

WFP Palestine | Brief

Reporting period: 01 July – 30 September 2015

Country Director: Daniela Owen

COUNTRY STRATEGY

WFP's vision is to support the Palestinian Authority to use new and innovative approaches to build food security sustainably. In 2015, WFP aims to reach 566,940 of the most vulnerable, food insecure non-refugees in Palestine who have been affected by the ongoing conflict and occupation, a fiscal crisis and a steady decline in living standards. The Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation (PRRO), launched in 2015, combines operations in the West Bank and Gaza to coherently address food insecurity needs in Palestine. In addition, WFP has a Special Operation (SO) supporting the Food Security Sector.

WFP has been present in Palestine since 1991.



A Bedouin woman in the West Bank uses WFP wheat flour.

OPERATIONS

	Project Duration	Planned number of people	Total requirement (in USD)	Total received (in USD)	Total Funded (%)	6 Months Net Funding Requirements (in USD)*	Top 5 Donors
PRRO 200709 - Food Assistance for Food-Insecure Populations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip	Jan 2015–Dec 2016	566,940	145,053,535	62,274,835	43%	18,038,163	USA, Japan, Russian Federation, European Commission and UK
SO 200560 - Strengthening the Food Security Coordination Platform in the State of Palestine	Jun 2013 - May 2015	-	1,257,892	827,779	66%	-	European Commission and Canada

*October-March 2016

Summary of WFP assistance:

WFP addresses urgent food needs, resilient livelihoods, economic activity and emergency preparedness. Supporting enhanced food security is a task shared by the Palestinian Authority, the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and WFP, with close links to activities of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), UNICEF and other partners.

WFP targets 566,940 people for assistance through general food distributions (GFD), electronic vouchers, food assistance for assets, food for training and schools meals. It has three main objectives: i) meeting food needs; ii) supporting the re-establishment of livelihoods and food security of communities most affected by conflict through conditional e-vouchers and school meals; and iii) supporting the Palestinian Authority's national safety net by strengthening the Government capacity. WFP's purchasing power supports local production and reinforces the Palestinian economy.

WFP's e-vouchers are a platform for a range of interventions, including:

- Food assistance for 164,000 people assisted by WFP and 45,000 people assisted by UNRWA
- Support for the elderly and for those with health related issues for about 14,000 people with two NGO partners
- Water and sanitation assistance for 84,000 people with UNICEF
- Education support for 42,000 students with UNICEF

In the last three years, WFP has injected more than USD 170 million into the local economy, of which USD 100 million was through e-vouchers and USD 70 million through local purchases of food. WFP works with a total of 252 local stores in the West Bank and Gaza. Thanks to the e-voucher programme, 225 new jobs were created in stores and at producer level, while the programme generated USD 772,000 of investments (2014 WFP Secondary Impact study).

WFP, alongside UNRWA and FAO, co-leads the Food Security Sector which strengthens food security analysis and response and links humanitarian and developmental interventions for the Palestinian Authority. The Food Security Sector has more than 40 members including government ministries, as well as local and international NGOs.

WFP's assistance in Palestine is aligned with the National Development Plan, the Ministry of Social Affairs' Business Plan and the Social Protection Sector Strategic Plan. WFP's work contributes to five of the six pillars of the 2014-2016 UN Development Assistance Framework and the annual Humanitarian Programme Cycle.

OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

ACHIEVEMENTS	ISSUES/CHALLENGES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WFP launched an electronic-voucher (e-voucher) pilot in September for 15,000 people that still face the effects of the 2014 conflict in Gaza. Households receive voucher values based on their vulnerability level, instead of a fixed value. The pilot reflects vulnerability levels identified by the new Socio-Economic and Food Security survey (SEFSec) methodology, e.g. <i>severely food insecure, moderately food insecure and marginally food insecure</i>. Results of the pilot will inform WFP's future programme design and implementation. Between July and September, WFP reached over 180,000 people in the West Bank with food assistance including more than 104,000 people with e-vouchers and 76,000 people with food distributions. In Gaza, WFP reached over 230,000 people with food assistance between July and September. This included 60,000 people with e-vouchers and 170,000 through food distributions. WFP continues to upgrade and expand its e-voucher system through the innovative PalPay system. This system increases the efficiency, effectiveness and accountability of WFP's e-vouchers, reducing implementation costs. Since late 2014, WFP has paid shopkeepers after each transaction in real-time, using internationally recognized financial processes and procedures to control risks and manage payments. Participating shopkeepers and people receiving the e-vouchers in Gaza and the West Bank have the possibility to contact a helpdesk when required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The political and security situation in the West Bank and East Jerusalem has deteriorated with tensions increasing, mostly driven by confrontations in the Old City of Jerusalem. According to a new International Monetary Fund report (September 2015), the main risks for the economic outlook are an escalation of political tensions and violence, particularly in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, as well as fiscal setbacks and continued shortfalls in aid contributions. This could impact food insecurity levels. Gaza's energy crisis has been seriously affected by extended power cuts: previously at 12-16 hours, to over 20 hours per day. On 14 September, the lack of electricity prompted the largest demonstrations in Gaza in years. Power cuts have severely disrupted the provision of basic services, including health and water. On 18 September, the Egyptian army started flooding tunnels between Gaza and Egypt. Since 2007, the tunnel trade represented the main supply and commercial trade route for goods into Gaza. In July 2013, the Egyptian army undertook extensive operations to close the tunnels. It is unclear how many tunnels remain functional. WFP averted pipeline breaks until November/December and secured in-kind assistance for 89,000 people in Gaza, and e-voucher support for 108,000 people in the West Bank. Additional resources are needed to avoid breaks as of November/December.

PARTNERSHIPS

WFP continues to expand its partnerships and is working with the following partners:

- WFP and UNICEF are preparing Nutrition Awareness sessions for people receiving WFP's e-vouchers in Gaza.
 - WFP and Médecins du Monde together provided e-vouchers for hygiene products for more than 9,000 people.
 - WFP and HelpAge have provided e-vouchers for food to 6,000 elderly people.
 - WFP and UNRWA run a joint programme in the West Bank, providing food assistance to 30,000 Bedouin and herders each month, and are implementing a voucher programme for 45,000 people in 11 governorates of the West Bank in 109 shops. WFP is acting as a service provider to UNRWA using its existing e-voucher system.
- WFP's line ministry is the Ministry of Planning for aligning WFP programmes with national priorities and objectives. WFP co-leads the Food Security Sector, which includes ministries, UN agencies, and international and local NGO's.

COUNTRY BACKGROUND

Palestine is a lower middle income territory with significant income disparities. Average purchasing power per person in Palestine is USD 5,167 while in Israel is USD 29,966 (2013 Human Development Index using the Purchasing Power Parity measure). The Palestinian economy is dependent on external aid and is closely linked to the Israeli economy, with Israel as the main market for exports and imports and an important employer of Palestinian labour. Due to long lasting restrictions on movement, access and trade, private sector activities have been severely constrained and private investment levels are amongst the lowest in the world. Unemployment levels are high, reaching 41.5 percent in Gaza in mid-2015 and 15.4 percent in the West Bank.

Results of the 2013 Socio-Economic and Food Security Survey showed food insecurity in Palestine remained at high levels, with a third of the households – 1.6 million people – food insecure. In Gaza, food insecurity levels remained at 57 percent and in the West Bank food insecurity remained at 19 percent. Although food is available in Palestine, prices are too high for poor households, who spend approximately half of their income on food. High food insecurity and vulnerability are a result of severe restrictions on livelihoods and economic activity.

The blockade of Gaza, recurrent conflict, the occupation of the West Bank and the separation barrier have resulted in high levels of protracted humanitarian needs, interrupted economic activity and further restricted movement and access. Peace talks on a two-state solution were suspended in 2014, followed by a 51 day conflict in Gaza that devastated the lives of many people and caused widespread destruction to infrastructure, homes and livelihoods. The current situation in Palestine is unsustainable and humanitarian needs are of great concern.

