

Palestinians in the Middle East

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1 Context

The humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) has considerably deteriorated since 2000. In 2004, around 50% of the Palestinian population in the OPT (68% Gaza Strip) was living below the official poverty line of USD 2,10 per day, compared to just 22% living below the official poverty line prior to the start of the second Intifada in 2000, and the beginning of the construction of the wall by Israel in 2002. 16% of Palestinians (25% of the Gaza population) were living in extreme poverty.¹ Female-headed households displayed an incidence of poverty 1,3 times higher than households headed by men.² With coping mechanisms more and more eroded, reliance on humanitarian assistance has increased. Closures and movement restrictions, in addition to the loss of property caused by house demolitions, land expropriation and levelling by the Israeli army are the main causes of the worsening humanitarian crisis of the last five years. While the attention of the international community has focused on Israel's unilateral disengagement from the Gaza Strip and four small settlements in the Northern West Bank in September 2005, Israel has continued the construction of the wall, increased the number of flying checkpoints and settler-only roads in the West Bank, expanded existing settlements and constructed new settlements. The wall has cut Palestinians off from some of the most fertile agricultural land of the West Bank and consolidated Israel's control over the richest and best accessible water aquifer of the West Bank. The wall has also cut off residents from schools, universities, jobs, social support networks and specialised medical care; especially affecting women. In the long run, the wall, settler-only roads and settlements will divide the West Bank into three or more separate entities connected only by tunnels. East Jerusalem will remain de facto annexed. Israel's unilateral policies compromise the territorial contiguity and political, social and economic viability of a future Palestinian state, as envisioned by the Middle East Quartet (US, EU, UN, Russia) in the Road Map.

Since 1995, political and economic power has been concentrated and centralised in the Palestinian Authority. With some exceptions, the PA's reputation is one of corruption and inefficiency. The legal system and judiciary are underdeveloped. Left opposition parties have been weak; despite occasional attempts to create new movements or alliances. Clan networks influence politics and the economy. Against the background of this internal state of affairs, Israel's ongoing occupation policies and the ineffective response of the PA and PLO, Hamas has grown as a social and political opposition movement. After the death of Palestinian President Yasser Arafat in late 2004, presidential and municipal elections were held in 2005. Elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council took place in January 2006 for the first time since 1996 and were exemplary for the Middle East region, widely praised for their fairness and professionalism. Having boycotted the 1995 PLC elections, Hamas gained an absolute majority (74 out of 132 seats) marking a shift of power to an extent that was unexpected by most observers.

External aid to the OPT is far higher than to any other country in the region. In 2005, 50% of the PA budget was externally funded. The need to integrate humanitarian and emergency aid into sound,

¹ Cf. Four years – Intifada, Closures and Palestinian Economic Crisis, Worldbank, October 2004.

² UN ECOSOC Commission on the Status of Women: Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women, Report to the Secretary General. Forty-ninth session 28 February-11 March 2005E/CN.6/2005/4, 10 December 2004. VIA www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw49/documents.html.

constructive, longer-term sector planning is increasingly becoming a priority.³ In 2005, the Palestinian Authority was developing a multi-year development plan (MTDP) in close co-operation with governmental and multilateral donors.

The determining factors for the economy are external players, primarily Israel's economic containment policies and practices that further weaken the small, highly import-dependent Palestinian economy and its dependence on Israel (78% of exports go to Israel). This includes Israel's control over external borders, tax revenues, internal movement restrictions in the OPT, and imposed Israeli trade intermediaries. Formal employment is concentrated in government, services (local commerce, small and medium enterprises, NGOs), manufacturing and mining. The current unemployment rate has risen sharply to around 21%, partly because Palestinians can no longer access workplaces in Israel. An increasingly large informal survival sector, where women are disproportionately represented, is concentrated in agriculture and small family businesses. Women who used to work in the Palestinian textile industry are increasingly working as seasonal agricultural labourers. The gloomy economic prospects are not conducive to decent labour standards in the OPT.

Palestinian women in the OPT, Israel and Palestinian camps in Lebanon are subject to double discrimination or denial of rights: as women on one hand, and on the other hand because they live under the multiple restrictions of occupation in the OPT, as members of a minority in Israel, or as refugees denied civil, political and economic rights in Lebanon. The level of girls' school enrolment and female literacy levels are relatively high. The new election law adopted in 2005 includes a quota for women for national party lists again, due to intensive lobbying by Palestinian women's rights groups. Under the quota, 15 women were elected to the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) on the national party lists. However, no woman was elected directly on district level, where no quota was foreseen. Palestinian women live in patriarchal societies in which conservative religious trends are on the rise and their level of participation in the labour force is relatively low (14% OPT).

As in most countries, civil society, including NGOs, is politicised and often divided due to competition and/or strong divergences over vision and strategies – although several networks do exist. NGOs grew into major service-providers to Palestinian civilians before the establishment of the PA, and still fulfil a considerable role in this field. There is competition between local NGOs and (especially humanitarian) international NGOs that operate programs directly. In recent years, the PA, PLC and militia figures have increasingly founded so-called GO-NGOs. Local community-based organisations are effective but hardly have structural influence.

Palestinian refugees living in refugee camps in the West Bank and Gaza, Jordan, Syria and especially Lebanon continue to face extremely difficult conditions. In Lebanon, Palestinian refugees have been kept in a state of transitional humanitarian crisis for decades. According to some statistics the highest yearly income levels of Palestinian households (LL 6,5 million) is half of the lowest income level of Lebanese households (LL 13 million).⁴ In Lebanon, refugees have higher infant and maternal mortality than in any other host country or camp; and a two to three times higher rate of childhood chronic illness than in other host countries.

Palestinian citizens of Israel make up around 19% of the 6,3 million Israeli population and struggle to achieve equal rights and to counter discrimination. According to official statistics, Arab citizens of Israel and Arab municipalities fall within the lowest socio-economic strata of Israeli society. Arab

³ WHO CS 2006-2008.

⁴ Difficult Past, Uncertain Future: Living Conditions Among Palestinian Refugees in Camps and Gatherings in Lebanon. FAFO. Page 165-166.

citizens of Israel have the highest unemployment and poverty rates in the country. In the unrecognised Arab Bedouin villages in the Negev, the government denies basic services to citizens, such as connections to water and electricity networks and access to schools, health care facilities, etc.

In the Middle East, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been used as a major excuse for ruling governments in the region to delay democratic reforms. Societies feel alienated by the West's perceived double standards with regard to the application of international human rights law in the region, be it the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Iraq or Western Sahara. The discourse about international human rights and democracy is increasingly perceived as covering up for geo-politics. These factors have in part contributed to the increasing attraction of Islamist movements, which large parts of the public perceive as the only social and political force offering an authentic alternative vision.

2 Strategy for change

The Oxfams and the Palestinians

Oxfam International, Oxfam Great Britain, Oxfam Quebec, Oxfam Solidarité (Belgium) and Oxfam Novib address one of the world's most protracted conflicts which inflicts suffering on both Israeli and Palestinian civilians. The Oxfams are supporting counterparts and/or carry out operational programs in the West Bank and Gaza, Israel, Lebanon and Jordan. The emphasis of OI's work in the OPT is on taking action against structural causes of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the occupation, as well as its impact on lives and livelihoods. Oxfam International seeks a just and lasting solution in which both Palestinians and Israelis will enjoy human security and peace. In OI's analysis the eventual resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is rooted in International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and International Human Rights Law (IHRL) principles. Oxfam believes international law should be applied consistently and universally. The Oxfams have reached joint planning and response with regard to emergencies. For 2007-2010, the Oxfams will explore deepened co-operation in other fields, such as refugee programming.

Collaboration between the Dutch development actors

Oxfam Novib works together with ICCO, Cordaid, and IKV Pax Christi, in the frame of United Civilians for Peace (UCP), which has pooled resources on media, campaigning and advocacy work in the Netherlands. Oxfam Novib also coordinates with ICCO and Cordaid on programs through regular exchanges and joint participation in donor consortia. Oxfam Novib, ICCO and Cordaid are also engaged in a joint advocacy project regarding the implementation of the EU guidelines for the protection of human rights defenders in the OPT and Israel. EU cooperation priorities for the OPT complement Oxfam Novib's interventions. In the frame of EU priorities for the OPT, Dutch bilateral co-operation focuses on human rights, good governance and peace building. Development cooperation is part of Dutch foreign policy supporting a peace process in the Middle East. Financial support from the Netherlands is about 10 million Euro, in addition to considerable funding to UNRWA. Oxfam Novib, Cordaid and ICCO meet annually with the Netherlands Representative Office in Ramallah to discuss program and advocacy priorities.

Oxfam Novib strategy 2007-2010

Oxfam Novib has a core program for Palestinians in the Middle East, which puts strong emphasis on conflict transformation and resolution based on international law, particularly via lobby and advocacy (Aim 3.2). In addition, acknowledging the negative effect of the prolonged conflict on increasing poverty rates, health and education, Oxfam Novib will continue to support efforts to improve access to basic social services (Aim 2) and income and food security (Aim 1.1) both in the OPT and in the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. In the OPT, Oxfam Novib sees this as transitional intervention until the establishment of a functioning Palestinian state and emphasizes Israel's obligation as an occupying power to provide basic social services and not to obstruct the provision of such services.

Oxfam Novib will also support Palestinians in building a democratic and inclusive society and shaping laws and systems of their future state. Here Oxfam Novib will focus on labour rights in the

OPT and the right to work for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon (1.2), democratic institutions in the OPT (Aim 4), and rights and security of women in the OPT (Aim 5). In Israel, Oxfam Novib also works on equal rights of the Arab-Palestinian minority (Aim 5).

In a context of increased fragmentation and movement restrictions in the OPT, and in order to promote diverse approaches, Oxfam Novib will balance support to organisations working on a national level with decentralised structures (which play a key role in strengthening communities' coping strategies with the conflict) with support to medium-sized organisations.

Lobbying and public awareness raising about the conflict and its effect on increasing poverty levels will be an important focus for Linkis⁵ co-operation in the OPT. This will be an additional entry point for creating a broader support base in the Netherlands for a just solution based on international law. Oxfam Novib will seek co-operation with Palestinian and Israeli-Jewish groups working with rights-based approaches to conflict resolution, as well as professional associations in the fields of Oxfam Novib counterparts (e.g. health, education, and agriculture). In addition, Oxfam Novib will seize opportunities for Linkis activities which address other issues Oxfam Novib focuses on in the OPT (e.g. women's rights, democratic development and accountability).

Oxfam Novib's core program for Palestinians in the Middle East is an essential component of Oxfam Novib's overall program in the Middle East and Maghreb. First, where aims of the core program for Palestinians and the regional thematic MME program overlap, linkages are forged (Aims 1, 4, 5), e.g. through regional networks or linking and learning activities. Opportunities will also be sought to integrate Palestinian issues related to Oxfam International campaign themes into any regional advocacy strategy and policy position. Repercussions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the entire Middle East and beyond, are one of the reasons for Oxfam Novib's core program for Palestinians.

Aim 1 The right to a sustainable livelihood

Oxfam Novib will focus on the protection of economic rights of the marginalised population and on overcoming structural obstacles to economic development in the OPT and Lebanon. This leads to the following program components:

SCO 1.1 Food and income security

With economic 'de-development' and rising unemployment; agriculture and small businesses have provided a safety net for many families. However, marketing of (agricultural) products in the OPT is frustrated by delays at checkpoints, export quotas imposed by Israel and Israel's practice of dumping subsidised Israeli agricultural products in the OPT. Oxfam Novib will support one rural partner, including sustainable agriculture, and possibly micro-finance as means for poverty alleviation in the OPT. As various donors are interested to invest in the MFI sector, Oxfam Novib will carefully assess its added value in the MFI sector in the OPT, especially as MFIs in the OPT cannot receive loans yet, because they have not reached the level of sustainable operation. Both rural development and micro-finance will especially target (rural) women and youth, who experience the highest rate of unemployment. In addition, Oxfam Novib will support advocacy and lobby on movement restrictions, access to markets and the negative impact on livelihoods in the OPT.

⁵ See the Oxfam Novib Linkis strategic programme elsewhere in this annex.

Oxfam Novib itself will advocate on market access, unfair trade rules imposed by Israel and increasing poverty in the OPT. Oxfam Novib, in coordination with other OI affiliates, will also proactively look for opportunities to link the Palestinian policy agenda on trade and other issues of economic justice to the Oxfam International campaign agenda. (cf. SCO 3.2).

SCO 1.2 Employment based livelihoods, trade and markets

The Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU) is closely intertwined with the PA and critiqued for a lack of democracy. In reaction to that, workers' representative bodies have seen more and more initiatives become independent and democratic in recent years, both within member unions of the PGFTU and outside the official unions. A labour code has been promulgated but a weak judiciary and enforcement capacity negatively affects the implementation of labour rights. There are no formalised institutions for social corporate dialogue and no system to protect the unemployed.

Oxfam Novib will support one partner building the capacity of democratic workers' representative bodies to defend and promote workers' rights, with special emphasis on seasonal agricultural workers, the informal sector and other sectors with strong female employment; promoting a legislative framework for decent working conditions (e.g. trade union law) and the protection of the unemployed; lobbying for the creation of labour courts, and monitoring enforcement of judicial decisions regarding labour rights violations. In addition, Oxfam Novib will strengthen networking with other labour rights actors in the region, especially Oxfam Novib counterparts pursuing similar strategies in the regional labour rights program (MME).

Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are denied the right to work in 70 skilled professions outside the refugee camps or to own property. As a result, employment opportunities of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are very limited. Income is derived from small businesses set up in the refugee camps or illegal employment in Lebanese companies, with no respect for minimal labour standards. Oxfam Novib will support one partner providing vocational and business training as well as advocacy for the right to work for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. Due to the historically sensitive position of Palestinian NGOs in Lebanon, opportunities for lobby and advocacy have been limited and the capacities of local organisations relatively weak. Oxfam Novib will strengthen its partner's capacity to this end.

Aim 2 The right to basic social services

SCO 2.1 Basic health services

In the OPT, the Ministry of Health (MoH) is the main health care provider. Other health care providers include the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), Palestinian and international non-governmental organisations including the Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS) and some private (for profit) health sector organisations. Currently 36% of the primary health care centers in the OPT are run by NGOs. The fragmentation of the health sector compromises its efficiency, which is exacerbated by the impact of the occupation.

Against this background, Oxfam Novib will support one organisation providing community-based primary health care provision and health education, including health care provision and education on HIV/AIDS. The official incidence rates of HIV/AIDS (78 reported cases) and general awareness

on HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) are low but MoH surveillance is insufficient. On the basis of this community based PHC, replicable and affordable health care models and pro-poor health policies (with a strong focus on the health of women and children) are developed and promoted, and national health sector policies are monitored, which Oxfam Novib considers as the key added value of health NGOs in the OPT. In addition, Oxfam Novib will encourage co-ordination between health actors, in synergy with activities to strengthen the emergency preparedness of its counterparts (cf. Aim 3.1).

Palestinian refugees in Lebanon who can not afford private care, are dependent on UNRWA and PRCS health services. Services can hardly meet the demands and due to the impoverishment of the refugee community, local organisations report increasing instances of drug abuse and mental health problems. Non-registered refugees, living outside the official refugee camps, are not eligible for UNRWA health services. Oxfam Novib will therefore support one organisation in Lebanon providing health services and health education to refugees, especially women, in unofficial camps, and lobbying UNRWA to take responsibility for those communities. To this end, Oxfam Novib will strengthen the advocacy capacity of the partner.

SCO 2.2 Education

Enrolment in basic education (the first ten years of schooling) is almost comprehensive in the OPT. With the financial and technical assistance of the international donor community, a relatively sound educational system has been set up. Palestinian refugees are mainly depending on UNRWA for their basic education. However, dropout rates have increased. 52% of students report diminishing learning achievements due to the conflict, because of irregular attendance, overcrowded classrooms, lack of motivation and trauma. The UNRWA educational system in Lebanon is notorious for its low quality and old-fashioned teaching methods.

Oxfam Novib's strategy is to monitor the performance of the state and the role of Israel as the occupying power in ensuring access to quality basic education and to focus support on improving the quality of education. Innovative teaching methods will be supported, including participatory learning methods and gender as key criteria for quality (one counterpart). Palestinian NGOs will share their practices with other counterparts working in conflict areas, such as Afghanistan and Somalia/land through the Oxfam Knowledge infrastructure with and between counterparts (KIC) and will be supported to link up to regional and global campaign initiatives on education. Oxfam Novib will also raise the impact of the conflict on education in the frame of its Aim 3 advocacy.

Aim 3 The right to life and security

SCO 3. 1 Emergency aid

The humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian Territories is characterised by its protracted on-going nature (Israeli-Palestinian conflict) and by occasional emergency peaks. Oxfam Novib will respond to this situation in four ways. First, it will strengthen the preparedness of strategic counterparts for emergency response (humanitarian response standards, improved co-ordination mechanisms with other actors; linking relief and development) in the context of Oxfam International contingency planning. This will focus on the health, sanitation, water and nutrition sectors. Secondly, Oxfam Novib will ensure adequate internal capacity to assume its lead role for OI emergency response in the OPT. Thirdly, in case of emergency peaks, Oxfam Novib will fund emergency projects as in previous years when the response has an added value to responses of

other key actors. Last but not least, Oxfam Novib will lobby and advocate in the frame of Oxfam International's campaign on "Rights in Crisis" for the international community to assume its responsibility to ensure the protection of civilians and explore mechanisms to this end.

SCO 3.2 Conflict prevention

While the rights of Palestinians are firmly rooted in UN resolutions and international human rights conventions, peace negotiations and state practice (including the US and EU) have been ambiguous with regard to acknowledging international law as the framework for conflict resolution. Israel violates international humanitarian law (IHL) for its political interests (settlements, wall) which creates prejudicial conditions to a final settlement and weakens the Palestinian negotiation position even more as these facts are accepted by the international community. However, sidelining and compromising international law and the internationally recognised rights of Palestinians only further minimises the chances for a viable Palestinian state and hence a sustainable peaceful solution for both Palestinians and Israelis.

For its Aim 3.2 work, Oxfam Novib supports local counterparts and reserves its own resources for advocacy and lobby within Oxfam International and United Civilians for Peace (UCP). Oxfam Novib's strategy has the following components:

1. Monitoring violations of IHL and IHRL in the OPT, i.e. facts which render a solution based on international law impossible, focusing on the wall, settlements, East Jerusalem; placing those violations on the agenda of key political players, highlighting the necessity of respect for IHL and IHRL for a sustainable two-state solution and regional security; asking key international players to invoke those violations with Israel. Within the Rights in Crisis framework of Oxfam International, Oxfam Novib advocates for ending the Gaza blockade; for the need to address movement restrictions for aid to be effective and for European funding not to sustain the occupation; as well as for the right of Palestinians to water (one-two counterparts, UCP, Oxfam International).
2. Drawing to international attention the effect of fragmentation, movement restrictions and conflict on Palestinian society with increasing poverty rates, lack of access to quality basic social services and decreasing levels of education and health, a more and more fragmented territory which obstructs social and political participation, obstacles for human rights defenders, and increasing levels of domestic violence. Oxfam Novib envisages to link all aims to advocacy and public awareness raising for a solution of the conflict (cf. Aim 1; Aim 2; Aim 5) To this end, Oxfam Novib will strengthen the capacity of Palestinian counterparts – together with allied organisations in the frame of OI and MBN co-operation – to advocate and campaign for a solution based on international law in order to strengthen their discursive power, including influencing media messages (cross-cutting all counterparts, OI, UCP).
3. Ensuring the voices of refugees are heard in the search for a solution consistent with international refugee law and advocating for UNRWA to have protection mandate for Palestinian refugees (all refugee counterparts)
4. Promoting conflict transformation on basis of IHL and IHRL in Israel in order to change perceptions and discourse in Israel about the parameters for conflict resolution (one new partner).
5. Strengthen the role of women in conflict transformation based on international law, aiming to put UN Resolution 1325 into practice (one new partner).

Increasingly, the OPT is not only afflicted by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict but also armed inter-Palestinian feuds and misuse of small arms (cf. Risks in the section on probability of success). Oxfam Novib plans to address this in the frame of Aim 4 and strengthening the rule of law in the OPT.

Aim 4 The right to be heard

SCO 4.1 Social and political participation

Oxfam Novib will support one partner for monitoring and promoting human rights, respect for the rule of law at legislative, judiciary and executive levels by making use of international mechanisms such as the ENP. This includes monitoring the democratic practices of the Palestinian Authority and Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), holding these institutions accountable and ensuring the regular and fair conduct of local, parliamentary and presidential elections. In addition, Oxfam Novib will explore innovative approaches to promoting inclusive democratic processes in the OPT, e.g. through creative education methods geared to independent critical thinking, reflection on democratic challenges in the OPT, and fighting corruption. (one new partner)

Last but not least, Oxfam Novib mainstreams social and political participation in its work on the other aims, including by promoting counterparts' participation in the formulation of regional advocacy strategies and Oxfam International regional campaigns agenda, and providing capacity building opportunities to that end where needed. Oxfam Novib supports counterparts strengthening the capacity of their target group/grassroots constituencies (especially youth and women) and mobilising collective lobbying for amendments to laws in their respective sectors (e.g. education, health, women's rights, workers' rights, and agriculture). It does so also by supporting national campaigning in the framework of global movements such as GCAP and the GCE. In addition, several counterparts aim to strengthen the judiciary and monitor public spending in their fields of work (e.g. labour courts, legal awareness about women rights, budgets related to basic social services).

Aim 5 The right to an identity: gender and diversity

SCO 5.1 Identity

Capitalising on significant achievements of women's rights organisations in the OPT, Oxfam Novib will support building alliances for women's rights and strengthening female leadership in public and private sectors. Gender based violence (GBV) is a serious concern for Palestinian women in the OPT. Honor crimes have alarmingly increased over the past few years. Among Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, GBV is also reportedly on the rise. The ongoing conflict and humanitarian crisis is a major factor for the increase of violence levels. Oxfam Novib will support two counterparts providing legal, social and psychological services to victims of GBV, raising awareness about women's rights, gender-based violence and discrimination, monitoring the gender-sensitive application of laws, and lobbying for policy and legal changes to ensure gender equality and protection against violence. Thus family law, based on religious law, grants women unequal positions compared to men. Where possible, international mechanisms will reinforce local advocacy. In specific, Oxfam Novib will support advocacy internationally for Israel and the PA to adhere to international conventions regarding the position of women, and expose the relation between the Israeli occupation and the violation of Palestinian women's rights (cf. Aim 3.2).

Furthermore, Oxfam Novib will support one organisation fighting discrimination against the

Palestinian minority in Israel bringing litigation against discriminatory laws and administrative practice at various legal levels, and bringing discrimination to the attention of international human rights bodies and other actors.

Oxfam investment 2005⁶ and Oxfam Novib investment in 2005 and 2010

	Mln. €	# CPs	Aim 1	Aim 2	Aim 3	Aim 4	Aim 5
All Oxfams 2005	7.0	46	25%	17%	41%	7%	10%
Oxfam Novib 2005	2.2	13	16%	40%	13%	19%	12%
Oxfam Novib 2010	2.9	15	20%	25%	15%	25%	15%

Oxfam-Novib's investment per intervention strategy 2010

Direct poverty alleviation	Building civil society	Advocacy	Total
65%	20%	15%	100%

⁶ Preliminary figures of OI mapping 2004/2005.

3 Expected results

SCO 1.1 Food and income security

350,000-400,000 rural poor (especially youth) and refugees in OPT and in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon (60-70% female) have increased employment opportunities and improved food and income security through the provision of agricultural services, micro-finance, vocational and business training programs, advocacy for the right to work, for the Palestinians in Lebanon, better marketing facilities and advocacy for local and regional market access for Palestinian (especially agricultural) products.

SCO 1.2 Employment based livelihoods, trade and markets

By 2010, 25,000-30,000 workers (30% female) in the public, private and informal sector and agricultural workers are better equipped to collectively bargain for their rights because of more effective, democratic representative bodies, increased rights awareness, national labour rights legislation in line with ILO standards, effective judicial bodies and precedent setting court cases. Unemployed people in OPT are also better organised and able to raise their voices. 1500-2000 Palestinian refugees (80% women) in Lebanon have increased employment opportunities.

Policy and practice change: Trade union law in line with ILO standards is adopted and specialised labour courts are established.

SCO 2.1 Basic health services

600,000 (65% female) disadvantaged Palestinians in the OPT and Lebanon, especially women, children and refugees without access to UNWRA health services, have access to affordable basic health services and therefore improved health standards.

Policy and practice change: The Palestinian Ministry of Health develops health policies that meet the needs of the local population at affordable costs.

SCO 2.2 Education

Ten(s) of thousand(s) of disadvantaged Palestinian children and young adults (of which 60% are female) receive good quality and gender-sensitive education, preparing them for successful participation in social and economic activities.

SCO 3.1 Emergency aid

Palestinians who face a crisis beyond their coping mechanisms receive co-ordinated effective emergency aid from six - eight Oxfam Novib and OI counterparts, especially in the health, sanitation, water and nutrition sectors (estimated outreach 50,000-70,000, 50% female) consistent with Sphere standards and the ICRC Code of Conduct, and taking longer-term development into account. People affected by the conflict experience steps by European NGOs, EU to ensure the protection of civilians.

Policy and practice change: The international community (especially the EU) meets its obligation to ensure protection of civilians and uphold their right to quality assistance in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and develops effective mechanisms to this end.

SCO 3.2 Conflict prevention

Palestinians experience a decrease in violations of IHL and IHRL in the OPT, which will be monitored, widely publicised, and the end of which will be promoted, especially in the EU and Israel. The international community, especially Europe, will start holding all actors accountable for violations through public statements and applying diplomatic pressure. Refugees and women will have a stronger voice in negotiations related to their future through increasing their access to policymakers.

Policy and practice change: Key policy makers in the Quartet⁷ and public opinion in Europe increasingly recognise IHL, IHRL and international refugee law as basis for a sustainable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. All actors are held accountable for violations of IHL, IHRL.

SCO 4.1 Social and political participation

By 2010, 15,000-20,000 marginalised Palestinians, especially youth (of which 50% are female), organised in associations have participated in shaping key laws and holding the Palestinian local and national government accountable and monitoring public spending. Palestinians in the OPT benefit from strengthened rule of law and democratic institutions through monitoring of the judiciary, executive and legislative bodies.

SCO 5.1 Identity

By 2010, 8,000-10,000 Palestinians (of which 90% are female) in OPT and Lebanon enjoy increased protection from discrimination and violence through legal, social and psychological support services, increased rights awareness and laws that increasingly conform with CEDAW and they increasingly take a leading role in their communities.

300,000 Palestinians in Israel (50% female) benefit directly from decreasing discrimination in law and administrative practice, which have been challenged at various legal levels and in international human rights bodies, through lobbying parliament members and government officials, and through raising awareness about this discrimination locally and internationally.

⁷ The group, including representatives of the UN, Russia, the EU and the USA, involved in a peaceful settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

4 Probability of success

There are a number of *principal risks* that endanger the success of the strategy:

1. **Hamas might not accede to EU, US and Israel conditions of non-violence, recognising Israel's right to exist and accepting the status quo of peace agreements.** This could lead to aid to the PA being cut, which will have major implications, as in 2005, external donors funded 50% of the budget of the Palestinian Authority. The consequence would be that already high unemployment rates increase (PA is the main employer in OPT) and a Hamas-led PA would be unable to provide public services, with possible repercussion on internal conflict (cf. below). Advocacy towards the PA regarding the provision of services would be redundant if the PA has no funds. Aid could be channelled through UN, INGOs and NGOs instead, which would represent a setback for building Palestinian (state) institutions and therefore limit Oxfam Novib's possibilities to influence policy and practice change at national level. However, Hamas-led PA may tap resources from other parts of the world (Saudi-Arabia, Iran, Islamic institutions). If the Israeli government refuses talks with Hamas, further unilateral steps by Israel are likely, which would bode badly for a peace based on international law as promoted by Oxfam (Aim 3). It is very hard to determine at this moment in time what the likelihood of these possible repercussions of Hamas' election victory will be.
2. **Women's rights in the OPT might be curtailed** and international human rights standards might not be respected by Hamas-led government. Consequences for our strategy would be mainly that the political vision of Hamas contradicts views of Oxfam Novib's counterparts on controversial issues such as some women's rights and education. Legal changes and raising awareness for those values/rights in society (including via public education system) would be more difficult to obtain. The probability of such a set-back in social policies is rather unclear, but Hamas announces that Islamic law will be a source for legislation. The program may have to shift to focus on direct services and protection of women, awareness raising, media and work with e.g. Sharia courts.
3. **Major humanitarian crisis might emerge because of either internal armed Palestinian conflict in the OPT; or large-scale military incursions by Israeli army.** The consequences would be major. The program would possibly have to shift even more to service and humanitarian relief; advocacy and awareness raising issues would need to be put on hold. Protection of e.g. victims of GBV would be further weakened. Oxfam Novib monitoring would become difficult if travelling becomes impossible. However, travel restrictions would possibly not affect all of OPT at the same time or be temporary. Incidence of internal fights (tribal, political,) has already increased, especially in the Gaza Strip, but has also spilled over to the West Bank. Armed political confrontation has increased with Hamas election victory. Struggle around control over security services could develop into armed internal conflict. Israel has continued small-scale incursions in the West Bank and military attacks on Gaza Strip; considering the volatility of the situation larger scale operations could occur in the near future.
4. **Israel might continue to enjoy unwavering strong support** from the US administration, including on the refugee issue and the EU might further drift away from raising human rights violations with Israel in international forums with ENP. This would make it difficult to achieve the lobby goals against Israeli violations of Palestinian human rights, for attention to Palestinian refugee issues, or for a durable solution to the conflict based on international law, which is a major negative consequence for the strategy. Although alternative media reports increase, the

mainstream international media continues to present Israel as a peacemaker while in fact its destructive occupation policies and practices continue. The current ruling camp in Israel continues to pursue a strategy of conflict management, containment and unilateral steps. Hamas' election victory is indeed likely to reinforce EU and US support for Israel and is shifting the discourse about the conflict. It means that Oxfam Novib will have to adapt its strategy and pay more attention to IHL and IHRL respect by the PA; making sure the international law framework becomes a middle way between the various positions rather than being discarded as irrelevant. This could mitigate the consequences.

5. **Monopoly of large NGOs would not allow for enough space for democracy and pluralism in civil society.** While the size and weight of these NGOs is an opportunity for advocacy (both toward PA and internationally), it could negatively affect democratic development inside Palestinian society: large NGOs risk to derive their legitimacy from external funds, participation can become bureaucratized, local accountability and creative energy weakened. Oxfam Novib would succeed in parts of our strategy (advocacy), and less in others. Oxfam Novib will keep an eye on these dynamics, and possibly give more NGO newcomers a chance with new funding becoming available.
6. **Lack of effective co-operation between official trade unions and independent workers' rights bodies** might continue to exist. Consequences would be moderate as the desired improvement in workers' rights may not be achieved to fullest extent possible. Relations between unions and NGOs are particularly tense in the OPT; but independent workers' committees still contribute to main goals of legislative protection and workers organisation despite existing lack of co-operation. NGO work on workers' rights and strengthening workers' representation are perceived as competition by official trade unions and federations, so co-operation has always been walking a tightrope. On the other hand, official Palestinian trade unions don't do the job, i.e. intervention remains needed.

Nonetheless, an impressive list of *external social actors and factors* are conducive to the success of our strategy, which is explained below:

- Most larger NGOs in the OPT are comparatively strong and are active in international and regional networks, such as the People's Health Movement, EuroMed Human Rights Network, FIDH.
- Oxfam Novib has a variety of allied civil society organizations in the Netherlands, such as 'Een Ander Joods Geluid', FAST, UCP members. A number of strong international NGOs (e.g. Ford Foundation, APRODEV agencies) follow a similar approach to Oxfam Novib, creating synergies in programme and advocacy work and cooperate in donor consortia.
- EU policies for the OPT prioritise several areas which are complementary/relevant to Oxfam Novib's program: rule of law (judiciary reform, support to the electoral process, countering corruption), respect for human rights (political dialogue, civil society initiatives human rights) engaging civil society (initiatives in support of the Middle East peace process), economic viability (improve market access for Palestinian products). EU Association Agreement clause requiring respect for human rights, EU Guidelines for Human Rights Defenders and EU Neighbourhood policy are tools for advocating against IHL and IHRL violations and on democratic reform.
- Strategic links could be made to a possible future OI campaign on Aim 5 (especially women's rights in conflict) and Aim 4 (accountability and public spending)

Aim 1

- Other actors like Spanish unions, Grassroots International, follow a similar approach to supporting labor rights in the OPT. Some actors, like Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and Dutch trade unions, support and conduct dialogue with official unions, complementing Oxfam Novib's strategy.
- The Quartet Envoy and the World Bank have increasingly drawn attention to the necessity for lifting movement restrictions and free flow of goods for economic recovery of the OPT; which are powerful allies for market access/fair trade advocacy for, in particular, agricultural products.
- Since the death of Arafat in 2004, there seems to be more space for Palestinian NGOs to advocate for refugee rights. The Lebanese Minister of Labour decreed Palestinians refugees to be officially allowed to be employed for 'hard labour' – possibly a start for further exemptions to the restrictive Lebanese regulations for employment of foreigners/Palestinian refugees. In 2005, the Lebanese Ministry for Social Affairs has officially opened a dialogue with local Palestinian NGOs.

Aim 2:

- The MDGs (3,4 and 5) bring international attention and additional funding for health causes. The MDG (2) brings renewed attention to primary education. This is beneficial for advocacy regarding budget allocation for basic social services.

Aim 3:

- ICJ advisory opinion July 2004 on the wall and subsequent UN GA resolution highlighting third party responsibility to enforce respect for IHL; growing movement arguing for adopting IHL and IHRL discourse in lobbying for a solution of Israeli-Palestinian conflict; Euro-Med Human Rights network working group on Israel-Palestine providing shared Israeli-Palestinian platform; The UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has played a courageous role of monitoring and documenting the humanitarian crisis in the OPT highlighting its political causes.
- Increasing awareness inside EC/EU about its continuing violations of community law by accommodating Israel's practice regarding preferential tariff access of settlement products.
- New(er) groups in Israel's peace camp, such as Ta'ayoush, growing Refuseniks movement, Makhzoum Watch.
- The Dutch government is the sixth largest donor to UNRWA, which is a lobby opportunity regarding giving UNWRA protection mandate and increasing its service quality.

Aim 4:

- OPT can be seen as a state in formation, where civil society organisations have successfully engaged in commenting on and lobbying for draft laws in various sectors.

Aim 5:

- Several Palestinian women's committees and professional women's NGOs pursue similar goals.
- Two - three years ago the Ministry for Women Affairs was created, previously a sub-department in the Ministry of Social Affairs.
- Religious leaders if convinced to support women's rights (cf. minimum age for marriage) can

be potentially great opportunity.

Finally, Oxfam Novib has a strong *track record* due to long-standing relations with NGOs in the OPT, Israel and Lebanon since it started working in the region in the 1980s. Main Oxfam Novib achievements in the OPT 2003-2005 include:

- In OPT, 300 election monitors trained by Oxfam Novib partner PCHR (Palestinian Center for Human Rights), monitored municipal and presidential elections in 2005. Due to successful lobbying of Oxfam Novib counterparts in coalition with other civil society organisations, the new election law for the municipal and legislative elections 2005/2006 included a quota for women. In the PLC elections in January 2006, 15 women were elected under the quota.
- The highest Sharia judge in the OPT supported the suggestion by Oxfam Novib counterpart WCLAC (Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counselling) to raise the minimum age for marriage from 15 to 18 in draft revised personal status law. The support of this major religious authority will help further advocacy for an amendment to the personal status law. (2004) About 3,000 women received social support or legal aid and representation (2003-2005).
- Litigation by Oxfam Novib counterpart Adalah led to the cancellation of a plan that threatened more than 100 Arab farmers in Israel with the possible confiscation of 13,000 dunums (1300 ha) of their land. Adalah also achieved a key Supreme Court judgement holding that the exclusion of Arab towns from socio-economic plans of the Israeli governments, which have different objectives than the multi-year plan to develop the Arab sector, constitutes a prohibited discrimination (2004).
- In late 2005, Palestinian, Israeli and international female peace activists (including Oxfam Novib) launched the International Women's Commission (IWC) under the patronage of UNIFEM, aiming to strengthen the participation of women in conflict resolution as foreseen by UN Security Council Resolution 1325.
- A UCP delegation to the OPT in August 2005 received wide media coverage in the Netherlands, highlighting settlement and wall expansion in the West Bank violating international law and Israel's continuing occupation of Gaza.
- In 2004, an Independent Federation of Workers Committees and 67 new workers' committees (e.g. textile, agriculture) were founded in the Gaza Strip, as well as a Local Authorities Workers' Federation for municipal workers' committees in the West Bank. 126 cases of labour rights violations in Palestinian and Israeli labour market were solved and 103,335 USD obtained for clients.

In conclusion, against a protracted conflict where international and Palestinian efforts are more and more geared to preventing further 'de-development' and fragmentation of Palestinian society and further escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, opportunities and risks seem to be at even levels. However, considering the repercussions of the conflict on the Middle East and beyond, opportunities for conflict transformation and fighting poverty on all levels need to be seized; they are worth running the risks.

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