



FAO'S ROLE IN EMERGENCIES:

- **PROTECT**—We protect the most vulnerable households from basic food insecurity and long-term reliance on food aid
- **RESTORE**—We restore the food security, local food production capacity, coping mechanisms, rural livelihoods and self-sustainability of rural communities
- **ENHANCE**—We enhance agricultural, livestock and fisheries production for a quick and lasting recovery

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Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

OCTOBER 2008 WEST BANK AND GAZA STRIP

Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools Come to the West Bank and Gaza Strip

The first FAO “Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools” (JFFLS) kicked off this month, as part of an US\$ 600 000 Norwegian-funded project to help Palestinian young people develop agricultural and life skills.



Students at a participating school in Jenin preparing for the Junior Farmer Field and Life School

Sixteen schools are taking part in the activities: twelve in the West Bank from Hebron, Jericho, Qalqilya, Tulkarem and Jenin, and four in Gaza. Thirty students from each



Training-of-trainers for the JFFLS, Jenin

school will take part in the JFFLS sessions, in which they will learn specific agricultural and entrepreneurship skills, help establish youth associations, learn important life skills such as nutrition and hygiene, and take part in cultural activities such as singing, dancing and team sports. It is hoped that the project will not only increase the technical agricultural knowledge of these students, but also develop their future career prospects, leadership skills, health and development, as well as foster a sense of rural heritage. The students are split equally between boys and girls, and priority was given to those schools with many students from female-headed households or other vulnerable farming families.

The project activities are being implemented with the help of 32 facilitators, two per school, who have already received practical and theoretical training on the principles of JFFLSs and how to deliver successfully the project activities to the beneficiaries. The JFFLSs will take place twice a week after the school day; the first schools started on the 25 October, and the remaining schools will follow shortly. During the sessions, the students will receive a nutritious meal prepared by local women’s associations, who also attended training in October.

Project Leader Intissar Esh-tayeh is happy with the progress of the sessions so far, and is optimistic that at the end of project activities in 2009 closing ceremonies can be held involving all 480 students, in which they can demonstrate the agricultural and life skills they have developed during the project.



Training-of-trainers, group activity, Jenin

Current Donor partners:



Khayrat Blady Exhibition in Gaza

The first Gazan “Khayrat Blady” women’s exhibition was held on 16 October in Gaza City, as part of FAO’s ongoing gender activities in the area, raising a total of 26,800 shekels for the organizations involved.

The exhibition was a chance for the beneficiaries of a Spanish-funded project promoting backyard farming and cottage industry in female-headed households in the Gaza Strip to exhibit and sell their produce, made during the project activities. In total, 181 women from 21 community groups across the Strip took part in the event, and were joined by participants from other Gazan community-based organizations not formally included in the project. The three-day exhibition, held in the Royal Plaza Hotel in the centre of Gaza City from 16 to 18 October, was attended by UN agencies, a number of local and international NGOs and local community leaders, as well as more than 4,000 visitors from across Gaza and outside. Following prayers by local imam Mohammed El Rafati, the opening ceremony saw speeches by UNRWA Director of Operations John Ging, FAO Senior Project Coordinator Luigi Damiani and women’s organizer Najah Zohod praising the efforts of the beneficiaries, and calling for increased cooperation in future projects. They were joined by the local Debke troupe ‘Reem Al Bawadi’ who entertained the crowd with traditional Palestinian dancing, and volunteers from the Palestinian Youth Programme ‘Start Together’ helped coordinate the day.

On display and sale was an impressive range of products, from spices, cheeses, olives and other consumables, to embroidery, woodwork, hand-woven baskets, and clothes. The organizations and beneficiaries involved in the exhibition reported that the event raised 26,800 shekels—more money than any previous exhi-

Spices on sale at the exhibition



bitions— as well as providing valuable publicity to the women’s groups and encouraging them in their efforts to implement and promote cottage industry. Visitors to the exhibition expressed their admiration for the efforts of the women involved in the projects, and recommended an extra day be added to the exhibition in future to allow more people to sample and buy the products on offer, as well as requesting the exhibition be held in Gaza at least once a year.

Event organizer Mohammed El Shattali, FAO Deputy Project



Women at the exhibition purchasing bread products from a stall

Manager in Gaza, said that he was really delighted with the success of the exhibition and the amount of attention it generated, and offered his thanks to the women’s groups and the beneficiaries themselves for their enormous contribution and achievements. He thanked the Spanish Cooperation for providing funds for the exhibition, and noted that Khayrat Blady provided a medium between the women’s groups and customers in Gaza. Mr El Shattali agreed with the calls of the exhibition participants and recommended that the event be held annually, providing a valuable marketing opportunity to the project beneficiaries and other women’s community groups across Gaza.

FAO implements a number of projects promoting gender equality among Palestinians by increasing the agricultural opportunities available to women, at the same time enabling project beneficiaries to secure an income and improve the food security of themselves and their families. This Spanish-project, which saw an earlier Khayrat Blady exhibition in Ramallah in July, is due to finish in January 2009, benefiting more than 3,000 people to the cost of nearly US\$ 700 000.

Inputs Delivered to West Bank and Gaza Strip Women Farmers

More than a hundred women beneficiaries of the same Spanish-funded project in the West Bank saw their backyard farming activities boosted with the delivery of sheep in October. Women farmers from the Jerusalem, Jenin and Alsamo' areas received two sheep each, which they can now rear for milk production, and which will provide them with a valuable source of income.

The project originally intended to provide sheep to sixty beneficiaries from across the West Bank, but owing to the large number of eligible women who expressed an interest in the project, activities were expanded to help almost double this number. September saw the distribution of bees and beehives to women in Gaza as part of the same project, intended for honey production. As well as receiving four hives each, the beneficiaries also attended training on bee-keeping and honey production. This takes the total number of women benefiting from the provision of bees and hives in Gaza to forty, up from the originally intended thirty.

A project beneficiary walks home with her sheep



Finally, sixty beneficiaries in Gaza received four rabbits each (one male and four female), as well as a cage, fodder and training on rearing rabbits.

Beehives being delivered in Gaza. Here, the queen bee is pointed out.



Sheep being delivered in Abu Dis

Agricultural Projects Information System — APIS

FAO and the MoA are working together on the revitalization of the Agricultural Projects Information System (APIS) database, with the aim of increasing the use of APIS among members to improve the functionality of the application. APIS is an information sharing and response monitoring tool for the agricultural sector: relevant NGOs, international organizations, community-based organizations, UN Agencies and donors update the database with their projects and developments, creating a comprehensive picture of agricultural interventions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This can then be used to identify gaps in subsectors and potentially beneficial activities, so that members can plan for the following year in the most effective way. Members also use the data to help find partners for projects, devise particular programmes and evaluate the subsector in light of the information held in the database.

The APIS (Agricultural Projects Information System) database is being revitalized by the new FAO Information Systems Analyst, Sarah Leppert. It is intended that a GIS mapping system will be added in the near future, to provide further information on projects being implemented in the region. Furthermore, the Agricultural Projects Report, containing all relevant information about projects completed by members in 2008, will be published at the end November.

"If the olive trees knew the hands that planted them, their oil would have become tears": Mahmoud Darwish (Palestinian poet)

The olive harvest, a crucial period in the Palestinian agricultural year, started officially on October 21, 2008. The olive tree is not only a valuable source of income for many Palestinian families, but also an integral part of the Palestinian collective heritage, symbolizing prosperity and peace. It has formed the backbone of the Palestinian agricultural economy for hundreds of years, and harvest time sees whole families in the



Palestinian woman gathering olives

groves to gather the olives.

In the Salfit District of the central West Bank, some 70 000 dunums of olive groves are planted with local and Romanian varieties. This year, some 700 families from

this area were benefiting from an on-going Norwegian-funded project aiming to improve the olive quality through emergency interventions and the provision of tools. Farmers from 19 targeted communities are using inputs distributed under the project, as well as benefiting from training and increased cooperation. This season, these farmers are using two different harvesting mats and nets in order to collect the olives. The olives that do not fall on to the mats must be picked up by hand, or by using the distributed racks. Ladders delivered under the project were also used to access the higher branches of the olive trees.

The 19 farmers' groups are also using the well-ventilated plastic boxes provided by the project, and have started to ship their olives immediately to the presses as recommended by the project training, in order to achieve a higher quality of olive oil. Even though last year's drought has had a negative impact on the quantities of olives harvested, it is hoped that the increase in quality will nevertheless provide the farmers with an increased income this year. Ibrahim Yousif Hussein Mashni from Rafat commented that, "Last year's poor rain fall means that we have only harvested at most 120 kg of olive fruits per dunum, which means less than 12 kg per olive tree. I don't expect more than 80 percent oil from all my groves, compared with last year, even though that was considered to be off-season." He added, "I still believe that with FAO, we can re-balance this loss by the higher quality of our olive oil because we have learnt how to tend the trees properly and store our oil in suitable containers. I expect to sell for a higher price than last year because of this".

Project update

FAO is currently managing a portfolio of eighteen current or pipeline projects across the region, benefiting more than 8000 households, or 48,000 individuals, and with a budget totalling over US\$ 16,000,000. These projects are funded by the Governments of **Italy, Japan, Norway, Spain and Canada.**

FAO's main objective in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is to provide a safety net for food insecure farming/herding households whose traditional livelihoods are endangered and whose coping mechanisms are overstretched. Food security information and analysis is also a key area for FAO in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, promoting inter-agency cooperation to address social protection concerns.

Beneficiaries of the Agriculture Revitalization Action Project have seen the establishment of four water reservoirs in the Tamoun area of the Tubas district, as part of project activities. The reservoirs, each one standing at 363 cubic metres, aim to increase the availability and efficient use of natural resources, and have been funded by the Government of Japan.

The activity, which encourages community mobilization by requiring an in-kind contribution and participatory planning from the beneficiaries, will help to regulate and optimize agricultural water use, thus improving agriculture in the region. Tamoun was selected for the intervention owing to the local poverty levels, high cost of water, poor irrigation methods and risk of farmers abandoning their lands.

The Project Management Unit has formed a committee consisting of project beneficiaries and other interested individuals from Tamoun area. This committee has so far rented 1 dunum of land for 15 years on which the reservoirs have been constructed, opened a route to the rented site and signed an agreement with the owners of the Al-Far'a well to secure a permanent water source for at least 15 years. This well is able to fill the reservoirs every three to four days, pumping some 100 cubic metres of water into each. This provides around 15 cubic metres of water to each farmer, or enough to irrigate roughly three dunums of land.

The project will be completed in December 2009, benefiting more than 2 000 households, or almost 13 000 people across the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Bedouin Communities Receive Emergency Fodder

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The first of three fodder distribution sessions for an Italian-funded livestock project took place successfully in October in locations across the West Bank. The project 707/ITA offers emergency support to small ruminant farmers in the eastern slopes of the West Bank and Jordan Valley, by providing fodder and training and helping to establish a collective processing and distribution system.

Jericho was the first location to benefit from the fodder distribution, seeing 100 tonnes of barley and 50 tonnes of wheat bran delivered to 150 people from five Bedouin tribes on 16 and 17 October. The same quantities of barley and wheat bran were distributed in the south Hebron area on the 22 and 23 October and 27 and 28 October, to 330 beneficiaries in the Bedouin villages of An Najada, Al Faqeer, Al Hathaleen, Al Zuweideen, Sadet Athala. All of the project beneficiaries are vulnerable small ruminant herders whose livelihoods face a severe threat in the face of the current drought and ongoing military restrictions in the area.

The project, which started in November 2007, is being implemented by FAO together with the Italian NGOs Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli (CISP) in Jericho, and Associazione Italiana Per la Solidarietà fra i popoli (AISPO) in south Hebron, along with the local NGO partner Union of Agricultural Work Committees (UAWC) and Unity and Cooperation for Development of Peoples (UCODEP). The funding is provided by the Italian Cooperation.

Project manager Cristina Graziani was satisfied with the distribution sessions, noting that FAO has ensured that the fodder

complies with all nutritional quality and technical specifications, and thanking CISP for their help in implementing the activities. She also expresses her appreciation to the five tribe mukhtars (leaders) for successfully organizing transport for the beneficiaries and ensuring the smooth and efficient running of the session. Ms Graziani also reports that the distribution is still ongoing in south Hebron, and that the few logistical difficulties encountered on the first day of delivery were solved through cooperation between FAO and the implementing partners AISPO and UAWC.

The €650 000 project is slated to be completed in early 2009, benefitting 600 vulnerable herding households across the West Bank.

Fodder being distributed in the Jordan Valley



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