

Food Insecurity in the West Bank and Gaza Strip compared

The findings of the pair wise ranking for the percentages of food insecure and those under threat of food insecurity in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip are similar (71.7 percent for the West Bank and 69.4 percent for the Gaza Strip). While there is near parity in the overall percentages of the food insecure in West Bank and Gaza Strip (38.7 percent and 41.6 percent), data presented on the two maps of overall food insecurity in the West Bank and Gaza Strip shown above, indicates that food insecurity (presented by dark shades of red) is widespread in the West Bank while in Gaza Strip it is more concentrated in specific areas. The results pertaining to the West Bank and Gaza Strip are addressed in more detail below in the West Bank and Gaza Strip sections to this chapter.

As most observers have been under the impression that the residents of the Gaza Strip were in a generally more precarious situation than those in the West Bank and therefore requiring greater assistance, this finding may appear counter-intuitive. However, the Mission's findings are in accordance with the findings of other recent surveys. The latest round of the CARE/John Hopkins University/ANERA/AI Quds University sentinel survey conducted in March 2003 indicates decreased food consumption over time in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip. It found that the gap in food shortage between the West Bank and Gaza Strip is decreasing. The survey shows that food consumption has decreased most in northern and southern West Bank and at a greater rate than in Gaza Strip.

The recent deterioration of the food security situation in the West Bank to a similar level to that in the Gaza Strip may in part be due to the West Bank residents' greater dependence on the Israeli labour and commodity markets and employment in settlements, a point discussed in chapter IV. Closure appears to have had most impact on those who have relied upon employment and incomes generated or made possible by the movement of labour, consumers and traders between Israel and WBG. Although the Gaza Strip has also been severely affected by such closures and by the imposition of stringent pass laws and travel restrictions for some years, the intensification of internal closures of districts, cities, and villages throughout the West Bank, and the fragmentizing effects of the system of by-pass roads in the West Bank in more recent times may help to explain this apparent convergence in food insecurity rates. Businesses, especially those close to the Green Line, collapsed following the loss of customers from Israel no longer able to enter the West Bank. Farmers and traders can no longer access markets in Israel and Jordan to sell their produce.

The construction of the separation barrier is worsening the already critical situation by further restricting access across the border, severely damaging the economy, destroying livelihoods and eroding food security. A glance at the West Bank map of food insecurity above suggests that food insecurity levels roughly match the path of the separation barrier (at the time when the pairwise exercise was conducted), running down the west side of Jenin, Tulkarm, Qalqilia, Salfit and Ramallah impacting on the areas shaded dark red.

At the same time as closure of the West Bank from Israel, internal closures are severing villagers' economic and trading links to nearby towns and neighbouring villages, as roads are blocked by mounds of earth and barricades and curfews prevent people leaving their homes. Residents are prohibited from using the designated 'bypass' roads and many are unable to access their land, more of which is being expropriated for the expansion of settlements, new outposts, military zones and camps. The costs of transportation and therefore of goods and services traded, including agricultural inputs, have risen (and as chapter IV notes, are higher than in Gaza Strip) due to the long delays experienced at checkpoints, the back-to-back system operating at some checkpoints and the need to use longer, alternative secondary roads. Agricultural production for sale has been drastically affected.

The impact of the stringent internal and external closures in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is reflected in recent employment statistics. In Q1-2003 for the first time ever, unemployment in the West Bank exceeded unemployment in Gaza Strip. Interviews from this assessment found that the main breadwinner in seven percent of West Bank households was unemployed prior to the second *Intifada*, rising to 58 percent during it. In Gaza Strip, 10 percent were unemployed pre-*Intifada*, rising to 31 percent after. This Gaza Strip figure increases when the de facto unemployed farmers and fish folk are taken into account. As chapter IV notes, economic dependency ratios in the first quarter of 2003 increased from the previous quarter in the West Bank due to a large degree to rising unemployment while they have decreased in the Gaza Strip.

Finally, as chapter IV indicated, Gaza Strip has always been poorer than the West Bank, with Gazans earning smaller incomes, having smaller savings and consuming less. It may be the case that key informants in the West Bank perceived their food situation to be worse than key informants in Gaza Strip perceived their situation because the food situation deteriorated more recently and more sharply.

THE WEST BANK

The results of the pair wise ranking of vulnerability indicate that nearly 39 percent of the population of the West Bank (856 000 out of a total population of 2 213 000 including part of Jerusalem governorate) are currently food insecure. The data presented on the map of 'Food Insecurity in the West Bank' indicates that food insecurity is quite widespread in the West Bank, with some highly food insecure pockets, such as Area 7 in Hebron district (61 percent), Area 2 in Salfit district (79 percent) and Areas 4 and 8 of Tubas district (90 percent). Overall, 15 areas out of 70 (21.4 percent of the total) have between 50 percent and 90 percent of their population experiencing food insecurity. These pockets of very high food insecurity are located in all of the West Bank districts except for Bethlehem. Over half of the food insecure is concentrated in three districts: Hebron (206 000), Nablus (119 000), and Jenin (116 000). The districts of Ramallah, Bethlehem, Tulkarm, and the non-urban areas of Jerusalem governorate account for a further 36 percent.

Another 33 percent of the West Bank population is considered to be under threat of becoming food insecure in the near future. The pair wise findings presented on the map of the 'Percentage of the population under threat of food insecurity in the West Bank' indicates that Jericho, Nablus, Qalqilia and Tulkarm districts have a large proportion of their populations in this 'middle group'. In Nablus and Qalqilia, the food security status of this traditionally rich group has dropped due to the imposition of closure policies and is likely to drop further still with continuing economic decline. In Jericho district by contrast, the middle group has been relatively large for a longer period of time.

The assessment concludes that though access constraints have directly created this situation and are contributing to rising food insecurity, the removal of movement restrictions can reverse this trend and reduce levels of food insecurity. However, the continuation of current closures will impede food insecure households' ability to recover as members accumulate debts, sell remaining productive assets and forgo investment in their health, education and social relations. Furthermore, if current conditions persist, the 'middle group' will find it increasingly difficult to cope and risk joining the ranks of the food insecure.

Characteristics of the vulnerable in the West Bank

The vulnerable groups in the West Bank include the chronic poor ('social hardship cases'- households with chronically-ill members, women-headed households, large families with unskilled breadwinners, unskilled long-term unemployed) and the new poor. Table V.3 presents the different vulnerable groups, the state of their coping mechanisms and their food security status. The West Bank technical report in the Annex of this report describes their profiles in greater detail. The main attributes of the vulnerable groups in the West Bank are as follows:

Chronic poor

This group is defined by both UNRWA and MoSA as households without an able bodied male capable of working and therefore such households have a higher proportion of women, children and the elderly. Their livelihoods have not dramatically changed, but have steadily deteriorated. Especially vulnerable are those who do not receive assistance or food aid from any of the national welfare institutions or humanitarian organisations. This group is least well-equipped to cope with closures. They had no savings and few assets to fall-back on in September 2000. They are being cut off from credit at shops and obtain little support from impoverished support networks, so vital for their survival pre-*Intifada*. One of the remaining strategies available to women and children in this group is to engage in low-paid, piecemeal work in the informal economy. However, cultural norms together with a low level of education and skills, as well as housework and care commitments to children, elderly and infirm household members, are constraints to engaging in waged work. Their diet is very restricted – one or two meals per day without fruit, vegetables or meat.

New Poor

This is a diverse group consisting of: 1) people who have lost assets such as farmers whose land is confiscated and traders whose shops and people whose homes are demolished; 2) farmers, (including Bedouin) and traders who have lost access to markets and 3) waged workers who have lost jobs because of closure, including men in agriculture and construction, and women, albeit in smaller numbers, in textiles and horticulture. Many of these (e.g. workers in Israel, some farmers and traders) have experienced a big drop in status. They may have had a low level of education and few skills (opting for the good Israeli salary over completing their education and training). West Bank workers also had low levels of education and skills, but fare worse because they had smaller salaries pre-*Intifada*. This group's coping mechanisms initially cushioned the impact of closures but

many of these are now exhausted. They had assets and savings at the onset of the *Intifada* but after almost three years, have sold private (e.g. gold) and productive assets (farming equipment, livestock, land). An important strategy is going into debt with utilities services and local shops. Some men, women and children are able to find alternative low-paid work. They reduce spending especially on food and health.

Within both the chronic and new poor groups the children and the elderly face particular problems. Children eat less than before and the food is of lower quality. Children combine school with work and in the poorest households may drop-out of school altogether⁶. The reasons why they drop out include: their father has been arrested, killed or injured; they are performing badly at school; their parents forced them to leave school in order to work; their parents cannot pay education costs, their parents have fallen ill. Even if they were not coerced into working, many older children in the West Bank as in Gaza Strip, said they were depressed and that their families' suffering made them feel that they should be working rather than continuing their education. The elderly are affected by the impoverishment of their relatives, on whom they often depend for food. The food needs of elderly people in chronic and new poor households are often given low priority.

The location of the vulnerable in the West Bank

Food insecurity in the West Bank is governed by various influencing factors. This section summarises these factors (discussed in more detail in the West Bank technical report available on request) with reference to the maps found in the Annexes to this report.

Proximity to the Green Line and the Separation Barrier

In the past, communities near the Green Line were more food secure than those located further away. The wealthy areas were located along the Israeli border because workers there had easier access to well-paid jobs in the Israeli labour market, and Palestinian producers and traders could benefit from proximity to the Israeli consumer market. They benefited from the border towns and villages' accessibility for Jewish and Arab-Israelis who came to buy cheaper goods. The border areas enjoyed superior water sources and fertile land, the greenhouses and fields especially in the North West, producing some of the West Bank's biggest agricultural yields.

These advantages to living on the Israeli border have been eroded since September 2000 as communities have been cut off from Israeli labour and commodity markets and Israelis can no longer reach West Bank markets. Their predicament is made worse with the erection of the separation barrier by isolating them between it and the Green Line or by separating communities on the east side of the separation barrier from their land and water sources. The separation barrier will separate families from their land or from markets, uproot olive trees, damage soil and destroy greenhouses. The first phase of the separation barrier's construction starts with the villages of the northern region of Jenin (Area 1 on the Jenin district map) and extends southwards to Qalqilia (Area 3 on Qalqilia district map). Residents who lost assets are suffering from psychological problems and family conflict as a result of what they have endured. They resort to selling their land and productive tools and engage in piecemeal agricultural labour. Those still with land rely on fast-growing crops and rearing animals that demand less space. Some farmers have switched to rain-fed crops to reduce costs. Area 2 in Salfit district illustrates this predicament well. The cluster used to be prosperous due to its location on the Green Line, with many residents employed in Israel. Bidya and Mas-ha were vibrant markets generating wealth locally and the land is fertile. With the closure of the West Bank from Israel, the area's markets, without custom revenues from Israel, collapsed. Residents are unemployed because they can no longer reach jobs in Israel and the construction of the separation barrier through the area has resulted in the confiscation of much land.

Access to land

The closer the village or town to settlements the more isolated and hermetically sealed it is. Villages are having more land expropriated for the expansion of settlements and military zones. Throughout the West Bank, farmers

⁶ Caution is required when addressing the issue of school drop-out rates. In October 2002, UNICEF stated that more than 226,000 children and over 9,300 teachers were unable to reach their regular classrooms and at least 580 schools were closed due to closures and home confinement. Furthermore, the families of about 317,000 Palestinian school children risked no longer being able to afford to send their children to school. However, according to MAS social monitor published in 2003, the rate of school drop-out is on the decline in recent years even during the *Intifada*. According to the Economic Monitoring Unit of the Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS) Social Monitor, the drop-out rate was 4.51% for 2000/2001 academic year at secondary school level. Although school drop-out rates are decreasing, Save the Children Sweden found in its report 'Education under occupation' that girls are more likely to drop out, or be removed by their families because of violence and impoverishment. Boys are discouraged from leaving school because of the lack of job opportunities.

face extreme difficulties in grazing their animals or cultivating and harvesting their crops. Areas 3 and 4 of Bethlehem district, Area 7 in Hebron district and Area 1 in Jerusalem district illustrate this.

Access to markets

As chapter IV noted, the majority of workers have been prohibited from working in Jerusalem and Israel due to the very strict limit on permits. In addition, the movement of goods in and out of the West Bank is tightly controlled through five major crossing points at Jalima near Jenin, Taybeh near Qalqilia, Betuniya near Ramallah, and Bethlehem at its border with Jerusalem and Tarqumiya near Hebron. Qalqilia city (Area 4) and Area 3 in Hebron district.

Palestinians have also been prevented from reaching their place of work and farmers and traders moving their produce inside the West Bank. Transportation restrictions have resulted in an increased cost of Palestinian goods relative to foreign and Israeli substitutes. Many farmers and traders can no longer access West Bank markets to sell their produce because Palestinians have been forbidden from using main (bypass) roads without permits. Olive farmers are particularly hard hit. The internal movement restrictions faced by residents in Nablus district are a particularly stark example of this.

Access to remittances from abroad

Remittances play an important role in some areas where there are well-educated populations who often reside close to the district capitals for example, Bethlehem city and neighbouring Beit Sahur (Areas 2 and 4), and Ramallah city and the west of Ramallah district (Areas 5, 6 and 7). The bulk of remittances from beyond Israel are from relatives in the Gulf States although these have reduced since the 1990 Gulf War when many Palestinians left Kuwait.

Diversification into alternative income-generating activities

Many of the very food insecure pockets in the West Bank are chronically poor. These include Yatta in Hebron district, refugee camps (e.g. Area 8 in Tubas district), southern Jericho (Area 5), eastern Tubas (Areas 4 and 7) and the Old City in Nablus (Area 9). The means by which they could improve their food situation were limited before September 2000, and closure has exacerbated this insecurity. Some of the factors contributing to the lack of alternative income-generating income opportunities include poor quality mountainous land, inadequate water supply and distance from commodity and labour markets.

Access to alternative markets

The suffocation of markets in cities has led to markets relocating in other areas where some local investment and development is visible. These markets emerge in agriculturally productive areas, well-connected by alternative roads and close to closed cities. Azzun (Area 1) in Qalqilia district and Qabatiya (Area 7) in Jenin district illustrate this.

Inter-district links

No longer able to access external markets, very modest new trade relations are developing between the West Bank districts. Some producers and traders live in clusters with access to alternative markets in other districts. For example, in southern Qalqilia (Area 3), people can get to markets in Salfit and Ramallah and in east Qalqilia (Area 5) people can access business and trade opportunities in Nablus as an alternative to Qalqilia city.

This assessment's findings on food insecurity in the West Bank are presented in eleven district tables found in this report's annex. These tables describe the socio-economic characteristics of different areas in each of the West Bank districts, together with the vulnerability profiles of the people living there, the coping mechanisms they use and recommendations for improving their food security. The findings are summarised below:

1. Hebron district

206 482 (43 percent of the population) people are estimated to be food insecure and a further 147 276 (30 percent) are under threat of becoming food insecure. Area 7 is particularly affected by closure, land confiscation and the remoteness of many of its villages and has a correspondingly high level of food insecurity (61 percent). Bedouin farmers in Areas 4 and 7 are among the food insecure largely because they are prevented from grazing their animals freely due to the nearby Israeli Army training camps. Areas 4 and 6 depended on employment in Israel and now have many unemployed. Area 5, as the map indicates, is affected by curfew and settlements in the city. In Area 1, there are many farmers who cannot reach their land due to settlements and cannot market agricultural produce.

2. Bethlehem district

59 392 people (35 percent of the district's population) are estimated to be food insecure, and a further 34 213 (20 percent) are under threat of becoming food insecure. This district's food insecurity is shaped by the loss of employment in settlements, in Israel and local tourism. Farmers' food insecurity is due to the fact that they cannot access the land due to confiscations, settlements and bypass roads and lack access to markets. Bedouin farming households dependent on livestock in semiarid and desert areas of the district (Areas 3 and 4) have lost access to pastures because of expanding settlements, military camps and landmines and have insufficient water. Former workers in Israel and the settlements who are living off savings and farmers who cannot access their land and households of Palestinian Authority employees are under threat of becoming food insecure, especially in instances where the number of people reliant on their salary has increased.

3. Jericho district

The food insecure population is estimated at 14 109 (31 percent of Jericho district's population) and 19 523 (42 percent) are under threat of becoming food insecure. The district's food insecure residents include Bedouin farming households in the southern part of the district (Area 5), the new unemployed formerly working in the tourism sector, the settlements and Israel, farmers who no longer have land or face movement restrictions when accessing land and markets because of their proximity to settlements and the chronic poor, particularly women-headed households, where the male breadwinner has been imprisoned.

4. Jerusalem District

In Jerusalem District, which includes East Jerusalem, about 87 424 people (28 percent of the population) are food insecure and 113 161 (36 percent) are under threat of becoming food insecure. Most of the vulnerable households have West Bank IDs and can no longer reach Jerusalem city. The food insecure include farmers relying on seasonal agriculture who are now withdrawing to subsistence production and the newly unemployed now without work or reliant on low-paid part-time or casual labour (Areas 1, 3, 4 and 6). Women-headed households figure prominently among the chronic poor. Bedouin households (Areas 6 and 4) are food insecure and without access to other health, welfare and social services. Town dwellers engaged in petty trade, casual labourers and white-collar employees with low salaries are under threat of becoming food insecure.

5. Ramallah district

About 109 442 people (41 percent of the district's population) are food insecure and another 66 705 (25 percent) are under threat of becoming food insecure. The food insecure, who are concentrated in Areas 1 and 2 close to the Green Line, consist of the chronic poor, farmers who cannot access markets and the new unemployed who have depleted their assets. Residents formerly employed in Israel's construction, agriculture and services sectors are attempting to engage in agriculture. However, land confiscation, local surpluses of olive oil, the high cost of transport to Ramallah city, the cost of inputs and lack of skills make this livelihood risky. Low-salaried workers, especially some Palestinian Authority employees and unskilled labourers in the private sector, doctors and engineers are under threat of food insecurity.

6. Salfit district

28 845 people (50 percent of Salfit's residents) are food insecure and 6 204 (11 percent) are under threat of becoming food insecure. As the district map shows, Salfit is surrounded by Israeli settlements such as Ariel, Burkan, Rafafa, Qana, and Immanuel, which together with the military training centres and the designation of large areas of the district as military zones have resulted in the destruction of land and crops and the denial of access to land for grazing, cultivation and harvesting. Villages and towns suffer long curfews and numerous roadblocks (especially in Areas 1 and 4). The projected path of the separation barrier (marked on the Salfit map as affecting Areas 2 and 3) suggests that already high levels of food insecurity (especially in Area 2 where 79 percent of residents are food insecure) are going to increase further. The district is poorly connected to other cities with the result that the marketing of agricultural produce is expensive and time-consuming.

7. Nablus district

As a commercial and industrial hub of the West Bank, many residents worked in Nablus companies, factories, stores and workshops and camp and rural residents worked in Israel and the settlements. Areas 1, 8 and 9 on the map make up Nablus city which includes the centre, the Old City and three refugee camps. City residents cannot leave the city without an IDF permit. The district has been the target of violent incursions and lengthy curfews. Villagers take life threatening risks using alternative roads to reach Nablus city to purchase basic commodities. About 119 279 people (36 percent of the population) are food insecure and

182 646 (56 percent) are under threat of food insecurity. A large proportion of relatively prosperous households reliant on small-scale trade, the newly unemployed who still have savings or assets and Palestinian Authority employees whose small but regular salaries spread more thinly to support a larger number of dependent kin are under threat of food insecurity.

8. Qalqilia district

The district has a high population that is either food insecure (40 916 people, or 45 percent of the population) or under threat of becoming food insecure (36 346 people or 40 percent). Since the second *Intifada*, the vast majority of workers, especially those living near the Green Line lost their jobs in Israel and traders lost important Israeli/Arab-Israeli customers who used to come to West Bank to purchase cheaper goods. The district depends on irrigated agriculture and yet many dunums have been confiscated for the benefit of settlements. Residents with farming livelihoods that have had land confiscated for the construction of the 'security barrier' have experienced or will soon experience higher levels of food insecurity (Areas 1, 3, 4 and 6).

9. Tulkarm district

About 54 052 (33 percent of the population) are food insecure and 64 972 (40 percent) under threat of becoming food insecure. As is the case in Nablus and Qalqilia districts, Tulkarm district has a comparatively large proportion of its population in the 'middle group'. These households have seen their food security status fall sharply and still have more to lose should the current situation continue or deteriorate. Prior to the second *Intifada*, residents relied on employment in Israel and the local agricultural sector for their livelihoods. The district map indicates a series of trenches along the border with Israel (Areas 2 and 3) and many roadblocks especially in the vicinity of military bases (Areas 5 and 4). Trade with Israel including Arab Israelis, was also important, with markets situated in Areas 1 and 3. With the construction of the barrier that runs from the north to the south of the district, as indicated on the district map, access to land and markets will be severely impeded, thereby increasing levels of food insecurity. The construction of the barrier has already had negative repercussions for food security, particularly in Areas 1 and 3.

10. Jenin district

After Salfit, this district has the highest estimate of food insecure in the West Bank (47 percent, or 116 245 people). These include households of the newly unemployed who formerly worked in Israel in construction and in the local agriculture sector, those who have lost assets due to the construction of the security barrier (particularly in Areas 1 and 2) and households in which a family member has been killed, arrested or wounded. A small proportion of the population (about 17 percent) is under threat of becoming food insecure. These include households engaging in casual labour, the availability of which is dependent on the security situation and large households dependent on a small Palestinian Authority salary (less than 1 000 NIS). Food secure households (about 36 percent of the district population) have a breadwinner with a fixed monthly income, are able to sell dairy produce and crops, have relatives abroad sending remittances or continue to engage in business.

11. Tubas district

Levels of food insecurity in Tubas are high (about 19 860 people or 42 percent of the population is food insecure and 19 586 people or 42 percent are under threat of food insecurity). Many of this district's residents were employed by Palestinian landowners in agriculture, in settlements and in Israel. Military zones, military training centres and settlements have led to the destruction of land and crops and the denial of access to land for grazing, cultivation and harvesting. The district map shows that the central, southern and eastern clusters of the district (Areas 7 and 4) have high levels of food insecurity due to the series of trenches, military zones, checkpoints and settlements and heavy reliance on rain-fed agriculture. Clusters with irrigated land can cultivate diverse crops for home consumption and for sale locally and are more food secure. The map shows the connection in Areas 5 and 1 between the abundant water sources and lower levels of food insecurity due to reliance on irrigated agriculture. However, closure policies have severed the district's links to other districts making the marketing of produce costly and time-consuming.

Coping strategies and effects on livelihoods and access to food in the West Bank

Having lost their main source of livelihood, vulnerable groups rely on a range of coping mechanisms summarised below.

Reducing Expenditure

The findings of focus group discussions and interviews show that by far the most important coping mechanism is the reduction of expenditures (ranked first by 72 percent of interview respondents and relied upon by 97 percent of interview respondents in the West Bank). Figure V.4 below shows that reducing spending on the quality and quantity of food eaten is by far the most widespread coping mechanism in the West Bank (adopted by 95 percent and 94 percent of respondents respectively). In the West Bank, 90 percent of respondents prepare certain foods at home instead of buying them. This practice was widely relied upon during the first *Intifada* and illustrates households' resilience and capacity to develop coping mechanisms in order to survive the impact of conflict and economic decline. They have also reduced spending on clothes (91 percent), health (80 percent) and education expenses (69 percent), household maintenance (74 percent), children's pocket money (85 percent) and social activities (81 percent). A common strategy is young men's postponement of marriage, while girls/women marry earlier to reduce the family's expenses. Just under one half of West Bank respondents live with extended family either temporarily or in the long-term, a figure that is slightly higher in urban than non-urban areas and camps. This strategy is adopted for several reasons: to support relatives who cannot live independently, to cut down on costs (e.g. rent) and to pool resources.

Sale of Assets

A second important coping mechanism is the sale of assets, relied upon by 72 percent of West Bank respondents. The wife's gold was the first asset to be sold, followed by tools and land.

Borrowing

Going into debt or 'living on account' is a third important strategy. 85 percent of West Bank respondents have a credit line with the local shop and slightly less with the water provider. About half of those who have relied on credit from the local shop can continue to do so. This group that still has a credit line is made up of people earning a small income (less than 1 000 NIS per month) from small-scale production and trade, irregular agricultural labour and as Palestinian Authority employees. Alternatively, they have access to land and home-gardens and can repay debts in kind. Although they have lost their jobs or are earning a smaller income than pre-*Intifada*, they do have an income source and are able to pay back some of their debt every month or two months. Their credit lines are smaller than pre-*Intifada* but the shopkeepers trust them. Refugees living in camps and villagers also rely on borrowing from shops owned by relatives who would not refuse them even if they had no income source. Urbanites move from one shop to another once their credit lines are exhausted.

Interviews with traders and shopkeepers revealed that they have a credit line with a greater number of people than pre-*Intifada*, extending credit to the new poor, who amassed large debts in the first months of the *Intifada* in the belief that the situation would soon improve. Traders and shopkeepers have extended their credit debts to customers and have more money owed to them now than before. The extended family is also an important source of monetary assistance especially in non-urban and camp locations. Some respondents took a loan from a bank to pay for one-off large expenditures, specifically, marriage and university education.

Informal social networks continue to be a vital safety net. Family was the most relied upon source of support turned to by 67 percent of respondents, followed by neighbours (59 percent). Benefactors helped 53 percent of respondents and half of respondents said they had borrowed money from a creditor.

Humanitarian Assistance

This assessment found that 72 percent of West Bank respondents had received formal assistance from one or more organisations since the beginning of the second *Intifada*. The most frequent sources of assistance are UNRWA, ICRC and MoSA. UNRWA and ICRC provide mostly food aid and the other organisations, non-food assistance. Most recipients of UNRWA assistance received aid every three months. The majority of ICRC recipients said they received assistance once or twice. The majority of recipients of MoSA assistance said they received it twice. These findings suggest that aid is often provided on a one-off basis and is too irregular for most recipient households to depend on. Respondents who received assistance indicated that it is not enough to meet their basic needs.

Some of the chronic poor said they do not ask for assistance because they found it too shameful. Older people said they did not know how to register with MoSA. Other respondents said they did not qualify for assistance because they have a son who is over 18 years or because a family member works part-time or casually. Still others said that they are on the waiting list for MoSA assistance, but since the beginning of *Intifada*, MoSA had stopped taking new cases.

Income-generation and a return to agriculture

With little to fall back on, more and more people seek out any available work they can find in a shrinking local economy. The number of people working for low wages in the informal sector is increasing. The new unemployed turn up in growing numbers at designated sites in markets where they wait to be hired for casual daily work (53 percent of households sought casual work). Women produce food and goods for sale in their homes and children, farmers and traders engage in petty trade on the street and from small stalls. Women reported engaging in some income-generating work although they frequently minimised the significance of this often part-time and casual work, stressing instead the lack of employment opportunities available locally.

The dismal situation has prompted a return to agriculture. Over one half of respondents relied on some form of agricultural activity, a proportion considerably higher than in the Gaza Strip. For the main part, this is piecemeal and seasonal labour especially involving women and ex-Israeli workers in non-urban areas. New poor farmers are selling their land and working on other farmers' land, especially in areas where land was confiscated. However, the financial situation of landowners, often urban businesspeople, has deteriorated with the result that agricultural workers are laid-off and the farmers' families cultivate the land themselves. Farmers are diversifying production (crops for home consumption and animals because they use less space) and some new unemployed, especially in non-urban areas are starting home-gardens. Home-gardens are used as a source of food by half of the West Bank respondent households. However, the cost of inputs and lack of access to water are constraints. Some new unemployed are rearing poultry in an effort to earn an income but their efforts often fail because of the cost of feed and lack of access to markets due to curfew and movement restrictions.

The exhaustion of coping mechanisms in the West Bank

The coping mechanisms of the most vulnerable have reached exhaustion. The chronic poor and many of the new poor have no savings left, have sold the private and productive assets they possessed and cannot cut spending any further. Their ability to recover should the situation improve is compromised by their desperate attempts to survive today. Failed income earning initiatives are steeping them in heavy debt. They have sold their land, animals and businesses, are forgoing health and education needs, and community and household relations are breaking down. For most vulnerable groups, reducing expenditure on certain food items has become one way to ensure that there is something for the family to eat. Figure V.4 shows that roughly one-third of respondents who economised on the quality and quantity of food eaten reported that they were unable to reduce spending on food any further.

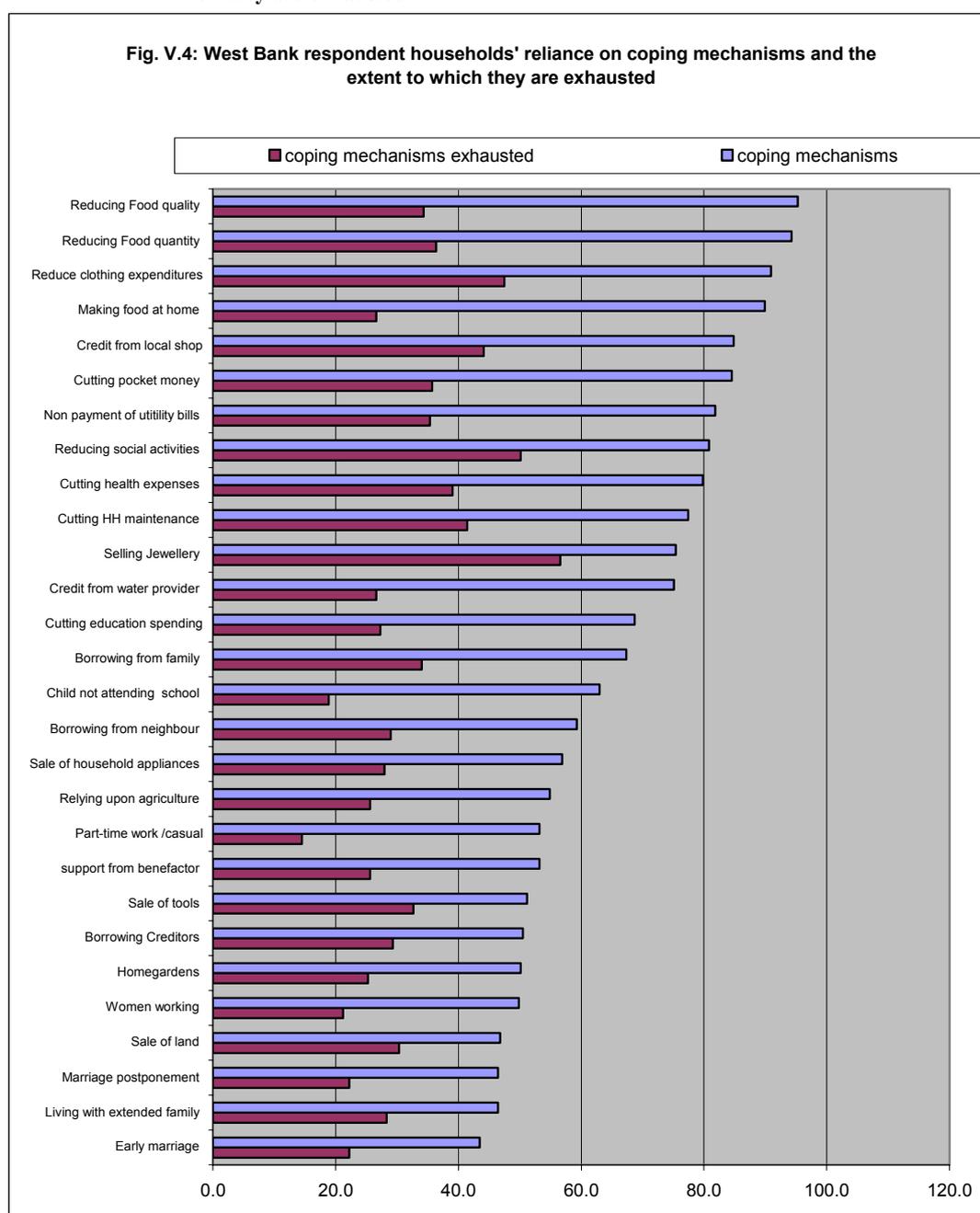
The assessment findings indicate that many West Bank households have reduced to an absolute minimum or cut out altogether spending on other basic needs. For example, spending could not be cut further on education by 41 percent of households, health (39 percent), household maintenance (41 percent), social activities (50 percent) and children's pocket money (36 percent). A larger proportion than in Gaza previously had access to productive assets such as tools and land, which many households have now sold or can no longer afford to rent. One quarter of those who have home-gardens no longer use them to produce food largely due to the cost of inputs. These households are among the most food insecure and are eating a very limited diet consisting of inexpensive foods such as bread, rice and pulses, gifts of food from kin and humanitarian food aid. These households' food insecurity is of particular concern because they are likely to be the same households that are also excluded from access to credit.

Figure V.4 shows that the asset that households most widely resorted to selling, mentioned by 75 percent of West Bank respondents, is jewellery. Selling jewellery was one of the first strategies households turned to at the onset of the second *Intifada*, and now it is the mechanism that is most widely reported to be exhausted. 57 percent of those who had sold jewellery had none left to sell. Aside from jewellery, respondent households have very few assets that they can sell. One third of those with land had sold some or all of it and a smaller number resorted to selling tools.

Living on credit is a coping mechanism that is showing signs of coming under strain. Figure V.4 shows that just over one half of respondents who had previously relied on credit from the local shop report that they can no longer do so because they cannot repay old debts. This includes the chronic poor whose financial assistance has been terminated and the new unemployed who have failed to find alternative work. Some chronic poor bought livestock on account, intending to repay the loan once they had sold the dairy products and eggs. Unable to sell the produce or afford the necessary inputs, they have sold or eaten the animals incurring further debt. Credit lines from water providers are under threat to a lesser degree although the affordability of water is a great concern for rural households reliant on tankers.

The assessment findings indicate that informal social safety nets that have played a vital role in vulnerable households' survival are no longer available to between one quarter and one third of respondents. 34 percent of respondents no longer borrow from family, 29 percent no longer receive support from neighbours and 26 percent from benefactors. These forms of social support come under strain due to vulnerable households' excessive reliance on them at a time when others in the community who used to be in a position to help can no longer do so. Some respondents said that while in the past they would turn to friends and relatives for support rather than receive or request humanitarian assistance, they preferred now to look for assistance from humanitarian agencies because of their indebtedness to others and others' inability to continue providing support.

Fig.V.4: West Bank respondent households' reliance on coping mechanisms and the extent to which they are exhausted



Changing social relations in the West Bank

Worsening poverty and widespread male unemployment challenges gender relations. As men sit at home and teenage boys spend their time sleeping or walking the streets, women take on a greater income-generating role, and their greater visibility in the public sphere challenges the traditional ‘privacy’ of feminine roles. Women are also claiming their rights to land inheritance so that the household can produce more food at home. The elderly and women have become more mobile than men whose movement across checkpoints is more restricted. As a result, women and the elderly assume greater responsibility for household tasks such as collecting gas, shopping and dealing with outside institutions.

One of the main findings of this assessment is the extent to which children are working to support their families. Children have always worked in agriculture during the harvesting and in petty trade during the summer holidays. However children now, particularly those from chronic poor households, are dropping out of school in order to seek work. Others, particularly among the new poor households, are combining school with work in the afternoons. A strong message that comes from listening to the children’s focus group discussions is the responsibility children from a very young age feel for supporting their families, when their parents are no longer able to provide for them. Children’s acute awareness of their parents’ problems is reflected in their descriptions of their families’ health problems, increasing levels of family violence and the way they suppress voicing their wishes or needs, whether it be for certain foods or seeking medical attention.

Availability of and access to food in the West Bank

In the West Bank most problems of food availability were reported from non-urban areas where 35 percent of the respondents mentioned one or more food items not always being available. In urban areas and camps, 25 percent of respondents report that some foods are not always available. While food availability is more of a concern in the West Bank than in the Gaza Strip, food is generally available if households have the purchasing power.

By far the greatest problem facing food insecure households is the affordability of food. Most West Bank respondents (97 percent) stated they could not afford certain food items. Food items have become more expensive in non-urban areas as the suppliers’ transport costs have increased. As incomes plummet, Palestinians find it more and more difficult to be able to afford food. The bar charts below (Figures V.5 to V.9) show that regardless of household size, all West Bank respondents are consuming minimal amounts of expensive protein and nutrient-rich foods such as meat, fish, dairy produce and eggs and oil. 73 percent of West Bank households interviewed stated that their household consumed under 10 kilograms of meat per month, some cutting it out of their diet altogether. Figure V.6 shows that 42 percent of household with between seven and ten members consumed less than ten kilograms of dairy produce and eggs in the previous month. A common coping mechanism is to substitute more expensive food for cheaper staples. While it is not surprising that households are cutting out expensive foods such as meat, fish, fruit, interviews and focus groups revealed that some households are also using less cheap staples, such as starch and cereals.

Figures V.5 to V.9 suggest that the food situation of larger households is particularly precarious because many of them are consuming the same minimal amounts of protein and nutrient-rich foods as smaller households. While some large households consume slightly more dairy produce, eggs and oil than smaller households, a large proportion nevertheless consumes minimal amounts of meat. Figure V.5 shows that 14 of the 31 households with 15 or more members and 26 of the 54 households with between 11 and 14 members consumed less than ten kilograms of meat in the previous month. This means that in larger households, individuals are likely to be eating very small quantities of food that they require for a healthy diet and are suffering nutritionally as well as psychologically, as a result. Interviews indicated that when food is in shorter supply due to the expansion of the households, food allocation is more unequal. Boys are more likely to receive better quality food than girls, than in households that have not expanded. Women whose homes had been demolished in locations such as H2 in Hebron and Jenin camp and joined the households of extended family reported facing discrimination in food allocation from their mothers-in-law. While this discrimination has long existed, its impact on vulnerable household members is greater when families are forced together and resources are stretched.

Fig.V.5: Meat (kg) consumed per month by households according to household size

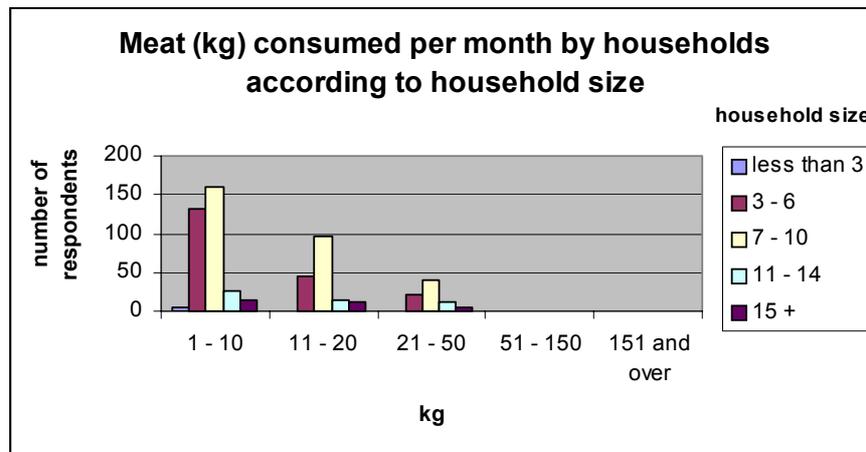


Fig.V.6: Dairy Products and eggs (kg) consumed per month by households according to household size

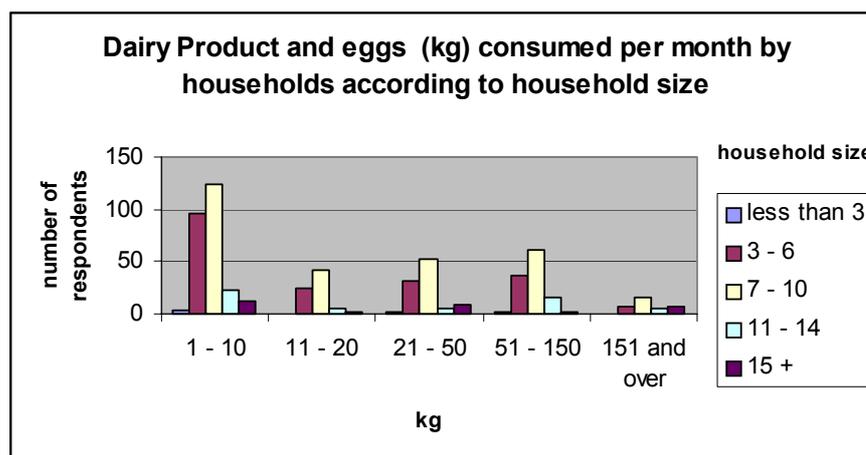


Fig.V.7: Bread, Rice and Pulses (kg) consumed per month by households according to household size

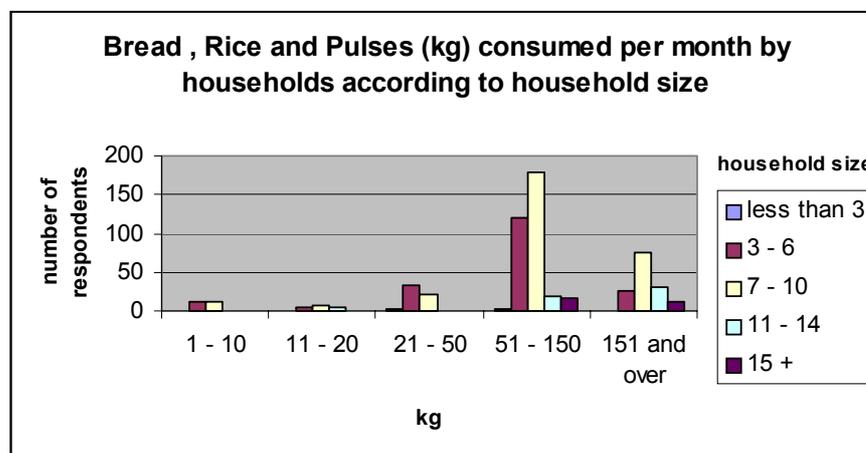


Fig.V.8: Oil (kg) consumed per month by households according to household size

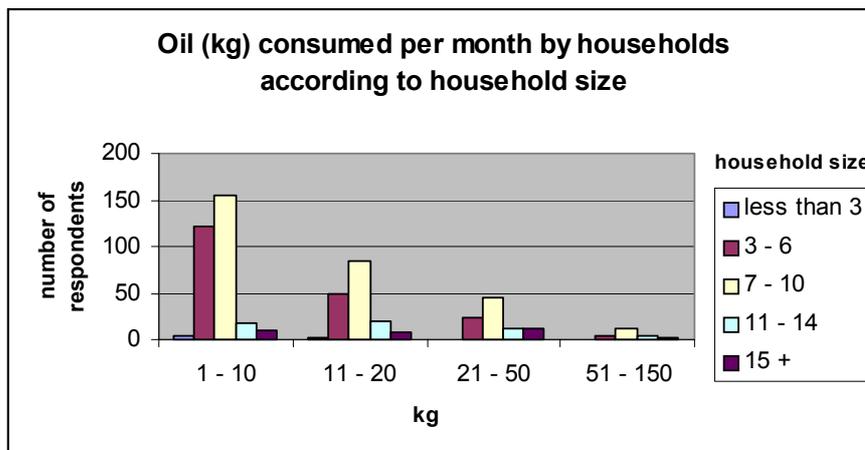


Fig.V.9: Fruits and Vegetables (kg) consumed per month by households according to household size

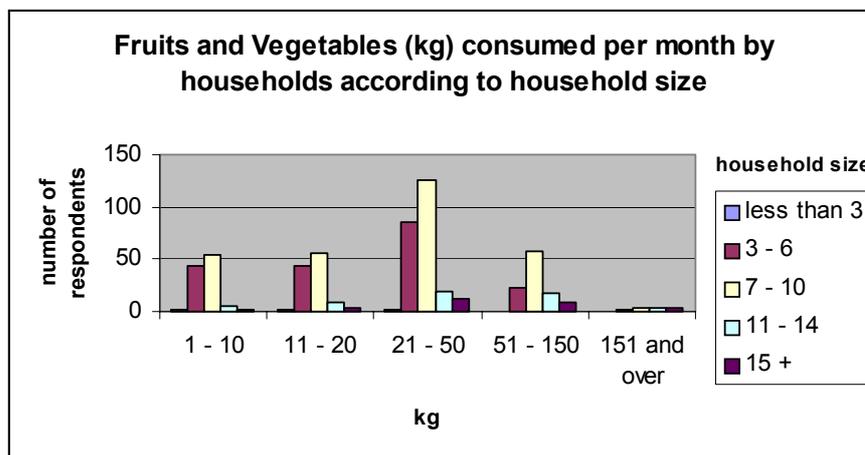


Table V.3: Vulnerable Groups in the West Bank

GROUP	DESCRIPTION	STATE OF COPING MECHANISMS	FOOD SECURITY STATUS
Chronic Poor	<p>This group contains four sub-groups:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Households with chronically ill and disabled members that demand special medical, dietary and care assistance. 2. Women headed households, including households that have lost the breadwinner during the <i>Intifada</i> and are unable to support themselves and receive insufficient and/or irregular external assistance. 3. Large families with an unskilled breadwinner 4. Long-term low income workers intermittently unemployed. 	<p>Support networks: They can no longer rely on food and money from impoverished support networks and are increasingly dependent on humanitarian aid.</p> <p>Living on account: Some do not receive cash assistance from MoSA or UNRWA with the result they cannot repay accumulated debts at food shops.</p> <p>Sale of assets and reduction of expenditure: What little jewellery and small pieces of land they possessed have been sold. They cannot reduce spending further - children are dropping out of school and the sick and the infirm forego essential medical treatment.</p> <p>Income-generation: Women and children are particularly active in small-scale informal production and trade and piecemeal, low-paid labour. Women produce handicrafts, clothes and foods at home for sale.</p>	<p>Food aid: They rely more on food aid. Receiving food from any humanitarian agency leads to a reduction in cash assistance.</p> <p>Changes in diet: two and sometimes one meal per day. Many meals consist solely of bread and tea. Expensive vegetables are supplemented by cheap vegetables and pulses such as potato, lentils, tomatoes and beans. If they eat meat at all, it is only the cheap parts of the chicken, chicken stock or poor quality frozen meat once per month. Adults and elderly report weight loss.</p>
New Poor	<p>This group contains three sub-groups:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Farmers + entrepreneurs who lost their business due to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i) damage or demolition of property or land confiscation. Farmers whose land has been confiscated, and urban traders whose shops and stock have been damaged or destroyed are unable to rebuild their livelihoods because they have many debts and no assets left. ii) lack of access to markets. Traders and farmers who no longer have access to markets especially in villages and towns along the Green Line. Bedouin farmers face difficulties moving to better pastures and cannot graze animals or grow pasture. They face problems reaching and affording inputs. Internal closure prevents them transporting their animals and dairy produce to market. 2) Those who recently lost employment <p>Consists of a range of workers including those previously earning a relatively high income in Israel and settlements and those who had small / irregular incomes in West Bank urban areas. The main breadwinner has lost employment due to movement</p>	<p>Going into debt and the sale of assets: Having spent their savings and heavily in debt after taking out loans at the onset of <i>Intifada</i>, they have resorted to selling their assets. In non-urban areas, they engage in piecemeal agricultural work for landowners, often for payment in-kind rather than cash. They sell these crops at low prices locally or use them for home consumption.</p> <p>Adjusting farming practices: Farmers without access to their land move from plant cultivation to animal-rearing and to short-term, low-cost farming practices both of which demand less space. They grow fast-growing crops to mitigate risk, reduce expenditure by using family labour, especially women's, rather than machines, switch to rain-fed crops and organic manure.</p> <p>Subsistence production: In non-urban areas and to a lesser extent, in camps and urban areas, they turn to small-scale livestock-raising (mostly chicken and sheep) and home-gardening. Camp households cut expenditure on food while providing a healthy diet by purchasing layers so children can eat eggs, and rabbits to sell the meat. Farmers and the new unemployed change from one crop for sale to various crops for subsistence.</p> <p>Income generation: In urban areas and camps, there is limited petty trade. Traders who lost or sold their shops set up street stalls and ex-farmers set-up small non-urban shops. At considerable personal risk, some women work in settlements as there are fewer constraints on their movement than on men's. Some unmarried men under 25 years living near the Green Line work illegally in Israel. The new unemployed</p>	<p>Those whose home has been demolished are the most food insecure, relying on handouts from organisations or relatives. Women are particularly vulnerable when they move into their in-laws, made to feel unwelcome / undeserving of food.</p> <p>The food insecurity within Bedouin communities also demands immediate attention. They face problems reaching and affording food in other towns and villages. Their diet consists more and more of dairy products.</p> <p>The new unemployed previously working in the West Bank were also among the first in this group to become food insecure. They had a poor diet prior to <i>Intifada</i> and rapidly exhausted their meagre reserves when they lost their jobs in the early stages of <i>Intifada</i>.</p> <p>Traders and the new unemployed previously working in Israel are also food insecure (but less so) or under threat of becoming food insecure in the near future. Access to a home-garden ameliorates food insecurity to some degree. Some farmers with access to land are able to grow some foods for home consumption but they are under threat because of the problems getting</p>

	<p>restrictions within the West Bank and between West Bank and Israel.</p> <p>3) Those whose homes have been demolished or damaged. Often already poor, living in poor areas of cities and refugee camps, their homes were damaged during incursions, due to their proximity to settlements, as a form of deterrence and due to the lack of building permits.</p>	<p>compete for too few, short-term, unskilled, low-paid jobs near where they live.</p> <p>Living on account: is important but shopkeepers have reduced the size of the credit lines and shortened the repayment period.</p> <p>Reliance on social support networks: Having experienced a sudden fall in economic status or deprivation of their livelihood, this group relied on social networks. However, the large numbers of such claimants strains these networks resulting in the breakdown of social relations and the greater vulnerability to future shocks. Of those whose homes have been damaged or demolished, instead of moving in with extended family, some rent accommodation with the help of UNRWA, MoSA etc. However, this support is temporary and when it dries up this group is by no means in a position to support itself.</p>	<p>inputs and affording water and because they are selling more and more of their land.</p>
<p>Children</p>	<p>This group consists of children from chronic poor and new poor households and comprises children who have dropped out of school and predominates in urban areas and refugee camps.</p> <p>Children, often the family's only income-earner, from the new poor group try to work for three or four hours after school.</p> <p>Breakdown of social relations: Children reported more violence at home. Children quarrel more with their siblings. Their fathers get angry when they ask for something</p>	<p>Reduction of expenditures: Children no longer get toys, new clothing or go on trips. Parents treat ailments traditionally (boiling wild plants) or at free clinics.</p> <p>High value attributed to education: Children are determined to continue studying despite the fact that parents no longer give them pocket money, checkpoints make getting to school more difficult and they now walk to school since they no longer use public transport.</p> <p>Income-generation: Under pressure from parents and extended family, children work. In urban areas, older boys work in blacksmiths and carpenters' workshops, on construction sites, in small shops and at markets. Younger boys work in petty trade. In non-urban areas, children engage in agricultural labour. Girls help more with housework and childcare especially when their mothers take on a new income-generating role.</p>	<p>Children eat two or even one instead of three meals a day and are still hungry when the meal is over. They eat much less chicken, meat, vegetables, falafel, eggs, fruits and sweets and they eat more rice and pulses (mojaddarah, a dish made from rice and lentils), potatoes and home-grown fava beans and cauliflower. Breakfast is tea with bread and dinner is chicken soup. Their mothers cook fewer meals and more of the foods they dislike. They receive far fewer invitations for meals with relatives and friends than pre-<i>Intifada</i>.</p>
<p>Elderly</p>	<p>Elderly who are living alone or a part of chronic poor and new poor households and who cannot engage in productive/income-generating activities are dependent upon the younger generation. However, their children are finding it more and more difficult to support them.</p>	<p>Exhaustion of savings and assets: These have been used up, sold or passed on to children.</p> <p>No access to living on account.</p> <p>Expenditure cutting: They make more food at home and use wood as fuel. They may move in with their children.</p> <p>Income generation: In non-urban areas, they till other people's home-gardens or hire labourers to till their land and sell their crops on commission. Elderly people purchase poultry to sell eggs and engage in petty trade.</p>	<p>Elderly people's nutritional situation can be compromised in poor three-generation households as they often forego meals in favour of the rest of the family. They reduced the number of meals to one or two per day. For many, the diet consists of basic foods such as olive oil, bread and lentils. They can no longer afford fruit, vegetables and milk. Specific food items that they require such as soya milk and whole-wheat bread are no longer available.</p>

GAZA STRIP

The results of the pair wise ranking of vulnerability indicate that nearly 42 percent of the population of Gaza Strip (552 278 out of total population of 1 329 670) are currently food insecure. The food insecure population includes 20 062 families identified as hardship cases and 17 243 families who are eligible for assistance from MoSA/WFP and UNRWA. In the Gaza Strip, high food insecurity is concentrated in certain areas. Five areas have food insecure populations that make up between 50 percent and 83 percent of the total area populations. These highly food insecure pockets are located in Jabalia camp (Area 4 in North Gaza district, 83 percent of the population being food insecure), Area 1 in Gaza district (62 percent food insecure), Area 2 in Deir al Balah district (66 percent food insecure), and in Areas 1 and 4 in Rafah district (62 percent and 52 percent respectively).

The estimates derived from the pair wise ranking for the numbers of food insecure in the Gaza Strip are similar to those estimates for the West Bank with over 69 percent of the Gaza Strip population food insecure or under threat of becoming food insecure in the near future. The reasons for this were outlined earlier in the chapter. The rates of food insecurity have been higher and for a longer period of time in Gaza Strip. The Gaza Strip has been severely affected by movement restrictions for many years, which have stopped the free movement of goods and labour between the Gaza Strip and its traditional outlets of Egypt, Israel and other neighbouring countries. Gazans have been confined to a narrow strip unable to move freely since 1991. They were generally more affected than West Bankers by the introduction of the permit policy in 1991 and since then, the erecting of the 'electronic wall' in 1994 and the introduction of coded IDs in 1995 worsened Gazans' living conditions. The recognised need in Gaza Strip resulted in the targeting of food assistance with greater amount per capita than in the West Bank. In more recent times, the imposition of more stringent pass laws and travel restrictions between the Gaza Strip and Israel and within the Gaza Strip has brought the economies and all other levels of life in the Gaza Strip to an unprecedented low level of bare subsistence.

Characteristics of the vulnerable in the Gaza Strip

The vulnerable groups in the Gaza Strip include female-headed households, fisher folk, farmers, including Bedouin farming households, households locked by security zones and the unemployed. Earlier in this chapter, it was pointed out that economic conditions in the Gaza Strip have been worse than in the West Bank for longer while in the West Bank the situation deteriorated more sharply than in Gaza since the second *Intifada*. Nevertheless, it is possible to distinguish, in the same way as was done in the West Bank, between the new and chronic poor. The female-headed households and the long-term unemployed are among the chronically poor whereas fisherfolk, farmers and households locked by security zones have seen their livelihoods deteriorate especially since the onset of the second *Intifada*, and are considered the new poor.

Female-headed households

These include hardship cases (widows, divorced, spinsters, older and disabled persons) receiving assistance and those that have 'fallen between the cracks' of food assistance. Living on account for those who have no support, income or male protector is rarely an option as shops do not trust their ability to repay loans. Their income earning potential is limited due to responsibilities as carers for the sick/disabled or children. Nevertheless, as in the West Bank, they take on small income generating activities such as home-based food processing for home consumption and sale on mobile stands and making handicrafts. They are unskilled and some fear losing their home and children. Prospects for improving their socio-economic status are limited in current circumstances.

Fisher folk

Fisher folk are denied access to the sea by yellow zones (Israeli military security zones) in southern Gaza, and at Gaza port, the only port still open, fisher folk are restricted to a three nautical mile fishing radius.⁷ Many fisher folk in the south reported not being able to go out to sea at anytime due to imposed restrictions. These grounded

⁷ According to Oslo agreement signed in 1993 between Palestinians and Israelis, fisher folk are entitled to fish up to 20 miles west and in an area of 1.5 mile to the north with Israeli border north and one mile to the south with Egyptian border. In practice however, the maximum zone in which Palestinians were allowed to fish was within 12 miles. During the second *Intifada*, the area in which they were allowed to fish was reduced again to between three and six miles. Since January 2001, more restrictions were imposed on fishing in Khan Yunis and Rafah. Since June 2002, fisher folk have been completely forbidden to fish in boats in Khan Yunis and Rafah.

fishers are de facto unemployed. For others particularly in the north, fishing restrictions, threats of violence from IDF and depleted fish beds limit the catch.⁸

Vulnerable fisher folk include boat-owners and non-owners as both are affected by the limited catchment area, lack of fish and restrictions on time spent at sea. Boat owners are more likely to have come from prosperous fishing families but have to pay running costs (fuel, maintenance, labour) and risk having their property damaged or destroyed. Many fisher folk have sold household appliances and sometimes their boats, are heavily indebted to workshops responsible for boat maintenance and have left their nets in a bad state of repair. Fishers are vulnerable to food insecurity because of drastic income decline or total loss; and they do not qualify for assistance from UNRWA or MoSA. They have lost dignity because they are unable to bring basic foods into the household, especially when shops are no longer willing to extend credit.

Farmers (including Bedouin)

The most vulnerable farmers have had their land razed and have become de facto unemployed. Farmers with land near yellow zones or settlements have seen their income decline rapidly due to movement restrictions. Some farmers envied labourers as they could earn 30 NIS/day, an income that they are not able to generate due to the high cost of inputs, difficulties marketing and low sale prices. Farmers practise a mono-culture that increases the marketing risks resulting from restricted mobility, lack of infrastructure and pricing policies as well as unfair competition from cheaper and heavily subsidised Israeli products.

Bedouin figure among vulnerable farming households. Their traditional livelihood requires nomadic movement to grazing land and water sources and yet in the Gaza Strip grazing land and water is limited and movement restricted. Most Bedouin farming households are located on the outskirts of cities close to checkpoints, the Israeli border or settlements. This has made them particularly vulnerable as they face near constant threats grazing their livestock and much of the agricultural land has been razed. Fewer people can afford to buy meat from them and many have been forced to sell their animals.

Households “locked” by yellow/security zones

These are areas close to settlements, land and sea borders and military bases. The coping mechanisms of residents in these areas are so limited that they quickly sell their capital assets. As soon as they exhaust their savings they become destitute since income earning opportunities in a restricted geographical area, where most of the population faces the same constraints, are very limited. Humanitarian assistance is sporadic, reaching them only when access is granted to agencies.

Unemployed

These include the 23 000 people who recently lost their jobs as a result of closures and the long term unemployed. This category fulfils the current criteria of hardship cases that MoSA provides for. However, limited financial capacity prevents MoSA (and other agencies) from meeting all the demand. Their food security status is very volatile depending on their ability to engage in seasonal work.

The location of the vulnerable in the Gaza Strip

According to the results of the pair wise ranking, 41.6 percent of the Gaza Strip’s population is estimated to be food insecure, 44 percent of the refugees and nearly 38 percent of the non-refugees. The food insecure population comprises hardship cases, estimated at 20 062 families and 17 243 families benefiting from MoSA/WFP and UNRWA's assistance respectively. Large food insecure groups are localised around Israeli security areas (indicated as yellow zones on the district maps in the annex) and security zones.

1. Rafah district

The food insecure population makes up about 35 percent of the district population. A further 38 percent of the population is under threat of becoming food insecure. About 54 percent of the population of Area 1 and 4 are food insecure; these are two areas where the population is closed in by a large yellow zone and a security fence with a checkpoint restricting and/or monitoring mobility. Areas 1 and 4 have high levels of food insecurity (63 percent and 52 percent respectively), which combined, make up to 8 percent of the Rafah Governate food insecure population. In Area 1 (Al Mawasi), the yellow zone cantons the population on the sea border without allowing free access to the sea. Supplies of emergency food and health care have faced restrictions. Many residents are farmers who fish from the seashore at the specified times in order to

⁸ Fishers are allowed out to sea at around six o’clock in the evening and are not allowed back before morning regardless of their catch, adding to their fuel and labour costs. Fish markets have been closed. The fishing industry’s seasonal nature exacerbates fisher folk’s vulnerability under closure policies as fishers may be unable to fish when it is available.

provide food for their families. Sandwiched between Al Shoka and Al Mawasi, the three main camps of Tall as Sultan (Area 2), Rafah (Area 3) and Al Bayuk (Area 2) shelter a food insecure population that forms about 91 percent of the food insecure group. These people have no access to the sea because they are prohibited from entering Area 1. Bedouin, particularly in areas 1, 2 and 4 of the district are food insecure because they live close to the security zone or border areas, which makes it difficult for them to graze their animals.

2. Khan Yunis district

An estimated 23 percent of the district population is food insecure. A further 30 percent are estimated to be under threat of food security. The highest concentration of food insecure groups in the Strip is close to Rafah border extending towards the sea onto Al Mawasi camp (Qa'al Kharaba, Umm Kameil, Umm al Kilab) making up about 40 percent of the area population. These groups are land and water locked in by a security fence surrounding the settlements that restricts the population's mobility and economic activity. Fisher folk who can no longer go out to sea are among the food insecure. Their boats and the tractors used to pull them on to the beach lie unused and in a bad state of repair due to the lack of resources to maintain them. Farmers that rely on tomatoes and cucumber production are among the food insecure in this district. They require costly inputs but their produce generates low sale prices. Farmers in Khan Yunis indicated that they fail to generate sufficient income to meet the cost of inputs and, at the same time, retain ready cash. The 'middle group' includes farmers who can still access their land, traders and fishers who have moved to Gaza city to fish. This area includes a large number of food insecure Bedouin farming families located near security zones and yellow areas.

3. Deir al Balah district

About 32 percent of the district population are food insecure with approximately 40 percent located in Wadi As Salqa and the Al Bureij Camp (Areas 3 and 2). A further 39 percent of the population is estimated to be under threat of food insecurity. The district is divided by a yellow zone, contains settlements and has a security fence allowing only one entry point. Farmers (including Bedouin) have lost access to their land and/or their land has been destroyed due to the security zone, checkpoint and settlements. Fisher families and households where the breadwinner is an unemployed labourer are also among the food insecure. Refugees living in camps are in a better situation relative to refugees in other districts because they have not been targeted by the IDF and some refugees experience lower levels of food insecurity relative to other district residents due to the fact that they have jobs with UNRWA.

4. Gaza district

An estimated 53 percent of the district population are food insecure. A further 23 percent are estimated to be under threat of becoming food insecure. 63 percent of Area 1's population is food insecure. This Area experiences high security measures with fencing, road blocks and checkpoints. The chronic poor (especially women headed households) as well as fisher folk and unemployed who used to work in Israel, Erez and Gaza and Bedouin households are among the food insecure. Pre-*Intifada*, boats left from various points along the seashore but now Gaza port is the only port still open. Fishers are restricted to fishing within three nautical miles. Some farmers who are unable to access their land east of Gaza city either because it has been razed or is close to the security zone and therefore no longer can sell their produce are food insecure. Other farming households that rely on rain fed agriculture, cultivating tomatoes, cucumber, peppers, melon, olives and grapes are under threat of becoming food insecure due to the fact that the price for their produce has fallen and the inputs, such as seeds, water and tools, have become unaffordable. Costs of inputs are reduced by relying solely on family labour. Nevertheless, the quality of their produce is compromised under current conditions. Displaced people who are dependent on extended kin who host them are either food insecure or under threat of becoming food insecure if their hosts are no longer able to support them. Their hosts are also under threat of becoming food insecure as they have more family members to feed.

5. North Gaza district

Of the 51 percent food insecure, Jabalia city (Area 3) and camp (Area 2) have the highest concentration with 83 percent and 41 percent respectively. A further 20 percent of the population are considered under threat of food insecurity. These areas have seen recurrent military incursions and house demolitions that have deprived people of their sources of livelihoods and their homes. Farmers, such as strawberry exporters in Beit Lahia (Area 1), who face severe problems selling their strawberries due to movement restrictions, are among the food insecure. Farmers, especially on the borders with Israel, have suffered major losses because their investment does not generate profits but rather leaves them increasingly indebted. This area has a large number of food insecure Bedouin households in which the main breadwinner who used to work in the

settlements or Israel is now unemployed or which are reliant on livestock and yet cannot graze their animals or sell meat.

Coping strategies and effects on livelihoods and access to food in the Gaza Strip

Earlier studies that warned of households' inability to continue to cope are confirmed by this assessment. Many of the coping strategies have been exhausted and with high dependency ratios and weakened safety nets, destitution is close at hand.

Living off savings

In the Gaza Strip, most respondents in our assessment no longer had any savings although the proportion that had exhausted all savings was slightly smaller than in the West Bank.

Borrowing

Purchasing goods 'on account' at local shops is an important source of credit vital for maintaining household food security. Figure V.10 shows that about 65 percent of the households rely on credit lines from the local shop to meet daily food expenses. 59 percent rely on credit from a local water provider. Income earners in Deir al Balah indicated that they started shopping on account by the middle of the month when their limited income is used up. However, with little hope for improvement in the foreseeable future, shopkeepers now hesitate to extend credit.

The non-payment of utility bills is a form of credit that is still available to many households and is relied upon by about 70 percent of Gazan respondents. Mutual help, especially between extended family members, is an important safety net. Figure V.10 indicates that respondents have borrowed from extended families (29 percent), neighbours (19 percent), benefactors (15 percent) and creditors (11 percent). Reports suggest that according to religious teaching, richer people are taking steps to help poorer members of their community. The year following the start of the second *Intifada*, very few households slaughtered meat for *eid*. The following year (2002), richer neighbours slaughtered more meat in order to provide for their poorer neighbours who had cut meat from their diets. As a result, Bedouin farmers reported a significant rise in their incomes in 2002 due to the sale of meat during this feast.

Some respondents reported engaging in savings clubs, primarily to buy fuel. Borrowing is gendered as most participants indicated that men's pride prevents them from borrowing from their relatives thereby compelling their wives to seek their relatives' support to put food on the table. Such potential is gradually eroding, as cash is too scarce to be shared with others.

Reducing expenditure

Gazans have reduced expenditures, at first through cutting back on all non-essential goods such as social activities. Figure V.10 shows that 74 percent of respondents have cut back spending on social activities. Spending on gifts and contributions to social events (births, weddings and funerals) has been reduced if not completely cancelled. Funerals remain one social event where people would try and contribute to the meals provided for charity purposes. Households have cut out medical expenditure shifting from private to public health care and alternative local remedies (59 percent), reduced spending on clothes (71 percent), reduced household maintenance costs (29 percent) and denied children pocket money (54 percent) and transport money for school.

As in the West Bank, vulnerable households employ a variety of coping mechanisms to ensure that their families have enough to eat (see Table V.4 below). Households have adjusted shopping frequency from daily to weekly, then twice monthly and now once every three weeks. As is the case in the West Bank, the most widely used coping mechanism is spending less money on food. 79 percent of respondents reduced the quality and quantity of food eaten. As in the West Bank, many families report that meals are skipped or that they simply consist of bread and tea. Meat is replaced by pulses. Milk and other dairy products are too expensive for most vulnerable households and fruits and vegetables, other than the cheapest ones, are no longer part of the diet. Meals are prepared only once every three days in order to reduce fuel costs.

Many of these alternative strategies to gain access to food are not new. As shown in Table V.4, 62 percent of Gazan households make their own food. Village women have always made labneh, hummus, fowl, tomato paste and falafel. Olive pickers in the West Bank are traditionally paid part of the harvest. In the same way, children's carpentry and plumbing in manufacturing workshops, work in agriculture, domestic work and care of younger siblings has been on the increase for over two decades in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. These and others

mentioned below are coping mechanisms that people have relied on for many years and that people depended on during the first *Intifada*. However, given the shortage of money, people are relying on these coping mechanisms more than ever. After the signing of the Oslo Agreement, practices such as producing food at home were used less and less as people became more integrated into a monetary economy, and it is only since the second *Intifada*, that they have resorted to them once again. Similarly, worsening economic conditions and the contraction of the formal labour market mean that there are more pressures on children to work informally on family farms, in home-based production and petty trade. Household level food production is playing an increasingly important role. Farmers are diversifying to production for home consumption. People are relying increasingly more on home-gardens and raising poultry as a supplementary food source although the costs of inputs pose severe constraints.

Gazan households economise on fuel costs by using wood for slow cooking and baking while using gas only for quick purposes such as coffee and tea. A small proportion of households have withdrawn daughters from school (as young as 15 years) to marry them off and 'get rid of their expenses'. Son's weddings are postponed or sons are encouraged to marry early to ensure their 'economic independence'. This may be due to the fact that households with able-bodied male members over the age of 18 are disqualified from humanitarian assistance. Moving in with extended family can be a mechanism to share what little resources are left. Many of those households whose homes have been destroyed have no option but to move in with extended families.

Sale of assets

Selling major family assets, mainly land, livestock and gold, is usually done when a household faces an immediate emergency (often health-related) or when all other forms of support have been exhausted. Once households have exhausted savings, they sell possessions such as jewellery (resorted to by 48 percent of respondents), expensive dress fabric, household appliances and furniture to meet daily subsistence costs. They try to keep some cash for emergencies. One-third of respondents resorted to disposing of capital assets including vehicles used for taxi driving, land, livestock, tools and boats. Many Bedouin farming families who are no longer able to graze their livestock have sold them.

Table V.4: Alternative Strategies to gain Access to Food visible in the West Bank and Gaza Strip

Making food at home	Women make labneh, yogurt, hummus, foul, falafel, tomato paste, marmalade and more bread at home. Households that receive powder milk as food aid use it to make dairy products. Drying fruits, pickling.
Exchanging Food	Households barter more food especially in non-urban areas. Examples include <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Olive oil for cleaning equipment, wheat flour, milk, rice and sugar. 2. Rice for sugar, soap, canned green beans and canned tomato sauce. 3. Donated blankets for rice 4. Butter for oil 5. Sweet boxes for sugar. 6. Bad quality food aid for food items at the local shop. 7. Two bags of bad flour for one bag of good flour. 8. Using home-produced olive oil and sheep to pay off debts to shops. 9. Giving eggs to shopkeeper for other food items at a local store. 10. Rice for lentils between neighbours.
Rearing animals	Households (especially among the chronic poor in non-urban areas) raise chicken, goats, sheep, cows, rabbits, and pigeons for food.
Home-gardening for household consumption	Eggplants, courgettes, tomatoes, onions, radish, cauliflower, leafy vegetables (e.g. parsley, spinach, and lettuce); pulses (e.g. fava beans and lentils) and fruits such as citrus fruits and plums.
Food for Work	During the olive picking season, agricultural labourers receive olives as payment. Construction workers receive rice and sugar as pay.
Change of crops	Villagers plant more pulses and vegetables that cost less to grow. Instead of planting one crop in large quantity, villagers diversify crop production for home consumption.
Gathering, hunting, stealing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Wild herbs and plants (thyme, sage, cyclamen), almonds and catching birds; 2. Scavenging for leftover potatoes in the soil; picking olives from the ground; 3. Stealing food from the market, from farms and shops. 4. Going to the soup kitchen at the mosque for meals
Changing Eating patterns	Supplementing expensive for cheap foods: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Exclude the meat and frozen meat. Chicken is eaten more rarely and the cheaper parts are eaten - chicken feet, necks and wings. 2. Walking long distances to get to shops that sell cheap food (e.g. half-rotten vegetables). 3. more pulses, especially lentils, mozzarella, 4. More olive oil, zaatar and bread. Breakfast consists of bread, olive oil and zaatar with tea. 5. Cheaper vegetables like tomato and potato while cutting out expensive vegetables. 6. Substantial decreases in the consumption of fruits and dairy products, the exception being Bedouins who have started consuming more dairy products. Most families now substitute milk with tea for their children's breakfast and dinner. Women are breastfeeding more rather than using fortified milk. 7. Reducing food intake: consume fewer meals, cook food more infrequently.
Alternative income generating activities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Women make sweets and snacks for children to sell; 2. Women weave scarves, traditional dresses, wallets, bags for sale; 3. Women make dresses for sale; 4. Women, men and children engage in seasonal agricultural work; 5. Young unmarried men smuggle themselves into Israel; 6. Boys find short-term work in settlements; 7. Children work in petty trade and as loaders and cart-pushers at checkpoints and in markets, transport clothes to villages for sale, e.g. match-seller (9 year-old boy in Tulkarm city; agricultural labour on cucumber farm (10 year-old boy)
Credit lines	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. local shop(s), utility and water providers

Income earning activities

Similar to the situation in the West Bank, the main income earner for many households who used to work in Israel or in the settlements now attempts to find seasonal or casual labour. This renders families extremely insecure in terms of income. A comparison of coping mechanisms in West Bank and Gaza suggests that respondents perceived this coping mechanism to play a more minor role in Gaza than the West Bank. The options for those who are not engaged in formal employment are limited. Job creation schemes by the government and by UNRWA provide limited relief. The assessment revealed considerable informal income-generating work, such as contract sewing, peddling and selling home-produced food. About two-thirds of the participants indicated that they maximised women and children's labour to generate ready cash (20-30 NIS/day) through petty trading (mobile stands, kiosks and sale), transport (taxi and cart driving) and menial jobs (housework). Women are returning to traditional craft and income earning activities in order to help families survive the crisis. Sometimes, children leave school in order to engage in income earning activities. About 15 percent of the participants indicated that children worked either after school hours/during holidays and/or encouraged them to drop out to bring some cash into the household. In addition to this, households sell rice and sardines received through food aid, rent out one or more rooms in the house or move into smaller accommodation in order to rent their home.

Only a small number of Gaza respondents relied on agriculture (8 percent) and home-gardens (4 percent) as coping mechanisms, reflecting the limited space available in Gaza. Some of those who have land or a backyard are growing food. In non-urban areas, households are relying increasingly on agriculture but the cost of inputs, the demolition of agricultural assets, and movement restrictions mean that production is now geared for local consumption and family subsistence only.

Humanitarian Assistance

Families are relying increasingly on humanitarian assistance. In January-February 2002, a PCBS survey indicated that 58 percent of Palestinian households were receiving humanitarian assistance (45 percent in the West Bank and 86 percent in the Gaza Strip), with the bulk of this in the form of food supplies and with UNRWA the main source of food aid. Humanitarian NGOs are providing increasing evidence that food aid in Gaza Strip is not keeping up with needs. UNRWA, though the demand for aid expands, must cut its food aid because of limited resources. MoSA has delayed welfare payments to the needy because of lack of means. These organizations cannot cope with the growing need. As chapter VI outlines, restricted budgets have meant that only those identified as vulnerable prior to the *Intifada* are receiving regular remittances of food and cash. Newly poor households are targeted only through emergency relief efforts. Households are thus coping through a growing dependency on these institutions at a time when they are least able to respond.

The eligibility criteria for targeting refugees and 'official' hardship cases do not include needy households who 'fall between the cracks' such as de facto female headed households who fail to meet all the selection criteria as they may be considered as having a male breadwinner and yet have no means to support themselves and their families. Fisher folk are marginalised by aid agencies including UNRWA and MoSA since fishers are neither refugees nor (officially) new unemployed. Farmers that are de facto unemployed also fall between the cracks. The distribution system is perceived as unjust by a substantial share of the poor. There is a concern that some households take more than their share from various sources of assistance while others are not provided for. In Gaza Governorate, key informants reported that some food insecure households in the eastern part of the governorate are excluded from access to humanitarian assistance because of their remoteness. In Deir al Balah, proximity to settlements prevented destitute households from accessing humanitarian assistance. Some of the most destitute households cannot afford transportation to reach service providers such as MoSA or NGOs.

Wanting more than hand-outs from humanitarian agencies, fisher folk have attempted to organise themselves into a pressure group to seek protection, compensation and an official acknowledgement of their plight. A newly-founded fisher's union sought the support of the local authorities to exempt them from tax. However, their success for 2002 could not be replicated in 2003 as the Ministry of Agriculture indicated that such exemption would not be accepted.

Changing social relations in the Gaza Strip

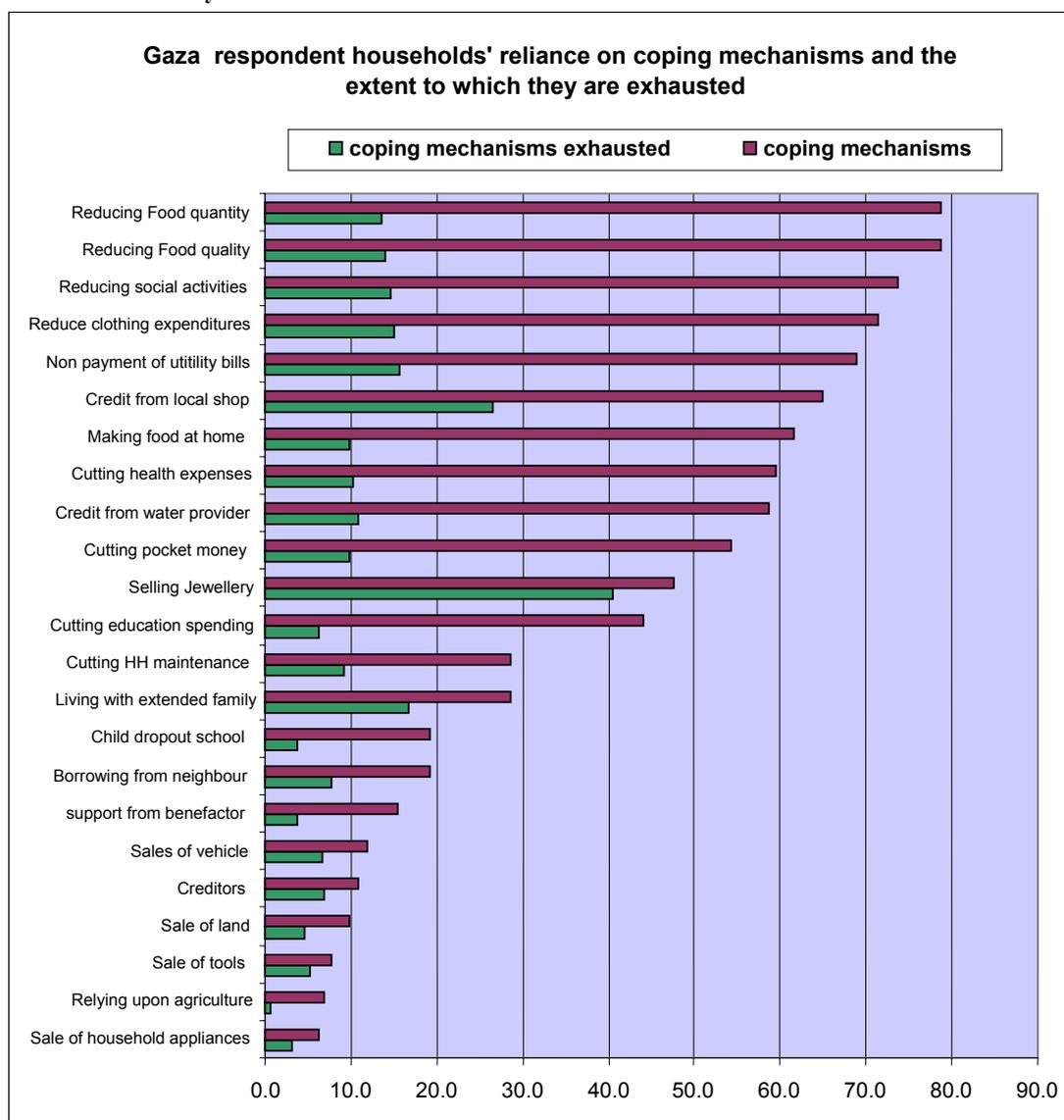
There have been changes in household size and composition. For about two-thirds of the respondents in the governorates of Deir al Balah, Rafah and Khan Yunis, there is a trend towards smaller household size ranging between five and seven members. This is because those households, which have lost their homes through demolition, lost land or have exhausted their coping strategies, rent cheaper accommodation, generally one room

or live in tents. However they may add to their relatives' burden by seeking support for food at meal-times thereby increasing vulnerability. In Gaza North and Gaza districts, some households rented out their properties and joined their relatives' extended households.

As was mentioned above, in both the West Bank and Gaza, women or younger family members sometimes substitute for men as breadwinners, reversing traditional roles and forcing women and youth into piecemeal work and to request small 'loans' and assistance from relatives. In households without able-bodied adults, children as young as 10-12 years attempt to provide for their siblings through petty trading and/or begging.

The crisis has affected different age groups differently. Men unable to provide for their families suffer loss of dignity and status. Adolescents of an age to understand the economic hardships that their families face are generally too young and inexperienced to be able to help much. As was reported in the West Bank, they are particularly susceptible to trauma and to feelings of powerlessness and rage. Teachers report an increase in violent behaviour at school. Many adolescents see no sense in continuing their education and drop-out rates in this age group are a concern. Children with emotional difficulties and sleeping disorders are widespread. Children are more aggressive and difficult to control. Intra-household conflict and domestic violence was frequently reported by women respondents due to economic difficulties.

Fig.V.10: Gaza respondent household's reliance on coping mechanisms and the extent to which they are exhausted



The exhaustion of coping mechanisms in the Gaza Strip

Over half of the respondents indicated that they have exhausted their savings to meet their basic daily needs or invest in income generating activity. Examples of projects in which people said they could no longer invest include a small grocery shop, a cart and mobile stands for the sale of home made food or cigarettes.

As in the West Bank, the coping mechanism most widely exhausted was the sale of jewellery. 41 percent of respondents who had relied on this strategy could no longer do so. About one-sixth of households (a smaller proportion than in the West Bank) who were spending the absolute minimum on food could not cut spending on the quality or quantity of food any further. Their severe lack of cash was further illustrated by their inability to cut back on other expenditures. Expenditures that households had relied on cutting back, but which they could no longer afford at all include social activities (15 percent), clothing (15 percent), household maintenance (9 percent), children's pocket money (10 percent) and education (6 percent).

For a significant proportion of respondents, credit lines from shops and water providers could no longer be relied upon. The credit lines in shops have been cut for about one third of the respondents. Over half of the responding shop owners reinforced this view indicating that they close their shop when they see the 'usual' (indebted) customer coming their way. De facto female headed households and fisher folk are amongst the categories of people that shop owners avoid unless they feel very charitable because they have no repayment capability. Many respondents report having exhausted borrowing from extended families, friends, neighbours and benefactors. The findings from interviews conducted with malnourished Gazan households for this assessment (see Box V.1) affirm that the most vulnerable households have exhausted their coping mechanisms. They have run out of savings, have sold off their assets, are without a stable income, have reduced expenditure on food and have a very limited diet, are not paying their utility bills and rely heavily on family support and humanitarian aid for survival.

The above results confirm a rapid impoverishment for a large proportion of the Gaza Strip's population, increasing threat/vulnerability to food insecurity for female heads of households, farmers (including Bedouin), the newly unemployed, fisher folk, and households "locked" between the security zones.

Box V.1: Characteristics of households with malnourished children

After reports from Palestinian NGO, Ard el Insan (Terre des Hommes), of growing numbers of malnourished children being brought every day to their clinics in the Gaza Strip, the Gaza Strip assessment team decided to gain some understanding on the household dynamics of the families of diagnosed malnourished children. Ard el Insan provided lists of identified households and interviews were undertaken. The following summarises the results of 23 interviews in the three northern districts of the Gaza Strip: Gaza North district, Gaza district and Deir el Balah.

Only one of the households, with malnourished children, interviewed was headed by a female. 18 of these households were refugees, 12 lived in the camps, seven in rural areas and four in urban areas. The average number of people per household is 8.6, with a high of 16 members. Eleven households had more than ten members in the household. The average number of children under 15 years was 5.2 with a high of 11. The average number of under five year old children was 2.69.

The average expenditure for these households was 614 NIS per month, on average per capita expenditure of 70 NIS per person per month.

The pre-*Intifada* expenditure for these families was four times higher than the current expenditure. Fifteen of these families were in receipt of food aid when their children were diagnosed as malnourished (eight were not).

Ten of the families received food aid from UNWRA, two from MoSA, and the rest from a variety of other sources. Three of the households report receiving food aid from both UNRWA and MoSA though it is unclear whether they received this on a regular basis or on an emergency basis.

When asked why they had not requested assistance, many replied that they had applied but been rejected. One of the household heads reported disallowing his wife to seek food aid assistance. They preferred to rely on the extended family. This particular family reports cooking only every three days, eating bread with *zatar* (thyme) for most of their meals and reducing overall consumption.

One of the households who had been rejected by both UNRWA and MoSA works under the Job Creation Program of UNRWA. Some of the households not receiving regular food aid stated they are receiving emergency coupons and work on an occasional basis. Many rely on the assistance from the extended family.

Overall the education of the household head was fairly high, with one having a university degree, one having a diploma and 12 having the secondary certificate. None of the household heads were illiterate. There was only one illiterate woman in the households (wife of household head) with half having the secondary certificate, seven having preparatory certificates and four with elementary education.

There were four disabled male heads of household in the group. There were ten heads of household who were former workers in Israel, seven of which are now unemployed, two are occasional workers and one who became disabled as a result of an Israeli attack.

In four of the households, the household head had the same employment as before: a policeman, a social worker, a farmer, and an employee in a local company. These households report supporting a growing number of people on the salary of the household head.

The farmer reported that his land had been bulldozed and he felt unsafe to work on it. Another former worker in a metal shop reported the business being destroyed by Israeli incursions. One of the household heads had been an owner of a textile factory who went bankrupt after the beginning of the *Intifada* when he was no longer able to access the needed inputs for production. This family sold their house to cover the debts and now live in extremely poor circumstances. The interviewer noted that there was nothing inside their home, not even a stove to cook on. He had applied for support from MoSA but had been refused.

Generally the households report having sold all assets, used up the savings that they had, decreasing expenditures in terms of both quality and quantity, and were unable to pay utility bills. Some of the households have looked for alternative employment with little result other than occasional work.

It should be noted that these households do not have common characteristics but cut across the social spectrum of the Gaza Strip society. Ard el Insan reports that cases of malnourished come now from a wide spectrum of geographical locations.

Availability and access to food in the Gaza Strip

The assessment clearly indicated that economic access to food rather than lack of food represented the main constraint to securing a healthy and nutritious diet. This is particularly true in the Gaza Strip which is normally served with well stocked markets. Just 9 percent of Gaza respondents reported that food availability was a problem and most of these were living in rural areas. For most households affordability is a key determinant of food intake. Food consumption habits have deteriorated as the numbers of meals, the portion size and the frequency by which certain foods are consumed have all been reduced. Meals are also prepared less frequently to save on fuel. The decline in both quality and quantity of food was reported in 73 percent of households. Animal protein intakes have fallen as meat (lamb or chicken) is now considered luxury foods. Households report they may buy lamb on pay day (one/twice a month) but for many poor households meat is beyond their budget and may be eaten only at funerals or social gatherings. Children's drawings made during the focus group discussions illustrate this, linking the consumption of meals such as rice and meat to funerals following bombardments and house demolition. Children report they usually go to school without breakfast, while women admitted that they skipped meals to ensure their children have food. Limited cash is spent on vegetables and next to no fruits are purchased. Vulnerable households, including Bedouin, eat only very cheap vegetables available in season such as potatoes, egg plant and tomatoes. They often go to the markets at the end of the day to buy or obtain without charge the rotten vegetables that are about to be discarded by traders.

Households perceive food security simply as availability of wheat flour, vegetable oil, pulses, and of milk for those households with children. While many households understand the concept of 'safe and nutritious' food, the limited income forces them into a drive for quantity to fill hungry stomachs at the expense of consuming a variety of good quality nutritious food. Fisher folk who cannot take their boats out to sea resort to fishing from the seashore during the specified times allowed but even this may not cover the households' basic food needs.

The mission observed various patterns of intra-household food distribution. In some instances, there was evidence of enhanced solidarity in that food distribution was positively biased towards the sick, older and disabled persons. In other instances, respondents reported that the elderly were particularly vulnerable, often eating whatever was leftover in the household after everyone else had finished eating. Older and disabled women were also sometimes at a disadvantage - their physical condition constrained their ability to seek and claim humanitarian assistance unless a trusted 'guardian' takes on the task. This, in itself was a risk as the guardian could 'cheat' the beneficiary out of her allowance or part of it thus increasing her food insecurity risk.

Nutrition situation of the population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip

In the West Bank and Gaza Strip, despite sufficient food in the marketplace, problems of undernutrition are emerging, as economic activity is curtailed and the population's access to employment, land and markets, health care, education and other essential services is restricted. The West Bank and Gaza Strip represent an environment where food insecurity and undernutrition, including micro-nutrient deficiencies occur in the absence of overt food shortage. A number of nutrition surveys have been carried out by various national and international institutions. Nutritional indicators are not conclusive, as Table V.4 below indicates, but there is concern that nutritional status is under great strain.

Acute malnutrition may arise over a short period of time and is a "snap-shot" reflecting the most recent nutritional status. It is however reversible and can improve rapidly with increased food intake. Chronic malnutrition, however, is a longer-term indicator, reflecting poor nutritional status over a period of months and years. Food and nutrition related interventions and a change in the population's socio-economic conditions can influence the prevalence of chronic malnutrition in time. Immediate food interventions can quickly reverse wasting and prevent acute malnutrition from becoming chronic malnutrition or may decrease the level of chronic malnutrition over time.

The most alarming evidence of poor nutrition was provided by an assessment conducted by Al Quds and Johns Hopkins Universities (AQU/JHU) in the summer of 2002⁹. A random sample of 1004 households, including 936 children aged 6-59 months in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, showed that 4.3 percent of West Bank children were wasted (less than two standard deviations below the median reference weight-for-height) or acutely malnourished. In a normal population the expected figure would be around 2 percent. This indicates that the nutritional situation in the West Bank, though not critical, is of some concern. However, the same survey found that 13.3 percent of Gaza Strip children were wasted, a high number and a cause for deep concern. Evidence for

⁹ Abdeen et al Z., 2002.

stunting or chronic malnutrition (less than two standard deviations below the median reference height-for-age) was found in 7.9 percent of West Bank and 17.5 percent of Gaza Strip children. The prevalence figure for stunting in the Gaza Strip, although higher than the 13.8 percent found in Gaza Strip preschool children by the 1998 UNRWA/US Centre for Disease Control assessment¹⁰, is still quite low. Other surveys before the *Intifada* had found chronic malnutrition prevalence of 7.2 percent and 7.5 percent (PCBS, 1996 and 2000)¹¹.

Table V.5: Results of Studies on Malnutrition in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip

Source/year	percentage of children aged 6-59 months:		
	Acute malnutrition	Chronic malnutrition	
West Bank			
1996	PCBS	2.2	6.7
2000	PCBS	1.5	7.0
2002	PCBS	2.3	7.7
2002	JHU/AQ	4.3	7.9
Gaza Strip			
1996	PCBS	3.7	8.2
1998	UNRWA/CDC		13.8
2000	PCBS	1.4	8.3
2002	PCBS	2.0	10.6
2002	JHU/AQ	13.3	17.5
2003	ACH	1.7	6.7

Source: Fafo, 2003 and Accion Contra el Hambre.

The AQU/JHU assessment found no significant differences in the prevalence of acute or chronic malnutrition between males and females. Significantly higher prevalence of wasting or acute malnutrition was found in the non-urban Gaza Strip children (21.6 percent) than urban Gaza Strip children (9.9 percent) and in household with incomes below the poverty level (10.2 percent) versus those above the poverty line (4.3 percent). Stunting or chronic malnutrition was significantly higher in households below the poverty line (14.6 percent) than those above (5.7 percent). Only 2.1 percent of the 1 534 non-pregnant reproductive age women (RAW) in the sample were found to be undernourished, with a Body Mass Index (BMI) below 17.5.

Accion Contra la Hambre in collaboration with the Gaza Strip NGO Ard El Insan, in March 2003, completed a survey of 1261 children ages 6-59 months in the Gaza Strip and found an acute malnutrition prevalence of 1.7 percent and chronic malnutrition of 6.7 percent¹². Although this survey used a less robust sampling frame, the sampling methodology used was a generally accepted method of field epidemiology.

The CARE/Johns Hopkins University Emergency Medical Assistance Project, partnered with Al Quds University designed and is implementing a sentinel surveillance system, begun in May 2002, to monitor the impact of the current emergency at the household level. It is an ongoing survey of randomly sampled 320 households in urban and non-urban clusters every two weeks in all 16 districts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The data collection will continue every two weeks until September 2003. It found that between May 2002 and the end of December 2002 roughly 60 percent of Palestinian households in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip had decreased the amount of food eaten¹³. Coping strategies in the long-term were clearly unsustainable: nearly

¹⁰ Pervanta et al, 1999

¹¹ www.pcbs.org

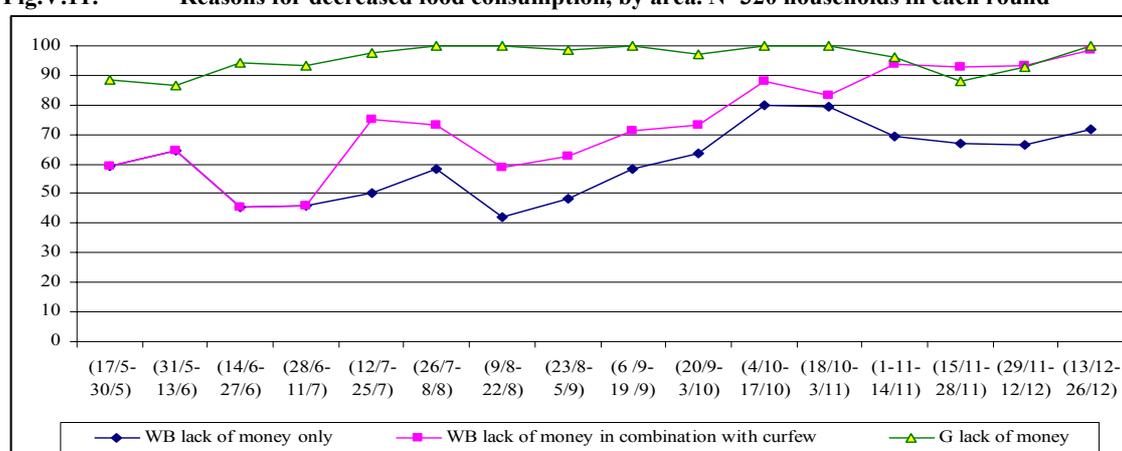
¹² Accion Contra el Hambre, Ard El Insan 2003

¹³ Al Quds University/John Hopkins University. Health Sector Bi-Weekly Report, 10 January 2003

60 percent of households were borrowing money to buy food and over 20 percent were selling off assets for the same purpose. Significantly more Gaza Strip households were forced to borrow money (61 percent) compared to West Bank households (49 percent) and 25 percent in the Gaza Strip were obliged to sell possessions compared to 14 percent in the West Bank. Comparison with the coping strategies shown in Fig V.10 shows that the situation at the household level for many of these indicators has further deteriorated since this time

Following the findings of the AQU/JHU nutritional study, UNRWA, WFP, as well as local *zakat* committees and local NGOs, such as Ard El Insan, increased food distribution in the Gaza Strip and the ICRC initiated an innovative cash-for-food voucher programme for 20 000 of the most vulnerable in urban areas of the West Bank. The expectation by Spring 2003, following the increased attention to food distribution was that the prevalence of acute malnutrition would not be as significant as had been nearly a year earlier, and that an improvement in the longer term indicator of chronic malnutrition might also be seen. Despite the improved employment over this period and increased access to food aid, the quality of food consumed in West Bank and Gaza Strip in general remains low.

Fig.V.11: Reasons for decreased food consumption, by area. N=320 households in each round



Source: Al Quds University/Johns Hopkins University. Health Sector Bi-Weekly Report, 26 March 2003

Between May 2002 and February 2003, 6400 households were surveyed by AQU/JHU in all governorates of the West Bank and Gaza Strip as to decreases in the amounts of food by food groups in the two week period immediately preceding the survey. Results showed significant percentages of decreased consumption of the more expensive high protein and nutrient foods:

- Decrease in meat consumption: 4250 households (66.4 percent);
- Decrease in fruits and vegetables consumption: 3951 households (61.7 percent);
- Decrease in milk consumption: 2911 households (45.5 percent); and
- Decrease in bread, rice and potato consumption: 1618 households (25.3 percent).

24 Hour recall food consumption data

The AQU/JHU nutritional assessment of 2002 using a 24 hour food recall on 941 non-pregnant women aged 15-49 years and 477 of their youngest non-breastfeeding children ages 12-59 months provides clear evidence that the quantities and quantity of the Palestinian dietary intakes are poor and getting worse.

Food consumption - macronutrients

The overall level of energy and carbohydrate, fat and protein dietary intakes remains a concern for the Palestinian population. Comparing food consumption data prior to the *Intifada* with that collected in the 2002 survey, significant reductions in total energy, and in protein, carbohydrates and fat intakes were observed in children and in all age groups of reproductive aged women (RAW). Although 90 percent of the children in the 2002 assessment were eating adequate protein, only three fourths of their mothers were - women in the 2002 assessment ate 14 percent less protein than their 2000 counterparts (Fig. V.12). Reproductive age women (RAW) had a 14.3 percent decrease in energy consumption. In the 2002 assessment, RAW had a median daily energy intake of 1 748 kcal, 17 percent below WFP's emergency ration rate of 2 100 kcal per day. Figures V.13 and

V.14 illustrate a 15 percent and 17 percent decline in carbohydrate and fats respectively for RAW between 2000 and 2002.

Fig.V.12: Usual Energy daily intake - Mothers

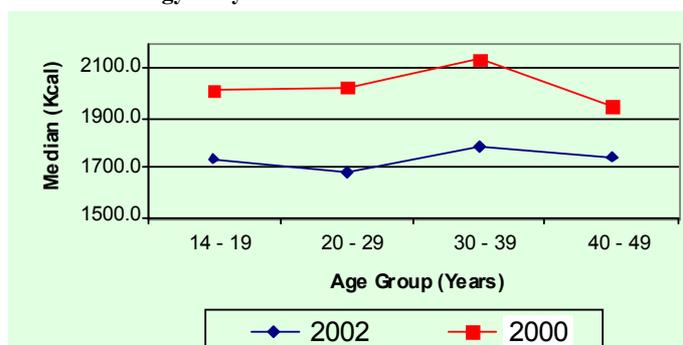


Fig.V.13: Median 24 hour protein intake of women ages 15-49 years, by age and year

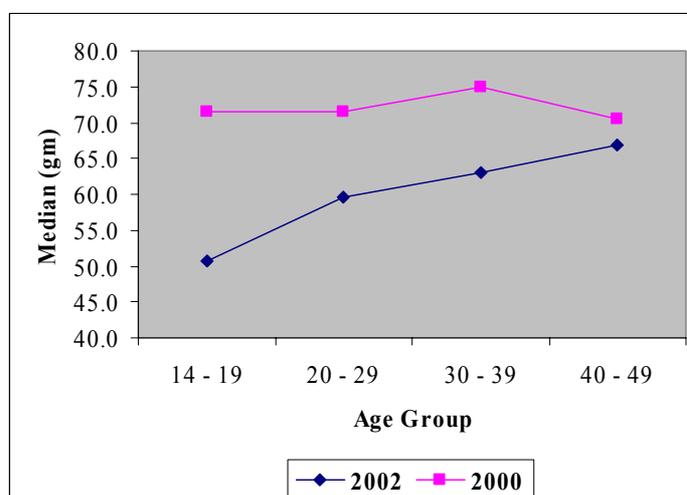


Fig.V.14: Median 24 hour carbohydrate intake of women ages 15-49 years, by age and year

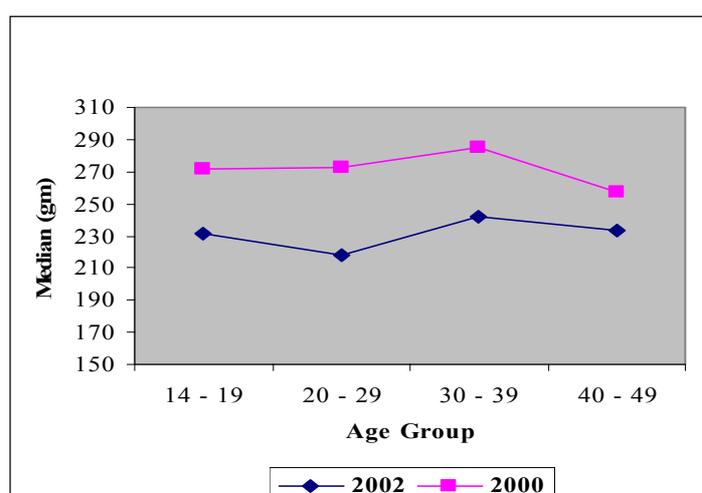
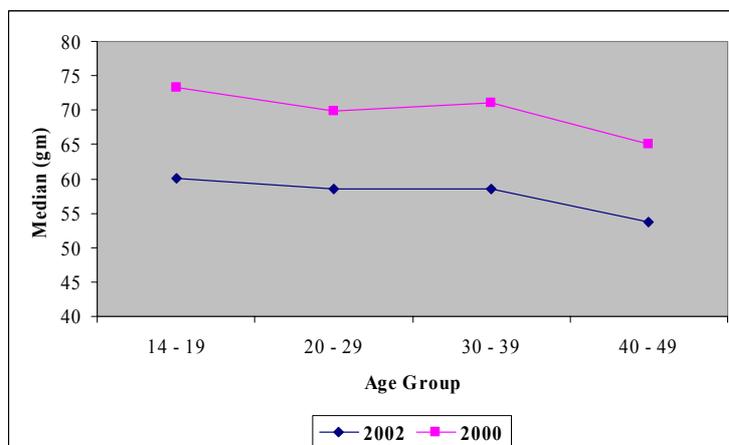
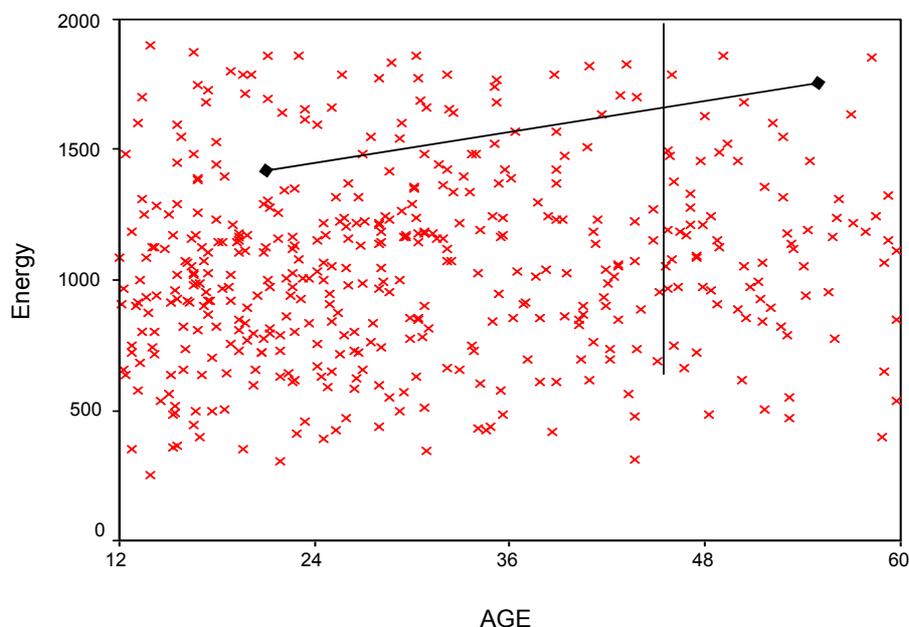


Fig.V.15: Median 24 hour fat intake of women ages 15-49 years, by age and year



Energy intake for the preschool aged children in the 2002 AQU/JHU assessment reflects the *average* needs of an individual based on resting energy expenditure and activity level for a given age. Energy intake deficiency was defined as that less than 80 percent of the daily recommended energy intake. In general, one-half of 1-3 year olds and three fourths of 4-5 year olds were eating below the 80 percent recommended energy intake for age (Fig. V.15). The scatter plot graph below (Fig. V.16) depicts each child as a data point in relation to the reference value of consumption below the 80 percent recommended energy intake (the horizontal or diagonal straight line). As children grow, their daily energy requirements increases. The vertical line indicates 48 months, the age of the sampling interval. The area of data points below the 80 percent energy intake median line defines the percentage of preschool age children with energy intake deficiency.

Fig.V.16: Energy intake scatter plot of children ages 12-59 months in reference to the 80 percent recommended energy intake values



Food consumption – micronutrients, vitamins and minerals

Using the US Recommend Dietary Allowances (RDA) as the standard, an intake of 80 percent or below the RDA for protein or a given micronutrient was defined as a nutrient deficiency, a definition used by most developed countries including Israel. The assessment found that for children:

- 80% ate below the 80% RDA for iron
- 59% ate below the 80% RDA for vitamin A
- 50% ate below the 80% RDA for folate
- 87% ate below the 80% RDA for zinc

For reproductive age women (RAW):

- 73% ate below the 80% RDA for iron
- 69% ate below the 80% RDA for vitamin A
- 27% ate below the 80% RDA for folate
- 75% ate below the 80% RDA for zinc

Iron deficiency anaemia, the most common micronutrient deficiency, is endemic throughout the Middle East and has a high prevalence in the Palestinian Territories. The AQU/JHU study found 44 percent of preschool aged children in both West Bank and Gaza Strip had mild, moderate, or severe anaemia, and 44 percent of West Bank RAW and 53 percent of Gaza Strip RAW had mild, moderate, or severe anaemia using the standard WHO cut-off value of 11 gm/dl of haemoglobin for preschool age children and 12 gm/dl of haemoglobin for non-pregnant RAW. Previous studies in West Bank and Gaza Strip with the same cut-off values indicate that iron deficiency is a chronic problem:

- UNRWA/CDC, 1990, West Bank: 58%¹⁴
- UNRWA/CDC, 1998, Gaza Strip: 53%¹⁵
- UNRWA, 1998, West Bank: 50%¹⁶
- UNRWA, 2000 birth year cohort, West Bank: 30%¹⁷
- UNRWA, 2001 birth year cohort, West Bank: 39%¹⁸

In general, RAW had diminished key micronutrient intakes from the 2002 AQU/JHU survey compared to the AQU 2000 survey. Compared to 2000, RAW in 2002 had:

- 8% decrease in vitamin E consumption;
- 8% decrease in vitamin A consumption;
- 19% decrease in folate consumption;
- 12% decrease in calcium consumption;
- 12% decrease in iron consumption; and
- 18% decrease in zinc consumption.

In 1997, a cross sectional study of 2 535 primary school children in the West Bank and Gaza Strip demonstrated a range of iodine deficiency disorders between 7 percent to 30 percent as determined by clinical exams for goiter and urinary iodine concentrations (Fig.V.17).

¹⁴ Yip *et al.* 1990.

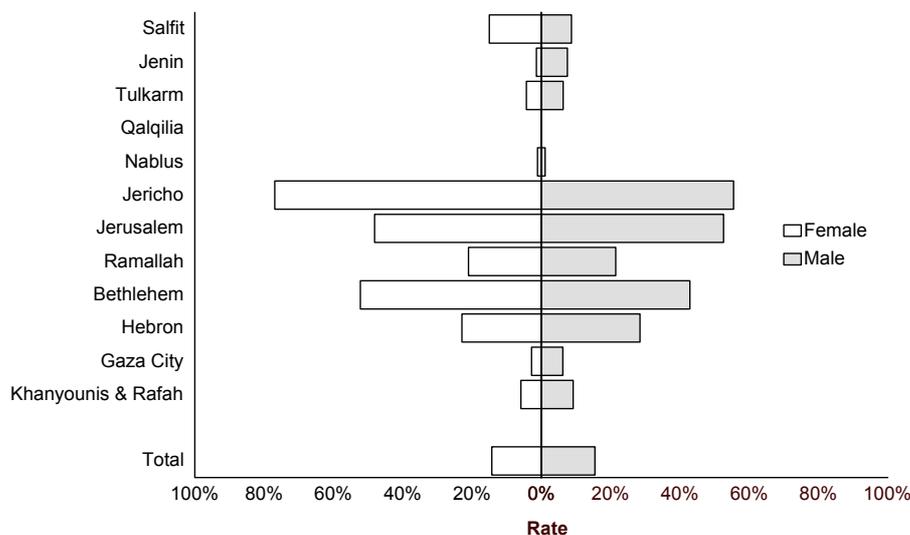
¹⁵ Pervanta *et al.*, 1999.

¹⁶ Kaileh 2002, p. 15.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 15.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 15.

Fig.V.17: Prevalence of iodine deficiency in primary school children, by gender and district, 1997



Source: Al Quds University/UNICEF, 1997.

Although acute malnutrition appears to be less of an immediate concern to the humanitarian community perhaps due in part to timely and appropriate interventions, the longer-term challenge of ensuring all of the Palestinian people consume adequate quantities of safe, good quality and nutritious food specifically that of adequate macro and micronutrients, remains a priority.

The above nutritional analysis of the nutrition situation is inconclusive about differences in malnutrition levels in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This said, the evidence of higher malnutrition levels in Gaza Strip discussed above is not incompatible with the findings of the pair-wise ranking comparison exercise of similar high levels of food insecurity and threats to food security in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Not all those that are currently food insecure suffer from malnutrition. The food security situation in the West Bank has changed more drastically in the past three years than in the Gaza Strip. There is evidence to suggest that food insecurity in Gaza Strip is long standing but at roughly the same levels in the past as now. This may have translated into malnutrition in Gaza Strip, while high food insecurity levels in the West Bank are fairly new. It could be conjectured that this new condition in the West Bank has not persisted long enough to visibly start affecting malnutrition rates. Food insecurity could, over time however, lead to increased malnutrition levels.

Al Quds University and Johns Hopkins University, in collaboration with this assessment mission, are conducting a 2 500 household quantitative survey. It addresses household food security and repeats anthropometric measurements and micro and macronutrient consumption to analyze nutritional trends over the past year. This survey will complement the qualitative food security information discussed in this report. It will shed light on some of these unanswered questions pertaining to the linkages between nutritional status and household food security, changes in nutritional status over time, and the similarities and differences between nutritional status in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.