

# FAST FACTS

United Nations

Development Programme

Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People



## Poverty in Focus

Over the past five years, increasing numbers of Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) have fallen below the poverty line. In mid 2007, the situation has changed and international aid was resumed further to the Fayyad government, lowering poverty rates from 64% in June 2007 to an average of 55% in September 2008.

There are numerous factors that are contributing to the fluctuating levels of poverty in the oPt, including the fact that the Palestinian economy continues to be mired in deep recession, low-levels of education, high unemployment, and the stifling effects of closures on economic activity and restricting the movement of people and goods. In the West Bank, the barrier has also had a hugely detrimental impact on communities along its trajectory. At over 65%, poverty in communities affected by the barrier is higher than the oPt average.

In the Gaza Strip, years of damage to agricultural land and the impact of closures and restrictions on the movement of goods on the economy have resulted in widespread loss of income. The unemployment rate in Gaza has reached 45.5% in the second quarter of 2008 and 16.3% in the West Bank.



*Empowerment of women in remote communities in through small grants programme.*

### How poor are the poor?

There are a number of methods used to measure poverty, which have produced varying figures on the percentage of the population living below the poverty line. However, what is clear is that hundreds of thousands of Palestinians are unable to maintain even the most basic living standards, despite considerable international assistance.

#### Sources:

Figures of 2007: "Poverty in the occupied Palestinian territory, 2007", *Development Times*, Issue No. 1, July 2007.  
Figures of 2008: *Near East Consulting, 2008 Monitor*

## MATTERS OF FACT

- 51% of Palestinians live below the poverty line and about 19% of them live in extreme poverty in the third quarter of 2008
- Poverty rates in the West Bank are at 48% and 56% in the Gaza Strip in the third quarter of 2008
- Highest percent of poverty is among the youth between 18 – 24 years old.
- 58.3% of employed people have monthly wages below the poverty line.
- 9.4% of the averages sized Palestinian households living above the poverty line are at high risk of falling into poverty.
- Poverty in communities affected by the barrier stands at over 65%.
- 19% of East Jerusalem households lived below the poverty line in 2007
- Approximately 61% of households in the oPt stated that they were in need of assistance in the year of 2007. Nearly 40% of Palestinians no longer have alternative means of coping with hardships

### Who are the poor?

Poverty affects men, women and children in the oPt however, evidence suggests that the bigger the family, the greater the likelihood of impoverishment. This is mostly owing to the fact that a greater proportion of members are likely to be dependant.

In the Gaza Strip, 56% of households live below the poverty line, while 48% of West Bank households and 19% of East Jerusalem households live below the poverty line.

### Where are the poor?

Poverty in the oPt is widespread, but more prevalent in refugee camps and rural areas. The majority of the poor are concentrated in Gaza, where 56% of the population lives in poverty and 28% in extreme poverty. Those residing in the middle area of the West Bank are the least likely to be poor. The Hebron, Bethlehem, Tubas and Jenin areas have the highest rates of poverty. Poverty in East Jerusalem is low by comparison; however, the number of Palestinians in subsistence poverty has tripled.

### What needs to be done?

The need for humanitarian assistance appears to be increasing although medium and long-term development approaches are needed to reduce poverty levels. Approximately 61% of households in the oPt stated that they were in need of assistance in 2007; a figure that is continuously rising. Employment and food have been identified as the most pressing needs.



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