

ALL IN SCHOOL كلنا في المدرسة

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA  
OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN INITIATIVE

# STATE OF PALESTINE

COUNTRY REPORT ON OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN



July 2018

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# List of Abbreviations

ANAR	Adjusted net attendance rate	1
ANER	Adjusted net enrolment rate	2
ANIR	Adjusted net intake rate	3
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey	4
EDSP	Education Development Strategic Plan	5
EMIS	Education management information system	6
5DE	Five Dimensions of Exclusion	7
GDP	Gross domestic product	8
IDF	Israel Defense Forces	9
IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning	10
ILO	International Labour Organization	11
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education	12
JDE	Jerusalem Directorate of Education	13
JEA	Jerusalem Education Administration	14
LSCE	Life Skills and Citizenship Education	15
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey	16
MIS	Management information system	17
MoEHE	Ministry of Education and Higher Education	18
MoH	Ministry of Health	19
MoI	Ministry of Interior	20
MoL	Ministry of Labour	21
MoSA	Ministry of Social Affairs	22

MoSD	Ministry of Social Development	23
NGO	Non-governmental organisation	24
NIR	Net intake rate	25
NIS	New Israeli Shekel (1 NIS = 0.29 USD on 29.01.2018)	26
ODI	Overseas Development Institute	27
OOSC	Out-of-school children	28
OOSCI	Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children	29
PCBS	Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics	30
PECS	Palestine Expenditure and Consumption Survey	31
PNCTP	Palestinian National Cash Transfer Program	32
PwD	Persons with Disabilities	33
SoP	State of Palestine	34
TES	Teacher Education Strategy	35
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study	36
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training	37
UCW	Understanding Children’s Work	38
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics	39
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	40
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund	41
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East	42



# Preface

Education is the right of every child. It empowers children to thrive. It helps promote greater civic engagement and peaceful communities. It is the most effective investment against child poverty and one of the best economic investments a country can make. This is why every child should be in school. Every child must have access to quality education, so they can fulfill their potential.

In the State of Palestine, very few children of primary school age are excluded from education, but nearly five per cent of 10-15-year-old children and one out of three 6-9 year-olds with disabilities are out of school. The aim of this study is to identify who these excluded children are, where they live, and to understand why they are not in school.

Based on a global initiative led by UNICEF and UNESCO's Institute for Statistics, it aims at providing a more in-depth analysis, using a unique conceptual and methodological framework to develop comprehensive profiles of out-of-school children and link them to the barriers and bottlenecks that led to school drop-out. It takes into consideration a variety of factors such as socio-economic factors, the quality of education, and the influence of the environment, the community and the school.

This study aims not only at understanding what barriers and bottlenecks prevent access to school, but also at taking action about it. Based on research findings, it proposes practical ways of removing these barriers to get children back to school, and to keep the children who are at risk of dropping out in school. By promoting and implementing sound policies that address exclusion, we can make a substantial and sustainable reduction in the number of out of school children.

Keeping children in school or getting them back into school and learning safely is a collective effort, which must be brought to the forefront of policy makers' agendas. UNICEF and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education hope that all relevant stakeholders will use the results and the practical recommendations of this study. It will help every child in the State of Palestine to fully realize their right to safe and quality education, to the benefit of all.

**Dr Sabri Saidam**  
Minister of Education and Higher Education  
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# Executive summary

The country report on out-of-school children (OOSC) in the State of Palestine is the product of a year-long collaboration between the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). Motivated by their shared commitment to securing the right of every child in Palestine to inclusive and equitable quality education, the out-of-school children country report puts a spotlight on 5-15-year-old children excluded from and within education.

To this end, the report undertakes three tasks. It first provides detailed analyses of 5-15-year-old children who are both out of school, and who are in school but are at risk of dropping out, using the analytic frameworks developed by the Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children (OOSCI). It then identifies and describes the barriers that contribute to these children’s exclusion from education. Concurrently, it presents brief descriptions of existing policies and efforts towards addressing these barriers and recommends ways to strengthen existing efforts. Finally, the annexes to this report provide an in-depth exploration of three particular groups: children living in the Gaza Strip, 16-17-year-old children<sup>1</sup>, and children living in East Jerusalem.

This Executive Summary highlights the main findings from the analyses of children who are out of school or who are currently in school but are at risk of dropping out, the barriers bringing about their exclusion from and within education, and the landscape of pertinent policies. Those barriers to accessing quality education in the State of Palestine are grounded in the context that includes the reality of the ongoing development of Palestine’s education system, Israeli occupation and frequent episodes of armed conflict.

## Out-of-School Children and the Dimensions of Exclusion from Education

The OOSCI has developed an analytic framework that seeks to understand out-of-school children through five dimensions. These five dimensions include two different groups of children: children who are out of school (Dimensions One, Two and Three) and children who are in school but are at risk of dropping out (Dimensions Four and Five). Thus, the term “exclusion” takes on a different meaning for each group. For children who are out of school, the term refers to their exclusion from education. For children who are in school but are at risk of dropping out, the term refers to their possible exclusion within education as a result of non-inclusive teaching practices and discriminatory attitudes in the school environment, among others.

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<sup>1</sup> The upper secondary school age (11 and 12 Grade) is not part of the main analysis in terms of numbers. Including this group required special methodology because upper secondary is not mandatory in SOP, hence if a kid is out of school at grade 12, we cannot officially call it a case of drop out or out of school child.

Accordingly, in capturing exclusion from education in the State of Palestine:

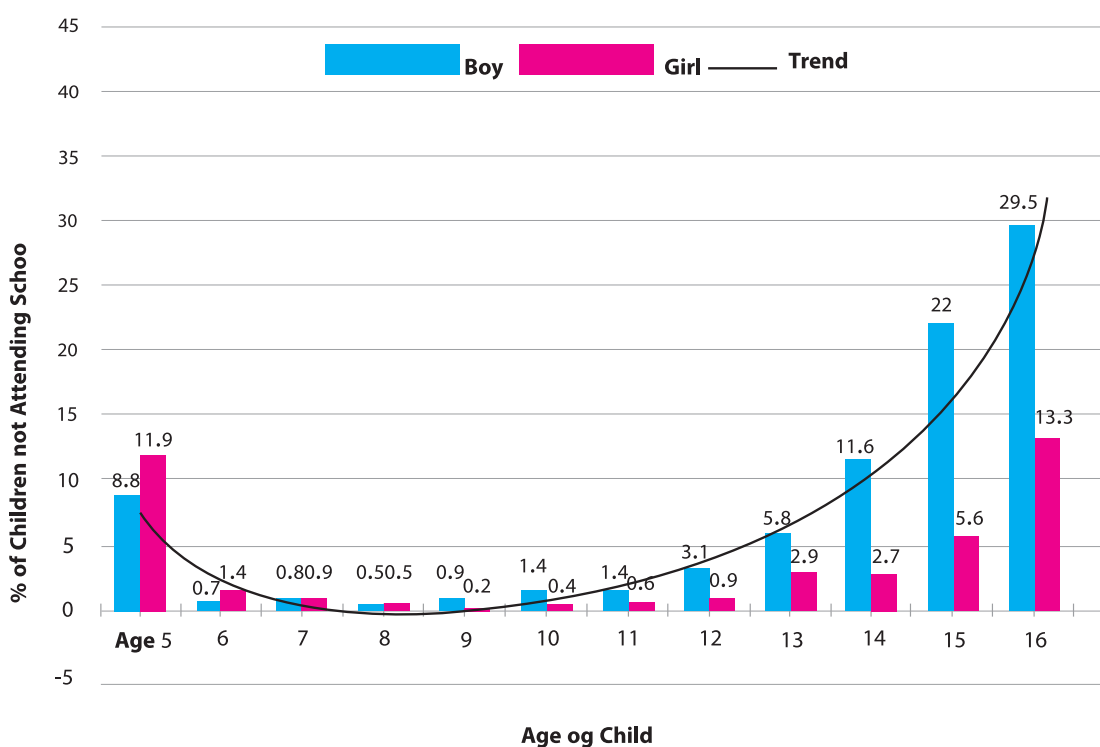
- **Dimension 1:** refers to 5-year-old children who are not in pre-primary or primary school,
- **Dimension 2:** refers to 6-9-year-old children who are not in primary or lower and upper secondary school,
- **Dimension 3:** refers to 10-15-year-old children who are not in primary or lower and upper secondary school.

In capturing exclusion within education in the State of Palestine:

- **Dimension 4:** refers to children who are in 1st-4th grades but are at risk of dropping out,
- **Dimension 5:** refers to children who are in 5th-10th grades but are at risk of dropping out.

Employing this analytic framework and comparing across the five dimensions, two notable patterns emerge. Firstly, using data from the 2014 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) of Palestinian households, an estimated 1.2 per cent of 6-9 year olds (corresponding to an estimated 5,611 children) and 4.9 per cent of 10-15 year olds (corresponding to an estimated 31,773 children) in the State of Palestine are out of school; and the relation between the rate of exclusion from education and age of the child is J-shaped<sup>2</sup>. At age 5, about one out of ten children are excluded from education. The rate of exclusion decreases at age 6, 7 and 8 and then increases slightly and gradually until age 12. The rate of exclusion almost doubles between ages 12 to 15, with about one out of fifty 12-year-old children excluded from education compared to about one out of seven 15-year-old children. This rapid increase in the rate of exclusion is particularly extreme for boys: about one out of four 15-year-old boys are out of school in the State of Palestine.

**Figure 1: Gender and Age Patterns for Exclusion from Education**



<sup>2</sup> A J-shaped curve refers to a “J” shaped section of a time-series graph in which the values start at one level then drop down and then gradually rise to a higher level than before the decline.

Secondly, the profiles of children falling under the different dimensions of exclusion vary. Household vulnerability, as experienced in the form of deep poverty and unstable household composition, emerges as a constant factor across all five dimensions of exclusion from education. Children growing up in vulnerable households attend pre-primary education at lower rates, some drop out in the early grades of primary education, and they are more likely to face academic challenges, repeat grades and drop out at higher rates during lower secondary education. At the very extreme, children from some extremely vulnerable households never enrol in school. Similarly, across all five dimensions, children with disabilities – particularly those with multiple disabilities, a psychological or an intellectual disability – experience exclusion from and within education at much higher rates than their peers. Among 6-9-year-olds, for instance, about one out of three children with disabilities and about one out of two children with multiple disabilities do not attend school. 14-15-year-old boys also emerge as a particularly important group for Dimensions Three and Five, yet the scale of their exclusion is staggering. In fact, 14 and 15-year-old out-of-school boys represent almost half of all 5-15-year-old out-of-school children.

### **Barriers to Accessing and Completing Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education**

The ultimate exclusion of a child from basic education often comes as a result of the interaction of various barriers related to the school, the child, the family, and the wider economic, political and security environment. The report prioritizes and groups a wide range of barriers into four categories based on their pertinence and importance for school drop-out rates, as well as their actionability.

1. The first group of barriers focuses primarily on the school and quality of education. Low academic achievement and lack of interest in education, all of which are closely related to the quality of education, are consistently identified as the primary reasons for the dropout of most children in recent survey-based studies. Therefore, this group of barriers focuses on the quality of education and the limited availability of tailored learning opportunities inside the schools. This leads to an exclusionary learning process and places many children at risk of dropping out due to low academic achievement. This group of barriers also highlights the gaps in providing different approaches to delivering education services delivered outside of schools.
2. The second group of barriers focuses primarily on the wellbeing of the child and the family. Recent survey-based on dropout show that for some children, deep poverty and the need to earn an income or external shocks such as health crises or deaths in family constitute the primary reason for their dropout. Preventive support services are therefore central to ensuring that such children with multiple disadvantages can continue attending and learning in school. The study recommends that such support services should include counselling services in schools, child protection services, and preventive health services.
3. The third group of barriers focuses primarily on economic barriers arising from the costs of education. Existing policies and practices concerning school donations; uniforms, textbooks and school stationary; school transportation; cash transfers and scholarships are reviewed to this end.
4. A fourth group of barriers are exclusionary administrative policies and practices that can push disadvantaged children towards dropping out of school. The report examines Palestine's repetition policy, policy on inter-school transfers, procedures for enrolment in first grade, and practices concerning the integration of over-age children who are returning to school after previously dropping out.

Building on these four groups of barriers, the report also discusses a fifth group of barriers related to education data and information collection in Palestine. Current data collection systems and administrative practices are unable to adequately identify children at risk of exclusion, and take preventative action in a timely manner. To this end, current administrative policies and practices are analyzed to understand how addressing design weaknesses and implementation inconsistencies in data collection can help reduce exclusion from education. Particular attention is given to ensuring enrolment in first grade and effectively monitoring absenteeism to prevent truancy.

### **Suggestions for Furthering Efforts in Provision of Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education**

The report puts forward various suggestions to contribute to the ongoing conversation about improving the provision of inclusive and equitable quality education in the State of Palestine to ensure that no child is excluded from and within basic education. These suggestions are presented in detail in Chapter Three against the five aforementioned groups of barriers to education, and summarized in the table below.

#### **Quality of Education: Targeting Children with Low Academic Performance – Pages 43 - 52**

##### **Possible interventions to improve the quality of education include:**

- Focusing quality improvement efforts on low performing schools (e.g. introducing incentives for high performing teachers to work in low performing schools, paying teachers in low performing schools for hours worked with low performing students beyond their core teaching time)
- Focusing quality improvement efforts in grades 1-4 (e.g. developing integrated literacy interventions, having classrooms teachers instead of subject teachers)
- Prioritizing children with low academic performance in teacher training programs, teacher assessments, teacher supervision, and school assessments

#### **Quality of Education: Tailoring Education Services Inside Schools – Pages 52 - 53**

##### **Possible interventions include:**

- Improving the implementation of remedial education plans
- Enhancing the availability and intensity of technical support to teachers for inclusive education in classrooms and integrated education in resource rooms
- Making resource rooms staffed with qualified teachers available in more schools
- Introducing year-round remedial education programs for children with low academic performance

## Quality of Education: Tailoring Education Services Outside Schools – Pages 53 - 54

### **Possible interventions include delivered ideally as a comprehensive package of services:**

- Improving quality and availability of second-chance education programs
- Providing second-chance education programs for children younger than 15
- Ensuring the effective implementation of the ongoing comprehensive reform of technical and vocational education and training
- Introducing different models of education for children in pastoralist communities
- Developing and implementing distance learning programs
- Facilitating and supporting the provision of education programs for children with severe cognitive disabilities by specialized education providers

## Preventive Support Services – Pages 58 - 56

### **Possible interventions delivered ideally as a comprehensive package of services include:**

- Provision of effective counselling services in all schools
- Equipping counsellors with the skills and tools to intervene in individual cases of children who are at imminent risk of leaving school
- Ensuring consistent implementation of the referral system under the Child Protection Network
- Enabling effective follow-up by school level actors for the treatment of children diagnosed with vision and hearing problems
- Improving the implementation of existing violence prevention programs
- Reintroducing nutritional support programs for school-age children

## Cost of Schooling – Pages 65 - 71

### **Possible interventions include:**

- Revising the policy and practice of collecting donations by schools (e.g. collecting donations on a sliding scale, taking measures to ensure donations are collected on a voluntary basis and spent transparently)
- Providing school grants for prioritized schools that predominantly serve children from poorest households
- Revising PNCTP benefits to increase its impact on educational attainment and strengthening its education related communication efforts
- Expanding school bus services
- Introducing need and merit based scholarships in targeted schools and targeted grades

## Administrative Regulations and Practices – Pages 71 - 77

- MOEHE to undertake a comprehensive review of administrative regulations and practices as appropriate with a view to revise those practices that contribute to exclusion from education, including grade repetition, inter-school transfers, enrolment in first grade, integration of over-age children into school

## Identification of Children at Risk of Exclusion – Pages 77 - 80

### Possible interventions include:

- Improving data systems to ensure all children are enrolled in first grade
- Improving monitoring of absenteeism at the school level by introducing early warning systems with follow-up and response protocols
- Improving administrative data collection systems by enhancing data sharing arrangements, the quality of administrative data on dropout, and the availability and quality of administrative data.

In Chapter Four and below, these policy suggestions are presented with a focus on their implementation. Implementing some of these suggestions would involve relatively easy changes to administrative procedures, while others would require introducing new procedures to bolster efforts for early detection and prevention of exclusion from education. Implementing some other suggestions would involve tagging on to existing policies and reform efforts in ways that maximize their positive impact for children at risk of exclusion from education. Finally, some of the suggestions put forward would require introducing new programs and interventions for preventing and reversing exclusion from basic education.

1. **Quick Fixes:** While addressing structural and systemic barriers is paramount to ensuring all children complete basic education, there are also several 'quick fixes' targeting small administrative practices that make or break some children's continuation in school. These children live in vulnerable households and lead particularly precarious lives. Thus, being faced with facilitating administrative procedures as opposed to administrative barriers could, at times, make the difference between keeping these children in school versus pushing them out. The report presents several ideas for eliminating these administrative barriers and instead introducing facilitating procedures in areas such as enrolment in school, collection of donations by schools, inter-school transfers, and truancy policies. These ideas are not meant to be a comprehensive list, but instead they are meant to underscore the need for a comprehensive review of existing administrative practices with a view to identifying and acting on quick fixes.
2. **Bolstering Existing Efforts:** Various efforts are already underway for identifying children who are at risk of dropping out of school with a view to preventing or reversing their exclusion from education. These efforts include but are not limited to school counsellors, remedial education plans, inclusive education, resource rooms, free or subsidized school bus services, monitoring and following up on truancy. Bolstering these existing efforts for early detection and prevention of dropout by improving the quality and coverage of their implementation is crucial to reducing the number of children excluded from education. Recognizing the challenge of implementing such efforts nationwide, the report suggests identifying schools with the highest drop-out rates in each district and focusing these efforts, at least initially, on these schools.



- 3. Mainstreaming:** Commendable efforts are underway in the State of Palestine to improve services in education, health, social protection, and child protection. Some of these efforts, such as the child protection network, Palestinian National Cash Transfer Program (PNCTP), curriculum reform, and teacher trainings, will indirectly benefit children who are out of school or at risk of dropping out of school. The report suggests mainstreaming out-of-school children into these ongoing efforts to maximize their positive effect on these children. Some of the suggestions presented in the report include: 1) revising the PNCTP benefits to help vulnerable families meet the indirect costs of education as well as incentivizing completion of basic education and transition to upper secondary school; 2) strengthening the child protection network's referral system for out-of-school children and children who are at risk of dropping out; and 3) targeting the MoEHE's system-wide efforts for improving teacher competencies and curricula in ways that increase their benefits for children who have low academic achievement.
- 4. New Programs:** Despite various commendable efforts already underway, in certain areas the need for new interventions remains. Some of these areas presented in the report are: 1) development of distance learning programs; 2) new programs for children with multiple disabilities and severe cognitive disabilities; 3) high quality and widely available second-chance education programs, back-to-school programs, and programs for the integration of over-age children back to school; 4) school or community-based remedial education programs targeting children with low academic achievement; 5) alternative education programs for children living in pastoralist communities; 6) grants for schools serving the poorest and most vulnerable communities. While new interventions are a crucial aspect of effectively addressing the exclusion of children from education, given the fiscal constraints facing the MoEHE, financing these new interventions in a sustainable and comprehensive manner requires looking beyond fragmented donor-funded programs and integrating these efforts into future Education Development Strategic Plans (EDSPs). In the short-term, donor-funded programs in these areas could be utilized as an opportunity for piloting these efforts. Furthermore, alternative financing models such as public-private partnerships could be explored to this end.

This report on out-of-school children in the State of Palestine represents a milestone in the MoEHE and UNICEF's efforts to provide inclusive and equitable quality education for all 5-15-year-old children in the State of Palestine. The analyses on out-of-school children and the policy landscape presented in this report aims to take stock of past achievements, while the policy suggestions hope to inspire future efforts.

# 1

# Introduction to OOSCI and the State of Palestine Education System

This country report is the product of a year-long collaboration between the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Motivated by their shared commitment to securing the right of every child in Palestine to inclusive and equitable quality education, the MoEHE and UNICEF developed this report as part of the Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children (OOSCI).

## 1.1 Overview of the Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children

UNICEF and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) launched the OOSCI in 2010.<sup>3</sup> The overarching goal of OOSCI is to make a significant, sustainable reduction in the number of children who are out of school around the world. To this end, OOSCI works with ministries of education to: (1) improve the statistical information and analysis on out-of-school children; (2) identify and analyse the barriers that contribute to exclusion from education; and (3) identify and promote sound policies that address exclusion from education.

The State of Palestine country report on out-of-school children is the culmination of MoEHE and UNICEF's joint efforts towards these three objectives. By using a systematic approach to identifying out-of-school children and to analysing relevant policy challenges, this report strives to guide future education policies that will help all children in Palestine enrol, stay and learn in school. The analyses of the scope of exclusion from education presented in this country report concern all children in the State of Palestine, including those in MoEHE schools, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) schools, and private schools. The policy analyses and recommendations, focused primarily on MoEHE schools but also to the extent possible included private schools and non MOEHE schools in East Jerusalem, as well as UNRWA education experiences.

## 1.2 Country context

The State of Palestine had an estimated population of about 4.8 million people in mid-2016 with 48.0 per cent of the population under the age of 18.<sup>4</sup> The country is divided into two physically separated geographic regions, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. 60.9 per cent of the population lives in the West Bank, which has a population density of 519 per square kilometre. 26.3 per cent of the Palestinian population in the West Bank had refugee

<sup>3</sup> More information on OOSCI in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region as well as OOSC reports of other countries in the MENA region can be reached at <http://www.oosci-mena.org/>.

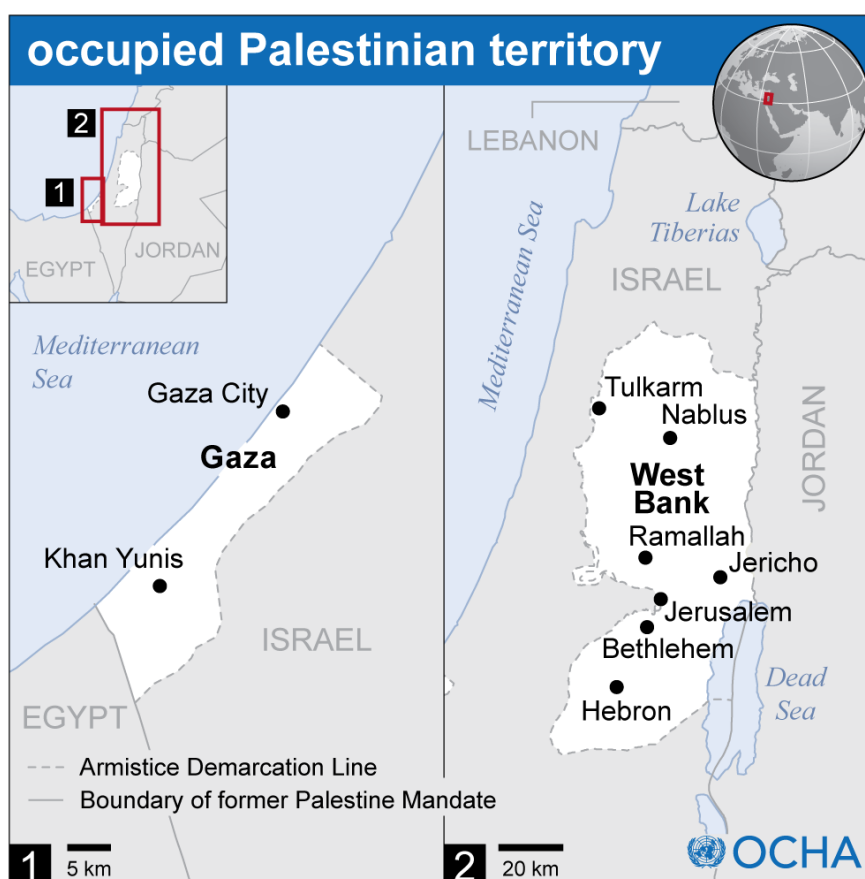
<sup>4</sup> The exact figure for the mid-year 2016 estimated total population is 4,816,503 and 0-18 population is 2,312,878. (PCBS single year population projections).

status in 2015.<sup>5</sup> The Gaza Strip, on the other hand, has a high population density of 5,154 per square kilometre, and 67.7 per cent of the Palestinian population in the Gaza Strip had refugee status in 2015.<sup>6</sup>

The governance of Palestine is characterized by multiple layers of divisions:

- Administratively, the country is divided into two regions, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip with 11 governorates in the West Bank and 5 governorates in the Gaza Strip.
- The two regions are institutionally separate, with parallel administrations in Ramallah and Gaza City since 2007 and are geographically not connected.
- The West Bank is further divided administratively into three areas in accordance with the Oslo II Accord. Area A is exclusively administered by the Palestinian government; Area B is under Palestinian civil control and joint Israeli-Palestinian security control; Area C is under Israeli security and administrative control, except for education and health services which are provided by the Palestinian government.<sup>7</sup>
- In addition to this administrative division in the West Bank, East Jerusalem has been occupied by Israel since 1967, and the administration of services is under the Israeli authorities' control.<sup>8</sup>

**Figure 2: Map of the State of Palestine**



<sup>5</sup> PCBS: Statistical Yearbook of Palestine 2016

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Note that the data on number of schools aged children per area is not available at present.

<sup>8</sup> Please see Annex 3 for an analysis of out-of-school children in East Jerusalem.

Economic development in Palestine is very fragile, leading to widespread poverty. The GDP per capita at the national level is \$4,715,<sup>9</sup> however, vast regional differences exist in the distribution of income. Poverty rates are notably higher in the Gaza Strip, with 21.1 per cent of the population living in deep poverty compared to 7.8 per cent of the population in the West Bank.<sup>10</sup> Yet significant differences in poverty rates also exist within the West Bank<sup>11</sup>, with the highest rates found in the governorates of Hebron and Jericho, isolated Bedouin communities, and communities in Area C.<sup>12</sup> The intra-Palestinian political separation between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip has also created disparities in public expenditures: in the Gaza Strip currently serving teachers sometimes do not receive their salaries for several months at a time or receive only partial salaries, and parents' voluntary contributions to schools have become a major source of revenue for Gaza's education administration.

The protracted conflict, recurring rounds of armed conflict, the Gaza blockade and the occupation of East Jerusalem have all had detrimental effects on the economic situation in the State of Palestine. The conflict has also contributed to some of the barriers preventing children from realizing their right to quality education, such as the lack of schools and classrooms, psychosocial impacts of the conflict on children, attacks and threats of attacks on schools, students and teachers, and other interferences with education.

### 1.3 Education system in State of Palestine

The Palestinian education system is comprised of pre-school education, basic education, secondary education and non-formal education: <sup>13</sup>

- Pre-school education consists of two years and is not compulsory. Pre-school education is primarily delivered by for-profit or non-profit private providers.<sup>14</sup> Not all private providers of pre-school education are registered with the MoEHE.
- Basic education includes grades 1-10 and consists of two levels: preparatory stage (1st-4th grades) and empowerment stage (5th-10th grades). Education from 1st-10th grades, i.e. the preparatory stage and the empowerment stage, is compulsory in Palestine. The official age of enrolment in 1st grade is 6.<sup>15</sup> Basic education is provided by three types of schools: (1) public schools managed by the MoEHE; (2) schools managed by UNRWA; and (3) private schools managed by for-profit and non-profit entities which are registered with and monitored by the MoEHE<sup>16</sup>.
- Secondary education includes academic and vocation education for 11th and 12th grades. Secondary education is provided by public schools managed by the MoEHE, as well as private schools managed by for-profit and non-profit entities which are registered with and monitored by the MoEHE.

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<sup>9</sup> GDP per capita (PPP constant 2011 international \$), 2016 World Development Indicators

<sup>10</sup> Figures from 2011; PCBS: Statistical Yearbook of Palestine 2016. A total of 38.8 per cent of the population in the Gaza Strip lives in poverty compared to 17.8 per cent in the West Bank. PCBS defines poverty as living on a monthly income of NIS 2293 (2011) and deep poverty as living on a monthly income of NIS 1832 (2011) for a family of two adults and three children. (Palestine Human Development Report 2014).

<sup>11</sup> World Bank, *Coping with Conflict?: Poverty and Inclusion in the West Bank and Gaza*, 61293-GZ, July 2011.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* It should be noted that East Jerusalem was not included in the local poverty rate calculations presented in this report, as well as a later poverty mapping exercise of PCBS and World Bank, due to limitations posed by survey coverage.

<sup>13</sup> Note that the education system in the SoP was revised with the Palestinian Law of Education and Higher Education ratified in April 2017. The new system consists of nine years of primary education and three years of secondary education. Due to the past-oriented nature of the OOSC analyses, this report uses the previous system as its point of reference. It should also be noted that the stages of education used by UNRWA differ from MoEHE's.

<sup>14</sup> During the 2015-2016 school year 88,487 children were enrolled in second-stage kindergartens registered with the MoEHE. Of these children, just 1,938 (2.2 per cent) were enrolled in a public pre-school managed by the MoEHE. (MoEHE Education Statistics Yearbook, 2015-2016 and administrative data shared by MoEHE in August 2017)

<sup>15</sup> According to MoEHE regulations, a child needs to turn 6 by January 31st of the relevant school year to enroll in 1st grade. UNRWA schools follow the same rule, though some private schools may have later cut-off dates.

<sup>16</sup> In East Jerusalem, Palestinian students receive education through five types of service providers. See Annex 3 of this study for details

- Finally, non-formal education consists of parallel education programs and literacy programs provided in non-formal education centres run by the MoEHE. In addition, non-formal education also includes other programs provided in vocational training centres run by the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) or the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA), the Ministry of Labour (MoL), UNRWA, or for-profit and non-profit non-governmental actors.

During the 2015-2016 school year, there were 1,053,513 children enrolled in 1st-10th grades in 1,285 public schools, 353 UNRWA schools, and 316 private schools in Palestine.<sup>17</sup> There are roughly an equal number of co-educational, all girls, and all boy's schools.<sup>18</sup>

It is worth noting that public schools do not correspond to the official education stages, and instead have a wide range of grades, including but not limited to 1st-2nd grades, 1st-3rd grades, 1st-4th grades, 4th-7th grades, 1st-10th grades, 5th-12th grades, 10th-12th grades, and 11th-12th grades. UNRWA, on the other hand, offers education services only for Grades 1st-9th, after which students are expected to transfer to public or private schools.<sup>19</sup>

It is also worth noting that the education stages in Palestine map precisely onto the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) levels established by UNESCO to facilitate international comparison of education indicators: in Palestine the pre-primary stage corresponds to the ISCED level 0 for pre-primary education, the preparatory stage (1st-4th grades) corresponds to the ISCED level 1 for primary education, the empowerment stage (5th-10th grades) corresponds to the ISCED level 2 for lower secondary education, and secondary education (11th-12th grades) corresponds to the ISCED level 3 for upper secondary education.

Palestine's education sector is fragmented, reflecting the broader administrative fragmentation described earlier in this section:

- At the national level, the MoEHE based in Ramallah is responsible for overseeing the education sector across Palestine. In addition to supervising the provision of education services in public schools in the West Bank through its 17 district offices, the MoEHE office in Ramallah also monitors the provision of education by private schools.
- Given the political separation between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, there is a parallel MoEHE office in Gaza City that supervises the provision of education services in public schools in the Gaza Strip through its 7 district offices.
- UNRWA also provides education services to children registered as refugees in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.<sup>20</sup> UNRWA's headquarters in Amman is responsible for providing strategic direction for education services delivered by field offices across Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine. The two UNRWA field offices in East Jerusalem and Gaza City oversee the provision of education services in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, respectively.<sup>21</sup> Eight per cent of basic education students in the West Bank and sixty per cent of basic education students in the Gaza Strip attend in schools managed by UNRWA.<sup>22</sup> The two field offices have working relationships with the respective MoEHE offices in Ramallah and in Gaza City, primarily for information sharing and coordination.

<sup>17</sup> MoEHE Educational Statistics Yearbook, 2015-2016.

<sup>18</sup> There are 931 co-educational schools, 954 all-girls schools, and 1029 all-boys schools at basic and secondary education levels in Palestine (MoEHE Education Statistics Yearbook, 2015-2016).

<sup>19</sup> The only exceptions are the UNRWA schools in Shufat Camp in East Jerusalem, where 10th grade is available.

<sup>20</sup> There are certain exceptions to this rule. For instance, if there are no MoEHE schools within a certain distance of a non-refugee child's place of residence and there is a closer UNRWA school, procedures are in place to allow this non-refugee child to attend a UNRWA school.

<sup>21</sup> UNRWA also provides education services in Syria, Lebanon and Jordan to Palestine refugees.

<sup>22</sup> Figures calculated based on administrative data (MoEHE Education Statistics Yearbook, 2015-2016). 48,776 students out of 610,088 in the West Bank and 248,059 students out of 443,425 in the Gaza Strip are enrolled in UNRWA schools providing basic education.

## 1.4 Conceptual framework of the OOSCI <sup>23</sup>

The OOSCI's conceptual framework for analysing out-of-school children and understanding their exclusion from education has two components: exposure to education, and dimensions of exclusion from education.

The first component focuses on a child's exposure to education and divides out-of-school children into three groups: children who had previously entered school in the past and dropped out (drop-out children); children who have not entered school yet but are expected to enter school in the future (late entrants); and children who have not entered school and are expected to never enter school (non-enrollers).

The second component of OOSCI's conceptual framework focuses on the different dimensions of exclusion from education, as well as exclusion within education. The Five Dimensions of Exclusion (5DE) are central to OOSCI's analytic approach:

Accordingly, in capturing exclusion from education in the State of Palestine:

- **Dimension 1:** refers to children of pre-primary school age who are not in pre-primary or primary school;
- **Dimension 2:** refers to children of primary school age who are not in primary or (lower and upper) secondary school;
- **Dimension 3:** refers to children of lower secondary school age who are not in primary or (lower and upper) secondary school;
- **Dimension 4:** refers to children who are in primary school but are at risk of dropping out;
- **Dimension 5:** refers to children who are in lower secondary school but are at risk of dropping out.

These five dimensions include two different groups of children: children who are out of school and children who are in school but are at risk of dropping out. As a result, the term 'exclusion' takes on a different meaning for each group. For children who are out of school, the term refers to their exclusion from education. For children who are in school but are at risk of dropping out, the term refers to their possible exclusion within education as a result of non-inclusive classrooms, teaching practices, and discriminatory attitudes in the school environment.

In Palestine, these five dimensions of exclusion correspond to the following groups of children:

- **Dimension 1:** refers to 5-year-old children who are not enrolled in pre-school or in preparatory stage

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<sup>23</sup> This section of the report is based on the corresponding section in the Operational Manual of the Global Out-of-School Children Initiative (UNICEF, 2015).

- **Dimension 2:** refers to 6-9-year-old children who are not enrolled in preparatory or empowerment stages (grades 1-10);
- **Dimension 3:** refers to 10-15-year-old children who are not enrolled in preparatory, empowerment or secondary stages (grades 1-12);
- **Dimension 4:** refers to children who are enrolled in 1st-4th grades but are at risk of dropping out;
- **Dimension 5:** refers to children who are enrolled in 5th-10th grades but are at risk of dropping out.

## 1.5 Education system in State of Palestine

A four-pronged methodology was employed in the preparation of the OOSC country report for the State of Palestine. Given the wealth of data from studies of out-of-school children in Palestine, as well as the availability of several survey-based studies on dropout from school, no original data was collected for the purposes of this report. The four prongs of the methodology, therefore, included:

- A desk review of 130 documents and reports about education, social protection, health, and child protection in Palestine, including three survey-based studies on the why Palestinian children drop out of school;<sup>24</sup>
- Original analyses of household survey data from the 2014 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) and the 2011 Disability Survey concerning out-of-school children; and secondary analyses of household survey data from the 2010 MICS concerning working children;
- Analyses of aggregated administrative data from the MoEHE;
- Analyses of interviews with 20 education policy makers from the MoEHE at the central level, 22 district- and school-level education program managers; and five focus group discussions with school principals, teachers, and counsellors to gain insights into existing policies and their implementation concerning barriers to education.

Additionally, interviews were conducted for the preparation of thirteen case studies of out-of-school children in Palestine. Their stories are shared throughout this report to help all of us remember the individual children behind the numbers and the figures.

The process for developing this country report on out-of-school children consisted of three main steps:

- Preparation of data analyses and draft report by a team of consultants with technical guidance from the MoEHE and UNICEF offices;

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<sup>24</sup> Please refer to the Bibliography for a partial list of the sources included in the desk review.

- Workshops and consultative meetings with two technical committees in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip under the leadership of the MoEHE and with participation from key actors and Ministries including UNRWA, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), MoSD, MoL, Ministry of Health (MoH), UNICEF, and UNESCO;
- Validation workshop with the participation of a wider group of relevant actors.

## 1.6 Structure of the OOSC country report

This report is composed of four chapters, including this introduction chapter. Chapter 2 presents the profiles of children in the five dimensions of exclusion based on analyses of household survey data and administrative data. Based on these profiles, Chapter 3 discusses the main barriers that bring about the exclusion of children from education, describes existing policies to overcome these barriers, and makes suggestions for new policies to strengthen existing efforts. The final chapter summarizes the key profiles, barriers and policy suggestions with a view to highlighting critical areas of impact to ensure all children in Palestine benefit from an inclusive and equitable quality education. The three annexes to the country report present analyses and findings specific to three groups of children: children in Gaza Strip, children of upper secondary school age, and children in East Jerusalem.



# 2

## Profiles of Children Excluded from Education

This chapter describes in detail the scope of the problem of exclusion from education and the profiles of children who are either excluded from education or are at risk of being excluded. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section provides an assessment of relevant data sources. The second section describes the scope of the exclusion problem in Palestine using the 5DE framework. The third section highlights three profiles of children to illustrate the severity and the scale of their exclusion from education. The chapter concludes with a summary of the main findings.

### 2.1 Data sources and quality

To analyse the various issues concerning out-of-school children, both household survey data and administrative data are crucial. Household survey data refer to data on children's school attendance collected with a household survey questionnaire. Administrative data, on the other hand, refer to data on student enrolment collected and reported by schools. In order to calculate access and exclusion rates, census data and related population projections are necessary. Palestine has a rich pool of household survey data and regularly collects administrative education data. This section of the report describes the selection of the data analysed for the out-of-school children study and the implications of this selection for the findings.

#### **Household survey data: Limitations concerning coverage and disaggregation**

For the purposes of the out-of-school children analysis, various household surveys were reviewed. Based on quality, coverage and date of the survey, as well as to ensure consistency with out-of-school children studies carried out in other countries, the most recent MICS survey conducted in 2014 was selected as the primary source for household-level data. The MICS have been conducted in over 100 countries since 1995, and provide internationally comparable data on health, education, and wealth with a particular focus on women and children. A MICS was previously conducted in Palestine in 1996, 2000, 2010 and 2014.

The 2014 MICS data enables researchers to conduct a rich array of secondary analyses involving the characteristics of the household and its members, with a particular focus on women and children. However, it also presents some limitations for the scope of analysis and level of disaggregation. The 2014 MICS, for instance, did not include questions concerning disabilities in children or the work status of children under the age of 15. For the purposes of the out-of-school children study, the 2014 MICS was therefore supplemented with other household survey data in order to investigate exclusion issues for children with disabilities and working children. Data from a disability survey conducted

in 2011 was analysed to understand the scope and patterns of exclusion among children with disabilities. The 2011 Disability Survey is the most recent nationally representative survey on disabilities in Palestine. Similarly, existing analyses of data from the MICS 2010 concerning child labour was used to investigate the exclusion of working children from education opportunities.<sup>25</sup>

Yet, data from both the 2011 Disability Survey and the 2010 MICS present some limitations. The questionnaire for the disability survey, for example, is adapted for children but it is not designed specifically for children.<sup>26</sup> This is a limitation because defining a disability in children is more difficult than in adults because children reach developmental milestones at different times, and the types of disabilities in children differ from those in adults. Also, the data from these surveys are from 2011 and 2010 respectively, yet they address issues that are evolving rapidly. Child labour dynamics have been changing in recent years in response to shifting demands in Palestine's highly volatile labour market, and the exclusion of children with disabilities within formal education is changing in response to efforts to provide more inclusive education in the State of Palestine.

The design and data collection for the 2014 MICS allows for disaggregated analyses at many levels, including by governorate, region (West Bank-Gaza Strip), type of residence (urban-rural-camp), household composition, mother's education, and the wealth quintile of the household.<sup>27</sup> To ensure the quality of estimates used for secondary analysis in this report, we discarded estimates based on fewer than 25 unweighted cases, and estimates based on 25-49 unweighted cases are reported with a note to indicate the small sample size.<sup>28</sup>

### **Administrative data: Limitations concerning disaggregation, collection, and coverage**

This study makes extensive use of the annual administrative data collected by MoEHE. The analyses conducted for this report do not use the raw administrative data, but rather the aggregated figures published in the MoEHE's annual statistical yearbook. The yearbook aggregates the school-level data collected using questionnaires that are sent to all registered schools during the month of November in the West Bank, and during the months of October and February in the Gaza Strip. Completed by school staff members, these surveys report information about students, staff members, and facilities.

Administrative data used in this study allows for disaggregated analyses at many levels, including by education district, region (West Bank and Gaza Strip), and supervising authority (MoEHE, UNRWA, private). However, it doesn't allow for disaggregation by socio-economic characteristics of the child (such as refugee status, disability status, household income) or of the community (urban, rural, camp).

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<sup>25</sup> The analyses of child labour was done by the Understanding Children's Work (UCW) program, which is an inter-agency research cooperation initiative involving the International Labour Organization (ILO), UNICEF and the World Bank. The analyses are available on UCW's website.

<sup>26</sup> The 2011 Disability Survey uses the Washington Group questions, which provides standard definitions and methodologies for disability to enable internationally comparable data. A 2016 study on the needs of children with disabilities in the SoP considers the application of Washington Group questions to children to be problematic for two primary reasons (Overseas Development Institute, Ministry of Social Development and United Nations Children's Fund, Every Child Counts: Understanding the Needs and Perspectives of Children with Disabilities in the State of Palestine, December 2016). Firstly, defining disability in children is considered to be more difficult than in adults since children reach different milestones at different times. Secondly, types of disability in children can be different from those in adults and thus, assessing child disability with the same questions used for assessing adults can sometimes be inappropriate. The same study identifies the Child Functioning Question Set (currently being developed) that asks different questions for children aged 2-4 and children aged 5-17 to be more appropriate.

<sup>27</sup> MICS data provides a wealth index for the household, which is a composite measure of that household's cumulative living standard. The wealth index is generated with principal component analyses and uses data on a household's ownership of selected assets. The wealth index places households on a continuous scale of relative wealth and then separates them into five wealth quintiles (20%). References to "poorest households" in this report correspond to households in the lowest wealth quintile, and references to "richest households" correspond to households in the highest quintile.

<sup>28</sup> This rule of thumb, where only estimates for subgroups that are based on 25 or more unweighted cases are included and estimates that are based on 25-49 unweighted cases are reported with a note or an asterisk to indicate the small sample size, is commonly used in analyses using MICS or DHS data.

Another challenge with administrative data is the fragmentation of the education system and its implications for data collection and comparability. Schools under different supervising authorities, i.e. UNRWA and government schools, have different information management systems, and the Government schools in the West Bank have a different information management system from the government schools in the Gaza Strip. While all schools use the same survey questionnaires, the schools differ in how they collect, process and share the data, which may create differences in data quality.

Administrative data also excludes certain types of schools, creating a limitation in terms of coverage. The MoEHE, for example, does not collect data from schools that are not officially registered with MoEHE. Such schools include some kindergartens in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, some private schools in East Jerusalem, and some schools in East Jerusalem run by the Jerusalem Education Administration, which is a joint body of the Municipality of Jerusalem and the Israeli Ministry of Education. The exclusion of certain types of schools might create a downward bias in enrolment indicators calculated using administrative data, leading to an underestimation of the actual number of children enrolled in education. Additionally, the MoEHE's administrative data does not include vocational education centres managed by the MoSD, MoL, UNRWA or private actors.

### **Limitations concerning the definition of out-of-school and dropout**

Both the 2014 MICS data and the administrative education data present limitations with respect to how dropouts and out-of-school children are defined. This impacts the calculation of dropout rates by grade and the overall rate of out-of-school children.<sup>29</sup> Dropping out of school can be a process with multiple stages and possible reversals: a child could hypothetically stop attending school for two months but then return, or a child could stop attending school for two years but then try to return when her/his situation changes. Capturing an extended process of this kind with cross sectional survey data or administrative data, which presents a snapshot of a single point in time, poses several challenges.

In assigning out-of-school status to a school-age child using MICS data, for example, the analysis conducted for this report primarily relies on a question about school attendance during the current school year. This question captures current school attendance by asking if a child "attends school or pre-school at any time" during the current school year. If the answer is yes, the child is considered to be in school. This formulation is used for the purposes of analysing MICS data for this report, yet presents various limitations. For instance, a child who attended school for a few days at the beginning of the school year and then permanently left would still be considered to be in school, according to this formulation. In contrast, a child who is not attending school during the current school year due to a health problem but has plans to return to school the subsequent year, would be considered to be out of school according to this formulation. These examples underscore the complexity of the out-of-school concept, the challenge of capturing it with cross sectional data, and the range of potential problems that can be encountered when using MICS data to assess out of school children.

Similarly, in assigning dropout status to a school-age child, the analysis conducted for this report relies on three questions from the MICS that establish current school attendance, 'ever' school attendance, and final grade completed respectively. In calculating dropout rates using administrative data, this report uses the annual data provided by schools to MoEHE on the number of dropout students. These schools are not provided with a definition or criteria for identifying children who drop out of school, so they use their own judgment in deciding which of the children who were attending their school the preceding year but have since left are 'dropouts'. The absence of any clear definitions and this method

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<sup>29</sup> The analyses of child labour was done by the Understanding Children's Work (UCW) program, which is an inter-agency research cooperation initiative involving the International Labour Organization (ILO), UNICEF and the World Bank. The analyses are available on UCW's website.

of data collection present various limitations. For instance, a child who declared to leave education over the summer vacation but decided to return to school in December would be reported by the school as a dropout in the annual comprehensive survey conducted in November, and would therefore be counted towards the drop-out figures in the annual statistical yearbook. In contrast, a child who declared to his school that s/he would be moving to a school in another governorate or to a school under another supervising authority, yet failed to continue schooling after the move, would not be captured as a dropout in the annual survey.<sup>31</sup> These two examples underscore the possible range of problems with correctly identifying dropout children using administrative data.<sup>30</sup>

### Limitations concerning recording of age

Another challenge encountered by both household surveys and administrative surveys is accurately recording of the age of the child, and the complications of age adjustment arising from the enrolment rules about age. In the State of Palestine, children are to enrol in 1st grade of government and UNRWA schools only if they turn six by January 31st of the relevant school year. Yet, private schools allow children who turn six later in the school year to enrol in 1st grade. This practice could introduce a small upward bias in the calculation of various critical indicators, including net intake rate and net enrolment rate.

Furthermore, administrative data, MICS data and population projections all use different age cut-off dates. Schools indicate the birth year of students in their annual surveys, so they use December 31st as the benchmark. MICS data adjusts the age of all children using September 1st, the presumed start date of the school year, as the benchmark. The single-age population projections used in the denominator for calculating rates are mid-year projections. Thus, there is a mismatch between the age criteria used in the numerator versus the denominator, as well as in the age criteria used in administrative data versus the MICS data. This mismatch may bring about an over-estimation of the adjusted net intake rate and the over-age rates, among other indicators. The analysis for this report partially corrected for this over-estimation by re-adjusting MICS age data for January 31st when calculating the adjusted net intake rate and pre-primary attendance rates.

### Limitations concerning population projections

Finally, the fact that currently population projections for Palestine are based on data from a census conducted a decade ago poses a challenge for indicators that require age-specific denominators. The currently available population projections for Palestine use data from the 2007 census and model a set of assumptions regarding fertility, mortality and migration. In a rapidly changing population with frequent exposure to external shocks, any assumption about trends in fertility, mortality and migration are limited in accuracy and unlikely to apply uniformly across the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.<sup>32</sup>

These limitations on household survey data, administrative data and population projections underscore the importance of caution when interpreting the various figures presented in this report. In the rest of the chapter investigates the exclusion problem using the 5DE <sup>33</sup>framework, then presents the profiles of several out-of-school children.

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<sup>30</sup> A secondary source of administrative data on dropout is collected via a tailored form filled out by schools at least three times per year. This form consists of a table that collects information on the number of dropout students, their grades, gender, and the main reason for their dropout. The form doesn't have a unique identifier for each dropout child.

<sup>31</sup> It is also worth noting two practices of the MoEHE in categorizing children as having dropped out of education: 1) a child who was enrolled in school at the time of being arrested, detained or imprisoned by Israeli authorities is not considered a dropout regardless of the duration of his absence; 2) a child who has stopped attending school before completing 10th grade but has started attending a vocational training centre run by the MoSD, MoL or UNRWA is considered a dropout.

<sup>32</sup> The assumptions about the fertility, mortality, and migration trends used in the currently available population projections include the following: 1) the fertility rate will decline by 30 per cent between 2007 and 2025; 2) the infant mortality rate will decline by 50 per cent between 2007 and 2025; and 3) the net international migration rate will be zero during 2007-2025.

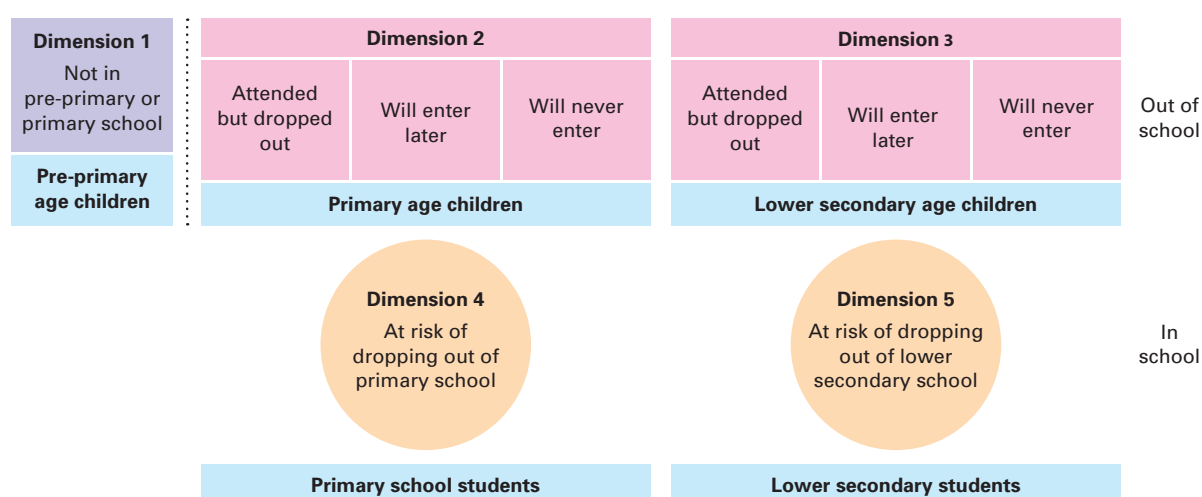
<sup>33</sup> The 5DE framework refers to the five dimensions of exclusion framework used in this report. Please refer to the Executive Summary of the report for more information about five dimensions.

This chapter describes in detail the scope of the problem of exclusion from education and the profiles of children who are either excluded from education or are at risk of being excluded. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section provides an assessment of relevant data sources. The second section describes the scope of the exclusion problem in Palestine using the 5DE framework. The third section highlights three profiles of children to illustrate the severity and the scale of their exclusion from education. The chapter concludes with a summary of the main findings.

## 2.2 Five dimensions of exclusion from education

This section presents the main findings on exclusion from education using the 5DE Framework introduced in the previous chapter. Dimension One describes findings about children who are of pre-primary school age (5-year-old). Dimension Two describes findings about children who are of primary school age (6-9-year-old). Dimension Three describe findings about children who are of lower secondary school age (10-15-year-old). Dimensions Four and Five highlight issues concerning children who are at risk of being excluded from primary (1st-4th grades) and lower secondary (5th-10th grades) education. The section ends with an analysis of the main points of constriction and obstruction as children move from first through tenth grade.

**Figure 3: Five Dimensions of Exclusion**



**Figure 4: Estimates of the Five Dimensions**

Column1	Estimates based on MICS 2014 data	Estimates based on MoEHE administrative data (2015-2016) and population projections based on 2007 census
D1 (%) - estimated ratio of 5 year-olds who are not in pre-primary or primary education	10.3	16.9
D2 (%) - estimated ratio of 6-9 year-olds who are not in primary or secondary education	1.2	5.0
D3 (%) - estimated ratio of 10-15 year-olds who are not in primary or secondary education	4.9	10.1

## 2.2.1 Dimension One: Children of pre-primary age who are not in school

Pre-primary education is widely recognized as an effective intervention for improving school preparedness, learning outcomes and educational attainment, particularly for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Many governments, including the State of Palestine, now reflect this recognition by including the pre-primary level in education policies and services.

In line with the OOSC 5DE Framework, for the purposes of this study the analysis of pre-primary education is limited to children who are five years of age, although pre-primary education in the State of Palestine consists of two years and includes both four and five year old children.<sup>34</sup> As described in the previous chapter, pre-primary education in Palestine is not compulsory and is provided primarily by private providers. Yet, based on the 2014 MICS data, most five-year-old children (89.7 per cent) in Palestine attend either pre-primary or primary education. More specifically, an estimated 55.8 per cent of five-year-old children attend pre-primary education and 33.9 per cent attend primary education.<sup>35</sup>

It should be noted, however, that the 2014 MICS data does not provide information on either the type of pre-primary education nor the frequency of attendance for these children. Since the OOSC 5DE framework considers all children who benefit from any type of early childhood education services, including non-formal, to be enrolled in school, the out-of-school rate for five-year-olds in the State of Palestine is estimated to be 10.3 per cent.

For this age group, some clear patterns emerge from analyses of the MICS national level data on the characteristics of the child, the child's household and their community. In terms of the characteristics of the child, a higher percentage of five-year-old girls (11.9 per cent) are out of school compared to boys (8.8 per cent).<sup>36</sup> In terms of household characteristics, household size and parental education both seem to matter with respect to a five-year-old child's exclusion from pre-primary education. 12.4 per cent of five-year-old children who have five or more siblings living in the same household, and 12.6 per cent of those whose mother has basic education or less, are out of school. This pattern is particularly worrying because a lower percentage of young children whose mothers have only a basic education are considered to be developmentally on track compared to other children.<sup>37</sup> Thus, their exclusion from education at age five is particularly troubling because it represents a missed opportunity for boosting their school preparedness to improve their longer-term educational attainment.

Household wealth is another critical characteristic. At the national level, the relation between household wealth and attendance in pre-primary school for five-year-old children appears to be non-linear; there is instead an inverted U-shaped relationship. An estimated 16.8 per cent of five-year-old children living in households in the middle wealth quintile are out of school, compared to 6.1 per cent of their peers living in households in the poorest wealth quintile and 8.6 per cent of their peers living in households in the richest wealth quintile. The inverted U-shaped relation between wealth and school attendance for this age is particularly pronounced for girls, whereby an estimated 21.0 per cent of

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<sup>34</sup> The official age of enrolment in first grade is 68-79 months and as a result, the official age for the second stage of kindergarten, i.e. the second year of kindergarten, is 56-67 months. Where relevant, alternative estimate figures for the official age are provided in footnotes.

<sup>35</sup> The official age for the second stage of kindergarten, i.e. the second year of kindergarten, in the SoP is 56-67 months and in this age group, an estimated 84.1 per cent of children are attending some kind of pre-primary or primary education.

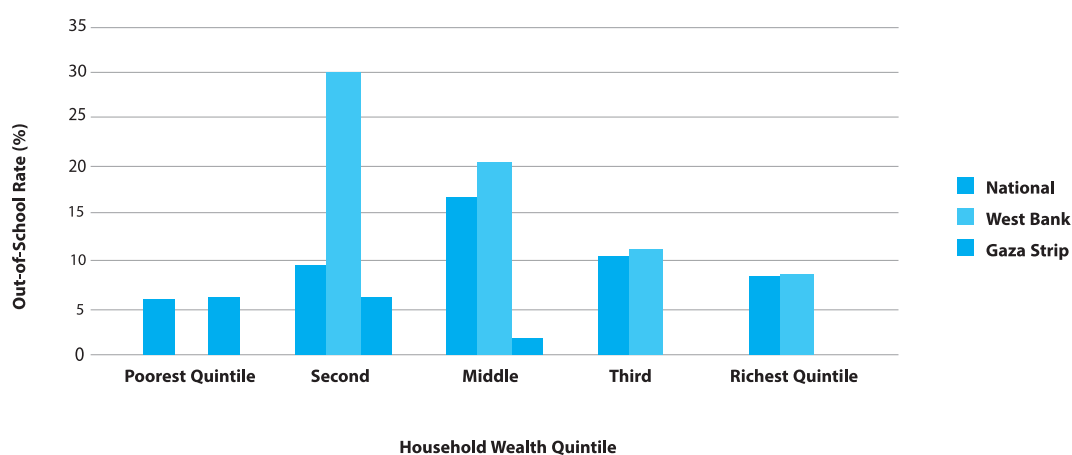
<sup>36</sup> It should be noted that reliable estimates could not be made regarding the exclusion of 5-year-old children with disabilities. MICS 2014 data does not include disability status of children. Disability Survey 2011 data does not provide reliable data on pre-primary schooling status. Given the importance of early diagnosis and intervention for children with disabilities, the urgency to collect data on the pre-primary educational access of children with disabilities remains.

<sup>37</sup> The data on early childhood development is collected in MICS 2014 for 3- and 4-year-old children. According to the MICS 2014 Final Report, 16.2 per cent of children in SoP whose mothers have basic education, 22 per cent of children whose mothers have secondary education and 28.4 per cent of children whose mothers have higher education are assessed to be developmentally on track in the literacy-numeracy realm.

five-year-old girls living in households in the middle wealth quintile are out of school.

When exclusion rates for five-year-old children in different wealth quintiles are analysed separately in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, however, a linear relation emerges for both regions. The linear relation between wealth and exclusion is particularly pronounced in the West Bank with an estimated 29.4 per cent of the five-year-olds in the poorest households in the region out of school as compared to 8.4 per cent of their peers living in the richest households.<sup>38</sup> In other words, since an overwhelming majority of the five-year-olds living in the poorest households are in the Gaza Strip, and the exclusion rate in the Gaza Strip for this age group is substantially lower than the West Bank (5.5 per cent versus 13.9 per cent), at the national level an inverted U-shaped relationship emerges between wealth and exclusion from education for five-year-old children. Yet when the relationship between wealth and exclusion is analysed in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip separately the relationship becomes linear, meaning children from poorer households are excluded from pre-primary education at higher rates than their geographic peers in wealthier households.

**Figure 5: 5-Year-Olds Attendance in Pre-Primary and Primary Education according to Household Wealth, MICS 2014**



In terms of community characteristics, a higher percentage of five-year-old children living in rural areas (12.1 per cent) are out of school compared to their peers living in urban areas (10.6 per cent) or in camps (5.2 per cent). As discussed earlier, a notable difference exists between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip with 13.9 per cent of five-year-olds living in the West Bank are out of school compared to 5.5 per cent of their peers in the Gaza Strip.

Among the governorates in the West Bank, the variation in the rate of exclusion from education for five-year-olds is substantial, underscoring the geographic inequalities in access to education in this region. For instance, an estimated 26.2 per cent of 5-year-old children in Hebron are out of school, which is the highest rate among the governorates in the West Bank. It is worth noting that Hebron is also the governorate with the highest poverty headcount rate in the West Bank.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>38</sup> The sample size for 5-year-olds in the West Bank living in the poorest quintile was too small for a reliable estimate. Hence, the reference here to poorest households is in fact a reference to those households in the second poorest quintile nationally. Here, figures also include children living in camps.

<sup>39</sup> For details on the consumption model and poverty estimates used in the poverty ranking of governorates in the West Bank, see World Bank: Seeing is Believing: Poverty in the Palestinian Territories, No. 86038, 2014.

The relationship between the exclusion of five-year-old children from education and high levels of poverty in Hebron specifically and, as discussed earlier, in the West Bank more generally, is troubling not only with regards to equality but also because a lower percentage of children from poorer households are developmentally on track compared to their peers from richer households.<sup>40</sup> Thus, lower levels of access to education for five-year-olds living in governorates with higher poverty rates, and living in poorer households, represents a missed opportunity for improving equality in educational outcomes.

Among the governorates in the Gaza Strip, the variation in the rate of exclusion from education for five-year-olds is relatively small, with North Gaza having the highest rate of exclusion (9.0 per cent) and Deir el-Balah the lowest (2.7 per cent).

Administrative data at the pre-primary education level provides insight into recent trends in enrolment in the second stage of kindergartens registered with or managed by the MoEHE, which is the year of pre-primary education that precedes the first grade of primary school.<sup>41</sup> Looking at administrative data from the last three school years, we see a significant increase in the number of children enrolled in the second stage of kindergarten, with nearly a 20 per cent increase over the past two years. This increase has been particularly rapid for the Gaza Strip where the number of children enrolled in the second stage of kindergarten increased by 46 per cent. This rapid increase in enrolment in Gaza has closed the gap between the gross enrolment rate in the West Bank (67.5 per cent) and the Gaza Strip (64.2 per cent) for the second stage of kindergarten.<sup>42</sup>

These figures, however, need to be interpreted cautiously given they are based on enrolment figures from kindergartens registered with the MoEHE. In other words, the increase in the number of children might partly due to an increase in the number of kindergartens that are registered with the MoEHE, rather than a change in the total the number of children enrolling. Therefore, the increase may not reflect underlying improvements in access to pre-primary education. It should also be noted that during the same period, the MoEHE increased the number of public pre-primary classrooms from 4 to 102 and is currently serving 2.2 per cent of children attending second stage of kindergartens.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> The data on early childhood development is collected in MICS 2014 for 3- and 4-year-old children. According to the MICS 2014 Final Report, 17.3 per cent of children from households in the poorest quintile are developmentally on track in the literacy-numeracy realm compared to the overall estimate of 22 per cent.

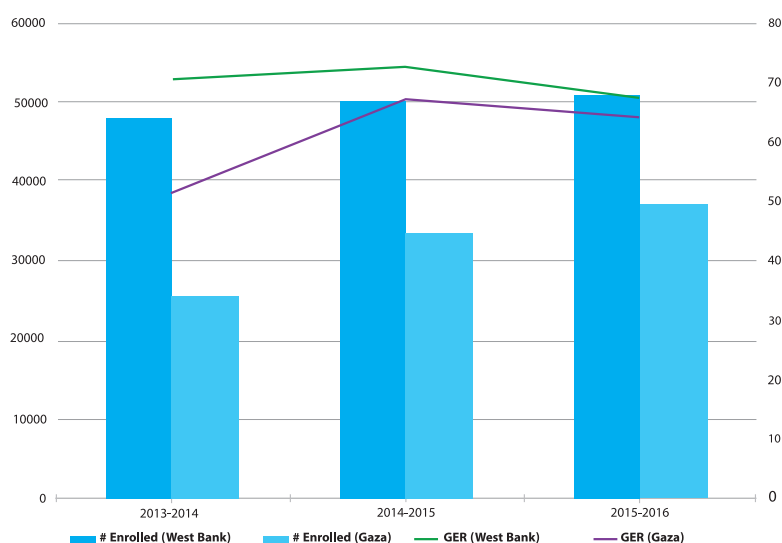
<sup>41</sup> Please note that the administrative data follows the enrolment rule concerning age (56-67-month-old). Also note that these figures reflect only those children who are enrolled in kindergartens registered with MoEHE.

<sup>42</sup> The gross enrolment rate in the second stage of kindergartens is calculated using administrative data and dividing the number of children enrolled in the second stage of kindergartens during the 2015-2016 school years regardless of their age by the projected population of five-year-old children by mid-2015. The gross enrolment rate is not adjusted and does not take into account five-year-old children who are enrolled in primary school.

<sup>43</sup> The figure is calculated based on administrative data shared by MoEHE in August 2017 and administrative data in MoEHE Education Statistics Yearbook, 2015-2016.



**Figure 6: Number of Children Enrolled and Gross Enrolment Rate in Pre-Primary Education, Administrative Data** <sup>44</sup>



## 2.2.2 Dimensions Two and Three: Out-of-school children of primary and lower secondary age

Turning to out-of-school children of primary school age (6-9-year-old) and lower secondary school age (10-15-year-old), this section presents various indicators and analyses of Dimension Two and Dimension Three in an effort to understand these patterns of exclusion. To this end, the relevant indicators are disaggregated by age groups and gender where possible. The analyses were conducted using several indicators from the 2014 MICS, 2010 MICS, 2011 Disability Survey, and the administrative data concerning the child (such as age, gender, disability, child labour), the household (such as wealth, mother's education, parental status, number of children), the community (such as urban-camp-rural, region, governorate) and the school (such as UNRWA-MoEHE-private, boys-girls-coeducational).

### Dimension 2: Out-of-school 6-9-year-old children

In Palestine, very few children who are of primary school age are excluded from education (1.2 per cent). Among these 6-9-year-old children who are out of school, an estimated 53.9 per cent are expected to start school at a later age, 34.1 per cent are expected to never enter school, and 12.0 per cent have dropped-out of school.

The intake rate, attendance rate, and enrolment rate for the primary school age group also suggests that the education system at the primary level has a low rate of exclusion.<sup>45</sup> Using 2014 MICS data, the net intake rate (NIR) for six-year-olds is estimated to be 64.4 per cent,<sup>46</sup> and the adjusted net intake rate (ANIR) is estimated to be 97.1 per cent.<sup>47,48</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Please note that the decrease in GER during the 2015-2016 school year is most likely the result of a non-linear increase in the single-age projections for 5-year-olds.

<sup>45</sup> The net intake rate to grade 1 represents the percentage of all 6-year-olds who are enrolled in first grade for the first time. It is calculated by dividing the number of 6-year-olds who enter grade 1 of primary education for the first time by the population of the same age. Thus, 6-year-olds who are enrolled in higher grades or who are repeating grade 1 are not included in the numerator.

<sup>46</sup> The official age for enrolment in first grade is 68-79 months in public schools and UNRWA schools. The net intake rate for 68-79-month-old children is 87.7 per cent. Note that private schools may enrol children younger than 68 months in first grade, which may mean that the net intake rate for 68-79-month-old children might be slightly under-estimated.

<sup>47</sup> The adjusted net intake rate represents the percentage of all 6-year-olds who are enrolled in first or a higher grade.

<sup>48</sup> The official age for enrolment in first grade is 68-79 months in public schools and UNRWA schools. The adjusted net intake rate for 68-79-month-olds is 91.2 per cent.

The estimated adjusted net attendance rate (ANAR) for 6-9 year-olds is 98.7 per cent, with another 0.5 per cent of children attending pre-primary education.<sup>49</sup> There is almost no difference between the ANAR for girls (98.7 per cent) and boys (98.6 per cent). The adjusted net enrolment rate (ANER) for this age group calculated using MoEHE's administrative data for the 2014-2015 school year and PCBS's single-age population projection for mid-2015 is 92.5 per cent, with a slightly higher ANER for girls (92.9 per cent) than boys (92.2 per cent).

This difference between the ANAR and ANER is worth highlighting. Some difference between the ANER and ANAR is expected given that household surveys and administrative surveys measure participation in education differently, as discussed earlier. The relatively large size of the difference between the ANER and ANAR in Palestine, however, suggest that additional issues might be contributing. One potential issue concerns the accuracy of fertility, mortality and migration assumptions underlying the population projections, which could cause an over-estimate of the total number of 6-9-year-olds in Palestine and, consequently, an under-estimation of their enrolment rate.

Other critical indicators, such as survival rate, completion rate and exclusion rate calculated with 2014 MICS data further confirms the low exclusion rates estimated based on intake and attendance rates. The education system at the primary level emerges as relatively efficient with the survival rate to 4th grade - the last grade of primary education<sup>50</sup> - at 99.9 per cent. This confirms a very low drop-out rate at the primary level. Similarly, when we look at the primary level completion rate,<sup>51</sup> we see that generally the education system performs well in ensuring children have access to primary education: using the 2014 MICS data an estimated 99.1 per cent of 12-14 year-old children have completed 4<sup>th</sup> grade.<sup>52</sup> While this completion rate is relatively high, it still means that 0.9 per cent of children between the ages of 12 to 14, or 2,908 individuals,<sup>53</sup> were unable to complete four-years of primary education in Palestine. This is not a negligible number given the potential life-long implications of being excluded from education so early on.

For primary school aged children (6-9-year-olds), an estimated 1.2 per cent are out of school. It must be noted this includes an estimated 0.5 per cent of children in this age group who are still in a pre-primary level school, in accordance with the 5DE framework. In other words, an estimated 0.7 per cent of all 6-9-year-old children are not attending school of any kind, which corresponds to almost 3,500 children.<sup>54</sup> The out-of-school rate is particularly high for 6-year-olds, with an estimated 2.9 per cent out-of-school. This is likely to be driven by late entrants. In terms of the characteristics of the child, household and community, some findings include the following:

In terms of the characteristics of the child, an estimated 32.5 per cent of 6-9-year-old children who have a disability are out of school, highlighting the severity of exclusion from education experienced by children with disabilities.<sup>55</sup> Different aspects of the exclusion of children with disabilities from education are taken up in detail in subsequent sections of this chapter.

In terms of household characteristics, children in this age group whose mother has only a basic education or less are out-of-school at a slightly higher rate (1.3 per cent) than their peers whose mothers have a secondary education (1.2 per cent) or a tertiary education

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<sup>49</sup> The adjusted net attendance rate represents the percentage of 6-9 year olds children who are attending any grade of primary or lower secondary school.

<sup>51</sup> The survival rate to the last grade of primary education represents the percentage of a cohort of students enrolled in 1st grade who are expected to reach 4th grade, regardless of repetition.

<sup>52</sup> UNICEF Global Databases 2016.

<sup>53</sup> This number is calculated by subtracting the primary level completion rate from 1 and multiplying it with the population projection for mid-2014 for 12-14-year-olds, which is 323,165 children.

<sup>54</sup> The estimate of the absolute number of children is calculated by multiplying the rate of exclusion (0.7 per cent) based on the 2014 MICS data, with the projected population of 6-9-year-old children in mid-2014.

<sup>55</sup> In analysing the Disability Survey 2011 data, only those children who are indicated to have "a lot of trouble" carrying out the specified activities or who "cannot at all" carry out the specified activities are considered to have a disability. Those children who are indicated to have "some trouble" are not considered to have a disability for the purposes of the analyses conducted for this report. This categorization parallels the one used in PCBS's main report of this survey.

(1.0 per cent).<sup>56</sup> A higher percentage of children who has one or no parents in his/her household are out of school (2 per cent), compared to their peers who have both parents in the household (1.2 per cent).

In terms of characteristics of the community, a higher percentage of 6-9-year-old children in the Gaza Strip (1.4 per cent) are out of school compared to their peers in the West Bank (1.1 per cent). It should be noted again that this figure includes those children who might still be enrolled in pre-primary education. A higher percentage of 6-9-year-old children living in camps (1.4 per cent) are out of school when compared to their peers in urban areas (1.2 per cent) and rural areas (0.9 per cent).

Administrative data is limited in terms of the insight it provides about out-of-school children in this age group because drop-out data from annual school surveys collects information about the grade but not the age of the child. As a result, three notable observations emerge: First, though they are very few in number, it is worth noting that about 0.1 per cent of children enrolled in 1st grade are reported to have dropped out.<sup>57</sup> Secondly, 4th grade emerges as a breaking point for some children particularly in the Gaza Strip: 2.8 per cent of 4th graders in the Gaza Strip and 0.2 per cent of 4th graders in the West Bank are reported to have left formal education during this grade. Finally, no notable differences can be observed between boys and girls, or UNRWA and government schools in terms of drop-out figures from 1st to 4th grades.

More generally, what emerges with some certainty is how limited our knowledge is about these 6-9-year-old children who are out of school. Existing household surveys, such as the 2014 MICS and the 2011 Disability Survey, provide a glimpse into their realities and highlight the role of certain disabilities and household vulnerabilities.<sup>58</sup> Yet given the dire life-long ramifications of not having any schooling or very little schooling, the need to thoroughly understand the conditions and experiences of these children is urgent. The profiles presented later in the chapter seek to contribute to this.

### Dimension 3: Out-of-school 10-15-year-old children

Among 10-15-year-old children in Palestine, an estimated 4.9 per cent are out of school. Of the 10-15-year-old children who are out of school, an estimated 87.2 per cent of them have dropped out of school, 12.5 per cent have never entered school, and 0.3 per cent have not yet entered school and are expected to enter at a later age.

Attendance rates for the lower secondary school age group (10-15-year-olds) suggest a worrying trend in terms of exclusion from education in Palestine. As children progress through the compulsory grades in Palestine, the levels of exclusion from education increase rapidly. This trend is particularly alarming for boys. For example, the estimated out-of-school rate for boys increases from 1.4 per cent at age 10, to 5.9 per cent at age 13, and then jumps to a staggering 22.0 per cent at age 15. The rates of exclusion for girls start lower and increase less rapidly, with 0.4 per cent of girls out of school at age 10, 2.9 per cent at 13 and 5.4 per cent at 15.

The adjusted net attendance rate (ANAR) for this age group<sup>59</sup> based on the 2014 MICS data is 82.9 per cent, with another 12.1 per cent of children still in a primary education grade level. For boys in this age group, the ANAR is 80.5 per cent with another 11.9 per cent of

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<sup>56</sup> Please note that using a logit regression analysis with binary independent variables for gender, household income (poorest), living in rural areas and having a mother with basic or less education show there to be no statistically significant relation between any of these variables and a 6-9-year-old child's being in or out of school.

<sup>57</sup> This figure is based on both the annual yearbook statistics from 2014-2015 and 2015-2016, and the Gaza Strip specific report on drop-out for 2014-2015.

<sup>58</sup> It is worth noting that both MoEHE and MoSD officials had substantial difficulty in identifying individual children who never enrolled in school, who could be interviewed as part of the case studies collected for this report. The difficulty officials from both ministries had in identifying these children further suggests the invisibility of these children to the state actors.

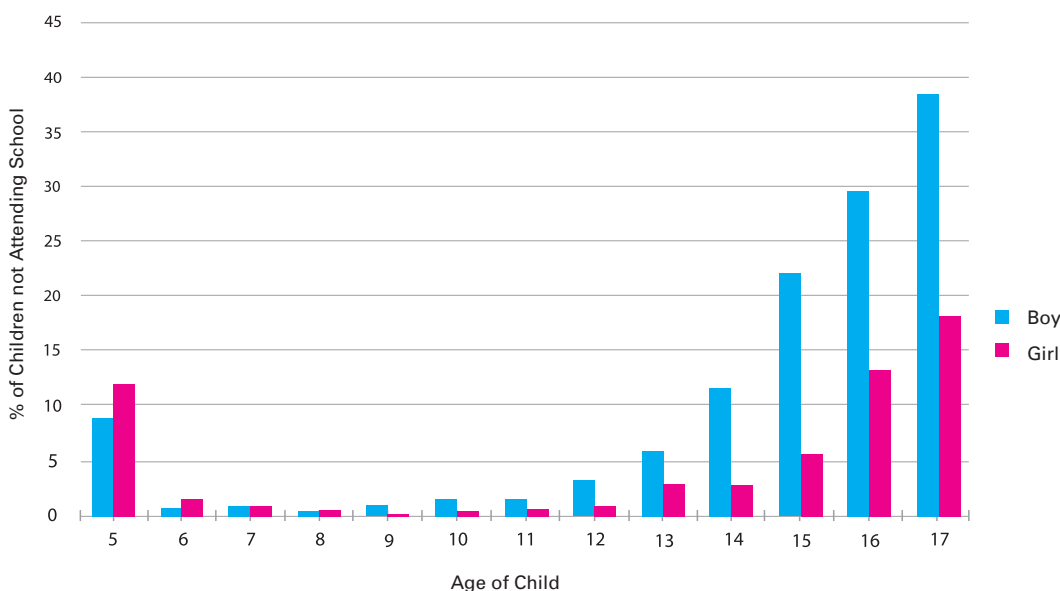
<sup>59</sup> The adjusted net attendance rate for 10-15-year-old children represents the percentage of children in this age group who are attending lower secondary or upper secondary schools.

the boys still in primary education. For girls in this age group, the ANAR is 85.4 per cent with another 12.4 per cent still attending primary education. The adjusted net enrolment rate (ANER) for this age group calculated using 2014-2015 administrative data is 86.7 per cent, with a higher ANER for girls (88.8 per cent) compared to boys (84.6 per cent).

Other critical indicators, such as the survival rate and completion rate, further confirm the worrying trend in exclusion based on attendance and enrolment rates. The education system at the lower secondary level has efficiency problems with a survival rate from the first to the last grade of lower secondary education (5th to 10th grades) at just 91.4 per cent. This rate is particularly low for boys at 86.9 per cent, compared to girls at 96.0 per cent.<sup>60</sup> Similarly, looking at the lower secondary level completion rate,<sup>61</sup> just 85.9 per cent of all 18-20-year-olds and only 79.9 per cent of 18-20-year-old boys are estimated to have completed 10th grade.<sup>62</sup> In other words, one out of seven (14.1 per cent) 18-20 year-old Palestinians - close to 43,000 young people - have not completed the compulsory ten years of basic education.<sup>63</sup>

Of all Palestinian children of lower secondary school age (10-15-year-olds), 4.9 per cent are out of school. This corresponds to almost 32,000 children.<sup>64</sup> Of these, an estimated 87.6 per cent entered school at some point but have since dropped out. A higher rate of boys than girls in this age group are excluded from education: 7.6 per cent of 10-15-year-old boys are out-of-school compared to 2.2 per cent of girls. The rate of exclusion from education increases as children get older. The percentage of children who are out of school roughly doubles with each additional year of age from ages 12 to 15. The difference between the rates of exclusion of boys and girls also increases as children get older. By the time children reach age 15, roughly one out of five boys versus one out of twenty girls (22.0 per cent vs. 5.6 per cent) are estimated to have left the formal education system.

**Figure 7: Gender and Age Patterns for Exclusion from Education, MICS 2014**



<sup>60</sup> The survival rate to the last grade of lower secondary education represents the percentage of a cohort of students enrolled in 5th grade who are expected to reach 10th grade, regardless of repetition.

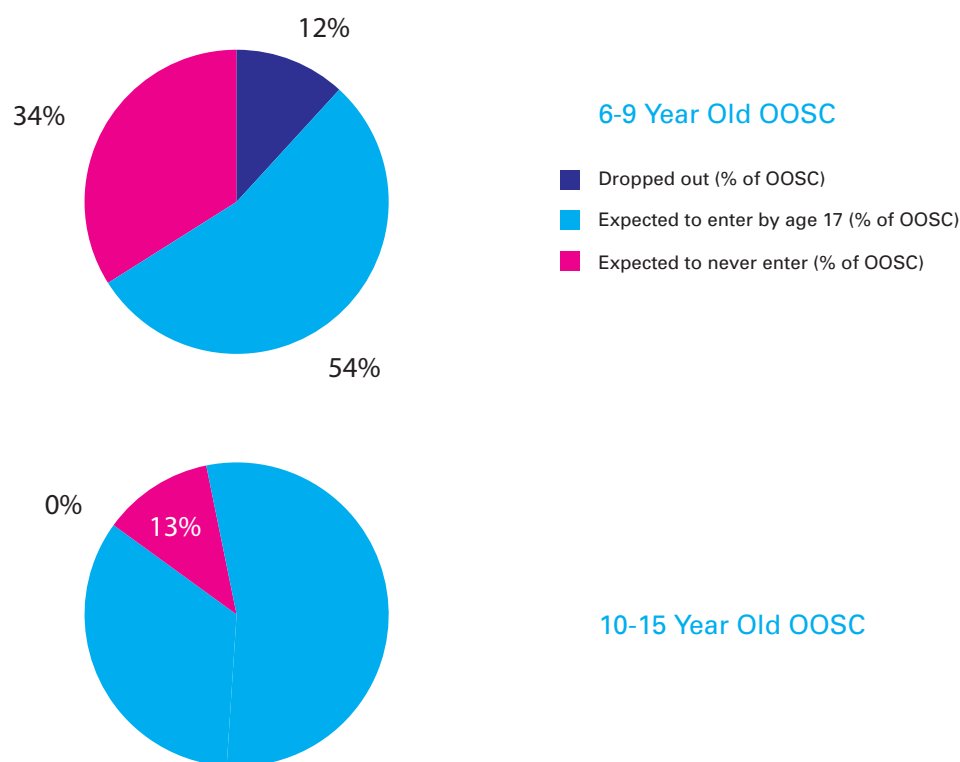
<sup>61</sup> Lower secondary level completion rate is calculated among children aged 3-5 years above the official lower secondary graduation age in an effort to capture over-age students.

<sup>62</sup> UNICEF Global Databases 2016.

<sup>63</sup> This absolute number is estimated by multiplying (1-completion rate) with the population projection for mid-2014 for 18-20-year-old children (303,943 people).

<sup>64</sup> This absolute number is estimated by multiplying the rate of exclusion with the population projection for mid-2014 for 10-15-year-old children.

**Figure 8: Status of Out-of-School Children, MICS 2014**



This sharp increase in the rate of exclusion over a six-year period of schooling is at the heart of the out-of-school children problem in Palestine. Some notable patterns emerging from the 2014 MICS data concerning these out-of-school children, the children’s households and their communities are discussed below.

In terms of the characteristics of the child, as also discussed above, a higher percentage of boys (7.6 per cent) are out of school than girls (2.2 per cent). This gender difference becomes more acute as the child gets older. Children with disabilities face particularly high risks of exclusion. Using the 2011 Disability Survey data, an estimated 30.2 per cent of 10-15-year-old children who have a disability are out of school.

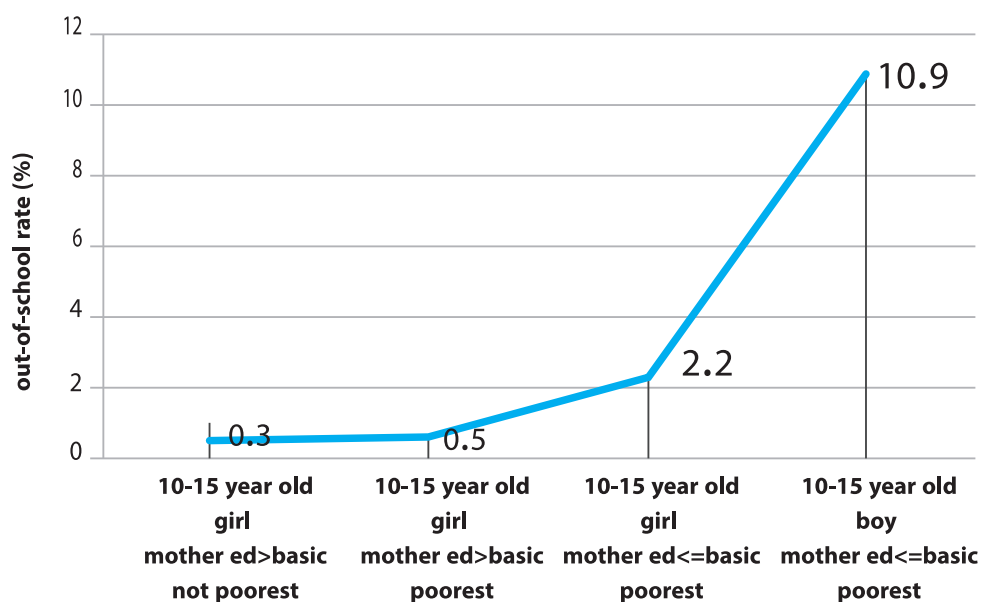
In terms of the household characteristics, household deprivation and vulnerability have a clear relationship with a child’s risk of being out of school. The rate of exclusion for children living in a household in the poorest quintile (6.3 per cent) is almost three times the rate of exclusion for children living in the richest wealth quintile (2.3 per cent). The rate of exclusion among children whose mothers do not have any education (18.2 per cent) is almost three times the rate of exclusion among children whose mothers have a basic education (6.9 per cent) and almost eight times the rate among children whose mothers have a secondary education (2.3 per cent). Among children who have more than eight siblings (9.5 per cent) living with them in the household, the rate of exclusion is more than twice the rate of exclusion among children who have five to seven siblings (4.3 per cent), and more than three times the rate among children who have two to four siblings (2.9 per cent). Finally, the exclusion rate for children who have either one or no parents in the households (10.8 per cent) is more than twice the rate for children who have both parents in the household (4.6 per cent). The effect of having one or no parents on exclusion from education seems to be stronger for girls than boys, even while the

rates of exclusion for boys are notably higher. An estimated 1.8 per cent of 10-15-year-old girls who have both of their parents in the household are out of school compared to 7.8 per cent of their female peers who have one or no parents in the household. For boys, these rates are 7.2 per cent and 14.2 per cent respectively.

To sum up, the key determinants of exclusion related to household characteristics are:

- Children living in the poorest households,
- Children whose mothers do not have any education,
- Children living in large families (more than eight siblings),
- Children living with one or no parents.

**Figure 9: Rate of Exclusion from Education for Different Groups of Children, MICS 2014**



In terms of community characteristics, a slightly higher percentage of 10-15-year-old children living in rural areas (5.6 per cent) are out of school compared to their peers living in camps (4.9 per cent) or in urban areas (4.8 per cent). Also, a higher percentage of children in this age group living in the West Bank (5.3 per cent) are out of school a compared to their peers living in the Gaza Strip (4.3 per cent). This is noteworthy because the poverty level is higher in the Gaza Strip. This regional difference is particularly notable for boys in this age group, with 8.3 per cent of 10-15-year-old boys in the West Bank out of school compared to 6.6 per cent of their peers in the Gaza Strip. For girls in this age group, 2.3 per cent of girls in the West Bank are out of school compared to 2.0 per cent of their peers living in the Gaza Strip.

The difference in the rate of exclusion of 10-15-year-olds from education across the governorates within the West Bank is worth noting. Children in Jericho and Hebron

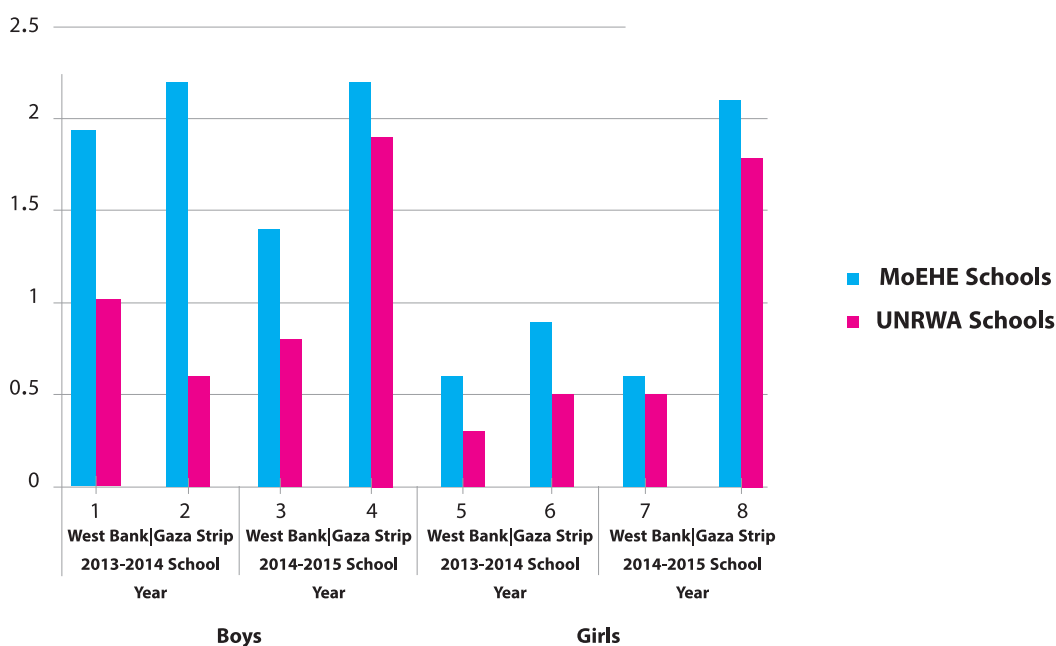
<sup>65</sup> World Bank, *Seeing is Believing: Poverty in the Palestinian Territories*, No. 86038, 2014

experience the greatest challenges: an estimated 13.8 per cent of 10-15-year-old children living in Jericho and 7.9 per cent of 10-15-year-old children living in Hebron are out of school. When disaggregated by sex, the rate of exclusion for boys is particularly high: 15.2 per cent in Jericho and 12.0 per cent in Hebron). These are also the two governorates with the highest poverty rates in the West Bank. Other governorates in the West Bank, such as Salfit (1.5 per cent), Qalqilya (2.6 per cent) and Nablus (3.1 per cent) have significantly lower rates of exclusion from education. There is much less variance in the rate of exclusion from education for 10-15-year-olds across the Gaza Strip, with Gaza governorate having the highest rate of exclusion (5.5 per cent) and Khan Yunis governorate the lowest rate (2.6 per cent).

Administrative data provides additional insights about children who leave school before completing basic education. When we look at drop-out data for 5th-10th grades from 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years, four notable patterns emerge. These patterns, however, need to be interpreted with caution especially for the Gaza Strip, given that a 51-day conflict occurred during the summer between these two school years.

First, boys appear to have dropped out of education at much higher rates than girls at the national level in both years. During the 2014-2015 school year the gender difference appears to be driven mostly by boys who left government schools in the West Bank. In other words, during this school year, the gender difference was not as sizable in UNRWA schools in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip or in government schools in the Gaza Strip. Looking closely at the government schools in the West Bank, it appears that during the same school year, boys attending boys' schools dropped out at a higher rate than boys attending mixed schools. During the 2013-2014 school year, there was a sizeable gender difference in drop-out rates except for UNRWA schools in the Gaza Strip.

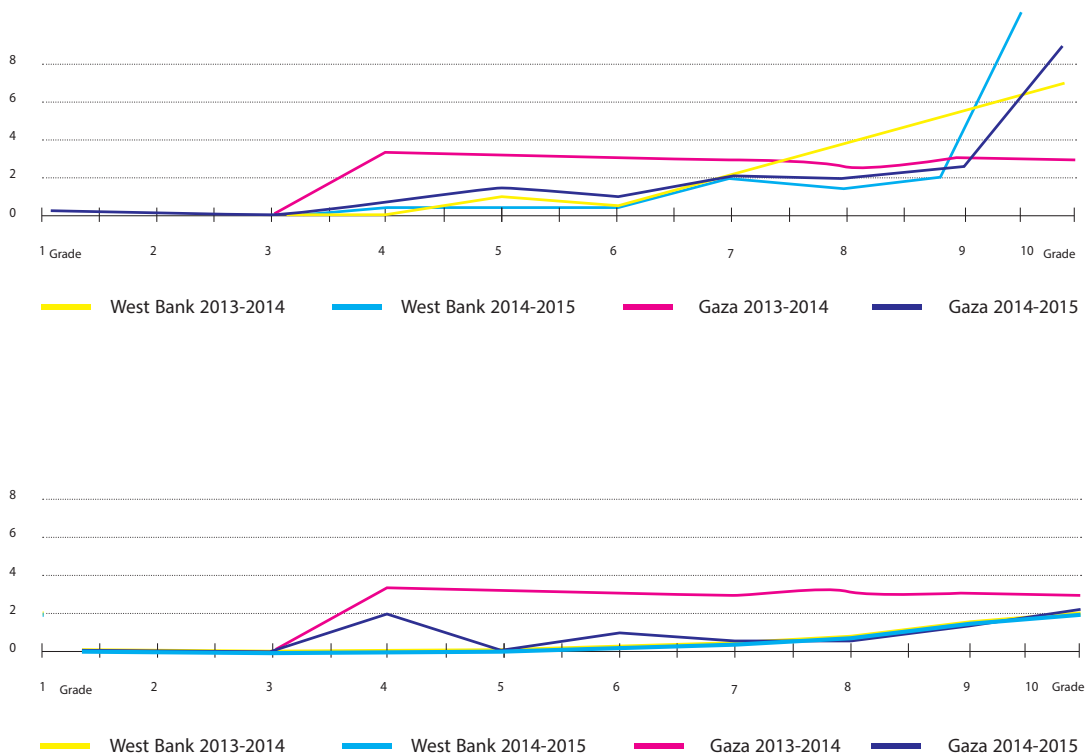
**Figure 10: Administrative Dropout Rates by Region and Gender**



Second, the drop-out rates calculated by the MoEHE using administrative data are higher in the Gaza Strip than in the West Bank for both UNRWA and government schools, and for both boys and girls during the 2014-2015 school year. During the 2013-2014 school year, however, the overall drop-out rates in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank as reported in the MoEHE administrative data are similar, despite the differences between drop-out rates at UNRWA and government schools and the differences between drop-out rates for boys and girls. Third, during both school years drop-out rates appear to be higher in government schools than in UNRWA schools; this is true for both boys and girls, and in both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

Finally, the grade-by-grade patterns of attrition appear to be different in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. In the Gaza Strip, there is a relatively constant drop-out rate (around 3 per cent during 2014-2015 academic year and around 1 per cent during 2013-2014 academic year) starting at grade 4 and continuing until grade 10. In the West Bank, the grade-by-grade drop-out rate appears to increase linearly from the 4th to 10th grade. The rate of increase is particularly steep for boys in the West Bank.

**Figure 11: Administrative Dropout Rates by Grade, Gender and Region**



### 2.2.3 Dimensions Four and Five: Children in primary and lower secondary school at risk of dropping out

The Fourth Dimension of exclusion in the context of Palestine concerns those children who are currently attending 1st-4th grades but are at risk of being excluded, and the Fifth Dimension of exclusion concerns those children who are currently attending 5th-10th grades but are at risk of being excluded. The complex dynamics underlying the risk of leaving school means that only indirect estimates are possible regarding the size and characteristics of the children in Dimensions Four and Five. In addition to the various child- and household-specific elements introduced as relevant to Dimensions Two and Three, two additional issues are considered to be relevant for Dimensions Four and Five: absenteeism and being over-age for grade.



## Absenteeism:

Long periods of being absent from school and irregular attendance can be both early warning signs of, and factors contributing to, drop out. Given the limitations of survey data due to the accuracy of respondent recall, administrative data on daily attendance is considered more reliable than household survey data in capturing absenteeism. However, in Palestine, while schools report administrative data on daily attendance, the MoEHE does not currently aggregate this data at the national level in ways that permit national level analysis.

The two other sources of data on school attendance are the nationally representative Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) conducted in 2004 and a survey conducted in 2013 with extremely or severely poor households as part of an impact evaluation of the national cash transfer program. Looking at the 2004 DHS data, the percentage of 6-9 and 10-15-year-old children who missed one or more days of school in the previous 7 days is higher in the Gaza Strip than in the West Bank for both age groups and genders. In the Gaza Strip, there is a discernible difference in the prevalence of absenteeism among boys versus girls: for both age groups, a higher percentage of boys missed one or more days of school in the previous 7 days compared to girls. Analyses of the 2004 DHS data indicate there are complex dynamics underlying absenteeism in the Gaza Strip. For example, conditional on enrolling in school, children from the poorest households tend to miss fewer days than children from wealthier households. In the West Bank, children living in rural areas were more prone to missing school days. While no statistically significant association was found between absenteeism and wealth. Analysis of data collected from extremely or severely poor households in 2013 shows that both girls and boys tend to miss more days of school as they move up to higher grades. The level of school absenteeism is higher among children living in extremely or severely poor households in the West Bank than in the Gaza Strip.

In the absence of national level administrative data on absenteeism, the findings from these two surveys demonstrate the need for more systematic collection and analysis of school-level data on absenteeism - an issue taken up in the next chapter of this report.

It is worth noting that while absenteeism can be an early warning sign of a child's eventual drop-out from school, not all cases of drop-out are preceded by long periods of absenteeism. For example, a study of children dropping out of UNRWA schools show that among girls, the average number of days of absence during the last month before dropping out was 4.4 in the Gaza Strip and 5.2 in the West Bank, neither of which are particularly high. ,

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<sup>66</sup> Given that the DHS data was collected in 2004, the results need to be interpreted cautiously as they may not reflect the current reality in the SoP.

<sup>67</sup> World Bank, *Coping with Conflict?: Poverty and Inclusion in the West Bank and Gaza*, 61293-GZ, July 2011.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Overseas Development Institute, *Effects of the Palestinian National Cash Transfer Programme on Children and Adolescents: A mixed methods analysis*, ODI, London, UK, 2014

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> UNRWA, *School Dropout: An Agency Wide Study*, UNRWA Education Department, September 2013.

<sup>74</sup> These average number of days of absence are considered to be not particularly high compared to the findings from another survey conducted in the Gaza Strip that found that children in very poor households miss schools at an average of five to six days in a month (Abu-Hamad, Bassam, Nicola Jones and Paola Pereznieta, 'Tackling children's economic and psychosocial vulnerabilities synergistically: How well is the Palestinian National Cash Transfer Programme serving Gazan children', *Children and Youth Services Review*, no. 47, 2014, pp. 121-135).

## Being over-age:

Like absenteeism, being over-age can be, but is not necessarily, a warning sign of and a factor contributing to dropping out. For the purposes of this report, a child is considered to be over-age when s/he is two or more years older than the official school age for the grade s/he is enrolled in. This section describes some general and regional prevalence patterns of being over-age among 6-9 and 10-15-year-old children. Three main drivers of being over-age are also explored with a view to understanding the different dynamics that might underlie the relation between being over-age and dropping out of school.

Children who are two or more years over-age in 1st-4th grades are estimated to constitute 0.5 per cent of all children (0.8 per cent of boys and 0.2 per cent of girls) in these grades. The rate of over-age children in 1st to 4th grades is higher in the Gaza Strip (0.7 per cent) than in the West Bank (0.4 per cent). The rates of over-age children vary across Palestine's governorates, with North Gaza (2.7 per cent), Rafah (1.9 per cent), Deir el-Balah (1.7 per cent) and Bethlehem (1.6 per cent) at the higher end. A higher percentage of children who live in the poorest households are over-age (0.9 per cent) compared to their wealthier peers. Children who live with five or more siblings in the same household are over-age at higher rates (0.7 per cent) than their peers with fewer siblings. Similarly, a higher rate of children whose mothers have no education or only a basic education are over-age (0.8 per cent), compared to their peers whose mothers have a secondary education.

The administrative data supports the findings from the 2014 MICS data. Looking at MoEHE administrative data, children who are two or more years over-age in 1st-4th grades constitute 0.6 per cent of all children in these grades during the 2015-2016 school year and 0.8 per cent of all children in these grades during the 2014-2015 school year.<sup>75</sup> During both school years, a higher percentage of boys are two or more years over-age than girls. Also during both school years, the rates are higher in the Gaza Strip than in the West Bank.

Children who are two or more years over-age in 5th-10th grades constitute about 1.5 per cent of all children in these grades. A higher percentage of boys (1.9 per cent) are over-age than girls (1.0 per cent). Factors such as poverty, household size, and parental education all seem to be related to a child's being over-age in 5th-10th grades, and this is particularly discernible for boys. An estimated 4.7 per cent of boys living in households in the poorest quintile are two or more years older than their classmates. Similarly, a higher percentage of boys (2.4 per cent) who have 5 or more siblings living in the same household are over-age compared to boys with fewer siblings. Finally, 2.6 per cent of boys whose mothers have basic or no education are over-age.

The estimated rate of children who are two or more years over-age in 5th-10th grades is higher in the Gaza Strip (2.2 per cent) than in the West Bank (0.9 per cent). The impact of location on the rate of over-age differs by gender: while a higher percentage of boys living in camps are over-age (2.2 per cent) compared to boys living in urban areas (1.5 per cent) and rural areas (0.9 per cent), a lower percentage of girls living in camps are over-age (0.7) compared to girls living in urban areas (1.0 per cent) and rural areas (0.9 per cent).

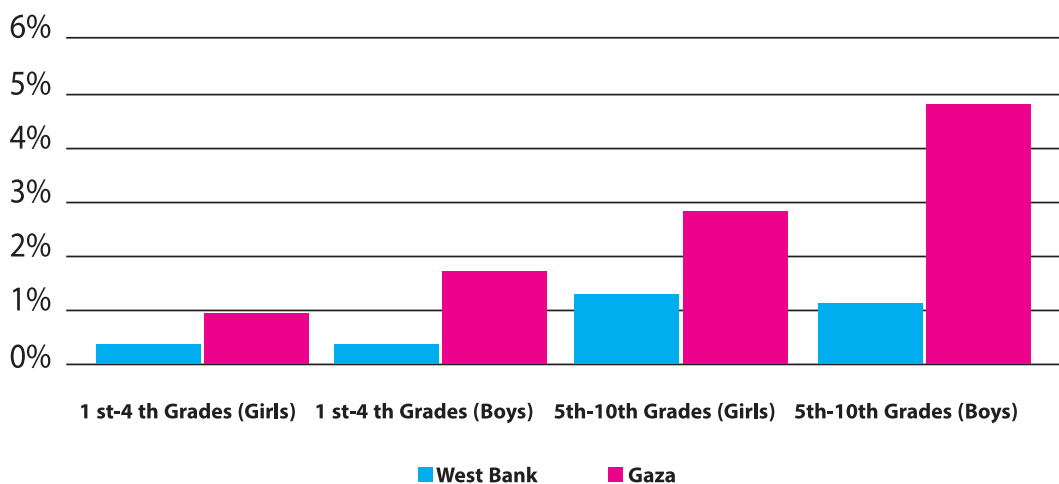
Looking at administrative data, children who are two or more years older than their classmates in 5th-10th grades constituted 2.0 per cent of all children in these grades during the 2015-2016 school year and 2.5 per cent of all children in these grades during the 2014-2015 school year. During both school years, a higher percentage of boys (2.7 per cent in 2014-2015, 2.1 per cent in 2015-2016) were two or more years over-age than girls

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<sup>75</sup> Please note that the calculation for 2+ over-age uses as the cut-off point in the year September 30th for MICS data and December 31st for administrative data. The official cut-off point for enrolment is January 31st. The difference in cut-off dates is likely to lead to an under-estimation of over-age rates by both MICS and administrative data. The under-estimation is expected to be larger for those rates calculated using MICS data.

(2.0 per cent in 2014-2015, 1.7 per cent in 2015-2016). Also during 2014-2015, a higher percentage of children in the Gaza Strip (2.9 per cent) were two or more years older than their classmates in the West Bank (1.5 per cent); the rates were particularly high for boys in the Gaza Strip (5.0 per cent).

**Figure 12: Ratio of Children 2+ Older, Administrative Data**



**Drivers of being over-age:** Being over-age by one or more years can be the result of starting school late, taking time off from school and/or repeating grades. While the available administrative data and MICS data allows for separately calculating the figures for children who are over-age, children who start school late, and children who repeat grades, these data do not allow for calculating the exact distribution of over-age children across these three groups or identify children who are in more than one of these groups, such as a child who starts school late and then also repeats grades in later years.

In terms of children who are over-age because they start school late, some findings from the 2014-2015 school year administrative data are worth noting. For instance, about 3.3 per cent of 7-year-old children who are enrolled in primary school are still enrolled in the first grade. Similarly, looking at MICS data, an estimated 1.9 per cent of 6-year-old children are still in pre-primary education and another 1 per cent are not enrolled in any school whatsoever, of whom many will be late entrants.<sup>76</sup> These late-entrants will remain at least one year over-age from their peers throughout their education.

In terms of children who are over-age because they take time off from school, a child could be away from school for extended periods of time due to health or family reasons with the school’s permission. It could also be the case that a child drops out of school for a period of time, but then is able to returns to school after one or more years away. The administrative data does not identify children who are out of school for extended periods of time but eventually return. Based on data from PCBS’s Palestinian Youth Survey 2015, among 15-17-year-old children who are attending school,<sup>77</sup> 0.9 per cent indicate having stopped attending school for more than four months at least one point during their education.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>76</sup> Please note that the enrolment in first grade starts at 5 years and 8 months, and as a result, these figures are likely to be an under-estimation.

<sup>77</sup> The figure of 0.9 per cent is likely to be an under-estimation of the percentage of school-age children who stop attending school for extended periods of time as it only includes those children who are still attending school by the time they are 15-17 years-old.

<sup>78</sup> The figure is from the PCBS’s Main Findings report for the Palestinian Youth Survey 2015, Table 2.12.

Finally, in terms of children who are over-age because they repeat grades, an estimated 0.65 per cent of 1st-4th graders and 0.91 per cent of 5th-10th graders repeat at least one grade according to MICS data.

Given administrative rules governing grade repetition, it should be noted that for 1st-4th graders repetition occurs either as a result of extended periods of absence, or with the parents' approval, based on the student not having acquired basic literacy and numeracy skills. Grade repetition among 1st-4th graders is higher in the Gaza Strip (1.1 per cent) than in the West Bank (0.3 per cent). A higher percentage of children living in households in the poorest quintile (1.9 per cent) repeat grades compared to their peers living in wealthier households. The estimated rate of repetition is higher for boys (0.77 per cent) than for girls (0.53 per cent).

For 5th-10th graders, students are required to repeat grades due to poor performance in school and/or extended periods of absence.<sup>79</sup> Similar to earlier grades, repetition among 5th-10th graders is higher in the Gaza Strip (1.2 per cent) than in the West Bank (0.7). Overall, a higher percentage of boys in 5th-10th grades (1.1 per cent) repeat grades compared to their female peers (0.8 per cent). Household characteristics have a discernible relationship with the likelihood of repetition in 5th-10th grades. Repetition among children in these grades is notably higher for children in households in the lowest wealth quintile (2.3 per cent). The rate of repetition for their peers in the middle wealth quintile and richest quintile are 0.7 and 0.3 per cent respectively. Children whose mothers have a basic education or less repeat grades at higher rates (1.4 per cent) than their peers whose mothers have a secondary education (0.5 per cent).

Administrative data reveals some additional insights. For 1st-10th grades during the 2013-2014 academic year, a higher percentage of boys (1.8 per cent) repeated grades when compared to girls (1.2 per cent). The gender difference in grade repetition rates is more substantial in the Gaza Strip than in the West Bank. Grade repetition remains at very low levels prior to grade 4, and becomes discernible only then. Children in UNRWA schools in the Gaza Strip are more likely to repeat grades than their peers in government schools in the Gaza Strip. In the West Bank, however, there was no significant difference between repetition rates at UNRWA versus government schools over the recent academic years (2011-2012 to 2014-2015). In both regions, private schools have exceptionally low repetition rates for both boys and girls when compared to government and UNRWA schools.<sup>80</sup>

It is worth noting that while being over-age can be both a warning sign of and a factor contributing to dropping out, not all cases of drop-out are over-age and not all over-age children drop out of school. In fact, the effect of being over-age on dropout seems to vary between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. A study on dropout from UNRWA schools, for example, found that while 49.2 per cent of children who dropped out of UNRWA schools in the Gaza Strip identified being over-age as a major factor in their dropout, none of the children who dropped out of UNRWA schools in the West Bank did.<sup>81</sup> In the same study, grade repetition, which is closely linked to being over-age, also emerged as a critical factor related to dropping out in the Gaza Strip: 96 per cent of boys and 92 per cent of girls who dropped out of UNRWA schools in the Gaza Strip had repeated at least one grade.<sup>82</sup> <sup>83</sup> Overall, these regional differences suggest the relationship between being over-age and dropping out is context-specific.

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<sup>79</sup> For details on repetition policy in government schools, please see footnote 161. Please also note the need for caution in interpreting the repetition rates as they are driven partly by administrative policies that create a maximum cap (5 per cent) for the number of repeaters in a given grade.

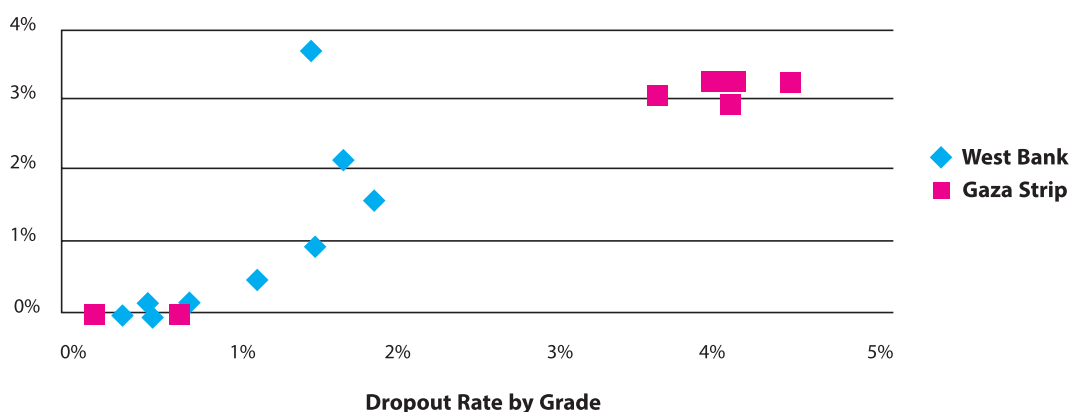
<sup>80</sup> Note that as part of its recent education reform efforts, UNRWA has undertaken a review of the repetition rates in its schools with a view to reducing them.

<sup>81</sup> UNRWA, School Dropout: An Agency Wide Study, UNRWA Education Department, September 2013.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Unfortunately, the study did not analyse the relation between repetition and dropping out of school for UNRWA schools in the West Bank. Hence, a regional comparison of this relation is not possible.

**Figure 13: Overage and Dropout Rates by Grade, Administrative Data**



In summary, the risk factors associated with leaving school early are complex and inter-related. Absenteeism and being over-age are two critical factors that were highlighted in this section. Other risk factors are examined in more detail in the next chapter as part of the discussion on barriers to education.

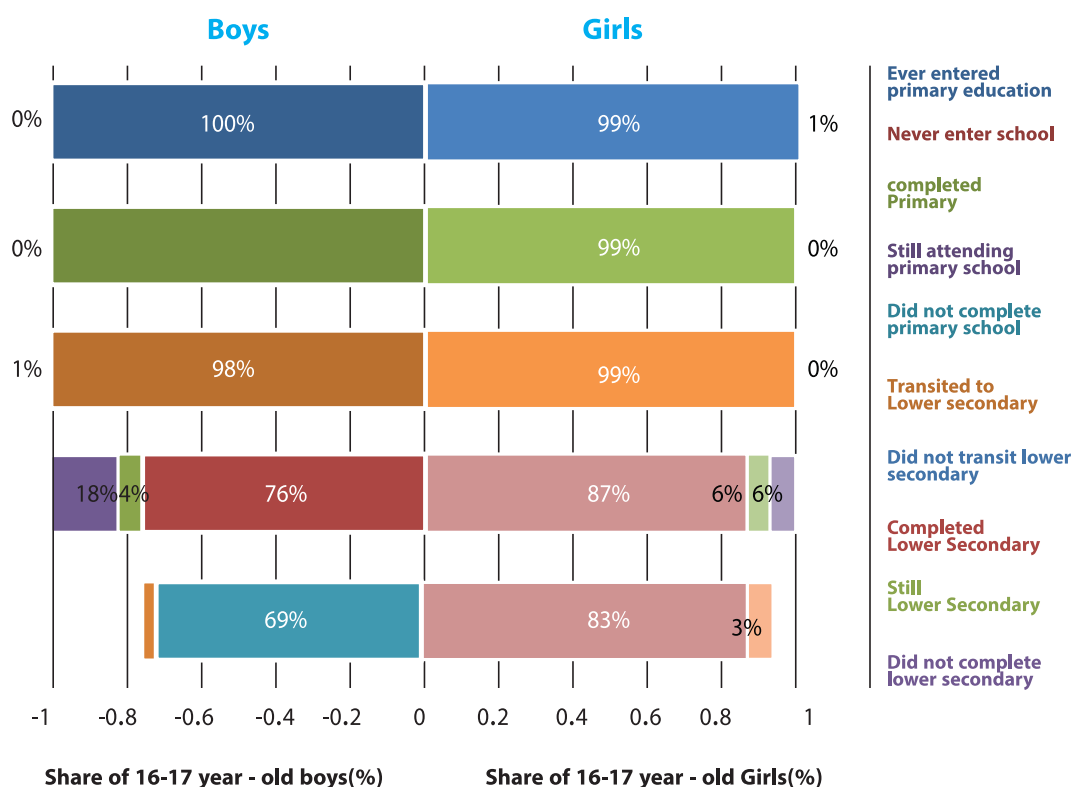
### Children’s progression through education and points of constriction

This section examines the flow of children through 1st-10th grade with a view to identifying the points where children leave the system in larger numbers. These are points of constriction, and represent cracks in the system where children fall through. These could also be considered points of ‘run-over’ where the ‘drops’ from a persistent stream of negative encounters in school finally accumulate to the point when the child decides to leave school. In the rest of this section, the flow of children through the education system is explored to understand the variations between different groups of children.

With respect to the points at which children leave education, the size of the constrictions faced by boys and girls are notably different yet for both groups. For both genders, the 9th and 10th grades and ages 14-15 are the most severe points of constriction in the system.

Looking at administrative drop-out data from 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years, a relatively small group of boys seemed to face a point of constriction in their school life around the 4th-5th grades. This group represents those boys who enrolled in school but leave after just 3-4 years. These boys are unlikely to have acquired basic literacy or numeracy skills given the very few years they spent in school, which makes their exclusion particularly troubling. After 5th grade, boys’ rate of exclusion increases somewhat linearly until 9th-10th grades. The 9th and 10th grades represent a point of major constriction in the education system when many boys drop out. Girls, on the other hand, face relatively smaller constrictions in the education system from 5th-6th grade onwards. Similar to boys, many girls drop out of school during 9th and particularly 10th grade.

**Figure 14: Progression through Education - Gender, MICS 2014**



These flows and the single-age ANAR figures depicted in the graph above further suggest that exclusion from education in Palestine is predominantly a 14-15-year-old boys' problem. The constrictions boys face grow much bigger with age when compared to the constrictions girls face. Although boys are out of school at higher rates than girls (0.9 per cent versus 0.2 per cent) as early as age 9, boys' exclusion from education becomes a particularly severe problem starting at age 13 when the rate of out-of-school boy's quadruples from 5.9 per cent at age 13, to 11.6 per cent at age 14, up to 22.0 per cent at age 15. For girls, the out-of-school rate reaches an estimated 2.9 per cent at age 13, and grows to 5.6 per cent at age 15. The gender difference seems to be particularly acute in the West Bank.

In addition to gender and age, analyses of the 2014 MICS data suggest household deprivation and vulnerability are critical factors in the timing and size of the constrictions facing children, particularly boys. This parallels the findings about exclusion from education described under Dimensions Two and Three. For instance, a higher percentage of children from households in the poorest quintile face constrictions earlier, and these constrictions tend to be bigger. Looking at survival rates to the last grade of basic education, just 80.3 per cent of boys from households in the poorest quintile reach 10th grade if they were enrolled in 5th grade, compared to an estimated 94.3 per cent of their male peers from households in the richest quintile. Similarly, an estimated 80.7 per cent of boys whose mothers have a basic education or less reach 10th grade if they were enrolled in 5th grade, compared to an estimated 96.9 per cent of their peers whose mothers have a tertiary education. Finally, the survival rate to 10th grade is estimated to be 75.4 per cent among boys from households where one or both parents are missing, and barely 74 per cent among boys who have 8 or more siblings in their household.

Figure 15: D1, D2 and D3, MICS 2014

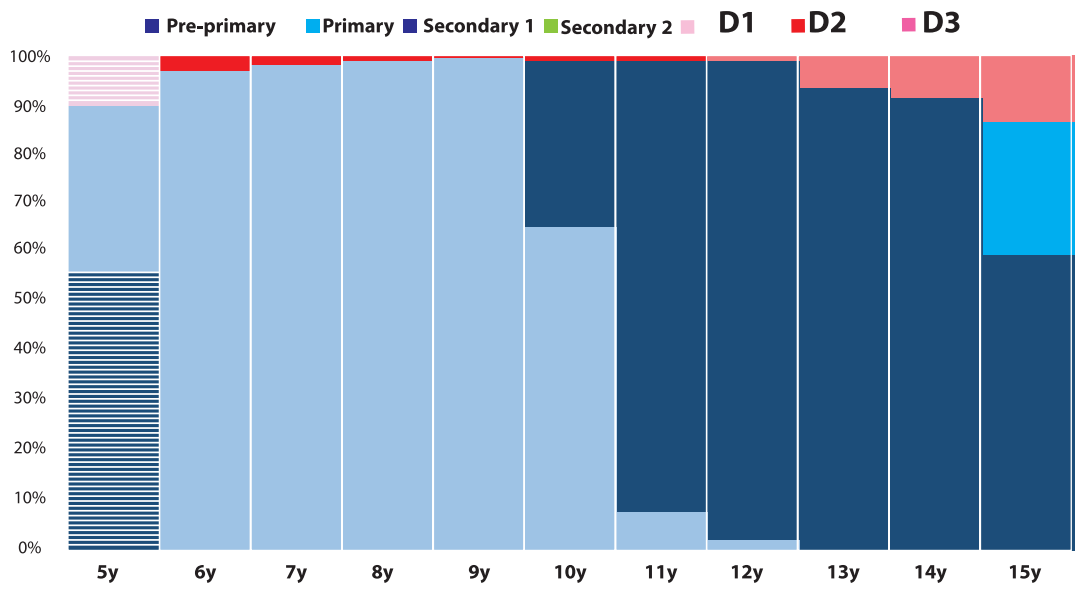
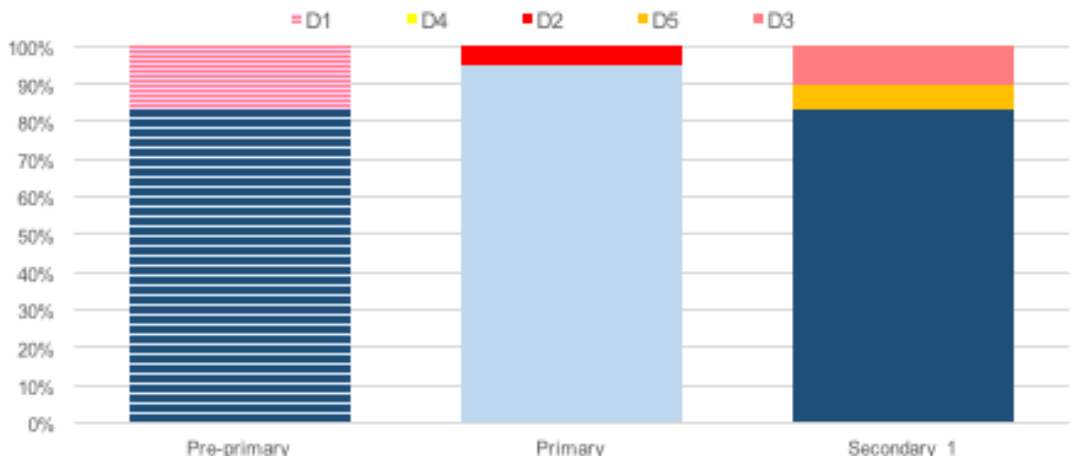


Figure 16: 5DE, Administrative Data



## 2.3 Key profiles of excluded children

This section presents stylized profiles of children excluded from education, selected based on the scale and severity of their exclusion. A large scale of exclusion indicates there are a large number of children who face similar challenges to those described in the profile. A severe level of exclusion means that the out-of-school rate is particularly high for children who are similar to this profile. Using the criteria of scale and severity, the three stylized profiles describe children from vulnerable households who are excluded from education at extremely high rates.

### Profile 1: Children from vulnerable households

The concept of vulnerability is used in this report to capture a number of characteristics of households where many out-of-school children live. Vulnerability, in this context, is used broadly to refer to a household's inability to overcome external shocks, such as unemployment, health crises, displacement and divorce, without interrupting the education of the children. Deep poverty is part of household vulnerability, but it is certainly not the only factor. Not having both parents in the household can be a contributing factor to household vulnerability. Parents' chronic illness or disability, parents' low level of education, having many children in the household, and having a weak social support network can all be contributing factors to household vulnerability.

Children living in vulnerable households are more likely to never enrol in school or enrol late. For instance, if the enrolment period occurs during a time of crisis for the vulnerable household, the parents are more likely to either forget or postpone their 6-year-old child's enrolment in school. If a 6-year-old child with a disability lives in a vulnerable household with many other children, the parents are far less likely to have the time and financial resources to secure education services for this child. If the nearest school is far and walking to school is not safe, parents in a vulnerable household are more likely to postpone their 6-year-old child's enrolment in school instead of making costly transportation arrangements.

Children living in vulnerable households are also more likely to leave school early compared to their peers living in stable households. If the school environment does not allow the child to learn, the parents in a vulnerable household are less likely to have the resources to support their child's learning at home. As a result, a slow learning child who lives in a vulnerable household is more likely to repeat grades and eventually drop out when compared to peers living in stable households. A vulnerable household is more likely to be displaced, and their displacement is likely to cause longer durations of instability and bring about long periods of absenteeism for the children. Such absenteeism might result in grade repetition, which may increase the child's risk of dropping out of school. A vulnerable household is more likely to encounter health crises and less able to cope with these crises, which may result in the child leaving school to become the caregiver for a sick family member.

Quantifiable variables can capture only some aspects of household vulnerability. Data from the 2014 MICS includes several of these quantifiable variables, such as poverty, absence of one or both parents, parental education, and number of siblings, which are used in this section for the purposes of analysing the relation between household vulnerability and exclusion from education.

Analyses of this data demonstrate the severity of the exclusion faced by children living in vulnerable households. While 4.9 per cent of all 10-15-year-old children are estimated to be out of school, the estimated out-of-school rate among children whose mothers have



no education is 18.2 per cent. Among children who have eight or more siblings living in the same household, the estimated out-of-school rate is 9.5 per cent. Among children who live in a household with one or no parent, the estimated out-of-school rate is 10.8 per cent.

While the relationship between household vulnerability and the risk of exclusion from education is not unique to Palestine, what is striking is the particular severity of exclusion for adolescent boys in these vulnerable households in Palestine. An estimated 11.6 per cent of 10-15-year-old boys whose mothers have a basic education or less are out of school compared to 3.0 per cent of girls whose mothers have a basic education or less. An estimated 8.6 per cent of boys who have five or more siblings living in the same household are out of school compared to 2.1 per cent of girls in similar households. Among boys who live in a household with one or no parent, the estimated out-of-school rate is 14.2 per cent compared to 7.8 per cent of girls who live in a household with one or no parent.

While a higher percentage of 5-14-year-old boys living in vulnerable households work in an economic activity (13.1 per cent), a relatively high percentage of boys living in wealthy, stable households also work (8.9 per cent).<sup>84</sup> The difference between these two groups of working boys is their rate of exclusion from education (1.5 per cent and 0.1 per cent respectively). This pattern suggests that boys from different types of households may engage in work for different reasons- with boys from poor and vulnerable households working out of financial necessity and boys from wealthy and stable households working for the purposes of acquiring skills and experience, or helping in the running of family businesses. In other words, all working boys do not necessarily face exclusion from education, but boys who have to work out of financial necessity and for extended hours are in fact excluded from education at higher rates. Finally, an estimated 5.4 per cent of 5 to 14-year-old boys living in the poorest households are neither engaged in an economic activity nor attending school; this rate is 1.6 per cent for their peers living in the richest households.

## Profile 2: 14-15-year-old boys

Given its scale and severity, the notably high dropout rates among 14-15-year-old boys places it at the heart of the problem of exclusion from education in State of Palestine. According to estimates using MICS 2014 data, 14 and 15-year-old out-of-school boys represent more than half of all 6-15-year-old children who are currently out of school.<sup>85</sup> 11.2 per cent of 14-year-old boys and 22.0 per cent of all Palestinian 15-year-old boys are out of school.

Analyses of data from the 2014 MICS reveal some puzzling findings regarding 14-15-year-old boys. Boys in this age group in the Gaza Strip are excluded from education at lower rates (14.7 per cent) than their peers in the West Bank (18.3 per cent) despite higher rates of poverty in the Gaza Strip. Certain governorates in the West Bank have particularly high out-of-school rates for 14-15-year-old boys, such as Jericho (29.5 per cent)<sup>86</sup> and Hebron (23.4 per cent), while others have relatively low rates of exclusion, such as Nablus (12.3 per cent) and East Jerusalem (11.2 per cent). Similarly, certain governorates in the Gaza Strip have particularly high out-of-school rates for 14-15-year-old boys, such as Gaza (19.2 per cent) and North Gaza (15.3 per cent) while others have relatively low rates of exclusion, such as Rafah (6.8 per cent).<sup>87</sup> While certain aspects of household vulnerability

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<sup>84</sup> For this comparison, vulnerability and stability is proxied by the wealth quintile of the household, and the comparisons are made between boys living in households in the poorest wealth quintile versus richest wealth quintile.

<sup>85</sup> The ratio is 52.1 per cent and it is calculated by comparing the number of cases of out-of-school children in MICS 2014 data for singles ages and genders. The estimated number of 14 and 15-year-old boys who are out of school is 18290. It is calculated by multiplying the rate of exclusion with the population projections for mid-2014 for these two singles ages.

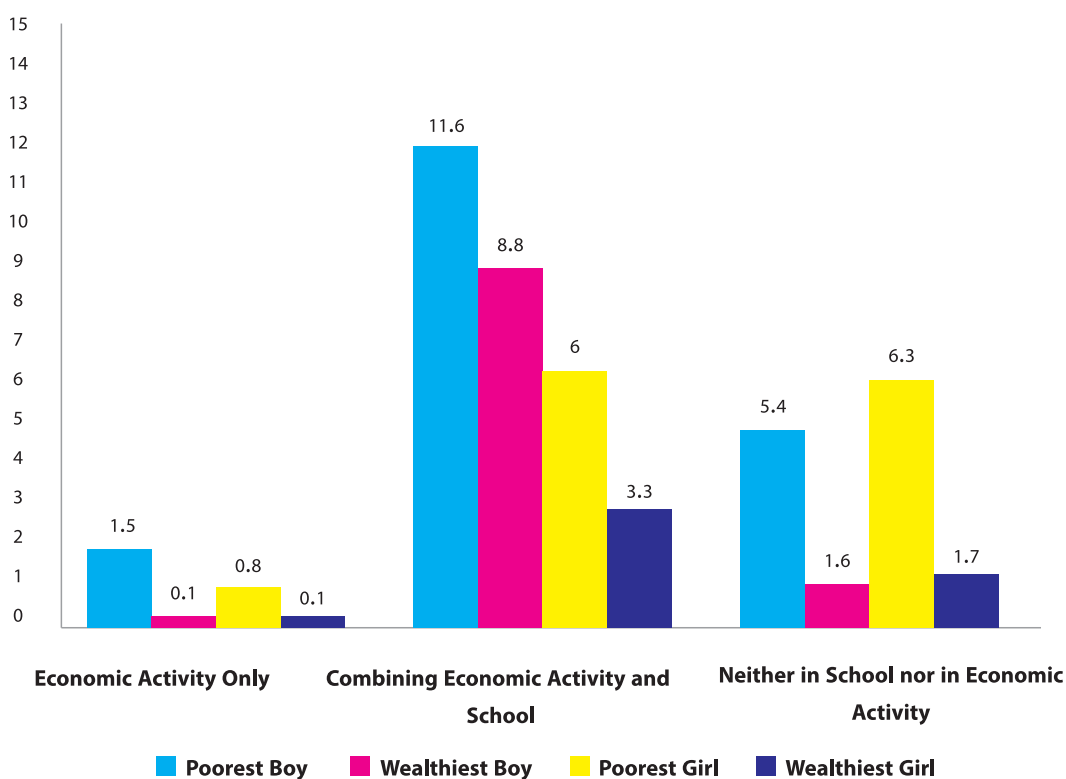
<sup>86</sup> Please note that the estimate for Jericho governorate is based on a small number of cases (25-49 unweighted cases)

<sup>87</sup> Please note that the estimate for Rafah governorate is based on a small number of cases (25-49 unweighted cases)

seem to impact the exclusion of 14-15-year-old boys from education, other aspects do not. For example, boys whose mothers have a basic or no education are out of school at a higher rate (23.9 per cent) than their peers whose mothers have a secondary education (9.2 per cent). Similarly, boys who live in households where there is one or no parent are excluded from education at a much higher rate (28.1 per cent) than their peers who live in households with both of their parents (16.0 per cent). Yet household poverty and number of siblings does not have a strong impact on exclusion from education for 14-15-year-old boys. The 14-15 year-old boys who live in the middle or poorer households are out of school at similar rates (21.3 per cent for middle quintile; 20.0 per cent for second poorest quintile; 20.5 per cent for the poorest quintile), while boys who live with five or more siblings are excluded from education at only a slightly higher rate (16.5 per cent) than their peers who live in a house with 2-4 siblings (12.7 per cent).

Among adolescent out-of-school boys, many are working in an economic activity despite being under 15, the minimum age of legal employment in Palestine. An estimated 32.3 per cent of 14-year-old boys who are out of school are working,<sup>88</sup> yet the relationship between work and exclusion from education is not necessarily causal. In fact, 86.3 per cent of 14-year-old working boys are still attending school. However boys who are working and attending school work fewer hours (8.8 hours per week on average) than boys who are working and are out of school (20.2 hours per week on average), suggesting possible differences in the types and intensity of work these two groups of boys are engaged in.

**Figure 17: Child Labour, Gender, Household Wealth, MICS 2010**



<sup>88</sup> These figures are calculated using UCW's standard definitions. Details on definitions, data, and calculation are available at UCW's website.

### Profile 3: Children with disabilities

In terms of the severity of exclusion from education, children with disabilities emerge as the most critical profile. An estimated 1.5 per cent of children (0-17-year-old) in Palestine have a disability.<sup>89</sup> Among 6-9-year-old children, an estimated 32.5 per cent of those with a disability are out of school compared to 0.9 per cent of their peers without a disability.<sup>90</sup> All of these out-of-school children with a disability were never enrolled in school. A higher percentage of 6-9-year-old children with a disability are out of school in the Gaza Strip (45.2 per cent) compared to their peers in the West Bank (27.7 per cent). Among 10-15-year-old children, an estimated 30.2 per cent of those with a disability are out of school compared to 2.3 per cent of their peers without a disability. More alarmingly, an estimated 22.1 per cent of children in this age group who have a disability never attended school. 10-15-year-old girls with a disability are out of school at higher rates (36.6 per cent) than boys (26.3 per cent). The gender difference arises mostly as a result of higher rates of girls with disabilities never attending school (28.5 per cent), compared to boys with disabilities (18.3 per cent). A higher percentage of 10-15-year-old children with a disability are out of school in the Gaza Strip (33.2 per cent) compared to their peers in the West Bank (28.3 per cent).

Looking closer at the profiles of all 6-15-year-old children with a disability, certain patterns emerge with respect to differences in the severity of exclusion. Children who have multiple disabilities are out of school at even higher rates compared to their peers who have a single disability.<sup>91</sup> While an estimated 9.4 per cent of children who have a single disability are out of school, 54.8 per cent of children who have multiple disabilities are out of school. Among 6-9-year-old children who have multiple disabilities, an estimated 49.2 per cent and among 10-15-year-old children who have multiple disabilities an estimated 44.3 per cent never attended school. The type of disability also seems to be related to the severity of the exclusion for children with a single disability. Among 6-15-year-old children who have a single disability, an estimated 8.6 per cent of those who have only a physical disability such as mobility, hearing, vision or communication, are out of school compared to 22.6 per cent of those who have only a psychological or intellectual disability.

According to MoEHE's administrative data the number of children with disabilities enrolled in grades 1st-10th in government schools during the 2015-2016 school year was 4,823 in the West Bank and 2,006 in the Gaza Strip.<sup>92</sup> Based on the disability categories used by MoEHE, about half of these enrolled children had an "articulation disorder" and another third of them had a physical disability.

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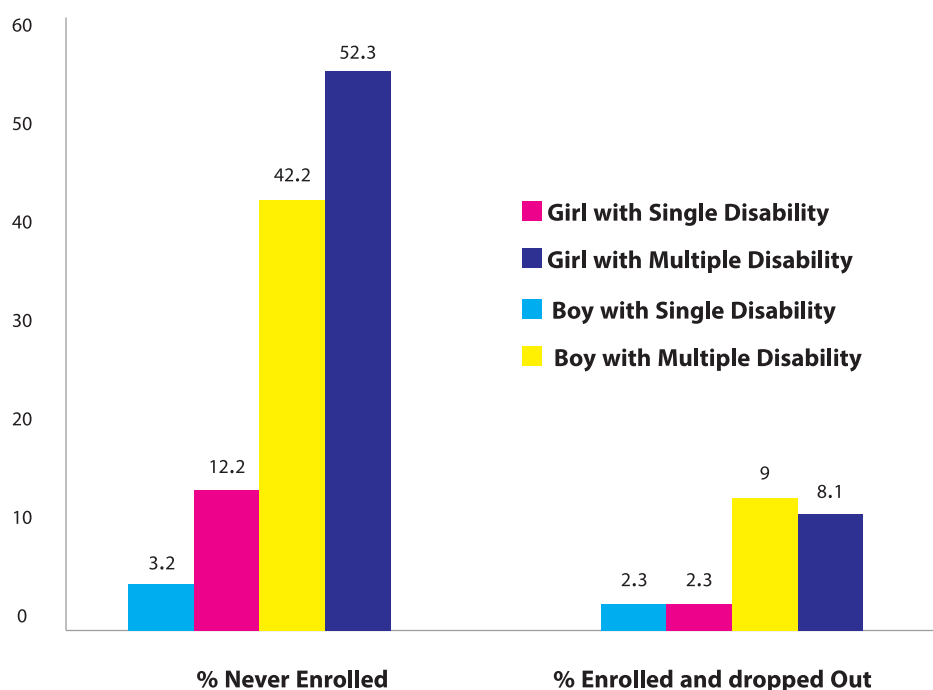
<sup>89</sup> PCBS: Disabled Individuals Survey, 2011, Main Findings Report.

<sup>90</sup> In analysing the Disability Survey 2011 data, only those children who is indicated to have "a lot of trouble" carrying out the specified activities or who "cannot at all" carry out the specified activities are considered to have a disability. Those children who are indicated to have "some trouble" are not considered to have a disability for the purposes of the analyses conducted for this report. This categorization parallels the one used in PCBS's main report of this survey. Please note that these figures are only internally comparable but not comparable to figures estimated based on MICS 2014 data or administrative data.

<sup>91</sup> The severity of exclusion from education facing children with multiple disabilities is also highlighted in a recent report on the needs of children with disabilities in Palestine (Overseas Development Institute, Ministry of Social Development and United Nations Children's Fund, Every Child Counts: Understanding the Needs and Perspectives of Children with Disabilities in the State of Palestine, December 2016). This report finds that among 6-18-year-old children with disabilities, those who have multiple disabilities have the highest rate of exclusion from education (57.6 per cent) when compared to their peers who have a single disability (e.g. vision (4.3 per cent), hearing (6.1 per cent), communication (23.1 per cent) or mobility (28.1 per cent)). The study also finds that children who have a single disability in learning (46.7 per cent) or mental health (50.0 per cent) are also excluded from education at higher rates.

<sup>92</sup> Interpreting the patterns in administrative numbers of children with disabilities poses a particular challenge. For instance, the number of children enrolled decreases as children progress through the first 10 years of education. There is, however, transfer between public and private providers of education for children with disabilities, which could be affecting this pattern both downward and upward. The numbers of children with disabilities enrolled in 1st-10th grades in government schools also appear to be decreasing from 2013-2014 to 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 school years, potentially signalling changes in the effectiveness of the implementation of the inclusive education policy.

**Figure 18: Disability and School Attendance – Gender and Multiple Disabilities, Disability Survey 2011**



## 2.4 Summary

Chapter 2 described the scope of the problem of exclusion from education using the 5DE framework and put forward three particular profiles of out-of-school children. In synthesizing the main patterns of exclusion from 5-year-old children, 6-9-year-old children, and 10-15-year-old children in Palestine, this summary re-emphasizes two critical points.

First, the level of exclusion from education differs across age groups. At age 5, about 1 out of 10 children in Palestine are excluded from education despite pre-primary education being not compulsory. The rate of exclusion from education decreases at age 6, and remains very low through primary education. Afterwards, levels of exclusion from education increase gradually and slightly until age 12, with a sharper increase for boys than girls. Ages 14 and 15 are a critical period, particularly for boys. About one out of four 15-year-old boys in the State of Palestine are out of school.

Second, there are specific profiles of children who are excluded from education at different points in primary and lower secondary education. Firstly, household vulnerability, as experienced in the form of deep poverty and unstable household composition, is an important factor across all five dimensions of exclusion from education. Children growing up in vulnerable households attend pre-primary education at lower rates, some drop out in the early grades of primary education, and they are more likely to face academic challenges, repeat grades, and drop out at higher rates during lower secondary education. At the very extreme, a few of the children from some of these vulnerable households never enrol in school. Secondly, children with disabilities, particularly those with multiple disabilities or a psychological/intellectual disability, experience severe exclusion from education at much higher rates than their peers. Among 6-9-year-olds, about one out of three children with disabilities and about one out of two children with multiple disabilities in Palestine have never enrolled in school.

Taken together, these two critical points suggest the presence of both limited and system-wide barriers in the provision of inclusive and equitable quality basic education in Palestine. These barriers require targeted and systemic policy interventions to overcome.

# 3

## Barriers to Education, Existing Policies & Policy Suggestions

### 3.1 Overview of Barriers to Education

This chapter identifies the main barriers to accessing and completing compulsory basic education (grades 1-10) in Palestine, examines existing policies related to these barriers, recognizes efforts that are underway to strengthen existing policies, and suggests additional interventions to strengthen current efforts.

The final exclusion of a child from basic education in any country is often the result of complex interactions among various barriers related to the school, the child, the family, and the wider economic, political and security environment. This report identifies significant barriers based on 1) findings from recent surveys on the determinants of children dropping out of education in Palestine;<sup>93</sup> 2) an extensive literature review on access and quality issues in basic education in Palestine; 3) and findings from interviews with policymakers in education, health, and social protection sectors, interviews district- and school-level implementers of education policies, and focus group discussions with school principals, teachers and counsellors. From among these significant barriers, the more actionable barriers that could be addressed by the policies and programs of primarily the MoEHE, but also MoH, MoL, MoSD, and UNRWA, were selected and grouped under four main categories.

The first group of barriers focuses on the school and the quality of education. Low academic achievement and lack of interest in education, all of which are closely related

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<sup>93</sup> These survey-based studies include a 2015 study by MoEHE on transition from formal to non-formal education, a 2013 study by UNRWA on drop-out, a 2005 study by MoEHE and UNICEF on drop-out, the Palestine Expenditure and Consumption Survey (PECS 2011) as reported in MoEHE's Baseline M&E Report of 2014, and a 2015 study by ILO on education-to-work transition. All five studies show that reasons related to low academic engagement constitute the primary reason for the largest group of children dropping out of education. More specifically:

- The survey conducted with drop-out children enrolled in vocational centres as part of the 2015 MoEHE study show that 63.8 per cent of children surveyed indicate "academic weakness and low achievement" as a primary reason for dropping out with 38.3 per cent indicating being convinced of futility of education and 34.0 per cent indicating a lack of interest in education as a primary reason.
- The survey conducted with a sample of children who dropped out of UNRWA schools provided children with 34 potential reasons under 4 categories and asks them to indicate if a reason is a major reason, a secondary reason or not a reason for their drop-out. The cluster of reasons under "low academic engagement", which includes underachievement and lack of interest in education, is identified as the most salient set of reasons for dropping out.
- The survey conducted with a sample of children who dropped out of public, private and UNRWA schools presented children with 87 reasons under 4 areas and asked them to indicate if a reason was a major reason, a secondary reason or not a reason for their drop-out. Accordingly, the top two reasons for dropping out were underachievement and lack of interest in studying. 47 per cent of children surveyed indicated underachievement as a major reason for dropping out with another 27.1 per cent marking it as a secondary reason. 45.4 per cent of children surveyed indicated lack of interest in studying as a major reason for dropping out with another 27.4 per cent marking it as a secondary reason.
- The 2011 PECS study conducted by PCBS asked heads of household to select the one primary reason for their child dropping out of school from among a list of 14 possible reasons. The three reasons selected by the highest proportion of heads of households as the primary reason were "not interested in study" (25 per cent), "frequent repetition" (25 per cent), "unwillingness for academic education" (20 per cent).
- The ILO study asked a sub-group of nationally representative sample of 15-29-year-olds who left education prior to completing secondary education their primary reason for dropping out: 36.6 per cent selected "not interested in education" and 20 % selected "failed exams".

to the quality of education, are consistently identified as the primary reasons why most children drop out in the various studies on this topic.<sup>94</sup> Therefore, this group of barriers focuses on the quality of education and the limited provision of tailored education services, which brings about an exclusionary learning process and which puts many children at risk of dropping out due to low academic achievement.

The second group of barriers focuses primarily on the wellbeing of the child and the family. The studies reviewed show that for some children, deep poverty and the need to earn an income, or external shocks such as health crises or deaths in the family, constitute the primary reason for their dropout.<sup>95</sup> Given the centrality of support services for ensuring that such children with multiple disadvantages can continue attending and learning in school, the quality and availability of support services in Palestine are analysed. Relatedly, the third group of barriers focuses primarily on economic barriers arising from the costs of education. The fourth group of barriers, based on findings from interviews with key informants, focuses on the administrative policies and practices that contribute to some children's exclusion from education.

These four categories of barriers are closely linked to the three profiles of out-of-school children described in the previous chapter, i.e. children from vulnerable households, 14-15-year-old boys, and children with disabilities. As detailed in the rest of this chapter, these groups are most likely to be negatively affected by the low quality of education, limited provision of tailored education services, fragmented support services, high cost of education, and exclusionary administrative practices.

Building on these four sets of barriers, the chapter describes the challenges the MoEHE faces with obtaining and using data for identifying children at risk of exclusion, and for preventing their exclusion. To this end, current administrative policies and practices are described with a view to highlighting the missed opportunities for preventing exclusion from education as a result of design weaknesses and implementation inconsistencies in data collection and intervention protocols. The chapter concludes with a summary of all groups of barriers. It should be noted that the barriers and policies highlighted in this chapter were identified with MoEHE as the primary actor in mind. Thus, efforts by other ministries, UNRWA, and other international actors are given relatively less attention. For the same reason, relevant efforts of local communities and local organizations are mostly excluded from the analyses.

While the chapter does not present a detailed discussion of the barriers related to the domestic economic and political environment, it remains cognizant of the fragmentation of education governance between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as well as the challenges posed by an unpredictable and inadequate education financing particularly in the Gaza Strip. Suggestions for policy changes and new interventions strive to be fully cognizant of these limitations and their ramifications for the viability of new interventions.

Finally, the barriers to accessing quality education in the State of Palestine are also linked to the protracted conflict, recurring rounds of armed conflict, and the occupation. This includes incidents of violations of the right to education such as attacks and threats of attacks on schools and on students or teacher; arrest and detention of students; and other interferences with the right to education such as access restrictions and delays at checkpoints, military usage of school infrastructure, and the demolition of schools or classrooms. The Gaza blockade also impacts the availability and costs of materials for

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<sup>94</sup> Overseas Development Institute, *Effects of the Palestinian National Cash Transfer Programme on Children and Adolescents: A mixed methods analysis*, ODI, London, UK, 2014; Ministry of Education and Higher Education, 'The Phenomena of Students Transfer from Formal to Non-Formal Education System and to the Labour Market', MoEHE, September 2015; UNRWA, *School Dropout: An Agency Wide Study*, UNRWA Education Department, September 2013; United Nations Children's Fund and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Education Quality & Equity in East Jerusalem*, 2012; Ministry of Education and Higher Education, 'The Phenomena of Dropout from Palestinian Schools: Causes, and Remedial and Preventive Procedures', MoEHE, August 2005.

<sup>95</sup> *ibid.*

constructing and rehabilitating schools, which results in the lack of school space, and overcrowded classrooms. The negative effect of the occupation and conflict on education is most severe for students living in Area C of the West Bank, which is under Israeli administrative and security control, in East Jerusalem and in the Gaza Strip.

## 3.2 Barriers Concerning Quality of Education: Untailored Education Services

### 3.2.1 General Background on Tailored Education Services

For every child to timely enrol, regularly attend, and successfully complete basic education, learning processes and delivery models have to be adapted to accommodate their individual needs. The very nature of this cornerstone of “quality education for all”, however, makes it a moving target. In other words, no level of improvement in adapting learning processes and delivery models is adequate until every child effectively acquires the basic skills necessary for lifelong learning. The analyses in this section need to be reviewed in this light so that they are not interpreted as an under-valuation of the existing efforts in Palestine in this area.

In general, tailoring education refers to adapting the learning processes and the models of delivering education to the different needs of individual children. Inside the school, tailoring learning processes can take on various forms, including a flexible curriculum design, different types of remedial learning opportunities for children with lower levels of academic achievement, special, integrated and inclusive education for children with disabilities, or accelerated learning for over-age children. Outside the school, tailoring the models of delivering education services can take on different forms, such as catch-up schools for out-of-school children, mobile classrooms for nomadic children and children working in agriculture, self-learning programs for children who cannot leave the house, evening schools for working children, and alternative schools set up in children’s hospitals and juvenile centres.

The effective provision of tailored education services, not only in Palestine but everywhere, is closely linked to wider efforts to improve the quality of education and learning outcomes. Low learning outcomes, for instance, are closely related to inadequately tailored education services that ignore the differences in the needs and capabilities of children. Similarly, factors that can negatively affect the quality of education, such as large class sizes, low teacher qualifications, ineffective pedagogical practices, overloaded and inflexible curricula, and unfavourable school infrastructure, are factors that can also inhibit the effective provision of tailored education services.

General efforts to improve the quality of education, however, are unlikely to effectively address the learning needs of students with lower academic performance especially in the context of Palestine. The Palestinian education system is characterized by high levels of inequality in learning outcomes. The levels of variance in student academic performance, and thus the inequality in learning outcomes in Palestine, are notably high when compared regionally and internationally.<sup>96</sup> The percentage of teachers in Palestine who consider their instruction to be limited by students’ lack of prerequisite knowledge or skills is higher than in almost all other countries,<sup>97</sup> which suggests that compared to their peers in other countries, a higher number of Palestine students progress through basic education without acquiring the expected literacy and numeracy skills. These high levels of inequality in learning outcomes calls for more targeted and tailored interventions to improve the quality of education for students with lower academic achievement.

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<sup>96</sup> World Bank, Quality of Teaching in PA Schools – Learning from Local Practices: Improving Student Performance in West Bank and Gaza, No. ACS9460, 12 June 2014; World Bank, West Bank and Gaza Education Sector Analysis: Impressive Achievements under Harsh Conditions and the Way Forward to Consolidate a Quality Education System, 7 September 2006.

<sup>97</sup> Mulis, Ina V.S., et al., TIMSS 2011 International Results in Mathematics, TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center, 2012.

### 3.2.2 Children Affected by Inadequate Provision of Tailored Education Services

While all children are affected by the inadequate provision of tailored education services, certain groups of children are likely to be affected more severely. Among these groups are children with disabilities, children with low academic performance, children whose education is disrupted, nomadic and semi-nomadic children, working children, married children, pregnant children, children who have children, children who dropped out of education, over-age children, children in conflict with the law, and children with chronic illnesses.

Adequate provision of tailored education inside the school would mean that those children who regularly attend school are able to learn while they are in school, regardless of their learning needs. By improving the quality of the learning processes for these children, tailored education inside the school decreases the risk of children dropping out before completing 10th grade. For children who cannot attend regular schools on a daily basis because their families are semi-nomads, because they are detained, because they have a chronic illness that require long periods of hospital-based treatment, or because they have just become a parent, providing tailored education services outside of schools enables these students to continue learning despite not being able to attend regular schools.

M. is 15 years-old. She is the youngest of six children and the first one in her family to drop out of school before completing 10th grade. When she was in 8th grade, her father decided to take her out of school. "I decided to take her out of school and when I make a decision I do not ask anyone," he said when asked about how M ended up leaving school. "Her father took the decision and he does not consult with any one," M's mother confirmed.

M's father explains that M does not do homework and watches TV all the time. "I do not see her studying so I took her out of school." M. did not have high academic achievement but she also never failed a grade. She attended the UNRWA school in Jenin camp regularly. According to the school counselor, M. was well liked by both her teachers and friends.

After M. informed the school counselor about her father's decision, the school counselor and the principal met with M. and her parents to improve her academic achievement and to reverse her father's decision. "I have no clue why her father does not want her to continue school," says the school counselor.

"My father took the decision. I feel very bad," M. says. "I kept my uniform. I was organizing my closet and found it, so I wear it because I miss school. Sometimes I have hope to go back and sometimes not. I see everyone going to school in the morning and I stay at home. I feel regret."



### 3.2.3 Existing Policies and Programs for Providing Tailored Education Services

This section provides a brief description of existing efforts in the provision of tailored education services in Palestine with a view to highlighting gaps and challenges. Overall, policies to improve the quality of education are general in their approach and are not targeted at children with lower academic achievement. Tailored education services inside the schools are characterized by inadequate implementation constrained by resource limitations, despite notable policy efforts such as MoEHE's inclusive education policy issued in 2015. Similarly, tailored education services outside schools are generally limited in terms of their coverage and quality.

#### Existing Policies and Programs for Tailored Education Services inside Schools

Provision of tailored education services inside schools is closely linked to wider efforts to improve the quality of education and learning outcomes. Hence, this section presents tailored education services inside schools against the background of ongoing efforts to improve the quality of education in Palestine.

Improving the overall quality of education has been a core component of the MoEHE's second and third education development strategies (EDSP), and remains central to ongoing reform efforts. The MoEHE's Teacher Education Strategy (TES) introduced under the second EDSP, the ongoing curriculum reform introduced under the third EDSP, and the recent efforts on Life Skills and Citizenship Education (LSCE), are three notable interventions in this regard.

Substantive improvements in the quality of education require well-synchronized reforms across several fields, including the curriculum, learning materials, student assessments, teacher competencies and practices, and teacher supervision, and are thus challenging to implement. Reviews of the reform efforts in Palestine over the last decade suggest that attempts to improve teacher competencies and practices have been partly held back as a result of a lag in bringing changes to a curriculum that is considered overloaded, rigid and focused on brighter students.<sup>98</sup> As an extension, outdated student learning assessment activities have remained intact,<sup>99</sup> further hindering changes in pedagogical practices that were expected to follow extensive investments in teacher trainings. Ongoing curriculum reform efforts combined with efforts to improve LSCE is expected to address some of these challenges.

MoEHE programs to improve tailored education services inside schools have been inadequate with respect to their coverage, continuity, and quality of implementation at the school level, despite the MoEHE's strong efforts to introduce new policies such as the inclusive education policy. The intervention that currently has the widest coverage involves teachers developing remedial learning plans at the beginning of each academic year for those children who have low academic achievement. Such learning plans may involve provision of alternative learning materials to these children, organizing peer-to-peer learning activities, and offering remedial classes before, during or after school. Interviews with school principals and teachers suggest that the quality of the remedial plans and their effective implementation vary based on teachers and principals' prioritization of these plans as well as the physical, financial and human resources available to the school.

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<sup>98</sup> International Institute for Educational Planning and Save the Children, *Fragmented Foundations: Education and chronic crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*, IIEP-UNESCO, 2007; Ministry of Education and Higher Education, *Education Development Strategic Plan EDSP 2014-2019: A Learning Nation*, March 2014; World Bank, *West Bank and Gaza Education Sector Analysis: Impressive Achievements under Harsh Conditions and the Way Forward to*

<sup>99</sup> Ministry of Education and Higher Education, *Education Development Strategic Plan EDSP 2014-2019: A Learning Nation*, March 2014; World Bank, *SABER Country Report: Student Assessment*, 2013.

Inclusive education is another MoEHE policy with nationwide coverage characterized by fragmented implementation.<sup>100</sup> Stemming from the inclusive education program adopted by the MoEHE in 1997 followed by the Education for All Package on Inclusive and Child Friendly Education, the effective tailoring of education inside classrooms has continued to face resource-related challenges.<sup>101</sup> Among these resource-related challenges are the physical adaptation of the facilities, adequate provision of supportive tools, and the development of teacher competencies.<sup>102</sup> Given these challenges, the recently-introduced inclusive education policy with its twin-track approach combining systemic changes and individualized support is considered a positive development in this regard.<sup>103</sup>

Another notable intervention for the provision of tailored education services inside schools is resource rooms.<sup>104</sup> Teachers appointed to these rooms provide tailored education services to children in grades 1-4 with special learning needs,<sup>105</sup> children with low academic achievement, as well as accelerated learning programs for over-age children. As of January 2017, there were 123 resource rooms across the 1,285 government schools providing different grades of basic education. In other words, less than one out of ten government schools have resource rooms to facilitate tailored learning opportunities for children with special learning needs and children with low academic achievement. Furthermore, in the particular case of accelerated learning programs for over-age children, the school is expected to request ministerial permission via the district offices yet is not provided with additional resources for organizing such programs.

Another set of interventions for the provision of tailored education services inside schools involve offering after-school, weekend, and summer programs for children with special learning needs and/or children who have lower academic achievement. These programs have often been initiated by the schools themselves or through programs funded by donors, such as “learning through playing”. However, such programs are limited in terms of their continuity and coverage due to limited donor funding.

It should be noted that the quality of the school infrastructure and the availability of facilities remains a significant challenge for the effective provision of tailored education services inside schools, particularly in the Gaza Strip, Area C and East Jerusalem.<sup>106</sup> While commendable efforts to improve school infrastructure have been made since 1994 and have resulted in notable achievements in the West Bank,<sup>107</sup> children in Area C and East Jerusalem have not been able to benefit equally from these improvements due to the structural limitations from the occupation.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Please note that UNRWA has also adopted an agency-wide inclusive education policy and strategy, which is not discussed in this report given the report’s primary focus on MoEHE policies and programs. Details of UNRWA’s inclusive education policy and its implementation can be found on UNRWA’s website.

<sup>101</sup> MoEHE, Education Development Strategic Plan EDSP 2014-2019: A Learning Nation, March 2014.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Overseas Development Institute, Ministry of Social Development and UNICEF, Every Child Counts: Understanding the Needs and Perspectives of Children with Disabilities in the State of Palestine, December 2016.

<sup>104</sup> MoEHE, Education Development Strategic Plan EDSP 2014-2019: A Learning Nation, March 2014.

<sup>105</sup> Overseas Development Institute, Ministry of Social Development and United Nations Children’s Fund, Every Child Counts: Understanding the Needs and Perspectives of Children with Disabilities in the State of Palestine, December 2016; World Bank, Disability in the Palestinian Territories: Assessing situation and services for people with disabilities (PWD), April 2016.

<sup>106</sup> United Nations Children’s Fund, Child Friendly Schools: Case study – Occupied Palestinian Territory, UNICEF, 2011.

<sup>107</sup> International Institute for Educational Planning and Save the Children, Fragmented Foundations: Education and chronic crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, IIEP-UNESCO, 2007; United Nations Children’s Fund and Ministry of Planning and Administrative Development, Situation Analysis of Palestinian Children in the State of Palestine – 2013, 2014; Ministry of Education and Higher Education, ‘Evaluation of the Education Development Strategic Plan (EDSP 2008-2012) of the Palestinian Ministry of Education: Draft final report’, 30 June 2013.

<sup>108</sup> United Nations Children’s Fund, ‘East Jerusalem Education’, June 2016 (internal document); Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Education Development Strategic Plan EDSP 2014-2019: A Learning Nation, March 2014; United Nations Children’s Fund and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Education Quality & Equity in East Jerusalem, 2012; United Nations Children’s Fund, ‘Bedouin schools fighting for survival in Area “C”: Kaabneh’s and Khan Al Ahmar’s children’, 2011.

In the Gaza Strip, the combined effects of the blockade, military incursions and fiscal constraints, have thwarted efforts to overcome infrastructure limitations. As a result, about a third of all government schools providing basic and secondary education, and almost half of UNRWA schools, are currently implementing a double-shift teaching model in Gaza.<sup>109</sup> Still, the ratio of pupils to classrooms in the Gaza Strip is markedly higher than the West Bank particularly in government schools.<sup>110</sup> The high prevalence of the double-shift model and the markedly higher pupil/class ratio in the Gaza Strip increase the risk of children dropping out because of they limit: 1) instruction time; 2) opportunities to reinforce learning; 3) provision of remedial education programs; 4) counselling services; 5) physical accessibility of school facilities for children with certain disabilities; and 6) availability of extra-curricular activities.<sup>111</sup>

## Existing Policies and Programs for Tailored Education Services outside Schools

Tailored education services outside schools provide children with opportunities for learning basic literacy and numeracy skills and life skills despite being unable to attend regular schools. Children might be unable to attend regular schools for different reasons. A child might be in a juvenile centre. A child might be under house detention. A child might have an illness or a disability that hinders leaving the house. A child's family might lead a nomadic or semi-nomadic life. A child might live in an extremely remote location. A child might have left school and is now considered "too old" to re-enrol in a regular school.

Existing policies and programs for providing tailored education services outside of regular schools are limited in their coverage and quality. Parallel education programs and literacy programs are the main intervention offered by MoEHE in this realm. Parallel education programs offer classes to children older than 15 who have basic literacy skills, and literacy programs offer classes to children older than 15 who do not have basic literacy skills. These programs are available in some but not all districts. During the 2016-2017 school year, 103 children were enrolled in parallel education programs and a total of 289 children were enrolled in literacy programs in the West Bank.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> In the Gaza Strip, there were 395 government schools providing basic and secondary education and 130 of these schools (32.9 per cent) were reported to follow a double-shift model during the 2014-2015 school year. Also in the Gaza Strip, there were 257 UNRWA schools providing basic education and 109 of these schools (42.7 per cent) were reported to follow a double-shift model during the 2014-2015 school year (MoEHE, Educational Statistics Yearbook, 2015-2016).

<sup>110</sup> The pupil/class ratio for 1st-10th grades are as follows: UNRWA schools in the West Bank – 32; UNRWA schools in the Gaza Strip – 39; MoEHE schools in the West Bank 27.8; MoEHE schools in the Gaza Strip – 37.9 (MoEHE, Educational Statistics Yearbook, 2015-2016).

<sup>111</sup> United Nations Children's Fund and Ministry of Planning and Administrative Development, Situation Analysis of Palestinian Children in the State of Palestine – 2013, 2014.

<sup>112</sup> According to administration data provided by MoEHE in January 2017, the number of children reported as attending these programs includes those who are 19 years-old. Parallel education program is two-year long and its completion is considered to be equivalent to completing 9th grade. If a child who completes the parallel education program is still younger than 18, he/she is allowed to enrol in 10th grade. If the child is older than 18, then he/she could apply to enrol in MoL vocational centres

A.'s eyes light up when asked about what he wants to do in the future. "I love studying. I wish to get a PhD," he says cheerfully. A.'s father concurs with him. "His mind is like a computer," he adds and describes how A. once easily solved a calculation that neither the father nor A.'s teacher could.

A. had been the top student in his class during the first few years of his education in East Gaza. He was well-loved by his teachers and peers at his school. After completing six years at a school for children with disabilities, he transferred to a public school for 7th grade. He adjusted to his school quickly and was supported by the head teacher who ensured that A.'s classroom was on the ground level and arranged for a ministry vehicle to facilitate his commute to school.

Everything changed in 8th grade. A newly appointed head teacher moved A.'s classroom to the fourth floor. Despite his parents' relentless efforts, the new head teacher did not reverse his decision. Unable to climb the stairs on his own and reach his classroom safely, A. had to transfer to another school. He had trouble adjusting to the new school. Soon after his transfer, his legs got worse. He traveled to Egypt for treatment where the doctor urged him to rest for a year.

For almost two years, A. could not attend school. Yet he continued studying from home using his siblings' school books and a computer his parents got for him. At the end of two years, A. was given the choice to return to 8th grade or to enroll in a parallel education center. He chose the latter. He has been successfully attending the program at the parallel education center and plans to take the Tawjih graduation exam as the next step to his ultimate goal of getting a PhD.

Vocational centres run by the MoSD, MoL, UNRWA and private providers are another important intervention offering tailored education services outside of regular schools. These vocational centres vary in terms of their minimum age and minimum education requirements, as well as the duration of the training programs offered.<sup>113</sup> They are available in some but not all districts. Among the various vocational programs, the rehabilitation centres run by the MoSD are closest to the "second-chance education" model: they accept children as young as 13 regardless of their education level, offer supplementary courses to build basic literacy and numeracy skills, and provide payments to cover transportation fees. In 2016, around 250 children were enrolled in eight vocational rehabilitation centres run by the MoSD in the West Bank.<sup>114, 115</sup>

The classes offered inside juvenile rehabilitation centres, and the one-classroom school at the Augusta Victoria Hospital for children receiving treatment for cancer and kidney-related illnesses are other types of tailored education services offered outside of regular schools. Lastly, special education centres and schools for children with different types of disabilities are another category of tailored education services outside of regular schools. Many of these centres are run by non-governmental organizations and licensed by the MoEHE.<sup>116</sup> Others are run by MoSD and UNRWA,<sup>117</sup> though they have limited outreach.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> MoL centres accept applications from candidates who are at least 16 years old and have completed at least 9th grade whereas UNRWA centres accept applications from candidates who have completed 6th grade. MoSD centres, on the other hand, do not have any minimum education requirements for its applicants.

<sup>114</sup> The number of enrolled children is based on administrative data provided by MoSD in January 2017.

<sup>115</sup> According to administrative data provided by MoL, 1,595 people were enrolled in the nine centres run by MoL in West Bank, as of October 2016. It should be noted again that only those who are 16 and older can enrol in these centres run by MoL.

<sup>116</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, The Status of the Rights of Palestinian Children 2014, April 2015.

<sup>117</sup> Overseas Development Institute, Ministry of Social Development and United Nations Children's Fund, Every Child Counts: Understanding the Needs and Perspectives of Children with Disabilities in the State of Palestine, December 2016.

<sup>118</sup> Based on administrative data provided by key informants.

### 3.2.4 Remaining Gaps and Recommended Policies

This section of the report identifies remaining gaps in existing policies and programmes that provide tailored education services. While refraining from making specific policy or programmatic recommendations for filling these gaps, the section presents examples of policies and programmes from other countries along with suggestions identified by key informants in Palestine that could lead to new national-level interventions.

#### Gaps in Tailored Education Services inside Schools and Recommendations

**Education Quality and Efforts for Targeting:** Efforts already underway for improving the quality of education through changes in curriculum and teacher competencies in Palestine are, to a large extent, broad-based interventions without a particular focus on children with lower academic achievement. In a country like Palestine with alarming levels of inequality in learning outcomes and extremely high variance in student academic performance,<sup>119</sup> the benefits of general quality improvement interventions for children with lower academic achievement will be limited unless they are complemented with more targeted interventions.

There are various ways to target interventions to improve the quality of education. Similarly, to efforts to improve school infrastructure under the third EDSP, a selected number of low performing schools could be prioritized for quality improvement efforts. Incentives could be provided to high performing teachers to work in these schools, such as professional recognition, salary bonuses, and preferential access to training programs. Additionally, teachers working in low performing schools could be paid for additional work time beyond their core teaching hours to enable them to work with low achieving children outside of regular class time.

Another way to ensure children with low academic performance benefit disproportionately from efforts to improve the quality of education could involve focusing efforts in the preparatory stage of basic education (grades 1-4), when foundational literacy and numeracy skills are acquired.

The learning acquired in these early years is critical for levelling the playing field for children who have lower levels of school preparedness when they enter school and who have less supportive learning environments in their households. The third EDSP's plan to implement an integrated education model that would reduce the number of subjects is a positive move in this regard. Complementary efforts could include shifting from subject teaching to class teaching.<sup>120</sup> Such a shift could also consider having one classroom teacher instead of subject teachers, who would be specialized in teaching basic literacy and numeracy skills in early grades, which is a recommendation put forward by some experts in the past.<sup>121</sup> Programs such as Palavra de Criança in Brazil that are designed to improve basic literacy outcomes via integrated interventions in early grades could be a relevant model for Palestine to consider.

Targeting quality improvement efforts could also involve prioritizing children with lower academic achievement in teacher training programs, teacher assessments, teacher supervision, and school assessments. Pre-service and in-service teacher training

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<sup>119</sup> World Bank, Quality of Teaching in PA Schools – Learning from Local Practices: Improving Student Performance in West Bank and Gaza, No. ACS9460, 12 June 2014; World Bank, West Bank and Gaza Education Sector Analysis: Impressive Achievements under Harsh Conditions and the Way Forward to Consolidate a Quality Education System, 7 September 2006.

<sup>120</sup> World Bank, West Bank and Gaza Education Sector Analysis: Impressive Achievements under Harsh Conditions and the Way Forward to Consolidate a Quality Education System, 7 September 2006; Mulkeen, Aidan, 'Consultancy to the Palestinian Authority Ministry of Education to Support the Development of a Plan for Curriculum Reform: Draft Report', 20 April 2013; United Nations Children's Fund, Investing in Public Education in Gaza: A case study, UNICEF, June 2013.

<sup>121</sup> Mulkeen, Aidan, 'Consultancy to the Palestinian Authority Ministry of Education to Support the Development of a Plan for Curriculum Reform: Draft Report', 20 April 2013; United Nations Children's Fund, Investing in Public Education in Gaza: A case study, UNICEF, June 2013.

programs could place particular emphasis on building competencies for teaching children with lower academic achievement and for using remedial plans effectively in resource-scarce settings. Teachers' and schools' efforts to support children with lower academic achievement could be incentivized by including this as a priority in teacher assessments, teacher supervision, and school assessments. To implement this, indicators measuring positive change in the attendance and performance of certain groups of children, such as children with lower academic achievement, children with disabilities, and over-age children, could be integrated into the metrics for assessing teacher and school performance.

### Tailoring Education Services Inside the School:

Existing policies and programmes for tailoring education services to the different needs of individual children inside schools in Palestine are characterized, to a large extent, by inadequate implementation and resource constraints. Assuming financial resources allocated to education will remain limited in coming years, the policy options and programs presented in this section constitute relatively low-cost interventions that can be implemented on a large scale and sustained over time.

To improve the implementation of remedial education plans, the MoEHE could put in place school- and district-level procedures and support mechanisms for ensuring minimum standards for the content and implementation of these plans. Targeted schools could institute monthly staff meetings where teachers talk through the remedial plans and the progress of individual children identified as at higher risk of dropping out of school. These processes could be facilitated by software developed for following the progress of these children and sending follow-up alerts based on pre-identified criteria. Establishing regional or local peer-to-peer learning platforms for teachers that encourage sharing challenges and learning about better practices around remedial education will help support teachers to implement remedial plans in resource-scarce learning environments.

Enhancing the availability and intensity of technical support for teachers who are providing inclusive education in their classrooms, and for teachers working in resource rooms for integrated education could be another low-cost intervention with high returns. Currently, teachers receive technical support in this realm from inclusive education counsellors at the district level, core special education trainers, and multidisciplinary teams at three resource centres.<sup>122</sup> Yet understaffing is common to all these sources of technical support for tailored education services inside schools. There are only 27 inclusive education counsellors across the 16 education districts;<sup>123</sup> only three resource centres across the West Bank and the Gaza Strip,<sup>124</sup> and only 24 core special education trainers and four special education advisors in all of the West Bank.<sup>125</sup> Thus, increasing staffing for these sources of technical support is likely to have high returns in terms of the quality of the tailored education services offered inside the schools. Needless to say, despite its financial implications, making resource rooms staffed with qualified teachers available in more schools would need to remain a priority in this realm for more children to be able to reach tailored education services at their schools.

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<sup>122</sup> Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Education Development Strategic Plan EDSP 2014-2019: A Learning Nation, March 2014; Overseas Development Institute, Ministry of Social Development and United Nations Children's Fund, Every Child Counts: Understanding the Needs and Perspectives of Children with Disabilities in the State of Palestine, December 2016; World Bank, Disability in the Palestinian Territories: Assessing situation and services for people with disabilities (PWD), April 2016.

<sup>123</sup> Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Education Development Strategic Plan EDSP 2014-2019: A Learning Nation, March 2014.

<sup>124</sup> World Bank, Disability in the Palestinian Territories: Assessing situation and services for people with disabilities (PWD), April 2016.

<sup>125</sup> Overseas Development Institute, Ministry of Social Development and United Nations Children's Fund, Every Child Counts: Understanding the Needs and Perspectives of Children with Disabilities in the State of Palestine, December 2016.

Finally, establishing remedial education programs for children with lower academic achievement, which would use appropriate pedagogy and a standardized curriculum, and could be implemented by non-profit organizations working with semi-volunteers in close collaboration with the MoEHE, could be a financially viable intervention in the Palestinian context. The Balsakhi remedial education program implemented by Pratham, a non-profit organization in India, targets children in grades three and four who have not acquired basic literacy and numeracy skills, and could be a relevant model in this regard. While the impending introduction of summer remedial programs in the West Bank is an important move in the right direction, remedial programs limited to summer months risk being too late and providing too little support to lower performing students to prevent drop-out, especially if they are not effectively designed and implemented. Remedial education programs need to be offered to students throughout the year, either during or after school hours, to prevent low-performing children from being excluded from education.

## Gaps in Tailored Education Services outside Schools and Recommendations

Gaps in the availability of appropriately tailored education services outside schools fall under four categories: 1) gaps in second-chance education programs; 2) gaps in tailored education programs for children in pastoralist communities; 3) gaps in distance learning programs for children whose education is disrupted; and 4) gaps in tailored education programs for children with certain disabilities.

**Second-Chance Education Programs:** Out-of-school children in Palestine are presented with limited opportunities for a “second chance” to acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills, and life skills. For out-of-school children younger than 13, there are currently no tailored education programs outside schools. For 13-14 year-old, out-of-school children, the only tailored education program outside the school is the MoSD’s vocational centres, which have limited geographic coverage and were characterized by key informants as having inadequate quality due to limited resources. For out-of-school children who are 15 and older, yet lack basic literacy and numeracy skills, an alternative to the MoSD’s vocational centres are the literacy programs run by MoEHE, yet which also have limited geographic coverage.

The tailored education programs outside schools offered by the MoEHE for out-of-school children currently exclude children younger than 15. Children younger than 5 are of compulsory education age, and thus are considered able to enrol or re-enrol in regular schools in order to continue their education. In practice, however, some principals appear hesitant to accept children who have never enrolled in school or who dropped out in earlier grades, and are likely to be three or more years older than their would-be-classmates. Similarly, out-of-school children who would be noticeably older than their would-be-classmates are also likely to hesitate about returning to education. While offering individualized catch-up education inside the school is an option on paper for schools that wish to provide this and have secured ministerial permission to do so, schools are unlikely to implement such programmes widely in the absence of well-staffed resource rooms; indeed very few numbers of children currently benefit from such programs.

Thus, there is a need for the MoEHE to provide tailored education programs for out-of-school children younger than 15. Tailored second-chance education programs for these children could involve evening or weekend schools offered by volunteer retired teachers, and supplemented by self-directed IT-supported learning. As these out-of-school children are more likely to be engaged in longer hours of child labour, and are less likely to be equipped to follow long hours of regular teaching, a new programme would need to accommodate their work obligations where possible, tailor the curriculum to their needs, and employ appropriate pedagogical approaches. Similarly, these programs would need to accommodate the concerns of conservative families regarding their daughters’ attendance in these programs. Some of the participants in these programs would also need to be supported by education counsellors and social workers.

Similarly, programs to improve the quality of existing MoSD vocational centres and MoEHE literacy programs, and efforts to make them more widely available could be part of a larger initiative to provide out-of-school children with more accessible and acceptable second-chance opportunities. Also as part of these efforts, non-profit or for-profit organizations could be supported to offer second-chance education services to out-of-school children. To this end, two alternative financing models that could be considered are results-based subsidies and development impact bonds, which are currently being employed for youth skills building programs in Palestine.

More generally, comprehensively reforming technical and vocational education and training in Palestine remains urgent to ensure that children who have lower academic achievement or interest and are currently being pushed out of higher grades have alternative educational routes. Ongoing reform efforts could offer higher quality technical and vocational education opportunities to children at a younger age and in tandem with a modified academic curriculum. The recent initiative to pilot integrated vocational classes during 7th-9th grades is a notable effort in this regard. Such changes could potentially prevent some of the exodus from higher grades of basic education.

“I regret dropping out of school. I should not have listened to my mother. But now I cannot go anywhere. I am ready to go back to school. I have been telling my parents that I want to go back to school. But they do not agree,” said R. almost seven years after she left school in third grade.

R., her five siblings and her parents live in a Bedouin community in Masafer Yatta in Area C. When it was time for R. to start first grade, her parents had to send her to stay with her grandparents in another community where they had a nearby school. During that year, R. came home only on the weekends.

A year later, a school was opened in Masafer Yata so R. started going there. She had to wake up at 4 am, help with the house chores, take a bath and walk to school. At the age of 8, R. and her cousins’ commute to school involved a long and arduous walk. When it rained, they would be wet and covered in mud by the time they got to school. If they were late returning home, parents would go out to look for them worrying about settler violence and fearing for their children’s safety.

When R. was in third grade, her mother decided to not send her to school. R’s mother had just returned home after a week in the hospital and she decided she needed R. to stay at home to help in the house taking care of her younger sister. Despite much protest from her husband, R.’s mother decided this was the best decision for R. especially given her long commute to school.

For much of R.’s childhood, R.’s family migrated during spring months for finding food for their sheep. They labored in harvests in addition to herding. Until recently they had no electricity in their home.

This past year, almost seven years since R. left school, the Ministry provided for the first time a vehicle to transport children living in R.’s community to the nearest school. But R.’s father decided that at age 15, R. was now too old to attend primary school.



**Education Programs for Children in Pastoralist Communities:** Children living in pastoralist communities are excluded from education at higher rates in most countries, partly because of the limited availability of easily accessible education programs tailored to their needs, interests and daily/annual schedules. In Palestine, their exclusion is aggravated by the fact that many pastoralist communities live in Area C where house and school demolitions are an ongoing threat due to the restrictive permit regime.<sup>126</sup> The available education services offered by the MoEHE are yet to overcome the challenges of accessibility and adaptability for these communities.

One model of tailored and accessible education programs for children in pastoralist communities in Area C could be mobile teachers who commute to pastoralist communities and teach multi-grade classes. These multi-grade classes could be based on a curriculum and pedagogy adapted to the needs of these communities, and could be complemented with open and distance learning programs. Where communities have some road access, provision of subsidized or free-of-charge school busses or 4x4 vehicles and distribution of bicycles to children could also be introduced as supportive measures to increase the accessibility of existing schools. For higher grades, free boarding school options could also be considered. No single model of tailored and accessible education is likely to address the diverse and significant barriers facing children in pastoralist communities in Area C. Thus, effective interventions would need to combine various context-appropriate programmes.

**Distance Learning Programs:** Medium and long-term disruptions to a child's education as a result of health problems, family crisis or house detention could quickly spiral into the child becoming permanently excluded from education, if opportunities for continued learning are not provided.

Currently, children who cannot attend school for a certain period of time in Palestine are to be provided with books and study sheets by their schools, and given the option to take examinations in their homes. Suggestive findings from interviews with policy implementers raise concern about the consistent implementation of this policy. More generally, the learning materials provided to these children are neither designed for self-learning nor are accompanied by media and technology-supported distance learning programs.

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<sup>126</sup> United Nations Children's Fund, 'Bedouin schools fighting for survival in Area "C": Kaabneh's and Khan Al Ahmar's children', 2011.

S. was two-years-old when her parents moved from her grandparents' house to a cave owned by her uncle in Yatta. Her parents, her older sister, and S. lived there for three years. When they moved to their current house seven years ago, it consisted of a single room with no door or windows. Soon after their move, her father had to stop working in constructions because his back gave in to long hours of heavy labor. S.'s younger brother and sister were born in this house.

S. never went to school. She says she did not want to go to school because of their circumstances. She adds: "I do not have the desire to go to school. I hate school and I don't like its name or to pass by it." S.'s older sister had already dropped out of third grade by the time it was time for S. to enroll in first grade. At that age, S. still had some speech problems. Her mother wanted to enroll S. in school but her father said they simply did not have the money for it.

Now, at age 12, S. spends her days helping with household chores, playing with her siblings and cousins, and watching television. Her younger sister is 6 years-old and she does not go to school either. She is also not registered with the Mol. Her younger brother is 8 years-old and he is attending second grade with his school expenses covered by someone in their community.

S.'s case came to the attention of relevant authorities as a result of the fieldwork for this report. S.'s father had previously applied for cash assistance and health insurance from the MoSD but his case was not followed up on although his forms indicated that he had three out-of-school children. S.'s younger brother is enrolled in school yet the family has not been contacted by the school regarding his sisters being out-of-school.

Thus, there remains notable opportunity to develop a distance learning program that would support children experiencing disruptions in their education. Such programs could also support other efforts, such as parallel learning centres and vocational rehabilitation centres, targeting out-of-school children. The availability of such programs could also become a useful tool for decreasing the disruptive effects of future military incursions and periods of insecurity on the education process. The remedial education program developed spontaneously by teachers in Hebron in 2001 in response to continuous closures could serve as a helpful starting point in this regard.<sup>127</sup>

13-year-old I. is the youngest of ten children. For the last two years, he's been herding his family's sheep. Before then, he was helping his mother with carrying water and wood, and also taking care of the animals at their home. Before then, he was attending a primary school in Jordan Valley.

I. dropped out of school when he was in 3rd grade. In the middle of the year, the IDF demolished his family's tents and I.'s parents decided to move to the mountains where they thought they would not face the threat of demolition. With no school in the mountains, I. and his two older siblings stopped attending school. They had no alternative means of continuing their learning when they were in the mountains. When they returned from the mountain two years later, I. re-enrolled in 3rd grade

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<sup>127</sup> International Institute for Educational Planning and Save the Children, *Fragmented Foundations: Education and chronic crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*, IIEP-UNESCO, 2007.

but dropped out after only a few months. That was last year. I.'s mother says that he is now tired of being a shepherd and he wants to go back to school. But now, I. is the only one who can take care of the sheep because his older brothers are working. I.'s mother says she also wants him to go back to school but his father does not.

During the 36 years since his parents got married, I.'s family has moved many times between Jordan and Palestine, and within Palestine. Since their main source of income is livestock and agricultural labor, the family also moves seasonally. Even during the few years I. and his siblings attended school, when April and the agricultural season came around, the children had to move with their parents and had to stop attending school. There was no alternative means of learning available to them while they were on the move. During the rest of the year, I. attended school regularly, did his homework and participated in the classroom, I.'s teacher recalls.

Among I.'s siblings, he attended school for the shortest period of time. Some of his siblings went onto complete 9th grade while others dropped out from 6th and 7th grades. I.'s mother remembers being visited by an official only once after one of I.'s older sisters dropped out; she does not remember any one else contacting them after her other children dropped out of school.

**Tailored education programs for children with certain disabilities:** The MoEHE's commendable efforts for inclusive education for children with disabilities have so far focused primarily on children with visual, hearing and moderate mobility constraints. As a result, schools remain scarcely equipped to provide learning opportunities to children with moderate and severe cognitive disabilities, children with severe mobility constraints, and children with multiple disabilities.<sup>128</sup> Some children with moderate cognitive disabilities are provided with the opportunity for integrated education, but only until 4th grade and only in schools where resource rooms are available - less than one out of ten public schools.<sup>129</sup> Efforts for inclusive or integrated education are yet to include children with severe cognitive disabilities whose only option for education remains the handful of special education centres run by nongovernmental organizations. Specialized education providers for children with severe cognitive disabilities, severe mobility constraints, and multiple disabilities are few in number, making them inaccessible to most children who need them.<sup>130</sup> It is unlikely that these children would be able to benefit from inclusive education in the short-term. Thus, Palestine needs to establish and financially support more specialized education providers and rehabilitation centres to provide tailored education programs for children with severe cognitive disabilities and multiple disabilities. In addition, efforts to empower and support family members to support their children with disabilities, as well as providing accessible transportation to schools, remain critical for ensuring that children with severe cognitive disabilities and multiple disabilities are not excluded from education.

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<sup>128</sup> Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Education Development Strategic Plan EDSP 2014-2019: A Learning Nation, March 2014.

<sup>129</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, The Status of the Rights of Palestinian Children 2014, April 2015; World Bank, Disability in the Palestinian Territories: Assessing situation and services for people with disabilities (PWD), April 2016.

<sup>130</sup> Overseas Development Institute, Ministry of Social Development and United Nations Children's Fund, Every Child Counts: Understanding the Needs and Perspectives of Children with Disabilities in the State of Palestine, December 2016.

## 3.3 Barriers Concerning the Child: Fragmented Support Services

### 3.3.1 Background on Preventive Support Services

Support services that contribute to the physical, emotional and social wellbeing of school-age children are critical for preventing children from dropping out of school not only in Palestine but globally. These services have a dual function. First, they enable a vulnerable child to regularly attend school and learn while the child is in school. Second, they enable a timely and effective intervention when a child faces a sudden risk of dropout due to an external shock, such as a health crisis, death in family, separation of parents or exposure to armed conflict and violence.

Preventive support services can be provided both inside and outside the school. Health screenings and nutritional programs in schools, counselling services and violence prevention programs in schools, provision of assistive devices to children with disabilities, social assistance programs for poor households, and child protection programs are all among the kind of preventive support services that help ensure the wellbeing of school-age children. The effective provision of such support services is a key component of the health, child protection, and social welfare programmes and policies in a country.

### 3.3.2 Profiles of Children Affected by the Fragmentation of Support Services

The fragmented provision of support services in Palestine has a negative impact on the wellbeing of children with disabilities, children with chronic illnesses, children directly affected by armed conflict and occupation, and children from vulnerable households suffering from poverty, disrupted families, and situations of neglect or abuse. In the absence of adequate support services often, vulnerable children are less able to attend school regularly or learn effectively due to a range of factors including hunger, anaemia, high levels of morbidity, inability to concentrate, post-traumatic stress disorder, and behavioural problems.

“I was being hit by the teachers,” M. responds very quietly when asked about his memories from school in Gaza. A long silence follows when M. is then asked if he has any other memories. When asked what he liked in his school, M. says “nothing” under his breath as he nervously bites his nails.

M.’s parents divorced when his mother was pregnant to M. He spent the first five years of his life with his mother and her family. At age 5, he moved to his father’s house and started living with his father, step-mother and step-siblings. According to M.’s father, M. had behavioral problems at that time and had difficulty adjusting to his new home. His troubles continued when he started school the year after. In response to M.’s behavioral challenges, his teachers often used physical violence as discipline.

M. left school for the first time after he failed 4th grade. After four years in school, M. was still unable to write his name or read, according to his father. M. did not want to go to school and was very happy when he no longer had to attend school. Following several visits from the school counselor, M.’s father re-enrolled M. in school despite the costs associated with the re-enrollment process and unfulfilled promises of financial assistance to support M.’s education. M. attended 4th grade again only to leave school again at the end of the year. M’s father explains he took the decision after M.’s teacher told his step-mother to take him out of school because M. was not suitable for a school and was a great burden for the teachers.

The main source of income for M.'s family is fishing, which is unpredictable and at times leaves the family with barely enough to eat. Despite financial hardships, M.'s younger siblings continue attending school. "They are good achievers," M.'s father says and he adds, "If one of them ask me for a notebook, I will borrow money to buy them what they ask for. Nobody feels bad about investing in successful children. I'm even ready to sell my blood for them."

### 3.3.3 Existing Preventive Support Services

Preventive support services in Palestine have improved significantly in recent years both in terms of their coverage and effectiveness. Despite various implementation challenges, counselling services inside schools and the child protection networks outside schools have been particularly noteworthy in this regard. Other relevant programs include violence prevention programs at schools, health screenings, nutritional support programs at schools, and the national cash transfer program, which is discussed in the next section. This section provides a summary description of these interventions with a view to highlighting the remaining gaps and challenges faced.

**Counselling Services:** Counselling services in schools constitute one of the primary preventive support services for children at risk of dropping out. Counsellors are tasked with providing ongoing support to children through group work and programs that increase their life skills. More relevant for children at risk of dropping out of school, counsellors are tasked with organizing individual and group activities for children who face particular challenges that interrupt their attendance and learning. Counsellors are also responsible for following up on children displaying irregular attendance via phone calls and home visits. They are often the main point of contact for families and children who decide to leave school. Their ability to intervene effectively and persuasively in these cases often determines whether a child ultimately returns to school or drops out permanently.

The availability of counselling services in Palestine has increased notably in the last two decades.<sup>131</sup> Yet coverage remains inadequate, with only 67.3 per cent of public schools and 72 per cent of UNRWA schools benefiting from full- or part-time counselling services.<sup>132</sup> In addition to inadequate coverage, the uneven quality of the services remains a challenge with student-to-counsellor ratio as high as 645:1 in public schools and 1,075:1 in UNRWA schools.<sup>133</sup>

With respect to the quality of education counselling services, the MoEHE's efforts are commendable both in terms of the high standards for the accreditation of counsellors and the intensity of in-service training courses.<sup>134</sup> Ensuring consistently high-quality counselling services, however, remains a challenge with school-age children describing mixed experiences with school counsellors.<sup>135</sup> Interviews in some schools also suggest the presence of conflicting incentives and diverging efforts by counsellors and principals/teachers with respect to children with behavioural and learning challenges. For example, a principal or teacher's strong focus on the school's academic performance may conflict with a counsellor's efforts to keep children with behavioural and learning challenges in school, given that these children are likely to bring down school's average academic performance.

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<sup>131</sup> Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Education Development Strategic Plan EDSP 2014-2019: A Learning Nation, March 2014.

<sup>132</sup> MoEHE, Educational Statistics Yearbook 2015-2016.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Education Development Strategic Plan EDSP 2014-2019: A Learning Nation, March 2014.

<sup>135</sup> Abu-Hamad, Bassam, Nicola Jones and Paola Pereznieta, 'Tackling children's economic and psychosocial vulnerabilities synergistically: How well is the Palestinian National Cash Transfer Programme serving Gazan children', Children and Youth Services Review, no. 47, 2014, pp. 121-135.

In light of these challenges, MoEHE's plans for increasing the coverage and quality of counselling services as stated in EDSP III are commendable given their critical role in preventing children's exclusion from education. These future efforts could benefit from complementary efforts to both raise the perceived status and importance of school counsellors in schools, and strengthen counsellors' capacity to identify and address risk factors for students.

**Child Protection Network:** While the counselling services offered in schools are critical to support the psychosocial wellbeing of school-age children, a larger set of well-coordinated and multi-sectoral interventions are needed to ensure the effective protection of children at risk of violence, neglect or abuse, and assist children suffering from severe post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of armed conflict requires. This goes beyond the abilities and responsibilities of a school counsellor. The child protection network, an umbrella network under the MoSD's coordination that brings together different ministries and non-governmental organization, emerges as a critical institution for the effective protection of at-risk children.

The child protection network uses a case management approach with clear referral processes.<sup>136</sup> Accordingly, a school counsellor who identifies particular cases of children who are at risk of violence, neglect or abuse are expected to refer these cases to the MoSD via the education district offices, which are then followed up by a child protection counsellor. Similarly, if other members of the child protection network identify a school-age child who is out of school, the MoEHE is expected to facilitate the re-integration of this child into school.

Interviews with some school counsellors suggest that the child protection network, in fact, constitutes an integral part of their interventions for school-age children who are at risk of neglect and abuse as indicated by absenteeism, health problems associated with malnutrition and poor hygiene, or dysfunctional, aggressive or delinquent behaviour.<sup>137</sup> Interviews with other school counsellors, however, suggest that they may either not be aware of the network's existence or consistently follow the referral processes. Many school counsellors have never received training on how to refer cases to the child protection network.<sup>138</sup> These differences in the knowledge and practice of school counsellors concerning the child protection network suggest that the networks' effectiveness in preventing dropout varies significantly. This is also supported by the findings of a recent study on the child protection system in Palestine.<sup>139</sup> Also, the effectiveness of the referral system may be particularly challenging in schools without counselling services, which constitute about a third of all schools.

At age 14, M. works from 6 am to 5 pm painting houses. He dropped out of school about a year ago after failing 7th grade. He explains how his grades plummeted after he became friends with another boy who encouraged him to skip school. The days M. went to school were filled with boredom during the class and fear of bullying outside the class.

After failing 7th grade, M. told his father that he wanted to leave school. His father did not resist and told M. that he would need to work if he left school. With 7 children living in the house, M.'s father welcomed an additional income.

When asked about his thoughts on returning to school, M. explains that he would be willing to return if he were allowed to attend his cousins' school where he would be away from the bullies at his old school and feel protected by his cousins.

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<sup>136</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, The Status of the Rights of Palestinian Children 2014, April 2015.

<sup>137</sup> Ministry of Social Affairs, 'Child Care and Protection Referral and Networking System Protocol', 2007.

<sup>138</sup> Child Frontiers, Review of the Child Protection System in the State of Palestine, 2017 (unpublished report).

<sup>139</sup> Child Frontiers, Review of the Child Protection System in the State of Palestine, 2017 (unpublished report).

**Other Preventive Support Programs in Schools:** Violence prevention programs, health screening programs, and nutritional support programs are among the notable interventions that contribute to preventing school dropout in Palestine.

The MoEHE's efforts prevent violence in schools have intensified in recent years, as demonstrated by a national policy of non-violence and discipline in schools issued in 2013, the distribution of several regulations to address the use of corporal punishment in schools, and a plethora of programs promoting a culture of non-violence in schools.<sup>140</sup> Yet corporal punishment remains a widely utilized method of discipline in public schools, and peer-to-peer bullying remains widespread. Despite a modest decrease in recent years, more than two-thirds of children in 1st-10th grades still report being exposed to violence in school.<sup>141</sup> Experiences of emotional and physical violence perpetrated by teachers or peers at school are among the main reasons children report for dropping out of public schools.<sup>142</sup>

Health screening programs targeting school-age children constitute another notable intervention for the early diagnosis of disabilities and timely provision of corrective devices, both of which are critical in preventing children's exclusion from education. While the precise practices vary between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and schools supervised by UNRWA and the MoEHE, vision, hearing and dental screenings constitute the main pillars of the health screening programs in schools. Children enrolling in 1st grade are also required to visit health clinics for a general health assessment. Health records of individual children, including chronic illnesses they may have, are to be kept in individual student files to ensure effective tracking and monitoring across grades and schools.

These school-based programs build on two commendable health policies for young children: the free-of-charge health insurance programme for 0-6-year-olds and the Healthy Child Clinics. Ongoing efforts to improve protocols for the early detection of disabilities in Healthy Child Clinics is a particularly welcome effort, given the importance of early diagnosis and intervention for the educational attainment and learning outcomes of children with disabilities.

Nutrition support programs targeting school-age children contribute towards prevention of exclusion from education in areas of Palestine where the rates of iron deficiency anaemia and malnourishment among pre-school and school-age children are very high. Iron deficiency anaemia and malnourishment affects up to half of all children in this age group in some governorates, and is associated with lower levels of cognitive and physical development, higher rates of morbidity and absenteeism, and lower levels of concentration in the classroom. In fact, nutritional support programs targeting school-age children in schools have been implemented in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip for many years, whereby children are provided with fortified snacks and vitamin-enriched milk. These programs have recently been halted, although the underlying nutritional needs of school-age children persist.

efforts to improve protocols for the early detection of disabilities in Healthy Child Clinics is a particularly welcome effort, given the importance of early diagnosis and intervention for the educational attainment and learning outcomes of children with disabilities.

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<sup>140</sup> United Nations Children's Fund and Ministry of Planning and Administrative Development, Situation Analysis of Palestinian Children in the State of Palestine – 2013, 2014; UNICEF and State of Palestine, Country Program Action Plan 2015-2017.

<sup>141</sup> Based on administrative data shared by MoEHE in January 2017.

<sup>142</sup> Overseas Development Institute, Effects of the Palestinian National Cash Transfer Programme on Children and Adolescents: A mixed methods analysis, ODI, London, UK, 2014; Birzeit University and United Nations Children's Fund, The Children of Palestine in the Labour Market: A qualitative participatory study, October 2004; United Nations Children's Fund and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, Education Quality & Equity in East Jerusalem, 2012; Ministry of Education and Higher Education, 'The Phenomena of Dropout from Palestinian Schools: Causes, and Remedial and Preventive Procedures', MoEHE, August 2005.

Nutrition support programs targeting school-age children contribute towards prevention of exclusion from education in areas of Palestine where the rates of iron deficiency anaemia and malnourishment among pre-school and school-age children are very high. Iron deficiency anaemia and malnourishment affects up to half of all children in this age group in some governorates,<sup>143</sup> and is associated with lower levels of cognitive and physical development, higher rates of morbidity and absenteeism, and lower levels of concentration in the classroom. In fact, nutritional support programs targeting school-age children in schools have been implemented in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip for many years, whereby children are provided with fortified snacks and vitamin-enriched milk. These programs have recently been halted, although the underlying nutritional needs of school-age children persist.

### 3.3.4 Remaining Gaps and Recommended Policies for Preventive Support Services

Overall, Palestine's support services that contribute the physical, emotional and social wellbeing of school-age children are commendable in terms of their design and vision. Yet challenges remain with respect to improving their coverage and consistency of the quality of services.

The MoEHE's plans for increasing the coverage and improving the quality of counselling services, as captured in EDSP III, are highly pertinent in this regard. Ensuring effective counselling services are available in all schools could play an important role in preventing children's exclusion from education. Similarly, equipping counsellors with the necessary skills and tools to intervene in individual cases of children who are at imminent risk of leaving school could have significant returns.

To this end, the MoEHE could consider a few supplementary interventions to its existing plans for improving the coverage and quality of counselling services in ways that would particularly benefit children who are at risk of dropping out of school:

- Currently, counsellor appointments take into account the size of the school, the school's proximity to critical areas, and the school's needs. A more systematic incorporation of school-level dropout rates into counsellor appointment decisions could be considered in an effort to improve the targeting of limited human resources. Similarly, schools with particularly high dropout rates could be selected for intensive counselling supervision and support from the district offices.
- The impact of efforts to improve the quality of counselling could be enhanced by reducing the conflicting incentives of principals/teachers who are focused on the overall academic performance of the school, and counsellors who are focused on the wellbeing of vulnerable children. These school-level dynamics with respect to children with behavioural and learning challenges risk isolating and undermining the counsellors' efforts in some cases.
- In-service trainings could be designed to equip counsellors with the necessary skills to identify and address the risk factors underlying exclusion from and within education. Such trainings would benefit from including skills such as persuasion and community engagement, that are directly relevant to improving the outcomes of counsellors' interactions with families whose children have stopped attending school. Similarly, successful cases of counsellors preventing and reversing dropout could be given visibility both to incentivize future efforts and to facilitate peer-to-peer learning.

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<sup>136</sup> Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Education Development Strategic Plan EDSP 2014-2019: A Learning Nation, March 2014; Overseas Development Institute, Effects of the Palestinian National Cash Transfer Programme on Children and Adolescents: A mixed methods analysis, ODI, London, UK, 2014; United Nations Children's Fund and Ministry of Planning and Administrative Development, Situation Analysis of Palestinian Children in the State of Palestine – 2013, 2014; Save the Children and Medical Aid for Palestinians, Gaza's Children: Falling Behind – The Effect of the Blockade on Child Health in Gaza, 2012; Tsigga, Maria and Maria G. Grammatikopoulou, 'Assessing the silent epidemic of malnutrition in Palestinian preschool children', Journal of Epidemiology and Global Health, vol. 2, pp. 181-191, 2012.



- The expected role of school counsellors in preventing and reversing truancy and drop-out, as well as the procedures concerning the child protection network, could be further clarified in the relevant documents distributed by the MoEHE to school counsellors and principals.
- Also, some counsellors' perceptions about the acceptability and reversibility of certain types of dropouts, such as those triggered by early marriage or by the pastoralist livelihoods of families, would need to change in order for them to effectively work on these cases. As it stands, interviews suggest that some counsellors, as well as principals and teachers, view girls leaving basic education for early marriage and children from nomadic households leaving education as acceptable and unchangeable. Ensuring that all counsellors, teachers and principals find leaving basic education unacceptable regardless of the reason is a prerequisite to effectively preventing such cases of drop-out.

“High school certificate has been my dream since I was a child. I really dreamed of getting this certificate,” explains H. a few weeks after she had to stop attending 12th grade at her school in the Gaza Strip. She was just a few months away from reaching her dream when her family arranged her engagement at the age of 17. After the marriage contract was signed, H.'s fiance told her that she could not attend school any more.

Despite H. and her family's insistence, her fiance did not agree to her attending school until completing 12th grade. He explained how he did not want H. to walk to school alone and that he would agree to H. completing 12th grade through the home study program after their marriage. H.'s mother thinks he asked H. to stop attending school because he did not want her to be as educated as him.

H. has always been a successful student and she loved going to school. Since her father did not allow her to leave their home to visit her friends or relatives, the school was H.'s only social outlet. She felt loved and supported by her friends and teachers. Her parents have also been supportive of H.'s and her siblings' education. All of their school-age children are currently attending school except for H. and their oldest daughter who completed high school two years ago.

Similarly, efforts towards the consistent implementation of the referral system under the child protection network are critical in this regard. Ensuring that all school counsellors consistently use the referral system if they identify a child at risk of neglect and abuse is a significant step in this regard. Ensuring that the referral processes are effectively followed even in schools without a counsellor remains a challenge in this area.

With respect to health screening programs, challenge persist for school-level actors to effectively follow up the treatment of children who are diagnosed with vision, hearing or dental problems. A pilot referral system is currently in place which equips teachers with the knowledge to recognize signs of health problems and disabilities. When a child with health problems is identified, referring the child for health services appropriately is an important next step. Yet the costs of receiving treatment for many school-age children who do not have health insurance is a significant obstacle for children to obtain the necessary treatment and care. A complementary intervention could involve converting student files to a computerized system to ensure a more effective diagnosis and follow-up of children with chronic illnesses and disabilities, ideally in close collaboration with the MoH. Such a computerized system could be designed so that the individual student's information is complete and up-to-date, and the administrators receive notifications for following-up on health-related cases.

With respect to violence prevention programs, the successful implementation of existing programs would have a discernible effect on preventing children's exclusion from education. To this end, some of the constraints that need to be addressed include the following, according to key stakeholders:<sup>144</sup> 1) insufficient financial resources to organize activities promoting non-violence; 2) absence of mechanisms to follow up cases of violence; 3) resistance from principals and teachers to refer cases to the district offices; and 4) a general acceptance of corporal punishment as a discipline measure by teachers and parents alike. Thus, an assessment of efforts already in place with a view to explaining their limited effect on the prevalence of violence in schools is a necessary first step to accelerate the speed of positive change in this area.

Finally, the impact of the recent changes in the nature of the nutritional support programs for school-age children, and more specifically the halting of school feeding programs, needs to be evaluated in terms of its impact on both the nutritional status of children and their attendance in school. Despite its cost- and logistics-related challenges, if the absence of school feeding programs are found to have a discernible impact on the nutritional status and school attendance of children, then the re-introduction of a school feeding program could well be justified on these grounds.

This year was the third time M. started third grade. The first time, she was 8 years old; she missed so many days of school during the first semester that she had to repeat her grade so she stopped attending school the second semester. The next year, when M. was 9 years old, she started third grade again but dropped out soon after. This year, M. is 14-years-old. She is in an accelerated catch-up program at the school so she was in third grade for only 20 days before she was moved to fourth grade. At the beginning of the second semester, she will be starting 5th grade.

M. is the seventh of fifteen children. Most of her older siblings went to lower secondary and upper secondary school in South Nablus. Two of her younger siblings, who are 9 and 12 year-old, are still in school. M. and her two younger siblings, however, all dropped out.

When at the age of 8, M. said she did not want to go to school any more, her parents and the school counselor tried hard to convince her to go back. She attended third grade again the next year but only briefly. M. did not want to explain why she decided to drop out of school. When asked if she kept anything as a memory from her school days, she said: "I did not leave anything when I dropped out of school. I burned the books. I did not want to keep anything that reminds me of school."

M's teacher and school counselor describe several factors that pushed M. out of school. M. was attending school irregularly and fell behind her peers academically. She was bullied and stigmatized in school by her peers who isolated her on the grounds that she had poor hygiene and mocked her for not being able to read. At one point, her teacher explains, M. was asked to wear a headscarf because of the lice in her hair. M's mother also talks about how M. was always angry and had fights with other students: "She used to tell me when she had fights and she said 'they do not love me'."

Three years after M. dropped out of school for a second time, one of M's younger brothers' photo appeared in a newspaper story highlighting child labor in Palestine. Soon after, the family was visited by MoEHE officials. The children, including M., were re-enrolled in school and are now regularly attending an accelerated catch-up program.

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<sup>144</sup> United Nations Children's Fund and Ministry of Planning and Administrative Development, Situation Analysis of Palestinian Children in the State of Palestine – 2013, 2014.

## 3.4 Barriers Concerning the Family: Cost of Education

### 3.4.1 Background on Cost of Education

For families around the world, sending their children to school on a daily basis for many years incurs different types of costs. Such costs may include direct costs associated with school fees or donations, indirect costs associated with uniforms, textbooks, school bags, and transportation to and from school, and opportunity cost associated with the monetary and in-kind contribution a child could have made by working instead of attending school.

In Palestine, for families whose children are attending public schools or UNRWA schools, the direct and indirect costs of education may include costs associated with school donations, uniforms, stationary and school bags, and transportation as well as the opportunity cost. These costs are particularly burdensome for the poorest families. Studies show that households in the poorest quintile spend on average 15 per cent of their income on education-related expenses, whereas households in the richest quintile spend only 2.5 per cent of their income.<sup>145</sup> Such high costs associated with education can be debilitating for the poorest households, forcing them to make difficult trade-offs between the current wellbeing of their family and the long-term prospects for their children.

Studies on drop-out and poverty in Palestine suggest that the relationship between the costs of education and a child's exclusion from education takes on a few different forms:

- In some cases, the combination of direct, indirect and opportunity costs of schooling becomes a deterring factor for school attendance for those children living in households experiencing deep poverty and/or external shocks such as parental unemployment or death. In such cases, the costs associated with school bring about the child's decision to stop attending school and work, and/or the parents' decision to stop sending one or more of their children to school.<sup>146</sup>
- In other cases, the costs associated with schooling limit a child's regular attendance whereby the child misses several days of school every month because the family cannot afford daily transportation, or because the family needs the child to work some of these days for additional income.<sup>147</sup> Irregular attendance negatively affects the child's learning and puts the child at risk of dropping out.
- In other cases, the family's inability to cover indirect costs associated with uniforms, school bags, and school stationary lead to the child being humiliated and bullied by their peers or teachers. The emotional burden of such episodes may then trigger a child's decision to stop attending school.

The fact that the poorest households spend a considerable part of their income on education underscores the role these costs play in poor children's exclusion from education, and stands in stark contrast to the perceptions expressed by several interviewees at the MoEHE and the schools, who consider the schooling related costs parents are expected to cover to be very small. The mismatch between the experiences of children from the poorest households and the perceptions of policy-makers and policy-implementers may partly explain the scarcity of policies and programs that address this barrier to education.

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<sup>145</sup> Rizk, Reham and Hala Abou-Ali, 'Out-of-Pocket Education Expenditure and Household Budget: Evidence from Arab countries', Economic Research Forum, Working Paper Series, no. 996, 2016.

<sup>146</sup> Abu-Hamad, Bassam, Nicola Jones and Paola Pereznieta, 'Tackling children's economic and psychosocial vulnerabilities synergistically: How well is the Palestinian National Cash Transfer Programme serving Gazan children', Children and Youth Services Review, no. 47, 2014, pp. 121-135.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

### 3.4.2 Profiles of Children Affected by Cost of Education

The costs associated with schooling have a particularly negative effect on the attendance of children from the poorest households, and children from households experiencing sudden shocks to their income as a result of unemployment or the death of a parent. Children from poor households whose transportation to school is a particularly burdensome cost, either because public transportation is unavailable, is too costly, or the child's disability does not allow for using public transportation, are at a higher risk of dropping out of education. Finally, given that high rates of poverty are geographically concentrated in the Gaza Strip, Hebron governorate, and some isolated communities in Area C,<sup>148</sup> the costs associated with schooling are more likely to have a determining effect on school attendance for children living in these areas.

### 3.4.3 Existing Policies regarding Costs of Schooling

This section of the report summarizes both the policies that bring about the costs associated with schooling and the policies that aim to mitigate the negative effect of these costs. To this end, school fee/donation policies, policies associated with uniforms, textbooks and school stationary, policies associated with school transportation, and cash transfer/scholarship policies are reviewed.

**School Fee/Donation Policy:** Children attending public schools for the compulsory primary and lower secondary education (1st-10th grades) in Palestine are not required to pay any fees. Yet, schools collect pre-determined amounts of donations from parents and guardians at the time of registration. These donations range from 20-50 NIS in the Gaza Strip and 40-60 in the West Bank for public schools, and 5 NIS for UNRWA schools in the West Bank. These donations, at times combined with revenues from operating the school canteens, are the only source of income for schools to cover their maintenance and operations costs. Schools are also obliged to transfer some of the donations they collect to MoEHE.

While the policy on donations clearly state that it is a voluntary contribution, the fact that the donation is collected at the time of registration, and the school administration is not provided with an alternative source of income to cover its maintenance and operations costs, increases the likelihood that some school administrations will present this parental contribution as a requirement. Smaller schools in poor communities are in particularly dire straits for securing adequate income to run the schools if parents do not volunteer to donate. Consequently, the donations that are voluntary on paper end up being mandatory in reality in many schools. The fact that official exemption and discount policies are in place for school donations is a testament to this unfortunate reality.

Across Palestine, children whose families are beneficiaries of the national cash transfer program and other vulnerable families are supposed to be exempted from paying donations to public schools. Until recently, the parents/guardians of children had to provide documentation as proof of their eligibility for exemption. Currently, the MoSD sends electronic records of their beneficiaries to all schools to facilitate the exemption process. Children of MoEHE staff members and children whose siblings are also enrolled in the school are entitled to discounted donations. Finally, schools can decide to give exemptions to families who indicate their inability to pay the donation, either through school committee decisions or the individual decisions of the principal.

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<sup>148</sup> World Bank, Seeing is Believing: Poverty in the Palestinian Territories, No. 86038, 2014.

**Uniform, Textbook and Stationary Policy:** Children attending public and UNRWA schools in Palestine are required to wear school uniforms. These uniforms must be purchased in private stores. Textbooks, on the other hand, are distributed free of charge to all children in school with the exception of English language books. Families are also expected to purchase essential items like stationary and school bags for their children.

The MoEHE does not currently have a policy in place to support poor families in meeting the costs of uniforms and stationary. Provision of in-kind assistance is mostly dependent on a school administration's initiative and ability to receive donations from generous individuals or charity groups in their communities. Wider distributions of stationary and school bags in public schools take place irregularly, with limited coverage, and are dependent on donors' for funding. UNRWA schools in the West Bank provide stationary to children whose families are assessed to be in abject poverty, whereas UNRWA schools in the Gaza Strip provide all children with basic stationary. In the past, UNRWA also had a policy in the Gaza Strip where families were provided 100 NIS per school-age child at the beginning of the school year to cover education related expenses.

Y. has 14 children and the entire family lives in a single room owned by Y.'s father in the Middle Governorate of the Gaza Strip. Y. and many of his sons are waste pickers; they are scavengers. They make a living by driving around in a horse cart, collecting, sorting, and selling other people's garbage. It is very hard work for very little money. When asked how he spends his days, one of Y.'s sons explains how he spends them just working and that he does not even have time to spend with his friends, "after coming from work, I just sleep" he adds. Some days the family gains 50 Shekels and others they gain only 10. They have to spend about 20 shekels on food for the horse.

None of Y.'s children attended school beyond 4th grade. When asked about his reasons for dropping out of school, one of Y.'s older sons said he just didn't see "boys like them" and explained how the boys at school don't dress like them and he didn't go to school because he didn't have clothes like them. His brother described how he had to repair his school bag with pieces of string. When the boys at school made fun of him because of his bag, he got into fights with them, which triggered his drop-out. Another brother describes how his teacher used to physically punish him when he couldn't do his homework so he didn't want to go to school any more. A fourth brother describes how he tried to re-enroll two years after leaving school but the administrative process was so complicated and took so long that he gave up after months of trying.

**School Transportation Policy:** The absence of reliable, safe and affordable public transportation options for children who live beyond walking distance from the nearest school emerges as a barrier to some children's access to education in Palestine. According to a study on the children who dropped out of UNRWA schools, 100 per cent of the children who dropped out of UNRWA schools in the West Bank and 31.8 per cent of the children who dropped out of UNRWA schools in the Gaza Strip lived more than 2 kilometres away from their schools. <sup>149</sup>

The negative effect of distance-to-school on attendance comes about through several pathways, including parents' considerations about child's safety, parents' assessments about young children's readiness to travel long distances, and parents' ability to avail time and financial resources to provide alternative means of transportation. The negative effect of distance is particularly acute for children with disabilities, considering 60.5 percent of 10-17 year-old children with disabilities indicate that they face barriers to using

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<sup>149</sup> UNRWA, School Dropout: An Agency Wide Study, UNRWA Education Department, September 2013, pg.8-9.

public transportation.<sup>150</sup> Another group of children severely affected by distance-to-school are those children whose commute requires passing through security obstacles such as checkpoints, fly barriers, the Barrier, and going nearby Israeli settlements.

Currently the MoEHE does not have a nationwide policy in place to provide reliable, safe and affordable transportation options for school-age children. During the 2016-2017 school year, transportation services were provided to about 2,200 children in 39 communities in the West Bank by buses and 4x4 vehicles owned or rented by the MoEHE.<sup>151</sup> These communities are selected on a case-by-case basis. Due to limited financial resources, however, the MoEHE is unable to provide other communities it has already identified with much-needed transportation services. In these cases, some communities arrange private vehicles without receiving subsidies from the MoEHE or MoSD. In the past, such subsidies were made available to some families through a time-limited donor supported program. The MoEHE does not provide any transportation services or subsidies for children with disabilities, whereas UNRWA in Gaza Strip provides limited assistance to some children with disabilities for school transportation.

H. was the top student in third grade at her school. She had many friends and loved going to school in Khan Younis Governorate of the Gaza Strip. When her parents told her they could no longer send her to school, H. cried for weeks. That was more than one year ago.

H. had grown notably during the year prior to her dropping out. She had become too big for her wheelchair and her parents could not afford a new one. To make things worse, her brothers who were now attending university could no longer help her maneuver the dirt roads between their home and her school. Since she was older and bigger, taxi drivers no longer accepted transporting her to school as it involved carrying her into and out of the car.

H. is 12 years-old now and spends her days at home drawing and helping her younger siblings with their homeworks. She is still hopeful that if they can find her a new wheelchair, she would be able to go back to school.

**Education Related Social Assistance and Scholarship Programs:** The national cash transfer program (PNCTP) is the umbrella social assistance program for poor families in Palestine with about 115,000 households benefiting from the program in 2017, of whom about two thirds resided in the Gaza Strip.<sup>152</sup> While the PNCTP is an unconditional cash transfer program, it is designed to provide additional cash assistance to families for each child attending school. Additionally, families who are beneficiaries of the PNCTP receive an exemption from school fees/donations. Early evaluations of the impact of the PNCTP on school attendance show a positive yet small effect only for 6-12-year-old children in the West Bank, and no discernible effect for other groups,<sup>153</sup> which suggests closer investigation of the program's design and underlying assumptions about its expected effect on school attendance are needed.

Several issues might contribute to the weak effect of the PNCTP on school attendance. The current design of the PNCTP, for example, does not incorporate household-specific schooling expenses, such as school transportation costs due to a family living far from the nearest school or having a child with a disability. The current design also does not

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<sup>150</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Disabled Individuals Survey 2011: Main Findings Report, December 2011.

<sup>151</sup> Based on administrative data provided by MoEHE in January 2017.

<sup>152</sup> World Bank, Project Information Document/Integrated Safeguards Data Sheet, Report No: PIDISDSC19913, 16 February 2017.

<sup>153</sup> Overseas Development Institute, Effects of the Palestinian National Cash Transfer Programme on Children and Adolescents: A mixed methods analysis, ODI, London, UK, 2014.

incorporate one-time expenses associated with school attendance, such as the costs of purchasing uniforms and stationery at the beginning of the school year. Moreover, parents may not know that the amount they receive is linked to each of their children's school attendance. Available studies of the PNCTP's implementation do not investigate parents' knowledge of the additional payments for children attending school. Similarly, the fact that beneficiary households receive only a part of the amount they are entitled to due to limited budgetary provisions for PNCTP could also be weakening the link between the amount of cash assistance received and the children's school attendance.

It is worth highlighting that neither the MoSD nor MoEHE have a nationwide program for needs-based or merit-based scholarships for school-age children. Similarly, individual schools do not have access to funds earmarked for supporting their students whose families struggle to pay for uniforms, stationery, school bags, and transportation. In-kind donations of stationery and bags by charities are irregular and unpredictable. Interviews suggest that some school principals, counsellors and teachers go so far as to use their own resources to provide students in dire need with stationery and bags, or seek case-by-case support directly from local charities. The unpredictable provision of basic school supplies for children from poor households aggravates the structural challenges these children face.

### 3.4.4 Recommended Policies regarding Costs of Schooling

Any policy revision to tackle the barriers to education brought about by the costs of schooling must keep in mind the dire fiscal straits facing the MoEHE, particularly in the Gaza Strip. Thus, the policy options presented in this section aim to find a viable middle ground between the financial constraints facing families in sending their children to school and the fiscal realities of the MoEHE.

**School fees/donations:** Recognizing that parents' donations to schools constitute the main source of income for most schools, eliminating all donation collections at the time of enrolment would significantly weaken Palestine's schools. However, building on the current exemption policy, schools could collect donations on a sliding scale. Such a sliding scale would entail collecting no donations from poorest households, collecting as little as 5 NIS from poor households, and also collecting as high as 150 NIS of voluntary donations from wealthier households. In other words, parents would be given the option of donating anywhere from 5-150 NIS. Additional donations collected from schools in wealthier communities could also be redistributed to schools in poorer communities to ensure that a minimum amount of funds are available for all schools to cover basic operational costs.

To ensure that the donations are purely voluntary, the MoEHE could consider displaying communication materials in schools so that parents are aware of the voluntary nature of the donations. Such communication materials could also include information on a complaint mechanism for parents who felt forced to donate or whose donations were not properly recorded. To encourage larger donations, schools could share their budget with the wider school community to demonstrate efficient spending and to highlight financial shortfalls.

**School grants program for prioritized schools:** Schools that disproportionately serve children from the poorest households are faced with a double-edged sword: the children they serve are frequently in dire need of financial support to cover school related expenses, yet the parents and the community often have fewest resources to financially contribute to the school. Interviews suggest that in these schools, principals, counsellors and teachers find themselves with very few options for covering the operational expenses of the school, and often are left without discretionary funds they could use to provide their most disadvantaged students with stationery, school bags, or a breakfast.

In the same spirit as the objective outlined in the EDSP III of increasing financial support to schools in Area C, the MoEHE could consider identifying a list of priority schools serving the poorest communities in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. These schools could be provided with school grants for the purpose of ensuring these schools are able to cover their operational expenses and provide needs-based scholarships and in-kind assistance to the most disadvantaged students. Experiences from school grants programs in other countries, such as the Bantuan Operasional Sekolah in Indonesia, could be useful models for such a program.

### **Revising PNCTP benefits and strengthening its communication strategy:**

The design of the PNCTP benefits could be revised to increase its impact on educational attainment. Such revisions could entail the following:

- Under the PNCTP, the MoSD could provide additional cash to households that incur high transportation costs to send their children to school because of the location of the school or because they have a child with a disability who requires special means of transportation.
- The PNCTP could adjust the cash transfer based on the seasonal costs associated with schooling. Specifically, the quarterly payment coinciding with the start of the school year could be increased for those families who have children enrolled in school.
- The PNCTP could introduce a one-time sizable additional payment to families when their child completes 10th grade, which could incentivize families to encourage their children's completion of basic education. Along similar lines, the PNCTP could consider introducing a one-time sizable additional payment to families for their child's enrolment in 11th grade and completion of 12th grade, which could incentivize enrolment in upper secondary level of education among children from poorest households.
- Finally, the communication strategy of the PNCTP could highlight the link between the amount of the cash assistance and the enrolment of children in school so that parents are further incentivized to support their children's education.

**Expansion of the School Bus Services:** The absence of safe, reliable, affordable transportation to school affects the regular attendance of those children whose homes are either located in remote areas or whose commute to school is unsafe due to the risk of settler harassment and violence. The MoEHE provides bus services for children in some of the affected communities in the West Bank. The expansion of the school bus services to all affected communities could decrease the risk of these children's exclusion from education by ensuring that they enrol in school at the right age and stay in school until at least completing 10th grade. Contracting these transportation services to the private sector through competitive bidding instead of purchasing vehicles for the MoEHE might contribute to bringing down the costs associated with the provision of these services, and facilitate its expansion.

Where the MoEHE is unable to provide school bus services, an alternative intervention could be the provision of transportation vouchers or subsidies to families who live in these communities and purchase private transportation services to send their children to school. Similarly, for children with disabilities whose transportation costs to school are significant for their low-income families, the MoEHE could consider providing free school bus services. Where such services cannot be provided, the MoSD could consider providing additional cash to mitigate the burden of the transportation costs on the family.



**Need & Merit based scholarships in poorest communities:** Studies of merit-based scholarships in poor communities have shown that such programs have a positive effect on students' average learning outcomes and educational attainment. The MoEHE and UNRWA could consider introducing merit-based scholarships in targeted schools that serve the poorest communities in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Such scholarships could target grades 8-10 where children leave education at higher rates. Similar scholarship programs could also be introduced to encourage transition to upper secondary schools.

## 3.5 Barriers Concerning Administrative Regulations and Practices

### 3.5.1 Background on Problematic Administrative Regulations and Practices

This section of the report highlights two aspects of administrative regulations and practices that relate to children's exclusion from education. Firstly, it identifies and describes specific administrative practices in public schools that act as barriers to children's access to education. Secondly, it highlights the ways a high level of fragmentation in the education system creates gaps some children end up falling through.

### 3.5.2 Profiles of Children Affected

The barriers created by administrative regulations and practices disproportionately affect children who are already at risk of dropping out of school, and children whose parents are less able to navigate administrative red tape due to their low levels of education and limited time/financial resources. Similarly, the gaps in the education system that emerge as a result of its fragmentation disproportionately affect those children who are already at higher risk of dropping out of school.

### 3.5.3 Existing Administrative Practices Acting as Barriers to Education

Details of neutral-seeming policies put in place for regulating the management of education services can at times be detrimental to children's access to education. This section identifies and describes four such administrative practices in the public education system that could create barriers to certain children's access to education. This list does not claim to be comprehensive. Instead, it aims to highlight the need for a comprehensive review of education administrative practices in Palestine with a view to removing any practices that might hinder children's access to education.

**Repetition policy and practice:** The repetition policy in public schools is characterized by various complex criteria<sup>154</sup> that require substantial use of discretion by school level actors. Two aspects of the implementation of this complex repetition policy could increase the risk of exclusion from education for children affected by this policy:

- Children who are absent from public school in the Gaza Strip for more than 40 per cent of the school days in a year with an excuse, or for more than 20 per cent of school days without an excuse, are officially considered to have dropped out of

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<sup>154</sup> For children in 1st-4th grades, repetition is an option only in cases of long-periods of absence, which is defined as absent with an excuse for more than 40 per cent of school days or absent without an excuse for more than 20 per cent of school days, or failure to master basic Arabic and math skills if agreed by parents and approved by the school committee. For children in 5th-10th grades, repetition is an option in cases of long-periods of absence (without an excuse more than 15 per cent of school days and with an excuse more than 30 per cent of school days), receiving less than 50 per cent in more than 3 subjects, and failure to pass the completion test. A child can repeat only once in 1st-4th grades, and only twice between 5th and 10th grades. The number of students repeating a grade should not exceed 5 per cent of all students except under special circumstances.

school and are unenrolled. Parents are asked to sign a document confirming their child left school. If a child who was absent for more than the allowed days would like to return to school in subsequent months or the next academic year, the parents must travel to the MoEHE offices in the Gaza Strip and complete the necessary paperwork to re-register their child. If the parents can successfully re-register their child, then the child will be required to repeat the grade he/she was last enrolled in. This administrative policy that un-enrols a truant child and requires a cumbersome re-enrolment procedure is likely to decrease the chances that a truant child returns to school, particularly given the disincentives created by the mandatory grade repetition upon the child's return to school.

- The quota policy, whereby the number of students repeating a grade cannot exceed five per cent of the number of all students in that grade, forces school administrators and teachers to select among equally low performing students with no pre-established criteria. Interviews suggest that this subjective selection process give rise to both perceptions of injustice and stigmatizes students selected to repeat the grade, which could trigger their decision to leave school. More generally, in the absence of tailored education services for low performing students, the repetition policy is unlikely to improve the learning outcomes of repeating children. In fact, the negative social effects and stigmatization of repeating a grade might push to an already at-risk child to leave school completely.

Policy and practice of inter-school transfers: Children transfer between schools for three reasons: 1) the child's family might relocate to another area and commuting to current school is not an option; 2) the child might encounter serious conflicts with teachers or peers in the current school that affect her or his wellbeing and learning; or 3) the child has completed all the available grades in the current school. This third reason will be discussed in more detail in the next part of this section.

When a child needs to transfer to another school because of family relocation or because of inter-personal conflicts in the current school, the burden is on the child and the parents to: 1) identify a school that is able and willing to accept him/her; 2) secure necessary forms from the accepting school indicating this; and 3) provide the current school with these forms from the accepting school so the administrator can officially initiate the transfer process. It is not uncommon for children and parents to have trouble finding a school that is able and willing to accept a new student, particularly if the student is looking to change schools due to conflicts experienced in the current school.

The fact that the burden is on the child and the parents both to find an accepting school and to follow up on the paperwork increases the risk of a child dropping out of education during transitions between schools. This risk is particularly high for children who are relocating due to displacement or family disruptions, such as unemployment, death of a parent or separation of parents, and for children who experienced inter-personal conflicts and behavioural challenges in their school.

Finally, there is no mechanism in place to ensure that a child who requests his/her school files to be transferred to another school in fact attends the new school. In other words, if a child does not enrol in a new school after being unenrolled from current school following the transfer request, there is no central mechanism to identify his/her leaving the education system.

**Policy and practice of enrolling children in first grade:** The documents that are requested when a child enrolls in first grade could act as a barrier to a child's access to education. Interviews suggest that the practice concerning enrolment in first grade varies across public schools as well as between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Some school administrators describe what seems to be a child-centred approach by being flexible with respect to the documents provided, especially for refugee children from other countries. Other school administrators, on the other hand, describe enrolment practices whereby children are denied enrolment if the parents do not provide the necessary documents, including a photo, father's identity card and the child's health card, in addition to the child's birth certificate. Providing these documents in a timely manner could be challenging, particularly for children from disrupted families and poorest households in remote areas. Thus, such strict practices of enrolment risk violating a child's right to education.

Relatedly, school administrators describe cases where they refuse enrolling children living close to the school if the number of children enrolled exceeds the number of children the school can accommodate. Schools calculate these numbers using the number of classrooms in the school and the maximum number of children who can be assigned to a classroom given administrative rules. School administrators do not follow up on these children who are refused enrolment. They are simply expected to enrol in another school. This practice might increase the risk of a child not enrolling in school at all or enrolling a year late.

**Policy and practice of integrating over-age children into school:** As discussed in the previous chapter, being over-age can be a risk factor for exclusion from education, and administrative practices can aggravate this risk.

Interviews indicate vagueness in policy and discrepancies in implementation with respect to integration of over-age children. School administrators described a wide range of responses to a hypothetical request for enrolling an over-age child in first grade. Some administrators described assessing the physical size and mental ability of the child in deciding whether to accept or reject enrolment of the child. Other administrators stated that they would refer all children older than 9 to literacy programs, although the literacy programs offered by the MoEHE do not enrol children younger than 15. Some administrators stated that regardless of the child's age, they would enrol them in first grade. In the Gaza Strip, school administrators explained that the child would need to go to the MoEHE's Planning Department in Gaza City to be assessed and get written permission for a specific grade placement. School administrators' practices similarly varied when given the hypothetical case of an over-age child who dropped out of school in an early grade and requested to return to school after several years.

In the absence of clear policies and consistent implementation, over-age children's access to education remains at the discretion of school administrators and their judgments about the risks of accepting an older child into the same classroom with much younger ones. As highlighted in the previous section, tailored catch-up programs are particularly important for the successful integration of over-age children into public schools.

### 3.5.4 Existing Gaps in the Education System Trigger Drop-Outs

The education system in Palestine is characterized by high levels of fragmentation both in terms of providers and system continuity. Fragmentation brought about by multiple providers give rise to coordination problems in identifying and preventing cases of exclusion from education. Low levels of system continuity, on the other hand, are brought about mostly by discrepancies between the grades offered across schools and the levels described in the education system. As a result, children end up having to transfer to new schools at various points in their education. Multiple transitions between schools poses a challenge to already weak monitoring and support systems for children who are at higher risk of exclusion from education.

To give a concrete example, in a non-fragmented education system, a child could enter 1st grade and graduate from 10th grade in the same school under the same supervising authority. In the case of a fragmented education system like Palestine, a child might end up having to transition across up to four public schools until completing 10th grade. Several schools offer only 1st-2nd or 1st-3rd grades, after which the child would need to transfer to a school offering higher grades. A child who attends UNRWA schools would need to transition across at least three schools, with the third transition occurring at the end of 9th grade from an UNRWA school to a public school.

Each transition between schools creates a gap through which children who are at higher risks of dropping out might fall through. The systems that are currently in place for transferring children who complete all the grades in one school to another school do not provide timely interventions to prevent children from falling through gaps created by inter-school transitions. Several school administrators describe a process where truant children are identified a month after school begins, and only at that point the previous school is contacted to follow-up on the child. The intensity of the subsequent follow-up at this point seems to vary, partly because the responsibility is dispersed across the two schools. Such delayed and varying follow-up significantly decreases the chances for successfully returning the child to education.

The transition from UNRWA schools to MoEHE schools at the end of 9th grade poses particular challenges with respect to timely and effective follow-up of children who might fall through this gap and leave the education system. While procedures are in place to manage this transition, key informants described various glitches in the implementation of the procedures. Following up on children who do not enrol in the 10th grade at their assigned school is particularly delayed because it requires coordination and communication at the ministerial level.

### 3.5.5 Recommended Changes in Administrative Regulations and Practices

Suggestions for changes in administrative regulations and practices are presented in two categories: 1) changes to existing administrative practices that act as barriers to children's access to education; and 2) changes to existing regulations and practices to minimize the risk of children falling through the gaps in a fragmented education system.

**Recommended Changes to Administrative Practices Pushing/Keeping Children Out of School:** Building on the list of issues highlighted earlier in this section, below is a list of options the MoEHE could consider to amend current administrative regulations and practices to reduce barrier to some children's access to education.

The options presented are not meant to be a comprehensive list but a suggestive one if the MoEHE chooses to undertake a wider review of its policies from a child-centred perspective.

- The current practice in the Gaza Strip of unrolling truant children from school and requiring them to re-register at the Ministerial level through a cumbersome process could be revised to facilitate a truant child's return to school.
- The current repetition policy could be revised to ensure more objectivity in its implementation, reduce stigmatization, and foster more positive returns to learning outcomes of lower achieving students. Remedial education programs in schools offered throughout the school year would be an integral part of a more effective repetition policy.
- The inter-school transfer policy could be revised so that the primary responsibility of identifying a school willing to enrol a child whose family is relocating and a child who is experiencing inter-personal conflicts in his/her current school lies with the district offices, and not the child's parents.
- The MoEHE could consider revising the regulations governing inter-school transfers so that the school administration providing the transfer documents to a child is obliged to follow up after a specified period of time with the new school to ensure that the child is in fact enrolled and attending the new school.
- The MoEHE could consider revising current regulations for enrolment in first grade to reduce unnecessary burdens on parents and ensure that enrolment in first grade is not conditional on the provision of specific documents. To this end, MoEHE could consider issuing a decree that:
  1. Requires school administrators to automatically enrol all children whose parents show up at school for enrolment, and to follow up with parents for required documents only after enrolling their children
  2. Establishes the mechanism whereby school administrators can verify children's date of birth via the Mol's population records
  3. Empowers school administrators to use their discretion in ways that ensure no child is turned away from school due to their inability to provide required documents

Similarly, the MoEHE could consider extending the official enrollment period into the summer months. Accordingly, the MoEHE could use birth registration figures from the Mol's records for textbook procurement purposes, instead of waiting for enrolment figures from individual schools. If the official enrolment period is extended, the end of this period could also mark the beginning of the follow-up procedures described in Section 3.6 for non-enrolled children in first grade.

- The MoEHE could consider revising its administrative rule on the maximum number of students enrolled in a class, when the enforcement of this rule leads to children being denied enrolment at their closest school and if attending an alternative school poses a substantial burden to the child and the family. Similarly, the MoEHE could consider revising the school assignment policy in ways that introduce further flexibilities to facilitate children's access to school.

- The MoEHE could consider issuing a clear policy and guidelines regarding the enrolment of over-age children in schools that takes into account both the right to education of all school-age children and the challenges posed by having much older children in the same classroom with much younger children. Part of this policy could entail making catch-up programs more widely available. Similarly, clearer and more consistently implemented policy and guidelines regarding late enrolment and absenteeism could minimize discretionary administrative practices by school principals and administrators that inadvertently push children out of school.

**Recommended Changes to Minimize the Risk of Children Falling through the Gaps in a Fragmented Education System:** As discussed earlier in this chapter, each transition between schools creates a gap through which children who are at higher risks of dropping out might fall through. It is, therefore, a positive development that one of the priorities in the High Priority Reform Track put forward in EDSP III is to decrease the frequency of such inter-school transitions by restructuring schools according to educational stage.

The MoEHE could also consider revisions to the regulations and guidelines governing inter-school transition processes to ensure that children who do not enrol in their new school are identified early enough for effective interventions to ensure they continue their education. The options for revisions presented are not meant to be a comprehensive list but a suggestive one:

- The MoEHE could consider introducing an early enrolment requirement for children who transition between schools because they completed all grades in their current school. An enrolment requirement over the summer months would allow the new school administration to identify, prior to the beginning of the academic year, those children who did not enrol and initiate follow-up procedures in a timely manner.
- The MoEHE could consider issuing a decree that details the follow-up procedures for children who do not enrol in their new school. Such a decree could spell out the responsibilities of the new school administration, the old school administration, the district offices, and the MoEHE's Department of Planning as well as time-bound requirements for when the specific procedures must be implemented.
- Despite improvements in information sharing between UNRWA and the MoEHE for the transition of students from UNRWA to public school at the end of 9th grade, additional procedures could help overcome the remaining glitches to ensure no child falls through the gaps and leaves education before receiving a diploma. For instance, currently UNRWA in the Gaza Strip shares the lists of 9th grade students with the MoEHE only once during the second semester. These lists become outdated by the beginning of the subsequent academic year, with some students repeating 9th grade and others transitioning to TVET programs run by UNRWA. Yet revised lists are not automatically shared with the MoEHE, making it more difficult to identify children who dropped out of education completely during the transition phase. If UNRWA uses children's identity card numbers in its administrative records, this could further facilitate information sharing with MoEHE.
- A protocol between UNRWA and the MoEHE could establish the scope of the student lists to be shared as well as the dates at which these lists should be shared. For instance, if UNRWA were to share one list during the second semester and a second updated list during the summer months, public school administrations could more quickly identify children at risk of dropping out during the transition process.

Furthermore, if UNRWA were to provide the contact details of each student, public school administrations could more effectively and directly follow up with those children who do not enrol in 10th grade.

- Similar to the suggestion about early enrolment when students transition between two public schools, the MoEHE could consider introducing an early enrolment requirement for children transitioning from UNRWA schools to public schools at the end of 9th grade. Such an early enrolment requirement would help schools identify children at risk of dropping out prior to the beginning of the school year and intervene more effectively.

### 3.6 Barriers to Effective Identification of Children At Risk of Exclusion

This section describes the barriers to obtaining and using data for the identification of children at risk of exclusion from education, and to effectively intervening to prevent their exclusion. To this end, the cases of children who never enrolled in school and of children who enrolled but drop out before completing 10th grade are discussed separately.

Ensuring all children are enrolled in first grade: No mechanism is currently in place to identify children who do not enrol in first grade. Interviews with MoEHE officials suggest that the age-specific population registration data required for identifying these children is, in fact, made available by the Ministry of Interior (Mol) to the MoEHE annually. Thus, the MoEHE could consider putting in place a system whereby the population registration data for children who are at the right age for enrolling in first grade is matched with the enrolment records from public, private and UNRWA schools before the beginning of the school year, to identify those children who did not enrol in first grade.

Once these children are identified, a follow-up mechanism would need to be put in place to ensure these children are enrolled in school before the school year begins.

- One component of a follow-up mechanism could entail establishing community groups composed of community leaders and volunteer parents who work in cooperation with local councils. Where contact information in the Mol data is correct, these community groups could be provided with the names and addresses of these children. These community groups could be provided with and trained in a protocol for identifying, contacting and communicating with the families whose children have not yet been enrolled in first grade. Such a protocol would benefit from including information for identifying cases of child neglect and child abuse as well as the appropriate referral procedures.
- A second component for a follow-up mechanism could involve establishing district level committees that would be assigned the responsibility of following up with identified children who live in remote locations. Similarly, these committees could then be provided with and trained in a protocol for identifying, contacting and communicating with families. A district level committee would be particularly important in areas where many children live in remote locations and are thus hard to reach by local community groups or local councils.

For identifying children who are at the right age to enrol in first grade yet are neither enrolled in school nor in the Mol's population registration database, the child protection network is the most appropriate mechanism. While Palestine has reached near total levels

of birth registration with a 99.3 per cent registration rate for children under age 5,<sup>155</sup> there still are some children who do not have a birth registration at the age of 5. Members of the child protection network and their employees on the ground, such as doctors, nurses, social workers, and NGO workers/volunteers, are well-placed to identify these children and refer them to the child protection network for effective intervention by MoEHE and MoSD.

Finally, interviews suggest that there is room for improvement for the means and content of the public announcements schools make for enrolment in first grade. The MoEHE could provide schools with sample content for their public announcements. The messages in these announcements could encourage not only parents to enrol their children, but also community members to encourage each other for the timely enrolment of all children. These public announcements could also provide a point of contact for community members who would like to inform the MoEHE about parents who do not enrol their school-age children in first grade. The distribution of these public announcements could also be expanded to ensure families living in remote areas are reached by these messages.

**Effective monitoring of absenteeism:** Absenteeism is a critical area for data collection and intervention. It both contributes to dropout and is also an early warning sign of the risk of dropout. Interviews with school principals and counsellors suggest notable differences across schools' administrative practices for recording attendance, following up on absent students, identifying children at risk of dropping out, and the intervention protocol for absenteeism.

At some schools, parents are contacted for the first time via phone only after three days of absence. They are sent a letter after seven to ten days of absence, and the school initiates sanctions after 15 days of absence. Once the child's absence exceeds the maximum days allowed by regulation, the parents are sent a form to sign to confirm that they have decided that their child will no longer attend school. However at other schools, parents are contacted immediately by text message or phone once after the school administration notices the child is absent; they are called by the school counsellor after two days of absence; and they are visited at their homes by the school counsellor after three days of unexcused absence. At these schools, counsellors continue regularly visiting homes to persuade the parents and the child for returning to school. If they fail, they refer the case to the child protection network via the district offices.<sup>156</sup>

Furthermore, school principals and counsellors who were interviewed do not seem to use a standard definition or criteria in deciding when a student has dropped out or when they report the drop-out case to the district offices. Some principals and counsellors described using their own judgment in deciding that a child has permanently dropped out of school. Other principals and counsellors referred to the maximum allowed days of absence as the criteria they use to determine that a child has dropped out of school. Some schools report dropout cases to the district offices as they occur for further follow-up, while others report it once a month or three times a year only to comply with reporting requirements.

In addition to the differences across schools, there also seems to be differences within each school in terms of the intensity of the follow-up with absent children and the dropout criteria applied. Some school principals explain how they contact a female student's parents as soon as her absence is noticed, whereas they contact a male student's parents only after three days of absence. Some school principals explained they view dropout due to early marriage as irreversible and report the child as a dropout immediately after of this reason, with no further efforts to bring the child back to school. Other school

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<sup>155</sup> United Nations Children's Fund and Ministry of Planning and Administrative Development, Situation Analysis of Palestinian Children in the State of Palestine – 2013, 2014.

<sup>156</sup> In a recent survey study conducted with parents and school principals of children who dropped out of school, only 7 per cent of parents and 7 per cent of principals indicated that home visits took place to prevent dropout while 93 per cent of parents and 63 per cent of school principals indicated that the school communicated with the parents by other means, such as phone calls or letters, to prevent the student dropping out (UNRWA, School Dropout: An Agency Wide Study, UNRWA Education Department, September 2013). This finding about the infrequent use of home visits as a prevention tool in these cases where children ultimately dropped out of school combined with the fact that several principals and counsellors interviewed for the OOSC study described home visits as a frequently used and effective tool suggest that home visits by counsellors and principals could in fact be an effective tool in persuading families and children to stay in school.



principals explain how they ignore long periods of absenteeism if the reason is known and it is unchangeable, such as seasonal agricultural work.

These notable differences across schools' administrative practices concerning absenteeism suggest that there is room for improvement vis-à-vis administrative policies and practices in this area. A comprehensive early warning system for identifying at risk children and their risk level, combined with a detailed and intensive follow-up protocol for absenteeism, and multi-staged responses for preventing the ultimate dropout of truant children could have significant impact in bringing down dropout rates. An early warning system combined with intensive follow-up and response protocols could be particularly effective in schools where dropout rates are high and current follow-up practices are relatively weak. Engaging other students, parents and community leaders to support the efforts of school counsellors could enable multi-staged responses that more effectively prevent a truant child from permanently dropping out of school.

**Integrated and High Quality Administrative Data Collection:** It is worth noting that the fragmentation of education governance remains a structural barrier to obtaining and using data on children at risk of exclusion from education. For instance, there are currently two disconnected active Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) in place - the EMIS of UNRWA and the EMIS of MoEHE in the Gaza Strip. The EMIS for the MoEHE in the West Bank was not fully operational as of October 2017 and even when it becomes operational, it will have no built-in ability to collect and process student-level data from UNRWA and the MoEHE in the Gaza Strip to identify out-of-school children. While this section focuses on the school level, the structural challenge posed by the fragmentation of the EMISs remains critical to the success of all other efforts in this realm. Until the various EMISs are integrated and operative, the need to establish stop-gap measures to improve data sharing to identify out-of-school children remains urgent.

1. Improving data sharing arrangements: The fragmentation of education governance in Palestine poses a serious challenge to the timely and accurate collection of enrolment data to prevent exclusion from education. Such arrangements would need to ensure frequent sharing of real-time, student-level data between supervising authorities. More specifically, such arrangements would need to be established or enhanced in: 1) East Jerusalem between Jerusalem Directorate of Education under the Jordanian Ministry of Waqf and Islamic Affairs and the Jerusalem Education Administration, which is a joint body of the Municipality of Jerusalem and the Israeli Ministry of Education; 2) the West Bank between the MoEHE and UNRWA; 3) the Gaza Strip between the MoEHE and UNRWA; and 4) the MoEHE in the West Bank and the MoEHE in the Gaza Strip. While each of these authorities use separate EMISs, sharing student-level data using individual identity card numbers could be viable, though cumbersome, without having to integrate the EMISs. Where such information sharing cannot be done directly due to political concerns, a third party could play an intermediary role.
2. Improving the quality of the administrative data on dropout: Currently, data submitted by MoEHE schools on dropout does not follow a uniform definition. Thus, a uniform definition of the term dropout needs to be established. As important, both the definition and the data collection system needs to take into account the different types of dropout, such as temporary dropouts, permanent dropouts, and reversed dropouts. Finally, the MoEHE could consider collecting student-level dropout data using identity card numbers at the national level, in order to better identify and correct miscounts and double-counts.
3. Improving the availability and quality of administrative data: The MoEHE in the Gaza Strip and UNRWA in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank currently have separate EMIS systems at both the school and regional levels. The MoEHE in the West Bank is in the process of finalizing its EMIS. These EMISs present an opportunity for improving the quality of national level administrative data collection in both accuracy and frequency. This could be pursued through a joint initiative between the MoEHE and UNRWA. At the school level, these EMISs could form the technological infrastructure for early warning

and prevention systems for dropouts. An additional area for improving the availability and quality of administrative data concerns children attending non-formal education and vocational training programs provided by governmental and non-governmental actors. Collecting annual data on these children would allow for a more complete understanding of the flows across different types of education and training programs, and as a result more accurate identification of out-of-school children.

4. In general, ensuring capacity of all schools to collect, process and share relevant school level data is recommended to reduce fragmentation of data and improve its quality.

### 3.7 Summary

Chapter Three described five categories of barriers that independently and jointly bring about children's exclusion from and within education in the State of Palestine. These five categories of barriers are the inadequate tailoring of education services, the fragmented nature of preventive support services, the costs associated with schooling, administrative regulations and practices, and challenges with identifying children at risk of exclusion. These barriers negatively affect the three key profiles of out-of-school children described in Chapter Two, namely children from vulnerable households, children with disabilities, and 14-15-year-old boys, in the following ways:

- The inadequate provision of tailored education services inside schools leads to exclusion within education, which then pushes low achieving children out of the education system altogether. Children from vulnerable households, children with disabilities, and 14-15-year-old boys are all affected by this system-wide barrier related to the inclusiveness, quality and equity of education services in Palestine. Once out of school, the options for tailored education services outside of schools are inadequate in quality and availability to facilitate a child's return to school or continued learning outside of school.
- The fragmented nature of preventive support services, such as health services and social assistance programs, represent a missed opportunity to promote the well-being of school-age children, which is directly related to their ability to regularly attend school and be physically and emotionally prepared to learn. Children from vulnerable households and children with disabilities are most severely affected by the fragmented nature of preventive support services.
- The direct and indirect costs associated with schooling disproportionately affects children from vulnerable households and children with disabilities. These costs may include costs associated with school donations, uniforms, stationary and school bags, and transportation.
- Problematic administrative regulations and practices act as barriers to children's access to education, and can create gaps in the system that some children fall through. These barriers disproportionately affect children who are from vulnerable households where parents are less able to understand and navigate administrative red tape due to their low levels of education and limited time and financial resources.
- Finally, gaps in the identification of children who never enrolled in school and the monitoring of children who are at risk of exclusion from education has disproportionately affected the three key profiles of out-of-school children because their exclusion is often not identified in a timely and effective manner.

Building on a thorough description of existing programs to address these five barriers, Chapter Three then discussed a range of potential system-wide interventions, targeted programmes, and policy revisions that could strengthen the ongoing efforts of key actors involved in providing education services in Palestine.

# 4

## Next steps

The country report on out-of-school children in the State of Palestine builds on the MoEHE and UNICEF’s shared commitment to ensuring all children have access to inclusive and equitable quality basic education. This concluding chapter aims to synthesize key findings and suggestions with a view to facilitating conversations about the next steps to ensure all children in the State of Palestine complete compulsory basic education (grades 1-10). To this end, the chapter reviews key recommendations in sections in accordance with the complexity of the tasks involved in implementing the suggestions spelled out in Chapter Three.

- The first section summarizes relatively easy administrative policy and procedure changes. Some of these changes address administrative practices that act as barriers; other changes aim to introduce “nudges” into administrative practices to better prevent children falling through the cracks in the system.
- The second section looks at revisions to existing administrative procedures and introduction of new procedures to bolster current efforts for early detection and prevention of children’s exclusion from education.
- The third section highlights opportunities for building on existing policies and system-wide reform efforts to reduce the number of children excluded from basic education.
- The fourth section synthesizes a suggestive list of new programs for preventing and reversing dropout from basic education.
- The final section of the chapter focuses on collecting and using data in ways that enhance monitoring of out-of-school children with a view to reducing the prevalence of exclusion from education in the State of Palestine.

### 4.1 Quick fixes and “nudges”

Both quantitative and qualitative stories of out-of-school children demonstrate how inter-related structural factors often give rise to a series of events leading to a child’s ultimate exclusion from education. Addressing structural factors stemming from the child’s household and school environments is paramount to ensuring all children complete basic education. Yet there are also several quick fixes and “nudges” that can improve the small administrative practices that often make or break the deal for the children and their families. For children whose families lead particularly precarious lives, encountering administrative practices that facilitate, rather than make more difficult, a child staying in

school could be the difference between dropping out or not.

To a large extent, section 3.5.5 and to a lesser extent section 3.4.4 of this OOSC country report introduces several ideas for eliminating these administrative barriers and introducing administrative facilitators and “nudges” at the school, district and regional levels. Some examples of these administrative barriers, facilitators, and ‘nudges’ that could be improved upon include parents’ donations to schools, inter-school transfers, enrolment procedures for first grade, truancy policy, and repetition policy, among others. These lists of ideas are not meant to be comprehensive; they are instead meant to be suggestive of the need to comprehensively review and improve existing administrative practices.

## **4.2 Bolstering existing efforts for early detection and prevention of dropout**

Various efforts are already underway at the school, district and regional levels in Palestine for identifying children who are at risk of dropping out with a view to preventing or reversing their dropout. These efforts, including but not limited to, strengthening school counsellors, remedial education plans, resource rooms, inclusive education, providing free or subsidized school bus services. In addition to these more focused efforts, school-level practices for monitoring attendance, and following up and intervening in cases of truancy are also described in Chapter Three with a view to highlighting the notable differences in practices across schools.

Bolstering these existing efforts for early detection and prevention of dropout by improving the quality and coverage of their implementation is crucial to reducing the number of children excluded from education. Recognizing the challenge of implementing such bolstering efforts nationwide, the MoEHE could consider identifying schools with the highest drop-out rates in each district and focusing its efforts, at least initially, on these schools.

## **4.3 Mainstreaming out-of-school children into ongoing efforts**

Various commendable efforts are underway in the State of Palestine to improve services in education, health, social protection, and child protection. Some of these efforts, such as the child protection network, PNCTP, curriculum reform, and teacher trainings, will indirectly benefit children who are out of school or at risk of dropping out of school. The OOSC country report suggests mainstreaming out-of-school children into these ongoing efforts to maximize their positive effect on these children.

Concrete suggestions to this end are presented in Chapter Three, which include: 1) revising the PNCTP benefits to help vulnerable families in meeting the indirect costs of education as well as incentivizing completion of basic education and transition to upper secondary school; 2) strengthening the child protection network’s referral system for out-of-school children and children who are at risk of dropping out; and 3) targeting the MoEHE’s system-wide efforts for improving teacher competencies and curricula in ways that increase their benefits for children who have low academic achievement.

## **4.4 New programs for preventing and reversing dropout**

This OOSC country report’s review of existing efforts that directly or indirectly address children’s exclusion from education reveals the need for new interventions in certain areas. These areas are presented in Chapter Three, and include: 1) distance learning programs; 2) new programs for children with multiple disabilities and severe cognitive

disabilities; 3) high quality and widely available second-chance education programs, back-to-school programs, and programs for the integration of over-age children back to school; 4) school or community-based remedial education programs targeting children with low academic achievement; 5) alternative education programs for children living in pastoralist communities; and 6) grants for schools serving ultra-poor, vulnerable communities.

These new interventions are a crucial aspect of efforts to address the exclusion of children from education in the State of Palestine. Given the fiscal constraints facing the MoEHE, financing these new interventions in a sustainable and comprehensive manner requires looking beyond fragmented donor-funded programs and integrating these efforts into future EDSPs. In the short-term, donor-funded programs could be utilized to pilot various initiatives. Furthermore, alternative financing models such as public-private partnerships could be explored.

#### **4.5 Collecting and using data for addressing exclusion from education**

A critical aspect of effectively addressing exclusion from education involves collecting and using data in ways that help to both identify children who are at risk of being excluded from education and measure the impact of interventions to prevent their exclusion. Chapter Three discusses several areas for improving administrative data collection and usage to help ensure all children are enrolled in first grade, that cases of absenteeism are identified and responded to in order to prevent cases of absenteeism from becoming cases of dropout, and that cases of dropout are identified accurately and without delay.

Opportunities also exist for improving data collection through future household surveys for better identification of exclusion from education. Such opportunities include: 1) collect more detailed data on the types of early childhood care and education services accessed by 3-5 year old children as part of future MICS; (2) collect more detailed data on the types of vocational and technical training programs accessed by 14-18 year old children as part of future MICS and labour force surveys; 3) collect more detailed data on the types of services accessed by children with disabilities, including rehabilitation, therapy, special education as part of future disability surveys.

#### **4.6 Concluding Remarks**

This country report on out-of-school children in the State of Palestine is the final product of a year-long collaboration between the MoEHE and UNICEF. Motivated by their shared commitment to inclusive and equitable quality education for all children in the State of Palestine, the report represents a milestone in MoEHE and UNICEF's efforts. The report puts a spotlight on out-of-school children, identifies the barriers that contribute to their exclusion from education, and makes suggestions for improving ongoing efforts in this realm. The suggestions presented in this report are not meant to be a prescription; they are instead meant to initiate a wider conversation about next steps.





# Annexes

## Annex 1 Out-of-School Children in the Gaza Strip

The purpose of this annex is to put a spotlight on out-of-school children in the Gaza Strip. To the extent possible, the analyses presented in the country report put forward a regional comparison. This annex strives to present a more holistic picture of the situation of out-of-school children in the Gaza Strip and highlight certain patterns specific to this part of Palestine.

### Basic Education in the Gaza Strip

A total of 443,425 children are enrolled in 1st-10th grades in the 569 schools in the Gaza Strip. UNRWA supervises 45.2 per cent of these schools serving 55.9 per cent of all children.<sup>157</sup> While 67.7 per cent of the entire population of the Gaza Strip have refugee status,<sup>158</sup> almost all the students in UNRWA schools and about 40 per cent of students in public schools have refugee status.<sup>159</sup>

The average student/class ratio is 37.3 for basic education. Among the children enrolled in 1st-10th grades in public schools, 90.2 per cent are enrolled in double-shift schools.<sup>160</sup>

### Out-of-School Children in the Gaza Strip

Based on analyses of the 2014 MICS data:

- Dimension One: Among 5-year-old children in the Gaza Strip, an estimated 5.5 per cent are out-of-school. An estimated 60.2 per cent of 5-year-olds are attending pre-primary education and 34.3 per cent are attending primary school. The out-of-school rate for 5-year-olds is highest in North Gaza (9.0 per cent). The rate of exclusion for 5-year-old girls (7.4 per cent) is higher than boys (3.6 per cent).
- Dimension Two: Among 6-9-year-old children in the Gaza Strip, an estimated 1.4 per cent are out-of-school (Dimension 2). The rate of exclusion is higher for girls (1.5 per cent) than for boys (1.2 per cent) in this age group. Among the governorates, Deir el-Balah has the highest rate of exclusion (2.4 per cent) and Gaza has the lowest rate (0.9 per cent)
- Dimension Three: Among 10-15-year-old children in the Gaza Strip, an estimated 4.3 per cent are out-of-school (Dimension 3). More particularly:
  - Boys in this age group are out-of-school at a higher rate (6.6 per cent) than girls in this age group (2.0 per cent). Similarly, the survival rate to 10th grade for those who start 5th grade is 88 per cent among boys and 94.9 per cent for girls.
  - The rate of out-of-school children in this age group is relatively high in Gaza (5.5 per cent) and North Gaza (5.3 per cent) governorates compared to other governorates in the Gaza Strip.
- Dimensions Four and Five: The estimated repetition rate is 1.5 per cent among children in 1st-4th grades (Dimension 4) and 1.2 per cent among children in 5th-10th grades

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<sup>157</sup> MoEHE, Education Statistics Yearbook, 2015-2016.

<sup>158</sup> PCBS: Statistical Yearbook of Palestine 2016

<sup>159</sup> United Nations Children's Fund, Investing in Public Education in Gaza: A case study, UNICEF, June 2013.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.



(Dimension 5). Among children enrolled in 5th-10th grades, an estimated 2.2 per cent are 2 or more years older than the official age for the grade they are enrolled in. Among boys enrolled in 5th=10th grades, this rate is 3.2 per cent.

Based on analyses of the MoEHE's administrative data from the 2014-2015 school year:

- Dimension Two: The net enrolment rate for 6-9-year-olds is 92.2 per cent (91.6 per cent for boys and 92.9 per cent for girls). The adjusted net enrolment rate for the same age group is 94.2 per cent (93.7 per cent for boys and 94.7 per cent for girls).
- Dimension Three: The net enrolment rate for 10-15-year-olds is 84.6 per cent (82.5 per cent for boys and 86.7 per cent for girls). The adjusted net enrolment rate for the same age group is 84.1 per cent for boys and 88.1 per cent for girls)
- Dimensions Four and Five: Among children who are enrolled in 1st-4th grades, 1.3 per cent are 2 or more years older than the official age for the grade they are enrolled in. Among children who are enrolled in 5th-10th grades, 4.1 per cent are 2 or more years older than the official age for the grade they are enrolled in.
- Dimensions Two and Three: The drop-out rate for children enrolled in 1st-10th grades is 1.9 per cent with the rates relatively stable between 4th-9th grades. It is worth noting that the preceding school year, the drop-out rate was 0.9 per cent.

Based on analyses of the 2011 Disability Survey data:

- Dimensions Two and Three: 63.6 per cent of 6-15-year-old children with a disability in the Gaza Strip are attending school. The attendance rates for boys with disabilities (64.3 per cent) are slightly higher than for girls with disabilities (62.7 per cent). An estimated 45.2 per cent of 6-9-year-old children with a disability never attended school. An estimated 21.7 per cent of 10-15-year-old children with a disability in the Gaza Strip never attended school and another 11.5 per cent enrolled but dropped out of school.

## Annex 2 Dimension 6 – Children of Upper Secondary School Age

The purpose of this annex is to put a spotlight on children of upper secondary school age, 16-17-year-old children, a group not covered by the analyses in the main report due to OOSCI's focus on children who are excluded from compulsory, basic education and are below the minimum legal age for work. To this end, the annex presents an analysis of the education and employment status of 16-17-year-old children in Palestine, which corresponds to the official age for the non-compulsory upper secondary education consisting of 11th and 12th grades in Palestine. Those 16-17-year-old children who are not in education, employment or training are considered to fall in Dimension Six.

### Upper Secondary Education in the State of Palestine

Upper secondary education in Palestine consists of academic and vocation education with academic education divided into science and humanities streams, and vocational education divided into commerce, agriculture, industry, and tourism streams.<sup>161</sup> 12.2 per cent of boys and 7.7 per cent of girls attending upper secondary education receive vocational education.<sup>162</sup> Upper secondary education is primarily provided in public schools: 92.3 per cent of 5,414 11th-12th grade classes are supervised by the MoEHE with the rest of the classes run by private providers.<sup>163</sup>

### 16-17-Year-Old Children in the State of Palestine

The estimated population of 16-17-year-olds in Palestine is 213,176 with 60.3 per cent living in the West Bank.<sup>164</sup>

Based on analyses of the 2014 MICS data, among children in this age group an estimated 24.6 per cent are out of school with another 5.2 per cent still attending lower secondary school. Boys are out of school (33.8 per cent) at higher rates than girls (15.1 per cent). The estimated out-of-school rate is 21.4 per cent among 16-year-olds (29.5 per cent of boys and 13.3 per cent of girls) and 28.6 per cent among 17-year-olds (38.4 per cent of boys and 18.1 per cent of girls). Among those 16-17-year-old children who are in school, an estimated 82.3 per cent are attending in 11th and 12th grades. An estimated 10.8 per cent of the children who are in school are attending tertiary education and another 7.7 per cent are still attending lower secondary education (5th-10th grades).

Also based on the 2014 MICS data, similar to Dimensions Three and Four, 16-17-year-old children from vulnerable households are excluded from education at higher rates.

- Poverty: 16-17-year-olds living in households in the poorest quintile are out of school (33.8 per cent) at much higher rates than their peers living in households in the richest quintile (13.9 per cent). Gender of the child matters with respect to the effect of wealth on school attendance at this age: 44.8 per cent of boys living in households in the poorest quintile are out of school compared to 21.6 per cent of boys living in households in the richest quintile. For girls, the rates of exclusion are 24.3 per cent and 6.1 per cent respectively.

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<sup>161</sup> Non-formal vocational education for this age group is also provided in registered centres run by MoL, UNRWA, and for-profit or non-profit private providers. Children enrolled in these vocational centres are not included in MoEHE's administrative data. In terms of MICS 2014, it is not certain if they are coded as "in-school" or "out-of-school". According to the instructions for the household survey questionnaire, they would be coded as "in-school" yet PCBS's technical clarification states that they were coded as "out-of-school".

<sup>162</sup> Figures calculated based on administrative data provided in MoEHE Education Statistics Yearbook, 2015-2016.

<sup>163</sup> MoEHE Education Statistics Yearbook, 2015-2016.

<sup>164</sup> PCBS population projection for mid-year 2016.

- Mother's education: 27.2 per cent of 16-17-year-old children whose mothers have basic or less education are out of school. The rate of exclusion is particularly high for boys in this group (40.0 per cent) compared to girls in this group (12.9 per cent).
- Parent(s) absent: 41.8 per cent of children in this age group who live in a household with one or no parents is out of school. The relation between parent's absence and school attendance is similar for boys (43.5 per cent) and girls (40.6 per cent).

Finally, children in this age group living in camps are out of school at higher rates (27.8 per cent) than their peers living in urban areas (24.1 per cent) and rural areas (25.0 per cent).

Also based on analyses of the 2014 MICS data, among girls 6.1 per cent of 16-year-olds and 7.2 per cent of 17-year-olds are married. 16-17-year-old girls from the poorest households are married at much higher rates (16.3 per cent) than their peers living in wealthier households. Girls in this age group living in the Gaza Strip are also married at much higher rates (11.1 per cent) than their peers in the West Bank. Married girls in this age group are out of school at much higher rates (88.3 per cent) than their single female peers (10.3 per cent).

Based on analyses of the MoEHE's administrative data from the 2014-2015 school year:

(1) Among 16-17-year-olds, 58.6 per cent are enrolled in upper secondary education (11th-12th grades) and 5.5 per cent are enrolled in lower secondary education (5th-10th grades).

- A higher percentage of girls in this age group are enrolled in upper secondary education (66.6 per cent) compared to boys (50.9 per cent).
- A higher percentage of girls in this age group are enrolled in lower secondary education (6.4 per cent) compared to boys (4.7 per cent).
- The enrolment rates for 16-17-year-olds in both upper secondary and lower secondary education are higher in the Gaza Strip (60.5 per cent and 6.8 per cent) than the West Bank (57.4 per cent and 4.6 per cent). This regional pattern is the same for both girls and boys. <sup>165</sup>

(2) For 11th and 12th grades:

- The total number of children enrolled in 11th and 12th grades is 138,199 of which 56.1 per cent are girls and 90.5 per cent are 16 and 17-year olds. <sup>166</sup>
- The drop-out rate is 2.0 per cent. The drop-out rate is higher in the West Bank (2.9 per cent) than in the Gaza Strip (0.7 per cent). It is also higher among boys (2.1 per cent) than girls (1.8 per cent).
- The repetition rate is 0.4 per cent. The repetition rate is higher in the West Bank (0.6 per cent) than in the Gaza Strip (0.04 per cent).

<sup>165</sup> The enrolment rates in upper secondary education is 67.4 per cent in the Gaza Strip vs. 66.1 per cent in the West Bank for 16-17-year-old girls, and 53.8 per cent in the Gaza Strip vs. 49 per cent in the West Bank for 16-17-year-old boys. The enrolment rates in lower secondary education is 7.0 per cent in the Gaza Strip vs. 6.0 per cent in the West Bank for 16-17-year-old girls, and 6.7 per cent in the Gaza Strip and 3.3 per cent in the West Bank for 16-17-year-old boys.

<sup>166</sup> Please note that these figures are based on MoEHE's education statistics yearbook for 2015-2016 school year.

Based on ILO's analyses of PCBS's School-to-Work Transition Survey 2012: <sup>167</sup>

- Among 15-24-year-olds, an estimated 40.7 per cent of girls and 62.0 per cent of boys are neither employed nor in school.<sup>168</sup> The labour market participation rate is notably lower for girls (4.3 per cent) compared to boys (32.0 per cent) while the education participation rate is higher for girls (63.3 per cent) than boys (52.1 per cent). For those who are in the labour market the unemployment rate is higher for girls (59.3 per cent) than for boys (38.0 per cent).
- Among 15-24-year-olds who are participating in the labour market, the estimated average age of dropping out of school is 19 for girls and 18 for boys. For the same group, the estimated average age of entering work is 22 for girls and 19 for boys.
- Among 15-24-year-olds who are not active in the labour market and are out of school, 23.2 per cent have not completed basic education (1st-10th grades), 38.3 per cent have only completed basic education (1st-10th grades), 24.4 per cent have completed upper secondary education (11th-12th grades), 14.1 per cent have acquired education beyond the upper secondary level.
- Looking specifically at 16 and 17-year-olds:
  - Among 16-year-old children, 81.5 per cent are students who are not employed and 3.5 per cent are students who are employed. Another 4.4 per cent are out of school but they are employed and 6.2 per cent are out of school but they are unemployed despite actively looking for employment. Finally, 4.4 per cent of 16-year-old children are neither in school nor in the labour market.
  - Among 17-year-old children, 73.2 per cent are students who are not employed and 4.3 per cent are students who are employed. Another 5.2 per cent are out of school but they are employed and 7.1 per cent are out of school but they are unemployed despite actively looking for employment. Finally, 10.1 per cent 17-year-old children are neither in school nor in the labour market.

Based on PCBS's Palestinian Youth Survey 2015 data: <sup>169</sup>

- Among 15-19-year-olds, a higher percentage of girls are married (8.2 per cent) compared to boys (0.4 per cent). A higher percentage of 15-19-year-old girls in the Gaza Strip are married (11.2 per cent) compared to their peers in the West Bank (6.3 per cent).
- Among 15-17-year-olds, 83 per cent are attending school with a slightly higher attendance rate in the Gaza Strip (84.3 per cent) than the West Bank (82.1 per cent).
- Among 15-17-year-olds, 88.1 per cent express their desire for an educational attainment higher than upper secondary school.

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<sup>167</sup> International Labour Office and ILO Regional Office for the Arab States, 'The twin challenges of child labour and youth employment in the Arab states', International Labour Organization, 2016.

<sup>168</sup> This rate includes 15-24-year-old girls and boys who are: (1) out of the labour market, (2) out of school, and (3) in the labour market but unemployed.

<sup>169</sup> Please note that the figures included here are from the PCBS's Main Findings report for the Palestinian Youth Survey 2015.

## Annex 3 Out-of-School Children in East Jerusalem

The purpose of this annex is to put a spotlight on basic education and out-of-school children in East Jerusalem. The estimated population of East Jerusalem is 264,937 with an estimated 35.5 per cent under the age of 15 and an estimated 21 per cent who are registered refugees.<sup>170</sup>

The provision of basic education in East Jerusalem is administratively fragmented. This annex describes the scope of this administrative fragmentation and its effect on the provision of basic education services with a view to highlighting the barriers this poses for 6-15-year-old children's access to inclusive and quality education in East Jerusalem.

### Administration of basic education in East Jerusalem

The administration of basic education in East Jerusalem is characterized by fragmentation and politicization. The MoEHE is not officially allowed to operate in East Jerusalem as a result of the 1993 Oslo Agreement, so it works through the Jerusalem Directorate of Education under the Jordanian Ministry of Waqf and Islamic Affairs. The Jerusalem Education Administration (JEA), a joint body of the Municipality of Jerusalem and the Israeli Ministry of Education, is the Israeli government body responsible for education services in East Jerusalem in addition to West Jerusalem.

While different administrations use different categories and terminologies, the schools providing various grades of basic education<sup>171</sup> in East Jerusalem can be grouped into five categories. These categories of schools and the approximate numbers<sup>172</sup> of children enrolled in them are as follows:

- public schools supervised by the Jerusalem Directorate of Education and financed by the MoEHE: 7,182 children are enrolled in 1st-10th grades;<sup>173</sup>
- UNRWA schools supervised and financed by UNRWA serving children who are registered refugees: 1,542 children are enrolled in 1st-10th grades;<sup>174</sup>
- private schools financed independently: An estimated 7,815 children are enrolled in 1st-10th grades. Some of these schools are also registered with the MoEHE and teach the Palestinian curriculum;<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> PCBS: Jerusalem Statistical Yearbook, 2016.

<sup>171</sup> Under Palestinian law, education is compulsory from 1st grade to the end of 10th grade (age 6 onwards). Under Israeli law, education is compulsory from one-year of kindergarten to end of 12th grade (age 5 onwards). Please note that in selected areas, the Israeli state expanded compulsory education to age 3 onwards; in East Jerusalem one neighbourhood (Beit Safafa) is among these selected areas (United Nations Children's Fund and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, Education Quality & Equity in East Jerusalem, 2012).

<sup>172</sup> The numbers of children enrolled are approximate as they have been based on a multi-step calculation using administrative data from various sources, including: PCBS's Jerusalem Statistical Yearbook (2016); an official response from the Municipality of Jerusalem, Education Authority to an information request by ACRI; and Jerusalem Institute for Policy Research's 2016 Statistical Yearbook.

<sup>173</sup> PCBS: Jerusalem Statistical Yearbook, 2016

<sup>174</sup> In the rest of West Bank and Gaza Strip, UNRWA schools provide education from 1st to 9th grades. The only exception are the schools in Shufat Camp in East Jerusalem where 10th grade is available.

<sup>175</sup> This figure was not directly available in administrative sources. Administrative data from JEA aggregates all schools providing education without receiving subsidies from the JEA, which includes Awqaf schools and UNRWA schools in addition to private schools that do not receive subsidies from JEA. Administrative data from MoEHE includes all private schools registered with MoEHE, which includes private schools receiving subsidies from JEA also. This figure was reached by subtracting the number of children enrolled in 1st-10th grades in Awqaf and UNRWA schools (as reported in PCBS's Jerusalem Statistics for 2016) from the number of children enrolled in K-9th grades in what JEA categorizes as "private schools", which includes Awqaf schools, UNRWA schools, and private schools that do not receive subsidies from JEA.

- public schools supervised and financed by the Jerusalem Education Administration (JEA), which is a joint body of the Municipality of Jerusalem and the Israeli Ministry of Education: 43,492 children are enrolled from kindergarten to 9th grades. <sup>176</sup> Most of these schools teach the Palestinian curriculum. <sup>177</sup>
- private schools financed partly by the JEA through subsidies: 43,647 children are enrolled in K-9th grades. Some of these schools are also registered with the MoEHE and teach the Palestinian curriculum.

Overall, about half of the children living in East Jerusalem attend a private school with the majority of these schools subsidized by the JEA, and about one out of ten children living in East Jerusalem attend a school supervised by the Waqf and financed by the MoEHE.

## Out-of-school children in East Jerusalem

The fragmentation of the administration of basic education in East Jerusalem and the limited information sharing between the JEA and the MoEHE presents a major barrier to effectively identifying out-of-school children and ensuring their return to school. Currently, there are no reliable data on the school-age population or enrolment.

There are two sources for data on school-age population:

- PCBS's population projections for East Jerusalem based on the 2007 population census: given that the census was conducted a decade ago and the population assumptions concerning fertility, migration and mortality used in the projections are uniform across the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the accuracy of these projections for school-age children in East Jerusalem is likely to be inaccurate.
- Israeli Ministry of Interior's (MoI) population database: its figures only include those children who are officially registered with the Israeli authorities by either having Israeli citizenship or East Jerusalem residency permits. In other words, those children who have Palestinian identity cards are excluded from the MoI's population database, which poses a challenge to the accuracy of these figures. <sup>178</sup>

There are also two sources for administrative data on school enrolment:

- The MoEHE's administrative data on school enrolment from public schools supervised by the Jerusalem Directorate of Education, UNRWA schools and private schools that are registered with the MoEHE: public schools supervised by the JEA and private schools that are not registered with the MoEHE are not included in this data. Furthermore, there are no separate data on children who have Jerusalem residency but are attending schools in a school in the West Bank outside of East Jerusalem;
- The JEA's administrative data on school enrolment from public, private, Awqaf and UNRWA schools: Due to its challenged jurisdiction, the JEA collects regular and reliable data only from those public schools that it either directly manages and those private schools that are recipients of subsidies.

<sup>176</sup> This figure includes 3204 children enrolled in kindergarten, 22,550 children enrolled in 1st-6th grades (primary), 15,824 children enrolled in 7th-9th grades (junior high), and 1914 children enrolled in special education. The source of this administrative data is an official response in 2017 from the Municipality of Jerusalem's Education Authority to an information request by ACRI.

<sup>177</sup> Recent interventions by Israeli authorities in the teaching of the Palestinian curriculum and textbooks in East Jerusalem by censoring national, historical and political elements from textbooks remain a major source of controversy.

<sup>178</sup> According to PCBS's Jerusalem Statistics, an estimated 2.7 per cent of the Palestinian population in East Jerusalem have Palestinian identity cards.

Consequently, administrative data does not allow for a reliable calculation of various critical education indicators, such as net enrolment rate, out-of-school rate, and drop-out rate.

With these limitations in mind, it is worth highlighting some of the figures presented in administrative sources:

- According to the MoEHE's education statistics yearbook, for instance, the repetition rate among children enrolled in 1st-10th grades in the schools in the Jerusalem directorate<sup>179</sup> is 0.5 per cent, which is lower than the average rate in the West Bank (1.2 per cent).<sup>180</sup>
- Also, according to the MoEHE's education statistics yearbook, the drop-out rate among children enrolled in 1st-10th grades in the Jerusalem directorate<sup>181</sup> is 0.3 per cent,<sup>182</sup> which is lower than the average rate in the West Bank (0.8 per cent).<sup>183</sup>
- According to the Municipality of Jerusalem's administrative data, about 2 per cent of 14-year-olds and 9 per cent of 15-year-old are out of school in East Jerusalem.<sup>184</sup>

Using the 2014 MICS data, some estimates concerning out-of-school children are as follows:

- Dimension One: An estimated 88.8 per cent of 5-year-old children in East Jerusalem<sup>185</sup> are attending either pre-primary or primary education (compared to 85.8 per cent of their peers living in the rest of West Bank).
- Dimension Two: An estimated 1.8 per cent of 6-9-year-old children in East Jerusalem are out of school (compared to 1 per cent of their peers living in the rest of West Bank)
- Dimension Three: An estimated 3.9 per cent of 10-15-year-old children in East Jerusalem are out of school (compared to 5.5 per cent of their peers living in the rest of West Bank)
- Dimensions Four and Five: An estimated 1.7 per cent of children enrolled in 5th-10th grades in East Jerusalem are two or more years older than the official age for the grade they are enrolled in (compared to 0.8 per cent of their peers in the rest of West Bank). The estimated repetition rate for children attending 5th-10th grades in East Jerusalem is 0.4 per cent (compared to 0.8 per cent in the rest of West Bank).

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<sup>179</sup> Please note that the administrative unit of Jerusalem Directorate as defined by MoEHE corresponds to an area larger than East Jerusalem but smaller than the Jerusalem Governorate as defined by SoP.

<sup>180</sup> Please note that this rate is calculated based on the annual comprehensive survey conducted by MoEHE for all public and private schools registered with MoEHE. Thus, it includes only some of the schools serving children in East Jerusalem.

<sup>181</sup> Please note that the administrative unit of Jerusalem Directorate as defined by MoEHE corresponds to an area larger than East Jerusalem.

<sup>182</sup> This drop-out rate is calculated based on figures reported by public schools supervised by JDE, UNRWA schools and private schools registered with JDE.

<sup>183</sup> Please note that this rate is calculated based on the annual comprehensive survey conducted by MoEHE for all public and private schools registered with MoEHE. Thus, it includes only some of the schools serving children in East Jerusalem. It should also be noted that this figure of 0.3 per cent is likely to be affected by inaccurate data collection arising from the fragmentation of the education system in East Jerusalem and the limited information sharing between the JEA and MoEHE. For instance, a child who is recorded to have dropped out from an Awqaf school might have enrolled in a JEA school yet still be recorded as a dropout due to the absence of regular, student-level information sharing. Similarly, a child who declared to be transferring from an Awqaf school to a JEA school yet instead dropped out of education would not be recorded as a dropout due to the absence of a regular, student-level information sharing between MoEHE and JEA

<sup>184</sup> The source of this administrative data is an official response in 2017 from the Municipality of Jerusalem's Education Authority to an information request by ACRI.

<sup>185</sup> MICS 2014 data for East Jerusalem estimates are the data from area titled "J1". Please note that due to the unique situation of East Jerusalem, updated household listings for sampling purposes could not be created in the 29 enumeration areas of East Jerusalem for the MICS 2014 survey; instead maps were used for sampling purposes.

## Barriers to education in East Jerusalem

In addition to the barriers discussed in the main body of the country report, the unique situation of East Jerusalem brought about by Israel's unilateral annexation in 1980 gives rise to additional barriers to Palestinian children's access to inclusive, quality education in East Jerusalem. Some of these barriers have a direct and severe effect on access to education while others have an effect on the quality of education accessed by children. The first category of barriers includes but are not limited to:

- Challenges relating to the family unification process, acquisition of permanent residency, and accessing schools: children from mixed-residency households in East Jerusalem without temporary residency status can have restricted mobility, which negatively affects their ability to access schools; <sup>186</sup>
- The challenge of accessing schools for children living outside of the Barrier: some children living on the West Bank side of the Barrier who are Jerusalem residents may face long and, at times, insecure commutes to schools located on the other side of the Barrier. <sup>187</sup>
- Children who are arrested and detained by Israeli authorities: (Palestinian children living in East Jerusalem face a relatively higher risk of being arrested and detained or being placed under house detention compared to their peers in the rest of West Bank (See Chapter Three for a more detailed discussion on the scope of this issue in the West Bank). Episodes of arrests and detentions of children from their schools combined with reports of severe beating, physical and verbal assaults, are particularly troubling. <sup>188</sup>

Though for different reasons, children attending public schools administered by the Waqf's Jerusalem Education Directorate and financed by the MoEHE, and children attending public schools administered by the JEA in East Jerusalem both receive a lower quality education compared respectively to their peers in MoEHE schools in the rest of West Bank and to their peers in JEA schools in West Jerusalem.

In the case of Awqaf schools, the reasons underlying the relatively lower quality of education at its schools in East Jerusalem emerge as a result of the various ramifications of the annexation:

- Because the MoEHE is not officially allowed to operate in East Jerusalem and it works through the Jordanian Ministry of Waqf's Jerusalem Education Directorate, its administrative capacities for planning and monitoring are limited;
- Although the MoEHE is able to provide services through the Waqf's Jerusalem Education Directorate, other ministries that the MoEHE collaborates with to prevent dropout in the rest of West Bank, such as MoSD, do not have a presence in East Jerusalem.
- The absence of MoSD services, combined with the absence of an alternative mechanism for counsellors, require Awqaf schools to coordinate with Israeli social services. Israeli social services do not meet the needs of children who are at risk of dropping out of Awqaf schools in East Jerusalem due to deep poverty, family neglect or abuse; <sup>189</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, *The Status of the Rights of Palestinian Children 2014*, April 2015; United Nations Children's Fund and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, *Education Quality & Equity in East Jerusalem*, 2012.

<sup>187</sup> United Nations Children's Fund and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, *Education Quality & Equity in East Jerusalem*, 2012.

<sup>188</sup> Ministry of Education and Higher Education, 'Education in Jerusalem: Reality, Violations, and Needs', Jerusalem Education District, 2015.

<sup>189</sup> Nuseibeh, Rawan Asali, *Political Conflict and Exclusion in Jerusalem: The Provision of Education and Social Services*, Routledge, New York, US, 2016.



- The MoEHE faces the challenge of recruiting sufficient qualified teachers both due to the lack of Israeli permits for qualified teachers in the West Bank to work in East Jerusalem and the low wages MoEHE teachers receive compared to their peers employed at JEA schools;<sup>190</sup>
- The MoEHE faces the challenge of securing adequate number of suitable classrooms in East Jerusalem;
- The Municipality of Jerusalem requires Awqaf schools to pay council tax due to the schools not being recognized as non-profit entities, and lawsuits have been filed for unpaid council taxes.<sup>191</sup>
- Due to strict limitations on construction and expansion, several demolition orders have been issued to Awqaf schools in East Jerusalem.<sup>192, 193</sup>

In the case of JEA schools, the relatively lower quality of education at its schools in East Jerusalem compared to its schools in West Jerusalem takes various forms, including:

- Disparities in the distribution of professional personnel, including inspectors and school counsellors;<sup>194</sup>
- Continuing classroom shortages in East Jerusalem despite several rulings of the Israeli Supreme Court reminding the Israeli state of its obligations.<sup>195</sup> As a result, many Palestinian children applying to JEA schools are being turned away, especially at the pre-primary level;<sup>196</sup>
- A shortage in dropout prevention programs in schools in East Jerusalem, and of supplemental classes within the traditional school system for children at risk of dropping out.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Education Development Strategic Plan EDSP 2014-2019: A Learning Nation, March 2014; United Nations Children’s Fund and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, Education Quality & Equity in East Jerusalem, 2012.

<sup>191</sup> Nuseibeh, Rawan Asali, Political Conflict and Exclusion in Jerusalem: The Provision of Education and Social Services, Routledge, New York, US, 2016.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> During the 2015-2016 school year, for example, 6 Awqaf schools are reported to have received partial or complete demolition orders (Ministry of Education and Higher Education, ‘Education in Jerusalem: Reality, Violations, and Needs’, Jerusalem Education District, 2015)

<sup>194</sup> Nuseibeh, Rawan Asali, Political Conflict and Exclusion in Jerusalem: The Provision of Education and Social Services, Routledge, New York, US, 2016; Ir Amim and the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, Annual Status Report: The Failing East Jerusalem Education System, 2013.

<sup>195</sup> Ir Amim, Between the Hammer and the Anvil: Persistent Neglect and Attempted Coercion in the East Jerusalem Education System: Annual Update, 2016; United Nations Children’s Fund and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, Education Quality & Equity in East Jerusalem, 2012.

<sup>196</sup> Nuseibeh, Rawan Asali, Political Conflict and Exclusion in Jerusalem: The Provision of Education and Social Services, Routledge, New York, US, 2016.

<sup>197</sup> Ir Amim and the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, Annual Status Report: The Failing East Jerusalem Education System, 2013.

## Tables

**Table 1: Dimensions 1, 2 and 3 estimates**

Column 1	Estimates based on MICS 2014 data	Estimates based on MoEHE administrative data (2015-2016) and population projections based on 2007 census
D1 (%) - estimated ratio of 5 year-olds who are not in pre-primary or primary education	10.3	16.9
D2 (%) - estimated ratio of 6-9 year-olds who are not in primary or secondary education	1.2	5.0
D3 (%) - estimated ratio of 10-15 year-olds who are not in primary or secondary education	4.9	10.1

**Table 2: Basic Typology of OOSC**

Categories of OOSC (%)	Primary age (Dimension 2)	Lower secondary age (Dimension 3)	Categories of OOSC (%) - Girls	Primary age (Dimension 2)	Lower secondary age (Dimension 3)
Dropped out (% of OOSC)	12.0	87.2	Dropped out (% of OOSC)	10.1	76.6
Expected to enter by age 17 (% of OOSC)	53.9	0.3	Expected to enter by age 17 (% of OOSC)	42.3	0.0
Expected to never enter (% of OOSC)	34.1	12.5	Expected to never enter (% of OOSC)	47.5	23.4
Total out-of-school children	1.2	4.9	Total out-of-school children	1.2	2.2
Categories of OOSC (population)			Categories of OOSC (population)		
Dropped out	676	27,714	Dropped out	268	5,262
Expected to enter by age 17	3,022	83	Expected to enter by age 17	1,120	0
Expected to never enter	1,913	3,977	Expected to never enter	1,258	1,608
Total out-of-school children	5,611	31,773	Total out-of-school children	2,646	6,870

**Table 3: Dimension 1: 5 years old children**

Girls and Boys	Not attending (%) school	Attending pre-pri- (%) mary school	Attending primary (%) school
Total	10.33	55.78	33.88
Residence			
Urban	10.56	55.29	34.15
Rural	12.09	56.91	30.99
Camp	5.15	58.13	36.72
Wealth index quintile			
Poorest	6.09	62.25	31.65
Second	9.75	58.49	31.76
Middle	16.82	50.48	32.71
Fourth	10.45	52.63	36.92
Richest	8.64	54.75	36.61
Region			
West Bank	13.90	52.50	33.61
East Jerusalem	11.22	56.38	32.41
Rest of West Bank	14.19	52.08	33.73
Gaza Strip	5.54	60.20	34.26
Governorate			
Jenin	10.79	61.44	27.77
Tubas	[6.36]	[69.88]	[23.76]
Tulkarm	1.53	57.55	40.91
Nablus	7.46	57.98	34.56
Qalqiliya	4.17	64.14	31.70
Salfit	[*]	[*]	[*]
Ramallah & Al-bireh	10.42	45.71	43.87
Jericho and Al aghwar	[15.9]	[43.5]	[40.6]
Jerusalem (J2)	6.36	40.78	52.86
East Jerusalem (J1)	11.22	56.38	32.41
Bethlehem	17.58	40.32	42.10
Hebron	26.22	48.33	25.45
North Gaza	8.97	62.38	28.66
Gaza	3.99	55.46	40.55
Deir el-Balah	2.66	63.52	33.82
Khan Yunis	7.13	58.34	34.53
Rafah	4.66	72.53	22.82
Mother's Educ. Level			
None or Basic	12.62	55.31	32.08
Secondary	9.43	55.35	35.22
Higher	8.04	57.01	34.95
Number of Siblings in Household			
0-1	7.49	53.30	39.21
2-4	9.20	57.22	33.57
5+	12.40	54.16	33.43
Household Composition			
Both parents present	10.36	55.54	34.11
One or both parents missing	[9.31]	[66.4]	[24.29]

Figures in [ ] are estimates based on 25-49 unweighted cases.

[\*] denotes estimates based on less than 25 unweighted cases.

**Table 4 : Dimension 2: Out-of-School Children (6-9 Year Olds), %**

	Boys	Girls	Boys & Girls
Total	1.2		1.8
Age			2.1
6	2.7	3.0	0.2
7	0.8	0.9	1.9
8	0.5	0.5	1.4
9	0.9	0.2	1.0
Residence			0.7
Urban	1.4	1.0	0.8
Rural	0.3	1.6	1.8
Camp	1.3	1.5	0.4
Wealth index quintile			1.5
Poorest	1.2	1.6	1.3
Second	0.8	2.2	0.9
Middle	1.7	1.1	2.4
Fourth	1.0	0.1	1.3
Richest	1.4	0.6	1.8
Region			
West Bank	1.3	0.9	1.3
East Jerusalem	2.3	0.9	1.2
Rest of West Bank	1.2	1.2	1.0
Gaza Strip	1.2	1.5	
Governorate			1.1
Jenin	0.6	0.0	1.1
Tubas	3.2	[0.0]	1.2
Tulkarm	3.1	1.0	
Nablus	0.0	0.5	1.2
Qalqiliya	0.0	3.6	2.0
Salfit	1.3	1.6	42.10
Ramallah & Al-Bireh	1.7	0.4	25.45
Jericho and Al Aghwar	0.0	[1.6]	28.66
Jerusalem (J2)	1.5	0.0	40.55
East Jerusalem (J1)	2.3	1.2	33.82
Bethlehem	0.0	0.6	34.53
Hebron	1.6	1.4	22.82
North Gaza	1.3	1.3	
Gaza	0.5	1.3	32.08
Deir el-Balah	3.9	1.1	35.22
Khan Yunis	0.0	2.8	34.95
Rafah	2.1	1.4	
Mother's Educ. Level			39.21
None or Basic	1.1	1.6	33.57
Secondary	1.3	1.0	33.43
Higher	1.3	0.6	
Number of Siblings in Household			34.11
0-1	0.6	1.8	[24.29]
2-4	1.1	1.2	33.57
5+	1.3	1.0	33.43
Household Composition			
Both parents present	1.3	1.0	34.11
One or both parents missing	0.0	3.6	[24.29]

Figures in [ ] are estimates based on 25-49 unweighted cases.

**Table 5 : Dimension 3: Out-of-School Children (10-15 Year Olds), %**

	Boys	Girls	Boys & Girls
Total	7.6	2.2	4.9
Age			
10	1.4	0.4	0.9
11	1.6	0.6	1.1
12	3.1	0.9	2.0
13	5.9	2.9	4.4
14	11.6	2.7	7.3
15	22.0	5.6	14.0
Residence			
Urban	7.5	2.0	4.8
Rural	8.4	3.0	5.6
Camp	7.1	2.6	4.9
Wealth index quintile			
Poorest	9.6	3.0	6.3
Second	8.4	2.2	5.4
Middle	10.1	3.1	6.7
Fourth	7.0	1.5	4.4
Richest	3.3	1.2	2.3
Region			
West Bank	8.3	2.3	5.3
East Jerusalem	5.5	2.3	3.9
Rest of West Bank	8.6	2.3	5.5
Gaza Strip	6.6	2.0	4.3
Governorate			
Jenin	9.4	2.2	5.8
Tubas	7.5	1.3	5.6
Tulkarm	8.6	0.9	4.5
Nablus	5.5	2.2	3.1
Qalqiliya	4.1	1.0	2.6
Salfit	2.9	0.0	1.5
Ramallah & Al-bireh	6.3	1.4	3.9
Jericho and Al aghwar	15.2	12.4	13.8
Jerusalem (J2)	8.0	0.8	4.4
East Jerusalem (J1)	5.5	2.3	3.9
Bethlehem	7.1	3.6	5.3
Hebron	12.0	3.4	7.9
North Gaza	7.1	3.2	5.3
Gaza	8.8	2.3	5.5
Deir el-Balah	5.4	1.3	3.4
Khan Yunis	4.5	0.7	2.6
Rafah	3.4	2.1	2.8
Mother's Educ. Level			
None or Basic	11.6	3.0	7.4
Secondary	3.7	0.8	2.3
Higher	1.4	0.1	0.8
Number of Siblings in Household			
0-1	4.7	0.0	2.6
2-4	4.4	1.0	2.9
5+	8.6	2.1	5.2
Household Composition			
Both parents present	7.2	1.8	4.6
One or both parents missing	14.2	7.8	10

**Table 6 : Repetition rate**

	1st-4th Grades			5th-10th Grades		
	Boys	Girls	Boys & Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys & Girls
Total	0.77	0.53	0.65	1.06	0.77	0.91
Residence						
Urban	0.92	0.54	0.73	0.87	0.91	0.89
Rural	0.14	0.53	0.33	0.91	0.57	0.73
Camp	0.68	0.43	0.56	2.78	0	1.41
Wealth index quin- tile						
Poorest	2.28	1.36	1.85	3.52	1.27	2.33
Second	0.78	0.22	0.5	0.54	0.42	0.48
Middle	0.14	0.34	0.24	0.71	0.74	0.72
Fourth	0	0.67	0.36	0.66	1.07	0.86
Richest	0.41	0	0.21	0.22	0.39	0.30
Region						
West Bank	0.2	0.35	0.28	0.66	1.1	0.72
East Jerusalem	0.35	0	0.18	0.36	0.57	0.37
Rest of West Bank	0.18	0.39	0.29	0.71	0.13	0.76
Gaza Strip	1.52	0.76	1.14	1.64	0	1.2
Mother's Educ. Level						
None or Basic	0.95	0.68	0.82	1.66	1.1	0.64
Secondary	0.98	0.39	0.68	0.52	0.57	0.77
Higher	0.17	0.43	0.3	0.26	0.13	0
Number of Siblings in Household						
0-1	0.55	0	0	0	1.34	0
2-4	1.22	0.49	0.52	0.78	0.57	0
5+	1.04	0.68	0.94	1.27	0.8	0.75
Household Compo- sition						
Both parents present	0.76	0.55	0.65	0.99	0.79	0.54
One or both parents missing	1.19	0	0.58	1.89	0.45	0.77

**Table 7 : Overage children**

Overage Rate 2+	1st-4th Grades			5th-10th Grades		
	Boys	Girls	Boys & Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys & Girls
Total	0.76	0.22	0.49	1.92	0.98	1.45
Residence						
Urban	0.77	0.20	0.49	1.95	1.03	1.49
Rural	0.52	0.20	0.36	0.85	0.90	0.87
Camp	1.14	0.43	0.79	3.59	0.70	2.16
Wealth index Quintile						
Poorest	1.10	0.00	0.93	4.67	1.01	2.73
Second	0.81	0.18	0.40	2.31	1.93	2.12
Middle	0.55	0.14	0.37	1.52	1.06	1.29
Fourth	0.85	0.00	0.40	1.06	0.13	0.60
Richest	0.49	0.17	0.33	0.54	0.78	0.66
Region						
West Bank	0.57	0.18	0.37	1.09	0.79	0.94
East Jerusalem	1.25	0.58	0.92	1.79	1.53	1.66
Rest of West Bank	0.49	0.13	0.31	0.99	0.70	0.84
Gaza Strip	1.01	0.28	0.65	3.17	1.26	2.20
Mother's Educ. Level						
None or Basic	1.07	0.43	0.76	2.58	1.22	1.88
Secondary	0.76	0.11	0.43	1.10	0.63	0.86
Higher	0.18	0.00	0.09	0.50	0.29	0.40
Number of Siblings in Household						
0-1	0.68	0.00	0.38	1.09	1.16	1.12
2-4	0.49	0.20	0.35	0.46	0.51	0.48
5+	1.21	0.30	0.73	2.44	1.01	1.68
Household Composition						
Both parents present	0.75	0.23	0.49	1.56	0.81	1.18
One or both parents missing	1.19	0.00	0.58	5.81	1.80	3.60

**Table 8 : Disability**

GIRLS & BOYS				
	Never Enrolled in School (%)	Enrolled but Dropped Out (%)	Completed Basic Education (%)	Currently Attending School (%)
6-15 Year Old Children without a Disability	0.4	1.4	0.4	97.9
6-15 Year Old Children with a Disability	24.3	5.3	0.3	68.8

GIRLS				
	Never Enrolled in School (%)	Enrolled but Dropped Out (%)	Completed Basic Education (%)	Currently Attending School (%)
6-15 Year Old Children without a Disability	0.4	0.7	0.3	98.7
6-15 Year Old Children with a Disability	30.1	4.9	0	65

BOYS				
	Never Enrolled in School (%)	Enrolled but Dropped Out (%)	Completed Basic Education (%)	Currently Attending School (%)
6-15 Year Old Children without a Disability	0.4	2.1	0.5	97
6-15 Year Old Children with a Disability	22.5	5.6	0.4	71.5



**Table 9 : Dimension 6: 16-17 Year Olds**

MALE	BOYS					GIRLS					BOYS & GIRLS				
	Not attending school	Attending primary school	Attending lower secondary	Attending upper secondary	Attending tertiary	Not attending school	Attending primary school	Attending lower secondary	Attending upper secondary	Attending tertiary	Not attending school	Attending primary school	Attending lower secondary	Attending upper secondary	Attending tertiary
Age	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
16	29.1	0.0	6.9	64.0	0.0	12.7	0.0	10.3	77.0	0.0	20.9	0.0	8.6	70.5	0.0
17	38.1	0.0	2.0	49.4	10.5	17.4	0.0	1.9	61.7	19.0	28.2	0.0	1.9	55.3	14.6
Residence															
Urban	32.9	0.0	4.6	56.3	6.2	15.3	0.0	5.9	69.3	9.5	24.1	0.0	5.3	62.8	7.8
Rural	35.2	0.0	3.8	57.1	3.9	12.9	0.0	8.0	68.7	10.4	25.0	0.0	5.7	62.4	6.9
Camp	37.4	0.0	3.2	56.8	2.7	17.4	0.0	4.5	71.5	6.6	27.8	0.0	3.8	63.8	4.6
Wealth Index															
Poorest	44.8	0.0	3.9	46.1	5.3	24.3	0.0	6.3	62.1	7.4	33.8	0.0	5.2	54.6	6.4
Second	29.8	0.0	4.4	60.6	5.2	16.8	0.0	4.8	71.8	6.7	23.5	0.0	4.6	66.0	5.9
Middle	42.6	0.0	5.6	47.6	4.2	18.6	0.0	8.8	63.6	9.1	31.5	0.0	7.1	55.0	6.5
Fourth	33.4	0.0	4.0	59.1	3.6	10.9	0.0	5.9	73.8	9.4	22.5	0.0	4.9	66.2	6.4
Richest	21.6	0.0	3.9	66.0	8.6	6.1	0.0	5.3	74.6	14.1	13.9	0.0	4.6	70.2	11.3
Region															
West Bank	35.6	0.0	4.7	55.1	4.6	13.3	0.0	7.3	68.7	10.7	25.0	0.0	5.9	61.6	7.5
East Jerusalem	34.8	0.0	11.5	51.3	2.4	20.5	0.0	9.4	66.1	4.0	28.1	0.0	10.5	58.2	3.2
Rest of West Bank	35.7	0.0	3.9	55.5	4.8	12.6	0.0	7.0	69.0	11.4	24.7	0.0	5.4	62.0	7.9
Gaza Strip	30.8	0.0	3.8	58.6	6.8	17.4	0.0	4.6	70.3	7.7	23.9	0.0	4.2	64.6	7.3
Mother's Educ. Level															
None or Basic	40.0	0.0	7.1	52.9	0.0	12.9	0.0	11.6	75.2	0.3	27.2	0.0	9.2	63.4	0.2
Secondary	17.8	0.0	4.1	77.8	0.3	3.1	0.0	6.4	90.3	0.3	10.9	0.0	5.2	83.6	0.3
Higher	9.8	0.0	3.7	85.9	0.6	0.0	0.0	1.5	98.0	0.6	4.3	0.0	2.4	92.7	0.6
Number of Siblings in Household															
0-1	[*]	[*]	[*]	[*]	[*]	[*]	[*]	[*]	[*]	[*]	[*]	[*]	[*]	[*]	[*]
2-4	25.0	0.0	3.6	71.4	0.0	6.4	0.0	7.9	85.7	0.0	17.2	0.0	5.4	77.4	0.0
5+	32.3	0.0	6.9	60.6	0.2	8.0	0.0	7.7	83.8	0.5	19.6	0.0	7.3	72.7	0.3
Household Composition															
Both parents present	28.3	0.0	5.3	66.3	0.1	7.7	0.0	7.7	84.2	0.4	18.3	0.0	6.5	75.0	0.2
One or both parents missing	43.5	0.0	10.8	45.0	0.8	40.6	0.0	9.7	49.7	0.0	41.8	0.0	10.2	47.7	0.3
Total	33.8	0.0	4.4	56.5	5.4	15.1	0.0	6.1	69.4	9.4	24.6	0.0	5.2	62.8	7.4

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