

Palestine Country Brief Year 2018 By Teacher Creativity Center

▪ Introduction:

The Right to Education Index (RTEI) is a global accountability initiative that aims to ensure that all people, no matter where they live, enjoy their right to a quality education. RTEI is a global index built out of the international right to education framework to monitor national progress towards its fulfillment. It reveals key areas in need of improvement, offers country-to-country comparisons, and tracks progress over time. Ultimately,

RTEI aims to:

- Strengthen the expertise and capacity of civil society and education advocates.
- Increase public and political support for realizing the right to education.
- Hold governments and institutions accountable for their commitments to the right to education.
- And finally, uphold the right to education for every child and adult everywhere.

RTEI is a global index designed to catalyze reform across select indicators of the right to education, leading to a multi-country advocacy campaign that will drive accountability and progress towards realizing the right to education. The project facilitates ongoing research, analysis, and advocacy in partnership with civil society such as TCC to unite education advocacy campaigns with a concentrated focus. TCC has had significant accomplishments in social accountability in education, including producing the education shadow report and representing the civil society in the review of the Palestinian Voluntary National Review (VNR) in New York in 2018.

In 2018 Teacher Creativity Center in Palestine participated in following Right to Education Index (RTEI). The results consist strictly of scores for the overall index, themes, subthemes, and cross-cutting themes. This is not a comprehensive report but solely the scores to be shared across the RTEI community of practice for immediate information. The RTEI results has helped Teacher Creativity Center (TCC) and all partners such as the Palestinian

education coalition for deeper analysis of key issue areas in Education and the development of country briefs. The views expressed in this country brief are strictly those of TCC.

It is important to be considered the impact of the current political situation on education status in Palestine. According to the National Need Assessment Framework, the fragmentation of the Palestinian territory represents a major challenge. The West Bank is divided into three different areas: Area A falls under the control of the Palestinian Authority, Area B is under joint Palestinian and Israeli control, and Area C is under Israeli administrative and security control. A major problem for education in Area C, which covers more than 60% of West Bank land, lies in the fact that Israel controls construction permits, including school buildings. Another major problem is the existence of settlements in these areas and in Jerusalem. Gaza strip is almost fully isolated from the rest of the Palestinian territory. Thus what is reflected on the ground that some schools in area C are subjected to be demolished or prohibited to improve its environment. Also, restriction in mobility in Jerusalem, WB areas cause unsafe access for teachers and students to schools and this affect relation between teachers and students and increase dropout from schools.

TCC participation in RTEI contributed to review and analyze deeply the violations in the right to education locally in Palestine based on international indicators, where the findings have resulted in contributing to the knowledge of the areas that should be focused on in the coming years and where to carry out policy and advocacy activities, to achieve greater equity and inclusion, quality teaching and learning, and stronger educational systems to achieve the education sustainable development goal (SDG 4).

▪ RTEI Results:

The RTEI Questionnaire, which was completed by TCC in 2018, was peer reviewed by national research organizations and institutions and made available to national government for further review. The RTEI Questionnaire focused on immediately realizable minimum core obligations and progressively realizable rights.

The overall RTEI result consists of individual scores for each of the five themes: Governance, Availability, Accessibility, Acceptability, and Adaptability.

Regarding the preliminary result, Palestine's Index Score was 81 as below:

RTEI Overall, Theme, and Subtheme Scores

Overall Index Score: 81%

Theme and subtheme score breakdown:

Governance		90%
International Framework		88%
National Law		100%
Plan of Action		100%
Monitoring and Reporting		100%
Financing		83%
Data Availability		71%
Availability		Insufficient data
Classroom		Insufficient data
Sanitation		Insufficient data
Teachers		50%
Textbooks		Insufficient data

Accessibility		79%
Free Education		78%
Discrimination		75%
Participation		85%
Acceptability		71%
Aims of Education		80%
Learning Environment		58%
Learning Outcomes		74%
Adaptability		74%
Children with Disabilities		67%
Children of Minorities		100%
Out-of-school Education		50%
Out-of-school Children		78%

Cross-Cutting Theme Scores

Girls' Education	Children with Disabilities	Indigenous and Minority Populations	Private Education	Teachers	Content of Education
77%	83%	100%	100%	86%	69%

Monitoring and Accountability	National Normative Framework	Opportunity and Indirect Costs	Alignment of Education Aims	Sustainable Development Goal 4
68%	92%	73%	100%	71%

Issues:

The work TCC has partnered with RTEI in 2018 stresses that the lack of sufficient funding for the education budget is not the sole or main obstacle of the many shortcomings that clearly affect the quality of education and its outputs in the occupied Palestinian areas. For instance, even with the availability of funding to build new schools in many marginalized areas, the occupation prevents the development of quality education. Despite the rise in the number of graduates of higher education and the rise in the rate of unemployment in the Palestinian society of 18% in the West Bank and 41% in the Gaza Strip, the Ministry of Education faces a severe shortage of teachers in several areas as a result of the restrictions on the freedom of movement as in the case of Jerusalem. This city has suffered since its occupation from the worst cases of oppression, harassment and injustice, which have negatively affected its inhabitants, among which are the members of the educational system including students, teachers and parents through the constant harassment exercised by the occupation authorities. In light of this, education is a reflection of how the city coexists within the situations that hinder any effort of development. In addition, the ministry is not able to compete with the salaries of the Israeli municipality and is unable to compete with the services of schools supported by the municipality. Also, infrastructure development in these schools is severely restricted by the occupation.

Likewise, the continued restrictions on movement made the status of Gaza Strip no different in terms of overcrowding; the closure and the siege imposed on Gaza for more than ten years has left it incapable of acquiring external expertise or new disciplines that students could have acquired from universities outside the borders of Gaza or could have benefited from the training courses and international conferences on education. These negative effects are being overlooked when talking about the low quality of education, thus we are trying to tackle complex situations that reveal how the issues of adequate funding and budget monitoring are in no way a guarantee to solve the problem of quality education. The number of problems in the Gaza Strip are even more complicated in the case of situations that follow the two-day (morning and evening) system, which is still operating in many United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) schools and government schools, with the exception of the private sector (70% UNRWA schools, 63% of public schools operate on a two-shift basis). Moreover, six schools operate on a system of three periods of education so as to accommodate the increasing number of children due to the shortage of schools and classrooms.

There has been development in public expenditure on education, which amounted to 20.7% of the total government public expenditure in 2017. However, any increase in expenditure usually goes to construction work, increase in salaries, or new recruitment, meaning that they are not intended to develop the process of education itself; the share of development expenditure is low within the budget allocated to the Ministry, which constitutes only 18%, while 66% is spent on salaries and wages, which makes the development issue at the disposal of the donor's requirements and trends.

Furthermore, the decline in the quality of education has had a noticeable effect on the suitability and rehabilitation of schools for students with different disabilities, as well as on the extent to which the educational system can integrate and absorb students with disabilities within its institutions with its different supervisory authorities. 35% of children with disabilities of the age of enrolment in education are not enrolled in any institution that offers formal education, and the number of students benefiting from the operating resource rooms is very low. This represents an obstacle to the integration of children with disabilities, which is mostly due to inadequacy of teachers in dealing with those groups of students. This results in an increase in truancy, staying at home or attending a limited number of schools that specializes in this area, this, however, is not actual integration.

▪ **Data Availability:**

Data on classrooms and accurate number of pupils per class or per toilet. Numbers are not updated regularly by MOE.

Data on sanitation is not available. However, there is a department for health, though there are no accurate numbers on this. Not enough data was provided.

Data on textbooks was not sufficient. This is justified since the MOE is still reviewing the new curriculum, and there are massive discussions in this regard.

▪ **Recommendations**

According to the shadow report and the education index in Palestine, TCC sees that the Palestinian educational system faces many issues that make SDG4 a challenge within the current reality, either by looking at the circumstances or by the effort. The Government's initiative to improve the quality and accessibility of education has been allocated in the budget for 2017 to build 10 schools, which will contribute to reducing the burden of moving from one village to another and effectively contribute to solving the problem of overcrowding. This is within the goals aimed at everyone to have free, fair and good primary, preparatory and secondary education, which comes in harmony with SDG4 that calls for all girls and boys to have access to quality early childhood development and care, pre-primary education to be ready for primary education. It also supports the goal to increase the number of youth and adults with appropriate skills, including technical and vocational skills for decent jobs and entrepreneurship, and eliminating gender disparities in education to ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities and children living in vulnerable situations. It also helps to ensure that a large percentage of young, and adults, both men and women, are able to read, write and count, ensuring that all learners have the knowledge and skills to support sustainable development through, inter alia, education for sustainable development and sustainable livelihoods, human rights, gender equality. The construction of educational facilities that are gender, disability, and children-sensitive helps to raise the level of the existing educational facilities and create effective and safe learning environments. The study presents a set of practical recommendations to reduce the inequality gap as follows:

- The need to address the issue of dropout that occurs after the completion of the basic stage, while the enrolment rate in the primary stage is more

than 90% of both sexes, but the official statistics indicate a significant decline in this ratio in secondary school, and significantly it becomes less than 60% for both sexes. Therefore, one must ask the question of the circumstance of students who cannot meet the requirement of smooth transition from the basic stage to the completion of secondary school. More than 45% of those who reach secondary school do not pass this stage. This raises the question about the fate of those in light of the high rates of unemployment in the Palestinian society. Thus, the fate of ten thousand students outside the formal educational system, distributed between houses, streets and exploitation in the labour market remains a question. These forms can be addressed by raising compulsory education from the basic stage to secondary school to ensure that dropout rates are minimized. This remains a debatable option, and in turn the reduction of this phenomenon should be studied to address cases of deviation or reduction of illiteracy.

- Community efforts must be mobilized at all institutions and levels to ease the situation in Jerusalem. As the situation in Jerusalem continues, the Ministry's ability to achieve its goals, including SDG4, seems impossible with the siege and Judaization of the city, which threatens the survival of Palestinians there. The policy adopted by the occupation authorities in the so-called "C" areas increases these difficulties, noting that these areas account for 64% of the West Bank, and to resist these actions and not subject to them is a responsibility of all parties.
- The issue of curricula is an important and crucial issue. Therefore, it is necessary to reduce the basket of donors who adopt the Israeli narrative, and replace it with taxpayer money. This highlights and encourages Palestinian taxpayers, increases confidence in the tax system, reduces pressure exerted on the formulation of Palestinian curricula, and provides support to Jerusalem residents to face the Judaization of education.
- Efforts to integrate people with disabilities should be strengthened by reducing the percentage of schools that are unsuitable in terms of latrines other facilities to less than 20% in the coming years, promoting specialized programs to support children with disabilities by activating a package of programs to empower them, and training teachers to respond to their needs.

- The education budget should be increased in many aspects, the most important of which are development expenditures and raising their share from 18% in the budget to 25% to improve the conditions of teachers. This means adjustments to wages in the context of the education profession and raising the level of workers in this sector.