

6 Unique Situation of the State of Palestine

6.1 Occupation

The occupation of the State of Palestine creates unique and hugely difficult circumstances for creating an effective and efficient DRM system for understanding, mitigating, and preparing for disasters. For example, not being able to be a full member of the WMO prohibits the Palestinian Meteorological Office from obtaining meteorological data, limiting their ability to perform meteorological risk analysis. The fragmentation of the population into A, B, and C areas and East Jerusalem, where access between them is controlled by occupying forces and the extra layer of governmental coordination through Palestinian military and civilian liaison with the occupying military liaison makes daily life very complex, making the situation in a disaster extremely complex. According to the UNDAC Mission Report:

Palestinian communities are subject to policies that undermined their ability to live normal and self-sustained lives. The long-standing policies associated to the occupation have resulted in territorial fragmentation of the State of Palestine; limited control over planning, trade and the economy; severely restricted access to land, water and other resources; and major restrictions on Palestinian movement and access within and between East Jerusalem, the rest of the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip have resulted in humanitarian needs.

Despite difficult circumstances, the government in Palestine has the ability to mainstream DRM into the daily activities of the governmental and societal entities and take steps to strengthen resistance and resiliency in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

6.2 Refugee Camps

The camps do not fall under the Government of the State of Palestine for West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. They are the responsibility of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency. The camps are managed by Camp Committees. This project met with representatives from numerous Camp Committees, but does not provide recommendations for how to address DRM in the camps, other than it is needed along with more focus on general living conditions in the camps need to be improved to reduce their vulnerability to disasters, diseases, and other problems.

The PLO, the president, the camp population committee, ministry of health, and ministry of education manage the camps. The governors are not involved in daily management of the camps, but include them during an emergency.

6.3 The United Nations

The situation in Palestine has led to a strong presence of the United Nations within Palestine. The UNDP and UN OCHA play important roles in leading the strengthening of disaster resistance and resiliency on the Palestinian people. National legislation includes only entities that the government can administer control over and therefore UN entities are not included with the recommendations in this project. However, while the situation in Palestine calls for the presence of the United Nations, UNDP and UN OCHA, and other key UN agencies, should be systematically linked to processes towards meeting the DRM objectives.

6.4 Regional Cooperation

The so-called JIP project, entailing Jordan, Israel and Palestine was established to create a common framework for preparedness that supports the interests of all parties. It is developed to

ensure the most effective response and recovery in case of a disaster affecting the region. In the particular case of the Jordanian, Israeli and Palestinian disaster management framework, the shared impacts of disasters drive the development of common approach on disaster preparedness. Joint approach is needed, to deal with the consequences of large-scale disasters. A strengthened regional preparedness framework enables more effective response and rapid recovery leading to more resilient societies. UN OCHA is leading the project.

6.5 International assistance

This situation creates complications regarding how the Government of the State of Palestine for West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, requests for and receives international disaster assistance in the event of a major earthquake. The Jordan Valley is a tectonic fault boundary and has caused major earthquakes, for example in Nablus and Jericho. An earthquake in Jordan Valley rift zone is likely to affect Israel and Jordan as well, requiring them to use their resources for their own people. It is therefore necessary that the Government of the State of Palestine for West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip develop procedures with the international community to ensure speedy requests from the government to the international response community and ensure speedy processing of international aid into Palestine.

The March 2013 Table Top Exercise clarified various issues on how to incorporate international assistance into the State of Palestine. SOPs for incorporating international assistance into the State of Palestine should be developed in a future project.

International procedures, such as have been developed by INSARAG, UNDAC, IFRC, should be addressed in Palestine.

The IASC Handbook for RCs and HCs on Emergency Preparedness and Response gives an overview of the UN response mechanism and it will be useful for Palestine to review and work with the UN to link the two systems together.

OCHA is the coordinating body for international assistance. Had three regional offices, Nablus, Ramallah, and Hebron. OCHA and the UN operate during a disaster through a clusters system, that the Palestinian entities are familiar with.