services Council	PA	Palestinian Authority		
LGU	Local Government Unit	PCBS	Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics		
LWSC	Land and Water Settlement Commission	PMO	Prime Ministers' Office		
MDLF	Municipal Development and Lending Fund	PwD	Persons with Disabilities		
MSNA	Mutli-Sectoral Needs Assessment	SDG	Sustainable Development Goal		
MoLG	Ministry of Local Government	SWM	Solid Waste Management		



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 fiscal 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 (ES-CWA), 2021). However, and despite these challenges, the State of Palestine has made notable strides with regards to fostering people-centred planning and in-

tegrated 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 directedly 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 km² and 365 km², 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 plan-

ning 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 Pal-

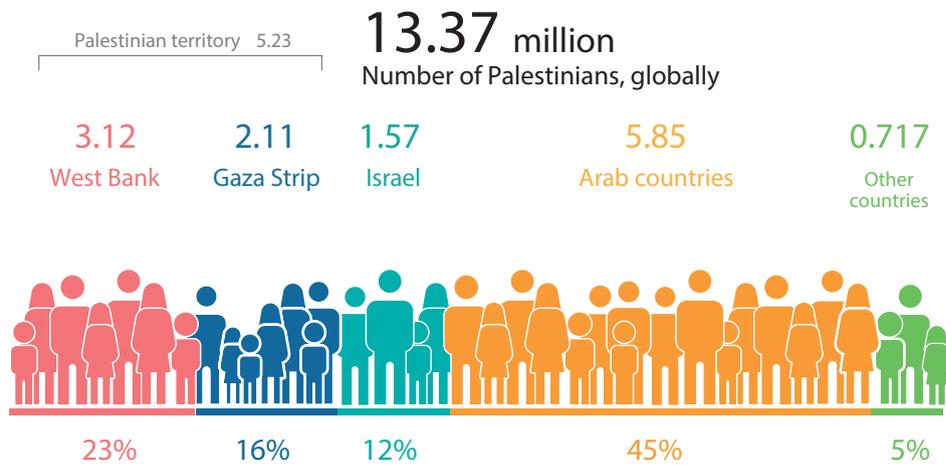
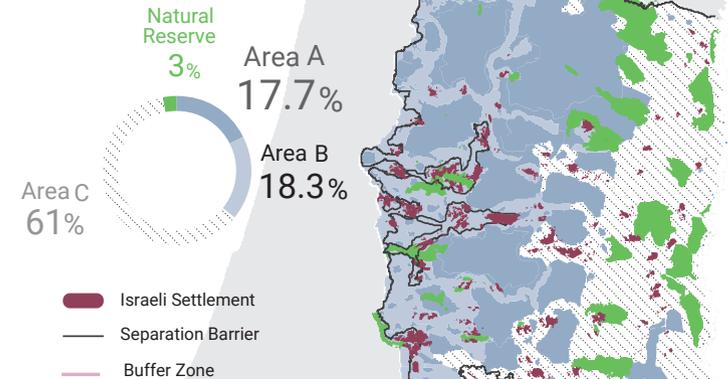
estinian people their rights to regulate land use, curb the increased urbanization and overcrowdedness of Areas A and B, and manage their own resources, without exceeding their carrying capacity. While the comprehensive plans of the Israeli authorities in the State of Palestine have been geared by political 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 asso-

Geopolitical map



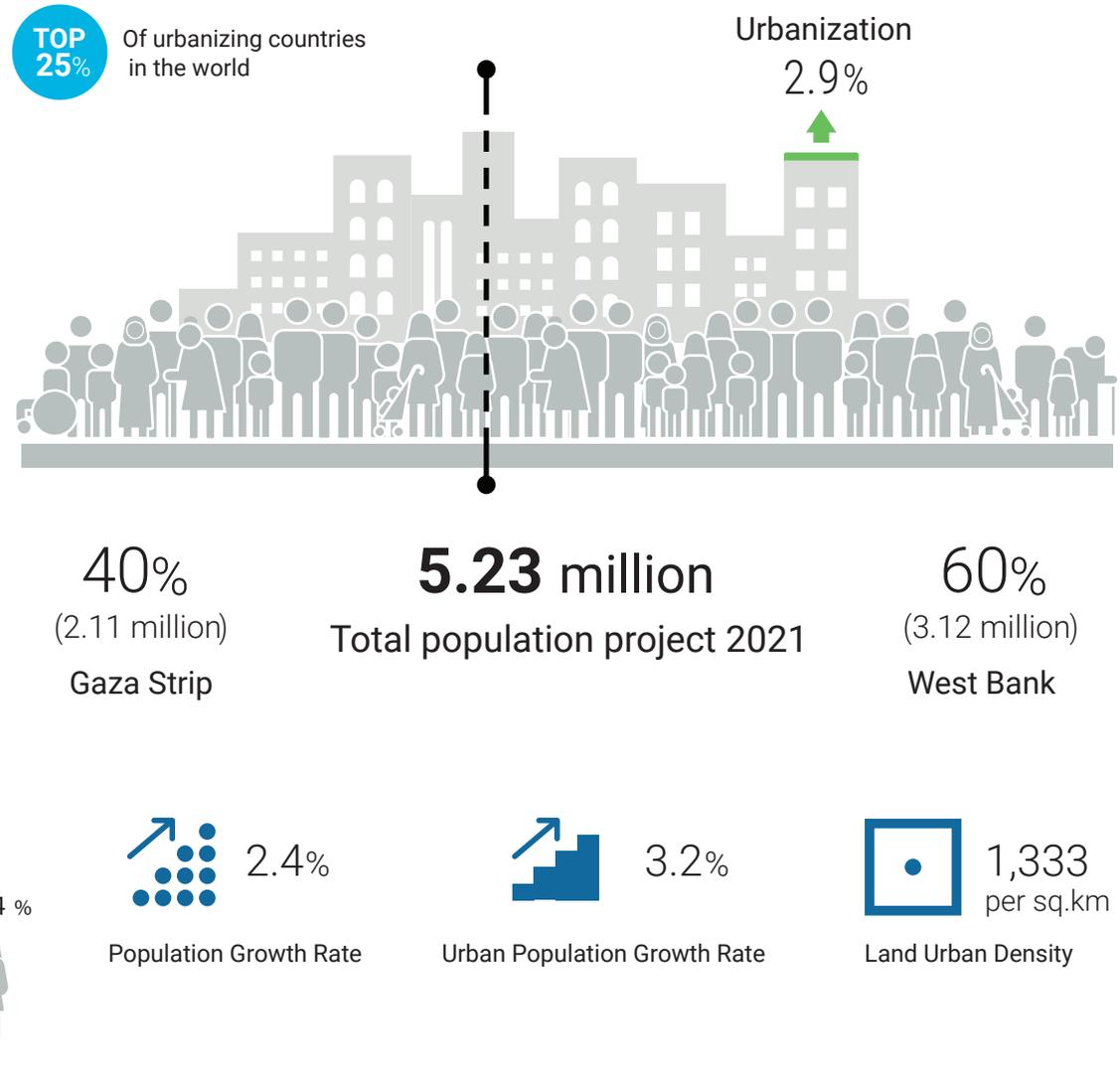
ciated gate and permit regime, violate Israel's obligations under international law (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 2013).

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).

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



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 PM₁₀) 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]



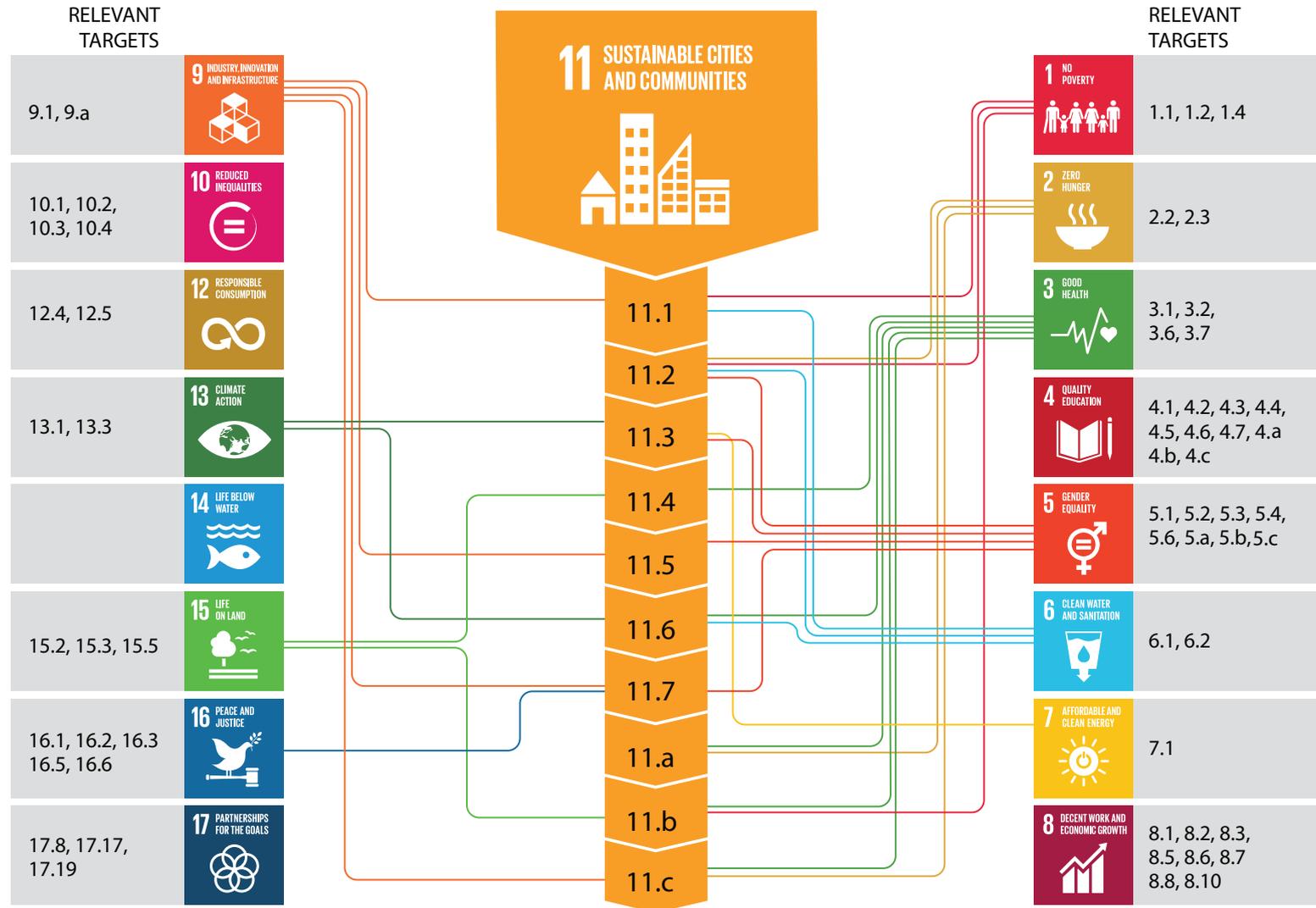
Target 11.b

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



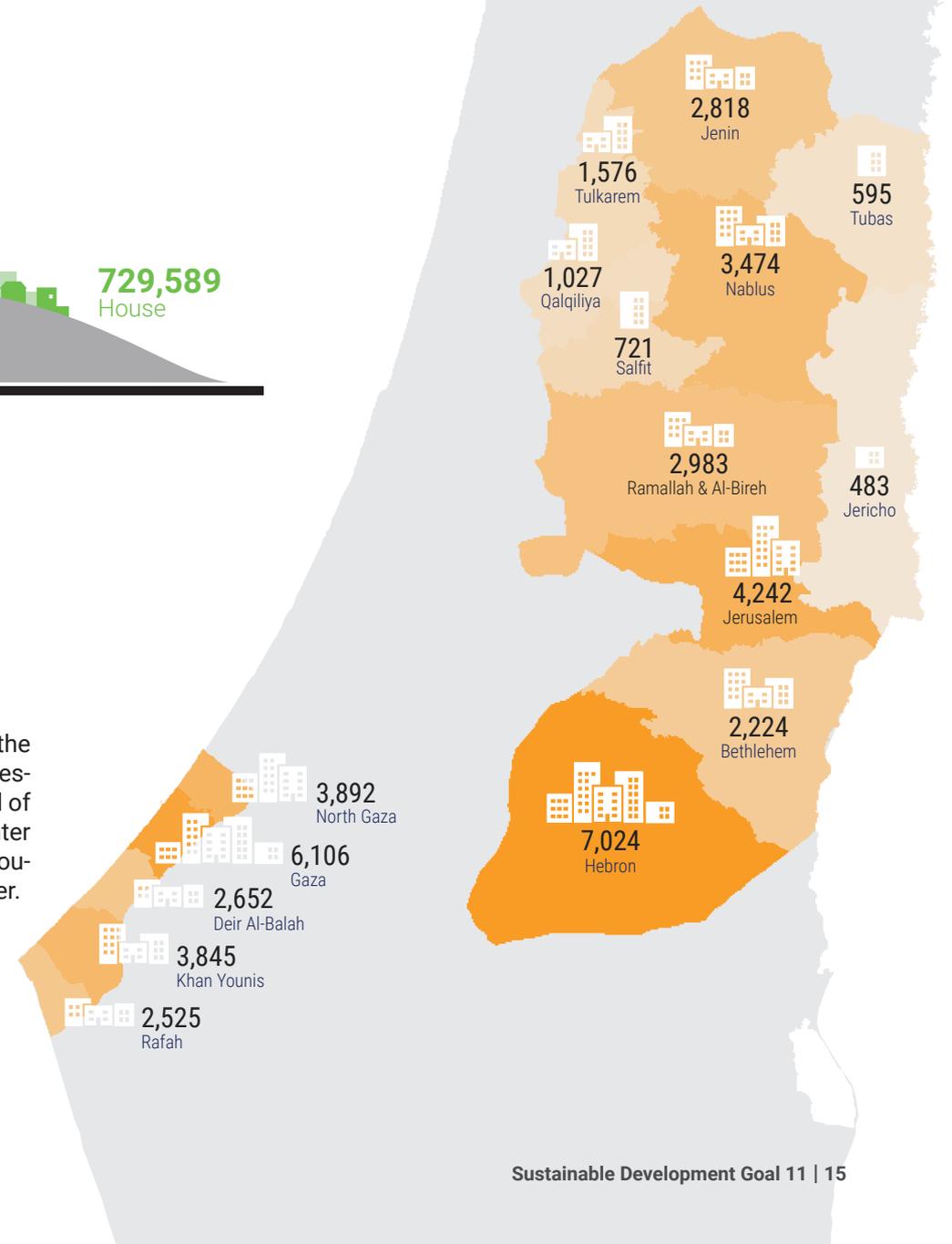
Housing needs in Palestine in 2020



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.

¹ 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).

Source: Ministry of Public Works and Housing (2019), Records.



Housing Affordability

Average household monthly expenditure

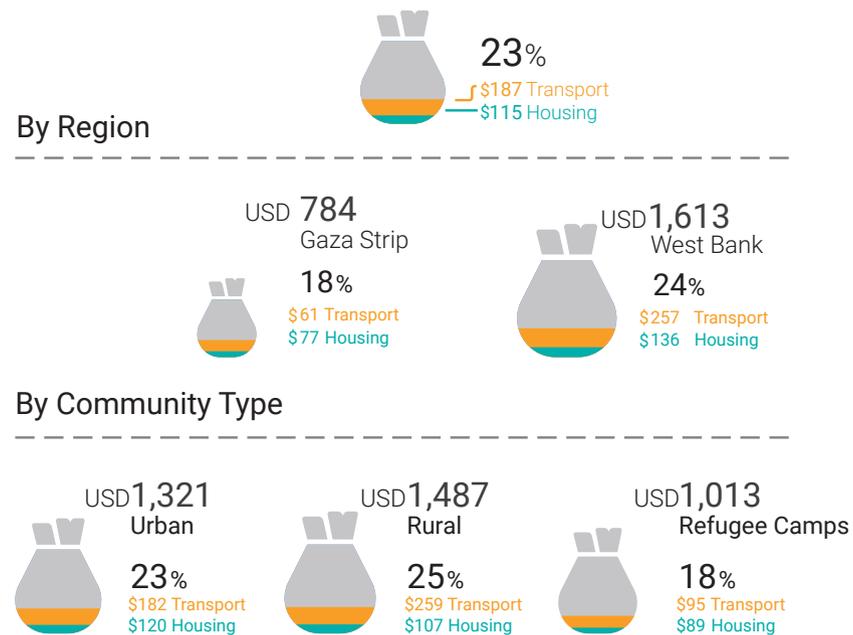
In Palestine, 38.8 per cent of households live in houses and 59.2 per cent live in apartments. In terms of ownership, 87.7 per cent of households live in owned housing units and 7.9 per cent live in rented housing units. While the relatively high percentage of households living in owned housing units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



Source: PCBS (2018)

Overcrowded Housing



Source: PCBS (2019)

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



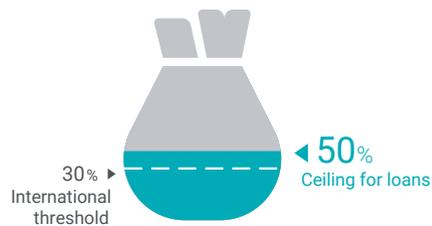
Source: PCBS (2018)

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 m²

India

250
USD per m²

Algeria

8%

Jordan

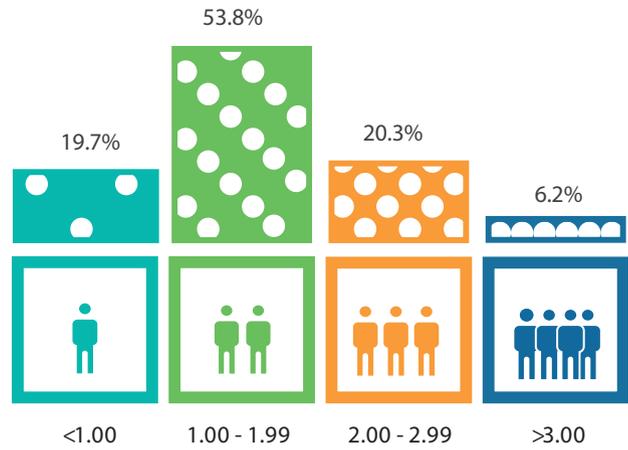
8%

Kuwait

4.1%

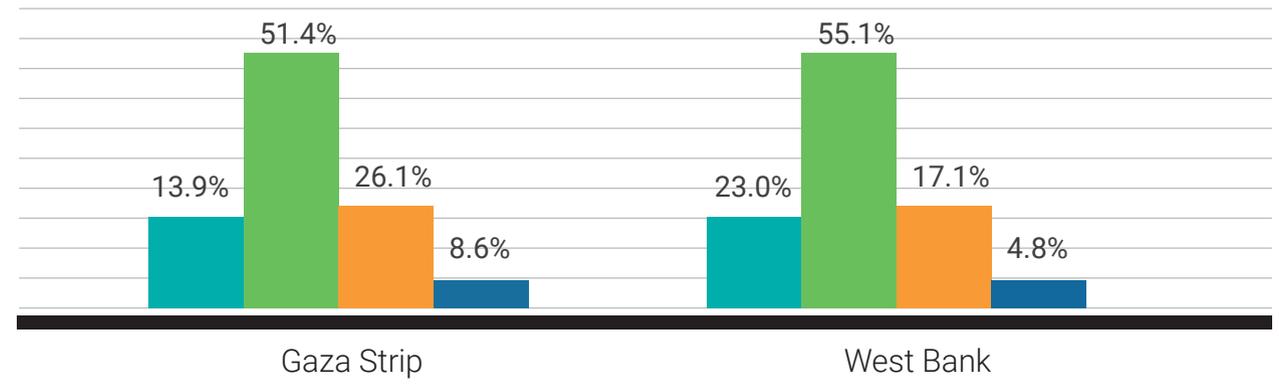
Sources: Office of the Quartet Representative
The World Bank Group (2020)

Housing Density

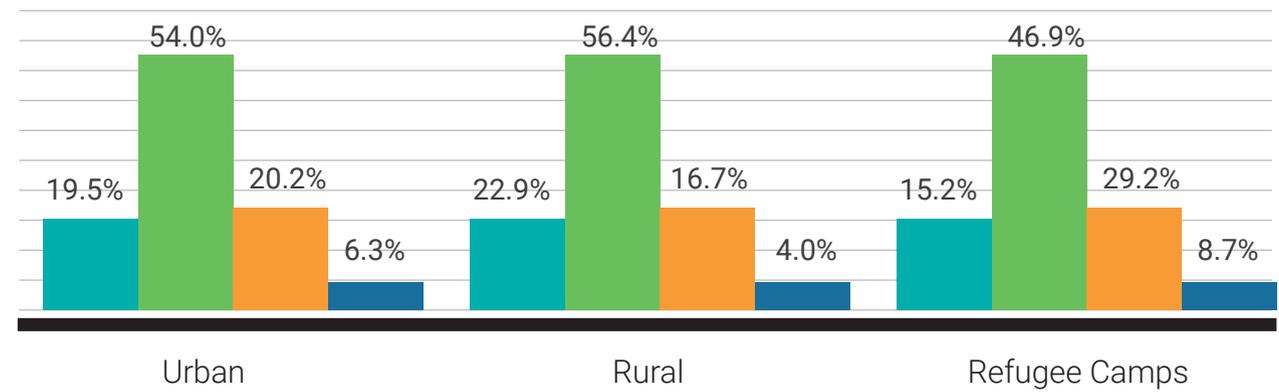


Source: PCBS (2019)

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).

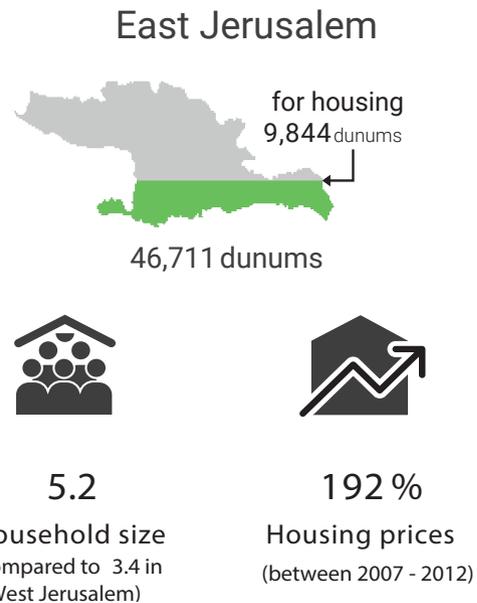
At the same time, Palestinian citizens are facing various policies aimed at forcing Palestinians outside

the city to maintain a Jewish majority. These restrictions impact every 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

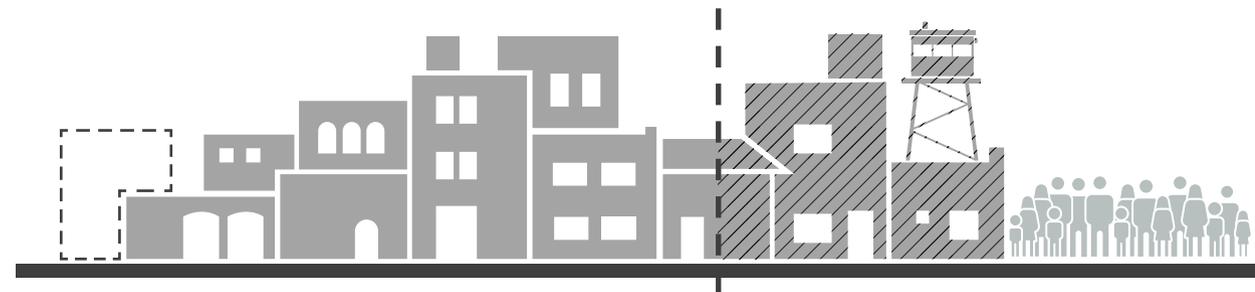
100,000 residents - 180 Palestinian households - at risk of displacement, particularly in the Old City, Silwan and Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhoods (United Nations Country Team and the Prime Minister's Office (UNCT and PMO), 2020).

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).



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



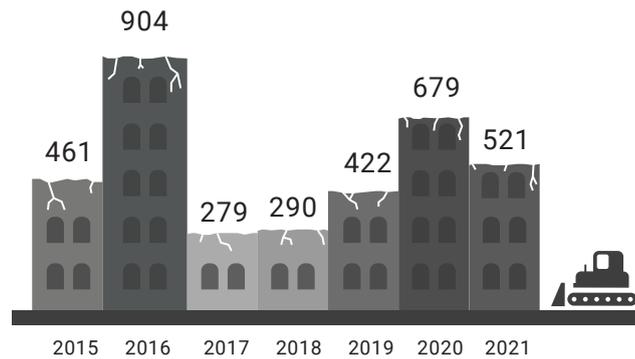
At least **180** Palestinian households in East Jerusalem are at risk of imminent forced displacement due to settler activities, particularly in the Old City, Silwan and Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhoods

Sources: IPCC (2013) and (2020)

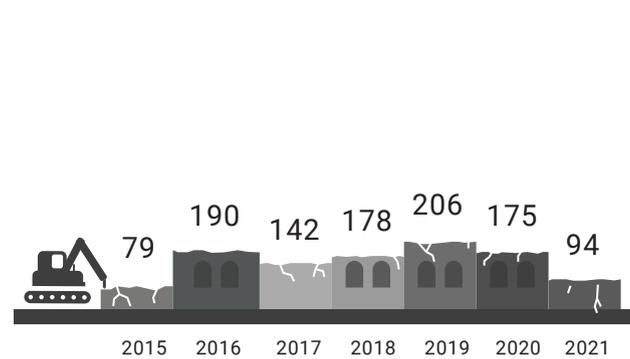
Demolitions in Area C and East Jerusalem

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



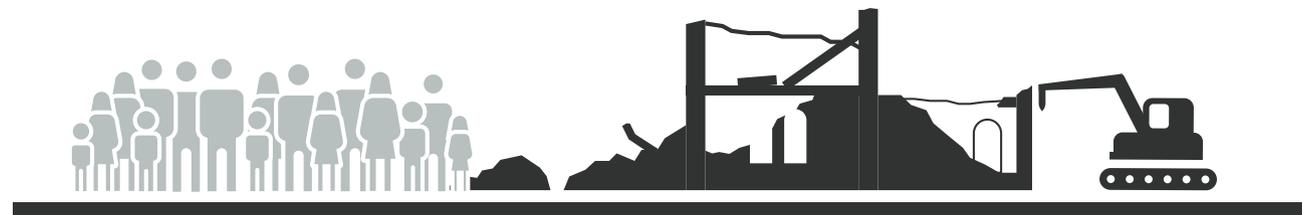
Demolished structures in East Jerusalem



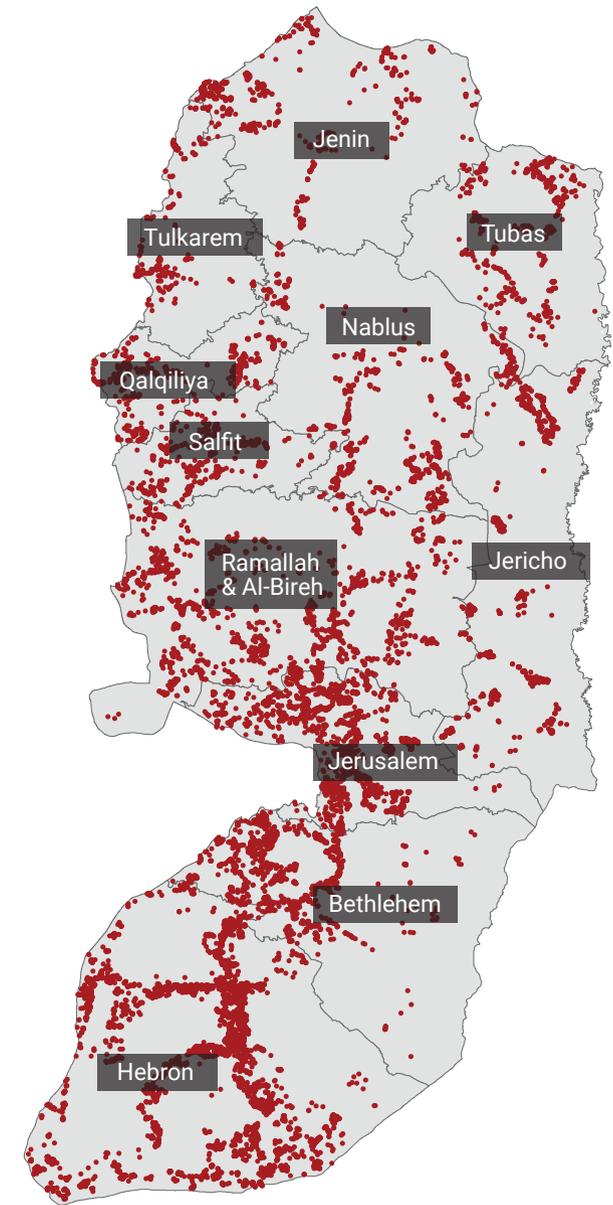
1,694
Displaced

6,200
Affected

1,046
Demolished



Source: OCHA OPT (2021)



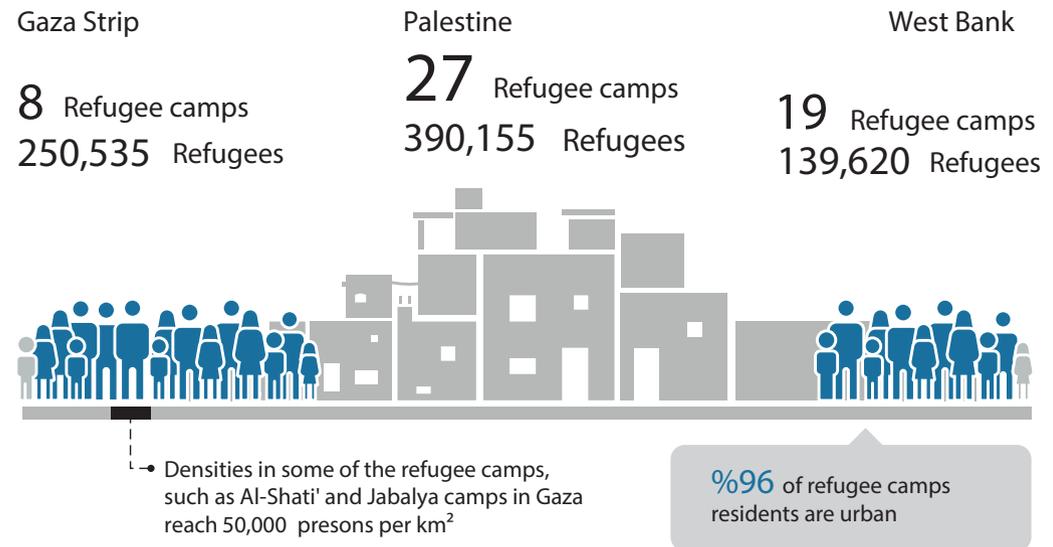
Refugee camps

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 km² (including Al-Shati' and Jabalya camps in the Gaza Strip), compared to the national average of 847 persons per km², the Arab region average of 410 persons per km², and the global standard of 25 persons per km² (UN-Habitat, 2016).



©UN-Habitat (2014). Shu'fat Refugee Camp, Jerusalem.

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

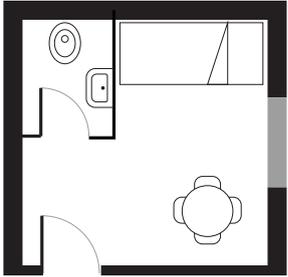
2,100 Palestinians and displaced more than 500,000 persons at the height of conflict. That is, at the time, around 27 per cent of the Palestinian population in the Gaza Strip were internally displaced; compared to the regional level, this is very close to the country with the highest number of internally 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.





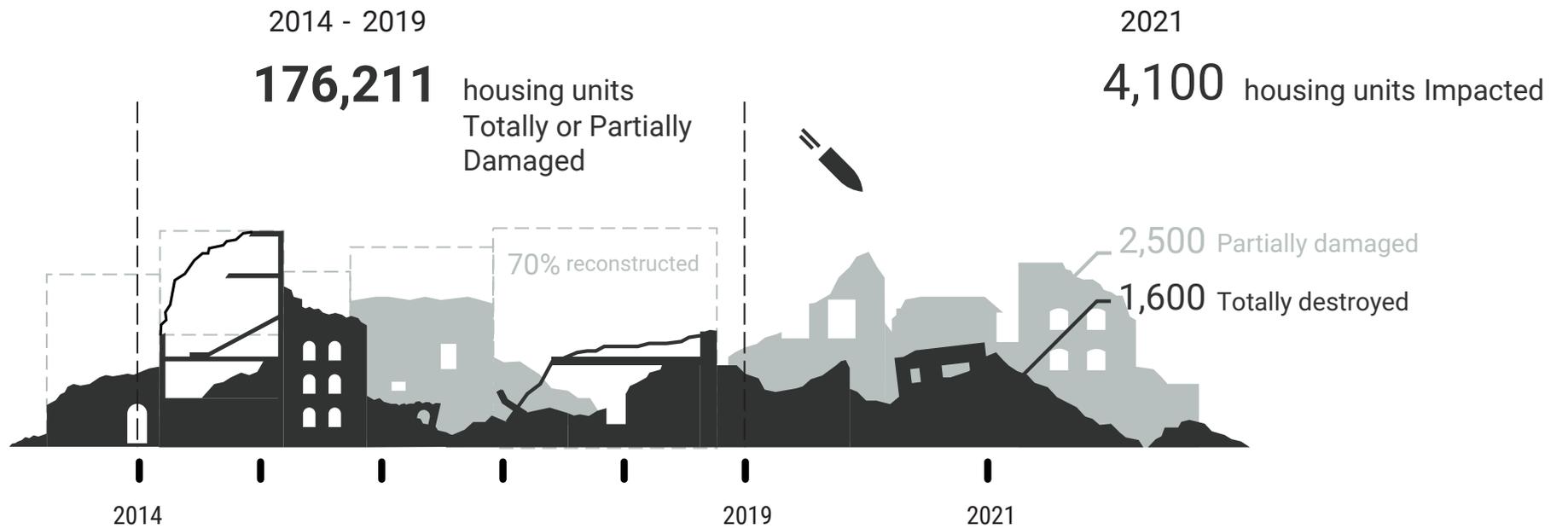
36.2% of families live in dwellings less than 120 square meters

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



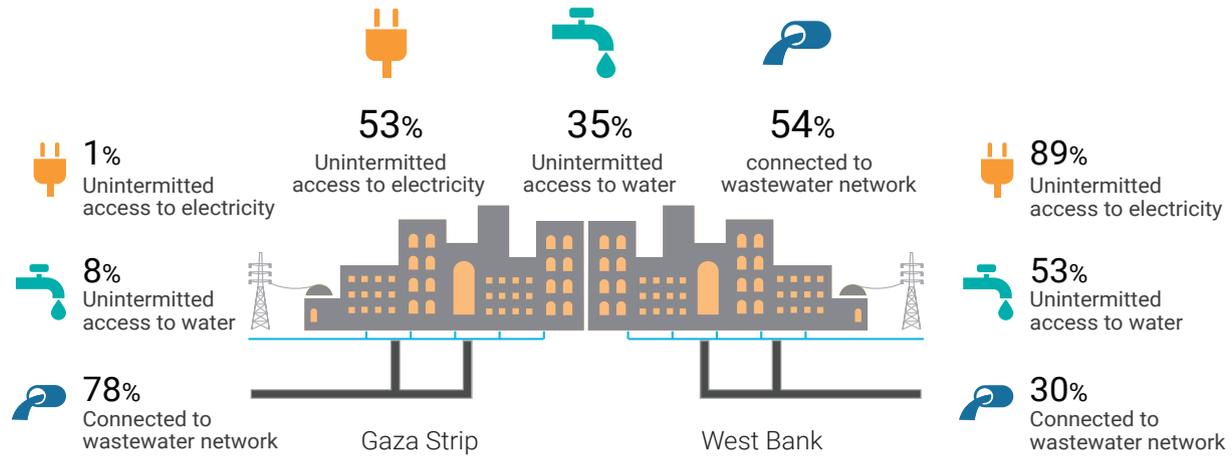
Gaza Strip is considered one of the highest urban congested places on earth, with a population of 2.1 million, including 1.4 million refugees

Source: AlMezan Center for Human Rights (2018)

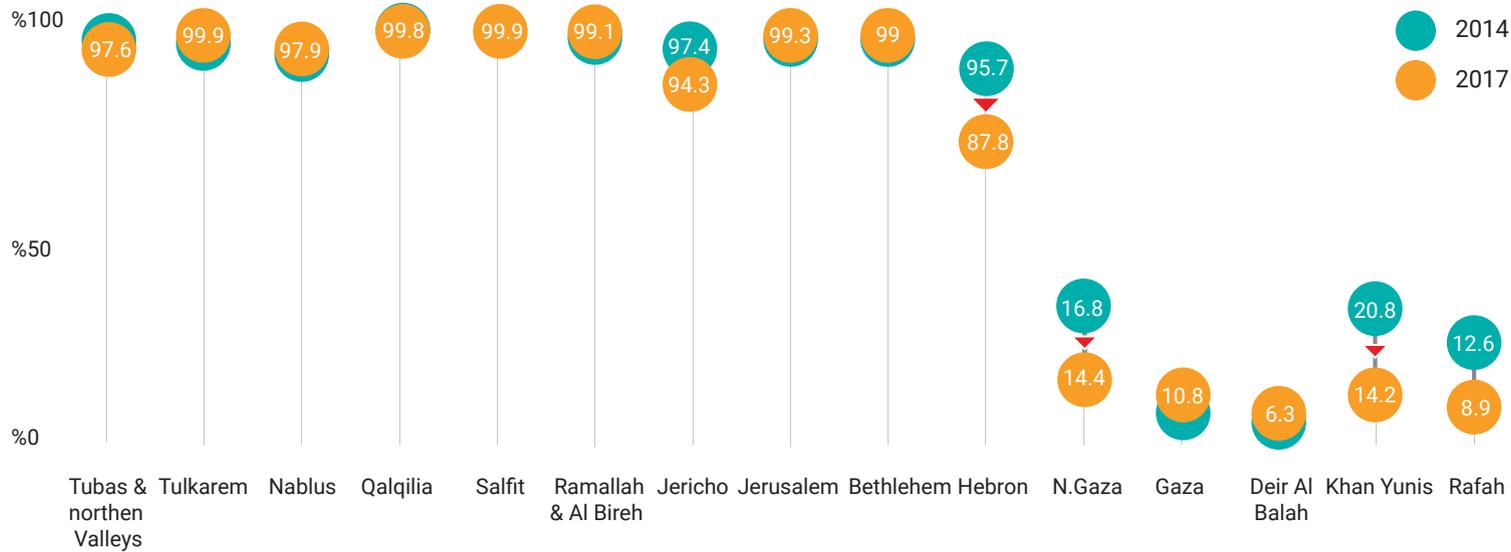


Source: OCHA OPT (2021)

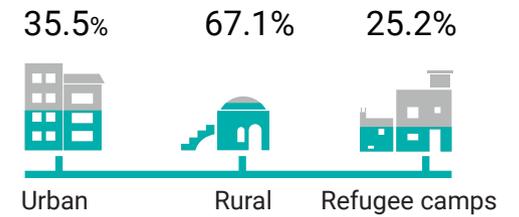
Access to services²



Sources: PCBS (2020)
The World Bank Group (2018)



Access to water more than once per week



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

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



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 interna-

tional 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 permanently 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.

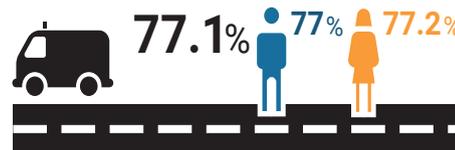
The Qalandiya Airport, which is the only airport in the West Bank, located only 9.5 km north of Jerusalem, has been inaccessible to the Palestinian population

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 km² 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

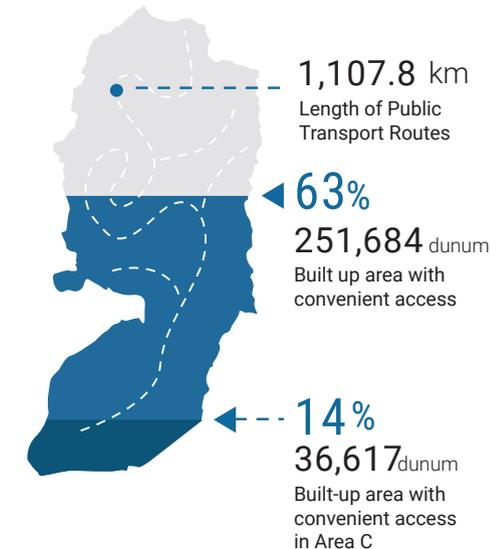
Transportation Master Plan of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 2018. The Master Plan has the overall objective to promote the achievement of a vision for the future of the Palestinian transport sector; in particular, it aims to incorporate equally West Bank and Gaza Strip into a single and united framework, 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



Age Group	Area A	Area B	Area C
0 - 14	76.3 %	76.5%	76.2%
15 - 24	77.2 %	77.4%	77.0%
25 - 34	78.1 %	77.9%	78.2%
35 - 44	74.7 %	73.6%	75.7%
45 - 54	77.8 %	77.5%	78.0%
55 - 64	79.6 %	78.9%	80.3%
65+	83.5 %	83.4%	83.5%



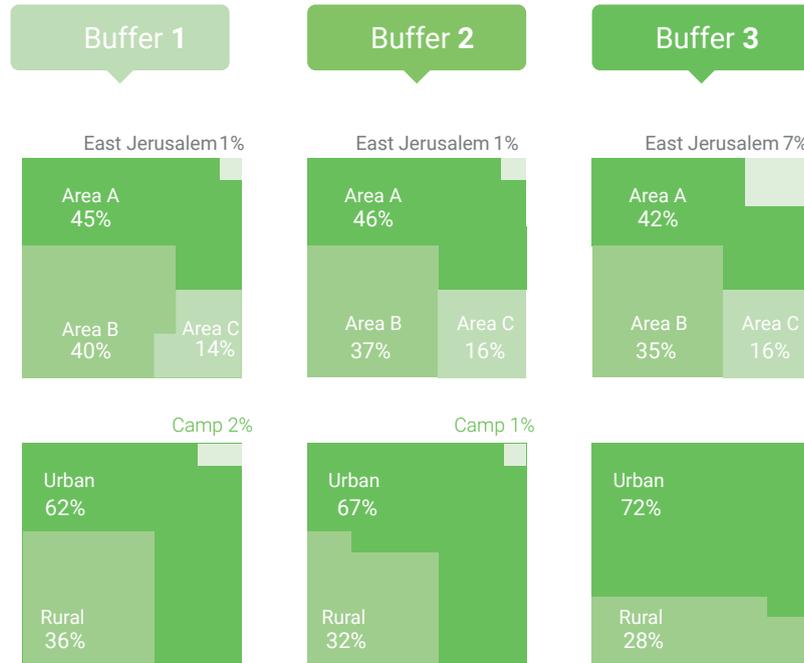
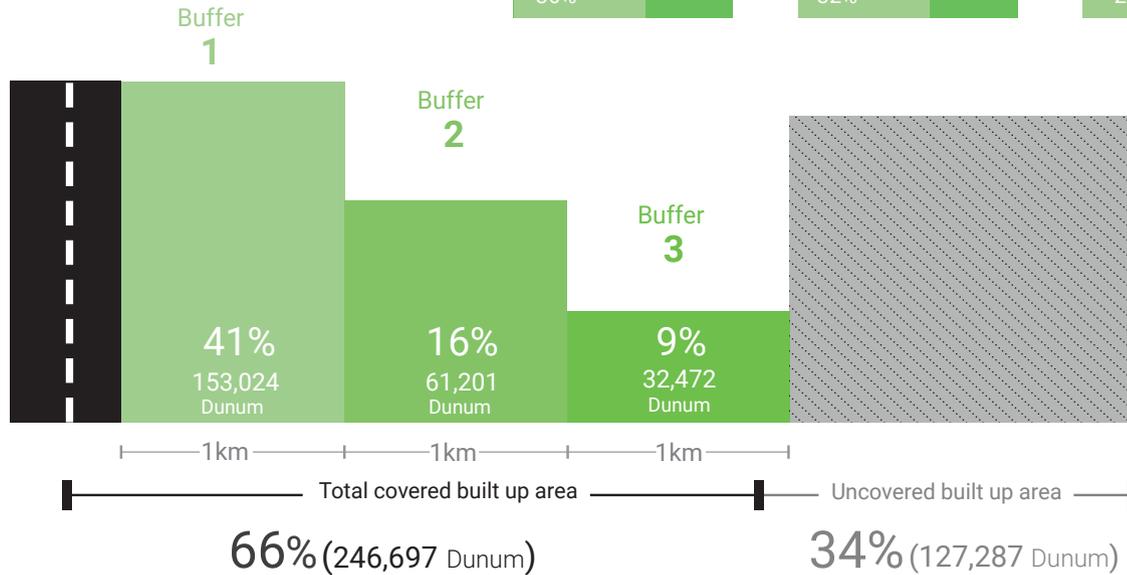
Source: Ministry of Transportation (2021), Raw Data

Convenient access to public transportation

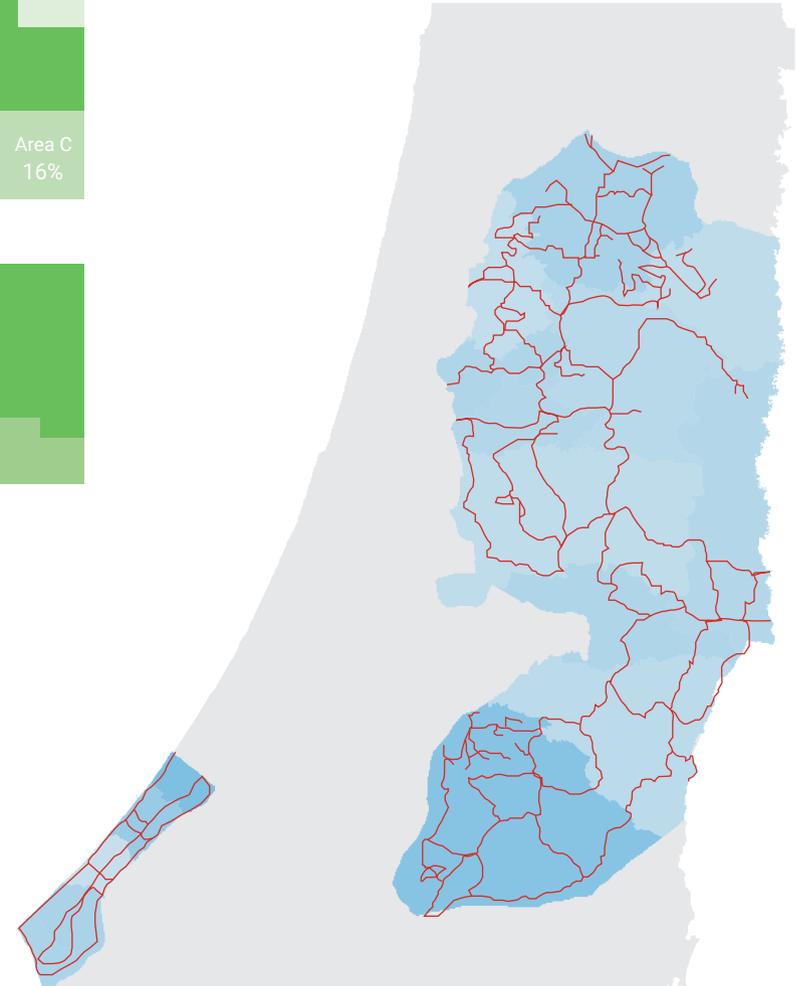
According to PCBS, using data from a perceptions survey in 2021, 77 per cent of Palestinians perceive that they have access to affordable transportation.

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

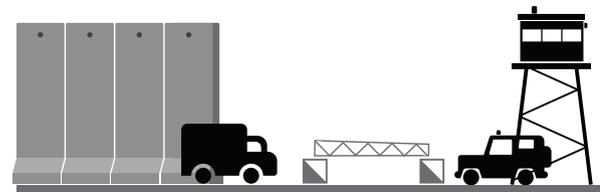
-  Fuel 81 million liters
-  CO₂ 196,000 tons
-  Economic 274 millionUSD
-  Time 60 millionhours

Infrastructural delays

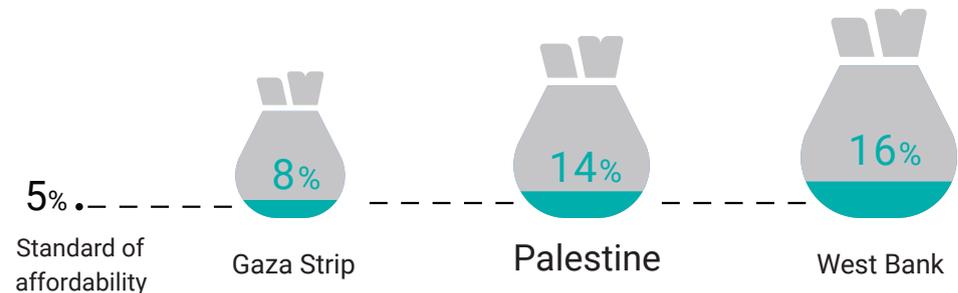
Cause: the Separation Barrier and the bypass roads

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 Pales-

tinian 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 obstructing 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)

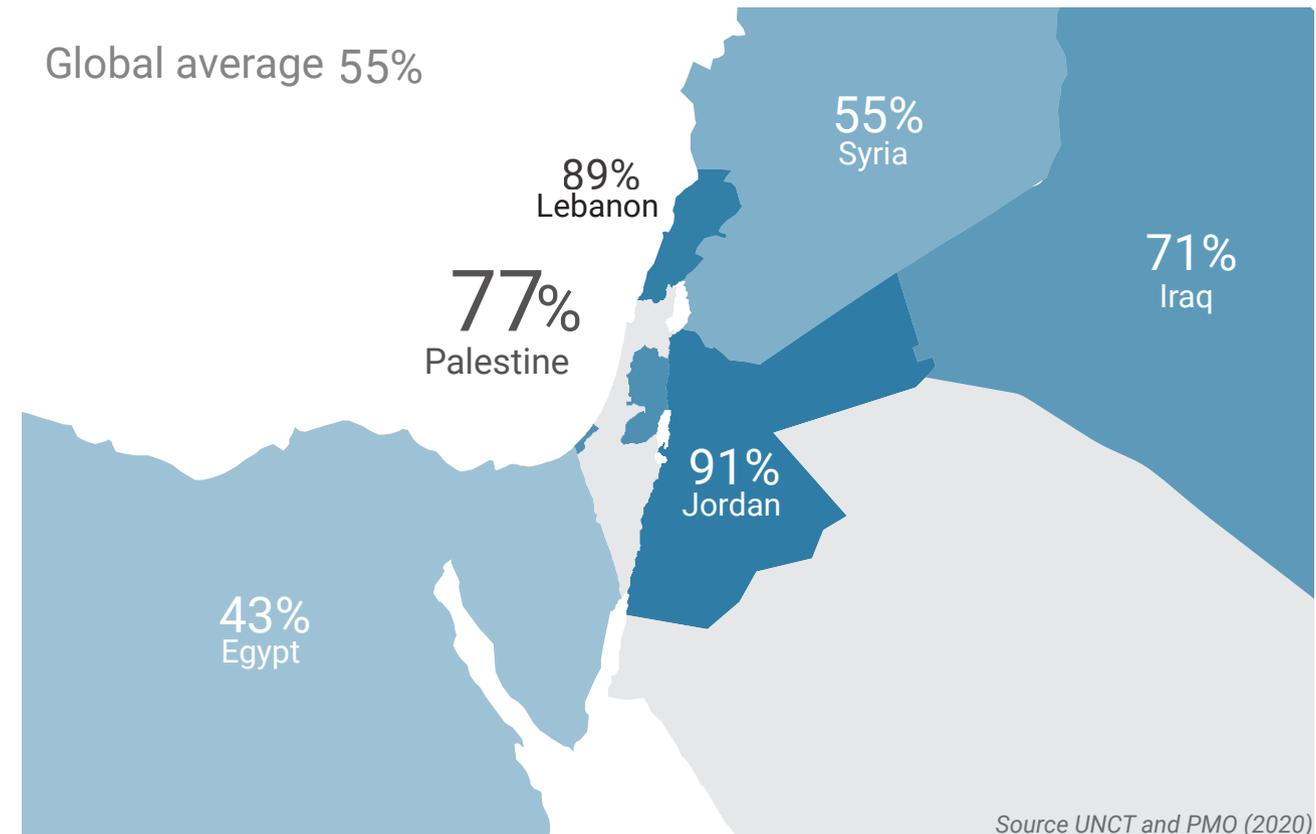
11.3 Sustainable Urbanization

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

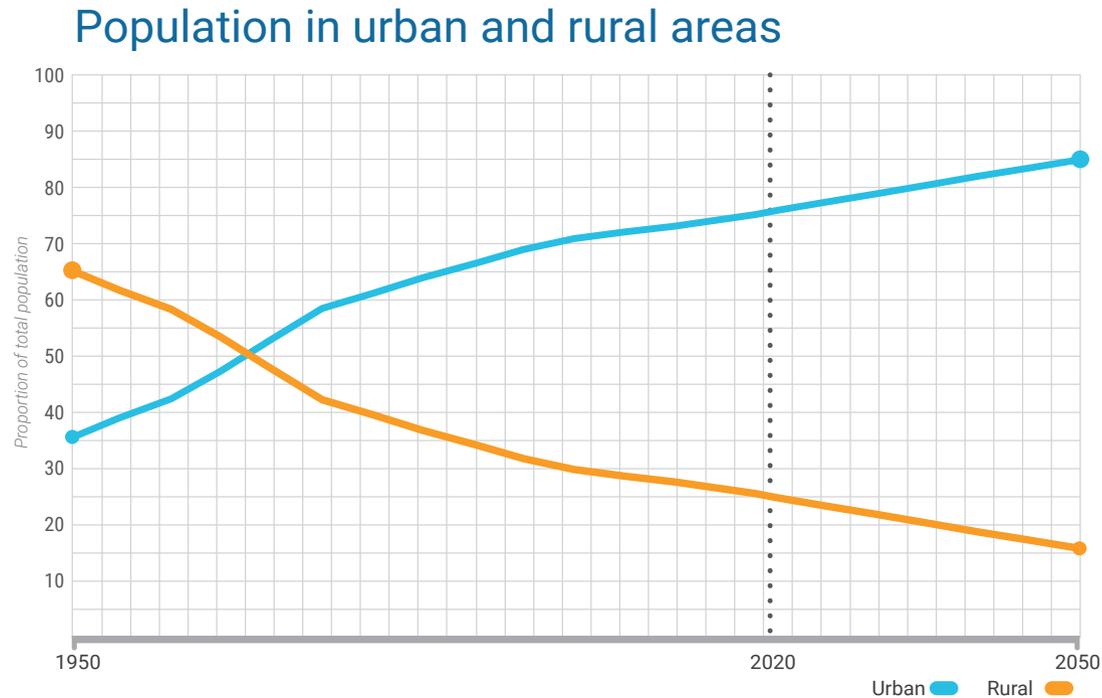
Upon the occupation of the OPT by Israel in 1967, thousands of Palestinians were displaced from their homes to other areas inside and outside Palestine, joining Palestinian refugees from the 1948 war.

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)

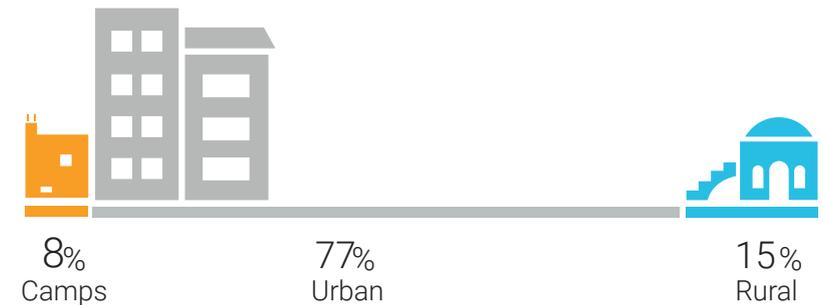


Percentage of population in urban and rural areas



Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) (2019).

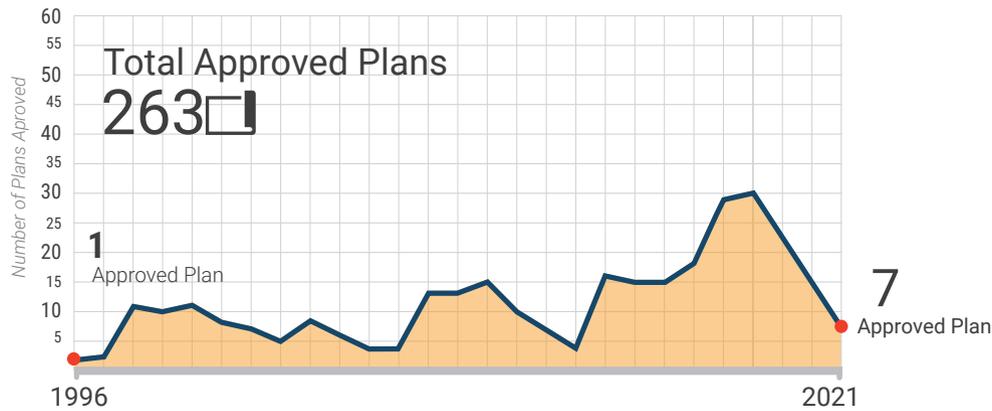
Overall, the urbanization trends have witnessed an unprecedented increase of 138 per cent during 1967 and 2007, with the first half of this period (1967 - 1987) witnessing more than 2.7 times the increase during the second half of the same period (1987 - 2007). This overall increase in urbanization trends 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).



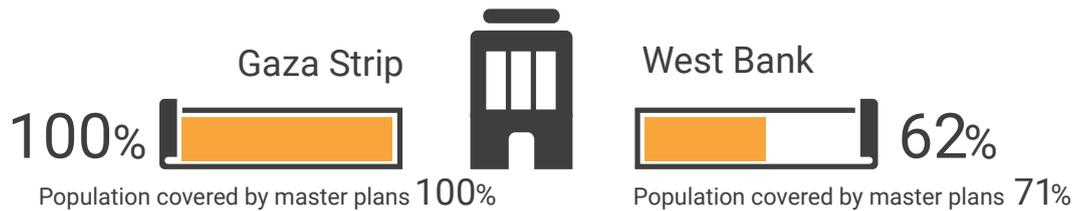
Source: PCBS (2017).

Participation of civil society

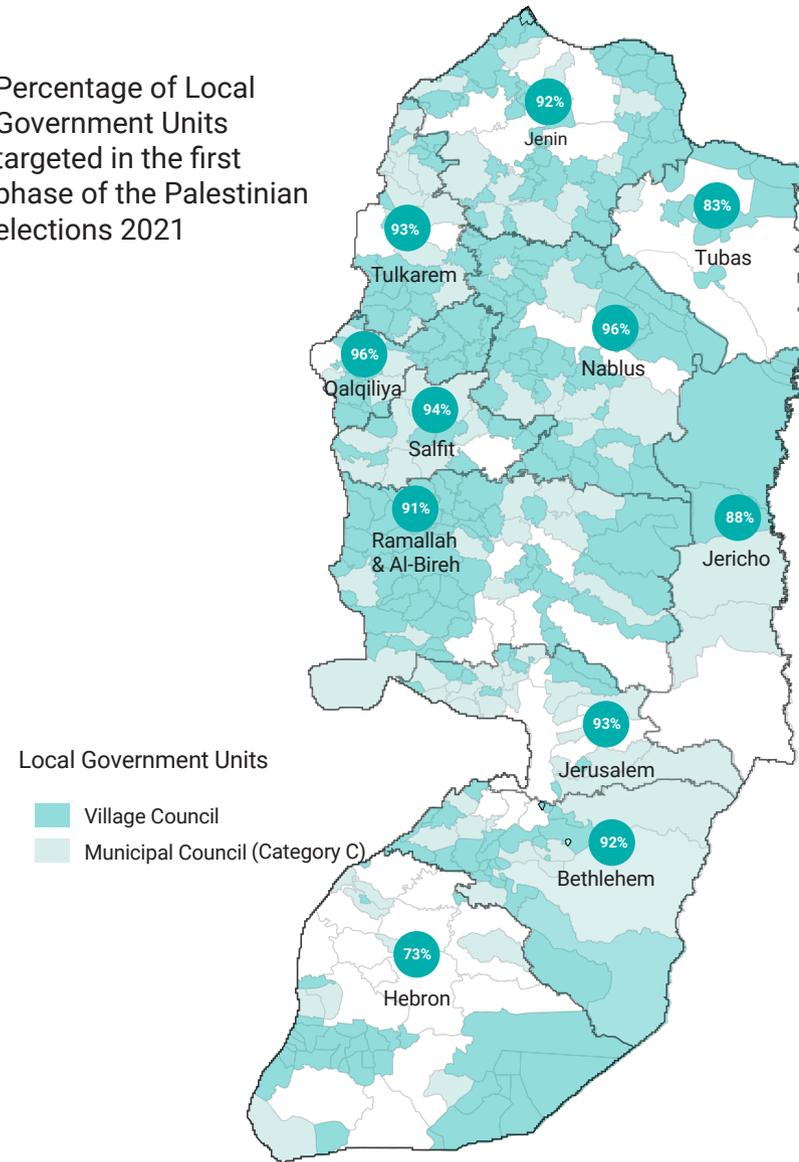
In Palestine, LGUs are regularly elected for a period of four years. In 2012 and 2017 elections were conducted for 272 and 326 LGUs respectively. It is planned that the upcoming elections will be held later this year, in 2021, focusing only on village councils and municipal council (category C) that 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



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

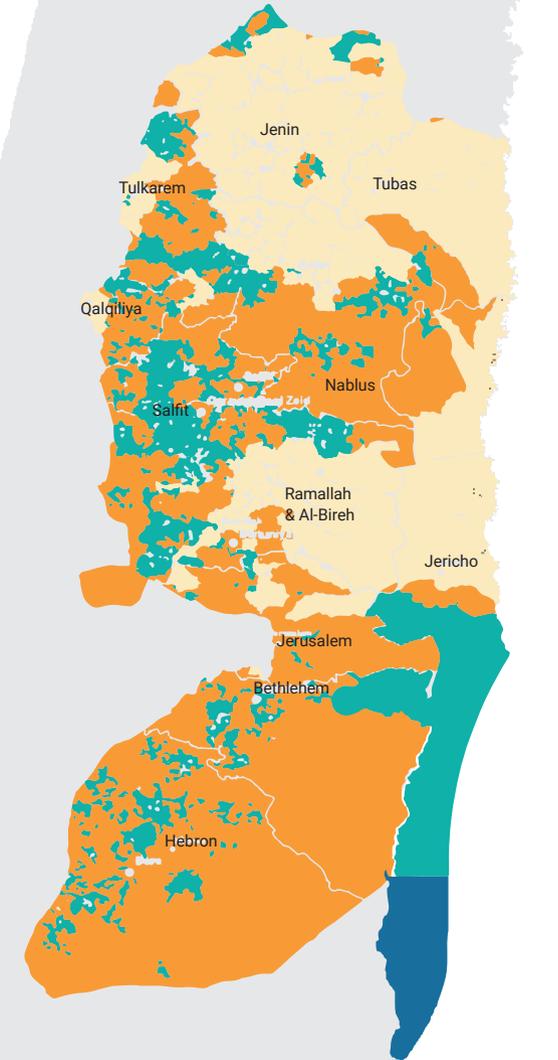
33% is owned by women
(within the areas settled by LWSC)

44%
Unsettled

Source: LWSC (2021), Raw Data

Total area of the West Bank

≈ **5,600 km²**

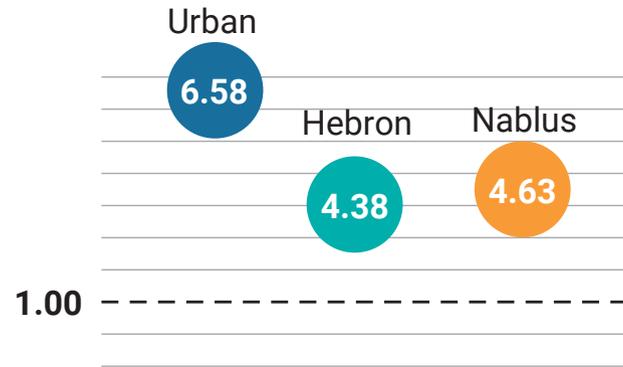


Land-Use Efficiency

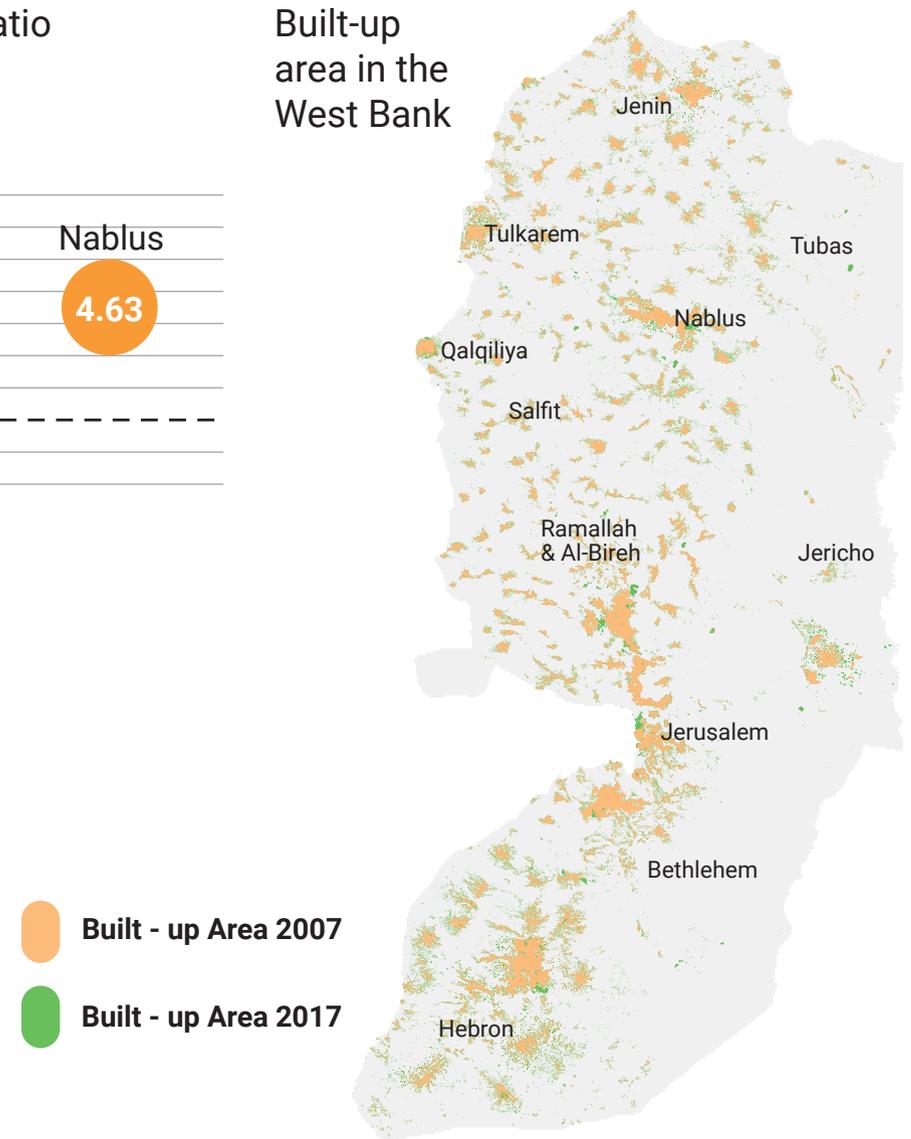
Ideally, this indicator, land consumption rate to population growth rate should be equal to 1, suggesting that the rate at which the city appropriated land from other uses to urbanized functions is equal to the rate at which its population grew. In other words, as population grew in a city over the analysis 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 modeling techniques to achieve sustainability in terms of socio-economic and environmental interventions.

- Institutionalization of Joint Services Councils (JSC) and support their service-provision operations mainly 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 es-

sential 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



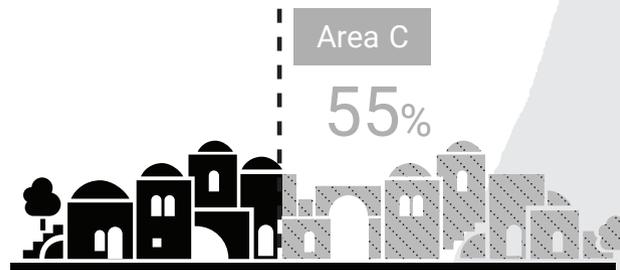
AL-KHALIL OLD TOWN
HEBRON



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

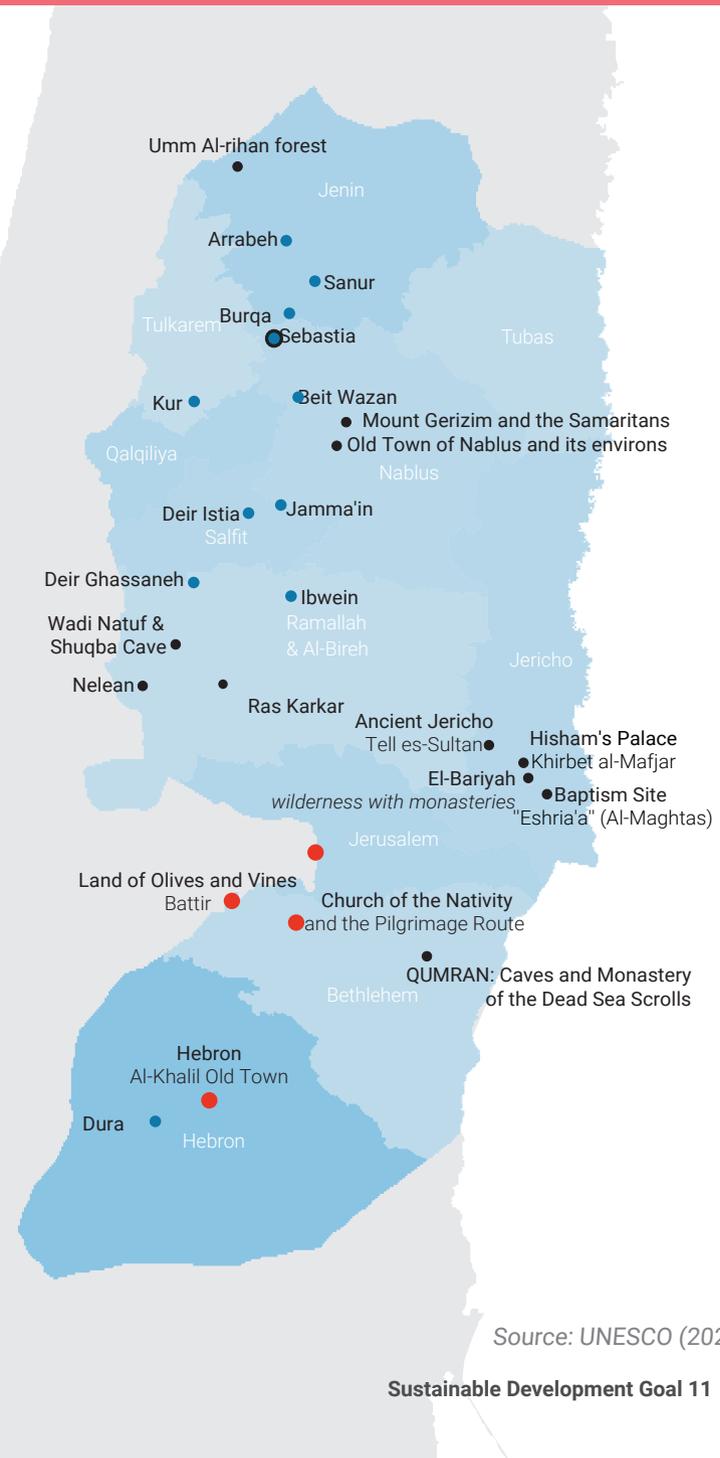
- Main sites on UNESCO World Heritage List
- Sites on the Tentative World Heritage List
- Throne Village Sites

7,000 archeological sites
50,000 historical buildings



- Wadi Gaza Coastal Wetlands ●
- Gaza ●
- Tell Um Amer ●
- Anthonon Harbour ●
- Deir Al-Balah ●

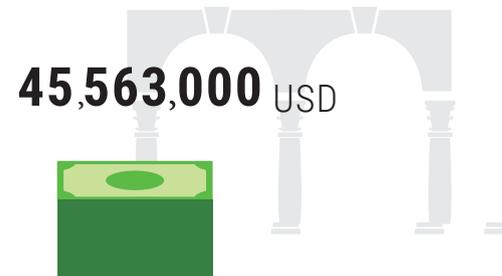
- Khan Younis
- Rafah



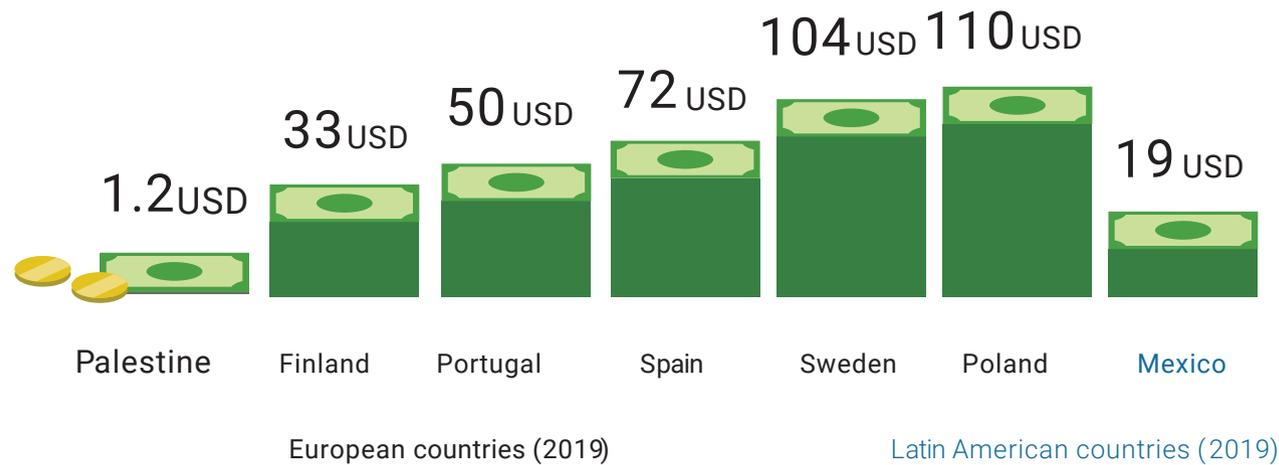
Source: UNESCO (2021).

Expenditure per capita on natural and cultural heritage preservation

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



Spending per capita



Source: UNESCO (2021)

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 tourist 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.

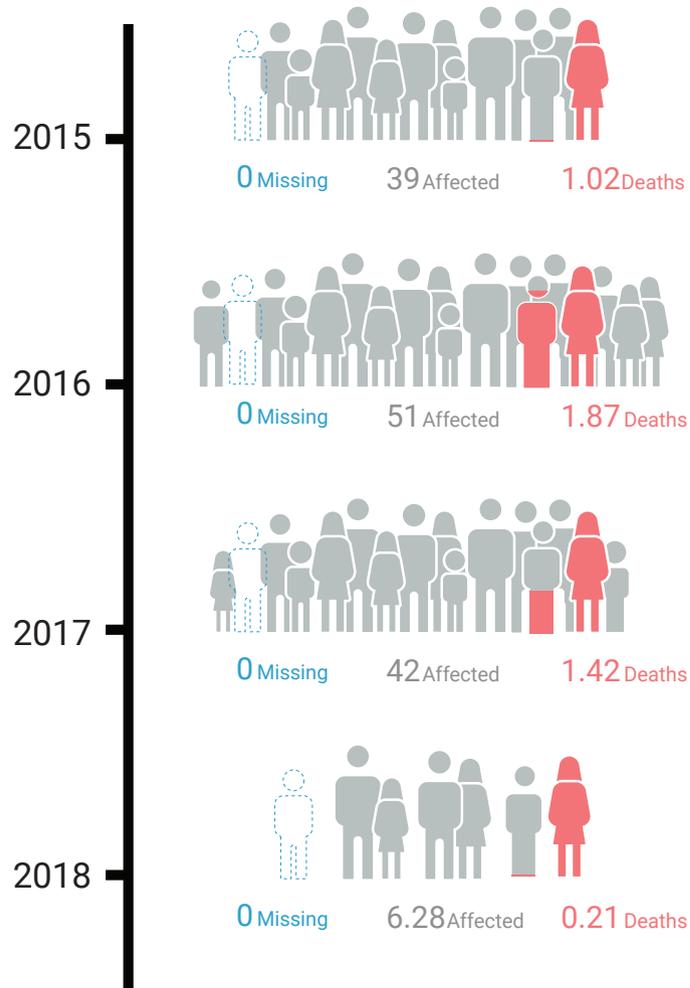
The mainstreaming of risk reduction into the spatial planning interventions is weak at the different planning levels, especially at the national level. The protection plan that was adopted by the Palestinian Cabinet in 2012 and then in 2019 under the NSP for the State of Palestine does not yet consider 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.



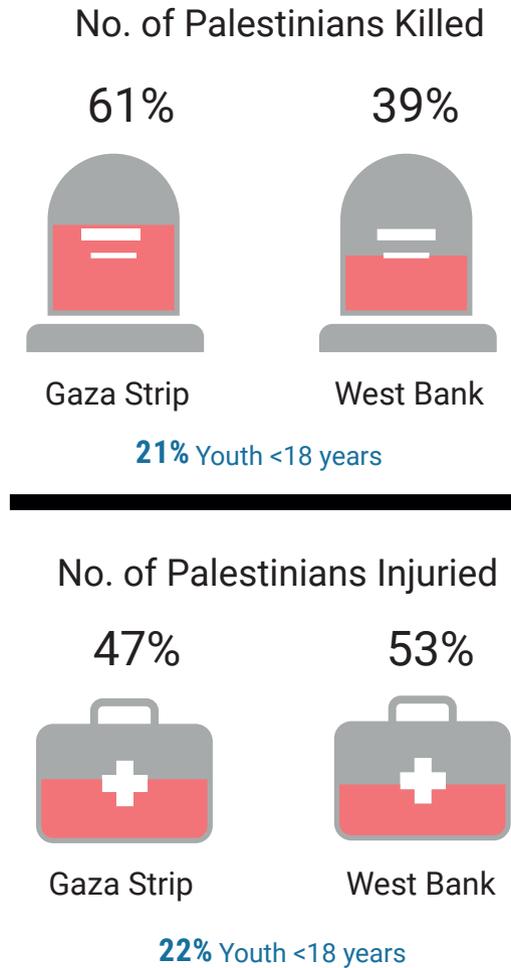
©Palestine Studies (2016). Earthquake, Nablus, 1927.

Natural Disasters



Source: OCHA OPT (2021)

Civil casualties due to Israeli occupation



Source: OCHA OPT (2021)

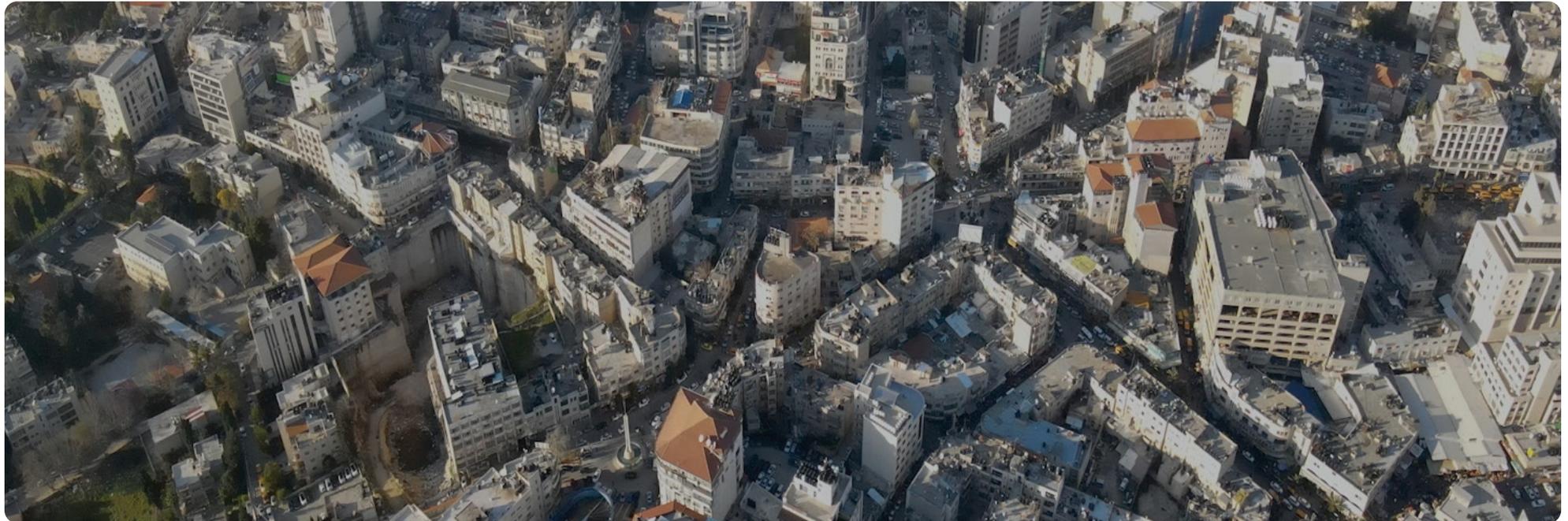
In 2018, due to the occurrence of disasters, there were 915 interruptions in basic services, 20 interruptions in educational services, and 895 interruptions in other services.

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:

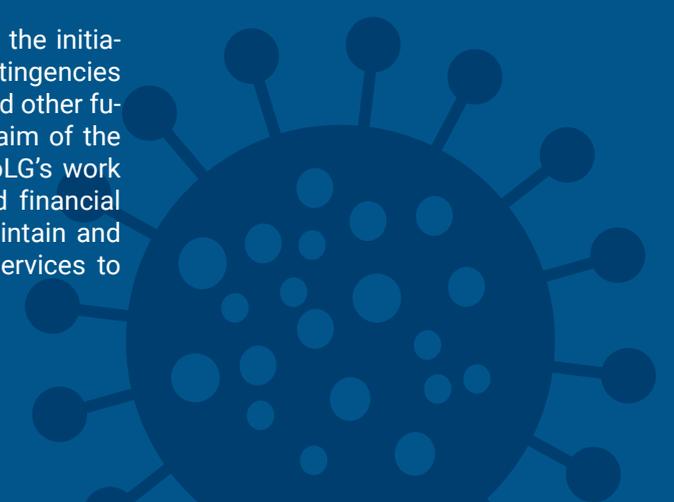
- Institutionalization and support of the NDRMC.
- Improvement of internal coordination and institutional capacity at various fronts, e.g., central government-LGUs, LGUs-CSOs and LGUs-private sector.
- Strengthen the capacity of LGUs in risk assessment and mitigation.
- Support LGUs in decentralisation 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 GOVERNMENT 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

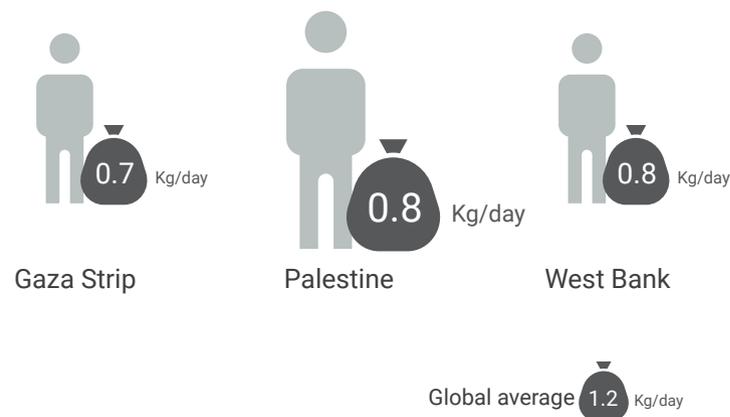
The fragile ecosystem in the OPT is threatened by increasing population growth and limited natural resources. The urban environment in Palestine is reeling under immense environmental pressure evident in water scarcity, climate change, and overall weakened urban livability and quality of life amid rapid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

cially 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.

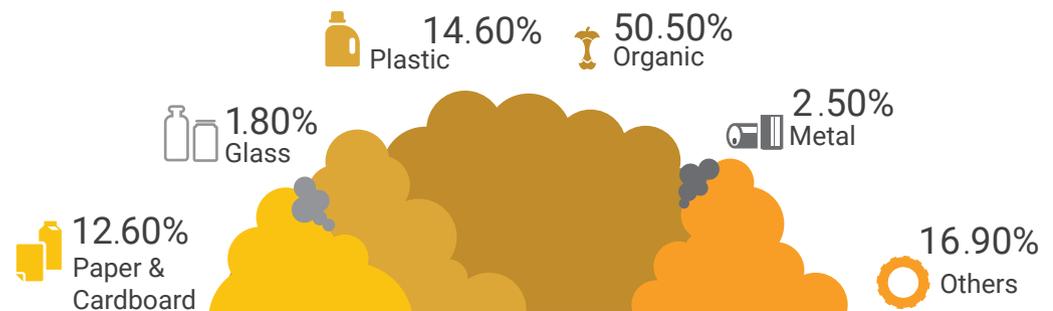
In addition, poor land use and spatial development patterns and zoning in Palestine have contributed to unsustainable urban sprawl and encroachment on

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



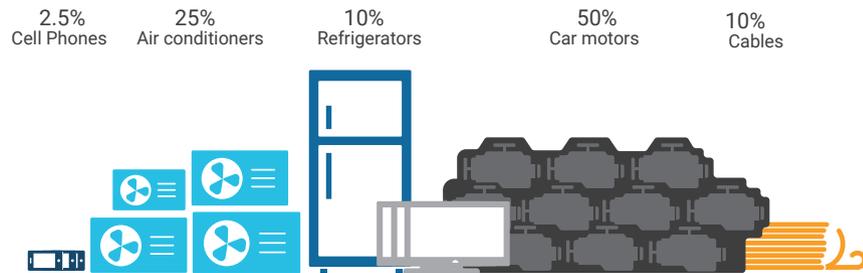
Solid Waste Composition in the West Bank



Source: MoLG (2019)

E-waste

70,000 - 80,000 tonnes/year

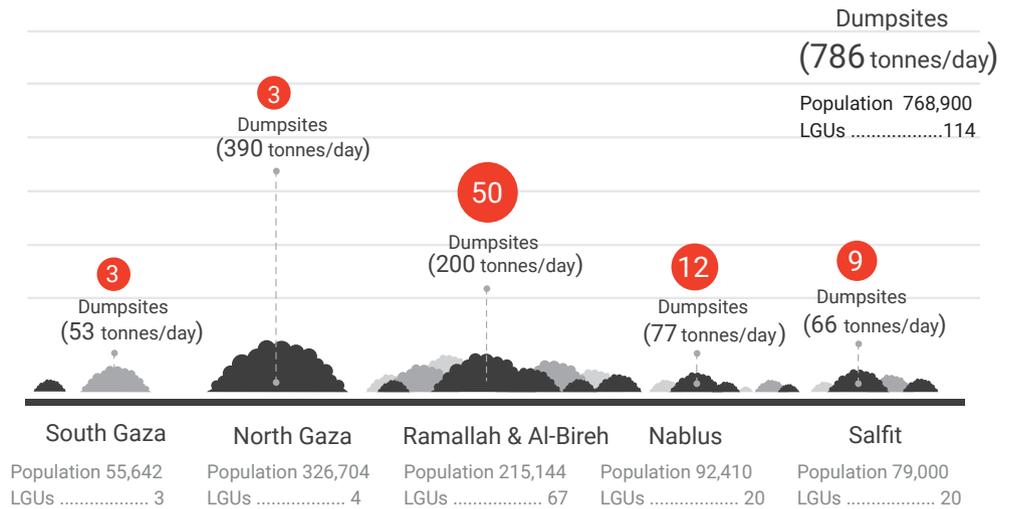


Locations: Beit Awwa, Idhna, Deir Samit, Al Kum and Beit Maqдум in Hebron governorate

90% of e-waste comes from Israel

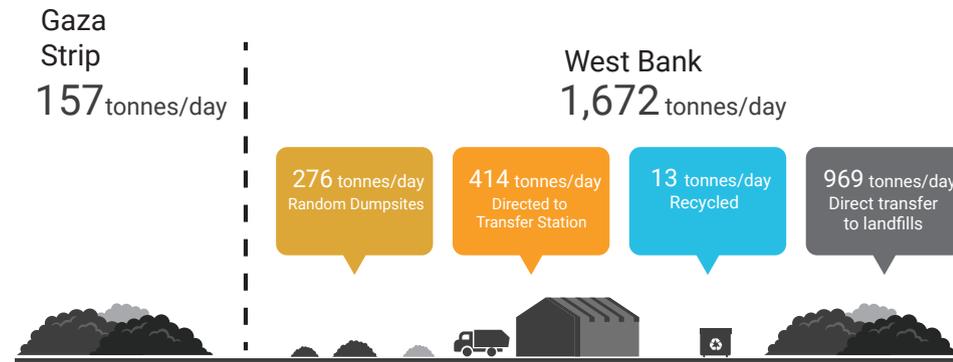
Random dumping (unregulated dumping)

77



Source: CESVI (2019)

Total solid waste collected by Joint Service Councils

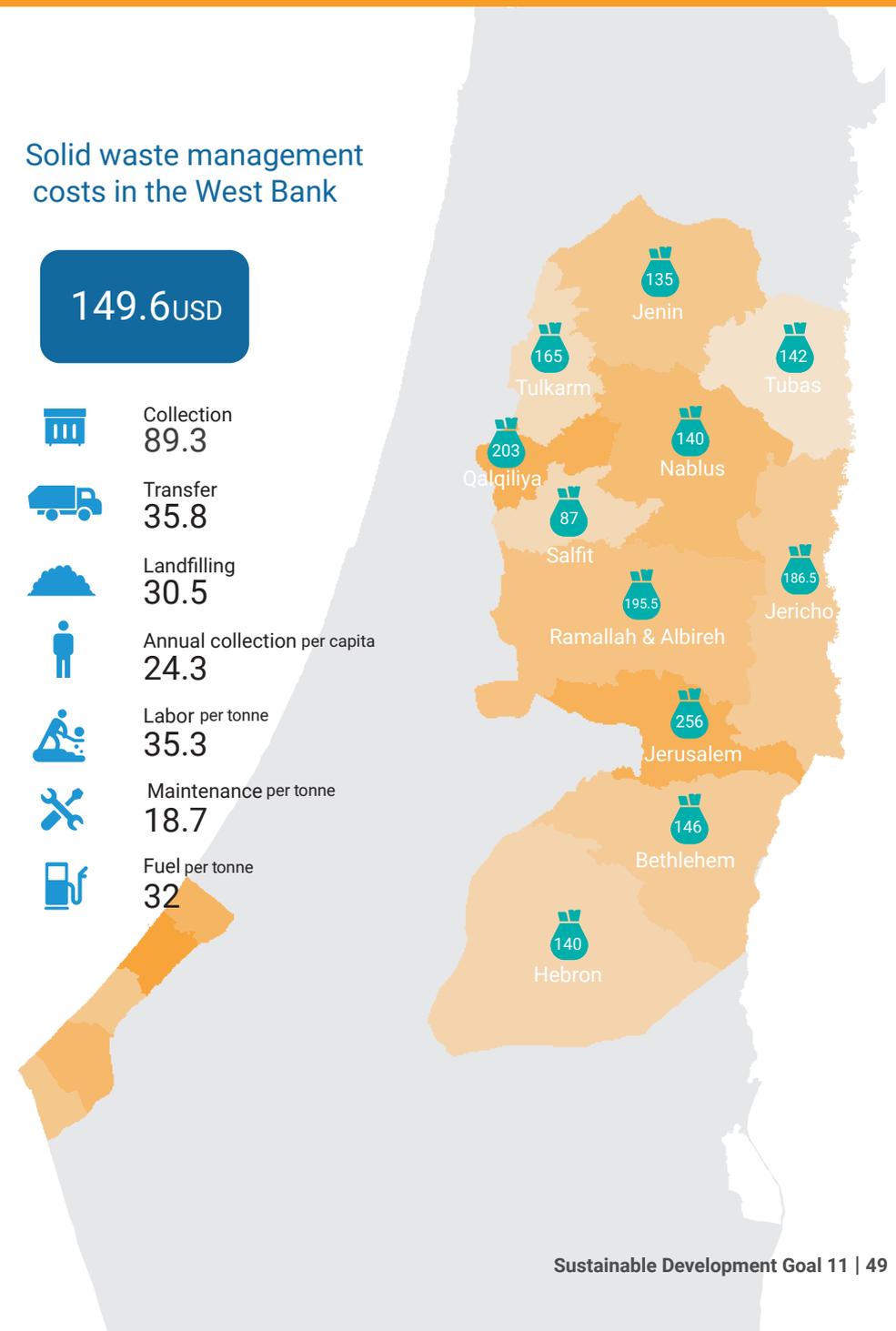


Source: MoLG (2019)

Solid waste management costs in the West Bank

149.6USD

	Collection	89.3
	Transfer	35.8
	Landfilling	30.5
	Annual collection per capita	24.3
	Labor per tonne	35.3
	Maintenance per tonne	18.7
	Fuel per tonne	32



Solid Waste Management challenges

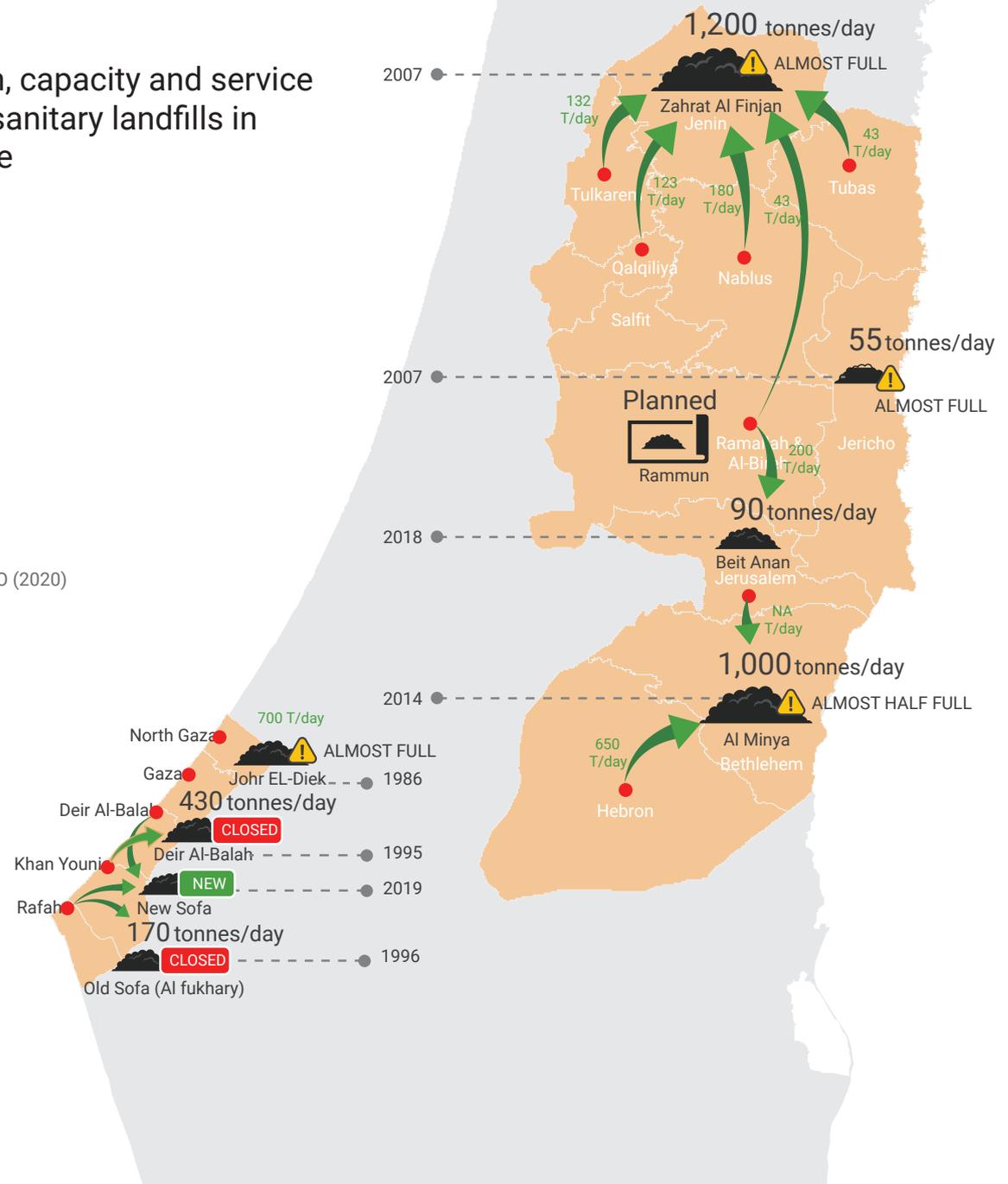
The lack of Palestinian control over Area C (more than 60 per cent of the West Bank) is exacerbated with the existence of about 200 Israeli settlements across the West Bank. These settlements, of 661,600 Israeli settlers, often release large quantities of untreated hazardous waste into the surrounding 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

Sources:
UNCT and PMO (2020)
MoLG (2019)
CESVI (2019)



Bethlehem Joint Services Council

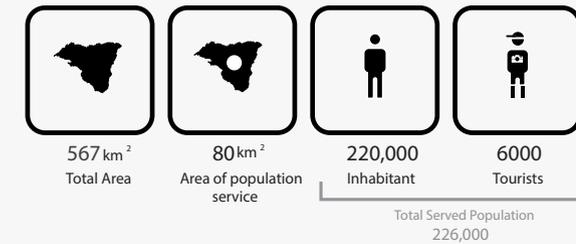
As part of its efforts to support the continuation of Solid Waste Management (SWM) services in Bethlehem Governorate, the first Palestinian area that was affected by COVID-19, UN-Habitat, with funding from Al-Waleed Philanthropies, provided financial and technical support to the Bethlehem JSC and the 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 Sep-

tember, 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

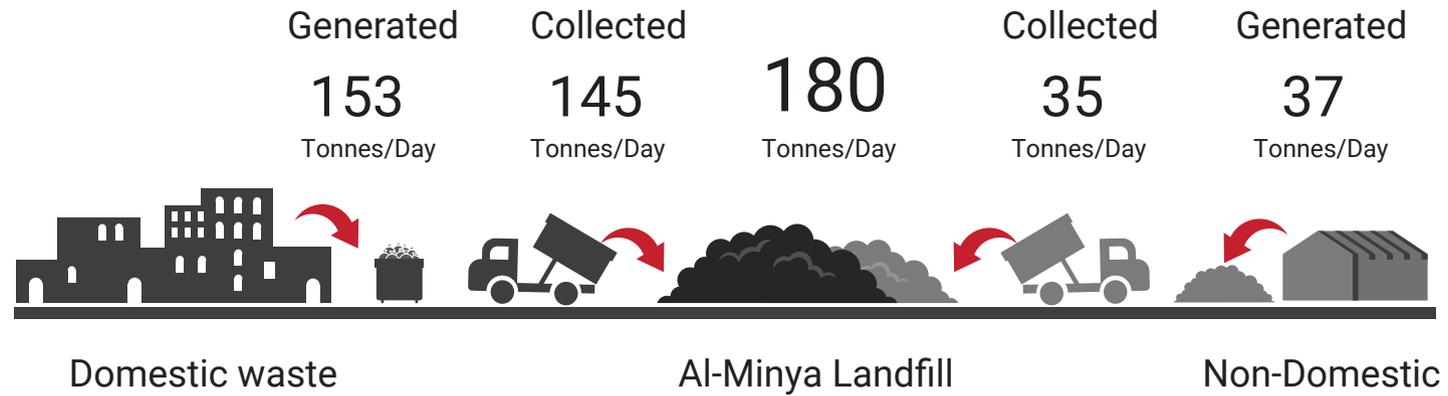


Waste collection in Bethlehem Governorate, 2020

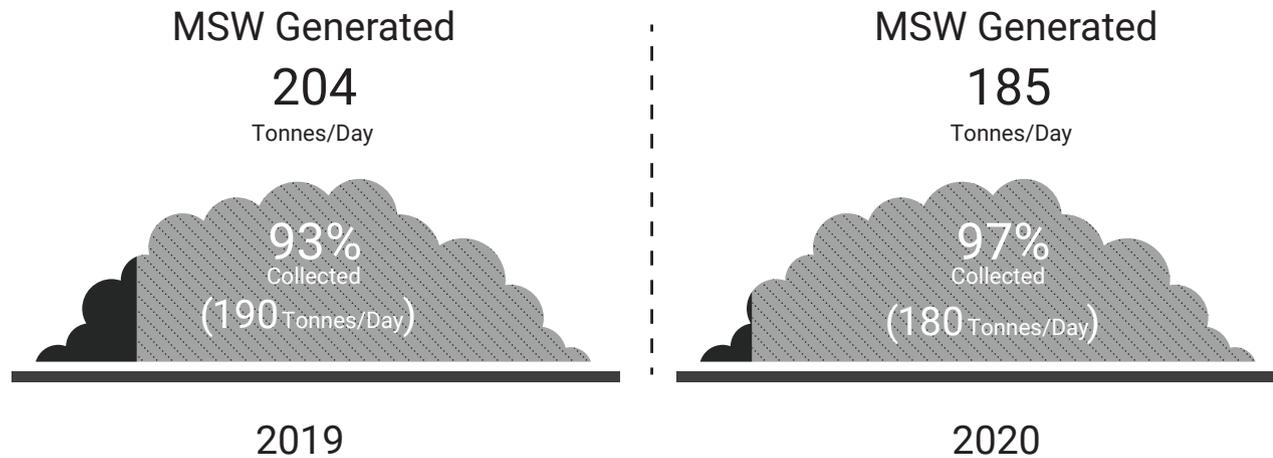


Source: Bethlehem JSC for SWM (2020).

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 Palestin-

ian 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 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 com-

prehensive system. Nonetheless, 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

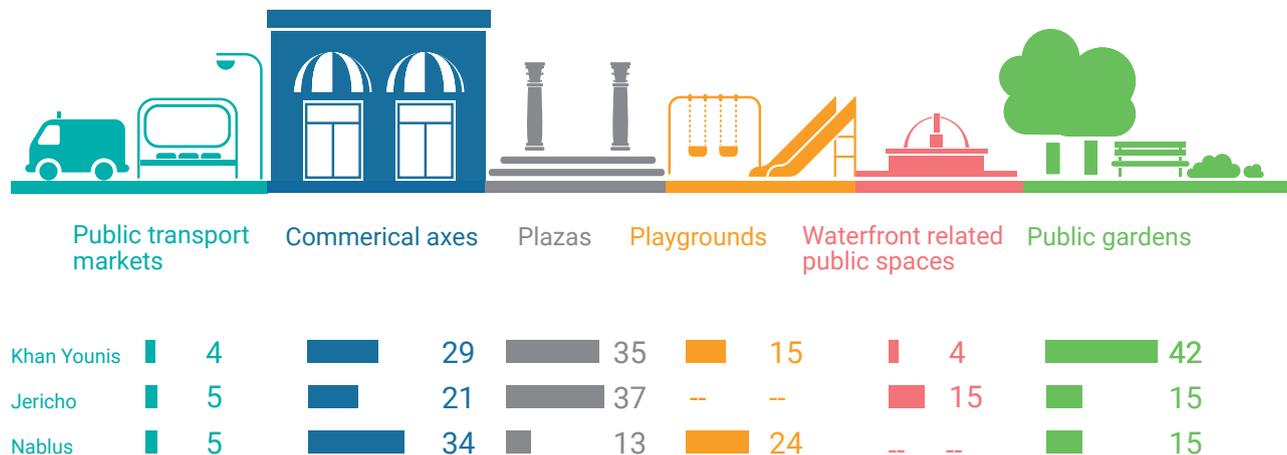
Provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities

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).

Public spaces in urban and rural centers are relatively low 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.

Typology of public spaces



Source: UN-Habitat (2021)

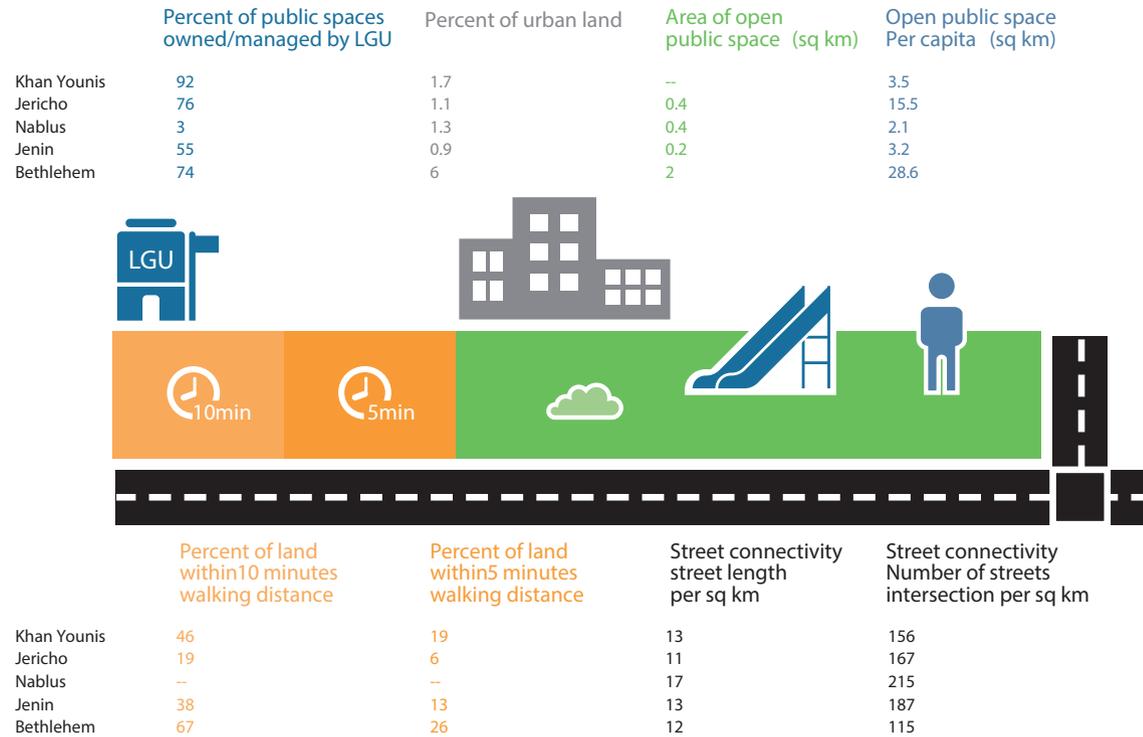
©UN-Habitat. East Jerusalem, Palestine.



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 reported 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



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)

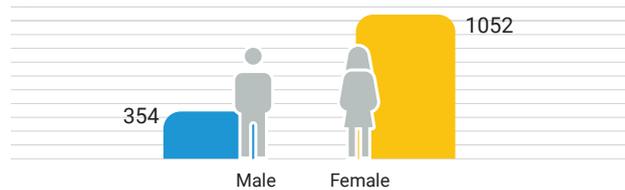
Source: UN-Habitat (2021)

People who are victims of physical or sexual harassment

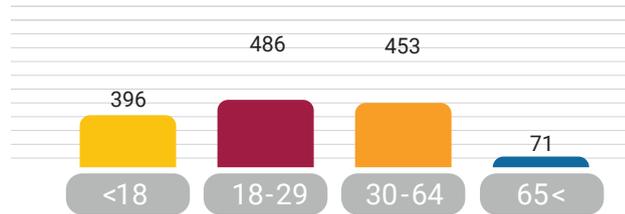
Proportion of persons victims of physical or sexual harassment by sex, age, disability status and place of occurrence in the previous 12 months (July 2020 - June 2021)



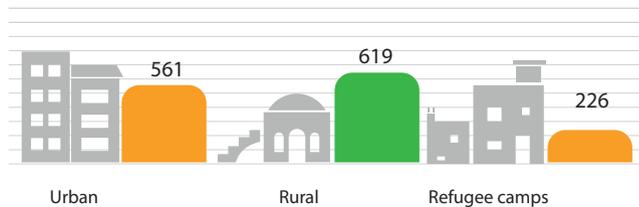
by sex



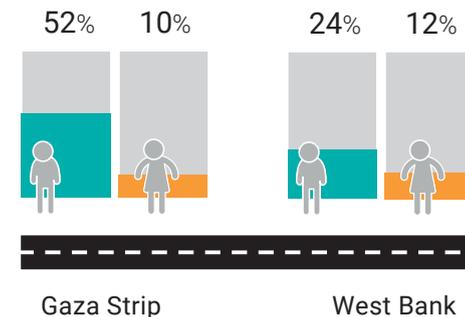
by age



By place of occurrence



Children facing violence on the street



Source: Palestine Police Force (2021).

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

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 CO² 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).

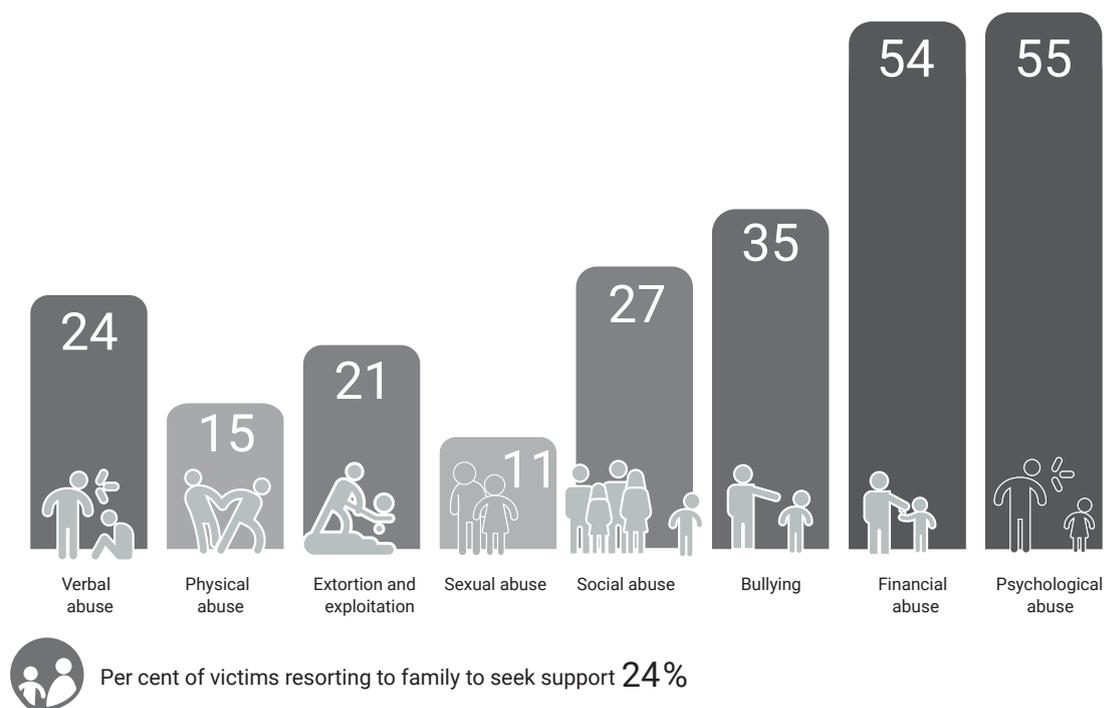
HAYA Programme

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:



Source: UNFPA (2020)

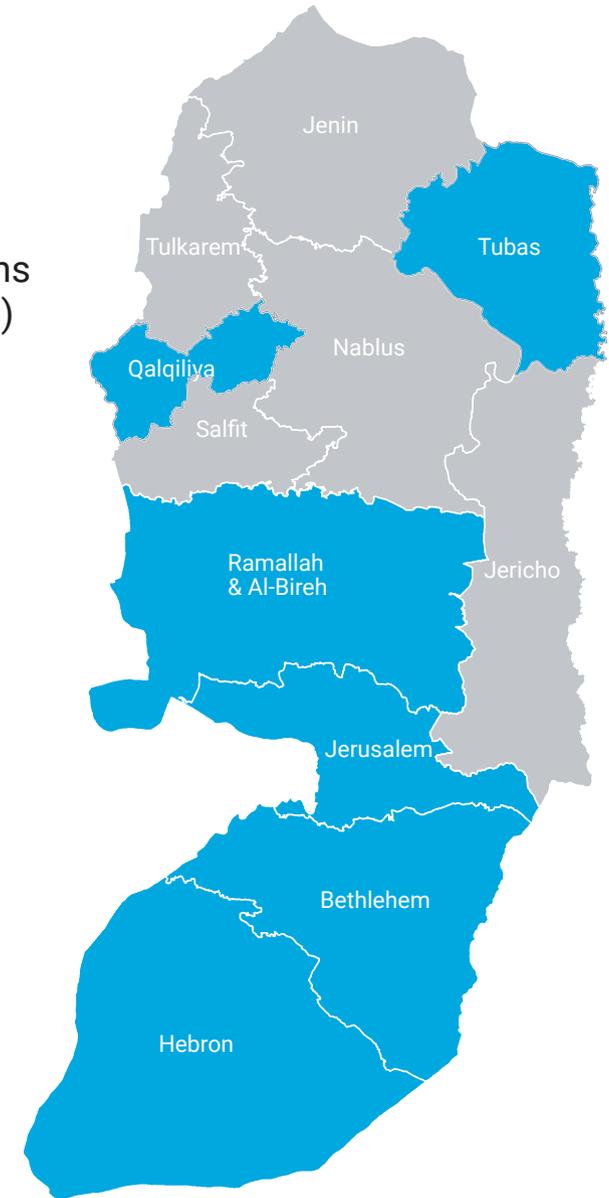
Strong National and Regional Development Planning

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 needs 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

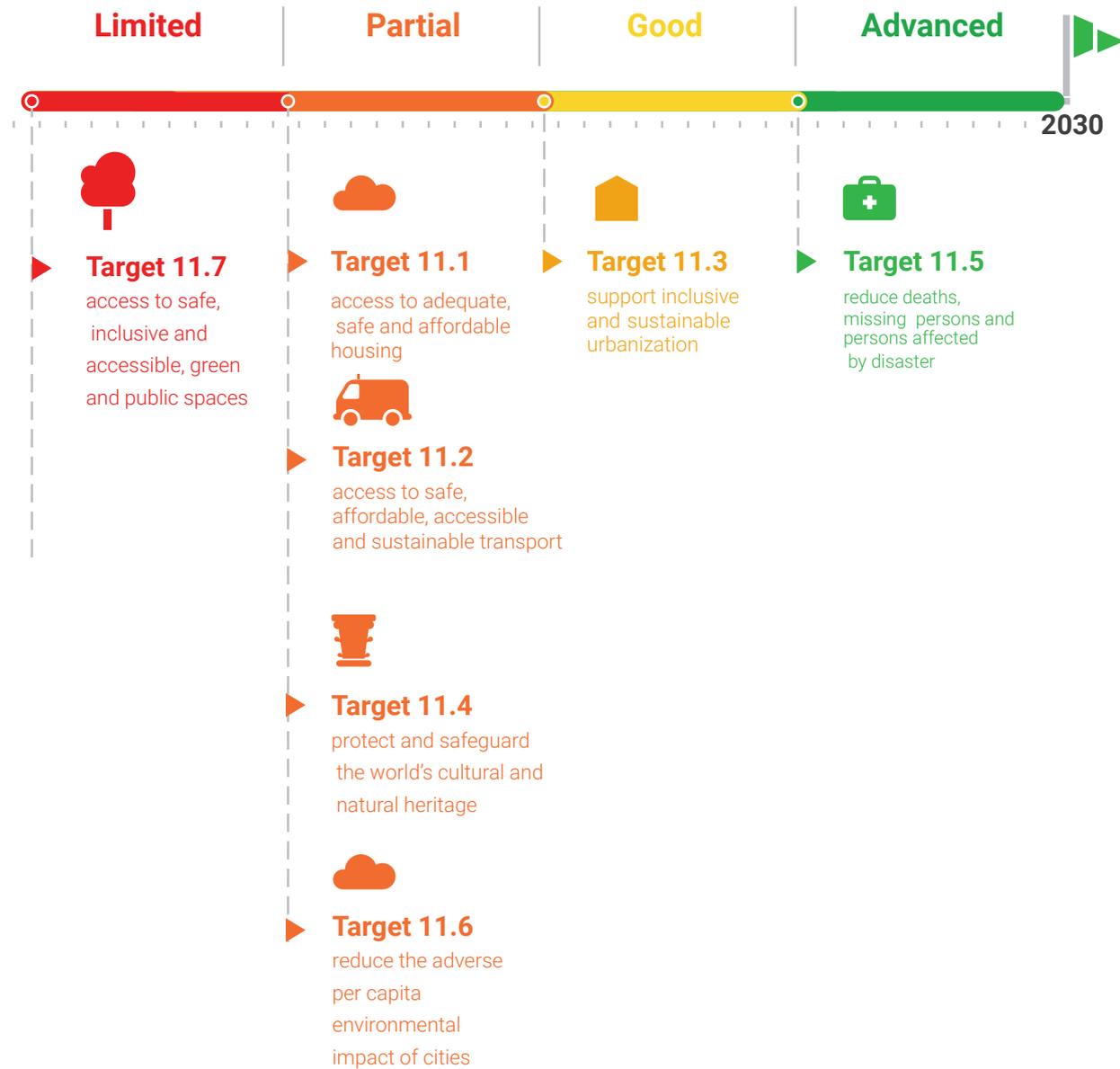
achieve sustainable development that can't be attained without ending the military occupation on the ground (PMO, 2018).

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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