

Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS)
Press Release

Quality of Life survey
Initial Findings

A pilot study to empirically assess the Quality of Life in health (QoL) of the population living in the Palestinian Territory was completed by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics during the period 19-25 December 2005. The study was commissioned by the Institute of Community and Public Health, Birzeit University, and the World Health Organization, Jerusalem, and aims to establish the validity and appropriateness of a World Health Organization QoL instrument - the WHO -Brief - for use in the Palestinian context, and to further reveal the components of life quality from the point of view of a population living in ongoing conflict. The survey included 1008 adults randomly selected from a representative sample of Palestinian households in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Respondents' ages ranged from 18 to 86 years. Of those, 50.4% were males and 49.6% were females. 41.0% had completed high school education or more; and about 40% reported themselves as being the main breadwinners of their household. Below is a summary of the survey's main findings.

Main Findings

- A high proportion (52.5%) of respondents reported having to cross Israeli army checkpoints to pursue daily life activities, such as getting to work, school, university or services.
- Almost one-fifth (19.8%) of respondents residing in the West Bank reported living close to the Separation Wall: 40.6% at a distance less than or equal to 300 meters and 60.6% at a distance less than or equal to 900 meters. Moreover, a majority of 87.2% of those living close to the Separation Wall reported that the Wall has a direct negative impact on their lives.
- More than a quarter (26.5%) of respondents residing in the West Bank reported living close to an Israeli settlement, with 80.8% stating that they are negatively affected by the settlement's presence.

- More than a quarter (28.5%) of respondents reported having lost, through martyrdom or imprisonment, a relative from the immediate (mother, father, sister, brother, etc.) or closely related (aunts, uncles, cousins, etc.) family.
- A quarter (24.6%) of respondents reported their health status as less than good. A disproportionately lower percentage (13.6%) also reported being dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their health status.
- Almost a quarter (25.6%) of respondents reported that their life quality was poor or very poor.
- **An assessment of physical function revealed:** 21.2% of respondents reported suffering very much or to an extreme amount from bodily pain, yet 35.4% reported that they still did, very much or all the time, what they had to do despite bodily pain; 18.9% reported needing very much or an extreme amount of medical treatment to function ; 23% reported that they do not have enough energy at all or just a little for their daily life; 15.4% reported suffering from very poor or poor physical health, negatively affecting their ability to get around; 31.8% stated that they were very dissatisfied or dissatisfied with their sleep; 18.8% were very dissatisfied or dissatisfied with their ability to perform daily living activities; and 20.1% were very dissatisfied or dissatisfied with their capacity for work. That is, about 1/5th of the respondents reported suffering a lot or extremely from physical/ bodily health problems that negatively influences their ability to function and their life quality.
- **An assessment of psychological status revealed:** 38.2% of respondents reported not enjoying at all or just a little daily life activities; 21.8% found no sense of purpose, or a little, to their life; 25.7% were not able to concentrate at all or a little; 5.5% were not able to accept their bodily appearance at all or a little; 11.7% were very dissatisfied or dissatisfied with themselves; 23.9% suffered from negative feelings such as blue mood, despair, anxiety and depression very often or always; 37.7% did not feel emotionally safe at all or just a little; 30.1% feared for themselves very much or a lot - and 66.5% feared for their families very much or a lot; 26.3% reported that they never or almost never have any control over their lives; 28.8% reported that they felt fairly often or very often unable to cope; 44%

reported being worried, 38.3% frustrated, 28.7% incapacitated, 20.5% humiliated, 21.6% lonely, 38.2% anxious, 31.9% sad, 38.4% angry, 37.9% fed up with life, 46.7% bored, 38.6% deprived, mostly or completely; and 39.4% reported that suffering is part of daily life mostly or completely. On the whole, about ¼ of respondents reported suffering a lot or extremely from psychological pressures.

- **An assessment of social relations revealed:** only 8.3% reported being very dissatisfied or dissatisfied with their personal relationships, and an even lower 3.8% with their family; 16.2% reported being subjected to family pressure a lot or completely, and 15.8% very dissatisfied or dissatisfied with the support they receive from friends. However, 20.5% were very dissatisfied or dissatisfied with their neighborhood, and 23.3% with their community. About 8% were very dissatisfied or dissatisfied with the freedom afforded to them by their family and 27.0% by community; 5.7% were very dissatisfied or dissatisfied with the possibility of expressing their opinion at home, 8.1% at school, university or workplace, 24.1% in their neighborhood, and 31.7% at the community level. Finally, 17.9% reported being subjected to social pressures a lot or completely and 9.4% reported not feeling any freedom at all or only a little at home, and 30.6% in the street.
- **An assessment of the living environment revealed:** 26% were very dissatisfied or dissatisfied with the conditions of their living place, 23.4% with the crowding level at home, 26.3% with access to health services and 26.1% reported that they did not have access at all or a little to medical treatment when they needed it. At the same time, 29.6% were very dissatisfied or dissatisfied with their access to transport; a high of 42.8% did not consider their physical environment healthy at all or a little; a very high of 72.6% did not have access at all or only a little to leisure activities; 18.9% were very dissatisfied or dissatisfied with the availability of electrical supplies, 19.2% with the availability of water supply, and 31.9% with the quality of drinking water. That is, almost half of respondents were dissatisfied a lot or extremely with their living environment.
- **An assessment of financial status revealed:** 42.6% reported not having money at all or a little to meet their individual or family needs; 20.1% needed to borrow

money a lot or completely to make ends meet; 19.8% reported they were in debt a lot or completely; 37.5% postponed paying bills a lot or completely to manage; 19.4% did not have access at all or just a little to the foods that they liked. In addition, 38.9% reported being very dissatisfied or dissatisfied with family earnings, 15.3% with their financial accessibility to school or work, 49.7% with their ability to bear sudden medical expenses, 56.2% with the availability of employment opportunities; and 53.2% feared and worried about not being able to provide for their families. That is, more than one third of respondents suffered a lot or extremely from financial problems.

- **An assessment of the political context revealed:** 34.4% did not feel physically safe at all or just a little in daily life; 45.5% feared losing their home, and 46.1% feared losing their land, while 44.5% feared displacement or uprooting a lot or to an extreme amount. A high of 68.0% feared and were worried over the future a lot or extremely and a high of 70.5% feared chaos in Palestinian society a lot or extremely. In addition, 44.8% were very dissatisfied or dissatisfied with the political leadership of their community, 39.7% with the possibility of expressing their opinion at the national level, 19.7% with the control they have over their life, 21.6% with their ability to plan for their daily life, and 23.8% to plan for the future. Of the total, a high of 65.8% felt always or very often angry over what Israeli military occupation is doing to them, and 49.4% to their families; 63.4% reported that they experienced humiliation always or very often by Israeli military action. Of the total, 79.8% reported that they were negatively affected by the ongoing conflict and Israeli military occupation a lot or completely, 78.5% by closures and siege, 62.7% by the Separation Wall, and 59.2% by the internal Palestinian political situation. Finally, 63.1% reported not feeling free at all or a little and 47.3% reported not being able to express their political opinion at all or a little.