
Investing in Palestinian Children’s Health and Education to Build Human Capital and Promote Growth

Jerusalem, November 5, 2018 – A child born in the West Bank and Gaza today will be 55 percent as productive when she grows up as she could be if she enjoyed complete education and full health, according to the World Bank’s new Human Capital Index (HCI) released on October 2018.

The Palestinian economy has had several setbacks due to ongoing fragility and conflict. This negative impact could be mitigated through investments in human capital. These investments would help prepare Palestinian youth for the jobs of the future that are now being shaped by technological advances. Along with education reforms that focus on teaching the right skills, building human capital equally means improving health services so that Palestinian youth enter the job market as healthy, and productive adults.

The World Bank’s Human Capital Index (HCI) allows countries to measure how much income they are foregoing because of human capital gaps, and how much faster they can turn these losses into gains if they act now. *“The Human capital index for the West Bank and Gaza is higher than what would be expected for its income level. This shows that the potential to take this even further is within reach,”* said **Marina Wes, Country Director for West Bank and Gaza.**

While in a better ranking than Lebanon, Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, Iraq and Yemen, the West Bank and Gaza HCI is still not higher than the average for its region. Children in the West Bank and Gaza can expect to complete 11.4 years of pre-primary, primary and secondary school by age 18. However, when years of schooling are adjusted for quality of learning, this is only equivalent to 7.5 years - a learning gap of 3.9 years. In terms of health, 89 percent of 15-year old children will survive until age 60, and 93 out of 100 children are not stunted. In general, the HCI for girls is higher than for boys.

“Against the backdrop of rapid technological and labor market changes, investment in the Palestinian human capital can yield equality of opportunities and economic returns. For that, a strategy to invest in the quality of learning with a focus on the skills of the future, and in health to ensure healthy generations, will be key to future well-being and economic growth,” **Wes** added.

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