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Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, submitted in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution [2013/17](#), highlights the situation of Palestinian women between 1 October 2012 and 30 September 2013 and provides an overview of the assistance provided by the entities of the United Nations system with regard to education and training; health; economic empowerment and livelihoods; rule of law and violence against women; power and decision-making; and institutional development. The report concludes with recommendations for consideration by the Commission on the Status of Women.

* [E/CN.6/2014/1](#).



I. Introduction

1. In its resolution [2013/17](#) on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women, the Economic and Social Council expressed deep concern about the grave situation of Palestinian women in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. The Council requested the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation, to assist Palestinian women by all available means, including those laid out by the Secretary-General in his previous report on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women ([E/CN.6/2013/6](#)), and to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-eighth session a report, including information provided by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution.

2. The present report covers the period from 1 October 2012 to 30 September 2013 and reviews the situation of Palestinian women based on information from the United Nations entities and individual experts that monitor the situation of Palestinians in the State of Palestine. In accordance with the report of the Secretary-General on the status of Palestine in the United Nations dated 8 March 2013 ([A/67/738](#)), the designation “State of Palestine” is now used in all documents of the United Nations, notwithstanding the use in parallel of the term used in previous reports, “Occupied Palestinian Territory”.

3. Unless indicated otherwise, the report is based on contributions and information submitted by entities of the United Nations system that provide assistance to Palestinian women, including ESCWA. The United Nations country team coordinated the contributions to the present report from the following United Nations entities: the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Development Programme/Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (UNDP/PAPP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO). It complements other reports on the living and socioeconomic conditions of the Palestinian people (see [A/68/76-E/2013/65](#), [A/68/77-E/2013/13](#), [A/67/13](#)).

II. Situation of Palestinian women

4. On 29 November 2012, the General Assembly, in its resolution [67/19](#), accorded the State of Palestine the status of non-member Observer State in the United Nations. On the same day, the Secretary-General stated that the vote underlined the urgency of a resumption of meaningful negotiations to ensure that an

independent, sovereign, democratic, contiguous and viable State of Palestine lives side by side with a secure State of Israel. Efforts to achieve a peaceful comprehensive settlement on all final status issues intensified during the reporting period. Under the auspices of the United States, direct Israeli-Palestinian negotiations resumed on 29 July 2013, and a number of meetings have been held since in Israel and Palestine. The United Nations Secretary-General travelled to the region — Jordan, Palestine and Israel — on 15 and 16 August to extend United Nations support and his appreciation for the courageous decision of both leaders to resume negotiations. The position of the Secretary-General remains that direct negotiations are the only credible way towards the long-overdue two-State solution. Prospects for peace were renewed against a tense situation on the ground, and all parties are called upon to sustain an environment conducive for forward movement in the peace process.

5. In Gaza and southern Israel, a dangerous escalation of violence occurred in November 2012, which triggered serious concerns with regard to the respect by all parties for international humanitarian and human rights law in their conduct of the hostilities.¹ The Secretary-General visited Egypt, Israel, Jordan and the Occupied Palestinian Territory during the hostilities and engaged in an intense diplomatic effort that culminated in the announcement of a ceasefire agreement welcomed by the Security Council which called for a reciprocal cessation of hostilities. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, eight days of fighting resulted in an estimated 174 Palestinians killed, including 101 civilians (55 men, 13 women, 25 boys and 8 girls), and some 1,046 Palestinians were reportedly injured, including 446 children and 105 women, while 6 Israelis, including 4 civilians, were reported killed by Palestinian rocket fire and 239 Israelis were injured, the vast majority of them civilians, from indiscriminate firing of rockets, mortars and other projectiles from Gaza. In the West Bank, during the period covered in the present report, 19 Palestinian civilians (15 men, 1 woman and 3 boys) were killed — almost quadruple the number of the previous year — and 4,156 were injured (2,811 men, 87 women, 1,238 boys and 20 girls) by Israeli Security Forces — a significant increase from 2,372 civilians injured during the previous reporting period. During the current reporting period, 156 Palestinians (105 men, 12 women, 33 boys and 6 girls) were injured by settlers, while 76 Israeli settlers (61 men, 10 women and 5 boys) were injured by Palestinians. In the Gaza Strip (excluding during the Operation Pillar of Defence), an additional 17 Palestinian civilians (11 men, 1 woman and 5 boys) were killed and 227 were injured (167 men, 13 women, 46 boys and 1 girl) by Israeli Security Forces.

6. The impact of the protracted crisis continues to have a devastating effect on the psychosocial well-being of women and families. The living conditions of women vary depending on sociocultural factors and the differential status that applies to Palestinian women and men in different areas² and related obstacles to movement and access. As at September 2013, 1.6 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip remained effectively isolated from the rest of the West Bank, including East

¹ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Occupied Palestinian Territory, “Fragmented lives: humanitarian overview 2012” (May 2013).

² Following the 1993 Oslo Accords and the 1995 interim Agreements between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, the West Bank was divided into three zones, Areas A, B and C. Extensive responsibility was delegated by Israel to the Palestinian Authority in Areas A and B. Area C remained under full authority of Israel.

Jerusalem, by the continuing closure by Israel. Access to East Jerusalem has remained limited for Palestinian residents in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Physical and administrative restrictions continue to impede access to some of the most vulnerable communities in Area C, and particularly those in the seam zones and the firing zones.¹

7. Food insecurity remains a significant challenge as result of the continued closure of the Gaza Strip, restrictions on access in the West Bank and related high rates of poverty, and continued increases in food prices and threats to livelihoods.³ According to the 2012 Socioeconomic and Food Security Survey, food insecurity levels rose by seven percentage points overall from the previous year, reaching 57 per cent in Gaza and 14 per cent in the West Bank. Female-headed households receive the highest level of assistance in the occupied Palestinian territory. In 2012, they received a monthly average of \$131 in assistance compared with \$78 for male-headed households. The targeted assistance was successful in lowering the percentage of food-insecure households, from 54 to 36 per cent for female-headed households and from 37 to 33 per cent for male-headed households.⁴ To achieve further reductions in poverty and improve food security, it will be necessary to achieve sustainable and inclusive economic growth and to create jobs. This will require further easing of movement and access restrictions that currently hinder economic development and private sector activity (see A/68/76-E/2013/65).

8. Despite the adoption of a range of policies over the past few years demonstrating a clear commitment to women's economic empowerment, in practice women have not become full participants in the labour market. Instead, labour market indicators suggest that women are facing increasing challenges. The significant educational gains made by women have not been translated into gains in the labour market, reflecting a great loss of economic potential, and unemployment has increased. In 10 years' time, women's overall unemployment rate has almost doubled, from 17 per cent in 2002 to 32.9 per cent in 2012, while for men the rate has decreased from 33.5 to 20.5 per cent over the same time period. Young women below 25 years of age are particularly affected by the lack of jobs, with an overall unemployment rate of 62.2 per cent, compared with 34.5 per cent of young men. In Gaza, the unemployment rate for young women reached an unprecedented 88.1 per cent in 2012 compared with 48.8 per cent for young men.⁵

9. Discrimination in the workplace is still common. The average daily wage for women represented 86.8 per cent of that for men in 2012.⁶ Most women in formal employment work in the public sector, in health and education. Outside of the public sector, women have few prospects of earning a living wage. For instance, women employed in childcare are paid as little as \$100 per month. Women are being pushed progressively into the informal economy, into unpaid and family jobs in the agricultural sector, domestic work and a broad range of cleaning jobs. According to ILO, many women lack control of revenues generated. In addition, a recent study

³ FAO, UNRWA, WFP and Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "Socioeconomic and food security survey 2012: West Bank and Gaza Strip" (August 2013) (available from: <http://www.wfp.org/content/state-palestine-socio-economic-food-security-survey-2012-august-2013> (accessed November 2013)).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "Labour force survey annual report" (2012).

⁶ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, factsheet issued on the occasion of International Women's Day, 8 March 2013.

shows that 29 per cent of women aged 25-29 were subject to harassment in the workplace with little or no access to any complaint mechanism.⁷ Women tend to be less present in workers' unions and less aware of their rights than men.⁸ The Palestinian Authority adopted a minimum wage in October 2012,⁹ but it is unclear how the agreement will be enforced across the territory and in sectors employing mostly women, such as the childcare and textile sectors. There is still no unified social security law. According to ILO, continued efforts are needed to find the means to provide income security and combat poverty and social exclusion.

10. Concerns highlighted in last year's report linked to access to health care and shortages of drugs and medical disposables remain. In the Gaza Strip, drug shortages currently stand at 29 per cent, while there is a 52 per cent shortage in medical disposables.¹⁰ Measures taken to improve access to maternal and reproductive health care are contributing to a declining trend with regard to maternal mortality. Data from the Palestinian Ministry of Health indicate a decline from 38:100,000 live births in 2009 to 23.7:100,000 (19.6 in Gaza and 27.5 in the West Bank) in 2012.¹¹ Out of married women aged 15-49, 94 per cent reported receiving at least four visits from qualified health-care personnel during their last pregnancy. At the same time, a review by UNFPA found a high prevalence of near-miss cases¹² and obstetric complications, with severe outcomes in 4.5 cases per 1,000 deliveries. According to WHO, the barrier and restrictions to movement and access continue to present particular risks for expectant mothers, such as lack of access to specialized maternal care for high-risk births. In terms of the overall disease profile, the incidence of non-communicable diseases, such as diabetes, is increasing among Palestinians.¹³ Cancer and heart disease are among the leading causes of mortality in Palestine.

11. The water, sanitation and hygiene situation remains critical. In Gaza, less than 10 per cent of available groundwater resources are suitable for drinking purposes. In the West Bank, over 1 million people continue to access less than 60 litres per capita per day of water. Following the escalation of violence in Gaza in November 2012, damage to the water, sanitation and hygiene infrastructure disrupted water supply and caused sewage to flood into the street, with the potential for polluting water resources and generating public health concerns.¹⁰ Similar concerns have arisen regarding the impact of the energy crisis developing in Gaza. While Gaza faces structural power supply challenges, the situation has deteriorated as affordable fuel has become scarce following the shutdown by Egypt of illegal smuggling tunnels into Gaza. This has affected operations of the Gaza power plant, which was

⁷ International Labour Organization, "The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories" (2011), p. 3, available from www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_181071.pdf.

⁸ ILO, 2013, Palestine General Federation of Trade Union Survey.

⁹ In October 2012, the Council of Ministers adopted a minimum wage of NIS1,450 monthly, NIS65 daily and NIS8.50 hourly, which took effect on 1 January 2013.

¹⁰ Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Consolidated Appeal Process, Mid-year review (2013).

¹¹ See Ministry of Health, Health Annual Report Palestine 2012. Most recent global estimates for the West Bank and Gaza (2010) show a ratio of 64:100,000 live births, but also confirm a decline over time (see: WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA and World Bank estimates. Trends in maternal mortality: 1990 to 2010, Geneva (2012)).

¹² A near-miss case is defined as a severe life-threatening obstetric complication that required an urgent medical intervention in order to prevent the mother from dying.

¹³ Palestinian Ministry of Health, Health Annual Report, Palestine 2012.

producing 25 per cent of the total electricity available in Gaza. Rolling blackouts are a daily occurrence, severely debilitating economic activity in the Strip and the functioning of basic services, including health, water and sanitation, with serious implications for the lives of Gazans, including many women.

12. While education indicators for enrolment continued to show significant progress, challenges linked to access and quality of education remain. The occupied Palestinian territory has reached parity in primary education (grades 1-10), and girls outnumber boys in secondary (grades 11-12) and higher education. The net enrolment rate for primary education is 93.4 per cent, with slightly more girls enrolled (94.4 per cent) than boys (92.2 per cent). In secondary education, the disparity is greater, where boys' net enrolment rate is only at 59.1 per cent, while at 74.7 per cent for girls.¹⁴ It is noteworthy, that in private schools the ratio of girls to boys in primary education drops to 0.7 (while 1.02 for the whole of the occupied Palestinian territory).¹⁵ In both Gaza and the West Bank, girls outperform their male counterparts in UNRWA schools.¹⁶ A study conducted by the Agency found that families see education as the only tool to ensure a better future for girls, while education for boys is not seen as the only option owing to the fact that boys enjoy easier access to the labour market compared with girls.¹⁷ Data from UNRWA shows that female students in the Gaza and West Bank are enrolling less in vocational training than male students. Disabled children, especially girls and children from Gaza, have less access to education (in Gaza, 29 per cent of disabled girls and 19 per cent of boys did not have access to formal education).¹⁸

13. Improvements in enrolment have, however, been coupled with an overall decline in the quality of education owing to the outbursts of violence, the closure of Gaza and other factors. According to UNRWA, continuous population growth and insufficient infrastructure stretches school capacity to its limits, with overcrowding putting pressure on diminishing resources and taking a toll on the quality of education delivered — 10,000 additional students joined UNRWA schools in the scholastic year 2011/12 and 8,000 in 2012/13 as well as in 2013/14. In Gaza, 89 per cent of the Agency's 245 schools operate on a double shift basis, resulting in shorter academic hours and a high number of students per classroom. The average classroom size in the 2012/13 scholastic year comprised 38 students. In addition, the shortage of schools means there is little opportunity for children to engage in organized recreational or creative pursuits during the regular school year. UNRWA is nonetheless planning to open 13 new school buildings in the first semester and 8 additional schools for the second semester. Access to schools for children living in the access restricted areas can be dangerous, and classes are often disrupted. The anxiety associated with attending school in those areas has taken a toll on students, with teachers reporting signs of psychosocial distress.¹⁹ According to the Education Cluster of the humanitarian country team, in the West Bank, threat of harassment by

¹⁴ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Annual Report. Palestine Children — Issues and Statistics. Child Statistics Series (No. 15) (2013), Ramallah.

¹⁵ Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education, *Educational Statistical Yearbook 2012/2013*.

¹⁶ UNRWA, *Results of 2012 Independent Tests UNRWA Schools by Gender*, West Bank.

¹⁷ UNRWA, 2013, *West Bank Survey on the drop-out rate of boys in school* (forthcoming).

¹⁸ Diakonia/NAD, 2011, *Access to formal education for people with disabilities*.

¹⁹ Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, factsheet: Access Restricted Areas in the Gaza Strip (July 2013), available from: http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_gaza_ara_factsheet_july_2013_english.pdf.

Israeli settlers and Israeli security forces on the way to school and fear of harm and humiliation at checkpoints create stress and fear among children and their families. At least 6,000 children in the West Bank cross through one or more checkpoints to reach their schools every day.

14. As a consequence of the November 2013 escalation of hostilities, at least 142 government school buildings in Gaza sustained damage, ranging from light to complete damage. This resulted in the disruption of schooling and an unsafe learning environment for at least 123,641 children (at least 50 per cent girls). According to UNICEF, the escalation of conflict had a devastating impact on the psychosocial well-being of children and adolescents in Gaza.²⁰ As observed by UNMAS, as a trend, every escalation of hostilities is followed by a spike in civilian casualties caused by explosive hazards left by both sides to the conflict. While explosive remnants of war in the streets and public places are dealt with quickly by the police, other hazards are encountered in private spaces, rubble and the access restricted areas. An emerging issue of concern is the number of children injured as a result of small arms and other weapons that are stored or made within homes. During the period covered by the present report, there were 30 victims (3 killed, 27 injured), of which 23 were children (5 girls and 18 boys).

15. Illiteracy rates among individuals aged 15 years or older in the occupied Palestinian territory fell in the period 1997-2012 from 13.9 per cent to 4.1 per cent. The illiteracy rate varies considerably between the sexes: 1.8 per cent for males compared with 6.4 per cent for females. Female illiteracy rates were highest in rural localities (8.6 per cent), followed by refugee camps (6.3 per cent) and urban localities (6.1 per cent).²¹

16. While women have continued to participate in a range of roles in political life, they remain underrepresented in decision-making bodies. As of September 2013, women held only 3 out of a total of 24 ministerial level posts in the Palestinian Government — a drop from 21 to 12.5 per cent since the last report. UNDP reports that in Gaza, there is only one female minister, who is the Minister of Women's Affairs. Women have fewer opportunities to reach higher positions in the public sector and in the general administration of the Government. At the end of 2012, women held 47 per cent of the lower-level positions in the administration and 22 per cent of director's seats, but only 11 per cent were at the level of general director.²² There has been some progress in the justice sector. Women now account for 15 per cent of judges, 19.5 per cent of prosecutors and 32.5 per cent of lawyers.²³ Some positive developments were also noted in the local elections held in the West Bank in October 2012, such as the introduction of an all-women party list in Hebron and Safa and the enacting of a 2010 manifesto from political parties to increase the quota of women on lists from 20 per cent to 30 per cent. As such, the women's movement has demonstrated its ability to channel its demands and raise women's voices for participation. In the 2012 local elections, the number of seats held by women increased moderately from 18 to 21.4 per cent (1,205 out of 5,629 seats).²⁴

²⁰ State of Palestine Inter-cluster Rapid Assessment and the Psychosocial Rapid Assessment done after the escalation of conflict in November 2012 in Gaza.

²¹ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, available from <http://pcbs.gov.ps/site/512/default.aspx?tabID=512&lang=en&ItemID=890&mid=3171&wvversion=Staging> (accessed November 2013).

²² Data from 2012 from the Palestinian General Personnel Council.

²³ Data from 2012 from the Palestinian Bar Association's Women's Lawyer's Network.

²⁴ Data from the Central Election Commission, 2013.

Such quantitative gains must be backed up by sufficient technical support to women in elected and appointed posts. According to UN-Women, as of September 2013, no women were participating on the Palestinian side in the resumed Israeli-Palestinian peace talks. Women have also not been present in the internal reconciliation committees set up to find a solution to the internal political divide. This is a reflection of a low level of political participation and representation of women across the board.

17. The Palestinian Legislative Council was not functional during the reporting period and, as such, there continued to be a hold on the passing of new laws or amending existing ones through democratic means, including those that are deemed discriminatory towards women and in contradiction to human rights, within the legal framework provided by the basic law of Palestine.

18. Since December 2012, human rights organizations and analysts in Gaza have noticed a negative development in Gaza regarding personal freedoms of the population, particularly in terms of imposing and enforcing conservative codes of conduct, and imposing separation of sexes in public. Further to the decision by Al-Aqsa University to impose a conservative dress code on female students and the cancellation of the UNRWA marathon after Hamas banned the participation of women, the de facto authorities in Gaza are now engaging in a “morality” campaign against young men citing “indecent” or “inappropriate” hairstyles and clothing (generally referred to as “westernized”), arresting young men and shaving their heads.

19. Violence against women remains a serious concern. According to the Independent Commission of Human Rights and civil society partners, 24 women were killed in the name of so-called “honour” between January and August 2013, in a significant deterioration over 2012 when 12 women were killed over the whole year. According to UNDP and UN-Women, the number of cases is most likely underreported. Studies suggest that overcrowding, especially owing to the housing situation in Gaza and East Jerusalem, exacerbates violence within households.²⁵

20. A study by UN-Women²⁶ shows that access to justice, especially for women who are victims of violence, is a difficult and long process. The weakening of already inadequate protection mechanisms combined with the closure and restrictions on movement have made it more difficult and often impossible for women and girls who are at risk of being harmed or killed by family members to escape and seek justice and help. Although communities and families are often the source of discrimination and violence, female victims of violence first approach their communities or families for help. When this approach fails, only some will go to external service providers, such as the police or providers of social and health services. This may expose them to various levels of critique, rejection and marginalization. Such calls for help are in some cases not acted upon or become too burdensome for the victims, creating a spiral of violence. Owing to movement and access restrictions in Area C, checkpoints and the Barrier, women in isolated areas do not have access to formal juridical institutions, having as only recourse the informal justice system, which does not afford the same rights to women, men, boys

²⁵ Norwegian Refugee Council, Overview of the Housing Situation in the Gaza Strip (March 2013), and OCHA, Easing the blockade: Assessing the humanitarian impact on the population of the Gaza Strip (March 2011).

²⁶ UN-Women, Study on access to justice for women (forthcoming, 2013).

and girls.²⁷ In addition, social and health services are restricted from establishing a permanent physical presence in Area C, which limits opportunities for women to report to health posts for medical check-ups and documentation of injuries related to gender-based violence.²⁸ Although the overall number of female inmates in corrections and rehabilitation centres is low, their stories highlight the multiple layers of discrimination, violence and abuse perpetrated against women in Palestine, as well as failures of and gaps in the protection and justice systems.²⁶

21. The Palestinian Authority continued to take noteworthy steps to strengthen capacity to prevent and respond to different forms of violence against women. The Ministry of Women's Affairs signed memorandums of understanding with six key line ministries for the operationalization of the national strategy to combat violence against women. The Ministry also finalized a national regulation for the establishment of women's protection centres detailing the supervisory and monitoring system within shelters. The Palestinian Civil Police launched a strategy for family protection units in June 2013 that provides a framework for addressing the rights of victims of violence in accordance with international standards. Sustained efforts are needed to improve and expand services and access to justice for victims, taking into account the context and reality on the ground.

III. Assistance to Palestinian women

22. The present section provides information on efforts made by the United Nations system, in cooperation with the Palestinian Authority, donors and civil society, to address the specific needs and priorities of women and girls. It contains updates on assistance provided in the following areas: education and training; health; economic empowerment and livelihoods; rule of law and violence against women; power and decision-making; and institutional development.

A. Education and training

23. United Nations entities continued to implement a range of initiatives to promote women's and girls' access to education and training and support the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education to improve the learning environment, for example, through the Education for All package for inclusive and child-friendly education and early childhood development. The package is currently being piloted in 47 schools and, for the first time, preschool classrooms were opened in some of the schools.²⁹ WFP maintained the provision of food assistance (date bars and milk) in schools, reaching 88,834 children (49 per cent girls). UNRWA continued to provide primary and secondary education in Gaza to 222,000 students (48.6 per cent girls) and primary education to 51,695 students in the West Bank (58 per cent girls). UNRWA also continued efforts to narrow the gender gap in academic achievements, where girls currently outperform boys, while simultaneously increasing the pass rate of both girls and boys. As a result, the gap in

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Kvinna till Kvinna, 2013, *Inequalities facing women living in Area C of the Occupied Palestinian Territory*, West Bank.

²⁹ The initiative, which is coordinated by UNESCO, is supported by UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNRWA, UNSCO, WFP and WHO.

academic achievement has narrowed significantly, from 25 per cent in 2009/10 to 9.4 per cent in 2012/13. UNICEF supported the rehabilitation of 98 schools in Gaza, securing safer learning environments for more than 87,945 children (40,915 girls). In addition, as a response to the escalation of violence in November 2012, 29,000 children (50 per cent girls) received learning materials, and 3,317 children (1,037 girls) and 249 teachers benefited from improved and protected access to learning environments. To improve the quality of education, UNICEF trained 1,600 teachers in the most marginalized areas on active learning modules developed by the Palestinian Ministry of Education.

24. UNICEF, in partnership with non-governmental organizations, continued to implement after-school activities in adolescent-friendly service centres. During the reporting period, at least 10,000 adolescents (50 per cent girls) benefitted from creative learning, life skills, recreational activities and health awareness sessions. UNRWA provided technical training to 515 women in Gaza. One of its centres provides special courses in entrepreneurship and communication. In the West Bank, UNRWA continued its tertiary education programmes. Of these, the trade and the technical vocation training programmes were attended by 1,217 students (603 female), and the teacher pre-service training programme was attended by 642 students (424 female). The UNRWA education programme in the West Bank also provided 38 merit-based scholarships to young underprivileged refugees, the majority of whom (87 per cent) were young women. In 2013, UNESCO in partnership with a local radio station, trained five female journalists to produce and present news in a gender-sensitive manner as part of their integrated approach to promote the training of female journalists and the equal presence of women's and men's issues across all types of media.

B. Health

25. The United Nations continued efforts to improve the access to and quality of health services, including maternal and reproductive health care. UNRWA provided a range of basic health-care services to refugees in the West Bank and Gaza, including antenatal care services. A total of 11,356 female and 7,976 male refugees were referred to external secondary and tertiary health-care services. In addition, 3,247 women and 2,290 men received care at the UNRWA-run Qalqilya Hospital. In Gaza, 60.6 per cent of visits to the health centres run by the Agency were made by women. During the second quarter of 2013, a total of 24,942 refugee women benefited from the Agency's family planning services in the West Bank, while in Gaza, 61,208 women benefited from such services in the month of August 2013. In addition, 9,265 women accessed preconception care. During the reporting period, there were 39,001 newly registered pregnancies. Of all pregnant women registered, 93.3 per cent attended four or more antenatal care visits.

26. UNFPA supported the implementation of the national obstetric care protocol through the training of 316 health providers and the establishment of hospital committees to audit near-miss cases in Gaza and the West Bank. Furthermore, they provided home visits for 2,625 pregnant women as well as postnatal care for 1,664 women in the West Bank and Gaza. Through outreach activities, UNFPA reached around 8,470 women, as well as 1,884 adolescent females and 975 males, improving their understanding of issues such as reproductive health, early marriage and healthy lifestyles. In addition, in August 2013, UNFPA supported the launch of the Youth

Peer Education Network, which is a network of young Palestinian men and women who are committed to promote healthy lifestyles among youth and raise awareness of sexual and reproductive health and HIV/AIDS. A total of 97 female and 57 male school counsellors were trained on the adolescent health guidance book in Jenin, Ramallah, Bethlehem and Hebron.

27. In Gaza, UNRWA provided postnatal care in follow-up to all 35,590 deliveries during the reporting period. Through the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative, UNICEF reached 26,000 pregnant women and 36,000 lactating mothers in 9 hospitals and 45 health facilities in the West Bank and 14,720 in 3 hospitals in Gaza with counselling sessions on exclusive breastfeeding. Mothers and newborn children at risk were reached through at-home follow-up, and the rate of 78 per cent of mothers who were exclusively breastfeeding was maintained after the third visit. WHO conducted awareness-raising activities on safe childbirth and postnatal care, training 769 health professionals on the process of care for mothers and newborns in the hospital.

28. UNICEF scaled up its psychosocial programmes implemented in Gaza reaching a total of 149,894 children and adolescents (50 per cent girls), 17,986 caregivers (of whom 65 per cent women) and 852 professionals (45 per cent women) all focused on helping children to increase their resilience and coping mechanisms especially in times of crisis.

29. UNICEF also supported a range of initiatives related to water, sanitation and hygiene. This included support for rehabilitation and construction of water, sanitation and hygiene facilities in 30 schools in the West Bank and 51 in Gaza, benefiting 45,930 students (20,292 girls), as well as water tankering to 34 schools in the West Bank and 81 in Gaza providing safe drinking water to 65,815 students (34,664 girls).

C. Economic empowerment and livelihoods

30. United Nations entities continued to implement a range of initiatives to promote women's economic empowerment and improve food security and livelihoods. Several activities were targeted at building the capacity of cooperatives and entrepreneurs. In 2012, ILO provided support to the Ministry of Labour in the development of a cooperative assessment tool for advisory support services and counselling to cooperatives on enterprise management and governance issues. Training workshops and coaching activities were provided to cooperative extension workers on how to undertake feasibility studies and assess the business plans and performance of newly established cooperatives. ILO also provided direct support to six women's cooperatives. UNDP trained women entrepreneurs and provided technical assistance and support to 28 women's cooperatives to enhance the competitive advantage of their products, and at the same time enhance their business, networking, marketing and advocacy skills. UNRWA implemented a training programme targeting women entrepreneurs from refugee camps across the West Bank. Of all graduates, a total of 30 women accessed loans to start or develop small enterprises. UN-Women continued to build on previous work aimed at providing poor and rural women with the proper tools and mechanisms for the establishment of small, sustainable businesses through local women's community-based

organizations and scaling up the women-run school canteens project in all the schools in the West Bank.

31. UN-Women, UNESCO and UNDP built and/or rehabilitated 9 women's centres in Gaza and the West Bank. Of those structures, some are made of traditional mud brick, where UNESCO trained 40 women in the technique of earthen architecture. The women's centres will bring a range of services to approximately 50,000 women in isolated areas.³⁰ A business plan has been developed for three of the centres to ensure sustainability, and 39 board members of the centres were trained to adequately manage them.

32. FAO, WFP and UNRWA continued interventions aimed at improving food security. FAO provided agriculture inputs such as on small animal husbandry, beehives and home gardens, and provided training on processing of food, management and marketing, benefiting close to 3,000 female-headed households in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in 2012. Forty women's associations participated in several exhibitions conducted in the West Bank and Gaza for the marketing of processed food products. WFP provided assistance through food distribution and conditional voucher programmes, which reached 310,148 female beneficiaries. WFP also started to implement a training component for eligible food-insecure Palestinian women which aims to improve their knowledge base, capacity and skills, thereby establishing a solid foundation for economic empowerment. During the third quarter of 2013, UNRWA supported a total of 36,264 special hardship cases³¹ in the West Bank through the provision of food assistance. Of those refugees, 23,281 were female and 12,983 male, with 5,833 families (50.6 per cent) headed by females. In Gaza, the Social Safety Net Programme of UNRWA provided basic food supplies and cash subsidies³² to 401,765 women (48 per cent of the total) from among the most vulnerable Palestinian refugees.³³ A total of 21,310 families are female-headed households, most of whom are extremely poor.

33. Microfinance support continued to be a source of short-term poverty alleviation in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. UNDP, as of December 2012, had provided support to 2,453 female-headed households (66 per cent of the total households supported) to be enrolled in the microfinance component of an employment and training programme. In the West Bank, the UNRWA microfinance programme provided 35 per cent of loans to women (out of a total of 10,067) amounting to 27 per cent of the total value of loans (\$13.7 million). In Gaza, the same programme provided 39 per cent of loans to women (out of a total of 1,382), also amounting to 27 per cent of the total value of loans (\$1.48 million).

34. Through the Gaza gender initiative, UNRWA reached a total of 1,108 female graduates through its Young Women Leaders Programme. The programme seeks to ensure that young female graduates are developing the skills required by the labour market by offering training and courses in areas such as advanced information technology, English language, management and administration, and leadership. It

³⁰ Part of those activities are undertaken in the framework of the United Nations Human Security Trust Fund (a joint programme with FAO, UN-Women, UNESCO, UNSCO and UNRWA).

³¹ They are identified on the basis of belonging to one or more vulnerability categories, such as female-headed households or households with one or more members with a disability.

³² Owing to funding constraints, the cash subsidies of the programme were cut in April 2013.

³³ The numbers in Gaza seem inflated relative to numbers in the West Bank because they include both regular cash and food assistance as well as emergency assistance.

also offers life-skills and self-development coaching and includes a work placement scheme to enhance employability.

D. Rule of law and violence against women

35. Building on lessons learned and good practices previously reported, United Nations entities continued to implement a range of initiatives designed to improve women's access to justice and enhance the capacity of institutions and personnel to prevent and respond to violence against women. Priority was placed on the implementation of the National Strategy to Combat Violence Against Women 2011-2019.

36. UN-Women continued to support the institutionalization of the Family Protection Units in the Palestinian Civil Police, which in 2012 handled 2,849 cases of family violence. UN-Women also continued to support the Corrections and Rehabilitation Centres Department to implement the United Nations minimum standard rules in relation to the rehabilitation component for women inmates in all four Corrections and Rehabilitation Centres in the West Bank where women are held. With the supervision of social workers, weekly training and exercise sessions were provided to an average of 30 women at any given time, and through the support of UN-Women to the Palestinian Bar Association, 20 women inmates were provided with biweekly lawyers' visits and representation in court. UNDP continued to support the Gender Unit of the Civilian Police, including in the development of a diploma programme on gender-responsive policing targeting mid- and high-level officers. UNDP also contributed to the establishment of a Coordination Committee to support and help harmonize strategies of gender units across security institutions. UNOPS supported a project aimed at improving the response by the Office of the Attorney General and Public Prosecution to gender-specific human rights violations. UNODC continued to implement a multi-year programme aimed at building the capacity and skills of forensics services and related personnel to investigate gender-based crimes and provide support for victims of sexual and family violence.

37. Efforts were made to expand and improve women's access to legal protection and services, as well as services specifically targeted at survivors of violence. From 2011 to June 2013, UNDP provided legal aid services to a total of 43,609 women in Gaza and the West Bank, tripling the number of women who were provided with legal representation in courts and almost doubling the number provided with legal information and advice. UN-Women continued to support the Mehwar Centre, which between 2008 and 2012 has sheltered 286 women and 79 child victims of violence and provided a range of services, including: social and legal services for women in the shelter; social counselling for family members; skills development; economic empowerment opportunities; support during the reintegration phase; and conducted outreach activities in the community. UN-Women, through the Millennium Development Goal programme, also continued to provide support to the Hayat multipurpose centre in Gaza City for the protection of victims of violence. Through the gender-based violence referral system established by UNRWA in all its field operations, 414 cases were reported (75 per cent female) in the West Bank, the majority of which received individual counselling from the UNRWA Health Programme's psychosocial counsellors. In Gaza, 384 survivors of gender-based violence were detected through the system.

38. UNFPA and OHCHR continued to support and build the capacity of community-based organizations and coalitions working in the West Bank and Gaza on the prevention of gender-based violence, the promotion of gender equality and the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). This included training by OHCHR on monitoring and reporting on human rights violations against women and support from UNFPA for publications documenting an organization's experience in monitoring implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). Thirteen cases of violations of women's human rights were reported by UNFPA partner organizations.

39. A range of activities were implemented to raise awareness and trigger action to end violence and discrimination against women. In Gaza, the Agency's gender-based violence awareness-raising programmes reached 346 adult women and 275 men as well as 285 youth. Concepts related to gender, human rights and violence were covered in training and discussion groups, including how to deal with violence within the home and how to build healthy and equal relationships. In the West Bank, UNFPA conducted several prevention activities focused on gender-based violence through awareness-raising sessions, media and advocacy activities, and training of community leaders, religious leaders and preachers, including staff at the Ministries of Women's Affairs, Social Affairs, Religious Affairs and Health. UNFPA also trained 75 health providers on gender-based violence identification and clinical management at the hospital, emergency, and primary health care and clinic levels. ILO supported the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics to develop research on violence at work.

E. Power and decision-making

40. United Nations entities continued to work towards strengthening women's participation and representation in decision-making and their engagement in public life. UNDP supported the Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy, which is designed to enhance the capacities of young Palestinian women leaders across the occupied Palestinian territory. In 2013, 181 women received training on topics such as leadership and communication skills, advocacy, public speaking, human rights and project management. In addition, 453 women were targeted through an awareness campaign related to the Constitution.

41. In October 2012, UN-Women in partnership with UNDP and UNSCO facilitated a meeting between members of the Palestinian women's movement and the United Nations Deputy Special Coordinator. Participants discussed the need for time-bound plans to increase the participation of Palestinian women in decision-making processes and the establishment of a more permanent channel of communication between the Palestinian women's movement and representatives of UNSCO. In follow-up, UN-Women supported the organization of a two-day conference in December 2012 on the theme "Towards achievement of equality: women's political participation for the achievement of social development". The objective of the conference, which brought together over 700 participants, was to provide a platform for the Palestinian women's movement to establish a unified position and identify common priorities in terms of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security and beyond.

42. UNFPA trained 20 women of the Wisal Coalition in Gaza on Palestinian law and women's rights to empower them to: act as community leaders; play an active role in family conflict resolution; and raise awareness about gender equality issues and human rights. UNFPA also trained over 40 youth leaders in the West Bank on communication and social media, gender equality and gender-based violence.

F. Institutional development

43. UN-Women continued to provide technical assistance to the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Ministry of Planning, including support for the review of the Cross-Sectoral National Gender Strategy 2011-2013 and the development of the new strategy for 2014-2016. UN-Women supported the ministries to develop a gender-responsive planning and budgeting approach for the Government and to integrate gender equality priorities in sectoral strategies and plans of line ministries. UNFPA trained staff of the Ministry of Women's Affairs on the newly defined national indicators for youth and gender that were developed in cooperation with the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics for the national monitoring system. At present, the Ministry of Women's Affairs heads the National Committee for Gender-responsive Budgeting which was established in July 2012 and is tasked to advance the Gender-responsive Budgeting approach in national plans and budgets and build such capacities in target ministries. In addition, the Ministry of Women's Affairs is a member of the Local Aid Coordination Structure, the official coordination forum among the Palestinian Government, civil society and international partners. Despite growing responsibilities, the budget of the Ministry of Women's Affairs remains limited. The annual budget for 2012 was 6,272,000 NIS, 0.5 per cent of the national budget.³⁴

44. Assistance was also provided for the institutional development of other ministries and bodies. UNDP continued to support the gender mainstreaming efforts of the Ministry of Justice. In 2013, the Ministry established a Juvenile Justice Unit, properly staffed its Gender Unit, trained all staff on gender equality, integrated gender and juvenile justice concerns into the workplans of all of its departments and developed an internal gender strategy. UNESCO continued to support the Palestinian Women's Documentation and Research Centre in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment through capacity-building, research, advocacy and documentation activities. The last phase of the project, starting in 2013, will be transitional in order to create a financially and intellectually autonomous structure. ILO assisted the National Committee for Women's Employment in developing their three-year strategic plan to advocate for gender-sensitive policies, legislation, capacity-building interventions, economic empowerment, social security for women workers and a healthy work environment. UNICEF continued to support the Ministry of Social Affairs to strengthen the national child protection system so that girls and young women are afforded greater protection from violence, abuse and exploitation. One of the results is the Amended Child Law that came into force in December 2012, which clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of duty bearers and sets enforcement mechanisms for implementation of its provisions.

45. Notably, during the reporting period the United Nations country team developed the first ever United Nations Development Assistance Framework for

³⁴ Ministry of Finance, Annual Budget of the Government of Palestine 2012.

Palestine. UN-Women, as the coordinator of the United Nations Gender Task Force, ensured its alignment with national gender equality concerns. While promoting gender equality mainstreaming throughout all United Nations programming, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework also identified specific objectives on gender equality. The framework will be implemented in harmony with the National Development Plan of Palestine 2014-2016.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

46. During the reporting period, prospects for peace were renewed through the resumption of direct negotiations. This occurred against the backdrop of a tense situation on the ground. The outbursts of violence and growing insecurity which have occurred since the previous report to the Commission are of great concern. The Secretary-General has called upon all parties to sustain an environment conducive for the peace process to move forward.

47. Many observations from previous reports still stand. Restrictions on movement and access, increased settlement expansion and settler violence, demolitions of Palestinian infrastructure and displacement, the fragmentation of the Territory and the closure of the Gaza Strip continue to have a negative impact on the lives of Palestinian women and their families. Progress on development indicators has remained slow owing to the volatility of the context, which renders progress fragile and prone to regression, including as it relates to women's rights.

48. High levels of unemployment and poverty persist, and many Palestinian women and girls still face significant obstacles in accessing basic services, health care, justice institutions, water and sanitation, and economic opportunities. Signs of increased food insecurity levels, declining quality in education and the growing challenges faced by women in the labour market are all issues demanding greater attention in the coming year. The critical situation with regard to water, sanitation and hygiene as well as energy, in particular in Gaza, are other serious concerns that must be addressed with urgency by all relevant stakeholders.

49. Violence against women remains a serious concern. As noted in previous reports and as was evident during the reporting period, insecurity and poverty can exacerbate gender-based discrimination and abuse, including in the workplace, and lead to elevated levels of violence against women in both the public and private spheres. Stronger efforts are needed by all actors to prevent all forms of violence and address obstacles and challenges to women's access to justice and services.

50. The United Nations system should use the development of the first United Nations Development Assistance Framework for Palestine and the new Palestinian National Development Plan to improve harmonization and efficiency among all development actors. This includes the initiation of new joint programmes building on the results and good practices created by the joint programmes on gender equality and empowerment of women funded under the Millennium Development Goal Achievement Fund that ended in April 2013.

51. The United Nations system and the donor community should use the current momentum to support the Palestinian Authority to build on the positive steps taken at the policy and institutional levels to address violence against women and promote gender equality and women's empowerment. In particular, further political commitment, technical and financial support will be required for the effective implementation of the National Strategy to Combat Violence Against Women (2011-2019) and the National Gender Strategy (2014-2016). Technical and financial support must be provided to the Ministry of Women's Affairs and women's civil society organizations.

52. More determined action is needed by all actors to increase women's participation and representation at all levels of decision-making and to support women in elected and appointed posts. With the renewed peace talks, efforts to engage both Palestinian and Israeli women in the related processes need to be enhanced and supported in accordance with Security Council resolutions [1325 \(2000\)](#) and [2122 \(2013\)](#). Mechanisms for enhancing accountability and monitoring progress in the implementation of these and related commitments on women, peace and security should be established. The recent experience of UN-Women in building the capacity of women leaders in different regions in negotiation and mediation skills could be applied.

53. Dialogue during the reporting period between women's civil society organizations and senior representatives of the United Nations entities proved rewarding and informative for those involved. This should be transformed into a regular practice.

54. While progress has been made in improving systems for data collection and analysis, it is critical to continue to build capacity to collect and analyse sex- and age-disaggregated data on the full range of issues that have an impact on the lives of Palestinians and to ensure that this information is used to inform programming and is incorporated systematically into all reports and briefings by the United Nations system to relevant intergovernmental bodies.
