

DevInfo in Action

Occupied Palestinian Territory: Using DevInfo to Provide Data for Decision-Making

National statistical organizations often wrestle with how best to fulfil multiple mandates: collecting, compiling, validating and disseminating statistical data; building capacity in statistical literacy for a diverse end user base; and ensuring that national demographic and socio-economic data is being used effectively to support policy decision-making.

The [Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics](#) (PCBS) stands out as one of the Arab world's leading examples of how to successfully balance these multiple objectives. PCBS's stated mission is to provide truthful and impartial official demographic and socio-economic data for citizens in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt). In light of continued international interest and involvement in the region, the mission of the PCBS has taken on heightened importance.

DevInfo use since 2005

Since 2005, PCBS has been relying on DevInfo as one of its key data dissemination platforms, implementing its use across oPt through a methodically executed programme of database development accompanied by national capacity building.



Maher Sbieh, who currently serves with PCBS as the DevInfo focal point, first heard about the software in 2004 during a training workshop in Beirut. Excited by what he learned, he returned home convinced that this software platform could well serve PCBS's data dissemination mandate. The following year in 2005, PCBS launched DHS Info, a DevInfo 4.0 database containing the results of the 2004 Palestinian Demographic and Health Survey.

“That same year (2005), we also began our national DevInfo training programme with UNICEF support, training over 100 government line ministry staff and 15 people from various NGOs how to use DevInfo 4.0,” explains Sbieh.

Capitalizing on DevInfo 5.0 and CensusInfo

With the release of DevInfo 5.0 in 2006, PCBS decided to capitalize on the enhanced software features by launching PalInfo 1.0 - a database containing the latest Millennium Development Goal (MDG) data for oPt. To ensure proper use of the database, PCBS initiated a new round of software

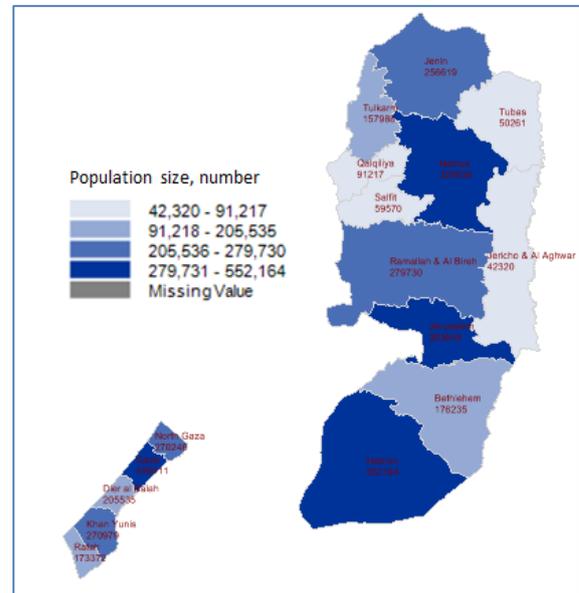


training activities in 2007 for line ministry and NGO staff.

Efforts to decentralize the database development process and transfer capacity to the local level received a major boost in 2007, when the Ministry of Planning requested PCBS to train government staff from Jenin Governorate - located in the northern West Bank - in how to build a local government database.

This was followed in 2008 by the launch of [PalInfo 2.0](#) – the first time PCBS made its updated national MDG database available online – along with three additional training courses for line ministry and UNICEF staff.

In 2009, PCBS became the first Arab region to use the [CensusInfo](#) online platform to publicize its census data. Containing data drawn from the 2007 Population, Housing and Establishment Census, [OPT CensusInfo](#) provides unprecedented access to demographic and socio-economic data for Palestinian citizenry down to the governorate level by locality type (urban, rural, camps) and locality level.

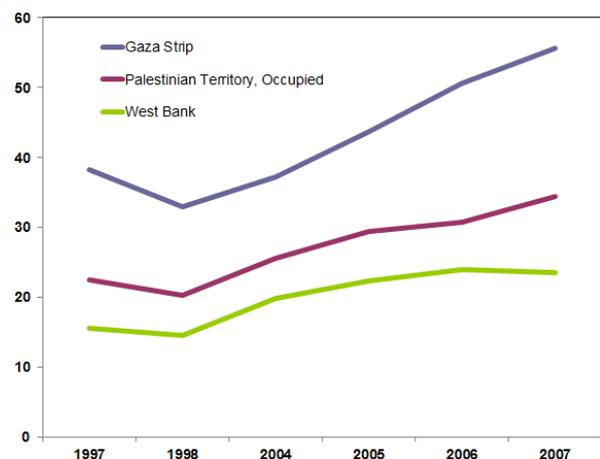


Population size, 2007 census

Modifying training approaches to further local penetration

That same year, PCBS began to modify its training approach to facilitate greater DevInfo penetration at the local level. Explains Sbieh, “Up till 2009, we had been focusing on training individuals how to use DevInfo. We decided to change our approach by instead first asking agencies and institutions what their monitoring needs were, and then equipping them to build their own databases using DevInfo. In this way, we would be addressing their felt needs.”

“We also decided that instead of holding our DevInfo trainings in the capital city, we would instead begin conducting them throughout oPt, to support greater use and implementation at the local level,” adds Sbieh.



Percentage of population below national poverty line

‘DevInfo has made their life much easier’

Are people actually using the databases launched and maintained by PCBS? Absolutely, according to Sbieh. “The online PalInfo database is being used by people who need data on MDG indicators –

those working in national government ministries and UN agencies.”

“Additionally, the online CensusInfo database is being used by people at local levels – governorates, municipalities, and villages. In these places, there is always a need for local-level demographic and socio-economic data. Governments need this data for planning. NGOs need this data for assessments and fund-raising. Before, these people had to spend a couple of hours searching for this data in hard copy format. Now, they simply go online, click their locality, and get the data in a table, graph or map format. DevInfo has made their life much easier!”

Looking ahead to 2012, PCBS plans to conduct assessments to determine how past trainees are using DevInfo and how it is supporting their work. With these answers in hand, the agency will be even better poised to support oPt’s planning, monitoring and decision-making requirements in the days to come.

Data making a difference.

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