



مركز شؤون المرأة - غزة  
Women's Affairs Center - Gaza



**Paper on the  
Repercussions of the Israeli Genocidal War  
on Civil Society Organizations in the Gaza Strip  
Women's Affairs Center**





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Organizations in the Gaza Strip**

2024

## **Contents:**

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Paper Objective</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Methodology</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Findings</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Losses in Human Resources (HR)</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Assessment of CSO Operations</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>1. Governance</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>2. Financial Management</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>3. Operations and Procurement</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>4. Program Planning and Management</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>5. Securing Funding</b> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>Needs of CSOs in the Gaza Strip</b> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>Management of Logistics Operations</b> .....	<b>15</b>
<b>Human Resources</b> .....	<b>15</b>
<b>Challenges Impacting the Recovery of CSOs</b> .....	<b>16</b>
<b>Recommendations</b> .....	<b>19</b>
<b>Recommendations for Donors</b> .....	<b>20</b>
<b>Recommendations for INGOs</b> .....	<b>21</b>

## Paper on the Repercussions of the Israeli Genocidal War on Civil Society Organizations in the Gaza Strip

### Introduction:

The genocidal war waged by Israel has severely impacted all aspects of life in the Gaza Strip, including the operations of civil society organizations (CSOs). This has led to significant reductions and obstructions in their interventions across various sectors and fields. The widespread destruction caused by the intense Israeli attacks has disrupted the work of CSOs, resulting in major challenges that limit the capacities and effectiveness of both CSOs and local community-based organizations (CBOs).

### Paper Objective:

This paper sought to examine the current reality of CSOs operating in the Gaza Strip, focusing on their effectiveness, performance, and compliance with the principles and standards of humanitarian and civil work within their respective areas of specialization. It further aims to identify the urgent challenges and needs of these organizations in the context of the ongoing genocide perpetrated by the Israeli occupation forces since October 7, 2023. Additionally, the paper aims to assess the capacities of these CSOs to restore their essential functions and rebuild their service delivery capacities across various specialized sectors.

### Methodology:

The paper utilized a mixed-methods approach to gather quantitative statistics, data, and qualitative information. It was primarily based on data from a comprehensive study previously conducted by the Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations Network (PNGO).<sup>1</sup> In addition, it drew on findings from studies, research papers, and reports published by local CSOs, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), international Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs), and United Nations agencies. Moreover, a set of interviews were conducted with representatives and directors of CSOs operating in the Gaza Strip.

The paper focused on the following areas:

- General overview of CSOs
- Scope of damage caused by the war against the Gaza Strip in terms of destruction of property and losses of human resources
- The impact of the war on the core functions of CSOs, including governance, financial management, procurement processes, program planning and management, and fundraising
- Needs of CSOs working in the Gaza Strip in light of the ongoing genocide
- The challenges faced by CSOs in their work, and the recovery efforts made to restore their capacities to respond to community needs arising from the genocidal war
- Recommendations for all stakeholders in order to enable CSOs to effectively contribute to sustaining the response to the needs of the population during and post-crisis.

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1. PNGO (2024) – A study to assess the reality of civil society organizations in the Gaza Strip, available at: <https://2u.pw/GmHWGVom>

## Findings:

### Civil Society Organizations in the Gaza Strip: Bridging Service Gaps and Complementing Government Roles:

CSOs in the Gaza Strip have played a crucial role in delivering essential services to the population to address major needs and compensate for the limited capacity of governmental institutions. These organizations have a long-standing history of serving the Palestinian community, dating back to their pivotal involvement during the 1948 Nakba and continuing through the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Jerusalem.

In the absence of effective Palestinian governmental structures, CSOs have assumed the role of providing fundamental services such as healthcare, education, agriculture, and social welfare. Even after the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) in 1993, CSOs continued to play their vital role in bridging service provision gaps and complementing the efforts of the PNA. Their role became even more pronounced throughout the internal Palestinian division that began in 2007, which led to the de facto fragmentation of the Palestinian territories into the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Additionally, the role of CSOs has remained critical during periods of Israeli wars on the Gaza Strip, such as the ongoing genocidal war.

Following the establishment of the PNA and the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, a substantial number of Palestinian CSOs were officially registered in accordance with Palestinian law. In 2000, the NGO Law was formally enacted, leading to the official registration of NGOs.

According to the latest data from the Palestinian Ministry of Interior in 2023, the total number of registered local and national NGOs in Gaza has reached (1,121), in addition to 134 INGOs.<sup>2</sup>

CSOs in Gaza operate within a highly challenging environment, facing financial constraints, restrictions on their activities, and political interference in their work. Despite these challenges, they continue to provide essential services to the population and advocate for their rights.

### Civil Society Organizations Continued Activity Amidst Genocide:

The results of the study prepared by PNGO indicated that 85% of the responding organizations are effectively providing services, while 15% have suspended their activities due to the devastating impact of the genocide, severe damage to their infrastructure, loss of human resources, or a combination of these factors. However, the findings revealed that 28% of the active organizations are operating at less than 50% of their original capacity. This decline in capacity has hindered these organizations' ability to effectively deliver essential services. Furthermore, only 29% of the civil society organizations included in the study have managed to maintain 80% or more of their original operational capacities, underscoring the immense challenges faced by CSOs in sustaining their activities amidst the ongoing genocide.

2. PNGO (2024) – A study to assess the reality of civil society organizations in the Gaza Strip, available at: <https://2u.pw/GmHWGVom>

### Damages to Offices of CSOs:

The table below provides an overview of the number of CSOs whose offices sustained damage, along with a description of the damage incurred.

Type of Damage	No. of CSOs
Total Damage	58
Partial Damage-Irreparable	5
Partial Damage-Repairable	62
No Damage	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>133</b>

Many CSOs have been adversely affected by the genocide in the Gaza Strip, with approximately 94% of these organizations reporting varying degrees of damage to their offices. Of these, 50% no longer have premises suitable for operations due to complete or severe partial destruction. Consequently, these organizations were compelled to temporarily suspend their activities, which has significantly hindered their ability to achieve their tasks and fulfill their missions.

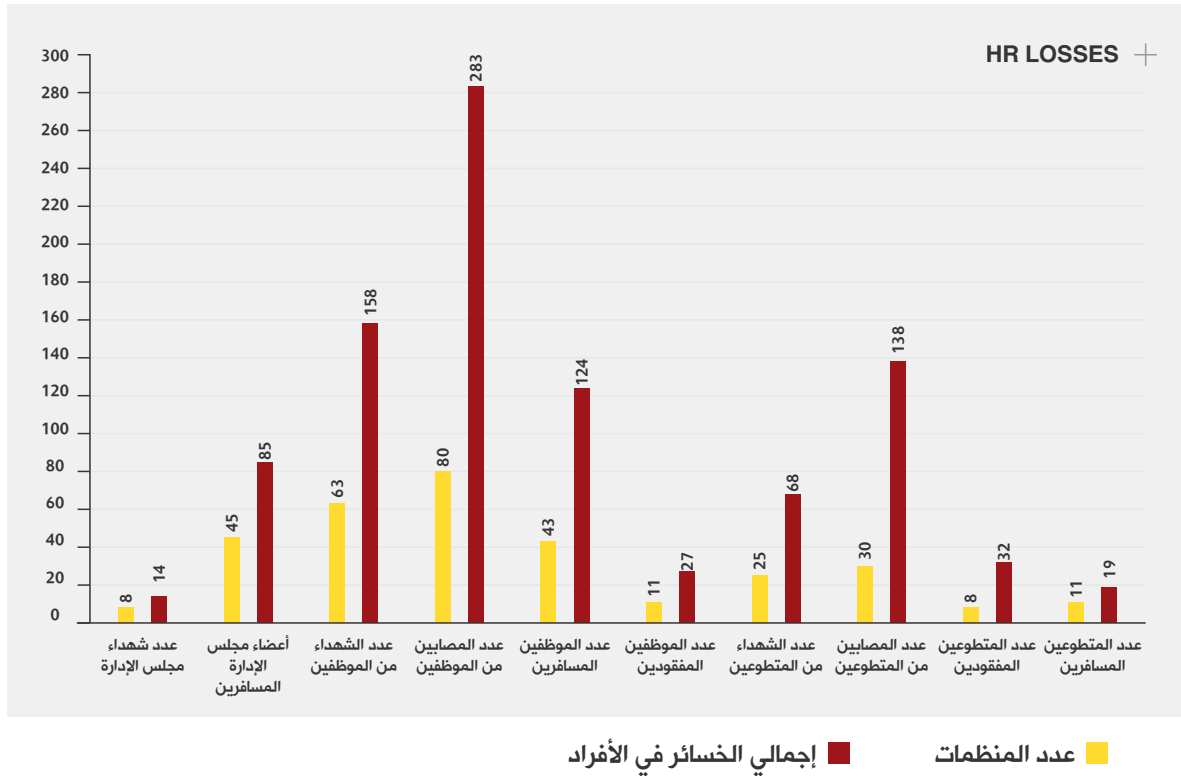
### Assessment of Value of Damage for CSOs:

Based on the study conducted by PNGO, the total losses of 87 CSOs are estimated at \$65,333,600.<sup>3</sup> This figure encompasses damages to buildings, facilities, vehicles, equipment, and information and communication technology tools.

### Losses in Human Resources (HR):

During the current war against the Gaza Strip, most CSOs have incurred substantial losses in human resources. According to the latest survey conducted by PNGO, (104) out of (133) responding organizations reported losses in human resources, owing to injuries and fatalities among members of Boards of Directors (BoDs), staff, and volunteers, with a total percentage of 78%. The chart and table below clarify these human resource losses among CSOs. The data indicated that (240) staff members of these responding organizations have been killed, representing a significant loss of human resources for CSOs in the Gaza Strip.

3. PNGO (2024) – A study to assess the reality of civil society organizations in the Gaza Strip, available at: <https://2u.pw/GmHWGVom>



These losses have posed significant challenges for CSOs, which are further compounded by other challenges related to fulfilling employees' entitlements due to disruptions in banking services and a cash shortage within the Strip. Additionally, local and national CSOs are struggling to retain experienced personnel, who are constantly seeking positions in INGOs and UN agencies. Representatives from various CSOs have raised concerns about this alarming trend, which adversely affects the capacity of these organizations to achieve their missions.

The study conducted by PNGO also pinpointed several challenges related to HR management, with at least one-third of organizations reporting difficulties in identifying and hiring qualified employees. Despite the extensive damage to personnel and facilities of CSOs during the war on the Gaza Strip, and the various hindrances posed by the displacement of staff, limited transportation, communication barriers, fuel shortages, electricity outages, and poor internet connectivity, these organizations have established new centers in displacement areas and continued to fulfill their mission and tasks.



\* INGOs offer competitive compensation packages to employees of local and partner organizations, whereas local CSOs invest immense efforts in developing the capacities of their staff until they become more skilled, experienced, and capable of assuming leadership roles within these CSOs. However, INGOs offer salaries that are double those received by these staff members, making it challenging for them to reject such offers. This ultimately leads to a high turnover rate of local expertise within local CSOs.

Thus, it is essential to reassess and address the bearings of this tendency, which poses a threat to the sustainability of our esteemed Palestinian organizations. There is an urgent need to establish protocols that mitigate this challenge by implementing a ceiling for the salaries provided by donors.

Hatem Abu Al-Qaraya  
General Director  
Abdel Shafi Community Health  
Association

**The following outlines the most essential services provided by CSOs during this genocide:**

In the field of relief and food and non-food services, some organizations have opened their offices as shelters for the displaced populations, hosting them and utilizing all available resources to support them. Some CSOs, in collaboration with INGOs, banks, and currency exchange service providers, have provided cash assistance to displaced women in the Gaza Strip.

Community kitchens (Takiyat) have been established to distribute hot meals as well as food parcels, fresh vegetables, and canned goods in light of the starvation policy imposed by the Israeli occupation on the Gaza Strip. Additionally, these organizations have supported the provision of non-food items, such as winter clothes for displaced persons, and shelter materials like mattresses and blankets to address the urgent and diverse needs of displaced persons, especially given the soaring prices and scarcity of these items in local markets. CSOs have also focused on creating job opportunities for graduates to enhance the resilience and abilities of displaced persons to cope with the deteriorating economic conditions resulting from the ongoing war and blockade on the Gaza Strip.

Furthermore, the scope of services provided by CSOs has expanded to include support for persons with disabilities (PWDs) and children, ensuring comprehensive assistance for those facing various barriers. Thus, organizations working in the rehabilitation sector have supplied wheelchairs for persons with mobility disabilities, hearing aids and batteries for those with hearing impairments, and other assistive devices that enable PWDs to cope during this crisis.

The role of these organizations and their staff members, particularly in the health services and emergency assistance fields, has become increasingly evident in enhancing citizens' resilience despite working under extreme conditions and facing ongoing threats from the occupation forces to compel the medical teams to evacuate their premises. Nevertheless, staff members remained with patients, providing all available health services. There had been numerous instances where medical teams did not leave their service premises for weeks at a time.

In the field of protection, most CSOs focused on delivering psychosocial support to all segments of society, but with a particular focus on women and girls, with and without disabilities. They also distributed dignity kits and established community protection committees aimed at supporting displaced persons in displacement camps and shelters. These committees also aimed to achieve a deeper understanding of the needs of displaced persons across various sectors and communicate these needs to relevant stakeholders, thereby facilitating a flexible and dignified humanitarian response amidst the ongoing genocide.

CSOs have also implemented several training programs and courses on "psychological first-aid" for service providers and psychologists in displacement camps and shelters; furthermore, they have disseminated information related to reporting protection issues and violations within displacement camps and shelters.

In the education field, some organizations have conducted educational initiatives in tents and schools that had been converted into shelters, implementing learning and recreational activities through the temporary learning spaces they had created.

CSOs have also played a crucial role in the fields of human rights and advocacy, publishing studies, reports, and fact sheets that document the violations perpetrated by Israeli occupation forces against Palestinian citizens, including journalists, patients, doctors, emergency responders, civil defense workers, and detainees.

They have set forward recommendations urging the international community to take immediate and effective actions to ensure the establishment of international investigative mechanisms to investigate the crimes and violations committed by the Israeli occupation forces. Moreover, they have called for the activation of international monitoring efforts in light of the escalating risk of further human rights violations occurring without any form of deterrence or accountability, thereby reinforcing the cycle of violations and impunity.

### Assessment of CSO Operations:

The analysis of data derived from the study prepared by PNGO<sup>4</sup> underscored significant weaknesses in areas of protection measures and addressing staff needs. These gaps are directly impacted by the security situation in the Gaza Strip and the threats posed by Israeli military attacks.

Nevertheless, the study findings indicated that other operational areas of CSO work, such as financial management, program implementation, governance, and monitoring and evaluation, remain relatively effective despite the challenging context. While the security situation has impacted how these operations are executed, CSOs have exhibited resilience and adaptability in sustaining their operations. For instance, although BoDs of organizations have held fewer meetings due to security concerns, they have continued to provide oversight and follow-up to ensure the effective performance of their organizations. Moreover, CSOs have adopted quality assurance mechanisms to uphold the quality standards of their programs and services, even though operational methods are likely to change in light of the evolving security situation.

الوظائف	النسبة
إدارة البرامج	80%
الحماية والأمن	43%
الموارد البشرية	66%
الإدارة المالية	66%
إدارة المشتريات	60%
المتابعة والتقييم	74%
الاتصال والتنسيق	73%
احتياجات الموظفين	44%
الحوكمة	71%

## 1. Governance

The ongoing genocidal war has profoundly impacted the governance of CSOs in the Gaza Strip, primarily due to the destruction of offices, repeated displacement, and the loss of human resources.

Key areas of impact include:

- 1- Board Meetings:** Organizations have encountered significant obstacles in holding meetings due to the lack of available facilities and transportation, leading to delays in decision-making processes.
- 2- Virtual Meetings:** While some organizations have attempted to conduct their meetings online, difficulties in achieving quorum affected decision-making efficiency.
- 3- Agendas:** The focus of meeting agendas has shifted to prioritize discussion on emergency response efforts, diverting attention from other organizational issues.
- 4- Financial Discussions:** Organizations have faced major financial challenges, such as frozen accounts and difficulties in securing funding.

4. PNGO (2024) – A study to assess the reality of civil society organizations in the Gaza Strip, available at: <https://2u.pw/GmHWGVom>

In general, the conditions imposed by the ongoing war have weakened the effectiveness of governance in these organizations. However, most of the aforementioned challenges were mitigated within the first five months of the war, and these organizations were able to re-establish their operational capacities and set up new temporary offices in displacement areas. Furthermore, BoDs of these organizations have become more effective and involved in the decision-making process, which is now conducted in a timely manner; they have also regained their ability to oversee interventions and field projects. Findings from the PNGO study revealed that 86% of CSOs have continued to operate under the supervision of their BoDs, reflecting a strong commitment to good governance practices. This has indicated that, despite the war, governance structures within these organizations remain highly efficient and capable of guiding organizational interventions. The continued communication between BoDs and senior management of CSOs, along with the boards' supervisory roles, has provided a solid foundation for these organizations to operate effectively and achieve their goals.

## 2. Financial Management

During the genocide, most CSOs in the Gaza Strip have encountered significant challenges related to financial and administrative management owing to the destruction of infrastructure, the displacement of employees, and the loss or destruction of financial records, weakened financial capacities of CSOs, as employees have been unable to access their offices or banks, as well as cash shortages in the Strip in general. On another hand, some associations licensed from the PNA in Ramallah have faced difficulties as their accounts were frozen due to unexpected financial transfers, which has hindered their ability to meet obligations such as staff salaries and the implementation of relief programs.

Organizations which main offices were destroyed and have lost their documents are likely to face particular challenges in accessing backup data systems and verifying financial transactions with traders and service providers. This verification may prove difficult to resolve in the aftermath of the genocide.

In fact, 51% of responding organizations have reported their inability to withdraw or deposit funds from their bank accounts. This high percentage underscored the significant financial obstacles CSOs encounter in effectively executing their operations. Despite these challenges, 74% of the organizations still implement financial and oversight controls across all their operations.

In response to the crisis, CSOs have taken major steps to adapt their financial management practices, thus, conducting measures that include rationalizing administrative expenses, prioritizing essential services, and seeking alternative funding sources. However, the overall landscape of financial management remains complex and strained due to the ongoing genocide.

**The following are the key challenges faced by CSOs in relation to managing their financial operations:**

- Conducting financial transactions in cash-for-work projects, targeted cash assistance programs, and orphan sponsorship initiatives has become increasingly demanding, as disbursements for these interventions require significantly high interest rates from currency exchange companies.
- Cash transactions imposed by traders and service providers have become a major obstacle impeding the work of CSOs. Organizations must comply with financial regulations stipulated by their own financial manuals and the requirements of the Ministry of Interior, as well as the financial systems of donors. Thus, many organizations have resorted to delaying activities until feasible alternatives that facilitate their operations become available.
- Several CSOs have incurred substantial debts to traders and have been unable to settle these debts, as traders demand cash payments.
- Financial procedures and transactions imposed by donors lack flexibility even in emergencies.
- Banks impose significant restrictions on CSOs' financial transfers related to receipts and disbursements.

### **3. Operations and Procurement**

CSOs have encountered substantial challenges in securing essential supplies and equipment necessary to carry out their activities due to the systematic destruction of commercial and service institutions throughout the Gaza Strip. These challenges were further worsened following the invasion of Rafah, the destruction of the Rafah crossing, and Israel's control over all border crossings, which has led to the prevention of goods and relief materials from entering. The resulting scarcity of resources, coupled with stock depletion, due to either consumption or destruction, has caused procurement costs to soar to levels exceeding the management capacities of CSOs.

The following are the key challenges faced by CSOs in relation to procurement:

- Restrictions on entry of humanitarian aid, goods, and fuel, as well as border closures, have significantly impaired the abilities of CSOs to receive and distribute supplies, severely hindering the delivery of humanitarian assistance.
- Escalating prices of materials and storage facilities have reduced the capacity of organizations to store adequate quantities of supplies.
- Long-term implications on procurement operations owing to the genocide are anticipated, as rebuilding damaged infrastructure, restocking essential materials, and addressing financial losses will require prolonged efforts and considerable resources.

- Survey results indicated that 70% of organizations have maintained their ability to monitor supplies, 63% of which have successfully contracted with suppliers, and 52% managed to meet their financial obligations to these suppliers. However, 53% of responding organizations were unable to procure the necessary materials. Despite these challenges, CSOs have demonstrated a high level of organization and oversight in their procurement processes and inventory management.



#### 4. Program Planning and Management

Most local organizations have demonstrated flexibility in their program implementation due to their close connection with the communities or target populations as well as the clear strategic plans that guide their work. However, only a limited number of CSOs have emergency response plans, which, if indeed existed, remain theoretical and lack the financial resources necessary for activation when needed. Given the scale of the Israeli war on the Gaza Strip, the acts of genocide, starvation policy, and severe human rights violations perpetrated by the occupation, no pre-existing emergency plan could adequately respond to the vast humanitarian needs of the (2.3) million citizens in the Strip, who have experienced repeated displacement and a severe lack of essential services, including water, shelter, food, and healthcare. Nonetheless, owing to their strong roots in their community, most organizations have been able to assess the needs of various segments of society and adapt their programs to address these evolving needs. Survey findings of the study conducted by PNGO in March and April 2024 revealed that 80% of responding organizations have exhibited exceptional capabilities in developing emergency response plans and projects, identifying the needs of target groups, efficiently managing and allocating available resources, executing emergency interventions, and mobilizing funds to support these efforts.

### **Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) Practices:**

Despite the rising costs and increasing complexities associated with monitoring and evaluation (M&E) activities within CSOs, less than 25% of these organizations have lowered their standards, reduced M&E efforts, or scaled back their MEAL functions to prioritize performance and address the immediate needs of citizens. In contrast, 74% of organizations have largely maintained a high level of capacity to monitor and evaluate interventions, implement quality assurance systems, uphold accountability principles, and ensure transparency. Given the prevailing challenging conditions of insecurity, safety concerns, and frequent displacement, maintaining this level of capacity is regarded as significant and promising.

### **Access to Data and Information**

CSOs' inability to access reliable data has significantly hindered their capacity to deliver essential services to affected communities. In turn, frequent displacement has led to a constant need to update beneficiaries' data, which posed substantial challenges for organizations, especially in light of the frequent internet and power outages, as well as the lack of safe workspaces.

- One of the most significant damages affecting organizations working in the social protection field is associated with their history, which has been jeopardized by the loss of equipment, databases, and other essential assets. These tangible damages are further compounded by the loss of the operational space and status these organizations once relied on for their work, depending on a network of relationships with beneficiaries, donors, and the broader community. This loss is priceless.

Amal Syam

Director

Women's Affairs Center

Moreover, without timely access to accurate updated information, CSOs have struggled to identify and address the needs of vulnerable populations, coordinate efforts with other organizations, and advocate for policy changes. This challenge has been particularly marked when engaging with donors, who often fail to grasp the urgent need for rapid data updates due to recurring evacuation orders. The findings of the PNGO study underscored that 30% of CSOs reported being completely unable to access their data throughout the war. Consequently, they could not store or process new or existing data as they had previously done. This situation has imposed severe consequences, as these organizations have been unable to document and report critical cases, monitor and evaluate their programs, or communicate effectively with stakeholders.

## 5. Securing Funding:

Following October 7, 2024, several donors suspended funding for Palestinian organizations and requested that already approved grants to specific organizations not to be disbursed. This decision has led to a funding imbalance for the benefit of INGOs and UN agencies, thereby disadvantaging local CSOs. This shift comes as a direct response to the Israeli and American pressures on donors.

Consequently, local organizations are experiencing a substantial decline in their capacity to deliver services as well as an increased competition for available funding. Such changes in funding priorities are likely to compromise the quality of services offered by local CSOs and may adversely affect the accessibility of aid for persons impacted by the current war in the Gaza Strip.

### Needs of CSOs in the Gaza Strip:

Findings from various sectors highlighted an unembellished reality regarding the substantial needs of CSOs in the Gaza Strip. The unprecedented scale of this crisis and the extensive damage inflicted by this genocide have adversely affected all aspects of life in the Gaza Strip, presenting CSOs with a monumental challenge. The accumulative impacts of material, human, and technical losses have placed immense pressure on CSOs in the Gaza Strip; they are facing a growing demand for services from populations severely impacted by the war, while simultaneously grappling with limited resources and inadequate capacities.

The following outlines the joint key and comprehensive needs of CSOs in the Gaza Strip:

- Rehabilitation and restoration of CSOs offices and facilities, which is directly connected with reconstruction and self-rebuilding efforts.
- Provision of sufficient financial resources for infrastructure rebuilding: donors must support local CSOs by resuming and increasing funding, simplifying project proposal submission procedures, streamlining financial and administrative processes, and facilitating access to essential resources.
- Providing facilitations regarding resource allocation: CSOs require mechanisms to allocate resources efficiently and promptly, enabling them to implement interventions that enhance their responsiveness to emerging community needs.
- Reassessment of organizational reality and strengths: All CSOs are urged to assess their current realities, operational conditions, strengths, and capacities, as well as beneficiary needs.



## Securing Funding

- Exploring innovative funding sources and actively seeking to restore previous donors' support.
- Restructuring programs and activities of CSOs to ensure their alignment with the emerging needs of the local community while maintaining both sustainability and quality.
- Designing emergency projects aimed at achieving long-term sustainability and enhancing the ability of CSOs to adapt to future challenges.
- Reconsidering conditional funding arrangements that limit the ability of CSOs to access essential resources for implementing their projects and programs. Additionally, relationships with agencies, such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), should be reassessed to ensure the localization of aid and support for local and national programs.

## Management of Logistics Operations

- Enhancing procurement processes through collaboration with reliable suppliers and the implementation of strategies to improve the efficacy of purchasing and supplying operations.
- Restoring access to financial data and accounts of CSOs, whether by recovering lost data or establishing new data management systems, as well as communicating with suppliers.
- Diversifying funding sources and seeking alternative funding paths to improve financial liquidity and finance logistical operations.

- Improving the preparedness and planning processes of CSOs and drafting comprehensive emergency plans to help them better handle future crises, including organized and systematic evacuation plans, which would help improve their responses during emergencies.
- Fostering partnerships with local CSOs and facilitating the exchange of expertise and resources, which would help enhance the capabilities of all organizations in delivering services.

## Human Resources

- Providing psychological support: CSOs should offer psychosocial support to employees affected by the dire conditions of the war to promote their morale and increase their motivation to work.
- Implementing Training Programs: Continuous training programs must be provided for new employees to equip them with the necessary skills and improve their efficiency in service delivery.
- Recruiting New Employees: CSOs need to actively seek qualified and trained personnel to address workforce shortages and ensure the continuity of service delivery.
- Offering Family Support Programs: CSOs should implement support programs for the families of affected employees to alleviate economic pressures and enhance their overall stability.

## Challenges Impacting the Recovery of CSOs:

### Constant Security Threats and Targeting of CSOs and Aid Workers

The unceasing Israeli attacks during the current genocidal war have caused significant damage to CSOs, instilling a pervasive sense of fear among their staff, particularly due to direct attacks that pose life-threatening risks. These threats have included the bombing and targeting of civilians, potential beneficiaries, convoys, storage facilities, and shelters. Both CSO facilities and personnel have been deliberately targeted, endangering staff members' lives and disrupting the delivery of critical services. Attacks on healthcare facilities have resulted in casualties and injuries among both medical teams and patients, constituting a violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention and international law, which prohibit the targeting of medical facilities.

Additionally, various other organizations have also been deliberately targeted by Israeli airstrikes, including educational institutions, media outlets, and human rights organizations. Moreover, agricultural lands, greenhouses, wells, and alternative energy sources have been demolished, further compounding the damage.



### Instability and Uncertainty in Future Planning

The overall uncertainty and instability in the Gaza Strip pose significant challenges for the work of CSOs. The ongoing war and the persistent threat of attacks at any time or location create an unpredictable environment, severely limiting CSOs' operational capacity and their ability to assess damage or evaluate the scale of the crisis. This lack of clarity hampers long-term planning, complicates recovery efforts, and undermines emergency preparedness. The overall ambiguous situation has broader implications for CSOs, making strategic planning for the future increasingly challenging. Without a clear trajectory for how the war on the Gaza Strip will unfold, making informed decisions regarding programming, staffing, and resource allocation will remain challenging.

\* We step into the future with caution, given the uncertainty of potential scenarios and our reliance on daily operational plans. Nevertheless, we have established a projected timeline based on our past experiences, encompassing three months, six months, and then one year.

Taysir Muhaisen

Director of The Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee (PARC)

**Damaged Infrastructure:**

The genocidal war has resulted in widespread destruction of infrastructure, roads, communication networks, and transportation systems, severely hindering the interventions and operations of CSOs that aim to provide humanitarian aid and support to the population and displaced persons.

This destruction has disrupted the operation of equipment and impeded the exchange of information, which in turn has hindered the effective delivery of aid. Additionally, the closure of border crossings and the imposed blockade, which restrict the supply of essential materials and infrastructure equipment, further impeded efforts of CSOs to recover and restore normal operational capacities in the Gaza Strip.

Consequently, CSOs working in the Gaza Strip have faced numerous barriers to effectively deliver aid and implement their programs due to the lack of essential infrastructure. For instance, poor conditions of roads have complicated the transportation of humanitarian supplies to remote areas, while persistent electricity shortages have disrupted the operation of medical equipment and water pumps. Moreover, inadequate communication infrastructure has limited CSOs' ability to coordinate activities and exchange critical information with affected communities and stakeholders.

**Financial and Funding Constraints:**

The closure of banks and restricted financial operations in the Gaza Strip during the war have had a profound impact on the financial stability of CSOs. These organizations have encountered significant hindrances in accessing their bank accounts and conducting essential financial transactions, including accessing funds, paying salaries, settling contractors' obligations, and obtaining cash.

The limited availability of cash, coupled with funding shortages and constraints, has posed a serious threat to the ability of CSOs to maintain payrolls and retain staff. Furthermore, changes in donor policies, such as the temporary suspension of ongoing grants or the imposition of additional measures, have further destabilized the financial situation of these organizations. In some cases, CSOs' inability to meet salary obligations has led to the loss of skilled staff, who left for positions with different organizations, particularly INGOs that can often offer higher and more consistent salaries. This departure of experienced and skilled staff has weakened the capacity of CSOs to address the needs of the population and introduced a wave of instability within the organizations, complicating their long-term planning and sustainability efforts.

**Human Resources:**

The war has inflicted devastating repercussions on the human resources of CSOs since many organizations have lost staff, including highly experienced aid workers. Targeted and deliberate Israeli attacks on aid workers have further hampered their ability to carry out their missions. A significant number of CSOs' employees were compelled to leave the Gaza Strip via Egypt to ensure the safety of their families, often abandoning their positions within these organizations.

This was especially apparent among senior management and board members. While some continued working remotely to the fullest extent, their physical absence has created gaps that disrupted the chain of command and decision-making processes. In addition, the war has severely affected the health and well-being of all residents of Gaza, including CSOs' staff.

Despite enduring the same harsh conditions of war and displacement, CSOs' staff were still expected to continue providing services and fulfilling their duties within the organizations. However, it is unrealistic to expect that this would not eventually impact both the quality of service delivery and staff well-being.

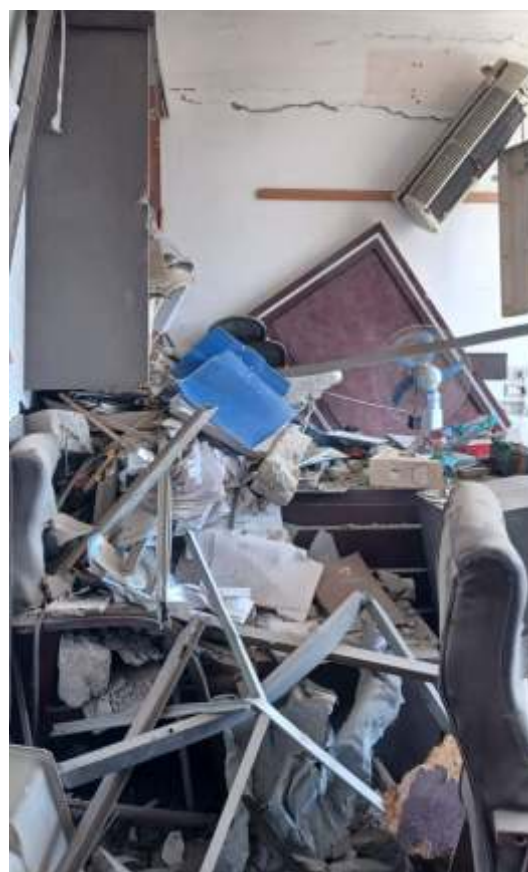
**Loss of Information:**

Limited internet connectivity and disrupted communication in affected areas have significantly hindered information exchange between CSOs and relief agencies, impeding the ability of CSOs to share critical data, compromising the understanding of the situation on the ground, and disrupting the coordination of relief efforts.

Moreover, security threats, such as targeted Israeli attacks, have further complicated data collection and increased risks for field workers. The loss or displacement of key personnel due to injury, evacuation, or death have further impaired the information-gathering process. The destruction or loss of databases as a result of Israeli bombardment or internet outages have added another dimension to these challenges, as these systems contained crucial data on beneficiaries and health records. Therefore, many CSOs were forced to rely on basic methods, such as using Excel sheets and phone calls, to verify and validate information. While these methods have offered temporary solutions, they have proved to be time-consuming and prone to errors, ultimately hampering the timely and effective delivery of aid and services.

**Displacement of CSOs:**

The displacement of many CSOs to the southern parts of the Gaza Strip has expressively disrupted their operations. These organizations were compelled to rent new offices, which increased financial strains, particularly as they lacked emergency contingency plans. Operating in unfamiliar areas and serving new groups of beneficiaries have also required CSOs to make operational adjustments and programmatic changes to address the needs of these newly targeted groups. Many CSOs have lost their offices and equipment during the war, exacerbating their ability to work in new locations owing to the lack of the necessary infrastructure and resources for effective operations. Repeated displacements due to consecutive evacuation orders have further compounded the financial and operational losses endured by CSOs.



## Recommendations:

The situation in Gaza presents a complex and multifaceted challenge that requires a comprehensive and sustainable response. Addressing the urgent humanitarian needs of the population is critical, including the provision of shelter, food, healthcare, and other essential aid.

Long-term recovery and reconstruction efforts must also be prioritized, focusing on rebuilding infrastructure, supporting economic revitalization, and addressing the underlying causes of the war on the Gaza Strip.

- In accordance with international humanitarian law, it is imperative to immediately cease ongoing attacks on civilians, civilian infrastructure, and relief workers. Civilians and civilian infrastructure must receive the protection to which they are entitled.

- Moreover, addressing the root causes of this crisis, such as the persistent blockade and Israeli occupation, is vital for achieving a permanent solution.

- Humanitarian organizations must develop actionable contingency plans for a variety of scenarios, including escalation of attacks, mass displacement to various locations, and widespread outbreaks of infectious diseases such as cholera and polio.

- Restoring and strengthening local CSOs is a priority to enhance life-saving and recovery efforts.

- The international community must take all necessary actions to protect CSOs from Israeli attacks. This includes condemning these attacks, demanding that Israel adhere to international law, and providing support to these organizations so they can resume their vital work.

- The international community must also play a crucial role in supporting the people of Gaza. The continuation of humanitarian assistance is vital, as are the diplomatic efforts aiming at facilitating a permanent political solution to the conflict. Promoting respect for human rights, ensuring civilian protection, and supporting sustainable livelihood development are essential components of a comprehensive strategy to address the challenges faced by the population of the Gaza Strip.

- INGOs, foreign funding governments, and donors should prioritize investments in infrastructure development and reconstruction in Gaza to create a conducive environment for humanitarian interventions and operations. This includes providing funding, and technical assistance, and advocating for the ending of the Israeli siege to allow the free flow of goods and essential materials into the Strip.

- Exerting efforts to restore internet connectivity and improve communication infrastructure in the affected areas in order to facilitate information sharing among humanitarian actors and enable real-time coordination of relief efforts.

- Taking all necessary measures to ensure the safety of relief workers and CSOs' staff.

- Supporting CSOs to rebuild their databases and information management systems, including offering technical assistance, equipment, and funding to create flexible and sustainable data management systems.

- Implementing capacity-building initiatives to enhance the skills and knowledge of CSOs' staff in data collection, analysis, and management, which would improve the quality and accuracy of the information generated and enhance the effectiveness of humanitarian interventions.

- The challenges faced by CSOs in accessing and managing their data and information systems during the war underscore the need for enhanced disaster preparedness and recovery plans. CSOs should prioritize regular backups, secure data storage solutions, and contingency plans to ensure uninterrupted access to vital information during emergencies. Investments in resilient infrastructure, such as reliable internet connectivity and appropriate devices, are essential for enabling these organizations to continue their vital work amid adversity.

- The lack of clear plans among many CSOs during and after the war poses numerous challenges, potentially hindering their ability to respond effectively to the immediate needs of affected communities and to contribute to long-term recovery and peace-building efforts. It is crucial for CSOs to develop robust plans that align with the specific circumstances and priorities of the post-war context to maximize their impact and contribute to a sustainable and inclusive recovery process.

- CSOs should prioritize effective communication channels and ensure regular engagement with their BoDs. Addressing challenges such as limited internet access and the absence of board members is critical for maintaining good governance and ensuring the effective performance of CSOs. By implementing measures to improve communication and facilitate regular board meetings, these organizations can enhance their decision-making processes, foster transparency and accountability, and ultimately achieve their organizational goals and objectives.

- CSOs should develop field emergency plans based on potential war scenarios and implement these plans promptly and effectively when needed.

- Enhancing collaboration with local partners and government institutions to ensure the effective distribution of essential services and programs.

- Responding swiftly to the needs of war-affected populations by providing immediate medical, relief, and psychological support.

- Enhancing communication with the local community to raise awareness about available services and how to access them

- Despite the challenges of envisioning the distant future due to unclear prospects, organizations must begin planning for the future and developing sustainable strategies for long-term service delivery.

## **Recommendations for Donors**

- Easing restrictions on funding and providing more flexibility for local CSOs, especially those affected by the war.

- Prioritizing local CSOs for recovery and rehabilitation grants and increasing funding allocations related to construction and capacity building.

- Encouraging donors to establish long-term partnerships with local CSOs to invest in their capacities and create a safety net to ensure the existence and sustainability of their operations.

- Increasing funding for women-led organizations and women's rights organizations to enable them to recover and continue their vital services as swiftly as possible.

- Allocating funding specifically for the early recovery of local CSOs, enabling them with the necessary flexibility to respond to emerging needs.
- Early recovery funding plans and humanitarian aid should take into consideration the impact not only on people in need but also on CSOs themselves, which requires long-term recovery programs and grants.
- Donors and UN agencies are encouraged to strengthen local networks and alliances to promote effective coordination mechanisms and proper information sharing.

## Recommendations for INGOs

- Lessening reporting and compliance requirements, increasing funds allocated to capacity building of local professionals, and enabling CSOs to recruit and retain skilled and experienced personnel.
- Promoting localization of funds and resilience of CSOs through consulting with them and taking their needs and requirements into account.
- Increasing cost-sharing and administrative costs allocated to local CSOs.
- The current funding landscape for CSOs requires INGOs to take a step back and provide greater space for local CSOs to compete for available funding opportunities. INGO support with the required expertise is needed in this regard

