

**Support Action for Strengthening PAlesthine  
capabilities for seismic Risk Mitigation  
SASPARM 2.0**

**Deliverable DE2**

**“Report on the local responses to cope with seismic emergency”**



## Table of contents

<b>1. National Context</b> .....	<b>3</b>
1.1 Humanitarian and Geopolitical Situation .....	3
1.2 Size, Demographic and Social Indicators.....	3
1.3 Economic Situation .....	4
<b>2. National Policy on Disaster Risk Reduction</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>3. General Information about Disaster Risk Management Organizations /Stakeholders</b> .....	<b>7</b>
3.1 Governmental Organizations(GOs)/Stakeholders .....	7
Table 1 .....	9
3.2 Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Academia and Private Sector .....	9
<b>4. Ongoing Relevant Studies</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>Appendices:</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>Appendix 1: Unique Situation of the State of Palestine</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>Appendix 2: Analysis of Existing Legal Framework</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>Appendix 3: Proposed DRM Institutional Framework</b> .....	<b>11</b>

## 1. National Context

### 1.1 Humanitarian and Geopolitical Situation

Historical Palestine was under the mandate of Great Britain during the year 1948, when a Jewish agency declared an independent state of Israel, confiscating a large portion of the Palestinian land except the West Bank of the River Jordan, which was then part of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the Gaza Strip, which was under the Authority of Egypt. In the year 1967, the West Bank and Gaza Strip were occupied by Israel thus creating what is now commonly referred to as the occupied Palestinian territories, oPt, thus taking control of all Palestine. After the Oslo Accord in 1993, part of the West Bank and Gaza Strip were handed over to the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), creating for the first time a temporary and conditional Palestinian Country governed by the Palestinian Authority (PA). Unfortunately, Israel is still denying its obligations in this agreement and all Palestinian areas are now under the direct or indirect control of the Israeli forces.

According to the reports of the Palestinian Central Bureau for Statistics (PCBS), the politically volatile situation continues to worsen as a consequence of the occupation and crises and, as a result, the number of Palestinians dependent on foreign assistance is increasing continually. Currently around 6 million Palestine refugees are living in the Middle East. In the oPt with their 4.9 million inhabitants (PCBS 2015), all humanitarian indicators continue in a downward spiral.

This rapid deterioration has created a problem within the refugee camps that were established directly after 1948, many of which have been absorbed within the natural urban texture of a Palestinian homeland. Nevertheless, today these camps are accommodating large numbers of refugees and are overcrowded with limited access areas which are filled with unsanitary and vulnerable housing units with very low standards of living. Due to the large volume of refugees situated in these areas, there is a considerable stress applied to the local economy which has resulted in a number of socioeconomic challenges.

In the highly sensitive political issues of the Middle East, social welfare programs and conflict resolution are often given greater emphasis by individuals, governments and international organizations rather than disaster risk reduction dealing with natural hazards only.

### 1.2 Size, Demographic and Social Indicators

As mentioned above, the oPt includes East Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (EJ, WB & G) which are very small in area (6095 km<sup>2</sup> net area). According to PCBS the WB consists of eleven governorates namely, Jerusalem, Jenin, Tulkarm, Qalqiylia, Salfit, Nablus, Ramallah, Jericho, Bethlehem, Tubas, and Al-Khalil (Hebron). The total area of the WB is 5760 km<sup>2</sup> and about 60% of this area is rural.

The area of the Gaza Strip is only 365 km<sup>2</sup> and it is physically separated from the West Bank i.e. no geographical continuity exists between the two areas. Based on PCBS statistics the Palestinian population in the WB and the GS comes to approximately 5 million, 3 million of whom are in WB and 1.9 million in GS. These figures, in addition to those living in Israel, represent about 50% of the total Palestinian population. The remaining 50% is distributed mainly in neighboring Arab countries.

The oPt governorates of Hebron and Gaza are considered the most populated areas; with their shares of population totaling around 15% and 13%, respectively. The least populated governorates are Jericho, with 1.1%, followed by Salfit and Tubas. The Palestinian society is constituted of two main categories: citizens and refugees, whose problems remain a priority in any political settlement. According to a report released by UNRWA representing the period ending December 2007 (UNRWA reports 2007), the total number of Palestinian refugees reached 39% of total population (16% in West Bank and 23% in Gaza Strip). The Palestinian refugees still live in very crowded areas and desperate health conditions. The population density in the Gaza Strip is around 5200 persons per 1 sq. km. and is the highest in the region. The density in the West Bank is around 520 persons per sq. km.

The Israeli settlements occupy large areas (see Figure 1), affecting the population density. The population growth rate is considered the highest in the region reaching 3.2 % in 1995 and 3% in 2000. This rate decreased drastically after 2000 due to the prevailing complicated conditions in all aspects of people's lives, which resulted in the emigration of people especially newly graduated students (Reports of PCBS 2008).

### 1.3 Economic Situation

The Palestinian economic situation is very bad due, but not limited, to the following reasons:

- The special type and nature of the Palestinian issue.
- The lack of access and control over national resources.
- The closure of the oPt by Israeli Forces.
- The availability of only two major access routes (Jordan and Egypt) to the Arab countries and other parts of the world which are under the complete control of Israel.
- Escalating bad security conditions

All the above has rendered the Palestinian economy dependent on donations from the resources of different parties. This dependence and lack of sustainable development results in a high unemployment rate and level of poverty far below the red lines among a high percentage of the Palestinian population.

## 2. National Policy on Disaster Risk Reduction

Currently, there's no clear legislation regarding DRR in the oPt. The Palestinian case is unique because of the occupation. There is no national control of the airports, harbors and borders. There is no national defense force or army and also most of the governmental institutions are not capable of meeting their obligations as per their mandates due to the restrictions imposed as a result of occupation. This applies to civil defense and other related governmental institutions. The result of this has been an increase in the role of non-governmental organizations in providing assistance and the increased need for this assistance in many aspects of life. This is obvious when looking at NGOs such as the Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS) and other health relief and emergency medical organizations and societies. Based on the rich personal experience of the consultant, it has been concluded that these NGOs have strong capabilities and experience within the oPt, especially in comparison with many other Arab countries.



Figure 1: Settlements in West Bank.

The Higher Council of Civil Defence (HCCD) represents the main group of Palestinian governmental institutions responsible for civil defense. It was established in 1998 based on the civil defense law # 3 for year 1998, and based on a decision by the board of ministers. The members include all ministries and governmental bodies and is chaired by the Minister of Interior, whereas the non-governmental organizations are represented as supervisor’s members in the board. In addition to the HCCD, the Palestinian Red Crescent Society has paid special attention to the issue of disasters since it was established in 1968.

For more details about the unique situation of the State of Palestine, see the appendices.

### **3. General Information about Disaster Risk Management Organizations /Stakeholders**

Non-government organizations working in DRM have good capabilities and experience compared to other organizations in the region. Concerning the awareness, training, and studies relating to disaster risk management, many organizations have been founded and play a major role in educating people on natural disasters like earthquakes and landslides. The Urban Planning and Disaster Risk Reduction Center at An-Najah National University is the only center in the oPt in this field and its activities target all citizens, professionals, and decision makers.

For the purpose of collecting a national database about the organizations/stakeholders working in the DRM area, questionnaires, meetings and interviews have been conducted with the decision makers in the GOs and the NGOs.

#### **3.1 Governmental Organizations(GOs)/Stakeholders**

##### **- The Higher Council of Civil Defence (HCCD)**

Represents the national body for disaster management, headed by the Minister of Interior and the Director General of Palestinian Civil Defence.

##### **- The Ministry of Interior**

Based on the law, the minister is considered the head of the HCCD. He has the authority to decide the necessary measures and actions to be taken in case of emergency. He has also the higher authority on the security forces, transportation, water, electricity, oils, and food and to take any decisions for the benefit of the civil defense. The Civil Defence (CD) works under the Ministry of Interior, in addition to its important role in managing and coordinating HCCD activities. The CD also manages and conducts the work of emergency and disaster teams.

##### **- The Ministry of Planning <sup>(1)</sup>**

The mission of the ministry is to support national development initiatives, establish, implement and monitor economic and development plans, as well as activate technical, financial, and economic cooperation with the donors, international organizations, and financing institutions to support and implement national development projects.

*<sup>(1)</sup>A few months ago, the Ministry of Planning was merged with the Ministry of Finance.*

### **- The Ministry of Health and related organizations:**

The Ministry of Health works in emergency conditions all the time because of the political and security conditions. Also the resources they have are limited compared to the urgent and high demands made of it as a result of political situation. The ministry works within the capabilities available without a clearly defined plan to deal with disasters.

### **- The Ministry of Local Government (Municipalities and Local Councils)**

Dedicate all available resources for the rescue operations and all related actions in addition to their normal activities related to issuing building licenses; maintaining infrastructure and many other sectors of the people's life.

### **- The Ministry of Public Works and Housing**

Dedicate all available resources for rescue operations and all related actions and responsibility for engineering works and construction in the government sector.

### **- The Ministry of Transport**

Collect a database of the owners of heavy duty equipment and other tools (Bulldozers, Excavators, trucks, loaders, cranes etc.), as well as monitoring and forecasting the weather conditions through the meteorological department.

### **- The Youth Sector (Ministry of Education, the Higher Council of Youth and Sports)**

All human resources, assets and capabilities will be devoted to support emergency rescue and evacuation in addition to assisting in maintaining security.

### **- The Ministry of Agriculture**

Work on the protection of agricultural land to mitigate the effect of possible desertification, drought, frost and locusts by establishing special strategies and plans

### **- Other Governmental Organizations (GOs)**

For more details about Primary entities within the same disaster functions see Table 1, as well as for more details about the other GOs/Stakeholders pertinent to DRM and their contact persons and addresses, see Table 2. Other GOs, related to risk reduction: The Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Technology, the Media, the Water Authority and Environmental Quality Authority.

**Table 1***Entities within the same disaster functions*

<b>Disaster function</b>	<b>Primary Entities</b>
<b>Risk assessment</b>	Agriculture, Higher education, in particular universities (Accademia), Finance, Health, National Economy, Public Works and Housing, Social Affairs, Telecommunications and Information Technology, Transportation (Met office), Water Authority, Environment Quality Authority, and Red Crescent
<b>Mitigation</b>	Prime Ministry/Cabinet, Agriculture, Economic Development, Education, Finance, Health, Local Government, Public Works and Housing, Social Affairs, Telecommunications and Info Technology, Transportation, Water Authority, and Environment Quality Authority and, Engineers Association.
<b>Operations Preparedness</b>	Prime Ministry/Cabinet, Agriculture, Economic Development, Foreign Affairs, Health Interior, including PCD and police, Local Government, Public Works and Housing, Social Affairs, Water Authority, Environment Quality Authority, and Red Crescent and Accademia.
<b>Impact Operations</b>	Agriculture, Health, Interior, including PCD and police, Local Government, Public Works and Housing, Social Affairs, Transportation (Met office), Water Authority, Environment Quality Authority, and Red Crescent.
<b>Rescue Operations/Life saving</b>	Health, Interior, including PCD and police, Local Government, Public Works and Housing, and Red Crescent.
<b>Relief Operations</b>	Agriculture, Awqaf and Religious, Finance, Health, Interior, including PCD and police, Local Government, Public Works and Housing, Social Affairs, Transportation, and Red Crescent.
<b>Recovery Operations</b>	All
<b>Systematic Learning</b>	All

### 3.2 Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Accademia and Private Sector

#### - The Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS)

The Palestinian Red Crescent Society has paid special attention to the issue of disasters since it was established in 1968; PRCS is considered one of the most important organizations in this area. Its activities cover all of the Palestinian territories. This concern developed gradually

until it became a major part of the work of the society and complementary to its social and health targets. PRCS has 22 branches covering all governorates distributed across the West Bank and Gaza.

#### **- The Urban Planning and Disaster Risk Reduction Center (UPDRRC)**

The Urban Planning and Disaster Risk Reduction Center at An-Najah National University is the only specialized center in the oPt in the fields of natural hazard risk assessment, disaster risk management and earthquake engineering. Since its establishment in September 1996, UPDRRC oriented its activities (awareness, training, teaching studies and research) to cover all sectors of people including citizens, professionals and decision makers.

#### **- The National Agency for Disaster Risk Mitigation(NADRM)**

The National Agency for Disaster Risk Mitigation was founded July 31<sup>st</sup> 2006. It has been responsible for the formation of a National Framework that gathers all of the NGOs working in the field of disaster management and emergency support, in addition to planning and conducting capacity building and quality assurance programs for concerned organizations.

#### **- Other GOs and Private Sector /stakeholders**

For more details about other NGOs and GOs/Stakeholders pertinent to DRM see Table 2, which contains addresses and contact persons for each organization.

## **4. Ongoing Relevant Studies**

To develop the Institutional and Legal Framework for National Disaster Risk Management Systems in the state of Palestine, and as a result of SASPARM 1, international organizations including UNDP and UNISDR signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2013 with the Palestinian President. In 2015, the PA and UNDP/PAPP launched the project towards Developing Institutional and Legal Framework for National Disaster Risk Management Systems in the State of Palestine. In April 2016, the draft report is released and it contains the following key elements:

- Unique Situation of the State of Palestine (see Appendix 1).
- Analysis of Existing Legal Framework (see Appendix 2).
- Proposed DRM Institutional Framework (see Appendix 3).

## **Appendices:**

**Appendix 1: Unique Situation of the State of Palestine**

**Appendix 2: Analysis of Existing Legal Framework**

**Appendix 3: Proposed DRM Institutional Framework**