RISK MITIGATION ASSESSMENT REPORT TO PREVENT SEA IN THE GAZA STRIP AND THE WEST BANK

PSEA Network – Occupied Palestinian Territories
April 2024

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Before the current crisis, the PSEA network was well stablished as a key resource for 96 organizations working to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse. The network's strategic helpline was crucial in offering a victim-centred approach and improving the referral of high-risk cases. Efforts were also made to build a community of practice through peer-to-peer training, addressing technical assistance and capacity-building gaps. There was a regular flow of feedback and reporting through a well stablished field network of focal points and community feedback channels.

The helpline, held by a local partner, has been strategic to build trust with communities and has addressed calls about a range of sensitive and confidential claims regarding SEA but also GBV, CP, accountability and safeguarding claims for affected populations. In 2020, the helpline provided a total of 9,936 counselling sessions, in 2021 and in 2022 counselling sessions bypassed 23,000. In 2023 despite the severe communication restrictions, the helpline provided 28,228 counselling sessions; 18,638 since the beginning of the war. Since October the helpline has answered 43,954 calls. These calls have been crucial entry points for Mental Health Psychosocial Support Services (MHPSS), medical sessions, and referrals for food and cash. The helpline has addressed 9,002 mentions of SGBV forms, 4,860 during counselling sessions since October 2023, 1,060 on poor access to food or starvation, including child deaths, and has incorporated the protocol for unaccompanied and missing children.

In 2023, the PSEA Network transitioned to a new visual identity. Under the name SANAD –*support* – the PSEA Network wanted to be closer to the community. SANAD was launched at the end of December 2023 and despite the difficulties in connectivity, it shows a steady growth in posts' reach, engagement and followers, with an average 1.9 million Meta audience members reached monthly. SANAD aims to be recognized as the most reliable, trusted, and popular public engagement platform, uniting the efforts of the UN, INGOs, Palestinian NGOs and civil society organizations in the State of Palestine. Grassroots organizations, thus, promote SANAD PSEA awareness through community mobilization. To this date, 183,481 children and their caregivers have received SANAD messages in the Gaza Strip. The annual Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) reporting showed a significant increase in reporting capacity among network members compared to the previous year, reflecting shared responsibilities. In 2023, there were 1,085 sites where awareness-raising campaigns and activities on reporting SEA took place, and more than 600k individuals were engaged in awareness-raising activities and community mobilization interventions on PSEA in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

According to the SEARO 2022 Index[1], Palestine ranked in the 20th position among the context with higher risks of SEA. Yet, the onset of the war has challenged the resilience of the network and a completely different context is unfolding with important emergent risks of sexual exploitation and abuse by aid workers and related personnel. At large, risks of SEA by other actors have also skyrocketed. For these reasons, the PSEA Network lead on the elaboration of the SEA Risk assessment that aims to inform the emergency response on drivers of SEA, concrete risks and mitigation measures. Having in mind that the 2023 update of the SEARO index will yet not reflect the current crisis, the risk assessment offers an important qualitative insight with concrete details impacting affected communities while future SEARO exercises capture the impact on Global trends, certainly oPt will enroll into the top ten contexts at higher risks of SEA for affected communities.

The Gaza Strip methodology involved a combination of primary and secondary data collection methods due to the challenging situation that prevented representative primary data collection, particularly through interviews or consultations. The primary method utilized was a Multi-Sectoral Diagnostic Tool developed to identify gaps in the prevention and mitigation of potential safeguarding risks across various humanitarian response sectors, including WASH, shelter, food security, and general distribution activities. 107 samples of the diagnostic tool were collected by volunteers in all different areas of the Gaza Strip. **West Bank methodology** focused on

[1] SEARO Beta v.1.1. Index Data.xlsx (live.com)

qualitative approaches to understand safeguarding risks at organizational levels, allowing for consultations and interviews with CSOs and CBOs. The data was analyses against a PESTLE framework and the report is organized following the SEARO model.

The results of the assessment clearly indicate high operational risks in all areas of concern that should be match with a proportional response to integrate SEA risk mitigation responses in all operations and with support to the PSEA in- country structure to meet the challenge.

In terms of Law and Policies, Government Institutions, the total breakdown of government institutions in the Gaza Strip and partial in the West Bank, depicts a context were Palestinian communities lack the most fundamental accountability framework: rule of law and are exposed to the occupying power practices with no means to defend themselves. Absence of news coverage by international media and recurrent blackouts further also endangers international outreach and proliferation of fake news which has polarized global awareness and respect of global protection frameworks. Against this context, social and economic factors compounded with technological and environmental factors draw the main drivers of SEA.

As economic factors the assessment has identified: lack of basic needs; hunger; absence formal economies; and changes in the vulnerability framework as main areas of concern.

As social factors: overcrowding; loss of family and social support systems; weakened conflict resolution mechanisms; hyper-masculinization of the conflict; exacerbated traditional and customary law with embedded women discrimination practices; and mental health and collective trauma are the core issues affecting individuals at higher risk of SEA.

In terms of technological factors, severe restrictions in mobility and deprivation of ICTs as tools for survival profoundly affect communities' opportunities to seek remedies.

Finally, **environmental factors** such as threat of endemics and pandemics; extended exposure to lack of livelihood (including explosive remnants of war); and severe restrictions in mobility severely affect the most vulnerable constituencies.

Rich qualitative data was consolidated in this report through media monitoring, interviews and one field visit to the Gaza Strip. The results are in line with the spike on allegations received since February (more than twenty safeguarding claims and twenty-three SEA reports have been documented by the PSEA network). Reports pertaining safeguarding, child safeguarding and SEA have emerged on weekly basis. Yet, as this assessment shows, the conditions to establish accountabilities and aid are extremely limited and while the PSEA Coordinator is timely informed of all allegations when they are disclosed to the network of focal points the scope of action remains highly restricted due to safety concerns and an extremely limited access to the operations. Remote operational modalities, reliance on suppliers and implementing partners have diluted PSEA accountabilities of key humanitarian actors. Moreover, an extremely chaotic environment and lack of assurances to survivors have hampered survivors' will to come forward and for agencies to identify perpetrators.

In terms of operational capacities, the PSEA Network is well stablished in oPt reporting directly to the HC/ RC, well-staffed and with relative short and medium funding available. This should continue. Yet, humanitarian actors must scale up their PSEA and Safeguarding capacity to prevent an epidemic of SEA abuses committed by personnel related to humanitarian operations. This should be also seconded by programmatic actions to protect the most vulnerable from sexual exploitation and abuse by aid workers but also other actors. The Protection crisis in the Gaza Strip and West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is of historic proportions, posing an existential threat to Palestinians.

This report aims at informing operations and programs about underlying risks of SEA, therefore, they can integrate risk mitigation measures in their operations and project the necessary changes to accommodate for interventions that ensure the commitment towards a Do-No-Harm principle and the IASC Standard of Humanitarian action.

INTRODUCTION

METHODOLOGY

The safeguarding risk identification and mitigation plan development exercise was meticulously prepared for four months, from October 2023 to January 2024, in the aftermath of the outbreak of the October 2023 conflict and the subsequent escalation of violence within the Occupied West Bank. The report encompasses both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The analysis employed the PESTLE framework as a strategic planning instrument, facilitating the identification and evaluation of potential threats and opportunities.[2] Utilizing this framework enabled a thorough analysis of the prevailing factors in both Gaza and the West Bank, which could pose hazards and risks in safeguarding. This analysis laid the foundation for formulating mitigation measures tailored to each area. In the Gaza Strip, these measures were articulated as emergency checklists designed to support specific humanitarian sectoral responses. Conversely, in the West Bank, the measures were articulated as preparedness plans, encompassing minimum preparedness actions for organizations.

The Gaza Strip methodology involved a combination of primary and secondary data collection methods due to the challenging situation that prevented representative primary data collection, particularly through interviews or consultations. The primary method utilized was a Multi-Sectoral Diagnostic Tool developed to identify gaps in the prevention and mitigation of potential safeguarding risks across various humanitarian response sectors, including WASH, shelter, food security, and general distribution activities. This tool was designed for focal points and volunteers to complete based on observations rather than interviews to adhere to the Do No Harm principle and avoid overburdening the respondents. Observers, identified through the PSEA Network in Palestine, completed 107 observations across different locations in the Gaza Strip, primarily during the humanitarian pause starting on November 24, 2023. The tool was informed by checklists, risk assessments, and risk mitigation plans from other humanitarian crises, aiming to assess basic minimum standards and measures for preventing or mitigating safeguarding cases.

Key Informant Interviews were another primary method, involving discussions with individuals from various humanitarian clusters focusing on the Gaza Strip and local organizations to assess the situation and the challenges faced.

Secondary Data played a crucial role in identifying safeguarding risks, monitoring formal and informal news and media, conducting internet-based searches for reports, academic articles, and consulting frameworks and guidelines developed by IASC and other UN Agencies over three months from October 2023 to January 2024.

West Bank methodology focused on qualitative approaches to understand safeguarding risks at organizational levels, allowing for consultations and interviews with CSOs and CBOs. This approach aimed to identify risk factors and develop preparedness checklists as guidelines for organizations to mitigate safeguarding risks. The development of these measures consulted various frameworks and guidelines emphasizing emergency preparedness and response. Secondary data collection and consultations with CSOs and CBOs in the West Bank were also conducted to identify risk factors, utilizing a similar approach to that used for the Gaza Strip but tailored to the different contexts and situations in the West Bank.

Limitations of the study

Data collection took place during active conflict and in the midst of forced population displacement towards Rafah, the south of the Gaza Strip. In these conditions, while data collected and secondary data analyses provided valuable insights into the factors contributing to safeguarding/ SEA risks in the OPT, the limitations include:

[2] This approach significantly leverages Francis Aguilar's PESTLE (Economic, Social, Technological, Legal, and Environmental) analytical framework.

Lack of quantitative data and limited discussions on response mechanisms and the direct impact of operational conditions on SEA risks. Hampered access of humanitarian aid has severely impacted the full deployment of humanitarian actors. As the emergency response gets fully consolidated, further analysis should delve into the concrete nuances of governorates and regions and future plans for multisectoral assessments must include PSEA assessment questions.

Insufficient information on vulnerable constituencies- Specific Risks and nuances in differentiated governorates: program-based safeguarding analysis must address gender and children's specific interventions, localized and in relation to specific SEA/ Safeguarding risks.

OVERVIEW OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE

PART I: ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

Law and Policies, Government Institutions

Prior to the war, the legal, political and government framework in oPt enshrined important structural discrimination against women. Under the Personal Status Law (Art. 47), a woman can be 'head of household' or head of family in the same way as a man. However, the legal provisions require a married woman to obey her husband [3] and cannot obtain a judgment of divorce in the same way as a man. [4] Women have equal administrative power and ownership rights to immovable property, including land. [5] However, they cannot inherit assets from their parents or surviving spouses.[6] However, in practice, women and men enjoy equal rights to immovable property according to expert opinions on women's property, inheritance rights, and pensions, indicating recognition of equality in these areas.[7]

Legislation is absent or insufficient, particularly concerning women's rights and safety. There is no legislation in place addressing domestic violence, leaving women without legal protection from abuse within the home. The legislation does not cover femicide - the killing of women or girls because of their gender, and comprehensive legislation on sexual harassment is lacking, which means there are no clear legal remedies or protection for women facing harassment in various settings. In addition, the absence of legislation on child marriage led to adverse effects on young girls, including limiting their educational and economic opportunities.[8] Furthermore, the lack of applicable provisions that prohibit discrimination in employment based on gender can lead to discrimination in recruitment based on marital status, parental status, and age, as well as the absence of guidelines on non-discrimination and flexible work arrangements. Women also do not have equal rights to confer citizenship to their spouses and their children, and they cannot travel outside their homes in the same way as men.[9] The legal frameworks score for the West Bank and Gaza is 15.0 out of 100.0, significantly lower than the global average (64.2) and the Middle East & North Africa regional average (38.6), with particularly low scores in areas affecting women's safety. [10]

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[3] Personal Status Law, Art. 47.

[4] Personal Status Law, Arts. 82 and 102.

[5] Personal Status Law, Ar. 183

[6] Ibid.

[7] See The World Bank World Bank, Women, Business and the Law, West Bank and Gaza; page https://wbl.worldbank.org/content/dam/documents/wbl/2024/pilot/WBL24-2-0-West-bank-and-gaza.pdf

[8] World Bank, Women, Business and the Law, West Bank and Gaza; https://wbl.worldbank.org/content/dam/documents/wbl/2024/pilot/WBL24-2-0-West-bank-and-gaza.pdf

[9] Personal Status Law, Art. 69.

[10] Ibid.

With the onset of the war, women with children, adolescent and young girls and new and old women head of households represent a large portion of the displaced population facing gender specific risks that must be highlighted and mitigated. Food insecurity, loss of livelihoods, and acute aid dependency are highly engendered matters that further expose women and children to SGBV and VAC, including by Aid Workers. Early analysis of the conflict already stated that *lifesaving inputs, such as water, sanitation, food, fuel, and health care, are critical for the survival and well-being of these households. These must be matched with support for women and girls to access safe shelter, protection support and maternal health care.*[11]

As a result of the war, preexisting social- legal and political frameworks have been disrupted. Key findings from a Rapid Gendered Analysis[12] underlined new SEA enabling factors. The disruption of patriarchal norms hand in hand with the loss of livelihood opportunities for men is an acute source of tension an violence; disruption in health women-only services such a obstetric and SHRS care that exposes women to gender specific vulnerabilities; deepened mental health deterioration of the displaced population, which was already a dire pre-existing condition undermines women's access to services; food insecurity that affects women and pregnant women in higher proportions; worse access to sanitation facilities for women; break down of social norms of privacy affecting safety; the collapse of the education system which releases a burden on women domestics chores and finally intrafamilial tensions draw the picture of enabling factors for SEA on women and young and adolescent girls. Finally, the vacuum left by the broke on the rule of law and extremely fragile effective governance institutions also severely affect women exposing them to abuse and exploitation. On one hand widening the rule of customary law, on the other deepening the role of social and cultural values to maintain social cohesion that often do not foster women's rights and accountability measures.

Child Protection

The State of Palestine has a high proportion of young people with almost half of the Palestinian population being children. The number of children (under 18 years) was 2.35 million in the State of Palestine in 2022. As of June 2023, there were almost 905,000 registered Palestine refugee children, 635,000 in the Gaza Strip (70 per cent) and 269,000 in the West Bank (30 percent)[13]. The situation analysis released in July 2023, children's track on SDGs indicators was positive in important areas.

In right to survival and health, child mortality rates improved, yet malnutrition and mental health were a raising issue of concern. With regard to safe water, sanitation and hygiene, latest update showed than only 4 in 10 households have access to improved drinking water and wealth and geographical location greatly impacted this indicator. With regard to menstrual hygiene, 78.8 per cent were using appropriate sanitary means and with regard to education, ECD was on track, and SoP was right on the right path to meet SDG school completion rates, with a gap on adaptation to children with disabilities.

Yet, the analysis on the Right to protection, family environment and alternative care analysis prior to October, clearly stated that children were deeply affected by a protracted crisis and ongoing armed conflict. Verified child grave violations and detained children have been in the rise since 2021. In 2022, children continued to be disproportionately affected by armed conflict, and the number of children verified as affected by grave violations increased compared with 2021. The United Nations verified 3,133 grave violations against 1,139 Palestinian children (1,057 boys, 82 girls).[14] Killing and maiming; arrest and detention, health related incident, denial of humanitarian access, demolition and displacement, and education- related incidents against children depict a enabling environment that places children within a weak legal and institutional framework. Within this picture,

[11] UN WOMEN rapid assessment and humanitarian response in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (20, October 2023)

[12] Rapid gender analysis: gendered impacts of the October 2023 escalation in gaza (UNRWA, October 2023)

[13] Situation Analysis of Children's Rights and Wellbeing in the State of Palestine (Development Pathways, July 2023)

[14] SG Report Children and armed conflict Report of the Secretary-General 2022 (A/77/895-S/2023/363)

violence against children was already widespread prior to October, 64.8 of children aged 0-11 had experience physical violence and more than three quarters experience psychological violence (76.7 per cent). Violence against children was mainly perpetrated at home and was highly gendered. [15]

Six months after the onset of the war, all SDG indicators above already show grave negative deviations. With 1 million affected children, UNICEF estimated that 17,000 children are unaccompanied or separated from their families in Gaza and 70% of injured and killed are women and children.[16] The population of 2.23 million people in the Gaza Strip is facing high levels of acute food insecurity, according to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) report, and famine is imminent as half of the population – 1.1 million people– experience catastrophic food insecurity. Only 3 litres of water are available per person per day (median) across 75 shelter sites, as analysed by the WASH Cluster in a recent assessment. The most basic health care is also at risk, as hospitals across the Gaza Strip struggle to maintain operations and to save lives, as stated by the World Health Organization (WHO). Patients and medical personnel also lack food and water. Other children related health services are halted or severely impacted[17] and education facilities are damage or destroyed in their great majority. Against this picture, child labour and VAC is steady in the rise.

Policy & Societal Norms

Indicator	Yes/No	Year	Source
Policy & Societal Norms			
Legal Framework[18]			
Safety			
Is there legislation on domestic violence?	No	2024	World Bank
Is there legislation on femicide?	No	2024	World Bank
Is there comprehensive legislation on sexual harassment?	No	2024	World Bank
Is there legislation on child marriage?	No	2024	World Bank
Mobility			
Can a woman choose where to live the same way as a man?	No	2024	World Bank
Can a woman travel outside her home in the same way as a man?	No	2024	World Bank
Do women have equal rights to confer citizenship to their spouses and children?	NO	2024	World Bank
Marriage			
Can a woman be 'head of household' or 'head of family in the same way as a man?	Yes	2024	World Bank
Is the law free of legal provisions that require a married woman to obey her husband?	No	2024	World Bank
Can a woman obtain a judgment of divorce in the same way as a man?	No	2024	World Bank
Does a woman have the same right to remarry as a man?	No	2024	World Bank
Childcare			

[15] Violence Survey in the Palestinian Society 2019. PCBS.

16 UNICEF Unaccompanied Children in Gaza Strip March 2024

[17] UNICEF Escalation Humanitarian Situation Report No. 21

[18] World Bank, Women, Business and the Law, West Bank and Gaza; https://wbl.worldbank.org/content/dam/documents/wbl/2024/pilot/WBL24-2-0-West-bank-and-gaza.pdf

Does the law establish the provision of childcare services in centre-based settings?	Yes	2024	World Bank
Does the law establish any form of support to families for childcare services?	No	2024	World Bank
Does the law establish any form of support for non-state childcare providers?	No	2024	World Bank
Does the law establish quality standards for the provision of childcare services in centre-based settings?	No	2024	World Bank
Entrepreneurship			
Can a woman undertake entrepreneurial activities in the same way as a man?	Yes	2024	World Bank
Assets			
Do men and women have equal administrative power and ownership rights to immovable property, including land?	Yes	2024	World Bank
Do sons and daughters have equal rights to inherit assets from their parents?	No	2024	World Bank
Do male and female surviving spouses have equal rights to inherit assets?	No	2024	World Bank
Does the law provide for the valuation of nonmonetary contributions?	No	2024	World Bank
Policy (supportive frameworks)			
Safety			
Has the government developed comprehensive mechanisms to address violence against women?	No	2024	World Bank
Are there special procedures for cases of sexual harassment?	No	2024	World Bank
Is there a government entity responsible for the monitoring and implementation of national services, plans and programmes addressing violence against women?	Yes	2024	World Bank
Mobility		2024	World Bank
Are the application processes for official identity documents the same for women and men?	Yes	2024	World Bank
Workplace			
Has the government published guidelines on non-discrimination based on gender in recruitment?	No	2024	World Bank
Is there a specialized body that receives complaints about gender discrimination in employment?	No	2024	World Bank
Marriage			
Are there specialized family courts?	Yes	2024	World Bank
Is legal aid available for family law disputes?	No	2024	World Bank
Entrepreneurship			
Is there a current national government plan or strategy with a focus on women's access to financial services?	Yes	2024	World Bank
Assets			
Are there awareness measures in place to improve women's access to information about marital and inheritance rights?	No	2024	World Bank

Practices (expert opinions)	**Expert opinions responses (scale on the top range from 0% to 100%)**[19]
Safety	
In practice, are women free from GBV?	50% believe that, in practice, women are free from GBV
Mobility	
In practice, do women enjoy the same freedom of movement as men?	Opinions are divided on whether women enjoy the same freedom of movement as men, with the largest groups of experts (33.3%) indicating that some women do
Workplace	
	There is a consensus that about half of all women enjoy the same opportunities to enter and remain in the workplace as men.
Marriage	
In practice, do women and men enjoy equal rights during marriage?	There is a division of opinion on whether women and men enjoy equal rights during marriage and when getting a divorce, with 33.3 % of experts responding that some women do.
In practice, do women and men enjoy equal rights when getting a divorce?	There is a similar division of opinion (33.3%) on whether women and men enjoy equal rights during marriage and when getting a divorce.
Childcare	
In practice, do women have access to affordable and quality childcare services?	There is no clear consensus on whether women have access to affordable and quality childcare services (33.3.% responding to each category 'Some women', 'Most women", and 'Almost all women".
Entrepreneurship	
In practice, do women enjoy the same opportunities to start and run a business as men?	About half of the experts (50%) believe women enjoy the same opportunities to start and run a business as men.
Assets	
In practice, do women and men enjoy equal rights to immovable property?	Most experts (66.7%) believe that women and men enjoy equal rights to immovable property.

Community awareness, attitude, and practices around Gender, GBV and SEA

Almost one in three Palestinian women reported violence by their husbands in 2018-2019[20] and concerns over the safety of civilians, including women and girls, in the context of ongoing hostilities and the severe humanitarian situation in Gaza persist.[21] The prevalence of harmful gender norms and practices reinforces and perpetuates gender inequality with exacerbation of violence, inequalities, and discrimination against women and girls in the OPT, particularly in Gaza, where the disruption of schooling and collapse of healthcare and

[19] World Bank, Women, Business and the Law, West Bank and Gaza; https://wbl.worldbank.org/content/dam/documents/wbl/2024/pilot/WBL24-2-0-West-bank-and-gaza.pdf

[20] UN Women Palestine 2021 Gender Alert Analysis. https://palestine.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Palestine/Attachments/Publications/2021/11/D6-Gender%20Alert%20Analysis-111121_compressed.pdf ;

[21] See also https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/statement/2023/10/un-women-statement-on-the-situation-in-israel-and-the-occupied-palestinian-territory

housing have impacted the well-being and future prospects of girls. These conditions drivers of early/forced marriage, neglect, and violence, which can have profound effects on future generations of women and children.[22]

PART II: SOCIO- ECONOMIC CONTEXT

Economic Factors

Before the escalation of hostilities in October 2023, the West Bank and Gaza Strip were already grappling with significant social and economic challenges deeply rooted in the prolonged conflict and the complex political landscape of the region. Evidence demonstrates that dire economic conditions and economic disadvantage are major contributors to increasing safeguarding risks for children and adults, particularly in relation to sexual violence, including exploitation, abuse, and harassment. As of November 2023, according to the UNDP, it had been estimated that "the number of Palestinians living in poverty has risen by 300,000"[23]. According to the ILO, immediately after the beginning of the Israeli offensive in October 2023, around 390,000 jobs were lost in both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank[24]. This deterioration of economic conditions has been ongoing prior to the eruption of the massive invasion and carpet bombing of the Gaza Strip in October 2023[25]. It has been noted, before October 2023, that "Israel has denied Palestinians access to their natural resources, including shared water resources and an estimated 1.5 billion barrels of oil reserves in the West Bank as well as more than $2.5 billion worth of natural gas off the Gaza coast", which has resulted in stripping the Palestinian economy of vital elements for its healthy operation, whose productive base continues to shrink, thereby exacerbating dire living conditions[26]". These pre-existing economic conditions have undermined any preparedness measures and/or actions to ensure the resilience of the economy for similar situations. In May 2023, the World Bank issued a report noting that "growth remains sensitive to the escalation of tensions in the Palestinian territories and the ongoing restrictions on mobility, access and trade[27]". The following sub-sections explore the economic conditions in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank separately and demonstrate how these conditions are creating safeguarding and SEA risks for the Palestinian people.

The Gaza Strip

Gaza Economic Conditions

Whereas economic conditions have deteriorated across the Palestinian Territories, the October 2023 Israeli offensive has caused complete devastation of the formal economy in the Gaza Strip.[28] Before the mass destruction the Gaza Strip witnessed, unemployment rates in the Strip were 46.4%, one of the highest rates in

[22] https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/women/wg/WGDAWG-Statement-Gaza-2023.pdf

[23] UNDP 2023 Gaza War: Expected Socioeconomic Impacts on the State of Palestine, Preliminary Estimations until 5 November 2023. E/ESCWA/UNDP/2023/Policy brief.1.

[24] ILO, November 2023 Bulletin, Impact of the Israel-Hamas conflict on the labour market and livelihoods in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

[25] UN Meetings Coverage and Press Releases. October 2022. Israel's Practices against Palestinian Economy Exacerbating Dire Living Conditions in Occupied Territory, Syrian Golan, Senior Official Tells Second Committee. GA/EF/3574. SEVENTY-SEVENTH SESSION, 19T

[26] UN Meetings Coverage and Press Releases. October 2022. Israel's Practices against Palestinian Economy Exacerbating Dire Living Conditions in Occupied Territory, Syrian Golan, Senior Official Tells Second Committee. GA/EF/3574. SEVENTY-SEVENTH SESSION, 19T

[27] World Bank. 2023. The Palestinian Economy Remains Vulnerable Amid Socio-Political Instability. PRESS RELEASE MAY 2, 2023.

[28] ILO, November 2023 Bulletin, Impact of the Israel-Hamas conflict on the labour market and livelihoods in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

the world[29] and three and a half times higher than the West Bank.[30] In November 2023, the World Bank estimated that 85% of workers in the Strip had lost their work since the October 2023 escalation and that 54% of businesses had been compromised.[31]

Massive Economic Downturn

The Palestinian economy experienced one of the most significant shocks in recent history, with GDP in Gaza plummeting by more than 80% in the fourth quarter of 2023. This economic collapse has almost entirely halted economic activity in Gaza, leading to widespread poverty and making nearly every resident of Gaza live in poverty, at least in the short term.[32]

Increased Poverty and Vulnerability

The conflict has exacerbated multidimensional poverty, which covers income, access to education, and basic infrastructure, among others, with poverty levels reaching slightly higher than the peak of COVID-related economic restrictions.[33]

Widespread Internal Displacement

About 1.7 million Palestinians in Gaza, approximately 75% of the total population, have been internally displaced, in some cases multiple times. This displacement, coupled with the destruction of homes and infrastructure, has left over 1.2 million individuals without homes, further exacerbating the risks of exploitation and abuse.[34] Most of the displaced population are women and children that try to move with relatives. UNRWA is sheltering half of the IDPs in 154 schools occupied nearly four times their capacity. Churches, schools, public building, tents around these areas and hosting families are the makeshift shelter for a population under threat of a new forced evacuation. An estimate of 62% of building in the Gaza Strip have been destroyed. In light of a ceasefire, IDPs will not have a home to return, thus remaining in formal or informal shelters unfit for living.

Deterioration of Non-Monetary Welfare Conditions

Multidimensional poverty measures have rapidly deteriorated. This includes disruptions to children's access to education and colossal challenges in obtaining essential health and other basic services. Every person in Gaza faces acute food insecurity, with at least one in four experiencing catastrophic hunger, increasing the risk of famine.[35] [36]

Fiscal Crisis and Reduced Public Services

The Palestinian Authority has been forced to reduce public salaries and essential services, further jeopardizing the social contract and increasing the population's vulnerability to exploitation and abuse.[37]

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[29] ILO, November 2023 Bulletin, Impact of the Israel-Hamas conflict on the labour market and livelihoods in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

[30] UNDP 2023 Gaza War: Expected Socioeconomic Impacts on the State of Palestine, Preliminary Estimations until 5 November 2023. E/ESCWA/UNDP/2023/Policy brief.1.

[31] The World Bank December 2023 Update. Impacts of the Conflict in the Middle East on the Palestinian Economy.

[32] https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/db985000fa4b7237616dbca501d674dc-0280012024/original/PalestinianEconomicNote-Feb2024-Final.pdf

[33] https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/7600aee6c75eff4cf9b71ea1fe4016db-0280012023/original/NoteWBG-dec11-CLEAN.pdf

[34] https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/db985000fa4b7237616dbca501d674dc-0280012024/original/PalestinianEconomicNote-Feb2024-Final.pdf

[35] https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/note-impacts-conflict-middle-east-palestinian-economy-february-2024

[36] Gaza Strip: Acute Food Insecurity Situation for 15 February - 15 March 2024 and Projection for 16 March - 15 July 2024 | IPC - Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (ipcinfo.org)

[37] https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/note-impacts-conflict-middle-east-palestinian-economy-february-2024

Increased Restrictions and Loss of Employment

The conflict has led to heightened restrictions on movement and temporary reductions in public salaries in the West Bank, affecting consumption levels and deepening the economic impact. The cancellation of work permits for over 170,000 Palestinian workers has heavily impacted demand in the West Bank, contributing to an estimated 22% contraction in the West Bank's GDP during the fourth quarter of 2023.[38]

These economic impacts have not only devastated the Palestinian economy but have also significantly increased the risks of exploitation and abuse among the population, particularly among the most vulnerable groups such as internally displaced persons, children, and those living in extreme poverty. The combination of widespread poverty, internal displacement, and the deterioration of welfare conditions creates an environment where exploitation and abuse can flourish, further exacerbating the humanitarian crisis in the region.[39] [40] [41]

Findings Relating to Aid Distribution, Food Security, Shelter & WASH

The findings from this assessment offer a revealing glimpse into the current state and aid distribution's multifaceted challenges and risks of sexual exploitation and abuse, with key insights regarding food distribution, shelter conditions, and WASH services. The finding also identifies several common trends across these sectors, highlighting the complexities of ensuring safety, fairness, and efficiency in aid distribution efforts.

Since February the main channel to report SEA has received 23 safeguarding reports and 21 SEA allegations denouncing verbal and physical abuse, aid diversion, discrimination, favouritism and nepotism. Similar reports are also coming through oPt Confidential email. Communities expressed anger and frustration underlying an unbearable conflictive relationship with aid workers and aid institutions. On one hand, acute dependency, and fear of abandonment, on the other wiling to reclaim their rights, threat to retaliate and willingness to talk to the media depict the erosion of communities to be treated and served with dignity. Safeguarding claims were also part of the spot checks made during the first visit of the PSEA Coordinator to Gaza in March 2024. In two occasions, tension with the community and family disputes in the waiting queue for flour prevented the completion of the visits.

Aid Distribution

Responses/observations provide a comprehensive overview of the conditions and operational aspects of aid distribution sites across various locations, primarily focusing on Rafah (16 sites) and Khan Younes (26 sites), and a few sites in Gaza City (4 sites), Central Region (2 sites), North Gaza (2 sites). The data is collected through questionnaires by entities involved in the aid distribution process.

Most of the responses (11 out of 12) received for the food security and distribution assessment tool were from Rafah, which received "over one million of the 1.9 million" IDPs.[42] The responses reflect scarcity, inconsistency in food distribution, and irregularity in food distribution. Qualitative data from the tools showed that even those who received aid felt that the process was not dignified. This data (see Figures 6 and 7) indicates that food scarcity is alarming even in places with high numbers of displaced people. UNRWA has also warned that quantities arriving at the Strip do not meet the needs of the population[43].

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[38] https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/db985000fa4b7237616dbca501d674dc-0280012024/original/PalestinianEconomicNote-Feb2024-Final.pdf

[39] https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/7600aee6c75eff4cf9b71ea1fe4016db-0280012023/original/NoteWBG-dec11-CLEAN.pdf

[40] https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/note-impacts-conflict-middle-east-palestinian-economy-february-2024

[41] https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/db985000fa4b7237616dbca501d674dc-0280012024/original/PalestinianEconomicNote-Feb2024-Final.pdf

[42] Anera. 12 January 2024. Palestine Situation Report (January 12, 2024)

[43] UNRAW. 29 December 2023. THE GAZA STRIP: UNRWA CALLS FOR UNIMPEDED AND SAFE ACCESS TO DELIVER MUCH NEEDED HUMANITARIAN AID

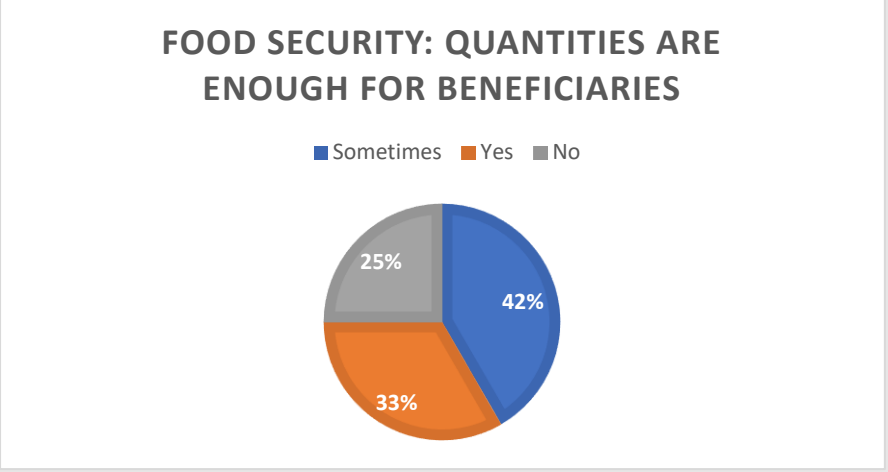

FIGURE 1. FOOD QUANTITIES

Observations and responses reveal a mixed picture of the aid distribution process, with several sites reporting that aid distribution occurs in open, safe, and easily accessible locations. However, there are notable concerns regarding safety and accessibility, mainly due to the large number of displaced people, making some sites not easily accessible. Distribution often begins and ends during daylight, although there are instances where distribution occurs at night, raising safety concerns.

Risks associated with aid distribution include the presence of unofficial humanitarian workers without identification, mixed distribution lines for men and women leading to potential safety risks for vulnerable groups, and reports of shooting to resolve disputes at some sites. Additionally, respondents/observation responses mention the presence of long and time-consuming distribution lines, which can degrade human dignity and exacerbate tensions among aid recipients.

Findings demonstrate a mix of separate and mixed distribution lines for men and women, with some sites having only male or female supervisors. The presence of male and female humanitarian workers at some sites suggests an effort to address gender-specific needs. However, the organization of distribution lines indicates areas for improvement in ensuring fairness and orderliness. Additionally, the presence of unofficial humanitarian workers without identification and reports of shootings to resolve disputes at some sites highlights significant risks to both the fairness of aid distribution and the safety of those involved.

The assessment reveals a complex picture of aid distribution efforts, with notable achievements in providing aid to various community groups and maintaining open and accessible distribution sites. However, significant challenges remain in ensuring the distribution process's safety, fairness, and efficiency, particularly in terms of accessibility for vulnerable groups, information availability, and the organization of distribution lines. Addressing these challenges is crucial for improving the effectiveness and impact of aid distribution efforts.

Food Distribution

During the period, assessment observations were conducted in December 2023. Food distribution was taking place at various sites in Rafah, such as neighbourhoods of AlQuds Open University – and tents in front of it, Saudi alWuds University – and tents towards the university, Deir elBah, Deir alBalah, Khirbet Adas, and shelter affiliated with CSOs or charitable organisations.

Perceived lack of orderly distribution. The distribution varies across sites. Food distribution was perceived to be fair and orderly in some locations, with male and female supervisors present. However, there were sites not

covered by the distribution and/or without supervisors present at some sites. Waiting times in food distribution lines range from 30 minutes to more than an hour.

Different types of assistance were provided across different sites. These include food vouchers and food parcels (sugar, rice, wheat flour, fresh vegetables, ready-to-eat)

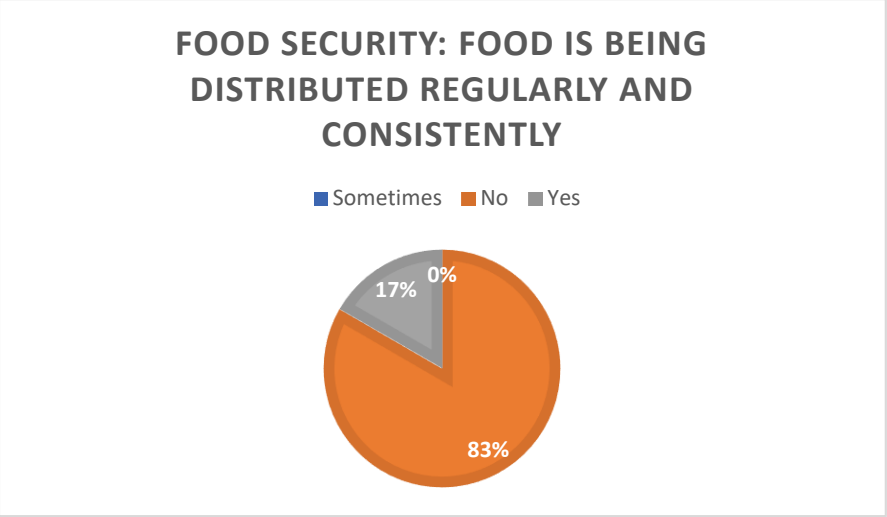

FIGURE 2. FOOD DISTRIBUTION

Limited information about food distribution: There is a mix of availability regarding information on food aid distribution, with some sites providing clear information about the content and timing of food aid distribution, information indicating that the aid is free, and means and methods for complaints.

Abusive Behaviour and 'Unofficial Humanitarian Workers'*:* Respondents reported There are instances of abusive behaviour, including violence, threats, and harassment at some sites, and the presence of 'unofficial humanitarian workers' providing assistance without identification or uniforms.

Dire economic conditions often increase safeguarding risks and make the whole population prone to exploitation. The emergence of a black market in particular places the population under extreme circumstances, with prices increasing on average by 12% for some products[44], including basic food items. The prolonged dire economic conditions caused by Israeli hostilities in the Gaza Strip were considered by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) the major cause for the entire population to become highly prone to food insecurity and at risk of famine[45]. According to the Protection Cluster's 18 January 2024 Operational Update on the Gaza Strip, "there are severe restrictions on the entry of essential relief and commercial supplies… materials essential for survival are scarce, humanitarian relief is unpredictable and inadequate, and the desperation amongst the community is further leading to complications including security concerns for distribution[46]".

Shelter

The assessment examined the conditions of several shelters in Rafah and Khan Younes. Observations were conducted at several Rafah and Khan Younes locations, including agency schools, civil sites, and camps. The shelters visited accommodated elders, children, individuals with special needs, and unaccompanied minors. Shelter infrastructure varied; some had lights and signs, while others did not. Male and female supervisors were

[44] The World Bank December 2023 Update. Impacts of the Conflict in the Middle East on the Palestinian Economy.

[45] IPC, December 2023, Gaza Strip: Acute Food Insecurity Situation for 24 November - 7 December 2023 and Projection for 8 December 2023 - 7 February 2024.

[46] PROTECTION CLUSTER - GAZA OPERATIONAL UPDATE 18 JANUARY 2024

present, although not all of them. Contractors such as construction workers and plumbers were spotted in some shelters.

Overcrowding. Many shelters are described as very crowded, with reports of up to 6 families in a room or 40 people in an apartment. One shelter is noted to have 35 to 40 thousand people. For instance, one shelter dweller describes the situation as "Very crowded, up to 6 families in a room". Overcrowding can lead to increased stress and tension among shelter residents, which may exacerbate conflicts and abusive behaviour. It also poses a challenge to maintaining hygiene and could potentially lead to the spread of diseases.

Abusive Behaviour. Abusive behaviours were reported and observed in some shelters, and they included violence, threats, or harassment. As Abu, a respondent from Rafah, noted: 'Bad behaviour of security personnel" is a concern. Another occupant reported that: 'Many problems occur,' which could imply instances of abusive behaviour. These comments suggest a need for better management and training of security personnel to ensure the safety and well-being of the shelter residents.

Lack of Information on Site. Several respondents have indicated a lack of available information. For example, a youth organization noted, 'There is none of this information on the site,' which could refer to information about aid distribution, mental health services, or medical services. The absence of clear information can lead to confusion and frustration among the shelter residents, contributing to chaos and lack of order.

Limited Health and Psychosocial Services. Primary mental health/psychosocial support services and recreational activities for children are limited, with some shelters offering none.

Safety and Accessibility challenges. Some shelters are equipped to accommodate people with limited mobility, but not all.

Sanitation and Health. The corridors and pathways in some shelters have good lighting, but not all of them. There are unofficial humanitarian workers on site providing assistance without identification or uniforms in some cases.

Fairness and Order. Interconnected issues on safety, accessibility and overcrowding can cause heightened stress and conflict, which may result in abusive behaviour. The lack of information can further exacerbate the residents' sense of insecurity and helplessness and raise the likelihood of exploitation. There is a need to improve conditions in these accommodation centres. The response would include, among other things, more training for security personnel, initiatives to alleviate overcrowding, improved privacy and enhanced communication and information sharing within the shelters.

WASH

The assessments identified risks associated with WASH, particularly issues related to accessibility, safety, and management of water and sanitation services.

Accessibility, Safety and Security issues. WASH sites are not always easily accessible from shelter areas, schools, and medical facilities, with some responses describing access as 'bad' or 'very difficult'. This poses a significant risk to the community, making it harder for individuals, especially those with special needs, older people, and children, to access essential water and sanitation services.

Inadequate lighting and hygiene. Lighting was limited to one hour each day in some regions. This increases the danger of accidents and makes these regions risky, especially at night. The lack of locks on the inside of restrooms and showers can jeopardise users' privacy and safety, leaving them vulnerable to abuse. There were also reports of poor hygiene in water collection areas. Without clear information on SEA, message prevention demonstrates a communication and support gap for the community's health and well-being.

Infrastructure and Management Deficiencies. Responses suggest significant deficiencies in the management and supervision of WASH sites, with some sites described as not having any workers but displaced volunteers.

Inadequate Provision for Vulnerable Groups.

Sites lack measures in place to ensure the needs of various vulnerable groups are met, such as older people, children with special needs, and children without guardians.

Environmental and Sanitation Concerns. Crowded conditions, difficulty entering bathrooms, and waiting times of up to three hours were reported.

Crisis Scope & Intensity

By 22 March 2024, it is estimated that there are 31,988 Palestinian fatalities, 74,188 reported injuries, and 1.7. million internally displaced persons (75% of Gaza population), with '1.1 million people projected to face a catastrophic level of food insecurity (IPC Phase 5)'.[47] Since 7 October 2023, Gaza has seen an increase in aerial bombardments, ground invasions, restrictions on freedom of movement, mass detentions, torture, threats, intimidation, sexual and physical violence, in addition to other forms of abuse, such as harassment, censorship, and silencing[48]. The conflict's intensity increases SEA risks and is considered SEA risks in its own right.

Crisis Scope & Intensity

Indicator (Gaza)	Value	Year	Source
People Affected			
People Affected (absolute)	1.7 million	2024	OCHA
People Affected (relative to the people in the affected area	75%	2024	OCHA
Crisis Severity			
Conditions of People Affected	1.1 million projected to face catastrophic levels of food insecurity (IPC Phase 5)	2024	IPC

Destruction of Infrastructure and Housing

Approximately 50% of the Gaza Strip had been affected by the conflict as of January 7, 2024, with over 69,000 structures directly impacted. This includes 22,000 destroyed, 14,000 severely damaged, and 33,000 moderately damaged buildings. The northern areas of the Gaza Strip, including North Gaza and Gaza City, experienced significant damage, with around 68% of buildings in North Gaza damaged to varying degrees. The conflict's expansion southwards has resulted in considerable damage in southern areas such as Khan Younis, Deir Al-Balah, and Rafah. Estimates suggest that 35% of buildings in Khan Younis and 20% in Deir Al-Balah have sustained various levels of damage, with around 10% of buildings in Rafah affected. The total number of structures across the Gaza Strip is nearly 180,000, with the report estimating that more than 60% of buildings, approximately 110,000 structures mainly residential, are now likely damaged and uninhabitable across the entire area. As a result, approximately 1.2 million people will likely be without adequate safe housing and urgently need emergency shelter and housing recovery assistance.[49] The demolitions of housing have increased people's vulnerability to exploitation and abuse of all kinds, including sexual. With the loss of housing and increased homelessness, the lack of safe spaces and privacy increases SEA risks and makes the population prone to SEA.

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[47] OCH,A, Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel – reported impact. Day 167. https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-reported-impact-day-167

[48] OHCHR. 27 December 2023. The Human Rights Situation in the Occupied West Bank including East Jerusalem: Flash Report.

[49] Remote sensing structural damage assessment to determine probable shelter needs in the Gaza Strip, March 2024. https://sheltercluster.org/palestine/documents/remote-sensing-structural-damage-assessment-determine-probable-shelter-needs

Overcrowding emergency shelters and makeshift shelters

Shelters, including those provided by UNRWA schools, have not been spared from Israeli aerial bombardments. The high demand for shelters, compounded by their targeting, presents substantial safeguarding risks for all affected Gazans, particularly for women, children, and other marginalized groups such as individuals with disabilities and older people. The enormous demand for shelters, exacerbated by the targeting of shelters, constitutes major safeguarding risks to all affected Gazans, and even more so for women, children and other marginalised groups, including people with disability and older people. The observation tool on shelters also echoed risks related to shelters and during the assessment conducted using 28 completed observation tools—50% from Khan Younis, 36% from Rafah, 7% from Deir Al-Balah, 4% from North Gaza, and 4% from Gaza City—revealed that shelters were in poor condition, overcrowded, unsafe, and unclean. These shelters house various social and vulnerable groups (see Figure 2).

When respondents were asked about shelter overcrowding, 82% confirmed over-crowdedness, while only one stated that the shelter assessed was not overcrowded (See Figure 4).

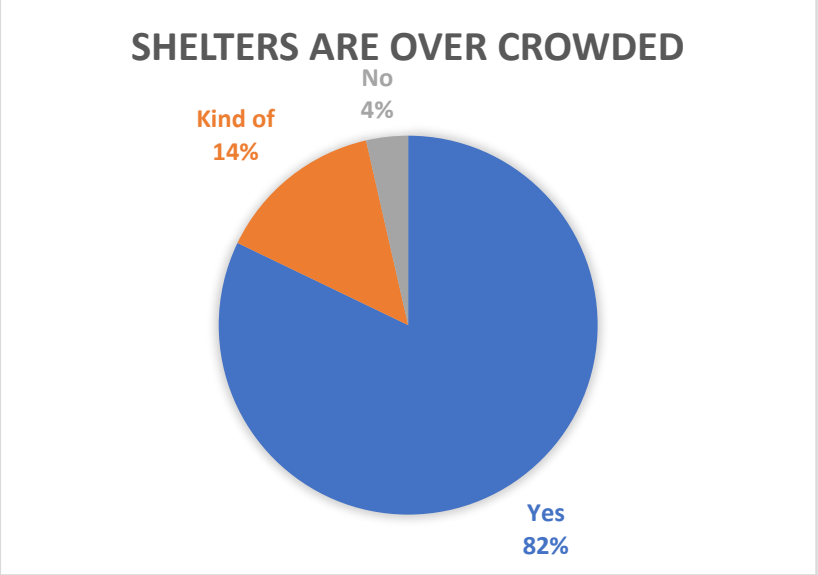
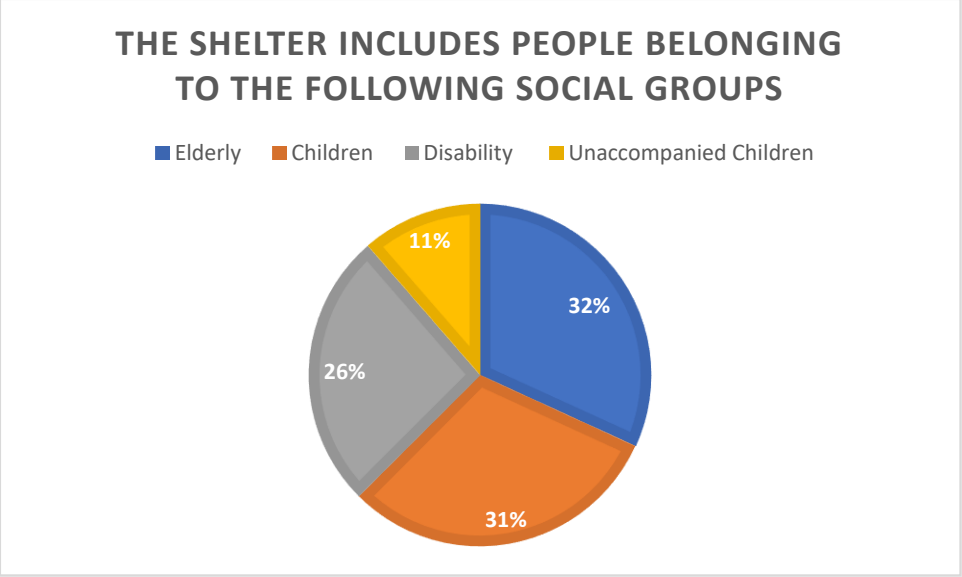


FIGURE 3. OVER-CROWDEDNESS IN SHELTERS

This over-crowdedness compromises peoples' overall physical and emotional well-being and increases vulnerability to SEA.



Difficult access to shelters for individuals with physical disabilities

16 out of 28 responses indicated that the shelters were not equipped to accommodate these needs. 82% of respondents confirmed the issue concerning overcrowding, with only one stating that the assessed shelter was not overcrowded.

When asked whether shelters are equipped to host people with a physical disability, 16 out of 28 responses stated that they are not (see Figure 3).

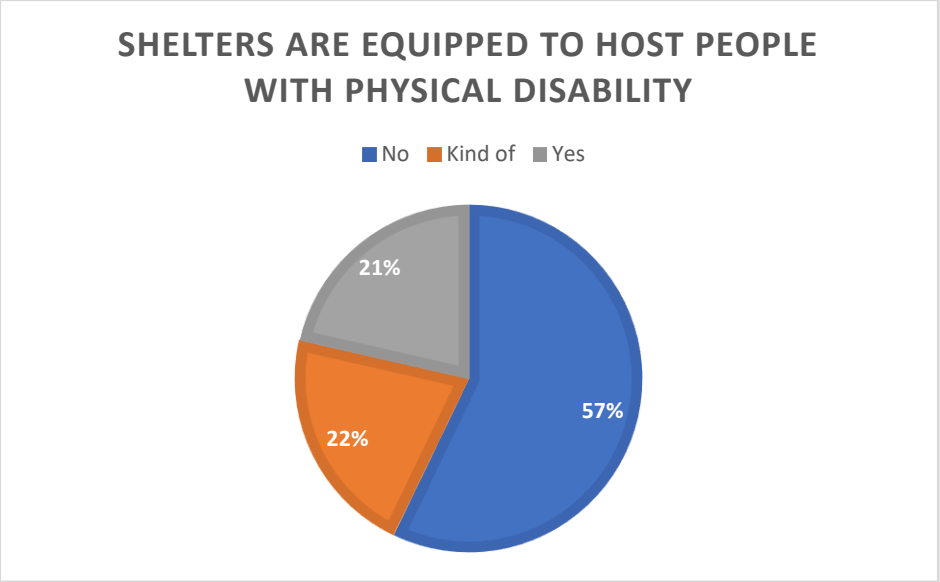


FIGURE 4. SHELTERS AND ACCESSIBILITY TO DISABLED PERSONS

Lack of electricity

The military action caused a considerable reduction in economic activity and household welfare due to the lack of electricity, as indicated by satellite photos and statistics on night-time illumination. The decrease in night light

levels predicted a notable collapse in economic activity and household spending.[50] The shelters' circumstances have been made worse by the absence of electricity, which has been intensified by Israel's choice to disconnect the power supply to the Strip during the attack. Lack of electricity raises security threats and immediately affects the safety of shelter areas, especially for women. 39% of respondents mentioned sporadic lighting, 29% stated there was lighting, and 32% said there was no lighting in the shelters. (See figure 5).

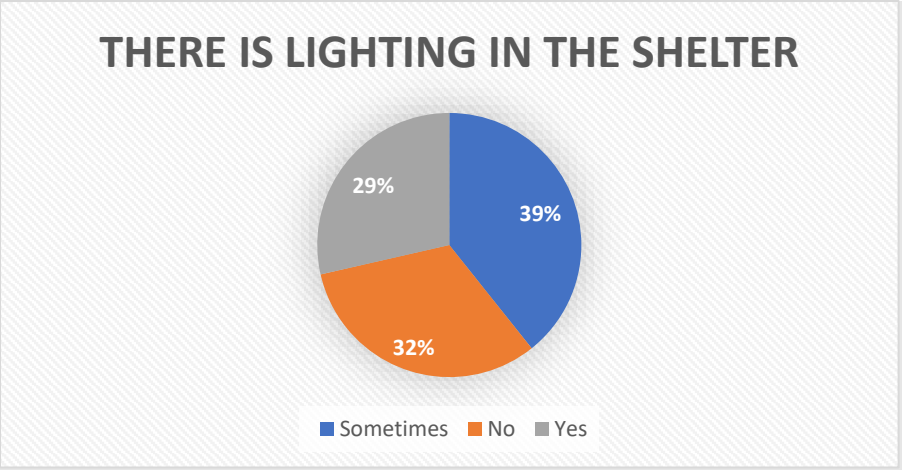


FIGURE 5. LIGHTING IN SHELTERS

In facilities with electricity, the observation's qualitative data clearly indicates that energy is generated through generators and solar panels when there is lighting.

Food and water shortages

The population faces life-threatening food and water shortages, with half of the population struggling with catastrophic hunger. Famine is imminent in northern parts of Gaza.

Medical services and safety

Displaced people face critical food, water, housing, and medical supply shortages. Unclean environments facilitate the spread of infectious diseases. Law and order are almost nonexistent and educational and health facilities are in ruins. Because of the population's precarious situation, they are easy targets for abuse and exploitation in Gaza. Medical services and the health sector in Gaza have been hit hard by the fuel and electricity shortages as well as the intentional attacks on hospitals. According to the World Health Organisation, only 15 of 36 hospitals were fully operational as of January 15, 2024. As a result, many injured people had to wait on overcrowded hospital floors to obtain treatment.

School targeting

The severe impact of 17 years of blockade and recurrent conflict on Gaza's education infrastructure led to damaged facilities, disrupted education provision, and adverse effects on the psychosocial well-being of children and teachers. Financial barriers to education, with many children dropping out due to the inability to afford school-related expenses. The infrastructure challenges include overcrowded classrooms and a shortage of schools, further exacerbated by the conflict. [51]

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[50] UNCTAD Preliminary Assessment of the Economic Impact of the Destruction in Gaza, and Prospects for Economic Recovery, UNCTAD Rapid Assessment, January 2024. https://unctad.org/publication/preliminary-assessment-economic-impact-destruction-gaza-and-prospects-economic-recovery

[51] Education Cluster Response Plan, January 2024. https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/gaza-education-cluster-response-plan-january-2024

The Israeli offensive has also severely affected children, targeting schools and forcing the closure of the formal education sector. The Education Cluster in the Palestinian Territories estimated that 69% of school buildings were damaged, over 625,000 students lost access to education, and 89% of school buildings are either being used as shelters for internally displaced persons (IDPs) or have sustained damage. UNICEF has highlighted that in conflict zones, children and youth with low levels of education are at an increased risk of exploitation. Furthermore, it has been documented that individuals of all ages in the Gaza Strip have been subjected to detention under extreme conditions.[52]

Collective Trauma

The overall political and legal conditions are causing collective traumas among the population of the Gaza Strip. Compromised mental health and psychosocial well-being may exacerbate SEA risks in humanitarian response. With populations feeling desperate for the very little assistance provided, vulnerabilities increase.

Political factors significantly contribute to the exacerbation of safeguarding risks. The deteriorating living conditions and the gradual inhabitability of the Strip are creating collective traumas among the Gazan population, impacting their physical, mental health, and psychological well-being. The control of Gaza's only internationally recognized border crossing, the Rafah Border Crossing, by Israel and Egypt allows for the regulation of the type and amount of aid and goods entering the Strip. This politically motivated restriction on the population's access to basic supplies, including medical supplies, food, fuel, and water, will have far-reaching and devastating effects on the entire population.[53]

Summary of SEA and Safeguarding Risks

The analysis above demonstrated that the current socio-economic situation produces hazards that exacerbates safeguarding and SEA risks associated with humanitarian response in the Gaza Strip. Four main risks arise as solid assumptions:

Lack of Basic needs: Scarcity of basic needs to meet essential living conditions increases competition for resources, thus deepening power dynamics where the most vulnerable will be highly exposed to abuse and exploitation (including sexual but not only) to access primary goods for survival.

Hunger: The declaration of famine re-dimensions access to humanitarian and charity food supply as the solely live saving mechanism for the most vulnerable.

Absence formal economies: Emergence of black markets further weakens institutional capacities to address equal access to affected communities and minimum protection assurances, including channels to report wrongdoing and seek safety.

Changes in the vulnerability framework: Pre-existing categories of vulnerability prevail with important nuances: children supporting women head of household, women without guardianship, women in lower ranks of the kindship structures, families without extended families, unaccompanied children, injured individuals, people with disabilities, and old people without extended family populate a new vulnerability framework.

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[52] Education Cluster (UNICEF and Save the Children). 7 December 2023. Education under attack in the Gaza Strip, as of 5 December 2023.

[53] WHO. 15 January 2024. Preventing famine and deadly disease outbreak in Gaza requires faster, safer aid access and more supply routes.

The West Bank

Socio-political factors

Settler violence in the West Bank has also been ongoing for decades. However, the scale of violence escalated with the October 2023 offensive on the Gaza Strip. Different cities and areas in the West Bank, although administratively governed by the Palestinian Authorities (PA), have come under routine Israeli invasion of homes and lands by both soldiers and settlers. The expansion of settlements on internationally recognised Palestinian lands and forced evictions have been ongoing since the 1993 Oslo Agreement.[54] In addition to that, the West Bank is politically, economically, and militarily controlled by Israel, with checkpoints separating different Palestinian areas and cities from each other. Over the past four months, settler violence escalated in the West Bank, with further restrictions on freedom of movement through increasing the number of checkpoints and unpredictable closures.

Consultations with CSOs in the West Bank expressed that the situation has worsened since the October 2023 escalation, with restrictions on freedom of movement and transportation disruptions that have heavily influenced their day-to-day lives and work. In addition to that, many expressed fears of leaving their homes, fearing for their lives, because of settler violence by soldiers and/or settlers[55]. Many areas in the West Bank are surrounded by settlements, where settlers are armed and regularly attack Palestinians. The threat of displacement and actual displacement have been a worry for West Bankers, as "nearly 2,000 Palestinians displaced amid Israeli settler violence since 2022; 43% since 7 October 2023"[56]. West Bankers struggle with a complete absence of political leadership and representation.

Following the October 2023 escalations, incursions occurred in several West Bank cities, and Jenin came under aerial bombardment. Since October 2023, Israel has detained 6,200 Palestinians from the West Bank and East Jerusalem, which included women and children, and has killed 314 Palestinians, among them 80 children, as of 4 January 2024[57]. This requires particular attention, as consultations with the CSOs demonstrated that most of them do not know their rights and/or what to do in case Israeli forces detain them. Others also emphasised needing first aid and Hostile Environment Awareness Training (HEAT) training.

The current situation and the gradual escalation in the West Bank are alarming, and there are areas of preparedness needed to mitigate the risks that could result from political factors. Safeguarding risks in the West Bank will likely be exacerbated if the situation continues and peoples' lives are constantly disrupted. The political situation and context may contribute to increasing safeguarding risks as living conditions deteriorate, violence increases, and large populations are forcibly displaced.

West Bank Preparedness Needs

Political and legal factors in the West Bank, which may produce and exacerbate safeguarding and SEA risks, are producing preparedness needs in the West Bank, which must be considered before the situation escalates further. The major risk that can be identified in the West Bank is the escalation of violence, displacement, bombardment, etc. and for the West Bank to become subject to violence that amounts to that in the Gaza Strip. For this reason, preparedness to ensure potential risks are mitigated is essential. Preparedness needs emerging from political and legal factors can be summarised as follows:

Anticipated Shelter Needs: With the escalation of events in the West Bank and the potential for more violence, shelters might become needed if the humanitarian situation deteriorates. For this reason, and to mitigate SEA

[54] Amnesty International. 2022. ISRAEL AND OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES.

[55] United Nations. 2 November 2023. Rise in intimidation, settler violence in the West Bank, warns OCHA.

[56] OCHA. 1 November 2023. The other mass displacement: settlers advance on West Bank herders.

[57] OCHA. 4 January 2024. Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel | Flash Update #84.

risks, it is imperative to ensure that available shelters in the West Bank are equipped with physical preventative measures and can provide psychosocial support.

Security Awareness Needs: Increased security awareness and hostile environment sensitisation can be lifesaving and a mitigation measure for SEA risks, as they reduce the chances of compromising physical health and mental well-being.

Legal Protection Mechanisms and Awareness Needs: As detention is one of the main legal and political hazards that could potentially produce safeguarding and SEA risks, establishing legal protection mechanisms and increasing awareness of existing mechanisms is essential.

Social Factors

The Gaza Strip

In the context of the recurrent conflict and the escalation of hostilities since October 2023, the social structure in OPT has been severely disrupted. With the onset of the war, customary and patriarchal roles replace other forms of governance that have now collapsed which has increased reliance on family and community structures for support. Absence of rule of law and law enforcement result in lineage based and community mediation for solving the increase tensions and, as literature shows, these often further enshrined discriminatory practices. During this review, e.g., several instance where customary mediation has reversed court orders on custody of children have been recorded. Secondly the female and children exodus, first form the north to the south of the Gaza Strip and then outside the strip also may entail a hypermasculinization of the conflict affecting particularly those most vulnerable women and children that do not possess the means to leave.

Gender Dynamics

The societal norms and expectations for men and boys emphasize their role as providers, which is challenged by limited economic opportunities. This situation leads to increased levels of frustration and a higher risk of violence, including gender-based violence (GBV). As in previous conflicts in OPT, Women and girls face societal pressure to fulfil conservative and traditional roles, limiting their participation in economic and social life. The conflict has also had an impact on economic challenges on women's participation in the labour market and the prevalence of gender-based violence.[58] Before the current conflict, women did not have equal access to jobs in the same way as men.[59]

There is a particular limited and/or lack of women humanitarian workers in Gaza, which also reflects gender imbalance in the provision of aid and support. This gender-balance workforce that is rooted in unequal power dynamics affects women and children, who face greater risks of SEA in an emergency due to their often marginalised status and the power imbalance that exists.[60] [61] Customary patriarchal practices in this context are exacerbated with an impact in conflict resolution mechanism that discriminate women and rule over pre-exiting court agreements – this can be noticed in payments of alimony and custody of children- and an

[58] ACAPS Thematic Report: Palestine - Social impacts of the humanitarian situation, 19 October 2021. https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/acaps-thematic-report-palestine-social-impacts-humanitarian

[59] World Bank, Women, business and the Law; West Bank and Gaza, 2024. https://wbl.worldbank.org/content/dam/documents/wbl/2024/pilot/WBL24-2-0-West-bank-and-gaza.pdf

[60] https://www.unicef.org/protection/protecting-children-from-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse

[61] https://emergency.unhcr.org/protection/protection-principles/protection-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse-psea

Community Safety and Social Support

Strong social support systems essential for providing a protective environment and for the recovery of survivors have been heavily affected,[62] increasing risk to vulnerable groups in communities. The Palestinian society in the Gaza Strip is heavily relying on collective and community forms of care, aid, and support despite losing trust in institutions. This reliance provides an opportunity to mitigate and safeguard risks. The population is heterogeneous, with native Gazans, internally displaced people, and refugees, which presents unique social challenges and opportunities for community engagement. In the current emergency settings, the breakdown of usual protective institutions such as family, community, government, and law enforcement structures can lead to increased risks of SEA.

Cultural and Organizational Norms

The diversity within the Gaza Strip is characterised by a complex interplay of cultural backgrounds that influence social and economic interactions. The majority of the population in the Gaza Strip is Sunni Muslim, with Islam playing a significant role in shaping social norms, practices, and the political landscape. Religious beliefs and practices are deeply embedded in the culture, influencing various aspects of life, including education, law, and community relations. The presence of a small Christian minority also contributes to the cultural fabric of the region.[63] The region's history of conflict, particularly the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, has had a significant impact on the social and economic conditions, leading to high levels of unemployment, poverty, and dependence on humanitarian aid. Organizational cultures, including hierarchical structures that promote traditional masculinity or risk-taking, are likely to dismiss incidents of sexual violence and exploitation.[64]

Social factors such as community structures, cultural norms, economic conditions, gender dynamics, and the availability of assistance and reporting procedures have significantly impacted the risks of SEA and the effectiveness of protective measures in emergencies and crises like the Gaza Strip. It is critical to address these factors in order to prevent SEA and protect the well-being and respect of vulnerable populations.[65] [66] [67] [68] [69] The SEA risk assessment findings highlight the Gaza Strip's relies on community aid due to the governance vacuum and the acute economic constraints. The varied society faces unique challenges, needing a focus on gender dynamics, raising awareness, and providing information to support the reduction of safeguarding and SEA risks.

Increased negative coping mechanisms

The socio-economic challenges in Gaza, where 46% of the population lives below the poverty line and 62% of households face severe or moderate food insecurity,[70] have led to increased negative coping mechanisms among vulnerable groups, especially children. This has resulted in higher school dropout rates, child labour, and

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[62] https://emergency.unhcr.org/protection/protection-principles/protection-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse-psea

[63] https://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/palestinian-culture/palestinian-culture-core-concepts

[64] https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/sites/default/files/migrated/2017-10/rta_addressing_sexual_violence_in_humanitarian_organisations_-_good_practices_for_improved_prevention_measures_policies_and_procedures.pdf

[65] https://www.unicef.org/protection/protecting-children-from-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse

[66] https://emergency.unhcr.org/protection/protection-principles/protection-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse-psea

[67] https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/sites/default/files/migrated/2017-10/rta_addressing_sexual_violence_in_humanitarian_organisations_-_good_practices_for_improved_prevention_measures_policies_and_procedures.pdf

[68] https://apps.who.int/gb/COVID-19/pdf_files/2021/14_10/Item1.pdf

[69] https://odihpn.org/publication/doing-the-right-thing-protection-from-exploitation-and-abuse-in-humanitarian-action/

[70] https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/statement-unicef-risk-famine-gaza-strip; https://www.who.int/news/item/19-02-2024-children-s-lives-threatened-by-rising-malnutrition-in-the-gaza-strip; https://www.unicef.ch/en/current/news/2024-01-08/intensifying-conflict-malnutrition-and-disease-gaza-strip-creates-deadly

child marriage. These conditions particularly impact children with disabilities due to a lack of necessary assistive devices, adapted learning materials, specialized support, adequate transportation, and adapted school facilities. Approximately 270,000 children in Gaza experience various degrees of learning difficulties, and in 2022, about 27% of children with disabilities aged 6-17 were not enrolled in education. Those who are enrolled face a high risk of dropping out. The ongoing conflict and recent escalations are expected to increase the number of children with disabilities significantly.[71]

High risks of child labour and child marriage

The main factors contributing to the high risk of child labour and child marriage in Gaza are deeply intertwined with the region's socio-economic conditions, cultural norms, and the ongoing conflict. Families facing financial difficulties often see child labour as necessary to supplement household income. Approximately 7.3% of children between the ages of 5 and 17 are engaged in child work.

Similarly, **child marriage** has sometimes been viewed as a way to reduce the economic burden on a family by transferring the responsibility of a daughter to her husband.[72] [73] Especially females with disabilities are more likely to marry young as a coping technique over time. Girls with disabilities face a variety of complicating factors related to patriarchal cultural norms and financial constraints. These situations promote detrimental activities, such as child marriage. Child marriage is also another example of gender-based violence that occurs within the home. Child marriage predominantly affects girls. Approximately 8% of girls aged 15 to 19 were married, with the Gaza Strip having a higher incidence (9.1%) than the West Bank (7.1%). 2.4% of girls aged 15 to 17 were married. Nonrefugee females have a child marriage rate of 9.0%, whereas girls with little or limited education have a rate of 10.9%. [74] Girls with disabilities face increasing pressure to marry at a young age to ensure their safety and financial stability. In 2022, the HNO reported that more than half of Palestinian parents considered it more difficult for a girl with a disability to marry and were willing to have their daughter marry before the age of eighteen.[75]

- *Cultural and social norms,* such as traditional beliefs and customs in Gaza and the broader Palestinian territories, sometimes prioritize early marriage for girls and view boys as economic contributors from a young age. These cultural practices can perpetuate the cycles of child labour and child marriage.[76]
- *Lack of access to education:* The current periods of heightened insecurity concerns and attacks on school facilities have heavily undermined the education of school children. The obstacle to obtaining high-quality education, exacerbated by the conflict and economic blockade, has increased dropout rates and restricted children's future prospects. This lack of educational opportunities leads families to consider child labour and early marriage as a viable alternative.[77]

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[71] Gaza Education Cluster Response Plan, January 2024. https://educationcluster.app.box.com/s/fj9rwnhy9aoehuzuuu7hi2gdmc0mjp4f

[72] https://www.unicef.org/stories/poverty-drives-child-labour-gaza

[73] https://www.ochaopt.org/content/child-labour-increasing-gaza

[74] Unicef, Situation Analysis of Children's Rights and Wellbeing in the State of Palestine, July 2023. https://www.unicef.org/sop/media/2471/file/Situation%20Analysis%20of%20Children's%20Rights%20and%20Wellbeing%20in%20the%20UNICEF%20State%20of%20Palestine.pdf

[75] ACAPS Thematic report - Palestine: Impact of the conflict on people with disabilities in the Gaza Strip (14 February 2024. https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/acaps-thematic-report-palestine-impact-conflict-people-disabilities-gaza-strip-14-february-2024

[76] https://borgenproject.org/child-marriage-in-palestine/

[77] https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_236940.pdf

- *Food insecurity:* A substantial portion of households in Gaza have been experiencing severe levels of food insecurity.[78] This situation exacerbates the vulnerability of children, pushing them into the labour market or early marriages as families struggle to secure their daily needs.[79]
- *Gender discrimination:* with prevalent gender-based discrimination and violence, girls are particularly vulnerable to early marriage as a form of protection or due to societal pressures. This discrimination also affects boys, who may be pushed into labour markets at a young age to fulfil traditional roles as providers.[80]

Since 2022, Palestine has faced significant challenges related to early marriage and child labour, with varying degrees of progress and setbacks in addressing these issues. These issues are deeply intertwined with the broader socio-economic and security challenges facing Palestine, including displacement, overcrowding in camps, financial and physical insecurity, and the impacts of ongoing conflict. Efforts to address early marriage and child labour are complicated by these factors, as well as by prevailing social norms and the need for comprehensive legal and policy reforms.

Findings relating to social factors

Key informant interviews with people from the Gaza Strip explained that IDPs are living under very difficult conditions, with over-crowdedness and lack of privacy and cleanliness. These conditions are creating tensions and difficulties, and in some cases, miscommunications and misunderstandings, between the IDPs, who come from very different cultural backgrounds. Observation tools confirmed that in shelters, different families are sharing the same rooms, due to the large number of IDPs and the huge demand for shelters. These factors point towards safeguarding risks, as demonstrated in the observation tools. The severe lack of humanitarian assistance creates safeguarding risks, potentially leading to community conflicts and abusive practices. Some observers from the tools confirmed that they had noticed abusive practices during the observation (see Figure 8). Qualitative data from the tools also showed that conflicts arise between families, and conflicts and problems arise from the behaviour of humanitarian workers supervising aid distribution.

[78] IPC, December 2023, Gaza Strip: Acute Food Insecurity Situation for 24 November - 7 December 2023 and Projection for 8 December 2023 - 7 February 2024.

[79] https://www.ochaopt.org/content/child-labour-increasing-gaza

[80] https://arabstates.unfpa.org/en/topics/child-marriage-5

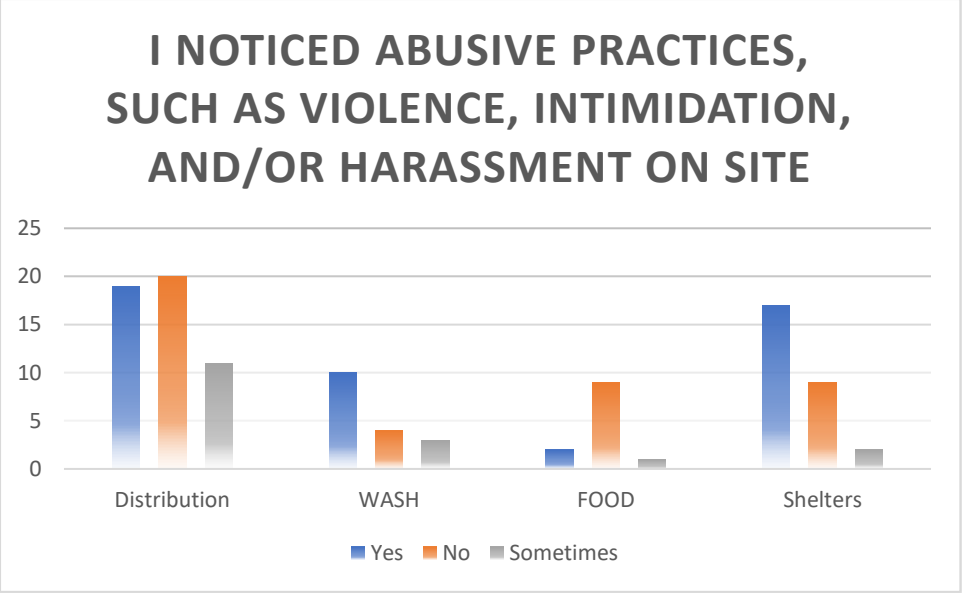

FIGURE 6. ABUSIVE PRACTICES ON SITE

Data from the observation tools, consultations, and key informant interviews revealed that communities and individual volunteers are responding to each other's needs and are relying on each other. Despite the absence of formal conflict resolution and complaints response mechanisms, these initiatives are currently filling that gap. Concerning information being available about complaints and conflict response mechanisms on observation sites, most observers confirmed the lack of information (see Figure 9).

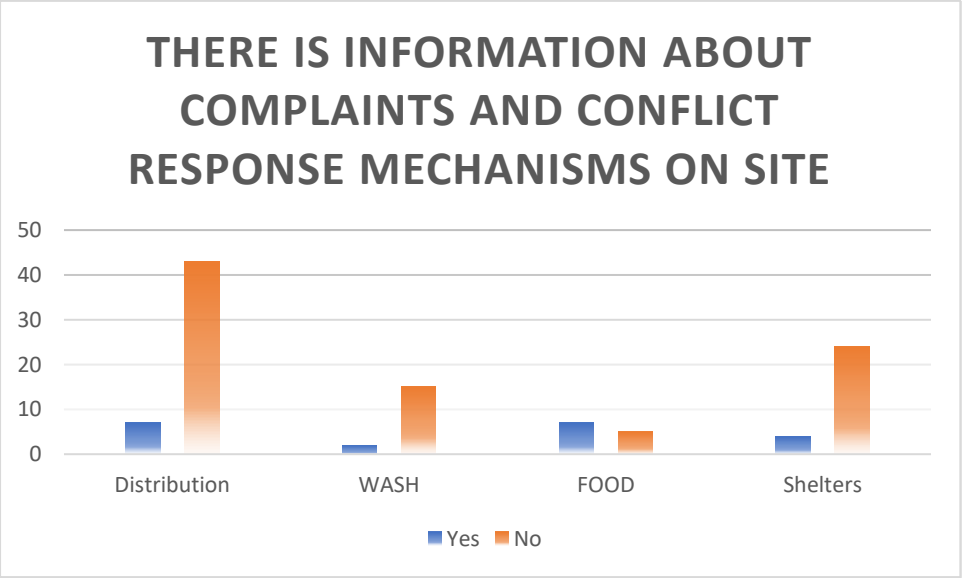

FIGURE 7. COMPLAINTS AND CONFLICT RESPONSE

In addition, the tools demonstrated that there are not enough humanitarian workers on the sites observed through this assessment (see Figure 10) and that there is a particular lack of women humanitarian workers. It is

important to highlight that humanitarian workers in the Strip were also targeted through Israeli bombardment. For example, UNRWA alone lost 130 its personnel in the Strip since the October 2023 escalations[81].

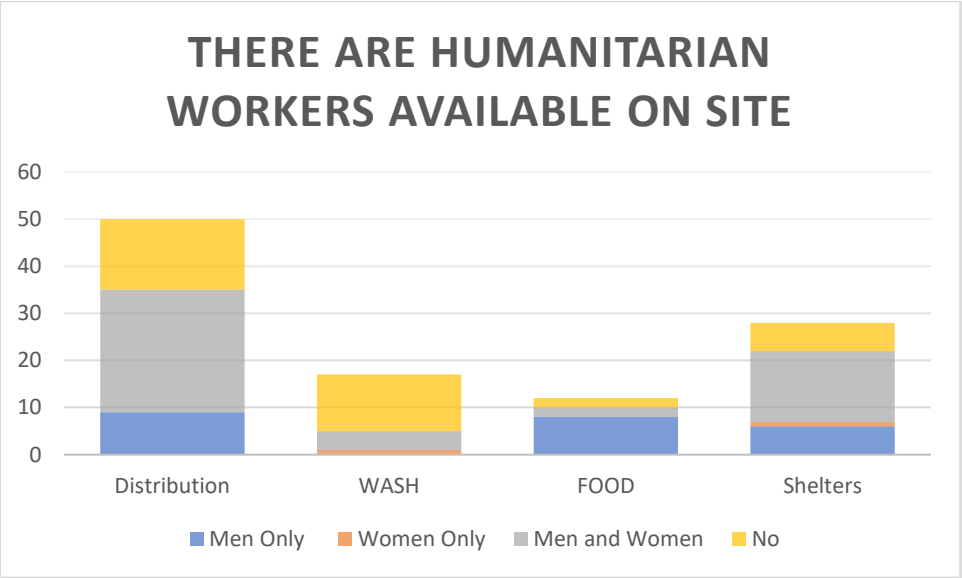

FIGURE 8. HUMANITARIAN WORKERS BY GENDER

Data showed that despite the lack of humanitarian workers, people from the community are volunteering to fill this gap. For example, the observation tools demonstrated that people are volunteering to cover different needs and work, such as cooking, cleaning, repairs, organising queues, serving food, and even entertaining children with activities. For example, the observation tool demonstrated that in 39% of the shelters observed, there were activities for children's entertainment (see Figure 11).

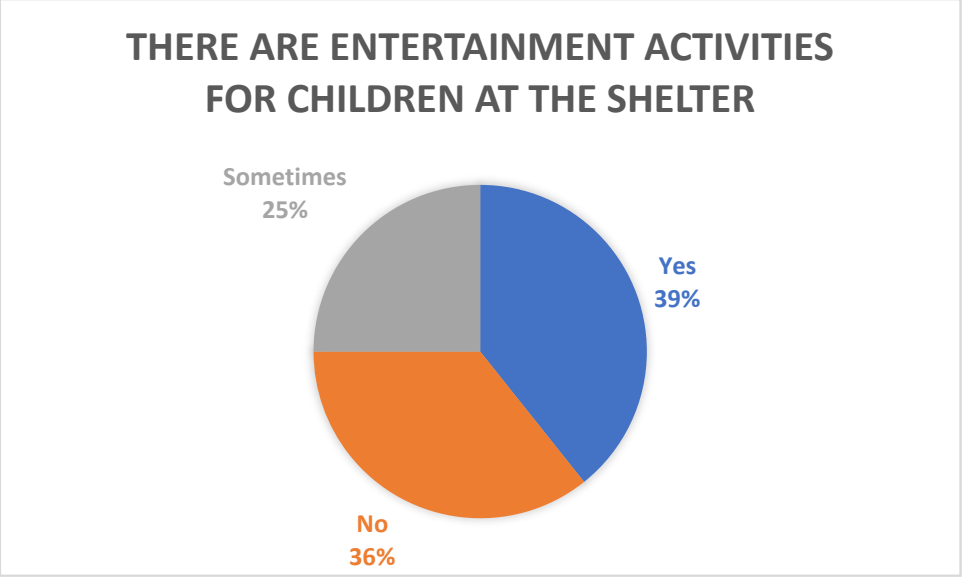

FIGURE 9. CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES IN SHELTERS

[81] UNRWA. 3 December 2023. UNRWA SITUATION REPORT #45 ON THE SITUATION IN THE GAZA STRIP AND THE WEST BANK, INCLUDING EAST JERUSALEM.

Data revealed some possible safeguarding risks, which could emerge due to social factors and the severe lack of humanitarian assistance. For example, observers were asked to verify whether certain types of information related to aid were available at the observation site. For example, most observers across all tools confirmed that no information explains that aid is free on-site (see Figure 12). When asked whether there were clear messages against abusive practices on sites, the majority also said that such messages were not there (see Figure 13).

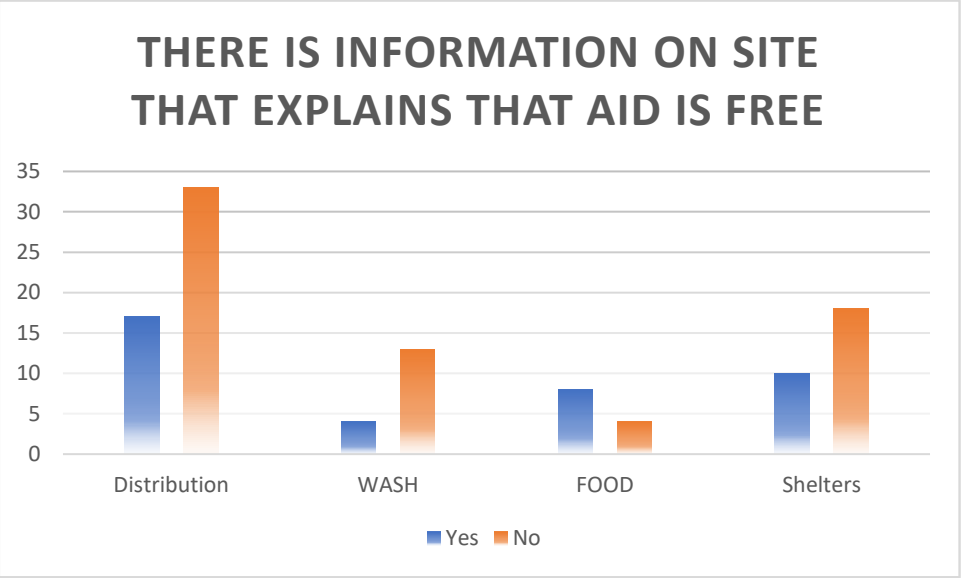

FIGURE 10. INFORMATION THAT AID IS FREE

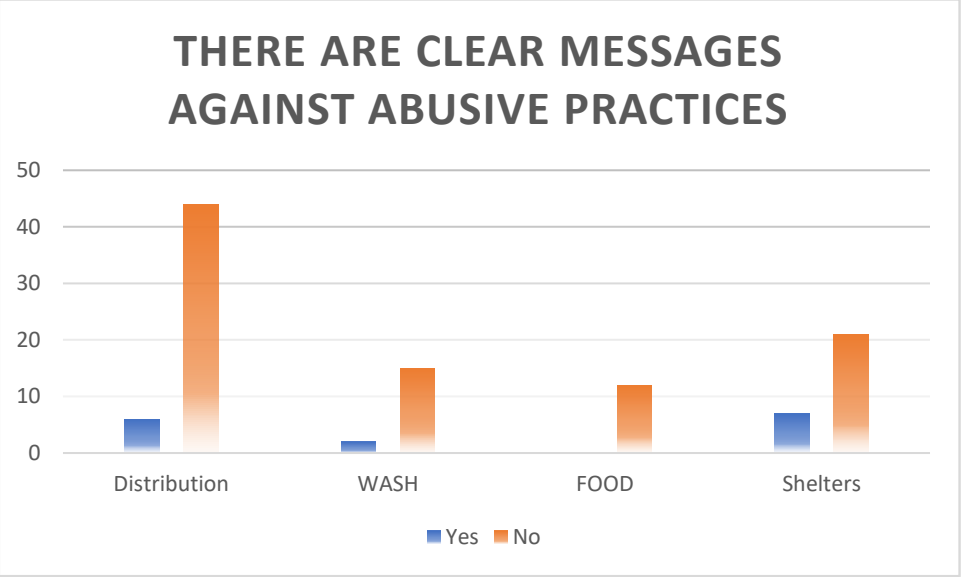

FIGURE 11. CLEAR MESSAGES AGAINST ABUSE

In addition to these indicators of safeguarding risks, and as the majority of experts confirm, the prolonged conflict and extreme humanitarian crisis "heralds breakdown of society[82]". Mass destruction and the total disruption of Gazans' lives leave many with post-traumatic stress disorders, especially children, who are left with

[82] UN News. 8 December 2023. Gaza humanitarian disaster heralds 'breakdown' of society.

no access to much psychosocial support[83][84]. Gazan children have gone through multiple traumas through intense periods of fighting. The need for psychosocial support will soar with the intensity of the October 2023 escalations. Data from the observation tool showed that at the shelters observed, only 25% had psychosocial support services available. In comparison, 29% said sometimes, and 46% said no psychosocial support services were available (see Figure 14).

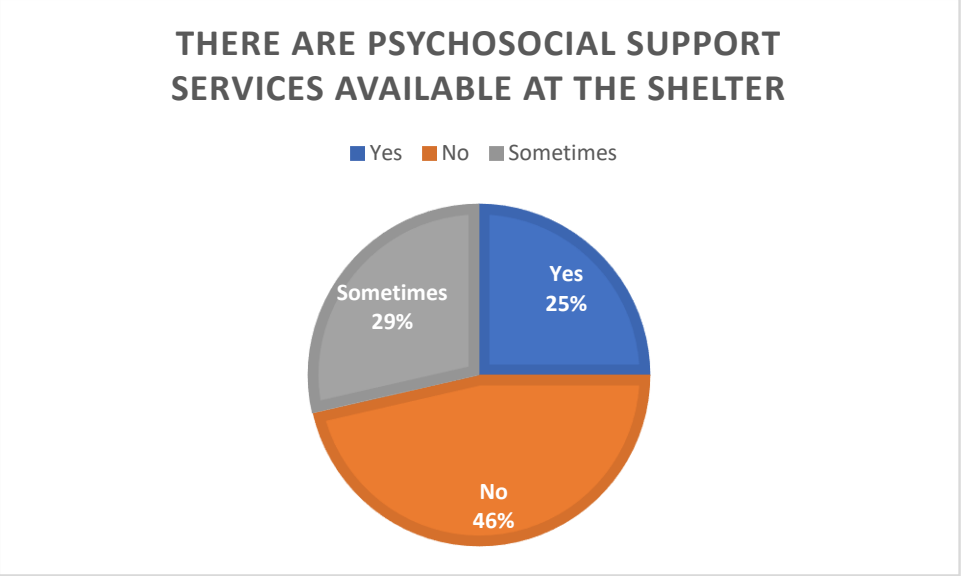

FIGURE 12. PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT IN SHELTERS

Under such conditions, and with these traumatising events, another safeguarding risk that can be identified is related to the emotional well-being of humanitarian workers and personnel in the Strip, who might experience burnout, mental health fatigue, context-induced anxiety, excess workload, and other stresses and pressures, which might affect their conduct, behaviour, and ability to deal with difficult situations.

Data and the reality on the ground demonstrate that the war is producing safeguarding risks at the social level in the Gaza Strip. That particular attention needs to be paid to gaps in the humanitarian response.

Summary of SEA and Safeguarding Risks

The analysis above demonstrated that some social factors produce hazards that may exacerbate safeguarding and SEA risks associated with humanitarian response in the Gaza Strip. The SEA risks we were able to identify in relation to social factors can be summarised as assumptions as follows:

Absence of alternative mechanism to patriarchal rule

Hypermasculinization of the conflict

Overcrowding in shelters, WASH facilities and distribution lines, has a deep impact in the social cohesion. Families with different social backgrounds and descending from different family lineage are forced to co-habit together. Individuals with lesser protection from a pack are exposed to higher SEA risks in humanitarian

[83] UN News. 27 November 2023. First Person: Trauma, stress and sadness take root in Gaza.

[84] CARE. 16 November 2023. Gaza: "Emotional scars will last a lifetime".

response. Compromised privacy, physical safety and security of people and adds mental and psychosocial pressures on the population

Loss of Family and Social Support Systems: Force displacement, military check points, isolation from relatives, lack of means of transport, and lack of privacy have completely broken traditional support networks of families, Those who lose their support networks become more vulnerable and potentially subject to SEA.

Weakened conflict resolution mechanism: formal safety and security institutions like the police is absence with a clear rupture in the rule of law. Informal and customary mechanism are still present but focused on addressing multiple family disputes. With regard to access to humanitarian aid and protection of vulnerable groups, the mediation of informal actors may not be sufficient to reverse power dynamics where stronger families prevail.
Mental Health and Collective Trauma: bereavement, lack of hope, severe trauma, depression among other mental health conditions are an underlying factor of accepting situations of abuse and exploitation.

The West Bank

Social factors, including poverty, education, healthcare, and unemployment, are deeply intertwined with the ongoing conflict, restrictions on movement, and other political and economic challenges, creating a multifaced crisis that affects the lives of millions of Palestinians living in the West Bank.

Poverty

Poverty is a significant issue exacerbated by the conflict and economic stagnation. The blockade and restrictions on movement have severely limited access to markets, resources, and employment opportunities, pushing many families into poverty. The situation is particularly dire in areas affected by violence and military operations, where households struggle to meet their basic needs.[85] **Child labour** rates are higher in East Jerusalem at 12.8%, North Gaza at 11.7%, and Ariha and Al-Aghwar (Jericho) at 11.1%. Child labour impacts a higher percentage of boys than girls, with 9.6% of boys affected compared to 4.8% of girls. Approximately 10% of youngsters not enrolled in schools are engaged in child work. Wealth significantly influences child labour, as 22.8% of 15-17-year-olds from lower-income families work (less than 43 hours), in contrast to 16.4% of those from the most affluent families. 5.1% of youngsters are involved in hazardous work tasks, such as dust, fumes, gases, extreme cold, or heat exposure. 24.7% of out-of-school youngsters are engaged in hazardous labour.[86]

Education

The education system in the West Bank faces numerous challenges due to the conflict, including attacks on schools, harassment of students and teachers, and the use of educational facilities for military purposes. These issues disrupt the learning environment and make access to education difficult for many children. The situation is further complicated by the destruction of infrastructure and the displacement of families, which affects students' ability to attend school and receive a quality education.[87]

[8585] https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/westbankandgaza/overview; See also https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/CR/Issues/2023/09/12/West-Bank-and-Gaza-Selected-Issues-539154

[86] Unicef, Situation Analysis of Children's Rights and Wellbeing in the State of Palestine, July 2023. https://www.unicef.org/sop/media/2471/file/Situation%20Analysis%20of%20Children's%20Rights%20and%20Wellbeing%20in%20the%20UNICEF%20State%20of%20Palestine.pdf

[87] https://www.educationcluster.net/country/occupied-palestinian-territory

Healthcare

Healthcare in the West Bank is severely impacted by the conflict, with attacks on healthcare facilities, restrictions on movement that limit access to medical services, and shortages of medical supplies and personnel. These challenges are compounded by the displacement of populations and the destruction of infrastructure, leading to a healthcare system that struggles to meet the needs of the population. The situation is particularly critical for those with chronic conditions, injuries from the conflict, or in need of emergency medical care. In the West Bank, 286 attacks on health care disrupted care delivery, including the supply of essential medicines and equipment, blocked hospitals and prevented ambulance access. During the same period, 64 attacks in Israel were verified by the WHO Surveillance System for Attacks on Health Care, resulting in 24 fatalities and 34 injuries. A total of 16 health facilities were impacted.[88]

Unemployment rate

Unemployment rates in the West Bank are high, driven by conflict, restrictions on movement, and blockades, which hinder economic activity and job creation. The loss of jobs and income sources strains vulnerable households, contributing to poverty and limiting access to essential services. The situation is particularly challenging for young people and those living in areas heavily affected by the conflict.[89]

Social cohesion concerns

Since the escalation of violence in October 2023, societies in the West Bank have been under significant pressure, with varying degrees of impact.[90] People in the West Bank are increasingly concerned for their safety, fearing settler violence, forced migration, demolitions, and detentions. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) have expressed concerns that violence could escalate further. A critical issue highlighted is the diminishing trust in humanitarian and human rights institutions, partly due to the perceived failure of these systems to adequately respond to the situation in Gaza. This perception is exacerbated by some international organizations suspending funding to Palestinian CSOs amidst the violence.[91] The actions of Israeli settlers and military violence are viewed by many Palestinians as being overlooked by these institutions, undermining decades of human rights advocacy work.[92] These developments suggest potential risks to social cohesion if violence continues. Despite the West Bank not facing as severe a humanitarian situation as Gaza, there is a need for preparedness measures against possible escalations.

West Bank Preparedness Needs

Social factors in the West Bank need particular attention, and some preparedness measures to ensure the mitigation that could emerge from social factors are essential at this stage. The major social risk that can be identified in the West Bank is the impact of the escalation on social dynamics within communities. Compromised social networks, social cohesion, and individuals' and communities' emotional and mental well-being may exacerbate SEA and safeguarding risks. Preparedness needs emerging from social factors can be summarised as follows:

Community Messaging: It is important to enhance community messaging around SEA in the West Bank, using a localised language accepted by communities. Community messaging must also include information about protection and available complaints response mechanisms. This is an important pre-emptive measure to further escalations.

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[88] https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/EB154/B154_51-en.pdf

[89] https://www.ilo.org/beirut/media-centre/news/WCMS_907149/lang--en/index.htm . See also https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/CR/Issues/2023/09/12/West-Bank-and-Gaza-Selected-Issues-539154

[90] https://acleddata.com/2023/12/14/the-resurgence-of-armed-groups-in-the-west-bank-and-their-connections-to-gaza/

[91] See also, https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/11/22/while-fire-rages-gaza-west-bank-smolders

[92] https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/west-bank-snapshot-14-december-2023.

Social Cohesion Work and Community Care Work: As humanitarian crises tear communities apart and thus create further vulnerabilities and disrupt social support networks, work around social cohesion can be an important preparedness measure in the West Bank at this stage. Supporting community care work is also essential as it maintains and improves social dynamics and relationships, thus decreasing safeguarding risks.

Psychosocial Support: Psychological, emotional, and mental pressure increase the population's vulnerabilities and thus create safeguarding and SEA risks. Making psychosocial support available for populations is important to mitigate the risks that may emerge due to traumas and mental health.

Technological Factors

Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) have become part of the life of almost every human being across the globe. Denying access to the internet has been condemned by the UN as a human rights violation several times[93]. With around 90% of Palestinian households having home internet access[94], people have become reliant on ICTs to communicate and manage many aspects of their day-to-day life, including work. In addition to that, connectedness to ICTs is essential for survival. Safeguarding cases and broader protection issues, such as bombardment, cannot be reported without connectivity. The Palestinian infrastructure for ICTs has been described as underdeveloped[95].

These restrictions are part and parcel of a larger silencing strategy, as Israel has attempted to curtail people's freedom of expression via the internet by passing laws that violate the rights to privacy and through which Palestinians can be charged with 'incitement' for social media posts[96] in the West Bank. Detentions over social media posts increased following the October 2023 escalation in the West Bank. This systematic silencing is also practised through the targeting of journalists[97] to control the narrative that comes out of the territories and to limit and curtail Palestinians' access to information as well. This lack of access to information and communications technologies was found to constitute more of a safeguarding risk for people in the Gaza Strip, as they were denied complete access to ICTs.

The Gaza Strip

Since the October 2023 escalations, ICT infrastructure in the Gaza Strip was consistently and systematically targeted, at times disconnecting Gazans completely from the outside world. This disruption of everyday lives and access to lifesaving ICTs may lead to safeguarding risks. The blackouts create several safeguarding and protection risks to people in the Strip in different ways. First, limiting people's access to information pushes people to seek unreliable information from others and through word of mouth, as evidenced by a study by Ground Truth Solutions and the Arab World for Research and Development[98]. The same study demonstrated that "very few people know how to access institutional (formal) aid, as conditions for targeting, distribution and

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[93] OHCHR. 23 June 2022. Internet shutdowns: UN report details 'dramatic' impact on people's lives and human rights.

[94] International Trade Administration. 12 December 2023. West Bank and Gaza - Country Commercial Guide: Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

[95] ESCWA. 2019. Arab Digital Development Report 2019: Towards Empowering People and Ensuring Inclusiveness.

[96] Global Freedom of Expression. 14 November 2019. "Hashtag Palestine 2018": Digital Rights of Palestinians Between Restrictive Legislations and the Complicity of Internet Companies.

[97] Carnegie Endowment. 28 November 2023. Israel's War on Journalists.

[98] Ground Truth Solutions and Arab World for Research and Development. January 2024. Community priorities and perceptions of aid and support in Gaza.

information-sharing are bordering on impossible[99]". Primary data from the observation tool confirm these findings, as across the tools used for all sectors covered by the assessment, the majority of observers confirmed that there is no clear information available about the timings and the content of aid distribution (see Figure 15).

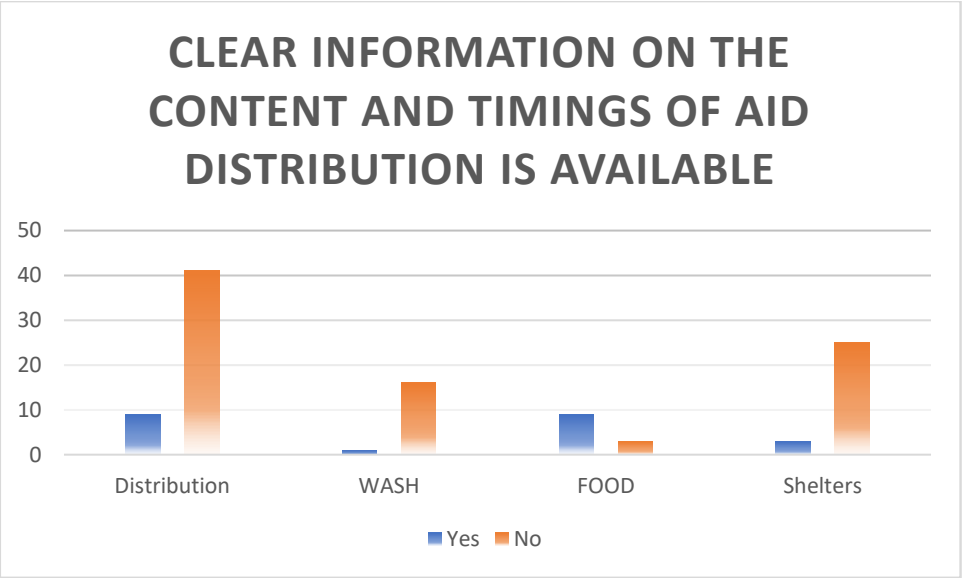

FIGURE 13. INFORMATION ON AID DISTRIBUTION

We also found that information about psychosocial support services is scarcer than information about the availability of medical care (see Figures 16 and 17).

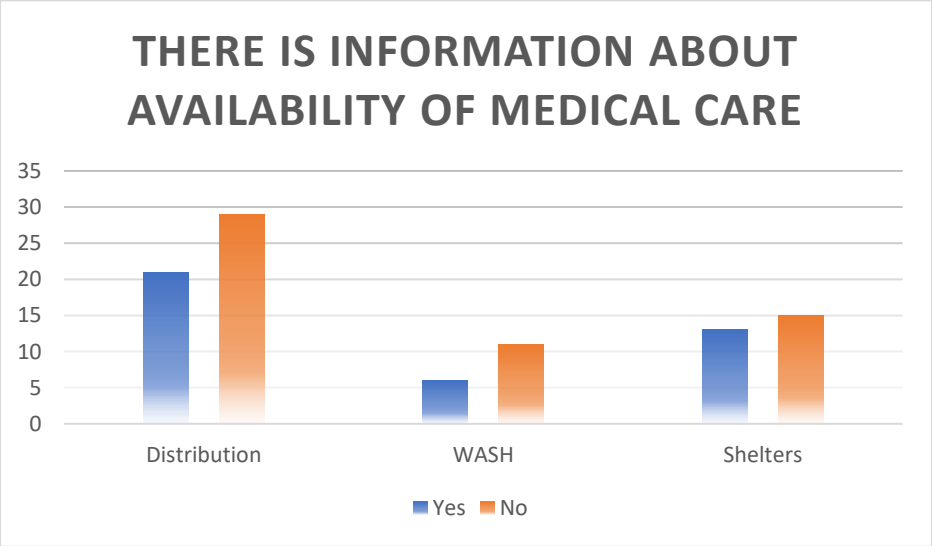

FIGURE 14. INFORMATION ABOUT MEDICAL CARE

[99] Ground Truth Solutions and Arab World for Research and Development. January 2024. Community priorities and perceptions of aid and support in Gaza.

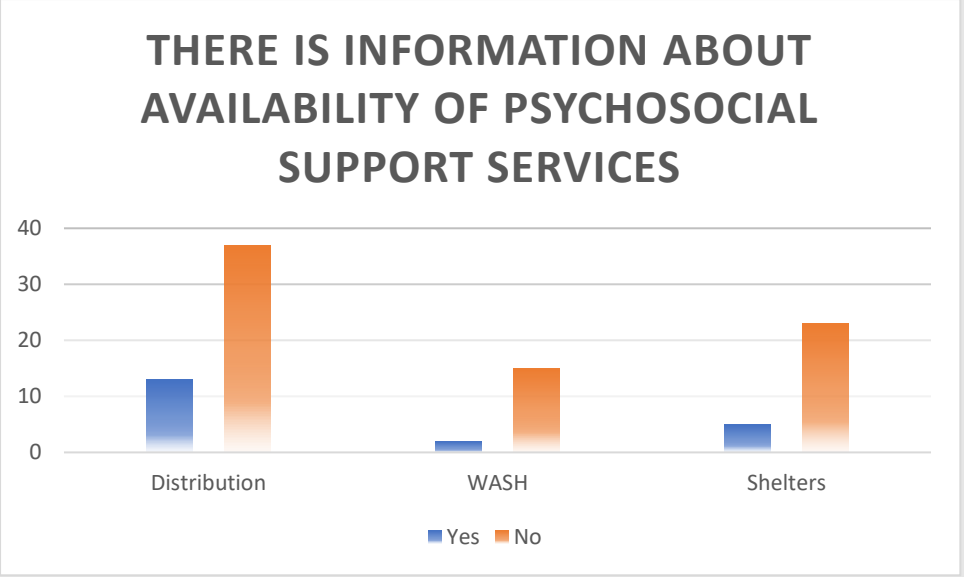

FIGURE 15. INFORMATION ABOUT PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

This lack of information exacerbates safeguarding risks for Gazans, as it makes them more vulnerable and thus more likely to become victims of exploitation. In addition, means of communication are essential for reporting violations and abuses and asking for support services. They are also essential for connecting families. There were documented cases where family members could not reach each other, which placed them in vulnerable situations. The lack of means of communication also makes it difficult for civil defence and medical teams to locate and reach sites where people became victims of bombardments and/or weaponry attacks. When people are unable to call civil defence and ambulances to locations where they are needed, they become more vulnerable and thus more at risk of SEA.

Technological factors play a significant role in safeguarding risks and opportunities in the Gaza Strip. As the Israeli occupation forces are invested in reducing the amount of information coming out about the war in the Gaza Strip, their targeting of Palestinian journalists and ICTs (Information and Communications Technologies) infrastructure are creating safeguarding risks for the people. Despite these efforts, ICTs also provide opportunities for the people of the Gaza Strip to tell and document their stories.

Summary of Safeguarding Risks

The analysis above demonstrated the lack of connectivity broadly compromises people's safety and well-being in the Gaza Strip under such circumstances. The SEA risks associated with the humanitarian response in the Gaza Strip can be framed as an assumption as follows:

Lack of Information: The lack of information on aid, including medical care, shelters, food security, miscellaneous distribution, and psychosocial support, increases vulnerability and thus exacerbates SEA and safeguarding risks associated with the humanitarian response to the Strip.

Deprivation of ICTs as Tools for Survival: As ICTs can be used as tools for survival, deprivation from accessing ICTs exacerbates SEA risks. For example, in cases where families and communities cannot identify each other's locations or people cannot call ambulances and/or civil defence services, vulnerability increases and thus, SEA risks increase.

The West Bank

For the West Bank, in relation to ICTs, it is important to highlight that preparedness in terms of developing the infrastructure for the use of satellite internet in case the situation further escalates is essential. Consultations with CSOs highlighted several technological preparedness needs and concerns, among them in case of escalation and in case they become subject to invasions or other attacks by Israeli settlers and/or forces. The consultations also confirmed that some CSOs were stormed by Israeli forces, which destroyed their offices and working spaces and stole their documents. Under these circumstances, CSOs in the West Bank need training and capacity building to equip them with skills related to data protection, archiving of data online, and cyber security. CSOs also confirmed during the consultations that they do not have enough information on what to do in case of detention and violence by Israeli settlers and/or soldiers.

West Bank Preparedness Needs

As ICTs are essential for survival in crises, preparedness measures to mitigate potential SEA risks arising in case the West Bank becomes deprived of access to ICTs are very important. This is important as compromised access to ICTs needed for survival increases vulnerability. Preparedness needs emerging from technological factors can be summarised as follows:

Provision of Alternative ICTs: Equipping communities and organisations with alternative ICTs, such as satellite internet and e-sims, can be a lifesaving preparedness measure in the West Bank.

Environmental Factors

The natural environment, directly and indirectly, affects people's lives and plays a major role in exacerbating and/or reducing safeguarding risks. The natural environment is also heavily affected by political and economic conditions. At the same time, political and economic interests are often driven by perpetrators' desire to control, access and benefit from natural resources. Understanding how environmental factors play a role in safeguarding requires an exploration of how the escalation of Israel's violence in the Palestinian Territories has impacted the natural environment and how the natural environment is playing a role in shaping political and economic conditions. Israel's expansionist interests in the Palestinian Territories cannot be understood without understanding its interest in natural resources.

Other than control over the resources, Israel's military and political practices also affect the natural environment in the Palestinian Territories. In one of its reports, the UN Institute for Disarmament Research considered the natural environment a key indicator in documenting the harm of explosive weapons[100]. The "destruction of environment during conflicts not only affects public health directly in the immediate aftermath – through air and water pollution – but also affects long term recovery due to destruction of livelihood depending on environmental resources[101]". Over the past four months, the Palestinian Territories, including the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, have witnessed an increase in the use of explosive weapons by the state of Israel and in the intentional destruction of the natural environment and natural resources- all of which have implications on safeguarding.

The Gaza Strip

The Gaza Strip has not only been affected at the environmental level due to the use of explosive weapons but also due to Israel's decision to completely "shut off the pipes that supply Gaza with water[102]" following 7 October 2023, violating the fundamental human right to water and sanitation[103]. Water is important for many aspects of human life. Lack of water influences socio-economic conditions, increases poverty levels, heightens the risk of diseases and infections, increases mortality rates, compromises hygiene and sanitation, and affects food quality and production[104]. As the UN Environment Programme states, "freshwater ecosystems underpin all human social and economic activity. They are vital for supporting the web of life on Earth. That's why we need to value, conserve, and restore them[105]". As of 8 November 2023, around 97% of Gaza's water was considered unfit for human consumption[106]. This crisis, as Oxfam notes, "comes on top of a long-standing struggle for water in Gaza[107]", with the following repercussions on Gazans under the ongoing escalations:

- Risk of exposure to waterborne diseases such as cholera,
- Significant public health hazards, as wastewater is being discharged into the sea and sewage and solid waste are piling up on the streets,
- Risks to personal hygiene, thus raising the risk of diseases, particularly among children under five,

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[100] UNDIR. 2020. REFERENCE FRAMEWORK: MENU OF INDICATORS TO MEASURE THE REVERBERATING EFFECTS ON CIVILIANS FROM THE USE OF EXPLOSIVE WEAPONS IN POPULATED AREAS.

[101] UN Environment Programme. 5 November 2021. Environmental legacy of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas.

[102] Human Rights Watch. 16 November 2023. Israeli Authorities' Cutting of Water Leading to Public Health Crisis in Gaza.

[103] UN. NA. Media Brief: The Human Right to Water and Sanitation.

[104] UN. NA. Global Issues: Water.

[105] UNEP. 2024. Fresh Water.

[106] Anera. 8 November 2023. Gaza's Water Crisis Puts Thousands at Risk of Preventable Death.

[107] Oxfam. 10 November 2023. THE UNFOLDING WATER CATASTROPHE IN GAZA.

- Particular risks to women and girls, such as menstrual management, risks to pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers,
- Risks to hospitals and medical facilities, as lack of water compromises sanitation,
- Environmental damage to the sea is caused by sewage being discharged into the sea.

For the WASH sector activities observation tool, we received 17 responses, and all of them confirmed that conditions in relation to water, waste, hygiene, and sanitation are appalling. For example, observers said, "There is no available water", "toilets are very dirty", "the space is very dirty", "toilets are overcrowded, and waste is running in corridors", and "there is no water or waste management to cover IDPs needs". In addition, accessibility to WASH facilities was highlighted as a problem, particularly for older people and women and girls. Sites were also described as "lacking measures to meet children's needs". Through qualitative responses, the observation demonstrated several safeguarding risks in and around WASH facilities. Quantitative data also support this finding. For example, 82% of observers stated that sites are overcrowded. In comparison, 18% described them as kind of, 59% of observers confirmed that toilets and latrines cannot be locked from the inside, 71% confirmed that sites are not easy to access, and 82% confirmed that there is no lighting on sites (see figures 18, 19, 20, and 21). These responses demonstrate that some on-site problems, such as compromised privacy, inaccessibility, and overcrowding, can exacerbate safeguarding risks and will need particular attention on WASH sites.

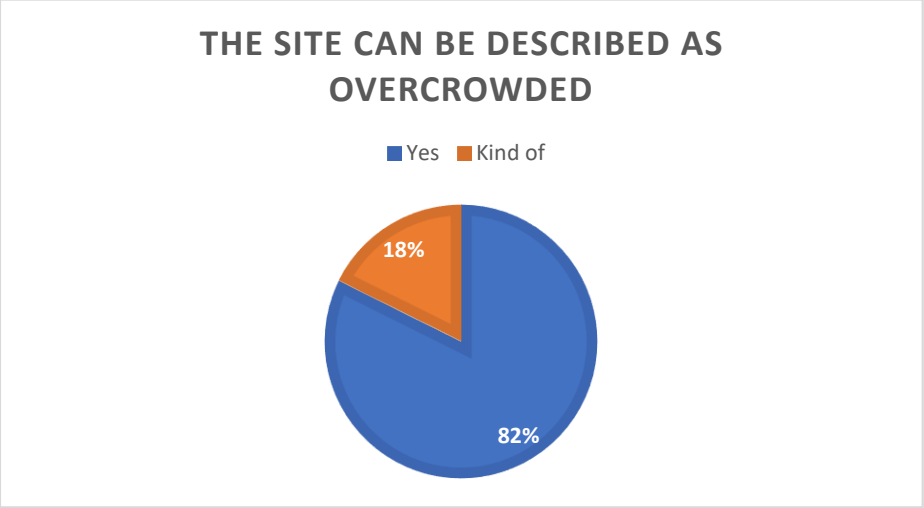

FIGURE 16. OVER CROWDEDNESS ON THE WASH SITE

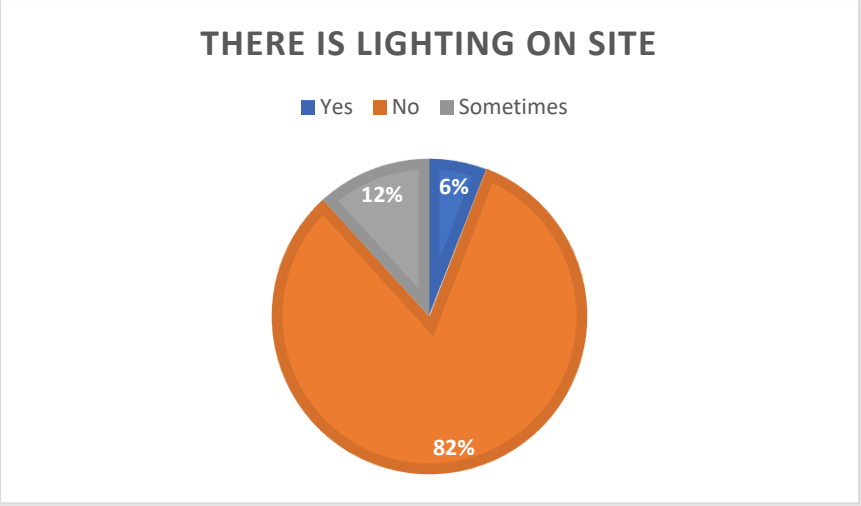

FIGURE 17. LIGHTING ON WASH SITE

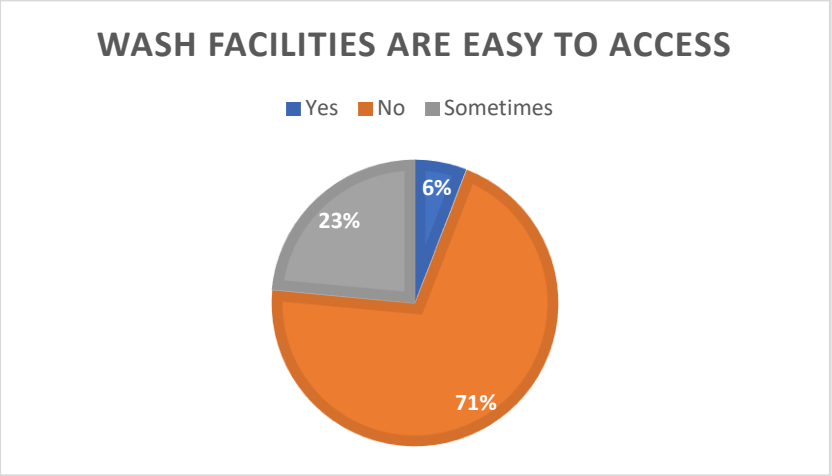

FIGURE 18. ACCESSIBILITY OF WASH FACILITIES

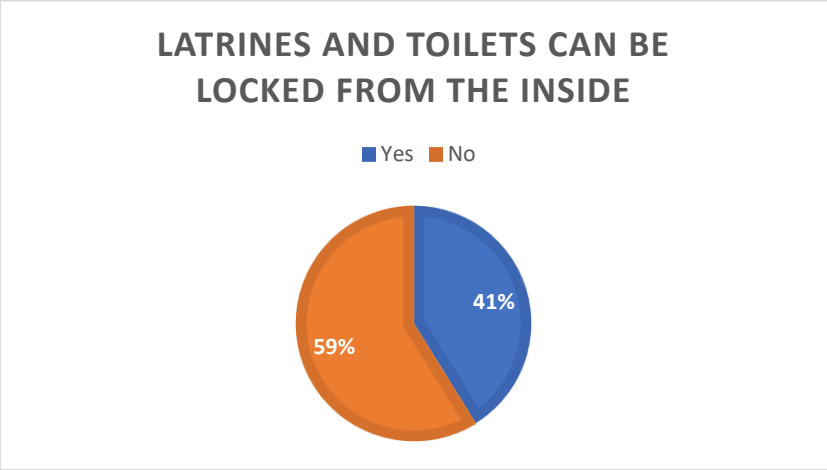

FIGURE 19. LATRINE LOCKS

In addition to the many impacts of water cuts on Gazans' everyday life, water cuts have also impacted agriculture and agricultural produce. As of 24 December 2023, based on satellite imagery, PCBS estimated that around 18%

of agricultural land was damaged due to Israeli aggression. The carpet bombing, artillery, aerial and sea shelling, and the use of internationally prohibited chemical weapons have all affected all aspects of the natural environment in the Gaza Strip, including agricultural land and residential areas. The smoke and the tons of debris, dust, and ashes resulting from the bombardment and demolition of large housing units are causing pollution to the air and resulting in numerous cases of meningitis, skin rashes, scabies, lice, chickenpox, and respiratory diseases[108]. These conditions increase the need for medical care in an area where only 15 out of 36 are partially functional[109]. The escalation has caused large-scale massacres, which resulted in injuries which need medical treatment and dead bodies that need to be buried without enough cemeteries to bury them. The mines advisory group also warns that the number of explosives dropped over the Gaza Strip will mean that unexploded ordnance and landmines will take decades to be cleared[110]. Environmental hazards exacerbate safeguarding risks and allow room for exploitation to occur, particularly among a population deprived of survival needs. Currently, the severe weather conditions are also exacerbating the suffering of millions of displaced Gazans. With the lack of shelters and housing units, Gazans are sleeping in tents and the playgrounds of shelters and schools.

Summary of Safeguarding Risks

The analysis above demonstrated the lack of connectivity broadly compromises people's safety and well-being in the Gaza Strip under such circumstances. The SEA risks associated with the humanitarian response in the Gaza Strip can be framed as an assumption as follows:

Threat of Endemics and Pandemics: The current situation in the Gaza Strip is producing environmental hazards, such as endemics and pandemics, which compromise people's physical and psychological well-being and thus exacerbate vulnerability associated with safeguarding and SEA.

Extended exposure to lack of livelihood: communities in the Gaza Strip will be forced to endure critical living conditions for an undetermined duration until rubble is remove and housing and basic infrastructure will be restored.

Severe restrictions in mobility will impact communities and men, women, young people, and children differently. Rehabilitation of space may not prioritize the needs of the most vulnerable. Fear of danger, lack of public space for playing or sports,

The West Bank

The fact that Israel is in complete control over the West Bank's natural resources, movements between different cities and areas, water, fuel, and electricity places the West Bank in a particularly vulnerable position and makes it prone to further exploitation and an escalation that could threaten the lives of thousands. In addition to this vulnerability, regular Israeli violence of confiscating lands, burning and destroying crops, and occasionally depriving specific areas of water not only leaves an impact on people's livelihoods but also plays a role in the natural environment, including agricultural lands[111].

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[108] WHO. 21 December 2023. Lethal combination of hunger and disease to lead to more deaths in Gaza.

[109] WHO. 15 January 2024. Regional Director opening remarks at WHO/EMRO press briefing.

[110] MAG. 1 December 2023. Clearing Gaza of deadly bombs could take decades.

[111] Irus Braverman. 2021. Environmental Justice, Settler Colonialism and more-than-humans in the occupied West Bank: An Introduction. Nature and Space: Vol. 4(1) 3-27.

Since the October 2023 escalations, Israel's violence has increased in the West Bank as armed settlers increased their attacks against vulnerable Palestinian communities, including the Bedouins and herders. For example, according to OCHA, between January and September 2023, 1,105 herders in the West Bank were pushed out of their communities through coercive or forceful means. OCHA figures also show that 274 home demolitions, displacing 711 people[112]. These displacements leave an impact on Palestinian lands and the environment, as often those forcibly displaced are agricultural communities. With the October 2023 escalations, Israeli settlers and military violence have also disrupted olive harvesting[113]. This disruption has impacted both the livelihoods of farmers and harvesters, and it has compromised the health of olive trees. In the West Bank, the disruption of the natural environment, albeit routine Israeli violence, has intensified in its gravity over the past four months. Some areas in the West Bank also came under demolitions, destruction of infrastructure, including sewage and waste management processes, and aerial bombardment- all of which may produce environmental hazards that could potentially affect the physical, mental, and psychological well-being of affected Palestinians. Although these do not amount to direct safeguarding risks, the situation could suddenly shift, and the West Bank may witness an escalation in destruction and devastation. When asked about environmental risks, some CSOs referred to risks related to the nature of their areas, such as being surrounded by settlements, not being well connected to other areas in terms of streets, roads, and transportation, and even not having well-paved roads and infrastructure.

West Bank Preparedness Needs

Some hazards associated with the natural environment may indirectly produce safeguarding risks as populations become vulnerable. As it is difficult to predict these environmental changes, it is important for environmental preparedness to focus on manoeuvring the risks identified in the Gaza Strip. Preparedness needs emerging from technological factors can be summarised as follows:

WASH Facilities: As a mitigation measure that pre-empts the emergence of a SEA risk, it is important to prepare for rapid installation of WASH facilities in crises. This preparedness may mitigate risks of overcrowding and hygiene and sanitation in crises.

Equipping Medical Care Providers: As a pre-emptive preparedness response, medical care providers in the West Bank must be equipped to deal with emergencies and crises similar to those in the Gaza Strip.

Aid and Development Workers' Attitudes and Behaviours (Gaza & the WB)

Aid workers attitudes greatly differ among different categories and conditions of work. The vast majority of aid workers currently in the Gaza strip are Palestinians, particularly from UNRWA who prior to the war counted with a work force of 13,000 employees yet most of them are currently not reporting to work. Government officials recently declared to be able to mobilize a workforce of 300,000 civil servants but this workforce is currently not active. UN Agencies and International NGOs are negotiating on daily basis their footprint, mainly due to the security situation and with an R&R of four weeks. When possible, INGOs and UN agencies have secured guesthouses for their staff nationals and internationals who follow a curfew at 5pm.

For international staff the main associated risks are associated with recruitment procedures with weak background checks.

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[112] Jerusalem Centre for Human Rights. December 2023. Fact Sheet: "ALARMING AND URGENT": THE ESCALATION OF SETTLER VIOLENCE AND FORCED DISPLACEMENT IN THE WEST BANK.

[113] Anera. 2 November 2023. Olives Won't Be Pressed This Year.

For national staff represents the immense majority of the aid workers presence in the Gaza Strip and they suffer the exactly same conditions as the community they serve. There is an important percentage of national aid workers trained on PSEA and the interagency system is well known and well consolidated. Yet it must be revamped. Communities and aid staff will largely support protection of communities against sexual exploitation and abuse, and the often relay on customary mechanisms to deal with allegations. Reporting SEA is still stigmatized but there is a renewed concern to protect communities from further harm. Safeguarding claims, nonetheless, shows the pick of the iceberg of misconduct of aid workers and poses risk for the communities, aid staff and aid institutions alike.

Identified risks are:

- Humanitarian aid diverted causing further harm to the community and increasing tensions
- Potential retaliation against aid workers (physical harm)
- Lost of trust in aid institutions calling for further acts of incivility: deterioration of the operational environment
- Media attention to safeguarding incidents which can also have an uncontrolled political manipulation

An important gap in national actors is contractors and suppliers. Compulsory training for contractors is not consolidated and implementation of training in the current situation is difficult.

PART III: OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

Humanitarian actors in Gaza are operating within an exceptionally challenging and complex environment marked by intense conflict, severe access restrictions, and a dire humanitarian crisis. The blockade, coupled with recent hostilities, has devastated infrastructure, leading to shortages of electricity, food, water, and fuel and restricting the entry of aid. Over 2.2 million people are in urgent need amidst this backdrop of destruction and displacement. Efforts to deliver humanitarian assistance are hampered by cumbersome procedures for aid entry, ongoing hostilities, and a lack of safe access, making the humanitarian operation one of the most difficult in the world.[114] [115]

Needs Scale & Complexity

Needs Scale & Complexity	**Value**	**Year**	**Source**
Operational Size	**3.3. Million**	**2024**	**OCHA Flash Appeal**
Funding Requirement	**2.8Billion**	2024	OCHA Flash Appeal[116]
HRP Funding Requirement	$600 million	2023	OCHA[117]

[114] https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-flash-update-92-enarhe

[115] https://www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-access-snapshot-gaza-strip-end-february-2024

[116] Flash Appeal for the Occupied Palestinian Territory 2024 | United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - occupied Palestinian territory (ochaopt.org).

[117]https://humanitarianaction.info/plan/1156?bs=eyJibG9jay1iOGIxODYzMC01YjVmLTRjN2MtYWE4ZC0zNzAzNDk2ZTY0NDIiOnsidGFyZ2V0IjoxfX0%3D

HRP People Targeted	3.1 million	2023	OCHA
Operational Complexity	Yes	Year	Source
Humanitarian Access	Limited	2024	OCHA[118]
Impediment to entry into the country (bureaucracy and administrative)	Yes	2024	OCHA
Restriction of movement (impediments to freedom of movement and/or administrative restrictions)	Yes	2024	OCHA
Interference in the implementation of humanitarian activities	Yes	2024	OCHA
Violence against personnel, facilities and assets	Yes	2024	OCHA
Denial of the existence of humanitarian needs or entitlement to assistance	Yes	2024	OCHA
Restriction and obstruction of access to services and assistance	Yes	2024	OCHA
Ongoing insecurity/hostilities affecting humanitarian assistance	Yes	2024	OCHA
Presence of mines and improvised explosive devices	Yes	2024	OCHA
Physical constraints in the environment (obstacles related to terrain, climate, lack of infrastructure, etc.)	Yes	2024	OCHA

Response Institutions

Before the current crisis, the PSEA network made notable advancements, establishing itself as a key resource for 96 organizations working to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse. A structured team, including a PSEA Coordinator and a National Coordinator, was set up under the Humanitarian and Resident Coordinator, fostering strategic partnerships and enhancing access to safe reporting channels and survivor assistance. The network's

[118] https://www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-access-snapshot-gaza-strip-end-february-2024

strategic helpline was crucial in offering a victim-centred approach and improving the referral of high-risk cases. Efforts were also made to build a community of practice through peer-to-peer training, addressing technical assistance and capacity-building gaps. The network's annual working plan for 2023 was developed in consultation with members to ensure it meets their needs and fosters ownership. Senior leadership's continued commitment to organizational change, victim assistance, investigations, and community engagement underscored PSEA's importance within the humanitarian community.

While the PSEA Network continued to function in OPT and Gaza, pre-existing community outreach became constrained. Training, consultations and community mobilization have been severely affected. Access and assistance to survivors is compromised and investigations cannot be carried with enough assurances for survivors and whistle blowers. Lack of connectivity has also impacted access to the main reporting channel.

The PSEA Network is partially funded, has developed a response plan and is restructure its presence in the Gaza Stirp to ensure the oversight of PSEA within the framework of survivor's centred practices.

Senior leadership, Organisational culture and practices & Partnerships

Senior leadership understand and supports PSEA interventions and adhere to an interagency system that is well staffed and funded. The PSEA Coordinator report regularly to the UNCT and HCT+ and has presence in all coordination structures. UN Agencies and partners promote SEA risks assessment and support the capacity building of partners. The annual Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) reporting showed a significant increase in reporting capacity among network members compared to the previous year, reflecting shared responsibilities. In 2023, there were 1,085 sites where awareness-raising campaigns and activities on reporting SEA took place, and more than 600k individuals were engaged in awareness-raising activities and community mobilization interventions on PSEA in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank coordinated by approximately 40 organizations. Women and children amounted for 60% of the targeted group.

IASC annual reporting on global indicators showed the incremental change in partners towards standardizing PSEA practices. All UN agencies submitted for the first time their internal AWP for PSEA, clusters' indicators clearly identify PSEA accountabilities and a portal on the 5ws has been created to foster PSEA reporting among partners. Internal processes were stronger, which enabled better reporting. Compared to 2022, the first six months of 2023 have shown significant progress in addressing SEA across different areas. The increased involvement of organizations in the network has played a key role in driving this advancement. In 2022, only 25 organizations were actively engaged in monitoring and evaluation, maintaining regular reporting. However, in the first half of 2023, this number has increased to 37 organizations, with 25% of them having offices solely in the Gaza Strip. In the latter half of the year 2023, the overall number of reporting organizations remained nearly unchanged. There was no significant increase in reporting as anticipated, primarily due to the extreme challenges faced by organizations in the Gaza Strip. The second reporting period occurred in late December 2023, amid ongoing war. While an increase in reporting in the West Bank was maintained, we lost nearly all reports from Gaza- based organizations. In anticipation of the next reporting period, the PSEA Network is actively working to mitigate potential disruptions to reporting efforts in the Gaza Strip.

Reporting shows that during the first half of the year, 40 percent of all reporting organizations had robust PSEA procedures in place, including regular PSEA risk assessments, integration of PSEA activities into their Annual Working Plans, budget allocations for PSEA, and mitigation strategies. Meanwhile, 60 percent expressed a need for support in strengthening their PSEA practices. In response, the IASC PSEA Network facilitated access to specialists for consultation and support. Risk assessment and monitoring of service providers remains a challenge.

Progress in the West Bank was notable, with the number of reporting organizations conducting regular PSEA risk assessments doubling. Additionally, the PSEA Network encouraged all member organizations to establish written agreements with their partners containing clauses on SEA prevention, resulting in an increase from 60 percent to 80 percent compliance. The percentage of organizations allocating budget and including SEA-related activities in their annual work plans also saw significant growth, from 40 percent to around 70 percent. Moreover, the proportion of organizations with mitigation strategies at the programmatic level increased from 40 percent to 56 percent. Measuring progress in the Gaza Strip was challenging. Development of assessments slowed significantly due to emergency activities and the severe impact of the war on member organizations of

the PSEA Network. To adapt to the emergency, the IASC PSEA Network prioritized providing a comprehensive PSEA and safeguarding risk assessment within the framework of the collective humanitarian response in the Gaza Strip.

Members of the PSEA Network in the State of Palestine include AIDA and PNGO platforms which represent more than 250 national and international Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs); and UN Agencies all working within the occupied Palestinian territories. Since its inception the network has grown significantly, currently encompassing over 80 organizations signatories of the Standard Operating Procedures (SoPs) and 25 more benefiting from support to acquire the minimum organizational standards on PSEA. In the past month four new national organizations have joined the network by signing the PSEA Standard Operating Procedures. Moving forward, the network aims to further strengthen members' capacity while welcoming new partners, with a particular focus on developing programmatic initiatives with strategic partners. For the first time, the needs reflected in the flash appeal also collected the needs of these partners that are willing to tailor specific programmatic actions for PSEA and safeguarding. 2,5m were the identified needs of the PSEA Network and members. These joint efforts are geared towards enhancing PSEA practices at the grassroots level and promote organizational change. These results reflect solid progress toward a well consolidated mechanism that fosters organizational change and community participation, yet the outset of the war calls for a renewal of the PSEA commitments according to the needs.

Response Modalities

PSEA Mainstreaming in Clusters and Working Groups

The Protection Against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Network in the OPT is the first comprehensive PSEA system in the MENA region, with 84 humanitarian partners adhering to its Standard Operating Procedures. It includes all UN Agencies and a portion of PNGO and AIDA members. The network has established an Inter-Agency Community Complaint Mechanism for reporting, with accountability on individual organizations and UN agencies. Complaint channels include a helpline, WhatsApp, social media, and email, with operators trained for confidential handling of cases. The 2023 HRP integrated PSEA activities, requiring project approval based on PSEA commitment. The network focuses on raising awareness, reporting mechanisms, and protection for the affected population, aiming for broader NGO membership and UN agency support. Funding for coordination positions is secured until September 2023, with efforts to ensure future sustainability.[119]

In the HRP strategic objectives, all clusters are required to report on the percentage of affected population (sex and age) reached through consultations on community-based complaint mechanisms, awareness activities, and community mobilisation interventions for PSEA, including complaint reporting (disaggregated by communication materials specific to each population group), as well locations receiving PSEA communications materials on reporting and accessing victim/survivor-centred support, broken down by kind of materials for each population group).PSEA is also well reflected in April 2024 Flash appeal

Programming modalities

Program delivery modalities

The manner in which aid is delivered can influence SEA risks. For instance, direct implementation involves aid organizations directly providing services or assistance to affected populations, while indirect implementation may involve working through local partners or contractors. In the context of Gaza, where there are unprecedented restrictions on humanitarian presence, remote management becomes a more common approach due to challenges in physical access. However, this increases risks as oversight may be compromised and accountabilities are diffused. With limited physical presence and direct supervision, monitoring for SEA incidents becomes more challenging and the reliance on contractors, who may lack proper PSEA training and knowledge can pose a significant risk. In this situation it's important to ensure that all personnel involved in delivering aid, including contractors, receive adequate training on preventing SEA. In addition, monitoring

[119] Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) OPT, 2023. https://www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-response-plan-2023.

mechanisms should address the access challenges by utilizing local sources of information and involving the community in reporting and feedback mechanisms.

- *Level of Decentralization of Operations and Access*

The decentralization of operations through the establishment of field offices can be a risk mitigation strategy. In remote management scenarios, where operations are coordinated from a distance, communication and information flow may be disrupted and can hinder timely reporting of SEA incidents. These limitations on physical access and movement restrictions also make it difficult to conduct thorough investigations and provide immediate support to survivors. In the context of Gaza, establishing field offices in central and northern regions is not feasible and field offices are now mainly centralized in the southern area.

Mitigation strategies can involve assigning national staff members, particularly those from local NGOs, who reside in the northern and central areas, to serve as focal points. Currently there are staff of local NGOs and community-based organizations who reside in hard-to-reach areas and who possess expertise in protection, having received prior training on PSEA prior to the war. They serve as trusted intermediaries capable of identifying SEA cases and reporting them confidentially. To enhance their effectiveness, they require support and involvement in coordination efforts. This entails including them in decision-making processes and ensuring they have access to necessary resources and information by integrating these focal points into the coordination structure.

- *Prevalence of direct interaction with affected populations*

Humanitarian and development programs in Gaza often involve direct interaction between aid workers and affected populations for the provision of essential services and goods. This direct engagement creates opportunities for exploitation and abuse, particularly in contexts where power dynamics are skewed, and vulnerabilities are heightened due to the humanitarian crises. In Gaza, where communication and electricity cuts are common, reporting SEA cases becomes even more challenging, leading to underreporting and delayed responses. One way to address this risk is to provide proper training or orientation on PSEA to all aid workers and related personnel, particularly those who directly interact with affected populations. Beside training and capacity building, conducting joint risk assessments for each operation involving direct beneficiary interaction can help identify specific risks and implement targeted mitigation measures.

Indirect interactions with affected populations are also common in Gaza especially in the central and northern areas. Humanitarian assistance in these areas relies on communication via intermediaries like community leaders or local organizations. In certain situations, indirect interactions may utilize remote communication methods to offer information or mental health support. However, one of the increasingly risky forms of indirect interaction observed in central and northern Gaza is the distribution of aid through air drops. Without direct supervision or oversight, there is an increased risk of acts of exploitation or abuse committed by taking advantage of chaotic or crowded distribution settings.

PSEA Integration into program/project budgets

More and more organizations are now recognizing the importance of prioritizing resources and allocating budget specifically for PSEA activities, rather than treating them as secondary concerns. This entails allocating dedicated staff with the necessary time and expertise to incorporate PSEA measures across all organizational operations and activities.

Donors have increasingly implemented consistent requirements regarding PSEA, reflecting a broader commitment to safeguarding and against sexual exploitation and abuse within humanitarian and development initiatives.

Organizations now include PSEA assurances and risk assessments in their project proposals. This serves as an entry point for collaboration with the PSEA Network and facilitates integration into the interagency system. While UN agencies operating in the OPT have confirmed budget allocations for PSEA, other members of the PSEA network, especially some national and community-based organizations, face significant budget constraints. To address this issue, the PSEA network offers support to local organizations by advocating for increased PSEA funding and by optimizing budget management through comprehensive annual plans. For instance, in 2024, the PSEA network advised two national NGOs not to allocate funds for PSEA awareness and printing materials but instead utilize existing resources from the network. This enabled the NGOs to allocate their budget to other essential PSEA activities, such as providing services to victims and survivors, while also assisting organizations with insufficient funding by referring cases to them.

In 2024, the PSEA network facilitated consultations with 80 partners to identify PSEA needs and associated costs, resulting in a flash appeal for $2.7 million USD. The appeal aimed to address priority needs such as reinforcing the PSEA network's advocacy for survivor-centered practices, enhancing community networks for PSEA mainstreaming, and mitigating risks of SEA among high-risk groups through various interventions.

Identification of program project risks

PSEA Network monitors cluster commitments on PSEA. The HRP move to activity base and the PSEA Network is developing tools to implement risk mitigation measure according to affected community, area and activity. All partners are advised to be vetted prior to receiving funds. Suppliers are a raising concern.

PART IV: PROTECTIVE ENVIRONMENT

Capacity and Resources

Coordination structure

The PSEA Network is staffed with one International Coordinator, one National Coordinator, one communication consultant and one administrative officer. One PSEA Specialist for Gaza is under recruitment. Funding is available until December 2024. Under discussion is the designation of two dedicated focal points in each of the Gaza Strip Area Based Coordination

All cluster have assigned dedicated focal points from partners.

PSEA focal Point Capacity

All UN agencies have designated focal points most of them have received some form of training on PSEA related to their functions as a Focal Point. In 2023, the PSEA Network counted with 101 active focal points form partners. Given the critical context, the PSEA Coordinator advises UN agencies and strategic partners to recruit dedicated personnel.

Mechanism and Accountability

Victim Assistance

Gender Based Violence (GBV) and Child Protection victim Assistance services.

The main helpline to report PSEA, which also provides emergency services and psychological first aid, has registered a steady increase in the delivery of counselling sessions. The system is comprehensive and contextualized within the changing scenarios of the conflict and facilitates referrals to GBV services.

The helpline has addressed calls about PFA, MHPSS, SEA, accountability and safeguarding claims for affected populations. In 2020, the helpline provided a total of 9,936 counselling sessions, in 2021 and 2022, counselling sessions bypassed 23,000; and in 2023 despite the severe communication restrictions, the helpline provided 28,228 counselling sessions, 18,638 since the beginning of the war. These calls have been crucial entry points for Mental Health Psychosocial Support

Services (MHPSS), medical sessions, and referrals for food and cash. The helpline has addressed 9,002 mentions of SGBV forms, 4,860 during counselling sessions since October 2023, 1,060 on poor access to food or starvation, including child deaths, and has incorporated the protocol for unaccompanied and missing children.

Reporting

Community Reporting

Limited Awareness and Use of Reporting Mechanisms. A significant challenge is the limited awareness among aid recipient families of reporting mechanisms for sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), coupled with a reluctance to use these mechanisms due to scepticism about their effectiveness and fear of negative repercussions, such as aid being cut off.[120] The OCHA multi-sectoral survey assessment conducted in July 2022 revealed significant challenges in the awareness and use of reporting mechanisms for sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) in the State of Palestine. In the West Bank, only 4.2% of aid recipient families were aware of a reporting mechanism, with 53.4% expressing reluctance to use them due to scepticism about positive outcomes. Awareness was slightly higher in Gaza at 21%, yet similar concerns about the effectiveness and potential repercussions of reporting were prevalent. The survey highlighted a general lack of knowledge about the Humanitarian Code of Conduct and low levels of community consultation regarding PSEA mechanisms, indicating a need for increased engagement and trust-building.

The survey also shed light on safety concerns, particularly for children and women, with reports of feeling unsafe at school or while receiving humanitarian aid and fears of sexual harassment and violence. These issues were more pronounced in highly conflicted areas and among aid-dependent households, underscoring the link between aid dependency and SEA risk.

In response to these challenges, the PSEA Network has focused on enhancing staff awareness, training focal points, and investing in organizational change and survivor assistance. Efforts include reassessing the risk of key partners, training 140 focal points, certifying 32 trainers, and providing intensive training to 14 case managers specialized in PSEA. Additionally, the main reporting helpline has been reinforced to handle increased demand for services. These measures aim to improve the effectiveness of reporting channels and ensure timely and appropriate responses to allegations, thereby reducing safety concerns for complainants and mitigating reputational risks for the humanitarian community. The national campaign for PSEA awareness has been rescheduled to better prepare for community engagement, reflecting the network's commitment to addressing these challenges and enhancing access to safe and confidential channels for assistance and investigations.

- *Telecommunication and Electricity Blackouts.* The ongoing hostilities have led to internet and telecommunication blackouts and electricity cuts, making it difficult to establish contact with on-the-ground PSEA focal points and reach vulnerable individuals. This severely hampers the ability to identify cases of SEA and provide necessary support.
- *Dependency on Aid and Increased Vulnerability.* The context of severe aid dependency, particularly in the Gaza Strip, increases vulnerability to exploitation and abuse. The lack of safe aid delivery mechanisms further exacerbates this issue, highlighting the need for safeguarding and risk mitigation measures.
- *Financial Constraints*. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in the OPT have cited financial constraints that hinder hiring, safeguard personnel, and limit operational expenses.[121]
- *Infrastructure Damage and Access Issues:* Damage to infrastructure, including water supply systems, and restricted access to internally displaced persons (IDP) locations due to security concerns and movement restrictions complicate the delivery of aid and the implementation of PSEA measures.[122]

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[120] https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-flash-update-5-enarhe

[121] https://safeguardingsupporthub.org/webinars/state-safeguarding-across-mena-region-and-forging-safeguarding-partnerships

[122] https://www.unicef.org/media/146861/file/State-of-Palestine-Escalation-Humanitarian-SitRep-No.2,-20-October-2023.pdf

Staff Reporting

At the end of 2022, In Palestine, significant progress was made in training humanitarian workers on the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) standards of conduct to protect against sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA). Of 17,167 personnel from 29 signatories, 15,055 (87%) received online PSEA training, emphasizing a zero-tolerance policy and managerial responsibilities to prevent SEA. Five Training of Trainers (ToT) sessions were conducted, resulting in the first batch of certified PSEA trainers. These trainers and over 120 focal points in the PSEA network advocate for a survivor-centred approach, prioritizing the needs of those with less access to reporting mechanisms. The PSEA system in the State of Palestine collaborates closely with SGBV partners, and a PSEA Coordinator has been appointed as the field officer for the Office of the Victim's Rights Advocate, ensuring a survivor-centred approach is integrated into all PSEA activities.[123]

In 2023, three ToTs – two in Gaza and one in West Bank- provided training for 40 participants that enrolled the peer-to-peer program. Complementary to this, two Head of Agencies training were offered for senior management and one training of 120 hours was offered to 17 case managers with focus in SEA protocols. The IASC 2023 exercise also reflected that online training is vastly available, reaching to a 85% of the staff of the reporting agencies. In person training, however, remains scarce reaching to 11% in the first half of the year and decreasing in the second half due to the inset of the war. Effort to offer in person training have been revamped yet still limited. It is highly recommended that agencies deploy safeguarding / SEA specialist that support with the cascade effect of the ToTs.

Inter-agency SEA Referral Procedures

The PSEA Network has made significant strides in establishing a survivor-centred approach. Both the helpline counsellors and the focal points are able to provide holistic services and referrals, this is addressing the needs of survivors at large. The Interagency Standard of Protocol is the cornerstone agreed mechanism to articulate referrals and support to survivors. Survivor Centred practices are inserted through various working groups and project vetting processes to integrate an intersectional rights-based approach into humanitarian response plans (HRP). Notably, in 2022, efforts were made to draft a project proposal for survivor assistance and to ensure HRPs reflect PSEA principles. The 2023 Annual Work Plan (AWP) emphasizes the network's responsibilities and priorities, marking a shift towards a more results and rights-based approach. The PSEA Coordinator oversees these initiatives, supported by a PSEA Specialist in Gaza, a National Coordinator and a program associate. Now independent and reporting directly to the HC/RC while hosted at OCHA, the network serves UN agencies, INGOs, and NGOs, showcasing a model of good practice. Its enhanced integration into intersectoral coordination structures, including SGBV, Child Protection Area of Responsibilities (AoRs), and the National Inter-cluster Coordination Group, underscores its growing influence and commitment to survivor centred PSEA efforts.[124]

Community Awareness

During 2023 the PSEA Network has transitioned to a new visual identity. Under the name SANAD –support – the PSEA Network wants to be closer to the community at two levels. First, as the venue that gathers a community of care and brings partners together to produce IEC materials with a PSEA/ Safeguarding angle, and second as a reliable place for affected communities to raise questions, find information and feel secure to issue complaints. SANAD was launched at the end of December 2023 and despite the difficulties in connectivity, it shows a steady growth in posts' reach, engagement and followers, with an average 1.9 million Meta audience members reached monthly, while a total of 5,682 audience members following Sanad's Instagram and Facebook pages, and 426 audience members who are subscribed to the Telegram page. SANAD aims to be recognized as the most reliable, trusted, and popular public engagement platform, uniting the

[123] OPT PSEA Network Annual Report, 2022.

[124] PSEA Network Annual Report, 2022.

efforts of the UN, INGOs, Palestinian NGOs and civil society organizations in the State of Palestine. Grassroots organizations, thus, promote SANAD PSEA awareness through community mobilization. To this date, 109,328 children and their caregivers have received SANAD messages in the Gaza Strip.

Investigations

Twenty-three (23) network members reported that their personnel had received training on SEA standards and procedures for victim/survivor-centered investigations by the end of 2022. The PSEA Network facilitates organizational reform and coordinates technical assistance for humanitarian community members. This requires a preliminary risk assessment of their programmes, partners, and institutions. Twelve organisations conducted a thorough PSEA assessment in 2022 utilizing the IP UN common assessment instrument.

Community participation was given precedence during the reporting period over investigation. However, during various consultations, it became apparent that additional effort is required to engage the community and increase awareness at this level.

Annex I: Gaza SEA Drivers Summary Table

ECONOMIC FACTORS

Lack of Basic needs: Scarcity of basic needs to meet essential living conditions increases competition for resources, thus deepening power dynamics where the most vulnerable will be highly exposed to abuse and exploitation (including sexual but not only) to access primary goods for survival.

Hunger: The declaration of famine re-dimensions access to humanitarian and charity food supply as the solely live saving mechanism for the most vulnerable.

Absence formal economies: Emergence of black markets further weakens institutional capacities to address equal access to affected communities and minimum protection assurances, including channels to report wrongdoing and seek safety.

Changes in the vulnerability framework: Pre-existing categories of vulnerability prevail with important nuances: children supporting women head of household, women without guardianship, women in lower ranks of the kindship structures, families without extended families, unaccompanied children, injured individuals, people with disabilities, and old people without extended family populate a new vulnerability framework.

SOCIAL FACTORS

Overcrowding in shelters, WASH facilities and distribution lines, has a deep impact in the social cohesion. Families with different social backgrounds and descending from different family lineage are forced to co-habit together. Individuals with lesser protection from a pack are exposed to higher SEA risks in humanitarian response. Compromised privacy, physical safety and security of people and adds mental and psychosocial pressures on the population.

Loss of Family and Social Support Systems: Force displacement, military check points, isolation from relatives, lack of means of transport, and lack of privacy have completely broken traditional support networks of families. Those who lose their support networks become more vulnerable and potentially subject to SEA.

Weakened conflict resolution mechanism: formal safety and security institutions like the police is absence with a clear rupture in the rule of law. Informal and customary mechanism are still present but focused on addressing multiple family disputes. With regard to access to humanitarian aid and protection of vulnerable groups, the mediation of informal actors may not be sufficient to reverse power dynamics where stronger families prevail.

Mental Health and Collective Trauma: bereavement, lack of hope, severe trauma, depression among other mental health conditions are an underlying factor of accepting situations of abuse and exploitation.

Hyper-masculinization of the conflict refers to an overwhelming presence of men in public spaces, managerial and operational positions. An exacerbated ratio of men versus women hampers women possibilities to voice their needs and secure means of survival that safe and respectful.

Exacerbated traditional and customary law with embedded women discrimination practices are often strengthen in conflict settings where women are not able to relay on formal justice processes that are inclusive of women's rights.

TECHNOLOGICAL FACTORS

Lack of Information: The lack of information on aid, including medical care, shelters, food security, miscellaneous distribution, and psychosocial support, increases vulnerability and thus exacerbates SEA and safeguarding risks associated with the humanitarian response to the Strip.

Deprivation of ICTs as Tools for Survival: As ICTs can be used as tools for survival, deprivation from accessing ICTs exacerbates SEA risks. For example, in cases where families and communities cannot identify each other's locations or people cannot call ambulances and/or civil defense services, vulnerability increases and thus, SEA risks increase.

ENVIROMENTAL FACTORS

Threat of Endemics and Pandemics: The current situation in the Gaza Strip is producing environmental hazards, such as endemics and pandemics, which compromise people's physical and psychological well-being and thus exacerbate vulnerability associated with safeguarding and SEA.

Extended exposure to lack of livelihood: communities in the Gaza Strip will be forced to endure critical living conditions for an undetermined duration until rubble is remove and housing and basic infrastructure will be restored.

Severe restrictions in mobility will impact communities and men, women, young people, and children differently. Rehabilitation of space may not prioritize the needs of the most vulnerable. Fear of danger, lack of public space for playing or sports.

Annex II: SEA_ Safeguarding Risks and Mitigation-Distribution

Safeguarding Risks in Distribution			
Safeguarding Risks	**Likelihood**	**Impact**	**Mitigation Measures**
Insufficient aid arriving at the Strip, not meeting demands	H	H	Advocacy for humanitarian assistance and aid to enter the Strip
Quality of material being distributed not meeting community needs	H	H	Consult communities on needs for material assistance
			Ensure quality of products delivered to the Strip
Inconsistency and irregularity of distributions, as they do not take place at specific known times, and location	H	H	Announce dates and times for distributions prior to distribution
			Schedule distributions consistently
			Engage community members in announcing times and locations of distribution
Distribution taking place at night	M	H	Ensure is happening in a safe open location during daytime
			In case distribution happens at night, encourage women and girls to come together in groups
			In case distribution happens at night, ensure the site is well lit
Lack of information about distribution times, locations, and other relevant details	H	H	Announce dates and times for distributions prior to distribution
			Announce content and material included in the distribution prior to distribution
			Ensure that information explaining that aid is free is available on site
			Engage community members in announcing times and locations of distribution
Lack of supervision by humanitarian personnel of all genders	H	H	Ensure distribution sites are managed by both men and women
			Ensure humanitarian personnel on site are easy to identify, through badges and/or uniforms

			Assign community stewards trained on positive social values, such as respect, dignity, privacy, sharing (*I'thar*), compassion (*rahma*), cooperation (*ta'aoun*), to organise lines and queues
Distribution sites not meeting the needs of different social groups, such as the elderly, children, women, girls, and people with disabilities	H	H	Ensure distribution sites have ramps are accessible
			Prioritise people with disabilities, the elderly, and children in lines
			Consult members of communities on how to tailor distribution sites to respond to their needs
			Ensure that distribution lines are separated for men and women
Distribution sites being in locations difficult to access	H	M	Consult communities on new locations for distributions
			Diversify distribution locations
Long waiting time	H	H	Increase the number of waiting lines on distribution sites
			Ensure sufficient numbers of trained supervisors and stewards are on site, easy to identify with uniforms or badges
			Ensure lines and queues are organised and managed fairly
Aid being distributed unfairly, due to favouritism and nepotism	M	H	Ensure distribution sites have messages against unfair treatment
			Ensure that information explaining that aid is free is available on site
			Ensure messages that distribution is carried out fairly
			Identify trusted community members to handle unfair treatment
			Encourage people to complain about and report unfair treatment
Lack of complaints and conflict response mechanisms	M	H	Identify trusted community members/initiatives to handle conflicts

			Set up complaints' response mechanisms
			Provide PSEA Network [Sanad] Details
Lack of messaging against abusive practices	H	H	Ensure messages against abusive practices are visible on the distribution site
			Ensure messages promoting positive social values are available and visible on site, including respect, dignity, privacy, sharing (I'thar), compassion (rahma), cooperation (ta'aoun)
Lack of information that explains that aid is free	M	H	Ensure that information explaining that aid is free is available on site
			Encourage people to report abuse of aid
			Provide flyers, with details of a complaints response mechanism, with aid packages
Lack of essential life needs compromising mental and psychological well being	H	H	Provision of details on mental and psychosocial support services available
			Ensure psychosocial support personnel are available on site
			Advocacy for more humanitarian aid
Possibility of social conflicts arising due to the extremity of living conditions, with severe poverty, thirst, and hunger	M	H	Identify trusted community members/initiatives to handle conflicts
			Set up complaints' response mechanisms
			Provide PSEA Network [Sanad] Details
			Ensure psychosocial support personnel are available on site
			Ensure messages promoting positive social values are available and visible on site, including respect, dignity, privacy, sharing (I'thar), compassion (rahma), cooperation (ta'aoun)
			Encourage people to complain about unfair treatment and abuse

SEA / Safeguarding Risks and Mitigation- Food Security

Safeguarding Risks in Food Distribution			
Safeguarding Risks	**Likelihood**	**Impact**	**Mitigation Measures**
Insufficient food items, not meeting demands	H	H	Advocacy for food assistance to enter the Strip
Quality of food distributed not meeting community needs, and/or below expectations	M	H	Consult communities on food needs,
			Ensure quality of food products delivered to the Strip
Inconsistency and irregularity of food distributions, as they do not take place at specific known times, and locations	H	H	Announce dates and times for food distributions
			Schedule food distributions consistently
			Engage community members in announcing times and locations of food distribution
Food distribution taking place at night	M	H	Ensure food distribution and assistance is happening in a safe open location during daytime
			In case food distribution happens at night, encourage women and girls to come together in groups
			In case food distribution happens at night, ensure the site is well lit
Lack of information about food distribution times, locations, and other relevant details	H	H	Announce dates and times for food distributions prior to distribution
			Announce details of food assistance provided through the distribution
			Ensure that information explaining that aid is free is available on distribution sites
			Engage community members in announcing times and locations of food distributions
Lack of supervision by humanitarian personnel of all genders	H	H	Ensure food distribution sites are managed by both men and women
			Ensure humanitarian personnel on site are easy to

			identify, through badges and/or uniforms
			Assign community stewards trained on positive social values, such as respect, dignity, privacy, sharing (*I'thar*), compassion (*rahma*), cooperation (*ta'aoun*), to organise lines and queues
Food distribution sites not meeting the needs of different social groups, such as the elderly, children, women, girls, and people with disabilities	H	H	Ensure food distribution sites have ramps are accessible
			Prioritise people with disabilities, the elderly, and children in lines
			Consult members of communities on how to tailor food distribution sites to respond to their needs
			Ensure that food distribution lines are separated for men and women
Food distribution sites being in locations difficult to access	H	M	Consult communities on new locations for food distributions
			Diversify food distribution locations
Long waiting time	H	H	Increase the number of waiting lines on food distribution sites
			Ensure sufficient numbers of trained supervisors and stewards are on site, easy to identify with uniforms or badges
			Ensure lines and queues are organised and managed fairly
Aid being distributed unfairly, due to favouritism and nepotism	M	H	Ensure distribution sites have messages against unfair treatment
			Ensure that information explaining that aid is free is available on site
			Ensure messages that food distribution is carried out fairly
			Identify trusted community members to handle unfair treatment
			Encourage people to complain about unfair treatment

Lack of complaints and conflict response mechanisms	M	H	Identify trusted community members/initiatives to handle conflicts
			Set up complaints' response mechanisms
			Provide PSEA Network [Sanad] Details
Lack of messaging against abusive practices	H	H	Ensure messages against abusive practices are visible on the distribution site
			Ensure messages promoting positive social values are available and visible on site, including respect, dignity, privacy, sharing (I'thar), compassion (rahma), cooperation (ta'aoun)
Lack of information that explains that aid is free	M	H	Ensure that information explaining that aid is free is available on site
			Encourage people to report abuse of aid
			Provide flyers, with details of a complaints response mechanism
Lack of essential life needs compromising mental and psychological well being	H	H	Provision of details on mental and psychosocial support services available
			Ensure psychosocial support personnel are available on site
			Advocacy for more humanitarian aid
Possibility of social conflicts arising due to the extremity of living conditions, with severe poverty, thirst, and hunger	M	H	Identify trusted community members/initiatives to handle conflicts
			Set up complaints' response mechanisms
			Provide PSEA Network [Sanad] Details
			Ensure psychosocial support personnel are available on site
			Ensure messages promoting positive social values are available and visible on site, including respect, dignity, privacy, sharing (I'thar), compassion (rahma), cooperation (ta'aoun)

			Encourage people to complain about and report unfair treatment and abuse

SEA / Safeguarding Risks and Mitigation- WASH

Safeguarding Risks in WASH			
Safeguarding Risks	**Likelihood**	**Impact**	**Mitigation Measures**
Increased demand over WASH facilities	H	H	Provision of more WASH facilities Advocacy on WASH needs, Advocacy on the impact of the lack of facilities such as spread of diseases, infections, etc.
Lack of privacy provisions	H	H	Ensure facilities have doors Ensure facilities have locks Ensure facilities include privacy provisions, such as separating curtains
Over crowdedness	H	H	Provision of more facilities Ensure sufficient numbers of trained supervisors and stewards are on site, easy to identify with uniforms or badges Ensure lines and queues are organised and managed fairly
Lack of facilities assigned for different genders	M	H	Ensure there are facilities for different genders Encourage women and girls to walk to facilities in groups
Not Meeting the needs of different social groups, such as the elderly, children, women, girls, and people with disabilities	H	H	Ensure WASH facilities have ramps, handrails, and removable seats Ensure WASH facilities are accessible to children Ensure provision of assistance for the disabled Consult members of communities on how to tailor facilities to respond to their needs
Lack of supervision by humanitarian personnel of all genders	H	H	Ensure sites are supervised by both men and women Ensure humanitarian personnel on site are easy to identify, through badges and/or uniforms

			Assign community stewards trained on positive social values, such as respect, dignity, privacy, sharing (*I'thar*), compassion (*rahma*), cooperation (*ta'aoun*)
Electricity cuts, causing lack of lighting compromises feeling of safety in the space	H	H	Ensure facilities are well lit, especially at night
			Ensure facilities have alternative sources of energy, such as solar panels and generators
Possibility of social conflicts arising due to traumas and displacement	M	H	Identify trusted community members/initiatives to handle conflicts
			Set up complaints' response mechanisms
			Provide PSEA Network [Sanad] Details
			Provision of mental and psychosocial support services on sites
			Ensure messages promoting positive social values are available and visible on site, including respect, dignity, privacy, sharing (*I'thar*), compassion (*rahma*), cooperation (*ta'aoun*)
			Encourage people to complain about and report unfair treatment and abuse
Locations of facilities require long distance travel	H	M	Consult communities on locations of new facilities
			Provision of more WASH facilities
Lack of information on use of facilities	H	H	Ensure information is available about the use of facilities
			Ensure that information explaining that aid is free is available on site
Lack of complaints and conflict response mechanisms	M	H	Identify trusted community members/initiatives to handle conflicts
			Set up complaints' response mechanisms
			Provide PSEA Network [Sanad] Details

Lack of messaging against abusive practices	H	H	Ensure messages against abusive practices are visible in the facility
			Ensure messages promoting positive social values are available and visible on site, including respect, dignity, privacy, sharing (*I'thar*), compassion (*rahma*), cooperation (*ta'aoun*)
Deprivation of water compromising hygiene and cleanliness, and affecting people's mental and psychological well being	H	H	Provision of personal hygiene kits that include antibacterial wipes
			Provision of mental and psychosocial support services on sites
			Advocacy on water deprivation

SEA_ Safeguarding Risks and Mitigation- SHELTER

Safeguarding Risks in Shelters			
Safeguarding Risks	**Likelihood**	**Impact**	**Mitigation Measures**
Mass displacement and loss of homes causing an increased demand over shelters	H	H	Provision of more shelters
			Advocacy on the protection of shelters from the military operation
			Advocacy on the impact of the lack of shelters on people's lives, safety, wellbeing, and health
Lack of privacy provisions	H	H	Ensure rooms have doors
			Ensure families are homed together
			Ensure there are gender-separated spaces and rooms
			Ensure facilities include privacy provisions, such as separating curtains
Over crowdedness	H	H	Provision of more shelters
			Ensure sufficient numbers of trained supervisors and stewards are in the shelter, easy to identify with uniforms or badges
			Identify trusted community members/initiatives to handle conflicts
Lack of spaces assigned for different genders	M	H	Ensure there are spaces for different genders
			Encourage women and girls not to walk alone in corridors and dark spaces
Not Meeting the needs of different social groups, such as the elderly, children,	H	H	Ensure the shelter is equipped with ramps, handrails, and accessible toilets

women, girls, and people with disabilities			Ensure shelter is safe for children
			Set up entertainment and educational activities for children, through engaging the community
			Ensure provision of assistance for the disabled
Lack of supervision by humanitarian personnel of all genders	H	H	Ensure shelters are supervised by both men and women
			Ensure the shelters' managers are easy to identify, through badges and/or uniforms
			Assign community stewards trained on positive social values, such as respect, dignity, privacy, sharing (*I'thar*), compassion (*rahma*), cooperation (*ta'aoun*)
Electricity cuts, causing lack of lighting compromises feeling of safety in the space	H	H	Ensure shelters are well lit, especially in corridors at night
			Ensure shelters have alternative sources of energy, such as solar panels and generators
Possibility of social conflicts arising due to traumas and displacement	M	H	Identify trusted community members/initiatives to handle conflicts
			Set up complaints' response mechanisms
			Provide PSEA Network [Sanad] Details
			Provision of mental and psychosocial support services on sites
			Ensure messages promoting positive social values are available and visible on site, including respect, dignity, privacy, sharing (*I'thar*), compassion (*rahma*), cooperation (*ta'aoun*)

			Encourage people to complain about and report unfair treatment and abuse
Lack of information about the shelter's facilities	M	H	Ensure information about facilities at the shelter is available
			Ensure that information explaining that aid is free is available on site
Lack of complaints and conflict response mechanisms	M	H	Identify trusted community members/initiatives to handle conflicts
			Set up complaints' response mechanisms
			Provide PSEA Network [Sanad] Details
Lack of messaging against abusive practices	H	H	Ensure messages against abusive practices are visible in the facility
			Ensure messages promoting positive social values are available and visible on site, including respect, dignity, privacy, sharing (*I'thar*), compassion (*rahma*), cooperation (*ta'aoun*)
Lack of presence of protection actors	H	H	Provision of personal hygiene kits that include antibacterial wipes
			Ensure mental and psychosocial support services are available in the shelters
			Ensure information about medical care services is available
			Ensure information about available psychosocial support services is available
			Ensure information about aid and distributions, times and locations, is available (also for aid outside the shelters)

			Ensure provision of information on first aid
			Set up entertainment and educational activities for children, through engaging the community

Annex III: West Bank Safeguarding Preparedness Checklist

Minimum Preparedness Actions for Safeguarding Risks in the West Bank (MPAs)		
Action	**Status**	**Needed Resources**
Ensure the organisational has security policies and protocols in place		
Ensure all personnel have access to security policies and protocols		
Ensure all personnel have access to organisational policies and procedures		
Ensure the organisation has feedback and complaints mechanisms		
Ensure all personnel are aware of and can access feedback and complaints mechanisms		
Ensure all personnel are familiar with the organisations' Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning Framework		
Ensure all personnel are trained to use alternative communications equipment, such as satellite radios and encrypted communications devices		
Ensure all personnel have access to safe working spaces		
Ensure all personnel participate in regular meetings to share concerns, barriers, and challenges		
Ensure the organisation has data management and data protection policies and mechanisms		
Ensure all personnel have access to data management and data protection policies		
Ensure the organisation has an emergency fund		
Ensure all personnel understand how to access emergency funds, if available		
Ensure psychosocial and mental health support is available for personnel and beneficiaries		
Ensure personnel receive HEAT trainings (Hostile Environment Awareness Training)		
Ensure personnel receive trainings on contingency planning		
Ensure personnel receive first aid training		
Ensure personnel receive trainings on "Leave No One Behind" in humanitarian responses		
Ensure personnel receive trainings on the documentation of violence and human rights violations		

Ensure the documentation of human rights violations the organisation and its personnel are subjected to		
Ensure personnel can access shelters and accommodation in cases of emergencies, and displacement		
Ensure organisational spaces and shelters comply with safety measures and regulations needed for conflict contexts, such as sealing off material, fixings, tools, first aid kits and fire extinguishers		
Ensure rapid recruitment processes can apply in emergencies		
Ensure flexible procurement processes can apply in emergencies		
Ensure financial policies and procedures do not hinder access to emergency funds		
Establish and maintain open lines of communications between personnel at all levels		
Ensure personnel details such as addresses, emergency contacts and phone number are up to date and available to relevant personnel		
Ensure organisational budgets cover costs associated with preparedness, emergency expenses and contingency plans		
Ensure the organisation has safeguarding policies and procedures		
Ensure safeguarding policies and procedures are mainstreamed into Human Resource management		
Establish and maintain safe communications protocols, emergency funds and other resources to address advanced risks		
Maintain a centralised database of organisational details, such as location of different offices, projects, funders, inventories of equipment, supplies, and capacities in different facilities		
Maintain a centralised database of key external contacts, such as lawyers, prisoners' committees, civil defence, local committees, etc.		
Establish open communications channels with local committees and/or other CBOs and CSOs		
Establish risk assessment and mitigation processes and strategies for all risks, including those associated with all project activities, such		

as trainings, workshops, assessments, and campaigns, etc.		
Develop data protection and management processes for each project		
Ensure all project personnel are aware of potential project activities risks		
Ensure all project personnel are aware of potential context related risks		
Establish and regularly update a centralised database of the organisation's partners' details, including assigned focal points and services		
Form partnerships with medical service providers		
Form partnerships with sexual and reproductive health rights services providers		
Form partnerships with psychosocial and mental health support providers		
Form partnerships with legal service providers		
Form partnerships with accommodation and shelter providers		
Form partnerships with security services		
Form partnerships with entities that deal with Palestinian prisoners		
Form partnerships with journalists and media platforms		
Form partnerships with coalitions and groups, which have advocacy, lobbying and pressure capacities		
Integrate risk assessments into partnership processes		
Introduce this preparedness checklist to partners		
Regulate partnerships through memoranda of understandings and partnership agreements		
Ensure partners have access to complaints response mechanisms		

Advanced Preparedness Actions for Safeguarding Risks in the West Bank (APAs)	
Action	Needed Resources
Safeguard organisational assets	
Ensure human resource management procedures do not hinder emergency response	
Ensure financial procedures do not hinder emergency response	
Ensure procurement procedures do not hinder emergency response	

Communicate decisions around emergency response transparently	
Prioritise the safety, security, and wellbeing of personnel over productivity and allow for remote work	
Shift project budgets to respond to emergencies	
Secure projects data	
Communicate emergencies and emergency response plans with partners	
Reach out to relevant partners for support	
Assess risks that could affect partners and communicate risks to partners	