

# FAO – European Union

A shared goal of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger

WEST BANK AND GAZA STRIP





## Context

The Palestinian economy faces stringent restrictions on the movement of goods, services and people which impede construction and infrastructure investment in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (WBGS). The expansion of Israeli settlements, the separation barrier – with its accompanying confiscation of land and natural resources – and settler violence; as well as the direct destruction of houses, crops, animals, water and sanitation infrastructure by Israeli authorities have further compounded an already grave situation.

Standard living conditions in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip remain far below those prior to the beginning of the Second Intifada in 2000. In 2012, per capita GDP was USD 1 679 compared to USD 1 649 in 1999, meaning that over a 13-year period, the GDP of the WBGS barely recovered. Had the Palestinian economy been privy to a normal growth rate during that time, per capita GDP would have realized growth of 55 percent to reach USD 2 961. Further, the unemployment rate in the 4th quarter of 2012 reached 18.3 percent and 32 percent in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, respectively, compounding economic woes.

Availability of and access to water is one of the largest problems Palestinian farmers and herders face. Israeli authorities extract over 80 percent of the water resources in the West Bank, leaving Palestinians with inadequate amounts of water to irrigate their orchards and crops. Further, since 2007 the region has suffered from severe weather conditions and rainwater scarcity affecting agricultural productivity. In addition, restrictions in accessing land and establishing or rehabilitating water wells have also severely impaired farmers from realizing their potential.

As early as April 2011, the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC), in its conclusions, welcomed the assessment of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the United Nations (UN) that the Palestinian Authority (PA) was above the threshold for governing a functioning state in the key sectors they studied. In September 2011, the AHLC reconfirmed that assessment of the PA's ability to govern in sovereignty. The AHLC concluded that Palestinian state-building efforts stood out as a remarkable international success story. Since then, the PA has made much progress in improving its fiscal performance, yet its current fiscal situation is critical. Nonetheless, the PA has a limited capacity to respond to and mitigate the economic, natural, environmental and security threats which their constituents face. In particular, the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) suffers from a lack of capacity in the face of overwhelming constraints.

### **FAO – European Union partnership**

At the international level, the European Union became a member of FAO in 1991. Since 1993, the two institutions have engaged in technical cooperation and in 2004 a strategic partnership was put into place. FAO and EU collaboration contributes to the achievement of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), particularly MDG 1 – “reducing by half the proportion of people suffering from hunger by 2015”.

At the field level, the Office of the European Union Representative has contributed to the FAO Plan of Action 2011 – 2013 with two grants amounting to EUR 4 950 000. These funds are also transparently accounted for by the MoA against the Agriculture Sector Strategy.

As with other donors, FAO and the European Union are working towards a true partnership model, in opposition to a donor-grantee relationship. Concretely, this means that the model envisaged is characterized by both shared goals and a highly productive working relationship. This translates into more effective support to the MoA, as part of the overall agenda to ensure the creation of a viable, independent and democratic Palestinian state living side by side in peace and security with Israel and its neighbours. It further contributes to supporting some of the most vulnerable Palestinian communities in the WBGS by reducing their food insecurity and enhancing their capacity to deal with both environmental and external shocks in a more effective and timely manner.



# Addressing water scarcity

Fostering water efficient practices



The European Union contributed EUR 1 500 000 in 2011 to improve agricultural water availability and demand management in the West Bank. Recent droughts have highlighted the risks which face human beings and livestock, occurring when rainfall levels are erratic or reduced. Under this intervention, the livelihoods and food security levels of poor rural families were protected and enhanced by increasing their access to water.

#### **Cistern construction and rehabilitation:**

Palestine is located in the arid or semi-arid belts where rain falls irregularly and much of the little water that falls is soon lost as surface runoff. Given this geographical and topographical nature of the West Bank, rainwater harvesting and storage through the construction and/or rehabilitation of cisterns was implemented, as it offers the most feasible and affordable way to ensure availability of/ and access to water.

#### **Income generation:**

Despite large inflows of financial aid, the Palestinian economy has not been able to sustain growth, leading to increased poverty. The vast majority of small- and medium-scale farmers lack the financial resources required to invest in their traditional livelihoods. Through implementation of a “cash transfer” modality, cistern owners were able to participate in the construction/rehabilitation of their own structures, in addition to hiring contractors or additional labour to carry out the required work. This methodology not only provided a much needed economic boost to some in the West Bank’s most vulnerable communities, but also insured that beneficiaries played a central role in the creation of their structures.

#### *Did You Know...?*

- In addition to collecting runoff rainwater for productive purposes, water harvesting is a productive form of conserving both soil and water.
- A reduction of 50 percent in seasonal rainfall, for example, may result in a total crop failure for rain-fed crops.
- Home gardening addresses water use efficiency as well as land access issues by installing highly efficient vegetable production units at the household level.
- When household water cisterns are used, a buffer of water storage capacity is created, allowing households to buy water in greater quantities and at cheaper prices per cubic metre.

**A consultation process was conducted with the MoA in order to identify the scope, modalities and geographic areas of the project. Two governorates of the West Bank – Jenin in the north and Hebron in the south – were targeted for project activities. The beneficiaries were poor and vulnerable rural families (small- and medium-scale farmers, small- and medium-scale herders) which rely completely or partially on agricultural and livestock production related activities for their food security and livelihoods.**

**Gender mainstreaming:**

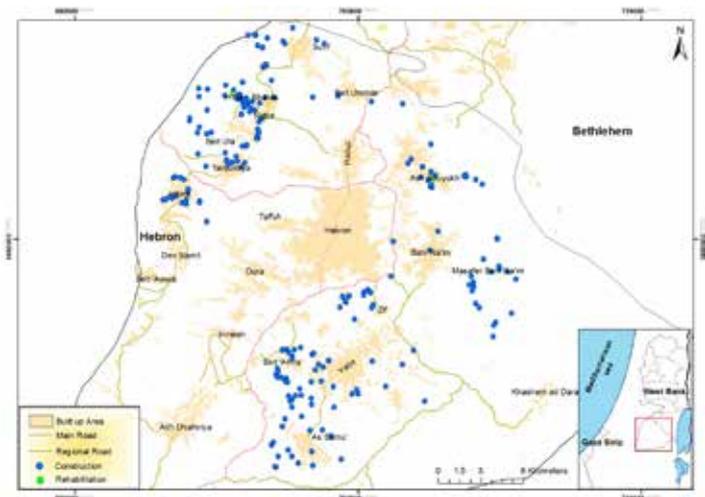
Women play a prominent role in the agriculture sector of the WBGs. Depending on the nature of the agricultural activity, 30 – 80 percent of agricultural work is done by women as part of their household duties. 158 households headed by women (32 percent of all project beneficiaries) were specifically targeted under this project, further enabling them to financially support their households through alternative income-generating opportunities. The project enhanced beneficiaries’ ability to cope with economic insecurity and helped them to secure a permanent (rainfall harvested) water source from which to establish home gardens.

**Project sustainability:**

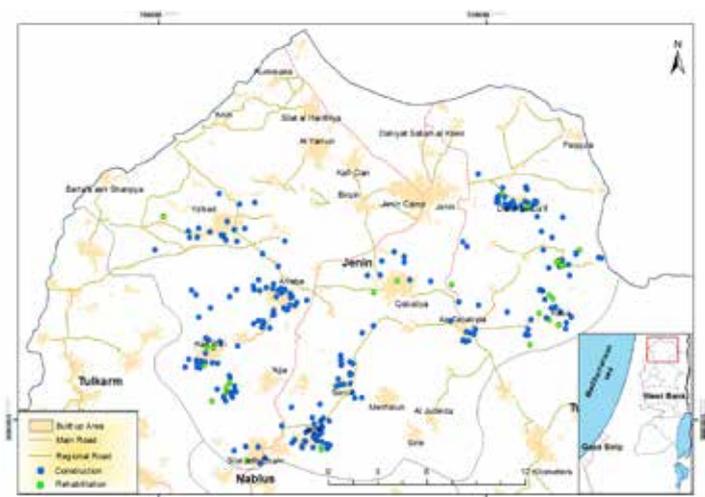
The constructed and rehabilitated cisterns are durable and can last an average of 50 years with annual maintenance. Annual cistern repairing or cleaning takes only four hours when performed by one person and two hours when performed by two people. The project has injected new

techniques and skills within the targeted communities through the intensive conducted trainings. These techniques, which are sustainable in nature, will help the targeted beneficiaries and their communities to effectively utilize their water resources by rationing and optimizing water use.

**Map 1: Cistern distribution in Hebron governorate (3 rehabilitated and 230 constructed)**



**Map 2: Cistern distribution in Jenin governorate (32 rehabilitated and 235 constructed)**



**Project Results**

- ✓ A total of 500 rainwater harvesting cisterns were established and rehabilitated in the West Bank (267 in Jenin and 233 in Hebron), exceeding the original target 450.
- ✓ 37 609 cubic metres of rainfall will be captured or harvested annually in the constructed and rehabilitated cisterns, substantially increasing beneficiaries access to water.
- ✓ 475 beneficiaries and 50 agronomists were trained in water management and optimization in irrigation.
- ✓ A total of 32 000 working days were created for 2 198 skilled and unskilled workers, offering an average of 15 working days each.
- ✓ Each beneficiary family saves roughly USD 200 every month (2 400 annually) on water costs, through rainwater harvesting.



## Bridging emergency responses....

Through the Food Security Thematic Programme (FSTP) of the European Union, FAO received EUR 3 450 000 in order to contribute to the capacity building of the MoA on issues related to livestock, animal health and food safety. The 36-month-long project began February 2013. Capacity building is at the heart of FAO's mandate, thus enabling standards and schemes at the international level to be applied adequately.

### Animal identification

Not only an essential component of traceability and disease control, animal identification also serves multiple other purposes in a country's livestock sector. The unique identification of animals is the basis for pedigree and performance recording, artificial insemination schemes, subsidy payment schemes, good farm management, prevention of animal rustling and trade certification. Moreover, animal identification contributes to securing access to markets for higher quality and geographically identifiable products.

Accounting of the multipurpose nature of animal identification, FAO's capacity-building activities rely on an integrated approach that involves all relevant partners and stakeholders. Under the EU funded project, FAO provides support for relevant policy development, drafting of legislation and strategic planning, and technical assistance for the implementation of relevant Codex Alimentarius and OIE standards.

### Did You Know...?

- The Codex Alimentarius Commission defines traceability as “the ability to follow the movement of a food through specified stage(s) of production, processing and distribution”.
- Traceability systems are important tools to prevent the spread of animal diseases and generally enhance livestock biosecurity.
- Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) is a holistic approach to identifying, assessing and reducing the risks of disaster.
- \$1 invested in DRR responses saves \$7 on future response interventions.

**Technical, organizational and regulatory framework:**

Through an intensive consultation process, FAO, the EU and the MoA concluded that there is a growing need for national policy and regulatory frameworks in order to respond to domestic requirements and be consistent with international frameworks. Agreed upon priority objectives for the project include:

- providing a forum for policy debate and negotiations on the regulatory framework, within the spheres of FAO’s competence;
- developing and implementing necessary national policies, legal instruments and supporting mechanisms in areas where FAO will provide specialized legal and technical advice on genetic resources, plant protection, food quality and safety and environmental protection; and
- strengthening national capacities to respond to, and benefit from, changes in the international trade environment.

**Institutionalized Disaster Risk Management approach**

Herders are recurrently and dramatically affected by natural disasters (drought), environmental threats (trans-boundary animal diseases) and economic shocks (fodder price volatility). These shocks threaten animal production, food security and destabilize the Palestinian socio-economic fabric. In this context, the project contributes to the creation of an environment where disasters are more predictable and monitored in a timelier manner. The goal of which is to reduce the time lapse between outbreaks and responses through an institutionalized and comprehensive approach to disaster risk management led by the MoA.



<b>Project Results</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Enhanced institutional capacities of the MoA to improve the management of and access to animal feed, water and pastures.</li> <li>✓ Livestock herders receive improved public and private services related to livestock development.</li> <li>✓ Effective linkage between humanitarian and development actions and coordination of donors’ actions in the sector.</li> </ul>
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