

2015

HUMANITARIAN NEEDS OVERVIEW

oPt

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Prepared by OCHA on behalf of the Humanitarian Country Team



KEY HUMANITARIAN ISSUES

The context in the oPt is a protracted protection crisis with humanitarian consequences, driven by insufficient respect for international law by all sides. Palestinians in the oPt face a range of serious protection threats related to these factors including threats to life, liberty and security, destruction or damage to homes and other property, forced displacement, restrictions on freedom of movement and on access to livelihoods, and lack of accountability and effective remedy. These threats are exacerbated by the inability of the sides to reach a political agreement, which could end the longstanding occupation and conflict. The seasonal winter flooding further exacerbates pre-existing humanitarian needs. In 2014, there was a sharp increase in the severity of humanitarian needs in the Gaza Strip as a result of the July-August conflict. Across the oPt the main issues of concern include:

Threats to life, liberty and security

Palestinian civilians across oPt continue to be subject to various threats to their life, physical safety and liberty, stemming from Israeli military and law enforcement operations, settler violence and the actions of Palestinian armed groups and security forces. This year has seen a marked increase in fatalities in the West Bank, an unprecedented (since 1967) civilian death toll and destruction of civilian objects and infrastructure in the Gaza Strip during the July-August 2014 conflict. The conflict has also resulted in an extensive presence of explosive remnants of war and other explosive hazards posing a serious threat to the life and physical integrity of Palestinians and humanitarian workers in Gaza, and restricting resumption of livelihoods.

Displacement

Thousands of Palestinians throughout the oPt have been forcibly displaced or are at acute risk of forced displacement or even forcible transfer as a result of multiple factors including policies and practices related to the ongoing occupation, recurrent hostilities, violence and abuse. In Gaza, over 100,000 people remain internally displaced as a result of the July-August hostilities due to the severe damage/destruction of 20,000 housing units, while in the West Bank, of particular concern, currently are over 7,000 Bedouins and herders from 46 communities in Area C who are at risk of forcible transfer. The Israeli authorities have claimed that these Bedouin communities lack title over the land and that the "relocation" will improve their living conditions.

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Erosion of livelihoods and lack of economic opportunities and access to food Results of the Socio-Economic and Food Security survey (SEFSec) indicated a continued high level of food insecurity in oPt in 2013 with 1.6 million Palestinians deemed food insecure. Food insecurity in oPt is primarily due to a lack of economic access to food, stemming from a low and a decreasing purchasing power of Palestinian families directly related to the cumulative impact of the occupation, namely restrictions on access to land, water and markets; the lack of free movement of people and goods within and between West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip; and the inability to freely and predictably access regional and international markets for goods and services combined with reduced international aid and the PA's fiscal crisis. Women's low economic participation contributes to food insecurity and high economic dependence ratios at the household levels which stands at 76.3%¹. The deteriorating economic situation in oPt is particularly prevalent in the agricultural sector.

Restricted access to basic services

Access to basic healthcare, education, water and sanitation services and shelter remains severely restricted for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Restricted access to services is primarily the result of physical and administrative obstacles to freedom of movement of people and service providers including checkpoints, the permit regime and designation of closed military or restricted areas; restrictions on repair, rehabilitation and development of essential service infrastructure; military operations carried out to address security concerns, or settler violence; and lack of investment due to the dire economic situation. Women are particularly impacted by the restrictions on access to health, education, WASH, energy and housing that have implications to increasing the burden of care work in the Gaza Strip, chronic problems in the service delivery sectors, including electricity, water and sanitation, health, and education, were compounded by the July-August 2014 hostilities which caused extensive and unprecedented damage to public infrastructure.

IMPACT OF THE CRISIS

HIGHLIGHTS

The situation in the oPt has remained a protracted protection crisis with humanitarian consequences, driven by insufficient respect for international law by all sides with recurrent peaks of hostilities as well as seasonal winter flooding, which expands humanitarian needs and requirements almost every year. Palestinian women, men, girls and boys in the oPt continue to face a range of serious protection threats, destruction or damage to homes and other property, forced displacement and restrictions on freedom of movement and on access to natural resources and markets. These threats are exacerbated by the inability of the sides to reach a political agreement, which could end the longstanding occupation and conflict. In the Gaza Strip, the seven weeks of hostilities during July and August 2014 resulted in an unprecedented level of loss and human suffering, which aggravated the already fragile situation that preceded the war.

Drivers and underlying factors

Recent humanitarian appeals in the oPt have underlined the principal drivers of humanitarian need and vulnerability, which include a range of policies linked to the prolonged Israeli occupation, recurrent hostilities, internal Palestinian political divisions, and the lack of accountability for alleged violations of international law by all sides. These factors have been compounded by the longstanding stagnation in the negotiations towards a political agreement.

Although as of October 2014 all of these drivers remain relevant, the relative impact of some of them has changed significantly.

Factors that impact the entire oPt

Another international attempt to provide a negotiated solution to the root causes of the conflict failed in June 2014. However, 2014 saw the formation of a Palestinian Government of National Consensus alongside initial steps towards the merging of the West Bank and Gaza based ministries that could be seen as a way to address one of the drivers of vulnerability, namely the long standing intra-Palestinian divisions. While there is

still a long way ahead, the creation of a unified Palestinian leadership and administration would eventually expand and improve the quality of services provided to the population.

A more significant improvement in the humanitarian situation, however, would require fundamental changes in the policies implemented by Israel in the context of its prolonged occupation, whilst taking into account its legitimate military and security concerns. These policies include the following:

The severe restrictions to freedom of movement, including the blockade on Gaza and movement restrictions between East Jerusalem and the rest of the West Bank, and within the West Bank, result in the fragmentation of the occupied Palestinian territory. Movement of people and goods between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, as well as within each of these two areas, remains restricted by a combination of physical (Barrier, checkpoints, roadblocks) and bureaucratic (permits, closure of areas) constraints. In recent years, the Israeli authorities have gradually relaxed some of the movement restrictions between the main towns and villages in the West Bank, improving the access of people to services and livelihoods. Additionally, in the context of the implementation of the ceasefire agreement reached in August 2014, the Israeli authorities allowed a limited resumption in the transfer of goods between Gaza and the West Bank, and relaxed some of the restrictive criteria regulating the movement of exceptional cases between the two areas. However, the remaining components of the system continue to undermine the living conditions of Palestinians across the oPt, including the separation of members of the same families from each other.

Lack of accountability for alleged violations of international law by all sides, discriminatory application of laws and law enforcement, and failure to uphold the rights of Palestinians. With respect to Israel, concerns include the apparent failure to open and carry out prompt, thorough, effective, independent and impartial investigations into allegations of unlawful killing or injury of Palestinians involving Israeli Security Forces in the course of law enforcement and during the conduct of hostilities. An official commission appointed by the Government of Israel to examine its mechanisms of investigation for alleged violations of IHL (the Turkel Commission) found that these mechanisms are generally compliant with the requirements of international law. Nonetheless, the commission recommended a number of significant changes to the system with the purpose of increasing its effectiveness and compliance with international law, some of which are at initial implementation stages.

A number of actions and omissions by Palestinian duty-bearers, particularly in the Gaza Strip, raise protection concerns and have a humanitarian impact. This includes the failure to investigate allegations of violations of international law by Hamas and other armed groups, including indiscriminate attacks that have killed and injured civilians in Israel and Palestinians in Gaza; attacks against Israel that originated from densely populated areas within Gaza which placed nearby communities at increased risk of harm; and the extra-judicial and summary executions of alleged collaborators. Also of concern is the lack of action by Palestinian authorities in the Gaza Strip and West Bank to investigate, prosecute and address gender-based violence, including the increasing number of female homicides.¹ Concerns remain about the lack of accountability and transparency in relation to investigations into incidents of alleged killing, torture and ill treatment.

Seasonal flooding: During 2013 the oPt was affected by two serious winter storms, whose impact was felt in the entire region, including in Israel. The storms tested the ability to respond and recover from an emergency and clearly showed that Disaster Risk Mitigation, including preparedness, was a gap. The January 2013 storm caused severe damage to agriculture and infrastructure in the northern part of the West Bank affecting some 12,000 people across 190 communities. In December 2013, Winter Storm Alexa impacted both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip with 75 per cent of the usual average precipitation falling in just four days represented. Heavy flooding in the Gaza Strip caused the displacement of almost 10,000 people to temporary shelters, damaging approximately 21,000 homes. The situation triggered a coordinated response, involving primarily the Palestinian authorities supported by the humanitarian community, as well as relief and rescue assistance by the Israeli authorities. Damages and losses were estimated at over USD 130 million.

¹In the first six months of 2014, WCLAC recorded 17 cases of female homicide (6 cases in Gaza and 11 case in West Bank).

Factors unique to Gaza:

In the Gaza Strip, the seven weeks of hostilities during July and August 2014 resulted in an unprecedented level of loss and human suffering including a high number of casualties, widespread housing damage, widespread presence of Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) and extensive damage to public infrastructure, aggravating the already fragile situation that preceded the war.

The severe restrictions on the movement of people and goods, which Israel has imposed,² combined with Egyptian restrictions, have continued to undermine the living conditions of 1.8 million residents of the Gaza Strip, undermining the human rights of Palestinians in Gaza, resulting in reduced access to livelihoods, essential services and housing. Restrictions on external trade, including those with Israel, and on transfers to and from the West Bank, prevent the realization of Gaza's economic potential, contributing to extremely high levels of unemployment. However, in the context of the implementation of the ceasefire agreement reached in August 2014, the Israeli authorities allowed a limited resumption in the transfer of goods between Gaza and the West Bank, and relaxed some of the restrictive criteria regulating the the movement of exceptional cases between the two areas.

Construction materials are defined by the Israel authorities as “dual use items”, due to the authorities' concern that these materials could be used also for the building of bunkers and tunnels. Consequently, their import to the Gaza Strip has been severely restricted since the imposition of the blockade, with the exception of materials for approved international projects. The network of illegal tunnels under Gaza's border with Egypt, partially met the demand for construction materials by the private sector in Gaza. However, the operation launched since June 2013 by the Egyptian authorities, in the context of military operations in the Sinai, has resulted in an almost total halt in smuggling, triggering a severe shortage of building materials on the the Gaza Strip market and massive layoffs in the construction sector, previously one of the few functioning outlets in the depressed Gazan economy. In the aftermath of the July-August 2014 hostilities, the UN brokered a temporary agreement between the Israeli and Palestinian authorities allowing for the entry into the Gaza Strip of large amounts of basic construction materials. The agreed mechanism aims to enable the Government of Palestine (GoP) to lead the reconstruction by the Gazan private sector of housing and infrastructure damaged and destroyed during the war, while addressing Israeli security concerns. This effectiveness of this mechanism is yet to be tested; however, should the mechanism prove successful it will have a significant mitigating impact on certain humanitarian needs such as shelter.

Factors unique to the West Bank (including East Jerusalem)

Policies and practices related to the establishment and expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, have been and continue to be a primary driver of protection threats. Since 1967, successive Israeli-governments have led and directly participated in the planning, construction and expansion of settlements. Seizure of land for settlement building and future expansion has resulted in the shrinking of space available for Palestinians to develop adequate housing, basic infrastructure and services and to sustain livelihoods. These and related measures have contributed to physical insecurity, loss of land, resources, assets and livelihoods, forced displacement of families and communities, impeded access to services including education, and increased risk of arrest and detention of boys. Compared to 2013, in 2014 there was a decline in the number of 'building starts' of housing units in settlements. However, twice this year the Israeli authorities declared large areas in the Bethlehem governorate as 'state land'. While this procedure served in the past as the main tool for the seizure of land for the establishment of settlements, its use has been largely discontinued since the early 1990s. Additionally, the Israeli authorities have further advanced a plan to forcibly transfer Bedouin communities from an area allocated for the expansion of the Ma'ale Adumim settlement (the E1 area). The Israeli authorities have justified the plan claiming that the residents lack title over the land and that the relocation will improve the living conditions of the affected communities.

²A UN Panel of Inquiry appointed by the Secretary General in 2010 to investigate the 'flotilla incident' (also known as the Palmer Commission) found that the *naval* blockade imposed by Israel of Gaza is a legitimate security measure. However, the larger system of restrictions applied to the movement of people and goods to, from and within the Gaza Strip are considered to be in contravention to international law. See: A/HRC/24/30, paras 21-23 and A/69/347 para 30.

KEY HUMANITARIAN ISSUES

HIGHLIGHTS

The situation in the oPt remains a protracted protection crisis with humanitarian consequences, driven by insufficient respect for international law, with recurrent peaks of hostilities as well as seasonal winter flooding, which expands humanitarian needs and requirements almost every year.

Physical protection: Threats to life, liberty and security

Palestinian civilians across oPt continue to be subject to various threats to their life, physical safety and liberty, stemming from Israeli military and law enforcement operations, settler violence and the actions of Palestinian armed groups and security forces. This year has seen a marked increase in fatalities in the West Bank, and an unprecedented (since 1967) civilian death toll and destruction of civilian objects and infrastructure in the Gaza Strip during the July-August 2014 conflict. The conflict has also resulted in an extensive presence of explosive remnants of war and other explosive hazards posing a serious threat to the life and physical integrity of Palestinians and humanitarian workers in Gaza, and restricting resumption of livelihoods.

Gaza Strip

Casualties resulting from Israeli military operations

In the Gaza Strip, the recurrent outbreaks of hostilities between Palestinian armed groups and the Israeli military, remain a potential threat to life, liberty and security of the civilian population. A total of 2,254 Palestinians were killed during the July-August hostilities (including those who died of their wounds after the ceasefire). Of the cases initially verified by the Protection Cluster, 1,572 are believed to be civilians, including 538 children (339 boys and 199 girls) and 306 women. Israeli officials have claimed that the number of civilians among Palestinian fatalities is lower, however, so far no alternative figures have been officially released by the GoI.³

Nearly 69 per cent of child fatalities were below the age of 12, according to Protection Cluster figures. Additionally, 547 adults have been identified as members of armed groups, and the identity or status of 135 is still being verified.⁴ At least 142 Palestinian families lost three or more members in the same incident. According to the Palestinian Ministry of Health (MoH), 11,231 Palestinians, including 3,436 children, 3,540 women and 410 elderly people, were injured. Preliminary estimates by the MoH indicate that up to 1,000 of the children injured will have some form of life-long disability.

The cumulative Israeli fatality toll during the hostilities was 71, including 66 soldiers, one security coordinator, and four civilians, including one child, according to various Israeli sources. One foreign national civilian was also killed in Israel. Dozens of Israelis civilians were injured by rockets or shrapnel.

The high number of civilian casualties and damage to civilian residences and infrastructure, considered together with initial information about the conduct of hostilities, raises serious concerns about potential lack of compliance with international law, including International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and International Human Rights Law (IHRL) by all parties to the conflict.

As of December 2014, the Israeli Military Advocate General (MAG) examined approximately 100 incidents involving allegations of violations of IHL, and ordered the opening of criminal investigations into thirteen of them. Despite these developments, based on previous experience from operation Cast Lead (2009) and Pillar of Defence (2012), serious concerns about lack of accountability remain.

³Nonetheless Israeli officials have reportedly endorsed the figures produced by an Israeli think tank, indicating that 44 per cent of the fatalities were combatants, 33 per cent civilians, and the remainder unknown. See, The Amit Meir Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, <http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/index.aspx>.

⁴Information regarding fatalities, including affiliation, is compiled by the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights, based on investigations carried out by members of the Protection Cluster, and is subject to changes when new information becomes available.

During the hostilities, several UNRWA emergency shelters were hit both directly and collaterally, killing and injuring dozens of displaced sheltered in the UN schools. UNRWA also identified and denounced three cases where its premises were used by armed factions to store weapons. These attacks and incidents tarnished the inviolability of UN premises, reinforcing a general perception that there was no safe place left. UNRWA lost 11 colleagues, other staff was seriously wounded, and 118 UNRWA installations are confirmed damaged. This is despite the GoI's close coordination with the UN and other international organizations for humanitarian movement in sensitive areas.

The Multi-Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA) carried out during the last week of hostilities identified the need for legal support to pursue accountability for the death, injuries and destruction of property as a result of the hostilities. Accountability is important not only for the victims, but also to deter and prevent future violations. Legal support is also needed to address the loss of documentation. War widows heading families and their children (estimated at over 800 households) are also at risk of disinheritance and in need of responses to address their land, house, property and inheritance rights and access to livelihoods and assistance⁵. High fertility rates amongst women in Gaza have also resulted in a high number of female casualties. The impact of the crisis on women has been significant as more than 250 women were killed including more than 16 pregnant women that were documented.⁶ Further, military operations and the recent escalation of hostilities also further exacerbated the psychosocial distress across the population in Gaza, in particular among children and women, resulting in an increased need for child protection responses and psychosocial support (PSS) for children and their families. 373,000 children have experienced a death, injury or loss of home since the beginning of the July-August conflict and are in need of PSS.⁷ An additional 60,000 children are in need of child protection services.⁸ Women have identified themselves as being in need of PSS.

Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) and other explosive hazards

Over the course of the recent hostilities, significant numbers of unexploded aircraft bombs, tank shells and other ammunition, including ERW from armed groups, have been reported in civilian areas across the Gaza strip. The UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) anticipates a minimum of 7,000 explosive items to be recovered, including an estimated 800 unexploded aircraft bombs. Considering the extent of the destruction and damage, the presence of ERWs and other explosive hazards poses a serious threat to the life and physical integrity of the population and humanitarian workers. Because of its concentration in debris of destroyed and damaged infrastructure and impacted agricultural land, it impedes initial clean-up of densely populated areas, public spaces, and farmland.

Where ERW are believed to remain hidden under rubble, the process of rubble removal becomes much more protracted requiring it to be removed layer by layer rather than with heavy equipment. Furthermore, the widescale nature of the destruction makes early return to neighborhoods more complex.

As observed in Gaza since 2009, civilian casualties due to ERW increase substantially in the six months following an escalation. So far eight civilians have been killed and 14 injured since the end of the hostilities. Risk assessments of ERW and other explosive hazards, their removal and ERW risk education activities are among the most acute needs to respond to the threat to life of Palestinians and humanitarian workers in the Gaza Strip.

The map below shows the density of the damage in the Gaza Strip and indicates the extent of the ERW contamination.

Access restricted areas

The Access Restricted Areas (ARA) on land and at sea are part of the restrictions on movement and access imposed by Israeli authorities in the Gaza Strip to address security concerns. The manner in which the ARAs are enforced by Israeli forces, including the use of live fire and detention, also places civilians at serious risk, affecting farmers, fishermen, herders and others.⁹ From 1 January 2014 up to 30 June 2014, reportedly at sea, eight fishermen were injured, 32 detained, 16 boats confiscated, and there were 11 incidents of equipment being

⁵ According to PCBS, only 20% of women entitled to inheritance claim their inheritance rights.

⁶ Victims in the shadow, Gaza post crisis reproductive health Assessment, UNFPA. October 2014

⁷ Information provided by UNICEF on the basis of an estimate of the number of children that have experienced death, injury or loss of home since the beginning of the conflict.

⁸ UNICEF SoP sitrep, 21 August 2014

⁹ A/69/347, paras. 35-39.

damaged, destroyed or confiscated and daily shooting incidents were reported. At land in the same period, four Palestinians were killed including one woman and 58 people were injured with daily incidents of shooting. The enforcement of the ARA also includes the destruction, damage and confiscation of property.

West Bank

Casualties by Israeli security forces

In 2014, there has been a marked increase in civilian fatalities and injuries by Israeli security forces in the course of clashes that erupted during protests or arrest operations, compared to 2013. Since January 2014 up to end of September, 45 Palestinians, including 10 children, have been killed in the West Bank (OHCHR).

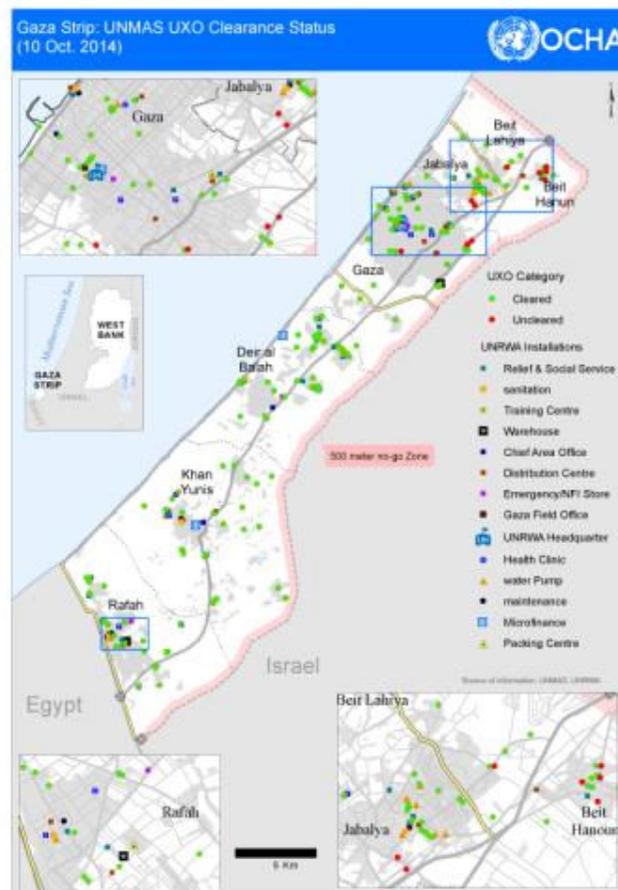
The period between June and August, during the Israeli-named operation "Brothers Keeper" following the kidnapping and killing of three Israeli youths and the Gaza hostilities, was notably marked by heightened tensions and intensified clashes across the West Bank. Between 1 June and 31 August 27 Palestinians (five children) were killed (OCHA) and more than 2,800 were injured by Israeli Forces.¹⁰

Nearly a quarter of all Palestinian injuries during this period were from live ammunition, a sharp rise compared with previous periods, both in absolute terms and as a percentage of all injuries. For example, in 2013 live ammunition accounted for four per cent of all injuries. The remaining injuries during the three-month period resulted mainly from rubber and rubber-coated metal bullets, tear gas inhalation, and physical assault. At least 48 members of the Israeli military and police forces were also injured during this period.

According to the Israel Security Agency (ISA), July witnessed a record number of attacks carried out by Palestinians against Israeli forces and settlers across the West Bank (including East Jerusalem). A total of 507 attacks were recorded by the ISA during that month, of which 90 per cent involved the throwing of firebombs, compared with less than 100 in the previous two months.

October and November 2014 witnessed an additional wave of Palestinian attacks against Israelis, most of which took place in Jerusalem, which resulted in the killing of ten Israelis, eight of whom were civilians, and the injury of approximately 100 others. These attacks took place in the context of Palestinian concerns about Israeli changes to the status quo in the Al Aqsa Mosque compound.

There are serious concerns about Israeli Security Forces excessive use of force, including the use of live ammunition for crowd control purposes, in particular in responding to demonstrations. This year, Hebron, Nablus, East Jerusalem and a number of refugee camps, including those of Aida, Al Arroub, Qalandia and Al Jalazun are



¹⁰ Information on West Bank casualties is collected by OCHA on a weekly basis and recorded in its Protection of Civilians database. Only cases that were registered by a medical body (a hospital, a clinic, or a paramedic team on the ground) are counted as injury.

among the worst affected areas. The monthly average of Palestinian children injured in 2014 is 87, compared to 103 in 2013. In addition, a residual threat remains from riot munitions which pose an additional risk for civilians living in affected areas, especially for children.

Settler violence

Violence by Israeli settlers against Palestinians and their property in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is directly linked to the presence of Israeli settlements.¹¹ This violence, which is further fueled by the lack of accountability, has undermined Palestinian access to land and resources. In 2014 the number of reported incidents of settler related violence resulting in Palestinian casualties and the number of Palestinians killed and injured also increased compared to the same period in 2013. On the other hand there has been a slight decrease in the number of settler violence attacks leading to damage to land and property in 2014.

The Israeli authorities have adopted a number of special measures aimed at addressing settler violence, which included, among others, the establishment of an inter-ministerial team and a new police unit dealing with incitement and nationalistic crimes by Israelis. According to the Israeli authorities, these and similar measures are expected to result in a reduction of the phenomenon of settler violence.

The impact of settler violence continues to include loss of life, physical injuries, physical insecurity; loss of land, resources, assets and livelihoods; psychosocial distress; impeded access to services; hampered functioning of schools; increased risk of displacement; and increased risk of arrest and detention of boys. Settler violence and harassment targeting Palestinian residents in urban centres (e.g. Old City in Jerusalem and Hebron) mainly affects women and children inside or around their homes. Settler attacks on agricultural land threaten one of the few available economic opportunities for female labourers who make up about 35 per cent of agricultural labour.¹² Settler violence also negatively impacts on Palestinian access to services. For example, children's access to education has been impeded in some areas, with a disproportionate impact on girls, particularly in Area C.¹³

The lives of women and girls are directly and indirectly affected by settler violence in various ways: continued exposure to settler violence has a psychological impact on women, who report suffering from anxiety and constant fear for themselves and their children; the increased pressure adds further stress and tensions to family life, and can increase the risk of violence within families; and women may be restricted from working or studying outside the home because of the threat of settler violence.¹⁴ Takeover of springs by settlers or damage to water infrastructure also threatens access to water.

Search and arrest operations

The number of search and arrest operations conducted by Israeli forces during 2014 has increased by 31 per cent (weekly average) compared with 2013 for a total of 3,713 operations in 2014, resulting in the detention of 4,978 people. The intense military operations launched on 13 June ("Brother's Keeper"), following the kidnapping and killing of three Israeli youths, focused initially on Hebron, but was later expanded to refugee camps, villages and cities across the West Bank. Densely populated refugee camps have been among the localities most impacted by the increase in search and arrest operations.

Palestinian boys in the West Bank have continued to be detained and prosecuted through the military court system, mostly in relation to allegations of stone throwing. In 2014, almost 200 Palestinian children were held in Israeli prisons at any given moment, nearly the same as in 2013. Over the past two years, the Israeli Military Prosecutor has introduced a number of changes in the military legislation and procedures, which addressed some of the concerns related to the rights of Palestinian children in detention.

¹¹ Israeli settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, violates Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention and are illegal under international law. See A/ES-10/273 and Corr.1 para. 120)

¹² PCBS surveys cited in World Bank, Checkpoints and Barriers, 2010

¹³ Kvinna till Kvinna, *Inequalities facing Women living in Area C of the occupied Palestinian territories* (October 2012).

¹⁴ WCLAC, *Women's Voices in the Shadow of the Settlements* (2010) as cited in the Protection Cluster Needs Analysis Framework for oPt (2014-2016)

Impact of the lack of accountability in relation to threats against life, liberty and security (oPt)

Overall, there has been insufficient accountability for the killing and injury of Palestinian civilians by Israeli security forces in oPt.

According to available information, from July 2013 up to May 2014 Israel opened investigations into at least 10 out of the 30 Palestinian fatalities in incidents involving Israeli Security Forces in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.¹⁵ While the number of investigations opened appears to be higher than in previous years, it has not led to effective accountability. Impunity also includes the failure to effectively and impartially investigate acts of violence by Israeli settlers against Palestinians and their property, and hold those responsible accountable for these crimes¹⁶.

In Gaza, as of 15 May 2014, no criminal investigations had been opened into allegations of violations of international humanitarian law in Gaza by Israeli Forces during the escalation of November 2012, although two fact-finding committees were formed to investigate specific incidents.¹⁷ In relation to the recent July-August conflict in Gaza, as of December 2014, the Military Advocate General (MAG) ordered the opening of thirteen criminal investigations, while dozens of additional incidents are still being assessed by a dedicated fact-finding team¹⁸. It still remains to be seen what the outcome of this process will be, and there are concerns that at present there will be no in-depth scrutiny of tactical policies employed during the escalation that may have breached international law.

Despite these concerns, an official commission appointed by the Government of Israel (GOI) to examine its system of investigation regarding alleged violations of IHL (the Turkel Commission), which issued its final report in February 2013, found that this system is generally compliant with the requirements of international law. Nonetheless, the commission recommended a number of significant changes to the system with the purpose of increasing its effectiveness and compliance with international law. The Israeli Ministry of Justice is currently overseeing the implementation of some of these recommendations.

Displacement

Thousands of Palestinians throughout the oPt have been displaced or are at acute risk of forced displacement or even forcible transfer as a result of multiple factors including policies and practices related to the ongoing occupation, recurrent hostilities, violence and abuse. Forced displacement has a serious immediate and longer-term physical, socio-economic and emotional impact upon Palestinian families and communities. It deprives Palestinians of their home and land, which are often their main assets, and frequently results in disruption to livelihoods, a reduced standard of living and limited access to basic services. The impact on children can be particularly devastating. Additional impacts reported include negative coping mechanisms including child labour, early marriage of girls¹⁹ and loss of community resilience.²⁰

Gaza Strip***Over 100,000 people remain displaced as a result of the recent conflict in Gaza***

Following the open-ended ceasefire announced on 26 August, the majority of Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) returned home. However, due to the severe damage / destruction of some predicted 20,000 housing units approximately 120,000 individuals will be displaced in the long-term (49,200 children under 14, 35,046 women and 35,754 men). In addition while the number of IDPs staying in collective centers is expected to decrease as IDPs find short-term housing solutions elsewhere, temporary spikes in the overall number of IDPs are expected during the winter season as those currently residing in damaged homes are in precarious situations and may be forced to leave as a result of floods and harsh winter conditions.

¹⁵ See supra fn 11. Paras A/69/347 paras. 54.

¹⁶ See for example "Update on Settler Violence in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem", Protection Cluster, October 2014

¹⁷ See supra fn 11. Paras A/69/347 para 56.

¹⁸ See <http://www.mag.idf.il/261-6958-en/Patzar.aspx>; <http://www.law.idf.il/261-6858-en/Patzar.aspx?pos=1>

¹⁹ Kvinna till Kvinna, Inequalities facing Women living in Area C of the occupied Palestinian territories (October 2012).

²⁰ See, for example, UNRWA, Al Jabal: a study on the transfer of Bedouin Palestine Refugees (May 2013).

As of 4 November, approximately 30,230 IDPs (4,848 families) are still residing in 18 UNRWA schools, and one government shelter supported by UNRWA, and according to MoSA some 50,000 are estimated to be residing with host families, however this figure may be higher.²¹ UNRWA's current projection estimates that approximately 30,000 IDPs will continue to require being hosted in collective centers by 1 January 2015 while an estimated 92,500 IDPs will follow alternative sheltering mechanisms such as short term rentals, finishing off existing 'spare' units in exchange for rent-free accommodation, prefabricated units located either near to destroyed/severely damaged former homes (especially in rural situations) or in small temporary displacement sites in urban situations by 1 January 2015 (Gaza Shelter cluster). The response to transitional housing needs is hampered by the widescale nature of the destruction and damage and the pre-existing chronic housing shortage making rental units both expensive and difficult to find. Active efforts are underway to research the potential for finishing off the existing shells of housing units built by families to cater for expansion for these to be made available as transitional shelters.

Understanding and responding to the needs of IDPs with host families poses difficult challenges due to their geographical spread, the partial registration, and difficulties in monitoring IDP movements. Therefore, between 27 August and 4 September, OCHA carried out ten visits and focus group discussions with IDPs in host families in order to enhance the understanding of their perceptions, needs, challenges and future options. For all IDP focus group participants their biggest challenge was related to their housing situation, followed by access to education. Other challenges included loss of income and livelihoods as well as lack of food, water and diversified food assistance, lack of NFIs and the need for financial assistance and psychosocial support (PSS) interventions for children and their families to enhance the wellbeing and protection of boys and girls in Gaza. Further, for the long-term IDPs in need of humanitarian assistance, and in particular those in collective centers, any humanitarian response needs to be tailored to the specific needs of widows, female heads of households, orphaned children, girls, elderly and people with disabilities. Overcrowding and lack of privacy in shelters and in host families is a concern for IDPs due to the heightened risk of violence against women and children, including gender based violence (GBV), sexual harassment, abuse and exploitation. Child protection responses to prevent and respond to those protection concerns are needed including the establishment of systems and funded services to effectively identify, refer to needed services, and provide follow up support to the most vulnerable families, women and children which are scarce in Gaza. Prevention and multi-sectoral gender based violence responses are also needed to address specific protection concerns faced by women and girls in shelters and host families.

Housing Construction and Damage

Recent assessments²² reveal an unprecedented number of damaged and destroyed housing units as a result of the latest conflict: 29 per cent of Gaza's total housing stock has been affected; with nearly 6 per cent (18,837 units assessed so far with assessments ongoing) severely damaged or destroyed. The Israeli authorities have attributed the large scope of damage to civilian housing and infrastructure to the practice by Palestinian armed groups of using residential areas and buildings for the launching of rocket attacks.

Prior to the conflict, there already existed a chronic shortage of housing units resulting in overcrowding and associated protection concerns with some 5,000 outstanding reconstruction case loads from previous military operations in addition to the stated need in 2011 for an additional 75,334 housing units (projected to be 122,668 by 2014)²³ to reduce deficit due to high natural growth rates. The Shelter Cluster has estimated that 800,000 people (344,000 children under 14, 223,440 women and 232,560 men) are affected by overcrowding.

It will be important to ensure that early-recovery opportunities are not missed. To this effect it will be necessary to establish a municipal level planning and coordination mechanism to form the backbone of a participatory planning service that will accompany and guide neighbourhood communities through the process of return and reconstruction. Formed early, this mechanism will provide the expertise and coordination support needed to ensure appropriate utilization of prefabricated units and other transitional options and will accompany the return of communities to appropriately designed built environments.

²¹ UNRWA Gaza and Shelter Cluster, 26 October 2014

²² Assessments by UNRWA, UNDP and the Ministry of Public Works and Housing (MoPWH) are nearly complete

²³ http://www.mpwh.ps/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=223%3A2013-09-24-08-29-25&catid=35&lang=en

Emergency Winterization

Delays in funding, lack of access to materials due to the ongoing blockade and the scale of destruction have led to delays in the response to housing needs of those families whose homes were damaged or destroyed by Operation Protective Edge. These delays and the proximity of winter must overtake the need for durable solutions. To this effect agencies are mobilising to make emergency shelter materials available for winterisation and to maintain sufficient collective centre capacity for those in need.

West Bank, including East Jerusalem

In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, forced displacement is triggered by multiple factors, including the destruction of homes and other property, forced evictions, settler violence, movement and access restrictions, and, particularly for East Jerusalem, by lack of civil documentation and revocation of residency rights. Israeli laws governing residency of Palestinians in East Jerusalem do not allow family reunification permits in cases of marriages involving Palestinians outside East Jerusalem. Such policies force Palestinians to reside outside East Jerusalem with their spouses resulting in revocation of their East Jerusalem residencies. In 2012, 64 women, 29 children and 23 men had their East Jerusalem residences revoked. These factors are driven by a range of Israeli policies and practices.²⁴ The planning regime in Area C and East Jerusalem is a key driver of displacement and puts thousands of Palestinians at risk of forcible transfer and forced evictions. Currently, over 7,500 Bedouins and herders from 46 communities in Area C are at high risk of forcible transfer and evictions. Most of the homes and livelihood structures in their current places of residence have been issued demolition orders. In the context of ongoing litigation at Israeli courts, the authorities have committed not to implement most of these orders until the alternative sites are approved.

Other particular vulnerable communities include: Palestinians living in communities between the Barrier and the Green Line (the approximately 11,000 people, excluding residents of East Jerusalem). Some 1,300 Palestinian herders in South Hebron Hills; and 6,200 residents of communities in northern Jordan Valley live entirely or partially in closed military zones. According to OCHA, at least 33 per cent of Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem lack Israeli-issued building permits, leaving at least 93,100 residents at risk of eviction, demolition of their homes and displacement.²⁵

Restrictions imposed by Israel on planning and zoning, is a major obstacle for Palestinian development in Area C by impeding access to natural resources and livelihoods, the development of needed services and infrastructure. Both permanent and non-permanent infrastructure built without a permit is subject to demolition by the Israeli authorities – for example at least six schools in Area C and in East Jerusalem in 2013, have been issued with verbal or written stop-work or demolition orders by Israeli authorities.²⁶ According to the Israeli authorities, the demolition of structures built without permits is part Israel's obligations under IHL to maintain law and order, including the protection of the property rights of those whose land is being illegally used.

In Area C, the GoP and development partners are severely limited in their ability to construct basic health clinics, making communities reliant upon expensive mobile clinic services for basic primary health care, while restrictions on rehabilitation, repair and construction of even basic water and sanitation infrastructure severely impedes access to adequate WASH services in many communities, reducing their resilience and increasing their risk of displacement – between 1 January and September 2014, at least 59 WASH structures were destroyed by the Israeli authorities. The GoP is entirely prohibited by Israeli law from operating in East Jerusalem.

Punitive demolitions: This year saw the resumption of the Israeli practice of punitive demolitions/sealing, citing deterrence and security needs in the context of the abovementioned increase in Palestinian violent attacks against

²⁴ These include the establishment and expansion of settlements and the Barrier in its current route, the declaration and implementation of closed military zones and the planning regime. Regarding the latter, the Secretary General has clearly stated that the Israeli Planning Regime in place in the West Bank is discriminatory and contravenes international humanitarian and human rights law. See A/HRC/25/38, para 20 and 53, and A/68/513, para. 32.

²⁵ OCHA, East Jerusalem Key Humanitarian Concerns, Fact Sheet, December 2012

²⁶ Education Cluster Vulnerable Schools Matrix. August 2014.

Israelis. Four houses were entirely destroyed on this ground and another was sealed. At least 27 people, including 13 children, were displaced as a result.²⁷

Restricted access to basic services

The blockade and its associated restrictions imposed by Israel citing security concerns continue to adversely impact the rights of Palestinians in Gaza, specifically their rights to education, health, work, water and sanitation, housing and an adequate standard of living and also undermines their freedom of movement. Palestinians, including those in need of life saving healthcare outside Gaza are prohibited from leaving Gaza via Israel except for a limited number of people meeting strict criteria imposed by Israel. Of particular concern have been some emergency cases involving the denial of permits for humanitarian workers and civil society. The ability of Palestinians to leave Gaza via Egypt has been also severely restricted since mid 2013 in the context of measures adopted by the Egyptian authorities to address the security situation in the Sinai.

According to estimates provided by clusters, access to basic healthcare, education, and water and sanitation remains severely restricted in the West Bank for 200,000, 400,000 and 312,000 Palestinians respectively. In the Gaza Strip, the figure is 1.3 million (health), 300,000 (education) and 1.3 million Palestinians (WASH). While Israeli policies present particular challenges to ensuring adequacy and access of basic services that respond to the needs of the population, prevailing gender inequality presents additional challenges to securing equitable access to available basic services including those provided by humanitarian actors. Women are particularly impacted by the various constraintson access to health, education, WASH, energy and housing that have implications to increasing the burden of care work. In addition, social restrictions on women and girls present additional barriers to accessing basic services as is the case with health and education due to social restrictions on the mobility of women and girls, and women's housing rights due to discriminatory policies and values²⁸.

Gaza Strip

Restrictions on movement of goods and people into the Gaza Strip have created chronic problems in the service delivery sectors, including electricity, water and sanitation, health, and education. This was compounded by the July-August 2014 hostilities which caused extensive and unprecedented damage to public infrastructure. The same restrictions inhibit the construction and repair sectors evidence in part by the 2011 survey revealing a staggering gap in housing supply of 75,334 units that was set to rise to 122,669 by 2014²⁹.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

The extraction rate from Gaza's aquifer is estimated to be three times higher than the rate of aquifer recharge. Current annual extraction is 208 MCM/year, including of 134 MCM/year for domestic use and 74 MCM/year for agricultural use.

Available resources equal to 61 MCM/year, consisting of aquifer recharge from rain water of 55 MCM/year, 1MCM/year of desalinated sea water and 5MCM/year import of water from Israel (Mekorot).³⁰ Although a clear strategy towards sustainability exists, the restrictions of the blockade result in piecemeal advancement.

²⁷ The first demolition targeted the house that belonged to the family of a Palestinian man suspected of killing an Israeli policeman in Hebron in April 2014, while the other three belonged to the families of three suspects accused of abducting and killing three Israeli youths in June in Hebron. The demolitions were carried out after the Israeli High Court of Justice (HCJ) rejected the petitions filed by the affected families, challenging the legality of the demolitions under international law, on grounds that they violate the prohibition on collective punishment, among other provisions. According to the Israeli authorities, the purpose of this type of demolition is to deter Palestinians from committing acts of violence against Israelis. This practice was discontinued in 2005, after an Israeli military committee considered it ineffective. Forced evictions and house demolitions as a punitive measure are inconsistent with art. 50 of the Hague Regulations of 1989, article 33 (1) of the Fourth Geneva Convention and with the norms of the Covenant on Economic and Social and Cultural Rights and in particular its art. 11. They also violate article 46 of the Hague Regulations and in the context of occupation article 53 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. They may also entail the forcible transfer of those affected.

OCHA Humanitarian Bulletin August 2014

²⁸ Only 11.1% of women in Gaza own or share a house or real estate, and 5.7% of women in the West Bank and East Jerusalem

²⁹ http://www.mpwh.ps/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=223%3A2013-09-24-08-29-25&catid=35&lang=en

³⁰ 'Water and Energy' summary presentation PWA/CMWU 30 April 2014

Overabstraction leads to intrusion of seawater and underlying saline layers of the aquifer into sweet water aquifer, rendering 74.2 per cent of wells in Gaza too salty to drink. With the compounding factor of Nitrate contamination from agriculture and seepage of sewage, only 6.5 per cent of the water pumped from water wells is drinkable³¹.

As an impact on the population, more than 90 per cent of the Gaza population purchase questionable or unregulated potable water from the private sector, who convert brackish water to potable water through small scale desalination plants.

In terms of sanitation, Gaza's wastewater treatment facilities were operating at reduced capacity due to the blockade restrictions on their maintenance and upgrade, but also due to the fuel and electricity crisis. As a result, up to 90 million liters of sewage, untreated or partially treated, were released daily into the Mediterranean Sea from Gaza.³² One third of households in Gaza do not have a connection to the municipal sewage network.³³

The effects of these chronic problems have been compounded by the recent hostilities. As a result of the war, 267,000 people in the Gaza Strip (primarily in communities east of Salah ad Din road) suffer from reduced access to water supply, 69,000 households have lost water storage capacity and 257,000 people have reduced access to sanitation services³⁴. Following the war, the entire wastewater from Gaza flows directly into the Mediterranean Sea or the environment without treatment, increasing the release of untreated or partially treated sewage by 20 per cent.

Physical limitations on the capacity to import electricity and the damage sustained by the Gaza Power plant create huge demands on purchase of fuel for service providers, who are unable to pay due to a decrease in payment of bills for water and sanitation services, ultimately flagging the lack of household income and non-viability of Gaza economy. Entry restrictions on materials necessary for repair of water and sanitation infrastructure projects pose an additional constraint. Solid waste collection has decreased because equipment for collection was destroyed and salaries of employees remain largely unpaid.

Education

During the 51 days of fighting at least 189 public schools were damaged (of which 26 were seriously damaged) and 84 UNRWA schools incurred damage (out of 156), together affecting 462,000 basic and secondary school students. Twelve higher education institutions were also affected by infrastructure damage. Overcrowding due to severe restrictions on the construction, rehabilitation and upgrading of educational infrastructure was already a serious challenge for Gaza's schools prior to the conflict with a shortage of almost 200 schools. Over 85 per cent of schools operated on double shifts (with three schools on triple shift). Access to education has also been negatively affected due to the fact that 18 UNRWA schools are still being used as shelters to house those who continue to be displaced. Limited availability of schools raise concerns regarding quality of education in Gaza compared to the rest of oPt. IDP children are particularly at risk of dropping out of school.

Students are also in need of gender sensitive psychosocial support, which teachers and educational staff (many of whom have also experienced acute trauma) will be unable to provide. Protection risks including ERWs also continue to affect children's ability to attend schools, particularly children with disabilities, in particular for girls with disabilities³⁵. Access to education for children living in the ARA is also a concern, affecting 4,433 children in the ARA 12 schools which are subject to frequent Israeli incursions and activity by Palestinian armed groups.

Health and Nutrition

The entire population of Gaza (1,760,037 people including 894,130 males and 865,907 females)³⁶ is affected by the deterioration of the public health system due to conflict, prolonged restrictions on the movement of people and

³¹ Evaluation of Groundwater Part B, Water Quality in the Gaza Strip Municipal Wells, Water Resources Directorate Sept, 2013

³² EWASH, *Five Years of the Blockade: The Water and Sanitation Situation in the Gaza Strip*, 2012

³³ EWASH, *Ibid.*

³⁴ WASH MIRA updated based on data from service providers and NGO Area Focal Points

³⁵ According to a study by Diakonia I 2011, girls with disabilities are less likely to attend schools than boys. (29% of girls with disabilities do not attend schools compared to 19% of boys.

³⁶ Estimated Population in the Palestinian Territory Mid-Year 2014, PCBS

goods including the blockade, the PA's fiscal crisis and the political divisions between Ramallah & Gaza³⁷. The drug and medical consumable shortages in Gaza reached their height in June 2014 with over 28 per cent of essential drugs (136 out of 480) and 54 per cent (485 out of 902) medical consumables being at zero stock³⁸. The situation remains dire despite Gol policy for fasttracking approval for any medical supply and equipment (including recently CT machines).

An average of 1,480 patients are leaving Gaza every month to receive treatment that is unavailable in the deteriorated, under-developed health system. The Egyptian restrictions on the Rafah Crossing since mid 2013 have resulted in further deterioration in access to health, as in recent years, the majority of patients requiring specialized medical treatment abroad were referred to hospitals in Egypt. The rate of approval rate of permit applications for medical referral through the Erez Crossing with Israel stood in 2014 at an average of XX per cent.

The July - August 2014 conflict resulted in extensive disruption of the already over-stretched health system in Gaza, including damage to 51 per cent of hospitals and clinics, breakdown of services, interruption of chronic disease treatment and patient referral abroad. Overall, infrastructure has been destroyed or poorly maintained, and drugs and disposals are in chronic shortage. There are also an inadequate number of health professionals with adequate training and career development. The chronic deterioration of the health sector, exacerbated by grave consequences of the conflict, resulted in severe limitation of service availability and service quality, dependence on external support and NGOs, and extremely costly coping mechanisms like the referral of patients abroad for treatment that would easily be available in Gaza had the health sector been able to develop over the past decade. The greatest impact has been on children under five, pregnant and lactating women, people living with disabilities, the elderly, the chronically ill and the displaced. During the conflict, the Israeli authorities established a field hospital near the Erez crossing, dedicated to treating Palestinian injuries, and facilitated the transfer of medicines and medical equipment into Gaza

Six maternities were closed during the conflict due to damage to six hospitals, and extremely unsafe conditions in some Gaza Strip locations. Furthermore, the high number of wounded people overloaded hospitals and required transformation of maternities totally or partially into surgical care units. This resulted in diminished care for women in need for emergency obstetric care including surgical interventions and diminished post-operative care by immediately discharging women after giving birth³⁹. Health services do not integrate GBV related support. GBV survivors in Gaza report being requested to pay out of pocket for GBV related health services⁴⁰.

West Bank

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

The key concern is access to adequate water supplies mainly due to Israel's extensive control over water resources and limited water allocation for Palestinians. This is despite the existence of Joint Israeli-Palestinian Water Committee which oversees the allocation and development of water resources in the West Bank.

Limited access to water resources, lack of construction permits issued for water infrastructure, restrictions on the movement of people and goods, high transportation costs for water trucking has contributed to rising costs and decreasing availability and quality of water for Palestinians. The Palestinian Water Authority (PWA) estimates that some 1.25 million people in the West Bank currently consume less than the WHO recommended 100 lpcpd. In addition, some 300,000 people live within the Area C communities which fall outside of the PWA control. Some 100,000 persons in over 200 Area C communities currently pay more than 20 NIS per cubic meter of water (4 times the average cost). Consequently, an estimated 70,000 people consume less than 60 lpcpd, of which an estimated 20,000 people consume less than 30 lpcpd. Water scarcity also has implications for the food security of these communities as Bedouins, farmers and herders are among those deemed most vulnerable. The situation is exacerbated by demolition or confiscation of WASH infrastructure and settler activities leading to damage or

³⁷ According to WHO reports, Gaza is kept underfunded and undersupplied at ~30% constantly.

³⁸ Central Drugs Store, June 2014, Gaza

³⁹ Victims in the shadow, Gaza post crisis reproductive health Assessment, UNFPA. October 2014

⁴⁰ Solidaridad International 2014

destruction of infrastructure or restrictions on access to resources, which is an additional factor putting pressure on communities to displace. The recent increase in the targeted demolition of WASH facilities⁴¹, including humanitarian projects built with international funds, have placed Palestinians at increased risk of disease and illness, led to the decline of Palestinian agriculture, prevented communities from practicing their livelihoods, and led to significant levels of displacement. It should be noted that some steps to promote delivery and extraction of water have been approved by the COGAT, however those remain limited in scope and effect.

Health and Nutrition

Access to primary health services and ambulatory care is limited for 522,224 people (including 240,856 males and 281,368 females) in Area C, the Seam Zone, and non-camp refugee communities as a result of military and settler violence, restrictions on the freedom of movement for patients and medical professionals, and a discriminatory permit/planning environment. Children, women, persons with disabilities, and older people are most vulnerable. Restrictions result in increased transportation and other indirect costs, difficulties in obtaining health care and worsening of health status due to delayed treatment. Access to PHC is particularly difficult for women, elderly and people with disabilities in Area C as well as restrictions on movement and access in Area C and limited public transportation are important factors that prevent women from accessing public space. Furthermore, fear of violence can result in conservative behaviour, is limiting women's and girls' freedom of movement, and their access to basic services including health care⁴². Access to health services in East Jerusalem for Palestinians from other areas of the West Bank is controlled by a combination of physical and administrative obstacles. Approximately 55,000 Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem are physically separated from the urban centre by the Barrier and must cross crowded checkpoints to access health, emergency services, education and other services to which they are entitled as residents of Jerusalem.

Lack of economic access to food and erosion of livelihoods

Results of the Socio-Economic and Food Security survey (SEFSec) indicated a continued high level of food insecurity in oPt in 2013 with 1.6 million Palestinians considered food insecure. This figure considers the impact of food and other humanitarian assistance, without which the number of food insecure people would rise to 1.8 million. Moreover, 635,000 people are considered vulnerable to food insecurity. Food insecurity in oPt is primarily due to continuous erosion of livelihoods and a lack of economic access to food,⁴³ stemming from a low and a decreasing purchasing power of Palestinian families directly related to the cumulative impact of the occupation, namely restrictions on access to land, water and markets; the lack of free movement of people and goods within and between West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip; and the inability to freely and predictably access regional and international markets for goods and services. This is combined with reduced international aid and the PA's fiscal crisis. According to the World Bank restrictions on movement and access imposed by Israel are the "most significant impediment to Palestinian private sector growth", with restrictions on economic activity in Area C as particularly detrimental.⁴⁴

Women's livelihoods and resilience face increased restrictions resulting from gender specific biases restricting their access to productive assets, opportunity and assistance including social restrictions on their movement, the heavy burden of care work, and the biases in assistance programmes. Women's low economic participation contributes to food insecurity and high economic dependence ratios at the household levels which stands at 76.3 per cent⁴⁵.

The deteriorating economic situation in oPt is particularly prevalent in the agricultural sector which represents 10.5 percent of employment⁴⁶, (with women's share of agricultural labour reaching 34.3 per cent compared to 12 per cent

⁴¹Diakonia, Planning to Fail, 2013, <http://www.diakonia.se/globalassets/documents/ihl/ihl-in-opt/planning-to-fail.pdf>

⁴²Issa Ar-Rabadih and Zuheir Tmeiza, *Effects of Demolitions on Women and Children* (July 2011).

⁴³PCBS, FAO, UNRWA, WFP, Joint press release, June 2014

⁴⁴World Bank, Economic Monitoring Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, 25 September, 2013. The World Bank estimates that if Palestinians were allowed to develop Area C, the GDP could increase by 35 per cent and the dependency on aid decrease by half.

⁴⁵WHO, Demographic, social and health indicators 2013

⁴⁶Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2014. Labour Force Survey: (April – Jun 2014) Round, (Q2/2014). Revised Press Report on the Labour Force Survey Results. Ramallah - Palestine.

for men⁴⁷). The sector has suffered from a lack of access to an estimated 50 percent of the agricultural land as a result of land confiscations, settler violence against Palestinian farmers; limited access to water resources; lack of physical access resulting from the barrier; restrictions in the ARAs in Gaza; restricted access to inputs and markets and the continuing destruction and/or damage to productive assets.

According to recent projections by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), economic growth in the oPt, decelerated from 6.3 per cent in 2012 to 1.9 per cent in 2013. The IMF anticipates a loss of 15 per cent for 2014 in Gaza and continuing stagnation in the West Bank, with real GDP for the oPt declining by between 3.5 and 4 per cent for the year as a whole

Gaza Strip

The 3 June SEFSec Joint Statement of FAO/WFP/UNRWA and PCBS (based on 2013 data) shows that 57 per cent of households in Gaza continue to be food insecure; while a further 188,397 people or 14 per cent of households are vulnerable to food insecurity.⁴⁸ The 2012 data also indicated that 8 per cent of households in Gaza are headed by women. While the precise scope of current food insecurity in the Gaza Strip will not be known until the release of the updated SEFSec in early 2015, the Emergency Food Security Assessment (EFSA) carried out in September 2014 suggested that food security conditions further deteriorated as a result of the combined effect of the conflict, and the continued Israeli imposed blockade and Egypt's closure of the illegal smuggling tunnels since June 2013 due to both countries' legitimate security concerns. Main drivers of food insecurity include high levels of displacement and the loss of productive assets, leading to people's inability to access adequate livelihoods. This is compounded by sharp increases in food prices since the hostilities ceased, mainly due to the reduced local supply of fresh products, as a result of the vast destruction of the sector that was met with more expensive imports from Israel. In particular, the rise in cost for fresh vegetables has negatively affected dietary diversity.

The restrictions on movement and access to land and at sea imposed by Israeli authorities in the Gaza Strip citing security concerns have continued to undermine the livelihoods of tens of thousands of Palestinians in Gaza, including fishermen, farmers and herders. The ceasefire agreement of 26 August 2014 has reportedly reduced the ARA alongside the Gaza fence from 300 to 100 meters, and re-established the fishing zone off Gaza's coast to six miles (as was the fishing limit up to 6 July 2014), with the possibility of gradual extension up to 12 nautical miles if the truce holds. Unemployment rates in Gaza amongst youth (24-35 years) reach as high as 88 per cent amongst females and 48 per cent amongst males.⁴⁹ Entry into newly accessible areas remains precarious.

The conflict greatly affected agricultural livelihoods as 32,000 farming households (15,000 farming, 5,000 herding, 9,000 mixed farming herding and 2,000 fishing households) in addition to the households of the 8,000 wage laborers that rely on agriculture for their main source of income were impacted in some way. According to initial damage and loss assessment by MoA, nearly 30 per cent (2,900 ha) of the agricultural land in addition to a large number of the irrigation wells, irrigation systems, 575 ha of greenhouses, more than 2,000 ha of productive trees, post-harvest facilities and agricultural equipment were targeted and destroyed, causing unprecedented shortages and increases in the prices of fresh produce in Gaza markets. A sizeable proportion of the livestock perished including 40 per cent of the poultry and 36 per cent of total productive livestock (nearly 29,000 head). It has been estimated that the number of sheep and goats fell from 73,553 to 58,346 head according to FAO records. Similarly, the number of head of cattle fell from 9,635 to 3,743. This is expected to further increase the severity of food insecurity for more than 35,000 people whose livelihoods depend on herding activities in Gaza.

After the summer conflict, the UN has facilitated an agreement between the GoI and the GoP on a temporary Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism (GRM) that aims to enable the GoP-led construction and reconstruction work at the large scale conducted by the Gazan private sector without delays while at the same time addressing Israeli security needs. Also in the context of the understandings reached as part of the August 2014 ceasefire, the Israeli authorities allowed a limited resumption of agricultural transfers between Gaza and the West Bank. While these

⁴⁷ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2010 Labour Force Survey

⁴⁸ Joint press release by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the World Food Programme (WFP), 3 June 2014

⁴⁹ ILO KILM

developments had so far a limited impact on the people's livelihoods, a successful implementation of the GRM, along with an increase in the volume of commerce between Gaza and the West Bank (including of non-agricultural products) could facilitate a significant reactivation of Gaza's economy.

West Bank

Nineteen (19) percent of households in the West Bank are food insecure.⁵⁰ With 19 per cent and 17 per cent food insecurity in urban and rural areas respectively, and 29 per cent in refugee camps. Restrictions on trade and access to land and water, which are a direct consequences of the Israeli occupation, leads to a lack of economic access to food, lower purchasing power and unemployment, particularly for communities in Area C, the seam zone, Barrier affected communities, refugee camps, as well as pockets of poverty within areas A and B.

Work in Israel and in Israeli settlement has remained a significant source of livelihood for the Palestinian population, accounting for 16 per cent of the employed workforce.⁵¹ In 2014, the number of permits issued by the Israeli authorities for this purpose increased by 140 per cent to 14,000 compared with the equivalent period in 2013. Additionally, in recent years, the Israeli authorities have gradually relaxed some of the movement restrictions between the main towns and villages in the West Bank, improving the access of people to services and livelihoods.

Settlement expansion and related activities - including settler agricultural activity - are increasingly depleting Palestinian land and water resources. Those most affected include farmers, herders/Bedouins, female headed households, the unemployed, and households with disabilities and elderly (for a total number of 174,138 people). As in recent years, food insecurity is higher among refugees than non-refugees, although the gap is closing. Where in the previous four years this amounted to five percentage points, recent figures show only one percentage point difference (19 per cent versus 20 per cent). Similarly, "food-insecurity rates in West Bank refugee camps remain higher than in either urban or rural areas".⁵²

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ PCBS, Labour Force Survey, (April –Jun, 2014).

⁵² UNRWA (2014), Press Release, Food insecurity in Palestine remains high, 03 June; as consulted in August 2014 on <http://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/press-releases/food-insecurity-palestine-remains-high>; and PCBS, WFP, FAO and UNRWA (2013). Socio-Economic and Food Security Survey 2012

GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE AND DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE CRISIS

Figure 1: Statistics of the population in need



4.5 million total population as of Oct. 2014

Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) 2014



3.3 million est. number of people living in areas affected by crisis as of Oct. 2014

Gaza strip: all the population is indirectly affected by the crisis.

West Bank affected areas: est. number of people living Area C (Vulnerability Profile Project 2013): 298,000, East Jerusalem: 297,000 (Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics), people identified as Food Insecure and Vulnerable to Food Insecurity living in Area A and B excluding Area C: 928,918 (Food Security Sector 2014, SEfSEc 2013)



2.3 million est. number of people in need of humanitarian assistance as of Oct. 2014

Gaza strip: 1.3 million people estimated in need of humanitarian assistance as largest number identified by clusters (Food Security Sector 2014, SEfSEc 2013).

West Bank: 1 million people estimated in need of humanitarian assistance for affected areas for the West Bank as largest number identified by clusters (Food Security Sector 2014, SEfSEc 2013)

Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) 2014, Sefsec 2013, Vulnerability Profile Project 2013 (includes all clusters and Line Ministry agree indicators of vulnerability for Area C)

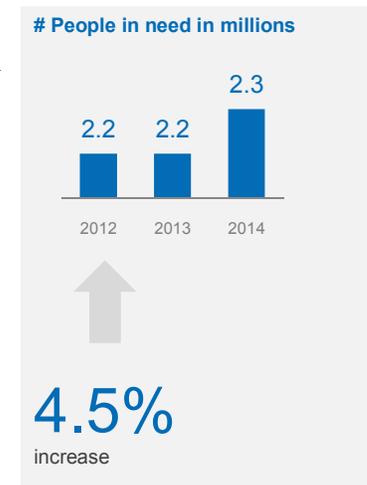
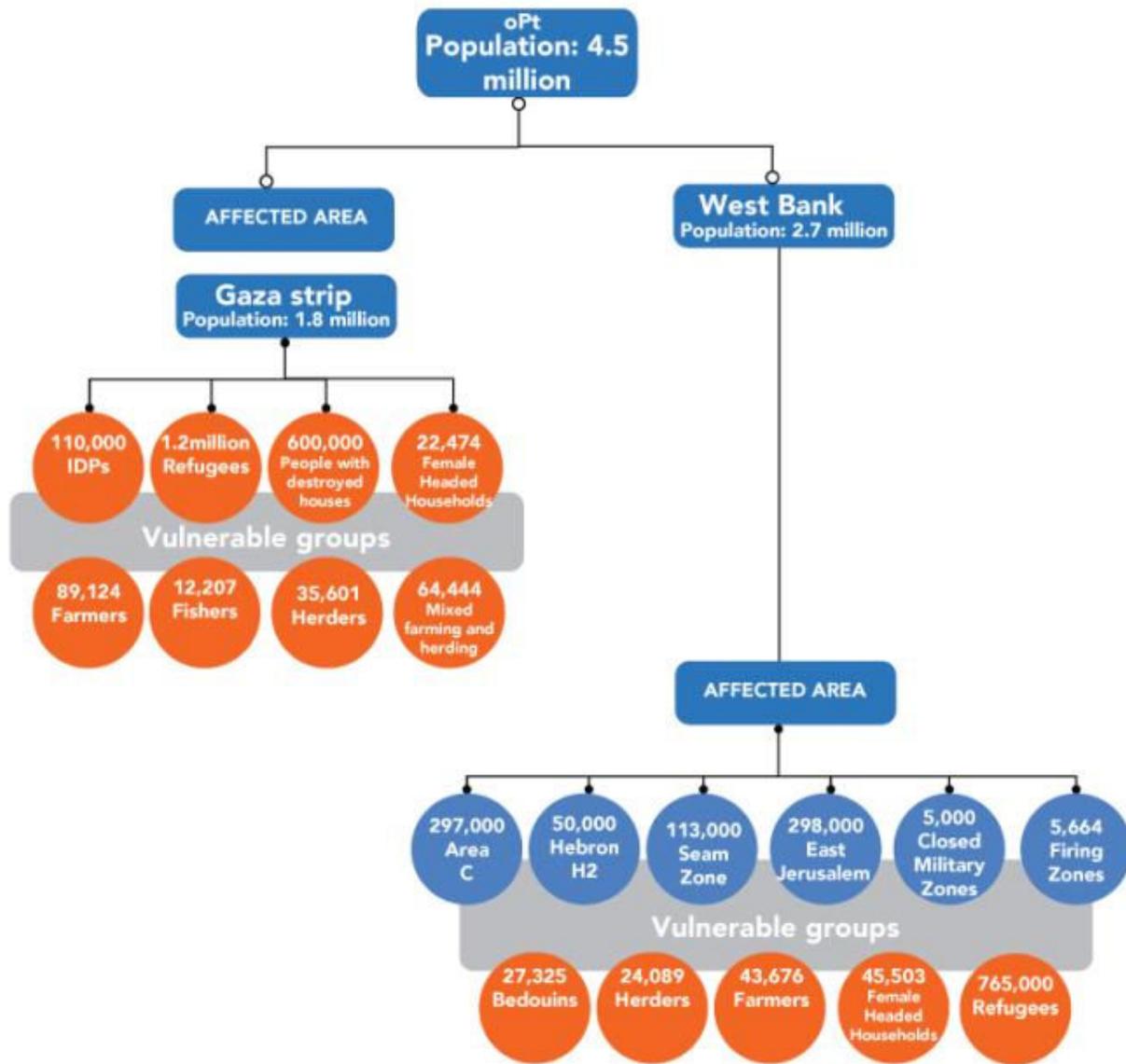


Figure 2: Classification of people in need of humanitarian assistance



Drivers and Factors of Humanitarian Needs

Poverty, unemployment, closures and access restrictions, blockade, settler violence, demolitions, Gaza Crisis, settlement expansion and land expropriation

N.B. There will be considerable overlap between the numbers for the vulnerable groups in each of the affected areas therefore these numbers will NOT add up to the total number of people affected by the crisis or the total people in need of humanitarian assistance. The diagram should be read as an illustration of vulnerable groups identified in each of the affected areas. The numbers have been extrapolated from the sources here referenced in the HNO.

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INFORMATION GAPS

Following the Gaza crisis a number of organizations including UN agencies conducted an inter-agency needs assessments as well as in-depth assessments. Those were used to inform the Gaza Flash Appeal, launched on 3 September and Gaza reconstruction conference which took place in Cairo on the 12 of October. Those assessments presented a wealth of information which in the future will allow humanitarian and development organizations alike to intervene with high level of confidence. The Multi Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA) presented a good example of an inter-agency joint data collection and analysis exercise.

In the West Bank, the registry of assessments illustrates that very few number assessments were conducted by humanitarian organizations and the Palestinian Government. This was apparent in the lack fresh figures on needs and targeted communities. Data disaggregated to the second administrative level (governorate level) or sex and gender was also not available in many cases.

The Vulnerability Profile Project (VPP) which includes information on a range of humanitarian indicators related to physical protection, access to land and livelihoods, water and sanitation, education and health, among others was however, used by some clusters to help quantify needs and vulnerable people in Area C. The VPP visualization tool which was made available to cluster leads/ information managers presents a variety of data on different themes on Area C. Upon a deep and detailed analysis of the tool and endorsement by cluster leads, the VPP assessment could be expanded in 2015 to cover the West Bank and Gaza. Many underscored that an inter-agency information management tool to assess needs will generate adequate and timely information to support the Humanitarian Programme Cycle, although specialized and dedicated specific-cluster-oriented assessments are still deemed necessary in order to provide more accurate information.

Further, in-depth assessments at the cluster level were planned and initiated but require a longer time to be finalized as most of these assessments have significant quantitative components which will require substantial time to be carried out.

With regard to gender issues, a review of six assessments undertaken by humanitarian partners in oPt in 2013-2014 in oPt, indicated that gender issues are rarely prioritized in data collection and analysis beyond basic sex disaggregation in quantitative assessments with sectoral or multi-sectoral focus and that in cases where assessments did include a minimum number of gender related questions, the related data was overlooked in the final analysis. Gender issues should be considered as integral elements of humanitarian assessments determining vulnerability, food insecurity, household resilience and coping strategies or emergency response. Qualitative assessments offer a relatively wider space to examine gender issues whether as part of the overall scope of the assessments, or as a stand-alone research that examines specific gender related questions.⁵³ The data of the Ministry of Social affairs (MOSA) was not fully utilized. MOSA holds a database of 110,000 households who have access to health, food and education programs among other humanitarian interventions. The overarching goal is to have access to registered beneficiaries “abject poor” to avoid duplication and to better target vulnerable groups by geography and age. The information is current and based on real monitoring and evaluation rather than community based or infrequent needs assessments.

⁵³ OCHA, availability of gender related data in oPt needs assessment, 2014 <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/occupied-palestinian-territory/gender>

It was highlighted by most cluster leads that the information gap should be addressed by line ministries/bodies. Besides clusters' internal information gathering, clusters rely on information originated from the government, however those information needs to be customized to fit with the HPC information requirement. To that end, the AIM WG will work with a number of key governmental bodies such as PCBS, MOSA, MOLG, PWA, and MOA over the course of 2015 with the aim to strengthen the capacity of National Authorities to collect and process gender sensitive humanitarian information.

Priorities to address information gaps

Information gaps by theme		
Theme	Gap (complete or related to specific parts of the country/sections of the population)	Method/data to address information Gap
Forced Displacement	Good quality data on IDPs was provided. However the data was not always disaggregated by gender and age group.	Demolitions Tracker was used to synthesize information on people at risk of displacement.
		Ministry of Social Affairs and UNRWA provided accurate and reliable information on internally displaced people and people living with host families
Physical Protection		Protection related information such as information on documentation, fatalities, displacement was covered by the Protection cluster monitoring, Protection of Civilian Database, MIRA and VPP.
	Incidence of GBV in oPt:	Data available comes from 2011 survey on Violence against Women conducted by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. It would be important to provide updated data by 2016. Other potential sources and tools for data collection includes data from national hotline (e.g. Sawa) on demand for GBV services, and UNRWA GBVIMS for refugees.
	Availability of GBV related services in the Gaza strip	The SWG on GBV chaired by UNFPA conducts a mapping of GBV interventions on an annual basis however, this exercise does not provide refined information on availability of services, and a geographic breakdown
Access restrictions to services		In the last decades, information on access was systematically collected by OCHA, such as closure mapping exercise, Humanitarian Atlas and Gaza crossing database.
	Gender specific barriers to accessing services	No such data is collected. Gender specific restrictions (e.g. Israeli restrictions on movement of young males, or social restrictions on movement of women and girls) are often overlooked

Food insecurity	Food insecurity data is not available at community level	Food security sector depends on organizations program databases
		Food sector use PMTF to determine the eligible families to receive targeting food assistance interventions.
		SEFsec 2014 data collection will be conducted in Jan/Feb 2015 with a bigger sample size for the Gaza Strip. The report will be finalized by June/July 2015
	Women's economic roles in sustaining livelihoods and as agricultural workers:	Available data only captures concerns of food security in female headed households with absence of data on women who have breadwinning responsibilities in households with unemployed, injured or detained male "heads of households".
	Gender specific barriers to accessing productive assets and accessing humanitarian assistance	No such data is collected. Gender specific barriers to productive assets (e.g. land registration regime, failure to protect women's inheritance rights, gender bias in customary law and unequal gender relations) are often overlooked
Health and Nutrition	Review of the health sector response, review of existing emergency preparedness and response plans, objective: improved emergency preparedness planning	Conduct an assessment on the health system preparedness in Gaza
	Assessing impact of conflict on environmental health, objective: identify environmental health risk, develop mitigation measures	Joint assessment with WHO MoH,WASH to assess the impact of the conflict on Gaza
	Mental health sector service capacity in light of the increased need for mental health services in Gaza.	Joint assessment on capacity of mental health services in Gaza
	Assessing disabilities caused by the conflict and identify their needs	Assess the disabilities in Gaza with HI and other partners
Shelter NFIs	# and situation of families with host families	sampling using MoSA database and/or UNRWA and UNDP payments data
	Cash assistance - amounts received and by whom, in order to assess gaps, duplications and equity across categories of people including from a gender perspective.	Verification through MoSA and MoPWH/UNDP lists and comparison with UNRWA lists
	Shelter & NFI response to Operation Protective Edge	Verification of repairs, reconstruction, to determine solutions adopted, to verify all displaced families have left unsatisfactory host family situations and collective centres and remain in possession of essential items
	The transitional shelter responses being applied require monitoring to ensure that mechanisms produce adequate sheltering solutions and to ensure learning in action	Shelter Cluster members to monitor interventions and share findings

WASH	Water Scarcity monitoring across the oPT communities	Reformalisation of the water scarcity indicators, and resourcing an agreed focal point to compile both monitoring and response data (inc. food sec actors)
	Demolitions and response tracking in the West Bank	Reformalising response tracking in the West Bank, and resourcing an agreed focal point to compile the response data
	Reinforced Activity tracking	Improve / replace APIS as the sectoral platform for activity tracking

ANNEX: OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

HIGHLIGHTS

The need for unimpeded access of humanitarian personnel and goods to the affected population became ever more important in light of existing humanitarian needs and those newly created by the recent hostilities in the Gaza Strip. UN sponsored agreement of Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism between the GoI and the GoP aims at addressing some of those needs. Access to and around the West Bank remains restricted and cumbersome.

National and local capacity and response

The GoP has made significant progress in regard to institution building and the development of a sustainable Palestinian economy and has articulated a National Development Plan (PNDP) for 2014 to 2016, Palestinian institutions compare favourably with those in established states. It must be stressed however, that due to restrictions imposed by Israel, compounded by internal Palestinian divides, the GoP has limited or none administrative control (including programming) over Gaza, Area C, the seam zone, and East Jerusalem, which all together represent the vast majority of the oPt and a significant part of the population.

Despite some progress made in broadening the fiscal base, there was a sharp decline in the economic outlook with one in six people in the West Bank and nearly every second person in Gaza unemployed. In this context, the Gaza war has taken a heavy toll on an already struggling Palestinian economy. Gaza's energy crisis is a binding constraint for the development of any private economic activity, second only to political instability, resulting from long-term generation capacity deficits and poor distribution infrastructure. The situation has worsened over the last year due to the chronic fuel shortage and disruption of fuel supply from both Israel and Egypt and remains a high priority on the humanitarian agenda for Gaza.

The launch of the Government of the State of Palestine National Early Recovery and Reconstruction Plan for Gaza at the 12 October 2014 international conference for the reconstruction of Gaza, and the subsequent pledges amounting to \$5 billion are both positive events which if realized and implemented will significantly reduce humanitarian needs in the Gaza Strip. The implementation of the PNDP 2014-2016 and the 'Palestinian National Recovery and Reconstruction Plan for Gaza, 2014-2016' relies heavily on donor assistance and recovery funding. Assistance for the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip, however, should not come at the expense of budget support or development assistance for the West Bank, both of which are at least as necessary now as before the war.

Even though Palestinian institutions (including national and local level authorities, private sector and notably Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS)) were primary responders during the winter emergencies in 2013 and early 2014, the UNDAC Disaster Risk Preparedness mission to the State of Palestine deployed in June 2014 found

preparedness to be a gap that requires priority attention. The national disaster coordination/response role is expected from the High Council of Civil Defense (HCCD), which needs further streamlining and clear by-laws. The current National Consensus Government may need to work on an integrated system of emergency planning and response for the West Bank and Gaza, which is currently disjointed as it was aligned to the political division of the Palestinian authorities and further affected by the heightened access restrictions and the blockade of Gaza.

At the governorate levels, there are some contingency plans, however, these plans are not necessarily activated and governors do not always have the necessary space for activation due to complications related to fragmented land and difficulties associated with the policies and practices of the Israeli Occupation (i.e, access issues - see sections above). In this context, the role of volunteers and local-level response is crucial for an efficient response. Another important actor is the private sector, particularly for the logistics, as demonstrated during the recent winter storm disaster.

International capacity and response

The HCT, established in 2008, meets monthly and includes actors involved at the country level in the provision of humanitarian assistance and protection.

OCHA facilitates the work of the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICG) that consists of six clusters/sectors, as follows: Protection Cluster, Food Security Sector, Education Cluster, WASH Cluster, Health Sector and Shelter Cluster (the Gaza Strip and the West Bank). The Logistics Cluster was activated during the Gaza emergency for a period of two months and then de-activated as per HCT decision. The ICG also works in the preparation of the contingency plan and preparedness measures. OCHA has been preparing the Humanitarian Programme Cycle on behalf of the HCT (since 2003), mobilizing humanitarian funding from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), and acting as the manager of the ERF on behalf of the HC. Both the CERF and ERF, under the RC/HC's leadership, have track records of supporting recurrent emergencies linked to hostilities and extreme weather events.

During the emergencies (both manmade and natural disasters) ICRC and PRCS, both in Gaza and in the West Bank, are key emergency responders. ICRC, IFRC and PRCS have an observer role in the HCT which facilitates complementarity and information exchange.

During the last Gaza crisis in July-August 2014, applying contingency planning procedures, OCHA set up an Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) in Gaza to facilitate information on needs, gaps and responses as well as the coordination of the multi-cluster needs assessment (MIRA). Under the lead of the Ministry of Social Affairs in Ramallah, a national EOC also operated to coordinate and support responses in Gaza, mobilizing the support of the Government of National Consensus for the Gaza Strip. It is the first time that there has been an activation of the two EOCs, and it was a first attempt to systematically foster a coordinated approach to disaster response involving the HCT and the national authorities. While lessons learned exercises are still ongoing for the two EOCs, the initiatives were a response to key recommendations from the UNDAC missions. The role of the private sector depended greatly on the existing coordination arrangements prior to the emergency.

Humanitarian access

Humanitarian organizations continue to face a range of obstacles which hamper their ability to provide assistance and protection to Palestinians in need across the oPt. These obstacles primarily include physical and administrative restrictions on the access of (I)NGO and UN personnel, especially national employees; restrictions on the delivery of materials needed for humanitarian projects; and limitations on the implementation of projects that involve building, expanding or rehabilitating infrastructure in the Gaza Strip as well as Area C and East Jerusalem. Humanitarian operations of INGOs in the Gaza strip are further hampered by the impact of counter-terrorism policies of key donor countries.

During the last Gaza crisis in July-August 2014, the Israeli authorities maintained the Kerem Shalom crossing for goods open almost without interruption, despite the challenging conditions generated by the hostilities, alongside continuous engagement and coordination with a range of humanitarian actors. This proved essential in facilitating

the entry of humanitarian consignments, including medical supplies, food assistance and non-food items, and the implementation of humanitarian responses. Similarly, the opening of the Erez and Rafah crossings with Israel and Egypt respectively allowed for the evacuation of hundreds of wounded people for treatment outside Gaza. The opening of the former also allowed for the movement of humanitarian staff, despite the restrictions maintained on national staff⁵⁴.

Gaza Strip

Restrictions on entry of materials

One of the key factors impeding provision of humanitarian assistance in the Gaza Strip during the first half of 2014 remained to be the Israeli approval, coordination and verification process for international reconstruction projects which impedes the ability of humanitarian agencies to respond to urgent needs, increases project costs and ultimately prolongs the hardship of some of the most vulnerable people. Since 2010, Israel has eased some of its restrictions on the entry of a range of items classified as 'dual use' (which includes basic construction materials such as aggregates, steel bars and cement), thereby allowing entry of construction materials for international projects approved by Israel and the GoP. However, it takes, on average, 12 months for a project to be rejected or approved. Currently, 84 per cent of the value of international projects submitted to the Israeli authorities has been approved.

Following hostilities during the summer of 2014, and in light of the unprecedented level of destruction, it became apparent that that reconstruction of Gaza would not be possible under current project approval arrangement. The UN has facilitated an agreement between the GoI and the GoP on a temporary Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism (GRM) that aims to enable the GoP-led construction and reconstruction work at the large scale conducted by the Gazan private sector without delays while at the same time addressing Israeli security needs. The mechanism is twofold: it will facilitate the GoP-led work focusing on repair of damaged homes and large scale public sector works based on needs assessment as identified in the GoP National Early Recovery and Reconstruction Plan for Gaza but also UN led work by easing the COGAT approval procedures with the approvals being issued on a comprehensive plan of work basis rather than on a project-by-project basis. A High Level Steering Team, consisting of representatives from the GoP, Israeli authority and the UN has been established to ensure the implementation of the mechanism.

There are some uncertainties over future access to construction materials, their price, the mechanism for materials access and over the effectiveness of the Unity Government in Gaza. For example, should the GNC fail to take hold or the GRM not succeed this would represent significant risk factors for humanitarian actors considering their engagement in repairing damaged homes. Past experience of the difficulties faced in responding to the housing damage caused by operation "Cast Lead" coupled with the above are causing several actors to hesitate over making commitments to respond to the return of displaced families. Several are taking early action but the majority are examining the situation carefully as it evolves.

⁵⁴ COGAT summary of humanitarian coordination activities during the Gaza conflict:

- Hum Liaison Officers from battalion level upwards - to coordinate assistance for population, facilitate safe movement, coordinate sensitive sites (over 4000) and infrastructure issues.
- Over 500 tactical coordination events during the fighting - to mend infrastructure, extract casualties, facilitate convoys etc.
- Holding direct and constant coordination with international humanitarian community, via Joint Situation Room near Erez crossing, and daily updates & coordination meetings in TA HQ.
- Erez crossing during the conflict:
 - Facilitation of entry into Israel of 1217 sick & injured, including 247 Ambulance transfers
 - 1200 dual citizenship evacuation in 4 waves
 - 787 International Organization workers crossings
 - 1624 reporter crossings
- Kerem Shalom during the conflict
 - Facilitation of over 5390 trucks loaded with medicine, food and other humanitarian supplies
 - 616 Natural Gas trucks
 - 227 Fuel trucks
 - 10 electrical generators on emergency loan from Israel
 - Israeli humanitarian supply donation unmarked convoy with medicine and food was rejected from entering to Gaza by Hamas
 - Israeli separate medicine donation – rejected
 - Israeli field hospital for Palestinians near Erez, was banned by Hamas for population

Access restrictions affecting personnel

In addition to ongoing restrictions on the entry of humanitarian goods into the Gaza Strip, INGO and UN personnel continue to face difficulty in moving in and out of Gaza. All (I)NGO personnel as well as UN national personnel are required to obtain permits from the Israeli authorities to travel in and out of the Gaza Strip. Permit processing time for movement of international humanitarian personnel to the Gaza Strip improved over the last couple of years. While trends are best determined on a year basis, there has been an indication that the positive trend continued during 2014 with the exception of recent hostilities in Gaza. Nevertheless, not all humanitarian personnel are eligible to apply as issuance and/or duration of travel permits are conditioned by the Israeli authorities with a number of factors including national origin, seniority within the organization and at times relationship with the GoI. In light of humanitarian needs further exacerbated by the recent hostilities, the current permit system is therefore limiting the ability of humanitarian community to address those needs in an efficient manner. Access and movement restrictions imposed by the de facto authorities in Gaza in early 2013 remains of concern. Those restrictions include requirements for exit permits for national staff often conditioned by INGO compliance with requests for payment of VAT and income tax and provision of personal data, including salary information, for national staff. These restrictions are affecting INGOs in varying degrees. Many of these requirements are also in contravention of certain donor policies relating to counter-terrorism measures. These challenges would eventually disappear once the Unity Government assumes full control of the Gaza Strip, including over the crossings with Israel.

Access of national staff working for aid organizations is more impeded than that of their international colleagues as they are subject to a more scrutinized permit regime and the differential treatment of personnel makes national staff bear the brunt of access restrictions as they are for example more likely to experience access incidents while on mission.

The Government of National Consensus and UN partners dominate the planned reconstruction and repair process. Access for the UN agencies is being maintained and is envisioned to become easier with the implementation of the planned Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism enabling a more rapid response to be effected. This has yet to be implemented at scale.

For the wider humanitarian community, access can be problematic. Some humanitarian organisations are experiencing blockages to entry for both international and national staff that have proved impossible to resolve. This lack of access reduces the capacity of the humanitarian community to respond to the needs. The private sector is also envisioned to play a major role in reconstruction under the GRM. This essential component faces several implementation barriers which need to be addressed quickly.

A further potential way to address access issues could be for UN agencies to partner more closely with other humanitarian actors.

West Bank

The Government of Israel's removal of some physical barriers to movement of people between key urban centres in the West Bank, and between cities and many of their satellite villages in recent years has resulted in improved humanitarian access throughout large parts of the West Bank. These measures are positive. However, physical and administrative restrictions continued to impede access for humanitarian actors to some of the most vulnerable Palestinian communities especially in the 'Seam Zone', firing zones and closed military areas, and other parts of Area C.

Incidents at West Bank checkpoints continue to obstruct and delay the movement of personnel and goods to the 'Seam Zone' areas of the West Bank and East Jerusalem, albeit on a lower scale as such incidents have been on steady decline since 2009.

Humanitarian workers continue to face limitations on their ability to enter and work in East Jerusalem. National staff with West Bank ID cards need to apply for permits to access and work in East Jerusalem, which are typically valid for a limited period of time and permits may be turned down based on 'security grounds', delayed or not renewed in a timely manner.

Security constraints

Major infrastructures have been severely damaged during the hostilities, impacting humanitarian, early recovery and reconstruction response. Efforts should be made to identify areas and infrastructure that has been affected by

the hostilities and ensures it is secured. ERW clearance efforts should be scaled up to ensure that the ERW threat in Gaza is mitigated eliminated so that safe humanitarian and reconstruction initiatives are no longer impeded and the probability of explosives harvesting, is reduced.

The manner in which the ARAs are enforced by Israeli forces, including the use of live fire, also places humanitarian workers at serious risk and restricts the geographical area of damage to housing and livelihoods that is able to be covered safely.