



“The Reality of Social Protection in the Gaza Strip”

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Social protection systems contribute to assisting individuals, families, and the neediest groups in facing risks, crises, and disasters. They also contribute to enabling access to job opportunities, improving income and productivity, investing in the health and education of their children, and protecting the elderly and those who are unable to work. Social protection programs represent the core of the process of enhancing the human capital of the neediest groups, enabling people to enjoy a good standard of living and health, continue their education, and seek opportunities that would lift them and their families out of poverty¹.

Throughout history, social protection was limited to the developed world as a tool to compensate for the temporary loss of income due to crises and was not activated in developing countries that suffer from poverty and fragility. Overtime everyone became involved with the Millennium Development Goals and the sustainable development program that were adopted by the international community under the auspices of the United Nations in 2000-2015, as a mechanism to combat poverty and fragility, which prompted many developing countries to work in stages to establish a social safety net to keep pace with their development model.

¹ World Bank Website Sunday 21/8/2022, <https://www.albankaldawli.org/ar/topic/socialprotection/overview>

Through the efforts conducted the countries were able to gradually establish a system of protection, targeting many groups and social segments within several assistance programs. It is worth mentioning that such a system is still limited, as the statistics of the International Labor Organization in its report on social protection indicated that 47% of the world's population is currently covered by one of the social benefits and protection programs, while 53% do not receive it². On the Palestinian society level, no more than 50% of the population enjoys any type of security³ or social protection, and the ultimate that is available to them is health insurance that covers 55% of the community and it is free for 27% of the population⁴

Social protection has been an essential and main entry point for enhancing the survival, continuity, and resilience of the Palestinian people, especially the poor, workers, and the weak, fragile and marginalized groups. The Palestinian people were displaced and the occupation has been engaged in various types of aggression, wars, and sieges the matter that left behind families of martyrs and injured, widows, poverty, unemployment... and other economic and social problems, in addition to the fragility of the Palestinian private sector, low income, and deepening poverty. Not to forget the right guaranteed by international laws and regulations that lead to the necessity of establishing social protection programs and institutions, to protect the citizen from risks and their repercussions, assisting him to meet the requirements of life for himself and his family, and supporting him by providing insurances to enhance his steadfastness.

In light of the siege and the rapid population increase in the Gaza governorates, it increased from (0.9 million people in 1997 to 2.2 million people currently), and it is expected, according to global population projections to reach 2.6 million people in 2030, and this represents a major disaster if conditions are not improved. According to studies, the citizen will not receive the minimum basic services, which may deepen the humanitarian crisis and the state of poverty and destitution⁵. This comes in the context of the role of the Palestinian government, social partners and civil organizations in enforcing the obligations and benefits of the social contract in order to alleviate the social and economic gap, which has widened after the Covid 19 pandemic and brought a large segment below the poverty and unemployment line, and this would be achieved by working on social protection within **three basic components, the first component:** On re-institutionalizing the social safety net as it includes various non-contributory social support program, initiatives, and assistance, **the second component:** Social security and risk insurance relay on social insurance systems based on contributions and payment from the beneficiaries while ensuring the representation of the minimum level of social protection as stipulated in ILO Recommendation No. 202, in addition to providing a harmonized system of social protection that achieves protection

² International Labour Organization World Social Protection Report 2020-2022, Social Protection at a Crossroad (Executive Summary)2021

³ Mosaeif Jamil Options for Social Security and Social Protection Systems in Palestine, General Review, Institute for Economic Policy Palestine- MAS, Ramallah 2016.

⁴ The Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS) The Consultative Forum on Comprehensive Social Protection in Palestine, Summary of the Policy Paper "Corona Pandemic for the Development of the Social Protection Sector in Palestine" Ramallah, April 2021 Page 4 file:///C:/Users/JIT/Downloads/improve-social-protection-5-1643553316-pdf.pdf

⁵ Mamoun Besiso: a study on the relationship between population growth in the Gaza Strip and the challenges of different sectors and possible solutions, Palestinian NGOs Network, Gaza, P.2, 2022.

and justice for vulnerable social groups on the basis of justice, equity, continuity, clarity, and transparency, in order to achieve just and comprehensive development, and **the third component:** Linked to economic empowerment and interventions in the labor market to create new job opportunities within fair and decent wages.

Reaching this goal and examining the reality of social protection in the governorates of Gaza, this paper will attempt to answer some questions, including: What is the reality of social protection in the governorates of Gaza? What is social protection, its concept, and types? What are the challenges, obstacles, and problems in applying social protection methods? What is the proposed scenario for intervention to enhance social protection, especially providing a vision for intervention from the civil society organizations' perspective? The paper aims to identify the reality of social protection in Palestine, issues of interest, goals, values, procedures, targets, and the role of partners in the community during the period from (1987 - 2022) in light of population growth, and to review the current system of social protection (if any) and assessing its effectiveness, efficiency and ability to intervene to help social groups suffering from poverty and fragility, and submitting proposals to enhance the work of the protection system, expand coverage and improve the quality of performance, and develop a road map to enhance the contributions of civil organizations to activate and develop social protection systems at the level of the governorates of Gaza.

The Concept of Social Protection:

Social protection policies have been developed since the mid-nineties of the last century, and have entered a new stage in presenting their programs as a means of sustainable development considering it a human right that guarantees every person the right to a standard of living sufficient to ensure the health and well-being of himself and his family, especially in terms of food, clothing, housing, and medical care, necessary social services⁶ and obtaining income and care insurance for the individual and his family by providing the necessary aid to the person who is unable to secure the requirements of life for reasons beyond his control. Protection systems also contribute to enhancing a sense of security, civil and social peace, and peace of mind among social capital, and give hope for the future.

Social protection is considered a long-term investment, as it deals with the system of rights that must be provided to the individual in his life stages⁷ and it was known as a set of policies and programs that aim to reduce the problems of poverty and vulnerability that a person may encounter in his life⁸ in a manner that contributes to reducing individuals' exposure to risks and enhancing their ability to protect themselves from the possibility of losing income.

⁶ United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 25 https://www.un.org/ar/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights?gclid=CjwKCAjwmJeYBhAwEiwAXlgOAW6hVhgt-vzkWzYOx-yk6WWDa70s-Pq-zUQ3n2ra7tjz1sZ1MnDs1BoCET8QA-vD_BwE

⁷ The Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS) Consultative Forum, Previous reference.

⁸ International Labour Organization Social Protection Website <https://www.ilo.org/100/ar/story/protection/>

It is also known as the sum of mechanisms that help individuals to face the effects of risks, including interventions and programs aimed at reducing poverty and vulnerability, which contribute to enhancing the efficiency of markets and fields work, reduces people's exposure to risks, enhances their ability to manage economic and social risks, and secure income in cases of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other circumstances beyond their control that make them lose them a decent livelihood. Social protection includes the most common types and components in addition to health insurance and education, **the following three components:**

- Social assistance that is provided in cash or in kind to vulnerable individuals and families who are unable to provide means of support, such as single mothers, homeless people, people with physical or mental disabilities...etc. Among its models is the social safety net provided by the Ministry of Social Development, UNRWA, and many civil organizations, programs, and social initiatives...etc.
- Social insurance that contributes to mitigating risks associated with unemployment, sickness, disability, work-related injuries, and old age, such as Retirement Insurance, maternity insurance, work injury insurance, sickness and death insurance, unemployment insurance...etc. It depends on contributions and assessments, and its model is social security.
- Interventions in the labor market and economic empowerment, including policies and programs aimed at promoting employment, the effective operation of labor markets, the protection of workers and social capital, and the model of economic empowerment institutions, the employment fund, women's empowerment programs, and other institutions with objectives.

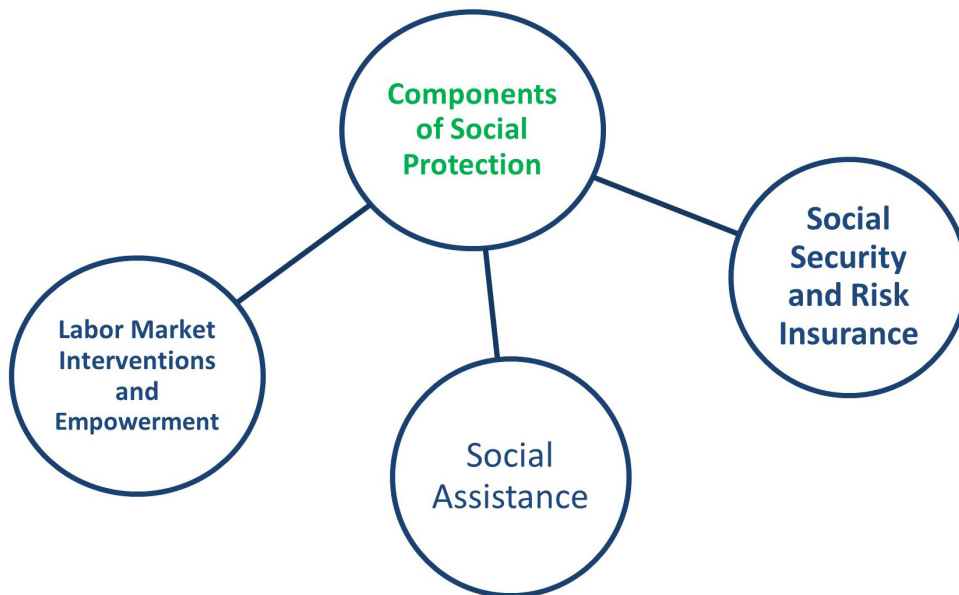


Diagram of the Components of Social Protection in Palestine.

The Reality of Social Protection in Palestine

The reality of social protection in Palestine was a peculiarity that differs from many societies because it is linked to conditions related to occupation, displacement, dispersal, and successive crises, and the consequent poverty, need unemployment, and displacement. Such reality has established popular solidarity and symbiosis and has laid a strong foundation for having institutions that contribute to strengthening resilience and providing assistance to the needy in facing the conditions in occupied Palestine and the diaspora. We will explain the historical development of social protection, especially in the Gaza Strip.

First: Social Protection in Gaza Governorates (1994-1948):

The features of social protection began to be determined within its general concept with the establishment of the International Relief Agency “UNRWA”, which coincided with the forced displacement in 1948. Despite the presence of some social institutions that contributed to assisting citizens in Palestine since the twenties of the last century, the beginning of the provision of social protection services in the Palestinian territories and the regional environment was from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees, which contributed to providing aid, relief, protection, and employment to Palestinian refugees who were forced to leave their homes. Its gradual interventions in the provision of subsistence and housing include free basic education, health care, nutrition and employment, women’s program centres, youth sports centres, and care centres for people with disabilities and rehabilitation. These services were directed at refugees only, while social protection programs were provided to citizens in the Gaza Strip under the control of the Egyptian Administration within the Department of Social Affairs from 1950-1967, and its services included food aid provided by CARE International and the Al-Rabie Foundation for Juvenile Care.

After the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip the attempts to provide social protection continued and were embodied in the restructuring of the Department of Social Affairs within the framework of its legal responsibility over the occupied territories after 1967. The occupation employed several researchers, including re-evaluating previous files for reasons that serve its policies, including refugees within its programs, applying the case study system, issuing instructions for the work system, and providing aid to several poor families and widows according to the social research approach. It included social security, financial and in-kind aid, rehabilitation services, vocational training programs for school dropouts, health insurance for beneficiaries, and others, all of which do not reach the minimum level of subsidy for the helpless due to the occupation and its policies⁹.

The Palestine Liberation Organization had also a role in establishing the Foundation for the Care of the Families of Martyrs and the Wounded in 1969 to provide care to the families of the martyrs and the wounded inside and outside the country, by disbursing monthly allowances by the Foundation’s financial system, and providing a

⁹ Salah Haj Ahmed: Interview with the retired Director of Social Affairs on Wednesday, 25/8/ 2022 at 11 am.

decent standard of living¹⁰ Some civil society organizations continued to provide daily needs outside the occupation system until it reached its climax in the 1987 Intifada, and it included a wide spectrum of national and political action, including federations, trade unions, women's unions, professional unions, chambers of commerce, agricultural unions, production cooperatives, civil organizations...etc.

Second: Social protection under the Palestinian National Authority:

Since the advent of the National Authority, in addition to what was provided by the UNRWA, civil organizations, unions, and non-governmental organizations, the Authority, represented by the government, has initiated mechanisms to enhance social protection by establishing a specialized ministry such as the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Labor and the Ministry of Women, and it integrates the institutions of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (martyrs, wounded, and prisoners that developed into a ministry and a body at a later time), and it created social protection laws and new institutions for protection, which have not been completed until this moment, including the Law on the Protection of the Family and the Elderly, the Welfare and Childhood Law, and the people with Disability..., and the Social Security Law and its institution, which has gone through multiple stages that we will discuss later.

Over the course of successive governments, Palestinian governmental and non-governmental institutions worked within their strategic plans and directions to enhance social protection by implementing programs in their entirety depending on their funding of foreign aid for the social protection of citizens, which is considered consumeristic in its dimension, but is productive in the long and medium term for its investment in human capital that constitutes a basic input of economic development¹¹ The social protection programs are provided within **the following three components:**

1. Social Assistance

Social assistance is provided within social safety nets as entitlements and non-contributory benefits and is designed to provide regular and targeted support to the poor and vulnerable and their families, including cash assistance and food aid, care and rehabilitation services for people with disabilities and the elderly, child care and rehabilitation, services for the family and women, free medical and health care, vocational training, and rehabilitation, care for detainees, families of martyrs...etc. They are provided within various programs. The Ministry of Social Development, in cooperation with main donors and relevant community institutions, supervises the implementation of these interventions and programs.

¹⁰ Consumer Protection Society A summery about Social Protection, Website !Website, <http://www.pcp.ps/article/1035>

¹¹ Previous Reference

Statistics from the Ministry of Social Development during the year 2021 indicated that the number of beneficiaries reached 3,281,515 individuals, and the value of the aid for the same year was estimated at 174,424,752 US dollars. The figures indicated that the individual/family can benefit from more than one intervention¹², while the number of Palestinian refugees benefiting from the International Relief Agency “UNRWA” food aid in the Gaza Strip reached 1,130,000 people, and cash assistance is provided to about 13,000 families from the most vulnerable families, and the follow-up to rebuild 715 homes¹³. It is noticeable that these interventions did not contribute to reducing the poverty rate and societal fragility, which is getting worse year after year, with the absence of sustainable solutions to lift people out of the distress of poverty, destitution, and deprivation, especially vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities, orphans, caring for the elderly, widows, abused women...etc.

2. Social Security and Risk Insurance:

As for social protection interventions within the social insurance system, contributions, and assessed contributions, the statistics indicate that only 23% of workers have a guarantee through the general retirement system, and public sector employees (civil- and military) benefit from it, along with the beneficiaries, part of the private sector employees who joined the Retirement Authority by the law, and the percentage of socially insured among workers rises to reach 77% who do not have social security and the number is estimated¹⁴ (with more than one million users). It is worth mentioning that there are many initiatives to draft a social security law that serves workers and the private sector, however, it is still suspended despite passing through several stages, starting with the passing of the social security law in 2003, which was frozen based on a study by the World Bank by a decree of the late President Abu Ammar, then issuing Law No. 6 of 2016 that was frozen due to the union movement by a decree of President Mahmoud Abbas “Abu Mazen”. A dialogue was opened about the Law, and it was amended by Law No. 19 of 2016, and as a result, the Board of Directors of the Social Security Corporation was formed, which continued to work within the preparatory and non-binding period of 24 months for the application of the Law, which was followed by a new movement against social security, after which a decision was issued by the President to freeze it and open a dialogue about it, which has not been completed until now.

The social security system is one of the social protection systems that target the private sector, and it is complementary to the social protection system with the public sector, and it is possible that about 903,00 male and female workers working in the local market¹⁵ and the private sector to benefit from it, in addition to processing insurance and retirement funds for workers within the Green Line as (Israel) will transfer all workers' entitlements if an independent Palestinian social security institution is established in accordance with the agreements signed with the National Authority.

¹² Mamoun Besiso: Previous Reference

¹³ Anatolia: Press release Thomas White, Director of UNRWA affairs in Gaza, a news website <https://www.aa.com.tr/ar>

¹⁴ The Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS) Consultative Forum, Previous reference.

¹⁵ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics: The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics announces the main results of the Labor Force Survey, for the second quarter cycle (April- June, 2022) <https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/postar.aspx?lang=ar&ItemID=4293>

The Social Security Corporation will also provide shareholders with insurance compensation from risks gradually, starting with the application of four risk insurances, which are: Insurance for old age, disability, natural death, work injuries, death, maternity, and voluntary retirement, and this gradation is in line with International Labor Recommendation No. 202 of the International Labor Organization, which sets out the guidelines that should be taken into account when setting the minimum levels for social protection, and which guarantee protection aimed at eliminating poverty, vulnerability, and social exclusion. It is worth mentioning that attempts to issue and implement the Social Security Law did not achieve tangible successes, and did not contribute to laying an effective base for protecting workers, securing them from risks, and enhancing their stability and job security within a fair system based on equity and justice and offering sustainable solutions to change the reality of workers for the better in the world of labor.

3. Labor market Interventions and Empowerment

These interventions come within the framework of integration to strengthen labor markets and achieve development by implementing a set of economic empowerment programs that have a developmental nature more than relief for vulnerable and fragile groups, such as lending programs and small enterprise projects, vocational and technical training, guidance and provision of services to develop small enterprise projects, in addition to temporary employment services and productive cooperatives, to strengthen social capital and empower it economically, taking into account the gender dimension, among its models are the Economic Empowerment Foundation, the Palestinian Employment Fund, and a group of national funds and institutions.

In general, it must be noted that the services provided by all actors in the social protection sector do not amount to the size of the problem, and to the minimum standards and quality of services from the perspective of regional and international standards, to contribute to combating poverty and ensuring social protection for citizens. All these interventions are insufficient to meet the basic needs to combat poverty and provide community protection, the gap is widening year after year due to the reduction of funding and the increase in poverty rates and societal fragility. Such matter calls for re-examining the reality of social protection in the Gaza Strip and identifying the challenges, difficulties, and problems to develop their means, upgrade programs, and develop services to enhance the resilience of the citizen and provide him with assistance based on solidarity, justice, equity and continuity to ensure the provision of decent livelihoods for him and his family.

Indicators of Poverty and Unemployment in Gaza Governorates:

The Palestinian society in general, and the governorates of Gaza in particular, have suffered from low standards of living and deterioration of livelihoods. Statistics indicate that nearly a third of the Palestinian society suffers from poverty at a rate of 29.2%, (53%) in the Gaza Strip, which is more than four times the rate prevailing in the West Bank, where the percentage reached 13.9%¹⁶. The unemployment rate in Palestine was 24%, 14% in the West Bank, and 44% in the Gaza Strip¹⁷. Unemployment among females participating in the labor force was 43%, compared to 22% among males participating in the labor force¹⁸. Young people aged 15-29 years are the most vulnerable to unemployment, reaching 50%, 41% in the West Bank, compared to 64% in the Gaza Strip, and was the highest among females than among males, reaching 66% for females compared to 34% for males¹⁹. The unemployment rate among young graduates with an intermediate diploma or higher reached 48%, with 29% in the West Bank compared to 72% in the Gaza Strip²⁰.

The humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip continues to deteriorate at an alarming rate, following the collapse of all productive sectors, basic social services, and infrastructure, and the almost halting of services of the Ministry of Social Development for more than 14 months, as 64.4% suffer from food insecurity²¹, about 85% of the population of the Gaza Strip needs assistance, which calls for a trend to strengthen the social protection system and develop policies and legislation to upgrade the active and operating institutions in the social protection sector, to confront and address the problems resulting from poverty and unemployment and to develop services provided to the poor, marginalized, vulnerable and fragile groups, workers and low-income groups.

Problems, Obstacles, and Challenges for Social Protection in Palestine:

Social protection has been a priority in light of the Palestinian reality, and the successive problems and crises faced throughout history, within the phase of liberation and construction experienced by our people, which imposes the importance of strengthening the home front and the resilience of the citizen, providing means of social protection, analyzing problems and obstacles, and facing challenges at the level of the components of social protection. They are as follows:

¹⁶ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics: 2020 Multidimensional Poverty in Palestine, 2017- Key Findings. Ramallah-Palestine

¹⁷ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics: The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics announces the main results of the Labor Force Survey, for the second quarter cycle (April- June, 2022) <https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/postar.aspx?lang=ar&ItemID=4293>

¹⁸ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics Labor Force Database 2021, 2022, Ramallah- Palestine

¹⁹ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics The situation of young people in Palestinian society On the occasion of International Youth Day, 08/12/2022, <https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/postar.aspx?tabID=512&lang=ar&ItemID=4295&mid=3915&wversion=Staging>

²⁰ Previous Reference

²¹ Food Development Program: Saving lives is life, Palestine, Website <https://ar.wfp.org/countries/palestine>

A. Obstacles and Problems Regarding Social Assistance:

The first component of social protection relies on non-contributory programs and assistance, which are given to people in need of assistance to assist them to provide the necessities of life for themselves and their families via governmental and non-governmental institutions. These programs face many obstacles and challenges in achieving their goals, **including:**

- The high numbers of beneficiaries and affected groups as a result of poverty, unemployment, siege, aggression, repeated wars, and the resulting poverty, unemployment, martyrs and disabilities, and the demolition of homes. They all need care and intervention to obtain aid and subsidies for steadfastness and advancement to participate in social work and national building.
- Dispersion of programs and assistance in the social protection system, as they are not organized within a unified vision and homogeneous goals, and are not widely provided to the affected and needy groups. They are often isolated, fragmented, unsustainable, or coordinated programs within a plan that depends on updated and accurate data, which contributes to the existence of coverage gaps and errors related to the exclusion of certain persons entitled to protection from vulnerable persons and groups that must be protected against social and economic risks.
- Absence of unified plans, lack of coordination and harmony, and integrated work between all institutions of social protection and intervention that provide aid and subsidies to beneficiaries in balance, justice, and equality.
- Lack of financial resources, weak funding, and the dependence of most programs and aid on external funding put institutions under pressure to respond, and submit to donors in determining the nature of the intervention and social protection programs, which are sometimes consumptive, draining and wasting money, and do not serve the development goals of strengthening social capital in facing the demands of life.
- Weakness in the functional structure and structures in institutions active in the social protection field, and a shortage of cadres, professional competencies, and a specialized process capable of providing vision and interventions with a developmental dimension.
- Weakness in the application of legislation and laws related to social protection interventions in the field. There is a gap between the laws and the application process, which is reflected in social protection interventions and the groups benefiting from them.
- The political division and political and partisan interventions that govern many of the programs offered to beneficiaries and affected people in need of intervention.
- Irregularity in aid and subsidy programs, which negatively affects the beneficiary groups, the matter that puts them under difficult life pressures, the latest of which is the suffering of the beneficiary families from social affairs aid as they have not received their financial allocations for 14 months.

B. Obstacles and Challenges around Social Security:

The second component of social protection depends on criteria based on equity and sustainability as a system of insurance against risks at work and is based on the foundations of paying contributions and assessed contributions from beneficiaries and is represented by social security in which benefits are provided to beneficiaries by the law. The previous experience of its issuance and attempts to apply it, faced many problems, obstacles, and challenges that formed a labor union, and institutional movement that led to the suspension of the law and the opening of a new dialogue about it. **The most prominent of these problems and challenges are:**

- The law conflicted with the interests of some influential people in decision-making who fought and incited against the application of the mandatory law by questioning the credibility of the insurance law and its institution, and the custodian of insurance funds.
- The lack of trust between the people and the government and the lack of conviction as a guarantor and money keeper, especially after the experience of insurance and pensions for the public sector, whose funds are considered indebted to the government.
- The law in its submitted version did not address unemployment insurance.
- Delays in issuing the interpretative regulations and rules attached to the law, which should have been available before applying the law.
- Weak awareness among workers about the importance of social security in providing social protection and insurance against risks.
- Weak media and awareness role to explain the importance of the law to workers and beneficiary groups and its role in enhancing protection from risks for shareholders, and enhancing the values of symbiosis and solidarity among them.
- The multiplicity of union references to labor parties and employers, which in turn has caused an increase in divisions in opinions about social security and the importance of working with it for the public interest and workers in its social, developmental, and evolutionary dimensions.
- Fears of the counter-movement over the future of the government delay the opening of a serious dialogue between partners on social security.

C. Labor Market Interventions and Empowerment

The third component of social protection depends on programs and policies to support labor markets and economic empowerment to enhance human capital, especially in light of what the local labor market suffers and faces from weakness and lack of possibilities to create new job opportunities, which may contribute to alleviating unemployment rates and poverty, as it faces many problems and obstacles, **including:**

- Continuation of the siege and control of resources, sources, and crossings.
- Weak economic empowerment programs targeting youth, women, and fragile and vulnerable groups, and weak funding for establishing small and micro enterprises or supporting successful initiatives.
- Absence of policies and legislation to attract investors, develop the labor market, and support the local product.
- There is a gap between the outputs of vocational education and training and the needs of the labor market.
- Many industrial, agricultural, and production institutions were destroyed and damaged during wars and aggression, and they have not been compensated until now.
- The absence of integrated policies for employment, the lack and limitation of operational programs, especially temporary ones, funded by external parties, and their failure to develop them to achieve sustainability in work through an integrated plan among the actors in the labor market.
- The absence of accurate sources of data and information about the labor market and workers.
- Weak coordination between the parties in the labor market and the absence of serious social dialogue aimed at confronting crises, achieving development, and protecting workers.
- The absence of serious targeting in creating job opportunities and opening new labor markets for workers from the most affected areas, especially the governorates of Gaza, and their exclusion from a large number of operational programs due to the political division.

The Proposed Scenario for the Development of Social Protection Policies:

Social protection, with its three components, constitutes one of the most essential policies and tools necessary to confront the economic and social crises afflicting the Palestinian society, through which it is possible to intervene to protect society and its groups and segments in the face of risks and enhance their steadfastness to achieve development, stability, and social security. Therefore, it is necessary to work within an integrated plan based on accurate and real data, information and statistics for the labor market that are consistent with reality to transform challenges into opportunities, and benefit from the surrounding international experiences, within participatory work mechanisms and real cooperation between all effective institutions related to social protection, especially social partners from government representatives, unions, workers and employer representatives, and representatives of civil organizations in the community, with the aim of introducing a new approach to social protection and work policies, participating in taking risks for diversity in the work environment, and providing a fair approach to protection and social security for workers that is compatible with the variables, diversity and increasing developments in the world of labor, and the work of an initiative or campaign to apply the minimum level of social protection, according to the proposed scenario for intervention through three strategies that simulate the three components of social protection, which are:

First Strategy: Develop policies, legislation, and laws that regulate non-contributory assistance to the needy, develop the hierarchical structure, build the capacities of effective institutions in the field, enhance coordination among them, and establish a unified database.

Second Strategy: Launching the Social Security Law, and practically starting to apply it after studying all aspects of the recent failure to launch the law, the positions of all parties and pressure forces, and opening a serious dialogue about the controversial legal provisions for social security in dispute.

Third Strategy: Serious work on developing the labor market and promoting the economic empowerment of initiatives, small enterprises projects, pioneering and creative ideas, providing financial support and soft lending programs, within real facilities for investment, and sponsoring small enterprises projects until achieving development success.

General Recommendations

- Re-drafting of the national strategy for social protection based on integration with the social development process and its human dimension, to provide life opportunities for citizens of vulnerable and targeted groups at all levels, and to work to enhance their capabilities, develop their skills and upgrade their capabilities to expand their options for a better life.
- Developing an integrated vision from all actors in the field of social protection within a strategy consistent with the sustainable development goals to reduce risks and take advantage of opportunities available at the local, regional, or global levels to develop methodology and policies for protection and social security.
- Enhancing partnership and cooperation between civil and trade union institutions, governmental agencies, and the private sector on the one hand, and international organizations and bodies, on the one hand, to achieve effective interventions that contribute to raising levels of social protection from safety networks and social security to prevent social and economic risks.
- Working on applying financial inclusion within the national social protection policies to enable target groups to access products that meet their needs at reasonable prices, useful financial services, credit facilities, etc., in an orderly and sustainable manner. Financial inclusion is an enabling factor for seven of the seventeen sustainable development goals. It is a key enabler of eradicating extreme poverty and promoting shared prosperity.
- Providing social protection interventions based on resources from the national economy to enhance sustainability and commitment to protecting the weak, fragile, and affected groups that are unable to meet the requirements of life to achieve social justice, solidarity, and social solidarity.
- The need for action by the government and social partners, and civil society organizations and institutions at all levels on the importance of social protection and considering it a top priority in intervention and adopting the scientific methodology in planning, implementation, and evaluation.

- Working on adopting more comprehensive social policies that ensure the sustainability of providing social and economic services, health care, and education to the affected and targeted groups of social protection programs.
- Working on designing rehabilitation, training, and education systems that can provide the beneficiaries of social protection programs with the skills and capabilities necessary to deal with reality and developments, especially the new world order, technology, digitization, and the world of work and its variables.
- Reconsidering the social policies followed by adopting an approach that combines the mechanisms of social development and the elimination of the economic and social problems of citizens, and the development of effective mechanisms and policies for social protection and lifting people out of poverty, destitution, and exposure.
- Developing research related to social protection, especially the phenomena of unemployment, poverty, disability, and their causes and other social problems to provide contributions, ideas, and successful scientific proposals for their treatment, and effective intervention in confronting them.
- Providing an accurate and up-to-date database that allows the evaluation of social policies and social protection programs for all groups and beneficiaries, and monitoring of changes and obstacles they face, to plan and take sound decisions.
- Promoting legislation that supports vulnerable and marginalized groups as a law: For prisoners, martyrs, the elderly, and family care. etc., in the context of organizing social protection for all groups within regulated legislation and laws.
- To work on promoting educational policies aim at consolidating the values of social solidarity and symbiosis among members of society, especially young people, and implementing care and rehabilitation programs for them to enable them to participate positively in promoting social protection.
- To work on activating and strengthening all forms of solidarity and traditional social cohesion at the family and local community levels to upgrade their capabilities and invest their resources to raise their contribution in achieving social protection for beneficiaries, including finding a balance between the social needs of the elderly and the requirements for restructuring imposed on the government, and the financial pressures it faces.
- The need to improve and develop effective, organized, and programmed forms of solidarity for social protection and to involve all civil society bodies and institutions in formulating social and economic policies to protect and advance citizens.
- To work on developing forms of coordination and networking between civil organizations and civil bodies, and combine their efforts and capabilities to activate their role in social protection, sustainable development processes, and the fight against poverty and unemployment.
- To work on developing laws and regulations that regulate the work of civil organizations, and reduce restrictions imposed on their work in a way that enhances their participation in the decision-making process, and in a manner that enhances the standards and principles of good governance, accountability and transparency.

Suggestions and a vision to develop the role of civil organizations in promoting social protection:

Civil organizations and civil society organizations, in general, represent an essential element in the provision of social protection networks at the level of Palestine, especially in the governorates of Gaza, and their role is growing and diversifying in terms of programs, contributions, and means of social assistance they provide to individuals and families in need in a manner that supports the achievement of sustainable social and economic development. The roles and effectiveness of such organizations vary in their role, function, and social and development goals, according to the conditions of their establishment.

The civil organizations and the social partners play a role in bearing the burdens and conditions that the Palestinian society is going through, especially in the Gaza Strip, which is burdened to a large extent by many problems, including division, population increase, high rates of poverty and unemployment, and the low economic and social level of the population, which put them before a joint responsibility as they play a key role in providing many aspects of care, carrying out development programs in the community, and searching for effective mechanisms to intervene in the treatment of problems and challenges. This can be achieved through a set of interventions and recommendations that can be worked on through:

- To work with social partners to establish a database and information bank about citizens within fair standards and a scientific methodology, and a case study for each person to obtain accurate information and data. This establishes a computerized system and network in which all effective institutions in the field of social protection participate, to find ways to coordinate work and exchange information and data.
- To put pressure and influence to develop the legislation, policies, and programs for social protection, and to present proposals and sustainable solutions to lift people out of poverty and unemployment.
- To put pressure to allocate part of the government's general budget to support social protection programs, especially for fragile and vulnerable groups, to lift them out of poverty and destitution, and try to integrate them into society and empower them economically.
- To train the cadre, and support capacity-building of institutions active in social work within an integrated vision of social protection, which contributes to raising and developing the professional and functional skills of cadres.
- To work on forming a national body for social protection, especially the one related to aid and relief programs among all partners, to supervise policy-making, unify, coordinate and organize work to promote justice among all beneficiaries of the targeted and affected groups.
- To work on developing means of communication processes by introducing technological development and digitization in the organization and implementation of social protection programs.
- To work on strengthening the professional and union role of professionals working in the field of social work and social protection and raise their professional efficiency through training, skills development, follow-up, and regulation of professional ethics and practice by the law.

- To work on creating financial portfolios with a socio-economic dimension, to support small and micro-enterprises established by weak and vulnerable groups within economic empowerment plans, and to work on strengthening and sponsoring them within a program of support and grants or the provision of soft loans to them.
- To work on enhancing awareness and societal culture towards social security for workers and its importance in providing social protection from risks.
- To participate in promoting the approach to the issue and implement the Social Security Law and to put pressure and influence to open a dialogue about security and access treatment for the contentious materials for the actual direct application of the law, and to establish a security institution.
- To assist in conducting a scientific study on social security, application mechanisms, and appropriate work methodologies for the Palestinian society, especially in light of the surrounding changes and circumstances.
- To form a civil union alliance to support the establishment of a social security institution within the standards of good governance and management.
- To network and communicate with all effective institutions in social protection to coordinate work, integrate roles, and merge within the national strategy to combat poverty and destitution to lift people out of poverty, destitution, and vulnerability.
- To search for organized funding to assist institutions in carrying out their role and enabling them to play an effective role in developing social protection plans, especially the Social Security Law, as it is among contributions in which production parties participate, workers and employers, and relies on sources from participants to launch an institution with a strong developmental dimension.

Conclusions:

All economic and social indicators in the governorates of Gaza are bleak, indicating an increase in unemployment and poverty rates with rapid increases, especially with the population explosion simultaneous with the weakness of interventions in the context of combating poverty and social protection for vulnerable groups. All efforts are still not up to the required levels. Social protection programs suffer from weakness and fragmentation, and rely on relief sector-based contributions, donations, and external support, -and this depends on the donor - and all of them are programs that do not achieve the lowest level of protection and a sense of safety for all poor, fragile, marginalized and vulnerable groups and workers.

The low standard of living, poverty, and unemployment, the lack of governmental support, and the state of division push civil society organizations to play a more prominent and effective role in light of the scarcity of resources and the increasing need, which calls for intensified and integrated efforts within a comprehensive national policy, leading to an integrated system of social protection that includes social security, social assistance, family transfers, labor market support and empowerment, financial inclusion, health insurance, and social services...

The national and moral responsibility to protect the Palestinian person and alleviate his suffering starts with ending the division and the return of the unified Palestinian government to administer the affairs of the governorates of Gaza, controlling and developing all financial resources, working to end the siege, strengthening social protection programs and policies, the participation of civil society organizations, and integration in the distribution of shared responsibilities to protect and develop society, especially women's, youth and human rights organizations, training and community rehabilitation institutions, sectoral associations, trade, and professional unions, and trade unions. The objective of such intervention is to develop the government's programs, interventions, and activities that aim at enhancing care for the groups it represents at the community level and contributing to providing them with protection, and enabling them to obtain their rights from basic services (a decent income, food, clothing, health care, and education...), in addition to contributing to changing such difficult reality by playing an effective role in ending the division and its coercive repercussions on our Palestinian society.

Being keen on the human being and working to secure a decent life for him and his family and protecting him from dangers is the first step towards optimal investment in the human element, as it is the most precious thing we have. It is the goal and development tool through which we can achieve the dream of establishing the state with Jerusalem as its capital, and the stability of society in the face of all the challenges that pose a threat to society and its stability. Therefore, governmental efforts, social partners, and civil institutions must intensify and coordinate with the rest of the parties to establish a unified and comprehensive system that responds to the needs of social groups, taking into account their interests and including them in all social and economic policies and standing in front of the population increase and the expansion of the poor and the unemployed.

Finally, this paper was presented in a workshop in the presence of specialists and representatives of social, civil, and union institutions, and related parties, and their observations and recommendations were taken into consideration to achieve deep interventions in the Palestinian social protection system to alleviate poverty and achieve sustainable development.

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The information and views set out in this paper do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the Palestinian NGOs Network and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.



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