

HRI THE HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE INDEX 2011



OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

FEW IMPROVEMENTS, FAILING HOPES



CRISIS AT A GLANCE

OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

THE CRISIS AND THE RESPONSE

- The easing of the blockade of Gaza in 2010 brought limited improvements in the lives of the population, as they continue to depend on foreign aid and smuggled goods. Poverty in the West Bank has quadrupled since 1999.
- Restrictions on movement of people and goods for humanitarian organisations and Palestinians as well as the no-contact policy enforced by many donors make the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt) a difficult and expensive operating environment.
- At mid-year, the United Nations (UN) Consolidated Appeal (CAP) for 2010 was reduced to US\$603.4 million. Donors provided US\$276.3 million (55 percent of the requirements) in new funding to projects within the CAP and US\$73 million to projects outside the CAP (OCHA FTS 2011). The United States (US) continued to be the largest donor, followed by the European Commission.
- The response to cluster needs was uneven, with priority to food security and limited support to agencies for their cluster leadership roles. The nearly full blockade of construction materials to Gaza prevented most 2009 pledges for reconstruction from materialising.

TOTAL FUNDING TO OPT IN 2010:

US\$ **404.5** MILLION

82% INSIDE THE CAP

OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES



CAMPS & SETTLEMENTS

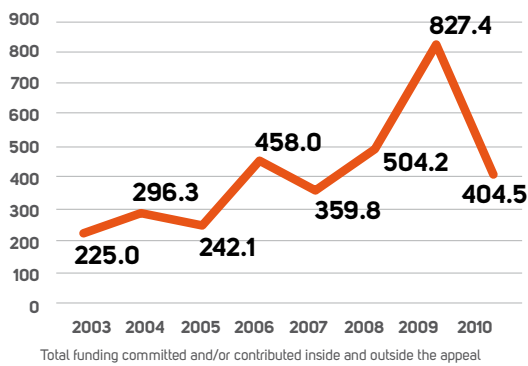
- Armistice Demarcation Line
- Boundary of Former Palestinian Mandate

Map Sources: Europa Technologies, OCHA, UNCS
Map created Jun 2010 - www.reliefweb.int

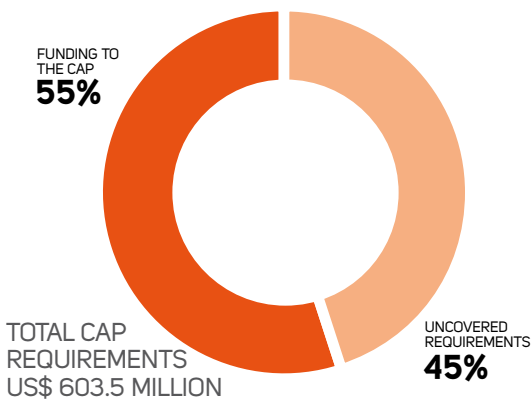
CRISIS AT A GLANCE

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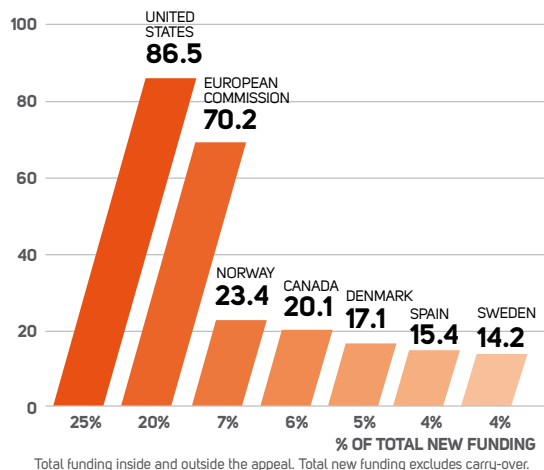
TOTAL HUMANITARIAN FUNDING TO OPT US\$ MILLION



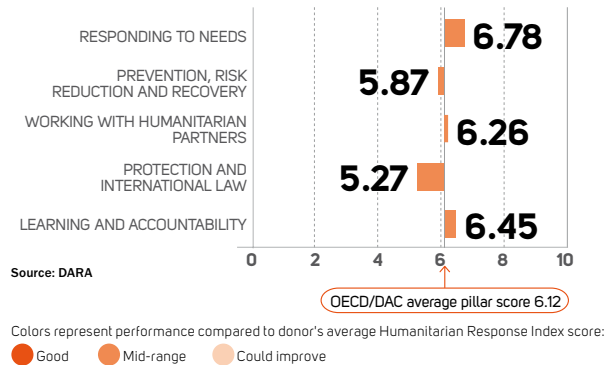
2010 OPT CAP COVERAGE



MAIN HUMANITARIAN DONORS IN 2010 US\$ MILLION



HRI DONOR PERFORMANCE BY PILLAR FIELD PERCEPTION SCORES



DONOR PERFORMANCE AND AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- Humanitarian organisations complained of donor passiveness in advocating for access and their acceptance of additional operational costs.
- At a time when many donor governments are looking to maximise the results and value of their money spent, the situation in oPt shows just how far the response is from achieving efficiency, much less impact.
- A number of key donors' application of anti-terrorism legislation continues to threaten the impartiality and independence of aid based on needs.
- Some donors, like the European Commission's Humanitarian Office (ECHO), Austria and Canada, did stand out for their commitment to gender needs. Other donors seemed satisfied to see gender mentioned in proposals, but did little to prioritise implementation.
- Although donors agree that humanitarian assistance should make links to recovery and rebuilding livelihoods, they continue to provide only short-term funding.
- Donors must continue to deploy all of their means by insisting that all parties work together to create an environment conducive to unconditional peace and stability.

Source: UN OCHA FFS, accessed in August 2011.

FEW IMPROVEMENTS, FAILING HOPES

The humanitarian crisis in the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt) continues unabatedly, with little sign of progress in the Palestinian peace process and lack of visible improvement in the daily lives of the Palestinian population trapped in the conflict. Field research conducted in early 2011 as part of the Humanitarian Response Index (HRI) found many of the same issues raised in previous HRI reports, revealing a highly politicised crisis with a response characterised by limited respect for humanitarian principles, severe restrictions on access to affected populations, incoherent donor approaches and an excessive focus on short-term needs. If anything, the operating environment has become even more complicated for humanitarian agencies in the last year, underlining the need for donor governments to revise their approaches to be principled and needs-based, while reinforcing efforts to find solutions to this politically-driven crisis.

THE CRISIS

The Israeli government's decision to ease the blockade of Gaza in June 2010, eighteen months after Operation Cast Lead, has brought only limited improvements in the lives of the population. Gazans continue to depend almost entirely on foreign aid and goods smuggled through tunnels. With one of the highest unemployment rates in the world, at 45 percent of the population, only one in five Gazan households can be considered food secure (WFP, FAO and PCBS 2011, p.8), and housing needs as well as access to basic services, such as healthcare, remain largely unmet. Abject poverty in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, has quadrupled since 1999, and food insecurity has

reached 79 percent in Area C, an administrative area under complete Israeli control. The Palestinian Authority (PA) and Israel share control over Area B, and the PA fully manages Area A.

Last year saw some improvement in the overall West Bank economy, although this was largely due foreign aid, investment and, to some extent, to the removal of

■ A HIGHLY POLITICISED CRISIS WITH A RESPONSE CHARACTERISED BY LIMITED RESPECT FOR HUMANITARIAN PRINCIPLES

several restrictions on access in urban areas east of the barrier. Nonetheless, in addition to the consequences of forced displacement, severe restrictions on movement and access to

social services and labour opportunities continued, particularly affecting those living in the "seam" zones and Area C of the West Bank. Facing frequent harassment, evictions, stop work orders and demolitions, the population of East Jerusalem remains cut off from the rest of the West Bank, causing tremendous psychological stress and suffering.

By mid-year, the United Nations (UN) Consolidated Appeal (CAP) for 2010 was reduced to US\$603.4 million. Donors provided US\$276.3 million, or 55 percent of the requirements, in new funding to projects within the CAP and US\$73 million to projects outside it (OCHA FTS, 2011). The United States continued to be the largest donor, providing 26 percent of the total response to the CAP, followed by the European Commission with 17 percent. Arab donors did not repeat the generosity

shown in response to the 2009 Operation Cast Lead. The nearly full blockade of construction materials to Gaza prevented most 2009 pledges for reconstruction from actually materialising. The response to cluster needs was uneven, with priority to the food security cluster and only limited support to agencies for their cluster leadership roles.

OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES

As reported in the HRI 2010 report on oPt, in this highly politicised environment, humanitarian organisations face a number of difficulties in attempting to provide assistance to all in need. Having to work around the oPt's physical and bureaucratic fragmentation is a major obstacle to progress, as agencies struggle with movements between physical zones and the bureaucratic procedures they entail. According to a recent survey, 80 to 90 percent of national and 50 percent of international humanitarian workers with delays or denials when seeking permits for travel between Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem (AIDA, 2011). Many agencies DARA interviewed reported that they have been forced to hire additional staff to deal with these cumbersome and time-consuming administrative procedures.

At a time when many donor governments are looking to maximise the results and value of their money spent on humanitarian assistance, the situation in oPt shows just how far the response is from achieving efficiency, much less impact. As a result of multiple restrictions, delivery of basic humanitarian goods to Gaza, particularly food items, suffers from significant additional costs, estimated to be at least US\$4 million per year for the World Food Programme (WFP) and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) combined. More importantly, lack of access prevents vulnerable communities from being reached and urgently needed reconstruction from taking place. Many

of the humanitarian organisations interviewed complained of donor passiveness in advocating for access and an apparent willingness to accept these additional operational costs. However, both the implementing agencies and donor representatives interviewed unanimously considered the Israeli blockade and occupation to be the main impediments to achieving a minimally acceptable level of livelihood and human dignity for the Palestinian population. A recently published Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) report on the effects of the barrier additionally supports this view (OCHA, 2011).

To further complicate an already untenable situation, a number of key donors' application of anti-terrorism legislation continues to threaten the impartiality and independence of aid based on needs. This legislation obliges humanitarian organisations to show that no assistance will benefit Hamas, placing unreasonable costs and administrative and legal burdens on organisations

■ HAVING TO WORK AROUND THE OPT'S PHYSICAL AND BUREAUCRATIC FRAGMENTATION IS A MAJOR OBSTACLE TO PROGRESS

to justify fulfilling basic humanitarian objectives. For example, the European Union (EU) policy of no-contact with Hamas and the UN rule forbidding communication beyond the purely technical level further compromise

key humanitarian principles, including those of neutrality and impartiality, which are essential to gain the trust of all parties and access to affected populations. The restrictions put non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in a difficult situation, as they must simultaneously compromise between complying with their own domestic criminal law, international humanitarian law (IHL), Palestinian law and the administrative procedures of Hamas. Several interviewees made reference to the

“criminalisation of humanitarian aid”, and as one interviewee expressed, “identifying Hamas as a terrorist group undermines the whole humanitarian response: creating parallel networks, wasting money, in addition to not using available services and resources.”

NEEDS-BASED RESPONSES

The difficulties of access and the no-contact policy with Hamas, along with a highly fluid and shifting context, make properly assessing needs highly challenging. Most humanitarian programme planning is done around cluster-specific needs assessments, using existing standards. Donors are informed of this process and, in some cases, have participated in cluster needs assessments, but the many donors who have only limited humanitarian capacity on the ground must rely on the agencies’ needs assessments without any verification or follow-up. Although some respondents considered this lack of “interference” to be positive, most would clearly welcome wider donor involvement in the process.

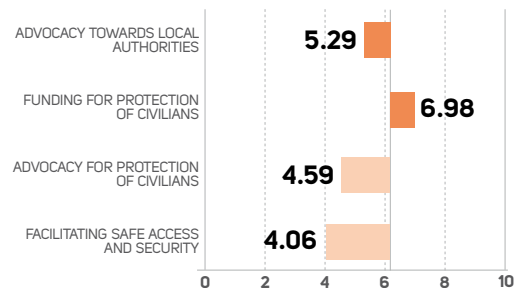
Many donors interviewed stated that they link needs assessments to project design. However, feedback from various humanitarian organisations suggests that needs assessments often do not guide funding decisions, which instead are influenced by national strategic priorities, hearsay and rumours. According to one agency, “the political agenda determines everything at the donors’ headquarter level.” There is also concern that incomplete coverage of needs assessments in the buffer zone and restricted areas of Gaza leaves agencies, the UN and donors with an incomplete picture of needs in these areas.

A number of donors do undertake regular field visits and base their recommendations for funding on what they observe. Several donors participate in consultations on needs analysis initiatives, which are based on cluster specific assessments, monitoring them indirectly through interaction with the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) and the

Humanitarian Donor Group (HDG). Furthermore, a few donors, such as Australia and Canada, require project specific needs assessments to be included in project proposals. Most donors interviewed explained that they analyse the CAP document and submit advice to their capitals, which then forms the basis for financial decisions. Furthermore, the level of delegation at country level for funding decisions ranges considerably among donors; some field delegations have no authority at all, others manage the funding of smaller projects, while others make decisions on funding for projects over US\$15 million. The authority at country level to make funding decisions also influences the timelines of funding upon publication of appeals or in case of additional or changed needs.

DONOR PERFORMANCE ON PROTECTION AND INTERNATIONAL LAW

FIELD PERCEPTION SCORES



Source: DARA

OECD/DAC average question score 6.15

Colors represent performance compared to donor’s average Humanitarian Response Index score:

● Good ● Mid-range ● Could improve

GENDER ISSUES

Incorporating gender analysis into needs assessments and funding decisions continues to lag behind in the oPt. According to a survey commissioned by the UN Gender Task Force in Gaza in the aftermath of operation Cast Lead (UN Inter-Agency Task Force, 2010), both men and women were highly concerned about the increasingly high level of domestic violence, aggravated by the psychological stress and traumatic effects of war,

particularly among the displaced population in the southern part of Gaza (Ma'an News Agency, 2011). Yet, despite both increased attention to gender issues and greater awareness of the prevalence of domestic and gender-based violence tied to traumatic stress in Gaza, humanitarian workers need to improve their knowledge and strategies to address the issue.

Preparation of the 2011 CAP involved integrating a gender dimension and analysis in project proposals to improve gender sensitive programming. Under the guidance of a GenCap advisor (One Response, 2011), all CAP projects were assessed on the extent to which gender-sensitivity was integrated and sex-

disaggregated evidence was included. CAP projects coded "2a" indicate that gender is mainstreamed, and those coded "2b" specifically target gender issues. To date, donors have directed 74 percent of their funding to 2a and 2b projects (OCHA FTS, 2011). Some agencies urged donors to prioritise funding for CAP 2011 projects with

■ DESPITE INCREASED ATTENTION AND AWARENESS, HUMANITARIAN WORKERS NEED TO IMPROVE THEIR KNOWLEDGE AND STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS GENDER

high gender marks. However, obtaining satisfactory access to Sex and Age Disaggregated Data (SADD) appeared to be a major challenge, compounded by the extensive fragmentation of the oPt.

According to many respondents, some donors did stand out for their commitment to gender; ECHO, Austria and Canada all insisted that gender sensitive approaches be clearly described in projects submitted for their support. Other donors, however, seemed satisfied to see gender mentioned in proposals, but did little to monitor or follow up on implementation. In some cases, gender-focused projects met with limited success when implemented. Furthermore, a few donors, including



the US, prioritised activities aimed at empowering women through increasing their involvement in the labour market. However, this continues to be a challenge in a country so dependent on foreign assistance, particularly in a time of overall high unemployment and lack of economic options.

Meanwhile, integrating gender into the response presents more pressing problems, especially concerning safety and protection. Many organisations highlighted the importance of ensuring that relief and recovery programming targets the specific needs of affected populations to guarantee the domestic safety of women and children, as well as the public security of men and boys. More attention must also be given to issues disproportionately affecting women, such as displacement by housing demolitions and evictions, especially in East Jerusalem.

LINKING RELIEF, REHABILITATION AND DEVELOPMENT

A lack of longer-term approaches to addressing needs has created another gap in donor responses. As in many crises, the long-standing nature of the Palestinian conflict means that needs are chronic. Although donors agree that humanitarian assistance should make links to recovery and rebuilding livelihoods, they continue to provide only short-term funding, in part due to the annual CAP process and the perception that the situation is not ready for aid addressing long-lasting needs. Some agencies warned that this goes against the principle of 'do no harm'.

Many agencies urged donors to change their approach, in particular by providing more flexibility, with less earmarking in funding. Establishing multi-year frameworks could also increase the predictability of their funding, and allow for more sustainable programming that could be adjusted to changes in the conditions affecting needs and

the implementation of activities. This would allow for slightly more sustainability in projects and inclusion of more recovery activities. The humanitarian community can also play a role in overcoming short-term planning by extending the CAP programming cycle beyond one year.

■ NEEDS ARE CHRONIC BUT DONORS CONTINUE TO PROVIDE ONLY SHORT-TERM FUNDING

With most international attention directed towards Gaza, donors must not abandon the West Bank. The need to hold the Israeli authorities to their obligations as occupying power should not eclipse the need for self-criticism on the Palestinian side. Many acts of violence and retaliation, for example,

cannot be blamed on the occupation. International actors should try to engage in constructive dialogue as well by talking to, rather than isolating, the Hamas leadership in order to create a better understanding of mutual concerns and obligations that could help open the door to a resumption of the peace process.

DONOR TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

In general, donor transparency in sharing information about their funding decisions is rather limited, despite examples of good contact between donors and agencies for countries such as Norway, Sweden and Switzerland. Participation of donors in the clusters ranges from attending meetings to active involvement in consultations on programming and prioritisation. Although most donors do report their contributions to the Financial Tracking Service (FTS) in addition to publishing them on their own websites, this usually happens after the fact. Several agencies mentioned they found out about decisions on funding for their projects only later through the web.

Donors only emphasised the need for projects to include local populations in the design and implementation phases to a highly limited degree. Agencies mentioned that donor requirements for accountability to beneficiaries were quite mixed, and many donors did not specifically require any mention in project proposals of ways in which these would involve local communities in the actual implementation. In addition, because participation is often used as a tool to foster greater accountability (Winters, 2010), true downward accountability is significantly harder to realise as a result of the 'no-contact' policy enforced by many donors. As one organisation noted, "local capacity building is difficult due to [vetting] restrictions and the no-contact policy. [However], if an organisation

Checkpoint leading to
Ibrahimi Mosque, Hebron /
DARA / April 2011.



wants to work with a local partner, this partner needs to be approved by the government in Gaza.”

The majority of agencies interviewed pointed to the need for donor governments to maintain diplomatic pressure on all parties to find a resolution to the crisis as the most critical issue related to accountability. As one agency put it, “donors need political courage to move from the current band-aid [approach] to state-building- recognising the rootcause being occupation.”

DONORS NEED TO DEPLOY ALL OF THEIR MEANS

A number of factors –particularly restrictions on movement of people and goods for both Palestinians and humanitarian organisations as well as the no-contact policy enforced by many donors– make the oPt a difficult operating environment. This is particularly true when it comes to being accountable to beneficiaries, allowing them to participate in projects and finding sustainable solutions to address long-term needs. While donors have made progress in several aspects, they must continue to deploy all of their means by insisting that all parties work together to create an environment conducive to unconditional peace and stability. It is in their own interest to allow their many years of support to have an impact and bring a positive end to this long-lasting crisis.



INFORMATION BASED ON FIELD INTERVIEWS WITH KEY HUMANITARIAN AGENCIES IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES (JERUSALEM AND RAMALLAH) FROM 28 MARCH TO 2 APRIL 2011, AND 168 QUESTIONNAIRES ON DONOR PERFORMANCE (INCLUDING 120 OECD/DAC DONORS). THE HRI TEAM WAS COMPOSED OF MIGUEL GONZÁLEZ, FIONA GUY, LISA HILLEKE AND MAGDA NINABER VAN EYBEN (TEAM LEADER). THEY EXPRESS THEIR GRATITUDE TO ALL THOSE INTERVIEWED IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES.

NOTES

1 Despite the announcement of easing Gaza access, Israel closed the Karni border crossing and promised additional facilities at the Kerem Shalom crossing close to the Egyptian border, which are still under construction. According to field interviews, the cost of transport, storage, handling, additional security checks and arduous “back-to-back” procedures has risen from US\$25/mt to US\$66/mt.

2 Including SPHERE, the European Commission Humanitarian Aid department’s (ECHO) Global Needs Assessment and the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership’s Standard in Humanitarian Accountability and Quality Management.

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FOCUS ON is a series of research papers on issues, donors and crises which result from our work for The Humanitarian Response Index (HRI). The HRI is an independent assessment of donor performance against Good Humanitarian Donorship Principles.

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