

Forgotten Villages

Struggling to survive
under closure in the
West Bank

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Summary

Oxfam is deeply concerned about the appalling toll being paid by the civilian population on both sides of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Oxfam is committed to the impartial applicability of international humanitarian and human rights law, especially the right of all civilians to protection from violence. We believe that a just solution to the current conflict must be based on existing UN Security Council resolutions, which call for an end to the Israeli occupation of lands held since 1967, and the right of both Israel and a future Palestinian state to live within secure borders. The recent escalation of the conflict has created a serious humanitarian crisis for the Palestinian population living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. All parties to the conflict must take immediate steps to prevent this humanitarian crisis from turning into a full-blown humanitarian disaster,¹ by supporting the long-term livelihoods of the poorest and most vulnerable people in the area.

New research by Oxfam and its partners on the impact of the Israeli government's policy of closure finds thousands of rural households in the West Bank on the brink of destitution. Away from the media spotlight, the families of farmers, unemployed labourers and small businessmen in these often neglected Palestinian villages have run out of savings and sold off land and livestock. Urgent action is needed: Farmers are unable to harvest their olives, and water tankers can't pass checkpoints. Closure should be lifted now, in order to avert an immediate humanitarian disaster, and to protect prospects for future development and peace.

Israel has dramatically tightened its restrictions on the free movement of Palestinian people, vehicles and goods since the second *intifada* (uprising) began in September 2000. As a reaction to a serious escalation in Palestinian suicide bombing attacks against Israeli civilians, the decade-long closure policy of the Government of Israel is being intensified and formalised. A new travel permit system is proposed to further control the movement of goods and people between different areas of the West Bank, whilst a 350-kilometre security fence that is being constructed by the Government of Israel could permanently exclude Palestinian products and workers from Israel. Whilst these policies are a response to serious security concerns on the part of the Israeli government, blanket movement restrictions are collective punishment, and thus illegal under international law.

Closure and curfews of towns and villages now dominate every aspect of Palestinian life. The majority of the West Bank population lives in villages or small towns; these village economies are highly dependent on their links to West Bank cities and Israel, particularly for jobs, markets and productive inputs, and services. Closure policies have undermined or even broken many of these links, leaving rural communities facing impoverishment and unemployment, lack of access to services, a weakened agricultural sector, and increased vulnerability to Israeli settler violence. In desperation, households have turned to a range of short-term emergency measures to eke out a living. Inside the family, measures include using up savings and selling land and livestock to buy food or meet emergency needs, and simply

eating and buying less. None of these measures are sustainable, and all will eventually harm the most vulnerable family members.

In the local community, we are witnessing the rapid erosion of support networks that provide a range of services and social protection such as credit, loans and food. People already heavily indebted to impoverished friends and family can no longer turn to them for support. **Shopkeepers and water providers no longer give credit to poor families, depriving them of essential services, food, and the means of generating an income.** Furthermore, the loss of cohesion in the household and wider community has exposed more women and children to violence and discrimination.

This year's olive harvest is at immediate risk as farmers cannot reach their fields or find a market for their harvest. Oxfam research shows that many households still have productive capacity, and are continuing to engage in a struggle to generate income. Agriculture remains the main recourse for rural families as a source of food, employment, and income generation. Farmers without cash, however, cannot afford basic inputs such as seeds, fertilisers and water. Restrictions on movement have distorted supply and demand in the economy to such an extent that harvests are rotting in the fields whilst some market places remain empty. In markets where goods are available for sale, prices have crashed. Productivity has also been curtailed by a marked increase in settler violence, making it increasingly difficult to access agricultural land.

Closure denies village families access to basic services available in towns and cities. Health and water are now, for many households, either too expensive or simply not available. Increasingly families are forced to use dangerous or inappropriate alternatives – such as riding donkeys to hospital, or unplanned home births – or to simply do without. **Scores of villages without water networks are facing severe water shortages, as water tankers either cannot access villages or people can no longer afford the price of tanked water.**

Closure is creating a growing number of destitute families that are suffering from malnutrition, chronic health problems, welfare dependency, and psychological stress. As the main household managers, women are bearing the brunt of closure impact.

Surprisingly, the most vulnerable groups include not only the chronic poor, who tend to be well integrated into social welfare networks. Closure has had a disproportionate impact, rather, on the so-called 'new poor' – lower and middle class families who relied heavily on cash incomes. These include farmers who have been squeezed by rising costs and loss of markets, businessmen cut off from markets, and the growing number of unemployed wage labourers without access to alternative forms of livelihoods.

Policy Recommendations

Earlier in 2002, Oxfam called on all parties to this conflict to uphold international humanitarian and human rights law. We condemn violence against civilians perpetrated by both sides in this conflict and believe that an international protection mechanism should be a priority to avert further loss of life among both Israeli and Palestinian civilians.

Long-term protection of civilians will only come through a just peace for Palestinians and Israelis, based upon the UN resolutions which call for an end to Israeli occupation of the lands held since 1967, and the right of both Israel and a future Palestinian state to live within secure borders.

The recommendations in this paper focus particularly on the social and economic impact of closure on those living in Palestinian villages across the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The most urgent of these call for **an immediate end to the Government of Israel's policy of closure of Palestinian civilian areas. If closure is not lifted, remedial steps will be needed to avert a severe deterioration in the currently critical humanitarian situation:**

- Water tankers to be allowed to reach the rural population, particularly in areas without networked water systems.
- The Israel Defence Forces to remove, or at the very least regulate, checkpoints to allow trading, farming and other enterprises that sustain people's livelihoods. In particular, there is an urgent need to allow farmers to reach both their land and markets during the imminent olive harvest.
- Ambulances and health workers to be allowed to move freely between villages and cities, and villagers allowed to travel to towns for specialist health treatment.
- The Palestinian Authority to ensure the protection of Israeli citizens. It should condemn and seek to prevent the activities of suicide bombers and prosecute all parties engaging in illegal activities against civilians, including attacks against Israeli settlers.
- The Palestinian Authority to guarantee that donor funds will be used transparently and effectively for the alleviation of poverty.
- The International Community to intensify diplomatic efforts to bring an end to this conflict and maintain pressure on all parties to halt the spiralling violence against civilians and uphold international humanitarian law with regard to their protection.
- The International Community to intensify diplomatic pressure on the Government of Israel to ease closure, and on both the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority to comply with the other recommendations listed above.
- International donors and local and international aid agencies to provide appropriate humanitarian assistance that supports and strengthens existing coping strategies. They should work with local communities to prioritise the protection and rebuilding of productive assets and credit networks.

Preface

Oxfam is deeply concerned over the ongoing suffering and conflict experienced by Palestinians and Israelis in the Middle East. In March 2002, Oxfam called for all parties to address four basic issues needed to bring an end to the immediate suffering of civilians and provide a path for a long-term solution (see Oxfam Briefing Paper 21, 'Foundations for Peace', 28 March 2002).

1. Protection of civilians

All parties to the conflict must first and foremost uphold international humanitarian law and human rights law, particularly as stated in the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 relating to the protection of civilians in times of war, in particular those living under occupation.

2. Foundations for peace

Protection of civilians will only come through a just peace for Palestinians and Israelis. Any framework for negotiations must include UNSCR 242 and 338, which call for Israeli withdrawal from lands occupied since 1967, and reaffirm the right of Israel and a future Palestinian state to exist within secure borders. In addition, a permanent solution to the status of over five million Palestinian refugees must be addressed in a way that is consistent with international refugee law.

3. Immediate humanitarian need

Immediate needs, particularly for food, water, and health care, must be addressed to reverse the significant decline in nutritional and health status among Palestinians, and intolerable stress on community life. Ensuring the basic conditions that allow people to obtain employment and productive activities is a critical factor in meeting these needs.

4. Livelihoods development for long-term poverty reduction

Palestinians must be guaranteed conditions that foster economic growth and development for the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and for a future Palestinian state. This includes the reconstruction of destroyed assets, investments in infrastructure and economic enterprises, and special measures that build the capacity of Palestinians to enter into regional and global markets on fair terms.

In the six months since 'Foundations for Peace' was written, we have witnessed a dramatic worsening for all involved in the conflict. Israeli civilians are victims of horrific suicide bombings, often targeting children and the elderly. In a cycle of retaliation, Palestinian towns, camps and villages have been invaded by the Israeli army, with devastating consequences for the well-being of civilians and destruction of civilian infrastructure. For the three million Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, curfews and closure and violence and impoverishment are now the daily reality.

Oxfam calls on all parties to acknowledge and address the growing insecurity and the humanitarian crisis resulting from the conflict, and to reaffirm and protect the rights of civilians under international law. Immediate action must be taken to protect the lives and basic rights of Israelis and Palestinians and to take steps to reverse the immediate and long-term damage to the livelihoods of the poorest and most marginalised people.

The most crucial immediate step is the recognition by all parties of the applicability of international law. The Palestinian Authority must act to ensure the protection of all Israeli civilians: there are no exceptions to this obligation. Suicide bombings especially must be condemned. In the words of the United Nations Secretary-General (UNSC, 5 August 2002) '...these attacks on civilians are immoral and illegal, as well as politically counter-productive.'

The Government of Israel must halt its illegal use of excessive force and collective punishment against Palestinian civilians. Security concerns can never provide exemption for states from the guidelines of humanitarian law. During the past two years of open conflict, the Israeli government has been responsible for attacks on emergency medical personnel, excessive use of force leading to civilian casualties, extra-judicial executions of suspected militants causing the deaths of scores of innocent women and children, demolitions of hundreds of homes, and settlement-related destruction of property.

Closure is a form of collective punishment that breaches international law and has devastating consequences for Palestinians' livelihoods, education, health and family life. According to a Human Rights Watch report on closure, 'These restrictions on movement are not exclusively designed to address security concerns, but are also punitive in nature, thus amounting to collective penalties that are proscribed under international law.'²

Forgotten Villages

This paper examines how rural Palestinian communities in the West Bank cope with the impact of closure. Oxfam, together with its partners, has been working with vulnerable groups in Palestinian villages for many years – with farmers and small producers, local women’s groups, Bedouins, village councils, small health clinics and volunteer doctors, and many others.

Approximately 60 per cent of the West Bank population lives in villages or small towns – some 945,000 people in over 600 localities.³ Village economies are highly dependent on their links to West Bank towns and Israel, particularly for jobs, markets and productive inputs, and services.⁴ Closure policies, combined with curfews, have undermined and even broken many of these links, leaving village communities facing impoverishment and unemployment, lack of access to services, a weakened agricultural sector, and increased vulnerability to Israeli settler violence.

What is closure?

Closure is a policy restricting the movement of Palestinian people, vehicles and goods in the Palestinian Territories. The Israeli government first implemented closure in 1991 and over the years it has taken numerous forms: internal or external, full or partial, with or without permits. Over the past years, as Palestinian attacks on Israelis have worsened, both the geographic scope of closure and the level of enforcement have increased steadily and systematically, restricting Palestinians to smaller and more limited areas.

The Government of Israel states that closure is to protect its citizens from suicide bombings and other attacks in Israel and settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Foreign Minister, Shimon Peres, recently stated of the Palestinian population, ‘Improving standards of living depends on only one thing, security. We cannot do what we want to do – withdraw the army from the positions it is holding – if the next day there’s a suicide bombing.’⁵

There is an internal debate as to whether closure is an effective way to improve the Israeli population’s security. A recent Israeli State Comptroller’s report revealed how closure was failing to ensure security. The report concluded that the 32 checkpoints along the seam-line⁶ manned by IDF soldiers and police do not fulfil their function of preventing attacks. Most of the time, terrorists entered Israel through these checkpoints.⁷

In addition to arguments over the efficacy of closure, international⁸ and Israeli human rights groups have condemned the closure policy as a form of collective punishment, causing suffering to many in an attempt to prevent the actions of a few. As such it is illegal under international humanitarian law. B’Tselem, a leading Israeli organisation, condemns closure as a violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, stating, ‘The sweeping nature of the restrictions imposed by Israel, the specific timing that it employs when

deciding to ease or intensify them and the destructive human consequences turn its policy into a clear form of collective punishment'.⁹ There are also fears that the cumulative effect of impoverishment resulting from closure will create a generation of poor and angry young people.¹⁰ This generation will be responsible for bringing peace, but is growing up to know only economic oppression and violence.

Since the start of the current *intifada* in September 2000, closure has intensified dramatically. In the West Bank, some 140 checkpoints now separate town from town, villages from cities, and for the first time, and in many places, village from neighbouring village. There are fixed and 'flying' military checkpoints that are swiftly erected and without warning; roads are blocked by military presence, by mounds of earth, boulders, concrete blocks and sometimes even by heaps of old cars; villages, hills and fields are encircled by barbed wire. Curfew – the ultimate form of closure, when military force is used to confine Palestinians to their homes – has become a regular occurrence.

At the same time, Israel has started building a 'security fence' to contain entirely the West Bank.¹¹ This barrier is a 350 kilometre-long complex of ditches, fences, walls, patrol roads and electronic surveillance devices,¹² which, when combined with movement restrictions within the Palestinian Territories, will permanently divide the West Bank into separate cantons. Whatever the motive for this policy, it will result in deeper, more permanent impact on the livelihoods of Palestinians and Israelis.

Closure now dominates all aspects of Palestinian life and affects everyone.¹³

The limitations of coping

The impact of closure has turned daily life for villagers into a struggle to survive. The means by which village households carry out this struggle are known, prosaically, as coping mechanisms. Households and communities use a wide variety of coping mechanisms in their attempts to confront closure at all the different levels of life: in market relations outside the home, in engagement with informal networks in the village and elsewhere, and of course, within the family itself.

Some households are better equipped to cope with new restrictions than others. Among the most vulnerable are the poor, particularly households headed by women, families with fixed medical expenses, and the elderly and all families who lack labour to work on the land. Today, however, it increasingly includes the new poor – families that before closure had incomes, but have now been made destitute by closure. These families lack the access to welfare available to the chronic poor.

Oxfam believes that many of the major coping mechanisms used by vulnerable families are now reaching their limits. The result is that

they are increasingly ineffective and in some cases, pose serious threats to the current and future well-being of village communities.

Life under closure

Closures have made 38-year old Ahmed's life hell. Every day is a struggle to survive and he barely scrapes a living for his two wives and baby daughter in the village of Ma'een. Located in Yatta District, near Hebron, the village is small, poor and increasingly isolated.

The only access road from Ma'een to the town of Yatta is a seven-kilometre dirt track. It has been closed since the start of the second *intifada*. If villagers want to go to Yatta for provisions, to see friends and family, visit the health clinic, go to school, or carry out any kind of business, they need time and money, as well as moral and physical strength.

Military checkpoints block both ends of the road. Concrete slabs and piles of earth guarded by Israeli soldiers prevent people from using it. Without warning, the Israeli military sets up additional 'flying' checkpoints, to prevent people from getting onto the road further up. Every three or four days the road is opened for a few hours. Getting through all these checkpoints involves long waits in the sun. Ahmed's sister gave birth to twins at the side of the road, near a flying checkpoint. The babies died and she was hospitalised due to complications with the birth.

If villagers manage to get to Yatta but want to continue on to Hebron – to attend university, go to work or get to the hospital – they have to take a mini-bus to Al-Fawar refugee camp, which they cross on foot, climbing over high earthen barricades. They must then negotiate another checkpoint in order to cross a settler road, climb another earthen barricade and finally catch a taxi to Hebron. If either Yatta, Al-Fawar camp or Hebron is under curfew, the long and arduous trip will have been in vain.

There are no alternative roads for the villagers to use because the area is under military control to protect the six settlements on the bypass road to Beersheva, 100 metres from the village. There is a new military control point on the hill overlooking the village, set up to protect the settlements and the road. A tank points down into the village. At night, powerful searchlights shine into people's homes.

Curfews – announced by loudspeaker and usually lasting several days at a time – became a regular occurrence in October 2001. Children cannot go to school and farmers have no access to their fields. Like his neighbours, Ahmed does not risk leaving his home during curfew.

In fact, Ahmed never leaves the village. Like many men throughout the West Bank, he is afraid to leave in case he is arrested by the soldiers at the first checkpoint he comes to.

Ahmed used to work as a plasterer in Hebron but now he is jobless. There is no work for him in the village. His first wife, Maryam, is now the family's breadwinner, embroidering dresses to sell. Ahmed's second wife, Samia, looks after their three year-old daughter at home.

They live together in a two-roomed house with an outside toilet and a small garden where Ahmed grows cucumbers, tomatoes and squash. They have no electricity bills because the family cannot afford to pay for the connection. But Ahmed owes NIS 2,000 for water and food. He is worried about how he is going to pay for his daughter's schooling.

From the start of July, the army has conducted nightly house-to-house raids in Ma'een, searching for wanted men. It is not the life Ahmed had imagined. 'We are animals in a big cage,' he says. 'My will to survive comes from my responsibility for my daughter and my two wives and sister.'

[Names have been changed throughout, to protect people's identity.]

1. Inside the family: cutting consumption, selling assets

Closure has meant getting by with less of everything – money, food and space. As households become poorer and more constrained, their primary recourse is to look for resources within the family itself. A basic coping mechanism is to use savings – accumulated for future investment or emergencies – to cover daily costs. The World Bank notes: ‘On the assumption that the average income has reduced by almost a half, and average consumption by one third, ...savings would permit households to maintain reasonable levels of consumption for seventeen months in all, i.e. until the spring of 2002.’¹⁴ By spring 2002, research suggests that 30 per cent of people in rural areas had run out of money.¹⁵ Oxfam interviews reveal that by summer 2002, many villagers had exhausted any savings they once had and now have to find other ways to get by.

In times of economic crisis and shortages, there are two basic coping mechanisms within the family: cutting consumption and reallocating resources on the one hand, and selling household assets on the other. While both these strategies are successful in that they allow families to make the most of their limited resources, they also carry serious threats to the immediate health and social well-being of family members. In particular, these strategies seriously undermine the household’s capacity for future recovery by eroding health, education and physical assets and by damaging relations within the family and community.

Cutting consumption: Women, responsible for the daily running of the household, find ways to make money go further. They cope by economising on a range of products, including essentials such as food and water.¹⁶ A PCBS survey found that 51 per cent of households reduced the quantity of food consumed, and 63 per cent the quality of food consumed.¹⁷ Women told Oxfam that techniques for cutting consumption range from the relatively harmless, such as inviting people round less, cooking smaller meals, and eliminating sweets, to more serious actions such as restricting variety in the family diet, cutting down on more expensive foods such as meat and fruit, substituting tea for milk and diluting milk powder for babies. These findings are confirmed by a study of 480 rural West Bank households, which shows that nearly half had members who had eaten less food for at least one day during the previous two weeks, with the vast majority citing money as the primary reason.¹⁸ While it is not surprising that households are buying less higher priced foods such as (protein-rich) meat and fish, the study found that well over

one quarter are also cutting back on inexpensive staples such as bread, potatoes and rice.

Most at risk of nutritional deficiency are young children and infants and pregnant and lactating women. A nutritional assessment conducted jointly by Johns Hopkins University, Al Quds University, and CARE International between May and July 2002 found that closure is having an impact on people's health. According to one of the authors,

Preliminary findings indicate an increase in acute malnutrition and chronic malnutrition among children ages 6-59 months in the West Bank, which is cause for concern. The indication is that this is largely economic rather than about access – a growing proportion of people cannot afford food.¹⁹

Changing the way resources are allocated: As part of cutting consumption, household members' entitlements to resources are altered to save money. Children may forgo enrolment in higher education and look for work instead. Women may go without food so that other family members can eat well and, as mentioned earlier, sacrifice their own medical needs. Rita Giacaman, the Director of ICPH, observes:

In the face of food shortages one can imagine that violence takes the form of unequal distribution of food resources in the home. This among the poor is common, where less food and less nutritious foods are given to women; men eat first, then boys, then girls, then the women of the house. This is the manifestation of patriarchy. Food distribution runs contrary to biological need – pregnant and lactating women first, then children, then men.

HDIP has concluded that 'the deteriorating economic situation and the closures will unquestionably lead to the deterioration in nutritional status' and states that poor people, pregnant women and children will suffer greatly from the long-term effects of nutritional deficiencies.²⁰

Anecdotal evidence suggests that adult children under current circumstances are unable to set up separate households thus placing a greater burden on parental households. Newlyweds who would normally move into a separate home or set of rooms are frequently compelled to continue living with their parents. Households are forced to expand when families cannot afford to buy or build a new home or additional rooms for the younger generation. As one unemployed man living with his wife, sister, mother and children in Abu Fallah, Ramallah District, notes, 'It makes it cheaper for us to live together.' However, these arrangements introduce potential tension in household relations as people who would prefer to live separately are forced to live together. Sharing food, money or water –

already in short supply – more thinly between a larger number of people can increase impoverishment.

Selling off household resources: Selling major family assets, mainly land, livestock and gold, is usually done when a household faces an immediate emergency (often health-related) or when all other forms of support have been exhausted. A survey of 960 households carried out between May and July 2002 found that 20 per cent of rural households in the previous two weeks had sold assets in order to buy food. This was a significantly higher proportion than among urban households (12.9 per cent).²¹ People told Oxfam that the first asset to be sold is the wife's gold, with livestock being sold later, and land last of all.

Ashraf is without work and lives with his wife and three children in Mughrayeh village in Ramallah District. Rima, his wife, sold her jewellery, then all their gold, then their cow and finally her husband's 50 per cent share in a tractor. Having sold their assets and finding it increasingly awkward to ask others for help, the family is becoming desperate. Rima caught Ashraf trying to drink poison. She stopped her husband killing himself, but confided that she cannot continue to live as they do, and is close to leaving him.

Hag Eid is a 73 year-old farmer who lives with his three wives in Beit Duqo in Jerusalem District. While in 2000 he produced 20 tanks of olive oil, which he sold in Ramallah and Jordan, in 2001, he only managed to sell eight tanks to villagers and relatives in Jordan. In addition, threats from Israeli settlers meant he could not access the land he rented outside the village. He has sold five dunums of land this year because he does not have the money to hire labour at a cost of JD 30 per day to plough the land. He has now stopped renting the land outside the village and fears that if he fails to earn enough money from the olive harvest again this year, he will have to sell more land.

Families sometimes resort to selling their assets to pay off mounting debts. Two families interviewed in Ibziq, a small Bedouin village in Jenin District, which relied on livestock as their main asset, could not afford to continue borrowing money for water or buying it on credit. One family has a debt of NIS 3000 to a local water trucker, and fears they will lose their entire herd this summer, as they cannot afford the price of water. Another sold 50 per cent of their herd as a direct result of the price of water.

In desperation, villagers are also selling the assets they invested in to cope with closure. Oxfam's discussion with a women's savings group in Faquah in Jenin District revealed that women were compelled to sell off assets from productive ventures. The fall in the price of cheese from NIS 15 to 8 per kilogram and the rising cost of animal feed means that some of the women have sold or slaughtered the livestock they purchased with credit from the savings group.

2. Informal networks and social support: credit, gifts, welfare and aid

When a family can no longer meet basic consumption needs or deal with emergencies through its own internal resources (by cutting consumption or selling assets), it quickly becomes dependent on a variety of informal support networks. Vulnerable households consistently described how they cope by using the village network of credit and debt, gifts and loans, and aid and welfare to meet basic needs such as food, water and other commodities and services.

In Rehiyeh in Hebron District, the al-Khirsh family consists of the parents and nine children. When the father could no longer get to his construction job in East Jerusalem, household monthly income declined from NIS 1,500 to NIS 140-200. The family survives on the one or two days work a month that the father gets locally, supplemented by 'gifts' of money from relatives, and by running up a NIS 4000 credit line at the local store.

The Halak family, also in Rehiyeh, has five members. The father also worked in construction in East Jerusalem, and has lost his job. The household is now destitute and survives on occasional agricultural work in exchange for food, daily gifts of food from relatives, donations from unknown sources (possibly the ICRC) of rice and sugar, and a NIS 2000 credit line at the local shop.

The credit system – life 'on account': Local credit – purchasing goods 'on account' at local stores – has proven to be one of the most important factors in keeping households afloat.²² A major fear expressed by many families is that they are, or will be, denied credit as they cannot maintain sufficient cash payments to keep the credit line viable. Needy families increasingly use money borrowed from or given by others to make a partial payment to a local creditor, simply to keep the credit line functioning.

The entire credit system, however, is at risk because of the shortage of disposable income. FAFO, the Norwegian research institute, warns, 'Shopkeepers are increasingly hesitant about giving credit as their suppliers no longer provide credit or because their own savings have been depleted.'²³

Aysar, a shop owner in Biddo village in Ramallah District, restricts credit to those public employees whom he knows will clear their debts once per month. He is forced to operate

more in cash now because his suppliers only accept cash and he can no longer get loans from the bank. Half of those who used to receive credit no longer do because they are without regular work.

Another shop owner in Rehiyeh, where there are three local stores, told Oxfam in January 2002 that he had credit debts to local villagers of NIS 140,000 – before the *intifada* his usual credit line was NIS 25,000. It has only been those villagers with PA salaries who keep him afloat, and he has now decided that he simply cannot extend more credit.

Mohammed Adeh has a grocery shop in Artas village in Bethlehem. The credit he extends to families is dependent on whether they can reliably pay at least half of it back at the end of the month. Before the second *intifada*, he gave credit of between NIS 1000-1500 on a regular basis to 25 families. Now he only gives credit to ten families whom he completely trusts to fulfil their repayment obligations.

There are indications that credit may be particularly crucial for the numerous new poor, who are less likely to have access to supplementary welfare networks than the chronic poor, and who amassed large credit debts in the first months of closure, in the belief that the situation would soon return to normal. Mohammed Abu Ahmed and his wife and children live in a large impressive new villa in Asira al-Qibliya. He and his brother owned a marble factory in the village of Bidya. With a booming market in Israel, business was good, and monthly income average NIS 4000-5000. The family spent around NIS 2000 on expenses, and used the remainder to build the villa, not for savings. Today, the villa is empty of all but the most basic furniture. The marble factory is bankrupt and monthly income down to NIS 500 for eight persons. Mohammed is panic-stricken. He has accumulated massive debts to a variety of creditors, sold the family land at reduced price, and has no idea of how to cope now. One of his children is severely disturbed, and requires tranquillisers that cost NIS 600 a month – without them, the son's behaviour is uncontrollable. Mohammed lives in daily hope that closure will disappear, and in the meantime continues to amass debt by constantly opening new credit lines.

Non-payment of utility bills is a form of credit. Issa Abu Mohammed owns a small take-away restaurant in Biddo village. Customers owe him NIS 1500 and he owes suppliers NIS 3000, and has five months' outstanding water and electricity bills. PCBS surveys reveal that most households cannot pay utility bills; on average households have three outstanding bills.²⁴ In interviews with village councils, Oxfam found that debt was being systematically accumulated at the village level as well, with local councils no longer collecting payments for garbage collection, sewage disposal and other local services.

The limits to giving and receiving help: According to an ICRC 2001 report, 'It is commonplace in the West Bank villages to find some 14-20 per cent of the village population (the richer) supporting with loans or gifts 40-60 per cent of fellow village households (the poor).'

Families have surprisingly diverse sources for gifts or loans²⁵ of money – relatives, former employers, neighbours, or any well-off contact in or out of the village. A study of 960 households found that over 50 per cent of rural households borrowed money in the previous two weeks to buy food.²⁶

While the ethos of giving to and helping those worse off is an important element of both traditional village life and of Islamic practice, recipient families are clearly unhappy with continued reliance on others, and aware that the prolongation of closure is putting a terrible strain on the resources of those supporting them. Yasser from Abu Fallah in Ramallah District has a large circle of influential contacts who help his family, but they do not compensate for a regular income.

I know all the people in the village. That's going to help us. It's OK to ask friends for loans every now and again but it is shameful to ask for money and I feel useless turning to them every month.

Ashraf lives with his wife and three children in Mughrayeh village in Ramallah district. Two years ago, while harvesting dates on a settlement in the Jordan valley, he fell from a tree and became paralysed. Now his family is dependent on social support from a range of sources including relatives, religious organisations, the local UPMRC clinic and the ICRC. However, giving and receiving this support has become problematic.

'It has become harder for people to help each other materially and spiritually. You know that people have their own problems and you do not want to bother them with yours. Because of economic difficulties, people can't afford to look after each other like they used to.'

Yasser used to work in the Jericho casino earning USD 3000 per month. At the beginning of the second *intifada* the casino went bankrupt due to closure. Since then, Yasser has been sitting at home with no income. His family of five relies on his sister's meagre teacher's salary of NIS 1500. Before the *intifada*, he used to give olive oil to the families of prisoners. He no longer can. He used to invite relatives around weekly. Now he doesn't because he cannot afford the meat. He is no longer able to help friends with money and gifts for weddings. Yasser's economic and social status in the village was based on his benevolent giving to others. He has never had to ask others for material assistance and is ashamed to do so because it demonstrates his decline in status.

Yasser's predicament illustrates another phenomenon – the greater numbers of unemployed men and their families who are becoming dependent on one relative. In order to share food expenses and avoid shaming economically dependent family members, the man's mother often takes on the role of collecting money from family members and redistributing it – as she did in Yasser's household.

It is doubtful if the broader Palestinian community is economically capable of continuing to support others. Unless closure eases substantially, the general economic indicators point to an inevitable

decline. Gifts and loans are a crucial buffer for needy families between the ability to make do versus total dependence on welfare.

Social welfare and aid: People have definite opinions on the value of different forms of social welfare and aid. The most common complaint is that much assistance only comes once or twice - and is thus of little value for long-term coping. Families cite the one-time only cash payments from the Ministry of Labour, or the infrequent UNRWA food packages, which last some 20 days only. Institutions such as the *zakat* (Islamic trust), which are more likely to provide regular monthly food or cash, are considered most effective.

The most consistent welfare distributions (*zakat*, MOSA and UNRWA special hardship cases, village council subsidies, etc.) are available mainly to the chronic poor - many of whom were social hardship cases before the *intifada*. While these families are definitely needy, the formal and informal welfare system appears not to have adapted to meet the needs of the new poor - families previously getting by but made destitute by closure-related income loss.

Ali Abu Mohammed of Asira al-Qibliya has two wives and eight children. Before the *intifada*, family income was only NIS 1200 per month, and was subsidised by credit at the local store, monthly *zakat* donations of food, and social assistance from MOSA. Since the *intifada*, income has fallen to NIS 500 per month. While the family is quite poor and lives in very bad conditions, donations from both the *zakat* and the village council have increased to help meet closure-related needs. Thus the family's situation is not dramatically different than before the *intifada*.

One general comment on welfare is the prevailing need for cash or income, as opposed to food. Again, it is the chronic poor, the social hardship cases, who are best able to benefit from food aid.²⁷ Other families cite the availability of food if they only had cash to pay for it. For many communities, it is clear that providing disposable income would allow families to make payments to local stores or creditors, protecting or reactivating their local credit lines, thus providing them with a longer-term access to food and other commodities.

3. The struggle to produce: back to the land?

With incomes no longer coming from jobs in West Bank towns and in Israel, families in rural areas now depend much more on agriculture.²⁸ However, they are doing so at a time when closure causes greater and greater obstacles to markets and inputs,²⁹ and

when they are also facing increased security threats from Israeli settlers and soldiers.

Getting to the fields: To avoid settlers and soldiers, checkpoints, closed roads, and curfews, Palestinian farmers have to find alternative and much longer routes on foot or donkey to reach their fields, and are often unable to reach them at all. This prevents them from carrying out such basic tasks as ploughing, sowing, fertilising, pruning and reaping.

In Beit Qad village, Jenin District, curfews leave inhabitants housebound two or three times per week from three in the morning until three in the afternoon. As a consequence, farmers have been unable to tend their fields and many crops are now disease-ridden. The problem of disease control has been further exacerbated by the shortage and rising cost of pesticides. Even when the curfew is lifted, villagers are scared to venture far from home because of the threat of being shot by settlers if they approach their fields or orchards.

Violence between settlers and Palestinians: Since the start of the *intifada*, there has been a marked increase in Palestinian attacks against settlers, and in settler violence against Palestinian communities. Without minimising the violence done to settlers, this paper focuses on the forgotten villages. A recent study in the Ramallah area found that 17 out of 29 villages had experienced intimidation and threats of violence from nearby settlements, including the destruction of crops, water supplies, electrical infrastructure and private property, and blocked access to agricultural land and markets.³⁰ The biggest impact of actual and threatened violence by settlers comes during harvest, when damage to crops can devastate rural livelihoods.³¹

In Rehiyeh, Hebron District, villagers lamented that settlers had uprooted 800 dunums (about 200 acres) of olive trees last April and that in June their wheat fields were set on fire and their crops destroyed by settlers. These farmers were depending on the income from selling the oil and wheat. The head of the village council, Sheikh Issa Abu El Halwa, estimates that each family lost NIS 2000-3000. Fields around the village of Deir Nidham, Ramallah District, were left fallow this year because settlers vandalised their water sources and farmers could not irrigate their crops.³²

Restricted access to markets: Because of closure, rural communities in the West Bank now have greatly restricted access to markets – both in the Palestinian Territories and abroad – and it is becoming increasingly difficult to sell their products locally because of rising poverty in the villages.

A quarter of the 350 households in Asira al-Qibliya, near Nablus, now rely on agriculture to earn a living, compared with ten per cent

two years ago. According to the village council, Asira al-Qibliya used to produce about 10,000 chickens every 40 days but that number has fallen to 2000 because access to markets has diminished and demand has dropped. Farmers are no longer rearing chickens because they cannot sell them.

In Beit Surik, Jerusalem District, villagers found it almost impossible to get their plums to market this year. Beit Surik plums were once exported to Jordan, but in recent years villagers have had to rely on markets in Ramallah, Nablus and Jerusalem. Since the start of the second *intifada*, the five main roads into Beit Surik have been closed, and farmers have had to resort to alternative routes, such as dirt tracks and by-roads. Mohammed Shkir, an agronomist with PARC, calculates that the village has lost JD 150,000. Desperate producers take risks to sell their fruit. The case of Subhi Jber, a farmer from Beit Surik, is not unique. He was caught entering Jerusalem in a car with Israeli number plates but without the requisite Israeli ID card. Subhi Jber was summoned to court, fined and his plums were confiscated.

If farmers cannot sell their produce, many will not have the money to invest in next year's crops. Rula Nesnas, Director of Public Relations at PARC, says that the situation in Beit Surik is not unique. 'All villages face the same problem. Now it is plums, in August it will be the same problem with figs and grapes because ongoing restrictions affect all agriculture.'

In Deir Ibzi'a, west of Ramallah, the fig crop is a vital source of income. In the past, these figs were sold throughout the central West Bank and as far afield as Tel Aviv in Israel. But now, because of the closures, Deir Ibzi'a farmers only manage to get their fruit to nearby villages whose roads are not blocked by Israeli military checkpoints.³³ As a result there is a glut of figs on the local market and their price has dropped from NIS 10 per kilogram last year to NIS 1.5 per kilogram this summer.

Increased costs: The 'unique system of complex regulations and procedures mainly linked to Israeli security considerations'³⁴ leads to high transaction costs in the agricultural sector. The cost of chemicals, animal feed and water has risen largely because transport now has to use alternative and longer routes avoiding main roads. The cost of additional fuel is passed on from the suppliers to the farmers.

A farmers' association in Jenin District stated that its members can no longer afford to buy fertilisers and pesticides, tankered water, or animal fodder. In Beit Qad village, the price of essential inputs has increased by 30 per cent because lorries from Jenin have to take a 40 kilometre detour to avoid roadblocks rather than the direct 10 kilometre journey.

In Beit Duqo in Ramallah district, Ahmed Abu Abed and his wife are struggling to pay for the fertilisers and pesticides they need for cultivating grapes, vegetables and olives. In the last two years, these inputs have risen in price by 10-20 per cent. As most Palestinian middlemen now only accept cash payments, Ahmed has gone heavily into debt to his relatives.

In Ibziq, village income before the *intifada* came from a mixture of work in Israel, rain-fed agriculture, and raising goats. Now, no one works in Israel and the number of households investing in livestock has increased by some 50 per cent. In one extended family of 17, four sons lost their jobs in Israel, making the family almost totally dependent on their herd. The family's income has fallen from approximately NIS 6500 a month to NIS 1500. Before the *intifada* they sold approximately 100 goats a year at NIS 540 each, but now they only manage to sell 40 goats a year at NIS 360 per goat. In addition, the family has a debt of NIS 3000 to a local water carrier. They are afraid of losing their entire herd this summer, because they cannot afford the price of water.

Although the agricultural sector is still productive, the indications are that its capacity will diminish significantly if closure policies are not eased.

ALERT!

This year's olive harvest at risk

There is growing concern about this year's olive harvest, which begins in the autumn. A quarter of the Palestinian agricultural sector is dedicated to olive production. Nearly two thirds of the Palestinian population – and therefore a higher proportion of the rural population – benefit from income from olive oil. This year, the olive yield promises to be very high.³⁵ But the entire production and marketing cycle is at risk of being wiped out because of closure, with the result that thousands of people will be deprived of a primary source of income. This has potentially devastating implications as many families are relying on the olive oil income to pay for basic goods and services, and to pay off their rising debts. Support networks that provide vital credit to rural communities are already under strain and they risk breaking down completely if this year's olive crop fails.

'This olive season is very important,' says Judeh Abdullah Jamal, Deputy General Director of PARC. 'At harvest time, a large number of people have to pay merchants for food and fodder. If they don't sell their olives they won't be able to pay them. There will be many households who will no longer have food security. In the past, these households had alternative work in settlements or in Israel. Now they depend only on olives. The failure of the olive harvest is going to have a very big impact.'³⁶

The Case of Salfet

The 19 villages in the Salfet region, south-west of Nablus, produce 12 per cent of all the olives grown in the West Bank. It is the fourth most productive olive-growing region in the Palestinian Territories, churning out 2500 tons of oil annually and bringing in much needed income.

Access prevented: Salfet farmers are regularly denied access to their trees, olive presses and markets, mainly because of the existence of 14 Israeli settlements, a military camp, and new settlement bypass roads in the district. Recently local Palestinians were informed by the IDF that if they want to cross the main by-pass road, Aber As-Samareh, they will need to apply for permits.³⁷

Forced to avoid these new roads, villagers must find alternative routes to reach their fields and trees. Approximately 70 per cent of the alternative roads – those connected to main or bypass roads – have been closed by the IDF with concrete blocks and ditches so cars cannot get through. Farmers travel on foot or by donkey, and even a short journey becomes a major expedition.

Salfet farmers are regularly threatened and intimidated by settlers. Some have been physically beaten as they tend their olive trees and others scared away by settlers shooting into the air. On several occasions last year, soldiers reportedly emptied tanks of newly pressed oil at IDF roadblocks. Since the start of the *intifada*, soldiers have uprooted 7000 olive trees as punishment for Palestinians for throwing stones.

Maintenance made difficult: Olive growers are less vulnerable to attack from settlers if they work in groups, but this is not feasible except at harvest time. Therefore, the general year-round maintenance of olive groves – ploughing, fertilising and pruning – is being neglected. To ensure good

yields, olive trees have to be pruned immediately after harvest, but many farmers will be too afraid to prune their trees this year. Consequently, next year's crop is likely to bring less income than it should, even if closures are lifted.

Difficulties with processing and marketing: As they are only used for two months of the year, it is more economical to have a co-operatively owned olive press serving several villages rather than one in each village. Farmers generally have to transport their olives several kilometres to the nearest press.

Olives should be picked and pressed on the same day. Delays and difficulties in transport mean that the olives start going off and the acidity level in the fruit rises. In just a few days olives can become unfit for human consumption and are then only good for making soap. Because of closure, there is real risk that the oil produced this year may be of poorer quality and fetch a lower price than usual.

Because of closure, olive growers in Salfeet can no longer export their oil to their traditional customers in Gaza, Israel, Jordan and the Gulf States. Instead, they have to rely on local markets in Ramallah, Jericho and Bethlehem.

Transportation is prohibitively expensive and there has been a fall in local demand because Palestinians have less money to spend. More and more often, farmers are physically prevented from reaching markets to sell oil, while city merchants are less likely to reach villages to buy it.

Reduced consumption: Palestinian olive oil consumption has halved in the last two years.³⁸ Normally, households consume two or three 18-litre tanks of oil per year, but now they use more vegetable oil, which is three times cheaper than olive oil. As a result, much of last year's oil was not sold and will be worth even less once this year's crop is pressed. It is expected that this year's oil will fetch less than the 2001 price of USD 63 per 18-litre tank.³⁹

4. Deteriorating health services: making do with local health care

Closure has had a greater impact on the health of people living in villages than those living in larger urban areas.⁴⁰ Although village clinics have managed to continue providing a basic service, people with medical emergencies and chronic illnesses cannot get the specialist treatment they need.⁴¹ Over 600 incidents have been reported in which the IDF have denied PRCs and UPMRC ambulances permission to pass through roadblocks.⁴² The consequences have often been fatal.⁴³ Approximately 50 people have died because they could not receive appropriate medical attention.⁴⁴

In response, some villages operate a back-to-back ambulance service in which patients are transferred from one ambulance to another on either side of the checkpoint so that they can reach the hospital. When this is not operating, people use whatever other kind of transport is available. Deir Nidham village, for example, has been closed since the beginning of the second *intifada* because it is on a main settler road. Since it does not have a fully functioning clinic, patients have to travel over the hills to Ramallah by donkey.

Another strategy is to substitute professional health care services with local alternatives. These include using often untrained local midwives, local [and often inadequately equipped and staffed] clinics for emergency cases, taking non-prescription medicines, and relying on traditional health-care practices. In the worst cases, people ignore their health problems altogether. While some of these solutions provide essential and even life-saving support, others can be inadequate or even detrimental to the health of the individuals concerned.

The burden on village clinics: Village clinics have assumed the full burden of emergency and chronic cases without having either the trained staff or equipment to cope. The number of cases at the Biddo primary health care clinic increased by almost 100 per cent between January and May this year (from 816 to 1534). However, the clinic is unequipped to treat renal failure patients who have begun arriving there for the first time. In Aboud village, Ramallah District, the clinic has seen its list of patients increase by 20 per cent. Many of these new patients are suffering from leukaemia, which is normally treated in Ramallah. Mughrayeh primary health care clinic, also in Ramallah District, has seen its number of patients rise from 300 to 450 this year. Many of these are seeking treatment for hypertension and hyperglycaemia which are normally treated in Ramallah.

The biggest impact of the reliance on village-based care has been on women's health. Before the *intifada*, 95 per cent of women gave birth in hospitals. According to HDIP, this number has fallen to less than 50 per cent. For example, in January 2000, Hebron's Mohammed Ali Mohtaseb hospital had 148 deliveries compared with only 63 in January 2001. Giving birth outside the hospital in an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty and without access to professional care for the mother, whether it be at home, or, worse, at a checkpoint, is not only undignified, but seriously jeopardises the health of both mother and child. There are at least 39 documented cases of women giving birth at checkpoints.⁴⁵

Many mothers prepare for giving birth by moving from their village to stay with relatives in the town so that they can get to the hospital in time.⁴⁶ To reduce the risk to expectant mothers, doctors' clinics have been turned into birthing centres. Back-up assistance for complicated cases, or when families are alone under curfew, is provided from the city hospital by telephone.⁴⁷ A doctor at Tulkarem Palestinian Red Crescent Maternity Hospital regularly gives instructions this way to village health workers and traditional birth attendants during complicated deliveries.

While clinics and other village-level alternatives play an important role in providing emergency medical support, they do not provide the level and quality of service available in hospital. Most villages do not have a full-time clinic or doctor, and military closure prevents staff from reaching village clinics.⁴⁸ In villages, the incidence of stillbirths was five times higher in July 2001 than in September 2000 and there has been a rise in the number of miscarriages and infections due to stress and trauma. The UPMRC clinic in Mughrayeh has noted a two-fold increase in miscarriages between April and May 2002. A doctor at the clinic recounted a case where a woman who could not get to the hospital in Ramallah gave birth at home with the help of a friend. However, because her friend cut the umbilical cord with contaminated scissors the baby became infected with gangrene.

Substituting alternative services and going without health care:

Another danger is that households substitute medicines that are in short supply with inappropriate alternatives. In one household Oxfam interviewed in Rehiyeh, Hebron district, a woman's son was suffering from asthma. Unable to find his medicine in the village or Hebron, she substituted with water in the ventilation machine and made his condition worse.

ICPH research revealed that people are going back to indigenous medical practices and the use of herbal remedies, including for mental health or stress-related illnesses. These practices are a double-edged sword. Whilst some can be helpful, others can cause serious harm. One UPMRC doctor described how a traditional healer had

incorrectly put a villager's broken leg in a homemade cast. When the villager eventually had to go to the hospital the doctors re-broke his leg so that it could heal properly.

According to the UPMRC clinic in Mughrayeh, families cope with chronic illness by economising. Blood sugar tests that should be done three times a day are only done once a month, whilst high blood pressure tablets are being taken every other day instead of on a daily basis. Increasingly, families are reporting that they no longer seek treatment and hope instead that the illness will simply go away. The Tulkarem Palestinian Red Crescent Maternity Hospital reported that women are not going for hospital operations because they cannot afford to pay for them. Likewise, women with positive smear test results are not returning to the hospital for treatment. Tamara Tamimi, Director of Projects at HDIP, told Oxfam:

When 70 per cent of people are below the poverty line, the first thing you see is a change in care-seeking practices. Women are the last to see doctors because their priorities are food and taking care of their children and husbands. Patriarchy becomes stronger when resources are stretched.⁴⁹

5. Coping without adequate water or sanitation

Water has long been a major problem for rural people.⁵⁰ Ordinarily, households without a water network rely on rain and spring water, which they store in cisterns in the wet winter months. In summer, when these run dry, they buy water from water tankers. With tightening closure, villages across the West Bank are experiencing a dramatic decline in their ability to access sufficient water.

A growing number of water networks are no longer functioning at full capacity.⁵¹ Villages with piped water therefore face the same problems as those without, but are less likely to have coping mechanisms at hand, such as individual or communal cisterns.⁵² Also, villagers report that settlers vandalise water supplies and prevent villagers from collecting water at springs.⁵³

The price of trucked water rose sharply at the start of the second *intifada* as the increased transport costs incurred by truckers having to use longer, alternative routes to get to villages were passed on to customers. The local authorities of 11 localities interviewed by Oxfam reported an average increase of 82 per cent in the price of tankered water, as the table below shows.

Increases in the price of tankered water

Village/ District	Summer 2000 (NIS/cubic metre)	Summer 2001 (NIS/cubic metre)	Increase (%)
Asira al-Qibliya/Nablus	11	17	55
Ibziq/Jenin	20	80	300
Madama/Nablus	12	15	25
Aqaba/Jenin	8	13	63
Rihiyeh/Hebron	2.1	3.6	71
Shyukh/Hebron	16	25	56
Suisya/Hebron	25	40	60
Deir Samit/Hebron	20	30	50
Jala/Hebron	20	25	25
Deir al-Asal/Hebron	12	25	108
Kharas/Hebron	18	25	39

Households cope with the rising price of water by going into debt to water providers, seeking out alternative water sources (that are often not clean) and cutting back on water consumption. All of these responses pose threats to family well-being.

Going into debt: Households rely heavily on a system of credit to water providers. However, as households' debts mount, their access to further credit is threatened.

In household after household, families said that they are selling their animals because they consume too much water. In Ibziq, where almost half the villagers raise livestock, the cost of a cubic metre has increased four-fold since the start of the current *intifada*. Families that invested their dwindling assets in livestock, often after losing regular jobs in Israel, are now unable to afford water to keep their goats and sheep alive. One family has had to sell half their herd because of the increased price of water. As a result, these people's long-term livelihoods are under threat.

Using unclean water: Villagers search for cheaper sources of water, but in so doing, put themselves at risk of disease. In Rehiyeh, women resort to taking water from irrigation channels and boiling or filtering it through cloth to use for drinking, cooking and cleaning. While boiling and filtering does significantly reduce the likelihood of disease, the danger is that purification is not done properly in all households.

In Mughrayeh, rainwater cisterns and wells were not cleaned or chlorinated this summer due to the lack of supplies from Ramallah.

Because pathogens (disease-causing organisms) accumulate at the bottom of cisterns, as rainwater supplies run out the risk of illness increases. In three villages visited by Oxfam, households were scraping the water from the bottom of their cisterns because deliveries by tanker had been delayed due to closure restrictions. Four out of ten households Oxfam interviewed reported an increase in the incidence of diarrhoea.⁵⁴

Cutting water consumption: Village women told Oxfam that they were concerned about the increasing difficulty in providing a clean and safe home. They have to be much more frugal with water to minimise household expenditure. Commonly used water-saving measures include recycling grey water and using it to wash floors, bathing much less frequently, and not washing fruits or vegetables.

In Rehiyeh, Hebron District, the school is no longer cleaned. The washrooms and toilets are in a terrible state and the classrooms are dirty. Children now have to bring a bottle of drinking water to school.

By using less water people are putting their health at risk. Without adequate quantities of clean water, the likelihood of getting diarrhoea is greater.⁵⁵ One recent study⁵⁶ shows that in a quarter of the rural households interviewed, a member was suffering from diarrhoea; in approximately half these cases they had not had an adequate amount of water for bathing over the previous two weeks.

According to internationally accepted standards,⁵⁷ the minimum amount of water required in a disaster response is 15 litres per person per day for drinking, cooking, personal and domestic hygiene. Oxfam assessment teams have found rural households whose water consumption has fallen to 16 litres per person per day.

These international standards do not include situations where water may be needed in large quantities for specific purposes, such as to water animals that may be vital to livelihoods and the well-being of the community.

ALERT!

Villages are running out of water

Villages across the West Bank are running out of water and a major crisis is looming. As people's access to water diminishes, their health and well-being is threatened.

In 25 villages in Tubas, Jenin, Nablus and Salfeet Districts,⁵⁸ the rainwater cisterns dried up between May and June. Since then, villagers have had to depend on water brought in by truck but many cannot afford the cost.

Tanker drivers in these districts sometimes stop trying to get to villages because they are too inaccessible, there are too many roadblocks to get through on the way, they are afraid the soldiers at the checkpoints will empty their tanks, or because they know that even if they make it through all the roadblocks, the villagers will not be able to pay.

Before the current *intifada*, all the villages that Oxfam visited relied heavily on work in Israel, but now 70 to 90 per cent of the workforce is unemployed. As a consequence, household incomes have fallen drastically. At the same time, the cost of tankered water has gone up, so the proportion of household income spent on water has also risen. Oxfam estimates that in Nablus District an average 21 per cent of household expenditure now goes on water, while in Jenin District the proportion is 27 per cent, and in Salfeet District it is 39 per cent.⁵⁹

For the last two years, cash-strapped families have either borrowed money to pay for water or bought it on credit, but these sources of support are becoming exhausted.

Some water-supply companies have stopped providing water on credit to people who can no longer guarantee repayment. Abu Jamal, a water provider in the Jenin District, sells water to 290 households in five villages. He now only gives credit to those who have cleared their debts from last year -- but only 20 per cent have done so. He is still owed NIS 27,000 from 2001 and has run up NIS 15,000 in credit so far this year. The remaining 80 per cent have to pay him upfront in cash or go without. Of his usual clientele, 80 households have stopped buying water from him because they cannot afford it.⁶⁰

6. Disintegrating community and household relations

Despite the immense lengths to which households go in order to make a living under closure, there is mounting evidence of the failure of households and communities to adapt. Closure elicits negative responses - psychological stress and violence - that detrimentally affect social relations.

Family and community relations give villagers the strength to cope with closure. However, as the economic situation continues to decline and the possibility of change for the better seems more remote, villagers' resilience is worn down. Elia Awad, the Director of the Mental Health Department of PRCS, notes,

We are numb. We do not sympathise like before. We are overwhelmed. But in time, the emotional impact of this will appear in a negative form and hurt our families.⁶¹

This emotional impact of closure has resulted in 'an epidemic of psychological trauma'.⁶² The psychological consequences are particularly severe in villages. Village men have been unemployed for a greater length of time than men in towns because of the difficulties of getting to work in cities and Israel. In addition, their close proximity to settlements leaves villagers fearful of violence and vandalism.

Feelings of continual distress are high,⁶³ particularly among older people, children, women and unemployed men. Middle-income men who in the past were able to provide for their family but are now dependent on others for assistance suffer because their dignity and pride has been compromised. Doctors are seeing psychosomatic complaints such as heart problems in men in Hebron villages because they have been devastated by their loss of status in the community.⁶⁴

An opinion poll conducted in May 2002 found that 68 per cent of the respondents reported that children are facing emotional difficulties.⁶⁵ Psychologists working on UNICEF projects have observed that restrictions on children's movement - not being able to go on trips, the curtailment of future career plans, and the separation of families - have led to children developing a strong sense of injustice and the belief that those with power can impose their will, regardless of whether it is right or wrong.⁶⁶ Sleeping disorders - such as bedwetting, nightmares, sleep walking - are widespread manifestations of the psychological difficulties children face.⁶⁷ In villages in Hebron District, parents note that their children are more violent and no longer respect their parents.⁶⁸

Gender relations: Men's violence towards women in the home shows signs of having increased as sanctions against men's violence weaken. This is part of a wider pattern of more frequent open conflict in the community as traditional systems that regulate people's behaviour break down. In the past, in cases of domestic disputes, representatives from the husband and wife's families would meet under the elders' supervision. The husband and his relatives had to ensure that the abuse would stop. Now, women's isolation from family support due to the expense and/or difficulty of travel makes it harder for them to flee violence, especially in cases of cross-village marriage.⁶⁹

UPMRC and PRCS clinics visited by Oxfam have observed a rise in cases of violence against women and children in the home. WCLAC has documented an increase in the number of women victims of men's violence turning to women's centres for counselling since the outbreak of the second *intifada*. Maha Abu Dayyeh Shamas, the Centre's Director, states,

The household becomes like a pressure cooker that explodes sometimes in a controlled and sometimes an uncontrolled way. The pressure on the family is so high and it expresses itself in many ways – people feel a searing anger, become violent, cry and are always on edge.⁷⁰

Closure throws gender roles into flux. Men feel undermined by their loss of a breadwinner role. In interviews, women told Oxfam how their husbands felt they had failed and sometimes took this frustration out on them. Yasser from Abu Fallah in Ramallah District comments:

I am reduced to sitting, waiting and hoping. I am exhausted and disappointed. I feel bad because my family can't eat well. Because we are short of money, I find it difficult to talk to my wife and get angry with the children easily.

Men repeatedly said that one of the most difficult aspects of no longer being a breadwinner is their inability to provide for their children, whether it be a request for some change to buy a piece of watermelon or fees for enrolment into university. Men's inability to meet their children's expectations often triggered their shouting, breaking of objects, or violence against the wife or child. Women mentioned that the difficulty of providing household necessities has meant that they argue with their husbands more about money and food. Tamara Tamimi, director of projects at HDIP notes:

Women and men's daily life in villages has totally changed. It's not men's place to be in the home. Women are used to their men being away from nine till five or for several days at a time if they work in Israel. The fact that men are around all day unemployed and feeling directly the oppression of the Israeli government and military causes

friction and tension. Some men feel impotent because they are unable to protect their family. And of course this disrupts children too...

The mother-in-law is becoming a more powerful figure in rural households. Women report that the mother-in-law has greater control over the workings of the household and can instruct her son to beat his wife, forbid her from leaving the house or seeing her parents.⁷¹

Relations between parents and children: Closure also reverberates negatively on parents' relations with their children. Home life during closure can be quarrelsome and tedious and dominated by irritable unemployed men who control their wives and children.⁷² Parents are unable to protect their children⁷³ and children trust their parents less, thereby threatening the parent-child bond.⁷⁴

Parents may overcompensate for their inability to provide a secure home by restricting their children more. One study reported that 40 per cent of respondent parents had changed their behaviour towards their children since the beginning of the *intifada*. 76 per cent of those increased the time spent with children. Villagers relied more on corporal punishment.⁷⁵ In rural areas, girls in particular, spend more time at home. In villages in Yatta, an area south of Hebron, parents prevented girls from making the journey to distant schools.⁷⁶ WCLAC reports that many parents fear that travelling on bypass roads exposed girls to sexual harassment by Israeli soldiers.⁷⁷

Policy recommendations

Oxfam calls on all parties to this conflict to uphold international humanitarian and human rights law, particularly as stated in the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 relating to civilians in the time of war, in particular those living under occupation. An international protection mechanism should be an immediate priority to avert further loss of life among both Israeli and Palestinian civilians.

Oxfam denounces the spiralling violence against civilians being perpetrated by both sides to this conflict in direct contravention of international humanitarian law. We condemn the activities of Palestinian suicide bombers against Israeli citizens and acts of violence committed against Palestinian civilians by the IDF and by Israeli settlers.

Long-term protection of civilians will only come through a just peace for Israelis and Palestinians. There is no alternative to negotiations and to a reasonable timetable to be agreed by both sides. Any framework for such negotiations must include UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, which call for Israeli withdrawal from lands occupied since 1967 and reaffirm the right of Israel and a future Palestinian state to exist within secure borders, with the end to illegal occupation and the status of Jerusalem resolved. In addition, a permanent solution to the status of over five million Palestinian refugees must be addressed in a way that is consistent with international refugee law.

The focus of this paper has been on the social and economic impact of Israeli closure on the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians living in forgotten villages across the West Bank. In relation to this issue, Oxfam makes the following specific recommendations.

Recommendations for the International Community

- The International Community should intensify diplomatic efforts to bring an end to this conflict and secure a just peace for Israelis and Palestinians. It should also maintain pressure on the Israeli Government and Palestinian Authority to halt the spiralling violence against civilians and uphold international humanitarian law with regard to their protection.
- The International Community should intensify diplomatic pressure on the Government of Israel to ease its policy of closure and curfew of Palestinian communities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Closure is a form of collective punishment and presents real hardship for a broad segment of the population, many of whom are innocent victims of the wider conflict. As

such, it infringes political, civil, social and economic rights, and is a breach of international humanitarian law.

- The International Community should take appropriate measures to provide an international monitoring body and an international protection mechanism to avert further loss of life. Such a body would serve to secure an independent basis for establishing accountability to international human rights and international humanitarian law by all parties.
- The International Community should review trade agreements with Israel and the Palestinian Authority to monitor abuses actively and to withdraw preferential conditions if abuses occur.

Recommendations for the Government of Israel

The Government of Israel has an obligation under the Fourth Geneva Convention to ensure the well-being of the civilian population living in the territories it occupies, who are legally considered as protected persons. To uphold its obligations under international humanitarian law, the Israeli Government should undertake a number of urgent measures:

- The Government of Israel should end its policy of closure and curfew. This requires removing or at the very least regulating checkpoints so as to allow trading, farming, and other forms of economic and social enterprise that sustain the livelihoods of the population. Farmers must be assured of access to their land and markets during the upcoming olive harvest. Restrictions on external border access should be lifted or subject to reform, allowing optimum movement of Palestinian people and goods.
- The Israel Defence Forces should allow health workers and ambulances to move freely between villages and cities. Rural populations must be granted access to specialist health services in urban areas. Water tankers must be able to deliver regular water supplies to the rural population, particularly in areas without networked water systems, or where access has been disrupted by conflict. Access to closed communities must be guaranteed to international and local aid and relief agencies.
- The Government of Israel should withdraw its military forces to positions before the current hostilities, and halt all attacks on and damages to Palestinian civilian infrastructure.
- The Israel Defence Forces must provide adequate protection to rural communities from settler violence. In particular, they should monitor and punish aggression against Palestinian farmers and their property. Acts of intimidation or vandalism by

settlers should be regarded as criminal and prosecuted accordingly.

Recommendations for the Palestinian Authority

- The PA must ensure the protection of Israeli civilians. It should condemn and seek to prevent the activities of suicide bombers and prosecute all parties engaging in illegal attacks against civilians.
- The PA must prohibit attacks against Israeli settlers. Although settlements are illegal under international law, individual settlers are civilians and as such are protected.
- The PA and all its institutions must guarantee that donor funds are used transparently and in the most effective ways possible to alleviate poverty and meet the needs of the most vulnerable groups.
- To this end, the PA should work closely and openly with a broad range of Palestinian civil-society organisations and NGOs.

Recommendations for international donors and local and international aid agencies

Appropriate humanitarian assistance that supports and strengthens existing coping strategies.

- Donors and agencies should work to protect and support the capacity of Palestinian networks to provide social welfare and emergency aid, rather than increasing direct reliance on international agencies. Monitoring systems to identify the new poor, not on existing welfare lists, need to be developed.
- Food aid is needed to protect the most vulnerable. However, this is a direct result of income, not food, shortages. If purchasing of food for distribution were done through local producers, the add-on value to rural communities and urban merchants could arguably compensate for the additional expense. Purchasing locally produced olive oil for food packages is one such suggestion.
- Protection for increasingly vulnerable women and children can be promoted by international agencies working to provide access for Palestinian groups that deal with domestic violence and psychological counselling.

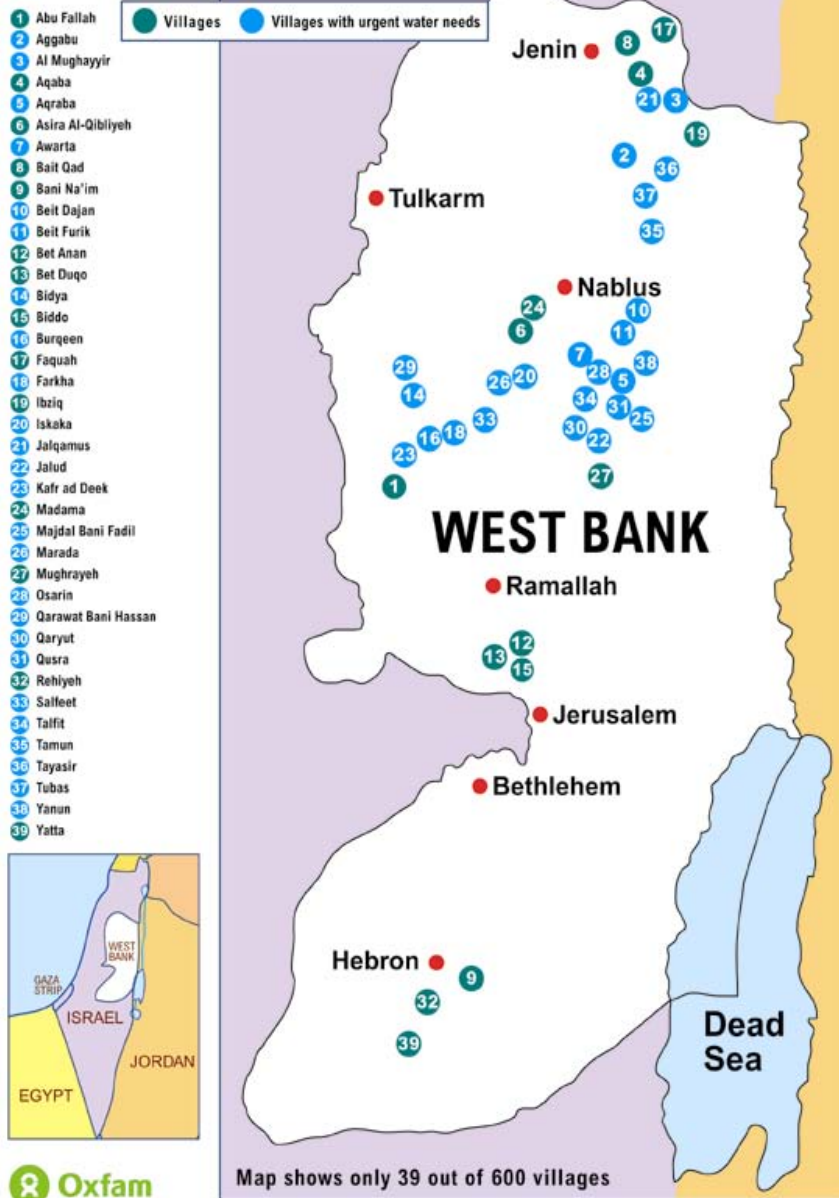
Working together with local communities to prioritise the protection and rebuilding of productive assets and credit networks

- The forced selling of productive assets must stop. A first step could be the creation of credit or finance agencies to ensure that assets such as land and livestock can be protected, to reduce risk of further asset depletion.
- The increasing role of women in confronting the economic crisis should be recognised and encouraged. Local-level credit and savings schemes for women provide important and equitable subsistence gains for households.
- Access to local credit and purchasing on account is a crucial element of household sustenance. Local and international agencies should work to develop strategies that will ensure that credit lines can be continued, to prevent the shift to complete welfare dependency, and keep local businesses afloat.

Promoting market access for food and income security

- Access to local and international markets is a priority. International trading partners should take steps to facilitate access for local Palestinian producers.
- On the local level, actions to promote transport, storage and processing of produce could be a major boon to small-scale farmers who cannot reach markets in neighbouring towns.

Villages visited by Oxfam and EWASH (Emergency Water, Sanitation & Hygiene Co-ordination Group)



Acronyms and abbreviations

ECHO	European Community Humanitarian Office
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDF	Israel Defence Forces
JD	Jordanian Dinars
MOH	Ministry of Health
MOSA	Ministry of Social Affairs
NIS	New Israeli Shekels
PA	Palestinian Authority
PWA	Palestinian Water Authority
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation

Oxfam partners contributing to this paper

HDIP	Health, Development Information and Policy Institute
ICPH	Bir Zeit Institute of Community and Public Health
PARC	Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committees
PCBS	Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
PHG	Palestinian Hydrology Group
PRCS	Palestinian Red Crescent Society
UPMRC	Union of Palestinian Medical Relief Committees
WCLAC	Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling

Exchange Rates (July 2002)

Shekel rate	Jordanian Dinar
1 GBP = NIS 7.29	1 GBP = JD 1.0792
1 USD = NIS 4.76	1 USD = JD 1.4184
1 EUR = NIS 4.72	1 EUR = JD 1.43

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Oxfam GB

Oxfam Quebec

Oxfam Solidarité (Belgium)

Methodology

Oxfam's partner organisations have played a central role in preparing this paper, participating in design meetings, providing information and commenting on initial drafts. These organisations also facilitated all Oxfam research in the West Bank. However, as an Oxfam policy position, our partners bear no responsibility for the conclusions in this paper.

In June 2002, four trips were undertaken to Bait Qad and Faquah villages, Jenin District; Mughrayeh and Abu Fallah, Ramallah District; Biddo, Bet Anan and Bet Duqo villages in Jerusalem District; and Rahiyeh and Yatta, Hebron District. Oxfam conducted interviews with doctors and nurses in UPMRC clinics, heads of village council and district-level regional planning committees, shopkeepers, private water providers and owners of small businesses, as well as with members of grassroots farmers' organisations and women's groups. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted in nine households. Access was difficult because of closures and many trips had to be curtailed as a result.

As part of research conducted by the Emergency Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Co-ordination Group (EWASH) in June-July 2002, village council heads were interviewed in 60 villages to identify their urgent water needs.

Between May and July 2002, as part of the implementation of an ECHO-funded project in the West Bank, Oxfam visited 17 UPMRC village clinics and five PRCS village clinics in the West Bank where doctors were interviewed about the medical provision and the impact of closures on health.

In January and February 2002, while conducting research on water access, Oxfam and PHG staff interviewed village council members in 11 villages, and conducted 14 detailed household interviews in the villages of Ibziq and Aqaba, Jenin District; Asira Al-Qibliyeh and Madama, Nablus District; Rehiyeh and Bani Na'im, Hebron District. Assessments were conducted in 27 localities covered by an ECHO-funded water and sanitation programme.

Notes

¹ The IFRC defines a disaster as an extreme disruption of the functioning of society that causes widespread human, material, or environmental losses that exceed the ability of the affected society to cope using only its own resources.

² Human Rights Watch, *Israel: Israel's Closure of the West Bank and Gaza Strip*, July 1996.

³ There are 615 villages or small towns in the West Bank – scattered around five cities and 22 towns. According to PCBS, 'rural' refers to a locality with less than 4000 persons or whose population ranges from 4000 to 9999 persons but lacks four of the following: public electricity network, public water network, post office, health centre with full-time physician and a school offering secondary education.

⁴ Villages have a high number of unskilled workers and rely heavily on Israel for employment – more so than towns and refugee camps. According to one survey, 31 per cent of villagers are unskilled workers, compared with 25 per cent of camp residents and 16 per cent of urban residents. Examination of the village semi and unskilled workers shows that 64 per cent of the unskilled work in Israel and the settlements, compared with 26 per cent of the semi-skilled (*Inside Palestinian Households, Volume One*, Eds. Giacaman, R. and Johnson, P., Institute of Women's Studies, Birzeit University, 2002). With the closure of the West Bank from Israel, these unskilled workers face the most difficulty getting jobs within the Palestinian economy. It is illegal for them to work in Israel without permits and they face difficulties getting through checkpoints, while cities are now often under curfew.

⁵ 'U.S. Ambassador: The situation in the territories is a humanitarian disaster', *Ha'aretz*, July 26 2002.

⁶ The boundary drawn between Israel and the West Bank.

⁷ 'The great security plan that came apart at the seams', *Ha'aretz*, July 31 2002.

⁸ Amnesty International has called on the Government of Israel to end collective punishment of Palestinians in occupied territories and stated that 'Durable security cannot be addressed by more repression and more walls and barriers. It can only be achieved if the human rights of all are guaranteed.' (Israel/Occupied Territories: End Collective Punishment of Palestinians in Occupied Territories, AI-index: MDE 15/121/2002 22/07/2002; Israel / Occupied Territories: Palestinians suffer renewed collective punishment, AI-index: MDE 15/100/2002 26/06/02).

⁹ B'Tselem, *Civilians Under Siege: Restrictions on Freedom of Movement as Collective Punishment*, January 2001.

¹⁰ An Israeli newspaper's editorial recently argued that economic oppression (and not just security) was a main reason for imposing closure. It comments, 'Since the intifada's violence began, the government has adopted recommendations from the defense establishment to use economic pressure as a means to weaken the power and influence of the top echelons of the Palestinian Authority... The suicide bombings forced Israel to impose a curfew and siege on the civilian population in the West Bank. But no security argument can be allowed to delay, for even one day, the transfer of food and medicine to Palestinians, and assistance to rebuild their homes'. (Editorial: 'Critical humanitarian aid', *Ha'aretz*, Monday, July 29, 2002).

¹¹ Construction commenced on 16 June 2002. On 30 June, Israel started erecting a fence to cut off the parts of Jerusalem (in the north, south and east of the city) bordering the West Bank. The cost of the fence is estimated at one million dollars per kilometre.

¹² Construction of the first section has entailed confiscation of 78 square kilometres of land from West Bank villages near Jenin and Tulkarem. 'The Fenced-in West Bank: Suffering for the crimes of the few', *The Economist*, June 22nd – 28th 2002, p. 62.

¹³ Major literature sources on closure include: *Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people* (A/57/63-E/2002/21) US General Assembly, 05/17/2002; Impact on the Palestinian Economy of Confrontation, Border Closures and Mobility Restrictions, UNSCO, 1 October 2000 to 30 June 2001; *Paying a Price: Coping with Closure in Two Palestinian Villages*, UNSCO/FAFO, Norway, 2001. *Israel: Israel's Closure of the West Bank and Gaza Strip*, Human Rights Watch, vol. 8, No. 3, July 1996; *Fifteen Months – Intifada, Closures and Palestinian Economic Crisis*, World Bank, March 18 2002.

¹⁴ *Fifteen Months – Intifada, Closures and Palestinian Economic Crisis: An Assessment*, World Bank 2002, p. 34.

¹⁵ *An Overview of Palestinian Public Assessment of its needs and conditions following the recent Israeli military operations in the West Bank, March-April 2002*, R. Bocco M Brunner, I. Daneels and J. Rabah, IUED Graduate Institute of Development Studies, University of Geneva (Report IV, April 2002), p. 18.

¹⁶ Economising on fuel is also frequently mentioned. Shortages and the expense of bottled gas force women to rely on firewood for cooking, the collection of which adds to their work burden.

¹⁷ *Impact of Israeli Measures on the Economic Conditions of Palestinian Households on the Eve of Israeli Incursion* (4th Round: January-February, 2002), PCBS April 2002.

¹⁸ *Health Sector Bi-weekly Report*, John Hopkins University, Al Quds University, CARE International/ANERA, Maram Project, Number 1, 12 July 2002.

¹⁹ Interview, Gregg Greenough, John Hopkins University (17/07/02).

²⁰ *Health Care Under Siege II: The Health Situation of Palestinians During the First Seven Months of the Intifada, September 28th 2000 – April 28th 2001*, HDIP.

²¹ *Health Sector Bi-weekly Report*.

²² Credit, or the purchasing of basic consumer needs on a monthly account, is a long-standing system that predates the *intifada*. Families used credit as a means of saving some money each month, or because they lived off only a monthly wage payment which did not fully cover consumption, or even because of no easy access to cash, due to the lack of banks or moneychangers in villages. The credit system carried low risks for service providers, as it is used in communities that share a deep personal knowledge of neighbours and residents, based on extended family ties. A storekeeper was always fairly confident that a debt would eventually be repaid, either by the borrower or by the extended family.

²³ *Paying a Price: Coping with Closure in Two Palestinian villages*, UNSCO/FAFO, Norway, 2001.

²⁴ *Fifteen Months*, p. 34.

²⁵ During interviews, it was almost impossible to get people to differentiate between loans and gifts. Some respondents stated that any sum under US\$ 500 was basically a gift, while above would need to be repaid at some point.

²⁶ *Health Sector Bi-weekly Report*.

²⁷ In May 2002, the ICRC announced the expansion of a food relief programme to cover 30,000 particularly vulnerable families (approximately 180,000 individuals) in over 300 villages in the West Bank. The programme provides food and hygiene parcels and sports and school equipment (Israel and the Occupied Autonomous Territories: ICRC to massively increase aid. *PALDEV Digest* 28 May to 29 May, Special issue #2002-199). In the belief that their basic food needs are not being covered, the ICRC has also introduced a bulk food emergency programme. Food packages are not an attempt to provide the monthly food basket but rather supplementary economic support. Between June 2002 and spring 2003, these 30,000 families will receive three bulk food packages each lasting three months (personal communication, Katy Atfield, ICRC, 15/0702). WFP was providing food to half a million persons, and the needs of the remaining 120,000 were covered by local and international non-governmental organisations (*Occupied Palestinian Territories* UN Department of Public Information 9 Jul 2002).

²⁸ Full or part-time employment in agriculture remains an important livelihood source. Since the start of closure, agriculture has acted as an important 'buffer', absorbing unemployed workers, providing nutritious food, and producing surplus for sale. In 2000, 14 per cent of the formal labour force was employed in agriculture, in 2002, 13.4 per cent - 11.9 per cent in the West Bank (*Labour Force Survey Results on the Eve of the Israeli Incursion*, PCBS (January– March, 2002) Round Q1\2002). Agriculture is also the only sector where women enjoy relatively high rates of employment. According to PCBS, in the first quarter of 2002, 26.4 per cent of all working women are employed in the agricultural sector.

²⁹ Agriculture has been in decline as a productive sector for many years, though the most dramatic decline is in the past decade, since closure was initiated. In 1990, agriculture contributed 35 per cent of GDP – in 1994-96, this had declined to 12 per cent, and by 2000, had hit a low of 7 per cent.

³⁰ *Environmental and Public Health Crisis Emerging in the Western Ramallah Villages*, R. Giacaman and A. Abdullah, Institute of Community and Public Health, June 3rd 2002.

³¹ *Free Reign: Vigilante Settlers and Israel's Non-Enforcement of the Law B'Tselem (October 2001); Special Report on Israeli Violations of Palestinians' Civil, Political, Economic and Social Rights in the Palestinian Occupied Territories* (12 November 2001), submitted to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on behalf of the Network of Palestinian Non-governmental Organisations (PNGO), Al Haq.

³² Reported to Oxfam GB staff in July 2002 during a water and sanitation assessment of the West Bank.

³³ Report on Solidarity Action in Deir Ibbzi'a, *International Checkpoint Watch*, 2 June 2002.

³⁴ Transaction Costs in the Palestinian Economy: A Microeconomic Perspective, F. Fischer, M. Said, R. Valdivieso. In *West Bank and Gaza: Economic Performance, Prospects, and Policies. Achieving Prosperity and Confronting Demographic Challenges*, R. Valdivieso, U. Erickson von Allmen, G. Bannister, H. Davoodi, F. Fisher, E. Jenkner, M. Said, International Monetary Fund, 2001 p. 61.

³⁵ Olive harvests follow a two-year cycle, with a high yield one year and a poor yield the next.

³⁶ Interview, 23 July 2002

³⁷ Judeh Abdullah Jamal, Deputy General Director of PARC.

³⁸ Judeh Abdullah Jamal, Deputy General Director of PARC.

³⁹ Dr Abdellatif, Director of the Palestinian Farmer's Union, estimates that 5 million litres of olive oil, mostly leftover from 2000, has still not been sold. The union is lobbying to keep the price of olive oil stable and to prevent it from depreciating but Dr Abdellatif expects the price to fall.

⁴⁰ A study conducted between May and July 2002 found that 35 per cent urban households and 62.3 per cent of rural households could not access the emergency services they needed (*Health Sector Bi-weekly Report*). A PCBS survey conducted in the West Bank during April and May 2001 found that 28.6 per cent of families who needed curative services did not obtain medical advice because medication was not available, 32.9 per cent said they had no money, 26.6 per cent could not reach a clinic, and 16.8 per cent reported that the doctor could not reach the clinic (*Impact of the Israeli Measures: Survey on the Well Being of the Palestinian Children, Women and Palestinian Households, 2001, Main Findings PCBS 2002*).

⁴¹ In Ramallah, village women who made it to Al-Bireh maternity hospital reported to Oxfam that they could not enter because snipers on surrounding buildings were targeting people coming to the hospital.

⁴² The Palestine Monitor, *Palestine Fact Sheets*, 27 May 2002.

⁴³ Repeated Israeli reinvasions of the West Bank between March and July 2002 have compounded villagers' health problems. UPMRC reported in June 2002 that 200,000 residents of villages surrounding Ramallah do not have

access to hospital care in the city. Consequently, pregnant women in labour, children with serious infections, kidney dialysis patients, and men and women with chronic diseases are deprived of life-saving hospital care (Press Release 12/06/02). Israeli forces have turned some village clinics into interrogation and detention centres, destroying medical equipment in the process (Press Release 30/06/02). At the end of May 2002, UNICEF reported that 500,000 Palestinian children living in villages were prevented from accessing health services during Operation Defensive Shield (*Humanitarian Action: OPT Donor Update* UNICEF 29 May 2002). A study of 29 villages conducted in May 2002 noted that over two-thirds of the villages reported severe shortages of medications, especially those treating diabetes and hypertension (*Environmental and Public Health Crisis Emerging in the Western Ramallah Villages*).

⁴⁴ UPMRC Press Release (12/06/02).

⁴⁵ *Palestine Monitor* (17/06/02).

⁴⁶ *Immunisation Campaign Assessment of the Children and Mothers in West Bank Villages. Final Report*. UNICEF/MOH 14 May – 23 June 2002.

⁴⁷ *Birth at Checkpoint, the home or the hospital? Adapting to the changing reality in Palestine*, L. Wick, 15 June 2002, Bir Zeit University.

⁴⁸ In July 2001, UPMRC reported that their doctors and community health workers could not pass military checkpoints for days or weeks at a time, even when they showed identification that clearly marked them as medical personnel.

⁴⁹ Telephone interview, 13/07/02.

⁵⁰ The PWA reports 281 rural localities without a water network, and WHO estimates that some 63 per cent of rural households are not connected to running water.

⁵¹ In May 2002, the Head of Yatta Micro-regional Planning Committee told Oxfam that the municipality received no piped water from Israel since December 2001.

⁵² In Zababdeh in Jenin District, Mekorot (the water supply company) disrupted their water supply without explanation during summer 2001 and is now providing water two days per week. People compensated for the water shortage by purchasing water from the nearby town of Qabatya, for a price in February 2002, of 7 NIS/m³ to 12-15 NIS/m³ according to the situation of the roads. In the summer, supply of the well water from Qabatya can also cease for weeks at a time.

⁵³ In village after village, people told Oxfam staff of damage to water networks, sources and storage facilities by settlers and the Israeli military. This included ripping up pipes, shooting at PWA and municipality water personnel and the destruction of cisterns. The water supply to the village of Deir Nidham, Ramallah District, is connected to the Israeli network but comes through the Halamish settlement first. Villagers report that settlers shut off the valve for periods of time and on four occasions have destroyed the water pipe in the stretch after the village's water metre located in the settlement. At the end of May 2002, the village had an outstanding debt of NIS 300,000 with Mekorot, of which 120,000 was spilled consumption,

allegedly the result of settler vandalism. In Asira al-Qabliya and Madama in Nablus district, villagers reported settlers deliberately contaminating water sources. In Aqaba in Jenin District, Toqo'a and Artas in Bethlehem District, and Deir Ibzi in Ramallah District, villagers said that the IDF cut access.

⁵⁴ Since pathogenic agents attach to solid particles in the water, the highly turbid water at the bottom of a cistern is more polluted.

⁵⁵ *Health Sector Bi-weekly Report.*

⁵⁶ *Health Sector Bi-weekly Report.*

⁵⁷ *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response*, The Sphere Project, 2000.

⁵⁸ These villages were visited as part of a needs assessment carried out by the Emergency Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Co-ordination Group (EWASH) in June-July 2000. The 25 villages were: Al Mughayyir, Aqaba and Jalqamus in Jenin District; Aqraba, 'Awarta, Beit Dajan, Beit Furik, Jalud, Majdal Bani Fadil, Osarin, Qaryut, Qusra, Talfit and Yanun in Nablus District; Bidya, Burqeen, Farkha, Iskaka, Marada, Qarawat Bani Hassan and Kafr ad Deek in Salfeet District; and Aqqaba, Tubas, Tayasir and Tammun in Tubas District.

⁵⁹ This estimation is calculated using the average incomes in the villages concerned and the price of tankered water in each village. Average water consumption in the villages was based on a household containing six members.

⁶⁰ Another reason is that households move to other villages.

⁶¹ Interview, 16/07/02.

⁶² Meeting with Dr. Jihad Mashal, Director of UPMRC.

⁶³ An opinion poll found that 65 per cent of respondents living in the West Bank exhibited feelings of continual distress. Suffering was highest in Salfeet District, which is surrounded by Jewish settlements (*Livelihood, Negotiations, the Future, and TV and Radio Stations*, Birzeit University Development Studies Programme, Survey--Public Opinion Poll #7).

⁶⁴ Dr. Elia Awad, PRCS, 16/07/02.

⁶⁵ Birzeit University Development Studies Programme, *Survey--Public Opinion Poll # 7.*

⁶⁶ Interview, UNICEF Jerusalem office. 12/07/02.

⁶⁷ In April – May 2001, PCBS found that at least half of the school children interviewed showed psychological symptoms such as crying and fear from loneliness, the dark, and loud noises. One-third showed symptoms of sleep disorder, nervousness, decrease in eating and weight, feelings of hopelessness and frustration, and abnormal thoughts of death. Half showed deterioration in their schoolwork and one-third were unable to concentrate (*Impact of the Israeli Measures: Survey on the Well Being of the Palestinian Children, Women and Palestinian Households*).

⁶⁸ Personal communication, Sallie Motche, Mediciens Sans Frontieres (14/07/02).

⁶⁹ Interview, Maha Abu Dayyeh Shamas, 12/07/02.

⁷⁰ Interview, 12/07/02.

⁷¹ Interview with Ghaidia Rahil, social worker, PRCS, Bethlehem, 16/07/02.

⁷² *Education under occupation: Palestinian children talk about life and school*, Save the Children UK and Save the Children Sweden, March 2002. p. 15.

⁷³ Only 48 per cent of parents living in villages feel able to deal with their children's psychological distress (*Palestinian Children, Issues and Statistics. Executive Summary. The 4th Annual Statistical Report*, PCBS 2001).

⁷⁴ Interview, Dr Elia Awad, 16/07/02.

⁷⁵ *Palestinian Public Perceptions of Their Living Conditions: The Role of International and Local Aid During the Second Intifada*, R Bocco, M Brunner, I Daneels and J Rabah, IUED Graduate Institute of Development Studies, University of Geneva (Report III, December 2001).

⁷⁶ *Education under occupation*.

⁷⁷ Meeting with Maha Abu Dayyeh Shamas, Director of WCLAC.

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This paper was written by Lee O'Brien and Dr. Francine Pickup. It is part of a series of papers written to inform public debate on development and humanitarian policy issues. The text may be freely used for the purposes of campaigning, education, and research, provided that the source is acknowledged in full.

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