



Norwegian Ministry
of Foreign Affairs



YOUTH IN PALESTINE

POLICY AND PROGRAM
RECOMMENDATIONS
TO ADDRESS DEMOGRAPHIC
RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

October 2017

Youth in Palestine:

Policy and Program Recommendations
to address demographic risks and opportunities

Table of Contents

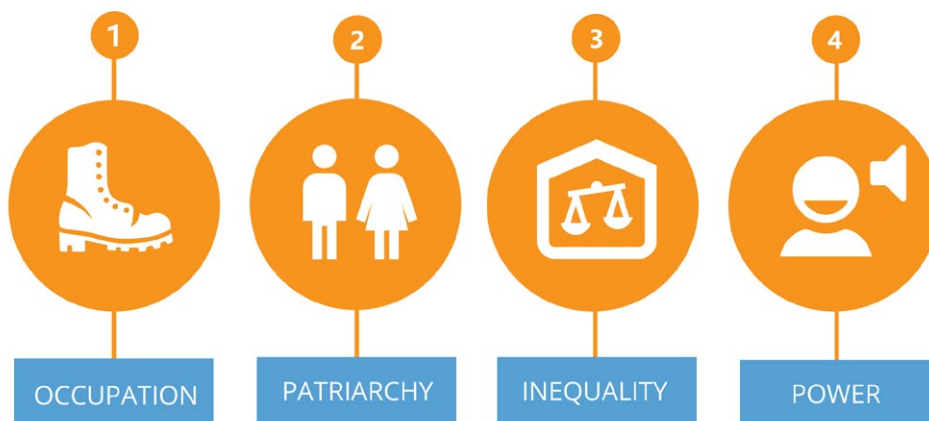
1	Introduction	1
2	Occupation and Youth	2
3	Economic Empowerment	4
4	Education	6
5	Civic Engagement	8
6	Health	10
7	Gender	13
8	Intersecting vulnerabilities	16
9	Adolescent girls	17
10	Refugee youth	17
11	Youth in poverty	17
12	Spatially vulnerable youth	17
13	Bedouin youth	17
14	Ex-Detainees	18
15	What now?	18
16	Strategic Opportunities: Empowered and Resilient Youth	19
17	Cross-Cutting	20
18	Economic Empowerment (including Education)	21
19	Civic Engagement	22
20	Health	24
21	Gender	25
22	Works Cited	26

Introduction

Youth (aged 15-29) comprise 30%ⁱ of the total Palestinian population, and all children and youth under the age of 29 comprise over 50%ⁱⁱ of the population. Despite representing a significant and growing segment of the population, youth remain disempowered, disenfranchised, and disenfranchised in Palestinian society. With high unemployment rates and low political representation, youth often do not feel that their voices are heard or that they have much of a say in decision-making at any level. As a whole, youth are rarely afforded equitable access to opportunities.

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region as a whole has been characterized by a 'youth bulge,' as seen across the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt). With an extremely high fertility rate in both the West Bank and Gaza, the youth population is set to continue growing at a concerning rate. Although a rapidly increasing youth population can cause extreme stress on already underdeveloped infrastructure (education, health, social services, urban infrastructure, housing, and access to economic opportunity), a large youth population can also be seen as a "missed opportunity." While hypotheses suggest that high proportions of youth in a state, especially under conditions of economic stagnation, can increase the risk of domestic armed conflictⁱⁱⁱ, or could lead to both disillusionment and communal unrest, other actors, including UNFPA, have suggested that "increasing numbers of young people and declining fertility has the potential to reap a demographic dividend."^{iv} Utilizing quality demographic data and projections would allow for a situation where the rapid growth of the youth demographic would not be seen as a burden on the State, but instead would encourage investment in youth to lead the change needed to establish an independent, viable, and sustainable State of Palestine.

YOUTH CHALLENGES



A recent UNFPA study Palestine 2030 has demonstrated that Palestinian youth can present a demographic threat, or a great opportunity for the future. Learning that the youth population will more than double by 2050, and increase by a million by 2030 is a daunting prospect. However, if youth were to receive quality access to education and economic opportunity; participate in public life, in the formal and informal political spheres; access to quality youth-friendly healthcare, including sexual and reproductive health; and felt themselves to be productive, valuable members of society, their potential could lead to positive growth for Palestine as a whole.

With the adoption of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 2250 in 2015, to increase the representation of youth in decision-making at all levels, as well as rising global and regional extremism and radicalization, particularly of youth, strategic engagement and inclusion of young people is particularly important for the establishment of a democratic, tolerant, and inclusive state. It is critical now for the Palestinian Authority (PA) and relevant partners to invest in young people, not only for the future of Palestine, but for today.

Occupation and Youth

Palestine has been under protracted occupation since the Arab-Israeli War in 1967 (also known as the Six-Day War), which continues to permeate every aspect of its current existence and development. While under occupation, the territory has been split into the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, each with its own governing body, legal system, and unique development and human rights context. This severely complicates development interventions into Palestine, which must take into account the specificities of each distinct area. Every population group, marginalized or other, has been negatively impacted by the forces of occupation that restrict their freedom of movement, human rights, economic development, and political freedoms. Following the Oslo Accords of 1993 that created the PNA, the land mass of the West Bank was splintered into 3 distinct land areas that determined whose authority presided. These are Areas **A** (under complete Palestinian civil and military control), **B** (under Palestinian civil and Israeli military control), and **C** (under complete Israeli military and civil control). Area C comprises approximately 60% of the West Bank. A divided city, Palestinians living in East Jerusalem are particularly vulnerable to a conflicted sense of identity, heightened and frequent levels of violence, a lack of a clear legal framework, and destructive coping mechanisms, such as high levels of drug use. Furthermore, the Gaza Strip has entered an extreme situation of developmental deterioration termed as 'de-development.'^v

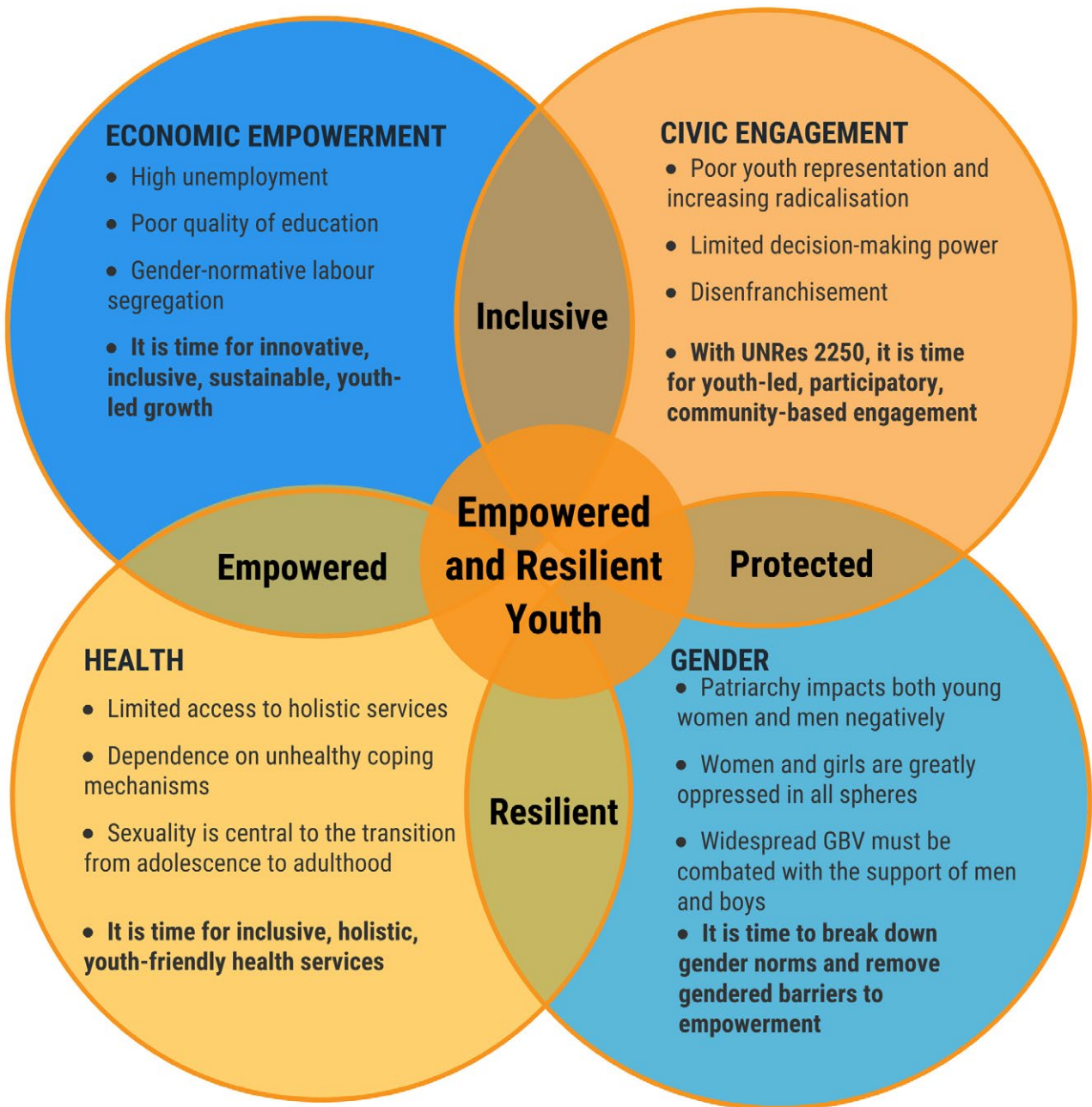
Young people and adolescents have been very much influenced by this situation, externally by the forces of occupation, and internally, by Palestinian fragmentation, loss of identity, and a patriarchal society. During youth and adolescence, human beings begin the transformation from childhood to adulthood, having to formulate their identities, beliefs, and behavior. Being exposed to high rates of violence and discrimination is extremely damaging during this formative part of life. In this context, there is a clear need to link human development interventions to the extremely complex environment of the territories, particularly in order to build the resilience of youth to enable them to remain hopeful under occupation and utilise their positive energy to develop themselves and their communities. Although youth concerns are already on the PA agenda, it is important to add greater nuance and understanding to ensure that the most vulnerable young people are being targeted and supported.

Furthermore, the gender dynamics created by a patriarchal society impact other key developmental areas, such as economic growth, civic engagement, health, and sexual education. Patriarchy impacts both men and women, boys and girls, in different ways, creating specific models for masculinity and femininity that pervade all other areas of life. A human being's gender and gender identity is extremely relevant when formulating the self, in terms of personal understanding of what is normal, permissible, accepted, desirable etc. In Palestine, gender inequality has created an oppressive environment with limited opportunities for women. Both horizontal and vertical segregation can be seen in key areas, specifically women's economic and political participation.

Widespread legal and institutional ineffectiveness and the internal political divide is compounded by societal conservatism, which restricts gender equality and opportunity. These internal challenges are further exacerbated by the protracted occupation, which systematically violates international law. There is clear fragmentation within Palestinian society, not only geographically, but socially, politically, economically, and psychologically between the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza. This fragmentation is worsened by large demographic differences between rural and urban, varying degrees of religious conservatism, the differing treatment of women and men, the standard of living and societal discrimination towards disadvantaged groups. Combined, these factors have led to increasing inflexibility within competing groups, an unwillingness to work together or even recognize the other, and overwhelming hopelessness among youth. This has further exacerbated rising internal radicalization as well as a general negative emigration trend out of the country. While this remains the current reality, there is a strong current within society pushing towards an end to these polarizing narratives, and empowering young people who hold the potential to cultivate a better Palestinian future.

The remainder of this analysis will consider four areas that are key challenges against the empowerment of youth, but still hold the promise of change, if sustainable, long-term strategic interventions are formulated. These are: 1) Economic Empowerment; 2) Civic Engagement; 3) Health; and 4) Gender. Figure 2 below summarizes our key focus areas in these areas:

STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES





Economic Empowerment

Due to the 1994 Paris Protocol,^{vi} the Palestinian economy has been integrated into the Israeli economy with an absence of 'economic borders.' With restrictions on construction in Area C of the West Bank, and the siege on Gaza, economic growth is severely hindered by the Israeli occupation. While this has bred economic innovation and entrepreneurial success across Palestine, the lack of opportunity combined with the youth bulge means that youth unemployment rates are staggeringly high.

The latest labour force statistics demonstrate overall unemployment increased to 26.6% in the first quarter of 2016.^{vii} Youth are the most detrimentally affected with unemployment rates reaching 39% in the West Bank, close to 60% in Gaza, and 51% of university graduates are unemployed.^{viii} Overall labour force participation rates have stagnated at 45.8%, with female participation at approximately 19%.^{ix}

The uncertain economic forecast in an increasingly precarious political situation suggests domestic political strain and the risk of social unrest. Only 22.6% of young Palestinians have completed the labour market transition to stable or satisfactory employment, the majority of which are men. Nearly half have not started the transition, and 31.8% remain "in transition."^x

A new UNFPA study, Palestine 2030, has shown that the active-age population, "would grow from 2.9 million in 2015 to 7.2 million in 2050, thus a multiplication of 2.5... By 2030, labour force size will increase by one million."^{xi} This provides both opportunities and challenges, particularly for the labour market. The rapid growth provides a demographic dividend, but to realize this requires "multiple intersecting investments to empower, educate, and employ young people."^{xii}

Furthermore, economic growth continues to be hampered by the fact that the "Palestinian economy is dependent on its Israeli counterpart and faces internal and external challenges that impede economic development and threaten economic sustainability."^{xiii} As a result of this precarious situation, youth face compounded vulnerabilities and economic hardships, which lead to higher levels of poverty, food insecurity, and lower living standards. Together, these factors are seen as a leading cause of mental health deterioration amongst Palestinian youth.

Palestinian men are seen as providers and women as care-givers within the traditional familial paradigm; these heteronormative gender roles in a patriarchal and oppressed society have led to further psychological pathology amongst young people. Unable to find socially acceptable work, young men are seen as unable to provide for their families and thus insufficiently fulfilling their imposed gender role, leading to inadequate socialisation and dysfunctional marital and familial relationships. Young men feel they are letting down their family honour and are not worthy as providers to their future wives.

This can lead to psychological damage, feelings of inadequacy, and a loss of masculinity, all of which later contribute to heightened levels of violence, particularly gender-based violence (GBV), and unsafe and unhealthy coping mechanisms (these can include violence and drug, alcohol, tobacco abuse, and unsafe sex). Meanwhile, women suffer from early marriage, marital and familial violence, and limited economic opportunities, due to the fact that women are often unable to travel long distances or through checkpoints independently. It is also difficult for them to take jobs that are considered socially unacceptable with consideration to the existing gender model. These can include roles that are considered traditionally male, ranging from service jobs, such as electricians or plumbers, or high-level professional jobs, such as doctors or engineers.

Women thus tend to be dependent on male relatives (fathers, husbands, or brothers) for their livelihoods, limiting their freedoms. This often leads women to be stuck in dangerous situations, such as marital or domestic abuse, an inability to work, limited personal autonomy, left unable to ask for help, especially due to the societal stigma around violence, which tends to blame the victim rather than the abuser.

The limited potential for economic growth thus has far-reaching consequences beyond the negative impact of poor livelihoods. The resulting high unemployment rate has led to increased migration (causing internal brain drain), early marriage among young women, and increased risky behaviours (including drug use, violence, and radicalisation). Furthermore, it causes greater incidence of poverty and food insecurity in the country as a whole. Together, all of these factors are detrimental to the lives of young Palestinians. It is critical that youth are empowered with greater opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship, and equally, provided with gender sensitisation trainings to unpick traditional gender roles. Such interventions could be the genesis of an improved standard of living, and the prevention of illegal or risky livelihood strategies often employed to restore personal and familial honour.



Education

In comparison to worldwide trends, access to education in Palestine is extremely high, with 96% overall literacy and almost 100% youth literacy. Almost 95% of children are enrolled in primary school, and 41% of youth aged 15-29 are enrolled in some form of education. Dropout rates are approximately 33%^{xiv}; these rates are significantly affected by place of residency and proximity to occupation forces. Strikingly, women are more highly educated than men in Palestine, with 13% holding a university degree compared to 9% of men.^{xv} However, this does not translate to gainful employment and women's participation in the labour force is a staggeringly slow 19%. In Palestine's patriarchal society, this may be linked to the social pressures that encourage men to transition into the workforce at a younger age in order to support their families. Women thus invest more time in education, and have higher levels of enrolment and attainment. Even so, when resources are scarce, many families prefer to invest in sending sons to university. Another barrier to women's education can be early marriage (prominent in rural and conservative areas), pervasive gender norms that limit women's livelihood options, and the assertion that the reproductive capacity of women is their most important function in society, not taking into account a woman's entire personhood. This may be linked to the conceptualization of Sumud or 'steadfastness' in the 1970s, a national movement rooting Palestinians to their land in the face of an occupying power, which connected women's reproductive capacity to the Palestinian "demographic struggle" in that period.^{xvi} Fertility rates, then extremely high, have now been cut in half.^{xvii} Gaza's high fertility rate in conjunction with the economic deterioration after the 2014 conflict with Israel has led to an untenable situation. Without significant structural change in the Palestinian territory, it will be difficult to bridge this gap.

Despite promising enrolment and literacy rates, education is not an indicator of economic prosperity and 55% of young graduates are unemployed. Paradoxically, the higher the education level, the lower the employment possibilities, particularly for women due to the limited opportunities within the labour market. At the same time, the private sector complains of a lack of skilled young people that can meet market needs. It is clear that interventions in the education sector must focus on quality, rather than the number of years of education. The current curriculum focuses very much on rote learning, rather than active learning or critical thinking. There is a need for local curriculum development, which not only changes this teaching approach but includes an understanding that school is an "important socialization space that should model what a peaceful, democratic, and pluralistic community looks like."^{xviii} Furthermore, physical, social, and health education should be included in the national curriculum, providing much-needed support to young people during this transitional time of adolescence. This must also include sexual and reproductive health education, with not just biological information, but also emotional, sexual, and psychological. Concurrently, actors in this field must ensure that marginalized communities, especially Bedouins in Area C, have improved access to quality education.

The Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector is yet to be thoroughly explored as a viable option for many young people, due to a societal stigma associated with vocational training. This stigma is central to a belief that vocational trainings are less 'prestigious' than academia, interventions around social pragmatism are required, as these yield the highest rate of transition into the labour force. Interventions are needed both at the Tawjihi level and younger, providing young people with career and occupational counselling, to understand areas of potential opportunity in Palestine. According to a recent ILO survey, 75% of surveyed students hope for a higher-level professional job^{xix}; in the current labour market, this is far from possible.

Presently, 58,000 jobs are required in the labour market each year to meet growing demand. By the 2030, this will reach 72,000.^{xx} Simultaneously, 'wasta' or nepotism is widespread in Palestine, meaning that youth with some factional affiliation often find economic opportunity easier to find, in a difficult economic situation. This also means that those without some 'wasta' to help them find employment are unfairly excluded from the labour market. These can include marginalized groups, such as women, the poor, the disabled, and Bedouin communities.

In terms of refugees, UNRWA has been providing basic education since 1950. Protection issues affect a vast number of communities in both the West Bank and Gaza; many children and young people in the West Bank still have restricted access to quality and safe education, due to the system of military checkpoints, roadblocks, and settler harassment.^{xxi} These concerns lead to spatial inequities between youth communities located in different areas, dependent on their interaction with the occupation apparatus, and suggests that the quality of provided education varies vastly between areas.

It is critical to note that physical and psychological violence is rife in Palestinian schools. Recent data from PCBS suggests that over one-fifth of Gazan students aged 12-17 were exposed to psychological violence, and over 20% deal with physical violence.^{xxii} In general, boys were more likely to be exposed to violence than girls at 28% versus 16%. Reporting that almost one-third of boys are exposed to violence at school, whilst girls are at higher risk of being exposed to domestic violence. This concerning statistic indicates that violence learnt and internalized at school will lead adolescents, at their impressionable age, to believe that this is an accepted and normalized form of interpersonal interaction, and may cause a predisposition to patterns of violence in other spheres, later on in life.

Finally, young women are reminded to focus on their marriageability from a young age, with their reproductive capacity given axial importance. At the same time, neither women nor men are encouraged to understand or learn about their sexuality. There is little sexual education in schools, and where it does exist, it is generally focused on the biological facts of life, rather than the emotional, physical, and psychological impacts, which are of greater importance to young people during this period in their lives. Little understanding of STDs, unplanned pregnancies, contraception, HIV/AIDS, and so on, is incredibly damaging to both young women and men, but principally to young women, who will feel the impact as a loss of 'honour', which will cost both them and their family, sometimes leading to outcomes as extreme as 'honour killings.'

Civic Engagement

Human rights are enshrined in Palestine's 2002 Basic Law,^{xxiii} however according to Freedom House's 2015 Freedom in the World Report, the West Bank and Gaza are 'not free'. Where 1 is best and 7 is worst, the 'freedom' rating stands at 5.5, civil liberties at 5 and political rights at 6. These extremely poor political rights are directly informed by the fact that the Fatah-led PA "continued to operate without an electoral mandate or a functioning legislature."^{xxiv} The current President, Mahmoud Abbas's term was indefinitely extended in 2009. Negotiations towards repairing the rift between the two major political parties led to an agreement in April 2016, but have yet to be operationalized. The most recent local elections due to be held in October 2016 have been indefinitely postponed.

Although traditionally active, involved and engaged in leadership roles in their communities, many young people are unsurprisingly now idle, disenchanted, and disengaged from politics. Years of infighting between political factions has meant that young people are seen only as a voting body, rather than a group to critically engage with. This, in combination with no significant political change in a decade, has led many of Palestine's young people to withdraw from political participation. Only 40% of young people reported interest in participating in an election event, 29% in the West Bank compared to 57% in the Gaza Strip.^{xxv}

There is a widely disavowed democratic deficit in the Palestinian territories, and most young people (under the age of 29) have never participated in a Palestinian national election. The Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) is not active and citizen's representation is not observed within governmental institutions. The political split between political parties has significantly contributed to decreasing youth participation within their communities and escalated their disenfranchisement with any participation.

University students, traditionally most active in the political sphere, are utilized as pawns in a power struggle between the major parties. University campuses are, instead of purely educational institutions, breeding grounds for political strife, where youth are exploited by factions for their own expedient ends. This has fostered a trend of extreme youth disillusionment with politics, conjointly with fear and distrust of factional engagement.

Many youth no longer feel that it is worthwhile to even attempt engagement in the formal political sphere, because their voices or opinions will not be heard. This is particularly true for young women, who lack many female role models in the political arena. Although many actors have been working together to establish a set of Youth Local Councils (YLCs) in the West Bank, these lack any real political clout and do not serve their official purpose of acting as a check on government bodies; instead, they serve to provide a means for government officials to appear engaged with youth, while taking little heed of youth opinions, desires, or beliefs.

Adolescent and Youth Friendly Centres provide one of the only healthy and secure recreational activities for youth, with over 350 centres in Palestine. It can be said that "youth participation is a product and strategy of sustainable human development."^{xxvi} However, for youth participation to lead to real empowerment, it must be also be inclusive. However, these centres are characterized by extremely low female participation. This is due to both societal constraints in allowing young women to participate in activities with men, and also often due to access issues, where young women are not able to access these centres (due to checkpoints or poor infrastructure) or at certain times (such as late at night). Limited access to healthy recreational activities can lead to unhealthy activities, such as the abuse of drugs and alcohol (see Health.)

Simultaneously, there are poor or limited services for engaged youth participation in governance activities. This makes it more difficult for young people to gain the motivation necessary to engage in the political sphere, or indeed the belief that engagement will make a difference. Despite this, volunteerism has long been prevalent in Palestinian society, particularly during and after the Second Intifada. However, these rates have now dwindled to only 2 out of 10 Palestinian youth having participated in volunteer activities.^{xxvii} Volunteerism can provide a means for young people to participate in a healthy, educational, and recreational activity that educates them on the importance of community engagement. This kind of community engagement is positive for the society at large and also puts Palestinian youth in a position of becoming drivers of positive change.

Youth are extremely vulnerable with no real representative voice, leading to an extreme power chasm between young people, the PA, and security forces. In recent years, there has been an alarming crackdown on freedom of expression, particularly over social media, where any criticism of public figures inevitably leads to arrest and unreasonable detainment. There have also been allegations of torture within Palestinian prisons, with unsafe conditions for detainees. Considering that Palestine became a signatory to critical human rights conventions in 2015, including the Convention against Torture, it is of high priority that the state is held to account for exploiting youth's structural societal vulnerabilities to their own ends.

Decision-makers must remember that the rapidly growing youth population is pivotal to the future democratic, free, and tolerant state of Palestine. In order to educate the next generation to take up the mantle of leadership, government representatives must engage with young people in a serious and sustained manner.



Health

Access to, and the quality of, healthcare in the Palestinian territories is extremely dependent on the geographic context, varying widely between Areas A, B, and C in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. Healthcare services are provided through the Palestinian Ministry of Health (MOH); UNRWA provides social services and some free healthcare services. Palestinian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) funded by international, local, and private donors provide healthcare to around 13% of households in the West Bank. Huge disparities have been found between Israeli and Palestinian health-care systems,^{xxviii} and although responsibility for healthcare was transferred to the PA, over 160,000 Palestinians still receive treatment in Israel every year.^{xxix}

The healthcare system suffers due to Israeli restrictions on the purchase of medication, driving up prices, and mobility restrictions.^{xxx} Where Palestinian doctors are not able to provide the necessary healthcare, they refer patients to Israeli hospitals:

“The convoluted process involves a referral from a Palestinian specialist physician, a wait for approval by the Palestinian Authority Health Ministry and a request to the Israel Defence Forces’ Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories for permission to enter Israel, which is not always granted.”^{xxxi}

According to the recent report, “Divide and Conquer: Inequality in Health,” one can see stark differences in health determinants, for example, the average life expectancy of Palestinians residing in the oPt is approximately 10 years lower than the average in Israel.^{xxxii} Furthermore, dependent on the political and economic situation of the city at hand, there are differentials between access to safe, inexpensive, and protected healthcare amongst different areas of the West Bank.^{xxxiii} The movement of ambulances and emergency healthcare is often restricted resulting in patient mortality.

Adolescent and youth health concerns that require urgent intervention include sexual and reproductive health, psychosocial support, the need for safe, youth-friendly health centres, and the prevalence of unhealthy coping mechanisms. Although the MoH strategy 2014-2016 includes youth-friendly health services as an objective, there is no mention of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), a great oversight. “Aside from the decreased cost of healthcare that comes with unwanted pregnancies, STDs, HIV/AIDS, and other health concerns, girls and young women are more likely to be able to stay at school, improving their future participation in the labour force and earning potential. In turn, household savings and assets receive a boost. Poverty is reduced, living conditions improve and communities are better off when women can fully participate and contribute. All these benefits have direct impacts on a wide variety of other development goals.”^{xxxiv}

Adolescents and youth are constantly exposed to psychological trauma due to the dual impact of the external Israeli occupation and the internal patriarchal society. There are high rates of anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), especially in Gaza. At the same time, a quarter of women have reported sexual harassment in Gaza, significantly more than the West Bank (13.8%).^{xxxv} Societal stigma means that youth suffering from such psychological trauma are unlikely to seek life-saving help, impacted by social pressures, family honour, and gender norms. There is a distinct lack of youth-friendly health services, which integrate SRHR and psychosocial support into mainstream healthcare. Psycho-education must be increased in order to reduce concerns of stigma, which can lead to preventable deaths.

High risk coping mechanisms are pandemic in Palestine. These include smoking, drug usage (especially in Gaza and EJ), and violence. Recent studies have demonstrated a prevalence of substance use and abuse among young people in Palestine.^{xxxvi} As these studies have pointed out, there is very limited accurate information on substance use in Palestine, due to the social stigma that surrounds it. Even so, there is a clear need to gain accurate information in this arena, considering that substance abuse is known to be on the rise. As a whole, health risk activities among youth are relatively low, but substantially higher for male rather than female youth.^{xxxvii} Tobacco use among youth is extremely high; even among younger youth (aged 15-19), 45% of males and 22% of females currently smoke. Older youth (20-24) levels stand at 72% and 31% respectively. With regards to alcohol use, slightly less than one-quarter of youth report having tried alcohol. In contrast, very few youth report having tried any illegal drugs; only 10% of 20-24 year-old males have tried any, in contrast to only 4% of females in this age group. Less than a third of those youth who say they ever tried drugs say they currently take drugs.^{xxxviii} Studies into taboo subjects such as substance abuse must however take into account a potential margin of error, as young people may be reluctant to admit their usage due to social constraints. Furthermore, alcohol and drug usage is known to be much higher in East Jerusalem, where Palestinian youth are able to access these easily from Israel. Other factors that have led to higher drug use in East Jerusalem include: "economic stagnation, poor social services, significant social and political tensions, and the inability of Palestinian law enforcement authorities to police this area."^{xxxix} In general, many youth believe that high levels of stress, worry, and politically motivated violence are reasons for increasing drug use.^{xl} Another cause was to use drugs and alcohol as a way to pass free time and socialize with friends.^{xli} In addition, young people in Gaza are demonstrating high addiction to Tramadol, an opioid painkiller, and has been said to affect between 50% and 80% of the adult population.^{xlii} It is used as a way of dealing with the stress, nervous disorders, and psychologic problems caused by 9 years of siege and economic blockade.^{xliii} It is a highly dangerous drug which has devastating effects on the body and can lead to heart disease and liver failure.^{xliv}

Increasing access to harmful substances can be extremely damaging to Palestinian youth. This is further exacerbated by a lack of outreach or educational programmes that teach youth or their families about the harmful impacts of substance abuse. Furthermore, a lack of psychosocial support or integrated health services means that young people do not know where to turn for this information, and fear speaking to their families due to social stigmas. This is further worsened by recent drug-related arrests by the PA, where youth are imprisoned, and sometimes tortured, by the intelligence services. This punitive rather than rehabilitative response to drug use will likely lead to re-offense on leave prison. Furthermore, the treatment of all drug abuse with the same sentencing is not in line with international drug and crime prevention methodology. This suggests that young people strongly require access to healthy, safe spaces for recreation, integrated youth-friendly health services, and mechanisms to help them build resilience to better deal with the occupation and its many challenges. Nutritional problems such as obesity are also of concern, as many young people lack the knowledge to live a healthy life, in terms of proper nutrition and exercise.

Finally, with regards to sexual activity, 25% of older (19-24) unmarried male youth and 22% of younger (17-18) male youth report having had any sexual experience. Rates for females were generally similar.^{xlv} Rates for sexual intercourse remain lower (9.5% of older unmarried males and 7% of females). Once again, East Jerusalem shows elevated risk levels compared to other areas. While HIV/AIDS and STD prevalence remains relatively low across Palestine, the lack of SRHR education is likely to lead to increases in these communicable diseases. It is therefore critical to take preventive action now, as well as ensure that integrated health services include sexual and reproductive health and non-discriminatory counselling.

Gender-based violence incidence is also increased by the lack of effective SRHR. According to a 2011 Violence Survey, 37% of women have faced domestic violence in the West Bank with a much higher rate of 58.1% in Gaza. Furthermore, there is limited legal recourse to which young women can turn to escape marital or familial violence. Although not included in the methodology of the aforementioned survey, one form of GBV is early marriage: according to the Palestinian family health survey in 2010, adolescent birth rate reached 67 per 1000. In addition, 40% of young women aged 20-24 were married before age 18, with 20% of this group giving birth to a child before 18. Marital violence or rape is much stigmatized within Palestinian society. Although the PA has recently put in place a National Referral System in order to centralize and better tackle cases of violence against women, it has not yet been operationalized. In addition, a 2005 Amnesty International Report highlighted a positive correlation between increased levels of violence against Palestinian men by Israeli authorities, and a rise in violence against women in the Palestinian society.^{xlvi}

There are limited protection or prevention services in the West Bank, a situation that is worsened by the fact that women who suffer marital violence are stigmatized within society. To date, there is still no law criminalizing marital, domestic, or familial violence.

Finally, the vulnerability of youth in general is magnified with regards to youth with disabilities. They are particularly disadvantaged in the labour force, education, and access to healthcare. Rehabilitation services are currently limited or non-existent. Disabled youth are acutely stigmatized, and are typically unable to fulfil their otherwise prescribed gender norms. Girls with disabilities are often disproportionately vulnerable to violence, exploitation and abuse from the community, and sometimes within the family.^{xlvii}



Gender

The term 'gender' is often taken as synonymous with 'women' or 'women's programming.' This misnomer however must be corrected, and the social construct of gender taken for what it is: a series of societally influenced norms, which influence the characteristics, lifestyle, development, and behaviour of all individuals. While sex is a scientific fact, gender is a spectrum rather than a simple binary of male versus female.

Although gender is a social construct, it has been reified to develop its own power structures in each society. Globally, women have been historically oppressed due to their gender in a variety of different manifestations, which is one of the reasons why gender programming is often seen as women's programming. While gender programming generally has a greater focus on women, this is in order to help correct the equality imbalance in the society. With this in mind, it is still important to consider how the social conceptions of gender impacts both men and women differently. In a patriarchal society such as Palestine, heteronormative understanding of masculinity and femininity and male and female traditional roles take on profound importance, and can be damaging to both women and men, contradistinctively.

Thus, gender as a whole cross-cuts the other three major areas of concern for youth in Palestine: economic empowerment, civic engagement and health. As this analysis touches on the gender dynamics of these areas in the above sections, below it will just consider the overall gender dynamics that can influence all areas of an individual's life. Within Palestine, women face greater constraints in all areas of life – economic, political, social – and thus from this point onward, this analysis will have a greater focus on women. As a whole, men are considered bread-winners in Palestinian society, whose role lies in the "public" sphere, whereas women are relegated to position of caretakers, whose role lies in the "private" sphere. While there are examples of men and women who cross-cut these gender norms, on the whole, this construct is very much still adhered to in Palestinian society.^{xliii} These men and women are usually privileged through power, influence, or money, and are able to operate outside the normal social boundaries.

In the occupied Palestinian territories, occupation and traditional patriarchy intersect to create a uniquely complex situation, often termed as a 'double oppression' for women. As in the rest of society, women are oppressed by the violent apparatus and loss of freedoms by the occupation, which at the same time perpetuates patriarchal conservatism within the society; the impact being that it is particularly difficult for gender equality to advance. Together, this has resulted in a "Palestinian society [that] is more conservative today than 20 years ago, creating additional obstacles to women and their economic empowerment."^{xlix} Over these 20 years, there has also been a downward trend in the number of women in decision-making roles or the public sphere. Where women's organizations used to have clout in the socio-political sphere, they have lost their influence and ability to effectuate change. Women were very much part of the First Intifada, holding influential and important roles during that period, however, a combination of societal conservatism and poor quality education has led to a situation where there are limited or no women to take on that mantle. Where women are well-educated, influential, and good communicators, they often either emigrate out of the country or work within the NGO/aid sphere. This is often linked to higher incidence of early marriage in Palestine, which leads many women to be excluded from decision-making roles, both within the domestic and the public spheres.

In 2014, the Palestinian Authority (PA) published a new Palestinian National Development Plan (NDP), which demonstrates how the “physical, political, and administrative divide” between the West Bank, EJ, and Gaza, means that the PA lacks jurisdictional authority of the oPt. If legislation passed in one area of the oPt cannot positively impact Palestinians in other areas, this acts as a continuous barrier to gender advancement in Palestine. Furthermore a 2011 UNDP report noted that where gender equality laws are in place, they are rarely enacted. At the same time, there are essential laws, which require necessary reform to comply with international standards, such as limited or no protection for victims of GBV.ⁱⁱ

Legal frameworks aside, Palestine has one of the lowest participation rates for women in the world, including across the MENA region.ⁱⁱⁱ Women’s participation in the labour force stands at about 19%.ⁱⁱⁱ Likewise, women are underrepresented in the political arena, particularly in decision-making roles: “only one of 18 PLO Executive Committee members, 5 of 22 ministers and only one of 16 governors (Ramallah/Al-Bireh) are female. In 2013, females represented 40.6% of total employees in the public sector, but only about 4% occupy assistant undersecretary positions in PA ministries.”^{iv} Within both the economic and political sectors, we see wide-ranging vertical and horizontal segregation; vertically, women are largely limited from taking the top-most decision-making roles, and horizontally, we see limited or no women’s participation in certain economic realms as well as in the public sphere. This is because of societal norms that continue to segregate women to certain roles and sectors that are deemed acceptable or appropriate within social constraints. Furthermore, the decline of manufacturing and agriculture – traditional areas of female employment – has exacerbated this.

It may therefore be argued that young women, as part of two of the most vulnerable groups within Palestine – youth and women – suffer greater vulnerability, susceptible to the patriarchy that privileges both old age and men alike as decision-makers. During the formative period of youth, young women are often socialized into believing that they are less worthy than their male counterparts, with less to say, without dreams to fulfil, and with limited possibilities.^{iv} While this may not be the case in every Palestinian family, it is this socialized diffidence and lack of confidence that extends to many future decisions for young women.

Interventions are needed in the oPt that seek to unpick these gender-based stereotypes, which influence all aspects of both young women and men’s lives, including most importantly, their autonomy over their own lives. Under prolonged occupation there are limited social interventions that will induce long-lasting change for Palestinian youth, without, critically, a political solution. Despite this, much can be done internally to improve the situation of young women and men, by taking their gender in consideration.

EFFECTS ON YOUTH

1



01. RADICALISATION & EXTREMISM

Compounding challenges including occupation, economic and political inequality, a democratic deficit, and youth disenfranchisement have led to increasing radicalisation and extremism in Palestine. The trials of living under occupation in combination with traditional socio-cultural and religious elements have combined to create a society more conservative than it was twenty years ago. With instability across the region, UN Res 2250 recognises the importance to combat this trend.

02. RISKY BEHAVIOURS

The pervasive psychological impacts of living under protracted occupation have led to a prevalence of unhealthy coping mechanisms and risky behaviours among young people, including alcohol, drugs, and tobacco abuse, violence, and unprotected sex (leading to STDs, HIV/AIDS, and unwanted pregnancies). It has also led to widespread mental illness, including depression and PTSD. Little thought to consequences can lead to greater future concerns as adolescents transition to adulthood and become ready to start their own family and gain employment.



2

3

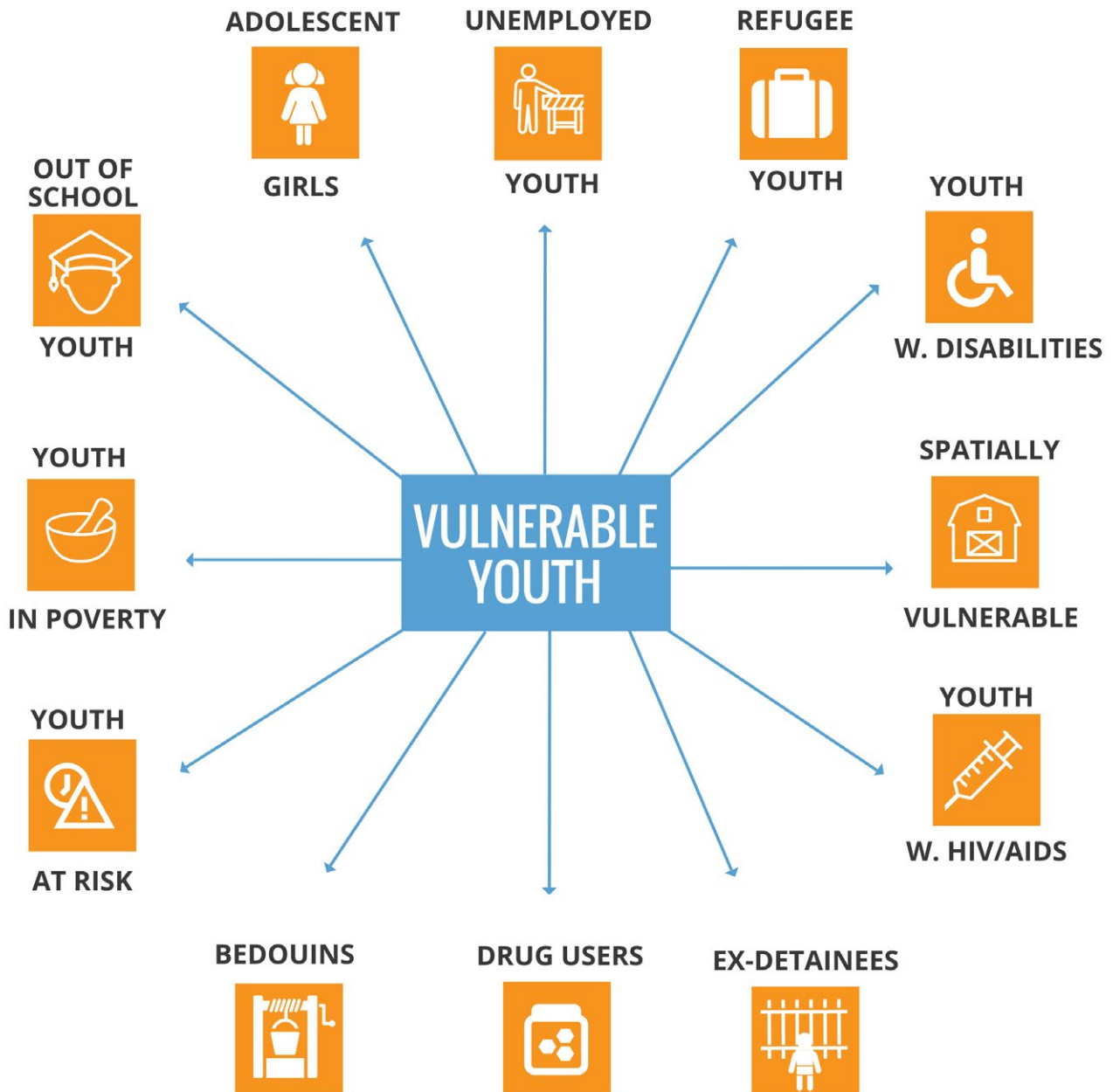


03. DOUBLE OPPRESSION

Young women are inordinately effected by the combination of occupation and a patriarchal culture. They face what is termed as a 'double oppression' because their freedoms are doubly curtailed as compared to men, in all spheres of their life. Relegated to the role of 'caretaker' under a patriarchal structure and limited by the Israeli occupation apparatus, women's oppression often manifests in gender-based violence, limited agency, and little choice. This can lead to risky behaviours and extremism.

Intersecting vulnerabilities

The final section of this report will take a brief look at the intersecting vulnerabilities of certain groups of youth that are even more marginalized due to these intersecting structural factors (both internal and external). These include: adolescent girls, refugee youth, poor youth, ex-detainees (both in Israel and Palestine), and Bedouin youth. While this list is far from exhaustive, these are areas of particular vulnerability that must be factored in to any analysis that considers the youth of Palestine.



Adolescent girls

Adolescents make up approximately 23% of the total population, with girls making up approximately half of this segment. Although the context of adolescent girls was briefly touched upon above, it is important to reiterate their vulnerability, as a result of heightened exposure to violence, limited choices, and early marriage. Poor access to comprehensive education and health services limit their opportunities and abilities to advance in society. The Palestinian public and government still perceive adolescents as recipients rather than social actors or partners in decision-making.^{lvi} Adolescent girl and young women are also most likely to fall victim to honour-related killings.

Refugee youth

40% of refugees are under the age of 15.^{lvii} Youth living in refugee camps suffer extremely deprived living conditions, chronic poverty, unemployment, over-crowding, with inadequate infrastructure (which can increase rates of communicable diseases). Refugees also have higher unemployment rates and higher fertility rates, which worsens conditions and increases poverty, food insecurity, and reliance on UNRWA aid. Refugee youth have lower access to opportunities in mainstream society, tend to have greater exposure to violence, do not have their own assets or capital, which means they are highly vulnerable to shocks or stresses. After over 60 years of refugee status, refugees suffer the psychological trauma of not having identity papers or citizenship, which can lead to loss of identity, alienation from society, and limited incentives to work towards a better and more secure future.

Youth in poverty

'Poor' youth can come under a variety of different vulnerable groups. Approximately 25.8% of Palestinians live in poverty. In general, these are young people from families that are un- or under-employed, with incomes below the nationally-defined poverty line. They are also generally food insecure, lacking in autonomy, and decision-making power, and are vulnerable to deteriorating standards of living, if they are hit by new or recurrent shocks or stresses. Refugees tend to be poorer than non-refugees. Born into this environment and with limited social mobility, young people generally lack the opportunity needed to advance their livelihoods. Poor young women are particularly disadvantaged, as their disempowerment multiplies due to both gender and wealth. There is a higher prevalence of early marriage among poor young women. Furthermore, poor youth, especially males, are often more easily susceptible to becoming radicalized or joining radicalized groups based on the promise of a better life. Furthermore, these youth tend to engage in more risky behaviours in order to help mitigate the hardships of life.

Spatially vulnerable youth

Spatially vulnerable youth are those who are particularly vulnerable for having been born into certain areas of the oPt. Geography in the oPt is a political rather than physical construct, as it refers to locations created by the occupation.^{lviii} These areas can include Area C, Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, Hebron H2, and the Seam Zone. The context of these areas vary greatly, however, there are certain common attributes that lead to greater vulnerability for their residents. Young people in these areas tend to be more exposed to violent apparatus of the occupation (in differing forms) and thus violence in general; lack access to economic opportunities or the means to develop their own enterprises; under-represented in the political sphere; food insecure; poor; limited access to education and health services; and suffer some measure of geographic isolation from other Palestinian communities. While this provides a very general overview of the spatial vulnerabilities faced by youth in these areas, specific analysis is required to plan interventions into each area. As a whole however, it is notable that the situation for young Palestinians is very much impacted by their residency.

Bedouin youth

There are approximately 40,000 Bedouins in the oPt, primarily based in Area C. Bedouins are in general among the most vulnerable communities in the oPt. Israeli restrictions on Bedouins deteriorate their quality of life and cause greater poverty. These groups have limited freedom of movement, right to housing, health, education, and employment. Furthermore, their nomadic way of life is under threat by Israeli forced displacement and settler violence. Over 90% depend on herding as their primary source of income, and an inability to move freely means that this is no longer possible. Young people suffer from poverty, food insecurity, limited freedom of movement, lack of economic opportunity, limited access to education or health services, and finally, psychological separation from mainstream Palestinian society, within which they are also stigmatized.

As a conservative, patriarchal society, Bedouin (young) women are even more vulnerable to violence, domestic violence, and limited freedoms. They are also more likely to drop out of school at a young age in comparison to boys.

Ex-Detainees

Young Palestinians can be extremely vulnerable to Israeli search and arrest operations, of which there were 4,568 into the West Bank in 2015. Currently, there are 340 Palestinian children out of a total 7000^{lix} Palestinian prisoners behind bars in Israeli prisons, many without trial or conviction. These youth are often stigmatized when they return to mainstream life, suffering psychological and physical traumas. There are limited psychosocial support opportunities or support groups that could help young people reintegrate into society. Arrested Palestinian women are usually held in Hasharon and Damon prisons, which are situated outside the 1967 borders. This violates international law and also makes it difficult for detainees to meet with defense counsels. Moreover, women held in these prisons usually suffer harsh conditions, with high incidence of torture, physical and psychological abuse, sexual harassment, denial of education, solitary confinement, medical neglect, denial of family visits, including for mothers with kids, lack of natural light, etc.^{lx} Young women who have been detained often have difficulty reintegrating into Palestinian society, due to stigmatization from society, lower marriageability prospects, and a loss of honour.

Likewise, there are a number of youth that have been detained within Palestine for crimes against the state, which can include criticisms of the PA and security forces; the consumption or selling of drugs; and recently, social media posts that are deemed by the state to be inflammatory or supportive of the occupier. These detainees are known to suffer violence, sometimes torture, perpetrated by Palestinian security forces.^{lxi} The stigmatization that these youth suffer is far worse than those who return from Israeli prisons. There is no support provided for these young people, often cut off from families and support networks, and dealing with psychological and physical harm. These youth suffer the additional dimension of feeling betrayal and anger towards their own government and security forces. There is little discussion of this within the oPt and little recourse for these detainees.

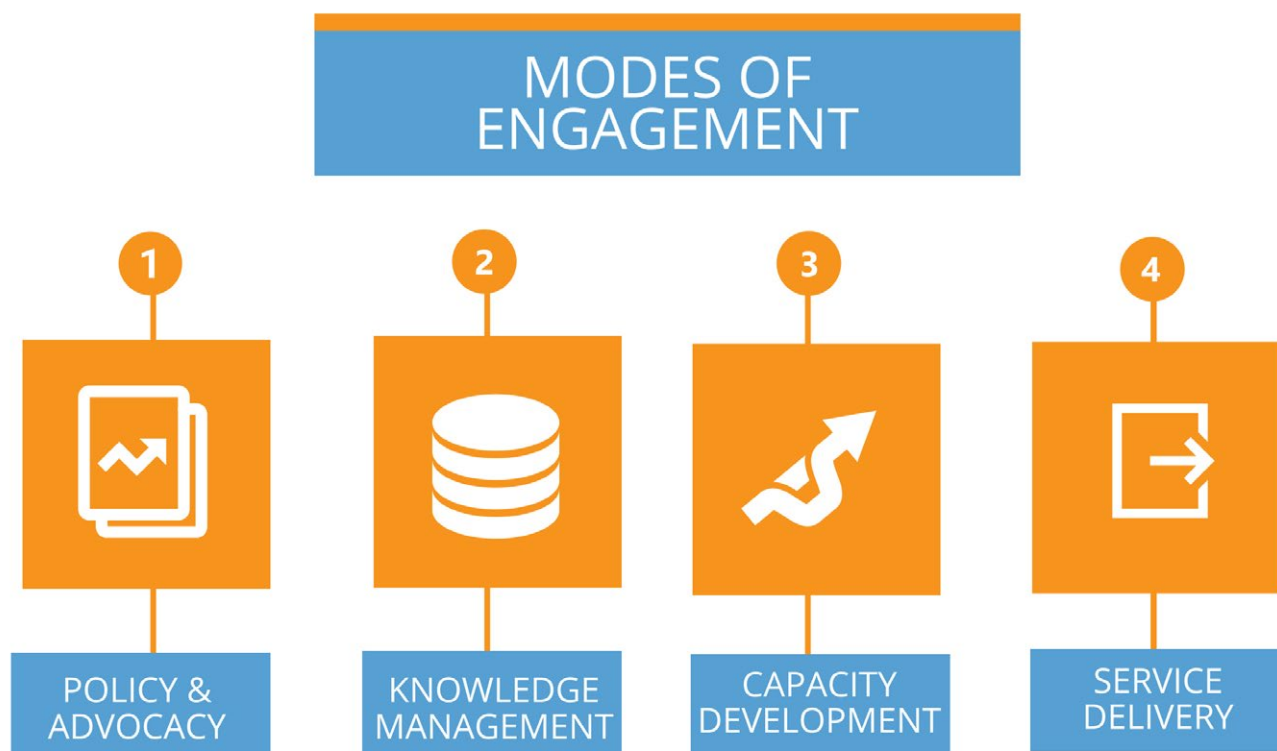
What now?

This analysis cannot claim to provide a comprehensive picture of the intersecting challenges that young people face in the oPt, however, it does provide a starting point for clearly defined and fruitful interventions to help improve the lives of youth in Palestine. After 25 years of aid to the oPt, it is critical that programmes are designed to target the underlying causes of these vulnerabilities, rather than only the manifest symptoms. It is necessary to empower youth as agents of change, by improving the structural conditions within the oPt. In the absence of a political solution, there are limited areas in which interventions can make a substantive difference. In spite of this, there are areas where true change is possible, including the advancement of gender equality, greater youth participation in the economic and political spheres, improved education and health services in the oPt, better infrastructure, and finally the mainstreaming of marginalized youth groups. Youth must be empowered in order to actualize their potential in the future, rather than risking Palestine's youth bulge retrospectively being assessed as a "missed opportunity."

Strategic Opportunities: Empowered and Resilient Youth

As can be seen from the above situation analysis, there is much to be done to achieve an empowered and resilient youth population. There is still hope for the future State of Palestine, and much of this lies in its young people. Palestine's youth have demonstrated their resilience and steadfastness over the years in continuing to live their lives even under enduring occupation. They continue to work towards their hopes, dreams, and an independent Palestinian state. As UNFPA's population study, Palestine 2030, has demonstrated, young people are Palestine's future. They provide an opportunity, a resource, and real potential to drive the change needed to finally achieve an independent, viable, sustainable, and resilient State of Palestine.

In light of the most recent UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and the Common Country Analysis (CCA) for Palestine, youth have been recognized as one of the major vulnerable groups to be targeted. This is therefore a particularly pertinent time for UNFPA to be operationalizing a new youth strategy. While this strategy is far from comprehensive, the following lays out some critical strategic opportunities, in the areas of Economic Empowerment, Civic Engagement, Health, and Gender (Figure 1), where we can focus our efforts **over the next four years** to empower young people to become leaders, decision-makers, and change-makers. Many of these interventions will be cross-cutting and involve more than one sector, in which case they will be placed within the area that seems most relevant. This strategy seeks to remember that young people are individuals with competing needs, desire, goals, dreams, and hopes for the future, and therefore, many of these areas must be considering in tandem with each other. Wherever possible, this report will try to demonstrate these linkages as clearly as possible.



Under each thematic area, this section will explicate critical and strategic opportunities under UNFPA's four modes of engagement: i) Policy/Advocacy; ii) Knowledge Management; iii) Capacity Development; and iv) Service Delivery. These key modes of engagement are necessary for a comprehensive, long-term, and sustainable strategy that seeks to reach one major goal: empowered and resilient young people. We seek to empower youth that are not only better able to cope with the challenges of occupation, but transform themselves for the better.

As this report focuses on strategic opportunities internally within Palestine, all policy suggestions will be directed towards the PA, unless otherwise specified. It is important to note that these four thematic areas often overlap and interlink, and indeed must be linked to one another for an intervention to appropriately tackle the root cause of the problem and build the transformative resilience of Palestinian youth. Where strategic interventions do not specifically lie in any of the four key areas, they will be placed under 'cross-cutting'. Furthermore, these four modes of engagement interlink closely with one another and therefore interventions may often utilize several modes of engagement at once, in order to reach the overall goal.

Most importantly, the following interventions link to UNFPA's four major thematic areas: i) Sexual and Reproductive Health; ii) Adolescents and Youth; iii) Reproductive Rights and Gender Equality; iv) Population Dynamics. While undoubtedly the focus on this report is on ii) Adolescents and Youth, the following will cross-cut with other areas and try to tackle the root causes of adolescent and youth disempowerment. In this strategy, we seek to harness the transformative potential of resilient youth to make change for the better.

1 Cross-Cutting

Policy/Advocacy

1. Provide technical assistance to the Palestinian Authority (PA), private and public sectors, and civil society to encourage the inclusion of young people as important social actors and decision-makers into all strategies, plans, major committees, task forces, dialogues, etc., including in humanitarian settings.
2. Encourage greater social cohesion by increasing links between young people in hard-to-reach or spatially vulnerable areas, including East Jerusalem, Gaza, Area C communities, Seam Zones, and Hebron H2, to build a unified national identity, particularly through digital-social platforms.
3. Encourage dialogue and cooperation between young people from different political parties, in order to help foster future political unity and collaboration.
4. Document human rights violations against Palestinian youth by both the Israeli occupation and the Palestinian Authority, including those institutionalised into Palestinian law, particularly relevant after the PA's ratification of major human rights treaties.
5. Encourage cultural interventions to promote Palestinian culture, art, music, and identity led by young people for young people.
6. Increase spatial equities in all areas (economic, political, social, cultural) by providing technical assistance for the improvement and diversification of service provision outside Ramallah, ensuring geographic inclusion through provision of service points in other major urban centres and rural areas to service marginalised youth and other communities.
7. Advocate for the utilisation of demographic data to encourage increased focus on empowerment of adolescents and youth, with special attention on young women, adolescents, and marginalised populations.
8. Empower young people to act as advocates for the vulnerable within society, including other youth, women, the disabled, the elderly, Bedouin populations, the poor and marginalised, etc.
9. Empower young people with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to advocate on behalf of the Palestinian people on international and national platforms to end the occupation of Palestine.
10. Encourage the utilisation of new technologies among government and other stakeholders to better engage with young people in general.
11. Develop rehabilitative mechanisms to help young ex-detainees reintegrate into society, to find decent work and housing, to recover psychologically, and to prevent re-offense and re-imprisonment.
12. Establish community groups for young ex-detainees to come together, share experiences, and gain support from others in a similar situation, under the supervision of a qualified counsellor.
13. Assist the PA in establishing a welfare service, which provides means-tested cash or in-kind benefits to the needy, especially young people. A social security net would help build the resilience of the Palestinian youth to better deal with and transform from shocks.
14. Ensure a specific focus on vulnerable youth in all policy-making, including adolescent girls, refugee youth, youth in poverty, spatially vulnerable youth, Bedouin youth, and ex-detainees.

Knowledge Management

15. Conduct annual digital surveys of major youth needs and priorities, in order to ensure the ongoing relevance of youth interventions.
16. Document and disseminate good practice models, including through South-South cooperation (knowledge sharing, exchange of ideas, travel grants for youth, peer education).

Capacity Development

17. Foster and encourage the Palestinian youth cultural spirit by developing greater socio-cultural initiatives across socioeconomic and spatial divides, bringing together different groups.
18. Encourage socio-cultural and art-based non-violent initiatives to reclaim the land in Area C and reduce territorial fragmentation, in order to reclaim one Palestinian national identity.
19. Increase the capacity of young people to establish and develop their own micro-initiatives with a social focus.

Service Delivery

20. Utilise new technologies, including mobile, social media and online tools to maximise outreach to young people, including remote areas.
21. Provide small grants to young people to establish and develop their own initiatives with a social focus.

2 Economic Empowerment (including Education)

Policy/Advocacy

22. Develop new strategies to foster greater economic opportunities and the creation of jobs for young people, within the limitations caused by the occupation, by investing in potential high-value added and growth sectors, including (but not limited to), the productive sectors – agriculture, industry, manufacturing, tourism, and IT.
23. Advocate for young people to enter growth sectors and to provide subsidised training programmes to give young people an edge in the labour market.
24. Advocate for young people to consider professions, traditional or non-traditional, which are under-represented or lack skilled labour supply in the current labour force (for example, specialist medical professions, such as psychology).
25. Encourage policymakers to embed new and innovative learning methods, critical thinking, and career counselling into the Palestinian curriculum, particularly to foster transition into the labour market.
26. Advocate for greater PA expenditure on the education sector, in order to improve educational infrastructure and construct new educational institutions, train teachers and teaching assistants, raise teacher's salaries, purchase new equipment and technologies, and revamp the curriculum.
27. Ensure the presence of school counsellors in each school to work with students who require mental healthcare.
28. Campaign against the stigma of vocational training and education and encourage young people, especially women, to consider non-traditional careers.
29. Discourage discrimination against women in the workplace, and encourage higher participation rates through the provision of life, employment, and IT skilling programmes.
30. Develop a comprehensive development strategy for investing in Gaza's infrastructure and private sector to boost job creation and financial security for youth, particularly in the productive sector.
31. Increase youth access to finance and loans, in order to establish their own enterprises and generate employment.

Knowledge Management

32. Conduct a mapping of knowledge/skills-based high value added sectors, which will provide opportunities for young people to contribute to GDP growth in the long-term.
33. Conduct a thorough mapping of youth participation in the labour market including geographically and sectorally; utilise this data to help diversify youth participation, especially for women.
34. Conduct assessments to measure the quality of education in line with international standards, through the establishment of localised criteria for schools to be evaluated in relation to the economic needs.
35. Conduct regular digital youth satisfaction surveys with education services, and provide space for youth to give recommendations.
36. Develop localised standardised tests to check critical thinking, numeric and spatial reasoning etc. to measure youth skill levels, in line with international averages, in order to gain an idea of performance and skill gaps.

Capacity Development

37. Tackle both the 'supply' and 'demand' sides of unemployment, through the skilling of young people to become ready for the labour market, and increasing private sector demand for young, especially female, employees.
38. Provide subsidised or free training programmes for young women to enter non-traditional sectors and end the vertical segregation in the labour market.
39. Restructure the tourism industry with one unified vision, and invest in initiatives already showing success in East Jerusalem.
40. Increase the capacity of young people to advocate against the purchasing of Israeli settlement products, and invest in businesses that seek to achieve Palestinian economic self-sufficiency.
41. Encourage students to do internships during their education to help them build their soft skills and improve their chances of successfully securing jobs after their graduation.
42. Foster innovation, productivity, and the use and development of new technologies through the establishment of grants and funds for research and development for young people, especially from marginalised backgrounds.

Service Delivery

43. Provide limited grants, micro-financing, and subsidised loans to young people, in order to help foster entrepreneurship, self-employment, and expand the start-up culture in Palestine.
44. Utilise new technologies to outreach education to employment programmes to reach marginalised youth, especially Bedouins.
45. Develop or improve career centres at universities to help students with career counselling and assisting with the development of soft and employment skills.

3 Civic Engagement

Policy/Advocacy

46. Advocate for the PA to enact UNSC Resolution 2250, in order to take steps against rising radicalisation and violence in society, particularly among excluded, vulnerable, and marginalised youth.
47. Actively work towards social cohesion in society, in order to limit radicalisation, and encourage alternative healthy coping mechanisms.
48. Actively encourage greater youth participation in the public sector and government, including in any high level meetings, dialogues, committees, task forces, etc., at the Ministerial and municipality levels, and utilise these experience as a platform for youth involvement on a larger scale.
49. Engage young people in community-based planning at the local level, to ensure that these plans respond to the needs and priorities of youth, rather than responding to donor priorities.

50. Encourage volunteerism and community engagement among young people, nurturing young people to become active citizens and the drivers of social change in Palestine.

51. Empower young people to advocate for a truly democratic Palestinian State, with free and fair elections, and respect for all human rights and freedoms.

Knowledge Management

52. Learn from successful youth engagement networks and models in other contexts with a 'youth bulge,' with a focus on the global south.

53. Conduct a widespread assessment on the role of youth in community and community building, including gaining qualitative data on how to expand this role, build on youth efforts in community development, and to positively influence community perspective towards youth.

Capacity Development

54. Invest in and empower young people as leaders and active citizens, in order to advocate for youth rights in all areas to the PA and international and national civil society actors, to advocate against radicalisation, extremism, and instrumentalization of vulnerable youth, in conjunction with UNSC Resolution 2250, to be trained in peacekeeping and successful dialogue, and to actively participate in governmental policy- and decision-making.

55. Support citizen journalism and activism led by youth, to act as a check on their governing bodies and demand their rights, through social accountability interventions.

56. Encourage youth-led environmental activism, campaigning, and lobbying to bring environmental protection higher up the governmental agenda through garnering public support.

57. Empower young people to create and implement innovative renewable energy projects, such as portable solar panels and wind farms to increase energy independence and overcome Israeli restrictions.

58. Support the development of youth-led community-based response networks that include emergency healthcare, civil defence, evacuation and emergency responder service, and emergency aid and shelter services in Gaza.

59. Provide subsidised training programmes and small grants for young people to implement their own social initiatives that seek to change society for the better.

60. Provide support to the Ministry of Social Development youth centres, with a strong focus on out-of-school and at-risk youth.

61. Increase the capacity of Youth Local Councils (YLCs) across the West Bank and Gaza to act as a real check on their government, ensuring representation from vulnerable youth.

Service Delivery

62. Provide workshops to young people educating them on their human rights under international and national law, and appropriate means of ensuring their rights are met.

63. Support the delivery of learning exercises such as conducting Model UNs among school- and university-level students, in order to develop youth knowledge and skills on global, national, and local engagement strategies.

4 Health

Policy/Advocacy

64. Promote preventive healthcare, by focusing on healthy lifestyle, engagement in sports, risks of substance abuse, such as cigarettes, drugs, and alcohol, and healthy diets and holistic well-being.
65. Increase national capacity to deliver integrated health services, including sexual and reproductive health, family planning, psychosocial support and mental health services.
66. Assess the delivery of SRH and psychosocial support under the National Health Strategy, including quality of services.
67. Conduct public awareness campaigns to encourage better family planning, the use of contraceptives, and sexual health testing, including for HIV/AIDS and STDs, free of stigma, discrimination, and violence.
68. Enhance nuanced youth awareness of the dangers of unhealthy coping mechanisms, such as substance abuse (drugs, alcohol, and tobacco), unsafe sexual activity, and violence, and develop educational campaigns on healthy alternatives.
69. Advocate for integration of SRH in emergency preparedness plans.
70. Include comprehensive physical, social, and health education into the curriculum at school and university levels, with a strong focus on comprehensive sexuality education.
71. Develop a comprehensive health strategy to ensure the prevalence of mobile outreach health services for the most vulnerable youth populations in Palestine.

Knowledge Management

72. Conduct regular surveys of national health youth-friendly and SRH services in partnership with the MoH and MoE, to ensure their compliance with international standards, to understand gaps and successes in health provision, and encourage investment in relevant areas.

Capacity Development

73. Provide technical assistance to ensure the provision of integrated youth-friendly health services, including family planning, maternal health, psychosocial support, and sexual health testing.
74. Conduct gender sensitisation workshops with the Ministry of Health as well as healthcare professionals to encourage inclusive and discrimination-free service provision.
75. Increase the capacity of the Palestine branch of the Y-Peer Network^{lxiii} to reach out to young people of different socio-economic and political backgrounds, bringing together women and men to advocate for, and learn about gender-based and health issues.
76. Educate and empower young people to be leaders in campaigning for SRHR, and to encourage community support.
77. Develop the capacity of primary healthcare to detect and treat youth with mental health problems, develop counselling initiatives, and community services for reproductive and mental health, organise awareness campaigns on mental/ psychological health issues to minimise stigma, and expanding human resources and research capacity into mental and reproductive health.

Service Delivery

78. Improve the quality and accessibility of healthcare for marginalised youth through the provision of mobile services and other initiatives.

5 Gender

Policy/Advocacy

79. Enact policy changes that encourage preventive and protective interventions for women's rights, particularly engaging young people as advocates for women's rights.
80. Encourage the engagement of men and boys in gender-based initiatives and interventions through campaigning and peer education.
81. Advocate for the participation of young people of both sexes in national committees to support gender equality and combat violence against women.
82. Provide resources and grants for micro-initiatives planned and led by and for youth, raising awareness of gender-based issues.
83. Advocate for a youth role in the operationalisation of the National Referral System across Palestine, to improve protection and welfare services for women suffering from domestic, marital, or familial violence, including raising awareness of different manifestations of GBV and how to recognise signs of GBV.
84. Carry out advocacy campaigns to change perceptions towards women and girls in society at large, with a focus on unpicking traditional gender norms that specify gender-based roles for women and men.
85. Advocate for better protection of young women from GBV, marital rape, and sexual harassment in line with international human right standards.

Knowledge Management

86. Document and replicate successful intervention youth-led models for women's empowerment and the engagement of men and boys, particularly from the global south.
87. Encourage south-south exchange among young people to advocate on gender-based issues.
88. Conduct regular digital, face-to-face, SMS, and other surveys with young women to better understand their views, needs, and hopes for the future.

Capacity Development

89. Conduct gender sensitisation workshops for government ministries, private sector, public sector, CSOs, health providers, service providers, and public actors with regards to the positive role that young people can play to mitigate the effects of gender-based violence, as well as teaching them how to recognise the signs of GBV, and enable the delivery of multi-sectoral services for women.
90. Strengthened engagement of youth to promote reproductive rights and women's empowerment and address discrimination, including of marginalised and vulnerable groups, people living with HIV, and key populations.
91. Economically, on the supply side, (i) develop training courses for young women using internationally recognised frameworks to improve life and employment skills, in order to increase their employability within the Palestinian labour market. (ii) facilitate young women's access to formal and informal credit to promote entrepreneurial activities led by women. On the demand side, (i) conduct advocacy and gender sensitisation workshops among employers to encourage the employment of young women, and change the negative perceptions towards women in the workplace. (ii) ensure both young women and employers are aware of labour rights, and work with the Ministry of Labour to ensure women access their right to annual and sick leave, maternity leave, fair working hours etc.

Works Cited

- AA, Ampofo. "When men speak women listen": gender socialisation and young adolescents' attitudes to sexual and reproductive issues." *Afr J Reprod Health* (2001): 196-212. <<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/12471941>>.
- Addameer. "Quarterly Newsletter: July - September 2016." 2016. Addameer. <http://www.addameer.org/sites/default/files/publications/quarter_3_newsletter_1.pdf>.
- al-Botmeh, Reem. "A Review of Palestinian Legislation from a Women's Rights Perspective." 2011.
- ASALA. "Women's Economic Empowerment in the West Bank, Palestine." Research Study. 2010.
- Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI). *Education Under Occupation*. Geneva: EAPPI, 2013.
- Efrat, Mor. "Divide & Conquer: Inequality in Health." 2015.
- Efrati, Ido. "Huge Disparities Between Israeli, Palestinian Health-care Systems, Says Rights Group." 11 January 2015. *Haaretz*. 17 May 2016. <<http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-1.636228>>.
- Freedom House. *Freedom in the World: West Bank*. Washington D.C.: Freedom House, 2016.
- IMEU. *Palestinian Social Customs and Traditions*. 2006. <<http://imeu.org/article/social-customs-and-traditions>>.
- International Monetary Fund. *West Bank and Gaza: Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee*. Ramallah: International Monetary Fund, 5 April 2016.
- Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS). *On the Eve of International Youth Day 12/8/2015*. 12 August 2015. 28 May 2016. <<http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/512/default.aspx?tabID=512&lang=en&ItemID=1457&mid=3171&wversion=Staging>>.
- *On the Eve of International Youth Day, 12/8/2014*. 12 August 2014. 26 May 2016. <<http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/512/default.aspx?tabID=512&lang=en&ItemID=1184&mid=3172&wversion=Staging>>.
- PCBS in Collaboration with the ILO announced the results of the Youth Transition from school to Work Survey. 15 May 2015. 23 May 2016. <<http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/512/default.aspx?tabID=512&lang=en&ItemID=1117&mid=3171&wversion=Staging>>.
- PASSIA. *Palestinian Women*. August 2015. <<http://www.passia.org/images/meetings/2015/dec/Women2015.pdf>>.
- PCBS. "Main Findings of Violence Survey in the Palestinian Society." 2011. <http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/portals/_pcbs/pressrelease/el3onf2011_e.pdf>.
- *On the Eve of International Youth Day 12/8/2015*. 2015. <<http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/512/default.aspx?tabID=512&lang=en&ItemID=1457&mid=3171&wversion=Staging>>.
- Pereznioto P, Jones N, Abu Hamad, B and Shaheen M,. "Effects of the Palestinian national Cash Transfer Programme on Children and Adolescents: A mixed methods analysis." 2014. <http://www.unicef.org/oPt/ODI_and_UNICEF_Palestinian_Cash_Transfer_Study.pdf>.
- Rijke, Alexandra and Toine van Teeffelen. "To Exist is to Resist: Sumud, Heroism, and the Everyday." *Jerusalem Quarterly* 59 (2015): 86 - 99.
- Roy, Sara. "The Gaza Strip: A Case of Economic De-Development." *Journal of Palestine Studies* (1987): 56-88. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2536651?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents>.
- Sadeq, Tareq and Sara Elder. "Labour market transitions of young women and men in the occupied Palestinian Territory." 2014. <http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_307634.pdf>.
- Starrs, Ann M. "Sustainable development is only possible if women's health is prioritised." 21 January 2015. *The Guardian*. <<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters/2015/jan/21/sustainable-development-is-only-possible-if-womens-health-is-prioritised>>.
- State of Palestine. *National Development Plan 2014-16: State Building to Sovereignty*. Ramallah: State of Palestine, 2014.
- UNFPA. *Demographic Divident*. 2014. <<http://www.unfpa.org/demographic-divident>>.
- Urdal, Henrik. "The Devil in the Demographics: The Effect of Youth Bulges on Domestic Armed Conflict, 1950 - 2000." 2004. <<http://www.eldis.org/vfile/upload/1/document/0708/doc14714.pdf>>.
- USIP. *Rebuilding Societies: Strategies for Resilience and Recovery in Times of Conflict*. Washington: Atlantic Council, 2016.
- World Bank. "Despite Progress, Laws Restricting Economic Opportunity for Women Are Widespread Globally, says WBG Report." 2015 йил 9-September. World Bank. 2015 йил 1-October. <<http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2015/09/09/despite-progress-laws-restricting-economic-opportunity-for-women-are-widespread-globally-says-wbg-report>>.

- i PCBS. On the Eve of International Youth Day 12/8/2015. 12 August 2016.
<http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/512/default.aspx?tabID=512&lang=en&ItemID=1721&mid=3172&wverson=Staging>
- iiiii Ibid
- iii Urdal, H., 2004. *The Devil in the Demographics: The Effect of Youth Bulges on Domestic Armed Conflict, 1950 - 2000*: World Bank.
- iv UNFPA, Demographic Dividend. 2014. <http://www.unfpa.org/demographic-dividend>
- v Roy, Sara. "The Gaza Strip: A Case of Economic De-Development." *Journal of Palestine Studies* (1987): 56-88.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/2536651?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents>.
- vi Betselem. *The Paris Protocol*. January 1, 2011. http://www.btselem.org/freedom_of_movement/paris_protocol.
- vii PCBS. "Press Release on the Results of the Labour Force Survey (January- March, 2016)." 4 May 2016.
<http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/512/default.aspx?tabID=512&lang=en&ItemID=1654&mid=3171&wverson=Staging#>
- viii PCBS. On the Eve of International Youth Day 12/8/2015. 12 August 2016.
<http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/512/default.aspx?tabID=512&lang=en&ItemID=1721&mid=3172&wverson=Staging>
- ix Ibid.
- x Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. PCBS in Collaboration with the ILO announced the results of the Youth Transition from school to Work Survey. May 15, 2015.
<http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/512/default.aspx?tabID=512&lang=en&ItemID=1117&mid=3171&wverson=Staging> (accessed May 23, 2016).
- xi UNFPA. *Palestine 2030*. December 2016, p.12.
<http://palestine.unfpa.org/sites/ArabStates/files/pub-pdf/Palestine%202030%20Booklet%20%282016%29.pdf>
- xii Ibid, p.20.
- xiii IMF. *West Bank and Gaza: Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee*. Ramallah: International Monetary Fund, April 5 2016, p.4.
- xiv PCBS. On the Eve of International Youth Day, 12/8/2015.
- xv Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS). On the Eve of International Youth Day, 12/8/2014. August 12, 2014.
<http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/512/default.aspx?tabID=512&lang=en&ItemID=1184&mid=3172&wverson=Staging> (accessed May 26, 2016).
- xvi Rijke, Alexandra and Toine van Teeffelen. "To Exist is to Resist: Sumud, Heroism, and the Everyday." *Jerusalem Quarterly* 59 (2015): 86 - 99.
- xvii UNFPA. *Palestine 2030*. P. 7
- xviii USIP, 2016. *Rebuilding Societies: Strategies for Resilience and Recovery in Times of Conflict*, Washington: Atlantic Council p.20.
- xix Sadeq, Tareq and Sara Elder. "Labour market transitions of young women and men in the occupied Palestinian Territory." 2014.
<http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_307634.pdf>.
- xx UNFPA. *Palestine 2030*. P. 12
- xxi Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI). *Education Under Occupation*. Geneva: EAPPI, 2013, p.5. http://www.unicef.org/oPt/UNICEF_Under_Occupation_final-SMALL.pdf
- xxii PCBS. "Main Findings of Violence Survey in the Palestinian Society." 2011.
<http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/portals/_pcbs/pressrelease/el3onf2011_e.pdf>
- xxiii Arts. 9-10, *Palestine Basic Law, 2002*. <<http://www.palestinianbasiclaw.org/basic-law/2002-basic-law>>
- xxiv Freedom House. *Freedom in the World: West Bank*. Washington D.C.: Freedom House, 2016.
- xxv PCBS. *International Youth Day, 12/08/2016*.
<http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/512/default.aspx?tabID=512&lang=en&ItemID=1721&mid=3172&wverson=Staging>
- xxvi Baseline Assessment of Centers in the West Bank with regards to the National Standards for Adolescent and Youth Friendly Centers
- xxvii PCBS. *International Youth Day 12/08/2016*.
<http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/512/default.aspx?tabID=512&lang=en&ItemID=1721&mid=3172&wverson=Staging>
- xxviii Ibid
- xxix Efrati, Ido. "Huge Disparities Between Israeli, Palestinian Health-care Systems, Says Rights Group." *Haaretz*. January 11, 2015.
<http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-1.636228> (accessed May 17, 2016).
- xxx Efrat, Mor. *Divide & Conquer: Inequality in Health*. Physicians for Human Rights, 2015. <<http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/256771352-Divide-Conquer-Inequality-in-Health-PHR-Israel.pdf>>
- xxxi Efrati, "Huge Disparities Between Israeli, Palestinian Health-care Systems."
- xxxii Efrat, *Divide & Conquer*, p.3.
- xxxiii Efrat, *Divide & Conquer*, p.12
- xxxiv Starrs, Ann M. "Sustainable development is only possible if women's health is prioritised." 21 January 2015. *The Guardian*.
<<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters/2015/jan/21/sustainable-development-is-only-possible-if-womens-health-is-prioritised>>.
- xxxv PCBS. "Main Findings of Violence Survey in the Palestinian Society." 2011.
<http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/portals/_pcbs/pressrelease/el3onf2011_e.pdf>.
- xxxvi See for example: Massad et al, Substance use among Palestinian youth in the West Bank, Palestine: a qualitative investigation. *BMC Public Health*, 16:800, 2016 < <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4988009/>> and Glick et al, Prevalence and Patterns of Health Risk Behaviours of Palestinian Youth: Findings from a Representative Survey: Working Paper. *Rand*, 2016. < https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/working_papers/WR1100/WR1119-1/RAND_WR1119-1.pdf> . Juzoor for Health and Development and Sawa have also conducted important studies in this area.
- xxxvii Glick et al, *Prevalence and Patterns of Health Risk Behaviours of Palestinian Youth: Findings from a Representative Survey: Working Paper*, p.2.
- xxxviii Ibid, p.2.
- xxxix Massad et al, *Substance use among Palestinian youth in the West Bank, Palestine: a qualitative investigation*. *BMC Public Health*, 16:800, 2016
- xl Ibid
- xli Ibid
- xlii Billing, Lynzy. *The Dark World of Gaza's Drug Epidemic*. *The Metro*. 11 Nov 2016.
<<http://metro.co.uk/2016/11/11/the-dark-world-of-gazas-drug-epidemic-6197439/>>
- xliii Eldar, Shlomi. *Is Gaza facing an opioid epidemic?* *Al Monitor*. 5 Aug 2016.
<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/08/tramadol-gaza-strip-pain-killer-siege-israel-hamas.html>
- xliv Billing
- xlv Glick et al, p.3.

- xlvi Amnesty International, 2005. "Israel: Conflict, Occupation and Patriarchy: Women Carry the Burden." <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE15/016/2005/en/623916bd-f791-11dd-8fd7-f57af21896e1/mde150162005en.pdf>
- xlvii Perezniето P, Jones N, Abu Hamad, B and Shaheen M,. "Effects of the Palestinian national Cash Transfer Programme on Children and Adolescents: A mixed methods analysis." 2014. <http://www.unicef.org/oPt/ODI_and_UNICEF_Palestinian_Cash_Transfer_Study.pdf>. P. 57.
- xlviіі IMEU. Palestinian Social Customs and Traditions. 2006. <<http://imeu.org/article/social-customs-and-traditions>>.
- xlix ASALA, Women's Economic Empowerment in the West Bank, Palestine, Research Study (The Regional Economic Empowerment of Women Project (REEWP, 2010), 9.
- l State of Palestine, National Development Plan 2014-16: State Building to Sovereignty, (Ramallah: State of Palestine, 2014), 13.
- li al-Botmeh, Reem. "A Review of Palestinian Legislation from a Women's Rights Perspective." 2011, 5
- lii World Bank, "Despite Progress, Laws Restricting Economic Opportunity for Women Are Widespread Globally, says WBG Report," World Bank, September 9, 2015, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2015/09/09/despite-progress-laws-restricting-economic-opportunity-for-women-are-widespread-globally-says-wbg-report> (accessed October 1, 2015).
- liii http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/WomenDy2015E.pdf
- liv PASSIA. Palestinian Women. August 2015. <<http://www.passia.org/images/meetings/2015/dec/Women2015.pdf>>, 10.
- lv AA, Ampofo. ""When men speak women listen": gender socialisation and young adolescents' attitudes to sexual and reproductive issues." Afr J Reprod Health (2001): 196-212. <<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/12471941>>.
- lvi https://www.unicef.org/oPt/children_213.htm
- lvii CCA, 157
- lviii CCA, 40
- lix Addameer. "Quarterly Newsletter: July - September 2016." 2016. Addameer. <http://www.addameer.org/sites/default/files/publications/quarter_3_newsletter_1.pdf>.
- lx http://www.addameer.org/sites/default/files/publications/womens_day_factsheet.pdf.
- lxi Ibid
- lxii Y-PEER is a Youth Peer Education Network in Palestine comprised of various organizations and young people between the age of 18 and 24 working on youth sexual and reproductive health including HIV/AIDS. It is part of an international network including more than 7,000 young people coming from over 45 countries in Eastern Europe, Africa, Central Asia, Latin America and the Middle East.

Prepared by:

Ms. Nanki Chawla, UNFPA Consultant

Photo credit:

Cover Photo: ©SHAREK Youth Forum

Page 4: ©Mohammed El-Reefi

Page 6: ©Save Youth Future Society

Page 8: ©SHAREK Youth Forum

Page 10: ©SHAREK Youth Forum

Page 13: ©SHAREK Youth Forum



**Delivering a world where every
pregnancy is wanted, every
childbirth is safe, and every young
person's potential is fulfilled.**

**United Nations Population Fund
State of Palestine**

Ar-Radwan St. / Beit Hanina
next to the Lutheran Vocational School
P.O. Box 67149, Jerusalem 91517

Tel.: 97225817167

Fax: 97225817382

palestine.unfpa.org