

PROFILE FOR THE STATE OF

Palestine

UN HABITAT
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE





FOREWORD

The operational environment in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) is characterized by a fragile security situation; numerous restrictions on movement, on access to large areas of the West Bank and the entirety of Gaza, and on the ability of Palestinians to access natural resources, build and develop in Area C and East Jerusalem; an ongoing settlement enterprise; and regular instances of human rights violations with weak accountability.

Governments at the 19th Session of the UN-Habitat Governing Council in 2003 adopted by consensus resolution 19/18 calling on UN-Habitat to establish a Special Human Settlements Programme for the Palestinian People (SHSPPP) and the Technical Cooperation Trust Fund. The long-term development objective of the programme is to improve the human settlements conditions of the Palestinian people and in so doing contribute in a modest way to reaching peace, security and stability in the region. During the 23rd Governing Council in 2011, a new resolution 23/2 was adopted, requesting UN-Habitat “to further focus its operations on planning, land and housing issues in view of improving the housing and human settlement conditions of Palestinians, addressing the urbanization challenges, supporting the building of a Palestinian state, humanitarian action and peace-building, in the areas where there are acute humanitarian and development needs”. During the 26th Governing Council in 2017, a new resolution 26/9 was adopted, requesting the Executive Director of UN-Habitat “to reconvene the Advisory Board to the Special Human Settlements Programme for the Palestinian People and the Technical Cooperation Trust Fund with particular emphasis on reviewing progress and supporting fundraising to meet identified gaps in view also of the implementation of the New Urban Agenda”.

UN-Habitat is now playing a more substantive role in Palestine - leading debate on urbanization issues, supporting NGOs, government and private sector firms on spatial planning, and informing advocacy efforts by the international community on planning and building rights for Palestinian communities in Area C and East Jerusalem. Its engagement in the occupied Palestinian territory is in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goal 11, “Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable” and it is mobilizing the territories towards the 9th World Urban Forum which will take place in Feb 2018 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.



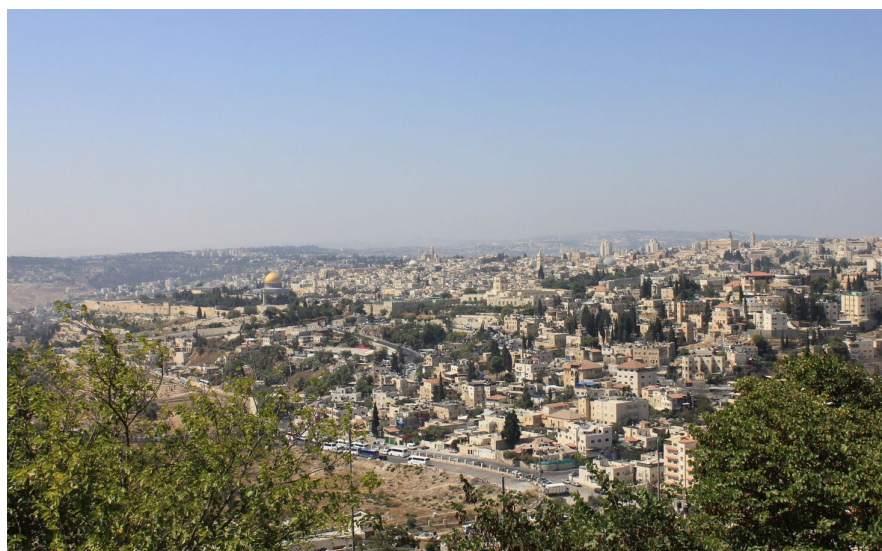
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URBAN ISSUES

GDP Growth	4.1% (2016) ¹
Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index	0.684 (2016) ²
Population	4,816,503 (2016) ³
Urban Population	3,559,795 (2016) ⁴
Population Growth Rate	2.9% (2016) ⁵
Urbanization Growth Rate	3.2% (2015) ⁶
Youth Population (15-32)	1,641,826 (2016) ⁷
Refugee population (% of urban population)	455,847 (12.8%) ⁸
IDPs Population (% of urban population)	193,277 (2016) ⁹

Key Urban Challenges

The Palestinian urban areas are growing exponentially while reeling under immense pressures on the environmental, socio-economic, and political fronts. At present, almost 74 percent of the population in Palestine is considered urban, living in 40 percent of the territory that is effectively under direct Palestinian planning jurisdiction, while the remaining are living under full Israeli control. The high urban growth rate is accompanied by random spatial development, as



East Jerusalem in the Horizon. Photo© UN-Habitat

cities and communities have expanded haphazardly, encroached on surrounding agricultural land, and suffer from poor infrastructure. Furthermore, there is an increasing demand for job opportunities, services and housing. The key urban challenges could be outlined, as follows:

Spatial and Administrative Fragmentation

The spatial and administrative division inside the West Bank, including occupied East Jerusalem and between the West Bank and Gaza Strip is considered the key challenge facing the Palestinian cities and communities. The illegal

annexation of East Jerusalem in 1981 by the Israeli authorities, and the division of the West Bank into areas A, B, and C as part of the Oslo Accords in 1995 have created a phenomenon of land scarcity. This allowed Israel to maintain full control over East Jerusalem and Area C. The latter comprises 61% of the West Bank and accommodates only 6% of the Palestinian population, and this consequently gave the Palestinians the control over Area A and partially over Area B, which are mainly the urban areas. As a result of land seizure and allocation for Israeli settlement construction and expansion, the designation of military zones and the construction of the West Bank Barrier, only

1 World Bank Open Data, retrieved on November 20, 2017: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?view=chart>
 2 UNDP (2016) - Human Development Report, retrieved on November 20, 2017: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/PSE>
 3 Palestinian Bureau of Statistics (2016), Estimated Population in the Palestinian Territory Mid-Year, retrieved on November 20, 2017: http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_Rainbow/Documents/gover_e.htm

4 Palestinian Bureau of Statistics (2016), population Projections – Annual Statistics, retrieved on November 20, 2017: http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/lang_en/803/default.aspx
 5 World Bank Open Data, retrieved on November 20, 2017: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.GROW>
 6 World Urbanization Prospects, 2015
 7 Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (2017). Revised Estimated based on the final results of Population, Housing and

Establishments Census, 2007. Ramallah – Palestine.
 8 Palestinian Bureau of Statistics (2016), population Projections – Annual Statistics, retrieved on November 20, 2017: http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/lang_en/803/default.aspx
 9 World Bank Open Data, retrieved on November 20, 2017: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/VC.IDP.TOCVW>

30 percent out of a total Area C is available to Palestinian construction. This situation has resulted in an unplanned urban development.

Urban Sprawl (Unplanned Urbanization)

With a 3.2 percent urban growth rate in 2015, Palestine is classified among the top 25 percent of urbanizing countries. The urban population in Palestine has almost tripled in the past 25 years compared to the increase rate of the World's urban population over the same period calculated at 1.7 and 2.0 for the Arab world. It is expected that by 2025, the population in Palestine will reach 6 million, and by 2050 to reach 11 million people. This does not take into account more than 7.5 million Palestinians, who were displaced from their lands following the 1948 and 1967 wars and currently living in the diaspora. Palestine is considered one of the highly dense countries in the world, with an average population density of 735 persons per sq. km, almost 9 times the density of its border country Jordan. Furthermore, the densities of the West Bank and Gaza Strip differ largely, with densities in Gaza exceeding 4,500 people per sq. km, a figure considered amongst the highest in the World¹⁰. The rapid urbanization rates in Palestine is caused by the high urban growth rates, and geo-political conditions on the ground. Poor land use and spatial development patterns and zoning in Palestine have also contributed to urban sprawl and encroachment on agricultural land and sensitive environmental areas.



Urban sprawl in Nablus city. Photo© UN-Habitat

Urban Environment

The urban environment in Palestine is facing many challenges, including water scarcity, climate change, and overall weakened urban livability and quality of life conditions amid unprecedented rapid urbanization and urban sprawl. Due to the high urbanization rates, the generation of municipal solid waste is projected to increase, which is predominantly organic waste, mostly disposed in open dumps. The number of dumping sites has increased, reaching 189 random dumping sites, sprawled near residential

areas, where the main method for waste disposal is burning. This has highly affected the urban livability and quality of life conditions, in terms of air pollution, access to green space, and public safety. In this undertaking, noise pollution in Palestinian large cities is becoming an alarming challenge, especially in light with traffic conditions that are becoming, by and large a formidable challenge. This is propelled by the lack of and unequal access conditions to usable open spaces, such as: plazas, squares, parks, and greenways that normally create pockets of amnesty amid dense urban developments, allow youth and children a place to play and provide space for

10 Ministry of Local Government (MoLG) (2016), State of Palestine – Cities Report 2016, pp. 10.



Silwan Neighborhood in East Jerusalem. Photo© UN-Habitat

community gatherings and cultural events. In 2017, UN estimates predicted that the Gaza Strip might become uninhabitable by 2020¹¹.

Urban Economy

The fragile economy is another challenge facing the Palestinian urban areas. The Palestinian economy is largely dependent on Israel and very vulnerable to Israeli policies and decisions. In terms of economy sectors, reports are indicating significant decline in the size of agriculture and manufacturing in the economy and an increase, from the other hand, in the service economy sector during the past 10 years. The service sector is the largest contributor to the

Palestinian economy at 57% share and it employs more than 62% of the Palestinian workers¹². The concentration of the economic activities in the main urban centers and the lack of investments in rural areas have led to and high level of rural-urban migration creating an additional pressure on the existing infrastructure and urban services.

UN-HABITAT PROGRAMMES IN PALESTINE

Urban Legislation, Land and Governance

Land governance interventions in the geopolitical context of Palestine have proven to be slow and fragmented. UN-Habitat programme in Palestine and in partnership with the Global Land Tool Network (GLTN) are working at present with the Office of Prime Minister and the Land and Water Settlement Commission to advance efforts related to mapping of land rights and security of tenure of Palestinian communities in Area C of the West Bank, using the Social Tenure Domain Model (STDM). In the Gaza Strip, UN-Habitat programme in Palestine provided the municipalities' staff and local communities with greater knowledge on Housing, Land and Property (HLP) related matters including land and properties tenure issues, and provision of individual legal counselling services to protect the most vulnerable members of household and make them aware of their rights. Furthermore, a comprehensive and guiding manual on HLP related matters has been prepared and distributed locally.

Expert Group Meeting on Fostering Good Land Governance in the Arab States

UN-Habitat programme in Palestine facilitated the participation of key officials from Palestine in the Expert Group Meeting on Fostering Good Land Governance in the Arab States last year in Amman, Jordan. The event aimed at developing

11 United Nations Country Team in the occupied Palestinian territory (2017), Gaza - Ten Years Later. Available at: https://unsco.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/gaza_10_years_later_-_11_july_2017.pdf

12 PCBS (2015). National Accounts at Current and Constant Prices, 2014. Available at: <http://www.pCBS.gov.ps/Downloads/book2172.pdf>

a joint vision and key recommendations for improving land governance in the Arab region.

Orientation Training on Social Tenure Domain Model Applications in Area C of the West Bank

An Orientation Training on Social Tenure Domain Model Applications in Area C of the West Bank took place with the purpose to strengthen the capacity of national government in Palestine to identify, respect, protect, and fulfil the land rights of Palestinian communities in Area C through participatory mapping methodologies at the local levels. This will contribute in raising awareness in land governance processes in Area C, with focus on the mobilization of a pilot project on community based land mapping to support owners to substantiate their legal claims within the Israeli system; and support advocacy efforts to defend the land rights of Palestinian communities maintained with national and international actors to guarantee more equitable land governance standards in Area C.

Urban Planning and Design

UN-Habitat programme in Palestine continue its efforts to support Palestinian vulnerable communities in Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, and Area C of the West Bank with spatial planning interventions to build their resilience through people's methodology with the aim to improve the planning standards and quality of interventions, and also aiming at scaling up the planning agenda within a coherent planning approach that includes multi-layer and multi-level plans, namely: placemaking design schemes for capital investment projects,

action plans, local outline plans, cluster plans, city-region plans, and the finalization of the National Spatial Plan (NSP) for the State of Palestine. Under the NSP project, UN-Habitat along with other development partners supported the preparation of 'Envisioning Palestine 2025, 2050' that captures a broad perspective framework for a vision in seven main sectors in Palestine: economy, urban development, infrastructure, demography, international relations, services and natural resources, and sub visions for each of those sectors.

UN-Habitat and the Government of Palestine, represented by Ministry of Local Government (MoLG) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding until September 30, 2020 with the aim to continue the collaboration and mutual work on issues related to spatial planning, local governance, and urban management, with emphasis on the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially SDG 11, and the New Urban Agenda in the State of Palestine. Furthermore, plans are underway to initiate the work on the National Urban Policy, after the preparation of the State of Palestine: Cities Report (2016), and the conclusion of the Second Palestinian Urban Forum that took place at Birzeit University during October 30-31, 2017 with financial support from the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ).

Fostering Tenure Security and Resilience of Palestinian Communities through Spatial-Economic Interventions in Area C

UN-Habitat programme in Palestine is implementing at present in partnership with

MoLG a three-year project to Fostering Tenure Security and Resilience of Palestinian Communities through Spatial-Economic Interventions in Area C, targeting more than 1.5 million people in 190 Palestinian communities across the West Bank. This project includes the roll-out of the Human Rights Impact Assessment Mechanism prepared by UN-Habitat and adopted by MoLG in a pilot 5 new local outline plans and consolidation of another 25 local outline plans in Area C of the West Bank.



Students engaged in plan-making process in Area C of the West bank. Photo© UN-Habitat

Support to Participatory Planning Programmes in Gaza and East Jerusalem

In the same token, UN-Habitat has undertaken spatial planning interventions under the **Gaza Participatory Spatial Planning Support Programme** in seven marginalized and heavily affected municipalities across the Gaza Strip, three of which were completed. Furthermore, under the programme **Building Blocks: Supporting State-building through Neighbourhood Planning in Gaza**, UN-Habitat supported Khuza'a municipality to 'build back better' using innovative



International and national planners discussing the future of cities in Gaza. Photo© UN-Habitat

participatory planning concepts in the design and planning of the targeted neighborhoods through the recovery process (masterplan updated and two detailed neighbourhood plans developed). Overall, through participatory spatial planning approach, these interventions have contributed in strengthening the capacities of local and national institutions for the provision of public services in a transparent, inclusive and accountable manner. Furthermore, these interventions included developing the municipal capacity to conduct and monitor participatory spatial planning through improving the technical

Urban Economy

In light of the weak economy of Palestine that is dependent on the Israeli economy, since economic development could not grow beyond a specific structural level as it could not access critical inputs of natural resources and free of transport of people and goods, innovative approaches are needed to build resilience of Palestinian communities and sustain the development processes at the local level. UN-Habitat advocates for new approaches to participatory governance, or more specifically

competitive and accordingly economic growth could be better shared with the rural areas.

Economic Foundations for Sustainable Urbanization: A Study on Three-Pronged Approach: Planned City Extensions, Legal Framework, and Municipal Finance

A fit-for-purpose training on urban economics issues, namely: 'Economic Foundations for Sustainable Urbanization: A Study on Three-Pronged Approach: Planned City Extensions, Legal Framework, and Municipal Finance' to Palestinian planning practitioners and decision-makers have been done with support from Urban Economy and Finance Branch at UN-Habitat headquarters during the Second Palestinian Urban Forum that took place in 2017. The training event was instrumental in introducing the approaches and empirical evidences and good practices from UN-Habitat experience. This training was a stepping stone in realizing economic empowerment at the local level, which is identified as a national priority in Palestine. Local Governments have a key role to play in such a process by utilizing local economic development as an integral part

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