



Palestine Country Profile

Urban Context

Palestinian urban areas are growing at a rapid pace while reeling under immense pressures on the environmental, socio-economic, and political fronts. At present, almost 77 per cent of the population in Palestine is considered urban, living in 40 per cent of the territory that is effectively under direct Palestinian jurisdiction, while the remaining are living under full Israeli control in peri-urban and rural communities in the West Bank, including Area C and Hebron H2 (at the heart of the city).

East Jerusalem continues to be occupied by Israel since 1967, and the Gaza Strip is besieged by the Israeli measures. The high urban growth rate in Palestine is accompanied by random spatial development, as cities and communities have expanded in an unplanned manner, encroached on surrounding agricultural land, and suffer from poor basic infrastructure. Furthermore, there is an increasing demand for job opportunities, services, and housing.

The key urban challenges are:

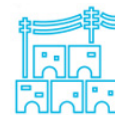
- Spatial and Administrative Fragmentation
- Urban Sprawl (Unplanned Urbanization)
- Urban Environment
- Urban Economy
- Urban Legislation, Land and Governance



Total population is 5.23 million



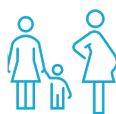
2.9% Urbanization rate



In Gaza strip, only 1% have unintermittent access to electricity



42.2% of the population are refugees



28.4% of the population are youth



In Gaza strip, only 8% have unintermittent access to water

UN-Habitat in Palestine



The crux of UN-Habitat approach is linking relief, rehabilitation, and development interventions in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt - the Gaza Strip and West Bank, including East Jerusalem) ultimately to 'build resilience' through people's methodology.

This is put forward as a mechanism to operationalize the Humanitarian Development Peace Nexus within the context of the oPt. UN-Habitat interventions aim to:

- Build-back-better in the Gaza Strip to support reconstruction efforts
- Provide shelter and reduce vulnerability in stricken areas
- Improve the precarious living conditions of the population
- Create high intensity reconstruction and recovery jobs as a way of progressing towards the recommencement of social, cultural, health, educational and economic activities

US\$ 16,200,000

Total Value of Ongoing Projects

5

Number of Active Projects in 2023

STORY FROM THE FIELD

The first well-designed public space for women and girls along the 8.2 km coastal area of Khan Younis (Gaza): The promenade was designed with four female architecture students using site-specific assessments, innovative tools and approaches to engage the local community, such as through the Minecraft game. Forty young community representatives, half of whom young women, participated, not only creating more inclusive spaces but also improving their skills in decision-making and leadership.



HOUSING REHABILITATION IN GAZA STRIP



18 months



US\$ 1,000,000



Gaza Strip



Palestinian Housing Council (NGO)



70 non-refugee families (700 persons) in Gaza strip whose houses were damaged during May 2021 conflict

Purpose

The main objective of the project is to rehabilitate a portion of the housing units in the Gaza Strip which have been damaged during the May 2021 conflict. UN-Habitat, through the Special Human Settlement Programme for the Palestinian People, undertook a self-help reconstruction project in Gaza to shelter affected non-refugee families whose houses were destroyed during the 2008-2009 conflict, in addition to developing some basic community infrastructure. The project was delivered through setting up a technical support center. This approach developed the highest level of satisfaction for the target group, adapting the response to the needs of the families and facilitating the most efficient use of cash grants given to the beneficiaries, along with respecting appropriate building codes and standards.

After the 2014 conflict, UN-Habitat undertook urban planning projects in 8 municipalities (Khuza'a, Wadi Gaza, Al Shoka, Beit Lahia, Absan al Kabira, Wadi as Salqa, Al Musadar and An Nesser) across the Gaza Strip where neighborhood plans were developed and municipal masterplans were updated through a participatory spatial planning process, to support the reconstruction of houses destroyed by the wars, and to accommodate for natural growth, allowing for more public space, better roads and market connectivity, and allowing people to shape what their built environment will look like in the next 20 years.

Project Description

The project will be supporting self-help rehabilitation of 70 housing units for affected non-refugee Palestinians in vulnerable situations and provide practical technical advice for the use of cash grants, technical support and guidance to families targeted by this project. The Cash Transfer to Beneficiaries approach will be used. The project will support vulnerable groups and communities with new inclusive open public spaces with specific attention to women, youth, and people with disability needs.

Project Strategy

The project will pursue a consultative approach with the relevant stakeholders opting for direct community participation, whereby the families will be enabled to organize the required works for their own residence.

Lessons learned from the programmes/projects implemented in Palestine suggest that effective interventions require responsiveness to local conditions, including cultural considerations and respect to gender sensitivities, based on community involvement in planning and implementation. This project builds on these lessons learned, and ensures local conditions, cultural considerations and gender sensitivities are taken into consideration in project design and implementation. Additionally, it has been recognized that under the volatile security and political situation, project activities are often negatively affected by unexpected changes in security conditions and arrangements. For example, inconsistency at the crossings create delays, including the transport of building materials required for rehabilitation works. To mitigate these challenges, UN-Habitat will ensure close liaison and communication not only with local authorities but also with key local informants such as community leaders to obtain necessary information and insights.

UN-Habitat will act as the executing agency for the Programme while the Palestinian Housing Council (NGO) will serve as the local implementing partner. An Agreement of Cooperation will be signed between UN-Habitat and the local implementing partner, (PHC) outlining the responsibility of each of the parties.

The theory of change of these interventions relies on key assumptions required to achieve the project impact, namely the strong partnership with the communities and key local government counterparts, which are essential for an effective implementation of the project activities and sustainability of its outcomes.

The first step to be carried out is to conduct a rapid assessment of the damage to have a better understanding of the vulnerabilities and confirm hotspots to be targeted where evidence-based activities will have a maximized impact. These enabling conditions will help to move from activities to outputs. The participation in the design and coordination of activities by stakeholders and tailoring interventions to the local context and needs of beneficiaries will ensure the progress from outputs to outcomes and impact.

Main Expected Accomplishments

- Severe pressures on the socio-economic fabric of the community reduced and hence contributing to a long-term stability conducive to peace and security in the region.
- Living conditions of the affected families improved; local economy strengthened; capacity of local actors related to rehabilitation developed.
- 70 housing units in the Gaza Strip rehabilitated; public spaces implemented

PLACEMAKING INTERVENTIONS IN GAZA STRIP



12 months



US\$ 250,000



Gaza Strip



1,175,000 people (21.5% youth and 49% females) in Gaza and North Gaza Governorates

Purpose

Placemaking is all about turning 'public' spaces into 'living' places that support the wellbeing of local communities and that can be managed and maintained by that community. Placemaking aims at jumpstarting an engaged process to protect the rights and responsibilities of local Palestinian citizens. Studying international experiences teaches us how relevant such an approach is and what are the parallels that could be singled-out, acknowledging the particular uniqueness of the Palestinian context that is affected by the damage and losses on the ground in the Gaza Strip. To put it simply, the implementation of placemaking interventions will consolidate the masterplans prepared with and for Palestinian communities to build-back-better, noting that UN-Habitat supported the consolidation of more than 10 masterplans out of the 25 masterplans designated for municipalities in the Gaza Strip.

Project Description

The project aims at supporting the implementation of public placemaking interventions for and with vulnerable Palestinian communities in the Gaza Strip to provide a safe, gender-sensitive, inclusive, and resilient built environment that would have a broader positive impact, especially on women, youth, and people with disabilities, who have been lacking access to basic needs in the public realm for a protracted period. Important to mention that the placemaking interventions focus on enhancing safety of local communities, by defining for instance pedestrian spaces in the street including sidewalks and pedestrian crossings, in addition to speed bumps. Relevant safety audit tools are utilized to achieve desired objectives. The implementation of a public space based on the placemaking approach as a non-statutory planning tool will complement the work that has been initiated in partnership with local communities based on the statutory planning tool - Local Outline Plans - prepared and submitted by the municipalities in Gaza Strip.

The project will contribute to localizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the New Urban Agenda in Palestine. Following the Third Palestinian Urban Forum 9, which was particularly

designed for this purpose, placemaking was identified as a key component in realizing the SDGs, in particular, SDG 5 1 0 and SDG 11.

Project Strategy

Participatory processes ensure citizens will be encouraged to partake in the local development processes, and the authorities will be more responsive to future needs and aspirations of the citizens. This will result in improving the conditions of the built environment, foster social cohesion, build resilience, foster tenure security, and enable spatial development. This marks an amalgam between statutory and non-statutory approaches in realizing National Development Plans 2021- 2023 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Palestine. UN-Habitat has strong experiences in using the placemaking methodology in the OPT that resulted in developing a Placemaking Toolkit: Designing People Places - A toolkit for communities and designers to design and implement public spaces and buildings in Palestine that was adopted by the Ministry of Local Government in 2020.

One of the issues to consider during the design of placemaking interventions is safety audits. The safety audits are usually performed in the proposed public spaces with the aim of formulating a better understanding of the safety aspects related to the semi-deserted enclosed public spaces under consideration. UN-Habitat has concluded such an exercise in Khan Younis at the bequest of the Canadian Government. Furthermore, UN-Habitat employs technological tools to engage all sectors of the society, especially children and youth groups. A good example on this the Belgian funded interventions in the Gaza Strip using the state-of-the-art technology of Minecraft video game. The importance of utilizing Minecraft rests on its ability to engage community members, especially youth from both genders, in a highly visual and intuitive manner that allows the expression of their needs and opinions. Minecraft is a critical tool for democratizing public space and broader spatial planning processes in a cost-effective and highly interactive manner.

Main Expected Accomplishments

- Safe, gender-sensitive, inclusive, and resilient public spaces especially for the most vulnerable groups in the Gaza Strip through participatory spatial planning interventions at the local level are promoted.
- The Palestinian municipalities in Gaza are capable to provide planning functions based on public spaces and extend their management reach.
- Local communities are empowered to enhance their living environment through bottom-up led initiatives.
- Advocacy efforts to defend the planning rights of Palestinian communities are supported and maintained with national and international actors to guarantee more equitable planning standards across the Gaza Strip.

SPATIALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF THE GAZA STRIP – URBAN PROFILING OF GAZA STRIP



6 months



US\$ 100,000



Gaza Strip



Gaza Strip residents comprising over one third of the Palestinian population

Purpose

Urban Profiles are a well-tested UN-Habitat approach for cities and communities in (post) conflict/disaster areas, as a basis for development aid strategies, policies and interventions at city and regional levels. Urban Profiles have been produced for Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, as well as for the Gaza Strip after the ending of the so-called Operation Protective Edge in 2014.

The 2014 Gaza Urban Profile¹⁴ has been warmly welcomed by PA institutions as well from the international community at large. The MoLG showed interest in developing Urban Profiling for the Gaza Strip after the recent escalations.

The urban profile will contribute to:

- The National Urban Policy for the State of Palestine currently under preparation by MoLG with support from UN-Habitat to localize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (especially SDG 11), and the New Urban Agenda, and
- The National Spatial Plan, under preparation at present by MoLG along with other national governmental and non-governmental partners.

Key stakeholders in the OPt expressed the need to have a better understanding and awareness of the spatial dynamics and potentials of Gaza Strip in an emerging metropolitan area as economic engine of the Palestine economy. This approach would largely contribute to the ongoing efforts of MoLG and UN-Habitat, to advance city-region plans for the Gaza Strip especially since the Regional Plan for Gaza Strip adopted in 2005 soon after the disengagement of the Israeli Authorities from the Gaza Strip came to an end in 2020.

The Urban Profile for the Gaza Strip would allow the Palestinian Authority, the UN, and development partners to have a better understanding of the current urban dynamics, in order to better frame the ongoing advocacy and messaging on one hand and to better frame the

current donor funded initiatives in the Gaza Strip. Therefore, it is needed to undertake a spatial impact assessment of the Gaza Strip from a Palestinian perspective, and closely monitor all territorial dynamics including settlement and buffer zones expansion, as well Israeli imposed geo-political constructs including the tight regime on movement of people and goods.

Project Description

UN-Habitat seeks to provide up-to -date urban analysis of the impact of the recent May 2021 escalations in key cities of Gaza, with focus on the most affected neighborhoods, through City Profiles, synthesizing information and insight from existing sources and priority sectors, supplemented by direct field research by UN-Habitat teams. It is worth mentioning that UN-Habitats expertise in urban analysis, community approaches and crisis contexts have informed the development of the City Profiling process in Gaza in 2014.

Project Strategy

Urban or city profiles use GIS-based mapping to analyze and present the impact of crisis in each affected city or urban neighborhood, taking into consideration damage and displacement, and how they impact a range of sectors including basic infrastructure, shelter, education, health, local economy. It considers the interrelationships between each sector and assesses local capacity within each. The structure of the City Profile provides baseline and current situation data to measure the impact of the crisis accompanied by narrative description and analysis. Gaza City profiles will be developed in close coordination with the active institutions that are currently involved in the work on the Gaza crisis. These include a wide range of local and international actors such central and local governments institutions, humanitarian aid agencies, other relevant UN agencies, and the international donor community. Of particular significance is the collaboration and coordination with all the institutions who are working on damage assessments at various stages and levels, as the urban profiles intend to consolidate existing damages data, analyze and update them. For the completion of priority areas profiles, support is needed to accommodate further data collection and updating.

Main Expected Accomplishments

- Urban Profile on the Gaza Strip is published
- An easy-to-use online dashboard is launched with spatial information and maps representing the main findings.