

Poverty Reduction and Economic Empowerment



The increased pressure stemming from the prolonged occupation has affected the Palestinian economy and livelihoods, the blockade of the Gaza Strip, the tightening and restrictive policies in Area C and East Jerusalem and the considerable restriction on freedom of movement in the West Bank. This has imposed major costs on the Palestinian productive and trade sectors, undercutting development prospects significantly. About 410,000 families are living under the abject poverty line in Gaza and almost 80% of Palestinians in Gaza depended on humanitarian assistance for survival, with no means to access education, health, clothing and shelter.

To reduce poverty in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Gaza Strip, UNDP's Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (UNDP/PAPP) supports several initiatives in the field of economic development and poverty reduction. UNDP prioritizes support to the most vulnerable communities and families through sustainable economic empowerment approaches that help people enhance their self-reliance and become gradually less reliant on aid.

Consequently, efforts mainly serve the following four areas: i) promotion of private sector productivity, employment schemes, and micro-entrepreneurship, ii) social safety nets for the most vulnerable families, iii) integrated

agricultural management, and iv) basic infrastructure for improved service delivery. UNDP is also contributing to poverty monitoring and collection of basic data through poverty scorecards. In doing so, UNDP works concretely with both communities and other non-state actors such as the private sector and NGOs as well as different key line-ministries.

Economic Empowerment of Productive Families through DEEP: This intervention targets households who have sufficient human and social capital to graduate from poverty by managing their own micro-enterprise. DEEP uses a specialized and a well-tested targeting and assessment process to identify eligible families and design interventions. The selected households will have the opportunity to establish micro enterprises through capital investment and micro financing instruments that safeguards the interests and investments of the families. Over 23,756 households have benefited from the programme since its inception in 2006. New strategic approaches are currently being adopted by the programme including community mobilization for economic empowerment, establishing incubators for economic empowerment, partnering with local CBOs, cooperatives and INGOs, youth employment and group projects.

Integrated Agricultural and Rural Development: This programme has two main components. The first is Rapid Support for Small Infrastructure in the West Bank, which mainly includes land reclamation, water harvesting, construction of agricultural roads and water storage units, installation of electricity and sewage networks and trees plantation. This component serves as an employment generation initiative and helps develop the productive assets of rural communities. It also contributes to local food availability such as olives, grapes and other fruit productions.

The second is the Rehabilitation of Water Facilities in Area C. This is done by enhancing accessibility to irrigation water in Area C of the West Bank through the upgrading of irrigation systems and installing new networks, and

building cisterns and water reservoirs. In addition to the construction work, the programme includes necessary soft components related to the capacity development of the Ministry of Agriculture and other partners. Since 2002, the programme protected over 70,000 dunums¹ of land in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture.

Export Development for Palestinian Business Project in the West Bank: The Export Development Project (EDP) in the West Bank (2011-2015) is being implemented by UNDP, Palestine Trade Center (PalTrade) and International Trade Centre (ITC). The project focuses on enabling PalTrade, the national trade development organization, to provide sustainable high quality export services to Palestinian local enterprises. Support is being provided to Palestinian Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in order to become more competitive exporters, to have the capacity to expand their workforce, including women and youth, to contribute to the development of exports resulting in economic growth and improved standard of living of the Palestinian people.

Al Fakhoora Dynamic Futures Scholarship Programme: The programme is funded by Qatar Foundation and the Islamic Development Bank and targets a minimum of 1,000 students who come from marginalized and poor families in the Gaza Strip. In its first phase, it offered scholarships to 300 students each year who are enrolled in university studies and covered all costs related to education and other expenses for the entire duration of the educational programme. The project also includes components for development of soft skills needed to enhance employability of students along with career advisory services.

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¹ 1 hectare equals 10 dunums