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Evaluation of Emergency Preparedness Plans for
International NGOs in Palestine

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Thesis Approval

**Evaluation of Emergency Preparedness Plans for International NGOs in
Palestine**

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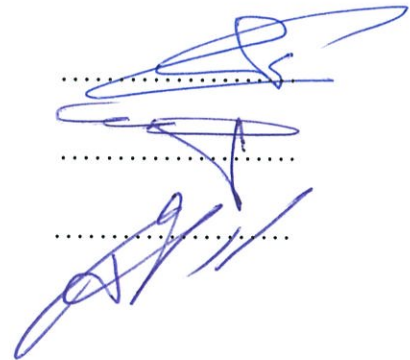
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Declaration

This work was not previously sent or submitted to any institution or university for any academic degree.

I am hereby declaring that this thesis is my original work and it has been written by me in its entirety. I have duly acknowledged all the sources of information which have been used in the thesis.

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Dedication

I would like to express the deepest appreciation to my committee chair Dr Abedalrahman Tamimi for his continuous support and guidance to carry on with this research.

I dedicate this work to my loving family and friends, especially my husband, Marwan, who never defined a limit for success, my parents, whose affection and prayers accompanied me throughout this journey, my son, Basem; the source of my joy and happiness, and my best friend Ghadeer, whose loving spirit will always be with us, may her soul rest in peace.

Abstract

Disasters carry a heavy toll globally. In Palestine, the humanitarian context is unique, and aggravated by complications of the political situation. Emergency preparedness has never been more crucial to lessen the impact of disasters on vulnerable Palestinian communities. This research aims to evaluate Emergency Preparedness Plans (EPPs) for International NGOs in Palestine. The analysis was established upon four main priorities of the United Nation's Sendai framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, along with the development process of Emergency Preparedness Plans. Moreover, in order to feed into future planning for emergencies, the research studies the level of coordination and unified efforts among key stakeholders in emergency preparedness and response.

The data was collected based on interviews that were conducted with ten NGOs under the Inter-Cluster coordination group, as well as the Palestinian Civil Defense's Disaster Management Unit, and the National Committee for Disaster Risk Reduction. Analysis of the data revealed key observations. Firstly, despite high compliance with certain pillars of the Sendai framework, EPPs are not fully effective and can certainly be improved if all pillars are incorporated within. Secondly, the findings also suggest a need for more systematic, inclusive, and institutionalized coordination efforts among different actors in emergency preparedness and response.

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Acronyms

UNISDR	United Nation’s International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
WHO	World Health Organization
Opt	Occupied Palestinian Territory
EPP	Emergency Preparedness Plan
UN OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
ICCG	Inter-Cluster Coordination Group
MEAL	Monitoring , Evaluation, Accountability and Learning
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
UNICEF	United Nation’s International Children’s Emergency Fund
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease of 2019
CAP	Consolidated Appeal
D.R.R	Disaster Risk Reduction
PWD	People With Disabilities
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
CBO	Community Based Organization
IACP	Inter-Agency Contingency Plan
GNP	Gross National Product
UNDAC	United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WFP	World Food Program

HIP	Humanitarian Index Plan
HCT	Humanitarian Coordination Team
DG-ECHO	Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
PA	Palestinian Authority
HNO	Humanitarian Needs Overview

1 Introduction

The humanitarian situation in Palestine has been rapidly deteriorating. It is very much affected by the protracted conflict and the continued Israeli practices against the Palestinian population; from tighter closures, to incursions and destructions accompanied by the ongoing fiscal crisis facing the Palestinian Authority. All of this aggravates the social, economic and political vulnerabilities, and exacerbates impact of disasters, be it manmade or natural. Therefore, effective preparedness and response to disasters/emergencies has never been more important given such complex circumstances.

In Palestine, we have a multitude of NGOs that can help address emergency situations; examples include the World Food Program and the Palestinian Civil Defense, among many others such as UNICEF and Save The Children. In 2008/2009, after the “Operation Cast Lead” aggression launched by the Israeli army on December 27, 2008 in the Gaza Strip, the United Nations introduced the cluster approach in Palestine, in which organizations are divided into 6 clusters of work and coordinate interventions in emergencies accordingly; these clusters are Education, Shelter, Protection, Water and Sanitation (WASH), Health, and Food security. UN OCHA undertakes the overall coordination role between all clusters (Susanna Krüger, 2010).

Having an effective emergency preparedness plan (EPP) requires an effective workforce with skills and knowledge in order to plan and evaluate activities effectively (Chandler, Qureshi, Gebbie, & Morse, 1974). The importance of having a preparedness plan is to mainly protect people and property from damage. Therefore helps to mitigate and lessens the effects of a disaster, by knowing how to react and deal with different forms of such situations

The EPP should address the: who, why, when and where, in order to plan (IFRC, 2007). And most importantly evaluate the effectiveness of the plan. It relies heavily on identifying and on allocating personnel and logistics (supply chain). In which the supply chain analyses requires resources planning, material and equipment requirements planning (Wacker & sheu, 1993).

Recently, there have been global advocacy efforts to incorporate Disaster Risk Reduction (D.R.R) within existing humanitarian and development work. For that purpose, the Sendai framework was introduced by the United Nation's International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR). This framework introduced important concepts that elevated emergency preparedness and response approach among international humanitarian actors.

To achieve effective preparedness and response mechanisms, efforts must be combined on a national level between all relevant stakeholders. This would ensure a unified approach in preparedness, as well as optimum use of resources to avoid duplication of efforts and overlapping.

1.1 Research Problem

Palestine is subject to various types of emergencies; natural and man-made. National capacities for Emergency Preparedness and response are generally weak in most of the countries in the region (AL Dabbeek, 2010)¹. In Palestine, it is especially critical due to the effects of the Israeli occupation that hurdles sustainable development efforts, and increases social, economic, and physical vulnerabilities. This creates a huge need for effective and

¹ An Assessment on Disaster Risk Reduction in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, <https://repository.najah.edu/bitstream/handle/20.500.11888/1849/assessment-disaster-risk-reduction-occupied-palestinian-territory.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

appropriate emergency preparedness and response mechanisms among all development actors; more specifically international NGOs, who are among the main responders to disasters/emergencies, and sources of funding in emergency interventions.

Problem statement: In Palestine, the ill-preparedness for emergencies, and lack of a unified response approach have serious implications on the structural, economical, and human development of the country.

1.2 Research Objective

This research aims at examining the effectiveness of Emergency Preparedness Plans (EPPs) for NGOs in Palestine in case of a disaster/emergency, whether manmade or natural. The study will also measure the level of alignment of EPPs with priorities of the Sendai framework. Moreover, the level of cooperation and integration among international NGOs in their emergency interventions will also be evaluated. This will be essential for the purpose of providing strategic input to feed into future emergency response planning and sustainability of interventions.

Finally, this study will explore the extent to which Emergency Preparedness and response efforts are unified and coordinated among different key actors; namely humanitarian, development and governmental organizations.

1.3 Research Significance

As the humanitarian situation is exacting a heavy toll on Palestinian communities; disasters, whether manmade or natural, constitute an enormous threat that aggravates the already fragile social, economic and political structures. According to UN OCHA, at least 2.1 million Palestinians are experiencing, or at risk of, conflict and violence, displacement and

denial of access to livelihoods, among other threats (UNOCHA, 2020). Humanitarian aid in such a difficult context requires national and unified efforts towards more efficient preparedness and response in emergencies. This research intends to contribute to the emergency planning and response among NGOs and different actors, through attempting to provide strategic input to feed into future preparedness and response processes; it identifies gaps in fulfilling global preparedness standards, as well as highlights the importance of coordinating efforts between different sectors to avoid duplication of efforts and overlapping. This sheds the light on some barriers that hinder reaching the utmost development possible in emergencies.

The barriers that will be identified through this paper will provide the key actors in the humanitarian sector and other relevant stakeholders with a comprehensive view of the situation, and a broader perspective of the contribution each organization can provide, to improve addressing immediate, and longer term needs in emergencies.

1.4 Research Question

The main questions that this research aims to answer are as follows:

1. Is emergency preparedness and response Plans for international NGOs in Palestine effective and adequate?

Sub questions are:

- a. Are Emergency Preparedness Plans (EPPs) for international NGOs in Palestine aligned with the United Nation's Sendai framework?
- b. Are international NGOs in Palestine cooperating in times of crisis and unifying their efforts with other actors to respond to emergencies?

1.5 Research Hypothesis

The level of preparedness to face a national disaster in Palestine is inadequate and insufficient. Moreover, Emergency Preparedness and response lacks holistic and unified efforts on a national level among different actors.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Disasters and Disaster Risk Reduction

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines a disaster as: “a sudden ecologic phenomenon of sufficient magnitude to require external assistance” (WHO, *Disasters and Emergencies*, 2002). And while no disaster definition is accepted universally (Shaluf, 2002), several researchers strived to provide an understanding of the concept. The American College of Emergency Physicians identified disasters as “when the destructive effects of natural or man-made forces overwhelm the ability of a given area or community to meet the demand for health care.” (Zibulewsky, *Defining disaster: The emergency department perspective*, 2001). The Asian Disaster Reduction Centre also defined disasters as “A serious disruption of the functioning of society, causing widespread human, material or environmental losses which exceed the ability of affected society to cope using only its own resources”. All previous definitions describe disasters in terms of its impact on people, or as Elizabeth G. NeSmith articulates in terms of “Cause and Effect” relationships of natural or man-made events that “overwhelm and suspend the productive function of a community or society”, (NeSmith, 2006).

Disasters are divided into 2 basic groups; Natural and Manmade. In his research, Zibulewsky describes natural disasters as earthquakes, volcanoes, hurricanes, floods, and fires, while man-made disasters are war, pollution, nuclear explosions, fires, hazardous materials exposures, explosions, and transportation accidents (Zibulewsky, 2001). Throughout the years, perceptions of disasters have evolved to ensure better understanding and relevance to the current contexts. After the fall of the Soviet Union, Organizations began using the term “Complex Humanitarian Disaster/Emergency” to refer to “relatively acute

situations affecting large civilian populations, usually involving a combination of war or civil strife, food shortages and population displacement, resulting in significant excess mortality” (Salama, 2004).

The term, ‘Complex Emergency’ was initially developed by the United Nations to describe calamities requiring a “system-wide response” (Kagawa, *Emergency Education: a critical review of the field*, 2005). Complex emergencies/disasters are further defined by sharing five common characteristics: declining or collapsed governmental authority, human rights abuses leading to ethnic or religious conflicts; food insecurity leading to mass starvation, “macroeconomic collapse involving hyperinflation, massive unemployment and net decreases in Gross National Product (GNP), as well as mass population movements of displaced people and refugees escaping conflict or searching for food” (Natsios, *NGOs and the UN system in complex humanitarian emergencies: Conflict or cooperation?*, 1995). Therefore, it can be concluded that Complex Emergencies are dynamic with ever-changing necessities and unpredictable events, affecting every aspect of people’s lives.

Recently, there has been an increasing interest towards incorporating Disaster Risk Reduction into humanitarian and development work, which is defined by the United Nation’s International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) as “the concept and practice of reducing disaster risks through systematic efforts to analyze and reduce the causal factors of disasters. In addition to reducing exposure to hazards, lessening vulnerability of people and property, wise management of land and the environment, and improving preparedness for adverse events”.

2.2 Emergency Preparedness and Response

According to WHO's Emergency Strategic Framework, Emergency Preparedness is a continuous process to prepare for and implement priority actions during emergencies through securing funding, establishing effective partnerships, and sustaining political commitment at all levels to work in a collaborative and collective manner (WHO, 2017). To maintain a high level of preparedness for emergencies, researchers define major components which they called "The Preparedness Pyramid". These components include prior planning and establishment of policies, availability of equipment and infrastructure, knowledge and competence of staff to manage the emergency, as well as training of community members who will play a leading role in the response (Adini, 2006).

In General, Emergency Response consists of three main phases: Activation, Implementation and Recovery; Activation usually happens within a short span of time to conduct rapid assessment of the damage and the amount of need. The implementation phase is responding to the urgent needs and conducting rescue missions, while recovery is reassessing the long term impact and helping to mitigate longer term damage. (Zibulewsky, 2001).

Implementation of the right Emergency Response depends on the type of emergencies organizations are facing. Responses to complex emergencies are indisputably complex, requiring external intervention from the international community to empower or recreate government institutions at national and local levels (Kirkby, Relief and Rehabilitation in Complex Emergencies, 1997). Bertrand argues that the main difference in response mechanisms between natural and complex emergencies is the institutional setting within which these emergencies occur (Albala-Bertrand, 2000). Reasons for that, -according to Bertrand- are six essential characteristics that differentiate between responses to complex

emergencies and natural disasters. First of all, the political nature and protraction of violence in complex emergencies makes response more difficult and unstable than that of natural disasters, necessitating an immediate international intervention. Second, in complex emergencies, there is a substantial overlap between emergency, reconstruction and prevention, making the response more unpredictable. Third, the duration of activities in complex emergencies is long term, which means every response attempt should take into consideration its long term repercussions in the development of violence in the inflicted areas, which will be discussed in more detail in the next section. Fourth, the right to access is problematic in complex emergencies; it is more time consuming and it might require negotiations at certain levels, while in the case of natural disasters, access of location, resources and reaching affected people can be better planned and executed. Fifth, the misplacement of resources is more prevalent in complex emergencies as deliberate tactics, as opposed to natural disasters which can be associated to institutional corruption. Finally, reconstruction efforts in complex emergencies are associated with peace and long term development, while in natural disasters it is more of a physical reconstruction of stocks that are in poor conditions.

From the above section, it is evident that complex emergencies affect people's lives in all aspects, altering and interfering with their societal institutions. Consequently, response to this type of emergencies demands major societal interference and a magnitude of deliberate and intense efforts on multiple levels (Drabek, 1985). This is why it becomes absolutely crucial to integrate long term development into relief efforts.

2.3 Emergency and Development

“Relief effort might be more than simply pushing down death rates and saving lives”, as Natsios argued persuasively, highlighting the importance of engaging long term development efforts into relief programs among humanitarian actors (Natsios, 1995). This means, as Kirkby interprets it, that Emergency Response goes beyond relief efforts, such as service delivery and political lobbying, it is more about enhancing people’s quality of life; considering the specific needs, concerns and perspectives of women, children and men, as well as ensuring its incorporation in decision making processes while planning and developing programs that targets them (Kirkby, 1997).

Traditionally, relief efforts were mostly logistically-based and implemented through delivery of tangible commodities, with little focus on longer term developmental interventions that aim at enhancing social and economic realities for communities. However, NGOs realized the importance of incorporating developmental components in their relief work, in line with global policies and trends -such as United Nations Models for Disaster Risk Reduction, which will be discussed later in depth-. These components include focusing on agriculture, microenterprise, primary health care and reconstruction (Natsios, 1995). Later on, the concept of social, political and economic change started to surface. During the 1980s, NGOs began focusing on social and economic transformation through advocacy - in the form of campaigning, development education, political lobbying and public opinion forming-. Also, most NGOs have attempted to incorporate gender justice in their programs. All of this revolutionized NGOs’ approach to development, affecting the approach organizations practice their relief work as well (Natsios, 1995).

There are principles for development and relief work that Eade and Williams stated in their research. Those include people centeredness: placing people’s needs at the very core of

the interventions as both development and relief work are meant to enhance their lives. Second, Human rights: This is through promoting and incorporating human rights into development and relief. The third principle is participation: empowering people through using a participatory approach in all aspects of relief and development work. The final principle is Risk: taking the associated risks into consideration when implementing emergency and development programs (Eade & Williams, 1994, p. 18).

For decades, the transition from relief to development has been a challenge on multiple levels, especially in complex emergencies. First of all, as Munslow states in his article; peace keeping efforts that accompany humanitarian assistance is extremely sensitive and may in fact complicate complex emergencies further, leaving a negative impact and in some cases adding “fuel to the conflict” (Munslow, 1999). Those complexities are especially prevalent in the absence of a government structure in the inflicted areas. In this case, international NGOs carry the responsibility to provide humanitarian assistance, as well as establish adequate conditions for rehabilitation, reconstruction and development (Kirkby, 1997).

Another challenge in linking relief efforts to development is the competition amongst NGOs themselves or as Eade and Williams describe them “middle aged NGOs”, who became concerned about being faster and bigger than everyone else as opposed to securing funds to establish longer term developmental programs, especially in the current times where success is measured in quantitative terms rather than the long term and “less photogenic” process of development (Eade & Williams, 1994).

In addition to the aforementioned challenges, there is also the culture and preferences of donors themselves. According to Smith and Maxwell, the problem lies in the cultures,

practices and policies of donors, manifested in short term funding for longer term needs, as well as inefficient allocation of resources among countries and sectors. This causes scarcity of resources, hence more fierce competition between NGOs to receive funds (Buchanan-Smith, 1994). Moreover, according to Natsios, for donors, it is more appealing to fund highly visible humanitarian emergencies, portraying photos of starving children and helpless communities (Natsios, 1995). All of this shifted funding resources away from sustainable development programs towards a shorter term relief and humanitarian aid.

Several researchers developed practical suggestions to ensure a more successful transition from relief to development; Kagawa emphasized the importance of “education in emergencies” and described it as a fourth pillar of humanitarian in crisis after food and water, shelter and health care. If education in emergencies is provided to people, governments and institutions, there would be adequate preparation for emergencies, more empowered nations, thus integration of long term development (Kagawa, 2005).

Also, more research is required to better link between relief and development, focusing on “institutional issues, conflict and post conflict situations, calculations of costs and benefits, monitoring and evaluation, as well as knowledge expansion on what works, when, where and why?” (Buchanan-Smith, 1994).

2.4 Role of United Nations and International NGOs in Emergencies

In times of emergencies, local populations of inflicted areas are usually the first responders, in addition to local governments who are responsible for provision of basic needs as well as assistance to the population (Zibulewsky, 2001). Also, non-governmental organizations play a major role in emergency response. In complex emergencies, their role is crucial, given the absence of a government structure, which further complicates the response in such contexts.

The role of UN agencies in emergency response is of great importance. After the cold war, the UN system became more political and focused on peace keeping processes, in addition to its humanitarian programs implemented through the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Food Programme (WFP) and their coordination under the Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) (White, 1999). Each of these agencies perform a unique role in line with five components in the humanitarian field: Adhere to humanitarian principles, promote values and standards, coordinate and facilitate the efforts of humanitarian actors, assess the needs of the affected populations, monitor and evaluate the impact of the operations carried out continuously” (Kent, *International Humanitarian Crises: Two Decades before and Two Decades beyond*, 2004, p. 265).

International NGOs have also been on the frontline in delivering humanitarian assistance during emergencies. They specialize in food distribution, shelter, water and sanitation, as well as medical care, in addition to rehabilitation efforts in the recovery phase aimed at bringing communities of inflicted areas to a minimum level of self-sufficiency (Natsios, 1995). According to the researcher, the large development organizations (CARE, Catholic Relief Services, World Vision, Save the Children, and Oxfam/ UK) have an additional advantage of running development programs and staff located in countries before an emergency outbreak. This establishes familiarity with the culture, partnership relationships with different stakeholders as well as familiarity with existing development programs of the country (Natsios, 1995).

Historically, the relationship between NGOs and UN agencies in emergencies has fluctuated. UN agencies perceived NGOs as subcontractors implementing their role in a

subordinate position rather than equal partners. This caused resentment by NGOs when treated as subordinates and by UN agencies when NGOs do not perform their jobs the way UN agencies expect (Kent, *International Humanitarian Crises: Two Decades before and Two Decades beyond*, 2004). In general, NGOs perform their relief work at the grassroots level, empowering people to work collectively towards their social and economic rights that should be provided by government institutions. However, NGOs' focus on community based, grassroots level has driven them further away from dealing with issues on the national level such as policy, governance, economic reform and planning. UN agencies -on the other hand- play a crucial role on national and international levels. However, when it comes to advocacy, UN staff is hesitant to publicly criticize a member state during a civil war, in an attempt to remain impartial in performing their humanitarian role, while NGOs have more space for criticism, as part of their normal advocacy programs (Natsios, 1995).

From every disaster experience, there are many lessons to be learned that both UN and NGOs should incorporate and update in their response to emergencies. The most important one is to consider long term implications on emergency interventions, especially in complex emergencies, as even the "purist emergency neutrality may add fuel to the conflict", as argued by Drabek in his research where he differentiated between response to different emergencies (Drabek, 1985). In other cases, maintaining neutrality is of great importance, especially by UN agencies. This can be applied in the case of Rwanda in the beginning of the 1990s, and how distributing aid to one community triggered internal conflict and violence that resulted in tremendous loss of lives (J.Farer, 1996, p. 4).

Over the past two decades, it is notable that the role of UN agencies has been strengthened; it became more efficient and coordinated during emergency response. Logistics and delivery systems have improved, as well as the systematization and coordination of

response efforts among different humanitarian actors (Kent, International Humanitarian Crises: Two Decades before and Two Decades beyond, 2004).

2.5 The Sphere Project and Code of Conduct

After the Rwandan genocide in 1994, it became essential to establish guidelines and unified principles to monitor NGO operations in the world of humanitarian aid, and since the field of emergency response is considerably decentralized, it is important to use these standards as baseline for effective aid in a variety of contexts. This is exactly what The Red Cross and Red Crescent Society's (IFRC) Code of Conduct for Disaster Operations provides (Coles, 2017).

The Code of Conduct involves 10 rules for disaster response programs, and they are: 1) the humanitarian imperative comes first. 2) Aid is given regardless of the race; creed or nationality of the recipients and without adverse distinction of any kind; Aid priorities are calculated on the basis of need alone. 3) Aid will not be used to further a particular political or religious standpoint. 4) We shall endeavor not to act as instruments of government foreign policy. 5) We shall respect culture and custom 6) We shall attempt to build disaster response on local capacities. 7) Ways shall be found to involve program beneficiaries in the management of relief aid. 8) Relief aid must strive to reduce future vulnerabilities to disaster as well as meeting basic needs. 9) We hold ourselves accountable to both those we seek to assist and those from whom we accept resources. 10) In our information, publicity and advertising activities, we shall recognize disaster victims as dignified humans, not hopeless objects (IFRC, IFRC, 1994).

Several scholars attempted to bridge the gap between research and practice in regards to the Code of Conduct. To ensure proper operationalization of the Code, these principles need to be institutionalized; examples include incorporating it into the reports of the organization, and develop internal guidelines or policies to link the code's principles with the organization's own values and standards (Hilhorst, 2005). Other means of effective implementation of guidelines include developing an assessment tool to measure performance of the organizations against the code on a regular basis (Coles, 2017)

Another important reference guiding NGOs' humanitarian response is The Sphere Project; it is a book of charter developed by IFRC and a group of international NGOs. The Sphere project provides minimum standards in humanitarian response, as well as expectations for meeting the needs of people in an emergency situation (Griekspoor, 2001). This includes specifying the minimum standards in health action, water supply sanitation and hygiene promotion, food security and nutrition shelter, settlement and non-food items, in which a range of key actions, key indicators and guidance notes are identified to follow (Gostelow, 1999). What differentiates the Sphere Project is that many of the standards are much more specific and situational dependent (e.g., the amount of water per day, per person, number of latrines for 1000 people) (Coles, 2017).

2.6 Emergency Preparedness Plans (EPPs)

Response to different emergencies is very much affected by the level of preparedness and planning within organizations/ humanitarian actors. This is what the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) emphasized as "Effective contingency planning should lead to timely and effective disaster-relief operations" (IFRC, 2007). Planning involves making decisions in advance about management of human and financial

resources, coordination and communication procedures for timely and effective humanitarian aid during emergencies (IFRC, 2012).

Emergency planning prior to an emergency outbreak is of great importance within and across organizations. The Inter-Agency Contingency Planning Guidelines for Humanitarian Assistance (IACP) defines Emergency Planning as "Actions taken in anticipation of an emergency to facilitate rapid, effective and appropriate response to the situation" (Bloom & Menefee, 1994, p. 223). Or as simply put by the WHO, it is a basic response system to a dramatic event (WHO, 2017)

According to Eriksson, the on-going planning process, and the reflection of its principles result in the translation of vulnerability into a workable and practical emergency response (Eriksson, 2009). And hence the definition of Emergency Response Plans (EPPs) is "a coordinated set of protocols for managing an adverse event, whether expected or untoward, in the future (Alexander D. , 2002). The written plan provides a documentation of response measures and protocols produced and rehearsed by the planning process. Therefore, written plans become living documents, to be referred to, revised and modified in an ever changing environment. (Perry & Lindell, 2003).

Given the prevalent lack of uniformity, consistency and quality control in emergency planning (Eriksson, 2009), there needs to be guidelines, models and processes for developing, testing, and utilizing emergency plans. For that purpose, several researchers strived to provide standards, models and principles to guide the planning process and produce successful EPPs. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies breakdown emergency plans into 5 stages: prepare, analyze, develop, implement and review (IFRC, 2012). (Alexander D. , 2005) Alexander went further in his analysis to demonstrate the importance of standardizing emergency planning to help achieve minimum levels of

accountability, compatibility and functionality. In order to help planners and organizations measure the effectiveness of a plan, thus make necessary adjustments when needed. In his research, the criteria for an emergency planning standard include but are not limited to conformity to the laws on emergency and disaster management on national and regional levels, specificity about the extent and limitations of its jurisdiction, compatibility with existing planning requirements at other levels of government and neighbouring jurisdictions, as well as setting clear overall objectives that are based on a thorough needs assessment in the field, specifying roles and activities of every participant in the emergency operations. Finally, seeking integration and embracing provisions of the private sector.

While Alexander's synthesis is detailed and specific, (Bloom & Menefee, 1994) suggested a more generic approach to guide the emergency planning process; it starts by identifying contingent events, assessing the impact of each event, specifying trigger point for each event, developing strategies and tactics to respond to major events, assessing the impact of the plan and finally evaluating the feasibility of its implementation. Other researchers addressed emergency planning in much broader terms, and studied the relationship of emergency planning with other practices and its impact on the effectiveness of the plan; such analysis was highlighted by (Pearce, 2003), who argued that the success of the emergency planning process lies in its integration with community planning, as involving the public ensures both acceptability and credibility of the plan,. Pearce discussed that disaster management planning must shift its focus from response and recovery to mitigation, and in order to do that, both community planning and public participation must be integrated, resulting in sustainable hazard mitigation, which, according to (Mileti, 1999) includes (1) maintaining and enhancing environmental quality (2) maintaining and enhancing people's quality of life, (3) fostering local resilience and responsibility, (4) recognizing that vibrant

local economies are essential, (5) ensuring inter- and intra-generational equity (i.e. not destroying a future generation's opportunity by allowing the present generation to exhaust resources), and (6) adopting local consensus building. All of this emphasizes the importance of considering emergency planning as a collaborative effort, and ensuring the active participation of all relevant stakeholders, whose capacities must be increased to manage their own environment and resources as well as decide what they are willing to lose and gain in future emergencies/disasters (Pearce, 2003). And so in more simple words, an emergency response plan needs to address who is going to do what, what resources need to be allocated, where the work will be located, and who is the point of contact for particular tasks (Tanga & Shenb, 2015).

Several researchers criticized emergency planning and EPPs, some of them argued that emergency planning process is not rigid and it needs flexibility to respond to an enormous catalogue of requirements (Kartez & Lindell, 1990). Others stated that time and energy required to prepare plans are wasteful, especially that events may not occur in the first place, and that plans can be unrealistic and inaccurate (Bloom & Menefee, 1994). Bloom and Manefee argue that despite having valid points in the criticism towards emergency planning, it is without a doubt, that its benefits far outweigh the criticisms, and that these processes have been used successfully in many fields. In today's rapidly changing environment, it is essential that -before an emergency outbreak- organizations position themselves strategically and quickly to minimize negative impact of future emergencies/disasters.

NGOs demonstrate tremendous capacity in emergency response planning and development of EPPs. First, NGOs can operate closely with communities as local partners, and be participant in development plans which gives them an advantage to respond to people's needs. Another important reason is that NGOs have higher operational flexibility as

they can be able to respond in a quicker and easier manner, and lastly NGOs work for the needy and most vulnerable populations (UN, 2006). According to an OECD report, the challenges of emergency response revolve around the following: the importance of effective monitoring and surveillance, planning and coordination of emergency responses, managing the media, containing damage propagation once disaster has struck, and international coordination of emergency operations (OECD, 2003).

2.7 Emergency Preparedness in Palestine and NGOs' Role

More than 50% of the Palestinian population lives in what is classified as "hazard-prone" areas, (Ahmad El Atrash, 2008). This is due to many factors that characterize the Palestinian context and increase its vulnerability. The protracted Israeli occupation is the main driver of humanitarian vulnerability. This is manifested in the continuing conflict and practices of the military occupation that perpetuate outbreaks of violence, area C restrictions, demolitions, and displacement as well as the illegal blockade on Gaza. This creates significant humanitarian needs in the country and amplifies existing risks (IFRC, 2021)

According to United Nation's mission report (UNDAC, 2014), Palestine is considered vulnerable to natural disasters including earthquakes, floods, droughts, and landslides. Despite the low probability, earthquakes are considered a major hazard given its severe adverse impacts. Other natural disasters include -according to the researcher- the Red Sea-Dead Sea Conveyance that will possibly bring about two billion cubic meters of saline water from the Red Sea to the Dead Sea which could be a huge source of induced earthquakes (IFRC, 2021). Such disasters result in huge losses and hinder economic progress in developed and undeveloped countries alike. In Palestine, the water shortages, the environmental degradation, and the land and natural resources' depletion, are amplified by the political

situation and protracted conflict, and perceived to be “substantial anthropogenic disasters currently affecting the Palestinian people”.

Primarily, the Palestinian Authority is responsible for providing core services to the Palestinians. However, as argued in the Humanitarian Implementation Plan (HIP), assistance is delivered sporadically, as the Israeli occupation limits access to deliver basic services both in the West Bank and Gaza (ECHO, Humanitarian Implementation Plan (HIP), 2018). For example, the illegal blockade in Gaza is a major factor in restricting assistance delivery. On the other hand, access and control restrictions in area C causes limited emergency response and development efforts among both governmental and non-governmental organizations. Finally, Palestinian governance, the fiscal crisis, and the intra-Palestinian divide continue to hinder emergency preparedness and response efforts. (ECHO, 2020).

In Spring 2020, the Palestinian Authority (PA) declared a state of emergency due to the outbreak of the COVID 19 pandemic, and despite being praised for handling the first wave of the pandemic, the PA’s inability to develop a more multi-faceted response in the consequent waves as well as the lack of unified efforts in responding to the pandemic was an indicator of decades of mismanagement and misuse of resources throughout the years (AlKhaldi, 2020). Another weakness as found by the researcher in some fields of government organizations include Emergency Preparedness itself as well as limited resources and capacity (Elmasry & Bakri, 2018). HIP highlights further weaknesses within the Palestinian context manifested in the lack of control by Palestinians over their own lands and resources, as well as the inefficient and non-transparent system of land administration by the PA, all of which undermine sustainable development programs in the Palestinian Territory (IFRC, 2021)

Despite the weaknesses in the government's Emergency Preparedness and Response in handling the pandemic as mentioned above, it is without a doubt that the assaults on the Gaza Strip showed improvement in the emergency preparedness of the Palestinian health system in particular throughout the years (Majdi Ashour, 2012). This improved preparedness, however, should be accompanied by unified efforts among different sectors of the Palestinian community to stop the Israeli violence and end the isolation of the Gaza Strip through international efforts (Ahmad El Atrash, 2008)

The international community continues to play an important role in responding to the chronic humanitarian needs in both Gaza and the West Bank, despite reduced donor engagement and U.S. withdrawal of funding in the region (ECHO, 2020). Among these efforts are The Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO)'s Integrated Analysis Framework (IAF) for 2018-2019, which identified humanitarian needs for the West Bank and Gaza. In 2021, UN OCHA developed the Inter-Agency Contingency Planning document that provided a common strategic planning framework for the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) and humanitarian actors in case of a large-scale emergency in the West Bank and Gaza. The document includes potential scenarios, their impact operational consequences, as well as coordination and response arrangements. Scenarios are expected humanitarian needs emerging as a result of natural or man-made disasters based on the needs already identified and addressed by the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) and Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt). The document also presents preparedness measures at both the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG) and cluster levels, while details are available in the cluster-specific contingency plans (OCHA, 2020) .

Finally, the European Joint Strategy (EJS) introduced the “Nexus” framework in support of Palestine’s 2021-2024 - *Towards a democratic and accountable Palestinian State*. High level donor agencies are currently working to operationalize the “Triple Nexus” for “greater alignment and complementarities of humanitarian-development-peace building planning and programming”, which - simply put- promotes connecting relief with rehabilitation and recovery (RRR), adding the peace-building component to it. In Palestine, the operationalization of the nexus according to the European Union requires the dedication of all the key stakeholders, at policy and operational levels (AICS, 2020).

Emergency Preparedness and Response in Palestine -whether performed by Governmental, non-Governmental or UN agencies, undergoes serious operational constraints; those include access/humanitarian space to deliver the response, as well as partners’ presence and capacity, all affecting humanitarian actors' capacity to operate in an efficient manner (ECHO, 2020).

Politicized funding of donors is another constraint towards delivering successful response programs. UNRWA is a prevalent example of that; the UN agency for Palestine Refugees has been facing financial difficulties due the US decision to withdraw funding in 2018. That year, Gulf countries helped fund the agency programs to continue delivering core services in health, education, and food distribution. However, in the following years, fundraising efforts proved to be more challenging, resulting in a significant financial deficit for the Agency (ECHO, 2020)

2.8 Sendai Framework

As the concepts of Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction are starting to incorporate within existing humanitarian work, the United Nations office for Disaster Risk

Reduction (UNDRR) adopted the “Sendai Framework”, which was developed at the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai, Japan, in 2015 (UNDRR, 2015). The Sendai framework aims to achieve “the substantial reduction of disaster risk and losses in lives, livelihoods and health and in the economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets of persons, businesses, communities and countries” (Helen K. Green, 2019). The Sendai Framework is connected to other major UN landmark agreements of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically but not limited to the Paris Climate Conference which addresses issues of climate change within different policy areas (Souza Boeno, 2017).

The Sendai framework developed seven targets and four global priorities for action to prevent new and reduce existing disaster risks: (i) Understanding disaster risk; (ii) Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk; (iii) Investing in disaster reduction for resilience and; (iv) Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response, and to "Build Back Better" in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction (UNDRR, 2015)

Several researchers studied the Sendai framework closely, some talked about its strengths and benefits, while others discussed gaps in the understanding and implementation of the framework. Among those who stated its strengths are Helen and Oliver, who argued that the framework provided a rare opportunity to promote optimum use of available resources to address mortality data gaps in order to “facilitate monitoring global population” and provide better protection to prevent more loss of lives. The researchers state that this framework also represents the first international attempt to systematically measure the effectiveness of “disaster-impact reduction” to make evidence-based decisions and inform policies. (Helen K. Green, 2019).

Furthermore, researchers emphasized the importance of considering the needs of people with disabilities, and despite being one of very few frameworks that integrates the needs of People with Disabilities (PWDs), there is still room for improvement in the understanding and operationalization of the Sendai framework in relation to the needs of PWDs. For example, discrepancies of the definitions of disaster or disability may in fact increase marginalization. Therefore, additional studies on the global investments made are encouraged to share lessons learned in relation to the inclusion of people with disabilities (Bennett, 2020).

According to the researcher, in order to accelerate implementation of the Sendai framework, there needs to be more effective involvement, experience, and resources of all non-government stakeholders to enforce disaster risk reduction and resilience building. Despite the fact that governments are mainly responsible for preventing and reducing risk, the Sendai Framework promotes that all stakeholders including the private sector, non-government organizations, academia, civil society, etc. contribute to this regard. Therefore, UNDRR endorses an “all-of-society engagement and partnerships” (Yuki Matsuoka, 2021).

Finally, given that achieving the global targets and priorities of the Sendai framework requires mounting tasks, governments should engage the civil society, especially international NGOs, as there are many roles for them to play under the Sendai Framework for disaster risk reduction. According to Jonatan A. Lassa, NGOs have unique vision and flexibility that open up new prospects for DRR actions as well as the integration of minority groups in DRR decision-making and so on. NGOs have been trying to innovate in the DRR sector by promoting community awareness about disaster reduction and the role insurance can play in the matter. Unfortunately, worldwide, NGOs have been hesitant to promote private sector investment, particularly disaster insurance and other fiscal means to achieving resilience. In his research, Lassa presented a practical implementation of the framework’s priorities among NGOs; he highlighted several key discussion points within each action priority (Lassa, 2018).

This research adopted a similar approach to evaluate implementation of priorities among INGOs operating in Palestine.

3 Methodology

3.1 General Information

The methodology adopted to conduct this research is qualitative in nature. The reason behind choosing a qualitative method over quantitative is that evaluations of planning approaches and response efforts for NGOs require a qualitative means in order to gain insight, primarily through interviews which permit for more understanding and in-depth information to be gathered. In addition, in interviews, more questions arise within the course of the interview, and hence more details are given that are useful to strengthening the research.

Furthermore, in addition to gathering secondary data through a literature review, the primary methods of data collection were through a set of interviews. These interviews were conducted with a selected number of NGOs, the Palestinian Civil Defense as well as the National Committee for Disaster Risk Reduction (D.R.R) under the Prime Minister's authority. This will -in addition to evaluating preparedness and response for NGOs- provide evidence on the level of cooperation among various sectors in the country, and whether or not these actors have a unified vision in their emergency intervention mechanism.

The criteria in which the NGOs interviewed were chosen upon were narrowed down to:

- The NGO being a member of a humanitarian cluster, under the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG)
- The NGO being an international organization/actor.

It is worth mentioning that in Palestine, emergency interventions among NGOs are mainly coordinated through clusters, and their plans are derived from the Inter-Agency Contingency Plan (IACP) developed by UN OCHA. Some of the organizations interviewed are members of two or three clusters. For example, UNICEF is a member of the WASH and Education clusters. This allowed for more valuable input to be added to the analysis in various fields of work.

In addition, a vital interview was conducted with the unit of disaster management, under the Palestinian Civil Defense. The importance behind choosing it is to study the concept of disaster management as implemented by a Palestinian entity, in order to evaluate the level of harmony with that of other humanitarian actors. Moreover, since the Palestinian Civil Defense undertakes the responsibility of responding to natural disasters, as stated and enforced by the Palestinian law, it was important to evaluate the clarity of designated roles and responsibilities within the disaster management unit, in order to study the effectiveness of cooperation and coordination with other humanitarian actors in times of disasters/emergencies.

Among the remaining organizations, five are members of more than one cluster, and the remaining 3 were members of the WASH, Protection or Health clusters. Moreover, to understand the dynamics of preparedness and interventions on a cluster level, the WASH cluster Coordinator was interviewed to gain a broader perspective of coordination efforts among organizations working in the same sector. Finally, UN OCHA was interviewed, which is responsible for coordination of humanitarian interventions in emergencies across all 6 clusters. All of this enabled for deep insight using the bottom up approach in understanding emergency preparedness among organizations; it started with interviewing members of different clusters to understand their approach on the ground, it then leveled up to achieve

broader perspective from a cluster coordinator, then captured the essence of humanitarian aid in emergencies through studying coordination mechanisms between different clusters, under the Inter-Agency Contingency Plan (IACP) developed and led by UN OCHA.

The list of questions for the interview process was divided into two parts². Part one had a set of general questions about the construction of emergency preparedness plans in terms of scenarios, context, development and objectives. While the second part was more specific to include the four main priorities of the Sendai Framework; it was divided into 4 sub-topics; each representing one of the four priorities of the Sendai Framework. Within these questions, the level of coordination between different actors was incorporated.

There were 3 different sets of interview questions targeting all 12 interviewees; the first set of questions targeted 9 organizations that have EPPs and are implementers of emergency response. These questions were the main questions that the findings were built upon. Another set of questions was targeted to the UN OCHA; these were similar to the first set. However, questions were edited to better consider the coordination role of the UN OCHA, rather than an implementing role. Finally, another set of questions was developed solely for the Palestinian Civil Defense and the National Committee for D.R.R. These questions were mainly to study the level of coordination in emergency preparedness and response efforts, as well as incorporation of D.R.R on a national level.

Moreover, in the analysis stage of the research process, content analysis was used to interpret the collected data. Through content analysis the responses gathered from the different interviews were analyzed and compared with one another as well as what was

² See index for the set of questions

mentioned in the literature review which led to the implications in the findings and conclusions.

Nonetheless, there were limitations and difficulties faced throughout the process of data collection. The biggest problem was time constraint; the difficulties in arranging appointments for interviews with some vital organizations consumed a lot of time and energy. Another limitation was the insufficient literature about the emergency preparedness and response implemented in the Palestinian context.

3.2 Interviewed Organizations

3.2.1 Action Against Hunger- Spain (ACF):

It is a nongovernmental organization, non-political, non-religious, non-profit organization that was created in 1979 in France. Its aim is to save lives by combating hunger, physical suffering and the associated distress that endanger the lives of vulnerable people children, women, and men. The organization intervenes in natural or man-made disasters, social/economic breakdown that places groups of people in extremely vulnerable positions and in situations where survival depends on humanitarian aid (Accion Contra el Hambre, 2022).

3.2.2 Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED)

It is a non-governmental, non-political, and non-profit organization that works in 37 countries responding to emergencies and crisis situations.

ACTED has been present in the West Bank since 2007 and in Gaza since 2008, The NGO supports the most vulnerable Palestinians through development initiatives to empower women, youth, and unemployed graduates in the sectors of digital technologies, tourism and

social entrepreneurship. ACTED also responds to shocks such as natural disasters by providing cash and material assistance to affected households (ACTED, 2022).

3.2.3 MSF

Médecins Sans Frontières, sometimes rendered in English as Doctors Without Borders, is an international humanitarian medical non-governmental organization of French origin best known for its projects in conflict zones and in countries affected by endemic diseases. In Palestine, MSF provides medical and psychological assistance to people affected by the ongoing conflict in Palestine, runs mobile clinics to provide healthcare in remote communities, in addition to providing surgical and post-surgical assistance to victims of burns and trauma in Gaza for the past 15 years (MSF Spain, 2022).

3.2.4 ActionAid

It is a global federation consisting of 45 branches in the world, working for the purpose of ending poverty and injustice. It was founded as a charity in 1972. In the 1990s, the organization adopted a human rights-based approach to development. Its work falls into four broad areas: women, politics and economics, land and climate, and emergencies. All with a particular focus on women's rights. In Palestine, ActionAid has been working in Palestine since 2007. Areas of work were mainly women and youth empowerment, as well as emergency response (ActionAid, 2022).

3.2.5 Oxfam

It is a British founded confederation consisting of 21 independent charitable organizations that aims to end poverty and injustice. Its main areas of focus are poverty eradication, disaster relief, advocacy, and policy research and migration advocacy. In Palestine, Oxfam works with a range of partners to help communities to earn a living and to

ensure that they have access to food and water as well as education. The organization also responds to humanitarian crises and helps to build a strong civil society so that human rights will be upheld, (Oxfam, 2022).

3.2.6 Save The Children

The Save the Children Fund, commonly known as Save the Children, was established in the United Kingdom in 1919 to improve the lives of children through better education, health care, and economic opportunities, as well as providing emergency aid in natural disasters, war, and other conflicts. In Palestine, Save The Children works with and for children in Palestine to promote their rights, enhance their participation opportunities, and improve their living conditions (Save the Children, 2022).

3.2.7 ICRC

The International Committee of the Red Cross is a humanitarian organization based in Geneva, Switzerland. The ICRC is an independent, neutral organization ensuring humanitarian protection and assistance for victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence. It takes action in response to emergencies and at the same time promotes respect for international humanitarian law and its implementation in national law (ICRC, 2022).

3.2.8 UNICEF

The United Nations Children's Fund is a United Nations agency responsible for providing humanitarian and developmental aid to children worldwide. In Palestine, UNICEF works to uphold the rights of children to access services and protection, from early childhood through to adolescence. Their objective is to ensure that every child in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, irrespective of background or circumstance, has an equal chance to fulfil their potential (UNICEF, 2022).

3.2.9 UN OCHA

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs is a United Nations body established in December 1991 by the General Assembly to strengthen the international response to complex emergencies and natural disasters. In Palestine, OCHA coordinates emergency response to save lives and protect people in humanitarian crises. The organization also advocates for effective and principled humanitarian action by all, for all (UN OCHA, 2022).

3.2.10 WASH Cluster

The Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Cluster-state of Palestine was activated in January 2009 to be responsible for the overall coordination of the WASH humanitarian planning and response in the West Bank and Gaza (relief web, 2021).

4 Discussion

4.1 Development Process of EPPs:

All organizations interviewed have similar EEP objectives. 80% reported that their objectives are to respond to people's needs during emergencies effectively and efficiently, in order to minimize the impact of disasters and loss of lives, especially in marginalized communities. In addition to reaching as many impacted people as possible and providing safe access to basic services. Only one organization has specifically added empowering communities in their objective to be better prepared for emergencies. The remaining 20% of respondents had broader and somewhat different EPP objectives; these were the UN OCHA and the WASH cluster; this is due to the nature of their role which is mainly coordination of interventions and efforts across clusters, as their objectives involve the creation of a strategic framework and a unified vision for all humanitarian actors in times of emergencies. 60% of organizations interviewed have one combined EPP for the West Bank and Gaza, taking into consideration the contextual differences between both areas, which require continuous analysis and update of scenarios. The remaining 40% have two separate EPPs for the West Bank and Gaza, these organizations believe it is crucial to separate plans given the contextual and political differences that guide the response mechanism in each area; such differences include the coordination structure between humanitarian actors and authorities, as there are two different authorities with two different approaches to manage crises and emergencies. Moreover, access to beneficiaries and resources is more difficult in the West Bank than in Gaza, due to Area C restrictions, frequent checkpoints as well as settlements' presence adjacent to the Palestinian localities, while in Gaza, access of personnel, humanitarian aid and reconstruction materials for emergency response to the coastal strip is a challenge to begin with. This is due to the illegal Israeli blockade of air, sea and land borders imposed since

2007. However, with proper coordination with authorities, access to beneficiaries, warehouses and shelters is less challenging than it is in the West Bank. All of this -according to respondents- requires having separate EPPs for the West Bank and Gaza with detailed context analysis and scenarios, along with response mechanisms to perform accordingly.

When preparing for emergencies, organizations follow international standards that guide their approach in emergencies; 100% of organizations interviewed follow Core Humanitarian Standards and the Sphere minimum Standards, these organizations also emphasized the fact that this is all in line with the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG) initiated by UN OCHA, these standards include commitments and indicators specifically tailored to fit the Palestinian context. However, some organizations use Core Humanitarian Standards to develop further guidelines and Standards in particular areas, such as ActionAid, where the federation developed more detailed principles to focus on one marginalized group or aspect of work during emergencies, for example, the Sexual Harassment, Exploitation and Abuse (SHEA) Policy, which gives special attention to women and children, whether in developmental work or in times of emergencies.

In regard to the Monitoring and Evaluation, 90% of the organizations interviewed monitor their emergency response interventions through their Monitoring and Evaluation departments, or as some organizations call it the Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) departments. After activation of the emergency plan, organizations monitor progress of the response plan through conducting regular review sessions to measure implementation against developed result indicators, in order to determine strengths and weaknesses, thus immediately implement corrective measures accordingly. These organizations state that the frequency of these reviews depends on the nature of the emergency itself, and their specific roles in the response; for example, UNICEF, in the case

of violence escalation, conducts reviews in the beginning of the emergency every 2 to 3 days, until the situation becomes clearer in terms of distribution of roles and responsibilities, available stockpile, staff capacity, partner capacity, agreements, resources and allocated budgets, as at the start of any emergency- especially during the rapid assessment phase- information of the situation, risks, impacted beneficiaries is still ambiguous, which is why response needs to be reviewed as frequently as possible. After that, review of the response becomes less frequent, some organizations conduct monthly reviews, while others do it quarterly, as for the WASH cluster, the review time is every 90 days. The remaining 10% of the sample depend on the cluster level review and do not conduct a response review of their own.

The plans are updated when needed. For example, when the COVID 19 emergency occurred, all of these organizations updated their plans and scenarios to include a widespread pandemic, which was never accounted for in the past. They also update the plan and scenarios yearly or every 2 years.

Scenarios of EPPs were the same for all organizations; 100% of respondents have scenarios that include: a) escalation of violence and political unrest, this applies to external escalation of violence in Gaza, and violence in Area C resulting from practices of the Israeli occupation and settlers, including mass demolition of properties. This also includes internal unrest resulting from intra-Palestinian division. b) natural disasters such as earthquakes across the country as well as floods in Gaza, and c) widespread pandemics; this scenario was recently added after the COVID 19 crisis. The difference between scenarios stated by the organizations interviewed lies in the prioritization of these issues; some organizations focus more on the escalation of violence in Gaza, while others focus on mass demolitions in Area

C. All of this depends on the organization's expertise and scope of work, as well as the severity of the emergency, each organization evaluate and scales those priorities accordingly.

4.2 Application of the Sendai Framework

The following section discusses application of the Sendai Framework principles among interviewed organizations in their emergency response approach. For a more accurate analysis, discussion in this section will be divided into four components, representing the four main priorities and principles of the Sendai framework, attached in appendix 1.

4.2.1 Priority 1: Understanding Disaster Risk

Description of this priority- according to the official document of the Sendai framework- focuses on information collection and sources, as well as analysis approach of the context to identify associated risks, in addition to information dissemination and segregation. This is for the purpose of ensuring risk awareness among all stakeholders, community participation and involvement in the process, gender responsiveness, as well as including minorities and marginalized groups to the extent possible:

Organizations interviewed depend on two main sources of information; secondary information which is usually either government reports containing national figures and information, or reports from credible organizations like the UN; such reports are usually produced using global planning and assessment tools developed by the United Nations. NGOs, depending on those tools and assessments, contribute to the information collection continuously, which is all consolidated in the Humanitarian needs overview; the document in which organizations extract information from to respond to emergencies.

In addition to secondary reports, all organizations interviewed conduct their own needs assessment, either by their own staff or through external consultants. This is usually conducted at field level in coordination with local partners in the working areas. Only 20% of the organizations interviewed established emergency preparedness committees. These committees are trained to develop Disaster Risk Reduction plans, where they identify risks associated with a particular locality, along with assessing impact and mitigation measures of these risks.

Information collection and needs assessment conducted by interviewed organizations all include the local community's involvement at some level; 70% of organizations conduct information collection in coordination with local partners, and the remaining 30% form working groups which ultimately use information from the field to formulate the plan. However, only 30% involve other stakeholders in the development stage of the EPP itself, the remaining organizations involve only senior level staff to combine, develop and finalize the EPP. The data is then shared and circulated among all relevant stakeholders unless it contains confidential information.

Regardless of the source of information, data segregation is not consistent, and is limited to certain levels and sectors. Either way, segregation of data is not followed by a gender analysis or disability analysis. As a matter of fact, only one organization interviewed, Oxfam, conducts gender analysis and incorporates it within its emergency response.

4.2.2 Priority 2: Strengthening Disaster Risk Governance to manage Disaster Risk

To achieve this priority, the focus will be on three main pillars: engagement with the government to prepare for emergencies, involvement of organizations on a national level in existing plans and frameworks and finally, incorporation of Disaster Risk Reduction approach when working with other organizations; governmental and non-governmental.

In terms of planning and preparation for emergencies, the extent to which organizations are engaged with the government varies from one organization to another; 70% of respondents stated that their work with the government is proactive, and aims at helping these government organizations become better prepared for emergencies; organizations interviewed mainly support the government in the preparation stage through capacity building trainings, information collection and management (establishing databases to collect and monitor information during a crisis), as well as filling stocks and prepositioned materials in order to respond on time in the case of emergencies, the remaining 30% do support governmental organizations in similar aspects, but their engagement is not preemptive or proactive and does not exceed small scale coordination, usually after an emergency occurs, rather than in preparedness for emergencies.

In terms of the organizations' involvement on a national level, such as participation, provision of input and feedback on national level plans and existing frameworks, some organizations are more involved than others; for example: Oxfam, Save The Children and ICRC are more involved on a national level than other organizations, they are usually invited to participate in national plans on a certain scale, and do provide input to certain ministries according to their roles. However, all organizations stated that participation in national-level plans with ministries depend on their relationship with that particular ministry, as well as the willingness to share information and involve other actors; if an organization has a good relationship with a certain ministry, it gets invited and involved in the planning phase, and occasionally given the space to provide feedback as well. It is worth mentioning though, that involvement does not usually exceed the planning phase and is not systematic or consistent. Moreover, engaging with the government on a national level usually occurs through clusters, not individual organizations, except for big organizations that are key humanitarian actors in the country, and have good relationships with respective ministries, such as Save the Children

and its involvement with the Ministry of Education. In brief, there is a certain extent to which organizations are given the space to be involved on a national level, and their involvement depends on the governmental organization itself and how much it is willing to share and involve other actors in the humanitarian sector.

Finally, the essence of the Sendai framework lies in introducing the Disaster Risk Reduction (D.R.R) concept, incorporating it within existing emergency and developmental work, as well as sharing these efforts with other humanitarian actors, especially government organizations. To that aspect, organizations have had similar responses; 50% of respondents do not have D.R.R incorporated at all within their development work, due to its difficult application in the Palestinian context considering limitations of access to various resources, their engagement with D.R.R is not systematic, and they do not have allocated funds and resources for it. Among this percentage was UN OCHA who stated that their involvement is after an emergency occurs, not before. The remaining 50% mentioned that they do incorporate D.R.R within existing development work, and that it constitutes an important component, especially since it is recently capturing more attention among donors, and it has become of great interest to the international community. However, application is still not easy in the Palestinian context due to the political situation and access restrictions, and incorporation of this concept among other organizations, especially the government is challenging; it depends on the government's willingness to incorporate new concepts from other international organizations in a professional manner. In general, these organizations' attempts to incorporate D.R.R are mainly through awareness raising, communications and advocacy efforts.

4.2.3 Priority 3: Investing in Disaster Risk Reduction for resilience

The third priority tackles two main pillars: investment in D.R.R by the organizations, and their involvement and coordination with the private sector to promote investment in D.R.R:

All organizations interviewed were familiar with the concept of D.R.R, they acknowledge the fact that it has recently become of great interest globally and attract the attention of several donors. However, when asked if it is done intentionally, whether there are funds allocated to D.R.R specifically, and integrated within the organization's development work, only 20% of organizations confirmed that. These organizations were Oxfam and Save The Children, who stated that D.R.R is actually incorporated within their development work intentionally and there are funds allocated for that as it constitutes a component in their plans. Preventive measures of D.R.R include investing in solar systems and conducting feasibility studies to strengthen alternative power sources, more specifically in Gaza. It also includes child protection, and funding community initiatives that relate directly to D.R.R. The remaining respondents all stated that some interventions within their response approach can be considered as preventive measures, such as rehabilitation of water networks, maintenance, identification of warehouses and shelters, as well as capacity building of communities and youth groups to strengthen their resilience and reduce impact of disasters. However, these interventions are not systematic, do not have allocated funds and are not institutionalized. This is due to many factors; the fact that there are limited and insufficient resources, so organizations prioritize response to actual needs rather than preventive measure. In addition, investing in D.R.R requires coordination and joint efforts from multiple sectors, and close involvement of the government, which also does not include D.R.R within their top priorities.

The second pillar of this priority is an important aspect of the Sendai framework; it is being constantly discussed and debated globally. Engagement with the private sector is an

important factor in a country's economy and overall development, and while organizations acknowledge the importance of its engagement and contribution, none of the respondents actually work with the private sector and strategically engage them in their development efforts. The private sector is mostly a service provider of interventions, whether these interventions are considered preventive measures or not.

4.2.4 Priority 4: Enhancing Disaster Preparedness for Effective Response and to «Build Back Better» in Recovery, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction:

Alignment to this particular priority will be measured through two main aspects: effective preparedness measures which includes a people-centered strategy and building successful partnerships, and most importantly, linking relief with longer term development.

All organizations have similar intervention strategies during emergencies, after the Humanitarian Coordinator declares an emergency, organizations activate a certain scenario of their EPP; they start by conducting rapid needs assessment where they evaluate the impact of the emergency, then they conduct vulnerability assessments to identify most affected people by the emergency. At that point, a set of criteria for intervention is developed with clear response indicators. Finally, validation processes are conducted.

Mainly, the activation of a certain scenario, vulnerability assessments, prioritization of issues, and matching needs with available resources is conducted in coordination with the clusters; this is why respondents have similar strategies of intervention when an emergency situation is activated. However, organizations sometimes need to make their own assessments and validation, depending on the emergency and the nature of their role in responding.

As for establishing successful partnerships to help communities prepare for emergencies, organizations interviewed stated that it depends on the nature of the emergency itself; some

require fast and direct intervention and delivery of services, while others are implemented through partnerships that are at the frontline of the response. In general, 80% of the organizations interviewed established partnerships with NGOs, Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and government organizations and work with them or through them. Amongst them, two organizations explicitly work through partners at all stages of the intervention; starting from needs assessment and information collection up until the delivery of services, the rest of the organizations work both directly and with partners according to the situation and urgency of the needs. Either way, when establishing partnerships, organizations conduct capacity building for partners to prepare them for emergencies. This includes assessment tools, standard procedures and specifications in times of emergencies, and so on depending on the role of the organization itself. To sum up this pillar, in general, all organizations interviewed undertake effective preparedness measures to respond to emergencies, they all have people-centered strategies and 80% of them established different partnerships to empower communities and better them for emergencies. The remaining 20% are ICRC and UN OCHA, who –considering the natures of their roles- do not establish partnerships as the former implements directly and coordinates mainly with authorities to empower them in emergencies, and the latter undertakes a coordination role across all clusters and therefore does not implement the interventions itself.

The last discussion point toward measuring organizations' practices in comparison with the Sendai Framework is a very important topic that is widely discussed across humanitarian actors and has created an evolution in how emergency response is perceived, which is linking relief with development. As discussed in the literature review, organizations are now striving to link immediate needs in emergency response to the longer-term needs and incorporate it within their development work. And as familiar as the interviewed organizations were of the concept, true application remains a challenge for most organizations; 30% of the respondents

claim that, after addressing immediate needs, rehabilitation and recovery programs are developed and incorporated within the organization's development work, these organizations were Oxfam, Save the Children and UNICEF. They stated that the duration of relief programs in emergencies depend on the nature of the emergency. However, it is a standard of 90 days on average in large scale emergencies. After that, a re-evaluation of the situation is conducted and they decide whether there is a need for more relief programs, or of it is time to begin addressing the longer-term needs and develop appropriate recovery and rehabilitation programs. As for the remaining respondents, they all stated that after relief, they try to the extent possible to move to recovery and rehabilitation and include it within their development work, some through rehabilitation of existing water networks, provision of new sources of water, and others through community initiatives and rehabilitation of new tents. However, it is not systematic, and it depends on the availability of funds and donor requirements. Also, the Palestinian context is undeniably challenging and hurdles any development efforts implemented by the organizations; restrictions on Area C, H2³ in Hebron, settler violence, and the blockade on Gaza limit organizations' access to development sources; lack of control over land, water resources, and agriculture prevents organizations from realizing true development and addressing longer-term needs of the most vulnerable communities. In Palestine, according to UN OCHA reports⁴, vulnerability assessments and humanitarian needs are all related to access limitations and practices imposed by the Israeli occupation. All of this makes sustainability of programs and the transfer from relief to development extremely challenging, particularly in the absence of protection for humanitarian work.

³ According to the Hebron Protocol in 1997, Hebron was divided into H1: under Palestinian Military control, and H2: under Israeli Military control.

⁴ Humanitarian Needs Overview report 2021 <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-needs-overview-2021>

According to the organizations interviewed, application of the Nexus project in Palestine cannot be achieved without the presence of protection for humanitarian work and personnel from practices of the Israeli occupation and settler violence.

To provide a clearer and more comprehensive picture on application of the Sendai Framework among the interviewed organizations, a scoring table was developed. Table 1 scores the aforementioned pillars and priorities on a scale of 0 to 2. L represents Low application of a particular pillar and given a score of 0. M represents medium application and is scored 1, and H represents High application and is scored 2, each of the four priorities constitute 25% of the final score, each 25% is divided into the pillars attached to that particular priority.

Table 1 shows results of the organizations' scoring in relation to each pillar of the four priorities in the Sendai framework

Organization	Understanding D.R			Strengthening D.R Governance			Investing in D.R.R		Enhancing preparedness		Score
	Risk awareness	Community involvement	Gender and disability responsiveness	Engagement with Gov.	Participation on national level	Incorporation of D.R.R	Investment in D.R.R	Coordination with private sector	People-Centeredness	Relief to Development	
UN OCHA	2	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	27.1
ACF	2	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	33.3
ACTED	2	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	33.3
ICRC	2	1	1	2	1	0	0	0	1	0	35.4
AA	2	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	2	0	37.5
WASH Cluster	2	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	37.5
MSF	2	1	1	2	0	1	0	0	2	0	41.7
UNICEF	2	2	1	2	0	1	0	0	2	1	52.1
Save the Children	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	0	2	1	62.5
Oxfam	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	0	2	1	66.7

Table 1 illustrates that the highest score was around 67% achieved by Oxfam, which indicates that among the organizations interviewed, Oxfam applied priorities of the Sendai framework the most. Save the children came in second place with a close score of around 63%. The lowest scores were UN OCHA and ACF who scored 27% and 33% respectively. It is worth mentioning here that the reason UN OCHA achieved lower than other organizations was the fact that it is not an implementing organization, it undertakes a coordination role of organizations across different clusters. However, it was necessary to include it within the analysis in order to study elements of its EPP as well.

In general, only 3 organizations apply more than 50% of the Sendai framework priorities, these are Oxfam, Save the Children and UNICEF; these organizations excelled in 3 main pillars that created the difference between them and other organizations in the sample, the pillars were incorporation of D.R.R within existing development work, involvement in emergency response on a national level, as well as the transfer from relief to development. The remaining organizations scored below 50% and had somewhat similar scores which indicate similar working approaches in emergency response with minor differences in pillars such as engagement levels with the government as well as gender and disability responsiveness.

For more accurate analysis of the compliance rates, Figure 1 demonstrates percentage of compliance of interviewed organizations with each of the four Sendai priorities, while figure 2 includes further breakdown of compliance rates with **pillars** that correspond to the Sendai priorities. All for the purpose of identifying strengths and weaknesses in EPPs and their compliance with the Sendai framework

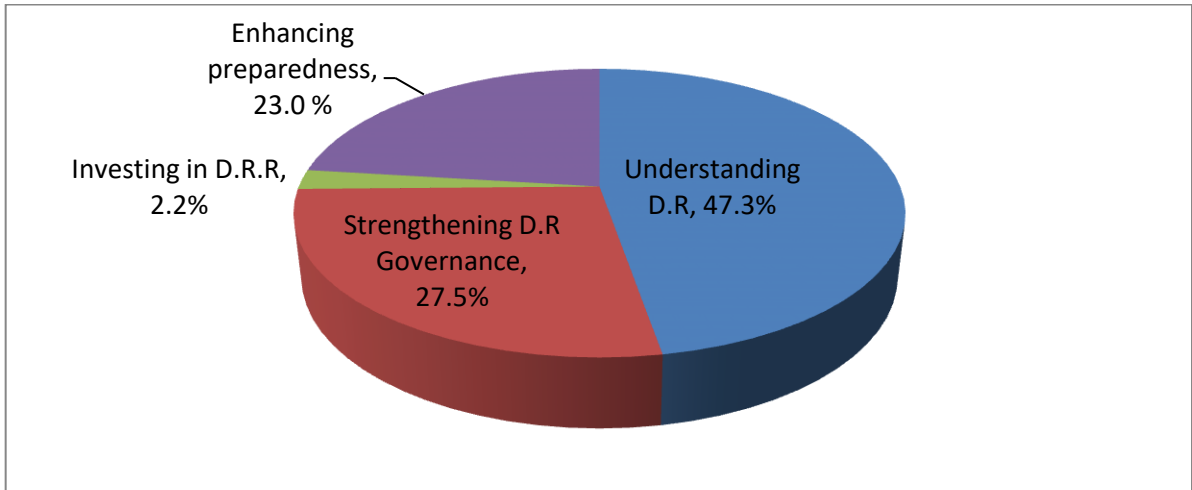


Figure 1 Compliance of organizations with each priority in the Sendai Framework.

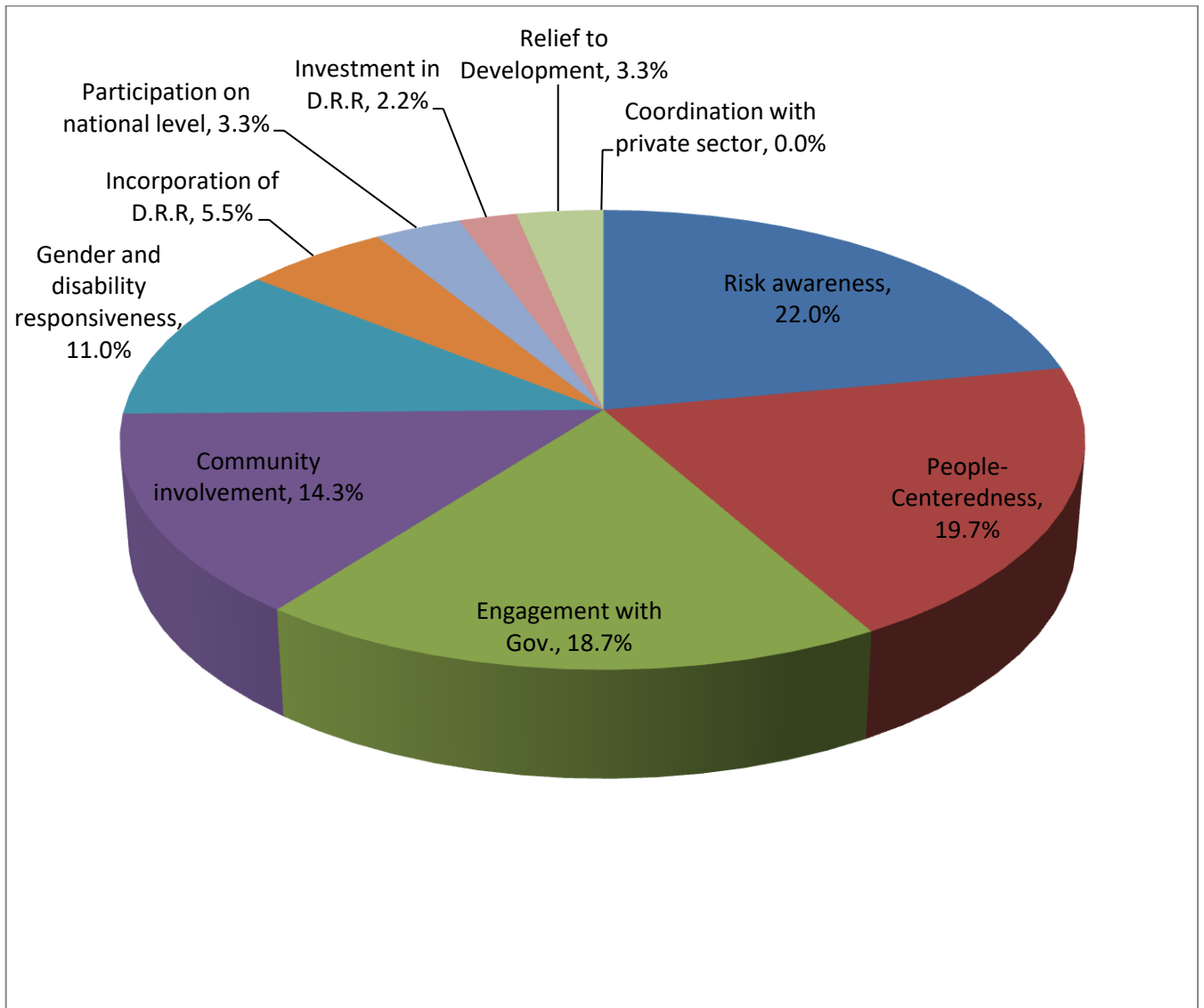


Figure 2 Compliance of organizations with each pillar of the four priorities in the Sendai

From the above charts in Figures 1 and 2, it is evident that organizations have high compliance percentages with the first two priorities namely: understanding disaster risk and strengthening disaster risk governance, while compliance with the third and fourth priority is remarkably lower. The third priority has a compliance percentage of only 2% which is drastically lower than other priorities, while the fourth priority has higher compliance percentage of 23%.

Figure 2 indicates a major gap in two pillars which are investing in D.R.R, and involvement of the private sector. As a matter of fact, 0% of organizations in the sample involve the private sector in a strategic manner. Moreover, participation on a national level as well as linking relief with development also have lower compliance rates than others. Finally, pillars with higher compliance rates included risk awareness and contextual knowledge, developing people centered strategies and ensuring community involvement.

4.3 Coordinating Efforts in Emergency Response

This component will be analyzed based on interviews conducted with the 10 aforementioned organizations, as well as the disaster management department in the Palestinian Civil Defense, and the recently established National Committee for Disaster Risk Reduction, which is under the umbrella of the prime minister, established in 2017 as per the United Nations' recommendation.

All of the organizations interviewed stated that the main coordination body they are involved in is clusters; all of these organizations coordinate interventions before, during and after emergencies through clusters. This includes the planning phase, assessment, response and recovery. Additionally, these clusters coordinate with ministries and other governmental organizations according to the nature of the emergency. However, this coordination is sectorial, it only happens between organizations working in a particular sector, and ministry or governmental organization related to that same field of work. This means coordination is mainly sectorial and not

comprehensive; does not include multiple sectors to ensure a unified vision and approach in emergency response. MSF added to the previous discussion that it is also a member of the national emergency committee that consists of CBOs, local and governmental organizations. However, it mainly discusses health issues, and MSF provides technical support for that committee as well. Other organizations stated that when an emergency occurs, they proactively coordinate with the central emergency committees on a governorate level. These efforts are mainly to avoid duplication and identify beneficiaries in some areas, but it does not rise to the level of a coordination body.

Interviewing UN OCHA was crucial to understand coordination structures on a broader level, rather than a sectorial one. UN OCHA undertakes a coordination role in emergencies across the clusters and other key actors in the Palestinian context. This is through the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG), which sets the general framework for all 6 clusters of humanitarian response and develops emergency response plans according to different certified scenarios and indicators. Within the IACP, there is a coordination structure that identifies key stakeholders and describes the communication structure, which means, there are certain scenarios in the EPP that require close coordination between UN OCHA and the Palestinian Authority more than others, such as earthquakes and natural disasters. In this case, coordination occurs with the national unit for disaster management, led by the Palestinian civil defense.

There are several challenges that hurdle effective communication between UN OCHA and other key stakeholders, especially governmental organizations; these challenges are due to the discrepancy in intervention approaches, emergency trainings, and response plans. In general, capacity for proper planning and preparedness among governmental organizations- according to UN OCHA- is not sufficient to accommodate the needs of vulnerable communities, especially in the field of zonal planning of different locations in the West Bank. This challenge can be generalized to describe the overall approach in emergency response in the country; roles and

responsibilities are often unclear, and organizations usually compete over who will take the lead in the response efforts. What UN OCHA does in this regard is help with the information collection to ensure better planning and response.

The biggest test for national emergency planning and response was the COVID 19 pandemic, before that, the violence and unrest in the West Bank did not rise up to constitute a large-scale emergency in which these scenarios, in the IACP are activated, so effective coordination has not been tested up until the COVID 19 crisis.

When the COVID 19 crisis started, it was an unprecedented event and was not accounted for in EPPs' scenarios, there were not effective coordination mechanisms between different sectors in the country; the government worked in a rather random approach than effectively including different sectors for a unified response. Information sharing, collection and participation depended on the capacity of persons working in that field; some were more knowledgeable and efficient than others. To sum up, on paper, there is supposed to be a coordination body consisting of different sectors on a national level to coordinate emergency response efforts. However, up until the COVID 19 crisis, there has not been a large-scale emergency to activate this coordination body, and since the pandemic was new and unaccounted for, coordination mechanisms were not effective, and there were not unified approaches in the response efforts among different actors. All of this is actually consistent with the analysis of the DG-ECHO's Humanitarian Implementation Plan 2020, mentioned in the literature review.

Another challenge is the coordination of response efforts between NGOs themselves; inconsistent coordination of efforts among different clusters is a challenge that weakens the response itself and leads to inefficient use of resources and duplication of efforts. This, on the one hand is due to the indifference of some NGOs to become active members of clusters; some NGOs believe it is a waste of their time, which results in several NGOs working on their own, within their

mandate and available budget. On the other hand, it depends on the capacity of the cluster coordinators themselves to include all active organizations within clusters and motivate them to continue their coordination efforts through it. This has been improving recently; there have been motivations to ensure NGOs' participation in clusters, such as receiving emergency funding from the UN only if the organization is a cluster member, and that the cluster recommends your project. Finally, one of the biggest challenges faced in the coordination aspect is with funds received by local NGOs. Most of these organizations have a charity mindset that guides their approach in emergency response, which affects the holistic developmental approach of emergency relief and response. These organizations are also politicized which can create struggles within the local communities.

One of the biggest weaknesses in the coordination of emergency response efforts is the lack of inclusion of the private sector. Ideally, there is supposed to be a strong relationship with the private sector, particularly when developing a national emergency response plan, being the main provider of needed materials and equipment. However, it is a weakness that organizations need to work on and improve.

As for other key stakeholders in Disaster management, the research included input from the Disaster Risk Management Unit within the Palestinian Civil Defense, as well as the National committee for Disaster Risk Reduction, under the management of the prime minister. These interviews were conducted specifically to measure the coordination of efforts in emergency response on a national level.

According to the Palestinian Law, the Palestinian Civil defense is the key actor and main respondent in large scale emergencies; they take the lead in responding to disasters such as earthquakes, floods, and others. On a national level, the higher council for Civil Defense was formulated to undertake the role of organizing the emergency response efforts in times of medium

to large scale emergencies; it is constituted of key relevant stakeholders that include governmental organizations, private sector organizations as well as big NGOs, depending on the nature of the emergency. Its role also includes conducting assessments and studies on possible disasters, their impact, and mitigations measures to prevent or minimize losses.

The work of the Disaster management unit in the Palestinian Civil defense does not exceed conducting assessments and evaluations; there are no actual interventions on the grounds that serve as preventive measures under Disaster Risk Reduction. The Disaster management unit does not have a budget specifically allocated to the D.R.R component. Also, the first and real test of a large-scale emergency in the country was the COVID 19 crisis, and because it is a health-related issue, the Ministry of Health took the lead and worked closely with WHO, so none of the organizations interviewed were part of an inclusive coordination body on a national level regarding the COVID 19 crisis.

As for the national committee for D.R.R, it was established to serve as a coordination body between all organizations working in emergency response and intensify work in D.R.R. however, since its establishment in 2017, it has not yet acquired a legal status in order to function according to specific roles and responsibilities stated by the law. It does not have a budget as well which means their role is mainly assessments and recommendations. The national committee for D.R.R perceives their work as broader and more specific than the Disaster Management unit in the Palestinian Civil defense. Either way, they still do not have the authority to function as they are supposed to and organizations interviewed had very little interaction with them, some organizations did not even know the committee exists. So far, the work of the national committee did not intersect with that of the Palestinian civil defense, nor with the organizations interviewed.

4.4 Summary of Results

Findings and results extracted from interviews can be summarized as follows:

- INGOs follow similar intervention approaches in preparing for emergencies; they have thorough understanding of the context and the risks associated with it, and they follow international standards for planning and preparations. Cluster members have unified visions and scenarios under the UN Inter-Agency Contingency Planning.
- Establishment of local partnerships is prevalent in emergency response for INGOs, it is evident that partners and community involvement is integral in the preparedness and planning phase. However, this involvement does not exceed the field level assessments and data collection.
- There are differences in emergency response between the West Bank and Gaza; these differences include different scenarios, communications and coordination structures, information sharing mechanisms, as well as different types of access complications.
- Data segregation in EPPs is not consistent, and is rarely followed by further analysis to include gender responsiveness and accommodate the needs of PWDs.
- Involvement with the government in preparing for emergencies is mostly through clusters; it mainly involves capacity building of personnel to help them better prepare for emergencies, or technical support when an emergency happens.
- On a national level, involvement of INGOs in planning and response efforts is highly dependent upon relationships with government organizations, and the willingness of these organizations to share information, cooperate and create a space for INGOs to participate and provide input on existing planning efforts within the government. Either

way, involvement of INGOs in existing national plans and frameworks is limited to certain initial phases.

- Incorporation of D.R.R among organizations is not systematic, and does not exceed small-scale preventive measures. There are no funds allocated specifically for D.R.R among INGOs and governmental organizations. Therefore, investment in D.R.R is very limited and not institutionalized on a national scale.
- The role of the private sector in emergency preparedness and response is very limited, it does not exceed being service providers and they are not included within coordination or communication structures in emergency preparedness and response.
- The transfer from relief to development in emergency response within INGOs is challenging; it is not systematic and is limited to small scale interventions in an attempt to address longer term needs, and include it within development programs to the extent possible. This is mainly due to political complications that result in access complications and lack of control over development sources, such as Gaza and area C.
- In terms of application of the Sendai framework, some pillars are highly incorporated within organizations' emergency preparedness. These include risk awareness, community involvement in planning, supporting governmental organizations in emergency preparedness measures, as well as creating people centered strategies. On the other hand, it is evident that application of other pillars is very low, such as incorporation and investment of D.R.R, cooperation with the private sector, as well as consistent linking of relief and development.
- In general, organizations have similar application levels of the Sendai framework priorities. What created the difference in scores between organizations, -according to the scoring table- were mainly incorporation of D.R.R within existing development work,

involvement in emergency response on a national level, as well as the transfer from relief to development, which were implemented on a medium level for a few organizations and scored accordingly, while remaining organizations have very similar scores below 50%.

- The biggest coordination body for INGOs in times of emergencies in Palestine is the ICCG, and coordination efforts within the ICCG and other relevant stakeholders, such as the government are mainly sectorial.
- There is not one coordination body that includes all relevant stakeholders across the country; such as governmental, local non-governmental organizations, INGOs, private sector and others. Coordination is not institutionalized within emergency response efforts, especially nationally. This was manifested in the COVID 19 experience, which highlighted the lack of unified vision and response in emergencies across all key actors in the country.
- Roles of Disaster management between the Palestinian Civil defense and the National Committee for D.R.R do not intersect; their roles in D.R.R are limited to assessments and recommendations, without a designated budget, or a coordination structure. The role of the national Committee for D.R.R is not yet enforced by law since its establishment in 2017, therefore does not have a legal status to bring organizations together and coordinate efforts nationally in regards to D.R.R.
- Some organizations; local and international NGOs, respond to emergencies on their own without any level of coordination with other actors. These organizations respond according to their mandate and available funds. This results in duplication of efforts and sometimes struggles within local communities who are recipients of emergency interventions.
- Coordination levels between different stakeholders in emergencies depend on the nature of the emergency itself; some scenarios require more coordination with the national authorities than others such as earthquakes in case of natural disasters.

5 Conclusion

In Palestine, Preparedness and response to emergencies, addressing immediate as well as long term needs, has never been more important given the political complications and lack of control over the country's resources. This is why; international NGOs are key humanitarian actors in times of emergencies.

It is evident that the development of the organizations' EPPs was based on a unified approach, following similar steps that coincide with what has been mentioned in the literature review. Organizations who are members of clusters try as much as possible to unify the scenarios in line with the UN inter agency contingency planning.

The Sendai framework's four main priorities are an accumulation of decades-long experiences in the emergency response field; it introduces important concepts to emergency preparedness and response worldwide. These include incorporation of and investment in D.R.R, engagement with the private sector as well as addressing the longer-term impact of emergencies/disasters. Organizations interviewed showed various commitment rates across all pillars of the Sendai framework; they have shown the strongest commitment to the first priority, which is "Understanding Disaster Risk". Organizations are fully aware of risks associated with the Palestinian context, and partnerships are the main connection channel to reach the communities. However, community participation occurs at the initial stages of EPP development; their involvement is limited to information collection and identification of risks and impacted beneficiaries, while consolidation and analysis of the information, development and finalization of the plan is conducted by senior level personnel. Gender responsiveness is not intentionally incorporated within emergency response plans, nor is the specific needs of other minority groups such as People with Disability. It is worth mentioning that the Inter

Agency Contingency Plan mentions gender and disability in the protection component but does not conduct specific gender or disability analysis afterwards.

The other priorities have lower commitment rates among interviewed organizations; the second priority showed overall compliance in engaging with the government, which was mainly through providing technical support to the government to be better prepared for emergencies. However, organization's involvement on national level planning, policies and existing government frameworks remains minimal. Therefore, incorporation of D.R.R within existing frameworks is almost absent.

The third priority had the lowest commitment rate; none of the organizations established strategic relationships with the private sector or invest in D.R.R in a consistent manner. As for the fourth priority, and despite the fact that people are the very heart of the emergency response efforts, linking relief with development was minimal and requires substantial resources and control over natural resources.

Based on the above, it is realistic to say that despite high compliance rates of certain pillars, organizations interviewed do not fully comply with the Sendai framework priorities and principles in their emergency preparedness and response efforts in Palestine. Therefore, the EPPs are not fully effective and can certainly be improved if all pillars are incorporated within.

On a national level, it is evident that coordination of emergency response and preparedness is mainly sectorial; it is not inclusive of all sectors and fields for a holistic approach in emergencies. A specific coordination body that includes all sectors and expertise on a national level may exist on paper but is not applied in reality. Coordination of work among key humanitarian actors happens through clusters, under the Inter-agency Contingency planning, or through individual organizations proactively seeking collaboration with specific governmental organizations, relevant to the field of work in the emergency intervention itself, or vice versa.

5.1 Recommendations

Based on the above findings and conclusions, recommendations are as follows:

Strengthen data flow across different sectors and organizations to ensure effective exchange of information and facilitate coordination of efforts before and during emergencies.

This can be achieved through:

- Strengthening national plans and priorities to include operational breakdown on geographic and sectorial levels, including performance indicators to demonstrate each sector's contribution to the overall development vision across the country on the immediate, medium, and long terms.
- Building strong local partnerships to guarantee more accurate data collection on household level, ensure high community representation and transparent sharing of relevant information.
- Conducting specific gender and disability analysis and include it within emergency preparedness and response plans.

Strengthen incorporation of and investment in D.R.R within existing development and emergency plans for local and international NGOs, as well as governmental organizations.

This can be achieved through:

- Developing a national early warning system to provide information and warnings before and during emergencies/disasters. This is implemented on four stages: risk assessment, monitoring and predicting of potential risks, disseminating and communicating warnings, as well as effective response.
- Strengthening donor negotiations to allocate a specific budget for D.R.R and include this component within development and emergency response projects.

- Developing awareness raising campaigns led by clusters around D.R.R concepts, tools and application in the Palestinian context targeting INGOs, governmental organizations as well as local NGOs.
- Adopting community-based emergency preparedness approach and strengthening existing emergency committees on a grassroots level to introduce D.R.R and increase community awareness on its tools and application.

Increase participation of NGOs-being key humanitarian actors- in national level planning, policies, and frameworks to establish a strong foundation for further development and coordination of efforts during emergencies, as well as endorse D.R.R on a national level. This can be achieved through:

- Increasing advocacy efforts to drive governmental organizations into engaging other humanitarian actors-especially national and international NGOs, in the design of national development and emergency preparedness plans, and institutionalize this involvement to ensure active participation of organizations, as well as space for these organizations to provide their input.
- Developing a strategic framework within NGOs to provide support to eligible governmental organizations only through binding them to comply with specific communication structures and coordination requirements.

Strengthen the role of the national committee for D.R.R. This can be achieved through:

- Seeking collaboration with the Prime Minister to highlight the importance of this committee as a coordination body.

- Advocating to legitimize it as a coordination body with clear roles and responsibilities, and provide the support needed to strengthen its role and include all relevant stakeholders, in order to unify efforts in both preparedness and response to emergencies/disasters.

Establish strategic relationships with the private sector to increase their involvement before and during emergencies, highlighting the importance of D.R.R incorporation. This can be achieved through:

- Conducting local market analysis: this includes an assessment of the available operational capacity, as well as supporting the local market to increase its internal production to provide the necessary products and services during emergencies/disasters.
- Designing market-based response approach in order to respond to people's needs in disasters more efficiently and based on the available resources in the market.
- Lobbying the government to establish and systematize production standards with the private sector before and during emergencies that prevent or reduce the impact of disasters.
- Lobbying the government to enforce disaster insurance in insurance companies to lessen impact of property and infrastructure loss.

Institutionalize the transition from relief to development among humanitarian actors in emergency preparedness and response. This can be achieved through:

- Establishing common planning systems between all relevant stakeholders in emergency preparedness and response. This includes humanitarian actors, development actors and government actors.
- Coordinating and defining clear communication channels to ensure a unified vision and objectives between all three levels of actors in emergency preparedness and response: humanitarian actors, development actors and the government.

- Designing quality interventions that achieve maximum development, which means achieving as many development goals among different actors as possible. This will ensure efficient use of resources and creates space for innovative longer-term interventions.

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Appendix A

Chart of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030

Scope and purpose

The present framework will apply to the risk of small-scale and large-scale, frequent and infrequent, sudden and slow-onset disasters, caused by natural or manmade hazards as well as related environmental, technological and biological hazards and risks.

It aims to guide the multi-hazard management of disaster risk in development at all levels as well as within and across all sectors

Expected outcome

The substantial reduction of disaster risk and losses in lives, livelihoods and health and in the economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets of persons, businesses, communities and countries

Goal

Prevent new and reduce existing disaster risk through the implementation of integrated and inclusive economic, structural, legal, social, health, cultural, educational, environmental, technological, political and institutional measures that prevent and reduce hazard exposure and vulnerability to disaster, increase preparedness for response and recovery, and thus strengthen resilience

Targets

Substantially reduce global disaster mortality by 2030, aiming to lower average per 100,000 global mortality between 2020-2030 compared to 2005-2015	Substantially reduce the number of affected people globally by 2030, aiming to lower the average global figure per 100,000 between 2020-2030 compared to 2005-2015	Reduce direct disaster economic loss in relation to global gross domestic product (GDP) by 2030	Substantially reduce disaster damage to critical infrastructure and disruption of basic services, among them health and educational facilities, including through developing their resilience by 2030	Substantially increase the number of countries with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies by 2020	Substantially enhance international cooperation to developing countries through adequate and sustainable support to complement their national actions for implementation of this framework by 2030	Substantially increase the availability of and access to multi-hazard early warning systems and disaster risk information and assessments to people by 2030
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Priorities for Action

There is a need for focused action within and across sectors by States at local, national, regional and global levels in the following four priority areas.

Priority 1 Understanding disaster risk	Priority 2 Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk	Priority 3 Investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience	Priority 4 Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response, and to «Build Back Better» in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction
Disaster risk management needs to be based on an understanding of disaster risk in all its dimensions of vulnerability, capacity, exposure of persons and assets, hazard characteristics and the environment	Disaster risk governance at the national, regional and global levels is vital to the management of disaster risk reduction in all sectors and ensuring the coherence of national and local frameworks of laws, regulations and public policies that, by defining roles and responsibilities, guide, encourage and incentivize the public and private sectors to take action and address disaster risk	Public and private investment in disaster risk prevention and reduction through structural and non-structural measures are essential to enhance the economic, social, health and cultural resilience of persons, communities, countries and their assets, as well as the environment. These can be drivers of innovation, growth and job creation. Such measures are cost-effective and instrumental to save lives, prevent and reduce losses and ensure effective recovery and rehabilitation	Experience indicates that disaster preparedness needs to be strengthened for more effective response and ensure capacities are in place for effective recovery. Disasters have also demonstrated that the recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction phase, which needs to be prepared ahead of the disaster, is an opportunity to «Build Back Better» through integrating disaster risk reduction measures. Women and persons with disabilities should publicly lead and promote gender-equitable and universally accessible approaches during the response and reconstruction phases

Guiding Principles

Primary responsibility of States to prevent and reduce disaster risk, including through cooperation	Shared responsibility between central Government and national authorities, sectors and stakeholders as appropriate to national circumstances	Protection of persons and their assets while promoting and protecting all human rights including the right to development	Engagement from all of society	Full engagement of all State institutions of an executive and legislative nature at national and local levels	Empowerment of local authorities and communities through resources, incentives and decision-making responsibilities as appropriate	Decision-making to be inclusive and risk-informed while using a multi-hazard approach
Coherence of disaster risk reduction and sustainable development policies, plans, practices and mechanisms, across different sectors	Accounting of local and specific characteristics of disaster risks when determining measures to reduce risk	Addressing underlying risk factors cost-effectively through investment versus relying primarily on post-disaster response and recovery	«Build Back Better» for preventing the creation of, and reducing existing, disaster risk	The quality of global partnership and international cooperation to be effective, meaningful and strong	Support from developed countries and partners to developing countries to be tailored according to needs and priorities as identified by them	

Appendix B

Interview Questions Addressed to Nine NGOs Within Clusters

General

- What are your goals and objectives of the EPP?
- Do you have one EPP for Palestine or separate for Gaza and West Bank? How are they different?
- Are there guiding principles describing your approach in your work? Do you follow international standards?
- How often do you update the plan? What about monitoring and evaluation?

Priority 1: Understanding disaster risk

- 1) What are the potential scenarios of your EPP?
- 2) What is the source for your information in the EPP? Is there baseline information? Is data segregated by gender and/or disability?
- 3) How was your EPP developed? (Who was involved in the assessment/analysis of risk, vulnerability & capacity; and in the development of the EPP?)
- 4) Is this information accessible and shared with the team, to other stakeholders and to beneficiaries or on an international level with other organizations? How?

Priority 2: Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk

- 5) Do you work with local authorities to prepare for emergencies? How?
- 6) Do you participate in the development of plans and strategies on a national level? If yes,
- 7) Do you attempt to incorporate disaster risk reduction efforts within existing frameworks?
How?
- 8) Are you a member of a coordination forum during emergencies? How does your participation contribute to these forums?
- 9) Do you follow up with performance of existing emergency plans for local and national authorities? Do you provide feedback on government plans?

Priority 3: Investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience

- 10) Do you invest in disaster prevention (before emergencies occur) in your organization's working areas? Is it included within your developmental work? If yes, How?
- 11) You coordinate and/or lobby other sectors to invest in disaster prevention, especially the private and public sectors?

Priority 4: Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response, and to «Build Back Better» in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction

- 12) What is your intervention strategy in emergencies? Do you have specific criteria for intervention?
- 13) Is the decision taken from the field itself? Or do you wait for HQ approval?

14) Do you respond directly or through local partnerships (local NGOs and CBOs)?

Do you provide capacity building for partners before and during emergencies? How?

15) Do you work alone or coordinate with other actors? Is there a coordination body during emergencies?

Which sector(s)?

16) Do you contribute to existing government response programs? How?

17) What is the duration of your intervention in emergencies? Do you continue intervening after addressing immediate needs?

18) What are the challenges that hinder emergency response in your organization? How does the Palestinian context make interventions and disaster reduction more difficult?

Interview Questions Addressed to UN OCHA

General Questions

- What are your goals and objectives of the EPP?
- Do you have one EPP for Palestine or separate for Gaza and West Bank? How are they different?
- How often do you update the plan?

The Sendai framework and complementarity of efforts across different sectors

- 1) What is the source for your information in the EPP? Is there baseline information? Is data segregated by gender and/or disability?
- 2) How was your EPP developed? (Who was involved in the assessment/analysis of risk, vulnerability & capacity; and in the development of the EPP?)
- 3) Is this information accessible and shared with the team, to other stakeholders and to beneficiaries or on an international level with other organizations? How?
- 4) Do you work with local authorities to prepare for emergencies? How? Do you contribute to existing government response programs?
- 5) Are organizations familiar with risk reduction? Are there attempts to incorporate risk reduction within existing plans for clusters and NGOs
- 6) Do you participate in the development of plans and strategies on a national level? If yes,
- 7) Do you attempt to incorporate disaster risk reduction efforts within existing frameworks? How?
- 8) Is there a coordination body on the national level? Representing different sectors? Is this body active before and during emergencies?
- 9) What is your role in the coordination of efforts during emergencies? What are the challenges you face in the coordination of efforts in emergency preparedness for organizations and clusters? What about between WB and Gaza?
- 10) Do you follow up with clusters and different NGOs before and during emergencies? To organize response efforts?

- 11) Do you follow up with performance of existing emergency plans for local and national authorities? Do you provide feedback on government plans? Do you think the inter agency contingency plan is in harmony with governmental efforts in emergency response?
- 12) Do you invest in disaster prevention (before emergencies occur) in your organization's working areas? Is it included within your developmental work? If yes, How?
- 13) You coordinate and/or lobby other sectors to invest in disaster prevention, especially the private and public sectors? Why do you think this concept is not fully incorporated within existing programs?
- 14) What is your intervention strategy in emergencies? Do you have specific criteria for intervention? Do you think other organizations have matching/harmonizing criteria?
- 15) What are the challenges that hinder emergency response in your organization? How does the Palestinian context make interventions and disaster reduction more difficult?
- 16) How does it make application of nexus more difficult? Linking relief with development?

Interview Questions Addressed to the Palestinian Civil Defense, as Well as the National Committee for Disaster Risk Reduction

- 1) What is the role and scope of work of the disaster management unit/ national D.R.R committee?
- 2) Is there a specific budget allocated for D.R.R?
- 3) What are the coordination and communication structures followed to coordinate with other relevant stakeholders? Is there a coordination body? How are roles and responsibilities divided between different actors? Before and during emergencies/disasters?

- 4) How would you describe the COVID 19 experience in Palestine? What were the challenges encountered that may have hurdled effective preparedness and response on a national scale?

المخلص

تتسبب الكوارث الطبيعية والانسانية عالميا بخسائر فادحة في جميع أنحاء العالم على جميع المستويات، و في فلسطين؛ قد تتفاقم آثار هذه الكوارث بشكل كبير بسبب تعقيدات الوضع السياسي المتمثل في الاحتلال الاسرائيلي للأراضي الفلسطينية، لذلك، كان من المهم جدا أن يتم الاستعداد لأي كارثة محتملة والعمل لتقليل حجم الضرر في المجتمع الفلسطيني، وفي المجتمعات الفقيرة والمهمشة على وجه الخصوص.

على هذا الأساس، يهدف هذا البحث إلى تقييم خطط الاستعداد لحالات الطوارئ لدى المنظمات غير الحكومية الدولية في فلسطين. تم التحليل بناء على أولويات العمل الأربع الرئيسية لدى إطار عمل سينداي للأمم المتحدة للحد من مخاطر الكوارث، إلى جانب المنهجية المتبعة في تطوير خطط الاستعداد للطوارئ. تكمن أهمية البحث في تقديم حلول وتوصيات مهمة للمؤسسات تهدف إلى إثراء عملية التخطيط لحالات الكوارث في المستقبل، كما يدرس البحث مستوى التنسيق والجهود الموحدة بين المؤسسات الرئيسية أصحاب العلاقة في التأهب والاستجابة لحالات الطوارئ.

وفي هذا السياق، تم جمع البيانات بناء على المقابلات التي تم إجراؤها مع عشر منظمات غير حكومية دولية ضمن مجموعة التنسيق المشتركة (Clusters)، إضافة إلى وحدة إدارة الكوارث في الدفاع المدني الفلسطيني واللجنة الوطنية للحد من الكوارث التابعة لرئاسة الوزراء الفلسطينية، حيث تمخض عن تحليل هذه البيانات عدة نتائج: أولاً: على الرغم من الالتزام ببعض بنود إطار عمل سينداي، إلا أنه لا يوجد التزام كامل من المؤسسات بجميع البنود والمحاور في التخطيط والاستجابة للكوارث. ثانياً: تشير النتائج إلى الحاجة إلى جهود تنسيقية ممنهجة وشمولية بين مختلف المؤسسات والقطاعات الفاعلة في التأهب لحالات الطوارئ والاستجابة لها.