

SURVEY OF THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN THE GAZA STRIP

MAY, 2014



**YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION
GAZA - PALESTINE**



Young Men's Christian Association
Gaza - Palestine

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May, 2014

This survey was prepared by the *Young Men's Christian Association*, Gaza Strip

Report Preparation

Rami Mourad
Ali Abuzaid
Ali Bandi

Database Developer

Ayaa Bandi

Field Work Coordinator

Mahran Hani Saba

Field Work Team

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| • Souzi Alnajjar | • Haneen Swelem | • Mohanad Saba | • Saly Alnajjar |
| • Anjail Albayyouk | • Hanna Elkhouri | • Mona Habashi | • Dana Tarazi |
| • Azzam Azzam | • Hasam Aljelda | • Nahed Eldabbagh | • Yousef Tarazi |
| • Fadi Tarazi | • Jawdat Michael | • Nour Alnajjar | |
| • Georgina
Aboudawoud | • Karim Tarazi | • Ouda Aljelda | |
| | • Marena Amash | • Saed Ayyad | |

Christian Partner Institutions

- | | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| • Ahli Arab Hospital | • The Near East Council of Churches | • The Myrrh Bearers Society |
| • Latin Church | | • The Orthodox Council of Churches |



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“A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. Whoever has ears, let them hear.” Matthew 13: 4-9

After long preparation and thorough discussion since June 2013, YMCA-Gaza has been honored to undertake the management of the Needs Assessment Survey for Gaza’s Christian Community beginning in February 2014. In March 2014, a survey coordinator and 20 trained young women and men from YMCA completed visits to 390 households in 20 days. The work done by those young people is proof that the youth movement is an essential component of the Gaza YMCA community. The young men and women were the champions of this important project, and we are very proud of them.

There were several surveys done for Gaza population over the past number of years; however, we believe this survey is unique in its focus on and depth in studying Christian Community’s needs.

The wider objective of this report is to provide factual information on Palestinian Christians in Gaza. Hopefully, it would form a better understanding to enlist help to meet the actual needs of the Christian community to enhance their presence and steadfastness in their homeland. This community has been surviving under a difficult and critical political, economic, and social situation.

The completion of this report would not have been possible without the contribution of many people and Christian organizations. I would like to express my thanks and appreciation to Dr. Sami El-Yousef and his team at the Pontifical Mission, Jerusalem and Gaza for their dedication and commitment to help the Christian community in Gaza. This survey would not have been brought to life without their endless support.

I would like to thank Embrace the Middle East and their on-going support and follow-up.

I extend my thanks to all the Christian institutions in Gaza, particularly the Latin Church, The Greek Orthodox Church, the Near East Council of Churches, Ahli Arab Hospital, the Myrrh Bearers Society, and the Orthodox Council of Churches. I am grateful for their feedback during the project.

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Finally, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to all members of the YMCA board of directors who supported this project during difficult circumstances. I must also acknowledge the help provided by the YMCA support team, and all other colleagues who have willingly helped the team in order to ensure a successful project.

Suheil Tarazi
Chair
YMCA, Gaza
May, 2014

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures	4
List of Tables	5
Preface	6
Acronyms	7
Executive Summary	8
Chapter I: Objectives and Methodology	
Introduction	10
Facts and previous studies	11
Objectives of the community survey	12
Methodology	12
Population	12
Data collection	13
Data analysis and reporting	14
Report structure	14
Chapter II: Demographic and Social Characteristics of Christian Households in the Gaza Strip	
Introduction	15
Changes in the Christian population in the Gaza Strip	15
Social features of Christian households in the Gaza Strip	19
Refugee status	19
Family type	19
Housing type	19

Household size and housing density	20
Monthly income	21
Durable goods and supplementary services	21

Chapter III: Social Features of Christians in the Gaza Strip

Marital status	22
Age at first marriage	24
Denomination	24
Nationality	24
Health status	25
Health insurance	25
Disability	26
Chronic diseases	27
Education	28
Participation in the labor force	31
Employment status	31
Status of employment and unemployment	32
Humanitarian aids	38

Chapter IV: Conclusions and Recommendations

General conclusions	40
Recommendations	42

References	44
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Appendices	45
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LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Palestinian population pyramid – Gaza Strip, 2013	17
Figure 2: Christian population pyramid – Gaza Strip, March 2014	17
Figure 3: Distribution of Christian population by sex and age group	18
Figure 4: Distribution of Christian households by refugee status	19
Figure 5: Distribution of Christian households by housing type	20
Figure 6: Distribution of Christians who hold other nationalities	25
Figure 7: Distribution of Christians by sex and education level	28
Figure 8: Distribution of Christians who dropped out of school yet are intending to continue their education	29
Figure 9: Distribution of Christians who receive humanitarian aid and source	39

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Population distribution by sex and governorate (1997-2014)	16
Table 2: Distribution of Christian households in the Gaza Strip by income	21
Table 3: Number and percentage of households by durable goods and supplementary services	22
Table 4: Distribution of individuals aged 17 and above by sex and marital status	23
Table 5: Distribution of the Christians in the Gaza Strip by denomination	24
Table 6: Distribution of Christians in the Gaza Strip with health insurance	26
Table 7: Distribution of Christians in the Gaza Strip with disabilities by sex	26
Table 8: Distribution of Christians in the Gaza Strip with chronic diseases by sex	27
Table 9: Distribution of individuals by type of educational institutions	30
Table 10: Distribution of individuals above 16 years of age by sex and employment status	31
Table 11: Distribution of individuals above 16 years of age by employment status	32
Table 12: Distribution of individuals above 16 years of age who started working in 2007 – 2012 by sex and employment status	34
Table 13: Distribution of individuals above 16 years of age who started working in 2007 – 2012 by sex and work classification	36
Table 14: Distribution of unemployed individuals between 17-28 years of age by sex and degree type	37
Table 15: Distribution of individuals by income and source of aid	39

PREFACE

In September 2009, just after I began working at the Pontifical Mission for Palestine (PMP), I was advised by my staff to make a trip to Gaza to check on the progress of our emergency intervention, following an aerial bombing that completely destroyed NECC's mother and child clinic where a joint collaboration effort between PMP and other donors was underway in order to help re-establish the clinic. Stereotypical images of the Gaza Strip in my mind were of over-crowdedness, lack of law and order, dirty streets, poor sanitation and the like. I crossed Israel's Erez Border Crossing alone not knowing what to expect on the other side, and not knowing that this very first trip would be a life changing experience for me.

I spent a mere five hours in Gaza meeting with a number of the Christian leaders and heard the firsthand accounts about their daily life in the Gaza Strip. I also heard about the wonderful work of the Christian institutions that continuously serve the local population in the various fields of education, healthcare, and social service. In a few short hours, I learned more about the meaning of pride, dedication, bravery, self-worth, sense of mission, commitment, and the true application of Christian values than at any other time in my life and I immediately fell in love with this small yet determined community.

During my visits, I always felt that there was a missing step to better serve the people of Gaza; to identify the real needs of the community and a well-defined plan for future involvement. In June 2013, PMP invited the heads of all key institutions in Gaza to a roundtable discussion to see how we can move forward with this endeavor. As a result of this meeting, a decision was made to launch the first ever community survey of Gaza's Christian community which defines the community's demographic data, identifies their needs, and based on the results, to develop an action plan.

I am delighted that we have concluded the research and publication of this very important document with anticipation that this will only be the beginning of a larger concerted effort to support this vibrant community.

My sincerest thanks go to the YMCA team and a community committee who accepted this challenge and dedicated their time and effort to ensure that we reach our common goal. My gratitude also goes out to our donor partner, Embrace the Middle East for believing in this initiative and for their financial support. Most importantly, my respect and admiration goes out to every individual and institution for their contributions towards this study, which would otherwise have not been possible.

I have no doubt that after all of the suffering, Gaza will one day soon regain its glory and its rightful place, and justice and peace will finally prevail.

*Sami El-Yousef
Regional Director
Pontifical Mission – Jerusalem*

ACRONYMS

YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association
PNA	Palestinian National Authority (Ramallah)
PHEC	Population, Housing and Establishment Census
PCBS	Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
JD	Jordanian Dinars
USD	United States Dollars
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The “Survey of the Christian Community in the Gaza Strip” is a household survey that was implemented in response to an urgent need expressed by various local institutions and international funding agencies to have an updated database with tangible statistics and analysis highlighting the characteristics of the Christian community in the Gaza Strip. Data collection and relevant field work was conducted in March 2014 by researchers consisting of twenty one young people from the YMCA in Gaza. The percentage of the total number of Christian households participating in the study was 97.7 percent, including 390 households and 1,313 people (636 males and 677 females), and including those currently residing in Gaza and those who are living, working or studying abroad on a temporary basis (for a period of less than a year). Out of the total number of Christians (1,313 people), there are 1,266 individuals residing in the Gaza Strip and 47 individuals residing elsewhere (including 38 university students and 9 individuals for other reasons). A majority of the Christian population in Gaza, or 89 percent, are Greek Orthodox while 9.3 percent are Latin and 1.52 percent belong to other denominations.

Key findings show that there is a steady decline in the number of Christians living in the Gaza Strip, with an average decline of 1.3 percent every year, between the years 1997 - 2014. In 1997, the total number of Christians was 1,688; in 2007 it was 1,375 and by March 2014, it was 1,313. Today, the average Christian household size is small compared to the general population, with only 3.8 individuals per household, while housing density averages less than one person per room.

Most of the Christians in Gaza are middle-aged adults due to the population’s low birth and death rates. The sex ratio is 93.9 males per 100 females which reveals a higher number of females than males within the Christian population. The median age for first marriage for males is 29 years old, while for females it is 21 years old, which is considered relatively high in age compared to Gaza’s general population.

An overwhelming majority, or 99.77 percent, of Gaza’s Christian population reside in Gaza Governorate, while only 0.23 percent reside in Khan Younis Governorate. Some 54 percent of Christian households are classified as “refugee” status; some 34 percent of those households are without an income, while 32 percent of Christian households receive a monthly income of more than 1,000 USD.

With regard to health status, 34 percent of Christians do not have any health insurance. 2.7 percent of the population has been diagnosed with a physical or mental disability and 16 percent suffer from chronic diseases.

Regarding education, the survey results show that among those who are aged 22 and above, there are 9 individuals, or 1 percent, of the population who are illiterate; 350 individuals or 40.9 percent of the population has earned a bachelor's degree; 58 individuals or 6.7 percent of the population has earned a postgraduate degree (Master’s or PhD). For Christians who are below the age of 18 years and enrolled

in a formal education institution, 54.2 percent are enrolled at Christian private schools while 36 percent are enrolled at public schools and 9.8 percent are enrolled in UNRWA schools.

The percentage of Christians who participate in the labor force (aged 16 and above) is 40 percent, while 3.5 percent have joined the workforce since 2012. 5.4 percent of Christians receive humanitarian assistance.

In closing, most of the social characteristics of the Christian community in the Gaza Strip are similar to that of the general population because they live in similar circumstances (the blockade and Gaza's poor economic situation). Thus, the Christian community's involvement with greater society will increase confidence and motivation among young Christians which will help support their choices in the future. Christian institutions in Gaza need to better coordinate and complement their work to enhance empowerment among the Christian community by building their capacities, especially the youth amongst them, so that young people are better prepared to effectively integrate in the general Palestinian society of Gaza despite all of the challenges.

Chapter I

Objectives and Methodology

Introduction

Describing Gaza's Christian community as a minority does not reflect the size of their actual participation in social and political activities. Rather, Gaza's Christian presence is a source of pride cherished by Palestinian leaders and the general population, who consider them a corner stone in the fabric of the Palestinian community, which collectively aspires to achieve freedom and build an independent Palestinian state on the basis of equality and participation.

The Gaza Strip is located in the southern part of the Palestinian coast on the Mediterranean Sea with an area of 365 square kilometers, bordered by historical Palestinian territories occupied in 1948 from the north and east, and from the southwest by Egypt.

The Gaza Strip was under the British Mandate from July 1920 to May 1948, and then it fell under Egyptian military rule until it was occupied by Israel in 1967. Following the Oslo agreement in 1993, it became part of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) while retaining some Israeli settlements. In September 2005, Israel unilaterally withdrew from the Gaza Strip but maintained full control of its land, sea borders and airspace.

Following the second legislative elections in January 2006 and the victory of the Hamas movement with a majority of seats, there was internal Palestinian division resulting in Hamas' takeover of Gaza in July 2007. Israel then imposed a strict blockade on the Gaza Strip which has affected all aspects of life, and waged a fierce war in December 2008. Israel eased the blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip after the "Marmara" Turkish ship event in May 2010. In November 2012, the Gaza Strip witnessed another war.

The Christian community in the Gaza Strip has effectively engaged in wider community, contributing individually and through the various Christian institutions to provide services to all segments of society without any religious-based discrimination. Furthermore, it stands with the national consensus which rejects the occupation and aspires to build an independent Palestinian state. Christians were represented in the national Legislative Council in both legislative cycles in 1996 and 2006 through a quota of one member representing Gaza, as guaranteed by Palestinian electoral law.

Facts and previous studies

There are a number of studies that examine the situation of the Palestinian Christian community, a notable example being the SABEEL 2006 survey, which relied on a sample of 1,500 Christian households from both the West Bank and Israel. However, this survey did not represent the Christian community of the Gaza Strip because of the political circumstances that prevented it from doing so.¹

Related statistical reports show that there is a decline in the number of Palestinian Christians in the Holy Land, which began during Ottoman rule when it forced conscription into its army; as a result, many young Christians fled. Israeli wars and occupations in both 1948 and 1967 also played a prominent role in the displacement of a large number of Christians from their lands, as with the rest of the Palestinian population. Furthermore, political and economic circumstances play another major role in the current trend of Palestinian Christians toward emigration.²

By the end of 2013, the estimated number of Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip was about 1.7 million people.³ According to PHEC 1997, the number of Christians in the Gaza Strip was 1,688 individuals (789 or 46.74 percent of whom were men), and centered mostly in Gaza Governorate (96.15 percent); the rest were distributed in four other governorates throughout the Gaza Strip.⁴

The findings of PHEC 2007 showed that the Christian population decreased by 18.54 percent to only 1,375 people (47.23 percent male), with a higher concentration of households in Gaza Government compared to 1997, including an absence of any Christian presence in the Rafah Governorate in the southern Gaza Strip.

The absence of specialized surveys regarding Christians in Gaza makes it necessary to build an updated database that provides essential information about the community regarding its demographics and social characteristics, so that it might help Christian institutions build plans and programs to more effectively empower Christians in Gaza Strip.

¹ Sabeel Centre, 2006. The Sabeel survey on Palestinian Christians in the West Bank and Israel. Summer 2006, Jerusalem – Palestine.

² Jerusalem Inter-Church Centre, 2009. Palestinian Christians, Jerusalem – Palestine.

³ PCBS, 2013. Statistical Yearbook of Palestine 2013, No. 14. Ramallah – Palestine.

⁴PCBS, 1999. Population, Housing and Establishment Census -1997, Final Results, Ramallah - Palestine.

Objectives of Community Survey

A comprehensive census of a community aims to identify key statistics and analyse their distribution according to the community's characteristics, for the purpose of planning and development.

Since the Christian community in the Gaza Strip is a religious minority, understanding its demographics and social characteristics will actively contribute to improving the situation of its members, and will help the various religious and social institutions develop reliable plans and programs for an active Christian presence in Gaza.

Objectives of this survey can be summarized as follows:

- To provide an accurate and updated census of the Christian community for associated Christian institutions in Gaza to better organize and plan their programs in line with the needs of the community.
- To provide Christian institutions and donor agencies with accurate needs assessments of the Christian community in the Gaza Strip enabling them to share information, resources, and coordinate efforts to provide funding.
- Build a database that can be updated regularly about the Christians of the Gaza Strip.

Methodology

The “Survey of the Christian Community in the Gaza Strip” offers detailed data about Christian individuals and their households, including social and economic variables and the services provided to them, with the goal of highlighting the most important challenges they face and to identify their needs according to priorities. The results will be provided to Christian institutions in the Gaza Strip and funders to help in planning and programming responses to the needs of the Christian community.

Population

The population targeted by the survey includes all Palestinian Christians residing in the Gaza Strip on the 3rd March 2014. It includes Palestinian Christians who are abroad on a temporary basis for a period of less than one year (for the purpose of visits, tourism, medical treatment, or other reasons) if their primary place of residence is in the Gaza Strip; these individuals were counted with their households. It also includes Christian students who are abroad, and their households, regardless of the length of absence.

All members of surveyed Christian households have been recorded, including members residing outside the Gaza Strip for more than a year for various reasons; these individuals have been included in the database but were not used in this analysis, in order to achieve consistent indicators in line with the methodology.

The sampling frame was identified based on a list of names and addresses registered at YMCA–Gaza and other Christian institutions participating in the census.

Throughout this report, a household is known as one person or a group of persons with or without a familial relationship, who live in the same housing unit, share meals and provisions of food and other living essentials. Households are divided into two types:

Nuclear household: comprised of a couple only or a couple and their children; no other relatives or non-relatives live within this household.

Extended household: A household of at least one nuclear household together with other relatives.

Data Collection

To achieve the above goals, data was collected using two different tools. First, household and individual information questionnaires were created (see Appendix 1) after discussions between the preparation team and the follow-up team of YMCA-Gaza. The second tool was a workshop to identify different challenges and needs of the Christian community.

The survey was conducted from the 3rd to the 19th March 2014 by a team of 21 young people from YMCA-Gaza after receiving training from the report team for one day at YMCA-Gaza. The training included goals and methodology and explanation of the survey content, as well as data collection ethics.

Field researchers were assigned to various households under the supervision and follow up of YMCA-Gaza. The report team checked all questionnaire sheets for complete and accurate answers before data entry.

Pilot Study: As a verification of the accuracy of the questionnaire sheet and to train the field researchers, a total of 20 questionnaire sheets were filled in as a pilot in order to acquaint the trainees with the various forms and questions.

Workshop: The survey team organized a focus group workshop on the 22nd March 2014 at the YMCA-Gaza, with the participation of 20 Christian young people aged 18 - 35 from various social backgrounds.

Data Analysis and Reporting

Coding and numbering: Questions/options were coded to facilitate data entry and control its quality.

Data entry: Completed questionnaires were manually entered into two pre-prepared forms on Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16. The first form was concerned with household data and the second was for household members' data. The entry operation was closely monitored by the research team to ensure accuracy.

Data filtering: After data was entered, it was filtered. The research team re-entered 30 questionnaire sheets to make sure that they were identical to the first entry; this revealed there was high quality entry.

Database: A special database was designed using ACCESS 2007. This software includes many options for portraying data, modification, deletion, queries, as well as the ability to secure the database with passwords to maintain security and privacy of data (Appendix, 2).

Data processing: After filtering the data, the two data forms were merged. Data was analyzed to cover all aspects required by YMCA-Gaza. Statistical methods used included frequency tables, relative distribution, classification, and distribution of categories.

Report Structure

This report contains four chapters, including this chapter presenting the objectives and methodology. Chapter two discusses demographic and social characteristics of Christian households in the Gaza Strip, while the third chapter concentrates on demographic and socio-economic information about Christian individuals in the Gaza Strip. Finally, this report presents conclusions and recommendations in addition to a list of references and appendices.

Chapter II

Demographic and Social Characteristics of Christian Households in the Gaza Strip

Introduction

Based on the list provided by YMCA–Gaza, the number of Christian households visited by field researchers was 399 households. There were a total of 390 households that agreed to participate in the community survey questionnaire, giving a participation rate of 97.7 percent.

The definition of the Christian population used in the methodology of this survey is consistent with the definitions used by the PCBS in its censuses. On this basis, the number of confirmed Christian households in the Gaza Strip on the 3rd March 2014 was 390, with a total of 1,313 individuals. According to information provided by respondents, this figure includes 1,266 individuals who were residing in the Gaza Strip, 9 individuals who were residents of the Gaza Strip but were temporarily absent for less than one year for the purposes of visits, tourism, treatment etc., and there were also 38 students abroad whose permanent households were still in the Gaza Strip).

Changes in the Christian Population in the Gaza Strip

PHEC 1997 is considered the first documented reference for a census of Christians in the Gaza Strip, which at that time numbered 1,688 individuals. The findings of the second PHEC in 2007 showed that numbers decreased to 1,375 individuals. It should be noted that PHEC 2007 was conducted in difficult circumstances due to internal fighting between Hamas and Fatah, seven years after the start of the Al-Aqsa Intifada in 2000, which was followed by the blockade and Israeli attacks on the Palestinian territories.

The year 2007 was a turning point in the life of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. The events of June 2007 led to the emergence of two Palestinian governing bodies, one in the West Bank led by the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), and one in Gaza led by the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas). Moreover, there were a series of Israeli violations against the Gaza Strip, including the imposition of the blockade and the closure of crossings with Israel, in addition to the closure of the Rafah crossing. Furthermore, repeated Israeli attacks on the Gaza Strip, which peaked in December 2008 and November 2012, left a large number of dead and wounded, vast amounts of destruction, and immeasurable psychological and social problems among different social groups.

The Christian community of the Gaza Strip suffered similarly to all other people in Gaza. For example, the blockade deprived Christian youth from celebrating religious feasts in various holy sites outside Gaza.

Table 1 presents Christian demographic distribution in the Gaza Strip for 1997, 2007 and 2014, by sex and governorate. Findings show an increase in the proportion of males to females. The sex ratio is 93.9 males for every 100 females among the Christian community, according to this community survey. In contrast, the overall sex ratio in the Gaza Strip was 103.2 at the end of 2013.

The sex ratio of the Christian community in the Gaza Strip may reveal that Christian males are more likely to change their place of residence for purposes of studying, marriage, or work opportunities.

Table 1: Population distribution by sex and governorate (1997-2014)

Governorate	1997			2007			2014		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
North Gaza	2	13	15	1	2	3	-	-	-
Gaza	768	855	1623	643	710	1353	635	675	1310
Der Al Balah	1	5	6	2	6	8	-	-	-
Khan Younis	17	20	37	4	7	11	1	2	3
Rafah	1	6	7	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	789	899	1688	650	725	1375	636	677	1313

The findings of the community survey highlight a decrease in the overall population to 1,313 individuals. Between 1997 and 2014, the annual decrease rate was 1.3%, 1.85% for the period 1997-2007 and 0.64% for the period 2007-2014 annually.

A decrease in the number of Christians is down to several reasons, mainly related to the prevailing circumstances in the Gaza strip mentioned elsewhere above.

There are 104 individuals that have changed their residence since 2007, 35.6 percent of them for study, 17.3 percent for marriage, 15.4 percent for work, 6.7 percent for the political situation, and 24 percent for other reasons.

Among a focus group of twenty Christian youth, 3 (15%) said the main motivator to stay in the Holy Land was for religious reasons, 12 (60%) for national pride, and 3 (15%) for family (while 10% had no specific motivators). The whole group agreed that none of them would think to leave Gaza if they had appropriate work opportunities and a decent life.

The above conditions caused the median age at first marriage among Christians to be high compared to the general population of Gaza (as mentioned in chapter three), which has led in turn to a decrease in the overall number of Christians.

The Christian community in the Gaza Strip is concentrated in Gaza Governorate. In 1997, Christians were unevenly distributed throughout the Governorates of the Gaza Strip. The findings of PHEC 2007 show that the 7 Christians who lived in Rafah Governorate (south) in 1997 had left, followed by the Christians in the northern Governorates and Deir Al-Balah, who had left by 2014. Thus, the Christian presence can now be found in two Gaza Governorates: 388 households, 99.77% of Christian households, are in Gaza Governorate and only 2 households are in Khan Younis Governorate. The reason for this may be due to the existence of churches and other service centers located in Gaza Governorate. Moreover, the Gaza Governorate is a relatively open minded social environment compared to other governorates in the Gaza Strip. Furthermore, the survey shows that all Christian households are in urban localities and none of them are in refugee camps or rural localities.

Figure 1 presents the population pyramid of the Gaza Strip at the end of 2013,⁵ based on gender and seventeen age groups. The pyramid is expansive and has a broad base and gently sloping edges, which indicates a rapid rate of population growth. Thus, the population of the Gaza Strip is considered young.

Figure 2 presents the population pyramid of the Christian population in the Gaza Strip in March 2014. The pyramid has a moderate base while its edges rise horizontally, which indicates a low birth and death rate, indicating that the population is more mature.

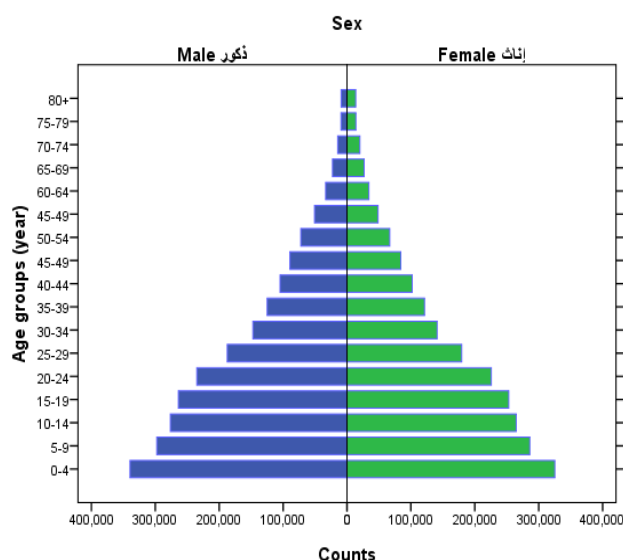


Figure 1: Palestinian population pyramid – Gaza Strip, 2013

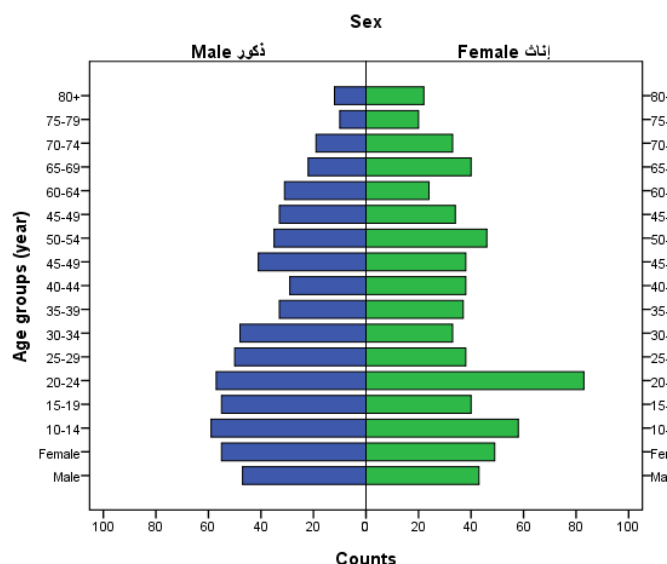


Figure 2: Christian population pyramid – Gaza Strip, March 2014

⁵ PCBS, 2013. Palestinians at the end of 2013. Ramallah - Palestine.

Several characteristics stand out, among which

- There is a large number of Christian females in the age group 20 - 24 years old, compared to males from the same age group. This is normal in developing societies where young males search for better education and work opportunities.
- There are more females than males aged over 65, but for those who are between 25-35 years old, there are fewer females than males.
- There is a high count of individuals in age groups 10-14 years old and 20-24 years old; this might possibly be due in part to a more stable political situation (twenty years prior) and with the establishment of the PNA in 1994.

Figure 3 presents the distribution of the Christian population in seven age groups, in order to better understand their needs when planning interventions. About one-fifth of Christians in the Gaza Strip (20.4%) are younger than 13 years old, 20.7% are young people aged 17-28 years, 6.2% are adolescents aged 13-16 years, while there is a similar percentage in the age group 17-20 years old. The percentage of the population who are aged 60 and over is 16.4%.

The findings show that the number of females is greater than males in the following age groups: 13-16 years old, 21-28 years old, 41-60 years old, and those who are more than 60 years old.

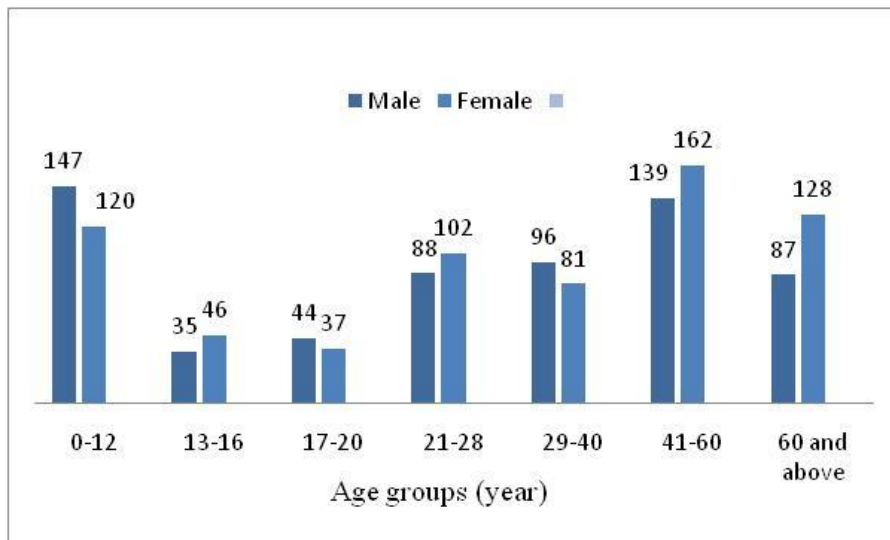


Figure 3: Christian population distribution by sex and age group

Social Features of Christian Households in the Gaza Strip

Refugee Status

This status belongs to Palestinians who were forced to leave their land in Palestinian territory occupied by Israel in 1948. The number of registered refugee households is 210, 54 percent of all Christian households in Gaza, while the number of non-refugee households is 180, 46 percent of all Christian households in Gaza, as illustrated in Figure 4.

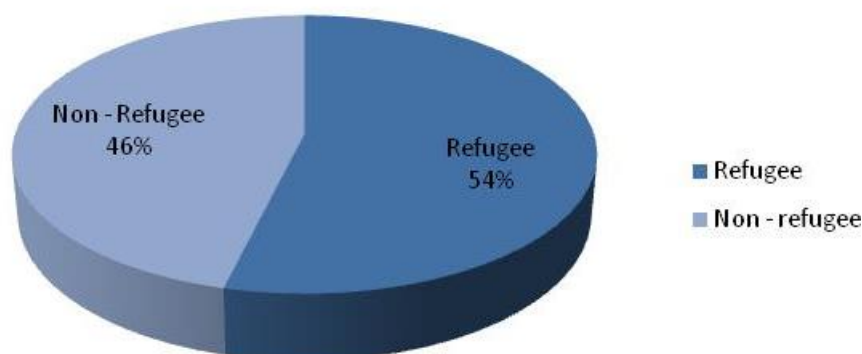


Figure 4: Distribution of Christian households in the Gaza Strip by refugee status

Family Type

Christian households are distributed according to “family type” as follows: 383, or 98.2 percent, are nuclear families, and 7, or 1.8 percent, are extended families (each of these contain exactly two nuclear families). Thus, the total number of nuclear families in the Gaza Strip is 397.

Housing Type

The definition of “housing type” refers to the architectural type of housing. Figure 5 shows the distribution of Christian households by housing type; this distribution is similar to the general distribution of housing types in the Gaza Strip. The findings show that most Christian households (47.7 percent) reside in houses,⁶ followed by 42.8 percent in apartments, while 9.5 percent of Christian households are in villas.

⁶ House: a building originally intended for single-family housing and consists of one or two stories; considered a traditional construction in Palestine.

Villa: a stand-alone building usually constructed of clean stone and intended for single-family housing; consists of one or two stories linked by an internal stairway, attached to a garden and surrounded by a fence.

Apartment: Part of a house or building; consisting of one or more rooms with kitchen, bathroom and toilet facilities, locked by an external door, and accessed by a stairway corridor leading to the outside road.

The vast majority own their homes (340 households, or 87.2 percent) while 16 households (4.1 percent) live on the property of a relative, two families (0.2 percent) live in *Waqf*-owned property (part of a religious endowment), and 32 households (8.2 percent) live in rented apartments. Rents range from 200 – 400 USD per month, with a mean of 266.09 USD. This figure is higher than average rental fees of apartment complexes in Gaza in 2011, which was estimated to be 108.5 JD, equivalent to 155 USD.⁵ This increase reflects Gaza’s steep housing price rises as a result of the non-entry of building materials across its borders, especially since the closure of the tunnels from Egypt in June 2013.

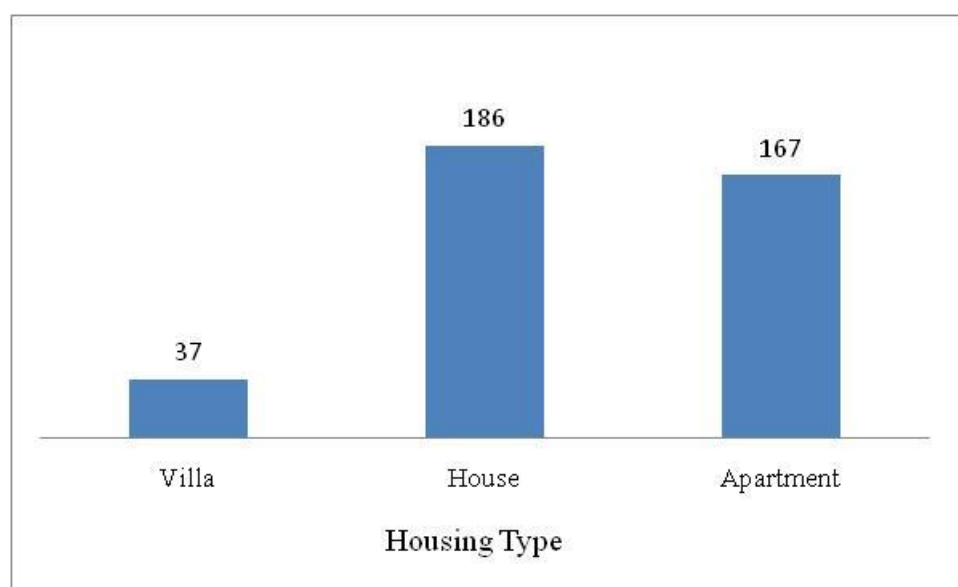


Figure 5: Distribution of Christian households in the Gaza Strip by housing type

Household Size and Housing Density

The average Christian household size is 3.8 individuals, while the average household size in the entire Gaza Strip is 6 individuals.⁷

A housing density of three or more individuals per room is considered “overcrowded”. Housing density among Christian households ranges between 0.14 individuals per room and 3.33 individuals per room, with a mean housing density of 0.9 individuals per room. Only one household was categorized as overcrowded. The findings indicate that Christian houses in general are not overcrowded, due to a decline in the size of Christian households.

⁷ PCBS, 2013. Palestinians at the end of 2013. Ramallah - Palestine.

Monthly Income

Monthly household income is regarded as the sum of all household members' income in the month prior to this survey being conducted, based on data provided by respondents.

Monthly incomes of Christian households range between incomes that are non-existent to 4,226.36 USD, with a mean of 739.65 USD. Table 2 shows that 131 households, 33.6 percent, reported having no salary or source of income. There are 24 households, 6.2 percent, with a monthly income of less than 300 USD, 31 households with a monthly income between 300-500 USD, 79 households with a monthly income between 500-1,000 USD, and 31.2 percent of households have a monthly income of more than 1,000 USD.

According to the Palestinian Expenditure and Consumption Survey 2011, the poverty line and deep poverty line for households (of two adults and three children) stood at 637 USD and 509 USD respectively.⁸

A large proportion of households reporting zero income is a critical financial situation. However, it must be noted that many respondents to this type of survey (despite it being anonymous) will fear that the results could be used to determine social aid or tax obligations.

Table 2: Distribution of Christian households in the Gaza Strip by income

Income	No. of Households	(%)
No income	131	33.6
Less than 300 USD	24	6.2
300-500 USD	31	7.9
500-1000 USD	79	20.3
1000-1500 USD	61	15.6
More than 1500 USD	61	15.6
Unknown	3	0.8
Total	390	100.0

⁸ PCBS, 2012. Living Standards in the Palestinian Territory. Expenditure, Consumption, Poverty, 2011. Ramallah - Palestine.

Durable Goods and Supplementary Services

Access to durable goods and supplementary services is an indicator of household welfare. Table 3 presents the number and percentage of Christian households in the Gaza Strip with access to a range of goods and supplementary services. It is notable that all Christian households have a refrigerator, while televisions, satellites, washing machines, telephones, mobiles, and solar/electric boilers are each accessed by more than 90 percent of households.

Due to the electricity crisis in Gaza, about 40 percent of Christian households have electricity generators and 38 percent have a UPS (uninterruptible power source). On the other hand, 37 percent of Christian households do not have an alternative source of power. The implication is that these households use traditional methods, such as candles, during power outages which exist for as much as half the day. The use of candles and other traditional methods increases the risk of fire and loss of life, as a result of misuse by family members or children.

Table 3: Number and percentage of households with access to durable goods and supplementary services

Goods	No.	(%)	Goods	No.	(%)
Camera	97	24.9	Refrigerator	390	100.0
Video camera	48	12.3	TV	388	99.5
Vacuum cleaner	276	70.8	Satellite dish	383	98.2
UPS	140	35.9	Electric fan	340	87.2
Water filter	148	37.9	Washing machine	384	98.5
Dish washer	21	5.4	Mobile/cell phone	368	94.4
Computer	192	49.2	Phone (land line)	353	90.5
Laptop computer	251	64.4	Electricity generator	156	40.0
Internet line	276	70.8	Microwave	229	58.7
Air conditioning	185	47.4	Electric blender	338	86.7
Car	170	43.6	Gas oven	339	86.9
Motor cycle	3	0.8	Deep freezer	55	14.1
Solar/electric boiler	364	93.3	Fireplace	301	77.2

Chapter III

Social Features of Christians in the Gaza Strip

This chapter presents a descriptive analysis of 1,313 Christian individuals' data, highlighting marital status, denomination, health status, education, and labor participation.

Marital Status

Table 4 presents the distribution of marital status for persons aged 17 and above, by sex and age group. The findings show that the number of unmarried persons is 360, including 349 singles and 11 who are engaged, which is 37.3 percent of all Christians. The number of unmarried females is higher than the number of unmarried males for those aged 40 and above, with 65 single females compared to 12 single males. The ages of engaged people range between 21 - 40 years old.

Table 4: Distribution of individuals aged 17 and above, by sex and marital status

Age group	Sex	Marital Status							Total
		Remarried	Separated	Widowed	Divorced	Married	Engaged	Single	
17-20	Male	-	-	-	-	-	-	44	44
	Female	-	-	-	-	1	-	36	37
21-28	Male	-	-	-	-	7	3	78	88
	Female	1	-	-	1	51	5	44	102
29-40	Male	-	-	-	1	68	1	26	96
	Female	-	-	3	-	69	2	7	81
41-60	Male	1	-	1	1	127	-	9	139
	Female	-	-	10	2	116	-	34	162
60 +	Male	-	-	9	1	74	-	3	87
	Female	-	1	60	1	35	-	31	128
Total		2	1	83	7	548	11	312	964

The proportion of married people is 56.8 percent of all Christian individuals over 16 years of age, and the youngest is a female aged 17-20. The proportion of widowed or separated individuals is 9.4 percent, and the youngest is a female in the 21-28 age bracket.

There are many more widowed females than widowed males. The findings also show there is only one person separated, a woman aged over 60, and there are two individuals who are remarried.

Age at First Marriage

Gazan Christians' age at first marriage ranges from 14 - 50 years old, with a median age of 25. For males, age at first marriage ranges from 17 - 50 years old, with a median age of 29, while females' age at first marriage ranges from 14 - 42 years old, with a median age of 21. There are two females among the Christian community who were married for the first time at 14 years old, however the marriages took place more than 20 years ago.

The findings indicate that age at first marriage is higher for males than for females. Furthermore, Christians tend to get married at a later age when compared to the general Gaza population, where the average age at first marriage is 23.8 for males and 19.8 for females.⁹

These findings correlate with Gaza's Christian birth rate and the community's increasing decline.

Denomination

The findings show that the majority of the Christian population in Gaza is Greek Orthodox, totaling 1,170 or 89.1 percent, followed by Latin (totaling 9.3 percent), Coptic (0.8 percent), Baptist (0.5 percent), and Anglicans (0.2 percent), as presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Distribution of Christians in the Gaza Strip by denomination

Denomination	No.	(%)
Greek Orthodox	1,170	89.1
Latin	122	9.3
Coptic	11	0.8
Baptist	6	0.5
Anglican	3	0.2
Other/unknown	1	0.1
Total	1,313	100.0

Nationality

There are 113 individuals who have acquired other citizenships besides Palestinian nationality. Most of these have Egyptian passports (40 people), followed by Greek and American passports, as presented in Table 6. There is one person who holds dual-citizenship (Egyptian and Irish). It should also be noted that there are 28 individuals, 2.1 percent of Gazan Christians, who do not possess Palestinian national identity cards.

⁹ PCBS, 2013. Palestinians at the end of 2013. Ramallah - Palestine.

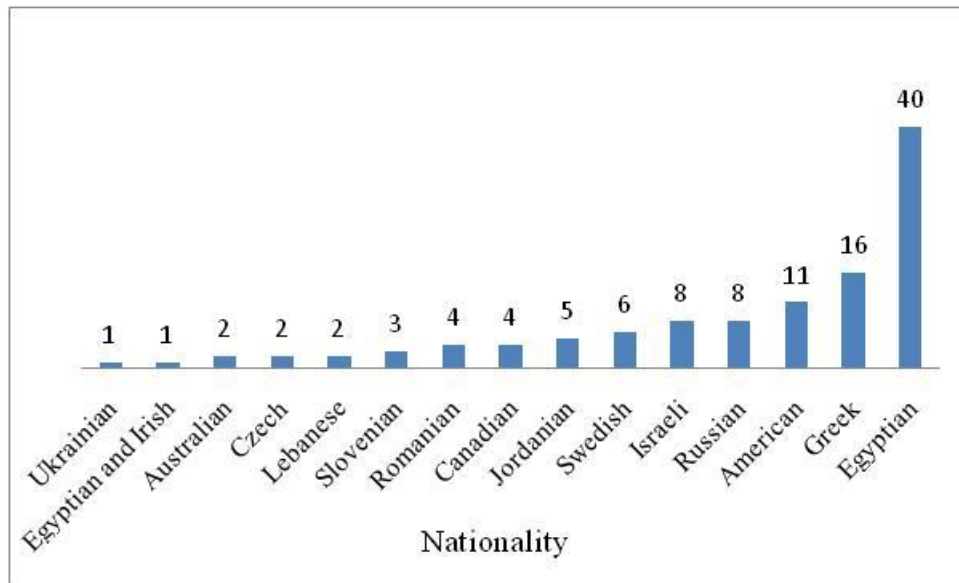


Figure 6: Distribution of Gazan Christians who have other nationalities

Health Status

Health Insurance

Half of Gaza's Christian population, 51.2 percent, are covered by government health insurance, while 33.1 percent do not have any health insurance coverage; 5.6 percent are covered by UNRWA health insurance, 6.9 percent have private insurance, and 2.6 percent have health insurance through their employers, as presented in Table 6. There is a significant proportion of Christians who do not have any health insurance, especially when compared to the general population of Gaza, where lack of health insurance is estimated to be around 3.3 percent.¹⁰

¹⁰ PCBS, 2013. Statistical Yearbook of Palestine 2013, No. 14. Ramallah – Palestine.

Table 6: Distribution of Christians in the Gaza Strip by health insurance coverage

Health Insurance Coverage	No.	(%)
No health insurance	435	33.1
Government health insurance	663	50.5
UNRWA health insurance	74	5.6
Private health insurance	90	6.9
Employer's health insurance	34	2.6
Unknown	17	1.3
Total	1,313	100.0

Disability

The number of persons who have at least one disability (physical or intellectual) is 35, or 2.7 percent of the Christian population; the prevalence of people with disabilities in the general population is 2.4 percent.

The findings in Table 7 indicate that the incidence of disability is consistent between males and females. The distribution of Christians with a disability by type is as follows: 1.68 percent are immobile or have difficulty moving, 0.15 percent have an intellectual disability, 0.15 percent have hearing impairments, 0.08 percent have visual impairments, 0.08 percent are unable to care for themselves, , and 0.53 percent have more than one diagnosed disability.

Table 7: Distribution of Christians with a disability by sex

Disability	Male	Female	Total	(%)
Mobility disability	10	12	22	1.68
Intellectual disability	1	1	2	0.15
Hearing disability	1	1	2	0.15
Visual disability	0	1	1	0.08
Unable to care for oneself	0	1	1	0.08
More than one disability	3	4	7	0.53
Total	15	20	35	2.67

Chronic Diseases

There are 214 individuals, 16.3 percent of the Christian population, that suffer from at least one type of chronic disease; the percentage is very similar to the prevalence of chronic diseases among the general population (16.2 percent).¹¹ 53 of these individuals, 4.04% of the Christian population, suffer from more than one chronic disease. Table 8 presents the number of cases of particular chronic diseases by sex. There are 133 cases, affecting 10.13 percent of the Christian population, of hypertension. Respondents who participated in the survey mentioned that they are satisfied with the health services offered in the Gaza Strip and encouraged the development of these services, especially advancing diagnostics and treatment for specific conditions.

Christians who suffer from chronic diseases or disabilities receive medical aid from governmental and community healthcare and rehabilitation service providers; however it was mentioned that there are no special programs at any of the Christian healthcare institutions aimed at treating people with chronic diseases or disabilities.

It should be noted that there are a few Christian institutions in Gaza, such as Al-Ahli Arab Hospital and the Middle East Council of Churches' Mother and Child Clinics, that provide affordable healthcare and social services to all without discrimination.

Table 8: Incidence of chronic disease among Christians by sex

Chronic Disease	Male	Female	Total	(%)
Hypertension	48	85	133	10.13
Diabetes	36	30	66	5.03
Chronic heart disease	21	18	39	2.97
Arthritis	6	11	17	1.29
Cancer	1	2	3	0.23
Mental illness	2	0	2	0.15
Thalassemia	1	1	2	0.15
Poliomyelitis	2	0	2	0.15
Hemophilia	0	1	1	0.08
Other chronic disease	6	12	18	1.37

¹¹ PCBS, 2011. A Special Bulletin on the Palestinian Population as the World Population Reaches VII Billion. Ramallah-Palestine.

Education

Figure 7 shows the educational attainment of Gazan Christians aged 22 and above, both male and female. The number of illiterate people is 9 out of the entire Christian community, or 1.1 percent, whereas the illiteracy rate among the general population is 3.6 percent. The number of Gazan Christians whose highest educational attainment is a Bachelor's (BA) degree is 350, or 40.9 percent of the adult population, while for the general population it is 13.4 percent. The number of those who finished with high school diplomas or general secondary certificates is 370, 43.2 percent of Gazan Christians. Finally, the number of Gazan Christians who have a Master's degree or PhD is 58, or 6.7 percent, compared to 1.08 percent among the general population of Gaza (in 2007).

Survey results show that the educational attainment level of the Christian community is significantly higher than that of the general population in Gaza. Females are more likely than males to finish education at secondary or diploma level, while males are more likely to obtain degrees and postgraduate qualifications.

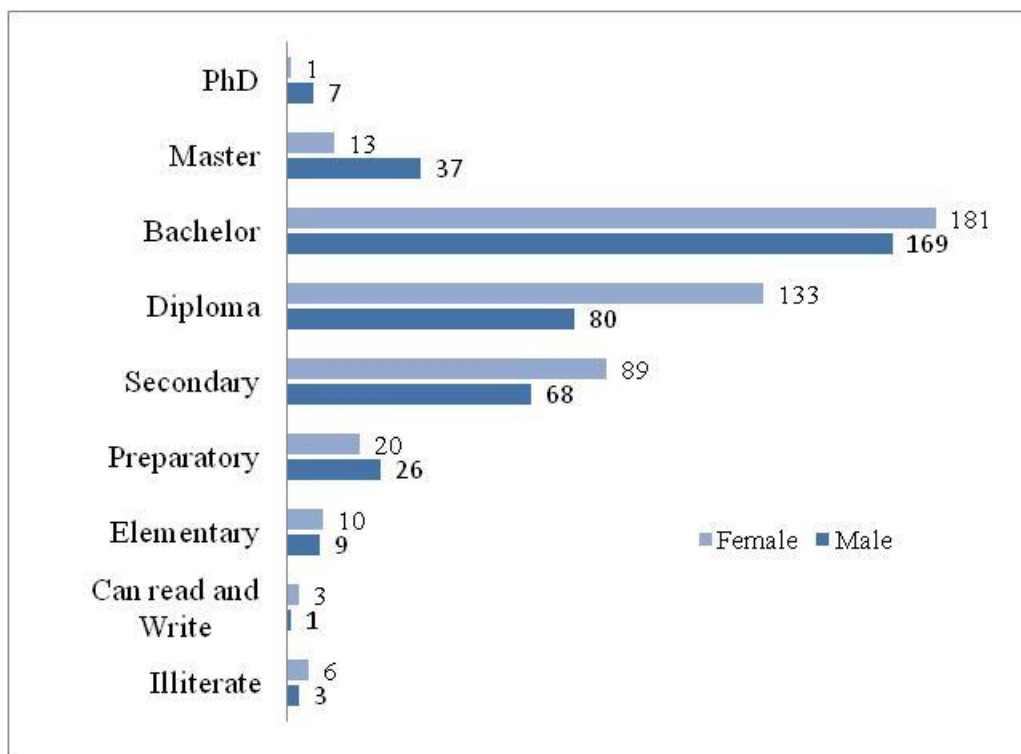


Figure 7: Distribution of Christians in the Gaza Strip by sex and education level

Figure 8 illustrates that 25 (2.1 percent) have dropped out of school yet are planning to continue their education at some point. 1 person plans to obtain a PhD, 12 people plan to continue their studies to Master's level, 10 people have dropped out at diploma level, and 2 people dropped out of high school yet are willing to go back to school.

The number of Christian individuals who dropped out of school and are not willing to continue is 399, or 28.1 percent of the entire community. According to participants in the study, those who dropped out of school did so for the following reasons: financial constraints (82 people), social issues (118 people), poor academic achievement (13 people), and other reasons (150 people).

A majority of participants in the survey are satisfied with their education level and are not seeking higher education because of the tuition costs and their priority to find work, even though none of them have sought scholarships.

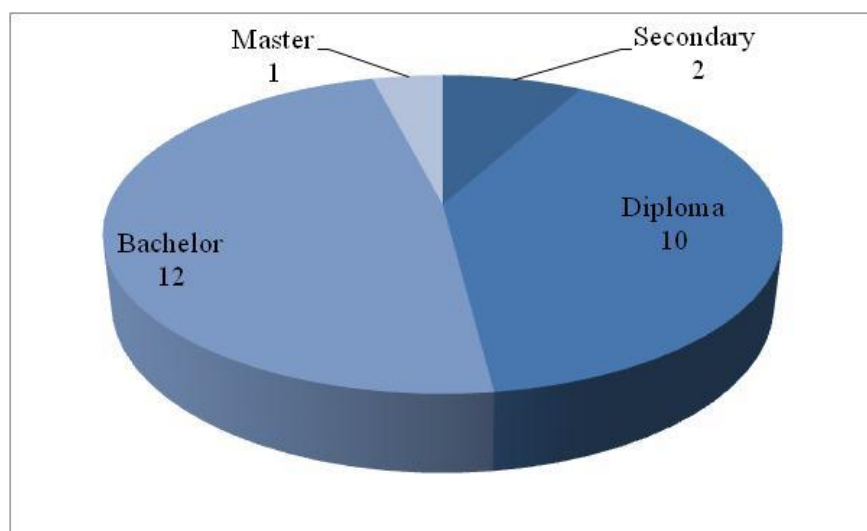


Figure 8: Distribution of those who dropped out of school yet are intending to continue their education

Table 9 illustrates the distribution of Christians in Gaza by sex and educational institution: 47 Christian children attend kindergarten and over half of these, or 63.8 percent, are enrolled in private kindergartens, 31.9 percent are enrolled in kindergartens supervised by the YMCA-Gaza, and a mere 4.3 percent are registered in kindergartens at non-Christian educational institutions.

Of the 389 students enrolled in schools, more than half (54.2%) are attending private Christian schools while 36.0 percent are attending governmental schools; only 9.8 percent attend UNRWA schools.

A high proportion of those who study at Christian private schools mention the quality of education and its Christian values, which provide an appropriate environment for Christians to enrich

their faith. It should be noted that all of the Christian schools in Gaza do not provide a free education, even for Christians, and all are for-profit institutions. Moreover, Christian schools accept non-Christian students who mostly come from upper middle class households.

Table 9: Distribution of individuals by type of educational institution

Educational Institution		Male	Female	Total	(%)
Kindergartens	Christian institutions	8	7	15	31.9
	Private	15	15	30	63.8
	Non- Christians institutions	1	1	2	4.3
	Total	24	23	47	100
Schools	UNRWA	17	21	38	9.8
	Government	68	72	140	36.0
	Private	104	107	211	54.2
	Total	189	200	389	100
Universities	Government	30	42	72	11.0
	National/civil	157	248	405	61.8
	In Arab countries	70	47	117	17.9
	In other foreign countries	51	10	61	9.3
	Total	308	347	655	100

According to the table, 61.8 percent of Christian individuals attending university are enrolled in national or private universities, 27.2 percent are or will study at universities abroad, and 11 percent of Christians study in government universities. Specialization plays an important role in attracting students to register at certain universities, taking into account the university's value, system, and academic requirements.

Participation in the Labor Force

Employment Status

Table 10 presents the distribution of Christians, aged 16 and over, and their involvement in the labor force by sex and age group. The survey revealed that there are no individuals below the age of 16 who are working or have worked previously. The findings show that 40.14 percent of the Christian community Gaza is working. Young Christians aged 17-20 are currently unemployed and only two have worked previously.

Table 10: Distribution of individuals above 16 years of age by sex and employment status
(February 2014)

Age group	Sex	Employment Status			Total
		Unemployed and never worked before	Unemployed but worked before	Working	
17-20	Male	43	1	-	44
	Female	36	1	-	37
21-28	Male	46	9	33	88
	Female	67	15	20	102
29-40	Male	7	5	84	96
	Female	22	10	49	81
41-60	Male	4	27	108	139
	Female	66	26	70	162
60+	Male	3	64	20	87
	Female	56	69	3	128
Total		350	227	387	964

For other age groups, the survey reveals that the number of working males is higher than working females, which indicates a weak female Christian labor force. For Christian women who are less than 40 years of age, the number of those who are not working and have little or no work experience is greater than the number of those who have worked, indicating a need to provide training and job opportunities to help women enter the labor force.

The distribution of Christians (older than 16) by employment status is as follows: 27.9 percent in the age group 21-28 are working; 75.14 percent in the age group 29-40 are working; 59.1 percent in the age group 41-60 are working; and 10.7 percent of those aged over 60 are working.

Status of Employment and Unemployment

In Table 11, Christian individuals (above 16 years old) are classified according to their involvement in the labor force, into one of 19 categories. Results show there are 216 individuals, or 22.4 percent of the entire Christian labor force, who are unemployed homekeepers, and 171 (17.7 percent) of these are not seeking employment. There are 151 students (15.7 percent), and of those 74 are not seeking work because of their studies. There are 24 individuals (aged under 18) who are studying in secondary schools, and there are 132 (13.7 percent) who are retired or have a disability or another reason which prevents them from working.

Table 11: Distribution of individuals above 16 years of age by employment status

Employment status	No.	(%)
Student doesn't work and doesn't seek to	74	7.7
Student doesn't work but seeks to	77	8.0
Child (under 18 years old)	24	2.5
Homekeeper doesn't work and doesn't seek to	171	17.7
Homekeeper doesn't work but seeks to	45	4.7
Doesn't work due to a disability	18	1.9
Retired	114	11.8
Irregular/informal work	13	1.3
Employee at the PNA	99	10.3
Employee at the Gaza government	7	0.7
Employee at UNRWA	11	1.1
Works at an international institution	23	2.4
Works at a Christian institution	62	6.4
Works in the private sector	102	10.6
Owner of a private enterprise	69	7.2
Works without a salary	1	0.1
Other, seeking work	46	4.8
Other, does not seeking work	8	0.8
Total	964	100.0

In contrast, there are 99 individuals, 10.3 percent of Christians in Gaza, who are employed in the PNA, while only 7 (0.7 percent) are employed in Gaza's governmental offices. A total of 34 individuals, 3.5 percent, are working at either UNRWA or international institutions, while 62 (6.4 percent) are working in Christian institutions located in the Gaza Strip. 171 individuals, 17.8 percent of the Christian labor force, work in the private sector or have their own enterprise. Excluding homekeepers and students, the total number of individuals searching for work is 46, 4.8 percent of the Christian community, while those who are not seeking work number 8, or 0.8 percent.

Table 12 shows the distribution of Christians in the Gaza Strip (aged 16 and over) who are working having joined the labor force since 2007 (when the PNA and Gaza government split), by sex and employment type. The table also reveals how many of these have joined since 2012 (the numbers of those working since 2012 are therefore included within the 2007 columns as well).

Table 12: Distribution of working individuals above 16 years of age who have commenced employment since 2007, by sex and employment status

		Current employment type and period of commencement																Total	
Age group	Sex	Owner of a private enterprise	Employee in the private sector	Employee at a Christian inst.	Employee at an international inst.	Employee at the Gaza gov.	Employee at the PNA	Employee at UNRWA	Irregular/informal work										
		Since 2007	Since 2012	Since 2007	Since 2012	Since 2007	Since 2012	Since 2007	Since 2012	Since 2007	Since 2012	Since 2007	Since 2012	Since 2007	Since 2012	Since 2007	Since 2012	Since 2007	Since 2012
21-28	M	9	2	10	6	4	2	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	4	2	28	13
	F	1	1	8	1	7	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	17	9
	Σ	10	3	18	7	11	8	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	5	3	45	22
29-40	M	4	1	13	2	5	-	4	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	28	4
	F	-	-	10	2	7	1	4	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	1	23	5
	Σ	4	1	23	4	12	1	8	1	1	-	-	-	1	-	2	2	51	9
41-60	M	-	-	3	2	1	-	3	-	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	9	3
	F	-	-	1	-	3	1	2	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	8	2
	Σ	-	-	4	2	4	1	5	1	-	-	2	1	1	-	1	-	17	5
60+	M	1	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-
	F	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Σ	1	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-
Total		15	4	45	13	28	10	14	2	2	1	2	1	2	-	8	5	116	36

The survey results indicate there are 116 working Christians who have joined the labor force since 2007; they are distributed as follows: two people are employed at UNRWA, two people are employed at the PNA, two people are employed at Gaza governmental offices, and a further 14 Christians are employed in international institutions in the Gaza Strip. There are also 28 individuals employed at Christian institutions in Gaza, 11 of them between the ages of 21-28. According to the survey results, the private sector is the most appealing for Christians as 45 individuals of all ages have begun working in this sector since 2007. Additionally, 15 individuals started their own businesses and of these, 10 (66.7 percent) are young Christians aged 28 and under.

Of the 116 Christians who have joined the labor force since 2007, 34 have joined since 2012; 22 of these individuals, 64.7 percent, are aged 21 - 28. However, no Christians were reported to have started employment at any of the international institutions or UNRWA since 2012, probably due to budget shortfalls.

Table 12 indicates that, since 2007, two people found employment at a Gaza government office, while there are seven Christians employed by the Gaza government in total, as reported in Table 11. This suggests there are five people working for the Gaza municipality, which is led by a council assigned by the Gaza government (their wages are not related to the PNA). Even though these five were employed before 2007, now their wages are paid by the Gaza government so they consider themselves employees of this government.

In general, there is some association between fields of employment and gender; some fields are limited to males only (such as drivers and technicians) while other fields are dominated by males but with some female inclusion, such as construction workers, artisans, engineers, and physicians. In contrast, however, females are more likely than males to be teachers.

Table 13 illustrates the total number of Christians who have joined the labor force since 2012 (36 individuals); 61.1 percent of them are young adults (aged 21-28), and over half (60 percent) are male.

In general, there is some association between fields of employment and gender; some fields are limited to males only (such as drivers and technicians) while other fields are dominated by males but with some female inclusion, such as construction workers, artisans, engineers, and physicians. In contrast, however, females are more likely than males to be teachers.

Table 13: Distribution of individuals above 16 years of age who started working in 2007 – 2012 by sex and work classification

		Current employment field and period of commencement																		Total	
Age group	Sex	Construction Worker		Artisan		Teacher		School Principal		Driver		Engineer		Doctor/Physician		Technician		Other		Total	
		Since 2007	Since 2012	Since 2007	Since 2012	Since 2007	Since 2012	Since 2007	Since 2012	Since 2007	Since 2012	Since 2007	Since 2012	Since 2007	Since 2012	Since 2007	Since 2012	Since 2007	Since 2012	Since 2007	Since 2012
21-28	M	2	1	2	-	2	1	5	2	1	1	4	3	2	1	-	-	10	4	28	13
	F	-	-	1	1	8	4	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	6	2	17	9
	Σ	2	1	3	1	10	5	6	3	1	1	4	3	3	2	-	-	16	6	45	22
29-40	M	3	1	1	1	3	-	3	1	-	-	4	-	1	-	-	-	13	1	28	4
	F	1	1	1	-	12	1	5	2	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	3	1	23	5
	Σ	4	2	2	1	15	1	8	3	-	-	5	-	1	-	-	-	16	2	51	9
41-60	M	1	1	-	-	1	1	2	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	2	1	9	3
	F	-	-	-	-	2	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	1	8	2
	Σ	1	1	-	-	3	2	4	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	6	2	17	5
60+	M	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	3	-
	F	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Σ	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	3	-
Total		7	4	5	2	28	8	19	6	3	1	9	3	4	2	1	-	40	10	116	36

Table 14 shows the distribution of unemployed Christians (aged 17-28) who are seeking work, by sex and specialization/field. The findings show that 57.7 percent of these unemployed young adults are female. 31 unemployed Christians (39.7 percent) have a bachelor's degree in economics or administration, while 12 (15.4 percent) studied various medical specialties. There are also 6 Christian females who are unemployed teachers.

Table 14: Distribution of unemployed individuals between 17-28 years of age by sex and degree type

Specialization	Male	Female	Total
High school certificate (sciences stream)	2	0	2
High school certificate (arts stream)	4	2	6
Medicine, dentistry, pharmacy	4	8	12
Medical support professions	0	1	1
Maths and sciences	1	0	1
Arts and humanities	1	3	4
Economic and administrative sciences	15	16	31
Law	0	1	1
Education	0	6	6
Other	6	8	14
Total	33	45	78

Christian young people in Gaza greatly benefit from ‘job creation programs’ offered by international and Christian institutions. These programs help build their personal and job experience, in addition to providing an income that helps improve their livelihoods. According to survey participants, such programs are considered temporary and young people look forward to other longer-term opportunities to gain experience and develop their skills.

According to the Christian young people who were interviewed, there is hesitation and a lack of drive to compete for job opportunities in the Gaza Strip. In fact, only one individual from a group of 20 Christian graduates had applied to the “Jadara Program” – a program promoted by the Ministry of Labor. Moreover, Christian young people are reluctant to establish micro-enterprises due to a fear of greater recession, and due to their need for training and financial aid to jump-start these enterprises. As a result, in seeking stable employment and income, Christian young people prefer to become employees rather than start private businesses..

Christian young people in Gaza need to work on strengthening the spirit of ‘entrepreneurship’ and build their own capacities and skills in order to enhance their competitiveness and chances of being successful in the labor force. Training programs based on a needs assessment of Christian youth, and programs/interventions to promote integration with the wider community, will certainly lead to a better understanding of the requirements of the labor market.

Specific training programs that will help improve the competitiveness of young Christians should include foreign language classes, especially English, and computer programming, in addition to other subjects relevant to their specialization. These training opportunities would help motivate the youth, providing practical experience in their specialization and promoting voluntary work, and help to develop their skills and expertise to improve their access to work opportunities.

Humanitarian Aid

1,223 Christians in Gaza (94.6 percent) do not collect humanitarian aid from any institution, while 70 people do collect some sort of humanitarian assistance, as shown in Figure 9. UNRWA assists 48 individuals and is the major source of humanitarian aid, followed by Christian institutions, which support 11 people; other sources of aid include the PNA, Gaza government, relatives, and non-Christian institutions.

Food aid is the main type of assistance received by Christians, as 60 people (85.7 percent of those receiving aid) receive essential food items. 10 people receive financial aid from the PNA, while family-based assistance is limited to financial aid; non-Christian charitable aid is limited to food packages.

Table 15 illustrates the distribution of humanitarian aid by source. The survey findings reveal that 54.3 percent of those who receive aid are from households with no income. The incidence of aid delivery decreases as household income increases, which indicates that aid is being distributed effectively. It is important to note that there are 300 individuals from Christians households with no income who do not receive any aid.

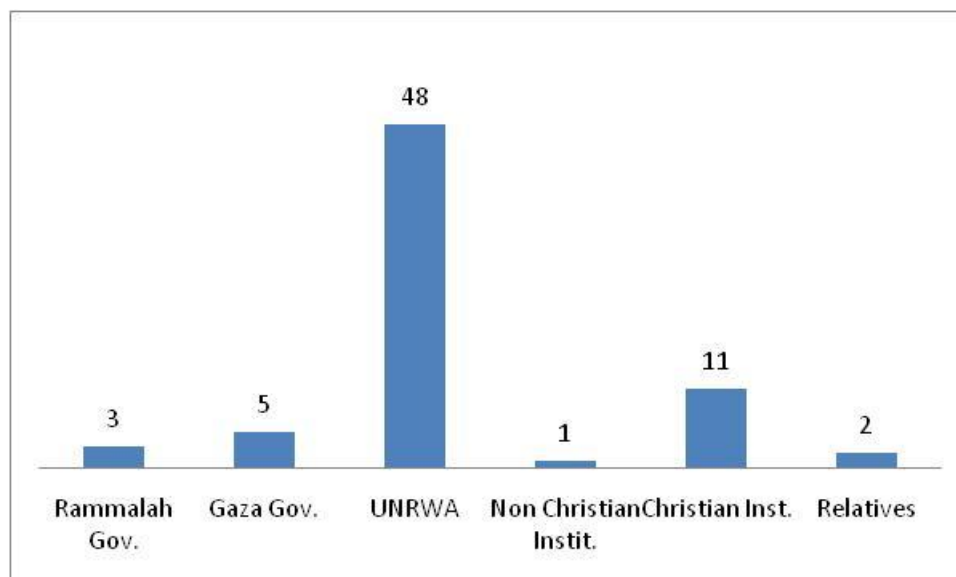


Figure 9: Number of individuals receiving humanitarian aid by source

The findings show that UNRWA is the only aid agency that provides assistance for households from all income categories, except households with a monthly income that exceeds 1,500 USD.

Table 15: Distribution of individuals by household income and source of aid

Household income	No aid	Source of aid							Total
		PNA	Gaza gov.	Christ ian inst.	Non-Christ ian inst.	UNR WA	Relati ves	Total	
No reported income	300	1	4	7	1	23	2	38	338
Less than 300 USD	66	1	1	0	0	11	0	13	79
300-500 USD	109	1	0	4	0	4	0	9	118
500-1000 USD	263	0	0	0	0	6	0	6	269
1000-1500 USD	244	0	0	0	0	4	0	4	248
More than 1500 USD	234	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	234
Total	1216	3	5	11	1	48	2	70	1286

Chapter IV

Conclusion and Recommendations

As an integral part of the greater Palestinian community in Gaza, Christians continue to suffer from the absence of security, a prevailing poor economic situation due to the seven-year blockade, and the repercussions of Palestinian internal division which affects all aspects of life in Gaza. Like all Gazans, upholding aspirations of freedom and building an independent Palestinian state is the way forward.

Most of the statistical results which were presented in this report, with the exception of the population pyramids, indicate that there is a remarkable consensus between the general characteristics of the Christian community and the overall Gaza population. Therefore, the challenges faced by Gazan Christians are no more or less than the challenges faced by the general population, with minor exceptions.

General Conclusions

The population of the Gaza Strip has for many years lived through harsh conditions collectively, from the Israeli occupation, its siege, and armed attacks on the Gaza Strip which is detrimental to the stability of Gaza and which continues to prevent planning and development by both the government and civil society. Secondly, Gaza's has a high population density of 4,742 individuals/km² in a small coastal strip which is surrounded and threatened by risks, with limited opportunities to maintain or expand resources that benefit the population. These conditions may further nourish an extremism which does not differentiate between race and religion.

One of the most remarkable repercussions of the Gaza siege is the rising unemployment rate, caused by the cessation of several projects and the subsequent impact on various sectors of the economy. There is also a worsening electricity crisis which impacts the interests and lives of citizens, creating a heavy burden for ordinary households and their breadwinners who are forced to search for alternative sources of electric power; this has a deepening psychological impact on all household members. Moreover, alternative sources of power increase risks of damage to property, and even death.

While the Christians of Gaza feel that they suffer from the same problems that affect all citizens of the Gaza Strip, Christians perceive the blockade as having an immense impact on their community in particular. They have been prevented from visiting holy sites in Bethlehem and Jerusalem since 2007, which disrupts their ability to truly uphold their religious faith, in contrast to other Christians from around the world who are freely able to visit these sites.

Gaza's Christian community also fear the political rifts and changes happening in the Middle East, especially the so-called 'Arab Spring' which has led to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Christians from the region (especially from Iraq and Syria). Moreover, the emergence of extremists with religious antidotes to secular societies and a rejection of 'others', is also considered a challenge to

Christians' lifestyles and the lives of their children. It is also worth mentioning that poverty, the siege, and a catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza as a result of the deteriorating political situation and internal Palestinian division, threatens Gazan society for both Christians and Muslims alike.

Gaza's Christian community appeals to the international community to help lift the blockade and denounce collective punishment and Israeli occupation, and work to improve the living standards and freedom of movement for Gaza's Palestinians, including its Christian community.

Recommendations

Openness to the Community is an Entrance to Development

“Openness to the community” is a key factor in promoting and maintaining the Christian presence in the Gaza Strip and contributing towards its development through:

- Supporting and empowering Christian institutions in the Gaza Strip to conduct community service, and helping to expand these activities to include a larger number of target groups, without discrimination.
- Networking between Christian institutions and young people through social and health organizations in the Gaza Strip.
- Helping to activate Christians in Gaza and enabling them to voice their concerns regarding national public and social issues.
- Developing an ‘integrated media plan’ through local radio stations, television, and social networking media to clarify the contributions, customs, and traditions of the Christian community.

Integration and Coordination between Christian Institutions

Coordination and integration between Christian institutions in the Gaza Strip plays an important role in achieving their mission to serve the needs of the Christian community and greater Palestinian society. It is important to define the roles of each institution, taking into consideration their programs so as to avoid duplication, in order to ensure the provision of services for all beneficiaries.

The integration of Christian institutions in Gaza does not mean in any way seeking to build a closed community, but it is the best way to cover the needs of all segments of the community, with reciprocal coordination between public and private institutions.

To achieve this, churches and ecclesiastical and international institutions must work to empower the Christian presence in the Holy Land, especially in the Gaza Strip, by supporting institutions and individuals to have a more active role within the community.

Promote Confidence and Motivation

The most prominent challenges facing Gaza's young Christians today are hesitation and lack of motivation to engage in the labor market; this results in a sense of alienation due to the difficult political situation, poor economic conditions including high poverty and unemployment rates, an unstable future, and lack of real development.

To enhance the confidence and motivation of Christians, the following recommendations may serve as responses to this crisis:

- Adoption of intervention programs that identify the needs of target groups to ensure maximum benefit,
- Promote a spirit of volunteerism among young people to help serve the Palestinian community in Gaza through the support of community initiatives,
- Promote entrepreneurship by helping to plan and financially assist small enterprises, as possible business incubators targeting the youth,
- Capacity building and other training opportunities for young Christians.

Capacity Building

The process of building capacities is not limited to school and university education, but extends and transcends to the community level. To achieve this goal, it is recommended that capacity building programs should be implemented through:

- Promoting understanding and practice of full citizenship rights, through training and legal support if necessary,
- Enhancing capacities in foreign languages, especially English,
- Coordinating summer training programs for students at institutions related to their major/field of study,
- Coordinating training and work experience programs for graduates in their respective sectors,
- Giving priority to vocational training programs for young people,
- Encouraging young people to move forward towards postgraduate studies that will open new horizons for competition and development in various sectors.

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Appendices

Appendix (1) Community Survey Questionnaire

Social Survey of Gaza's Christians

All disclosed information in this questionnaire is considered confidential in accordance with the General Statistics Law of 2000.

Part one: Households Data

1- Questionnaire Data

Governorate: 1.North 2.Gaza 3.Mid Zone 4.Khan Younis 5.Rafah	A4	
Locality type: 1- Urban 2- rural, 3- Camp	A5	

Questionnaire Serial Number:	A1	
Residence Quarter:	A2	
Field Researcher Name:	A3	

2- Households and Housing Conditions

Name of Respondent	A13	
House Telephone Number	A14	
Jawwal Number (for contact)	A15	
Name of Respondent Jawwal Number	A16	
Full address:	A17	

Refugee Status: 1- Refugee 2- Non-refugee	A6	
Type of Housing unit: 1- Villa 2- House 3- Apartment 4-Other	A7	
Tenure of the housing unit: 1- Owned 2- Rented 3- For relatives 4- Awqaf	A8	
Monthly rental for rented housing unit	A9	
Family Type: 1- Nuclear 2- Extended	A10	
Number of nuclear households in the housing unit	A11	
No. of rooms of the housing unit	A12	

B- Availability of durable household items

19- Dish washer		10- Electric blinder		1- Refrigerator		B- Availability of durable household items 1 - Yes 2 - No
20- Computers		11- Gas oven		2- T.V		
21- Lap top		12- Deep freezer		3- satellite/dish		
22 -Internet line		13- Fireplace (gas or electric)		4- Electric fan		
23- Air condition		14- Photographic Camera		5- Washing machine		
24 -Car		15 -Video Camera		6- Hand phone		
25- Motor cycle		16- Vacuum cleaner		7- Phone line		
26- Solar/ electric boiler		17- UPS		8- Electricity Generator		
		18- Water Filter		9- Microwave		

Part two: Household Individuals Data

C11	C10	C9										C8	C7	C6	C5	C4	C3	C2				C1
Health Insurance availability 1- No 2- Governmenta 1 3- UNRWA 4- Private 5- Worker 88- Do not know	Nationality (Palestinian who has another nationality Write Palestinian)	No. of identity card (for Palestinians only)										Denomination 1- Orthodox 2- Latin 3- Copt 4- Baptist	Age at first marriage in full years or unmarried	Martial Status: 1-Single 2-Engaged 3- Married 4-Divorced 5-Widow 6-Separated 7-Re-married	Sex 1- Male 2- Female	Age (Children less than a year please put 0)	Relation to the head of Household 1- Head of household 2. Spouse 3. Son/ Daughter 4. Father/ mother 5. Brother/ sister 6. Brother/ sister in low 7. Son/daughter in low 8- Father/mother in low 9-Son/ daughter spouse 10. Grand son/daughter 11.Other relations 12. Other	Full name (Start by recording the name of head of the household, record all are living here usually)				
																	Family	Grand Father	Father	First	Individual No.	
																					1	
																					2	
																					3	
																					4	
																					5	
																					6	
																					7	
																					8	
																					9	
																					10	
																					11	
																					12	
																					13	
																					14	
																					15	
																					16	

Part three: Residence and Immigration

D5	D4	D3	D2	D1	C2	D1
Reason of changing residence place 1- Work 2- Education 3- Marriage 4- Deportation 5- Persecution 6- Political Situations 7- Others	Date of residence change (year) 999- Does not change his/her residence place	Current place of residence	Place of usual residence	Individual No.	Full name (Start by recording the name of head of the household, record all are living here usually)	Individual No.
				1		1
				2		2
				3		3
				4		4
				5		5
				6		6
				7		7
				8		8
				9		9
				10		10
				11		11
				12		12
				13		13
				14		14
				15		15
				16		16

Part four: Chronic Diseases and Disabilities

E3		E2			E1
E3.1 Does the individual suffer of physical or tangible disability make him from a special needs? 1- Yes 2- No		E2.1 Does the individual suffer of physical, Physiological or Hereditary chronic disease?		Full name (Start by recording the name of head of the household, record all are living here usually)	Individual No.
E3.2 What is the disability that makes him from the special needs? 1- Moving disability 2- Hearing disability 3- Visual disability 4- Inability to Personal Care 5- Mental disability 6- More than one disability		E2.2 What is the Chronic disease? 7- Hemophilia 8- Thalassemia 9- poliomyelitis 10- Diabetes 11- hypertension 12- Chronic heart disease 13- Arthritis 14- Cancer 15- mental illness 16- Other chronic disease			
E3.2 Disability	E3.1 Situation	E2.2 Disease	E2.1 Situation		
					1
					2
					3
					4
					5
					6
					7
					8
					9
					10
					11
					12
					13
					14
					15
					16

Part four: Labor and Working Status

F9	F8		F7	F6	F5	F4	F3	F2		F1
Total income for working individual during the last month (NIS) Does	E8.1 Does individual receive any help 1- No 2- Yes from Ramallah government 3- Yes from Gaza government 4- Yes from UNRWA 5- Yes from charity non Christian Societies. 6- Yes from Christian Societies. 7- Relatives F8.2 Nature of help: 1- Financial. 2- Food 3- Health 4- Educational 5- Other		Economic Activity 1-Agriculture, Hunting 2-Fishing 3-Manufacturing 4-Electricity, Gas and Water Supply 5-Construction 6-Whole sale and Retail Trade 7-Hotels and Restaurants 8-Transport, Storage 9-Financial Intermediation 10-Education 11-Public Administration 12-Health 13-Other Community Social activities	Work Classification 99- Workers 99- Artisans 99- Teachers 99- Principals 99- Drivers 99- Engineers 99- Physicians 99- Technicians 9- Other works 99-does not apply	Place of work 1- In the Locality 2. In the Governor ate 3.In other Governor ate 4.Outside Gaza Strip 99.Does not apply	Date of joining the current work (year)	Relation to Labor Force 1- Housewife does not work and doesn't seek 2- Housewife doesn't work but seek. 3- Student doesn't work and doesn't seek 4- Student doesn't work but seek 5- Disability 6- Child (less than 18 years old) 7- Retire 8- Work by irregular income 9- Employee at UNRWA 10- Employee at Ramallah gov. 11- Employee at Gaza gov. 12- Work at international institution 13- Work at Christian instit. 14- Work at private sector 15- Work without salary 16- Owner of private project	Working Status 1- Working 2- doesn't work but want to work/ worked before) 3- does not work but want to work/never worked before,	Full name (Start by recording the name of head of the household, record all are living here usually)	Individual No.
										1
										2
										3
										4
										5
										6
										7
										8
										9
										10
										11
										12
										13
										14
										15
										16

Part six: Education

G6	G5	G4	G3		G2	G1
Social Activities 1- Does not involve in any social activity 2- Member at a Christian Society 3- Member at non Christian Society 88- Do not know 99- Does not apply	Type of Educational Institutions: <u>For those less than school age:</u> 1- Kindergarten for Christian institution. 2- Private Garden 3- Kindergarten for non Christian institution. <u>For those studying at School</u> 4- UNRWA schools 5- Unpaid Christian schools 6- Governmental schools 7- Private Schools. <u>For those studying at the Higher Education Institutions</u> 8- Governmental 9- National 10- Private 11- Arab countries 12- Foreign Countries 99- Does not apply.	Specialization <u>For those less than University level</u> 1- Scientific. 2- Literary. 3- Commercial. 4- Industrial <u>University or above</u> 5- Medicine, dentistry, pharmacy. 6- Support health 7- Pure sciences 8- Agriculture. 9- Human Sciences 10- Economic and administrative Sciences. 11- Law 12- Education 13- Others 88- Do not know. 99- Does not apply.	G3.1 Continuing Education 1- Completed 2- Stopped 3- Stopped and will continue 4- Continuing G3.2 Reason of Stopping 1- Financial 2- Social 3- Weakness 4- Other G3.2 Reason G3.1 Stopping	Education 1- Illiterate 2- Can read and Write 3- Elementary 4- Preparatory 5- Secondary 6- Diploma 7- Bachelor 8- Master 9- PhD	Full name (Start by recording the name of head of the household, record all are living here usually)	Number
						1
						2
						3
						4
						5
						6
						7
						8
						9
						10
						11
						12
						13
						14
						15
						16

Appendix (2) Database Main Menu

