



CASE STUDY SERIES # 2

Palestinian Womens' Associations and Agricultural Value Chains



Palestinian Womens' Associations and Agricultural Value Chains

**“All labor that uplifts humanity has dignity
and importance and should be undertaken
with painstaking excellence.”**

Martin Luther King Jr



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Forward

The rate of women's participation in the labour market in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (WBGS) is just 15.2 percent, one of the lowest in the Middle East and the world. Sixty-two percent of women outside the labour market are young women between the ages of 15 and 34, and most of them are married and have no children. This represents a good opportunity for intervention to encourage these women to look for jobs. It must be noted that 45 percent of the women who have given up looking for work have suffered from frustration for not finding jobs and were regarded as unemployed or outside the labor market¹.

The Palestinian society is a society of young people; about 46 percent of the population is under 15 years old. It is also anticipated that half a million young people, half of which females, will be entering the labor market in the next few years.

Since international standards and the Palestinian Basic Law emphasize human labour, it becomes necessary then for women to exercise their right to work and contribute to the development of their communities.² The third goal of the Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations points to the fact that the high percentage of working women, equality in wages between women and men, and the high number of seats occupied by women in the parliament are major indicators of progress and development achieved by nations. The Palestinian Authority (PA) has endorsed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) as incorporating women in state building.

FAO presently supports 84 women's associations in the WBGS (approximately 900 women farmers), jointly with the Ministry of Agriculture, Trade and Women's Affairs, effective linkages have been facilitated between the Associations and the market. During the years the trainings on agricultural techniques and innovations as well as on marketing and quality of products have led the associations to high quality standards for their products with easy placement in the market. Gender-focused projects were conducted by FAO mostly in the West Bank, with three quarters of the activities taking place there. Hebron District was the focal point for gender-related interventions (one third), followed by Jenin District (about 10 percent). From the data collected in the past year, it can be determined that there is a lack of focus in the agricultural sector on women and the essential role they play in agriculture. Considering that 72 percent of unpaid family members working in agriculture are women in the WBGS, and that 85 percent of unpaid women work in agriculture, they are not adequately represented and recognized in their agricultural communities (PCBS, 2007). There remains a great potential to capitalize on the knowledge, skills, and motivation that women have in relation to this sector.

This case study was prepared by Francesca Dalla Valle and Peter Wobst from the Rural Employment Team within the FAO's Gender, Equity and Rural Employment Division (ESW) with Emma Conlan, Rana Hannoun, Ekci Suyapno and Adam Penman from FAO West Bank and Gaza Strip. The described activities in the Gaza Strip and West Bank are a joint effort between the Emergency Operations and Rehabilitation Division (TCES) as Operating Unit and the Gender, Equity and Rural Employment Division (ESW) as Lead Technical Unit, various other FAO Technical Divisions have also supported different activities in the area, such as the Animal Production and Health Division (AGAP), the Plant Production and Protection Division (AGP) and the Fishery and Aquaculture Division (FIRA). Many people contributed to the planning and development of the activities described in this case study, in particular Cyril Ferrand, Azzam Saleh, Erminio Sacco, Suheil Neiroukh, Intissar Eshtayah, Simon Boas, Sarah Leppert, Mohammed ElShattali, Adham Elkhateeb, Laura Jane Tiberi and Helena Eriksson.

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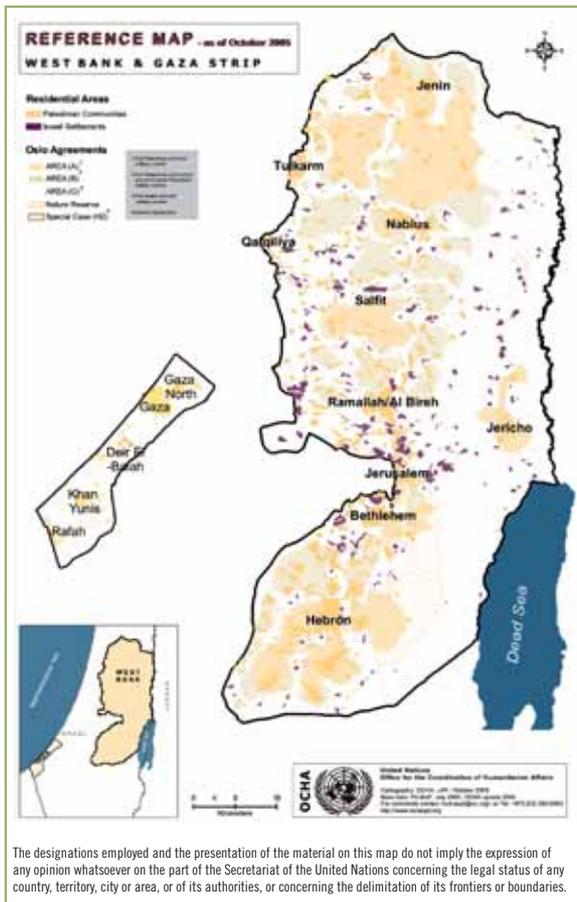
1 Palestinian Women's Research and Documentation Center

2 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Articles 6, 7, 8

Acronyms

CEDAW	Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women
DOP	Declaration of Principles
ESW	FAO's Gender, Equity and Rural Employment Division
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GLOBALG.A.P.	Global Good Agricultural Practices
GoI	Government of Israel
GS	Gaza Strip
IPM	Integrated Pest Management
JFFLS	Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoT	Ministry of Trade
MoWA	Ministry of Women's Affairs
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
PRDP	Palestinian Reform and Development Plan
OCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
oPt	occupied Palestinian territory
PA	Palestinian Authority
PCBS	Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
PFTA	Palestinian Fair Trade Association
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organization
PRDP	Palestinian Reform and Development Plan
TCES	FAO's Emergency Operations and Rehabilitation Division
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
WB	West Bank
WBGS	West Bank and Gaza Strip
WFP	World Food Programme

1 Background



Map of West Bank and Gaza Strip courtesy of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is at the core of the more comprehensive Israeli-Arab conflict, which arose as a result of the Israeli-Arab war in 1948.

The number of Palestinians who fled or were expelled from Israel following its creation was estimated at 711,000 in 1949 (source – General progress report and supplementary report of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine 23 October 1950)³.

A second legacy of the conflict has been Israel's continuing occupation of lands that are intended to make up the future Palestinian state – including East Jerusalem, the West Bank (WB) and the Gaza Strip (GS) – until August 2005 when, under the so-called disengagement plan, Israel withdrew its settlers and armed forces from the Gaza Strip and from Area A in northern West Bank; occupation of lands is still ongoing in the rest of West Bank and the Gaza Strip has been experiencing the imposition of Israel blockade since June 2007⁴. Tensions between Israelis and Palestinians started in the late 1960s/early 1970s⁵ when right-wing Israeli groups, strongly influenced by the trauma of the Yom Kippur war in 1973, accelerated a programme of settlement on the Palestinian territory, which Palestinians refer to as a de facto colonisation.

Over forty years of Israeli occupation and subsequent political developments has left an enormous impact on the socio-economic conditions of Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt). More recently, inter-Palestinian conflicts and tensions have added to the complexity of Palestinian-Israeli relations by creating additional obstacles to achieving lasting peace in the region. In the last ten years, three main events added to a further downward spiral of the socio-economic situation in the oPt: the second Intifada that began in 2000; the Hamas victory in the January 2006 national legislative elections, and the June 2007 Hamas take-over of the Gaza Strip.

In the aftermath of the latter, the Palestinian Government was established with Fatah as the ruling party and international cooperation with it opened new possibilities for interventions in the West Bank. However, under the current political realities, the Gaza Strip was left largely on the side with international support confined to humanitarian assistance, and even that faces heavy and insurmountable restrictions by the

3 <http://web.archive.org/web/20071011203241/http://domino.un.org/unispal.nsf/9a798adbf322aff38525617b006d88d7/93037e3b939746de8525610200567883?OpenDocument>

4 http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/gaza_agriculture_25_05_2010_press_release_english.pdf

5 http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/TheHumanitarianImpactOfIsraelInfrastructureTheWestBank_ch3.pdf

Israeli government. Since the imposition of Israel's blockade on the Gaza Strip in June 2007, the formal economy in Gaza has collapsed. Over 60 percent of households are now food insecure, threatening the health and wellbeing of children, women and men. In this context, agriculture offers some practical solutions to a humanitarian problem. However, Israel's import and access restrictions continue to suffocate the agriculture sector and directly contribute to rising food insecurity. Of particular concern, farmers and fishers' lives are regularly put at risk, due to Israel's enforcement of its access restrictions. The fact that this coastal population now imports fish from Israel and through tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border speaks to the absurdity of the situation.⁶

The combination of the above with an increasingly strict Israeli closure regime continued to strain the geographic, social, economic, and political contiguity and viability of the oPt, and the cohesiveness of its society. Unemployment rates in the oPt have been persistently high, and increased sharply since the start of the second Intifada when Palestinian day-labour permits to Israel were terminated: unemployment in the West Bank stands at 15.2 percent, while unemployment in Gaza is 39 percent.⁷ Underemployment affects an even larger percentage of the population caused by those turning to unpaid family labour or seasonal agriculture work.

Labour force participation rates are low (44 percent in West Bank and 37 percent in Gaza Strip in second quarter 2010) and, as employment opportunities become scarcer, the socio-economic conditions show no sign of improvement. Young people are the hardest hit by unemployment: 39 percent of 20-24 year olds (West Bank: 25 percent; Gaza Strip: 67 percent) and 32 percent of those aged 15-19 (West Bank: 23 percent; Gaza Strip: 72 percent) are jobless. Among youth, more than half (52 percent) of women aged 20-24 are unemployed. When considering educational attainment, women with 13 years of schooling

and more have a jobless rate of 35.3 percent, whereas for men in this category the jobless rate is 14 percent.

For the achievement of the third Millennium Development Goal (MDG) that promotes gender equality and women's empowerment, low female participation rate in the labour market of 15.2 percent (West Bank: 18 percent; Gaza Strip: 11 percent) is among the lowest in the world.⁸ High unemployment rates, especially among women and youth in the Northern and Southern West Bank and the Gaza Strip, negatively impact the poverty conditions in the oPt and the potential of achieving MDG 1, i.e. to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger by the year 2015. The objective income poverty trends in the oPt are negative and sensitive to changing circumstances on the ground, the blockade and ongoing conflict has caused poverty rates in the Gaza Strip to jump from 52 percent in March 2006 to 70 percent in February 2008⁹.

Due to relatively stable conditions in comparison to Gaza, in the West Bank, the share of poor households over the same period of time appears to have remained constant at around 50 percent. In an uncertain environment characterized by high unemployment and poverty rates, and severe constraints in movement and access due to closures, a large number of Palestinians consider migrating abroad or between the two territories.

The Palestinian Reform and Development Plan for 2008-2010 (PRDP) did set clear priority areas that included Governance, Social Development (including a youth empowerment programme and an employment generation initiative for women and youth), Economic and Private Sector Development, and Public Infrastructure Development, however, owing to the Palestinian Authority's (PA) running costs (mainly salaries) and little development investments, there were meagre attempts at meeting the PRDP objectives. The PRDP has now been replaced by the Guidance on Developing Sector Strategies for 2011-2013¹⁰.

6 http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/gaza_agriculture_25_05_2010_press_release_english.pdf

7 PCBS Labour Force Survey Round, Second Quarter 2010

8 *Ibid.*

9 <http://www.papp.undp.org/en/aboutundp/pappstrat.pdf>

10 http://www.mop.gov.ps/new/web_files/issues_file/Guidance%20on%20Developing%20Sector%20Strategies--En.pdf

11 Using PCBS Midyear population estimates, the population above the age of 15 is 58 percent of 4,048,403 of which 13 percent were employed in the agriculture sector. Therefore, the agriculture sector provides jobs for an estimated 305,250 workers in the Second Quarter of 2010.

1.1 Agriculture sector in Palestine

Agriculture plays a key role in the Palestinian economy and food security situation, providing work for more than 39 percent of those working in informal sectors and supporting a significant proportion of Palestinian families who cultivate their lands for livelihood. In the second quarter of 2010, the agricultural sector provided job opportunities and employment to 305,250¹¹ workers and about 14,000 private business establishments in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (WBGs).



Palestinian woman outside Bethlehem

Employment in the agriculture sector had witnessed an increasing trend since the beginning of the second intifada until 2008-9. Agriculture was considered a last resort for people who had lost their employment due to Israeli measures. The trend was reversed due to reasons such as waves of drought in the WB and destruction of agriculture land in seam zone and other in Gaza from 2009.

Israeli closure policies, the construction of the separation wall, land confiscation, limited access to water resources, lack of access to services and limited access to the labour market are leaving many villages facing impoverishment and high levels of unemployment. Women and youth in the WBGs face enormous challenges related to occupation, conflict, deep rural and urban poverty, food insecurity and lack of extracurricular activities.

Socio-economic conditions in the Palestinian territories continue to degrade as policies of the Occupation increase such as checkpoints, building of the separation wall, blockade on the Gaza Strip, permit system to move in/out of the WBGs and the decrease of the number of working permits for Palestinians to work in Israel. The need to maintain traditional agricultural practices grows as the consequences of Occupation and conflict threaten farming livelihoods and lack of other options. As territorial fragmentation continues in the West Bank herding communities living in Area C face increasing movement restrictions, limiting their access to range land and natural water resources. The Israeli occupation, expansion of illegal settlements, and displacement of Palestinian communities over the past decade, combined with drought, have forced Bedouin and herding communities in Area C to rely on bought fodder and tankered water, which is unsustainable. Livelihoods are under threat and families are struggling to meet their dietary needs. Aid assistance is mitigating some negative effects of chronic food insecurity but the situation remains poor. In addition to the hundreds of roadblocks and check points, there are severe restrictions on the development of water infrastructure. As a

11 Using PCBS Midyear population estimates, the population above the age of 15 is 58 percent of 4,048,403 of which 13 percent were employed in the agriculture sector. Therefore, the agriculture sector provides jobs for an estimated 305,250 workers in the Second Quarter of 2010.

result, herding communities in Area C are falling deeper into poverty and debt. Findings from the food security and nutrition survey undertaken by UNRWA, UNICEF and WFP in 2009 (using the FAO/PCBS/WFP Socio-Economic and Food Security Methodology) has found that food insecurity in Area C is the result of the physical and economic restrictions that prevent access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food. Israel's military control of Area C also exacerbates water scarcity and causes the cost of food to be more expensive than it would otherwise be.

As the Separation Wall and other security zones deny Palestinians the right to access agricultural areas, trade restrictions and dumping of Israeli goods in the markets limit the achievements of the agriculture sector. High unemployment and underemployment coupled with the high cost of non-food items continues to impact food security negatively, especially among poor rural households and female-headed households.

Sustainable biodiversity is considered a prerequisite for sustainable social and economic development; it ensures the continuing provision of goods and services from ecosystems and their components. The Palestinian land has several diverse ecosystems, which have favoured the country with rich cultural and natural resources. An economic valuation of biodiversity provides one way of taking practical decisions on where conservation action is most needed, and a variety of conservation techniques that have to be developed both *In situ* and *Ex situ*.

The wildlife and the cultivated species of agriculture are directly contributing and supporting the main income of people in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Different parts of useful plants are used by the Palestinians as direct food which includes: food cereals and pulses, root and tubers, oil, fruits and nuts, vegetables, herb, spices, drugs and medicinal plants.

The WBGS is also rich with plants that have different medicinal values, such as herbs, perfumes and dye plants. Medicinal plants were and are

used by Palestinians according to traditional ways. Forests in Palestine produce timber, used mainly as an energy source (fuel). The major benefit of forests in Palestine is the microclimate they induce, the filtering of air pollutants generated from urban areas, the retention of water in the ground and the fixing the mobile sand, dunes and soils. Recreation and eco-tourism can also transform forest areas into major sources of economic revenues. The agricultural sector, including plant and animal production, forestry, and range lands, plays a major role in the economic growth of Palestine and the livelihood of its people. However, the production of this sector has declined since the Israeli occupation of the West Bank. Agriculture in the West Bank is divided into rain fed and irrigated farming.

The major sector of plant production in Palestine is the cultivation of fruit trees. Olive trees, grapevines, almonds, figs and citrus are the major planted types of fruit trees in the West Bank. Field crops and forages sectors occupy the largest cultivated land after fruit trees. The planted field crops and forages in the West Bank may be classified into cereals (Wheat, barley and sorghum), legumes (lentils and chickpeas) and medicinal, spice (cummin, nigella, anise, fenugreek, dill and carawya, stimulant (tobaccos) and oily crops (sesame, safflower, sunflower, and peanuts). Agriculture in Gaza Strip is the most important economic sector. The main crops still grown are the traditional field crops, like wheat, barley, and peas, and vegetables like okra, cucurbits, onions and watermelons, often together with the cultivation of fruit trees like olives and almonds. Vegetables like tomato, cucumber and some other crops are grown, including various types of flowers. Strawberries, potatoes, carrots and a range of other vegetables including eggplants, cabbage, cauliflower, spinach, onion, garlic, peas, and melons are cultivated in the open fields.

2 Value chains in conflict-affected regions

© FAO West Bank



Food production activities in women's cooperative in the West Bank

Setting the Palestinian economy on a path of sustained growth requires understanding of the conditions that influenced its long-term development prospects. Conflict dynamics impact in various ways a value chain and a local economy. Therefore, it is key to understand how (violent and non-violent behaviours), in a society are structured and how the process for developing a more desirable human condition and socio-economic growth can be achieved.

Conflict can reverse development gains and deepen poverty and food security. A variety of

conflict-sensitivity tools and approaches have been developed to better understand the relationship between development and conflict, and to adapt and plan assistance so that the potential for violent conflict and abuse are reduced and the potential for positive outcomes is increased.

Conflict-sensitive approaches deal with the impact an intervention might have on actions, structures and processes that can support the prospects for a peaceful coexistence and decrease the possibility of the outbreak, reoccurrence, or continuation, of a violent conflict. Prior to the identification of a value chain to be developed and supported in Palestine, a conflict analysis is necessary to determine possible conflict interactions, which will minimize the negative impacts on related intervention.

In peace building there is an increasing interest in market development approaches as a mean to promote both peace building and economic growth. In selecting appropriate strategies to develop a value chain in such a context the main issues to be analyzed are the state of existing institutions, the duration of the conflict, the causes and effects of the conflict itself and the factor conditions in the economy (land, labour and capital).

© FAO Gaza



FAO-UNRWA opening ceremony of Khayrat Blady marketing exhibition fair in Gaza Strip

3 The role of women in WBGs

The contribution of women in Palestinian agriculture is significant, yet often invisible and rarely recognized. Palestinian rural women contribute largely to extensive chores, factory work and farm work. Despite this major contribution, an estimated 40 percent¹² of rural Palestinian women at working age carry out unpaid work, which means that their production is not comprehensively covered in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP)¹³. Moreover, they do not control agricultural revenues. This marginalizes their role in the production process.

In the current context of increasing unemployment, poverty, psychological trauma and destruction of property, crops and land, women are faced with the challenge of financially supporting the household and finding alternative income-generating opportunities in order to cope with household economic insecurity. However, many women are denied access to health and/or education services. Furthermore, the fragmentation of the West Bank and the closure of the Gaza Strip are resulting in the deterioration of the Palestinian social fabric and the informal networks that provided women with a certain level of support¹⁴. The level of participation of women in the economic activity of any country can be an indicator of potential economic growth performance. The contribution of women to the economy is an important factor contributing to the increase of productive capacity and the achievement of economic balance with regard to production and consumption. In addition, the participation of women and their contribution to the economic growth of their country empower them to become active participants in social, political and cultural life. However, the participation of Palestinian women in the economic development and growth in the Palestinian territories is much less than expected.



© FAO West Bank

FAO beneficiary

Women in Palestine constitute about 49 percent of the total population and hence a significant proportion of production capacity in local economies is non-performing. Moreover, women are most vulnerable to poverty and discrimination due to their reduced level of income, social exclusion, their lack of professional skills and their limited access to and/or control over productive assets. This impact is most pronounced on

12 *Ibid.* PCBS Labour Force Survey Rounds, 2000-2007.

13 For the purpose of compiling the GDP PCBS measures the value of final production [to do so they use household final consumption from PECS survey, this also included consumption from own produced goods in kind (covering informal agricultural activity consumed by the household) in addition GDP covers the final production of all other sectors including formal agriculture which also include the value added of the unpaid work].

14 United Nations Development Fund for Women, Revised Consolidated Appeals Process, 31 May 2006.

female-headed households,¹⁵ who tend to suffer from poverty and food insecurity at a disproportionately high level. Women also take charge of many agricultural responsibilities and carry out activities such as planting and preparing the land, as well as harvesting equally with men. Another female task tied closely to biodiversity is the collection of medicinal plants, which may be used for curing illnesses, in addition to other kinds of plants that have economic or industrial values while also serving as fodder and fuel or as manure and pesticide. Therefore, they have extensive knowledge, which is crucial to preserve in order to maintain their communities' well-being as well as agricultural biodiversity. This traditional ecological knowledge, which stems from generations living in close contact with nature, is mainly associated with women as they typically transfer this knowledge to their children, in particular to their daughters.

Agriculture plays an important role in food security and the economy for Palestinians living in the WBGS. It acts as a traditional shock absorber for rural families, especially in times of crisis. The Palestinian Authority (PA) estimates that 15.4 percent of the total employed in the West Bank is employed in the Agriculture Sector, and 7.8 percent in the Gaza Strip.¹⁶ Women only compose 18 percent of the labour force and one fifth of them (22 percent) contribute to the agricultural sector. However, most of women's labour in the informal sector remains hidden and thus their contribution to the agriculture sector in the form of home-based activities is much higher than what is officially reported. The World Bank reports that over 30 percent of informal agricultural work in the WBGS is performed by women as part of their domestic responsibilities.



© FAO WBGS
Women's groups training beneficiary

3.1 Women's Associations in WBGS and value chains

FAO implements a number of projects promoting gender equality among Palestinians by increasing the agricultural opportunities available to women, at the same time enabling the beneficiaries to secure income and improve food security for themselves and their families. Women's groups from these interventions attended trainings in food processing and preserving. Beneficiaries are always selected through a process involving cross-checking with relevant PA-line Ministries, such as the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA). FAO seeks to support the most vulnerable women in rural areas at the

15 The UN definition is: The definition adopted by the United Nations identifies female heads of households as "women (who) are financially responsible for their families", who are the "key decision makers and household managers", who "manage household economies on behalf of an absent male head", or who "are the main economic contributors" (UN, 1995: 32/B).

Typology and determinants of female headship:

Such heterogeneity is reflected in available/accessible information on different world regions (cf. UN/ DESI, 1991/B; UN, 1995/B).

Thus, female headship may differ in terms of, for example:

1. Whether or not female-headed households include the male spouse/other male kin authority figure;
 2. The physical presence of an adult male/husband may still mean that there is one sole/main income-earning female provider supporting the household;
 3. Such households tend "to support their children or other dependants – a responsibility that persists in later life";
 4. "Whereas women who head households in the developed regions are more likely to be elderly", in most of the developing regions they "are more likely to be in their childbearing years" (UN/DESI, 1991: 18/B).
- The typology, reflecting possible determinants of female headship, is generally:
1. Widows/divorcees living on their own with/without dependants, or within the extended family.
 2. Women separated from labour migrant husbands who receive regular or occasional remittances.
 3. Women whose husbands have abandoned them, or who have disappeared in situations of war and civil conflict, but to whom they remain legally married.
 4. Women whose husbands are imprisoned for criminal offences, or for political reasons, including those related to war and conflict.
 5. Women whose husbands are unemployed, or unemployable due to lack of skills, or old age or disability.
 6. Unmarried females who are the sole/main financial supporters of dependent/unemployed household members.

16 Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), Labour Force Survey, Q2, 2010

village level, and gives preference to female-headed households and those with disabled persons. Some households are led by women owing to lack of job opportunities, or because the previous male-breadwinner was killed during conflict or (is) imprisoned. Such families are particularly vulnerable to food insecurity and poverty.

3.1.1 Selection of beneficiaries

Beneficiary selection is carried out using a multi-stakeholder approach, including close collaboration between the FAO country team, the MoA, village committees and community-based organizations (CBOs). Within the priority beneficiary groups identified in the design phase of the programme, beneficiaries were selected using the following indicators: (i) poverty; (ii) income; (iii) assets and resources; (iv) access to inputs; (v) family farm self-employment; (vi) farm size (vii) family nuclei; (viii) agricultural practices, knowledge about agriculture; and (ix) beneficiaries' readiness.

3.1.2 Entrepreneurship skills and capacity building

FAO presently supports 84 women's associations in the WBGs. Approximately 900 women farmers and members of women's associations have been trained in:

- Agricultural production,
- Crop cultivation,
- Harvesting,
- Plant and animal diseases (and vaccinations plans),
- Composting for organic farming,
- Integrated pest management (IPM),
- Hygiene and nutrition,
- Cistern use and water management,
- Livestock management [production, nutrition (feed and feeding), lambing and replacement, recording system and artificial insemination],
- Dairy production [milking hygiene, milk processing (cheese and yoghurt) and production quality],
- Bee farming (practical skills on bee keeping, honey production-processing and marketing channels, diseases and techniques for parasites control);

- Fresh food processing and preserving techniques and packaging and labelling,
- Aquaculture management (fish hatcheries maintenance, fish diseases and water testing, marketing channels),
- Group formation,
- Farm management, and,
- Agri-business and marketing skills.



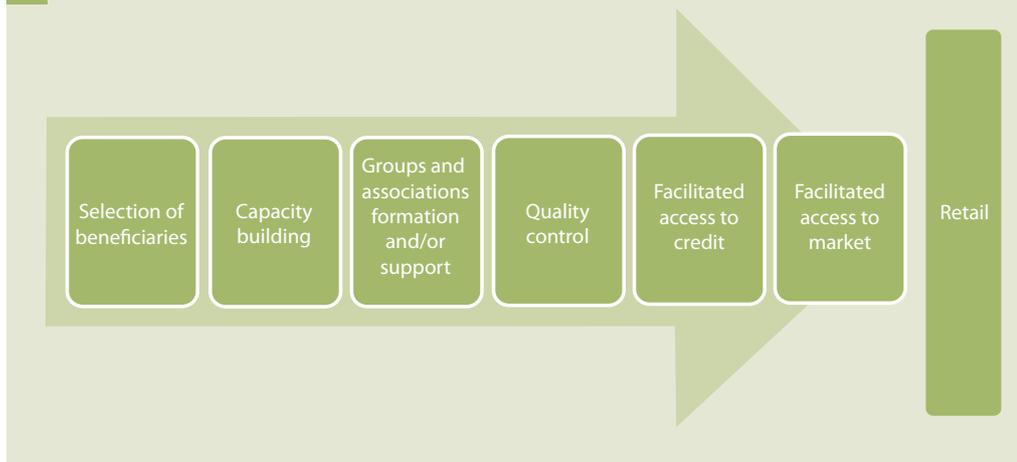
Khayrat Blady marketing fair in Gaza Strip

The model used, aims at increasing the associations' possibility of enhancing their knowledge in agriculture and of trading their products nearby their own villages to overcome the consequences of the severe lack of freedom to travel within and between the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The involvement of women's associations improves the collective power of women beneficiaries, enabling them to form cooperative links and marketing associations and to trade products or skills. Where women have very limited income-generating possibilities, this initiative gives them the opportunity to take control and to have a significant impact on the food security and income levels of their households. The home gardens established by the programme enable the beneficiaries to grow their own fruits and vegetables, which are of particular importance in light of current high local market prices for fresh produce.¹⁷ The water cisterns and grey waste water treatment units supplied in WB for example, enable female-headed households to have productive

17 Up to 80 percent of Gaza's population receive non-perishable foodstuffs as part of humanitarian aid packages and fresh products are not part of the food aid packages distributed; the home gardens enable the supported beneficiaries to provide themselves and their households with a nutritionally balanced diet.

BOX 1 FAO'S SUPPORT CHAIN FOR PALESTINAN WOMEN'S ASSOCIATIONS



home gardens even in the summer, when water is scarce and expensive in the region.

Beneficiaries also improved their skills in food processing and preserving. The inputs and training received enabled women to buy fruit and vegetables when they are at their cheapest and to preserve them for other times during the year, which improves food security and saves money for other necessities like education.

Given that land available for horticulture is limited in the WBGs and with the current closures and movement restrictions, many kinds of fresh vegetables are expensive and hard to find especially in the Gaza Strip. The interventions supported have shown that productive home gardens that are properly set up and tended can provide a family with an affordable supply of fresh produce, which is vital for good health and human development. Capacity development of women farmers and women's associations is highly recommended for ensuring equity and equality among men and women in rural communities. Support to women's productive capacities recognizes their role as part of the formal labour force, which contributes to their social empowerment within the community and the households. Marketing exhibitions are regularly organized (both in WB and GS) not only to provide women's associations (with) a space for selling their products but also for exchanging ideas and labour innovations among them.

3.1.3 Value chains supported and mechanisms of support and certification

Over the past 4 years, FAO in WBGs jointly with the Ministries of Trade (MoT), Agriculture (MoA) and Women's Affairs (MoWA) has facilitated the effective linkages of the supported women's associations with the market for their products. In order to establish contacts with potential buyers, the Organization has also linked the women's associations with rural finance institutions for micro-credit support funds. During the years the trainings on agricultural techniques and innovations as well as on marketing and quality of products have led the associations to high quality standards for their products with easy placement in the market. The value chains supported are honey, olives (and derivate products: olive oil, processed jarred olives etc.), sesame seeds (and derivate products: thaini) and Za'atar. The honey value chain has most probably given the best results of all the ones supported. Given that beekeepers were trained also in the processing step, they became able to sell their honey not just crude (like most beekeepers do) without adding value to it but also as a processed one and obtain sales both from beeswax and honey separately.

3.1.4 Impact Indicators of the Programme Objective

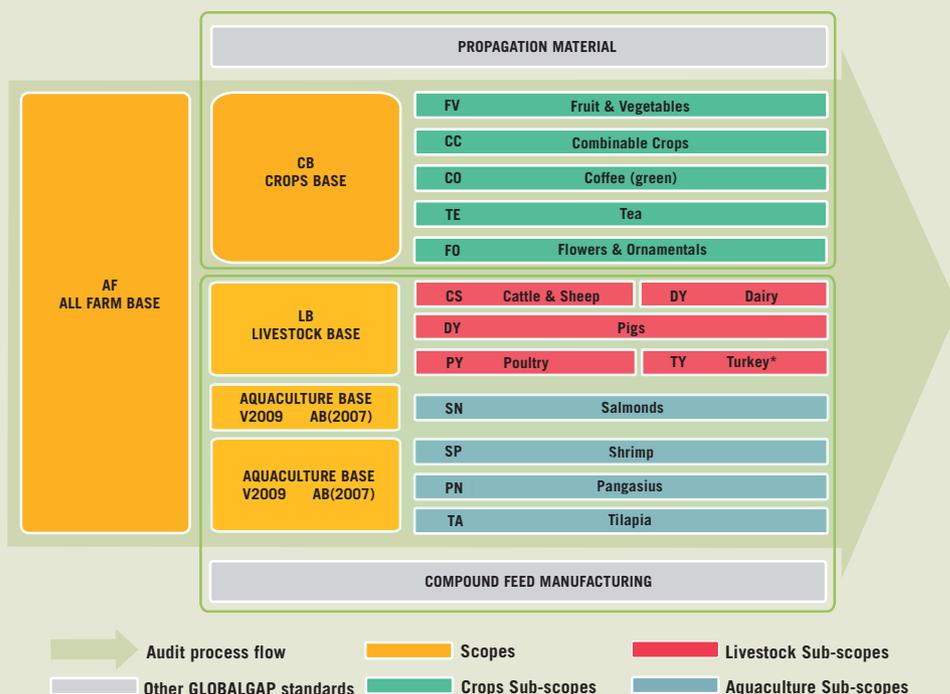
Impact according to the honey, olives, and sesame seeds value chains and based on focus group discussions during evaluations missions:

- *Impact in terms of increased production capacity and increased turnover and sales:* Tentative arrangements/agreements made among local operators and possible international buyers.
- *Impact in terms of improved product quality:* Professional capacities of stakeholders (beekeeping training for women farmers) being strengthened: better beekeeping and bee product processing skills and better quality standards of olive oil, thaini and so on.
- *Impact in terms of enhancement of knowledge:* All the beneficiaries have stated their increased knowledge in agri-business and management, marketing and enhanced their power of competitiveness among other producers.
- *Impact in terms of networking:* A strong network of private and public resource persons and consultants with complementing expertise has been created.

Fair trade is also acknowledged to be a good strategy for poverty reduction and sustainable development, members can potentially create social and economic opportunities through trading partnerships with for example marginalized groups. In Palestine the Palestinian Fair Trade Association (PFTA) is the largest fair trade producers' union, with over 1700 small Palestinian farmers joined in fair trade collectives and cooperatives across the country. The PFTA brings back traditions lost in the midst of conflict and reintroduces a new spirit into the work ethic of the villages and also renew the social values and ties weakened by the conflict. Farmers receive organic and fair trade premiums over sustainable fair trade prices. Given that fair trade women's associations already members of PFTA have served as a vehicle for introducing many traditional Palestinian specialty products to the world market, efforts have been made and links have been established to connect some of the FAO supported women associations with PFTA.

FAO WBGs also works closely with GLOBALG.A.P. (the Global Partnership for Agricultural Practice), the company is a private sector body that sets voluntary standards for the certification of production

BOX 2 STANDARD STRUCTURE GLOBALG.A.P. (SOURCE GLOBALG.A.P.)



processes of agricultural (including aquaculture) products around the globe, it basically sets out a framework for Good Agricultural Practices (G.A.P.) on farms which defines essential elements for the development of best-practice for the global production of crops, livestock, and aquaculture acceptable to the leading retail groups worldwide.

© FAO West Bank and Gaza Strip



FAO beneficiary near Hebron, West Bank

GLOBALG.A.P. respond to consumers concern on food safety, environmental protection, worker health, safety and welfare and animal welfare by:

- I. Encouraging adoption of commercially viable farm assurance schemes, which promote the minimization of agrochemical and medicinal inputs, within Europe and worldwide;
- II. Developing a Good Agricultural Practice (G.A.P.) framework for benchmarking existing assurance schemes and standards including traceability;

III. Providing guidance for continuous improvement and the development and understanding of best practice;

IV. Establish a single, recognized framework for independent verification; and,

V. Communication and consulting openly with consumers and key partners, including producers, exporters and importers.

Any producer¹⁸ of primary agricultural products, which the Integrated Farm Assurance standard covers may apply for GLOBALG.A.P. (formerly known as EUREPG.A.P) certification through a GLOBALG.A.P approved certification body.

The experience of certified smallholder groups has shown that GLOBALG.A.P can open opportunities to their businesses. Once certified, smallholder groups are recognized by buyers as certified producers, just as the other certified producers around the world. Experience of smallholders in developing countries has also shown that they have the ability to implement the standard and become certified. Challenges such as low levels of literacy and lack of resources can be overcome when the standard is communicated in a way that can be easily understood. Smallholders in these circumstances are able to grasp the importance of Good Agriculture Practices (GAPs), the essence of the standard and to apply it in their own context and in their own ways. It is critical that all stakeholders involved in the supply chain are well informed and aware of the steps towards certification, time commitment and the potential costs required for certification. When producers or buyers are not aware of the time and financial commitment it takes, it becomes very difficult for them to go through the whole process of implementation and to reach certification. GLOBALG.A.P implementation requires commitment, and the stakeholders need to be well aware and determined to make it to the final step.

From the very beginning of the implementation process, it is important to involve the buyers and aggregators who could be of support for the smallholder groups. Potential financial support could come from exporters, processors, traders, etc. who are interested in having the producer

18 The term "producer" refers to individual producers as well as producer groups.

groups certified so that they can source certified produce from them.

With some external support, it may become possible for the groups to reach the certification. Some standard requirements may be technically challenging for smallholders, especially if they are illiterate or lowly educated. Although the producers need to take an active role in the whole implementation process, technical support can be provided from outside sources. For example, extension agents or procurement officers of exporters or other buying companies are most of the time technically competent and closely connected to the producers. They are often in the position of being able to technically support the producers so that they can more easily understand the training content and implement it better.

Women's associations have also been selected as part of an FAO supported programme for youth employment creation, the Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools (JFFLS). The programme, previously successful in several African countries, took an innovative approach to empower youth by teaching them agricultural and business skills while placing a priority on raising self-esteem and building skills necessary for healthy and productive lives. Sixteen women's cooperatives registered at the MoWA were in charge of preparing and distributing meals for the youth during the JFFLS lessons, the initiative encouraged the active participation of local women while allowing them to benefit from training through the JFFLS. At the end of the JFFLS cycle, many of the youth have gained membership in those local women's associations and soon began receiving a share of the cooperative's profits. (Dalla Valle 2010).



Youth activities in the West Bank

3 Conclusions

The analysis above shows that women's associations have a much higher productive potential than individual women farmers and hence the promotion of their collective organization is conducive for an overall sustainable development. Facilitating the linkages between the sellers/producers and potential buyers is essential in the development of the value chains supported, especially in the context of Palestine in which the restrictions on mobility are high. The trainings provided on agricultural techniques, organic farming, innovation technology, marketing, group formation, bookkeeping and others have enhanced the overall knowledge in how to effectively start up and maintain a good agri-business enterprise. The products' quality standards achieved and the regularity of the supply maintained even during high peaks of exacerbation of the conflict have made the associations renowned. The Palestinian Fair Trade Association has given since it was established membership to many women association. Products like for example couscous, za'atar and tahini, are typically made by hand and over the years have given women an opportunity to earn income important to their families; a strengthened collaboration between FAO and the PFTA is presently under strategy and likely to be enhanced in the near future, same is for GLOBALG.A.P.

The marketing exhibitions organized have attracted clients both in the short and long term and enhanced the associations' collective power in the market. Equally important, the activities supported and promoted have empowered women, through the establishment of business enterprises, to gain experience and skill in management, problem-solving, and cooperative relationships. Economic success has led to greater self-confidence, greater civic participation, and greater influence for many women. As Palestinian

men have been disabled, detained, and/or denied work because of the occupation, it has become increasingly important for women to provide for their families. Rural women with little formal training and limited access to any job market have joined in cooperatives to use the traditional skills valued by the natural and organic food movement. The lack of initial capital and skills is the initial obstacle for women who wish to start small agri-business enterprises; it is hence essential to enhance the agricultural knowledge of women's associations' and link them to rural finance micro-credit schemes. FAO in Palestine has managed to empower the associations' members by providing them with the capacity to increase their productivity, to better access markets, and to increase social benefits through their participation in cooperative and collective work.

Gender-focused projects were conducted by FAO mostly in the West Bank, with three quarters of the activities taking place there. Hebron District was the focal point for gender-related interventions (two third), followed by Jenin District (about 10 percent). From the data collected in the past year, it can be determined that there is a lack of focus in the agricultural sector on women and the essential role they play in agriculture. Considering that 90 percent of unpaid family members working in agriculture are women in the WBGS, they are not adequately represented and recognized in their agricultural communities (PCBS, 2007). There remains a great potential to capitalize on the knowledge, skills, and motivation that women have in relation to this sector. It is recommended that women in agriculture be studied further to assess and better target their unmet needs. The activities undertaken in WBGS have been selected as a best practice by the UNDG policy network Best Practices publication for the chapter on MDG-1¹⁹.

19 http://www.undg-policynet.org/ext/MDG-Good-Practices/GP_chapter1_poverty.pdf

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