

Nutrition Awareness Sessions in Palestine

Food Insecurity in Palestine

More than **one fourth of the population in Palestine** (27 percent or 1.6 million people) are either severely or moderately food insecure.

Food insecurity in Palestine is a result of poor access to food due to high prices. **Palestinian households spend more than 50 percent of their monthly income on food**.

Approximately half of the Palestinian population suffers from more than one micronutrient deficiency. The situation is particularly alarming for female adolescents in Gaza, where 72 and 64 percent of them respectively suffer from Vitamin D and Vitamin A deficiencies.

Raising Nutrition Awareness

WFP's Nutrition awareness sessions target women beneficiaries who are pregnant or who have young children. Since 2014, the campaign also include men. Participants attend sessions over a period of six months, which feature interactive discussions and presentations on diet, hygiene, cooking, purchasing healthy food on a budget and caring for infants.

Interactive sessions have been instrumental to strengthen women's role as autonomous decision-makers and promote a common understanding of the importance of healthy eating. Since 2011, 4,850 women and their families have benefitted from the training.

The sessions are implemented in partnership with Oxfam GB, the local NGO Ard el Insan, and UNICEF. Since 2015, UNICEF delivers sessions on the **prevention of communicable diseases, mothers' nutrition during pregnancy and breast feeding**.

Impact of the Sessions

The sessions have a **long-term positive impact on levels of nutritional and dietary knowledge** and healthy cooking habits among participants. They give women the opportunity to interact and socialize with each other outside their normal domestic sphere, **leading to strengthened informal women's networks**.

Because of their increased knowledge, some women hold more authority at the household level, for example for making choices such as deciding what food should be bought.

Households, families and local communities are positively affected by the improved knowledge of the participants, making the number of **indirect beneficiaries of the sessions substantial**.

Samar's Story

Samar, 27, lives with her husband and four children in their small, basic flat in Gaza's al-Tufah neighborhood.

The area came under heavy attack during the 2014 conflict, which left many people in Gaza in need of food and other humanitarian assistance.

The conflict worsened an already difficult situation in Gaza. Samar's family had been struggling to make ends meet long before the latest round of violence. Her husband has been unemployed – not unusual in Gaza, where 40 percent of people have no jobs, the highest unemployment rate in the world.



Samar proudly shows the healthy Mujaddarah she prepared.

For years it was a challenge to convince my husband I needed to leave the house other than for chores or family errands. The first time I was able to do something for myself was when I went to attend WFP's nutrition awareness sessions," she said. "During the sessions I learned how to make traditional dishes healthier with just a few simple changes. When I came home from the sessions and shared what I had learned, I felt proud of myself." Samar says the six months of nutrition awareness sessions taught her about healthy diets, cooking, buying healthy ingredients using the vouchers and even caring for infants.