



IN BRIEF...

The Westbank/Gaza

Poverty has increased greatly in the West Bank/Gaza since April 2002, when the Israeli reoccupation of Palestinian towns and villages began. Palestinian society is in a deep crisis and the conflict is leaving deep scars: human rights are being violated every day, unemployment is rife and the destruction of the infrastructure continues. The aims of Swedish development cooperation with the West Bank/Gaza are to alleviate suffering and to help bring about a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

Why does Sweden provide support to the Westbank/Gaza?

Over the past six years, since the start of the Intifada in October 2000 and the Israeli occupation in 2002, the situation for the people of the West Bank/Gaza has deteriorated drastically. The poverty rate has risen from around 20 per cent to over 50 per cent, meaning that more than half of Palestinian population has to survive on under 1,5 dollars a day. They also have less access to education and healthcare.

The Israeli blockades and the prolonged curfews have severely restricted people's chances of earning a living and their access to schools and hospitals. The wall, or »separation barrier, that Israel has built on the West Bank prevents Palestinians from moving freely, even within and between the Palestinian controlled areas.

Israel's military air and ground operations have had a devastating effect on people as well as on crops, buildings and roads in the Palestinian areas.

Thousands of people, Palestinians and Israelis alike, have been killed and injured in the conflict.

The death of President Arafat in November 2004 marked a new era. Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) was elected the new president of the Palestinian Authority a few months later. The victory of the controversial Hamas party in January 2006 added to an already complex situation.

While considerable efforts are being made to resume the peace talks, the »Quartet Road Map«, drawn up by the USA, Russia, the EU and the UN, represents a possible solution that divides Israel and Palestine up into two autonomous states.

Sweden is contributing in various ways to easing the passage of the peace process, by, for instance, supporting a dialogue between Palestine and South Africa from which the former can learn from the latter's experiences of finding ways out of a bitter conflict.

How long has Sweden been providing support to the West Bank/Gaza?

Swedish support to the Palestinians began in the 1950s, a few years after the establishment of Israel in 1948.

The aid was channelled primarily via UNRWA, the UN agency dedicated to caring for Palestinian refugees, as well as via a number of Swedish NGOs.

Swedish aid increased greatly in 1993 after Israel and the Palestinians signed the Declaration of Principle, a framework for negotiations on peace within a five-year period.

What does Sida do in the West Bank/Gaza?

The overall goals of the cooperation programme are to promote peace and the development of a democratic Palestinian state by:

- mitigating the effects of the ongoing conflict
- promoting the peace talks
- facilitating democratic, economic and social development.

It has become increasingly difficult to pursue more long-term cooperation; some of the initiatives can only partially be put into effect while others are proceeding more slowly than planned.

Humanitarian aid

The largest change in support for the West Bank/Gaza is that humanitarian aid has risen sharply to almost SEK 100 million. The objective is to ease the suffering of those affected by the conflict. This includes food aid, job creation measures, the repairing of homes, support for the health sector, transport and measures to promote dialogue and peace.

Sweden is one of the largest donors

to the UNRWA. Other important channels for Swedish support are the UN's World Food Programme (WFP), the UN Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the UN children's fund Unicef, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Swedish Rescue Services Agency, the Swedish Cooperative Centre, Kvinna till Kvinna, the Christian Council of Sweden, and the Swedish Jerusalem Missionary Society. Support is also being given to the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan.

Democracy and human rights

The objective of Swedish support is to contribute to a Palestinian society founded upon democratic values and respect for human rights. In 2005, Sida contributed to 14 organisations and institutions working with human rights on the West Bank and in Gaza. Discussions are also being held with other donors on how support for civil society is to be worked out. Sida has also contributed to the presidential and other elections.

Sida's country strategy with the West Bank/Gaza gives priority to support for children. Almost half the population of the West Bank and Gaza is under 15, and the majority of children and young people, who live from day to day

under very trying circumstances, have had to endure traumatic experiences over the past three years. Sida is financing a Children's Secretariat and various child-orientated initiatives, such as radio and TV programmes and projects promoting children's rights.

Health

Priority is also given to children in the area of health. Sida's support for the Gaza Community Mental Health is directed, for example, at children who live under extremely difficult circumstances. Sida's main partners for healthcare on the West Bank and in Gaza are Diakonia and the Palestinian Solidarity Association of Sweden, which cooperate, in turn, with a number of Palestinian organisations.

Infrastructure and employment

Israel has pulled out of the Gaza Strip, an area about the size of New York city. Although this has brought a certain degree of relief, huge problems remain. Sida contributes, along with others (including the World Bank) to the improvement of the water and sewage systems and to a waste processing plant. A power transmission project financed by means of a development loan to the Palestinian Authority, has improved the power supply in Gaza.

Sweden also plans to take part in a major project with Norway to improve the energy sector even more. A Swedish-Norwegian fund has also been formed to help create jobs in northern Gaza and improve the urban environments in the region.

In Hebron and Ramallah Swedish aid is being used to help restore historically valuable buildings.

The private sector

Businesses are also seriously affected by the conflict. Sida is contributing to the Palestinian chambers of commerce that are endeavouring in various ways to make life easier for companies.

Culture and the media

Demand for support to the arts has risen, despite the turbulent situation. Diakonia is running a literature project for children, and the School of Music and Musicology at Göteborg University is working on a music project alongside six institutions on the West Bank and in East Jerusalem. The University College of Film, Radio, Television and Theatre has completed a drama and dance project, and the Institute for the Further Education of Journalists is offering supplementary training to journalists. All with support from Sida.

BASIC FACTS

Area, km ² : West Bank	5,800
Area, km ² : Gaza	365
Population 2004, millions	3.6
Expected population 2015, millions	5.0
Population growth per annum (per cent)	3.0
Per capita GDP (USD ppp 2004)	**
Average per capita GDP/annual growth 1990–2004 (per cent)	**
Total aid from all countries, million USD, 2004	1,136.4
Total aid as proportion of GDP, 2004 (per cent)	**
Adult literacy (per cent)	92.4
Life expectancy at birth (years)	72.7
Number of doctors (per 100,000 population)	84
Access to adequate sanitation (per cent of population)	73
Access to clean water (per cent of population)	92
Ranking in Human Development Report 2006 (out of 177 countries)	100
(Sweden)	5)

Sources: 2005 Sida Annual Report
Human Development Report 2006

COOPERATION IN FIGURES

Sida's development cooperation with the West Bank/Gaza in 2005

Costs, SEK

Health	23,583,000
Education	3,526,000
Research	0
Human rights and democratic governance	57,173,000
Conflicts, peace and security	14,327,000
Humanitarian assistance	92,690,000
Infrastructure	32,436,000
Trade, industry and financial systems	5,631,000
Natural resources and the environment	19,049,000
Budget support for poverty reduction	0
Other sectors	12,203,000
Total	260,619,000

Nine people from the West Bank/Gaza attended Sida's international courses in 2005.

*ppp: purchasing power parity (purchasing power taking into account exchange rates; used to compare living standards in different countries.) Per capita GDP in Sweden (USD ppp 2004) = 29,541.

**Information not available

Halving poverty by 2015 is one of the greatest challenges of our time, requiring cooperation and sustainability. The partner countries are responsible for their own development.

Sida provides resources and develops knowledge and expertise, making the world a richer place.



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