

Report

LOCALIZATION OF COORDINATION AND HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY

Good Practices from IASC Task Force 5

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Localization of coordination and humanitarian response in the Occupied Palestinian Territory

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Geographical coverage

- Occupied Palestinian Territory (oPt)



Actors and Stakeholders

- [Implementing Partners' profiles](#) are National NGOs (NNGOs), International NGOs (INGOs), UN agencies, international organizations and educational institutions that are operating in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in cooperation with local authorities.
- Partners are part of the Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Cluster to coordinate the WASH humanitarian response. In 2022, the number of WASH Cluster partners reached 61 organizations as full, associate and observer members. All these organizations coordinate their WASH plans and interventions to avoid duplication of efforts and ensure the maximum integration of their programs.
- The WASH Cluster partners' technical expertise in Palestine varies based on each organization's experience, mandate, technical and operational capacities. While some organizations have integrated comprehensive WASH approaches, other organizations focus on specific WASH components as their primary area of expertise.



Context

The occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) is one of the most complex and challenging environments in which the United Nations operates. The oPt remains a protracted political crisis characterized by 56 years of Israeli military occupation. This crisis is exacerbated by a lack of adherence to international humanitarian and human rights law, the 16-year blockade of the Gaza Strip, internal Palestinian political division and violent Israeli military and settler incursions into Palestinian villages and cities.

The WASH Cluster in the State of Palestine was activated in January 2009 to be responsible for the overall coordination of WASH humanitarian planning and response in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.



Implementation and objective

The aim of this initiative is to promote representation, leadership, visibility of local and national actors within the Palestine WASH Cluster, as well as two-way capacity strengthening between international and local partners.



Methodological approach

The WASH Cluster Coordination Team actively contributed to strengthen the participation of local and national actors in the cluster. They have performed the following activities since 2019:

- Proactive outreach to local and national actors: the Palestine WASH Cluster conducted an exercise to identify non-cluster partners involved in the WASH

This good practice was identified and documented through a template developed on the basis of the [2021 IASC Guidance on Localization](#), which aims at supporting efforts to strengthen the meaningful participation, representation, and leadership of local and national humanitarian actors (L/NAs) within IASC humanitarian coordination structures. Its objective is to share knowledge and inspire progress and positive change regarding the meaningful participation of local actors in Humanitarian Coordination platforms. The original draft of this good practice template was developed by the [KORE \(Knowledge Platform for Emergencies and Resilience\) team](#) in the Office of Emergencies and Resilience of the [Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations \(FAO\)](#) and was tailored to the needs of this IASC initiative.

response, visited them one by one and convinced them to join the coordination platform.

- Building trust with local and national actors through continuous bilateral outreach to promote the understanding that the cluster is here to support local and national actors (L/NAs) and not the other way around.
- Capacity building needs assessments were conducted for cluster partners. The Cluster then developed a National Partners Capacity Building Program that delivers trainings to local partners on an annual basis.
- Assign “focal points” roles to local partners: The Palestine WASH Cluster has 11 focal points in different areas and 5 of them are from local organizations.
- Ensured local and L/NAs have access to data and SOPs to strengthen their response.
- Peer to peer support between INGOs and L/NAs.
- As a result of increasing advocacy to funding access for L/NAs, the Humanitarian Response Fund added a 10 per cent bonus to the projects submitted by L/NAs and the projects involving national partnerships.



Results and impact

- In 2023, 34 out of 68 members of the Palestine WASH Cluster were local and national actors, including local NGOs, academia, community-based organisations, the Palestinian Red Crescent Society, and national Palestinian governmental authorities active in the WASH sector.
- 50 per cent of the SAG members are L/NAs, 5 out of 11 WASH focal points are L/NAs in specific geographical areas and 5 national authorities lead on a various themes including: the Palestinian Water Authority for water and sanitation at community level; the Ministry of Social Development for household WASH facilities; the Ministry of Education for WASH in schools; the Ministry of Health for WASH in Health Care Facilities; the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics on national assessment and monitoring.
- Local and national partners are very active in the implementation of the WASH response (especially WASH in schools) as well as in the Preparedness Task Force and in the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus Working Group.
- One local organization (Palestinian Hydrology Group) developed the [Palestinian Women Water Practitioner Network](#) for local and international actors to coordinate.
- The Humanitarian Response Fund added an allocation of 10 per cent bonus in projects prioritizations for the projects submitted by local and national actors and the projects that involve national partnerships around available funding to local and national actors, and the WASH Cluster continues to advocate for better access to funding.
- Increasing the number of L/NAs in the Palestine WASH Cluster has contributed to:
 - Optimizing the cost efficiency of the response as L/NAs have lower overhead and support costs’
 - Consolidated the Cluster’s institutional memory as some L/NAs have been operating in Palestine for over 40 years; and
 - Made quicker decisions as L/NAs are based in Palestine and have better access to local authorities.



Replicability and upscaling

This practice is in line with the 2012 IASC guidance on localization and can be replicated in other countries, provided that the cluster coordination team is able to dedicate time to build partnerships with local and national actors.

The high level of education of local and national actors facilitated the process as the working language remains English.



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