

West and South Bethlehem

GEOGRAPHY

Bethlehem is located just south of the city of Jerusalem. Situated in the West Bank, the Governorate of Bethlehem is part of the occupied Palestinian Territory. The Bethlehem Area Development Program (ADP) operates in two separate clusters of villages, one in the western part of the Governorate of Bethlehem and one in the south, assisting around 20,000 people.

Bethlehem is in the southern portion of the Judean Mountains and it has a Mediterranean climate, with hot, dry summers and cool to mild winters.

PEOPLE

The town of Bethlehem and its surrounding areas are home to more than 60,000 people. It's estimated that 85 percent of the population is Muslim and approximately 15 percent is Christian. The population of Bethlehem, like the rest of the occupied Palestinian Territory, is young, with an estimated 47 percent aged less than 15.¹

LIVING CONDITIONS

Communities supported by the Bethlehem ADP struggle daily. During wars in 1948 and 1967, communities had their land confiscated and what little remained became subject to Israeli regulations, including the construction of the Separation Wall. These regulations have hampered

development in the villages around Bethlehem and have made it increasingly difficult for community members to access basic services and maintain their livelihoods.

Many former farmers have become day labourers, but they are restricted from travelling to Israel to work. Continued confiscation of land by Israel puts pressure on the agricultural resources of the area. Basic infrastructure such as schools, roads and irrigation systems are in need of repair, but the community lacks the resources to do this.

Many children find accessing school difficult due to travel restrictions imposed by the Israeli military. As a result of the occupation, community members experience vulnerability, insecurity and hopelessness on a daily basis.

WORLD VISION ACTIVITIES IN WEST AND SOUTH BETHLEHEM

- World Vision is working to improve the lives of children and families living in west and south Bethlehem through the following project activities:
- Partnering with local communities and the Ministry of Education to improve educational facilities and services. This includes renovating school buildings and playgrounds, opening new schools and kindergartens, and developing a regional educational resource centre.
- Supporting the formation and development of student councils and parent teacher associations to address student needs and improve learning opportunities.
- Partnering with the Ministry of Health and local communities to improve the health and nutrition of mothers and children.
- Education and awareness-raising to promote healthy relationships within families and between community members.
- Partnering with the YMCA in a project to help children overcome trauma and build their confidence and self esteem.
- Capacity building for village representative committees so that they can plan, execute and monitor their own development projects.
- Training and supporting women to initiate income generating projects through beekeeping. As well as providing a new income source, this also helps to build women's confidence and increase their participation in decision making, both at a family and a community level.
- Supporting communities to reclaim agricultural land, improve their agricultural products and develop income generating activities.



Women are growing in confidence and self esteem through participating in an income generating project that focuses on beekeeping.

¹ Bethlehem Municipality population data, <http://www.bethlehem-city.org/index-4.php?Mid=NDk=>