



Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS)

# SOCIAL MONITOR



Issue Number 8 - May 2005

The Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute, or *Ma'had Abhath As-Syasad Al-Iqtisadiyeh Al-Filistini* (MAS), is an autonomous think tank founded in 1994 that engages in applied economic and socio-economic research, and provides expert analysis of policies critical to the development of the Palestinian economy.

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## Foreword

The Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS) is pleased to present the eighth issue of the Social Monitor. This number contains important improvements, especially in terms of expanding the indicators used for analysing social changes. It also includes a special supplement appraising governmental programmes and policies in the social field.

The Institute constantly strives to ensure that its work is of the highest quality and relevance, and even with a project as well-established and respected as the Social Monitor we recognise that there may be room for improvement. Accordingly, we conducted a survey into what you, the readers, think of the Monitor, and in what ways we could make it better. These changes come as a result of this evaluation, and are in response to calls to develop the analytical framework that accompanies the many statistics and data we annually assemble.

Overall, the results of the survey were positive. 86.4% of respondents said the Monitor was a useful tool for research work and a reliable source of information; 72.7% praised the choice of indicators we scrutinise. Furthermore, 65.0% thought the Monitor was an appropriate aid for making social policies, which is one of its main objectives. A similar percentage liked its layout, size and timing.

These results were encouraging, but (while knowing its impossibility) we should strive for 100% approval ratings of our work. The policy of quality in the Institute is based on a firm belief that the good quality of scientific research has no ceiling. But good quality research does not in itself assure the desired benefit if it is not accompanied by three basic conditions: First, the research work of the Institute should respond to national priorities and be practically beneficial in decision making; second, the research should be conducted in the appropriate timeframe to help in the elaboration of policies; and third, the costs of conducting such work should be reasonable. Thus an improvement of the quality of research should be accompanied by developing productivity and a constant effort to identify the needs, expectations, and aspirations of social policy makers and workers in the field of social development in general.

It is our hope that this Monitor lives up to the high standards its readers demand of it, and ever more strongly continues to assist and guide policy makers and researchers in Palestine and beyond. My thanks go to the team of researchers at MAS and our partners at the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics for their hard work and cooperation. Finally, and as usual, my sincere thanks to the Ford Foundation, whose generous support has made this Monitor possible.

**Dr. Samir Abdullah**  
**Director General**

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## CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) has adopted UN international standards to define the concepts and terminology used in its surveys. These terms and concepts were adjusted to meet the objectives of surveys and also to take into account the special circumstances surrounding the lives of the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (WBGS).

**Age-sex structure:** The composition of a population as determined by the number or proportion of males and females in each age category. The age structure of a population is the cumulative result of past trends in fertility, mortality and migration rates. Information on age-sex composition is an essential prerequisite for the description and analysis of demographic data.

**Age-specific enrollment rates:** The number of students of a certain age group actually enrolled at school compared to the total population of that age group.

**Crowding rate:** Average number of individuals per room. This is calculated by dividing the number of individuals who live in the household by the total number of rooms occupied by that household.

**Daily wage per employee:** This is the total net wages paid to all employees divided by the total number of work days. Wages received in different currencies are converted into New Israeli Shekels according to the exchange rate in the survey month.

**Dependency ratio:** The number of dependents, including children under the age of 15 and the elderly over the age of 65, per 100 people of working age (those between the ages of 15-65).

**Disability:** Any long-term (lasting 6 months or more) physical or mental restriction or lack of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being. This could limit the ability to move freely, to interact comfortably with surroundings and community, inability to use public transportation or work, or any condition that might result in social isolation or staying in bed for a period of more than six months.

**Dropout rate:** Number of students who left school (basic and/or secondary education) and did not register at any other school during the scholastic year beginning in September and ending on the 31<sup>st</sup> of August the following year, compared to the total number of students registered.

**Economic activity:** The type of work carried out at an establishment where the worker is employed (regardless of his/her profession). This is in case of employment at an establishment. In the case where he/she is self-employed, then this refers to the type of work, goods or services that they produce or trade with.

**Geographical divisions:** According to current administrative divisions, the Palestinian Territories are divided into two geographic areas: The West Bank and Gaza Strip. The West Bank was divided into 9 governorates and sometimes into 3 districts.

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North of the West Bank: including the governorates of Nablus, Jenin, Tulkarm, Qalqiliya, Tubas and Salfit.

Center of the West Bank: including the governorates of Ramallah/Al-Bireh, Jerusalem and Jericho.

South of the West Bank: including the governorates of Bethlehem and Hebron.

The exclusion of East Jerusalem in some sections is due to the nature of the data available on this area of the West Bank.

**Household:** One person or more (related or not) living together in the same housing unit or part of it who makes common provisions (arrangements) for providing themselves with food or other essentials for living.

**Household expenditure:** is defined to include the following:

1. Cash spent on the purchase of goods and services for living purposes.
2. The value of goods, services and payments or part of payments received from an employer.
3. Cash expenditure spent on taxes (non-commercial or non-industrial), gifts, contributions, interest on debts and other non-consumption items.

**Household consumption** is defined to include:

1. Cash spent on the purchase of goods and services for living purposes.
2. The value of goods, services and payments or part of payments received from an employer.
3. Own-produced goods and food, including consumed quantities during the recording period.
4. Estimated rent value of the household dwelling.

**Infant mortality rate:** The number of infant deaths in a given year per 1,000 live births.

**Labor force:** is defined as the economically active population. This consists of all persons aged 15 years and more, who are either employed or unemployed at the time of the survey.

**Live birth:** A birth is considered as live if the baby born has shouted, cried, or shown any sign of life at birth.

**Occupation:** The kind of work done during the reference period by the person employed, or the type of work done previously if unemployed, irrespective of the industry or employment status of the person. Occupations are grouped together mainly on the basis of the similarity of skills required to fulfill the tasks and duties of the job. Occupations are classified according to the International Standard Classification of Occupation (ISCO 1988).

**Private schools:** Any licensed, local or foreign, non-governmental educational institution or UNRWA school that is established, directed, run or financed by foreign individuals, groups, societies or bodies.

**Sex ratio:** The ratio of males to females, expressed as the number of males per 100 females.

**Standard of living:** this is calculated by dividing food consumption by total consumption (Engel's Law of Poverty). This indicator is based on the assumption that the standard of living is defined as the proportion of consumption on food out of total consumption. This indicator is divided into three categories:

- Well-off: whose food consumption to total consumption is less than 30%.

- 
- Middle category: whose food consumption to total consumption is between 30%-44%.
  - Worse-off: whose food consumption to total consumption lies between 45%-100%.

**Total fertility rate:** The average number of children that would be born alive to a woman (or group of women) during her life if she were to pass through her childbearing years conforming to the age-specific fertility rates of a given year. The total fertility rate is calculated by the sum of the age-specific fertility rates multiplied by 5.

**Underemployment:** This phenomenon exists when a person's employment does not match his/her occupational skills, education or when they are working fewer hours than they would wish. The underemployed are classified into two groups:

1. Visible underemployment: refers to insufficient working hours per week, that is persons working less than 35 hours during the reference week or working less than the normal hours of work in their occupation.
2. Invisible underemployment: refers to the existence of fundamental imbalances between human resources and other factors of production, such as insufficient income, under-utilization, poor working conditions, etc.

**Under-5 mortality (child mortality):** The proportion of children born who die before reaching their fifth birthday.

**The unemployed:** Unemployed persons are individuals who are 15 years and over who do not work at all during the survey's reference week, who are not absent from their job and are available for work and actively seeking a job during the reference week. Persons who work in Israel or are absent from work due to border closure are considered as unemployed.

**Working age population:** All persons in the West Bank and Gaza Strip aged 15 years and over.

**Unemployment (According to ILO Standards):** This group comprises all individuals who were within the work age during the period under discussion, and who were ready to work but did not, and who searched for work through newspaper advertisements, employment offices, asked friends and relatives for work, or through other means.

**Unemployment (Expanded Definition):** The expanded definition of unemployment includes those unemployed workers who were outside the labor force because they stopped looking for work, in addition to those unemployed workers accounted for according to the ILO standards.

**Type of Population Center:** Population Centers were classified in three categories: Urban, Rural, and Refugee Camps.

**Urban Center:** Any center with a population of 10,000 people or more. The definition includes all governorate centers, regardless of their size, all centers of 4,000 to 9,999 people, on the condition that at least four of the following services are available: a public electricity network, a public water network, a post office, a health center with a full-time physician available all days of the week, and a secondary school that grants General Secondary Certificates.

**Rural Center:** Any center with less than 4,000 people, and any center with a population of 4,000 to 9,999 but not having available at least four of the above-mentioned services.

**Refugee Camp:** All centers that are called camps and are run by UNRWA.

**The Rest of the West Bank:** The West Bank without Arab Jerusalem and its environs which were annexed by Israel in the aftermath of the June 1967 war. Jerusalem is excluded here due to the nature of available statistical data.

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**Private Household:** One to which the above-mentioned definition is applicable.

**Types of Private Households:** One person Household: A household consisting of one person.

***Nuclear Household:*** A household that consists of one nuclear entity composed of a childless married couple, or a married couple with one child (blood related, and not adopted) or more, or a father (head of the household) with one or more children, or a mother (head of the household) with one or more children, with no other relatives or non-relatives living with them.

***Extended Household:*** A household that consisted of one or more nuclear households, with one or more persons in the household related to the head of the household (by blood or kinship), with no “other” non-relatives living with them. Extended households can also be of two or more related people, without any of them forming a nuclear household. In brief, in the extended family there should be a head of the household, at least one other relative other than the spouse or children, and no non-related people living within the household.

**Types of Dwelling:** This refers to the architectural design of a dwelling which could be a villa, a house, an apartment, a separate room or any other form (such as a barrack, a tent, etc).

***Villa:*** A free-standing structure, usually built with clear stone, and ready to house usually one family. It consists of one floor with two wings, or two or more floors, wherein there is an internal staircase. One wing or one floor is set aside as the sleeping quarters, and another wing or floor is used for reception, kitchen and various other services. The villa often has a garden around it, regardless of its area, a wall that surrounds it from the outside, and a garage for the car. The upper roof of the villa is often covered with bricks. Within the villa limits there may also be another building or an annex that is one of its components.

***House:*** A building that was originally built for one family, and it represents the traditional building in Palestine. The house may have one or two floors used by one family. If the house is divided into separate units, each of which includes private facilities and is equipped to house a separate family, then each such unit is considered an apartment.

***Apartment:*** It is part of a house or a building consisting of one or more rooms with a kitchen and a bathroom, behind a private entrance, which is ready to house one family, and which can be accessed through a staircase or a passage that leads from a public street.

***A Separate Room:*** A simple room, with no facilities, whose occupant usually shares such facilities as the kitchen and the bathroom with the occupants of other such rooms. It is originally prepared for living, and is normally located on the roofs of buildings or in the courtyard. It is part of the house.

***Other:*** These include other cases like tents, barracks, huts, caves, and grottos, or any other place inhabited and is not subjected to any of the mentioned classifications.

***Room:*** Any area of four square meters or more surrounded by walls and has a ceiling that separates its occupants from others. A glass-enclosed veranda is considered a room if its area equals four square meters or more, and is used for any livelihood purpose. The foyer is considered a room, but the kitchen, bathroom, and hallways are not. Areas designated for animals and birds, or used for work only are not considered rooms.

***Number of Rooms:*** The number of rooms occupied by the household. It equals the number of rooms in a dwelling used by only one family. If the dwelling is used by two families then the number of rooms occupied by both families should be equal to the total number of rooms in the dwelling.

**Dwelling Acquisition:** It refers to the method in which a household is attached to a dwelling. This can be in one of the following cases:

1. **Rented:** If the dwelling is rented without furniture for a fee that is paid either every month or some other installment plan.

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2. **Ownership:** If the dwelling is owned by the household or any of its members who are living in the dwelling.
  3. **Free:** If the dwelling in question is free of any payments, such as that owned by a father, mother, or one of the relatives of the head of the household, or of one of its members who do not live in it, or offered by another party for free.
  4. **In Return for Work:** If the dwelling is offered to the household in lieu of payment by an employer for work performed by one of the household's members, and which the household occupies without any rental fees, whether this employer owns the dwelling or whether he/she is paying a rental fee to the dwelling's owner.

**Availability of Durable Commodities for the Household:** It is the availability of such long-lasting commodities as a private car, an electric refrigerator, a solar heater, a central heating system, a private library (which includes at least 10 non-school textbooks, used for developing cultural, religious and other aspects), a gas cooking range, a washing machine, a television set, a video system, a computer, a satellite dish, etc.

**Building Ownership:** It represents the status of ownership of a building, which could be one of the following:

1. **Private:** If the owner is an individual or an institution.
2. **Governmental:** If the owner is a PNA institution.
3. **Local Government:** If the owner is a municipality or a village council.
4. **Cooperative:** If the owner of the building is a cooperative regardless of its purposes.
5. **Charitable:** If the building belongs to a charitable society or institution.

**Use of the Building:** It means the way the building is used. It could be used as a residential building. It is considered residential if more than half its area is used for living. It could also be considered industrial, commercial, educational, health or other.

**Crude Marriage Rate:** The number of marriages per 1000 people in the middle of any given year.

**Crude Divorce Rate:** The number of divorces per 1000 people in the middle of any given year.



## West Bank and Gaza Strip (WBGs) - Selected Social Indicators, 1996-2003

Indicator	Unit	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Population*	1000	2630.8	2783.1	2897.1	3019.2	3149.4	3275.4	3394.0	3514.9
Sex ratio	Men/100 women	101.9	101.9	101.9	102.0	102.0	102.3	102.4	102.5
Less than 15 years old	(Percent)	46.8	46.8	46.9	46.9	46.8	46.7	46.6	46.5
15-64 years old		49.7	49.7	49.7	49.7	49.9	50.0	50.1	50.3
65+ years old		3.5	3.5	3.4	3.4	3.3	3.3	3.2	3.2
Population growth rate**	(Percent)	5.80	4.0	4.1	4.2	4.3	3.6	3.5	3.5
Life expectancy at birth**	Years								
Male and female		71.18	70.96	71.13	71.3	71.8	71.63	71.79	71.95
Male		69.59	70.22	70.39	70.57	70.74	70.90	71.06	71.22
Female		72.84	71.91	71.91	72.07	72.24	72.39	72.55	72.71
Infant mortality+ rate**	Per 1,000 live births	27.3	24.2	23.7	23.2	24.0	22.2	21.7	24.2
Male		-	26.9	26.3	25.7	25.2	24.6	24.1	26.6
Female		-	21.4	21.0	20.5	20.1	19.7	19.2	21.6
Maternity mortality rate (1995 statistics)	Per 100,000 live births	❖80- 70	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total fertility rate**	Births/woman	-	6.04	--		5.93	-	-	5.6
Use of contraceptives	(Percent)	45.2	-	-		51.4	-	-	-
Crude birth rate**	Births/1,000 persons	44.40	42.7	42.1	41.4	40.9	40.2	39.6	38.8
Crude death rate**	Per 1,000	6.11	4.9	4.8	4.6	4.5	4.4	4.3	4.2
Mean age at time of first marriage/males	Years	-	23.00	23.94	24.10	24.1	24.2	23.5	24.6
Mean age at time of first marriage/females	Years	-	18.00	18.70	18.80	18.9	19.0	18.4	19.4
Urban population	Percentage of total population	-	53.1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Refugee camp dwellers	Percentage of total population	-	15.9	-	-	-	-	-	-
Population of rural areas	Percentage of total population	-	31.0				-	-	-
Refugee population	Percentage of total population	-	41.4	-	-	-	-	-	-
Adult literacy rate	Percentage of population 15+ years	84.3 ❖	86.1	-	-	89.2	90.2	91.0	91.9
Male		91.5	92.2	-	-	93.4	95.3	95.7	96.3
Female		77.0	79.7	-	-	83.9	85.0	86.4	87.4
Dropout rate at elementary level++	(Percent)	2.40	1.86	1.76	1.57	1.44	1.2	0.79	0.75
Dropout rate at secondary level++	(Percent)	6.98	5.83	6.24	5.26	5.9	4.5	3.13	3.7
Average number of students per teacher +++	Students/teacher	29.8	29.2	29.5	29.4	27.7	28.1	27.8	27.3
Average number of students per class - elementary level +++	Students/class	37.2	37.3	37.2	37.5	37.3	37.1	36.7	36.4
Average number of students per class - secondary level+++	Students/class	30.2	29.9	30.2	30.3	30.2	30.6	30.6	30.4
Connected to water network	Percentage of total households	84.1	83.7	85	-	98.8	-	93.9	@86.5
Connected to sewage network	Percentage of total households	34.0	33.8	38	39.3	43.9	-	45.8	50.8
Connected to electricity network	Percentage of total households	98.1	94.7	94.6	-	99.2	-	-	-

Indicator	Unit	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Computer owner	(Percent)	—	4.0	7	—	10.8	13.1	12.6	26.4
TV owner	(Percent)	89.6	85.0	89	—	89.7	94.2	93.0	93.4
Housing density**	Persons/room	2.45	2.0	1.88		1.91	2.0	2.1	2.1
Family owning home library (ratio)	(Percent)	22.9	13.9	—		13.4	—	18.4	27.5
Public libraries ****	No.	295	—	13	20	—	—	—	—
Monthly personal expenditure	JD (according to 1996 prices)	84.1	84.4	82.6	—	—	—	—	—
Food expenditure as percentage of total expenditure	(Percent)	38.7	38.5	40.3	—	—	—	—	—
GNP per capita	US\$	1774.4	1762.8	1889.6	2028.3				—
Beneficiaries of assistance from Ministry of Social Affairs	Percentage of total population	3.5	3.6	3.4	3.5	3.9	3.7	3.5	3.5
Beneficiaries of assistance from UNRWA	Percentage of total population	3.5	3.3	3.4	3.3	3.2		3.2	3.1
Active labor force	Percentage of population 15+ years	40.0	40.5	41.4	41.6	41.5	38.7	38.1	40.4
Unemployment rate	(Percent)	23.8	20.3	14.4	11.8	14.1	25.5	31.3	25.6
Male		24.5	20.3	14.4	11.6	14.4		33.5	26.9
Female		19.6	20.1	15.2	13.0	12.3		17.1	18.6
Employed in public sector	Percentage of total number of employed	17.6	❖❖7.6	16.4	17.9	19.8	23.2		22.2
Employed in Israel and settlements	(Percent)	14.1	17.1	21.7	22.9	19.6	13.7	10.3	9.7
Agricultural labor force	(Percent)	14.2	13.1	12.1	12.6	13.7	12.0	14.8	15.7
Industrial labor force	(Percent)	16.8	16.4	15.9	15.5	14.7	14.0	12.9	12.5
Female share of adult labor force	(Percent)	11.0	11.5	11.3	12.3	12.7		10.4	12.8
Rate of labor force to population	(Percent)	21.3	21.5	22.0	21.1	22.1	20.7	19.9	20.5
Median daily wage***** (according to 1996 prices)	Shekels	46.2	50.0	57.7	69.2	69.2	61.5	60.0	55.8
Average daily wage (according to 1996 prices)	Shekels	54.3	59.3	68.5	75.5	77.3	72.7	74.0	73.7
Female wage/male wage *****	(Percent)	70.6	68.0	66.8	71.0	69.3	75.0	81.8	82.7
Hospital beds (ratio)	Beds/1,000 persons	1.00	1.17	1.13	1.27	1.3	1.4	1.35	1.40
Doctors (ratio)	Doctors/1,000 persons	-	99	114.9	128	140	134	150	149

Note: When making comparisons, it should be taken into consideration that population and housing data for the year 1997 are taken from the 1997 Population, Housing and Establishment Census. Data for other years are taken from sample surveys by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS). Some of the 1998 data are the result of assumptions on which PCBS based its population projections for 1998.

\* PCBS population projections based on the results of the 1997 Population, Housing and Establishment Census.

\*\* The 1998 and 1999 data are assumptions according to which the PCBS estimated population figures for the two years.

\*\*\* With the exception of the area of Jerusalem annexed by Israel following the 1967 War.

\*\*\*\* The number of libraries in 1996 includes libraries surveyed by a team supervised by the Ministry of Culture and includes all public libraries, including those in mosques. The figures for 1998 and 1999 are restricted to public libraries supervised by the Ministry of Culture.

\*\*\*\*\* Wages in the two regions of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, relate only to workers employed in each of them, while the wages of the total number of workers in the WBS also include the wages of workers in Israel and the settlements.

//// = 1995 data

////0 = The third quarter of 1997.

Health survey data revealed that the infant mortality rate estimated through direct means for the years preceding the survey (1995-1999) in the WBS was 25.3 for males and 25.6 for females.

++ Data for scholastic years 1995/1996, 1996/1997, 1997/1998, 1998/1999 consecutively.

+++ Data for scholastic years 1996/1997, 1997/1998, 1998/1999, 1999/2000 consecutively.

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## 1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Issue number 8 of the **Social Monitor** observes trends and changes in a number of selected social indicators during 2003. As usual, and as much as data permit, this issue includes comparisons of change and stability that have occurred in social life during the previous years of *Intifada*, in connection with the following basic areas: population, health, education, culture, social security, quality of life, living standards and the legal environment.

This number is different from previous numbers in that it contains a special dossier through which we monitor and evaluate the most important policies and programmes authorised by Palestinian governmental institutions. This is achieved by analysing leaflets and literature put out by these public-sector bodies, and a series of interviews with their leading officials. In fact, this is a logical extension of the activities of the previous seven Monitors, which always sought to evaluate and explain social policies, as well as putting forward proposals and recommendations to change and improve them. In all of this, the quickly-changing reality of the Palestinian environment was taken into consideration – a reality which poses extremely serious challenges for researchers and institutes in the timely monitoring and analysis of data and the formulation of relevant policies.

During 2003, the Palestinian territories in general, and Gaza Strip in particular, witnessed a tangible escalation in Israel's aggressive policy seeking to crush the *Intifada* and destroy the Palestinian national will. It was one of the harshest and cruellest years since the beginning of Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967, particularly for Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. There was an unprecedented escalation of Israel's military and political aggression. The occupation forces recurrently attacked numerous areas and refugee camps in the Gaza Strip, using fighter aircraft, military helicopters, tanks and bulldozers to bombard and demolish hundreds of dwellings, factories, and other public and private establishments.

Israel's repressive measures resulted in the death and injury of thousands of Palestinian citizens, including the assassination of important figures and leaders such as Sheikh Ahmed Yassin and Dr. Abdul Aziz al-Rantisy. It continued in its destruction of farms, uprooting thousands of fruit-bearing trees, and in its confiscation of water sources in the process of continuing the construction of the *apartheid* wall, which has gradually turned Palestinian population centres into collective detention camps. These conditions have resulted in the continued weakening and exhaustion of the Palestinian National Authority, completely paralysing some programmes, undermining efforts at democratic reform and reconstruction, and reducing the ability to extend badly needed services to citizens.

Undoubtedly, these measures and their devastating effects have caused great damage to all aspects of Palestinian people's life. They hurt many of the modest achievements of the Palestinian national institutions – governmental, civil society and private. Some of those negative effects have been reflected in the quantitative indicators that were monitored during the first three years of the *Intifada*, compared to years prior to that. Others did not appear in a tangible form in the quantitative indicators. They require studies that sense changes on the qualitative level, such as health and educational services and others. Also, many of these phenomena did not betray their symptoms due to the relative slowness of many social indicators in reflecting changes in the surrounding conditions compared to, for example, economic indicators.

The statistical look this issue of the **Social Monitor** casts on the various aspects of life in the West Bank and Gaza Strip points to the continued existence of inequality in Palestinian society, depending on social background, regions, age groups, and the different communities. Important differences emerge as to people's ability to obtain educational, health, cultural and social security services. The gap is also influenced by the severity of the repressive measures imposed by the occupation forces on

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each individual region. For example, differences appear between the north of the West Bank, especially Jenin and Nablus, compared to the centre of the region. Data show that despite the continued availability of services to the population in the areas of education and health, their quality has fallen below the desired standards. This has contributed to a widespread feeling of non-confidence among the benefiting public. Such a situation underlines the importance of approaching emergency, relief and reconstruction plans with respect to both the quality of services and their continued availability to all social strata and communities – a task which requires effort, capability and highly-efficient management.

## Summary of the Most Important Results

### 1. Population Indicators

Population growth continues to pose many challenges for social and economic policy-makers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The average rate of natural increase for 2003 in the Palestinian territories was 3.4%, which is among the highest in the world.

The population break-down prepared by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics underlines the continuing youthful character of Palestinian society in the West Bank and Gaza Strip: 46.5% of all inhabitants were below 15 years of age in 2003. The data also underline the continuing high fertility level, which reached 6.65 babies in Gaza Strip and 5.13 in the West Bank during 2003. In addition the average life-span tends to rise, which results in an increase in the levels of population growth and the necessity of appropriate social and economic policies to deal with it.

The indicators relating to marriage and divorce have also resumed their increase, after having declined in the last three months of 2000 (the first three months of *Intifada*). They also point to the continuation of the phenomena of marriage at an early age, particularly among females, as well as the continuation of the practice of polygamy. Cases of divorce also increased among the less educated, in situations of marriage at an early age, and during the early years of marriage.

Despite persistent recommendations presented in previous issues of the **Social Monitor** regarding the need for detailed studies dealing with these phenomena in order to elaborate appropriate policies and legal regulations, we still lack such studies. Our social policies remain detached from these phenomena.

### 2. Health Indicators

The section concerning health indicators deals with the most important indicators through which changes that have occurred in the health sector during recent years can be detected. The present issue of the **Monitor** also deals with two new indicators: youth and health, and accessibility of health services. Among the changes detected by the **Monitor** is the current amount of public spending on the health sector, and the share of this sector in the total current public spending. Data show an increase in the amount of spending on the health sector to reach US\$140 million in 2004, which is an increase of nearly 40% over 2003. But this increase kept the share of the health sector at the level of 10.6% of total spending, which is a small percentage compared to 1995, when it was 14%.

Data showed a big increase in the number of registered cases of live births, especially in the West Bank. This number increased by 7.7% in 2003 over 2002 (in the West Bank by 12.8%, but only 1.8% in the Gaza Strip). The gap between the West Bank and Gaza Strip indicates a big difference between the events of 2001 and 2002, where the increase was bigger in the Gaza Strip. The reason for this difference could be the inability of West Bank inhabitants to register their new-born babies during 2002, which led to their being registered in 2003. Data also showed an improvement in the average life-span. It reached 72.7 years for women and 71.2 years for men in

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2003. The averages in the West Bank remain better than in the Gaza Strip, which indicate better living standards and health conditions in the former.

Data further showed an overall fall in the average number of deaths among infants and nursing babies, reaching 20 infants out of every 1000 babies. However, the improvement is restricted to the West Bank; infant mortality actually increased in Gaza Strip in 2003. Data regarding the causes of death indicated that pre-birth causes are the most common (48.4%), followed by deformity at birth (14.4%). This demonstrates that the difficulties pregnant women encounter to obtain pre-natal medical care constitute an important factor in the death of nursing infants and babies.

Data also showed an improvement in the ratio of physicians to population. It reached an average of 150 physicians per 1000 inhabitants in 2003. The improvement in the Gaza Strip was more than in the West Bank. As for the availability of hospital beds to inhabitants, data revealed that there was an average of 1.4 hospital beds per 1000 people. The number has kept up with population growth but not improved, and is still insufficient. Data also showed an increase in the number of governmental basic health-care centres, but a decrease in non-governmental and UNRWA-run ones. Governmental centres increased by 16 to become 391 centres in 2003; non-governmental decreased by 8 - all in the Gaza Strip - to become 177. The number of UNRWA-run centres decreased by 2 in the West Bank, to become 51 in total.

Data obtained through the Youth Survey 2003 indicated the existence of a serious lack of health education in Palestinian society. It further revealed that young people have a poor assessment of their health conditions, which reflects both the deteriorating health conditions in Palestinian society and the need to develop health education programmes. Data showed that 12% of young people between the age of 10 and 24 evaluated their physical health condition as being average or poor, and 28% evaluated their psychological health as being average or poor, with the rate in the West Bank higher than in the Gaza Strip. The data also revealed that the physical and psychological health conditions of females are worse than those of males. By contrast, data also showed that health education of females is better than that of males. This does not necessarily constitute an advantage for women in Palestinian society. It only reflects the fact that Palestinian women assume the major role in the family's health care and protection, adding further to the other domestic burdens they shoulder.

Data available through the Health Service Accessibility Survey 2003 show that the number of families having access to health services, such as hospitals, health care centres and pharmacies, was satisfactory. But the question remains open regarding the capacity of these health services, on the one hand, and the quality of health services they offer on the other. Data revealed that nearly 11% of those requiring health services did not obtain them. The reasons include non-availability of such services at the time of need, long waiting times at the health-care centres, Israeli closures, road-blocks and checkpoints, lack of medicines and non-availability of specialists. There are several reasons which indicate that the existence of a health centre does not necessarily mean the possibility to benefit from those services, or even to reach them.

### **3. Education Indicators**

The section concerning education deals with the most important indicators through which changes that occurred in this sector in recent years could be measured. Data revealed an increase in 2004 in the amount of current public spending on the education sector, in both its school and university branches. It amounted to US\$287.1 million, an increase of 21.8% over 2003. Data also revealed an improvement in the sector's share of total public spending: 21.6% for 2004 compared to 20.7% in 2003.

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As regards the educational characteristics of Palestinian society, literacy indicators revealed a decline in the illiteracy rate to become 8.1% among those 15 years of age and above in 2003. The progress in the level of literacy was observed in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip and also in both sexes. But the gap between the two sexes remains relatively big (3.7% among males, and 12.6% among females). It is confined to older age groups, and is gradually shrinking and disappearing among the young. As regards educational achievement, data revealed a modest improvement. The percentage of persons of 15 years of age and above who completed the first level of university education rose to 7.1% for 2003. This progress was true for both sexes, and in fact the gap between them is being bridged.

As regards educational establishments, data revealed an increase in the number of schools for 2003/2004, in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The data revealed an increase in the number of kindergartens in the West Bank but a decline in their number in the Gaza Strip. This indicates that the continued effect of the economic crisis on the Gaza Strip was greater than on the West Bank. Data revealed that an increase in the number of schools was true across the board, but was higher on the government side than UNRWA and the private sector. Data also showed that the increase in number of schools resulted in improving the average class size, which became 36.4 pupils at every level during 2003/2004. The development affected both the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Class density at the secondary level became 30.4 students in all branches, but this last improvement was confined to the West Bank only. The average class size in kindergartens increased to 25.4 pupils, but this increase was in the Gaza Strip only, with the West Bank achieving some improvement. In general, data revealed the continued existence of a gap in the average 'class density' between the West Bank and Gaza Strip, significantly in favour of the former.

Data also revealed a 4% increase in the number of school students during 2003/2004 over the previous year, to become 1,087,668 male and female students in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. As for children in kindergartens, the number increased in the West Bank but fell in the Gaza Strip. On the level of the supervisory authorities, data revealed that the increase in the number of students at governmental schools was higher than at UNRWA schools, while fewer attended private schools. This points to the continued impact of the difficult economic conditions on parents' choice of schools. Data also revealed an increase in the number of teachers of both sexes, at a rate exceeding the increase in the number of students, which resulted in improving the student-teacher ratio to become 27.3 students per teacher during 2003/2004. This progress was confined to government and UNRWA schools; private schools witnessed an increase in this ratio, although it continues to be less in them than in others. The data also showed that the educational qualifications of male and female teachers are improving, a fact which will positively reflect on the quality of education in the future.

As regards the enrolment of females/males, data revealed stability at 98 female pupils per every 100 male pupils at the basic level. But it declined at the secondary level to become 109 female students for every 100 male students in 2003/2004, having been 112 female students for every 100 male students in 2002/2003. Data revealed a modest decline in the percentage of students enrolled in vocational education, to become 4.5% in 2003/2004. This fact reflects a failure to achieve any important success for the policy of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education to increase student enrolment in this kind of education.

Data revealed a continued increase in drop-out rates at the secondary school level and a continued decline in basic schools. According to available data the percentage of drop-outs in secondary schools was 3.74% in 2002/2003, and was higher among female students than males. It actually declined among male students in the Gaza Strip. At the basic level, the probability of dropping out increased among females in the West Bank and Gaza Strip but declined among

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males in both regions. The impact of the difficult economic conditions was greater on the continued enrolment of females in education than males.

On the level of higher education, data showed another large increase in the number of students at higher educational establishments. The number of Palestinian university students increased during 2003/2004 by 15.2% over the previous year. The increase affected both sexes but was higher among females, which means a continued narrowing of the gap between the two sexes enrolled in Palestinian universities. The average has become 98.4 female students for every 100 male students. Data also revealed a big increase in the number of students at intermediate colleges.

The big increase in the number of Palestinian university students was not matched by an appropriate increase in the number of teaching staff, which was limited to 9% during 2003/2004. This also applied to intermediate colleges. It points to an inevitable increase in the ratio of students to teaching staff in Palestinian universities and colleges, and raises questions about the adequacy of higher education institutions meeting their requirements. Undoubtedly, the situation will negatively affect the standard of higher education, which calls for serious efforts by all concerned parties to limit the damage done.

#### **4. Cultural Indicators**

Israeli repressive measures cast their shadow on cultural life in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Most cultural indicators monitored remained in a worse condition than on the eve of the second *Intifada*, despite the fact that a modest improvement occurred in participation in some cultural activities.

The number of functioning cultural centres increased from 50 in 2002 to 62 in 2003, but was still below the 74 which existed on the eve of the *Intifada*. The number of some cultural activities carried out by the centres, such as courses, seminars and lectures, increased, while others (especially artistic performances) declined. On the whole, the centres were much less active than prior to the outbreak of the *Intifada*. The year 2003 recorded a slight increase (one theatre and one museum) in the number of museums and functioning theatres compared to 2002. But the overall number of theatres, museums and licensed cinemas remained very low: 7 museums, mostly of folklore, 5 theatres and 4 cinemas.

The number of participants in the activities of the centres, namely in seminars and lectures, increased in 2003 compared to the previous year. Cultural life in the West Bank experienced an important development in 2004 in the form of the inauguration of the 'Cultural Palace' in Ramallah, which hosted important artistic performances and cultural activities. The Ministry of Culture launched a "Book in a Newspaper" project, which is hoped will contribute to the popularisation and spread of culture.

The number of published newspaper in the West Bank and Gaza Strip increased from 8 in 2002 to 13 in 2003. However, the number of dailies remained unchanged (3 newspapers). Data revealed that 17 magazines and journals are being published in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, most of them monthlies (11 journals), but no evaluation of their contents exists. The number of private TV stations remained at the level of the previous year (32 stations), while the number of radio stations nearly doubled (up to 29, from 15 stations in 2002).

An important revelation of the statistical data is the increased possession of computers and internet use by Palestinian families. More than one quarter of Palestinian families stated that they own a computer. This percentage is nearly twice what it was in 2002. The percentage of families having an internet connection increased from 1.8% in 2002 to 9.2% in 2003. Data revealed a big increase in the number of families having a home library (27.5%). These data indicate the

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growing importance of the computer and the internet in the lives of Palestinian families, both in areas of education and work.

## **5. Social Security and Quality of Life**

Some aspects related to the quality of life in the West Bank and Gaza Strip have experienced slight improvements, particularly in connection with the legislative environment, as well as a relative improvement in the functioning of some institutions with regard to decreasing unemployment and poverty. This occurred despite continued Israeli repression and the increase in its intensity, especially in the Gaza Strip.

The Ministry of Labour elaborated numerous organisational regulations for the implementation of the Labour Law, which means the unification of the legal basis of the Palestinian labour market. It also prepared organisational regulations for putting into practice the Social Security Law. The Ministry of Social Affairs also prepared organisational regulations to develop its work in various domains.

Work is proceeding to launch the Social Security Institute and the Palestinian Employment and Social Protection Fund, despite the fact that they still need big efforts and proper financing to make them operational.

Both years 2003 and 2004 witnessed an important development in the area of alleviating unemployment. The management of emergency employment was centralised through the creation of a national body grouping all ministries and government institutions, civil-society and private organisations concerned with the labour market. Employment offices at the Ministry of Labour were required to register the unemployed and candidates to benefit from the emergency employment projects. Criteria were also elaborated for the selection of those unemployed who will benefit from these projects, as well as the institutions and companies that will make use of the programme.

Available data indicate a decline in the percentage of families receiving assistance. During the third quarter of 2004, 15.1% of Palestinian families received assistance, compared with 41.5% during the first quarter of 2003. This decline is due to the decrease in foreign aid available in to Palestinians in general, particularly the decline in relief support. It is also due to donors and financiers focussing on financing emergency employment projects. Despite that, the percentage of families which believe that they are in need remains high, at 73.7 % in the third quarter of 2003.

The average number of families that received monthly help from the Ministry of Social Affairs was 38,388, 20,493 of which live in the Gaza Strip. This figure represents an increase of 6.8% compared to 2002. The Ministry helped 3.4% of the total number of inhabitants in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Various other Palestinian ministries and governmental institutions, especially the Institute for the Affairs of Martyrs and Wounded, the Ministry for Prisoners' Affairs, and the Ministry of Waqf, also provided help.

UNRWA provided regular assistance to 115 thousand Palestinians in 2003 in the West Bank and Gaza Strip who are members of families classified as hardship cases. The ability of UNRWA to extend emergency assistance to Palestinians, especially refugees, has declined, due to a poor response by donors to its appeals. This fact forced it to decrease its some of its support programmes, especially food assistance, and to cancel others.

The *Zakat* Committees continued to provide assistance to poor families in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The number of such committees increased tremendously; 81 of them were operating at the end of 2003. These committees sponsor more than 18 thousand orphans, in the framework of the Orphans' Sponsorship Programme, and provide monthly assistance to them worth 20 to 30 Jordanian Dinars. This is in addition to thousands of families that receive assistance depending on the availability of funds, and others who receive it regularly.

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Available data indicate that the value of assistance provided to Palestinian families is limited, despite its importance in helping them cope with the difficult conditions. The value at the end of 2003 of the Ministry of Social Affairs and UNRWA assistance was US\$26 per month per family, and US\$22 from the *Zakat* Committees. As for the regular assistance provided by these bodies, it is still calculated according to old criteria. It is small and only covers a small portion of the needs of the poor.

Data indicated the erosion of poor Palestinian families' ability to adapt to the difficult conditions which resulted from the Israeli repression and siege of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, especially inasmuch as coping mechanisms focus on decreasing spending on basic necessities, dipping into family savings and selling family possessions and productive assets.

Data also reveal the availability of utilities to most Palestinian homes. 85.5% of Palestinian families draw their water supply from the public water supply system. 50.8% of families in the Palestinian territories live in homes connected to the public sewerage system. 60.3% of families in the Palestinian territories have a mobile telephone and 47.7% of families in the Palestinian territories have a telephone line.

Data available from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics indicate a sharp decline in the number of building permits for living purposes issued by local authorities during 2003. During 2003, 792 permits for living purposes were issued in the Palestinian territories, while the number in 2000 was 7,445 permits. This decline is directly related to the repressive measures resorted to by the occupation forces. The Israeli occupation caused damage to 66,894 homes in the Palestinian territories during the period from September 28, 2000 to August 31, 2004. This equates to an average of 1423 homes every month.

## 6. Living Standards

Living standards indicators continued to reflect deterioration in living conditions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The levels of poverty and unemployment remained high, and income and spending were much below the level at the eve of the *Intifada*. The continued siege and closures imposed by Israeli occupation on Palestinian towns, villages and refugee camps in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, as well as the persistent destruction of property and livelihoods, have resulted in the erosion of Palestinian families' ability to meet basic needs.

Of significance in this respect is the emergence of indicators revealing the beginning of economic stability in 2003, suggesting a slight improvement in the living standards of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. But results in 2004 underlined the fact that the general impoverishment in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is of Israel's making, and is caused by occupation. They further unmasked the fallacy of believing that socio-economic indicators signalled the existence of the beginnings of stability.

Nearly half of Palestinian families stated that they had lost half or more of their income. The percentage increased to nearly two thirds of Palestinian families in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in half of 2004. The average monthly income dropped from 2300 Shekels on the eve of the *Intifada* to 1500 Shekels during the third quarter of 2004. More than half of Palestinian families (54.6%) stated that they decreased their spending on major needs during the year prior to the survey. The decrease in spending was concentrated in the domain of food and clothing. Levels of poverty remain high. More than 63.3% of Palestinian families in the West Bank and Gaza Strip lived below the poverty line during the third quarter of 2004. It is nearly the same percentage that was monitored in March 2003, according to what families stated.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics drew the attention of those concerned that the estimates are based on income statements by families. We use them here as general indicators of conditions of Palestinian families. It is worth noting that these figures correspond to estimates by international agencies operating in the Palestinian territories, such as UNESCO and the World Bank.

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Despite the small relative improvement in levels of Palestinian families' income and spending that were revealed by the tenth round of the survey regarding the impact of Israeli measures on the economic conditions of the Palestinian family (July-September 2004 round), compared to April-May 2003, levels remain much below the pre-September 29 2000 results. This is due to continued repressive measures and recurrent military operations in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which resulted in paralysis of economic activity. Different aid projects and emergency employment programmes had a clear effect in the slight improvement witnessed in some indicators. But it is a temporary improvement, dependent on continuing financing by an outside party, improvement in political and general security conditions, and the capricious whims of Israeli measures.

The size of the work force increased significantly (around 12.3 %) in 2003 compared to 2002, and continued to increase in 2004. This fact points to the revival of expectations among the unemployed regarding the possibility of finding jobs. The Emergency Employment Project and its centralisation at the Ministry of Labour and its employment offices in the governorates could have played important part in this regard. The tremendous increase in the number of the work force is due to new entrants to the labour market, and those who lost hope in finding jobs and redefined their relation to the labour market. The percentage of those participating in the labour force was 40.4% in 2003, but still below that of 1999 (41.6%). The percentage of female participation in the labour force increased during 2003 to 12.8%, a real improvement compared to the previous year (10.4%).

The ILO-defined unemployment rate decreased in 2003 compared to the previous year; 25.6% against 31.3% in 2002. But it was still much higher than on the eve of *Intifada*, when it was 11.8% in 1999. Similarly, the percentage of relaxed-definition unemployment decreased. The number of unemployed dropped from 215 thousand in 2002, to 193 thousand in 2003. Data revealed unemployment remains higher in the Gaza Strip (29%) compared to the West Bank (24%). The dependency rate in the West Bank and Gaza Strip for 2003 (population divided by employed persons) was 7.1 persons.

Data revealed that the improvement which occurred in the number of employed was basically due to jobs created through the emergency employment projects, which are temporary projects providing limited income, as well as through informal sector activities. The percentage of the self-employed increased at the expense of wage earners.

The percentage of those employed by the public sector dropped from one quarter of the employed in 2002 to 22.2% in 2003, despite the numerical stability of public-sector employment (130 thousand). The percentage of those employed in Israel and the settlements continued to decline in 2003, falling to 9.7% compared to 10.3% in 2002.

3.1% of children between the age of 5 and 17 stated that they work. Three quarters of them said that they worked because of economic need.

## **7. Legal Indicators**

Israel's occupation forces stepped up their violation of Palestinian citizens' rights during 2003, especially the right to live in physical safety, personal freedom, freedom of movement and civilian property ownership. Israeli occupation forces continued to commit acts of assassination and employ extreme violence against civilians. They also continued to demolish homes. More than 2000 housing units were damaged, and over 790 housing units were completely demolished. Trees were uprooted in an area exceeding 3570 dunums of agricultural land.

During 2003, Israel stepped up construction of its annexation and separation wall in the heart of Palestinian territories in the West Bank. The construction of the wall led, among other things, to

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the expropriation of 60 thousand dunums of land, most of which are situated in the north of the West Bank and the environs of Jerusalem. It also resulted in the uprooting of 83 thousand fruit-bearing trees, the destruction of 37 kilometres of irrigation networks and destruction of 15 kilometres of agricultural roads.

Palestinian citizens' rights sharply deteriorated as a result of those continuous and intensified violations that touched most aspects of Palestinian life and obstructed the work of all Palestinian institutions. No major progress was achieved in the functioning of three branches of the Palestinian authority. No serious steps were taken to achieve the desired institutional and financial reform, despite slight improvements in the functioning of the Legislative Council and important changes such as the creation of the post of Prime Minister. Palestinian citizens still suffer from a state of poor order and deterioration of institutional work.

Important data regarding crime and its victims were reviewed. They provide a general view of the situation of crime and that of victims during recent years in the Palestinian territories, taking into consideration objective and subjective difficulties that hinder obtaining accurate information regarding this subject. Israel's repressive measures and all social, economic and political conditions that accompanied the *Intifada* have contributed to undermining the reliability of information related to crime and its victims. This suggests that the available information on the subject should be regarded with great caution. The ability of the security apparatus to follow up on various cases and record them has experienced a set-back due to the existing political and military conditions. At the same time, the ability of citizens to report crimes has been weakened due to Israeli roadblocks and checkpoints. The difficult living conditions, caused by Israeli repression, have paralysed the judicial apparatus, strengthening the trend to resort to families and local reform committees to redress problems.

## 2. DEMOGRAPHIC INDICATORS

This section monitors the general population indicators, which include the size of the population, its geographic distribution, age-group composition, sex distribution, fertility and immigration levels and their basic trends, as well as population indicators related to family and cases of marriage and divorce.

### 2-1 Population Size and Distribution

The population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip grew significantly during the period 1997 to 2003, despite the rate of growth declining somewhat. This is due to maintaining high birth rates, and a drop in death rates. The rate of natural growth in the Palestinian territories was 3.8% in 1997, but even though it dropped to 3.5% in 2003 it is still one of the highest in the world. The number of inhabitants in the West Bank and Gaza Strip was 3.515 million persons at the end of 2003; 2.229 million in the West Bank and 1.286 million in the Gaza Strip.

Al-Khalil (Hebron) Governorate is the largest in the West Bank. The number of its inhabitants was estimated at the end of 2003 at 497,824 persons, i.e. 22.0% of the population of the West Bank. At the same time Jericho Governorate is the least populated. Its inhabitants were estimated at the end of 2003 to be 40,227 persons, i.e. 1.8% of the inhabitants of the West Bank. Gaza Governorate is the biggest in the Strip population wise. Its inhabitants were estimated at the end of 2003 to be 462,179, i.e. 35.2% of

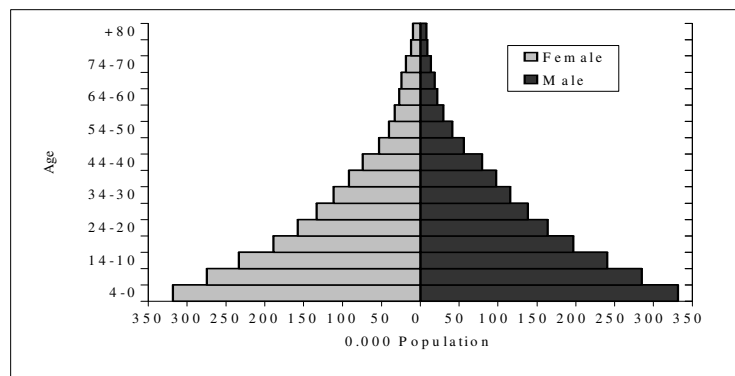
the total number of inhabitants of the Gaza Strip. Rafah Governorate is the least populated in the Gaza Strip. Its inhabitants were estimated at the end of 2003 to be 156,324 people, i.e. 11.9% of the inhabitants of the Gaza Strip.

### 2-2 Continued Youthful Character of Palestinian Society

Break-downs prepared by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics affirm that Palestinian society remains youthful in character, with 46.5% of the total number of inhabitants in 2003 below 15 years of age. The percentage of males was 46.4% and females 46.2%. The percentage of children below 5 years of age in the Palestinian territories was estimated in 2003 to be 18.0% of the total number of inhabitants. They constituted 17.2% of the West Bank, and 19.5% in of the Gaza Strip. It is noted that the percentage of persons 65 years of age and more is low – 3.2% of the total number of inhabitants in the Palestinian territories, 2.7% of males, and 3.6% of females. The percentage of old people in the West Bank was 3.4%, and in the Gaza Strip 2.7%.

It is also noted that there were differences in the average age in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, standing at 17.5 years in the former and only 15.1 years in the latter as of mid-2003. The average in the Palestinian territories as a whole was 16.6 years. Trends indicate that the inhabitants of Gaza Strip will remain younger than the inhabitants of the West Bank at least until 2010, with their average remaining below 16.3 years during this period.

**Figure 2-1: Population pyramid in the West Bank and Gaza Strip Estimates of mid-2003**



Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1999. Population in the Palestinian Territories, 1997-2025, Ramallah, Palestine

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## 2-3 High Fertility Rates

The rate of fertility is affected by social customs, marriage age, reproductive behaviour of women, use of family planning methods and programmes adopted by the state regarding family planning. The level of fertility is still high compared to that of other countries, despite the gradual decline it is experiencing. The early age at marriage, the desire to have a male child, the political situation, and traditions and customs in Palestinian society, all influence the level of fertility. Results of the health survey for 2004 indicated that the average level of fertility in the Palestinian territories was 5.6 infants – 6.6 infants in the Gaza Strip compared to 5.1 infants in the West Bank.

Birth rates are influenced by numerous factors, such as level of fertility and reproduction, the development of health services and the role of the state in mother and child care. The estimates by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics point to a decline, during the second half of the last decade, in the net average births in Palestinian territories. The number of net births was estimated to be 42.7 for every 1000 inhabitants in 1997, declining to 38.8 in 2003. It is expected that the decrease will continue until it reaches 33.8 in 2010. This trend in the decrease of fertility levels may be attributed to development of educational levels, especially among females, and increased female participation in the work force. Furthermore, improved health conditions and increased use of family planning methods in the Palestinian territories have had a clear effect on the decline in fertility levels. 73.3% of women who were previously married used birth control methods in 2004, compared to 49.3% overall

Despite an expected decline in levels of fertility, Palestinian society in the Palestinian territories will remain young during the coming three decades.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> According to final results of the general census of people, homes and establishments 1997, the highest fertility level in the West Bank was in Al-Khalil Governorate. The lowest level of fertility in the governorates of the West Bank was in Nablus Governorate, where it was 4.8 babies. In contrast the highest level of fertility in the Gaza Strip as a whole was in Jabalia Governorate – 7.5 babies. The lowest level of

## 2-4 Decrease in Death Rates

The general trend of death rates in the Palestinian territories tends to decrease. This is due to the development of citizens' health awareness and education, in addition to adopting and supporting plans concerned with health care. Death rates, in general, and infant death rates in particular, started declining in the Palestinian territories at the beginning of the last decade of the 1900s. The average net deaths in the West Bank and Gaza Strip declined from 5.1 and 4.7 per 1000 respectively in mid-1997 to 4.3 and 4.0 in 2003. The average rate of deaths among infants during the period 2000-2003 in the West Bank and Gaza Strip was 24.2 for every 1000 living births (26.1 males and 21.6 females). Also, the average number of deaths among nursing babies in the Palestinian territories during the period 1995-1999 was 25.5 for every 1000 living births, whereas it was 27.3 for every 1000 living births during the period 1990-1994.

As a result, life expectancy at birth in the whole Palestinian territories rose in 2003 to 71.2 years for males and 72.7 years for females. In the West Bank it was 71.4 years and 73.1 years for males and females respectively, compared to 70.9 and 72.0 years for males and females respectively in the Gaza Strip. It is expected that death levels will continue their gradual decline in the coming years, especially death levels among nursing babies. Thus, a higher life expectancy for both sexes is likely.

The Palestinian territories occupy a good position as regards the level of nursing infant deaths compared to neighbouring Arab countries. The average deaths of infants in Palestinian territories was 24.6 for every 1000 living births during the period 1995-1999, while the average was 29 and 51 for every 1000 living births in Jordan and Egypt respectively during 1999.

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fertility in the Gaza Strip was in Deir El-Balah Governorate, where it was 6.6 babies.

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## **2-5 Stability of Palestinian Family Size**

The results of the Youth Survey 2003, carried out by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, show that the average family size in the Palestinian territories was 6.1 (5.8 and 6.8 persons in the West Bank and Gaza Strip respectively).

The percentage of families headed by females in 2003 in the West Bank was 3.2% of the total number of Palestinian families, and 3.8% in the Gaza Strip. Often the size of families headed by a woman is relatively small. The average size of a family headed by a woman in 2003 in the Palestinian territories was 3.2 persons, compared to the average size of a male-headed family which was 6.4 persons.

## **2-6 Palestinian Families Moving as a Result of Israeli Repressive Measures**

The results of surveys conducted by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics<sup>3</sup> indicate that nearly 56 thousand Palestinians changed their place of residence due to the ongoing Israeli measures. This is equivalent to 1.7% of the total number of inhabitants of the Palestinian territories – 10,300 of them (18%) permanently changed their place of residence, 38,700 persons (69%) temporarily changed it, and 7,000 persons (12%) stated that they changed it for an unspecified period of time.

Closeness of homes to areas of engagement with the Israeli occupation army/ settlements was the primary reason for changing the place of residence. Survey results indicated that around 60% of the total number of those who changed their place of residence did so because their homes were close to engagement areas (33,500 persons). Children constituted 53% of the total number of inhabitants that were forced to change their place of residence (29,600 children of both sexes).

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<sup>3</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2001, Press Conference to announce results of surveys concerning the effect of Israeli measures on the life of children, women and Palestinian family.

## **2-7 Marriage and Divorce**

### **2-7-1 Increase in Number of Marriages During 2003**

Available data indicates that the number of registered marriages in the Palestinian territories increased in 2003. They amounted to 26,267, compared to 22,611 in 2002. The West Bank accounted for 14,782 of these (an increase of 2,463 over 2002) while the Gaza Strip saw 11,485 (an increase of 1,193 marriages over 2002).

#### ***2-7-1-1 July and August Experience Highest Marriage Rate***

Data indicated that during 2003 July and August witnessed the greatest number of registered marriages at Shari'a courts, numbering 3,422 and 3,632 respectively. November, however, witnessed the least number of registered marriages – only 991.

The average number of marriages at mid-2003 in the Palestinian territories was 7.2 for every 1000 inhabitants. This average was 6.4 and 8.6 in the West Bank and Gaza Strip respectively. They are close to those of previous years.

As is annually expected, Al-Khalil Governorate registered the highest number of marriages in the West Bank in 2003 – 3,458 marriages, while Jericho Governorate registered the least number during 2003 – 268 marriages. As for the Gaza Strip, most of the registered marriages in 2003 were in Gaza Governorate – 4,324 marriages – while Rafah Governorate registered the least – 1,311 marriages. It should be remembered that Al-Khalil and Gaza Governorates are the biggest population-wise in the West Bank and Gaza Strip respectively, while Jericho and Rafah Governorates are the smallest.

#### ***2-7-1-2 Early Marriage Continues***

Marriage and divorce data in the Palestinian territories for the period 1996-2002 indicate the continued widespread practice of marriage at an early age, particularly among females. The average age at the time of the first marriage during that period was 18.4 years for females and 23.5 years for males. The average

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age at the time of the first marriage in 2003 in the Palestinian territories had increased to 19.4 years for females and 24.6 for males. In the West Bank it was 19.4 years for females, and 25.1 years for males, while in the Gaza Strip it was 19.1 years for females and 24.0 for males.

It was noted that the average age at the time of the first marriage was higher among persons who had obtained a university degree – 24.2 years for females and 26.8 years for males – while it was only 17.1 years for females and 23.3 years for males whose highest educational qualification was a high school certificate.

### ***2-7-1-3 Polygamy Continues to be Widespread***

The practice of polygamy continues to be widespread in the Palestinian territories. The percentage of males who married again in 2003 in the West Bank, while still having at least one wife was 7.3%. In the Gaza Strip it was 7.5%. It is worth noting that the majority of those males married girls who were unmarried before – 65.4% in the West Bank and 51.8% in the Gaza Strip.

The percentage of persons who were below 30 years of age and had married again while already having at least one wife was 21.8%, while 59.7% were under 40. Polygamy is often practiced by the uneducated. The percentage of those who have a university degree and higher who married again in 2003, while still having at least one wife, was around 14.6%, compared with 53.3% who had a secondary school certificate.

### **2-7-2 Divorce Cases Increase**

A noticeable increase in the number of registered divorce cases in the Palestinian territories was detected during 2003. There were 3,909 cases registered for 2003 in the Palestinian territories – an increase of 864 over 2002. This was divided between the West Bank with 2,360 (an increase of 585 cases over 2002) and Gaza Strip with 1,549 cases (an increase of 279). The most registered divorce cases in 2003 were in the Governorate of Ramallah and Al-Bireh, and in Gaza, where 429 and 626 divorce cases were registered

respectively. The least number of registered cases were in Toubas area and Jericho Governorate in the West Bank, and in Rafah in the Gaza Strip. They were 39 cases in Toubas and Jericho Governorate, and 131 cases in Rafah Governorate.

### ***2-7-2-1 Continued Increase of Divorce Cases in Governorate of Ramallah and Al-Bireh Compared to Other Governorates***

Average net divorces in 2003 in the Palestinian territories were 1.1 cases per every 1000 inhabitants in the middle of the year. The average for the West Bank was 1.1 and for the Gaza Strip 1.2. This average was nearly the same during the previous two years. However, the average in Ramallah and Al-Bireh Governorate was higher than in the rest of the governorates – 1.6 per every 1000 inhabitants of the governorate in mid 2003.

Results for 2003 indicate that July witnessed the registration of the highest number of divorce cases – 444 cases – while November witnessed the least number of cases – 140.

It was also noted that more than one third of divorce cases occurred between couples who did not complete one year of marriage. 1,537 such cases occurred in the Palestinian territories, 904 of them in the West Bank and 633 in the Gaza Strip.

### ***2-7-2-2 More Than One Quarter of Female Divorcees below 20 Years of age***

The average percentage of female divorcees below 20 years of age was 30.4% of the total cases of divorce among females during the period 1997-2003. By contrast, the percentage of male divorcees below 20 years of age during the seven year period referred to fluctuated between 3 and 5%. This confirms that marriage at an early age, particularly for females, is one of the important factors causing divorce.

Age incompatibility among married couples could influence divorce. The number of divorce cases in 2003 where the husband was 10 years older or more than the wife was 787 cases out of the total number of divorce cases, i.e. 20.1%. The percentage of male divorcees

holding secondary school certificates and lower was 81.1% of the number of divorcees in 2003, while the same percentage of female divorcees was 87.3%. These results do not necessarily mean that a low level of education leads to divorce. Young age (of the husband or the wife) could have a bigger influence than the level of education. Undoubtedly, education could positively affect the success of married life. The difference in the level of education of the wife and husband could be a contributing factor in divorce. The percentage of male divorcees with a Bachelor's degree, and the former wives having only a secondary education or less, was around 34.6% of this group. By contrast, the percentage of female divorcees with BA, and the husband's educational level being secondary school or lower, was 35.6% of this group.

On the whole, population indicators reveal that the rates of population growth are still high, especially the rates of natural growth, as the levels of fertility remain high. These indicators underline the continued youthful character of the Palestinian society in the foreseeable future. The population indicators pose challenges for social and economic policy makers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip on two levels: first, taking these features into consideration when designing social and economic policies; and second, elaborating specific population policies to deal with this growth.

Data relating to marriage and divorce indicated a tendency to prolong the duration of the first marriage. But the practice of marriage at an early age remains widespread. Divorce

data reveal a partial connection between divorce and marriage at an early age. As for the practice of polygamy, data reveal an increase although it remains relatively limited. It is necessary to study these phenomena in detail, with the aim of elaborating appropriate policies and legislative regulations.

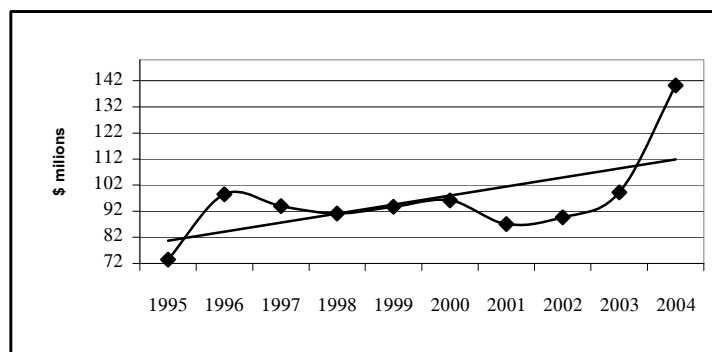
### 3. HEALTH INDICATORS

This section deals with the most important health indicators and the changes that occurred to them during previous years. Thanks to availability of data concerning youth and health derived from the Youth Survey 2003 conducted by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, as well as the availability of data concerning health services available to families and individuals in the West Bank and Gaza Strip derived from the Health Services Accessibility Survey 2003, also conducted by the PCBS, the present issue of the **Monitor** contains a special section on them.

#### 3-1 Health Care Share of General Budget

The Ministry of Health's allocation of public spending continued to rise, amounting to US\$140 million in 2004 compared to around US\$100 million in 2003. This increase was achieved after the sector's share fell in 2001 compared to previous years (see figure 3-1).

**Figure 3-1: Development of Current Public Spending on Palestinian Health Care in 1995 – 2004 (Million US\$)**

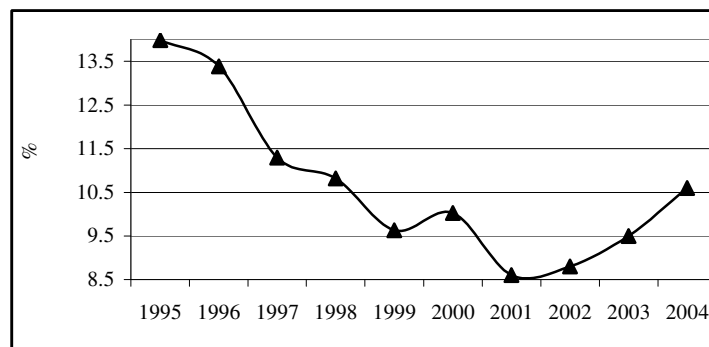


Source: Home page of the Palestinian Ministry of Finance

Ministry of Finance data revealed an increase in the Ministry of Health's share in current public spending to 10.6% in 2004, against

9.5% in 2003. However, the increase was insufficient to return the proportion to its 1995 original level – around 14% (see figure 2-3).

**Figure 3-2: Progress of Current Public Spending On Health Care 1995-2004 (%)**



Source: Home page of Palestinian Ministry of Finance

### 3-2 Big Increase in Reported Live Births in West Bank

A 7.7% increase in living births was reported in 2003 over 2002, reaching 101,647 in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Most of this rise (12.8%) was in the West Bank, while the Gaza Strip achieved a more modest 1.8%. However, the West Bank experienced a decline in the number of reported living births during 2001 and 2002, while the Gaza Strip experienced a big increase during the same two years. This big increase in the West Bank could be due to the fact that a sizeable percentage were not reported in 2002 because of Israeli siege and blockades, and were reported instead in 2003 as movement restrictions eased somewhat.

As regards life expectancy, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics estimates indicate an improvement in 2003 compared to previous years. The average life expectancy of females rose to become 72.7 years and for males to 71.2 years. Data revealed that the expected life span for both sexes in the West Bank remains better than that in Gaza Strip, which indicates that health conditions and living standards in the West Bank are better (see Chart 3-2 in Appendix).

### 3-3 Death Rates of Infants and Babies decline in West Bank but Increase in Gaza Strip

Data revealed a noticeable overall reduction of infant and baby mortality rates in 2003 (compared to a visible increase in 2002), declining to 16.5 infants per 1000 reported live births and 20 babies per 1000 reported live births in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. But the improvement in both averages (those of infant and baby deaths) was confined to the West Bank, as the Gaza Strip experienced a slight percentage increase. This means the reappearance of a gap between the two regions in this respect. This could indicate that the difficult conditions are having more a serious effect on Gaza Strip than on the West Bank, especially in the domain of health services and nutrition (see charts 3-3 and 3-4 in Appendix).

As regards causes of deaths of babies under 5 years of age, data put out by the Ministry of Health indicated that pre-birth conditions constituted the primary cause in the Palestinian territories (48.4%) in 2003, a decline from 56.6% in 2002. It was followed by causes related to deformity at birth, which amounted to 14.4% in 2003, compared to 16.1% in 2002. In third place came death caused by blood poisoning resulting from respiratory system diseases, and sudden death, etc. (see Chart 3-5 in Appendix). These figures could be attributed to the difficulties pregnant

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women encounter in receiving necessary medical care during pregnancy. It is certain that Israeli measures play a major role in this, as they have prevented women (especially those in rural areas) from reaching health centres and accessing pre-natal care.

### **3-4 Physicians – Population Ratio Improves**

Data revealed progress in the ratio of physicians to population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip during 2003. The ratio stood at 150 physicians per 100,000 inhabitants, having been 141.5 in 2002. Data also revealed that this development mainly occurred in the Gaza Strip, where the ratio rose from 216 to 240 physicians for every 100,000 inhabitants. The improvement was very limited in the West Bank, where the ratio became 100 physicians instead of 98.5 for every 100,000 inhabitants. However, the physician-population ratio in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, as a whole or separately, is still much below that in neighbouring countries – a fact which betrays a serious lack of doctors in the Palestinian territories and a need to augment their number, especially in specialised medical fields (see Chart 3-6 in Appendix).

### **3-5 Stability of Hospital Beds – Population Ratio**

Data revealed the stability of the ratio of hospital beds to population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip at 1.4 beds for every 1000 inhabitants during the period 2001-2003. The ratio remained stable at 1.6 beds for every 1000 inhabitants in the Gaza Strip and 1.3 in the West Bank in 2003 (see Chart 3-7 in Appendix). Overall, these figures reveal that the increase in the number of hospital beds available in hospitals and medical centres was only enough to cover the growth in population. There is a continued need to increase the number of hospital beds in order to improve the ratio of hospital beds available to inhabitants. This is especially important at a time of increased use during the *Intifada* because of an increase in the number of wounded and injured.

### **3-6 Increase in Number of Government Primary Care Centres, and Decrease of Non-Governmental Ones**

The number of government clinics and primary care centres in the West Bank and Gaza Strip increased in 2003 to become 391 clinics and centres, an increase of 16 over 2002. In the West Bank, the increase was 9 clinics and centres, to become 337; in the Gaza Strip the increase was 7 clinics and centres, to become 54. But the number of clinics and centres run by non-governmental health institutions decreased by 8 clinics and centres in 2003, to become 177. The decrease was confined to Gaza Strip, where they now number 32 instead of 40. In the West Bank the number of non-governmental clinics and institutions remained the same – 145 clinics and centres. UNRWA clinics and centres experienced a decline in number, to become 51 instead of 53. Here, the decrease was confined to the West Bank, and the number of clinics and centres became 34 instead of 36, while the number in Gaza Strip stood at 17 (See Chart 3-8 in Appendix).

### **3-7 Health Insurance of Inhabitants**

Data was not available concerning the percentage of medically-insured inhabitants in the West Bank and Gaza Strip after 2002, as the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics did not conduct a survey during 2003 that provides such information. Consequently, the present issue of the **Social Monitor** will present part of what was contained in the previous issue on health insurance.

Data put out by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics indicated a visible increase in the percentage of those with health insurance in the Palestinian territories. Whereas the percentage was 61.4% of the total number of inhabitants in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 2000, it increased to 74.3% in 2002. This means that the percentage of uninsured inhabitants in the West Bank and Gaza Strip was 25.7% in 2002, compared to 39.6% in 2000 (See Chart 3-9 in Appendix). Despite the unprecedented high percentage of those

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medically insured, there is need to examine the quality of insurance and the costs it covers. As for the distribution of those medically insured among the different sectors<sup>4</sup>, data revealed that governmental health insurance is most common. The difference between it and other sectors is enormous, and indeed the increase in the percentage of medically-insured inhabitants was concentrated largely in governmental health insurance. The percentage of those insured by governmental health insurance increased by 73.4% during the two years 2000–2002, rising from 27.9% of the total number of inhabitants in 2000 to 48.4% in 2002. At the same time, a decrease took place in the number of those covered by private health insurance – the percentage with such insurance dropped from 11.0% to 9.6% during the same two years. A drop also occurred in the percentage of those insured by UNRWA, from 14.8% to 11.6% during the same period (See Chart 3-9 in Appendix).

### **3-8 Youth and Health in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip**

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics conducted a Youth Survey in 2003. This survey revealed that 12% of young people between 10 and 24 in the West Bank and Gaza Strip evaluated their physical health as being average or poor. The percentages of the West Bank and Gaza Strip were close to each other, with the former slightly higher. But the percentage of females (13.5%) who evaluated the state of their physical health as being average or poor was more than that of males (11%). In the area of psychological health, however, data revealed that the percentage of those who evaluated their psychological health as being average or poor reached 28.2% in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. It is a situation to be expected under conditions of Israeli repression. Data revealed a higher percentage for this answer in the West Bank, as well as a big difference between the percentage of

females (31.8%) and males (24.7%) (See Chart 3-10 in Appendix).

Data derived from the Youth Survey 2003 revealed that only 25.9% of young people considered that the information they possessed on psychological health was adequate. The rest of them evaluated their knowledge in this field as being inadequate or non-existent. Data also revealed that the situation in this regard was slightly better in the West Bank than in the Gaza Strip, and for females than males. 30% of young female respondents considered that information available to them on psychological health was adequate, compared to only 22% of males. As regards sexually transmitted diseases, data revealed that information available to young people was even less than that available on psychological health. The percentage of those who considered the available information on sexually transmitted diseases as being adequate was limited to 20.9%, again higher for the West Bank than for the Gaza Strip and for females than males. As regards balanced nutrition, data revealed that 39.2% of youths evaluated the information they have on the subject as being adequate. The percentages in the West Bank and Gaza Strip were close, but were far apart among females (49.8%) and males (29%). As regards protection from contagious diseases, 36.4% of young people stated that their information was adequate. The percentage in the West Bank was slightly higher than in Gaza Strip was and again much higher among females (42.3%) than among males (30.7%) (see Chart 3-11 in Appendix).

The Youth Survey 2003 data revealed that information about reproductive health is limited, with only to 25.7% describing it as adequate. The percentage in the West Bank was higher than in the Gaza Strip and the difference between males and females was large – 31.8% of females said that they knew about reproductive health but only 19.8% of males gave the same answer (see Chart 3-12 in Appendix).

Overall, information derived from the Youth Survey 2003 revealed a severe lack of health education in Palestinian society. It also revealed a low view by youth of their state of health, a fact which reflects both the

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<sup>4</sup> The data provided by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics regarding health insurance reveal only that most commonly used by a family. Some families have more than one health insurance from two different institutions, but generally will use the one that provides better health services. This is not usually the government policy, so the percentage of those revealed here with it is lower than the figure put out by the Ministry of Health.

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deteriorated health conditions in Palestinian society and the need to develop health awareness and education programmes. The survey indicated that health education of females is better than that of males, but this does not necessarily count as an advantage for women in Palestinian society. Rather, it reflects the fact that the woman assumes the bigger role in family health care and protection, which further adds to domestic burdens she shoulders.

### **3-9 Family and Health Services in the West Bank and Gaza Strip**

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics conducted a survey concerning health services' accessibility in 2003. Data available from the survey indicate that the percentage of families with access to health services at hospitals in their communities is only 38.9% in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The percentage for the West Bank was low and limited to 25.2%, while in Gaza Strip it was 66.2%. This is due to the higher number of communities and population centres in the West Bank, compared to Gaza Strip. Data revealed that 85.5% of families have access to health services at medical clinics in their communities, and 94.3% have access to such services at health centres in their communities. 83.2% of inhabitants have pharmacies in the areas where they live. Data revealed that all these percentages are higher in the Gaza Strip than in the West Bank (see Chart 3-13 in Appendix).

The capacity and quality of these health services remain open to question. Data revealed that 11.1% of those who needed health services did not obtain them (see Chart 3-14 in Appendix). Of these, it was revealed that 19.7% did not obtain them due to non-availability in their areas, 19.9% stated that they did not obtain such services because of their non-availability at the time of need, 21.7% said that they did not obtain them because of long waiting times, 11.3% stated that the difficulty of reaching the services was the main reason for preventing them from making use of them. Those were mostly from the West Bank. The cited figures indicate that the existence of health centres and services in

a community does not necessarily mean that a person can receive the required medical care, and at the required time. In addition to the reasons mentioned above, persons who needed health services referred to other reasons which prevented them making use of these services. Among them were Israeli closures and occupation measures (6.5%) – mostly in the West Bank. 33.3% stated that high costs were the reason for not receiving medical care, also mostly concentrated in the West Bank. At the same time, 53.2% of persons stated that they did not receive health care because they did not want to. The highest percentage in this regard was in the Gaza Strip. This fact could reflect the difficult psychological conditions in which the people live and the deteriorating social and economic conditions from which they suffer (see Chart 3-15 in Appendix).

The effect of the difficulties was not only confined to non-receipt of needed care, but also extended to the fact that those who received the desired health care experienced difficulties while obtaining it, which reflects the poor capacity of medical centres as regards medical equipment and availability of needed medical staff. 28.9% of those who received medical care stated that they faced a lack of medicines, which also reflects the qualitative inadequacy of the health services, as diagnosis of a disease without the availability of necessary drugs and medicines does not solve the problem of the population's medical needs. 14% of those who received medical care stated that they faced the problem of non-availability of a specialist; 6% faced the problem of non-availability of other medical staff; 7% a lack of medical equipment; 11% stated that Israeli closures constituted a real difficulty in obtaining medical care; and 11.4% stated that transport was a serious problem. Others spoke of other difficulties in obtaining medical care (see Chart 3-16 in Appendix).

Generally speaking, data available from the Health Services Accessibility Survey 2003 indicate the presence of health centres and services, despite the need for more of them. But the main problem lies in the extent of their capacity, medical equipment and staff-wise, to provide the services.

On the whole, data concerning the health situation indicated a relative improvement in quantitative indicators, such as ratio of physicians to population, as well as a relative improvement in the average birth and mortality rates among babies and infants. But this improvement conceals a decline in quality of available health services at Palestinian health institutions. Data revealed an increase in the number of governmental primary care centres, and a decline in the number of UNRWA and non-governmental ones.

Data provided by the Youth Survey 2003 indicated a severe lack in health education in Palestinian society. It also revealed a poor view by young people of their state of health. Data from the Health Services Accessibility Survey 2003 revealed that the percentage of families with access to health services at hospitals, health centres and pharmacies in their communities was satisfactory. But questions remain over their capacity and quality. The existence of health centres does not necessarily mean an ability to benefit from them. This is because of the poor capacity of medical centres and the inadequate medical equipment at their command, or because of Israeli measures that restrict people's ability to reach the medical services and make use of them.

## **4. EDUCATION INDICATORS**

This section deals with the most important educational indicators in Palestinian society and the different educational establishments. Consequently, it provides a picture of the development and changes that occurred in the educational sector, and the educational features of Palestinian society as a whole, during 2003.

### **4-1 Education's Share of the General Budget**

The volume of current public spending on Palestinian education, both at school and university levels, increased to US\$287.1 million in 2004, up from US\$235.7 million in 2003 and US\$184.4 million in 2002 – an increase amounting to 21.8% in one year and 55.7% over two. The share of education at school and university level of total current public spending became 21.6% for 2004, compared to 20.7% for 2003 and 19.2% for 2002.

### **4-2 Educational Characteristics of Palestinian Society**

#### **4-2-1 Percentage of Illiteracy: Shrinking of Gap between Sexes**

Data available from the work-force surveys indicated that illiteracy in Palestinian society stood at 8.1% of those aged 15 years and above during 2003, a decline from 9% in 2002. The decrease was true for both sexes – the percentage of males declined from 4.3% in 2002 to 3.7% in 2003; among females it declined from 13.6% to 12.6% during the same period. On the whole, data indicate the continued existence of a literacy gap between the sexes. This is largely due to older age groups; such a gap is non-existent or negligible among the young age groups (see Chart 4-1 in Appendix).

The survey data indicated that the decline in the illiteracy rate in Palestinian society occurred in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The decline in the West Bank was from 8.8% in 2002 to 8.2% in 2003; in the Gaza Strip it was from 9.3% to 8.1% during the same period. Data also revealed that the illiteracy rate among males in the Gaza Strip declined from 5.2% to 4.2% and among females from 13.5% to 11.9%. In the West Bank the decline among males was from 3.9% to 3.5% and among females from 13.7% to 12.9%. Generally speaking, the data revealed that the literacy rate in Gaza Strip, except for males, is now better than in the West Bank (see Chart 4-1 in Appendix).

**Figure 4-1: Palestinian Literacy Rates (15 years and above) in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, according**

## to age and sex, 2003



Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2004. Database for Work Force Survey, 2003, Ramallah, Palestine

In general, data revealed that the literacy gap between the two sexes in Palestinian society is confined to the older age groups, and shrinks as the age groups become younger, to completely disappear among the young (see Figure 4-1 below and Chart 4-2 in Appendix).

### 4-2-2 Educational qualifications: Visible Improvement

The percentage of Palestinians (15 years and above) who finished the first level of university education (Bachelor's degree) and higher increased to become 7.1% in 2003, having been 6.4% in 2002. This increase applied to both sexes, with the percentage of males increasing to 9.4% from 8.8% and that of females to 4.7% from 4.1%. Data revealed that the percentage of those who finished university level education in the Gaza Strip was slightly higher than in the West Bank, the reason being basically a higher percentage of males in the Gaza Strip. The percentage of females who finished university-level education in the Gaza Strip was lower than in the West Bank, where it was 4.3% and 5.0% respectively. This fact shows that the gap between the two sexes in the Gaza Strip is wider than that in the West Bank. But data indicated that the gap is being bridged, both in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank (see Chart 4-1 in Appendix).

### 4-3 Educational Establishments

#### 4-3-1 Number of Schools Increases; Number of Kindergartens Increases

#### Again in West Bank and Continues to Decline in Gaza Strip

The number of basic and secondary schools in the West Bank and Gaza Strip visibly increased. The number of basic schools reached 1,462 schools during the school year 2003/2004, after having been 1,404 the previous school year. An increase also occurred in the number of secondary schools, to reach 647 schools after having been 602 the year before. Both these increases applied to the West Bank and Gaza Strip. These figures reflect the continued priority of the Palestinian National Authority to limit class sizes and fill existing gaps in educational facilities. Concerning kindergartens, data indicated an overall increase in their number. However, this was only due to an increase in their number in the West Bank, where it rose by 113 kindergartens during the two school years 2002/2003 and 2003/2004. The number of kindergartens in the Gaza Strip experienced a serious decrease of 24 during the same period. These figures reflect the continued effect of the economic crisis in the Gaza Strip, as kindergartens are part of the private sector or civil society. In addition, they require fees and the inhabitants' ability to continue enrolling their children in kindergartens was undermined by harsh economic conditions (see Chart 4-3 in Appendix).

Data also revealed a visible increase in the number of schools run by different parties, but the increase in UNRWA schools was limited only to three during the two school years 2002/2003 and 2003/2004. It was also limited in the private sector to 13 schools during the

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same period, while the number of Government schools increased to become 1,580 schools during 2003/2004, after having been 1,493 schools in 2002/2003. The higher rate of increase in government schools than of UNRWA and private schools is to be expected, due to the financial difficulties UNRWA is experiencing and in light of the hard economic conditions that limit the ability of students to enrol in private schools. (See Chart 4-4 in Appendix).

#### **4-3-2 Continued Increase in Children at Kindergartens in West Bank, and Continued Natural Increase of School Students**

The number of school students and children in kindergartens in the West Bank and Gaza Strip amounted to 1,087,668 male and female students and children during 2003/2004. This was an increase of 3.98% over the previous school year, higher than both population growth and the previous year's increase of 3.17%. The reason for the bigger rise could be attributed to the increase in the number of children at kindergartens, which had declined in previous years. The number of children enrolled in kindergartens during the 2003/2004 school year rose by 9,379 children. This was entirely in the West Bank; the number declined in the Gaza Strip due to the harsh economic conditions experienced by the inhabitants (See Chart 4-6 in Appendix).

#### **4-3-3 Continued Stability of Female-Male Ratio in Basic Level Enrolment, and Slight Decline at Secondary Level**

The ratio of female-male enrolment in the basic level remained stable during the school year 2003/2004 compared to the previous year, at 98 female pupils to every 100 male pupils. At the secondary level the ratio was 109 female students to every 100 male students, which is slightly less than the 2002/2003 school year, where the ratio was 112 female students to every 100 male students. Data did not reflect any difference between the West Bank and Gaza Strip with regard to the changes that occurred in this ratio (see Chart 4-7 in Appendix).

#### **4-3-4 Decline in Male and Female Students Enrolled in Vocational Education**

The percentage of male and female students enrolled in vocational education fell to become 4.52% of the total number of secondary school students during the 2003/2004 school year, after having been 4.64% during the previous school year. The decline was true for both sexes. These results indicate that the desire of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education to increase the percentage of students enrolled in vocational education has not achieved success. It should be noted that the Ministry's policy achieved relative successes in the years following the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority and until the 2001/2002 school year. But a visible decline in the number of those enrolled in vocational education began during the following years (see Chart 4-8 in Appendix).

#### **4-3-5 Increase in Number of Teachers Exceeds Student Rate of Increase**

Data revealed a noticeable increase in the number of teachers, male and female, in schools and kindergartens. Data also revealed that the increase was primarily among those holding Bachelor's and higher degrees. At the same time, there was a visible decline in the number of teachers having only the General Secondary School Certificates. Also, the number of male teachers having the Intermediate College Certificate declined, but the number of female teachers with this qualification increased (see Chart 4-9 in Appendix). The increase could be due to the need for more female teachers than males, especially in the basic classes, which have started concentrating on female teachers to teach at this level even to male pupils. But it can be said, in general, that the educational and scientific qualifications of male and female teachers in West Bank and Gaza Strip Schools are improving, and may positively reflect on the quality of education in the future.

#### **4-3-6 Recurrence of Increase in Drop-out Rates at Secondary Level, and Continued Decline at Basic Level**

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The school drop-out rate at secondary level reverted back to increasing, after experiencing a decline, reaching 3.74% during the 2002/2003 school year. Data revealed that this increase was confined to the West Bank, where it was true of both sexes. At the same time, the rate of dropping out at the secondary school level in Gaza Strip declined and was primarily confined to female students, while the rate among males decreased. The reason for that could be the continued deterioration of economic conditions in Gaza Strip, which limited female students' enrolment in education. The non-availability of jobs could have limited the dropping out of males. Hence the deterioration of the economic conditions affected females more than males with regard to dropping out of schools, and consequently the rates of enrolment of the two sexes in schools (see Chart 4-10 in Appendix, and figure 4-4).

As regards the basic level, the drop-out rate continued to decline, to reach 0.75% during the 2002/2003 school year. This was true of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Data revealed that the decline in the drop-out rates at the basic level was confined to males, while it slightly increased among females. The decline among males occurred in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which was also true of the rise among females. These results reflect the extent to which the difficult economic situation affects the rate of enrolment of youngsters, especially females, in education. It seems that the difficult economic conditions have deprived a higher percentage of females than males of education (see Chart 4-10 in Appendix).

#### **4-3-7 Continued Decline in Rate of Failure at Basic Level, and Continued Increase at Secondary Level**

The rate of failure at the basic level was 1.37% during the 2002/2003 school year, a decline from the previous year. This is a continuation of a trend that became evident with the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority. It was true for the two sexes at the basic level, as well as for both the West Bank and Gaza Strip. As for the failure rate at the secondary level, the data revealed an increase during the 2002/2003 school year, to become 1.26%. This was also true for the

two sexes, as well as for the West Bank and Gaza Strip (see Chart 4-11 in Appendix).

#### **4-3-8 Continued Improvement of Student-Teacher Ratio**

The average number of students per teacher continued to decrease, to reach 27.3 during the 2003/2004 school year after having been 27.8 during the previous one. The decline was confined to the number of students per teacher in government and UNRWA schools, which means that both government and UNRWA employed more teachers than the rate of increase in the number of students. As for private schools the average number of students per teacher became higher. But the ratio in private schools (16.9) remained much lower compared to government (26.8) and UNRWA (34.4) schools during the 2003/2004 school year. In kindergartens, data revealed that the ratio remained the same (see Chart 4-12 in Appendix).

#### **4-3-9 Improvement in Class Sizes Generally in the West Bank and Partially in the Gaza Strip**

Average class sizes in the Palestinian territories improved at both the basic and secondary school levels to become 36.1 and 30.4 students respectively during the 2003/2004 school year. This improvement was felt throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip, with the exception of the secondary level in the latter, which experienced a decline. As for kindergartens, they worsened somewhat to average 25.4 pupils per class during the 2003/2004 school year, compared to 25.1 pupils during the previous school year. The increase was confined to the Gaza Strip, while a slight decrease occurred in the West Bank. On the whole, data revealed the continued existence of a big gap between the number of students in every branch in the West Bank and their counterparts in the Gaza Strip at all levels of education. This implies a need to build schools and additional classrooms in Gaza Strip more than in the West Bank, although the levels in both regions are high (see Chart 4-13 in Appendix)

As regards class density at schools run by different parties, data revealed that at the

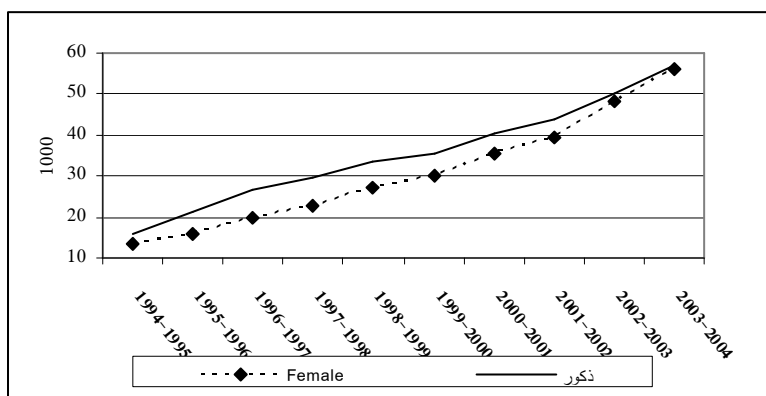
kindergarten level the number rose from an average of 25.1 students (male or female) in every class during the 20001/2002 school year to 25.4 students during the 2002/2003 school year. This was the first year the rate had risen since the 1994/1995 school year. (Chart 4-14 in Appendix).

Data revealed that class sizes in basic-level schools have declined in government and UNRWA schools, while they have risen in private schools. However, as with teacher/pupil ratios, the gap remains big between the different supervisory parties, still very much in favour of private schools. As regards the secondary level of education, data revealed a similar picture – class sizes declined in government schools and increased in private schools. However, this only goes a small way to closing the continued gap between them in favour of private schools. (UNRWA runs no secondary schools.) (Chart 4-14 in Appendix).

#### 4-3-10 Continued Big Increase in Number of University Students, and Shrinking of Gap between the Sexes

The number of students at Palestinian universities has continued to register large annual increases since the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority. The number of students increased in the 2003/2004 academic year by 15.2% over the previous year, becoming 113,417 students (males and females). The increase among females was 16%, and among males 14.5% during the same period. Thus, these rates reflect a shrinking in the gap between the two sexes, and a decline in the difference between the numbers of males and female enrolled at Palestinian universities. These rates stood at 98.4 female students for every 100 male students during the academic year 2003/2004, after having been 97.1 female students for every 100 male students in 2002/2003 (see Chart 4-15 in Appendix and figure 4-2 below).

**Figure 4-2: Student Distribution at Palestinian Universities According to Sex for Academic Years 1994/1995 – 2003/2004**



Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics and Ministry of Education. Data Bases for Survey of Educational Establishments (Several Years) Ramallah – Palestine

As regards students at intermediate colleges, data also revealed a big increase in their numbers, which reached 8,511 male and female students in 2003/2004, an increase of 44.5% from the academic year 2002/2003. The increase was true for both sexes, but was higher among males (50.5%) than among females (38.4%). This imbalance resulted in male students being greater in number than

female students at intermediate colleges for the first time ever (see Chart 4-15 in Appendix).

Data concerning teaching staff at universities revealed an increase in their number. They were 3,688 male and female teachers in 2003/2004, an increase of 9% over the 2002/2003 academic year. However, compared to the rate of student increase at

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Palestinian universities the rate of increase of the teaching staff is much less, which means a continued high student-teacher ratio at Palestinian universities. Certainly such a situation affects the quality of university education. Data also revealed a decline in the number of teachers at intermediate colleges. Their number declined to 370 teachers during 2003/2004 school year from 563 in 2002/2003. This happened despite the increase in the number of students at intermediate colleges, which, in turn, means a tremendous negative effect on the quality of education at these colleges (see Chart 4-16 in Appendix).

The adequacy of higher education infrastructure, teachers and staff to deal with large annual increases in the number of students is a worry. Are these requirements being developed, in quality if not quantity, to match the growing student body? As the data pointed out, 2003/4's increase in the number of teaching staff in the higher education institutions does not correspond to the big increase in student numbers. This could signal a serious problem facing the future of the higher education sector in Palestine, and calls for serious intervention by all parties to limit and contain its negative effects.

On the whole, the data revealed an improvement in the educational characteristics of Palestinian society in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. They also revealed an increase in the number of schools and kindergartens in the West Bank but a decline in the latter in the Gaza Strip, which indicates the continued greater negative impact of the economic crisis on the Gaza Strip. Data also indicated that the increase in the number of schools occurred with regard to all supervisory parties, but was higher with regard to the government than UNRWA and the private sector. That situation was reflected in the reduction of class sizes in the West Bank, although the Gaza Strip witnessed a set-back in this domain at the secondary level. But the increase in school enrolment should be taken into consideration when speaking about the education sector. The school year 2003/2004 experienced a 4% rise in the number of students over the previous year, which is indeed a significant increase. It should be remembered that 30% of Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip are in schools. At the level of higher education, data revealed a continued

tremendous increase in the number of students at higher educational institutions, where a 15.2% increase was experienced in 2003/2004. But this increase was not accompanied by a commensurate increase in the number of teaching staff at those universities. Such a situation raises a question concerning what effect this will have on the quality and standard of higher education.

## 5. CULTURAL INDICATORS

This issue of the Social Monitor covers a number of cultural indicators regarding which data were available for 2003. The data give a general picture of the most important characteristics of this field and the trends of its development. The section also deals with some data covering 2004, which further clarifies the features of cultural life in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This section depends, unless mentioned otherwise, on statistics provided by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. It is confined to activities of cultural centres licensed by the Ministry of Culture and classified as cultural centres, i.e. governmental cultural institutions; activities undertaken by institutions not licensed as cultural centres are not included in these statistics. Such a situation limits the ability of these indicators to draw a true picture of the reality of cultural life in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

### 5-1 Increase in Number of Functioning Cultural Centres

The number of functioning cultural centres<sup>5</sup> in the West Bank and Gaza Strip increased from 50 centres in 2002 to 62 in 2003. The increase was composed of 10 centres in the West Bank and two centres in the Gaza Strip. 24 centres did not undertake any activities in 2003.

Available data revealed that the functioning cultural centres are concentrated in the governorates of Al-Khalil and Nablus, where 31 of the 45 functioning centres in the West

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<sup>5</sup> This refers to centres that organized activities during the year

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Bank exist. Those in the Gaza Strip are concentrated in the Governorates of Gaza and Deir Al-Balah, where 13 of the 17 operate (Chart 5-1).

However, there is no relationship between the distribution of cultural centres to the governorates and the effectiveness of their cultural activities. The centres vary in size and volume and effectiveness of their cultural activities. There is a general impression that cultural activities are concentrated in the centre of the West Bank and Gaza city.

### **5-1-1 Increase in Number of Cultural Activities**

Activities of functional cultural centres during 2003 included the organisation and hosting of seminars, lectures, public courses, artistic performances and exhibitions. A breakdown of these cultural activities shows the following: there were 310 seminars, 113 lectures, 1,065 public courses, 418 artistic performances and 31 art exhibitions.

Compared to the activities of cultural centres functioning in 2002, an increase is noticeable in the number of seminars (an increase of 81), and public courses (an increase of 460 courses), stability of the number of lectures (an increase of only two lectures), while artistic performances experienced a big retreat (a decline of 179 performances) as did art exhibitions (a decrease of 16 exhibitions).

### **5-1-2 Big Increase in Number of Participants in Cultural Activities**

Artistic performances were the most attended by people who regularly take part in the activities of the cultural centres. 50,284 persons attended them, followed by the number of participants in public courses (31,413 persons), visitors to seminars (18,109 persons), visitors to art exhibitions (11,009 persons), and finally lectures (6,152 persons). These figures indicate a big increase in the number of participants in the cultural centres' activities during 2003 compared to 2002. During 2002 the number of spectators at artistic performances was 35,366 persons, followed by participants in public courses

(33,031 persons), visitors to art exhibitions (26,199 persons), participants in seminars (13,414 persons), and finally attendance at lectures (3,838 persons).

The repressive measures by the occupation and the major onslaught against the Palestinian territories had a great effect on cultural activities. Festivals, which used to attract large crowds, were suspended. The fair of international books, which had become a traditional annual event in recent years, folded. The reason was the harsh and unpredictable restriction of people's freedom of movement. Institutions and individuals seeking to reach their desired venue encountered tremendous obstacles. Repression by Israeli occupation and the consequences of the state of continued engagement during the Al-Aqsa *Intifada* have constituted major problems for cultural activities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

An increase in the role of universities in cultural activities has been evident through the organisation of conferences, seminars and lectures, despite the fact that the general character of these institutions remains scientific and educational, rather than centres for producing culture and knowledge. Some Palestinian universities, such as Bir Zeit, have become important centres in this domain, especially through the activities of some of their programmes and institutes. No information is available regarding Palestinian universities' activities as a whole in this field, which would allow an evaluation of the volume of their activities in this domain, or would allow monitoring the differences between their cultural activities.

The year 2004 witnessed an important development in this field in the form of inauguration of the 'Cultural Palace' in Ramallah, which provides a good opportunity to develop creative cultural and artistic activities. Several outstanding activities were organised there, such as The Lamps (Fawanees) Show, in which a large number of musicians and children from Palestine and Europe participated. This is in addition to launching the project a 'book in a newspaper',

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which contributes to the popularisation and spreading of culture at low costs by serialising a book every month in local newspapers.

## **5-2 Increase in Number of Published Newspapers**

There were 13 licensed newspapers in 2003 in the Palestinian territories, which represents an increase of five. Three are dailies, 6 are weeklies, 3 fortnightlies and 1 monthly. As regards their classification, data revealed that 10 were political newspapers and 3 non-political. In 2002, there were 8 political newspapers.

## **5-3 Majority of Published Magazines in West Bank**

The number of magazines published in 2003 in Palestinian territories was 33, 28 in the West Bank and 5 in the Gaza Strip. However, only 17 are actually appearing; 16 are either non-functioning or have suspended publication. 82.4% of the functioning magazines are concentrated in the West Bank, centred in the Governorates of Ramallah and Al-Bireh, and Jerusalem. Only 3 of the published magazines are situated in the Gaza Strip. As for their periodicity, data revealed that 11 are monthlies, 5 quarterlies and 1 fortnightly.

Their distribution as to type (specialisation) in 2003 was as follows: 2 for children, 2 religious, 1 economic, 1 cultural, and 7 general, in addition to 4 others specialising in other matters.

The above-mentioned data do not provide information regarding the content of these magazines. Also the cited figures do not include the publishing activities by academic institutions, such as university journals. This negatively affects the ability of available statistics to present a true picture of periodicals appearing in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

## **5-4 Slight Increase in Number of Functioning Museums**

Data revealed a decline in the number of licensed museums in the Palestinian territories from 15 in 2002 to 10 in 2003, 9 of them in the West Bank and one in the Gaza Strip. However, this actually represents an increase in the number of functioning museums, from 5 in 2002 to 7 in 2003 (3 are closed or undergoing repairs). The data indicated that the majority of museums are of antiquities, heritage and national dress. These museums are concentrated in the centre and south of the West Bank.

Information also showed a noticeable increase in the number of visitors to museums in 2003 compared to 2002. In 2002 the number of visitors was 9,512 persons, while in 2003 it climbed to 19,830 persons. Data also revealed that 93.8% of the visitors to museums were Palestinians.

## **5-5 Very Few Theatres**

There were 6 licensed theatres in the Palestinian territories during 2003, four in the West Bank and two in the Gaza Strip. Five were functioning and one was closed. In 2002 there were 9 licensed theatres in the Palestinian territories; 8 in the West Bank and one in the Gaza Strip. Their status was 4 functioning and 5 closed.

As regards plays performed in 2003, data revealed that they numbered 146; 137 in the West Bank but only 9 in the Gaza Strip. They were composed as follows: 134 Palestinian plays, 4 Arab and 8 foreign. Classified according to their targeted audience, they were: 57 children's plays, 39 plays for grown-ups, and 50 plays for both children and grown-ups. The number of spectators at these plays in 2003 was 40,494 persons.

## **5-6 Few Licensed Cinemas**

There were 4 licensed cinemas in 2004, which is the same as in 2002. All of them are in the West Bank and situated in the towns of Al-Bireh, Nablus and Tulkarm.

The licensed cinemas projected 201 films in 2003, 89 of them Arab films, and 112 foreign ones. The number of spectators was 52,458. In

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2002 the licensed cinemas projected 31 Arab films and 156 foreign ones. The number of spectators then was 23,932 persons. Some cultural centres and institutions such as the Art Centre and Al-Qassabah also organise regular film projections.

Attendance at theatre performances and film projections was low, despite efforts made to encourage them. 2004 witnessed outstanding efforts in this domain by cultural institutions not included in the statistics of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, such as the Film Festival organised by the Cultural Palace in Ramallah, and the regular performances and film projections at some cultural institutions such as the Centre for Folklore and the Khalil Al-Sakakini Centre.

### **5-7 Increase in Number of Radio Stations, Stability in Number of TV Stations**

There were 29 radio stations operating in the West Bank and Gaza Strip during 2003. This constitutes an increase of 14 radio stations over 2002. They are composed of 28 local stations, all of which are commercial, and one national (The Voice of Palestine), which is the only government-run station and has its headquarters in Ramallah.

There were 32 functioning TV networks in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, equal to the previous two years and an increase of 2 over 1998. These networks are distributed as follows: 31 local private commercial networks, all situated in the West Bank, and one national network (Palestine TV), which is the sole government-owned network. It has its main studios in Gaza, but has branch studios in Ramallah.

No evaluation of the contents of the activities of local radio and TV stations is available. Similarly, there is no information concerning the volume of local production during their transmission periods or evaluation of the quality of their programmes.

### **5-8 Increase in Number of Families Owning Computers**

More than one quarter of Palestinian families (26.4%) in the West Bank and Gaza Strip stated that they owned a computer (28.4% in the West Bank and 22.5% in the Gaza Strip) (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2004). This represents a huge increase over 2002, when the percentage was 12.9% of Palestinian families in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (13.6% in the West Bank and 10.6% in Gaza Strip).

Most families stated that study and education are the primary reason for owning a computer (56.7%). Families that do not own a computer stated that the reason is the high price of computers or the fact that no member in the family can use it.

Available data revealed that more than one third of Palestinians of 10 years of age are able to use a computer. 40.5% use it for entertainment and 32.1% stated that they use a computer for education purposes.

The number of families connected to the internet in the West Bank and Gaza Strip increased from 1.8% in 2002 to 9.2% in 2004. The increase in the West Bank was from 2.0% to 9.8% and in the Gaza Strip from 1.6% to 7.8% (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2004).

One third of Palestinians 10 years of age and above who use a computer also used the internet in 2004. The percentage of users varied among males and females (40.7% of males and 27.5% of females). More than one quarter of internet users (27.5%) said that they do so for obtaining information and knowledge. Two thirds of Palestinian internet users, 10 years of age and above, have an e-mail address and use the internet for personal correspondence. (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2004)

The big increase in possession of computers and the use of the internet may be attributed to policies pursued by companies and institutions involved in the business - policies that encourage buying computers by instalment

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through banks, and offer reduced rates of subscription to the internet. Such incentives have become widespread in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The Palestinian Minister of Communications announced at the end of 2004 the launching of a project for direct use of internet. This means an additional reduction in the costs of internet connection, and support for efforts to popularise and extend the use of the internet by encouraging citizens to own a computer. This is to be done by setting up a non-profit company that sells computers on long-term instalments, and by adding the amount of instalments to be paid to telephone bills.

The increase in ownership of computers points to their increased importance in areas of education and work. But a long way remains to go before use of computers and the internet in Palestinian society is widespread enough in order to create the knowledge-based society which is a necessary concomitant to meaningful development in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

### **5-9 More than One Quarter of Palestinian Families have a Home Library**

Results of the computer and internet survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip for 2004 indicated that 27.5% of Palestinian families have a home library. This percentage constitutes a big increase over 2002, when it was 18.4%.

The survey results also showed that one quarter of Palestinians 10 years of age and above attend public lectures and seminars, 22% participate in sports, and 6.8% are members of sports clubs.

On the whole, the improvement in cultural indicators does not reflect a general improvement in Palestinian living conditions. It points to Palestinian effectiveness in responding to the challenges of the occupation. Undoubtedly the continued repressive measures by the occupation have hindered the development of cultural life in the West Bank. This has largely occurred as a result of the decline in living standards, and

consequently the reduced possibilities to allocate funds for cultural projects. In addition, harsh and unpredictable physical restrictions have often prevented prospective audiences, organisers and performers from reaching venues.

Among the outstanding cultural activities that suffered as a result were art festivals, which had become popular after the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority, and the Palestine Book Fair, which had become an annual activity since 1994 and had to stop after the outbreak of the *Intifada*.

On the whole, the indicators that are being monitored in this regard provide a general if incomplete picture of the reality of cultural activities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. They disregard important cultural institutions such as universities and lack important statistics concerning some important activities – for example the number of books published, or the number of visitors to public libraries, or some creative artistic activities (local plays and films, and others). This calls for more attention to be paid to the development of cultural statistics, attaching greater importance to this serious area, so as to develop a more effective capability to elaborate developmental policies and strategies.

## **6. SOCIAL SECURITY AND QUALITY OF LIFE**

Israel's campaign continued against Palestinian National Authority areas, and included consolidation of measures isolating regions from each other. Onslaughts against Palestinian cities and towns, such as Nablus and Jenin, were repeatedly resorted to. The building of the wall of annexation and expropriation was speeded up, and aggression, particularly against the Gaza Strip, was escalated. Israel's repression resulted in continued deterioration of the economic situation and quality of life in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

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On the other hand, some of aspects related to quality of life in the West Bank and Gaza Strip experienced slight improvements, particularly in the domain of the legislative environment and the functioning of some institutions, especially in connection with the reduction of unemployment and poverty.

We will concentrate in this section on 2003 data, and review those of previous years, due to their importance in clarifying the picture of life in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. We will also review data concerning 2004 when available.

### **6-1 Legislative Environment Improves**

The Ministry of Labour produced part of the necessary organisational regulations for application of the Palestinian Labour Law. This fact will permit the actual application of the Law, and will mean the unification of labour legislation as well as laying legal foundations for new labour relations in Palestinian society and the organisation of the labour market.

On the same subject, the leading bodies of the Social Security Institution were named by actually applying the law. The Law fills an important legal gap in Palestinian legislation and contributes to providing a degree of social protection to broad sections of the Palestinian working people. It covers work accident insurance, old-age insurance and natural death and disability insurance for persons who fall under the Palestinian Labour Law, i.e. workers in the local private sector.

The Ministry of Social Affairs continued discussions and approval of regulations that govern the organisation of its work. It is expected that these regulations will contribute to improving the quality of services provided by the Ministry.

The Ministry of Social Affairs also drafted the proposed Law on the Palestinian Fund for Employment and Social Protection, and has already referred it to the Legislative Council for approval and adoption. The Fund was established in 2004 as one of the mechanisms

for dealing with the unemployment problem in the Palestinian territories.

However, some vitally important laws for Palestinian citizens such as the Public Health Law have remained for a long time on the agenda of the Legislative Council. In addition, some aspects and activities of public life still require appropriate legislation, such as the Palestinian Medical Council and health insurance.

### **6-2 Important Developments in Management of Unemployment Problem**

The years 2003 and 2004 witnessed two important developments regarding measures that seek to tackle the question of unemployment. The first development was the centralisation, in 2003, of dealing with unemployment in the Palestinian territories in the Ministry's General Directorate for Employment. The Ministry also established Employment Councils in the governorates in which representatives of parties concerned with employment - representatives of concerned ministries and governmental institutions, representatives of workers and business - participate. These councils are permanent bodies, not specifically related to emergency employment, though it is one of their responsibilities. Employment offices were asked to register the unemployed and create a computerised database for the labour market which would create a balanced supply and demand. The Councils at governorate level would decide on distribution of the unemployed to projects and employers having vacancies.

At the beginning of the last quarter of 2003 the labour offices started to register the unemployed in the framework of the temporary employment programme. Three groups of unemployed have already been referred to employment centres, which provide work for renewable three month periods. The management of the programme set standards and criteria for selection of beneficiaries which take into consideration a list of priorities based on the general features of the unemployed. It is noted that these criteria

favour women who head families or have dependents. Data revealed a strong response so far among the unemployed to register at employment offices. According to Ministry of Labour statistics, by March 2004 114,998 persons, among them 17,963 women, had registered their names in the Palestinian Employment Programme.

The second development was the establishment of the Palestinian Fund for Employment in 2004, which represents an important development in policies to tackle unemployment in the Palestinian territories. It constitutes a qualitative step towards centralisation of efforts to overcome the unemployment problem, or to limit, as much as possible, its effects. Despite making progress, including the formation of the Board of Directors, the Fund still needs to finalise its administrative structure and secure minimum financing to be able to function and shoulder its responsibilities.

Palestinian official bodies and civil society, as well as foreign aid institutions, continue to focus on tackling unemployment through emergency employment programmes, in addition to providing relief aid. Both methods have only had a limited effect, despite their importance and the positive role they play. For example the World Bank, in its report on the Palestinian economic crisis, has pointed out the limited effectiveness of emergency employment programmes but stressed that if donors fully honoured their financial obligations towards financing the emergency employment programme (which generally they do not), full-time employment for 3 to 4% of the unemployed in the Palestinian territories would be assured (MAS, **Social Monitor**, 2004, 40). Estimates by the World Bank indicate the need for US\$1.8 billion annually to solve the problem of unemployment caused by Israeli measures (Palestinian National Authority, Emergency and Investment Plan, quoted from the home page of the Palestinian National Authority).

The Palestinian Government initiated a programme for creating jobs in the framework of the emergency and investment plan. The programmes for job creation seek to provide jobs, often temporary (3 months, renewable),

to the biggest possible number of unemployed. Such projects take into consideration the possibility of continuation of a project and increasing its economic effect. The projects are labour intensive and attention is paid in designing them so that they are rapidly implementable, part of economically-productive sectors, and depend, at least partially, on local raw materials. Bodies concerned with women's affairs participated in designing the plan and in suggesting priority projects. The programme has cost US\$274.3 million.

### **6-3 Number of Families Receiving Assistance Declines**

Available data revealed that 92 thousand families, or a member of each one of them, received assistance during the third quarter of 2004, which is equal to 15.1% of the total number of families in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The percentage of families in the Gaza Strip which received assistance was higher than in the West Bank (17.2% and 14% respectively) (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2004 A). This represents a big decline in the percentage of families receiving assistance; 41.5% of Palestinian families in the WBGS received assistance during the first quarter of 2003. This decline is due to reduction of international and Arab aid in general, especially support extended to direct relief aid. For example, UNRWA expressed its regret that its "ability to properly respond, in a time of increased need for its help, is limited by a tremendous decline in donors contributions." Statements by UNRWA said that its food assistance only covers 40% of the population's food needs. (UNRWA, 2003)

#### **Impact of Under-funding**

Sadly, donor contributions requested to respond adequately to the crisis did not keep pace with the mounting needs during 2003, resulting in a curtailing of most, and the complete suspension of other, emergency activities. Prioritization of needs involved a precarious juggling act by UNRWA, dependent on the vagaries of the donor cash flow, despite the best efforts of some donors to maintain past levels of commitment and even, in one or two

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cases, to increase contributions to this emergency. Shortfalls in funding have seen food distributions almost halved in the Gaza Strip, with only five of the eight food rounds required being provided. The West Bank Field Office was likewise forced to reduce the volume of food made available to beneficiaries so as to stretch existing stocks until the end of the year. The basket of goods now distributed covers only 40% of the nutritional needs of the population, down by a third from the previous appeal.

In a particularly onerous measure, the Agency was also obliged to cut drastically its emergency re-housing programme. For example, in the Gaza Strip only \$966,000 of the \$7.7 million required for re-housing was available in the first six months of 2003. With these funds, the Agency was able only to purchase tents, blankets and mattresses for those made homeless. The situation improved marginally in the second half of the year with \$4.2 million available for rebuilding 167 dwelling units. Funds are required to rebuild 1,109 housing units. In the West Bank, the Agency has had to suspend its shelter repair programme because of the lack of funds. During 2003, in-kind assistance in the form of shoes and basic school supplies planned for 70,000 school children was cancelled. In the first half of the year, cash assistance was cut from \$3.4 million to \$950,000 in the Gaza Strip and of the \$3.3 million required in the West Bank, only \$260,000 could be allotted. A large number of destitute families have therefore gone without cash assistance for their basic needs such as fuel for cooking, or household items they lost when their shelters were demolished.

Of the \$9.2 million required for the emergency health programme during 2003, only \$1.3 million was available, largely covering emergency medical supplies. Funding for hospitalization in the West Bank was sufficient to assist only those with life threatening conditions in the first six months of the year. During the second semester the Agency had to cancel hospitalization contracts in three governorates. Repairs to water and sewage lines,

severely affected by IDF activity which saw sewage lines destroyed and waste removal services hampered, has been suspended. In Gaza, no funding was available in the first half of the year to support planned indirect hire activities for the construction of vital infrastructure using labour intensive methods. The situation improved somewhat in the second half of 2003. In the West Bank, the planned 1600 active monthly contracts under direct hire was first cut to 1300 and then further decreased to 900. Finally the education component of the response was cut significantly in both fields. The development of self-standing learning materials,

education kits and after school activities were all suspended.

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At the same time, data revealed that a high percentage of families remain in need of assistance – according to statements by the families themselves. Nearly three quarters of families in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (73.7%) needed assistance in the third quarter of 2004 (73% in the West Bank and 75% in the Gaza Strip). The percentage of such families fluctuated between 79% and 70% in 2003 (68-77% in the West Bank and 73-84% in the Gaza Strip) (PCBS, 2004). Around 15% of Palestinian families in the West Bank and Gaza Strip stated that their economic situation was serious and they did not know how to obtain their basic needs during the first half of 2004. Their number declined to 12% in the third quarter of the same year (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2004 A).

Available data revealed the poor value of assistance obtained by Palestinian families. In 2003, half of families received food aid worth US\$17 to \$22 (US\$21 to \$33 in the West Bank, and US\$17-22 in the Gaza Strip). Financial assistance amounted to US\$44-66 (US\$70-84 in the West Bank, and US\$31-66 in the Gaza Strip). 56.8% of these families receive aid worth less than US\$50. Only one of nearly every five families received help worth US\$100 or more. The value of aid provided declined in 2004. The percentage of families that received help worth less than US\$50 was 73.0%. Only 15.6% of families received aid worth US\$100 or more during the third quarter of 2004 (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2004 A)

Half of the assistance provided to Palestinian families in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in the fourth quarter of 2004 was food assistance (52% in the West Bank and 47% in the Gaza Strip) and one third was financial (34.4% in the West Bank and 33.5% in the Gaza Strip) (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2004).

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## 6-4 Un-institutionalized Support

Next-of-kin, relatives and friends constituted the most important primary source of assistance in the West Bank and Gaza Strip at the end of 2003. The percentage of assistance provided by friends, neighbours, next-of-kin and relatives was 24.4% of aid distribution rounds in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (22.9% in the West Bank and 25.9% in the Gaza Strip). The percentage was limited until the first quarter of 2002, then started increasing during the two years 2003 and 2004. It increased to 14.4% in the first quarter of 2003, and to 24.4% at the end of 2003, but declined in the third quarter of 2004 to 17.7%. That does not necessarily mean an absolute increase in value of aid provided by relatives and next of kin, but an increase in its relative importance due to the decline in aid in general (and aid provided by international institutions, especially UNRWA, in particular). The median average value of assistance provided by relatives and next of kin during the fourth quarter of 2003 in the West Bank and Gaza Strip amounted to US\$66 (US\$88 in the West Bank and US\$66 in the Gaza Strip). The median value of assistance provided during the same period by neighbours and friends amounted to US\$43 (US\$44 in the West Bank and US\$34 in the Gaza Strip) (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2003).

## 6-5 Ministry of Social Affairs

The number of families and individuals receiving assistance from the Ministry of Social Affairs has increased steadily since the Ministry began functioning. The monthly average number of families receiving assistance was 38,388 families in 2003; 20,493 of them from the Gaza Strip. This represents an increase of 6.8% compared to 2002. The increase in the West Bank was more than in the Gaza Strip (7.2% and 6.4% respectively). The Ministry provided assistance to 3.4% of the total number of inhabitants in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which is nearly the same percentage as in 2002, but represents a decline from 2001 when the Ministry provided assistance to 3.7% of inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In 1999 the percentage was 3.5%.

The monthly average number of families that received financial assistance in the West Bank and Gaza Strip increased by 5.8% in 2003 (7.8% in the West Bank and 4.1% in the Gaza Strip). On average 31,182 families received financial assistance from the Ministry of Social Affairs in 2002, more than half of them (51.4 %) living in the Gaza Strip (Chart 6-1).

At the end of 2003, monthly financial assistance provided by the Ministry of Social Affairs amounted to 5.7 million Shekels, extended to 31,182 families or cases, i.e. the average dispensation being 184 Shekels. This represents an improvement over 2002, when the average amount received by one family at the end of the year was 170 Shekels. The average in the Gaza Strip was 175 Shekels at the end of 2003, as against 163 Shekels at the end of 2002. In the West Bank, it was 195 Shekels at the end of 2003, as against 175 Shekels at the end of 2002. Added to this is the cost of health insurance that the Ministry covered, food assistance and help in the form of services, especially shelter or housing. Despite this relative increase, the value of assistance remains little. An average of 56 Shekels per month per person, it is less than 2 Shekels per person per day, or less than half one US dollar.

The Ministry of Social Affairs operates an assistance programme to which conditions are attached. The programme is financed by the World Bank, and provides assistance to families still poorer than those which receive assistance from the Ministry (poorer by 5% than beneficiary families). These families receive financial assistance and health insurance provided they send their children to regular medical check-ups, pregnant women to regularly visit medical clinics and children be enrolled in schools. These families also receive educational and guidance services. The Ministry started constructing two centres for the handicapped in the Gaza Strip, financed by the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia.

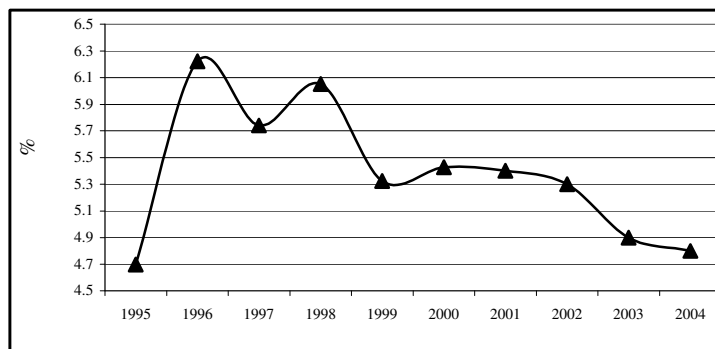
Data from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics reveal that during the fourth quarter of 2003 the Ministry of Social Affairs organised 12.9% of the rounds of assistance distribution in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This constitutes a relative improvement in the role played by the Ministry in this domain.

The average number of distribution rounds organised by the Ministry until the beginning of 2002 was 2.6%. The median value of assistance from the Ministry of Social Affairs was US\$26 at the end of 2003 – an improvement compared to the beginning of 2002 when it did not exceed US\$16 (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2003 A).

### 6-5-1 Decline in Social Affairs Share of Current Public Spending

Palestinian budget figures show a decline in the percentage of public spending spent on social affairs in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The percentage declined to 4.8% in 2004, after having been more than 6% in 1996. This has happened despite continued high rates of poverty and increased demand for social assistance (Chart 6-1).

**Figure 6-1: Progress of Current Public Spending on Social Affairs For 1995-2003 (%)**

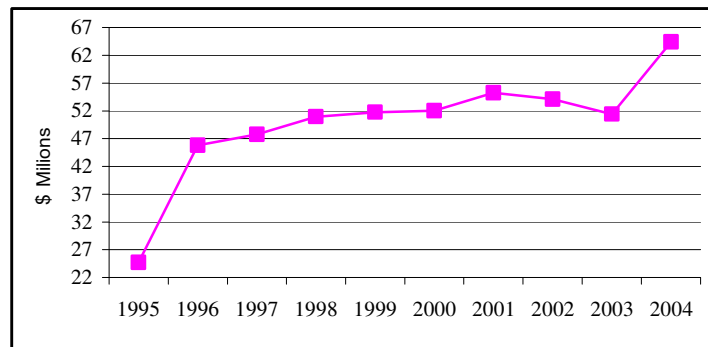


Source: Home Page of Ministry of Finance

It appears from figure 6-2 that current public spending on social affairs increased tremendously during 2004, compared to the previous year. But this increase does not mean a serious improvement in the system of social assistance, or a radical improvement in the

Ministry's activities. The percentage of poor families that receive assistance from the Ministry is stable, despite the fact that higher rates of poverty have been recorded in the West Bank and Gaza Strip

**Figure 6-2: Progress of Current Public Spending on Social Affairs For 1995-2003 (Million US\$)**



Source: Home Page of Palestinian Ministry of Finance

### **6-6 Institution for the Affairs of Martyrs' Families and Wounded**

The Institution for the Affairs of Martyrs' Families extended monthly assistance to 2,233 cases of Al-Aqsa uprising at the end of 2003, two thirds of them living in the Gaza Strip. This represents a big increase over the previous year, when the Institution provided assistance to 1,532 cases in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The number of beneficiaries in these cases was 10,361, again two thirds of them in the Gaza Strip. The total monthly assistance extended to them was 1,462,400 Shekels, which meant each family received a monthly average of 655 Shekels. All beneficiary cases of Al-Aqsa uprising were wounded persons. The average per-person assistance was 141 Shekels monthly.

Monthly allocations were provided to 6,259 old cases (prior to Al-Aqsa *Intifada*) in 2003, representing 21,725 persons. 3,134 of these cases (12,358 families) were in the Gaza Strip. The total amount of their monthly allocations was 2,221,543 Shekels. These are nearly the same figures as in previous years. A breakdown of pre-Al-Aqsa *Intifada* beneficiaries shows that 3,034 families of martyrs each received an average of 540 Shekels monthly. This is an improvement on the average assistance extended in the past, as the average for one family was 410 Shekels at the end of 2002. 1,279 wounded persons received monetary assistance, averaging 341 Shekels monthly at the end of 2003. 454 families classified as social cases received

monthly assistance averaging 325 Shekels in 2003.

The Ministry for Prisoners' Affairs provided assistance to families of prisoners in Israeli jails. Assistance is extended to their families in accordance with a scale approved by the Palestinian National Authority, which takes into consideration the number of dependent family members. The Ministry also provides assistance to freed prisoners in the form of small loans, vocational training, driving lessons, university education and health insurance.

In this context, the institutions of the Authority as a whole, including the Ministry of Social Affairs, organised 17.7% of the rounds of assistance distribution in the West Bank and Gaza Strip at the end of 2003. The percentage of rounds organised by institutions of the Authority combined in 2004 increased, to reach 26.2% of assistance rounds in the third quarter of 2003 (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2003).

### **6-7 Drop in Volume of UNRWA Emergency Assistance**

UNRWA represented the main channel of aid sanctioned by donors during Al-Aqsa *Intifada*, which made it the party that organised the most rounds of assistance distribution until 2002. According to data available from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, UNRWA organised 55.2% of aid distribution rounds in the West Bank and Gaza Strip until February 2002. But the percentage retreated

during 2003, to become 22.5% of assistance rounds in the fourth quarter, to rise slightly when it became 28.9% in the third quarter of 2004. The median value of UNRWA assistance was US\$26 at the end of 2003, which increased to US\$33 in the third quarter of 2004 (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2003 a).

The reason for the drop in UNRWA assistance was poor donor response to appeals for help, a fact which forced UNRWA to greatly curtail the volume of assistance it provided. Lack of funds resulted in reducing food assistance by nearly half. UNRWA estimated that its food assistance provides 40% of the inhabitants' food needs. UNRWA was also forced to curtail some aid programmes, such as assuring emergency housing for those whose homes are demolished. It confined itself to buying some tents and utensils for those who became homeless. Some commodities, such as shoes and school supplies, were dropped from UNRWA emergency support programmes. Some other emergency programmes were transferred to the regular budget, such as social and psychological support programmes, due to lack of appropriate financing for emergency programmes, and because psychological disturbance and social suffering have become permanent features. UNRWA reduced the volume of the assistance it provides, despite continued deterioration of economic and social conditions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

UNRWA provided assistance to non-refugee Palestinians during *Al-Aqsa Intifada* in addition to its responsibility for Palestinian refugees. Data by UNRWA indicated that regular assistance was provided to nearly 115 thousand Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip who are members of families classified as hardship cases. Most of them live in the Gaza Strip (around 80 thousand) and receive regular assistance according to an UNRWA scale.

The constraints to this better future are largely political and beyond the scope of this report. However, the responsibility of meeting the urgent needs of the refugees is ours and yours. UNRWA has been struggling to make do with a seriously

under-funded emergency budget for almost four years. It is no longer working. The 2004 emergency budget was not even half funded. The deficit of need has become too great. Closures, curfews and the wall/fence increasingly disrupt services and prevent economic activity; violent military incursions destroy lives, property and livelihoods. Despite an overwhelming desire to be economically productive and self-sufficient, the refugee population cannot, under current conditions, support itself, or rebuild its communities.

**Peter Hansen**  
**21st November 2004**  
**UNRWA Emergency Appeal**  
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Emergency programmes include providing emergency financial and food assistance, as well as blankets and kitchen utensils to needy families. They also include assuring housing for the disabled, house reparation and reconstruction of buildings demolished by Israeli aggression. But the latter programme slowed down its activities due to lack of funds, despite increased need resulting from intensification of Israeli acts destroying homes of Palestinians, especially in the Gaza Strip. UNRWA also contributes to reducing the existing high levels of unemployment by providing support for emergency employment projects. UNRWA estimated its needs for food assistance in 2004 to be US\$55.6 million, which would benefit nearly 222 thousand families, 128 thousand of them from the Gaza Strip. It also estimated its needs for different emergency support projects at around US\$193.6 million during 2004 (UNRWA 2004 Emergency Appeal, quoted from UNRWA Home Page).

## **6-8 Zakat Committees Continue to Provide Assistance**

Eighty-one *Zakat* Committees operate in the Palestinian territories, according to lists of the *Zakat* Fund at the Ministry of Waqf and Religious Affairs, 67 of them in the West Bank. These committees provide different services to a large number of orphans and needy families. Their activities and assistance vary. They include providing monthly financial assistance to orphans, needy families and to students at schools and universities.

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They provide medical assistance to thousands of sick persons in health centres and hospitals they run, in addition to projects of providing *Iftar* (food for breaking fast) for fasting people in Ramadan, and centres for the study of the Quran. The committees intensified their activities and assistance during *Intifada* and the month of Ramadan.

Data by the *Zakat* Fund at the Ministry of Islamic Waqf revealed that these committees sponsor more than 18 thousand orphans in the framework of the Care for Orphans Programme; around 13,500 live in the West Bank. On average, orphans are provided with monthly sponsorship money of between 20 and 25 Jordanian Dinars. It is worth mentioning that there exist a number of Islamic organisations which undertake similar activities to those of the *Zakat* committees, among them are Al-Salah Islamic Association, The Islamic Mujama, and the Islamic Charitable Association. They sponsor the majority of orphans in the Gaza Strip and provide assistance to thousands of poor families. For example, Al-Salah Islamic Association in Gaza sponsored 5,113 orphans in the Gaza Strip, and distributed assistance to nearly 1,000 families. It also distributed around 76,750 food parcels in 2003. The association also sponsored the construction and reparation of houses damaged as a result of Israeli army attacks and raids. (Home Page of Al-Salah Islamic Association)

These organisations provided assistance to nearly 17 thousand families in the framework of the Programme for Sponsoring Poor Families – among them 13,400 families in the West Bank. Each family receives monthly assistance amounting to between 20 to 50 Dinars, depending on the organisation providing the assistance and the donor party (Palestinian Ministry of Waqf, Statistics concerning assistance provided by *Zakat* committees, and Home Page of Ministry of Waqf).

The *Zakat* committees provide assistance and other varied services, including assistance to owners of homes demolished by occupation and to affected families in communities attacked by the Israeli occupation forces where damage was caused on a large scale.

The assistance includes food, clothes, and money. The services of the *Zakat* committees, especially in the Gaza Strip, also include training poor women to perform work that can help them to provide for themselves and their families.

The percentage of assistance rounds organised by the *Zakat* committee in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip was 3.8% of the total number of assistant rounds organised at the end of 2003. The value of assistance by these committees during the same period averaged US\$22.

Some other civil society organisations and associations financed by Islamic charitable organisations in the Gulf states, Europe and USA also provide relief aid to a large number of inhabitants, in the framework of programmes to sponsor needy families. Data by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics revealed that charitable associations and organisations provided 7.7% of the total rounds of assistance in the West Bank and Gaza Strip during 2003. The average value of the assistance was US\$22 (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2004 a).

## **6-9 Survival Strategies of Palestinian Families**

Data for the third quarter of 2004 reveal that most Palestinian families depended on their monthly income, deferred payment of bills and reduced spending, in order to be able to survive during the previous 12 months. 78.7% of families said they depended on their income for survival (the percentage for 2003 was 72.8%); 61.2% of families stated that they depended on a strategy of deferring payment of bills (their percentage at the end of 2003 was 68%); 55.2% said that they reduced their monthly spending to be able to survive (their percentage in 2003 was 72%); 28.3% of families said that they sold jewellery (26.8% in 2003), 22.4% dipped into family savings (25.6% in 2003) and 24.2% resorted to borrowing from relatives and friends (49% at end of 2003) (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2004).

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As regards possibilities of economic survival during the coming period, 27% of families in the West Bank and Gaza Strip stated that they could survive economically for more than one year during the coming period. 11% of families said they are in a precarious state and do not know how to assure their basic necessities (12.5% in the West Bank and 8.4% in the Gaza Strip).

The data cited above point to the erosion of the ability of Palestinian families in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, especially the poorer ones, to continue depending on survival strategies of the past.

## **6-10 Housing and Housing Conditions**

This section deals with indicators important for housing conditions of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. It surveys the state of the inhabitants and their living standards as reflected in housing: the conditions surrounding the home and the basic characteristics of the home – the type of home, ownership, crowdedness, etc.

### **6-10-1 Relative Improvement in Average Number of Rooms and Crowdedness**

Survey results of housing conditions in 2003 revealed that families having three-room homes constituted 32.7% of families in Palestinian society. It should be noted that the percentage was 30.8%, 29.6%, 31.4% and 28.8% in the years 2001, 2000, 1999 and 1997 respectively. As for families whose houses were one room, they constituted 4.7% in the 2003 survey of housing conditions and 5.7% in the workforce survey for 2002. These percentages have declined. In the population and homes census in 1997 they were 9.6% of families, and 7.2% in 1999. This points to an improvement in housing conditions, which is also reflected in home crowdedness. Results of the home conditions survey for 2003 showed that families with 3 or more members in one room constituted 19.2% of families, as against 20.2% in 2002. The percentage was 25.3%, 23.5% and 20.6% for the years 1997, 1999 and 2000 respectively. In contrast, the percentage of families with an average number

of  $2 \geq 3$  members in one room increased to 32.9% of families in the survey of home conditions for 2003, whereas in 1997, 1999 and 2000 it was 29.1%, 38.8% and 30.8% respectively. It is important to point out here that the cited percentages for 1997 are taken from the results of the population census, and not from surveys as for the other years. But the results on the whole show a general trend that indicates an improvement in average home crowdedness.

### **6-10-2 Prevailing Features of Home Ownership**

The housing conditions survey for 2003 showed that owning one's home is the prevailing kind of housing. The percentage of this kind of housing constituted 82.9% of families in the Palestinian territories (80.4% in the West Bank and 87.8% in the Gaza Strip). The workforce survey for 2002, however, showed that 86.3% of families lived in houses which they owned. The percentage shown by the general census of population, homes and establishments was 78.1%. Data revealed that the percentage of families living in rented houses increased in 2003 to become 9.4% (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2004, and Housing Conditions Survey, 2003) as against 8.3% in 2002, and 6.8% in 2001.

### **6-10-3 Water and Sewerage**

Data available from the housing conditions survey for 2003 revealed that 89.4% of families in the Palestinian territories obtain their water supply from the public water system (85.5% in the West Bank and 97.4% in the Gaza Strip). The percentage of houses connected to the public water supply network in towns and refugee camps is higher (95.7% in urban areas, 98.5% in refugee camps) than in the rural areas. In rural areas the percentage of families connected to the public water network was only 73% in 2003.

As regards sewerage, the survey results indicated that 50.8% of families in the Palestinian territories live in houses connected to public sewerage systems. The percentage is higher in the Gaza Strip (70.9%) compared to the West Bank (40.8%). It is also higher in the refugee camps, where 83.9% of families live

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in homes connected to the public sewerage system. On the whole, 62.3% of homes in urban areas and 11.5% in rural areas are connected to public sewerage network.

#### **6-10-4 Increase in Percentage of Families Having Mobile Telephones and Fixed Telephones**

Data for 2003 shows an improvement in Palestinian families' ownership of mobile and fixed telephones. 60.3% of families in Palestinian territories stated that they have a mobile telephone (65.0% in the West Bank, and 51.0% in the Gaza Strip). This represents a big improvement over 2000, when it was 43.7% (51.0% in the West Bank and 29.8% in the Gaza Strip).

Available data showed that 44.7% of families in the Palestinian territories had a fixed telephone (47.7% in the West Bank, and 38.9% in the Gaza Strip). That is an improvement compared to 2002, when the percentage was 36.1% (40.1 % in the West Bank and 27.7% in the Gaza Strip) (Food Survey). The percentage was 42.1% in 2000 (45.0 % in the West Bank and 36.5 % in the Gaza Strip). In general, the recent improvement in ownership of mobile telephones and fixed telephones by Palestinian families does not indicate an improvement in their living standards as much as it indicates a response to the difficulties of travel and communication between members of the same family and friends in the West Bank and Gaza Strip as a result of the occupation's repressive measures.

#### **6-11 Sharp Drop in Building Permits for Living Purposes**

Data from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics revealed that a sharp drop occurred in number of building permits in general issued by local authorities, especially building permits for housing purposes. In the years 2003 and 2002, 792 and 785 building permits were issued for building purposes in the Palestinian territories. The number for the years 1999, 2000 and 2001 was 8,982, 7,445 and 4,010 respectively. The drop that occurred in 2003 and 2002 was, to a large extent, due to Israeli attacks against Palestinian territories,

the deteriorated economic situation and the absence of government authority which led to a widespread tendency of building without permits.

#### **6-12 Large Scale Destruction of Homes**

Israeli occupation caused damage to 66,894 homes in the Palestinian territories during the period from September 28, 2000 to August 31, 2004, the equivalent of 1,423 homes every month. This was divided between 42,919 houses in the West Bank and 23,975 houses in the Gaza Strip.

Between the outbreak of the *Intifada* and August 31 2004 the Israeli army demolished or caused to become uninhabitable 6,757 private homes in the Palestinian territories, 2,735 in the West Bank and 4,022 in the Gaza Strip. The Israeli army caused serious damage to 673 government buildings and public establishments.

The loss in buildings in the West Bank during 2003 was concentrated in Nablus Governorate, especially the old town in Nablus City. Damaged buildings in the Gaza Strip were concentrated in Rafah, where the percentage of damaged buildings reached 41.2% of the total number of damaged buildings in the Gaza Strip. Of the 4,022 completely demolished building in the Gaza Strip, 2,626 can be found in Rafah (See Chart 6-3).

On the whole data revealed two basic problems that require special attention: first, the decline in support to Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, despite continued deterioration of economic conditions. This situation calls for serious thinking to find new mechanisms that reduce dependence on outside aid and better use available resources. The second problem is the erosion of the ability of Palestinian families to continue in their customary adaptation mechanisms in facing the total war declared by occupation. This is a matter which requires urgent and appropriate attention.

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## 7. LIVING STANDARDS

The year 2003 witnessed an escalation in Israeli repressive measures, especially in the Gaza Strip and Nablus city. Indicators continued revealing the deterioration of Palestinian living standards in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Poverty levels remained high, and family income and spending were well below their pre-*Intifada* levels.

We will mainly depend in this section on data provided by surveys conducted by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, especially the workforce survey and the survey concerning the effect of Israeli measures on economic conditions of Palestinian families. These data include the change in average family income, food habits and poverty levels, according to statements by the families themselves. Therefore, some of these statements serve as general indicators, clarifying change trends, their intensity and speed. Focus will be on data for 2003 in general, in addition to recent available data concerning 2004.

### 7-1 More than Half of Families Lost More than Half of their Income

Continuous Israeli repressive measures since September 2000 have resulted in an increased erosion of Palestinian family income. Data available from surveys conducted by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics reveal that nearly half of Palestinian families lost half or more of their income, compared to prior to the *Intifada*. Despite the fact that there was a drop in the number of these families at the end of 2003, when they constituted 40%, their number increased in 2004 to become 63% in the second quarter of that year.

### 7-2 Drop in Median Average Monthly Income of Palestinian Family

Monitored families stated that their average income was lower in the third quarter of 2004 compared to prior to the *Intifada*. The average monthly income of a family declined from

2,300 Shekels prior to the *Intifada* to 1,500 Shekels in the West Bank and Gaza Strip during the third quarter of 2004. In the West Bank, it declined from 3,000 Shekels to 1,929 Shekels, while in the Gaza Strip it declined from 1,500 Shekels to 1,000 Shekels (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2004 A).

### 7-3 Family Spending

Survey results indicate that 54.6% of families (335,000 families) in the Palestinian territories reduced their expenditure on basic needs during the 12 months prior to the survey (which was conducted in the third quarter of 2004). This was concentrated on clothes and food, where 96.5% of these families had reduced their spending on clothes and 86.8% of families reduced their spending on food. West Bank data indicate that 60.7% of families (248,000 families) reduced their spending on basic needs during the same period (96.2 % of them reduced spending on clothes, 84.4% on food). Gaza Strip results show that 42.7% of families (87,000 families) state they reduced their basic expenditure during the same period (97.5% of them did so on clothes and 93.4% on food).

Data reveal that a high percentage of families in the Palestinian territories changed their food consumption habits from prior to the *Intifada*. 97.1% of Palestinian families reduced quantity of meat they used to consume, 96.0% of families cut down on fruit consumption, 95.2% of families reduced the quality of food they are used to consume and 87.1% of families reduced the quantity of food.

Despite the slight improvement in relative income and spending of Palestinian families that some results may convey, for example comparing the survey concerning Israeli measures' effect on economic conditions of Palestinian families July-September 2004 with April-May 2003, they still remain much worse than the results prior to September 29, 2000. Different aid plans and emergency employment projects have had an apparent effect on some indicators, but it is a temporary and unsustainable improvement. It is the

continuation and severity of Israeli measures which will really affect living standards in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

## 7-4 Widespread Poverty

Data of the tenth round of the survey of the effect of Israeli measures on economic conditions of Palestinian families, conducted in July and September 2004, showed that 63.8% of Palestinian families, i.e. 2,723 thousand persons, in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are below the poverty line, according to statements by the families themselves<sup>6</sup>. This was composed of 53.5% of Palestinian families in the West Bank and 82.7% in the Gaza Strip.

### **The Palestinian economy recovered slightly in 2003, but is now stagnant.**

Given the growth in population in the West Bank and Gaza, real GDP rose by around one percent in 2003. As a result, average incomes in 2003 were some 36 percent lower than their pre-*Intifada* levels.

Labour market indicators for the first half of 2004 suggest that the recovery is coming to an end. Some 104,000 jobs were created for Palestinian workers in 2003, equivalent to a 21 percent increase in employment compared with 2002. Job growth was particularly strong in Gaza, where employment increased by 32 percent in 2003. Unemployment rates fell from an average of 31.4 percent in 2002 to 25.7 percent in 2003. More recently, however, these trends reversed, particularly in Gaza. During the first half of 2004, the Palestinian economy lost more than 22,000 jobs. Gaza experienced the lion's share of this loss (20,000 people lost jobs). Employment in the West Bank held up only because of a sharp increase in part-time jobs,

Economic hardship is most acute for the 600,000 Palestinians living under the minimum level for subsistence. That 16 percent of the population, who live below the subsistence poverty line, merely survive, despite significant amounts of humanitarian assistance. The coping strategies for the poorest segment of the Palestinian population are being increasingly stretched thin. By 2003, the ability of the subsistence poor to continue coping with a prolonged economic crisis by reducing

<sup>6</sup> The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics drew the attention of those concerned that these estimates are based on statements by families regarding their income. We use them here as general indicators concerning Palestinian family conditions. It is worth mentioning that these estimates correspond to estimates by international institutions operating in Palestinian territories, such as UNESCO and the World Bank.

consumption, drawing down savings and selling liquid assets became increasingly strained. Consumption has been drastically reduced; there is limited opportunity for further cuts.

**World Bank, 'Four Years –  
Intifada, Closures and  
Palestinian Economic Crisis -  
An Assessment', October 2004**

## 7-5 Palestinian Labour Market Indicators

Conditions of the Palestinian labour market in the West Bank and Gaza Strip continued to deteriorate during 2003. Levels of unemployment remained high, despite the many emergency employment projects aiming to reduce the effect of unemployment on Palestinian working people and families. We present a picture of the key work-force indicators, considering unemployment figures both in accordance with ILO standards and the broad definition.<sup>7</sup>

### 7-5-1 Human Resources

The number of persons 15 years and above was 1,965 thousand, representing 53.9% of the total population and an increase of 5.9% over 2002. Distribution according to regions was as follows: 1,288 thousand persons in the West Bank (55.7% of the region's inhabitants) and 677 thousand persons in the Gaza Strip (50.7% of the Strip's inhabitants).

### 7-5-2 Labour Force during 2000-2003

Basic results showed that the number of Palestinians in the labour force in the West Bank and Gaza Strip increased from 682 thousand persons in 2001 to 707 thousand persons in 2002, and reached 794 thousand in 2003. Their number further increased in the second quarter of 2004 to 831 thousand, compared to 695 thousand persons in 2000, i.e. before the *Intifada*. This means that the labour force increased by 12.3% in 2003, compared to the previous year, but only increased by 14.2% compared to 2000. The big increase in the size of the labour force in 2003 is due to a large number of those having

<sup>7</sup> The broad definition includes those unemployed but not actively seeking work, having become discouraged.

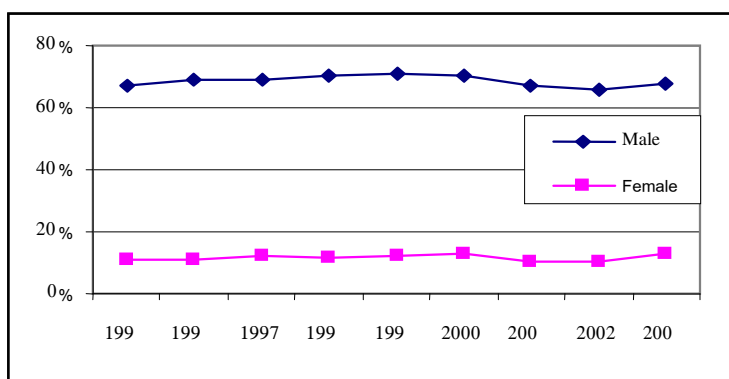
despaired of finding a job redefining their relation to the labour market.

The number of Palestinians in the labour force in the West Bank rose to 540 thousand persons compared to 488 thousand persons in 2002, an increase of 10.6%. In the Gaza Strip, the number increased from 219 thousand persons

in 2002 to 254 thousand in 2003, an increase of 16%.

The participation rate in the labour force among females increased, reaching 12.8% 2003 compared to 10.4% in 2002. Participation also increased among males from 65.5% in 2002 to 67.6% in 2003.

**Figure 7-1 Percentage of Labour Force in Palestinian Territories According to Sex 1995 – 2003**



Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force Surveys 1995 – 2003

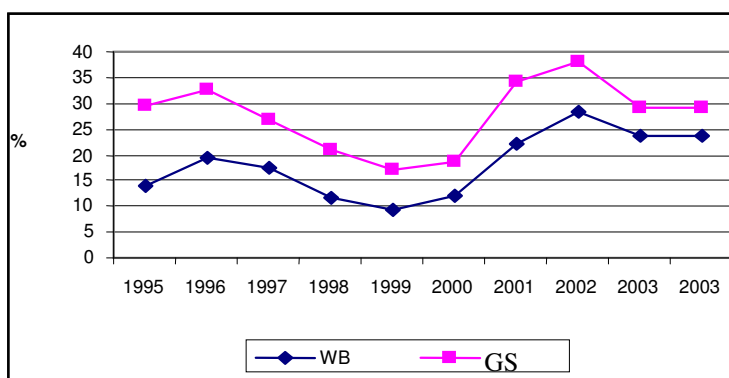
### 7-5-3 Decline in Number of Unemployed

The number of unemployed experienced a sharp decline in 2003, falling from 221 thousand unemployed in 2002 to 203 thousand unemployed in 2003, a drop of 8.8%. But it remains higher than in 2000, when 98 thousand were unemployed. The West Bank contained 129 thousand of the unemployed (down from 138 thousand in 2002 but still up

from 58 thousand in 2000) while 74 thousand lived in the Gaza Strip (down from 83 thousand in 2002 but up from 40 thousand in 2000).

The percentage of unemployed, according to the ILO definition, dropped from 31.3% in 2002 to 25.6% in 2003. The percentage of unemployed is still higher in the Gaza Strip (29.2%) than in the West Bank (23.8%).

**Figure 7-2: Percentage of Unemployed in Palestinian Territories According to Region**



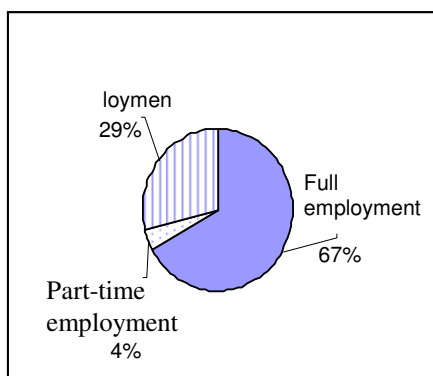
Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force Surveys 1995- 2003

Levels of unemployment varied between the different Palestinian governorates. The lowest level of unemployment in the West Bank was in Bethlehem and Jericho governorates (16.5%), followed by Ramallah and Al-Bireh (20.4%), and then by Jerusalem and Al-Khalil governorates (22.3%). Jenin Governorate and Toubas region recorded the highest level of unemployment (33.7%). In Gaza Governorates, the lowest level of unemployment was in northern Gaza (27.7%), followed by Gaza City (27.8%). The highest

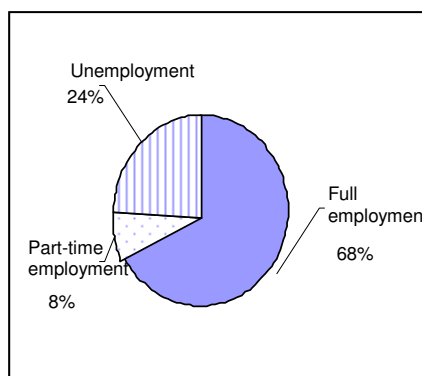
level was in Khan Younis Governorate (32.1%).

As regards gender, the number of unemployed among males declined from 204 thousand in 2002 to 180 thousand in 2003, an average of 11.8%. At the same time the number of females unemployed increased from 17 thousand to 23 thousand, an increase of 35.3%. The levels of unemployment among males remained higher than females (26.9% for males and 18.6% for females).

**Figure 7-3 Work Force Distribution in West Bank 2003**



**Figure 7-4: Work Force Distribution in Gaza Strip 2003**



Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Work Force Survey, 2003

#### 7-5-4 Unemployment According to the Relaxed Definition

In 2002, when the number of those unemployed and seeking work reached 221 thousand, there were 120 thousand additional unemployed who were not looking for a job, having despaired of getting one. This brings the total to 341 thousand unemployed using the relaxed definition. This number greatly declined in 2003, to become – after adding 93 thousand discouraged workers to the ILO’s 203 thousand – 296 thousand. This means that broadly-defined unemployment in the West Bank and Gaza Strip was 33.4% in 2003, much less than the 41.2% in 2002.

The number of unemployed by this definition declined in the West Bank from 215 thousand in 2002 to 193 thousand in 2003 (as against 115 thousand in 2000). The corresponding percentage fell to 32% from 38.1% in 2002. In the Gaza Strip, the number declined from 126 thousand in 2002 (48.1%) to 103 thousand in

2003 (36.4%), but was still higher than the 80 thousand of 2000.

Looked at on a gender level, the number of relaxed-definition unemployed among males declined from 309 thousand in 2002 to 258 thousand in 2003 – a decline of 16.5% - while the number of unemployed among females increased from 32 thousand to 38 thousand – an increase of 18.8%.

#### 7-5-5 Economic Dependency<sup>8</sup>

Results for 2002 indicate that the average economic dependency ratio in the Palestinian territories was 7.1 (i.e. every working person provided for 6.1 non-working persons in the West Bank and Gaza Strip) – 6.3 persons for every working person in the West Bank and 9.3 in the Gaza Strip. The average declined in

<sup>8</sup> The economic dependency ratio was calculated by dividing the number of inhabitants by the number of employed.

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2003 to become 6.2 persons overall; 5.3 in the West Bank, and 7.4 in the Gaza Strip.

On the whole, data relating to levels of unemployment showed a relative improvement in this area. However, levels of unemployment remain high compared to the period prior to *Intifada*. They do not indicate the beginning of a sustainable recovery of the Palestinian economy as many new jobs are centred on low-income activities or emergency employment projects.

### **7-5-6 Characteristics of Workers in the Local Economy**

Deterioration of conditions in the local labour market continued during 2003. The percentage of wage earners out of the total number of those working in the local economy continued to decline, from 59.2% in 2002 to 57.3% in 2003. It is to be noted that this decline was in favour of those who became self-employed. The percentage of the latter increased from 26.8 % in 2002 to 27.8 % in 2003.

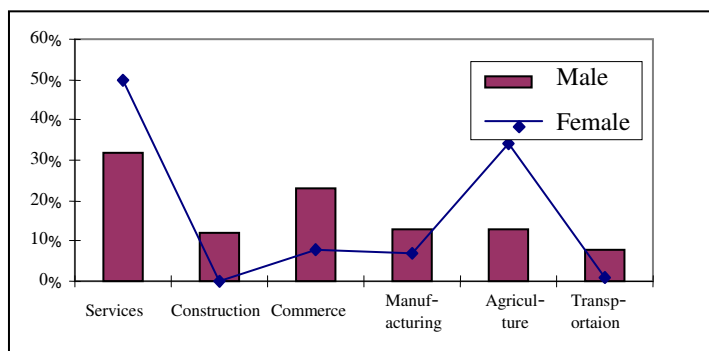
The percentage of workers in the building and construction sector in the Palestinian territories sharply declined – from 10.9% in 2002 to 9.6% in 2003. This was felt only in the West Bank, where it fell from 12.7% to 9.7% in 2003. In the Gaza Strip the percentage actually rose - from 6.3% in 2002 to 9.3% in 2003. This reflects the decline in building activities in the Palestinian territories. The following Figure shows the distribution of Palestinian workers by the various economic activities. It is to be noted that they are concentrated in the services and commerce sectors. It is also to be noted that women

workers are especially concentrated in the services and agricultural sectors.

Of the total number of those working in the local economy in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, 22.2% (around 130 thousand persons) were employed by the public sector, down from 25.5% in 2002. The decline in the percentage is due to a decline in unemployment levels, although the absolute number remained stable.

Available data revealed the existence of important problems related to working conditions. 3.0% of workers in the public sector said that they are subjected to gender discrimination – 2.6% of males and 4.4% of females. 5.4% said they were discriminated against because of their age - 5.3% of males and 5.5% of females. Results also indicated that 10.0% are exposed to humiliation / psychological violence while at work – 10.5% of males and 8.1% of females. 3.2% of workers said that they had private health insurance; 94% said they were covered by government health insurance; 37% were covered by insurance against work accidents. As regards the work place, 93.3% of wage workers said that there was natural ventilation; 84.2% said they had fire extinguishers, 81.9% stated that there was a first aid kit; 82.7% said there were instruction boards; 44.6% said that there were emergency exits; and 50.7% said that there was a person to apply first aid. 46.5% of workers who have an intermediate diploma and higher expressed their satisfaction with the work they perform, and said that it is compatible with their educational or professional qualifications; 58.4% of such respondents were from the West Bank and 33.9% from the Gaza Strip (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2004).

**Figure 7-5: Distribution of Workers in Palestinian Territories According to Sex and Economic Activity – 2003**



Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Work Force Surveys 1995-2003

Data revealed that 77.3% of workers in the local economy are employed by the **private sector**. 81.7% of wage workers said they regularly received their wages; 43.7% have paid annual holidays, 47.7% have paid sick leave; 49.4% of wage workers said they feel secure in their work (job security). Results of the working conditions survey for 2004 showed that 38.1% of wage workers in the local private sector have written contracts with their employers – 35.1% in the West Bank and 51.8% in the Gaza Strip. The results also indicated that 89.3% of work contracts contain articles stipulating guarantees of safe and healthy work conditions – 86.6% in the West Bank and 97.7% in the Gaza Strip. 2.2% of them said they suffer gender discrimination – 2.0% of males and 3.0% of females. The percentage of those subjected to discrimination because of age was 4.9% - 5.4% of males and 2.7% of females. 10.7% of wage workers in the private sector are exposed to insults / psychological violence during work – 11.6% of males and 7.1% of females. 33.7% have private health insurance, as against 4.0% covered by government health insurance. 35.0% have work accident insurance. 24.8% of workers with intermediate diplomas and higher expressed their satisfaction with the work they perform saying it is compatible with their educational and professional qualifications – 23% in the West Bank and 32.7% in the Gaza Strip.

It is generally noted that working conditions of workers in the public sector are relatively better than those in the local private sector. One reason may be that the laws and regulations existing to protect workers are harder to enforce in private small-sized enterprises and workshops.

### 7-5-7 Workers in Israel and Settlements

The percentage of workers in Israel and the settlements declined from 13.7% in 2001 to 10.3% in 2002 to 9.7% in 2003 (from 70 thousand workers in 2001 to 57 thousand workers in 2003). (This can be compared to pre-Intifada levels during the period 1995-2000: 16.2%, 14.1%, 17.1%, 21.7%, 22.9%, and 19.6% respectively.) As regards distribution of workers in Israel and the settlements by different branches of economic activity, a big increase was experienced in the building and construction sector, from 20 thousand workers in 2002 to 26 thousand in 2003, a 30% increase. In the meantime, there was no change in the agricultural sector (5 thousand workers), the transport sector (4 thousand workers), and commerce, restaurants and hotels sector (10 thousand workers).

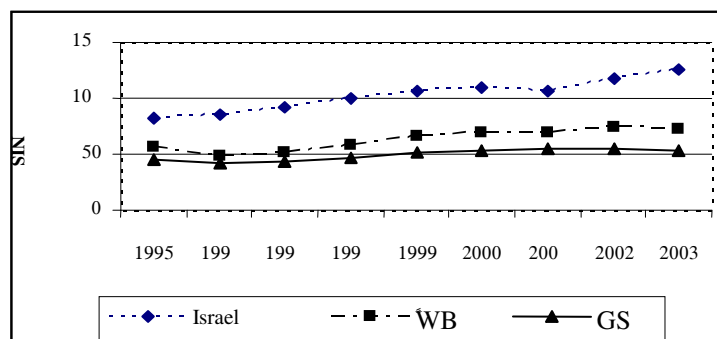
### 7-5-8 Wage Levels

The average daily wage for workers in all regions (the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Israel and the settlements) experienced a decline of 0.4% between 2002 and 2003. In all regions the average daily wage was 74.0 Shekels in 2002, but declined to 73.7 Shekels daily in 2003. Data revealed that the average daily wage in the West Bank experienced an increase of 1.1% in 2003 compared to the previous year, but in the Gaza Strip there was a decline of 3.3%.

The average daily wage of workers from the West Bank and Gaza Strip in Israel and the settlements experienced a 6.6% rise between 2002 and 2003. We note that the wage level has risen since 1995. Its initial level then was

81.5 Shekels, which reached 125.1 Shekels in 2003.

**Figure 7-6: Average Daily Wage of Workers in West Bank and Gaza Strip According to Work Place, 1995-2003**



Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Work Force Surveys, 1995-2003.

On the other hand, the median daily wage in the Palestinian territories maintained its level at 60.0 Shekels in 2003. But a big increase in the median daily wage of workers in Israel and the settlements occurred, from 100.0 Shekels in 2002 to 134.6 Shekels in 2003, a 16.6% increase and the highest level since 1995.

These figures reflect nominal wages and do not take into consideration the erosion of the Shekel's purchasing power due to a record increase in consumer prices, which meant a decline in the real value of wages.

The average daily wage of workers in the agricultural sector in the West Bank during 2003 was 53.7 Shekels, in the Gaza Strip 35.0 Shekels, and for Palestinian workers in Israel and the settlements 69.2 Shekels. The agricultural sector has the lowest wages. The daily wage in the building and construction sector – the sector that pays the highest wages – was 85 Shekels in the West Bank, 43 Shekels in the Gaza Strip, and for Palestinian workers in Israel and the settlements 127.5 Shekels.

As regards women's wages compared to men's wages, there still exists a big gap between the two sexes in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, although it has narrowed during the *Intifada*. The percentage of a woman's wage compared to a man's in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (including in Israel and the settlements) was 82.7% in 2003, as against 81.8% in 2002. It

was 69.3 % in 2000. The narrowing of the gap is due, on the one hand, to the fact that men lost their jobs in the Israeli labour market, where Palestinian workers received the best wages, and on the other the concentration of women's wage labour in the service sector in the government and UNRWA. This means that women's wages maintain their level, while levels of men's pay decline. The results do not indicate the narrowing of the gap in the area of wages so much as reflect the deterioration of the local labour market. Women receive higher pay in the services sector (64.7 Shekels is the average daily wage), as well as the lowest wage in the industry sector (43.2 Shekels). Half of women receive daily wages equivalent to 53.8 Shekels or lower, while half of men workers receive wages equivalent to or less than 61.5 Shekels.

#### 7-5-9 Informal Economic Sector

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics and The Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS) conducted a survey together in 2003 of the informal economic sector in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Excluded from the survey were agricultural activities. It became evident from the results that around 30% of employed Palestinians work in the informal sector. Women constituted 8.4% of the total number of persons employed in the informal economic sector, excluding enterprises, and 5.4% of the workers in the informal enterprises sector. The percentage of female

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operators (owners of projects) was 8.9% of the total number of operators in the informal sector, excluding enterprises, and 5% of the total number of operators in the informal enterprises sector.

The results of the survey revealed that informal sector projects and operations depended on the family for providing capital, labour and hereditary transmission of professional skills. Results also revealed that among the most important motives for starting self-employment projects in the informal sector is the desire to create jobs and consequently assure sources of income.

Results further revealed that informal sector projects, especially family projects (excluding enterprises) are more often mechanisms of adapting to conditions of economic crisis and loss of income than investment projects. Most informal projects, excluding enterprises, operating in 2003 were established during the Al-Aqsa *Intifada*, and are mostly self-employment projects. The average number of workers in an informal-sector project, excluding enterprises, is 1.5 workers, while it is 1.8 workers in an informal enterprise.

### **7-5-10 Child Labour**

The number of children between 5 to 17 years of age in the Palestinian territories in mid-February 2004 was estimated, to be 1,313,700 children, i.e. 34.9% of the total number of inhabitants. Results indicate that the number of working children, receiving a wage or not, was 40,300, i.e. 3.1% of the total number of children – 30,900 in the West Bank and 9,400 in the Gaza Strip (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2004).

72.8% of children who are in the labour market said that they worked because of economic need (49.5% to help in a family project, 20.7% to contribute to raising the family income, and 2.6% for other economic reasons). The percentage of those who worked because of social reasons was 27.2% (14.5% because of school holidays and dropping out of school, 6.5% for reasons of independence and self reliance, and 6.2% for other reasons).

Over two thirds of working children in the Palestinian territories (67.4%) are working in family projects without pay (87.7% of female

workers and 64.7% of male workers), while 28.2% are hired workers, receiving a wage, in projects owned by other persons (8.7% of female workers, and 30.8% of male workers). However, results showed that 98.0% of working children between the ages of 5-9 years work in their families' projects.

Results showed that 42.7% of working children in the Palestinian territories work as labourers in agriculture (49.3% in the West Bank and 21.1% in the Gaza Strip) and 19.5% work in primary professions (18.9% in the West Bank and 21.5% in the Gaza Strip). Children employed in the services and as vendors in markets constituted 18.5% (16.1% in the West Bank and 26.3% in the Gaza Strip). The percentage of children employed in handicrafts and the like was 16.6% (13.5% in the West Bank and 26.9% in the Gaza Strip).

Of child labourers, 47.4% wished only to continue their education, as against 24.9% who wanted only to continue working. The percentage of those who wished to continue their education and work at the same time was 18.3%, while 7.9% said they wanted to study regularly and work only during the summer holidays.

Results showed that the percentage of children who left school in the West Bank was 3%, while in the Gaza Strip it was 2.3%. Dropping out of school is due to a number of reasons, most importantly the lack of desire to study (32.9% of respondents) followed by the bad economic conditions of the family (10.5%). As regards the opinion of working children's families concerning the effect that child labour has on family economic conditions, results showed that 25.8% of families with working children said they would suffer a decline in their living standards if their offspring ceased working, whereas 50.9% of families said they would not suffer any negative economic effects.

Results also showed that 61.7% of families with working children would prefer that their children devote themselves to studying only. 18.0% would prefer that their children only work. The percentage of families who wished their children to study and work at the same time was 8.4%. On the other hand, 71.4% of families of non-working children would prefer

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that their children continue in their studies only.

### 7-5-11 Bad Working Conditions

23.8% of workers in the Palestinian territories said that their work requires them to wear protective clothes and use protective tools during work, and 70.5% of them stated that the clothes are available; 59.5% of those who have protective clothes and tools said that they regularly use them, 38.0% used them occasionally, and 2.5% did not use them at all. 21.0% of workers who have intermediate school diplomas or higher said that the work they perform corresponds to their educational and professional qualifications (20.1% in the West Bank and 23.4% in the Gaza Strip). 68.6% of workers said they are not members of trade unions/professional associations; 13.3% of them said that the non-applicability of conditions of membership in the trade unions was the reason, while 79.3% were not concerned to join.

7.5% of workers in the Palestinian territories had suffered work injuries – 9.0% in the West Bank and 2.9% in the Gaza Strip. Results also showed that 57.5% of these injuries were in the upper limbs and 27.9% in the lower ones. Results further showed that 38.6% of injuries were caused by dealing with machinery. The majority of these accidents caused wounds (66.2%). 62.1% of those who suffered injuries said that they themselves covered the expenses of their treatment. 16.4% of them were treated at the expense of the employer, 10.3% were covered by private insurance, and 9.1% by government insurance.

In general, indicators that suggested the existence of economic stability in the West Bank and Gaza Strip were soon dispelled by the results of the first half of 2004. The Palestinian economy again experienced a depression, especially as Israeli occupation escalated its repressive measures, tightened the siege of Palestinian towns, villages and refugee camps, and stepped up destruction of homes, infrastructure and agricultural land, especially in the Gaza Strip.

On the whole, the data reveals the continued deterioration of living conditions in the West

Bank and Gaza Strip. Poverty levels remain high. Family income is much lower than it was before the *Al-Aqsa Intifada*. Despite indications of the beginning of slight economic improvement and betterment of living standards in 2003, data for 2004 confirmed that general impoverishment of the West Bank and Gaza Strip is of Israeli making, managed by occupation. Data further unmasked the fallacy of economic and social indicators that suggested the existence of beginnings of stability.

Data concerning the labour market revealed a slight improvement over the previous year. But the situation remains worse than on the eve of the *Intifada*. The measures taken to alleviate unemployment in the West Bank and Gaza Strip have had a positive but inevitably temporary effect in this domain. Data revealed the need to pay attention to the conditions of the local labour market, in connection with work conditions, worker-employer relations and the employment capacity of the local economy. Putting into effect the laws that regulate the local labour market have a special importance in this regard.

## 8. LEGAL ENVIRONMENT INDICATORS

This section monitors the violations by the Israeli occupation authorities of the rights of Palestinian citizens during the third year of *Intifada*. Palestinians have paid a high human and material price as a result of the repressive policy of occupation applied by Israel against them. The section also continues in monitoring the functioning of the Palestinian Authority's three branches (legislative, executive and judicial). It evaluates the extent to which the Authority was committed to protect the rights of citizens in 2003. The section also deals with the indicators of crime and its victims in the Palestinian territories.

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## **8-1 Continued Escalation of Israeli Violations of Palestinian Citizens' Rights during 2003**

Sharon's government extended its aggressive measures during 2003 against the West Bank and Gaza Strip, in contravention of International Law and international human rights standards. These territories have experienced extremely harsh conditions unprecedented since the beginning of Israeli occupation in 1967. The Israeli authorities intensified their arbitrary measures against the Palestinian people in an attempt to crush the *Intifada*.

The Israeli occupation authorities continued their violation of the Palestinian citizens' rights by using excessive force against civilians. They resorted to all means of fighting, such as F-16 fighter aircraft, military helicopters, tanks, and heavy machine guns, which resulted in the death of hundreds and the wounding of thousands of persons. The occupation forces also demolished hundreds of homes and carried out illegal extra-judicial killings. Settlement expansion activities continued, accompanied by expropriation of Palestinian land. Thousands of Palestinians were arrested, sieges and curfews imposed, and strict closures applied against Palestinian towns and villages.

### **8-1-2 Escalation of Use of Excessive Force and Illegal Extra-Judicial Executions**

The use of excessive force against Palestinian citizens during 2003 resulted in the killing of 627 Palestinians, among them 123 children and 17 women. Israel also escalated the use of illegal executions against Palestinians. The number of persons assassinated by Israeli forces during 2003 was around 67, among them outstanding Hamas leaders such as engineer Ismail Abu Shanab. Assassinations continued during 2004, also mainly targeting outstanding Hamas leaders. Sheikh Ahmed Yassin and Dr. Abdul Aziz Al-Rantisy were among those murdered<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Ninth Annual Report by the Independent Palestinian Committee for the Rights of the Citizen, Situation of Palestinian Citizen's Rights during 2003, 1 January 2003 – 31 December 2003, Ramallah

### **8-1-3 Continuation of Campaign of Arrests and Raids**

The occupation authorities continued their semi-daily campaign of arrests during 2003, which affected thousands of Palestinian citizens. The total number of Palestinian detainees reached 6,206 - among them 669 'administrative' detainees, incarcerated without trial - held in central prisons, military detention camps and detention centres inside the Green Line<sup>10</sup>.

The period covered by the present issue of the Monitor witnessed hunger strikes in protest against conditions of detention. These incidents culminated in a general strike in all Israeli detention centres in August 2004 which involved most Palestinian detainees.

### **8-1-4 Attacks on Freedom of Action of Medical Teams**

The occupation authorities continued their aggression against the lives, safety and freedom of movement of medical teams operating in the occupied Palestinian territories in 2003. Israeli soldiers used tear gas and even artillery shells against Palestinian medical teams and ambulances. They also raided several hospitals and medical centres. Four members of medical teams were killed and many were injured. The following hospitals were stormed: Alia, Al-Muhtassib and Al-Mizan in Al-Khalil; Rafidya and Al-Watani in Nablus. They searched sections of the hospital and obstructed the work of medical teams.<sup>11</sup>

### **8-1-5 Continued Attacks on Journalists and Institutions of Information**

The occupation authorities continued their attacks against the freedom of journalists and correspondents of local and international news agencies in 2003. Journalists were regularly shot at by the occupation forces, which resulted in several deaths and injuries. On April 19, 2003, 38-year-old journalist Nazih

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<sup>10</sup> According to figures from the Mandela Institution for Welfare of Prisoners and Detainees.

<sup>11</sup> For more details concerning Israeli attacks against Palestinian medical teams and facilities, see the website of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society at <http://www.palestinercs.org>

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Darwazah was killed in Nablus while covering events there. On May 3, 2003 23-year-old British journalist James Miller, who worked for an American information agency, was killed while filming a documentary on the life of Palestinians in Al-Barazil refugee camp in the Gaza Strip.

The occupation authorities decided to withdraw accreditation (press cards) from tens of journalists considered supporters of the Palestinian people. The Israeli Government Press Office prepared a list of names of journalists and correspondents from whom accreditation will be withdrawn.

### **8-1-6 Attacks on Peace and Human Rights Activists**

The occupation authorities continued their aggression against foreign peace and human rights activists in the Palestinian territories. The most blatant of these attacks was the murder of the American peace activist Rachel Corrie, who was killed while trying to stop Israeli bulldozers from demolishing Palestinian citizens' homes in Rafah refugee camp, and the fatal shooting of Englishman Tom Hurdall, also in Gaza. In the wake of the incidents, Israel prevented the entry of peace activists to the Palestinian territories, unless they sign in advance documents absolving the state of Israel of any responsibility in case of death or injury as a result of activities of the Israeli military forces. The occupation authorities also arrested tens of peace and human rights activists, and deported them using the pretext that they were present in an area without permission from its military command.

### **8-1-7 Continued Attacks on Palestinian Civilian Properties<sup>12</sup>**

The occupation authorities continued destroying private properties in the various regions of the Palestinian territories in 2003. They damaged more than 2000 housing units and completely destroyed at least 791 of them.

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<sup>12</sup> For more details see the Ninth Annual Report by the Independent Palestinian Committee for the Rights of the Citizen, Situation of Palestinian Citizen's Rights during 2003, 1 January 2003 – 31 December 2003, Ramallah, pp. 36-39.

In addition, the Israeli authorities continued their policy of demolishing the houses of persons who perform military operations against Israeli targets, or persons wanted by the occupation forces because of activities in the *Intifada*. More than 142 homes were demolished in 2003 for such reasons.

The most blatant of such demolition operations in 2003 was the bulldozing of 250 homes of Palestinian citizens in Rafah Governorate, particularly those near the border with Egypt. The policy of demolishing homes as a collective punishment continued in 2004, with several towns and refugee camps in the Gaza Strip experiencing large-scale destruction operations.

The occupation authorities continued to destroy Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem and the surrounding villages during 2003, using as a pretext that they were constructed without obtaining permission. 61 Palestinian houses were destroyed by the occupation authorities for this reason.

Furthermore, the occupation authorities continued to uproot trees and destroy agricultural land in 2003 for the purpose of building the so-called 'Security Wall' separating the Palestinian territories and Israel, or for the purpose of protecting the settlements, or to build by-pass roads, or to expand existing settlements and establish new ones. There were 6 new settlements in 2003, and 3,570 dunums of land were destroyed.

The survey conducted by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics concerning the effect of the wall on the Palestinian communities through which it passes stated that 64,783 dunums of land had been expropriated for the purpose of building the wall by the end of August 2003, 40,460 of which are Palestinian National Authority property. Most of this land is situated in Jenin area. The rest is private property, and mostly situated in the Jerusalem area.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Survey of the Effect of the Separation Wall on Palestinian Communities through which it passes, 2003.

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The survey also indicated that 1,296 dunums of the destroyed land owned by the Palestinian National Authority was situated in the Jenin area. 21,002 dunums of the destroyed land is considered private property, and is mostly in the Jerusalem region. The results of the survey indicated that the value of the communities' loss in infrastructure, as a result of building the wall, amounted to US\$10.7 million, including the loss of US\$280 thousand resulting from the destruction of artesian wells, US\$4,417 thousand as a result of destruction of road networks, US\$119 thousand as a result of destruction of water networks, and US\$194 thousand as a result of destruction of electricity networks. This swift and systematic destruction of basic services in areas through which the wall passes resulted in driving away an estimated 402 families, or 2,323 persons, mostly from the Jenin area, from their homes.<sup>14</sup>

Completion of the Wall will result in the isolation of 115 thousand Palestinians in 53 villages situated between the Wall and Israel. At the same time, 150 thousand Palestinians will find themselves quarantined, surrounded on all sides by the Wall. 102 communities very close to the Wall on the east, inhabited by 402 thousand Palestinians, will need permits to enter their agricultural land or to go to school or to work.

### **8-1-8 Escalation of Attacks on Freedom of Movement**

The occupation authorities tightened their siege and closure for long periods of all Palestinian cities and villages during 2003, in a manner unprecedented since the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967. Most towns and villages in the West Bank and a big part of Gaza Strip were effectively turned into prisons, isolated from each other. At the end of September 2003 there were tens of permanent fortified road blocks manned by Israeli soldiers in the West Bank. In addition to that there were more than 600 obstacles obstructing the movement of people, goods and vehicles. Closures for varying periods also affected border crossings that connect the occupied territories to the outside world:

Rafah boarder crossing which connects Gaza Strip to Egypt, Gaza airport (the runways of which have been destroyed), and Al-Karameh border crossing which connects the West Bank to Jordan.

In addition, the occupation authorities imposed curfews for long periods on Palestinian cities and towns (with the exception of Jericho) in the West Bank. The number of days of curfew imposed in 2003 on Ramallah, Al-Bireh and neighbouring villages was 7 days; Jenin 43 days; Bethlehem, Beit Jala and Beit Sahour 18 days; Al-Khalil 31 days; Tulkarm 48 days and Qalqilya 22 days. The curfews resulted in total paralysis of civilian, social and economic life in the areas subjected to them.<sup>15</sup>

### **8-2-1 Improved Performance by Legislative Council**

The annual report on the situation of the Palestinian citizen's rights during 2003 by the Independent Palestinian Committee for Citizen's Rights indicates the continued existence of the same problems and obstacles which have accompanied the work of the Legislative Council since its creation. The Legislative Council, as other Palestinian public institutions, functions in difficult conditions that prevent it from fully performing its role. But with the passage of time the Council started to adapt to the abnormal measures imposed by the occupation authorities. The use of video conferencing technology enabled it to overcome some of the obstacles and difficulties. The creation of the post of Prime Minister reflected positively on the work of The Council. The number of draft laws referred by the Cabinet increased and the committees of the Council were activated. Interpolations addressed to Ministers increased. Parliamentary activities in general increased in 2003 compared to the two previous years. The Cabinet referred sixteen draft laws to the Council during 2003, compared to two in 2002.

However, the Legislative Council still suffers from a lack of a clear and harmonious legislative policy, or a set plan to adopt laws

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p.3

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, p.32

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that conform to the priorities and needs of Palestinian society. Consequently, there is a disregard for urgently-needed laws at the expense of less-needed ones. Also noted is the tendency to embark on a certain legislative question, and then shift without concluding it to another question or area. This has resulted in incomplete and disrupted legislative packages incapable of achieving their objectives.

The President of the Palestinian National Authority approved four laws and referred three of them to the Legislative Council during 2003. Seven draft laws were approved by the Council and not ratified, the most important of which were the draft law on the Duties and Rights of Members of Parliament, the Draft Law on Amendments to the Law on Standards and Measurements No. 6 of 2000, and the Palestinian Child Law. Five draft laws were approved in their first reading.

### **8-2-2 Slight Improvement in Power of Legislative Authority**

Recent years witnessed a continuous retreat in the control exercised by the Legislative Council and its performance. Actually this role was semi-paralysed since the first year of Al-Aqsa *Intifada*. During 2002 the Palestinian Legislative Council was able to force the government to resign by threatening to withhold confidence, but aside from that did not exert any power worth mentioning. It was not able to approve the general budget for 2002. But during 2003 the Council was able to improve its role and function, for example by threatening to withdraw confidence from some ministers, and it was able to approve the general budget for 2003.

During 2003 three Palestinian governments were formed. The Legislative Council granted confidence to two of them – the Mahmoud Abbas government and Ahmed Qurie's government. The third government, which was considered an emergency one, was not presented to the Council for confidence. Also the Control and Human Rights Committee presented a report to the Council containing a set of recommendations among which was a proposal to withdraw confidence from two

ministers, Hisham Abdul Razzek and Abdul Karim Abu Salah, for meeting the Israeli Minister of Justice in occupied (East) Jerusalem. The Council closed the matter by accepting an apology from the two ministers, despite the fact that Minister Hisham Abdul Razzek did not attend the session. Also contained in the recommendations of the Control and Human Rights Committee was a stipulation concerning the International Palestine Bank, that the Chairman of the General Control Agency and the Governor of the Monetary Authority should appear before the Council for a vote of confidence. On the basis of this recommendation the Council decided in its session held on December 30 2003 that both the above-mentioned chairmen need to be approved by the Council, in accordance with Article 93 of the Basic Law.

### **8-2-3 Limited Judicial Achievements**

New developments occurred during 2003 with regard to the Judiciary. Most important among them were the appointment and promotion of some judges and assistant public prosecutors. The salaries of judges and members of the General Prosecutor's Office were increased in the wake of the application of the section dealing with financial questions of the 2002 Law on Judicial Authority. A new Prosecutor General was appointed, the Higher Judicial Council was recomposed, and the composition of other judicial bodies was altered. Courts and public prosecutor's offices were provided with new furniture and equipment, and some courts were moved to new modern buildings.

Among the important developments in 2003 was the dissolution of State Security Courts, which had been the subject of heated discussion and debates as to their constitutionality and the legality of their decisions.

Despite that, the Judicial Branch still suffers from tremendous difficulties resulting from the escalation of Israeli aggression. The reoccupation of most Palestinian cities and towns in the West Bank, the destruction of prisons, detention centres, police stations and the Palestinian security forces made the application of judicial decisions extremely

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difficult. The Judicial Authority also suffers from chronic internal problems in many areas. Judicial control of judges and courts remains absent, in addition to the disregard and lack of respect by the Executive Branch for some court decisions.

This situation has shaken citizens' confidence in the courts and the usefulness of resorting to them, especially in the light of absence of security, the 'chaos of arms' and taking the law into one's own hands. These phenomena have resulted in tens of Palestinian victims who were either killed or wounded for different reasons. Such events have led to reluctance by citizens to resort to courts to obtain justice. It also resulted in strengthening tribal courts and a decline in the general authority of the Judicial Branch.

#### **8-2-4 Slight Increase in Number Employed by Criminal Justice**

It was noted from data available from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics that there exists an acute shortage of staff in the judicial apparatus, which causes delays in the settlement of cases. This has led people to resort to tribal courts, or to look for alternatives or other solutions. Consequently, the importance of the number of functioning judges in Palestinian courts becomes evident. Until recent years almost no change occurred in the number of judges in the courts: in 1997 there were 68 male and female judges in all the courts; in 1998 the number became 69; in 1999 the number slightly declined to 67, and it further declined in 2000 to 66. By contrast the number of judges increased in 2001 to become 100 judges, 8 of them females, and remained stable in 2002. In 2003, 20 new justices of the peace were appointed and 10 were promoted. 10 others were promoted from judges at courts of the first instance to judges of first instance, and 2 new judges of first instance were appointed. 10 new Sharia judges were also appointed. Despite all these new appointments in the judicial system, the number of judges is still insufficient, and judges are required to serve increasing numbers of Palestinian citizens.

As regards the number of prosecutors, there were 44 in 1997, increasing to 45 in 1998, 55

in 1999 and 64 in 2000, all of them males. In 2001 and 2002 a slight increase occurred, to become 68 and 69 respectively. In 2003, 64 assistant prosecutors were appointed and 7 assistant prosecutors were promoted to prosecutors. Thus the number of prosecutors increased from 69 in 2002 to 97 in 2003. Despite the importance of these appointments, which filled vacancies in the Public Prosecutor's Office, they were not done in accordance with criteria of experience and efficiency. For these reasons voices were raised calling for a halt to appointments, and demanding the creation of a supervisory mechanism entrusted with control over appointments in the Public Prosecutor's Office.

#### **8-2-5 Retreat in Performance of Executive Branch Due to Israeli Repression**

The functioning of ministries, government institutions and the security apparatus was negatively affected by Israel's reoccupation of cities and towns in the West Bank. Most offices of the security apparatus were destroyed, and most of its members could not perform their duties for a long time. Despite that, some ministries were able to cope with the crisis well and succeeded in fulfilling an important portion of the work entrusted to them, for example the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and the Ministry of Health. But the performance by other ministries was not up to the required level. Many shortcomings appeared in the functioning of most government institutions during 2002, which continued during 2003. This was caused by an absence of coordination among institutions and poor financial and logistic means. It was also due to the size of human and material losses caused by Israeli repressive measures and continued attacks and raids against Palestinian cities and towns, especially Jenin, Nablus and many quarters in cities and refugee camps in the Gaza Strip.

New developments also occurred in 2003 that affected the performance of the Executive Branch. Most important among them was amendment of the Basic Law of the Palestinian National Authority, the creation of

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the post of Prime Minister, and elaboration of the amended law concerning the powers of the Prime Minister. The President of the Palestinian National Authority declared a state of emergency for a period of one month in the areas of the Palestinian authority, during which a narrow government known as 'Emergency Government' was formed. The cabinet was formed and reformed three times. Internal and international pressure on the Palestinian National Authority was intensified with the aim of introducing reforms on all levels - security, financial, administrative and judicial.

In this context the government took several steps during 2003 to rationalise the general administration and the civil service. In addition to the stipulations of the Basic Law concerning regulations that govern the creation of public institutions and appointment of their heads, the Executive announced the transfer of certain bodies and institutions to concerned ministries, such as the General Agency for Petroleum, the High Committee for Finance and Investment, the Airport Authority, the Sea Ports Authority, the Legislative and Legal Opinions Council, the intelligence apparatus, police and civil defence.

### **8-3 Crime and Victims Indicators<sup>16</sup>**

Data concerning crime and its victims provided by centres of statistics are considered highly important, as they provide an evaluation of legal progress and the internal security situation in a given country. For this reason, the agencies and bodies of the United Nations pay serious attention to these data. The sixth United Nations Conference on Methods of Preventing Crime and Dealing with Criminals in 1980 recognised the need for the international community to provide standard statistics concerning crime and systems of criminal justice (Resolution No.2) to allow comparison at the international level.

In Palestine the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics started to collect, classify and

publish statistical data on crime in mid-1996. The Bureau also started to conduct surveys regarding victims. The first such survey was conducted in Palestine in 1996, then again in 1999. It was expected that the surveys would be conducted every three years. The most important aspect of conducting such surveys is to know the size and distribution of crime, not from the institution that administratively records the crime but from the victims of the criminal acts.

#### **8-3-1 Increase in Number of Reported Crimes (1998-2003)**

The year 2003 witnessed a tangible increase in the number of reported crimes. Compared to previous years, 2003 witnessed 17,565 criminal acts as against 14,947 and 12,233 in 2001 and 2002 respectively. The number is close to reported criminal acts prior to the *Intifada*, when they were 21,426 in 1999 and 15,867 in 2000. This increase could be attributed to adaptation by the security apparatus to functioning in these complex circumstances, and to an increased inclination among citizens to report crimes to the security apparatus and seek their help in an atmosphere of increased deterioration of internal security. We see that reflected also in the increased number of arrested persons in prisons compared to 2002.

If we look at reported criminal acts in 2003 we find that assault and battery constituted 30.1%, stealing 20.5%, and fraud and forgery 12.9% of the total number of reported crimes. The rest of the criminal acts are either kidnapping, attempted kidnapping and causing injury, and threats, etc. It is noted that the crime of assault and battery was also highest on the list during recent years. It constituted 32.5%, 36.7%, 36.6%, 29.9% and 29.2% in 2002, 2001, 2000, 1999 and 1998 respectively. If we examine crimes related to money (theft, fraud and forgery) we find that they constituted 33.4% of the total number of reported crimes, as against 21.7% in 1999. This could be attributed to the increase in the deterioration of the inhabitants' economic conditions as a result of Israeli siege and aggression. According to the Palestinian police, crime in the Palestinian territories in general does not take the form of organised

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<sup>16</sup> This part depends on the data of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Databases on Crime and Victims, 2003, Ramallah

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crime. It is committed in a spontaneous manner against the background of bad economic conditions.

### **8-3-2 Number of Prisoners in Palestinian Prisons Increases**

The number of persons held in prisons in the West Bank and Gaza Strip was 3,121 during 2003; 28.2% of them were accused of assault, and 20.7% for theft. The number in 2002 was 2,378, 26.0% for assault and battery, and 22.2% for theft (see Chart 8-1 in Appendix)

### **8-3-3 Increase in Proportion of Sentenced Prisoners out of Total number of Prisoners (1996-2003)**

The number of sentenced prisoners in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 2003 was 1,164, compared to 711 in 2002. The number of sentenced prisoners in previous years was 1,686, 1,842, 1,871, 1,836 and 1,371 for the years 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000 and 2001 respectively.

Comparing those arrested with those sentenced during the same period we notice that 37.3% of arrested persons in 2003 appeared before the courts and were sentenced, while 29.9%, 31.6% and 31.2% appeared before the courts and were sentenced in 2002, 2001 and 2000 respectively (see Chart 8-2). The increase in the number of sentenced persons out of the total number of those arrested indicates an improvement in the performance of the judicial system and the security apparatus. The average monthly arrests in 2003 and 2002 were 260 and 198 persons respectively, compared to 676 and 631 persons in 1997 and 1999. This also applies to prisoners who were not sentenced. It is primarily due to the damage suffered by Palestinian security centres and prisons as a result of continuous Israeli bombardment during the *Al-Aqsa Intifada*, which created tremendous difficulties for keeping sentenced or arrested persons in prisons in secure places and safe conditions. At times the authorities were obliged to release them without completing the legal procedures. In addition, Palestinian police could not operate in these conditions outside area A because of Israeli obstacles. This resulted in strengthening the

role of tribal justice, reconciliation committees and other parties and organisations.

### **8-3-4 Decline in Number of Minors Committing Criminal Acts during 2002 and 2003**

The number of minors accused of committing criminal acts was 647 persons in 2003, 254 of them in the West Bank and the rest in the Gaza Strip. Only 5 of their number were females. In 2001 the number was 976 minors, 443 of them in the West Bank, and 533 in the Gaza Strip. The percentage of females was then 1.9%. In 2002, the number was 1,054 minors, 522 in the governorates of the West Bank and 532 in the Gaza Strip; the percentage of females was 2.5%.

As regards the family size and its relation to a minor's deviation, we saw that 58.7% of accused minors belonged to families composed of 8 persons and more, 33.9% belonged to families composed of 5-7 persons, and only 7.4% belonged to families composed of four persons and less.

The number of minors who were confined to correction institutions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip was 309 in 2003, 55 of them in the West Bank, and 254 in the Gaza Strip. 7.4% of them were females. The number was 248 in 2002, 60 of them in the West Bank and 188 in the Gaza Strip. 8.1% of them were females. Most of these minors were in the 16-18 years age group; their percentage was 60.2%, 65.3% and 63% in 2003, 2002 and 2001 respectively. Examining their educational level we note that 36.6% of minors confined to institutions in 2003 had finished basic school only.

### ***Remarks Concerning the Situation of Minors in Palestinian Territories***

1. There are no special courts for minors. Regular courts are transformed into minors' courts whenever they are required to review minors' cases. In addition, secrecy is not observed during trials of minors, as is required by international recommendations.
2. Minors held in correction institutions before trial are not separated from those minors who have been condemned and

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sentenced. This is a violation of United Nations' principles concerning the protection of minors.

3. Several different bodies refer minors to correction institutions, although such a measure is the competence of the courts only.

### **8-3-5 Continued Decline in Number of Cases Referred to Courts and Settled in West Bank and Gaza Strip During 2003**

The number of cases referred to different regular courts was 77,735 cases in 2003, whereas it was 51,012 in 2002. Comparing these figures to the number of cases that were reviewed and settled, it is noted that 75,403 and 46,385 cases were reviewed and settled in 2003 and 2002 respectively (See Chart 8-3).

Despite rising slightly in 2003 the percentage of reviewed and settled cases out of the total in the same year and those carried over from the previous year has visibly declined during the last five years. The percentage was: 39.4% in 2003, 28.5% in 2002, 45.6% in 2001, 49% in 2000 and 51.8% in 1999.

There is a large difference between the West Bank and Gaza in the percentage of cases reviewed and settled by the courts in 2003: 24.6% in the West Bank and 77.9% in the Gaza Strip. This is primarily due to obstacles created by occupation. Most of the cities, towns and villages in the West Bank were subjected to recurrent attacks and raids by the Israeli army in the wake of the attack during the so-called "Defensive Shield" operation in 2002 and the ensuing events. This is in addition to a poor distribution of judges. There are an equal number of judges in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, despite the big difference in size of population and the number of cases that are referred to courts in both regions. There is also an unequal distribution of judges among governorates, and in any case too few of them. Thus there are shortcomings in the judicial system, which can not tackle the number of cases referred to it.

### ***Most Important Obstacles Hindering Courts and Palestinian Judicial System***

A number of difficulties and obstacles exist that hinder the normal functioning of Palestinian courts and judicial system. Some are the result of conditions and situation that accompanied the events of Al-Aqsa *Intifada*; others existed before. The most important among them can be summarised as follows:

1. Differences exist in the legal and judicial system in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which is a most important difficulty for Palestinian courts and the judicial system in general. Legislation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip was part of two different legal systems, the former part of Jordan, and subject to Jordanian legislation, while the latter was under Egyptian military administration that maintained most of the British Mandate laws. The Palestinian Authority has taken some steps to unify the legislation dealing with formation and responsibilities of courts in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, but this action is still incomplete.

In June 2000 the President issued a Presidential decree with which he formed the Higher Judicial Council covering all governorates and ratified the law concerning the composition of regular courts of 2001. The Higher Judicial Council thus became the body responsible for affairs of the judicial system. This step constituted a very important development, despite the many obstacles the Council faces.

2. Israeli military orders hinder the progress and development of the judicial system. They have made the laws that existed void of content.
- 3- Continued interference by official and non-official judicial parties and persons in many questions related to citizens undermines the judicial system and the responsibilities of its concerned bodies.
- 4- There is still a shortage in the number of judges for the numerous cases referred to courts. For example, it was noted that in 2001, there were 100 judges who studied

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and passed sentences in 46,385 cases, i.e. an average of 464 cases for each judge.

- 5- Israeli sieges imposed on cities, towns and refugee camps caused difficulty of movement for judges, court staff, lawyers, parties to cases and witnesses. Also, the attacks and raids against most cities and towns in the West Bank led to relatively long paralysis of public and private institutions, including courts. This has led to delays in reviewing and settling cases.

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**SPECIAL DOSSIER**

**Government Programmes and Policies  
in the Social Field**



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This dossier contains a survey of government social policies and programmes that Ministries and government institutions are applying or preparing to apply. It offers an evaluation aimed at improving these policies in a manner that serves to consolidate societal development. The basis for that is the desire to provide the Palestinian person with a decent life based on expansion of choices and opportunities, through improving the quality of social services and making them available to everyone, especially those marginalised and less privileged in Palestinian society.

The data in the Dossier are drawn from documents, reports and publications by relevant ministries. Their internet Home Pages were also consulted. In addition, officials in ministries were interviewed in order to obtain information about their social policies and programmes.

Monitoring these policies and programmes was divided into eight main topics, each of which also reviews the obstacles that hinder the field's development and presents proposals for further development of work in the field.

## **1. Population Policies**

Population indicators are generally divided to general population indicators and special population indicators. The former are concerned with size of population, geographic distribution, age groups, gender classification, fertility and immigration levels and their basic trends. The latter are concerned with indicators relating to family, and cases of marriage and divorce.

Population growth continues to pose many challenges for developmental policy makers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, where at 3.4% in 2003 it was among the highest rates of increase in the world. Population breakdowns prepared by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics confirm the high fertility rate in the Palestinian Territories. By contrast the general trend for mortality rates tends to decline and life expectancy tends to rise. These factors combine to result in a rise in population growth, which requires social and economic policies to deal with it.

The fertility rate is affected by a number of factors such as social customs, the desire to have male offspring, age at marriage, the reproductive behaviour of women, the use of family planning methods and the policies adopted by the state with regard to family planning. Despite a slight decline in the fertility rate it remains high compared to levels in other countries. Results of the Health Survey for 2000 showed that the average fertility rate in the Palestinian territories was 5.92 babies – 6.81 babies in the Gaza Strip and 5.52 in the West Bank.

Estimates by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics indicate that there was a decline in the net birth rate during the second half of the last decade in the Palestinian territories. It was estimated to be 42.7 births for every 1000 inhabitants in 1997, declining to 39.2 births in 2003. It is expected that the decline will continue until it reaches 34.7 in 2010. This could be attributed to an increase in levels of education, especially among females, and the increased participation of women in the labour force. Improved health conditions and a rise in the percentage of those using family planning methods have also had a clear effect.

### **1.1 Government Population Policies in the West Bank and Gaza Strip**

Palestinian governmental institutions are a long way from effectively tackling population problems. Unlike many neighbouring Arab states, the Palestinian National Authority did not adopt direct population policies. The question of population is being indirectly tackled within the context of other sectors' development plans, such as health, education, social welfare and anti-poverty programmes.

Generally, we can clarify the Palestinian National Authority's general approach to population in the following points:

1. A tendency exists among Palestinian national institutions to combine population policies with other development strategies, in compliance with demands of donor parties that have experience and concerns in this field. Population growth must be taken into consideration when planning development and social welfare programmes by many ministries, in particular those of Education and Higher Education, Health and Planning.
2. Monitoring population factors and their interaction with general developmental policies is also currently being done in the framework of anti-poverty programmes. Plans for fighting poverty and unemployment cannot succeed without taking into consideration factors that influence population growth.
3. Similarly, attention is paid to some population problems in the framework of discussion of the needs of old people, and the social welfare programmes that deal with them.
4. The question is also dealt with through the attention being paid by government institutions concerned with inhabitants of poor areas, and the need to make available to them general services, appropriate infrastructure and reproductive health services.
5. Likewise, population factors are considered in the developmental planning of local communities.

### **Population considerations reflected in government programmes**

We can notice the consideration of population factors in certain activities and actions of Ministries. We cite here the following examples:

1. A department concerned with population policies was created at the Ministry of Planning, with the specific task to follow population questions from a developmental point of view and to incorporate them in its plans and their implementation.
2. Specific research studies concerning population conditions and future needs were conducted, especially related to people with limited income.
3. The five-year development plans of the Ministries of Education and Health both considered population growth factors, with regard to increasing the number of schools and classrooms and to quantitatively and qualitatively developing health services, with special attention being paid to questions of reproductive health.
4. The Palestinian Development Plan dealt with the development of the Palestinian countryside and population distribution in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.
5. The Urban Development Plan dealt with dimensional effects of population growth, population distribution and the distribution of services.
6. Some mechanisms were created to develop population policies in coordination with existing applied population programmes in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.
7. Some Ministries prepared sectoral planning concerning population growth and the environment, dealing with increasing agricultural production to meet food needs.

Despite the absence of a clear population policy, several programmes were directly implemented, such as:

- a. The creation of women's health and development sections in the Ministry of Health that deal with reproductive health.
- b. Training some specialists in questions of reproductive health.
- c. The creation of a Health Education Unit to run the health education programmes.
- d. The inclusion of population growth and its effects in educational curricula.
- e. Training programmes on population and development at Palestinian universities, such as the health and women's programmes.
- f. Training and study courses on population and development for different ministries and governmental and non-governmental institutions.

### **1.2 Difficulties and Obstacles in Achieving Expected Objectives**

1. Political conditions and the nature of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict make the presentation and adoption of population policies, especially concerning family planning, a very sensitive issue with

political dimensions. This distinguishes the Palestinian case from that of other Arab countries. Some consider the demographic dimension as one of the important ways of facing occupation and the policy of forced emigration.

2. There is insufficient financing for the continuation of projects and programmes related to population policies and programmes.
3. There is a shortage of experts in the Palestinian territories on questions of population and development policies.
4. The continuation of the present political situation will lead to the emergence of new deformities in population distribution, and the occurrence of forced internal and external migrations, due to continued Israeli settlement in the Palestinian territories, the building of the separation wall, and the scarcity of jobs in some areas, especially those that depended on Israeli labour markets.
5. There is a lack of research studies and projects specialising in the different aspects of population questions.

### **1.3 Priorities Related to Population**

1. Train cadres in the Palestinian territories on questions of population and development.
2. Confront direct and indirect forced migration resulting from economic conditions and the effect of the isolation wall.
3. Set up a National Population Committee, bringing together all parties involved in the development process, to prepare policies and programmes dealing specifically with population questions.
4. Appoint a population officer responsible for the administrative areas in the different governorates.
5. Strengthen the role of training on demographic questions, in order to create experts in the field.
6. Pay attention to problems of old people, whose number and needs will increase in coming years.
7. Extend assistance to people forced to migrate internally.
8. Extend support to Jerusalemites whose identity cards were withdrawn to deprive them of the right of residence in the city.
9. Incorporate considerations of demographic changes in all government policies and programmes.
10. Consolidate the capabilities of local bodies with regard to demographic questions.
11. Make preparations for the return of the refugees (or a proportion of them).

## **2. Gender Policies**

Historically, women and their role in development have been marginalised for cultural, social and political reasons. The role of women in the national struggle has been stressed by women's movements at the expense of specific gender issues. Since the beginning of the nineties, however, and especially after the creation of the Palestinian National Authority, increased attention has been paid to women's problems. Official and unofficial programmes have expanded, seeking to strengthen the role of women in development, consolidating their status, and increasing their integration in society.

Governmental and non-governmental institutions became more aware of the importance of women's integration in the development process. They sought to achieve such objectives as developing legal initiatives to consolidate women's rights, strengthening gender equality, confronting violence against women, facilitating educational services for women etc. Some achievements, though insufficient, have been made in this direction. The Basic Law stressed the legitimate rights of women to protection and social support. Some gender considerations were included in the Labour Law, the Civil Service Law and the Higher Education Law. Some positive policies in the fields of education, health and social welfare have been adopted. Special departments for women's issues have been set-up in all ministries, and a special unit for women's statistics has been created at the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. In addition, there are series of varied cultural, information and training campaigns and projects that have been carried out by government and civil society institutions that seek to develop gender relations and strengthen the status of women.

Despite many achievements by women's movements and Palestinian governmental and non-governmental institutions, these achievements remained fragmentary, lacking an organising element that can unify their efforts and capabilities in a set of practical policies, objectives and programmes. In this context, the importance of the Ministry of Women's Affairs comes to light. It was created in November 2003 to be the highest official government body to work for the progress of women at all levels.

The Ministry of Women's Affairs is specifically concerned with meeting the practical and strategic needs of Palestinian women, aiming to raise their living standards and consolidate their skills and capabilities. On this basis the Ministry approved a plan of action to be implemented through activities that contribute to developing the abilities of women in general and young women in particular. They seek to integrate this into a comprehensive national developmental framework.

The Ministry sought first to identify women's needs, with the aim of economically, socially, and politically empowering young women. It also set three priorities within the framework of a three-year plan, focusing on young women in poverty, especially providers for families, education and professional training, and tackling the problem of the marginalisation of women in policy planning and decision making. The aim is to create a legislative and policy framework conscious of women's issues and acting as a driving force for their progress in economic, educational and cultural fields, to enable them to reach policy and decision-making positions. To achieve these objectives, the Ministry's work was defined in three areas:

1. The first area is concerned with Ministry-related activities and derived from authority vested in it by the Government. It includes building human capabilities on the government level, developing government policies, integrating gender into the overall development process, and adopting a vision of positive discrimination in favour of women.
2. The second area is concerned with the interaction and coordination between the Ministry, other governmental institutions and civil society organisations. Important activities in this regard are national awareness campaigns, national and international conferences and cooperative ventures. In this framework integrated relations are formed between all sectors of society concerned with the issue of women and gender.
3. The third area deals with economic and training projects such as micro-credit schemes or the setting up of vocational training centres. The role of the Ministry is following up the final results and assessing the extent to which they contribute to realisation of the objectives of the three-point plan.

## **2.1 Proposals**

It is noted that the work done by government institutions to improve the position and role of women in society still needs further persistent efforts to reach the desired level. It is not enough to create women's departments in the ministries without activating them and incorporating the gender perspective into all policies, programmes and plans. Undoubtedly the creation of the Ministry for Women Affairs was a very important step, but it must be recognised that the Ministry is still new and lacks the experience and financial resources to influence policy makers in government, civil society and the private sector. We present in this context a number of new proposals, and reaffirm others contained in the Ministry's draft action plan:

1. Strengthen coordination between all women's and other related civil society organisations to form an institutionalised pressure group capable of influencing society, politically and economically.
2. Monitor and evaluate legislation, proposing alternatives to laws which contain social, economic, political and cultural discrimination against women. Propose amendments to ensure ministerial plans and policies are gender sensitive.
3. Provide technical support and training to government cadres on questions of gender, including the different security bodies and the judicial system.

4. Develop, in cooperation with concerned government and civil society institutions, programmes which aim to increase society's awareness of the problems and needs of women, especially marginalised groups such as the unemployed, the poor, etc.
5. Elaborate plans and policies to increase female participation in educational and vocational training programmes. Also develop programmes supportive of women's economic position, such as lending programmes.

### **3. Education Policies**

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education elaborated a five-year plan that aims to raise the level of the Palestinian educational system. Its objectives were in conformity with the Dakar Action Framework, adopted by the World Education Forum, which fixed the general aim 'Education is a right for all'. The Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education support this aim and intend to apply it to Palestine. Its philosophy regards education as an important tool in creating a spirit of patriotism, inculcating decent values and conduct in society, and consolidating democratic principles. It is also an important instrument in social and economic development and is a continuous process, carried out in association with all groups in society.

Based on this the Ministry fixed policies for developing the education sector, including both academic and vocational branches. These can be summarised as follows:

1. Develop integrated and comprehensive policies in the areas of child care and protection, especially in the period of early childhood and school.
2. Provide education possibilities for all children, including those with special needs and those in rural areas, in all circumstances, including emergency ones.
3. Assure comprehensive education for children in all fields: development, health, educational and psychological.
4. Improve the quality of schooling and teaching in order to achieve outstanding knowledge and job skills for all.
5. Develop the administrative, financial and planning systems at all educational levels.
6. Endeavour to increase student enrolment in vocational education and different professional fields in accordance with the local market's needs.
7. Develop the role of local communities and raise awareness about the problems and needs of young children, as well as those in basic and adult education.
8. Develop skills and human resources in accordance with the needs and requirements of society, staying up-to-date with the latest knowledge.

Education is to be regarded as a social investment which helps in the realisation of society's aims and aspirations. Spending on it is not a burden on society's resources, but an investment which has a social and economic yield. Education in general, and higher education in particular, is a mechanism for developing and transforming societies, enabling them to occupy outstanding cultural, economic and social positions regionally and internationally. The higher education sector must be dealt with as a unified system and not simply as a collection of educational establishments. It is necessary to deal with these establishments as places for teaching, producing knowledge, and for developing human resources.

The goal of higher education, regardless of the institute that provides it and the level, is to develop thought, spirit and applied skills. The general policies and aims of the higher education sector can be summarised as follows:

1. Elaborate and develop financial policies regarding higher education institutes, and the sector as a whole, to assure continuity and progress.
2. Improve the quality of higher education in accordance with requirements and the spirit of the times.
3. Improve and develop the administrative apparatus of the institutes of higher education.

4. Focus on scientific research as a component of higher education, and endeavour to achieve integration of its findings and their transmission.
5. Deepen interaction between Palestinian higher education institutions and the Palestinian private sector.

Based on this vision and its policies, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education endeavoured to implement programmes and undertake activities which enable it to realise the required objectives.

### **3.1 Programmes and Activities**

The Palestinian Ministry of Education endeavoured to assure the continuity of the educational process in the schools it runs. It has also tried to reduce the over-crowdedness of classes and reduce the student-teacher ratio. Consequently it employed large numbers of teachers annually to meet the needs created by the natural growth in the number of students at schools. It also built new schools, especially in new communities previously without them, as well as new classrooms at existing schools to solve the problem of overcrowding.

The Ministry also endeavoured to develop the curriculum based on a Palestinian vision of education, and was able to gradually introduce it in government schools. The new curriculum will be authorised for all classes starting in the school year 2005-2006. The Ministry also worked to develop a system whereby it could measure the degree of student achievement. Students are examined at different levels to ascertain the degree of their absorption of knowledge, in order to control the quality of teaching and education.

The Ministry created programmes for training teachers employed in the government education system, especially after the introduction of the new Palestinian curriculum, the aim being to raise the level and quality of education through improving the skills of the teaching staff. The Ministry trains a large number of teachers every year in the use of the new curriculum and the desired objectives of its contents.

The Ministry fixed in its five-year plan a number of programmes and activities of a developmental nature with regard to the education sector. It included schemes related to developing the infrastructure of the educational sector. It also fixed programmes related to the development of human cadres and programmes to develop organisational and administrative procedures, both of educational establishments and of the Ministry itself. The Ministry also seeks to develop the legal and legislative aspects of the Palestinian educational sector.

On the level of infrastructure, the Ministry worked (in cooperation with other institutions) to build a number of schools and classrooms. It was also able to provide a number of schools with computer and science laboratories and libraries, and is seeking to provide all schools with such facilities in the future. It should be noted here that the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people during the Al-Aqsa *Intifada* limited the Ministry's ability to implement, as envisaged, its five-year plan. The Ministry was forced to concentrate on mitigating the consequences of this aggression, which caused damage to a number of schools and completely destroyed several.

As regards the development of human resources, the Ministry was able to organise a large number of training courses for teaching staff. However, the Ministry considers that the achievements so far are insufficient, and there is a need to organise more training courses in the future. The Ministry could not organise training courses in the fields of administration and finance for school principals.

On the level of higher education institutions, Palestinian universities were able to ensure continuity in providing educational services to students. Some universities introduced MA programmes in several fields. But these universities were unable to develop, as desired, their centres of research and knowledge output.

In cooperation with higher education institutions, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education managed to establish a fund for providing loans to students. The fund is now in operation, and has provided numerous loans to students at different institutions. This is in addition to the programmes of assistance and scholarships provided by the institutions in cooperation with other bodies, and the Ministry's programme of scholarships which allows university students to continue their studies at Arab and foreign universities.

### **3.2 Obstacles and Difficulties Faced by the Palestinian Education Sector**

The Palestinian education sector, both at the school and higher education levels, suffers from serious obstacles and difficulties that limit its progress and development. These can be summarised as follows:

1. Aggressive measures used by the Israeli occupation against Palestinian society. Israel's aggression caused large scale damage, physically and educationally, to many kindergartens, schools, and institutions of higher education. Many experienced destruction of some of their facilities as a result of Israeli bombardment. In addition, the whole educational process suffered long interruptions due to closures and siege imposed by the Israeli occupation forces on the Palestinian territories, and as a result of the policy of isolating regions and communities from each other.
2. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education suffers from shortage of funds. This curtails its ability to develop the educational sector and provide necessary cadres for the different levels of the educational process. Furthermore, the institutions of higher education suffer from a big shortage of financing, which hinders their efforts at developing their work and raising their standards.
3. Natural population growth is a big challenge for the development of the education sector, as it requires increasing the infrastructure and the human resources to match it. This places heavy financial and administrative burdens on the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, and the educational institutions themselves.
4. The increase in demand for higher education in Palestine, and the budget deficit in these institutions, resulted in lowering standards of education and of related services. It also led to a decline in scientific research output. The role of universities became confined to teaching at the expense of research and knowledge output.
5. Poor coordination between institutions engaged in the education sector is an impeding factor that limits the possibilities of progress and development in this sector. In this context, relations between institutions of higher education and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education becomes an important question that must be tackled. Poor coordination has led to duplication of many specialisations and wasted financial resources. One example of this is the poor conformity of Palestinian higher education output to the needs of the local market.
6. The education sector suffers from the absence of legislation and appropriate regulations to develop the content of the different levels of education – pre-school, school and higher education – in accordance with the objectives of the Ministry's vision and the national outlook for development and progress of the Palestinian education system.
7. The education sector, especially at school and pre-school levels, suffers from the presence of a number of teachers who are not of the required level. This undoubtedly affects the quality of education they administer to their students.
8. In general, the biggest problem faced by the Palestinian education sector is the question of quality. At a time when quantitative indicators reflect an ongoing improvement, all those employed in the education system agree on the low level of the quality of education provided at different levels.

### **3.3 Proposals**

The development of the Palestinian education sector – both its school and university branches – requires efforts to introduce changes in different areas to enable the sector to play its desired role, to

contribute to human development and strengthen social capital in Palestine. These can be summarised as follows:

1. Development of the Palestinian education sector requires endeavours to develop the infrastructure at all levels, as the whole education sector suffers from a shortage of educational facilities – classrooms, laboratories, libraries and others.
2. It is necessary to allocate a bigger budget for education in Palestine, as this sector suffers from a serious financial crisis, especially the higher education sector.
3. It is necessary to take into consideration the high natural population growth in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and consequently the increased demand for enrolment in educational institutions at all levels. Such a situation requires an increase in the number of educational institutions and their facilities as well as an increase in the number of people employed in education.
4. Attention must be paid both to increasing the number of people engaged in education (both school and higher education levels), and to improve the level of professional skills through the organisation of training courses, workshops etc.
5. Coordination between various bodies engaged in the education sector in Palestine, especially institutions related to higher education, should be improved to consolidate development opportunities and prevent duplication and waste.
6. Endeavour to encourage enrolment in vocational education, so that educational outputs may conform to market needs. This is to be done by increasing the number of institutions, programmes, and qualified teachers in vocational education.
7. Develop and activate appropriate legislation and organisational regulations to raise the efficiency of the Palestinian education system and improve its quality.

#### **4. Health Policies**

Policies adopted by the Palestinian governmental health sector are based on general basic principles defined by the Palestinian Ministry of Health in the National Strategic Health Plan for 1999-2003. These can be summarised as follows:

1. All Palestinians, regardless of their geographic location and financial situation have the right to receive health services as required, which should be appropriately and equally distributed.
2. Health care should be of high quality. The development of health services is a basic necessity for improving the population's health conditions and thus the economic benefit of health services.
3. Continuity. The Palestinian inhabitant's health is a basic national social objective, and an integral part of the National Strategy for Sustained Human Development.

The Ministry adopted, in this framework, the international commitment of health for all, with appropriate cultural modifications to suit local Palestinian conditions. Due to this commitment, and stemming from the basic general principles of the health sector, the Ministry elaborated a set of policies to develop the sector. They are policies which require a series of programmes and activities aiming to assure continuity and consolidation, while laying the foundations for future development.

The Ministry of Health called for preparing and implementing widespread integrated health programmes and services in the health sector, coordinating them as much as possible with allied social and economic sectors. The Ministry deems that the development and growth of the health sector in conformity with the international commitment of 'Health for All' requires the elaboration of clear and specific policies, out of which flow programmes and activities. The Ministry recognises that this requires a high degree of coordination between the Ministry itself and the private and civil society health institutions and UNRWA, as they are main parties involved in the Palestinian health care system. The Ministry also endeavoured to elaborate series of general policies for the Palestinian health sector and a set of programmes and activities that allow it to realise them.

The Ministry defined the policies it pursues in the framework of a Palestinian national vision of health development, which takes into consideration the health needs of the population, the available resources and the present health apparatus. That was done in the framework of the National Strategic Health Plan for 1999-2003. These policies include the following:

1. Improve the efficiency and usefulness of the organisational structure, so as to develop the health systems in an integral form through the whole health sector.
2. Strengthen the sustained development of human resources in areas that need development, including health administration, supportive services, organisational planning and research development, health economics, continuous health education, care quality, public health, and computerised administrative data systems.
3. Develop the quality of health services at all levels, while assuring equality at the same time, by expanding the availability of appropriate health care, especially in rural and deprived areas.
4. Apply a continuous system of control and evaluation of the Ministry's plans, and amend them according to changing circumstances.
5. Reform the system of health financing, and adopt appropriate systems of recovery of expenses and health insurance, with the aim of improving the possibilities of financial sustainability and efficiency.
6. Use the whole capacity of the existing primary health care services, put an end to the unnecessary use of the care system, and develop services at the secondary and tertiary levels.
7. Organise and manage the activities and programmes of technical assistance from donors in accordance with Palestinian needs and expectations.
8. Elaborate a practical system for coordination, cooperation and consensus between the public sector and other concerned bodies such as civil society organisations, UNRWA, the private sector and society in general, with the aim of avoiding duplication and unnecessary expenditure.

#### **4.1 Health Programmes and Services**

The Ministry of Health is implementing many programmes in the framework of providing health services to citizens in general. Among these are preventative programmes, with the free vaccination programme for all children, a health education programme for Palestinian families and individuals, and a system for monitoring epidemic diseases.

The health services programmes are many and varied. The Ministry provides primary health services in all Palestinian areas, and seeks to ensure that all communities receive them. The Ministry also has programmes specialised in women's health, reproductive health, mothers and early childhood care. It also provides laboratory services which are distributed in various geographic areas. All hospitals have blood banks. In addition, the Ministry has a health insurance programme that benefits three quarters of Palestinian families in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The Ministry provides a reasonable basket of services, quantity-wise, and endeavours to maintain sufficient stocks of medicines. However, the Ministry itself acknowledges the poor quality of services available in the insurance basket.

The Ministry of Health continued to provide basic services after the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa *Intifada*, despite many of the programmes being affected as a result of the Israeli aggression against Palestinian society. The Ministry had prepared a five-year plan to develop the Palestinian health sector over the period 1999-2003 which it actually started implementing, but Israeli measures impeded many of the programmes. The Israeli aggression turned much of the work of the Ministry of Health into adapting to the emergency situation and the enormous pressure on this sector resulting from the huge number of wounded, injured, disabled and martyrs. This is in addition to large scale destruction of the health sector's infrastructure.

The Ministry endeavoured, in the framework of policies and goals it set for itself in its five-year plan, to promote a set of programmes in accordance with a strategic developmental vision of the health sector. These included programmes to improve the infrastructure of the health sector, programmes to improve its human resources, and programmes to promote its administrative and organisational

structure. The Ministry also seeks to develop the legal and legislative environment of the health sector.

On the level of infrastructure, the Ministry endeavoured to restore and reconstruct some primary and secondary health centres and improve others. It also built new sections such as laboratories, administrative buildings and others in some existing health facilities to cover shortages in some services. After the outbreak of Al-Aqsa *Intifada* the Ministry focused on health centres and facilities that were damaged by Israeli aggression. In this context, the Ministry sought to increase the number of hospital beds available to meet increased demand. The Ministry also endeavoured to provide supportive services such as laboratories, blood banks, x-rays, pharmaceutical services and others, taking into consideration fairness in geographic distribution.

To achieve this higher degree of justice in geographic distribution of health services, the Ministry sought to build primary health centres in communities that have none, especially in rural areas. In the wake of the outbreak of *Intifada*, the Ministry focused on remote communities, the inhabitants of which have especial difficulty in reaching available services in other communities in the wake of the sieges and closures imposed by the Israeli occupation forces.

The Ministry endeavoured to promote and strengthen programmes for the development of human resources, especially in areas of training, be it technical, administrative or organisational. This is to be ongoing for all health professionals during their period of service. The Ministry also sought to establish and develop facilities concerned with improvement of human resources.

On the level of the administrative and organisational structure of the health sector, The Ministry sought to develop coordination between organisations involved, especially non-governmental health organisations. The Ministry is seeking to create an effective national framework to coordinate the management of this sector in harmony with all related parties. The Ministry is also working on the creation of a database for the health sector, seeking to develop it in a manner that contributes to health planning, project management, and the establishment of measurable standards to control and evaluate activities and programmes. This requires a proper system of data sharing for the process of planning and policy elaboration.

Overall, the Palestinian Ministry of Health tried to implement programmes both of a direct service nature and others of a developmental character to raise the level of the Palestinian health system. But their implementation faced many difficulties and obstacles which prevented the attainment of the desired goals in the timeframe set by the Ministry.

## **4.2 Obstacles and Difficulties Facing the Palestinian Health Sector**

Despite important achievements in the Palestinian health sector in the wake of the creation of the Palestinian National Authority, the complexity of the political situation in Palestine and the absence of economic stability have created tremendous obstacles for the realisation of objectives and policies set by the Ministry. The achievements were reflected in the improvement of major health indicators, progress in the health sector's structure, advances in human resources, an increase in volume of health services and an increase in health insurance coverage. However, the Israeli occupation imposes special problems for the Palestinian health sector. It requires the sector to respond to the division of the Palestinian territories, the isolation of cities and towns from their rural surroundings and the separation of Palestinian governorates from each other. Timely access to appropriate services, especially primary and preventative health services, is disrupted. One consequence of this is reflected in the relatively high cost of some health services, as a result of the difficulty of rationally distributing important and scarce specialisations between health facilities.

It can be said that the political situation and the absence of control by the Palestinian National Authority of the land and natural resources constitutes one of the most important obstacles impeding development of the health sector. It makes health planning a complicated task, and the future of health services unpredictable. The separation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip prevents the integration of the

health services. The isolation of Jerusalem, which contains important Palestinian health establishments, further complicates the problem. The serious effect of such negative factors on the opportunities to develop the health situation in the Palestinian territories sharply increased during the present Palestinian *Intifada*.

Other obstacles that negatively affect the Palestinian health sector are the poor infrastructure of the sector itself, the difference in quality of services and their administration in different regions and to different strata of the population, the unorganised growth of the private sector, the absence of a long-term strategic vision of progress for the health sector, the absence of a rational financial policy in this domain, the predominance of therapeutic medicine at the expense of preventative medicine, and poor coordination among different providers of health services.

Important achievements have been realised in overcoming those obstacles but they continue to affect, to varying degrees, the effectiveness of the health sector's performance.

### **4.3 Proposals**

Endeavours aiming to develop the Palestinian health sector demand that several changes are carried out in this domain to improve the quality of services and their availability to inhabitants. The required changes can be summarised as follows:

1. Endeavour to improve and develop the Palestinian health sector's infrastructure, by increasing the number of health centres and equipping them with the necessary medical instruments.
2. Ensure a just distribution of health services among communities, in a way that facilitates their accessibility and takes into consideration the effect of Israeli measures and the separation of regions and communities from each other.
3. Endeavour to organise the private sector's growth in the health sector through the enactment of special regulations and legislation and applying a system of control. The aim is to guarantee the availability of health services at reasonable cost and high quality.
4. Develop financial policies in order to enhance the efficiency of the system and rationalise consumption, so that savings may be used to develop the infrastructure and raise the quality of health services.
5. Develop the systems of preventative medicine through promotion of the vaccination policy and the expansion of health education and guidance programmes.
6. Raise the level of coordination between different bodies and organisations involved in the health sector to assure just distribution and improved availability of high-quality services.
7. Develop the capabilities and efficiency of employees in the health sector and attract excellent professionals, especially in scarce specialisations.
8. Endeavour to draft and enact health legislation and laws dealing with health insurance and the Palestinian Medical Board, so as to guarantee respect of proper health standards and the availability of high quality services.

## **5. Social Protection and Welfare Sector**

The Palestinian National Authority's ministries involved in the domain of social protection and care had to respond to two important challenges after the creation of the Authority in 1994. The first challenge was represented by the need to tackle the aftermath of Israeli occupation, which both increased social needs and destroyed the institutions to meet them. The second challenge was for the new institutions created after the Oslo accords to develop and implement the necessary social policies while still being prevented from effectively doing so by continued Israeli control and aggression.

This section reviews the current and planned programmes and policies being applied by the Ministries of the Palestinian National Authority in the area of social protection and welfare, and the steps being taken by them in order to develop their work in the future. They are divided into two parts: the first is

policies and assistance programmes directed at poor and marginalised sections of society, and the second are programmes and policies related to the labour market.

## **5.1 Social Assistance**

This is the main programme in this domain, and seeks to provide cash and in-kind assistance to the poorest sections in Palestinian society. The Ministry of Social Affairs covers the biggest part of beneficiaries of the governmental social support programme, and is the major governmental body responsible for the care of the needy groups.

### **5.1.1 Programmes of the Ministry of Social Affairs**

The Ministry of Social Affairs defined the nature of its work, when the Palestinian National Authority was created, as focusing on alleviating poverty and caring for marginalised sections of society. The work of the Ministry remains closer to this role than its aspiration to transform itself into a Ministry for Social Development, despite some important achievements in this regard. The Ministry is considered the main arm of the social welfare system in the Palestinian territories.

The following is a review of the most important programmes of the Ministry of Social Affairs in the domain of social protection and welfare:

#### **1. Poor Families Assistance Programme**

Through the Poor Families Assistance Programme the Ministry of Social Affairs provides assistance to nearly 3.5% of the total number of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Cash assistance is provided according to a progressive scale that takes into consideration the number of family members and starts with 110 Shekels per person per month. The scale was approved by the Ministry of Social Affairs in 1995 and has not changed since that time, despite the big decline in the Shekel's purchasing power. The value of any assistance from the World Food Programme and UNRWA are calculated as family income, and consequently deducted from the amount of assistance received. The Ministry has drawn up new regulations to develop the system of assistance provided to poor families which are being discussed by the concerned authorities.

Assistance provided by the Ministry includes monthly cash help, food allocations, shelter, health insurance, and services and care for old and disabled people, minors and orphans. Most of the Ministry's assistance is in cash, which constitutes four fifths of the cases receiving assistance from the Ministry.

The Ministry of Social Affairs focuses on providing assistance in all cases of extreme poverty, and in particular where any of the following are found to have insufficient income: widows and widowers, old people, physically or psychologically sick persons, the disabled, the deaf, dumb or blind, families with imprisoned or absent husbands, divorcees, abandoned women and spinsters, orphans, and illegitimate children. Limited help is provided in cases of family or housing problems, if the head of a family is drug addict, or in cases of multiple births. (Ministry of Social Affairs, 2003)

#### **2. Conditional Assistance Programmes**

This programme was initiated during Al-Aqsa *Intifada* and is being implemented in cooperation between the World Bank and the Ministry of Social Affairs and in coordination with the Palestinian Ministries of Education and Health. It is a temporary programme (four years, renewable). It is directed to the poorest families which receive limited support from other programmes and have lost their source of income over a long period of time. The programme provides cash assistance to beneficiary families on condition that they meet the following conditions (Al-Aridi, 2003):

- Send children under 7 years of age to primary health-care centres to monitor their growth and make sure that they receive the necessary vaccinations.
- Send children 6-8 years of age to school.
- Attend guidance classes dealing with problems of importance to the family.

The Programme seeks to provide assistance to 30% of the poorest families in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and contribute to improving their income. It focuses on the following groups: old people, disabled, those suffering from chronic ailments, and female-headed households. (Al-Aridi, 2004).

### **3. Poverty Fund**

The Ministry of Social Affairs introduced a plan for the Poverty Fund in 1999, drawing up its special regulations in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The Fund aims to introduce a qualitative change in the Ministry's mechanism for alleviating and fighting poverty by the use of developmental means and is based on a tri-partite partnership – government, private sector and civil society – in order to achieve higher efficiency in its administration. However, the Fund's operations were not launched. The Ministry instead provides some limited services similar to those of the proposed Fund, such as contributing to the employment of some poor persons, especially women, and encouraging self-employment.

The UNDP donated US\$400 thousand, which was invested in two directions: a women's training centre in the Gaza Strip run by the Ministry of Social Affairs, and small loans schemes, aiming to benefit poor female-headed households in particular. The Ministry of Social Affairs evaluated the programme with the aim to benefit from the experience and develop it.

#### ***5.1.2 Institution for Care of Martyrs' Families and Wounded***

The Institution for Care of Martyrs' Families and the Wounded provides monthly cash assistance to families of martyrs and to wounded persons according to a scale that takes into consideration family size. In general, the amount of assistance is small. In addition the families of martyrs and wounded are provided with health insurance. The Institution takes care of the affairs of the families of martyrs and the wounded both in Palestine and in the Diaspora.

#### ***5.1.3 Ministry of Waqf Programme***

The Ministry of Waqf (Religious Endowments) controls and supervises the work of the *Zakat* Committees through the *Zakat* Fund at the Ministry. The Ministry sponsors programmes of caring for orphans, and a programme called 'From Family to Family'. The Ministry of Waqf seeks to develop the system of family sponsorship, which is basically financed by the Arab Gulf, and aims at sponsoring poor families in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The Ministry launched this programme during the Al-Aqsa *Intifada*.

The *Zakat* Committees at the Ministry promote the Orphans' Sponsorship Programme, which is one of their most important. It provides care to thousands of Palestinian orphans by providing monthly cash assistance, in addition to assistance in kind provided on different occasions.

The Ministry of Waqf implements limited women's training programmes, especially for widows. They are trained in professions that help them to earn their living at the Ministry's training centres or centres run by the *Zakat* committees.

#### ***5.1.4 Ministry for Prisoners' Affairs***

The Ministry for Prisoners' Affairs provides services to Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails. It provides them with money for the canteen (basic necessities) inside the prisons, and their families with monthly cash assistance according to a system that takes into consideration the size of the family the prisoner used to provide for. The Ministry also administers another programme directed at liberated prisoners. In accordance with this programme the Ministry helps the freed prisoner to be integrated in society, through a package of services which includes vocational training in such fields

as driving, car repair, technical drawing, computer skills etc. Small loans are provided to liberated prisoners to start a small project, university scholarships are offered, and a contribution is made to health insurance (half the value of government health insurance).

## **5.2 Other Programmes of the Ministry of Social Affairs**

### **5.2.1 Women's Centres**

The Ministry has two women's centres in the Gaza Strip that enable women to start self-employment projects, provide vocational training and assist women to find employment. The Ministry seeks to develop those centres in the framework of a Canadian project that includes a series of activities aimed at increasing the empowerment of Palestinian women (in general, and not only the poor) in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

### **5.2.2 Programme for the Disabled**

The Ministry administers seven training centres for the disabled in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Of the four in the West Bank, two have training courses; one in Al-Khalil providing training in shoe making, and the other in Nablus providing various training courses. This is in addition to Al-Alai School for the Blind in Bethlehem and the Dar Al-Bida for the mentally retarded in Salfit. There are also three centres in the Gaza Strip, one in Gaza, one in Khan Younis and a third in Deir Al-Balah. The Ministry is also presently seeking to establish two new centres, one in Gaza and the other in Nablus, to meet the increase in the number of disabled in the West Bank and Gaza Strip during the *Al-Aqsa Intifada*.

The Ministry of Social Affairs already drew up the regulations for the Law on the Disabled, and is following the application of their rights as stipulated in the Law.

The Ministry is seeking to issue an authorised 'Disabled Card' that assures a number of rights and facilities for a disabled person, enabling them to access public services, and providing them a better chance of benefiting from services of public institutions.

### **5.2.3 Elderly Care Programme**

The Ministry of Social Affairs is making efforts to meet the different needs of old people. In addition to cash and in-kind assistance and health insurance it seeks to improve the level of services provided to them through the use of specialists. But so far it provides these services through the social workers themselves, and on a limited scale. The Ministry's programme includes providing services to the aged in their homes, and social communication with them, as well as providing them with hot meals. The Ministry supervises old people's homes, and runs one home for incapacitated old people in Jericho.

### **5.2.4 Early Childhood Programme**

The Ministry of Social Affairs supervises nurseries, and is seeking to develop correct standards that guarantee a proper environment for children with regard to healthy standards of homes and services provided. The Ministry supervises programmes to raise the level of qualifications of women working in this field.

The Childhood Directorate at the Ministry implemented the Programme for Social and Psychological Support to Children during the *Al-Aqsa Intifada*, in cooperation with other governmental and civil society institutions and with the support of UNICEF. The programme included providing individual support services to families and children that suffered direct Israeli repression, such as families living close to areas of engagement with Israeli settlements or camps, or areas that were subjected to bombardment, incursions and curfews, and families that suffered direct attacks such as home demolition, or the killing, wounding or arrest of one of their members. The programmes include providing collective support services at schools and organising entertainment and educational programmes that help children to unburden themselves.

### **5.2.5 Minors Rehabilitation Programmes**

The Ministry of Social Affairs administers correction and rehabilitation centres for delinquent children. A set of regulations serving as a legal basis for administering these centres were elaborated. The Ministry's philosophy in its endeavours in this field is based on the rehabilitation of these young people and their reintegration in society.

The Ministry administers 12 such youth rehabilitation centres, five of them in the Gaza Strip. These centres provide training courses in carpentry, iron-work, painting, tailoring, cosmetics, car upholstery, photography, electronics, secretarial work, home economics, etc. Children of poor families who went off the rails and dropped out from regular education benefit from the services of these centres which aim at improving the chances of these children to obtain an appropriate profession.

## **5.3 Social Protection Programmes Related to the Labour Market,**

### **1. Retirement and Pensions**

The Palestinian National Authority provides a pension scheme for its employees based on the deduction of a percentage of the employee's monthly salary (10% for those on the Gaza payroll, and 2.5% in the West Bank) during the whole period of service. The Palestinian National Authority unified all pension regulations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in the framework of the Retirement and Pension Fund.<sup>1</sup> This is administered by an independent committee and is calculated on the basis of years of service and final salary.

### **2. Social Security**

The President of the Palestinian National Authority issued the Social Security Law in 2003. According to this law a Social Security Institution was set up, whose aim is to administer the Insurance Fund. The Palestinian Ministry of Labour elaborated the organisational regulations for applying the law in 2004, and the management bodies of the Institution were defined and named. But the Institution remains in the stage of formation, and consequently the law has not been applied.

The Social Security Institution is dedicated to providing protection to workers in the private sector, including work accident insurance, old-age insurance, and insurance in case of natural disability and death. The law is based on an insurance financing system by the beneficiary, whereby a certain percentage is deducted every month from the wage of the employee or worker according to a specified system.

## **5.4 Palestinian National Authority's Drive to Develop Social Protection**

The Ministry of Social Affairs, the main government body working in this field, defined its mission as seeking to achieve social security for every Palestinian family. This is to be done on the basis of equality, and in a process of coordination between governmental and non-governmental sectors. This means creating a social security net that guarantees a reasonable level of welfare to every member of society and assures social protection for all citizens. This is the long-term objective which the Ministry strives to achieve by improving its performance, developing the components of social security, raising the level of the social support system, and developing the performance of social welfare agencies (Palestinian Ministry of Planning, 2004).

The Ministry of Social Affairs defined medium range policies and measures to achieve its aim of transforming itself into a Ministry for Social Development. Some of the policies and measures were reviewed earlier, such as the Poverty Fund, the 'Disabled Card' etc.

The vision of the Ministry to develop this sector is based on the following mechanisms: (Al-Aridi, 2004)

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<sup>1</sup> The unification process was not completed. A large number of employees in the West Bank are still subject to the old pension system.

- Creation of the social security system
- Anti-poverty Fund
- Employment and Social Protection Fund (this is a Ministry of Labour project to fight unemployment)
- Social assistance system related to the poverty line
- Conditional assistance system
- Disabled Card' system
- National Palestinian Council for Social Protection Institutions, aiming to unify efforts in this domain
- The Ministry of Social Affairs and related Ministries are applying these mechanisms to different degrees. But they are generally slow.

The Ministry of Planning, in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice, elaborated a national employment and job creation strategy, which was ratified by the Council of Ministers in 2004.

### **5.5 Obstacles Impeding Development of the Social Protection and Care Sector**

- The Ministry of Social Affairs deems that the most important obstacle impeding the implementation of these mechanisms is the absence of appropriate funds. Its allocations in the general budget are small, and declining in relative terms.
- General political and economic circumstances that led to impoverishment have resulted in the existence of very high levels of poverty, which means increased demand for services and assistance from the Ministry and other governmental bodies active in this field.
- Poor coordination and cooperation among bodies active in this field, including governmental bodies.
- Poverty of cadres, numerically and qualification-wise. The Ministry is seeking to provide its services through teams specialised in different aspects of activities, but it lacks the appropriate human resources in many fields, such as care of the elderly and the disabled.

### **5.6 Proposals**

The Ministry of Social Affairs has a clear vision of what its role in the future should be, i.e. transforming itself to a Ministry for Social Development. But its advance in this direction is still slow, impeded by many obstacles listed above. In order to achieve it, it is necessary to speed up the implementation of the Ministry's programmes and projects in the field of care and protection, namely:

1. Speed up the elaboration of organisational regulations of the Ministry's activities in the different fields, and also the elaboration of appropriate legislation, especially governing social assistance, the Poverty Fund, and the Social Security Law, among others.
2. Speed up reform of the social assistance system, by tying it to the poverty line, improving the quality of services and assistance provided, and enlarging the circle of beneficiaries.
3. Speed up the operation of the Poverty Fund and assure the necessary requirements for it, which will help improve the conditions of poor families through making use of their capabilities and skills.
4. Promote the role of the Ministry of Social Affairs in social guidance through information activities, lectures, seminars, workshops, leaflets and others, in order to achieve changes in the public's awareness of certain social issues such as fighting poverty, women's problems, drugs etc.
5. Raise the level of coordination between bodies involved in social care and protection, and improve the planning capabilities in this field. This is to be done through developing the human resources involved in planning and creating a national data base of information for use by those concerned.
6. Develop the work of the Ministry of Social Affairs in the field of social care through developing specialised human resources in the different fields of the Ministry's activities: old people, children with problems, psychological and social support etc. The circle of the Ministry's work with those

groups has to be enlarged, and its control of civil society and private institutions active in this field has to be based on clear organisational regulations.

## 6. Labour Market Policies and Programmes

The West Bank and Gaza Strip suffer from a serious weakness in the ability of the local economy to create jobs. Surplus labour is being absorbed by outside labour markets, mainly Israel's (unskilled) and the Gulf Countries' (skilled). The near total dependence of the West Bank and Gaza Strip's economy on Israel's limits the ability of Palestinian policy makers to apply planning to the local labour market. These manifestations are important results of the Israeli occupation that sets out to perpetuate the incapacity of the local economy and consolidate its dependency on the Israeli economy. Israel's repressive measures have increased the magnitude of problems from which the Palestinian labour market suffers, especially the high levels of unemployment.

The Ministry of Labour played a pivotal role in drawing up labour policies and programmes, in cooperation with the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the Arab Labour Organisation (ALO) and key local players (businessmen and workers represented by trade unions and syndicates) in this field. The most important achievement of this cooperation was the International Conference on Employment in Palestine in 1998, which contributed to the elaboration of policy trends for the Palestinian labour market. It is important to emphasise the importance of interplay between economic and social policies in different areas (economy, education, labour etc.) to tackle the problem of unemployment, and increase the ability of the Palestinian economy to create jobs.

### 6.1 General Policies of the Ministry

According to the Ministry of Labour's Annual Report and Development Plan (both of 2004) its aims are as follows:

- Organise of the labour market by producing basic information about the work force, improve employment services, and retrain the work force according to the needs of the labour market.
- Enhance and encourage the cooperative movement.
- Contribute to the achievement of social protection for the working class by setting up a modern system of social security.
- Improve working conditions, and strengthen labour relations between partners through tripartite consultations.

The Ministry of Labour endeavoured to plan and implement many programmes to achieve its above-mentioned goals, the most important of which are the following:

#### a. Programmes to deal with Unemployment

The Palestinian National Authority paid attention to the problem of unemployment during the *Tunnel Intifada* in 1996, when Israel's measures and the closure of the West Bank and Gaza Strip led to an aggravation of unemployment. Unemployment levels mounted again, tremendously and quickly, during the *Al-Aqsa Intifada*. More than one third, and at times half, of the work force were unemployed. Palestinian official and other bodies focused on tackling unemployment by means of emergency employment programmes, in addition to providing emergency assistance. Both methods have a limited effect in tackling the problem of unemployment in the Palestinian territories, despite their temporary importance<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> For example, in the report it prepared on the Palestinian economic crisis the World Bank referred to the limited effect of emergency employment programmes. The Bank estimated that even should donors fulfil all their financial commitments towards the emergency employment programmes in the Palestinian territories, which sought to provide two million full days work in 2002, it would result in providing employment for only 3-4 % of the unemployed in the Palestinian territories (MAS, *Social Monitor*, 2004: 40). The Bank's estimates speak of US\$ 1.8 billion annually needed to solve the problem of unemployment resulting from Israeli measures. (Palestinian National Authority, Emergency and Investment Plan, quoted from the Home Page of the Palestinian National Authority).

The Palestinian Government's activities in the field of emergency employment can be viewed in two stages:

1. The Palestinian Government prepared a programme for job creation in the framework of the emergency and investment plan. Job creation programmes seek to provide jobs, mostly temporary ( three months, renewable), for the biggest number of unemployed. In designing projects, consideration is given to the possibility of the continuation of the project, its knock-on economic effects, its use labour-intensive technology, its dependence on local raw materials, the degree of planning needed, and the speed of its execution.
2. In 2003 the Palestinian National Authority centralised tackling the unemployment problem in the Palestinian territories. This was done through the General Directorate of Employment in the Ministry of Labour. The Ministry established employment councils in the governorates, in which representatives of all parties concerned with employment participated – representatives of related ministries (Labour, Public Works, Local Government, Agriculture), the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, municipalities, village councils, chambers of commerce, professional unions, trade unions, businessmen, and vocational training institutions. The councils are permanent bodies, i.e. they are not restricted to emergency employment, though emergency employment is one of their responsibilities. The labour offices play an important role in this field. They were mandated to register the unemployed and to create a computerised national database for the market which would create a balance between supply and demand. The employment councils in the governorates decide on distribution of the unemployed to projects and on employers who provide jobs. The labour offices began registration of the unemployed in the framework of the temporary employment programme in the last quarter of 2004. They distributed three groups of unemployed to employment centres according to a set of standards and criteria elaborated by the management of the programme, which take into consideration national social priorities.

**b. Palestinian Fund for Employment and Social Protection**

The Palestinian National Authority set up the Fund for Employment and Social Protection in 2004 and formed the responsible boards required to launch it and begin operations with the appropriate legislation, technical cadres and necessary financing.

The Fund was established as an independent agency, with a legal personality and enjoying technical, administrative and financial flexibility that would enable it to perform its responsibilities in a decentralised manner (ILO, 2003, p.viii). It is an important experience of the Ministry of Labour to reflect the tripartite partnership between government, labour and employers. The Fund will implement three programmes during its first phase: a programme for developing infrastructure, a programme for developing facilities, and a programme for developing human resources.

The setting-up of the Palestinian Fund for Employment and Social Protection represents an important development in tackling unemployment in the Palestinian territories. It consolidates the trend to concentrate efforts to overcome unemployment, or limit its consequences as much as possible. The existence of the Fund and the launching of its activities will have an important effect on employment policies, the mechanisms for application of those policies, and their usefulness. It shifts the discussion from general theories onto a plane of dealing with tangible policies and measures of fighting unemployment.

The Fund's work focuses on improving the chances of less privileged groups to reach the labour market, and empowering groups such as new entrants to the labour market, women and others. It also seeks to create policies and programmes that strengthen the ability of the local economy to create jobs. At the same time it focuses on mechanisms which alleviate poverty, such as granting small loans that aim at providing jobs for the unemployed or to groups that face obstacles that impede their joining the labour market, such as the disabled and women.

The Fund is still in the establishment stage. It is still too early to judge its effectiveness in dealing with unemployment and the labour market in general.

**c. Working Conditions and Organisation of the Local Labour Market**

Specialised departments at the Palestinian Ministry of Labour monitor conditions of the labour market, especially the enforcement of the laws, instructions and regulations governing working conditions and relations between workers and employers.

- Enforcement of the Law and regulations: Specialised departments at the Palestinian Ministry of Labour, such as the Department of Labour Supervision, pursue the task of making sure that different workshops (especially licensed ones) respect and apply the regulations set by the Ministry, which are a translation of the text of the law.

The Palestinian Ministry of Labour elaborated many regulations that serve the enforcement of the Palestinian Labour Law, but the prevailing political and economic conditions are impeding the quick adoption of those regulations. Also, the political and economic conditions resulting from Israel's repressive measures result in flexibility in enforcing regulations and instructions. The Ministry's policy at present tends to give priority to the continued functioning of establishments. This hinders its efforts to improve working conditions and promote public and professional safety.

- Labour Relations: The Ministry monitors the nature of relations between workers and employers. It supervises the settlement of labour disputes in accordance with the spirit of the law. But the bad economic conditions and growth of the unemployment problem forced the Ministry to show a great deal of flexibility in the settlement of labour problems, and to give priority to the continued employment of workers, even at times at the expense of workers' rights (such as in the case of lowering wages).

The Ministry of Labour exerted great efforts to study the characteristics of the local labour market with the aim of elaborating policies to improve the market's performance. But its ability to apply such policies remains limited due to the general political and economic circumstances. The Ministry seeks to create a national labour market data base. It has already covered important ground in this field.

**d. Developing Vocational Training**

The Ministry elaborated, in cooperation with governmental and non-governmental bodies, a strategy to develop vocational training by encouraging enrolment, tying training to the needs of the labour market, and improving the quality of training. The Ministry seeks to achieve its objectives in this field by:

- Producing a vocational training database and planning and activating a vocational and professional guidance project that seeks to improve awareness of the importance of vocational training in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.
- Improve the quality of services provided by vocational training centres. The Ministry seeks to establish a multi-faceted vocational training centre in Halhoul, fully equipped and employing qualified trainers.

**e. Developing the Cooperative Movement**

The Ministry is making efforts to ensure the enactment of the Palestinian Cooperative Law in order to provide a legal basis for the advancement of the cooperative movement, to strengthen its role in production and develop its role in fighting unemployment and poverty.

**f. Programme for Protection of Workers Inside the Green Line**

This programme seeks to provide legal assistance to Palestinian workers from the West Bank and Gaza Strip in Israel and to protect their rights.

## 6.2 Obstacles

The policy of improving conditions in the local labour market face a series of obstacles, the most important of which are:

1. Poor employment capacity of the local market, which is a heavy burden inherited from long years of occupation.
2. The prevailing political conditions, manifested in the continued control by Israel over the Palestinian economy, and the limiting effect this has on the Palestinian authority to formulate and implement plans. The Israeli policy can be summed up as one that seeks impoverishment of Palestinian society in general, and which results in a big gap between supply and demand in the local labour market and high levels of unemployment.
3. Financial constraints of the Ministry of Labour and the Palestinian National Authority.
4. Limited effectiveness of coordination and cooperation between governmental and other bodies to enhance the development of the Palestinian labour market.

## 6.3 Proposals

The Palestinian labour market in the West Bank and Gaza Strip faces many important problems, most importantly the big gap between supply and demand. This is the result of the inability of the Palestinian economy in both regions to create an appropriate number of jobs, and the control exercised by occupation and the Israeli labour market over the mechanisms of growth of employment in the Palestinian territories.

The Ministry of Labour has achieved some important successes in laying the basis to alleviate unemployment, especially last year, but in order to develop the conditions of the local labour market it has to develop its work in the following fields:

1. Speed up the elaboration and adoption of legislation and regulations that allow the enforcement of approved laws, especially the Labour Law and the Social Security Law, the full implementation of the Civil Service Law, and the enactment of the Employment Fund Law and the Trade Union Law.
2. Speed up the creation of the Palestinian labour market database, which would allow the Ministry and related bodies to regulate the labour market and plan to improve its performance. It is necessary to develop, in conjunction with it, improved coordination and cooperation mechanisms between related bodies and institutions, governmental and non-governmental.
3. Speed up the functioning of the Employment Fund, and ensure its requirements in terms of people, legislation and financing are met.
4. Speed up the development of vocational education and training, official (schools, institutes and universities) and non-official, and tie it to the prospects of development for the Palestinian economy.
5. Focus on developing policies and programmes to encourage self-employment, by promoting small loans and facilitating the availability of finance to small investors, paying attention to vocational training, and developing mechanisms that facilitate the access of investors to markets.
6. In connection with the previous point, to pay attention to cooperatives and their development, especially the cooperatives that allow small investors to lower production costs and increase their ability to sell their products.
7. Train and fund appropriate cadres to supervise and follow up the enforcement of laws, with the aim of improving the work environment and working conditions.
8. Opt for active intervention to control Palestinian employment in foreign markets, especially the Gulf markets, and organise it through agreements with states that import Palestinian labour.
9. Activate the Ministry's role in the protection of the rights of Palestinian workers from the West Bank and Gaza Strip employed in the Israeli economy.

## 7. Policies and Programmes to Fight Poverty

Palestinian society in the West Bank and Gaza Strip suffers from high poverty levels. Aggressive Israeli measures following the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa *Intifada* have contributed to raising them in an unprecedented manner. However, the phenomenon of poverty among Palestinians has appeared throughout the twentieth century, which witnessed uprooting, eviction, wars, occupation and the deprivation of national rights. The historical determinants of the Palestinian people's impoverishment stem from two basic factors: the first, the uprooting and eviction, and the wars that accompanied them (before and after); the second, the absence of a Palestinian independent state as a result of a denial of the right to self-determination.

The Palestinian National Authority's policy towards the question of poverty was characterised by focusing on emergency assistance, both in cash and in kind. This is demonstrated by the programmes of the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Waqf for helping the poor, which we have reviewed. As we have seen, the Ministry of Social Affairs also developed some programmes to tackle the question of poverty from a developmental perspective, such as the two women's training centres in the Gaza Strip, its small loans schemes and the Poverty Fund, which focuses on combining training with employment for the poor.

The Palestinian Ministry of Planning also took an important step in the direction of drafting policies and programmes for fighting poverty. In cooperation with the UNDP, and with financing from the British Department for International Development DFID, it conducted a participatory poverty assessment project.<sup>3</sup>

The Ministry of Planning implemented the first phase of this project, which included conducting research concerning estimates of poverty by canvassing the views of the poor concerning their poverty and the ways to adapt to and escape from it. It blended these views with the opinions and positions of official and unofficial institutions active in alleviating or fighting poverty. This work involved holding sectional workshops on the level of governorates, and then on the level of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, with the aim of crystallising specific policy proposals concerning mechanisms to fight poverty. These workshops represented forums for the interaction of ideas of the poor themselves, officials and academics. It was a materialisation of the principle of partnership in the elaboration of policies and mechanisms of implementation.

Since the end of 2004, the Ministry of Planning has been implementing the third phase of the project. During this phase the following will be accomplished:

- Elaboration of regional plans to fight poverty at governorate level. These plans will take into consideration the specificities of every governorate.
- Elaboration of sectoral plans and policies to fight poverty.
- Including the process of fighting poverty in national development plans. This already happened in the case of the medium-term plan, the pivotal point of which was fighting poverty and unemployment.
- Setting up the national agency for fighting poverty, grouping together partners in the development process from the public sector, private sector, non-governmental organisations, trade unions etc., with the aim of elaborating national policies to fight poverty.

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<sup>3</sup> The Palestinian Ministry for Planning and International Cooperation implemented the participatory poverty assessment project of estimating poverty in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in cooperation with UNDP during 2001 and 2002. Research in the project continued for a whole year, and included estimates of poverty in all Palestinian Governorates. It involved working with poor families, government, civil-society institutions and notables in towns, villages and refugee camps and at governorate level. Qualitative research methods were used, and included interviews, case studies and discussion groups. The methodology of estimating poverty relied on consultation with the poor to reach an in-depth understanding of poverty and its causes, and find more effective policies and strategies to fight poverty. It involves broad dialogue between the poor and civil society and government institutions. Such a thing lends depth to the results of research, and increased feeling for the needs of the poor and the community. (Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, 2003).

- Institutionalisation of bodies and committees involved in fighting poverty, such as committees on the level of governorates (these committees were formed during the first phase of the project, and they group the directorates of the Palestinian ministries, active civil-society organisations and chambers of commerce) and the National Agency for Fighting Poverty, in addition to the institutionalisation of the departments of planning in the Ministries.

The Ministry of Planning adopted the definition of poverty used by the poor, which involves the inability to provide basic necessities for family and individuals. These necessities are food, clothes, healthy housing, adequate schooling, good health, the ability to pay electricity and water bills, and the ability to honour social commitments and responsibilities. The poor linked their definition of poverty to three major questions: poverty of income due to its non-existence or limited extent, poverty of capabilities related to skills and level of education, and poverty due to social causes, especially for groups with special needs such as children, the disabled, old people, those suffering from chronic ailments and others. This is linked to the absence of basic services in society. (Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, 2002).

The participatory poverty assessment project revealed several strategies to fight poverty. These proposals can be grouped in three main groups: the first is represented by broadening and improving participation in the labour market in a manner that can solve the problem of unemployment and raise wage levels. Consequently families become able to cover their basic necessities – housing, clothes, food, schooling, medicines, transport and others. Under this heading falls the establishment of labour offices and creating jobs through setting up productive projects.

The second group represents providing public services and raising their quality, both with regards to material infrastructure such as electricity, water, sewerage networks, schools, health centres and roads, and with regard to human resources that can manage and provide such services, such as physicians, teachers, engineers and others. The report attributed the importance of the availability of these public services as mechanisms for fighting poverty to the fact that they make it easier for the poor to create jobs. The availability of a public water network, for example, helps to develop agricultural projects as productive ventures that create jobs and income. The same is true of electricity networks, which provide the necessary energy for the operation of small industrial projects. Likewise, road networks contribute to facilitating the process of marketing, cutting production costs etc.

The third group is represented by the development of social security systems and social protection nets to satisfy the needs of families with special needs, such as the disabled and old people, whose families do not have members capable of working and generating income. The report focuses in this respect on improving the conditions set by institutions regarding extension of assistance to social cases.

Fighting poverty requires the unity of efforts and policies in different economic and social fields. It is a product of efforts made in several domains, such as employment, the development of human capital, the improvement of services etc.

In general, the policy of fighting poverty in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is still in its infancy, defining concrete targets linked to a timetable and mechanisms to achieve them. The programmes in this domain already implemented are mostly governed by the aim of treating some of the consequences and symptoms of poverty. A host of reasons contribute to obstructing a general effective policy to fight poverty, largely caused by the general political and economic conditions that stem from Israeli policy. The events throughout the years of occupation and the continued interference in Palestinian life today are a planned process of impoverishment of Palestinian society. The low level of coordination between related parties (ministries, government and non-governmental organisations, the private sector and other institutions) also affects the effectiveness of poverty-reduction measures. Among the important proposals that contribute to the development of an effective policy in alleviating poverty in the short run, and preventing it in the long run, are:

1. Speeding up the creation of an organisational mechanism that can lead the process of drawing up and implementing programmes to fight poverty. This should follow the spirit of the participatory poverty assessment report, i.e. creating a central body and committees in all governorates and on sectoral levels based on the participation of all concerned parties, including the poor themselves.
2. Facilitate the availability of important public services, especially education and health, to the poor, the deprived and the less-privileged groups in society.
3. Facilitate the accessibility of resources, especially sources of finance, to the poor and vulnerable groups. Help them make use of their capabilities through small loans and improved market access schemes.
4. Improve job opportunities for the poor, and increase access to the labour market.
5. Strive to include policies for fighting poverty in the plans of all ministries and government institutions.

## **8. Youth and Childhood Sector**

The youth sector, which includes the different stages of youth and childhood, is one of the most important owing to the effect it has on society as a whole. The elaboration of appropriate policies and programmes for this sector, often through areas of interest to it such as sport and culture, seeks to use the intellectual and scientific capabilities of young people in the creation of a generation imbued with humane values and behaviour.

Since its inception the Palestinian National Authority paid great attention to this sector, creating in 1994 a Ministry of Youth and Sports. In addition it worked with many other governmental, private and civil organisations to elaborate policies and programmes to allow young Palestinians to aspire to the top ranks of Arab and World Youth.

### **8.1 Government Policies Regarding the Youth Sector <sup>4</sup>**

The policies of the Ministry of Youth and Sports stem from a general philosophical framework that seeks to create a civil society capable of encouraging and focussing young people's energies, capabilities and creativity. Such a thing involves programmes seeking to instil in youth a spirit of patriotic identity and belonging, in order to develop self-reliance and strengthen democratic concepts and social justice. (Ministry of Youth and Sports)

Policies dealing with childhood and early childhood were drawn up on the basis of the National Plan for the Palestinian Child. They seek to extend and improve the overall care and upbringing of children in the early childhood stage, especially the most deprived children, and to develop unified policies in their development and protection. Improving the quality of education to enable children and young adults to build knowledge and gain skills, gaining equal benefit from appropriate programmes, is a key feature. (National Plan for the Palestinian Child)

On this basis, the work of the Ministry centred on achieving a number of goals, through which general policies were translated into concrete aims and programmes. The Ministry has endeavoured, since its creation, to:

1. Contribute to elaboration of laws and regulations to organise activities in the youth sector.
2. Train and prepare the necessary cadres to perform the proposed youth programmes and to develop youth and sports movements.
3. Ensure broad opportunities for this group in all areas so that they can play their role, assume their future leadership, and develop their personalities.
4. Draw up appropriate plans and activities that satisfy the needs of pioneers aged 13-18 years.

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<sup>4</sup> The Palestinian Council of Ministers approved at the end of 2004 the National Strategy for Youth. The research group did not have the chance to see the Strategy and review it.

## **8.2 Programmes and Activities in the Domain of Youth and Childhood**

The Ministry of Youth and Sports implemented several programmes and activities concerning youth and children. They are as follows:

1. Organised an annual summer camp programme. No fewer than 30 thousand participants of both sexes have benefited from it during recent years. 130 camps were held in 2002.
2. Set up a radio programme called 'Pioneers' Voice'.
3. Staged cultural, sports, artistic and environmental activities, and developed educational skills in all regions of the homeland, especially in rural areas. Nearly 100 thousand participants of both sexes benefited from these activities.
4. Published a monthly magazine called 'Pioneers' Magazine'.
5. Established the Palestinian Pioneer Organisation as a national framework that is involved in all-round care for pioneers in all parts of the homeland.
6. Organised workshops which focused on the contents of 'Sawa Sawa' Magazine, six issues of which were published during 2001-2002.
7. Prepared several television programmes that dealt with psychological health, and several which were prepared and presented by children.

## **8.3 Difficulties and Obstacles**

1. The arbitrary measures of Israeli occupation constitute the main reason for the delay and obstruction of many programmes and policies adopted by the concerned Ministries and government and civil society institutions.
2. Poor coordination between governmental and non-governmental institutions, as well as the poor coordination between government institutions themselves, concerning implementation of programmes related to the sector of youth and childhood.
3. This sector suffers from extremely poor infrastructure. Many communities lack youth institutions, and if they exist, basic services such as playgrounds, libraries, computers, etc. are lacking.
4. Poor control and supervision by the Ministry of Youth and Sports of the different youth establishments, which is due to shortage in specialised cadres in this field.
5. Poor financing, as the funds allocated to this sector remain extremely limited. It should be taken into consideration that nearly two thirds of the inhabitants of Palestine fall under this sector, in addition to the diversity and magnitude of its needs.

## **8.4 Proposals**

Palestinian ministries and official institutions concerned with youth affairs lack a clear official policy regarding the development of this sector. This demands an intensification of governmental and non-governmental efforts to speed up the crystallisation of a general policy for youth and youngsters, developing the sector and elaborating appropriate plans and programmes underpinned by a sense of national belonging, the spirit of participation, tolerance, respect for diversity and difference, and active participation in the problems of society.

The following proposals could contribute to improving the role of the Ministry of Youth and Sport in this domain, and be positively reflected in the situation of the youth sector:

1. Raise the level of coordination between the different parties involved in the care and development of the youth sector at governmental and non-governmental levels, and benefit from the diversity of experience of these bodies.
2. Strive to strengthen communication between young people and responsible officials, and create appropriate mechanisms such as workshops and regular meetings.
3. Assure appropriate financing for youth activities.
4. Pay attention to the infrastructure of youth activities, such as sports clubs, cultural and social centres, and assure they are appropriately equipped; increase the supervision and control of the Ministry of Youth and Sports in this domain.