



# Deepening Crisis in Gaza: Lessons for Operational Agencies

## INTRODUCTION

On 27 December 2008, in response to continued rocket fire from Gaza on southern Israel, Israeli forces launched “Operation Cast Lead” - a combined land and air military operation in the Gaza Strip.

As well as causing damage to infrastructure and buildings, this operation had a considerable human cost. According to OCHA the operation has left 1,336 Palestinians dead, including an estimated 430 children and 110 women; 5,450 Palestinians injured, including 1,870 children and 800 women.

Israel declared a unilateral ceasefire on 17 January, which was put into effect on 18 January, and Hamas and other Palestinian factions also declared a ceasefire later the same day. This ended the fighting, although several attacks have occurred and a number of rockets have been launched. The following weeks have seen the deployment of a substantial humanitarian effort, with appeals from the Disasters Emergency Committee in the UK, and the Gaza Flash Appeal from the UN which totalled some \$686m.

This lessons paper aims to distil key lessons for senior and mid-level managers in operational settings, as well as those staff working to support relief efforts from a regional / HQ level. It draws on the findings of a desk review, including evaluation reports in the ALNAP Evaluation Reports Database, and an extensive telephone-based research process with key international and national actors working in Gaza and Jerusalem.

While attempts were made to look at other comparable crises, the point was made at numerous times that there was no comparable situation. However, there are some partial parallels to the conditions facing agencies – for example, Iraq, Afghanistan, Chechnya, Lebanon - and wherever possible, these have been drawn upon.

The fifteen lessons covered in this paper are divided into four sections. These sections each relate to specific areas of agency work, and while they have been separated for ease of reading, it is important to highlight that in complex settings, each of these areas are interconnected and, done effectively, should be mutually reinforcing.

The majority of these lessons focus on humanitarian concerns, although attention is also paid to recovery and reconstruction issues.

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## SECTION 1: ESTABLISHING HUMANITARIAN SPACE

### ■ LESSON 1

#### Humanitarian negotiation needs to be strategic, coordinated, and address access, assistance and protection

The main objectives of humanitarian negotiations should be to facilitate the delivery of assistance and protection programmes, and to gain access to crisis-affected populations. These are detailed in Table 1. **In the Gaza context, it is essential that agencies give a high priority to strategic humanitarian negotiations alongside the provision of assistance.** The dual role of the ICRC in the occupied Palestinian territories exemplifies this: it maintains a regular dialogue with the parties to the conflict and reminds them of their obligations to civilians, medical personnel, objects, vehicles, and facilities under International Humanitarian Law, and monitors violations whilst simultaneously working to providing relief at field level (Monko, 2007). The ICRC played a similar role in Chechnya where it contributed to key humanitarian diplomacy efforts whilst engaging in significant emergency relief activities.

**Table 1:** Three-fold objectives of humanitarian negotiations

ACCESS	ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMES	PROTECTION PROGRAMMES
<p>This is the legal guarantee that protected persons must have access to the protection and assistance they need when they need it. It largely involves the free and unimpeded movement of people to relief services or the free movement of humanitarian agencies to reach people who are trapped, unable to move or detained. In both circumstances, access enables an impartial assessment of, and response to, people's needs and is thus often the precondition for any humanitarian action in a particular region.</p>	<p>They aim to provide specific relief items to meet the physical, social, economic and spiritual needs of protected persons as defined under international humanitarian and human rights law. Assistance usually includes the provision of nutrition and/or health services, including the distribution of food items, construction or repair of water supply systems or medical facilities and training of healthcare staff. Such aid can be provided directly by a humanitarian agency itself or indirectly by supporting governments, occupying powers or other bodies already operational in the area.</p>	<p>They aim to ensure "full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the relevant bodies of law, i.e. human rights law, international humanitarian law, and refugee law." In particular, protection refers to the means by which humanitarian agencies alert, advise, monitor and insist upon the responsibility of the warring parties and other states to prevent civilian suffering and the abuse of those now <i>hors de combat</i>.</p>

Source: Mancini-Roth and Picot (2004), 20

#### Access

Access is a precondition for any kind of humanitarian action. In many situations, access is the most difficult objective to achieve (Mancini-Roth and Picot, 2004). It was also unanimously cited as the single biggest limiting factor for agencies working to respond to the relief and recovery needs of affected populations in Gaza.

The number of truckloads of aid permitted to enter Gaza daily by the Israeli authorities remains insufficient, and humanitarian organizations continue to face serious restrictions on entering Gaza. Estimates frequently cited by senior officials suggest that it would be necessary to deliver up to 500 trucks per day but, at the most, only around 100-120 are getting in. Moreover, the materials that are being allowed in are highly specific and limited to 'humanitarian' goods, as defined by the border control authorities, Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT). At the time of writing, this definition is narrow, not shared with the humanitarian community, and is subject to many seemingly arbitrary changes.

At present, access negotiations are taking place on a project-by-project basis, with each project providing a list of necessary items, which are then negotiated on a case-by-case basis. These ad hoc, fragmented negotiations are time consuming, divisive and risk duplicating efforts. It is therefore important to highlight that **humanitarian negotiations should attempt, as far as is possible, to be systematic, concerted and complementary**. This is crucial for maximizing leverage and for making a convincing case for humanitarian space.

'Every negotiation pursued on behalf of your own agency must seek to complement rather than compete with the negotiation efforts of humanitarian colleagues in other organisations. It is important to be well informed about other agencies' negotiations, the bottom lines they have set and the lessons they have learned and to exchange information accordingly so that you can achieve complementary agreements and outcomes. Without such cooperation... the humanitarian effort in a given conflict [can be divided]' (Mancini-Roth and Picot, 2004, 36)

The key to better coordination is information sharing. **Agencies should immediately start to systematically share information on access issues, both in terms of personnel and materials, with relevant coordinating bodies, in order to ensure that the debates and discussions are more evidence-based**. The Access Support Unit that has been set up within OCHA should continue to play a central role in enabling a more strategic approach to negotiating access to be implemented.

While the longer-term solution to the humanitarian crisis may be to restore access in and out of Gaza, this is probably not attainable in the short-term given the highly complex political situation. **In order to secure a certain degree of access agencies should use 'compromise negotiations' for access, based on minimum requirements for humanitarian access and space**. This would require a humanitarian agreement to be reached between all parties, whereby 'interests can be recognised as at least somewhat compatible – although it may require that each side make significant concessions and compromises' (Mancini-Roth and Picot, 2004, 27).

An example that was being developed at the time of writing is an **agreement on minimum requirements for humanitarian space**, to which all parties – aid agencies, Israeli forces, and Hamas – can subscribe. This could prove especially important given the need to set out guidelines and parameters for how humanitarian assistance could be delivered in the short-term, whilst a political solution is being negotiated.

#### *Assistance*

Best practice reviews often cite the importance of involving recipient governments in the distribution of assistance. The classification of Hamas as a terrorist organisation, however, led the Quartet (US, EU, UK and the UN) to suspend aid to the Hamas-controlled bodies, with resumption conditional on Hamas' acceptance of Israel's right to exist, a commitment to nonviolence, and acceptance of previous agreements (Feinstein International Center, 2006).

The situation in Gaza is further complicated by tensions between Hamas and Fatah. The Palestinian Authority (PA) is mistrusted by Hamas and by many in the Gaza Strip, not least because of the perception that its Fatah leadership is, at best, an indirect beneficiary of the recent Israeli attacks.

The designation of Hamas as a terrorist organization has a distinctive effect on humanitarian efforts. A 2006 Feinstein study noted two primary negative repercussions on partnership relationships of the various donor restrictions related to Hamas.

- First, the restrictions on working with Hamas-affiliated or related organisations have led to fewer and fewer local partners for international NGOs that do not directly implement their own relief and/or development programs. There are also issues about the transparency of, and appeals to, the vetting process determining who might be appropriate partners.
- Second, the restrictions have damaged the trust that many humanitarian agencies have built up with local partners and communities. This raises the spectre of NGOs as implementers of foreign policy agendas, with corresponding security risks related to the rise of anti-western sentiment that is very much tied to the Global War On Terror (Feinstein International Center, 2006)

However, it may be practically necessary to have contacts with Hamas through Ministries and local authorities. Given their political stances, such connections should happen at a technical level, and at the lowest levels possible, and all interactions should ensure that the independent, neutral and impartial nature of humanitarian assistance be maintained.

There are also a number of key differences between Hamas and other armed groups highlighted by Glaser (Glaser, 2007), which are worth noting.

- In Gaza, Hamas are *de facto* in power and represent a legitimate government. Hamas can therefore be deemed an essential and necessary counterpart for humanitarian assistance agencies because it represents the local authority, irrespective of the declared terrorist status. 'In contrast, in post-Taliban Afghanistan, groups operate clandestinely, and neither represent nor participate in the official government. In Iraq, likewise, with some exceptions, the various armed groups are not included or represented in the government. If anything, in the latter cases the armed groups oppose the official administration'.
- Hamas has extensive social and medical support branches, which is part of the reason for its popularity among civilians. 'By contrast, al-Qaeda in Iraq and other Sunni- and Shia-based armed groups have as their primary aim denying the enemy effective control over territory and people; they are, in other words, what is commonly called *spoiler forces*'.

**Useful lessons:** There may be useful lessons to learn from the war in the Lebanon in 2006. Hezbollah is considered to be a terrorist organisation by many major donors but was also the biggest — and quickest — emergency aid provider in the south of the country. The UN decided to deliver the bulk of the assistance, particularly food, through the municipalities. At this level, political representation was mixed and the distribution of power reflected the outcome of the 2004 municipal elections; in the Shiite South many of the municipalities had a mayor representing the Amal political party while their counsellors were Hezbollah; in other areas this was reversed. By delivering aid through municipal institutions, the emergency response reinforced its own neutrality. Political affiliations were avoided, and greater transparency and accountability promoted.

The UN secretariat took the step of issuing a short guidance note to agencies working in the south. The document was aimed as much at donors with specific sensitivities towards Hezbollah but importantly stressed the independence and impartiality of UN agencies in their humanitarian work.

### *Protection*

The protection challenges in Gaza are immense because of the political issues dividing all the key parties, and the coalitions of allegiance and support that surround these parties. Protection is about seeking to assure the safety of civilians from acute harm. It is concerned with preventing or mitigating the most damaging effects – whether direct or indirect – of violent or abusive behaviour on a civilian population. Acute harm can be interpreted in legal terms as violations of the civil, political, social and economic rights which are codified in human rights, international humanitarian and refugee law, or in more physical terms, as threats to people's life, dignity and integrity (Jaspars et al, 2007).

The current situation in Gaza may be regarded as a '**post-conflict situation**' – in which 'violations and abuses persist and conditions frequently remain life-threatening and personally degrading'. At the same time however, the conflict happened against the backdrop of a '**protracted social conflict** – civil strife or political oppression that falls short of official armed conflict but nevertheless involves a crisis in which discrimination, violence, exploitation and impoverishment are constant risks' (Slim and Bonwick, 2005). There are specific issues relating to the rights of specific groups – children are the obvious ones; as 56% of the Gaza population is under 18, they are seen as dangerously exposed. There are also issues facing other groups, for example, detainees. Moreover, intra-Palestinian violence, such as extrajudicial killings and violent attacks are an issue, although these incidents have been not conclusively proved to be politically motivated.

Much of the needed protection work is not about service delivery, but rather is focused on **fact finding, information gathering, monitoring and documenting possible rights violations, and working to ensure accountability. Such documentation can permit more confident application of humanitarian law to events and enable more confident advocacy by those able to speak out.** Moreover, belligerents need to be assured that their conduct of hostilities during a conflict vis-à-vis civilians is being monitored and could lead to their actions being judged at a later date. While it is unlikely that this alone would prevent conflict, it could at least obviate some of its worst excesses (Shearer and Pickup, 2007).

Agencies should consider strengthening capacity for protection-related information and monitoring activities, especially because of the professional standards required for addressing such issues. **The work of the OCHCR and ICRC is critical in this regard, and should be wherever possible supported by better information sharing across operational agencies.** Protection concerns should be integrated into the early planning of emergencies, and not simply included as a by-product of humanitarian delivery.

Clearly, adopting a rights-based approach in Gaza presents particular challenges given the implied or explicit criticism of authorities that such approaches inherently carry, and the consequent danger of further tightening around access and distribution issues. Agencies must take these risks into account in their ongoing programming work.

The 2005 ALNAP Guide highlights eight best-practice principles for effective protection work by humanitarian organisations (ALNAP, 2005):

#### **Good Practice Principles for Protection**

1. **Focus on safety, dignity and integrity** *The immediate protection challenge is to keep people physically safe, to preserve their personal dignity and provide for their wholeness as human beings. This is best done by working closely with people at risk and concentrating on safety, dignity and integrity in all humanitarian action.*
2. **Think about law, violation, rights and responsibilities** *A protection approach means recognising that much civilian suffering in war is often the result of a violation of international law. It is this violation that then produces secondary needs. Their suffering and need often result from a deliberate pattern of violations that is integral to the policy and conduct of the war and is in breach of international humanitarian, human rights or refugee law.*

3. **Ensure respect** A protective approach requires that humanitarian workers go beyond an aid-only approach and also focus on ensuring respect for humanitarian and human-rights norms. This involves humanitarian agencies taking up some key skills and techniques that have been more explicitly developed in human-rights practice to date.
4. **Build on people's own self-protection capacity** Humanitarian common sense affirms the value of people's own knowledge, capacity, insight and innovation in any given situation that threatens them. This makes it essential that people are involved in, and often take the lead on, decisions concerning their own protection.
5. **Work with clear protection outcomes and indicators** Have a clear sense of what daily life would be like if people were to be appropriately protected, and then develop specific protection outcomes as the guiding stars of your programme's objectives and activities.
6. **Prioritise interagency complementarities** Different agencies have different mandates, protection priorities and expertise. They also work in different places and on different political levels, nationally and internationally. It is important to take advantage of these differences in regard to combined efforts to protect civilians in war.
7. **Prevent counter-protective programming or behaviour** Activities, attitude and behaviour can all prove counter-protective rather than protective, and must be constantly and carefully scrutinised to ensure that they do not expose individuals and the general affected population to even greater risk.
8. **Be courageous but realistic about your agency's limits** Humanitarian agencies have relatively limited means with which to protect civilians. In many situations, mandated and non-mandated bodies lack the political authority, the military force and the legal mandate that would give them the practical power to protect civilians effectively. Recognition of this fact is critical to ensure realistic programming, to avoid excessive expectation and to preserve agency morale.

#### Further reading

- Mancini-Roth, D and A Picot (2004) *Humanitarian Negotiation: A handbook for securing access, assistance and protection for civilians in armed conflict*.  
<http://www.hdcentre.org/files/HNN.pdf>
- ALNAP Guide to Humanitarian Protection  
<http://www.odi.org.uk/alnap/publications/protection/index.htm>
- ICRC Materials on protection:  
[http://www.icrc.org/Web/Eng/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/section\\_protection?OpenDocument](http://www.icrc.org/Web/Eng/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/section_protection?OpenDocument)
- Feinstein International Center (2006) "Aid in a Pressure Cooker" Humanitarian Action in the Occupied Palestinian Territory  
[http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWFiles2006.nsf/FilesByRWDocUnidFilename/EVOD-6XCHTA-full\\_report.pdf/\\$File/full\\_report.pdf](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWFiles2006.nsf/FilesByRWDocUnidFilename/EVOD-6XCHTA-full_report.pdf/$File/full_report.pdf)

## LESSON 2

### Short-term humanitarian advocacy should be focused on agreed minimum humanitarian space while keeping longer term goals in mind

It has been said that relief agencies often find themselves at the crossroads between politics and victims (Donini, 2006). This is especially true in Gaza, given the complexities of the protracted Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the difficulties, outlined above, of delivering aid in such a politicised environment.

While advocacy is a core area of practice for both humanitarian and human rights agencies, the task of convincing decision-makers to change their positions (Bonwick and Slim 2005) and to take account of humanitarian concerns is far from unproblematic. Advocacy activities may have little impact on belligerents. Moreover, simply maintaining operations in a difficult environment may monopolise senior management attention, with no time left for sensitive public advocacy. In addition, many fear that adopting a strong public stance may be

dangerous and may compromise their perceived neutrality. Perhaps most relevant in the Gaza context is the fact that ‘humanitarian actors operate in highly political contexts, and “raising the flag” of the humanitarian imperative too high may defeat the purpose if it impedes access to victims’ (Donini, 2006). All of these are consistent with lessons identified in existing research and evaluations (Donini, 2006; HPG, 2007; Mancini-Roth and Picot, 2004).

The following quote from an MSF-Holland review of work in Darfur could equally apply to humanitarian experience in Gaza, ‘the priority of protecting operationality underlies the cautious approach to advocacy’ (MSF, 2005). It is important that a confident advocacy agenda becomes a top priority of humanitarian engagement. **In the Gaza context advocacy to address protection needs and humanitarian access is as vital as the provision of relief assistance itself and should be a core activity of agencies.** It should also highlight the limits of humanitarian assistance to solve current and future needs of the Gaza population.

**The UN agencies are central actors and well-placed to coordinate humanitarian advocacy efforts in Gaza** ‘Humanitarian agencies and in particular their coordinating body must ensure that active lobbying and dissemination of information on the specificity of the mandates of the humanitarian agencies of the UN, but also of ICRC and the NGOs, is well-understood by all actors’ (Donini, 2006).

**Useful lessons:** Darfur demonstrates many of the classic characteristics of a non-permissive advocacy environment: high levels of insecurity for aid workers, continuous efforts by the Sudanese government to curtail what it perceives as ‘political’ activities and inconsistent levels of humanitarian access.

The intensity of advocacy activities of humanitarian organizations has been variable, but HPG work points to the fact that in Darfur, there has been a trade-off between access and the level and type of public advocacy that aid agencies have undertaken. While acknowledging the difficulties and the risks involved in engaging in advocacy, the Policy Brief concludes that advocacy by humanitarian agencies has a positive impact on the needs and safety of populations affected by crises.

The experience of international agencies in Darfur points to the scope for humanitarians to apply a form of ‘relative’ or ‘pragmatic’ neutrality, sufficient to maintain the appearance of general non-involvement in the politics of war, thereby retaining access to affected populations in order to provide relief, but flexible enough to allow different forms of advocacy to respond to life-threatening situations (HPG, 2007). These ideas are especially useful to consider in the Gaza context.

**Useful lessons:** In Chechnya in the 1990s, the repeated and flagrant denial of humanitarian access by Russian and, to a lesser extent, separatist military forces, and their combined harassment of humanitarian operations and personnel within the region were hindering effective international action in Chechnya. The Chechnya conflict highlighted the dangers inherent in tackling an ongoing humanitarian emergency where no political/security framework exists that can expand the space for humanitarian activity and address the causes of the emergency (Hansen and Seely, 1996). As in Gaza, humanitarian organizations were unanimous in identifying limitations on access as a major obstacle to their work inside Chechnya. An evaluation concluded that ‘the integrity of the UN’s humanitarian apparatus is seriously compromised if political obstacles to humanitarian action remain unchallenged. At the policy level, [the UN coordinating body] should act on its humanitarian mandate within the UN system, taking the lead in making representations to the highest levels of the... government on behalf of humanitarian efforts. [It] should work to secure commitment to an improved political, administrative, and security environment for humanitarian action. [It] should work to establish the view that humanitarian assistance can be provided without conferring political recognition or approbation on one or another set of authorities.’

- Further reading**
- HPG (2007) *Humanitarian advocacy in Darfur: the challenge of neutrality*. HPG Policy Brief 28. <http://www.odi.org.uk/resources/hpg-publications/policy-briefs/28-humanitarian-advocacy-darfur-neutrality.pdf>
  - Dubois, M (2008) *Civilian protection and humanitarian advocacy: strategies and (false?) dilemmas*. <http://www.odihpn.org/report.asp?id=2917>

## ■ LESSON 3

### **Deal with staffing issues in a strategic and context-specific manner**

At the time of writing, UN staff have relatively free movement into and out of Gaza, but the security requirements of travelling in armoured cars makes large numbers difficult to mobilize. For NGOs, only international staff are allowed in, but there is little consistency around the permits being granted or their duration. Therefore, when bringing in international staff it is vital to ensure that they have experience in coping with similar challenges in other difficult conflict settings.

There is a large, well-qualified workforce in Gaza, and with unemployment levels running high, there is considerable scope for effective recruitment to strengthen immediate and medium term capacity issues. Therefore, it is important in Gaza not to fly in a huge number of international staff, because of the tendency of this to undermine local staff capacity – which is considerable. However, restrictions on any Palestinian agency staff from Jerusalem or West Bank means that those with the best ability to support local staff and with the best knowledge are being prevented from bringing their skills to the situation.

**When hiring local staff, agencies should think strategically so as to ensure that the composition of their staff reflects the different backgrounds of people living in the programming environment. This is of crucial importance for ensuring acceptance, access to communities, and knowledge of context.**

In highly insecure and complex humanitarian environments, paying attention to staff management and welfare and ensuring a reliable and systematic support to staff is especially important. Attention to staff welfare goes beyond mere concerns with staff safety, but encompasses measures aimed to allow staff to do their jobs effectively in stressful, dynamic, and often frustrating and dangerous environments.

It is especially important to note that many agencies are mainly staffed by national staff, who remained in Gaza and carried on programming throughout the operation. Exhaustion, stress and strain highlights the need for counselling and other forms of support for staff who were affected by the crisis. International agencies need to deal with these immediate priority needs as a matter of urgency.

The importance of ensuring staff safety cannot be overemphasized, but it is important to find ways to strike a balance between the need to keep staff reasonably safe in an unstable war environment while preserving and even expanding access to the population. In this regard, 'localized approaches, intimate knowledge of context, willingness to take personal and organizational risks, flexible management structures, decentralization of security management and high quality personnel management and adaptation' are key (NCCI, 2008).

In the Occupied Palestinian territories, according to a 2006 Feinstein International Center report: 'national staff are more at risk from unpredictable violence and movement restrictions specific to the occupied Palestinian territories context, whereas international staff face more risk from unpredictable violence related to global events and the context of the Global War on Terror. This means that national staff are vulnerable to steady and prolonged risk and internationals to largely unpredictable spikes in violence. Furthermore, the lack of a political settlement and western governments' responses to the Palestinian elections are creating

hardships and therefore resentment against those affiliated with the West' (Feinstein International Center, 2006).

## SECTION 2: INFORMATION AND PLANNING

### ■ LESSON 4

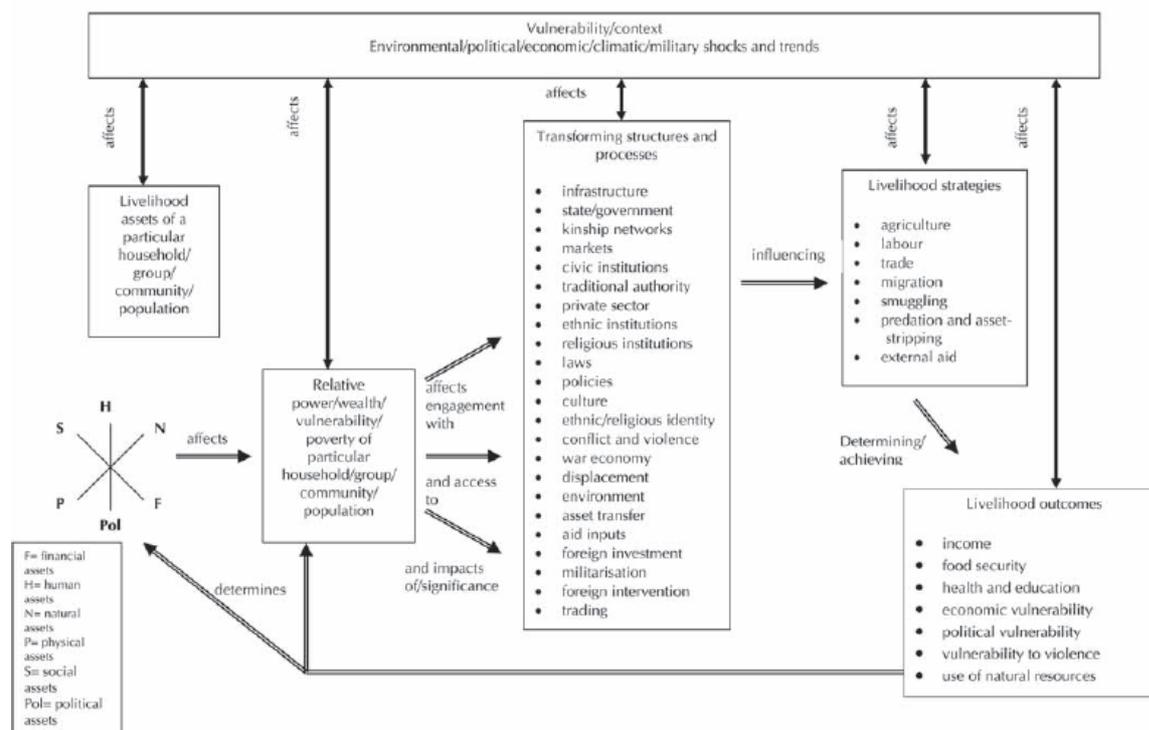
#### **Agencies must focus and improve planning, monitoring and evaluation processes using political economy approaches.**

Given the ongoing nature of the conflict and the persistence of humanitarian needs in Gaza, it is important that agencies anticipate vulnerability and risks, and carefully monitor progress in mitigating these risks. Political economy approaches, such as the livelihoods in conflict framework outlined in Figure 1, can be especially useful for agencies in Gaza.

An improved understanding of the political and economic contexts of relief can make a significant difference to aid programming in a number of ways, for example:

- Strengthen and refine early-warning systems, contingency planning and preparedness measures, and inform and improve the design and impact of prevention efforts.
- Assist agencies in ensuring a principled approach to their interventions.
- Inform the negotiation of humanitarian access and the management of relations with belligerents and local institutions.
- Improve the monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian activities.
- Identify, analyse and monitor vulnerable people's needs more effectively, and target and coordinate responses accordingly.
- Manage security more effectively.
- Help to distinguish between 'civilians' and 'combatants', and to understand better the relationships between violence and war economies and particular individuals, groups, communities, institutions, livelihoods and/or humanitarian interventions.
- Identify and distinguish between the war economy, economic violence and the economic impacts of conflict, and assess the implications for specific communities, groups and/or humanitarian programmes (HPG, 2003).

**Figure 1:** A sustainable livelihoods framework in situations of conflict and political instability



Clear preparedness plans with different scenarios and implications should be included in the overall aid framework, otherwise there is a risk that emergency situations will be treated on a case-by-case basis. The ECHO evaluation in Afghanistan recommended that preventive measures should be taken to reduce risks and vulnerabilities (better management of water resources for flood control or drought mitigation etc). Such a tool should be based on clear understanding of mandates and roles, and anchored in humanitarian principles, and can also be useful in advocacy approaches.

There are four broad scenarios that could play out in the Gaza situation:

- A political deal is brokered and crossings are fully opened: least likely in the short term, especially given the ambiguous results of the Israel elections
- Access situation stays broadly the same, but a humanitarian compromise is brokered allowing predictable relief and recover items to be delivered
- Access situation stays erratic and unpredictable, leading to massive compounding crisis
- Military operations start again, further affecting lives and livelihoods

Each of these carry specific implications for the operational programmes on the ground, and **contingency measures should be applied to take account of possible impacts in terms of access, assistance and protection. These contingency planning exercises should ideally be undertaken at an inter-agency level (Choularton, 2007).**

It is important for implementing and coordinating agencies to identify the scope of monitoring and evaluation activities within Gaza, in terms of implementation of projects. There has been a dearth of evaluative materials and the current situation should be used to enable more effective monitoring and strengthening the evidence-base on what works and doesn't in the Gaza context, and inform future aid programming. Given the access issues, a joint evaluation may be especially valuable in the Gaza context, and donors should consider mobilizing efforts to make this happen. However, given the politicized nature of the crisis, this may need to be led by a high level diplomat.

**Useful lessons:** A recommendation of a strategic review of CARE's programme in the West Bank pointed to the need to 'improve the level of household-level qualitative analysis e.g. incorporation of household level survey M&E tools through involvement of local partners. This should fill an important gap in analysis of vulnerability, improve understanding of outcomes and impacts, and contribute to a more robust advocacy platform by analysis of the impact of the conflict and providing documented case studies' (Telford et al, 2004).

**Further reading**

- HPG (2003) *Humanitarian action in conflict: implementing a political economy approach*. <http://www.odi.org.uk/resources/hpg-publications/policy-briefs/8-humanitarian-action-conflict-implementing-political-economy-approach.pdf>
- IASC Guidelines on Contingency Planning, which has a special focus on inter-agency contingency planning, see <http://www.undg.org/docs/8291/IA-CP-Guidelines.pdf>. For a more detailed review of practices in humanitarian contingency planning and scenarios, see *Contingency Planning and Humanitarian Action: A Review of Practice*. HPN Network paper 59: <http://www.odihpn.org/documents/networkpaper059.pdf>

## ■ LESSON 5

### **Needs assessments should anticipate changing needs while response analysis should inform what is “implementable”**

The most important issue to consider in needs assessments is the fact that there was a pre-existing crisis, described in March 2008 by an NGO coalition as the worst conditions at any time since the 1967 war. This was compounded by the campaign, resulting in dire and serious humanitarian needs.

The literature on needs assessments points to the importance of analyzing and monitoring the context. In Iraq, 'close monitoring of local contexts has been essential but under-emphasized by operational organizations and donors alike. Without exception, successful agencies have invested heavily in context analysis. Some employ dedicated context officers who stay in regular contact with field staff and the neighbourhood's network of contacts. Information about needs, local perceptions, changes in local demographics, shifting power relationships, and the “aid” activities of other entities equips these agencies to more carefully discern opportunities to become more active, and alerts them to the need to adapt their approach to changes in their programming environment' (NCCI, 2008).

Given the dynamic context in Gaza, needs assessments will need to be revised constantly. It is also effort by sector and geography, and share the workload as well as the information. To some extent this is already happening, but more coordination and division of labour is needed.

Needs assessment should also make good use of existing information and tools: for example, there have been needs assessments undertaken by local actors such as the water and electricity boards, as well as needs assessments by WHO and PRCS.

In the Gaza context, access issues would necessitate keeping track of what is feasibly “implementable”. Response analysis is currently undertaken on the basis of identifying what is appropriate and feasible in a given setting, and then designing appropriate programmatic interventions (WFP, 2008).

**Further reading**

- ProVention's Community Risk Assessment (CRA) toolkit. [www.proventionconsortium.org/CRA\\_toolkit](http://www.proventionconsortium.org/CRA_toolkit)
- IFRC *Guidelines for Emergency Assessment*. [www.proventionconsortium.org/themes/default/pdfs/71600-Guidelines-for-emergency-en.pdf](http://www.proventionconsortium.org/themes/default/pdfs/71600-Guidelines-for-emergency-en.pdf)
- WFP Response analysis project <http://home.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/ena/wfp194140.pdf>

## ■ LESSON 6

### Targeting should take careful account of the fluid and urban context in which most of the Gaza population live

Targeting of assistance in Gaza is complicated by the fact the Operation created a new layer of vulnerability on top of a pre-existing crisis. Aid is needed at different levels, and there is some confusion around mandates and coverage, partly because of the specific focus of UNRWA, which deals specifically with refugees. This confusion led some managers on the ground to conclude that duplication is inevitable, and that agencies might allow for duplication given the extent of the current needs. The primary focus is therefore seen as avoiding gaps in delivery. Whether avoiding duplication or gaps, **the key is precise and systematic targeting of needs.**

At the present time, there are a variety of different targeting mechanisms being used in the operational context. The ICRC is using volunteers to distribute plastic sheeting and kitchen kits and registering people for further emergency needs. UN is doing blanket distribution and also assessing further needs. **Targeting assistance is crucial for ensuring that the needs of the most vulnerable groups (e.g. children, women, disabled, elderly and detainees) are addressed in emergency operations.** To address their specific needs it is important to understand the dimensions and the sources of their vulnerability. 'Needs assessment is closely connected to targeting: needs assessments at the community level should inform targeting criteria and, in turn, appropriate programme activities' (ALNAP, 2008). **A menu of possible targeting options could be used to collectively ensure that different agencies are addressing sectors/ geographies in a systematic manner.** An example of such a menu, developed by USAID, is provided in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Targeting approaches in urban emergencies

Targeting Approach	Definition	Advantages	Disadvantages	Programme Examples
Geographic Targeting	Beneficiaries are selected on the basis of their geographic location (e.g. the poorest)	Easy and quick	Low targeting accuracy if vulnerable households are dispersed	Targeted household distribution
Self-targeting	Beneficiaries 'self-select' by deciding to participate. Aspects of program design encourage only intended target group to participate.	Avoids time and resource expenses	Risk of significant leakage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Food for work</li> <li>▪ Wet feeding (e.g. soup kitchens)</li> <li>▪ Market assistance programs (MAP)</li> </ul>
Administrative Targeting	Beneficiaries are selected from a population list; the criteria used for selection differ by	Simple to use when accurate lists available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Risk of exclusion if lists are incomplete or out of date (marginalized /</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Targeted household distribution</li> <li>▪ Food for training</li> </ul>

Targeting Approach	Definition	Advantages	Disadvantages	Programme Examples
	program.		new arrivals)	
Community-based Targeting	Administrative targeting in which distribution list is identified based on community leaders' knowledge and community determined criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Community engagement</li> <li>▪ Not restricted to a small number of proxy targeting criteria</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prone to exclusion if community leaders favour one group over another</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Targeting household distribution</li> <li>▪ Food for training</li> </ul>
Proxy Targeting	Beneficiaries are selected on the basis of an observable characteristic or set of proxy traits (e.g. gender of household head, unemployed, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Easy to use if selection traits are obvious</li> <li>▪ Multi-proxy increases accuracy but are more costly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Risk of exclusion and inclusion error; may be difficult to observe proxies objectively</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Targeted household distribution</li> <li>▪ Market assistance program (MAP)</li> <li>▪ Community-based management</li> <li>▪ Supplementary aid</li> </ul>
Means-testing	Beneficiaries are selected on the basis of their income, expenditures, wealth or assets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ High potential targeting accuracy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Time/resource intensive, requires census of all potential beneficiaries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Targeted household distribution</li> <li>▪ Food for training</li> </ul>
Institutional targeting	Beneficiaries are selected based on affiliation with a selected institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Relatively easy – beneficiaries already attend selected institutions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Excludes eligible people not registered with targeted institutions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ School feeding and aid distribution</li> <li>▪ Wet feeding</li> </ul>

Source: USAID 2008 (in ALNAP/ Provention Consortium, forthcoming 2009)

**Useful lessons:** The food security project that CARE carried out in the West Bank in 2000 in the aftermath of the second intifada emphasized careful targeting of beneficiaries. This was done effectively through a combination of a thorough needs assessment by CARE staff, thoughtful composition of the selection committee and beneficiary selection criteria, clearly understood by all stakeholders (Baker et al, 2004). However, one important lesson identified in the programme evaluation was that substantial relief efforts were invested in mobilizing communities, instead of working with the pre-established groups (such as women's savings groups) that had been involved in development programming before the conflict.

**Further reading**

- Lilly, D et al (2008) *Targeting in DRC: Targeting humanitarian assistance in post-conflict DRC* <http://www.odihpn.org/report.asp?id=2980>

## SECTION 3: COORDINATION AND LOGISTICS

### ■ LESSON 7

#### **Ensure coordination of response uses appropriate mechanisms, builds on existing structures and local capacities, and includes key actors on the ground**

The Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) for the occupied Palestinian territories was established in July 2008, some six months before the latest crisis, and consisted of key actors such as UNRWA, ICRC, MSF and a number of other international NGOs. The initial focus was to meet monthly to discuss key issues. A number of sector-specific coordination mechanisms were established prior to “Operation Cast Lead”, leading to some work in terms of information gathering and sharing. These employed “who what where” mechanisms.

During the operation, the coordination mechanisms were ‘remotely managed’ from Jerusalem because of security issues. Since January 18<sup>th</sup> 2009 the Sector Leads’ coordination meetings have been re-established as well as the Gaza Operational Coordination Group (OCG). Under the current cluster coordination mechanism, the coordination capacity within each cluster is variable, with some cluster leads based in Jerusalem, some in Ramallah, and some in Gaza. The general sense is that the Gaza clusters are the most effective and coherent.

The aim at time of writing was to shift the majority of meetings to Gaza, but this is unlikely to take effect, at least in the near future, as access into Gaza remains unpredictable and restricted<sup>1</sup>.

The multiple locations have led to a degree of confusion, lack of clarity and some duplication of mechanisms, such as multiple meetings. Although this is to some extent inevitable, **it is essential that going forward, coordination mechanisms are streamlined to avoid duplication, building on pre-existing relationships and national staff capacities; as far as possible work within Gaza; and ensure that the international ‘surge’ does not duplicate or undermine existing structures.** It is also essential for regular inter-sector or inter-cluster meetings bringing together key Senior Programme Officers on a regular basis, in order to ensure integrated responses to identified needs.

In previous high-profile operations, the focus of coordination efforts has been on mitigating the duplication and waste of the so-called ‘humanitarian circus’ (as exemplified in post-tsunami operations in Aceh as well as in Darfur). To some extent, this has been prevented by the access restrictions, but it is also important to highlight that the restrictions have also prevented a significant amount of effective programmes from getting started.

An important NGO coordination mechanism is the Association of International Development Agencies (AIDA) coalition. Chaired by Oxfam GB, this network brings together more than 21 NGOs. Although there is some attempt towards shared statements, the most important benefit is knowledge sharing. It can also be especially useful for smaller NGOs who do not have the capacity to attend all of the sector / cluster meetings to get briefings on key issues such as logistics, security, access and working with local governance structures. **NGOs in Gaza, especially newcomers and smaller single-sector operators, should try to access and work with other AIDA members, not just for information sharing, but also for programmatic and policy-oriented collaboration and joint planning.** The work of the NGO Coordination Committee in Iraq (NCCI) highlights the importance of such mechanisms for monitoring the local situation, maintaining working contacts with local actors, promoting the notions of neutral and impartial humanitarian work, and feeding and facilitating the two-way flow of information. One challenge that must be addressed, as highlighted in the work of

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha\\_occupied\\_Palestinian\\_territories\\_handout\\_flash\\_appeal\\_english.pdf](http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_occupied_Palestinian_territories_handout_flash_appeal_english.pdf)

the NCCI, is that the resources available for such mechanisms do not always keep pace with the expansion of the membership and the growing number and complexity of demands.

The uncoordinated presence of donors has been addressed as a problem in previous emergency responses in occupied Palestinian territories. This is especially challenging given the politicised nature of the response in Gaza, and the wave of donors from the Middle East and North Africa. There is some evidence of good donor-NGO coordination, especially for NGOs that are from the donor countries in question, but it is important to coordinate better across donors, potentially drawing on harmonisation mechanisms from the development aid side of the system. Donors also need to be kept in the picture about what is implementable, and what is needed, to ensure that needs on the ground can inform donor diplomacy activities. This points to one of the most important aspects of coordination with donors: negotiation and the creation of a set of minimum requirements for humanitarian space as outlined in Lesson 1. **It is vital for these efforts to be joined up, as duplication in this sphere is likely to lead to more confusion and a lack of serious progress.**

**Further reading**

- An overview of the organisation of OCHA's work in Gaza is available at: <http://www.ochaopt.org/>
- An evaluation of the NGO Coordination Committee in Iraq [http://www.nccirag.org/IMG/pdf\\_NCCI\\_Evaluation\\_Report\\_-\\_March\\_2007-2.pdf](http://www.nccirag.org/IMG/pdf_NCCI_Evaluation_Report_-_March_2007-2.pdf)
- OCHA lessons on humanitarian coordination (pre-cluster): <http://www.odi.org.uk/hpg/papers/ochacoordination.pdf>

## ■ LESSON 8

### **Local capacity is considerable and must not be underestimated or undermined, but reinforced and supported**

Gaza and the occupied Palestinian territories generally have a very well-educated and professional workforce. Many of the international agencies, UN and NGO, are staffed solely or predominately by national staff. Despite the prolonged blockade and the devastating impact of the recent conflict, reports from the ground consistently point to the remarkable local capacity in key areas (see technical delivery section for more information). These include actors such as the Palestinian Red Crescent, as well as actors such as the Water and Electricity Boards.

There is a long tradition of civil associations and NGOs in Palestine. These organizations have been operating for many years in a crisis environment and many have become strong and effective in the virtual absence of national governments. National NGOs are also well organised and have some characteristics of private enterprises. Many have local personnel with good qualifications. They may also provide semi-governmental services, mostly in the health sector. They have certainly proved to be capable of efficient mobilisation and quick response to emergencies in the most difficult political environments (Schokker, 2000). This was evidenced in the Lebanon in 2006, where many local NGOs were well-placed to identify and service vulnerable populations and work with local officials, and had credibility and longstanding relationships with the local population (Mercy Corps, 2006, p. 12, in Shearer and Pickup, 2007).

**The international response should be careful not to disregard local capacity and local coping mechanisms. A balance needs to be maintained between outside intervention to meet needs and the capacity of local populations to cope with crisis** (Donini, 2006). The work of the ICRC in Gaza appears to have been exemplary in this regard, with a number of key actors citing them as continual helpful presence.

Despite the difficulties and dilemmas that inevitably arise when operating in a politicised and complex context such as Gaza, agencies should strive to capitalise on local capacity. This

means working with local NGOs, religious organisations, local institutions and mechanisms. One of the most important of these mechanisms is the *zakat* system of payments, although this mechanism has been affected by the campaign. Similarly, municipal counterparts, who may constitute the best hope for initial governmental engagement, have experienced reductions in operations and capacity due to the destruction of their infrastructure and equipment, but also as a result of the fall off in revenue collection since 2005 (UNHCR, 2006).

Further  
reading

- More on the work of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society: <http://www.palestinerics.org/>

## ■ LESSON 9

**All agencies should work to coordinate and improve the established logistics operations to ensure effective transportation and distribution of relief items. Logistics-related information also has an important role to play in access negotiations.**

According to the Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS, 2009) the logistic function in Gaza aims to support relief operations, delivering a range of relief items in line with operational priorities. The PRCS is working to assess and reinforce the local logistics capacity (warehouse management, fleet, and procurement), and **international capacities should attempt to support this effort.**

The primary tasks that the PRCS has identified are:

- Liaise and coordinate actions with the local authorities and other key actors to ensure that the logistic operation will be as efficient and effective as possible.
- Maintain a detailed and up-to-date mobilization table.
- Support the distribution of incoming goods to affected individuals and communities to address identified needs.
- Manage mobile warehouses and setting up a local procurement system.
- Transport and deliver relief items to shelters, distribution points, and across the border.
- Deployment of logistics emergency response unit in Gaza.

A Logistics Cluster has been established, led by WFP, which aims to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance through various corridors in an efficient, coordinated manner. The Cluster is also involved with liaison with the Israeli Authorities and specifically with the Coordination Office for Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) for crossing into the Gaza Strip. All delivery of humanitarian items into the Gaza Strip is subject to clearance by the Israeli Authorities. The Logistics Cluster Members are developing a list of priority of items for transportation. It was noted that until organizations provide this list, COGAT is making these decisions on their behalf.

**It is vital that the logistic cluster and other such mechanisms are coordinated and linked up to access-related negotiations at different levels, to ensure that negotiation and operational approaches are effectively joined up and feedback loops exist to ensure that these efforts reinforce each other.**

Useful  
resource

- Gaza Logistics Information Platform: <http://www.logcluster.org/gaza09a>

## SECTION 4: TECHNICAL PROGRAMMING

### ■ LESSON 10

#### **Shelter and housing needs are critical, and UNRWA knowledge is vital in addressing these**

An initial survey conducted by the UN Development Programme (UNDP) estimates that more than 14,000 homes, 68 government buildings and 31 non-governmental organization offices were either totally or partially damaged during the latest conflict. According to the PRCS, at least 4,000 houses were completely destroyed.

Thousands of Gazans remain homeless, although the total number of internally displaced persons remains unknown. At the time of publication, three non-school UNRWA shelters remained. The Palestinian Red Crescent has also set up 5 camps for IDPs, with 100 tents per camp. These camps are very hard to establish because of the lack of space and land issues, as well as rubble clearance.

Distributions of non-food items by aid agencies to damaged shelters and host families are ongoing. Priority needs for the population include blankets, mattresses, plastic sheeting, kitchen kits, hygiene kits, water tanks, clothing and tents (PRCS, 2009). The de facto Hamas government is distributing cash for those whose houses were destroyed or damaged. UNRWA is providing cash to allow temporary rental to homeless people, while others are working on host family programmes.

**Experiences elsewhere in the world have shown that quality shelter can be achieved by effective guidance and supporting of the beneficiaries during the construction cycle (Schokker, 2000).**

Despite its mandate which covers only refugees, UNRWA knowledge and expertise can and should play a key role in shelter-related work in Gaza. It is also important to build on local capacities, with a large number of construction workers

**Useful lessons:** In Afghanistan, CARE's Kabul shelter and settlements (KASS) program demonstrated a number of good practices. The programme started with the implementation of a land usage survey to identify shelter opportunities and the establishment of community councils that helped to select beneficiaries in clusters rather than individually. The programme developed an inclusive list of beneficiaries not limited to those who were displaced but also opening the eligibility to elderly households, households without an able bodied bread winner earning more than \$100 a month, and to widows and female-headed households. **Beneficiary selection was done through a participatory process with trained community mobilisers to conduct door-to-door surveys to assess needs, which helped to build trust and strengthen local governance.** The programme emphasized the role of women as critical mobilisers in this process. CARE also developed a memorandum of understanding with the Kabul Municipality, which established mechanisms for regular communication between the community and the municipality and linked housing to broader issues of land tenure, occupancy rights and housing security. The programme also engaged local implementing partners which further strengthened institutional capacity among local organizations. An additional agreement with each beneficiary outlined the location, type of shelter, and roles and responsibilities of all parties during construction and post-construction phases. This created accountability in both directions – to donors and also to project participants – and dignified participants. This work highlights that successful shelter interventions in complex emergencies must include strategies for good governance that focus on increasing people's understanding of their rights and responsibilities, as well as enhance the ability of authorities to listen to the needs of the people, that encourage all to find solutions to problems that affect everyone (CARE, 2007, in ALNAP/Provention

Consortium, forthcoming 2009). Vulnerable groups, such as widows with young children and disabled people, regularly live in very poor shelter conditions. Intervention by ECHO financed programs was and is certainly needed (Schokker, 2000).

- Selected reading**
- OCHA (2004) *The OCHA guide to tents*.  
<http://www.sheltercentre.org/shelterlibrary/publications/201.htm>
  - Corsellis, T. and Vitale, A. (2005) *Transitional Settlement: Displaced Populations*. Oxford: Oxfam Publications.  
<http://www.sheltercentre.org/shelterlibrary/publications/112.htm>

## ■ LESSON 11

### **Water and sanitation present a looming threat for the Palestinian population and need to be dealt with through effective coordination, especially with local capacities and organizations such as the Gaza water utility**

Water in the West Bank and Gaza is a well-known problem. Already before the recent conflict, the water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) situation was highly precarious: '80% of wells were only working partially and the remaining wells were not functioning at all. As a result, over half the population of Gaza city only has access to water for a few hours once a week. Maintenance of the water system is prevented by a lack of spare parts and construction materials due to the blockade – potentially creating a major public health hazard.

Access to clean water has been a rapidly growing concern as pumping stations are no longer running properly due to lack of power and lack of access. In addition several water wells have been destroyed by the military. At present access to clean water is a huge problem, where the vast majority of the population has little or no clean water available for days. Some were for the first days relying on small storage tanks on their roofs, but this lasted only for a few days. The Coastal Municipalities Water Utility (CMWU) estimates are that some 10% of the water is drinkable compared to local water quality standards. Importantly, these local levels are lower than WHO limits for acceptable contamination levels, highlighting the dire state of water quality. The WHO limit for chlorine is 250ml per litre compared to the local standard of 400ml per litre while WHO limit for nitrates are 50ml per litre compared to the local standard of 70ml per litre.

**International agencies should prioritise the provision of emergency WATSAN in the short term**, including procuring and distributing items to treat the water, establishing temporary treatment plants, mobile water and sanitation kits and bottled water kits, while advocating for construction materials, especially PVC pipes, to be let through the blockades as a matter of urgency. It is also important for the WASH cluster to keep very close monitoring of the water situation, in collaboration with local actors. **The strengthening of coordination mechanisms, and ensuring that the CMWU is a central player, is key.** According to OCHA the public health laboratory in Gaza is collecting random samples from the water networks, water wells and wastewater treatment plants on a daily basis for microbiology testing to ensure water quality, especially in areas with destroyed/damaged networks. CMWU has said that analysis is limited by a lack of materials and tools. Some agencies such as the ICRC continue to work with specific bodies such as the Ministry of Health hospitals in Gaza to improve the quality of the water they use, as well as maintaining sewage pumps. Medium term, it is vital to ensure the aquifer tables are protected from sea water and sewage intrusion.

Overall, watsan work 'needs to be seen within an overall framework of water resource management – the management of surface water and groundwater and its use for human consumption, agriculture and to water stock' (Danida, 2005). This means that water and sanitation activities need to be approached from an intermediate or longer-term perspective,

rather than through 'acute-emergency' type projects. This would require, for example, working more continuously with communities (Baker et al, 2004).

- Useful resources**
- Sphere Project (2004) *Minimum Standards in Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene Promotion* [http://www.sphereproject.org/handbook/html/4\\_ch2.htm](http://www.sphereproject.org/handbook/html/4_ch2.htm)
  - Coastal Municipalities Water Utility Website: <http://www.cmwu.ps/english>

## ■ LESSON 12

### **Health challenges include huge need for system rehabilitation and social service support**

Even before the conflict, the health sector was at breaking point: the quality of health services was severely affected, medical equipment failing, over one third of applications to leave Gaza for medical treatment were denied and stock of essential drugs was in short supply (Oxfam, 2008).

Of the 122 health facilities assessed by WHO, about 48 percent were damaged or destroyed: 15 hospitals and 41 primary health care (PHC) centres were partially damaged; two primary health care centres were completely destroyed; and 29 ambulances were partially damaged or destroyed. There was also excess mortality and morbidity.

In addition to supporting recovery of the health system through necessary repairs, there are also issues with resources. The material healthcare resources are now substantially better than before the crisis, with gaps in essentials and consumables now largely addressed. However, one key issue was that supplies came in without WHO coordination, and it is vital that further supplies are not sent without prior consultation of the WHO supply donation guidelines.

**It is especially important to ensure that donor, UN agency, implementing partner and national counterpart efforts are complementary so as to cover the comprehensive approach needed for implementing health projects.** For example, although WHO handles water issues related to sickness and epidemics, UNICEF and Oxfam are leading the cluster in these areas, and therefore need to be involved in key discussions at inter-sectoral meetings (Schokker, 2000).

There is a huge need for social services programmes in the Gaza Strip, especially psychosocial programmes and those focusing on the rehabilitation of disabled people. These will be part of the ongoing PRCS programmes of the same kind, but due to the scope of the destruction and serious consequences on the physical and mental health of people due to the hostilities, these programmes will need to be intensified and expanded, which will require support from international partners.

The following groups are especially important to consider:

1. Affected families
2. National staff and their families
3. Medical and emergency personnel/teams

Previous research on the occupied Palestinian territories highlights the fact that many donors end up funding the health sector, often seen as a 'natural priority'. This perception causes regular 'flooding' on the input side, with a potential surplus on the output side. Meanwhile, there are irregularities on the fluctuating input side that obstruct the development of proper management and of monitoring systems to optimise the efficiency of the health system. Ultimately, **the presence and aid of multiple donors can contribute to the inefficiency of the health sector** (Schokker, 2000).

**Useful lessons:** The Emergency Medical Assistance Program (EMAP) was designed to overcome the access restrictions imposed on the occupied Palestinian territories after the onset of the second Intifada in September 2000, which brought curfews, closures, and increased numbers of checkpoints. This situation seriously affected the movement of persons requiring medical care and basic life needs. It led to the destruction and/or interruptions of infrastructure such as water supply and electricity to homes, businesses, and public services, including health facilities. This emergency situation forced people to seek health services closer to home and affected the ability of these typically smaller and formerly less-used health facilities to procure adequate quantities of medicines to respond to the larger demand on their services. EMAP helped fill the health services gap created by this emergency situation in critical areas of need. EMAP vehicles and staff became known to the 60 health facilities and 15 NGO sub-grant recipients (and, more importantly, to their clients), as the provider of emergency assistance. EMAP accomplished this by employing dedicated, knowledgeable field staff and a security officer who was able to build a communications network to facilitate checkpoint crossings and passage through conflict areas (Sarriot and Harris, 2003). The Sentinel Surveillance System (SSS) is one of the components of the EMAP and it provides valuable information for responding to an evolving emergency situation. The SSS collects bi-weekly information from all governorates and produces reports approximately on a monthly basis on questions of food security, water availability, infectious diseases, and access to health services. The SSS is highly valued, there is no equivalent source of information in the occupied Palestinian territories, and it has become a “vital tool for decision makers working in the West Bank and Gaza” (Sarriot and Harris 2003, 13).

- Further reading**
- WHO updates on the health situation in Gaza: <http://www.who.int/hac/en/>
  - MSF resources on refugee health: [http://www.refbooks.msf.org/msf\\_docs/en/msfdocmenu\\_en.pdf](http://www.refbooks.msf.org/msf_docs/en/msfdocmenu_en.pdf)
  - HPN on public health for crisis affected populations: <http://www.odihpn.org/documents/networkpaper061.pdf>

## ■ LESSON 13

### **Agencies must take account of existing food security issues, including markets**

Before the war and during the blockade there were already serious concerns about food security in Gaza. Over 70% now depend on food aid (OCHA, 2008). **Agencies must take account of these existing factors in delivering appropriate food aid if efforts are to make a significant contribution to food security and short-term recovery (WFP, 2004).** As an UNRWA review put it: ‘changes in food availability, the economy and nutrition over the past five years almost certainly mean that the ration has needed adjusting to take account of any changes in people’s access to food’ (ODI, 2006).

**In particular, provision of supplementary feeding for undernourished children and segments of the population at risk (pregnant and lactating women) is an important and appropriate strategy and can provide a ‘safety net’ for the vulnerable. However, for the strategy to be successful, the household must have access to adequate additional food (WFP, 2004).**

According to the PRCS, the operation damaged approximately 1500 factories, shops and markets and the losses in the Palestinian economy reached approximately 2 billion USD (PRCS, 2009). Scarcity is now pushing all basic commodity prices high (OCHA, 2009). **Agencies need to be aware that their need to implement and issues of access could push prices even higher and put basic commodities further out of reach of the population.** A key issue in this is the availability of cash. Some cash has been allowed in by Israel to pay Palestinian Authority salaries, but more is needed to support livelihoods of the Palestinian people. If this doesn’t happen, then in the long term the state structures will be eroded, further increasing vulnerability.

**Useful lesson:** Local market surveys were undertaken in Jordan, Syria, and Iran whereby local suppliers were contacted to check the availability and price of specific items and storage, and transport facilities were assessed. **This seems to have been an innovative approach to testing how far products and services could be obtained locally (UNICEF, 2004). Such surveys can be powerful tools to use in the advocacy for humanitarian access, delivery of humanitarian assistance as well as the longer term goal of commercial access into Gaza.**

- Further reading
- WFP (2003) *Food Aid and Livelihoods in Emergencies*  
<http://www.wfp.org/policies/Introduction/policy/>
  - World Bank (2005) *Food Aid and Food Security in the Short- and Long Run: Country experience from Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.*  
[Siteresources.worldbank.org/SOCIALPROTECTION/Resources/SP-Discussion-papers/Safety-Nets-DP/0538.pdf](http://Siteresources.worldbank.org/SOCIALPROTECTION/Resources/SP-Discussion-papers/Safety-Nets-DP/0538.pdf)

## ■ LESSON 14

### **Support to livelihoods and recovery of the local economy recovery are vital for addressing medium and longer term vulnerability**

The traditional sequential concept of “Emergency-Relief-Development” is hard to implement given the prevailing conditions in Gaza around access. However, efforts to reduce the present vulnerability of the Palestinians (Schokker, 2000) means that **consideration should be given to livelihoods options, with attention paid to the urban context of programming.**

Unemployment rates in Gaza (and the West Bank) are extremely high by regional and international standards. During the first half of 2008, 42.3% were out of work, with youth unemployment as high as 55% (UNRWA, 2009). In 2007 79% of residents lived below poverty line (\$4 a day) and 70% below the deep poverty line (\$3 a day) (OCHA, 2008). Even for those who have work, the rise in prices and lack of availability of basic commodities such as cooking oil intensifies existing hardships.

UNRWA has had a focus on job creation, something the review saw as “an appropriate response to the high levels of unemployment in the occupied Palestinian territories. It has been effective in creating jobs but less so in terms of other objectives (e.g., targeting, asset creation, promoting self-reliance). It would benefit from better planning and the development of a longer term strategy; lessons could usefully be learned from job creation programmes elsewhere in the world” (ODI, 2006). Cash crops such as strawberries and carnations have been important exports from Gaza. A recent export of some 200,000 carnations was permitted despite the blockade, and may be a useful area for focus of livelihoods efforts.

It has been estimated that the revival of the construction industry would create over 200,000 jobs as well as addressing vulnerability. Construction materials remain a priority to rebuild destroyed homes, schools, hospitals and clinics, and lack of access also inhibits livelihoods recovery.

**Useful lesson:** In the immediate aftermath of the beginning of the second Intifada in 2000, CARE launched an emergency response programme which focused on healthcare, food security, livelihoods, and water and sanitation activities. In response to the prolonged closures and the deterioration in the economic situation in the Palestinian territories, CARE launched a project to support women in the rural area of Jenin to improve their living standards by providing suitable resources and technical assistance. The project focused on improving the livelihood security of impoverished households in a self-reliant manner, for instance through promotion of and training in animal husbandry and household gardening activities with increased capacities, skills and community participation (Baker et al 2004).

Given the extent of unexploded ordnances, it is important to **incorporate mine-action components into livelihoods projects to address the specific needs of mine-affected communities**. Vulnerable households in contaminated areas may consciously engage in activities such as clearing landmines or cultivating crops on contaminated land in order to make a living. The PRCS is already planning to conduct Mine Risk Education in Gaza with a focus on the risk of explosive remnants of war and the risk of unexploded ordnance (UXO).

**Useful lessons:** Following the 2006 Lebanon war, the livelihoods of a number of communities in Southern Lebanon were severely affected by the contamination of cluster bombs on their farming and grazing lands. World Vision Canada initiated a four month project in December 2007 on “UXO/ cluster bomb risk education and economic victim assistance”. A number of activities were carried out in order to reduce the number of UXO casualties and to improve the livelihoods of survivors and victims’ families. For example, sessions were conducted for farmers and children in two target districts and messages on UXO/cluster munitions were put into agricultural toolkits. As part of the survivor assistance component, business plans were formulated for direct and indirect victims. The plans identified possible jobs for each beneficiary and specific in-kind grants and trainings available. Start-up materials and training sessions were provided, for example in the form of training courses on animal husbandry and bakery and construction equipment (GICHD, 2008).

**Further reading**

- The 2006 ICRC Household Economy Assessment in West Bank and Gaza [http://www.icrc.org/Web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/palestine-report-211106/\\$File/063281FinalHouseholdEN.pdf](http://www.icrc.org/Web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/palestine-report-211106/$File/063281FinalHouseholdEN.pdf)
- The ProVention CRA toolkit includes livelihoods tools [http://www.proventionconsortium.org/CRA\\_toolkit](http://www.proventionconsortium.org/CRA_toolkit)
- Young, H. et al. (2001) *Food Security Assessments in Emergencies: A Livelihoods Approach*. <http://www.forcedmigration.org/sphere/pdf/food/odi/food-security-and-livelihoods.pdf>

## ■ LESSON 15

### **Infrastructure, early recovery and reconstruction must be dealt with in ways that are sensitive to political contexts**

Homes and public infrastructure have been extensively damaged throughout the Gaza Strip, with Gaza City being worst hit. An estimated 21,000 residences have been completely destroyed or badly damaged. Nearly 51,000 people are displaced in shelters (Gaza Flash Appeal). The military operation has provoked extensive destruction to commercial enterprises and to Gaza public infrastructure. ‘According to Palestinian industrialists, 219 factories were destroyed or severely damaged during the Israeli military operation. Much of the 3% of industrial capacity that was still operating after the 18-month Israeli blockade has now been destroyed’ (Ibid).

**Table 3: Damage, Level and Value, from the 22-Day Conflict**

Type of Damage	Number	Value (in million US\$)
Housing Buildings (Destroyed)	4,100	200
Housing Buildings (Damaged)	17,000	82
Mosques	20	2.2
Education and Health Buildings	25	8.4
Security Headquarters	31	6.3
Ministry Compounds	1	25
Ministry Buildings	16	23.5
Bridges	2	3
Municipality and Local Authority Headquarters	5	2.3
Fuel Stations	4	2
Water and Wastewater Networks	10	2.4
Destroyed Ambulances and Civil Defence Vehicles	20	1.5
Electric Power Distribution Facilities	10	0.4
Road (in km)	50	2
Factories, shops and other commercial facilities	1500	19
Rubble removal	-	600

Source: Barakat et al, 2009

As well as these infrastructure needs, there are UXO tasks which relate to explosive remnants in buildings, which need to be addressed as part of any reconstruction activities.

Early recovery and reconstruction is especially challenging given the political situation in Gaza. The divisions and frictions between Hamas and Fatah (PA) do not appear to have been addressed in the latest plans, which call for a PA-led reconstruction effort, supported by UNDP. Providing the PA with a substantial role in the reconstruction process will contribute to the perception that Fatah intends to take advantage of the recently ended conflict and raise tensions to such an extent that internal, factional conflict becomes a palpable concern. As such, **reconstruction strategies must pay careful attention to previous lessons from reconstruction work in Gaza, and the political context, and should not unduly impact upon local structures or work in ways that might heighten tensions and difficulties (Barakat, 2009).**

**Further reading** ■ Barakat, S et al (2009) *The Reconstruction of Gaza: A Guidance Note for Palestinian & International Stakeholders*.  
<http://www.york.ac.uk/depts/poli/prdu/pub.%20Reconstructing%20Gaza.%20Barakat%20et%20al%5B1%5D.,%20Jan2009.pdf>

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