

Executive Summary

Palestinian Public Perceptions on Their Living Conditions The Role of International and Local Aid during the second Intifada Report V, December 2002



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I. Introduction

This executive summary covers Report V on the living conditions of the Palestinians in the Occupied Territory. The report mainly concentrates on the perceptions of the Palestinians on their living conditions in the aftermath of the major Israeli incursions in the West Bank in March 2002.

The report is based on a survey of 1370 Palestinians living in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. The survey was conducted during the first week of November 2002 and it was the fifth survey conducted by the IUED in the past two years.

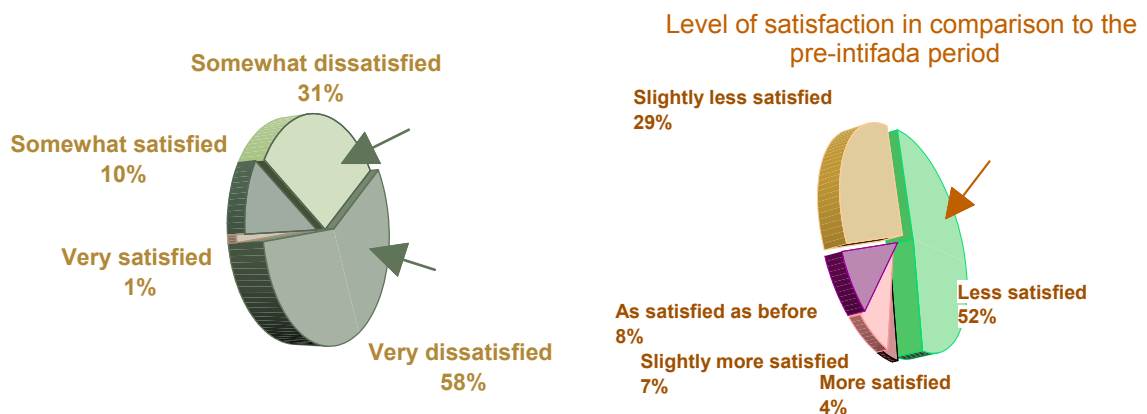
The objective of this effort is to provide stakeholders whether from the Palestinian Authority, the various local and international assistance agencies, or other parties involved in the area with an overview of the situation in the Palestinian Territory, as perceived by the Palestinian public. It is the hope that such information will assist these agencies and institutions in their developmental and humanitarian effort targeting the Palestinian population. The information presented is also intended to provide an impetus to a monitoring instrument that would facilitate coordination among the diverse groups and will further help in identifying needs and priorities that are essential to the overall objective of bringing a sense of stability and well-being for the Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

II. The current situation

A. Attitudes about the future in general

Even though a significant proportion of Palestinians have said in polls conducted by the Jerusalem Media and Communications Centre (JMCC) and by Birzeit University Development Studies Program (DSP) that they want the intifada to continue, only 11% of Palestinians are satisfied with the current conditions they live under. As shown below in figure 1, over 80% of the respondents are less satisfied when compared to the period before the Intifada started in late October 2000.

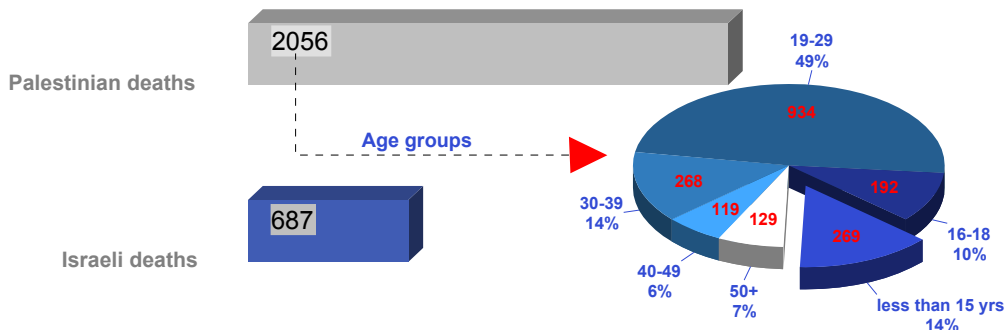
Figure 1: Attitudes about the future



B. Deaths and injuries

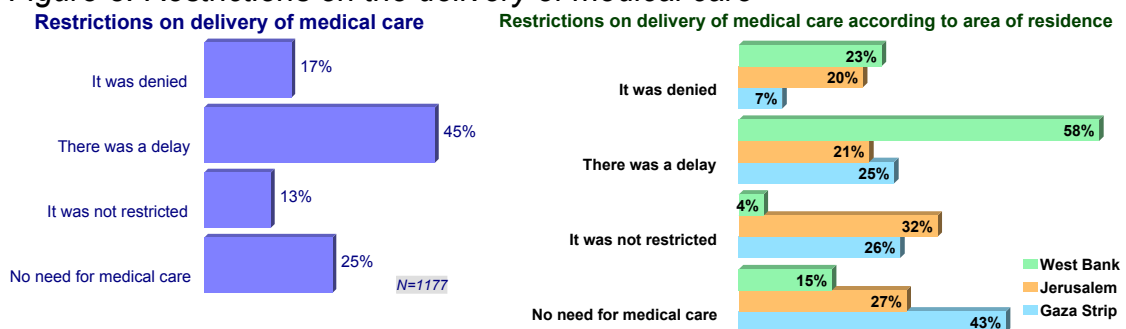
The grim attitude Palestinians have about life in general is most certainly attributable to the harsh realities they live under, particularly during the past twenty six months when the Palestinian uprising against the Israeli occupation was confronted with harsh Israeli measures, which, in turn, brought about attacks against Israelis in the form of suicide bombings which further escalated the situation to a level that impacted both human lives and their living conditions on both sides. During this period over 680 Israelis and over 2000 Palestinians were killed, many of whom were children below the age of 15, as indicated in figure 2.

Figure 2: Palestinian and Israeli deaths (September 2000 till December 2002)



The human suffering of the Palestinians was also reflected with regard to the provision of medical services. As indicated below in figure 3, 17% of the Palestinian households were denied medical care. This was more prevalent in the West Bank where the Israeli measures were more intense than in the Gaza Strip.

Figure 3: Restrictions on the delivery of medical care

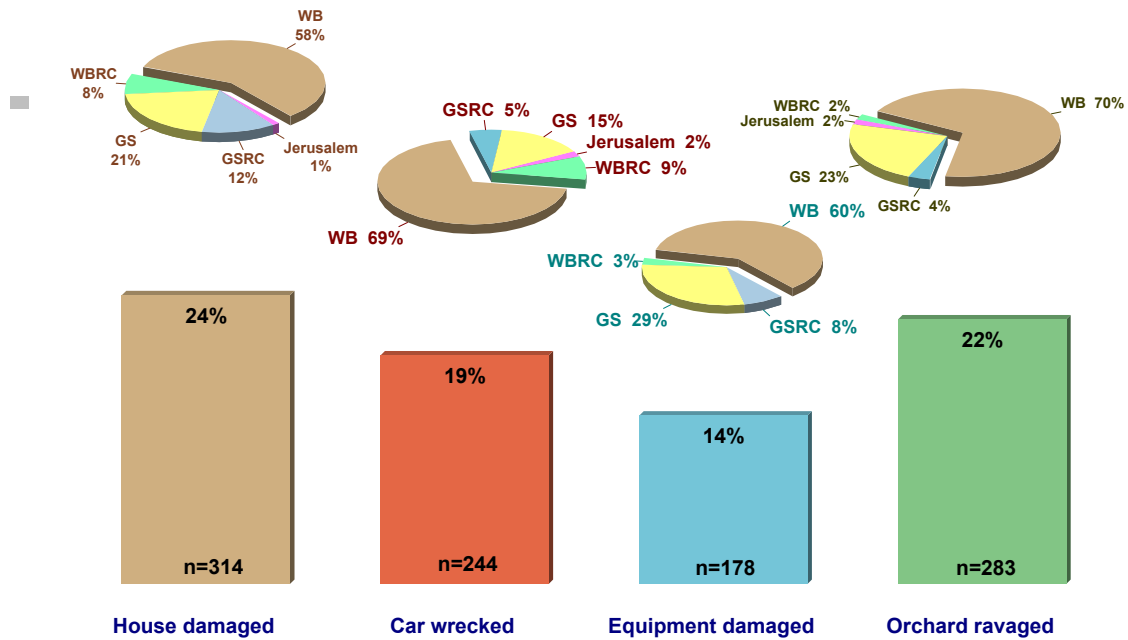


C. Damages to property

The living conditions of Palestinian households were also severely affected as a result of the Israeli response to the Intifada and to the suicide bombings. According to the respondents that were interviewed, 24% said that their homes were damaged, 19% said that their vehicles were wrecked, 14% said that equipment and machines belonging to their household members were

destroyed, and 22% said that their orchards were ravaged. As can be also discerned from figure 4, below, the West Bank residents were more affected than those in the Gaza Strip or in Jerusalem.

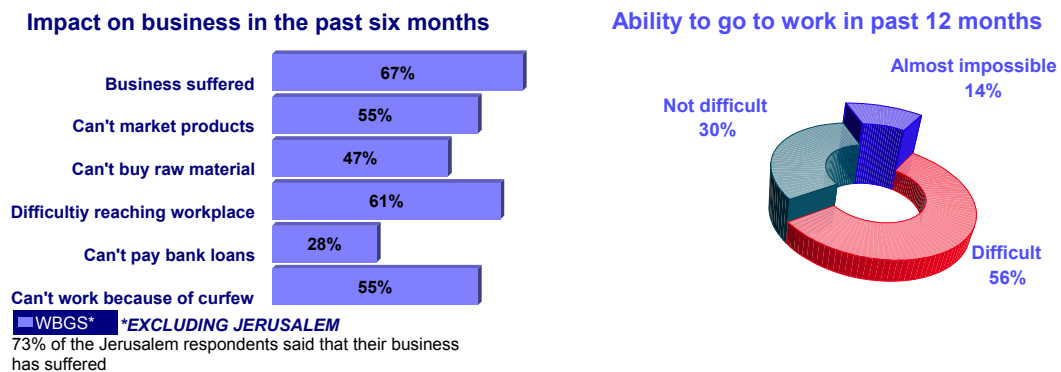
Figure 4: Property damages according to place of residence



D. Impact on business

One of the most noticeable effects of the developments of the past two years was the impact on the living conditions of the Palestinian households. As illustrated in figure 5 below, 67% of the respondents said that the business of their households has suffered, and 70% said that they faced difficulties or even were unable to reach their places of work.

Figure 5: Impact on Palestinian business and ability to reach the place of work



The inability to conduct business normally or to reach work regularly as a result of the prolonged curfews and the strict closure of the Palestinian cities, villages, and refugee camps have had dramatic consequences on the living conditions of all sectors of the Palestinian society. In the next pages, a brief

description of the perceptions of the respondents regarding their living conditions will be highlighted.

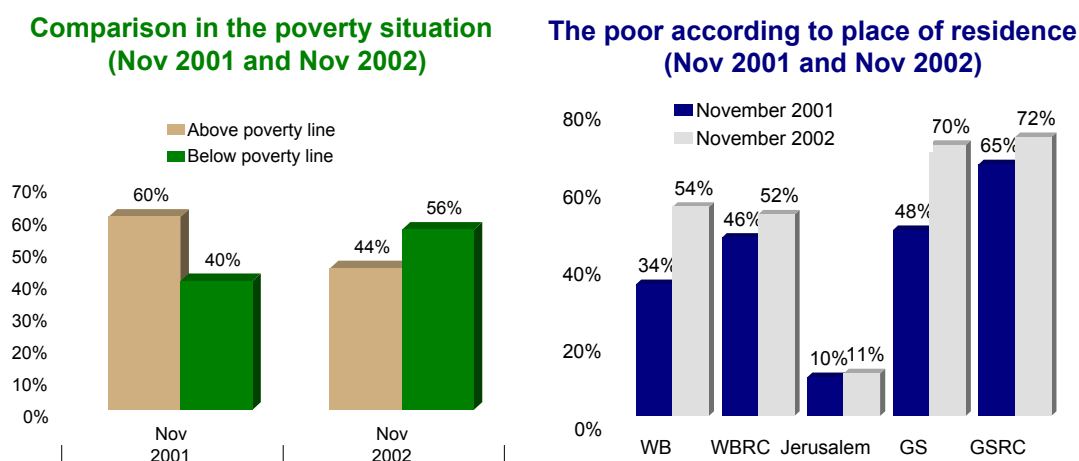
III. The socio-economic conditions

The preceding overview directs to the impact of the closure on the Palestinian life and the Palestinian economy. While it is common knowledge that the closure has been detrimental to the Palestinian economy and to the Palestinian living conditions, the extent of this deterioration and the implications in case the pace continues as such in the near future, is surprising.

A. Poverty conditions

As illustrated in figure 6, below, the percentage of people below the poverty line (i.e. below the 1650 NIS level) has increased by 20% in 2002. While in the survey conducted in November 2001 the proportion of respondents who said that their household income falls below the 1650 NIS level was 40%, the number increased to 56% by November 2002. It is also striking that the deterioration in the income levels is no longer a feature that is characteristic of the refugee camps in particular; the non-refugee camp areas have suffered from a significant decline in the income levels both in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip.

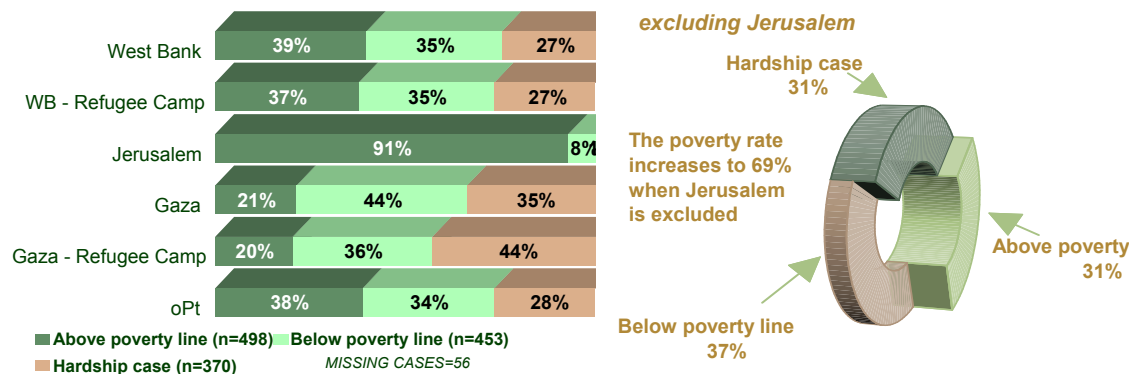
Figure 6: Comparison in the poverty situation (Nov. 2001–Nov. 2002)



The situation is even bleaker when the poverty line is controlled by the family size of the households. This interpretation of poverty, which is adopted by the World Bank, among others, raises the rate of those below the poverty line to 62%, instead of 56%. Moreover, it indicates that the percentage of Palestinians who are classified as hardship cases (those households earning less than 500 NIS per month), increases from 14% in the situation where household size is not considered to 28% when the household size is controlled.

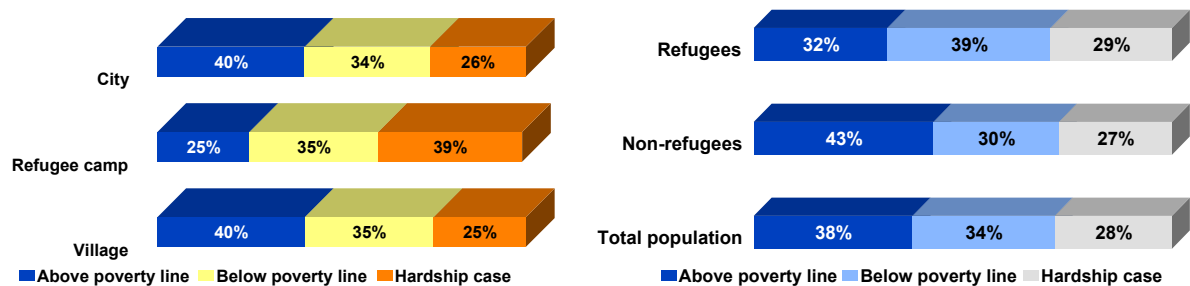
Equally important is the fact that the prevalence of poverty is widespread and covers almost all areas, with the exception of Jerusalem who has a special status with respect to Israeli policies. In fact if Jerusalem is controlled for, the poverty rate that is stated above is even worse in the other parts of the occupied territory as it then reaches 69%, as illustrated in the second graph of figure 7.

Figure 7: Poverty situation according to area of residence



Further analysis of the data (figure 8) shows that poverty is becoming endemic in all areas and amongst all sectors of the Palestinian society, irrespective of their place of residence or their refugee status that traditionally were the most significant indicators for poverty amongst the Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt).

Figure 8: Poverty according to area of residence and refugee status

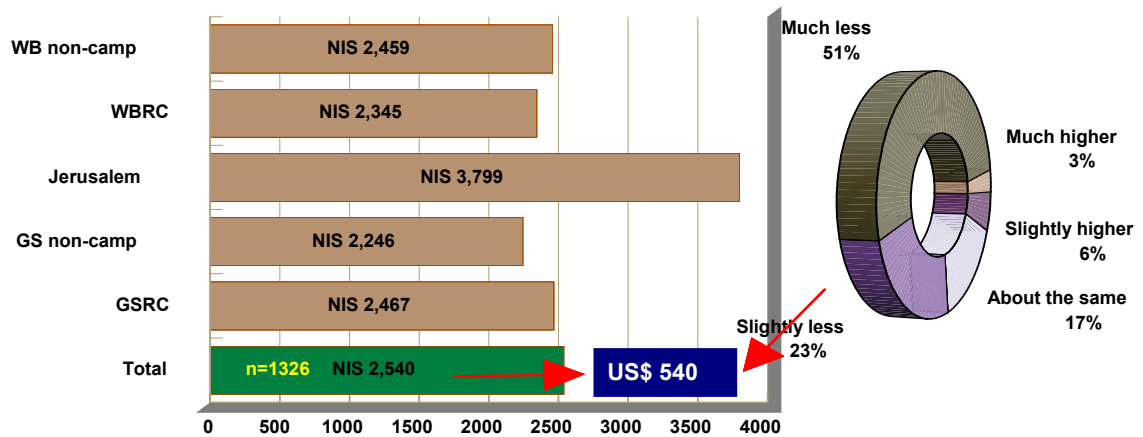


B. Perception of households' financial situation

While some may argue that the public often exaggerates their needs, when the Palestinians were asked as to the amount of money their household needs to meet the basic necessities of life, the average amount that the respondents have stated was equivalent to US\$ 540, an amount that is treated as a sensible and a realistic amount for the Palestinian condition. As can be observed in figure 9, below, Jerusalem respondents stated a much higher amount needed per month, whereas all other areas reported more or

less an amount that translates approximately to US\$ 3 per day for a six-member household.

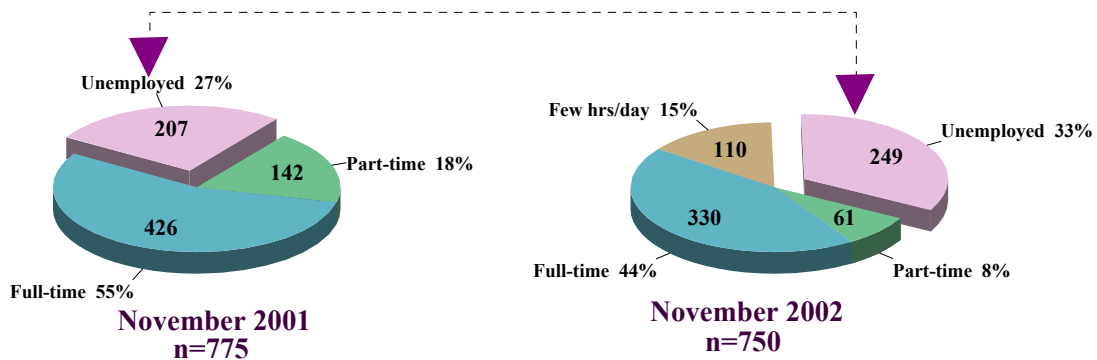
Figure 9: Average amount needed by households per month to meet basic necessities of life



C. The employment situation

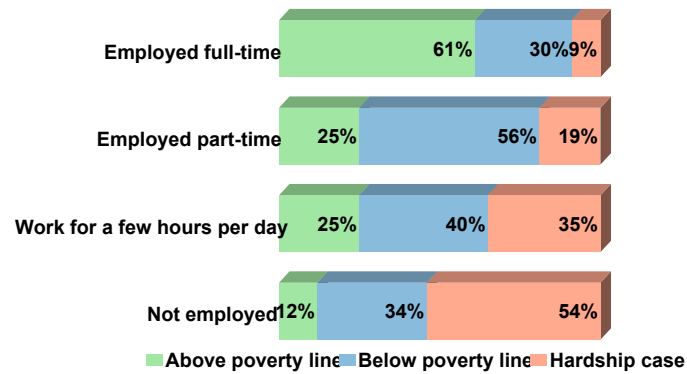
The increase in poverty is a function of the ability of the household members to generate income to their households. Given the extended curfew periods and the strict closure during 2002, the unemployment was expected to increase. Indeed, as illustrated in figure 10, below, the unemployment rate among the Palestinians who are part of the labour force did increase from 27% to 33%.

Figure 10: Distribution of the labor force (November 2001-November 2002)



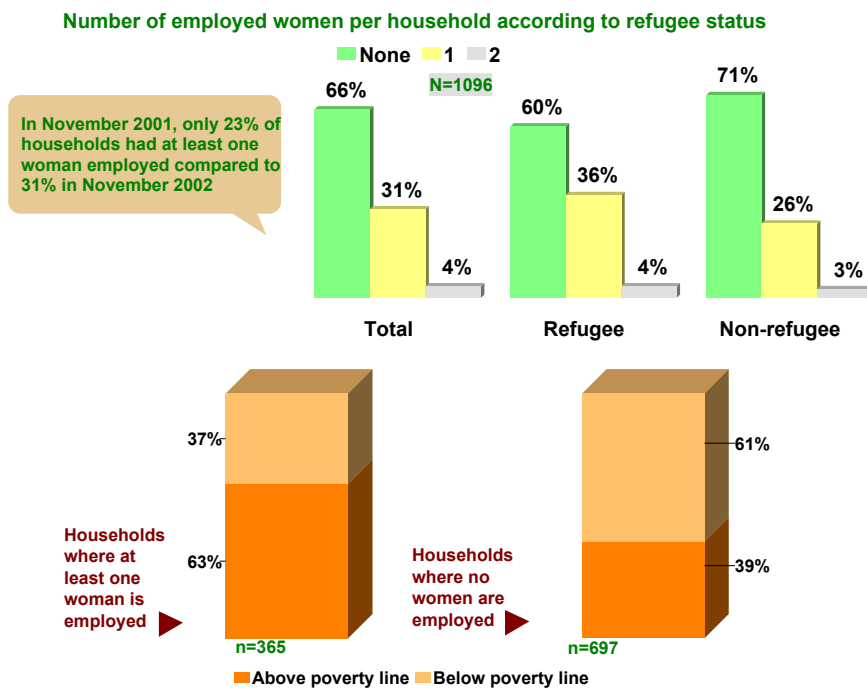
Not surprisingly, poverty is more prevalent among the unemployed than among the employed. Whereas 61% of the employed Palestinians can be placed above the poverty line, the percentage is only 12% for the unemployed and 25% for those who work part time or work for few hours per day, as illustrated below in figure 11.

Figure 11: Poverty among the labor force



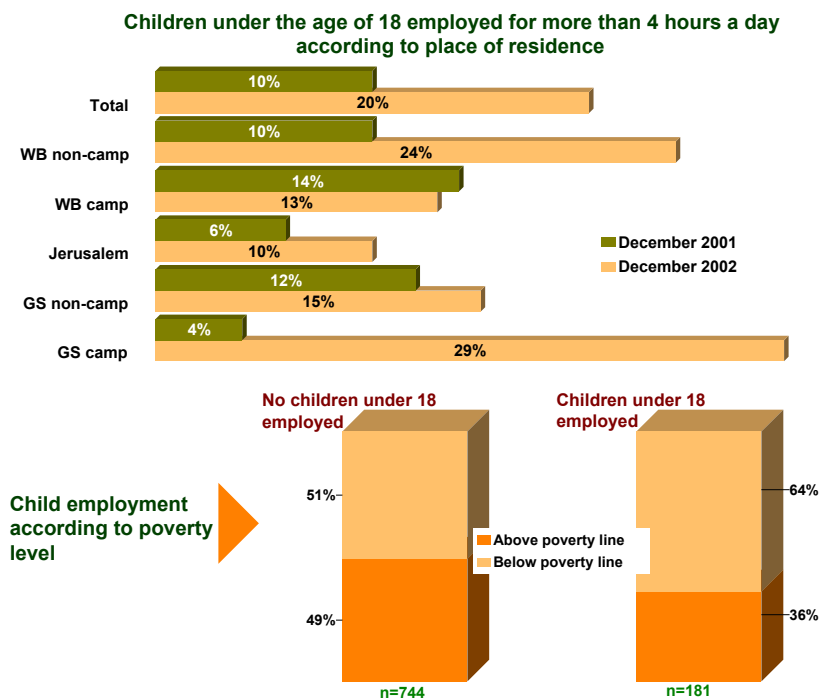
It is interesting to note in this regard that the deteriorating living conditions brought about an increase in the number of women employed. While in November 2001, 23% of households had at least one female member employed, the percentage increased to 31% in November 2002. As indicated below in figure 12, the extent of the contribution by employed women to the household should not be underestimated. Indeed, whereas 63% of the household's where at least one woman is employed have a living standard above the poverty line, this is the case for only 39% of the households where no women are employed.

Figure 12: Women employment



Equally interesting is the increase in child employment. As indicated in figure 13, below, the percentage of child employment almost doubled between November 2001 and November 2002. It is clear that the financial difficulties faced by the household greatly influence the decision of getting children involved in the labor market.

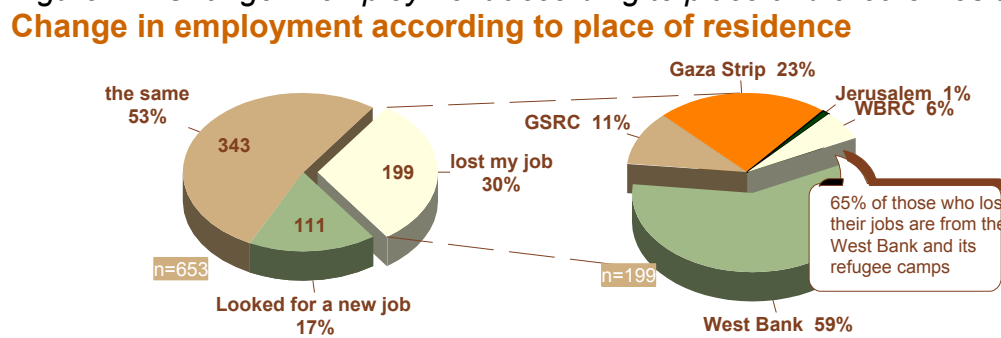
Figure 13: Child employment according to place of residence and poverty level



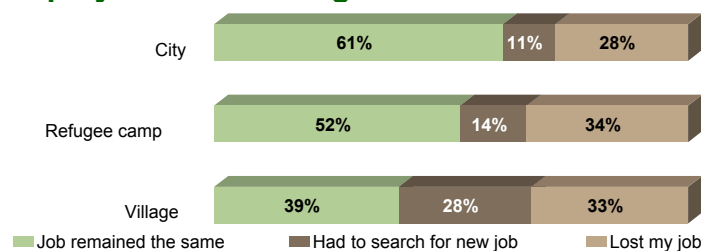
The fact that more children from low-income families are employed is also indicative of the intensity of the economic situation, which pushes children to seek additional employment as a means to bring in income to the household.

The dramatic increase in poverty in the West Bank can be explained particularly by the increase in unemployment during 2002. As shown below in figure 14, 65% of those who became unemployed were from the West Bank and from its refugee camps.

Figure 14: Change in employment according to place and area of residence

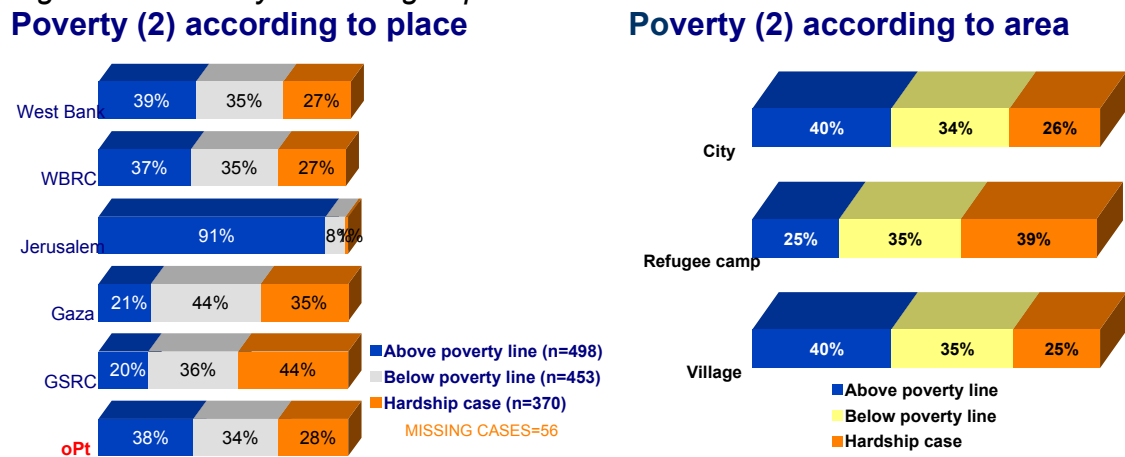


Change in employment according to area of residence



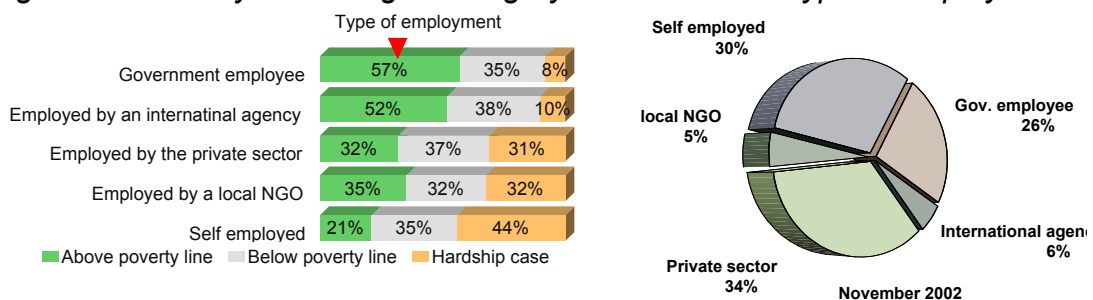
As illustrated in figure 15, below, the increase in unemployment in the West Bank and the subsequent increase in poverty in those areas, however, should not undermine the fact that the Gaza Strip and the Gaza Strip refugee camps are already in a dire situation that is even harder than that of the West Bank. What is important to stress, however, is that all indicators direct to the fact that it will not be too long before poverty levels in the West Bank and the West Bank refugee camps will equal that in the Gaza Strip.

Figure 15: Poverty according to place and area of residence



Future prospects also do not provide a hopeful outlook about the poverty situation. Given the fact that the 26% of those who are employed are Palestinian Authority employees (figure 16) and 57% of them consider their households to be above the poverty line, it is important to note that further deterioration in the status of the Palestinian Authority will most probably lead to a situation where unemployment will increase dramatically and so would the poverty levels.

Figure 16: Poverty according to category of workers and type of employers

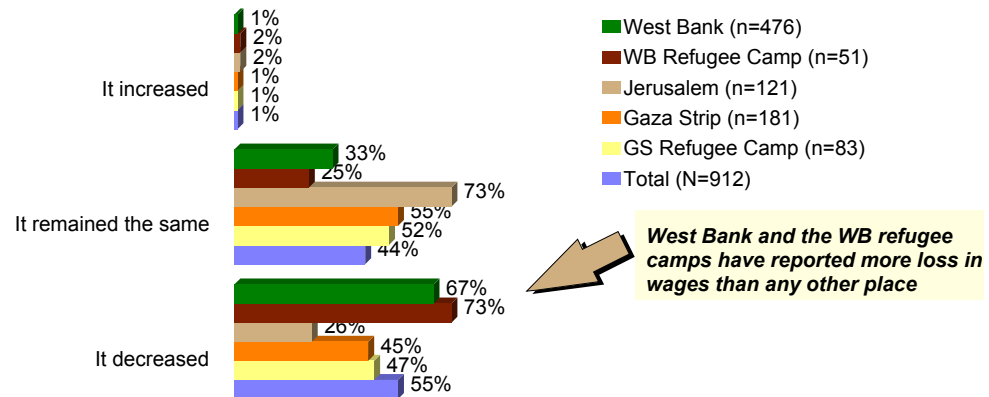


IV. Assistance delivered

The difficulties that the Palestinian economy is facing are not only demonstrated in the unemployment sphere, it has also impacted the employed. It is probably fair to assume that the loss of business and the inability of the private sector to work at levels comparable to those before the tensions started resulted in wage and salary cuts. As demonstrated in figure 17 below, 55% of the employed respondents said that their salaries have

decreased. This decrease has been striking both in the West Bank and the West Bank refugee camps. Most certainly, the sharp reduction of wages in the West Bank is indicative of the extent to which this part of the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) has suffered during 2002.

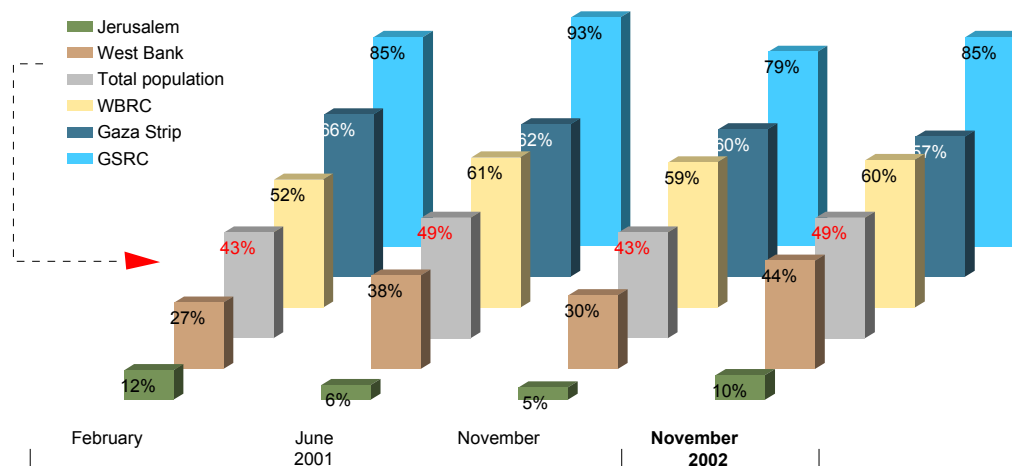
Figure 17: Change in wage according to place of residence



The economic and humanitarian suffering of the population in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip prompted an array of local and international organizations to provide assistance to the population despite the obstacles associated with meeting the needs of the population given the extent and pace of the hardship and the complexities associated with the delivery of such assistance.

While, as indicated in figure 18 below there has been an increase in the general level of assistance since November 2001 from 43% of households stating that they received some kind of assistance to 49% by November 2002, this level of assistance is the same as that of June 2001. What is clear, nonetheless, is the noticeable increase in assistance to the West Bank which reflects, to a certain extent, the needs of the West Bank, particularly after the massive Israeli reoccupation of the major areas there and after the long periods of curfews that virtually paralyzed all activities there during most of 2002.

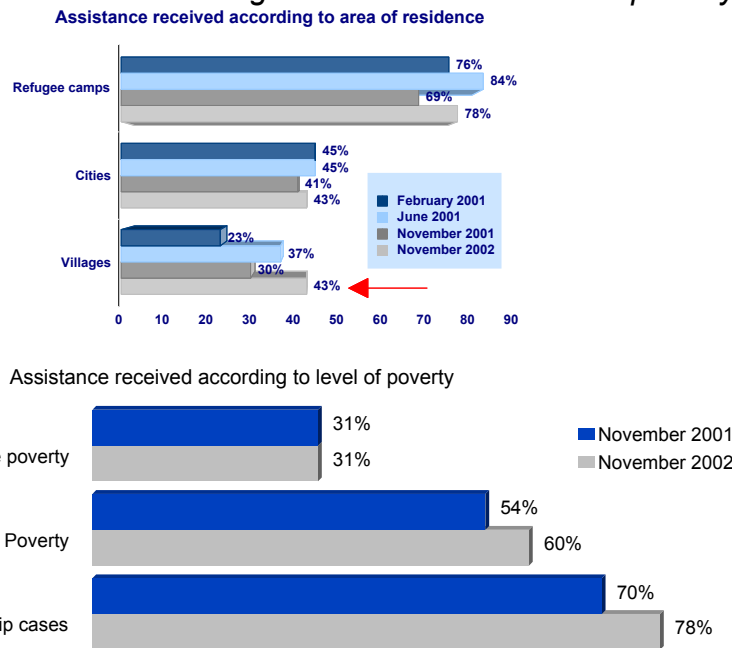
Figure 18: Assistance received according to place of residence, Feb.2001-Nov. 2002



When examining the assistance delivered in the period between November 2001 and November 2002, there seems to be a relative emphasis on villages

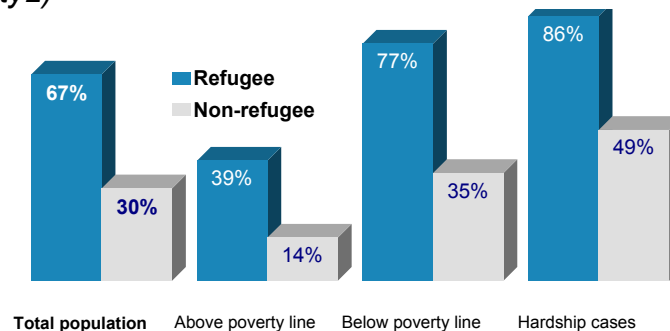
with the level of assistance increasing from 30% in November 2001 to 43% in November 2002. While the increase to villages is significant, assistance in general seems to focus primarily on the refugee camps as indicated in figure 19, below. Also significant is the increase of assistance since the November 2001 to the households that are classified as below the poverty line or as hardship cases. While the level of assistance to the households that are above the poverty line remained constant between November 2001 and November 2002, there is an increase of assistance by 6% to the households, which are below the poverty line and an increase by 8% to the hardship cases.

Figure 19: Assistance according to area of residence and poverty level



The increase in assistance to the poor, however, seems to target the poor among the Palestinian refugee population more than the non-refugee poor. As illustrated below in figure 20, while 77% of the refugees below the poverty line and 86% of the refugees falling under the hardship category said that they have received some type of assistance, the percentage is respectively 35% and 49% for the same categories among non-refugees.

Figure 20: Assistance received according to refugee status and level of poverty (poverty2)



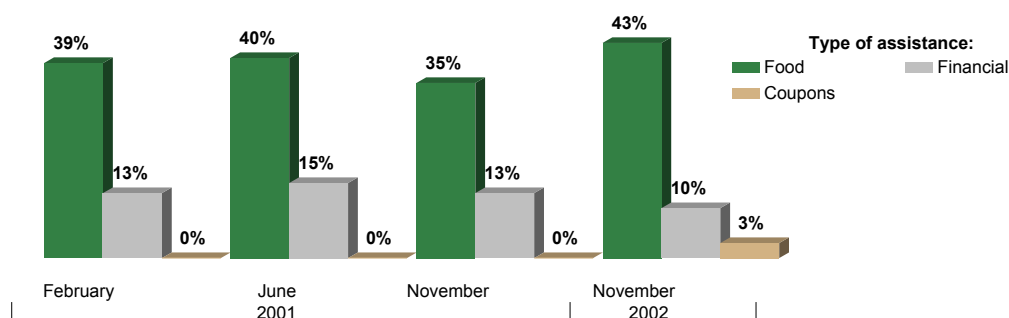
In conclusion, it is safe to state that there seems to be a clear trend towards a better focusing on assistance delivery to the needy by the donors:

- There was an increase in assistance distribution: 6% more Palestinians received assistance.
- Villages seem to be better reached.
- Poor Palestinians and especially hardship cases received more assistance.

But there are still some serious challenges: Assistance to non-refugees could be better targeted as some of these people are in very bad situations and should receive some help.

When examining the types of assistance delivered, food assistance is more or less the main type of provided assistance, followed by financial assistance. The long periods of closures and curfews during 2002 were probably the reason why food assistance has increased by 8% between November 2001 and November 2002, as shown in figure 21 below.

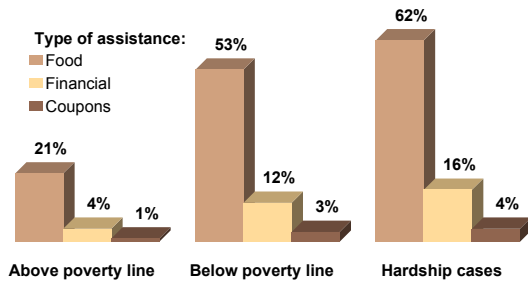
Figure 21: Type of assistance received (c37), Feb.2001-Nov.2002



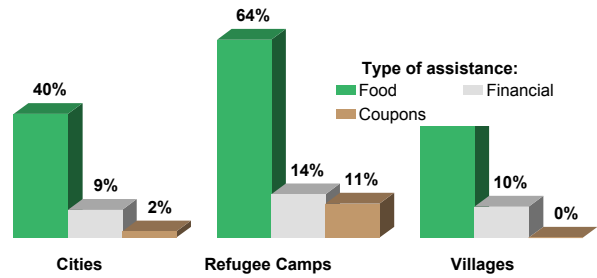
When considering assistance between November 2001 and November 2002, figure 22 below clearly indicates that the provided assistance is generally intended to target the poor. As will be discussed later, the fact that UNRWA is the main provider of food assistance explains the reasons why assistance targets refugee camps more than other areas, and refugees more than non-refugees. The concentration on refugees by UNRWA also explains why there are some households who are above the poverty line receive assistance, including food assistance as many refugee households are above the poverty line but they nonetheless receive UNRWA assistance.

Figure 22: Type of assistance according to poverty level and area of residence

Type of assistance according to poverty level



Type of assistance according to area of residence

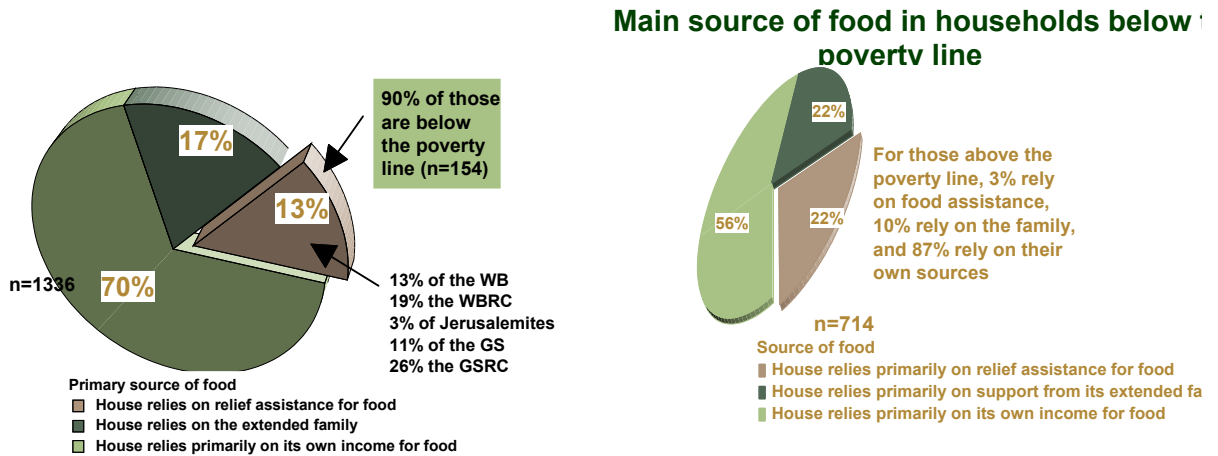


V. Food situation

A. Need for food

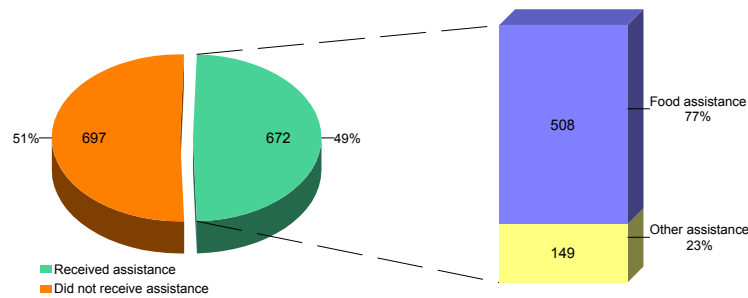
The survey showed that 13% of Palestinian households rely on food assistance for their households. As indicated below in figure 23, households below the poverty line rely more on food assistance than those above the poverty line. Naturally, hardship cases depend almost entirely on food assistance.

Figure 23: Main source of food in the households according to poverty level



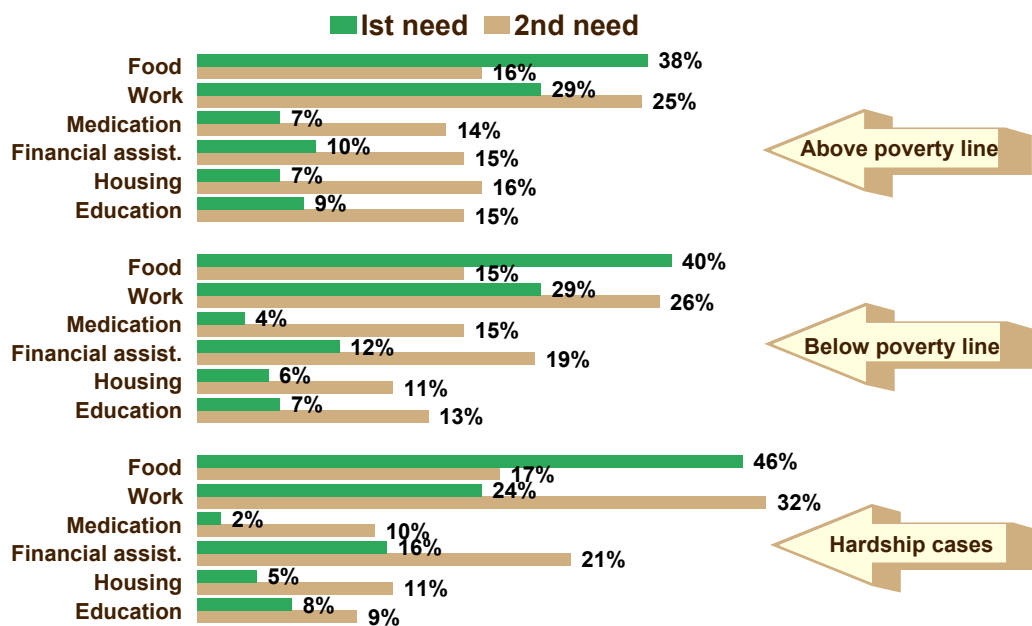
Although the distribution of food assistance to the needy seems to be conducted fairly, it is important to note that a significant proportion of Palestinians who need food assistance do not get any. As indicated in figure 24, below, 50% of Palestinians still do not receive any kind of assistance. As will be explained later, many of those are households that are in dire need for such help.

Figure 24: Food distribution in comparison with other types of assistance



The concentration on food assistance and the increase in such assistance in recent months is justified by the general decline in the economic situation. When respondents were asked as to what is the most important type of assistance for the households, surprisingly, food, as illustrated in figure 25, below, came as the most important followed by employment.

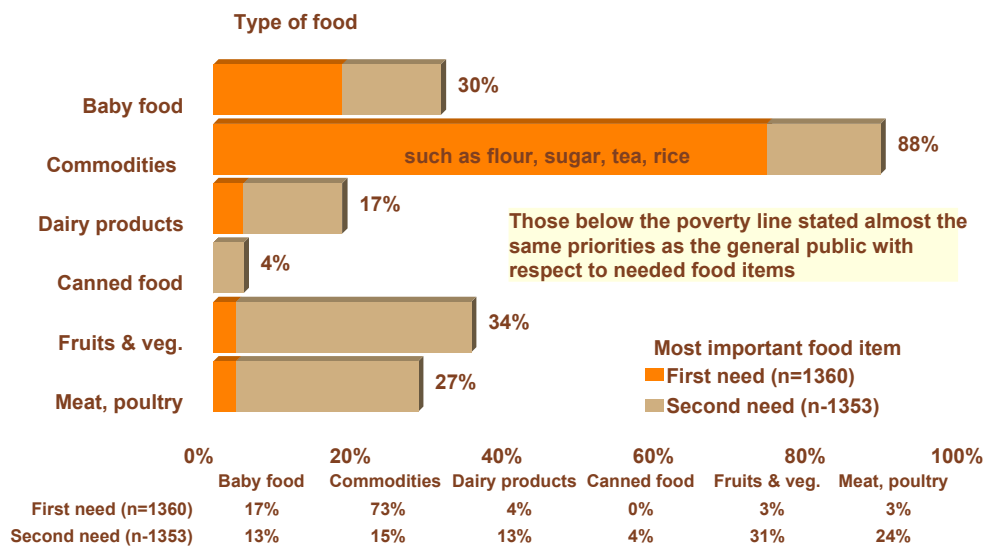
Figure 25: The two most important needs of the household according to the poverty line



As can also be seen above, the priority of food is not only for those who are economically worse off, even those above the poverty line stated food as their main priority perhaps because of their inability to have access to food as a result of curfews and closures or because they are genuinely concerned about their ability to provide food for the household members given the deterioration in the economic situation affecting even this sector of society.

The concentration on food commodities as the main type of food need is also important perhaps because such food items are easily preserved for longer period, although, as indicated below in figure 26, very few people want canned foods. As for baby food, West Bank Palestinians were much more inclined to state this type of food than their counterparts in the Gaza Strip.

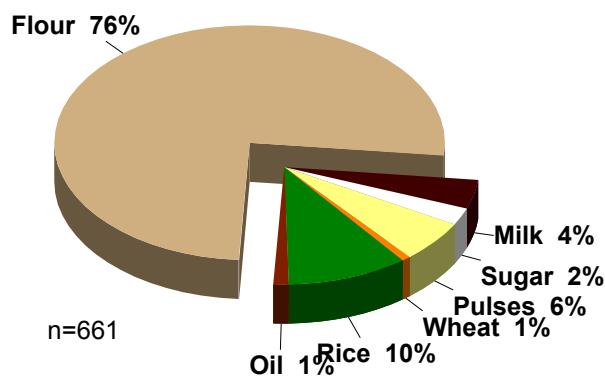
Figure 26: The two most needed food items in the household



B. Food assistance

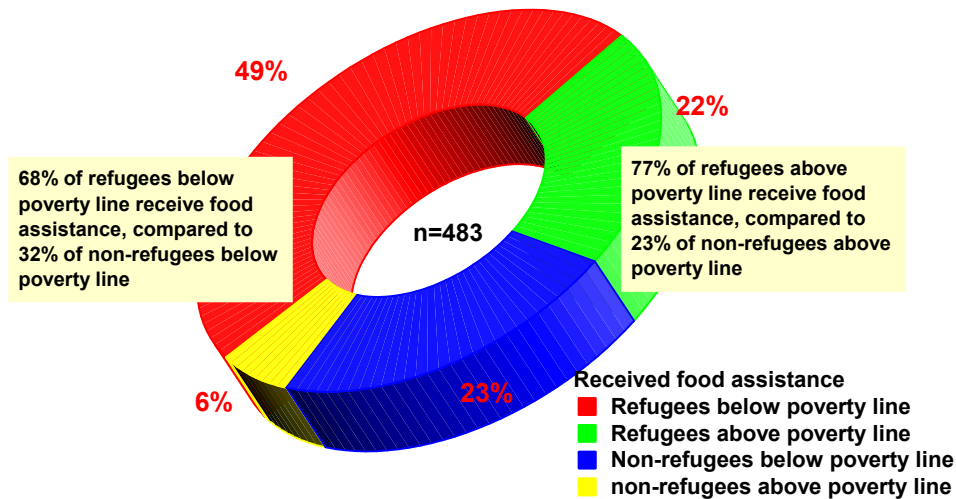
The apparent need for food is what prompted assistance providers to concentrated on food assistance. According to the respondents, most food assistance was in the form of flour (76%), followed by rice (10%), pulses (6%), and milk (4%). As illustrated in figure 27 below, the remainder was oil, sugar, and wheat.

Figure 27: Types of provided food assistance



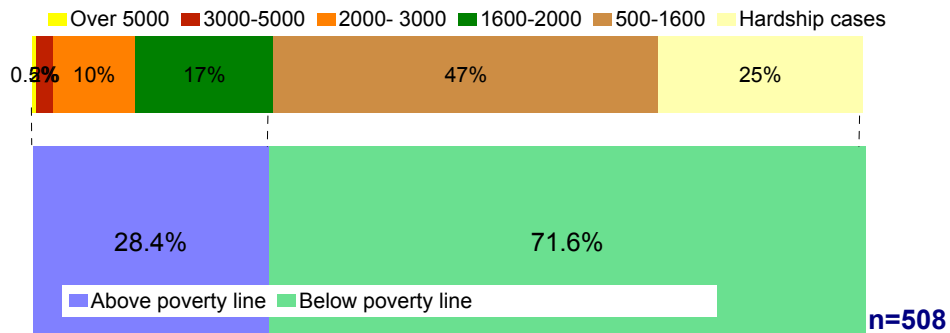
However, as was earlier mentioned, food assistance primarily targeted refugees. In fact, when examining food assistance according to poverty level and refugee status, it can be noticed that the percentage of refugees above the poverty line who receive food assistance is almost the same (22%) as the proportion of non refugees who are below the poverty line (23%). These findings are illustrated in figure 28, below.

Figure 28: Proportion of food distribution according to poverty level and refugee status



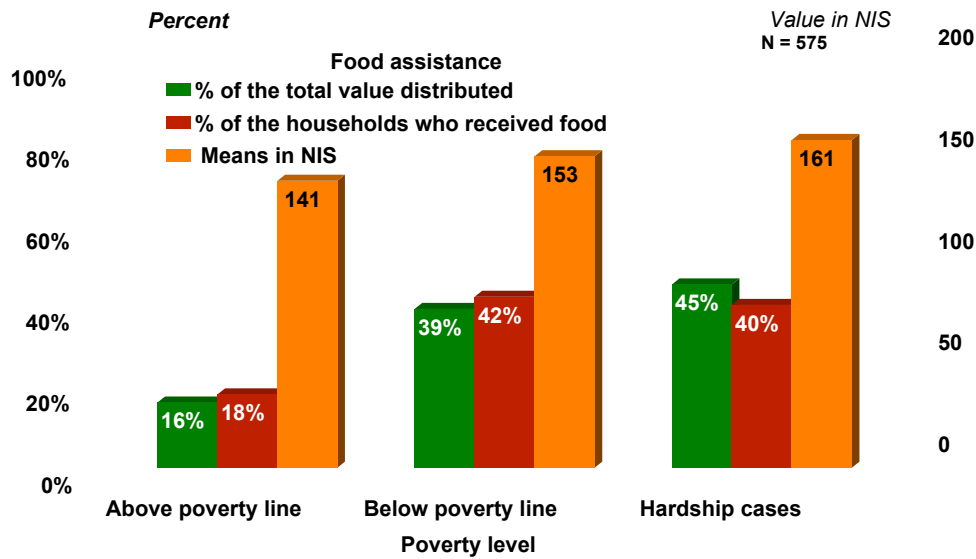
Even so, it is clear that despite the disparity in food distribution between refugees and non-refugees, food distribution targets more the sectors of society who are less advantaged economically than those who are better off. As explained below in figure 29, while 28% of food assistance was delivered to those above the poverty line, the remaining 72% was distributed to those who are below the poverty line.

Figure 29: Food distribution according to income levels



In fact, when food distribution is further examined on the basis of income, it is clear from figure 30, below, that not only do the less privileged receive more food assistance; the value of this assistance is higher.

Figure 30: Food assistance and its value according to poverty level

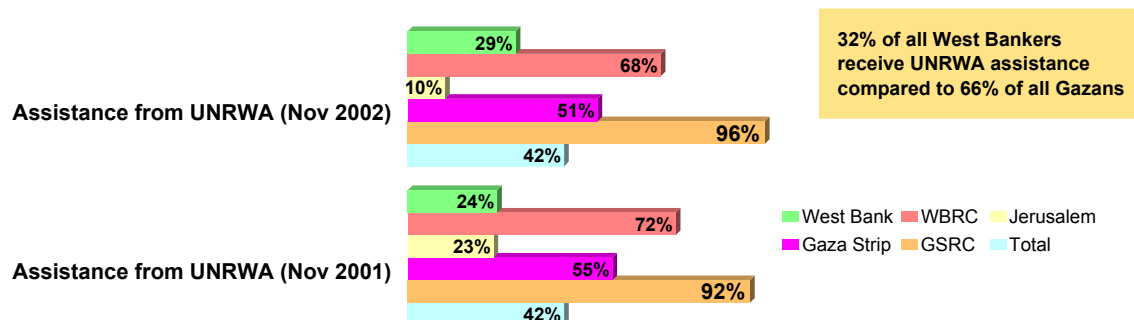


In the following pages, the relative disproportion of food assistance in favour of refugees is explained by the significant role UNRWA plays with respect to its mandate towards the Palestine refugees.

VI. UNRWA

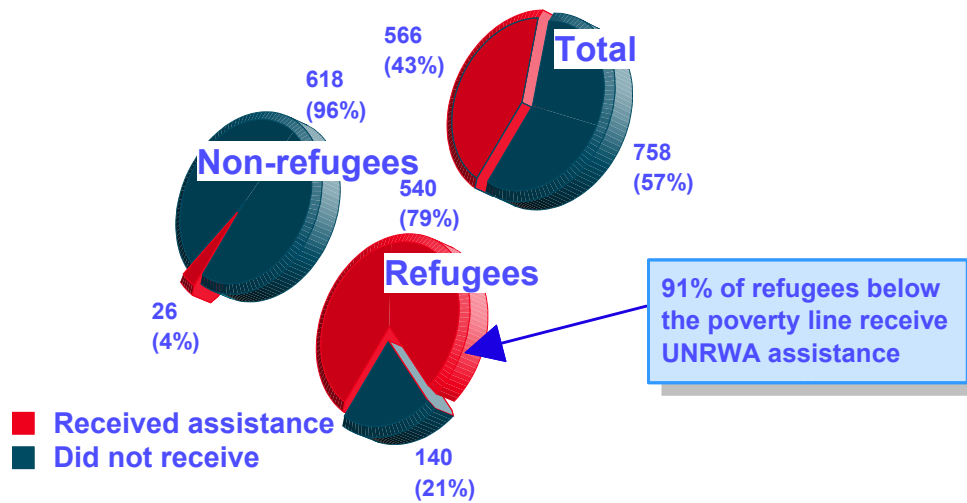
Looking at UNRWA's assistance since November 2001, it is clear that the level of UNRWA's assistance remained stable with almost 42% of Palestinian households stating that they received some form of assistance from UNRWA. Figure 31, below clearly shows the extent to which UNRWA's assistance is significant particularly in the refugee camps.

Figure 31: Distribution of UNRWA assistance according to place of residence Comparison between Nov 2001 and Nov 2002



As for non-camp areas, the assistance provided by UNRWA is equally significant. However, as illustrated below in figure 32, the concentration is directed at Palestinians who are classified as refugees or descendants of refugee families.

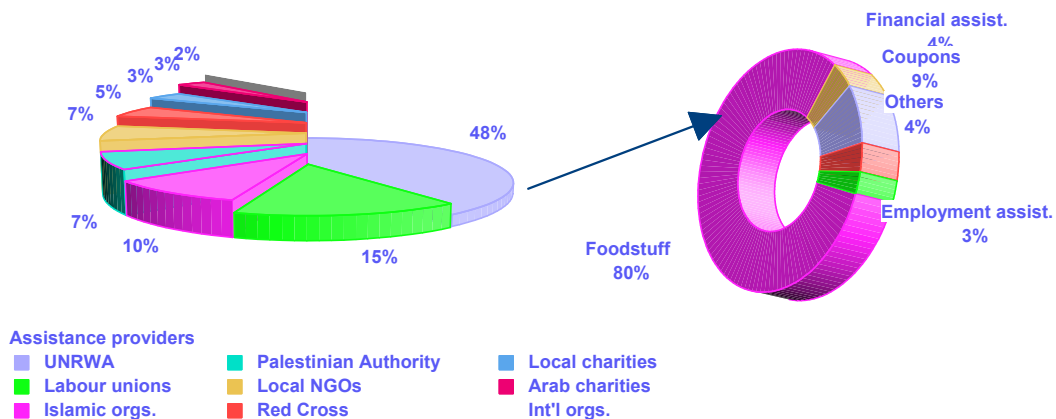
Figure 32: Proportion of Palestinians receiving UNRWA assistance according to refugee status



As also illustrated in figure 32 above, 91% of refugees who are below the poverty line received some type of assistance from UNRWA. Although, only 4% of non-refugees stated that they did not receive assistance from UNRWA, the reference is most certainly made to direct assistance, irrespective of whether they received such UNRWA assistance as education and health, which many non-refugee households benefit from.

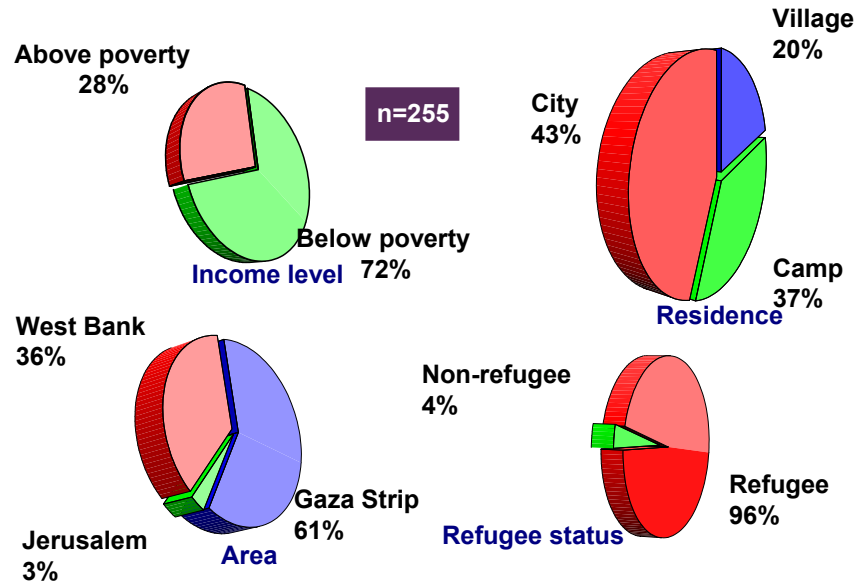
In fact, when examining the role of UNRWA with respect to the delivery of assistance, 48% of those who said that they received assistance identified UNRWA as being the source of that assistance. As illustrated in figure 33 below, 80% of the respondents who were provided with assistance by UNRWA identified food as the main assistance that their households have received from the international body.

Figure 33: Proportion of UNRWA assistance and the main types identified by the respondents



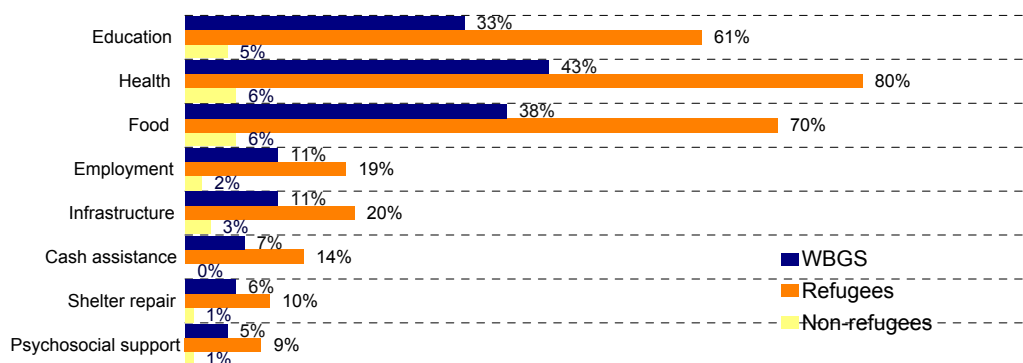
A closer examination of the food assistance provided by UNRWA clearly shows the concentration on refugees, but also on the underprivileged. These findings are detailed in figure 34, below.

Figure 34: UNRWA food distribution according to place of residence, income, and refugee status



While respondents identified food assistance as the main source of assistance that they have received from UNRWA, the situation changes when they were prompted as to whether they have indeed received other types of assistance from UNRWA. As shown in figure 35, below, the provision of assistance by UNRWA is clearly more widespread and more diverse.

Figure 35: Types of UNRWA services provided to households in the past -refugees and the general population-

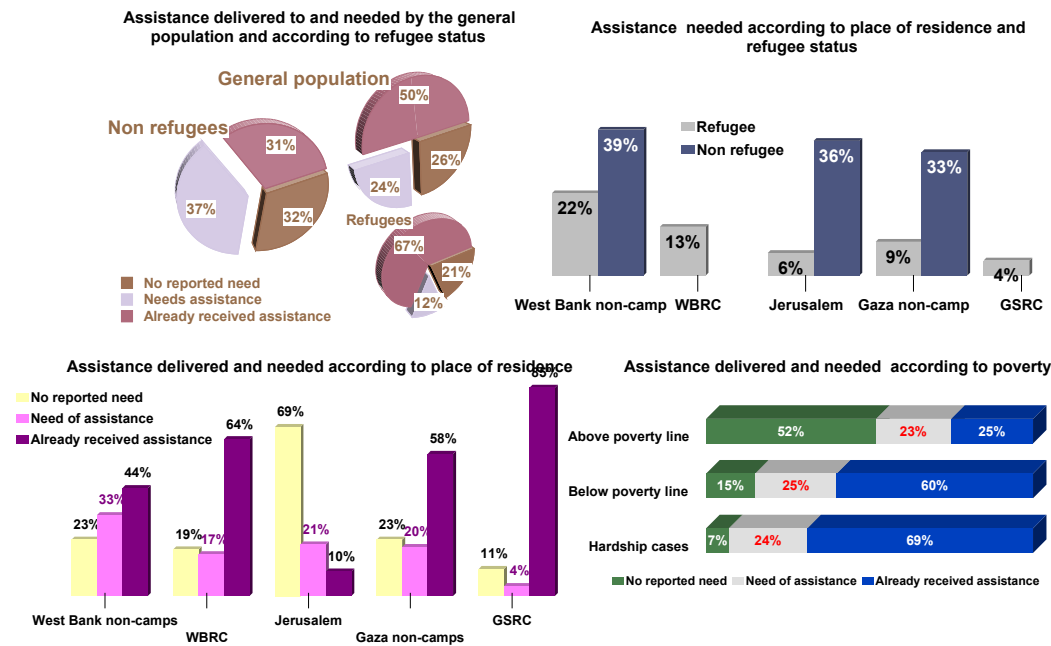


VII. Importance and effectiveness of assistance

The need for assistance is clear and is a reflection of the dramatic changes that affected all sectors of the Palestinian society. The significant role that UNRWA takes with respect to providing assistance to the refugees continues to be essential and a priority; the non-refugees have been less fortunate. As

indicated below in figure 36, 37% of non-refugee Palestinians who did not receive any type of assistance said that they need it, compared to 12% among refugees who need assistance, but did not get any. Similarly, West Bank refugees, camp dwellers and non-camp dwellers, need more assistance than do their counterparts in the Gaza Strip. Moreover, 25% of those below the poverty line and 24% from those classified as hardship cases that did not receive any assistance said that they need assistance.

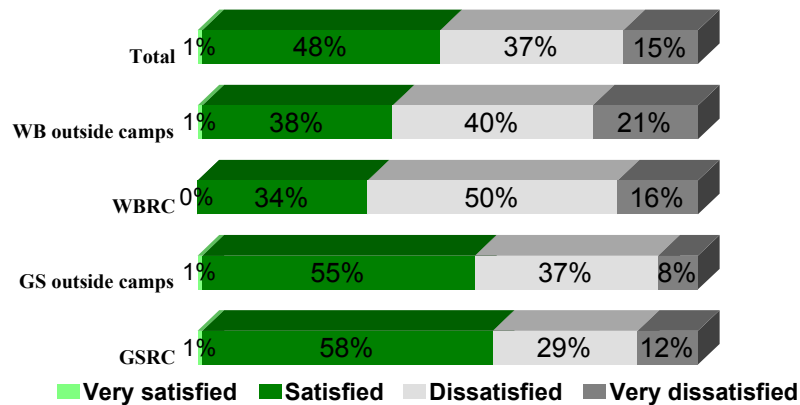
Figure 36: Assistance delivered according to refugee status, place of residence, and poverty level



A. Satisfaction with assistance

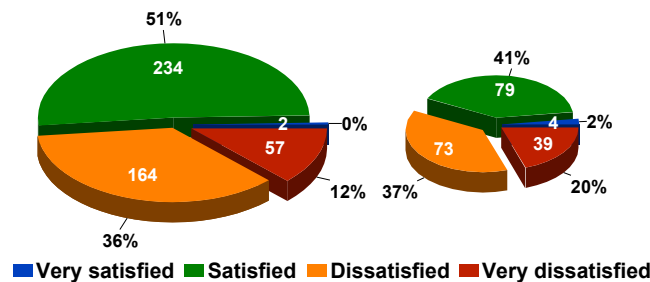
When respondents were asked as to the level of satisfaction with assistance in general, approximately half said they were satisfied and the other half were dissatisfied. The level of satisfaction, nonetheless, was significantly influenced by the place of residence of the recipients. While, as can be observed in figure 37, below, West Bank recipients, whether in camps, or outside camps are more dissatisfied than satisfied, their counterparts in the Gaza Strip seem to be more satisfied.

Figure 37: Satisfaction in general according to place of residence



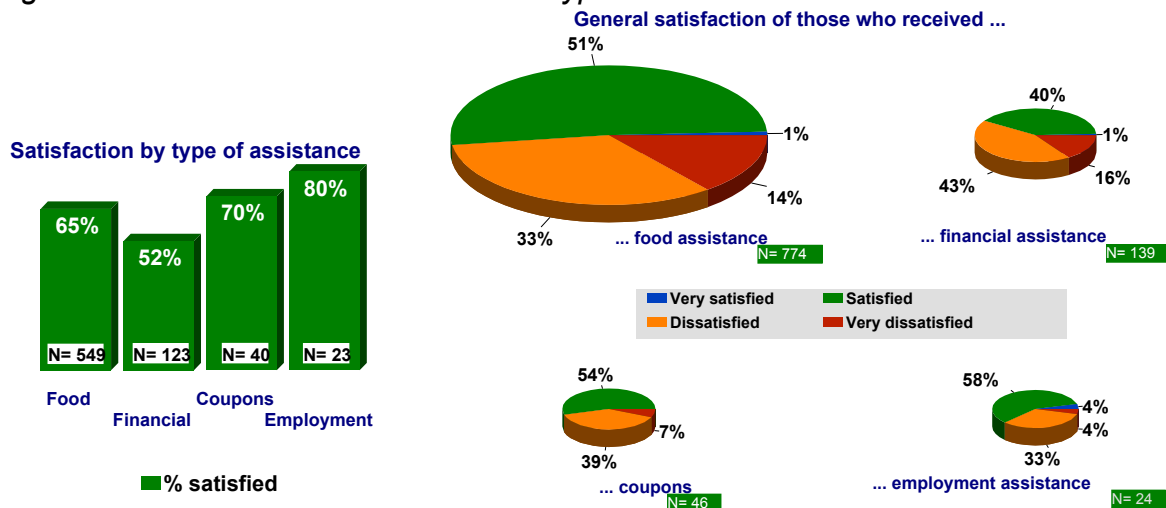
The concentration of refugees in the Gaza Strip and the seemingly effective UNRWA assistance distribution in the Gaza Strip may explain this difference between the two areas. As can also be noticed from figure 38, below, the level of satisfaction among refugees is significantly higher than among non-refugees, a matter that could be also explained by the relative strong showing of UNRWA, compared to other assistance providers.

Figure 38: Satisfaction according to refugee status



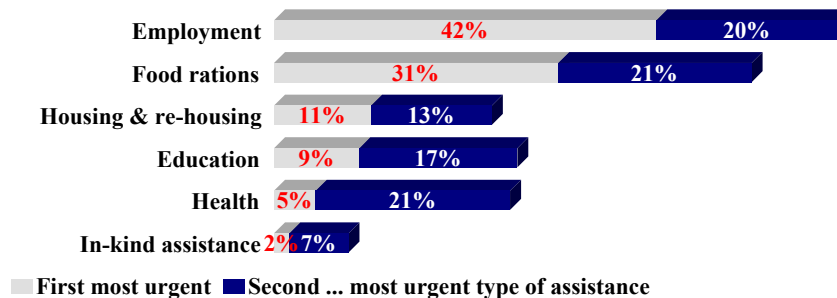
The level of satisfaction is also contingent on the type of assistance provided. When the types of assistance were classified according to the level of satisfaction, recipients of employment assistance were more satisfied than recipients of other types of assistance (figure 39), probably because the amount of assistance was higher or because some of the recipients benefited from employment programs that helped them bring a steady income to their households, whereas the other types of assistance are perceived as being rather short-termed.

Figure 39: Satisfaction with the various types of assistance



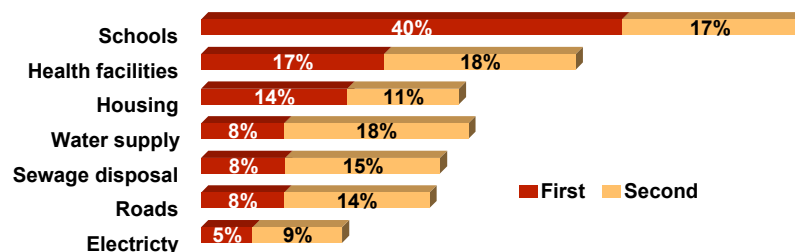
With regard to the **needs**, as mentioned earlier, food has been reported as the most important need for the households followed by employment. However, when respondents were asked as to what are the two most urgent **assistance** types required, employment came as the first most urgent need, followed by food, as can be observed from figure 40, below.

Figure 40: Most urgent types of assistance



As for the most urgent assistance for the community, respondents stated education as the most urgent assistance need for the community, followed by health and medical facilities. As can be seen in figure 41, below, housing, clean water, and sewage disposal were ranked third, fourth, and fifth, respectively.

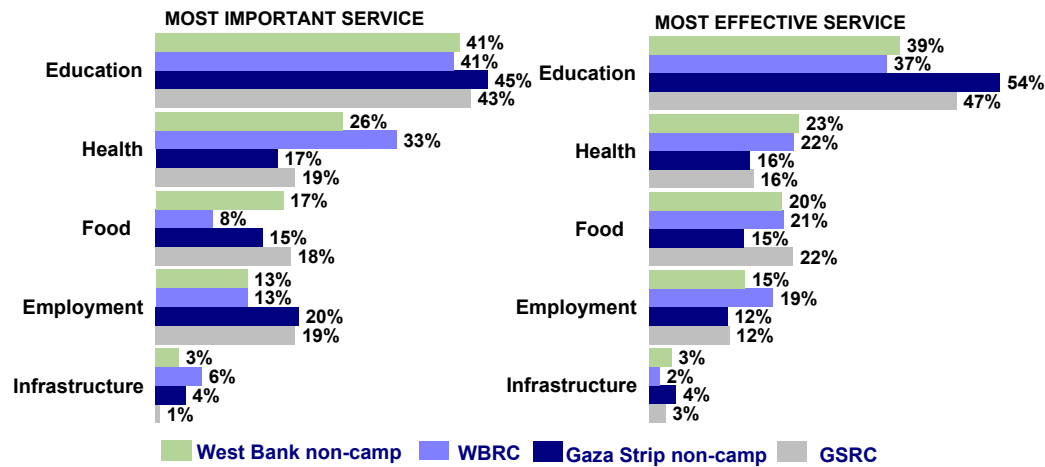
Figure 41: Most important needs for the community



With respect to the importance and effectiveness of the provided assistance, education was perceived as the most important and most effective service, followed by health and medical assistance. While food and employment were

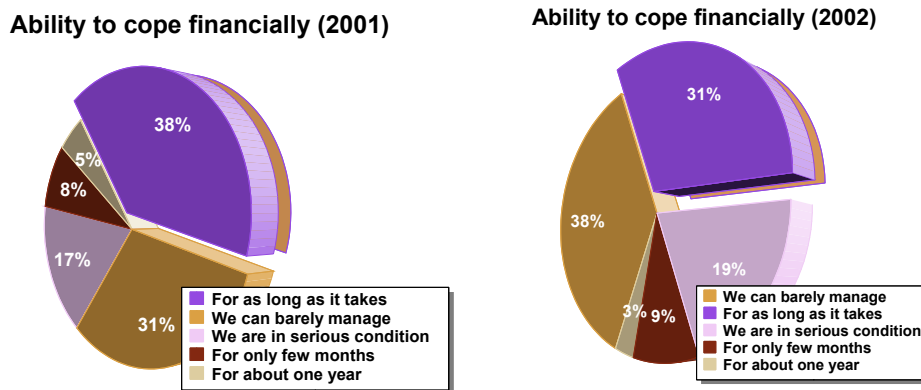
regarded as the most needed items for the households, their importance and effectiveness were ranked rather low.

Figure 2: Most important and effective service according to place of residence



In the midst of these conditions, one wonders how the Palestinian population was able to cope, particularly with respect to sustaining the members of the household. When comparing the answers to the question about how long respondents would be able to cope given the current situation, the proportion of those who said they could cope as long as it takes dropped from 38% in November 2001 to 31% in November 2002, as illustrated below in figure 43.

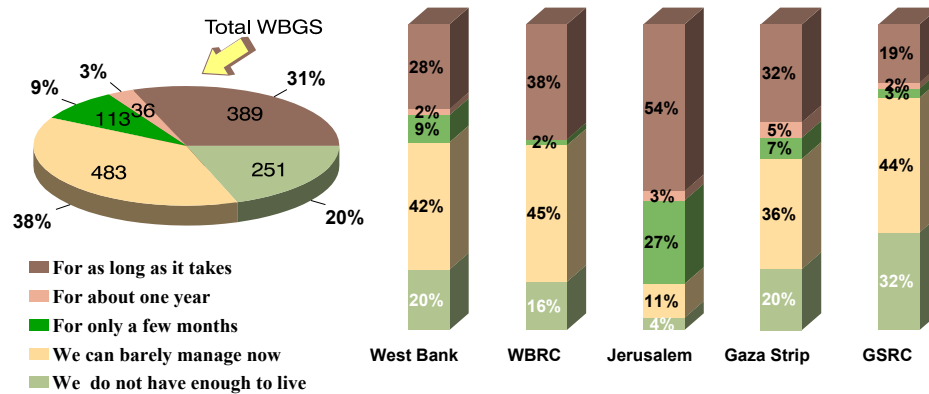
Figure 43: Ability to cope financially: comparison between November 2001 and November 2002



A significant proportion of Palestinians stating that they could cope financially for as long as it takes is not necessarily related to the financial situation of the respondents. As can be discerned from figure 44, below, 38% of West Bank camp respondents and 19% of Gaza Strip camp respondents said that they could cope financially with the situation as long as it takes. On the other hand, 54% of the Jerusalem respondents who are the least affected financially by the Israeli measures say they can cope for as long as it takes.

Nonetheless, about 58% of the Palestinians said they can barely manage or they have nothing to rely on financially and an additional 9% said that they can cope only for few more months.

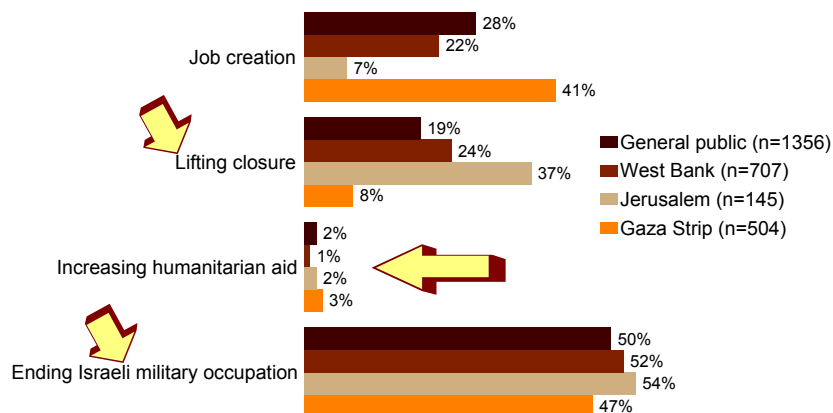
Figure 44: Ability to cope financially during the coming period



The high level of dissatisfaction among the Palestinians and the harsh economic realities that they are undergoing and are most likely going to face for the foreseeable future begs the question regarding the path that the various assistance providers should or could take in this respect. Certainly, there is a lot that needs to be done. Additional emphasis should be directed at the poor in the West Bank, particularly among non-refugees where a large proportion of them do not receive any assistance at a time when they can barely sustain themselves.

While the provision of assistance is a priority at this period of time, the need for easing the suffering is certainly the key for solving many of the problems that the Palestinian society is facing. When respondents were asked as to what is the most important solution to the current poverty situation, the large majority of them said ending the Israeli occupation (50%) and lifting the closure (19%). As illustrated in figure 45, below, Even at a time when humanitarian assistance is highly needed, very few respondents stated humanitarian aid to be the solution for solving the increase in poverty conditions.

Figure 45: The most effective means to reduce the level of poverty



Perhaps these results indicate that the Palestinian public feels that humanitarian assistance and job creation can only be effective once the causes of their current dire socio-economic conditions, i.e. the closure and the Israeli military occupation, are removed.