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The Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), attached to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation (MAEC), is the main management body of Spanish Cooperation. AECID focuses on sustainable human development and the fight against poverty, and includes humanitarian action among its priorities.

AECID's Humanitarian Action Office (OAH), created in 2007, is responsible for managing and implementing Spain's official

humanitarian action, based on the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence. Within the scope of its authority, the OAH follows the general guidelines laid down in Spanish Cooperation's Master Plan V for 2018-2021 and, in particular, the section on "Humanitarian Action Strategy", focused on improving the effectiveness of Spanish Cooperation's participation in humanitarian action interventions. This section states that, in those contexts that are a priority for

Spain's humanitarian action, humanitarian strategies shall be established for each context, in line with the humanitarian response plans of the United Nations (UN) and of the European Union (EU), complementing any Country Partnership Frameworks (CPF) in force.

AECID has also assumed different commitments regarding quality of aid, following the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit and the adoption of the humanitarian Grand Bargain in the same year.

In this same vein, the purpose of this strategic document is to plan AECID's humanitarian response in 2018 and 2019, in order to meet the main needs identified in this context¹, and proposing, in this exercise, that attention focus on four key intervention sectors: protection; water, sanitation and hygiene; food security; and gender. Aimed at improving the effectiveness of AECID's humanitarian response, this planning exercise takes into account the changing situation of the contexts in which AECID acts, thus allowing for the actions considered to be adapted to the reality of the situation, as well as to the resources available.

In this context, AECID will strive to ensure that the humanitarian projects supported enable women, men, girls and boys to benefit equally from all the services, resources and protective measures, in accordance with their specific roles, capacities and needs, with a view to advancing gender equality. In particular, support will be offered to projects that are classified with codes 2a and 2b² of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) gender marker.

As regards Spanish Cooperation's other horizontal priorities and points of focus, priority will be given to those interventions that have an inclusive approach and results-based management, as well as those which effectively mainstream environmental sustainability, cultural diversity and human rights.

BACKGROUND

The humanitarian situation in Palestine has unique characteristics that differentiate it from other humanitarian crises, and which are linked directly to the impact of the occupation on the lives of a large part of the Palestinian population.

After more than 50 years of occupation and a blockade of the Gaza Strip that has lasted more than 10 years, a protection crisis continues, with humanitarian consequences caused by restricted access to basic services and by the recurring violations of international humanitarian law (IHL) and international human rights law (IHRL)³.

Palestine's political and geographic fragmentation and the inequalities in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip are all part of an increasingly widening gap, accentuated by the years of

stagnation in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, as well as by deep intra-Palestinian divisions. This deadlock means that the policies and practices of occupation continue to be implemented as *fait accompli* policy, including, among other actions, restrictions on the movement of people and goods, limited access to land and natural resources, demolitions, displacements, and forced evictions.

On 12 October 2017, after 10 years of division between the Ramallah administration and Hamas in Gaza, a reconciliation agreement was reached in Cairo, which could lead to improved living conditions. However, the situation is volatile and unpredictable. Moreover, the lack of a clear political horizon for the peace process or intra-Palestinian reconciliation, along with recurring episodes of violence, is fuelling frustration on every side, further worsening the humanitarian situation.



¹ The present Strategy is based on the information provided by the sources consulted up to December 2017.

² IASC: "IASC Gender Marker Guidance Note". Available at: https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/gm-faq-en_0.pdf

³ Humanitarian Implementation Plan HIP Palestine 2018. ECHO.

After three wars in seven years, and more than ten years of blockade, the situation in the Gaza Strip continues to be critical. In 2012 the UN warned that, under these circumstances, Gaza would be barely habitable by 2020; furthermore, the 2017 energy crisis has seriously undermined health services, water and sanitation, and production and trade.

In the West Bank and East Jerusalem, restrictions on the movement of people and goods, limited access to land and natural resources, denial of basic services, the expansion of settlements, violence inflicted by settlers,⁴ and the rising number of demolitions (some financed with European funds), have created a coercive environment⁵ with complex needs, both humanitarian and involving development.

Approximately 320,000 Palestinians live in East Jerusalem, and they continue to face difficulties in access to housing, due to the lack of buildable land

and the lengthy and expensive permit application process.

Due to all of these factors, and despite its potential, the Palestinian economy's capacities are deeply distorted; it is unable to generate sufficient jobs and income to improve living standards. The productive base has deteriorated due to restrictions on trade and on access to resources, worsened by the consequences of the blockade in Gaza. Over the last 25 years, industry has shrunk by half, and agriculture by one third. As a result of this lengthy occupation, Palestine's economy is dependent on imports (with a trade deficit of 40%, one of the world's highest), its trade is completely concentrated in Israel, and it depends heavily on international humanitarian assistance.

Especially troubling is the continued rise in the unemployment rate, especially among women (30%), as well as the youth unemployment rate in Gaza (60%), which is 66% among young women.

The role of external assistance is essential to realize a different vision able to promote growth and job creation. Even in the hypothetical absence of external limitations (the blockade, and the lack of access to resources in Area C of the West Bank) and internal limitations (tax collection, streamlining public spending or measures to promote private investment), it would still be essential to reverse the trend towards lower level of foreign assistance, in order to support tax reform and guarantee private savings.

One of the challenges ahead in this humanitarian situation is that of better coordinating humanitarian and development needs to address, at the grassroots level, the main causes of vulnerability, fragility, and conflict, while also satisfying humanitarian needs and strengthening resilience⁶. To achieve all these things, it is crucial to use a more participatory approach, including gender- and age-specific community work.

Table 1. Palestine: Humanitarian and general information⁷

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|--|
| POPULATION UNDER OCCUPATION |
| 4.95 million (2 million in Gaza and 2.8 million in the West Bank) (40% under 15 years of age) |
| 2.5 MILLION IN NEED OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE |
| 42% of the population. 1.6 million in Gaza and 0.9 million in the West Bank |
| 29,000 internally displaced persons, more than 5,000 families |
| Refugee population (including direct relatives): 2.4 million living in the affected areas ⁸ |
| HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX 2016 |
| 0.684 (rank 114) |
| VULNERABILITY INDEX |
| 2 out of 3 |
| CRISIS INDEX |
| 3 out of 3 |

⁴ Settler violence rose during the first half of 2017 after a three-year decline--an 88% increase with respect to 2016 (OCHA humanitarian bulletin, July 2017).

⁵ HIP ECHO 2018. HNO OCHA 2017.

⁶ HIP ECHO 2018.

⁷ HNO OCHA 2018.

⁸ OCHA defines affected population as those people subjected to constant violations of IHL and to all forms of human rights violations: threats on life, freedom and safety; population subjected to forced displacement; livelihood erosion; impossibility of purchasing basic goods and services, etc.

VULNERABLE GROUPS

Gaza Strip:

- **Displaced population**, whose housing and/or livelihoods were destroyed or affected by the 2014 operation “Protective Edge”. At present, the number of displaced persons amounts to 25,500, affecting more than 5,000 families.
- **Population of the zones delimited by Israel along the border with restricted access**, supposedly for security reasons, which depend on agriculture and fishing.

An estimated 700,000 Gaza residents are living in conditions

below the minimum quality-of-life standards.

West Bank:

- **The Palestinian population in Area C**. This area, which represents 63% of the West Bank, is under the control of the Israeli government, which has applied a restrictive planning scheme that makes it impossible for the Palestinian population to obtain building permits—thus impeding the development of adequate housing infrastructure, as well as livelihood access. The 46 Bedouin communities—8,142 people—are particularly vulnerable as they are at risk of forced transfer.

- **East Jerusalem (and the periphery of Jerusalem)** are inhabited by approximately 320,000 Palestinians and 200,000 Israeli settlers. The threat of unilateral annexation of East Jerusalem and the periphery of Jerusalem violates international law, and increases the vulnerability of the resident Palestinian population.
- In **Hebron H2**, 20% of the area remains under Israeli control, and an estimated 40,000 Palestinians present a special protection risk in the face of settler violence.

PRINCIPAL HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

The UN’s humanitarian call for the Occupied Palestinian Territories in 2018⁹ identified, as the priority goals of humanitarian assistance, three lines of action: defending the rights of the Palestinian population living under occupation; providing basic services to those in situations of acute vulnerability; and capacity-building for families to deal with protracted crises.

The call amounted to USD 540 million (of which 32% was requested for maximum priority projects) to address the needs of 1.9 million people in Gaza and the West Bank.



PROTECTION

The root causes of the protection crisis in Palestine lie in the occupation and other infringements of IHL and IHRL that affect the lives and safety of the Palestinian population, and limit their access to health, water, and education services, and to means of livelihood. Nearly 2 million Palestinians are affected by protection risk. From January to October 2017, there were 365 demolitions (119 in East Jerusalem and 246 in the West Bank), involving the displacement of 588 people (211 in East Jerusalem and 377 in the West Bank). Furthermore, in 2017 the Israeli government announced the construction of 13,638 new settlement homes in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

In Gaza, at the end of 2017, 29,000 people were still displaced from their pre-2014-war place of residence¹⁰. In the West Bank (not only Area C) and East Jerusalem many people are at risk of forced displacement, including the 46 Bedouin communities at imminent risk of forced displacement.

Especially noteworthy in 2017 was the increase in violent incidents involving settlers in the occupied territories (after 3 years of decreases¹¹), in addition to violent incidents perpetrated by Israeli security forces.

There has also been an upswing in gender-based violence (GBV), sexual abuse, and forced marriage in the communities affected by different types of violence, fragmentation and displacement, with limited availability of multisector services (i.e. for GBV, health, legal assistance and psycho-social support).¹²

⁹ Humanitarian Response Plan 2018-2020 Occupied Palestine Territory. January - December 2018. https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/2017_hrp_draft5_20_12_2017_v2.pdf

¹⁰ HNO 2018 oPt (Draft). OCHA 2017.

¹¹ OCHA Humanitarian Bulletin July 2017.

¹² UNFPA: GBV Mapping (2016); UN Women: Navigating Through Shattered Paths: NGO Service Providers and Women Survivors of Gender-based Violence. An Assessment of GBV Services in Gaza. 2017.



FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY

The factors contributing to the situation of food insecurity in Palestine are insufficient economic access to food caused by restrictions on movement, trade, and investment, and by the high levels of unemployment. Although food is available, prices are too high for families with fewer resources, who spend approximately 50% of their income on food.

1.6 million people (31.5% of the total) are in a situation of food insecurity: in Gaza, one out of every two people fall into this category, and one out of three are severely affected by food insecurity.



WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE

There are an estimated 1.7¹³ million people with needs in this sector. In Gaza, response is hindered by delays in rebuilding caused by the limitations imposed by the blockade, and by the inclusion of 23 water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) materials on the “dual use” list.¹⁴ The deficient condition of the sanitation and wastewater systems, together with electricity cuts, provoke constant overflows of untreated water which infiltrates into the groundwater, meaning that 96% of aquifers are not adequate for human consumption. One million people are consuming water that does not meet minimum quality standards, and 60% of Gaza’s population resorts to private suppliers, exposing themselves to serious health risks.

In the West Bank, 70% of the population is not connected to a water network; 35,000 people in 52 communities in the southern part of the Hebron district do not have permanent access to safe drinking water, both at primary distribution points (homes) and at secondary collection distribution points. The destruction of water and sanitation facilities is also causing displacement and an increased risk of contracting diseases—an especially serious situation insofar as WASH access at schools is concerned.



GENDER

The Palestinian crisis has very specific gender dimensions (accentuated by its being a profoundly patriarchal society), which can be seen in gender-differentiated needs and access to services and humanitarian assistance, and in the different coping mechanisms of women and men.

A joint gender analysis by OCHA and UN WOMEN in 2017 reports continuous violations as regards the protection of women and girls (including security incidents, and denial of rights and of access to services and psychosocial well-being). This analysis makes clear the rise in GBV in the most vulnerable communities (especially in the case of women with disabilities, whose access to services is even more restricted), as well as warning of an increase in the risk of early marriage. Moreover, access to prevention and response services is limited and needs to be improved.

Likewise, Palestinian women’s high unemployment rate puts them at a disadvantage for generating income.

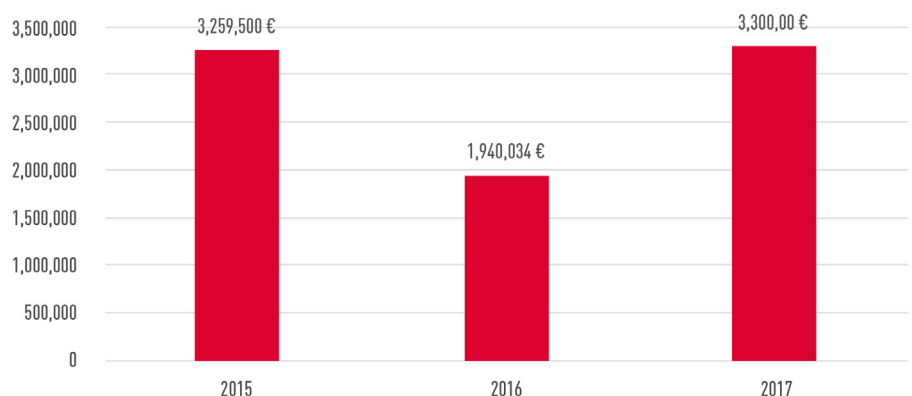
Especially troubling is the situation of separated, divorced, or repudiated women and of widows—especially, insofar as their property, ownership, and inheritance rights are concerned, as well as their need for legal assistance regarding these rights¹⁵.

In 2017, a significant number of clusters have made exhaustive efforts to truly include a gender approach, both in the identification of humanitarian needs and in response. However, there is still a need to improve the quality of sex-and age-disaggregated data, as well as the systematic inclusion of gender analysis in qualitative data compilation.

STRATEGIC POSITIONING

AECID maintains its humanitarian support for Palestine. Since 2013, it has been one of the top four crises in terms of funding from AECID’s Humanitarian Action Office budget. In 2016 and 2017, it accounted, respectively, for 7.5% and 9% of the Office’s total spending. The following chart shows the humanitarian funding received in the last three years.

Chart 1. Humanitarian action funding



Source: The authors, with data from AECID

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Pumps, drills, etc.

¹⁵ HNO oPt (Draft). OCHA 2017.

I. Strategic objectives

SO1. Contribute to protecting populations that are suffering or at risk of IHL violations, and carry out advocacy activities urging the Israeli government to assume its responsibilities regarding the Palestinian population pursuant to IHL.

SO2. Support access to basic WASH services and food security for the most vulnerable Palestinian populations (in Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem) and carry out capacity-building for coping with trauma and protracted threats.

SO3. Contribute to mainstreaming gender issues into humanitarian actions in Palestine.

2. Sectors of intervention

Based on the humanitarian needs described, AECID will prioritize its humanitarian actions in the protection sector. Moreover,

it will support assistance interventions in the WASH, food security, and nutrition sectors. In order to address sudden emergencies in Palestine, it will continue to support the coordinated emergency response system (OCHA pooled funds). Moreover, it will support projects with a multisector approach, and whose activities are conducted throughout the territory.

In line with the international commitments acquired, AECID will continue to support actions combining new technologies and methodologies, such as cash transfers. Gender issues will be given priority, cross-cutting treatment in the different actions.

Taking into account the volatile situation in Palestine, especially in Gaza, and the biennial nature of the strategy, a possibility to be considered is that of working in other, non-priority sectors within this strategy, as long as the interventions have a disaster risk reduction (DRR) approach that

therefore includes emergency preparedness and mitigation and early warning measures.

3. Main partners in the intervention




AECID, based on the priority sectors determined, and taking into account the nature of this crisis, i.e. as a protection crisis, will support in this area stakeholders and counterparts with recognized capabilities and experience in implementing protection projects, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC).

Regarding WASH, work with UNICEF will be prioritized; in food security, with the World Food Programme (WFP); regarding gender issues, with UN Women. Other multisector interventions will also be carried out with OCHA and humanitarian NGOs present in this region.



ACCOUNTABILITY MATRIX

Below is a list of indicators that could be used to measure the results achieved in Palestine during 2018-2019.

| GENERAL | |
|--|--|
| Indicators | |
| Annual budget disbursed in Palestine | |
| Annual budget disbursed, by principal sector | |
| Annual no. of beneficiaries of the interventions | |
| Annual budget for Palestine consisting of cash transfers (cash and coupons) | |
| Annual budget disbursed on interventions classified with codes 2a and 2b of the IASC gender marker or code 2 of the ECHO gender-age marker | |
| Budget annually disbursed to local organizations | |
| SECTOR | |
| PROTECTION | |
| Indicators | Partners |
| Annual budget disbursed for GBV prevention actions |  |
| Victims of GBV who have received assistance | |
| Number of children who have received psycho-social assistance | |
| Persons at risk of forced displacement who have received support/assistance | |
| Persons made aware or informed of and/or trained in IHL | ONG |
| FOOD SAFETY AND NUTRITION | |
| Indicators | Partners |
| Cash transfers distributed (cash and coupons) |  |
| WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE | |
| Indicators | Partners |
| Drinking-water facilities opened |  |
| Persons benefiting directly from safe drinking water | |
| Healthcare centres opened | |