



## Vocational Education in The Gaza Strip Within the Local Labor Market

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The local labor market in the Gaza Strip features high rates of labor force growth at a faster pace than the growth of labor demand. This has led to a steadily widening of the gap between the supply of labor and the demand for it, which indicates that the ability of the economy of Gaza Strip to absorb the labor force is diminishing over time. The situation is further complicated by the high rates of rapid population growth and the youth population structure, in light of the limited geographical area, the rapid disappearance of resources and lack of control over them. In addition, the continuation of the siege and division for more than 15 years, on the one hand, and the recurrent Israeli military assaults, on the other hand, not to mention the quantitative expansion of educational institutions and their outcomes and the opening of the door to university education for all who desire it, as long as s/he has obtained a high school diploma, which has led to receiving an increasing numbers of students, regardless of the need for them after graduation, and therefore the spread of the phenomenon of unemployment and its reach to unprecedented levels in relation to the world, particularly among young people and university graduates.

Hence the importance of the vocational education and training sector which constitutes an important pillar in the labor sector in general and the nature of the main role it plays in meeting the current and future needs of the labor market for the skilled and trained workforce in particular.

This sector has received considerable attention and investment from international institutions and donors. This sector can respond to the society labor needs, while having the capacity to create numerous employment opportunities, address the shortage of skills required in the current and future labor market and contribute to sustainable development<sup>1</sup>.

Despite the role that the vocational education sector plays in meeting the needs of the local labor market, there are many indicators that emphasize this sector faces challenges and problems that have prevented its development and impeded its role. Along with the current situation and possible efforts to work to develop and support this sector with the necessary resources.

In light of this situation, the paper aims to shed the light on the role of vocational education and training in meeting the needs of the local market of the Gaza Strip, monitoring the status and development of vocational education in the Gaza Strip over the past two decades, and discussing the development possibilities of the vocational education and training sector and the capabilities available in the Gaza Strip.

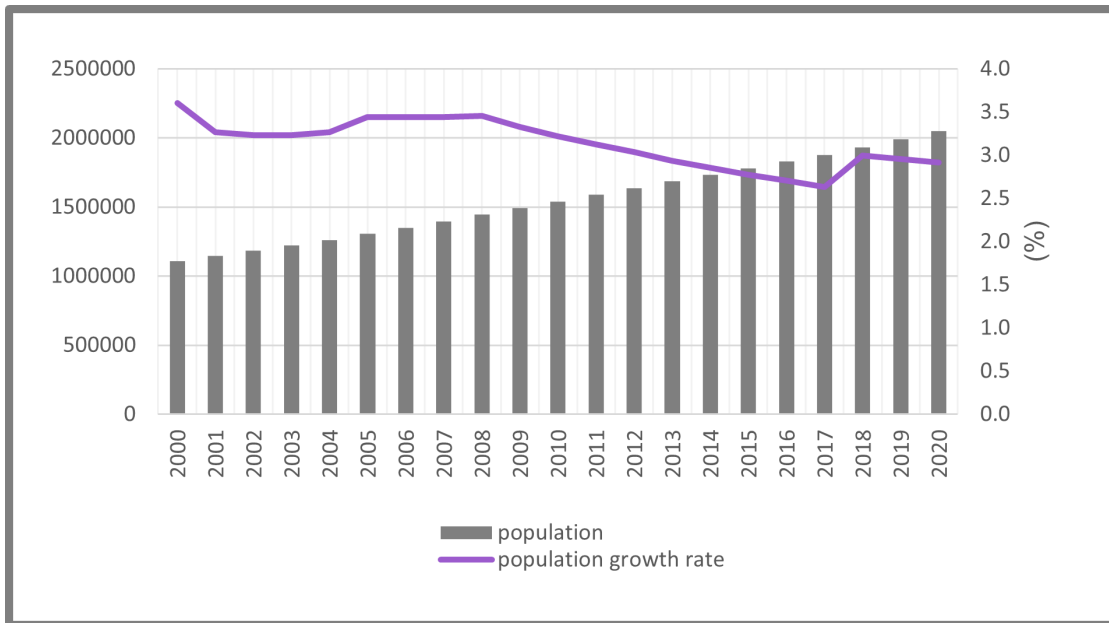
### **First: The main indicators of the population and the local labor market in the Gaza Strip**

The Gaza Strip covers approximately 365 square kilometers (approximately 140 square miles) and it is inhabited by approximately 2.2 million people. The strip is considered one of the most densely populated places on earth, with an average density of more than 5,800 people per square kilometer<sup>2</sup>. Figure No. (1) shows the rapid increase in the population of the Gaza Strip over the last two decades (2000 - 2020). The population in the Gaza Strip increased from 1.1 million in 2000 to 2 million in 2020 with an estimated increase approximately 84.6%.

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<sup>1</sup> Mamoun Besaiso (2022). Relation between population growth in the Gaza Strip and the challenges facing various sectors, as well as possible solutions. Reference Paper within the project “Channels for Developing Community Needs in Light of the Rapid Population Growth in the Gaza Strip”, the Palestinian NGO Network in partnership with Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Gaza, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> UN, A report by the United Nations Country Team in the occupied Palestinian territory. (2012)



**Figure No. 1: Population growth rate in the Gaza Strip meanwhile the period (2000 – 2020)<sup>3</sup>.**

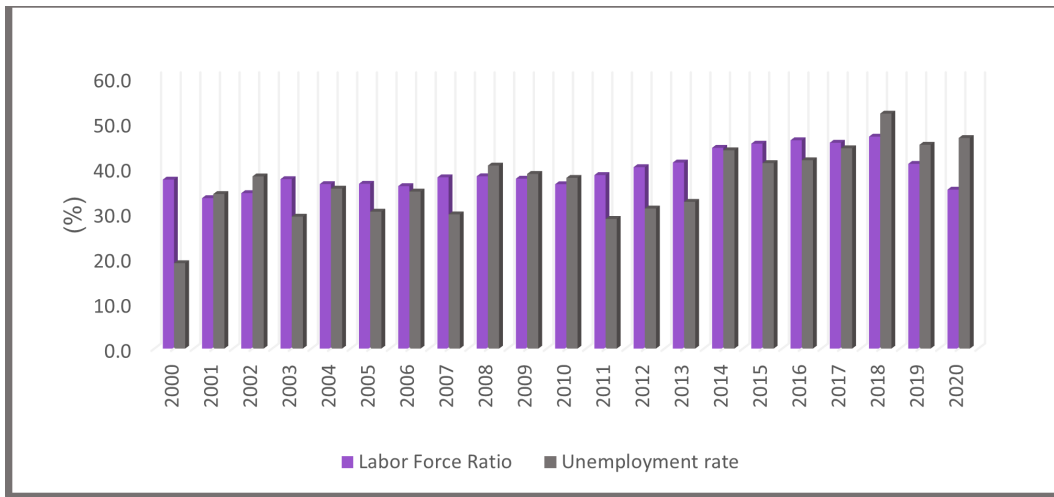
According to scientific population projections, the estimated population in the Gaza Strip by 2030 is expected to reach 2.6 million<sup>4</sup>, and this expected population explosion is considered one of the most vital challenges facing the local labor market in the Gaza Strip due to its small and limited size and its inability to keep pace with the rapid demographic growth, as well as youth demographics; in addition to its inability to absorb the entire labor force, which caused a large surplus; apart from the classical specializations available at Palestinian universities and colleges and their lack of specializations required by the local labor market, which led to the exacerbation of unemployment in the Gaza Strip in an alarming manner<sup>5</sup>, especially since the unemployment rate in the Gaza Strip is considered one of the highest rates in the world. The unemployment rate reached about 46.9% (41.9%) among males participating in the labor force, and 65% among females participating in the labor force) in 2021<sup>6</sup>. Figure No. (2) shows the increase in the unemployment rate in the Gaza Strip during the past two decades, as the unemployment rate rose from 18.9% in 2000 to 46.6% in 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Figure was prepared by the researcher based on the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (2022). Cumulative statistics of the population, Ramallah, available on link: <https://bit.ly/3ae5SU3>.

<sup>4</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (2020). Housing Development in Palestine 2007 – 2017, Ramallah, p. 97.

<sup>5</sup> Bassem Makhoul and Youssef Daoud (2005). Potential Economic Policies and their Impact on the Labor Market in the Gaza Strip: Results of Record Growth Simulation, Palestinian Economic Policy Research Institute – Maas, Ramallah, p. 14.

<sup>6</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (2022). Palestinian Labour Force Survey: Annual Report 2021, Ramallah, Palestine, p. 30.



**Figure No. (2): Unemployment rate in the Gaza Strip during the period (2000 – 2020<sup>7</sup>)**

In addition to the low absorptive capacity of the local labor market in the Gaza Strip, and the limited scale of this market, the political and economic conditions that forced by Gaza Strip during in the last two decades, cannot be ignored, which has also contributed to the increase in to the unemployment rates, as the Gaza Strip has been severely affected by the blockade and the devastating wars it has launched by the Israeli occupation in recent years, in which the citizens of the Gaza Strip lived under difficult and tragic economic conditions, in addition to the continuing Palestinian division that has prevented the implementation of development plans and programs prepared by successive Palestinian governments to reduce poverty and unemployment<sup>8</sup>.

The problem of unemployment in the Gaza Strip is exacerbated by the unemployment of young people and university graduates, as the unemployment rate in the Gaza Strip among young people of the age group (20-29 years) who have a scientific qualification, an intermediate diploma or a bachelor's degree, reached about 78.4% in the year 2020<sup>9</sup>, the problem goes beyond the high unemployment rate among young people and university graduates, but the dilemma deepens and the number of university continues to rise in light of the limited and lack of opportunities in the local labor market, where the number of Palestinian higher education institutions graduating an average of 40,000 thousand male and female graduates annually, on the other hand, the local labor market absorbs on average of 8,000 job opportu-

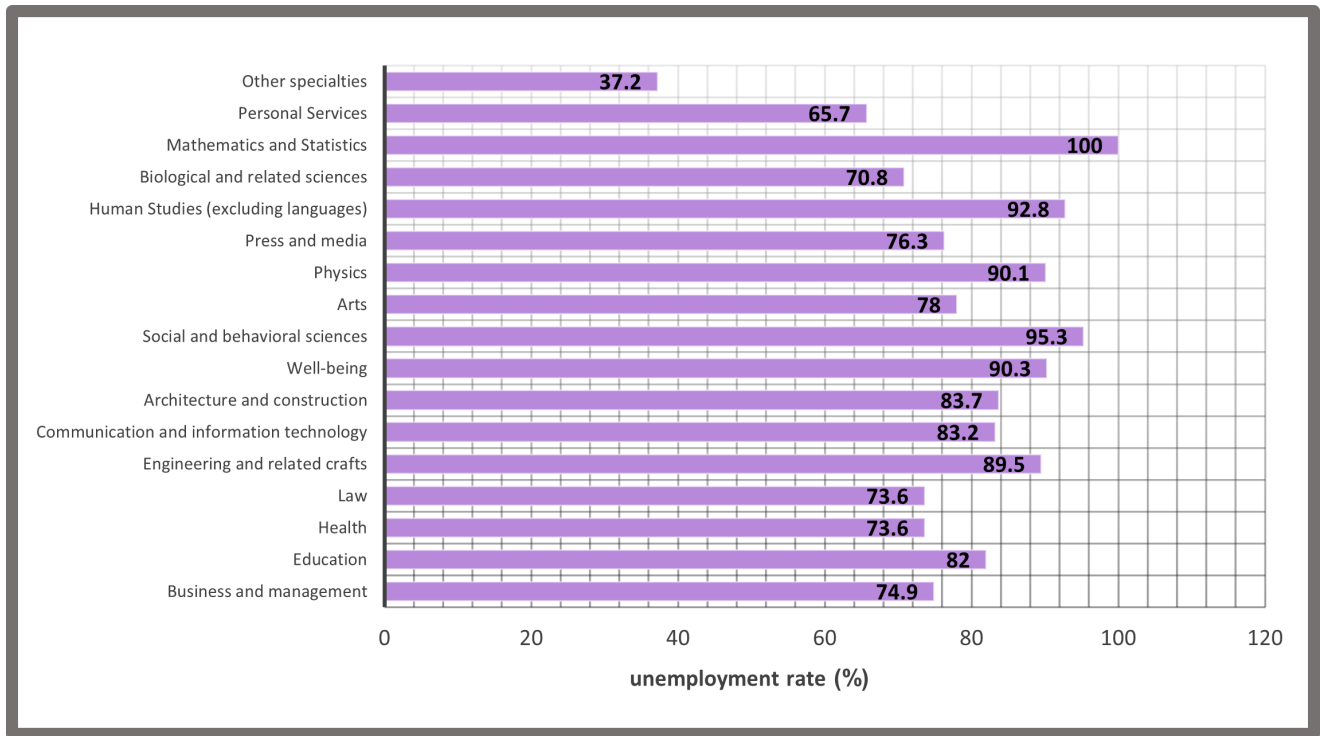
<sup>7</sup> Figure prepared by the researcher based on the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (2021). Performance of the Palestinian Economy, Ramallah, Palestine.

<sup>8</sup> Raed Heles (2020). The Evolution of the Palestinian Economy from Partial Independence to Dependency, Tolerance Magazine, Issue (71), Ramallah Center for Human Rights Studies, Ramallah, Palestine, p. 77.

<sup>9</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (2021). Press release entitled: Areas of Study and Relationship In the labor market for individuals (20 – 29 years old), Ramallah, Palestine, p. 2.

nities annually for graduates (20-29 years old)<sup>10</sup>, which means that the Palestinian economy, especially in the Gaza Strip, is facing a real dilemma, which is providing job opportunities for this huge number of graduates annually. In addition to the previously unemployed, the uneducated and unskilled “labor”, which in turn will negatively impact the course of current and future development.

A further problem on the local labor market is the quality of graduates of educational institutions that are incompatible with cognitive and technical developments and compatible with the needs of labor market. Figure 3 clearly shows the high unemployment rates among young people (20-29 years) with one or more intermediate diplomas in the Gaza Strip in 2020 in all disciplines.



**Figure No. (3): Unemployment rate for young people (20-29 years) who hold an intermediate diploma or a bachelor’s degree in the Gaza Strip in 2020<sup>11</sup>**

<sup>10</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (2020)). Press Release for Students Who Took the Tawjihhi High School Certificate Exam for the Year 2019/2020, Ramallah, Palestine, p. 1.

<sup>11</sup> Figure of the researcher based on the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (2021). Labour Force Survey Database 2020, Ramallah, Palestine.

The main indicators of the population and the local labor market in the Gaza Strip clearly show the importance of the vocational education and training sector and the important role it will play in providing skills for human resources that enable its owner to make a positive change towards meeting the requirements and needs of the local labor market of professionally and scientifically trained human cadres, whether Internally or externally, which contributes to the development of society in order to achieve sustainable development to serve future generations.

## Second: The development of vocational education and training in the Gaza Strip

The development of the education system occupies the highest priority in the development reforms of societies as a means of empowerment and preparation for the youth category and enabling them to acquire knowledge, science and skills to become active and productive members capable of contributing to the sustainable development process.<sup>12</sup>

The vocational education and training sector is the way by which participants acquire and understand scientific and managerial skills, allowing them to work in a specific professions or group of professions. These practical skills are provided in a wide range of contexts through education and training service providers in both the public and private sectors.<sup>13</sup>

In this context, since its inception, the Palestinian Authority has tried to organize the conditions for the vocational and technical education and training sector in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, especially as it has inherited an outdated vocational education and training system characterized by a negative social outlook represented by low rates of enrollment and participation, as it is the sector that absorbs drop-outs from schools. In the education and training process, it builds upon previous educational and training curricula and within an inappropriate infrastructure and unqualified teaching bodies<sup>14</sup>.

The authority worked to form an advisory council from a group of official institutions such as the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and the Ministry of Labor and representatives of universities and international and private institutions. The “National Strategy for Vocational and Technical Education and Training in the West Bank and Gaza Strip” and the “Implementation Plan for the National Strategy for Vocational and Technical Education and Training” have been prepared, as well as the formation of

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<sup>12</sup> Nyerere John (2009). For the Dutch Schokland TVET Programme Edukans Foundation.

<sup>13</sup> Atchoerena, D. Delluc, A. (2001) Revisiting Technical and Vocational Education in Sub – Saharan Africa: an update on trends innovations and challenges. Paris.

<sup>14</sup> Hisham Kuhail (2015). Implementation of the Strategic Plan for Education Vocational and technical training: a requirement Essential to Respond to Labor Market Needs, Palestinian Economic Policy Research Institute – Mas, Ramallah, Palestine, p. 2.

specialized bodies that follow up the planning, organization, follow-up and supervision of most vocational and technical education and training programs represented in the Ministry of Education Higher - General Administration of Vocational and Technical Education, in addition to the Ministries of Labor and Social Development.<sup>15</sup>

As a result of the continuing state of randomness in this sector, which is still dominated by chaos and fragmentation, due to the presence of many players and the lack of necessary coordination among them, and based on urgent requests from international institutions to regulate this sector, the Palestinian Authority decided to form the “National Commission for Technical and Vocational Education and Training”, to become the central official responsible body for the implementation of this sector instead of the conflict of powers between the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labor and the Ministry of Social Development, as well as to the private sector centers, civil centers and training centers affiliated with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA)<sup>16</sup>. On 25/2/2021 Decree-Law No. (4) of 2021<sup>17</sup> was issued regarding the formation of the Commission, and the implementation of this decision applies in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. However, due to the political division, the Commission has started its work in Ramallah where departments and centers affiliated with the ministries are being transferred to the new Commission. In the Gaza Strip, the situation remains the same.

**Table No. 1 shows the institutions that provide vocational training in the Gaza Strip 2021.**

Category	the number
Vocational education (Vocational secondary schools)	3
Vocational training	
• Training centers of the Ministry of Labor	5
• Training centers of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Refugees (UNRWA)	2
• Training centers affiliated to the Ministry of Social Development	5
• Non-governmental training centers (private sector and NGOs)	29

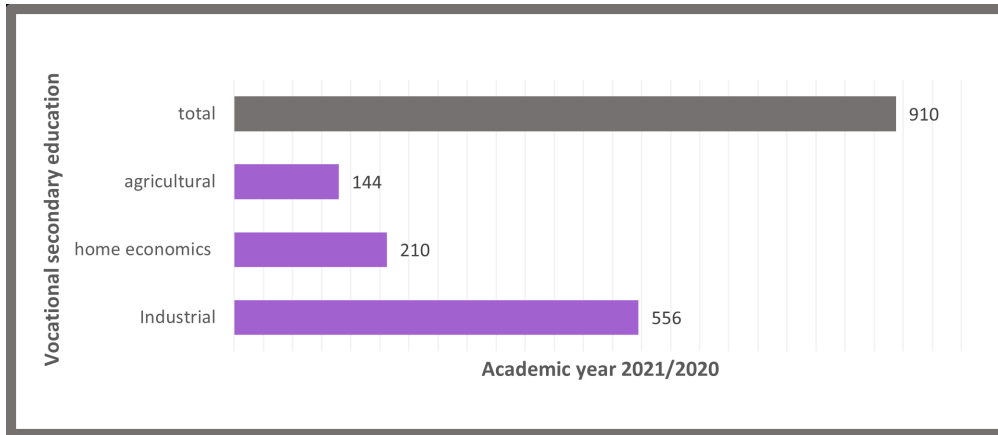
<sup>15</sup> Noor Habib (2017). Effectiveness of the Technical Standards of the Union of the European in the evaluation of project proposals for the development of TVET in the Gaza Strip, Master’s thesis, Islamic University, Gaza, PalestineAM20.

<sup>16</sup> Mamoun Besaiso (2022). Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>17</sup> Decree Law No. (4) of 2021 on National Authority for Vocational and Technical Education and Training, Palestinian Chronicle, Issue 172, 25/2/2021.

## 1. Vocational Education:

The Ministry of Education in the Gaza Strip provides secondary vocational education for two years and is divided into its three branches: industrial, home economics, and agriculture. Students in these branches are prepared to take the vocational guidance exam, which enables them to enroll in community colleges. The number of students enrolled in the vocational secondary education program has reached 910 students in secondary schools in the Gaza Strip during the year 2020/2021, as shown in Figure (4).



**Figure No. (4): The number of students enrolled in the vocational general secondary school in secondary schools in the Gaza Strip during the academic year 2020/2021<sup>18</sup>**

The number of male students enrolled in this program reached 581, while the number of female students enrolled in it was 329, and the percentage of students enrolled in the vocational high school program represented 1.3% of the total students in the general secondary stage in all branches, which numbered 71,590 male and female students in the academic year 2020 / 2021<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Figure of the researcher based on the Ministry of Education (2022). Book Statistical Annual Public Education 2020/2021, Gaza.

<sup>19</sup> Ministry of Education (2022). Book Statistical Annual Public Education 2020/2021, Gaza, p. 37



## 2. Vocational training

The entities that provide this type of education in the Gaza Strip vary depending on to their various objectives and interests, and are as follows:

### 2.1 Vocational Training Centers of the Ministry of Labor:

The Ministry of Labor in the Gaza Strip supervises 5 vocational training centers (Imam al-Shafi'i, Deir al-Balah, Khan Younis, Rafah and the North Center). The length of the training programs offered ranges from a few months to a year, and the average number of graduates in these centers is about 492 male and female graduates annually.

Figure (5) shows the increase in the number of vocational training graduates in the vocational training centers of the Ministry of Labor over the past two decades, as the number of graduates reached about 405 male and female graduates in 2001 to reach about 722 male and female graduates in 2020.

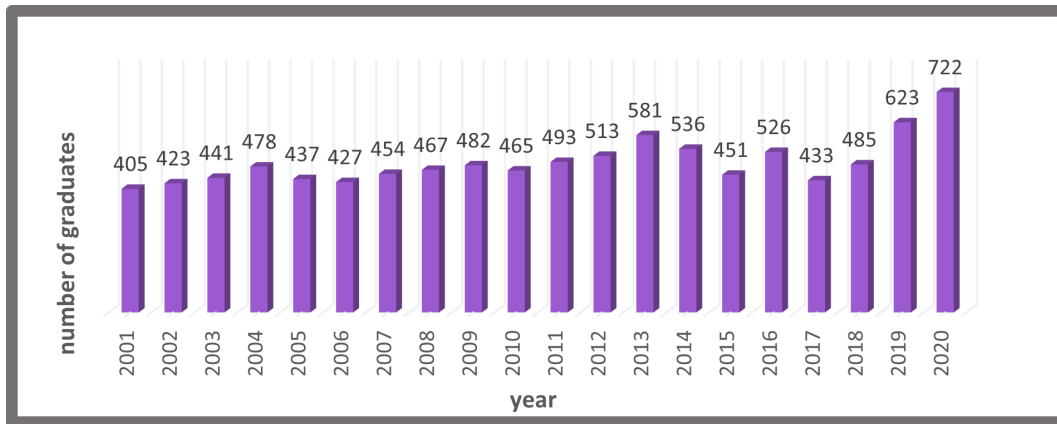
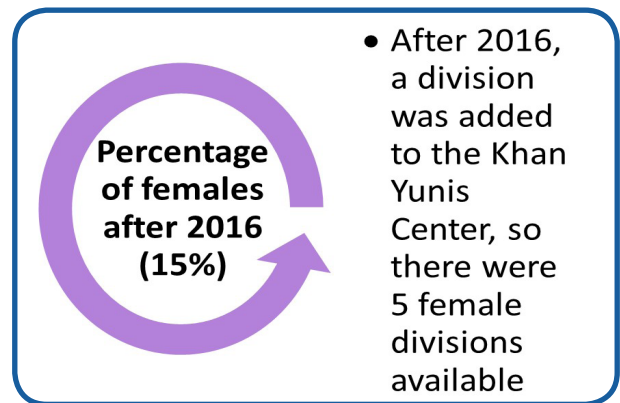
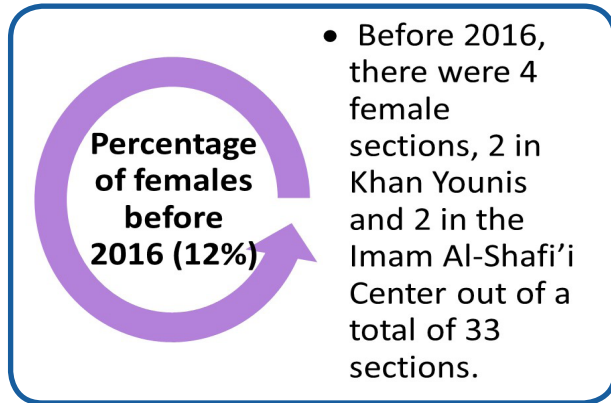


Figure No. (5): The number of vocational training graduates in the training centers of the Ministry of Labor in the Gaza Strip during the period (2001-2020) <sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Figure of the researcher based on Ministry of Labor (2022). Vocational Training Department Database, Gaza.

The percentage of females among the total number of graduates is much lower than the percentage of males in the vocational training centers of the Ministry of Labor in the Gaza Strip, where the percentage of females reached 12% annually of the total number of graduates before 2016 and reached 15% after 2016 of the total number of graduates.



Despite the increase in the percentage of female graduates from 12% to 15%, the percentage of females remains very low compared to the percentage of male graduates, which requires more efforts to raise the percentage of females on the one hand and raise the percentage of males on the other hand through the development of affiliated vocational training centers to the Ministry, and to develop curricula and professional specializations and to adopt new specializations that are attractive to both females and males and are compatible with the needs of the local labor market<sup>21</sup>. This can be achieved through the concerted efforts of all parties (the government, private sector institutions and civil society institutions)

## 2.2 Vocational Training Centers of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees – UNRWA

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees - UNRWA runs two vocational training centers in the Gaza Strip (Gaza Training Community College and Khan Yunis Training Community College), providing vocational training programs for two years. The number of students enrolled in these centers annually is approximately 800 students, and the average number of graduates is approximately 350 graduates annually<sup>22</sup>. UNRWA training centers have witnessed in recent years a noticeable increase

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Eng. Baraa Abu Hassanein, Vocational Training Department, Ministry of Labor, Gaza, May 30, 2022.

<sup>22</sup> Mazen Hashwa (2006). Resource Development Humanity and the labour market in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, European Vocational Training Foundation, p. 37.

in the demand by students to enroll in its training programs, which led to an increase in the average number of graduates to about 700 graduates annually during the period (2017-2021), by 500 graduates annually from the Gaza Training community College and 200 graduates annually from the Khan Yunis Training community College<sup>23</sup>, and this increase in the number of graduates is due to the significant and positive change towards vocational training, as well as to the difficult living conditions, which prompted parents to direct their children to vocational training centers in order to rehabilitate them and enter the labor market<sup>24</sup>

### 2.3 Vocational Training Centers of the Ministry of Social Development

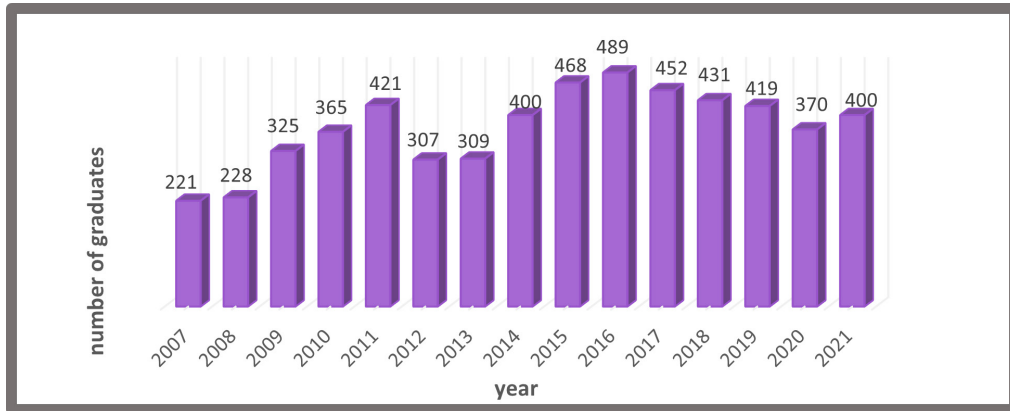
The Ministry of Social Development in the Gaza Strip runs 5 centers for care and training. These centers accommodate boys from 14-16 years old and girls from 14-18 years old who were unable to continue in formal education due to social, economic or psychological conditions. It is also not required for the applicants' enrollment in these centers to have an academic certificates and may not be able to read and write, in addition to the priority of admission for children of families benefiting from the Ministry of Social Development<sup>25</sup>. The vocational training is the main component of the programs offered by these centers and the duration of training is two years. About 374 male and female graduate from these centers annually, and the percentage of female graduates represents 17% of the total number of graduates annually<sup>26</sup>. Figure No. (6) shows the number of graduates in the vocational training centers of the Ministry of Social Development in the Gaza Strip during the period from 2007 to 2021.

<sup>23</sup> Interview with Ms. Rawia Helles, Community Manager of the Gaza Training College UNRWA, Gaza, June 6, 2022.

<sup>24</sup> Mamoun Bseiso (2022). Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>25</sup> Muhammad Nassar and Basil Abed (2022). The experience of the Ministry of Social Development in Social Welfare Centers - Vocational Training (Reality- Challenges- Future Vision), Conference: Vocational and Technical Education and Training between Reality Challenges and Future Foresight, Al-Isra University, Gaza, p. 5.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Dr. Mohammed Nassar, Director of the Department of Studies and Statistics at the Ministry of Social Development, Gaza, June 2, 2022.



**Figure No. (6): The number of vocational training graduates in the training centers of the Ministry of Social Development in the Gaza Strip during the period (2007-2021)<sup>27</sup>**

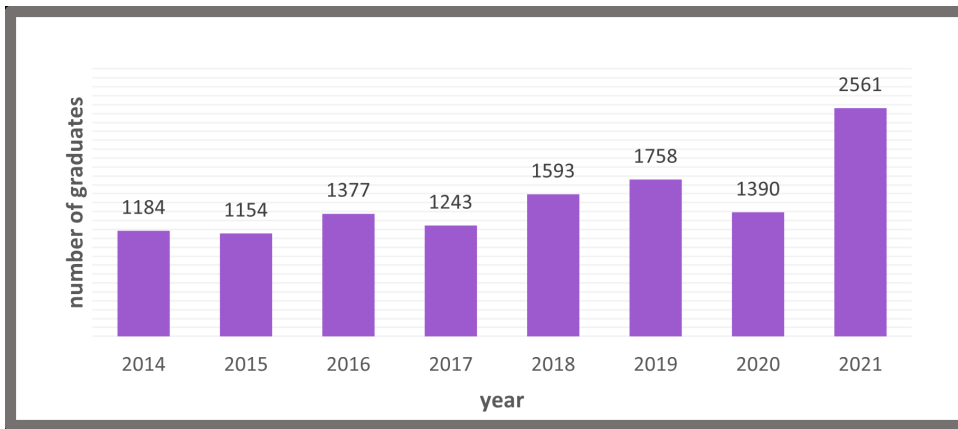
Although training provided in social care centers is limited to traditional professions such as metalworking and carpentry rather than the areas that the labor market actually needs, these centers play an important social role which must be reinforced and developed according to the needs of the labor market.

## 2.4 Non-governmental training centers (private sector and NGOs)

A number of non-governmental institutions and centers (private sector and NGOs) offer specialized vocational training programs for young people in the Gaza Strip. These institutions and centers have played and continue to play an important role in developing the vocational education and training system through the specialized training programs they provide. A positive development has taken place over the last few years, the number of graduates of these 29 institutions/centers has increased, noting that the number of institutions and non-governmental training institutions authorized by the Ministry of Labor exceeds this number, but 29 institutions and centers have implemented courses and had graduates<sup>28</sup>. Figure No. (7) The number of graduates from specialized vocational training courses implemented by non-governmental institutions and centers in recent years.

<sup>27</sup> Figure of the researcher based on the Ministry of Social Development (2022). Statistics on graduates from social welfare centers from 2007 to 2022, Gaza.

<sup>28</sup> Interview with Eng. Baraa Abu Hassanein, Vocational Training Department, Ministry of Labor, Gaza, May 30, 2022.



**Figure No. (7): The number of vocational training graduates in the training centers of non-governmental institutions and centers in the Gaza Strip during the period (2014-2021)<sup>29</sup>**

By comparing the annual average graduates from higher education institutions with vocational education and training centers in the Gaza Strip over the last few years (2014-2021), it is noted that the ratio of graduates of vocational education and training to the percentage of graduates of higher education institutions is only about 8%.

**3,201 graduates annually**

- Average number of graduates in vocational education and training centers during the period (2014-2021)

**40,000 graduates annually**

- Average number of graduates in higher education institutions during the period (2014-2021)

Therefore, the very low and limited percentage of vocational education and training graduates in recent years, despite its increase compared to graduates of higher education, is not commensurate with the importance of the vocational education and training sector and is not commensurate with the steady population growth and high unemployment rates in general and high unemployment among young graduates in particular. As a result of a set of challenges and obstacles facing this sector, the most

<sup>29</sup> Figure of the researcher based on the Ministry of Labor (2022). Database of the Department of Vocational Training, Gaza

important of which is the inferior societal view of education and vocational training, as well as the quantitative expansion in higher education institutions, especially for-profit universities, which make every effort to attract as many high school students as possible and encourage them to enroll in their programs and specializations, which led indeed, it has led to an increase in demand for higher education institutions, and thus the end result was a decrease in the proportion of graduates of vocational education and training, in contrast to an increase in the proportion of graduates of higher education.

### Third: Challenges facing vocational education and training within the local labor market in the Gaza Strip

The vocational education and training sector within the local labor market in the Gaza Strip faces a number of challenges and obstacles, as follows:

- **Negative societal view:** The vocational education and training sector suffers from a negative societal view of this sector and predominant culture of giving preferences to academic education rather than vocational education, this is why we find that the rate of students' participation in vocational education and training is low because of the continuation of this mistaken societal view of vocational training, and this has contributed to the educational system in forming the negative view of society towards education and vocational training, as the option of vocational and technical training represents the choice of those who have no choice, in terms of accepting high-achieving students in the academic secondary education path, transferring low-achieving students to the vocational secondary education path, and transferring students with Minimum achievement to the vocational training track.<sup>30</sup>
- **Weak funding:** The vocational education and training sector suffers from a continuous deficit in the budgets allocated by educational institutions and vocational training centers for training and applied programs, as well as the inability of these institutions and centers to secure the necessary funding for the training programs they provide, which is mainly caused by the weak funding provided to this sector. In this context, the various economic sectors, which are the first beneficiaries of the achievements of the vocational education and training sector, do not contribute to its financing, and do provide nothing for its development and the development of their available resources, and this in itself is a dilemma, since the economic sectors which use the outputs of the vocational education and training sector do not contribute to its financing, It not only deprives this sector of

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<sup>30</sup> Ali Ahmad Ali (2009). General policies to link technical and vocational training outputs and labor market needs, a working paper presented to the national symposium on the role of employers' organizations in narrowing the gap between training outputs and labor market needs. Arab Labor Organization, Cairo. p 10.

important resources, but also contributes to increasing the gap between the outputs of education and vocational training and the requirements of these economic sectors in the labor market.<sup>31</sup>

- **Weak physical structure:** represented by insufficient buildings, workshops and laboratories in training centers, which affects their absorptive capacity in cases of an increase in the number of students; It renders it unable to meet the students' need for effective practical training within the training centers, in addition to the fact that some appliance and equipment have become obsolete and need to be developed and modernized to adapt to the rapid technological developments.
- **Lack of organization and dispersion in the provision of services:** Vocational education and training is delivered unorganized by different groups of service providers at different qualification levels. Governmental institutions, where specialized government institutions and those in the education sector focus on graduating an average level of professional technicians. In parallel with this, the vocational training centers of the Ministry of Labor have their own vocational training programs, as well as for non-governmental institutions and providers of vocational training programs<sup>32</sup>.
- **Lack of accountability and lack of coordination of support mechanisms:** The internal Palestinian division constitutes an additional challenge to the vocational education and training sector, as a result of the absence of accountability and lack of coordination of support mechanisms for this sector and the absence of national consensus and appropriate tools for social protection as additional factors affecting the failure to implement the national strategy for vocational education and training<sup>33</sup>
- **Low enrollment of females in vocational education and training:** The low participation of females in vocational education and training programs is due to several reasons, the most important of which is the negative societal view towards this sector, and the failure to design programs commensurate with the capabilities and capabilities of females, in addition to the conditions for admission that are not encouraging for females, and the difficulty of access the training centers and distant educational institutions, in addition to the absence of vocational guidance and counseling for women, to be more aware of available job opportunities and creative initiatives, through an informational reference linking them to the latest developments in the labor market<sup>34</sup>.

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<sup>31</sup> Raed Helles and Mahmoud Issa (2014). Sources of Structural Imbalances in the Palestinian Labor Market, Fourth Palestinian Conference on Human Resources Development: Partners in the Challenge of Unemployment. Securing a Better Future for Graduates, Palestine National University: Bethlehem Human Resources Development Center, Palestine, p. 18.

<sup>32</sup> Rafat Al-Awadhi and Rana Aloul (2018). A proposed model for the development of standards of excellence for the cadre of graduates of vocational and technical education institutions In the Governorates of Gaza in the Light of the Requirements of Technological Development, Second Scientific Conference: The Future of Vocational and Technical Education in General Education Schools in Palestine, University College of Science and Technology, Khan Younis, Palestine, p. 11.

<sup>33</sup> Hilal, R. (2013). EFA skills development- Palestinian Experience and recommendations to post 2015.

<sup>34</sup> Raed Helles and Mahmoud Issa (2014). Ibid., p. 19.

Qualified human cadre: Although the human cadre is a very important element in developing and activating the role of education and vocational training in training centers, these centers still suffer from a shortage of qualified trainers in some technical disciplines such as: hotel departments, applied arts, and music education, as well as the lack of a significant number of trainers with educational qualification and knowledge of modern methods of teaching and training and scientific methods in the process of teaching, measurement and evaluation, and this is due to a clear shortcoming in identifying training needs and policies used in training workers.<sup>35</sup>

In addition to the above challenges, the challenges facing the local labor market in the Gaza Strip, the most prominent of which are the limited local market and the lack of employment opportunities and services, working conditions and relations that do not rise to acceptable standards for decent work, and the gap between the two sides of supply and demand in the local labor market is represented in the shortage of skilled and qualified workers, and the lack of some professional specializations required in the local labor market, such as craft industries<sup>36</sup>

## General recommendations:

In light of the indicators reviewed related to the population and the local labor market, as well as the development of the vocational education and training sector during the past two decades and the challenges faced by this sector as well as the challenges related to the local labor market, and based on the importance of the vocational education and training sector as well as the importance of the role it plays in meeting the needs of the labor market. The study proposes a set of general recommendations to overcome challenges on the one hand, and promote and develop education and vocational training on the other hand, which we review as follows:

### 1. Development of the educational and training system

Adopting advanced means to enhance and define all types of education, vocational training and skills development within an education and training system that meets the needs of the local labor market and creating new options for high-quality training in the vocational and technical fields.

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<sup>35</sup> Rafat Al-Awadhi and Rana Aloul (2018). Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>36</sup> Palestinian Ministry of Labor (2021). Sectoral Strategy for Action 2021 – 2023, Ramallah, Palestine, p. 14.



### Intervention Mechanisms:

1. Accelerate the accreditation of graduation certificates (for vocational education and training graduates) within the National Qualifications Framework.
2. Adding value to graduation certificates (for graduates of vocational education and training) by giving them an academic degree to encourage students to join this sector and provide opportunities in the labor market.
3. Accelerate the process of adopting the TVET Law (The Technical and Vocational Education and Training Law)
4. Equality between males and females in terms of admission, facilitating female access to training centers and distant educational institutions, and designing programs commensurate with the capabilities and capabilities of females.
5. Initiating the employment of vocational education and training within the open-track program, under which the vocational education and training bodies and centers can offer programs for a variety of professions according to the developments and needs of the local labor market and grant freedom to work for these bodies and training centers to design programs according to the needs of employers

## 2. Develop programs and curricula to meet the needs and requirements of the local labor market

Unifying the entities that manage the vocational education and training sector in the Gaza Strip into an independent body in which all concerned and relevant parties participate (Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labor, Ministry of Social Development, the private sector, civil society institutions, chambers of industry and commerce, trade unions, experts and specialists in the field of education, vocational training and curriculum preparation) It undertakes a comprehensive review, updating and development of all educational and training programs and curricula in the vocational education and training sector within a participatory approach.

### Intervention Mechanisms:

1. Forming a specialized committee to update and revise curricula in order to bring them into line with the overall objectives of vocational education and training and is commensurate with the abilities and capabilities of students enrolled in these programs.

2. Reviewing and developing curricula periodically to ensure that curricula are compatible with technological, economic and educational changes and developments in the local labor market.
3. Follow best practices in the evaluation process and devise effective and motivating evaluation methods such as projects and research.
4. Strengthening the role of the private sector and all other umbrellas related to education and vocational training in developing programs and curricula to ensure their compatibility with the developments and needs of the local labor market.

### **3. Develop the physical infrastructure of the vocational education and training sector**

Preparing a plan to develop the physical structure (buildings, equipment, tools and raw materials) for educational institutions and training centers to reach the standards of the internationally applicable educational and training environment.

#### **Intervention Mechanisms:**

1. Forming a specialized engineering committee to examine and inspect the buildings of educational institutions and vocational training centers and to make recommendations regarding institutions and centers that need restoration, expansion or transfer in line with internationally applicable training environment standards.
2. Providing training rooms with suitable spaces for the number of students and equipped with all devices, tools and means needed by trainers and trainees.
3. Providing modern equipment, tools and raw materials in the required quantities.
4. Conducting periodic maintenance of devices and equipment in the workshops of educational institutions and vocational training centers, and verifying the extent to which they keep pace with technical development and labor market developments.
5. Strengthening the economic partnership between vocational education and training bodies and centers and private sector institutions, and concluding partnership agreements with the aim of private sector institutions taking responsibility for field vocational training within the local labor market

## 4. Activating the role of civil society in developing the vocational education and training sector

Civil society plays a vital role in the development of the vocational education and training sector as it is the main partner in the development process and the nature of its relationship with the local and international community (international institutions, governmental and non-governmental institutions, private sector institutions, NGOs, local government institutions, and youth groups) helps in forming a strategic plan (Social, cultural, media) to develop the vocational education and training sector within the local labor market.

### Intervention Mechanisms:

1. Establishing vocational education and training camps in which all stakeholders participate (government agencies, civil society institutions, the private sector, chambers of industry and commerce, trade unions, experts and specialists in the field of vocational education and training, and youth groups of both sexes).
2. Preparing educational publications highlighting the importance of education and vocational training and the role it plays in meeting the needs of the local labor market.
3. Holding workshops and seminars targeting all segments of society and presenting the success stories and experiences of graduates of vocational education and training in the labor market.
4. Organizing public exhibitions to display the products of educational institutions and vocational training centers.
5. Preparing a directory of professional work that includes production and service professions in terms of their location and job opportunities in the local labor market.
6. Use all tools of pressure on decision-makers and on all international and local stakeholders to establish a support fund to finance education and vocational training.
7. Accommodating graduates of vocational training centers within the projects implemented by civil society organizations “field training programs”, which will facilitate their access to jobs in the future.

## 5. Activating the role of the private sector in developing the vocational education and training sector

The private sector plays a pivotal role in the development process which is the largest operator in the local labor market as well as its contribution to the gross domestic product, which requires activating its role in developing the vocational education and training sector system, by strengthening the relationship and harmonizing the outputs of vocational education and training to meet the needs of the local labor market and the private sector, both quantitatively and qualitatively, within the available job opportunities, and in line with the needs of sustainable economic and social development

### Intervention Mechanisms:

1. Give the private sector a major role in managing the vocational education and training sector system.
2. Involve the private sector in preparing training programs according to the needs of the private sector in the local labor market.
3. Involve experts and specialists in the private sector in activities related to the upgrading and development of this sector, including teaching, vocational guidance, counseling, consultations, tests and evaluation.
4. Provide training opportunities for educational and training frameworks in the workshops and workshops of private sector institutions, which are often newer and more advanced than their counterparts in vocational education and training institutions.
5. Involve the private sector in the process of technical qualification of trainers to ensure that trainers keep pace with the developments of the labor market as well as technological progress in the labor market.
6. Provide the necessary facilities to encourage the private sector to establish specialized vocational training centers that provide quality and new services, and exempt these centers from taxes for a period of no less than three years.
7. Allocate a portion of the profits of the private sector within the framework of social responsibility to support and develop vocational education and training for a period of two years.

## Conclusion

The development of the vocational education and training sector system in the Gaza Strip is linked to the extent of the capacity of the concerned and relevant authorities (the government agencies that manage the vocational education and training sector represented in the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Higher Education, the Ministry of Social Development, the Ministry of Labor, and private institutions and centers that follow licensed private sector institutions from the Ministry of Labor, the training centers of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees - UNRWA, the private sector institutions, the largest operator in the local labor market, and civil society institutions, the main partner in the development process) to apply intervention mechanisms within the nature of the role of each of these bodies, gradually, as the development and modernization of the vocational education and training sector system will have positive repercussions on this vital and important sector, especially as experiences prove day after day that the future will be for technicians, craftsmen and professionals.

The information and views set out in this paper do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the Palestinian NGOs Network and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.



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