

P W W S D

Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE



Jan. 2024

This report was developed to deliver a few aspects of the PWWSD's Humanitarian Response to the ongoing genocide in Gaza.



PALESTINIAN CONTEXT

Since the beginning of the Israeli genocide in the Gaza Strip, on October 7, 2023, the Israeli occupation intentionally created humanitarian crises to be utilized as one of the tools of the Genocide War. Alongside the arbitrary killing of civilians, mainly women and children who stand as 75% of the victims, the Israeli occupation imposed a restricted siege on the Gaza Strip denying the entry of life essentials, including (food, water, medicine, and fuel...). Starvation of people and denying them the right to medication is used as a tool within the Genocide conducted against civilians in the Gaza Strip. The Israeli army forcibly displaced 1.9 million Palestinians who were forced to leave their residential places. Hundreds of families were entirely killed and removed from the civic registry. As of January 6, 2024, there are 22.722 killed persons and more than 58.166 injured in addition to several thousands of killed and injured persons who are still under the rubble [1].

[1] <https://tinyurl.com/yq5vg8ha>



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The Israeli army targeted the hospitals, paramedics, and civil- defense teams and facilities, which resulted in leaving the people of the Gaza Strip with no medical services. The Israeli aggression led to demolish the of civic life in the Gaza Strip where 90% of the houses and civic establishments were targeted and demolished, including 40% of establishments entirely demolished. Hospitals, health centers, and other medical facilities were targeted. Medical and paramedical teams were attacked and so the ambulances and civic defense teams and vehicles were targeted directly. Targeting the civil defense teams prevented searching and rescuing missed persons under the rubble. During the week of humanitarian ceasefire, the spokespersons of the civil-defense in the Gaza Strip reported that approximately 90% of the bodies that the teams managed to pull out from under the rubble, were decomposed.

WOMEN UNDER THE WAR

Women represent the main targeted group of the Israeli aggression where women are targeted directly by the airstrikes. Women and girls in the Gaza Strip are passing through unprecedented levels of attacks and aggression. According to the reports of the Palestinian Ministry of Health and other official resources, more than 7000 thousand women are killed and tens of thousands are injured. Hundreds of women are still under the rubble and others were killed and buried in mass graves with no identity. A woman from Gaza reported that: “My niece was killed in shelling her house where she was killed with her husband and children and others. The shelling was heavy, and she was beheaded. She was buried without a head, and we recognized her depending on her clothes”. Another girl shouted in front of a body: “This is my mother, I recognize her from her hair”. According to a report issued by Action Aid (an international humanitarian organization), two mothers are killed each hour while 7 women are killed each couple of hours. Each woman in Gaza lost at least one person (son, brother, father, child, or friend).

In addition to the killed and injured women, 900 thousand women were displaced, including some who were displaced more than once. Displaced women are pushed to live in gathering places (called shelters). These places include UNRWA Schools, hospitals, churches, and other public facilities. Civilians in these places were targeted and killed like the case of the Church of Saint Porphyrius and the Baptist hospital. Additionally, the Israeli army targeted the hospitals and paralyzed them in the Gaza Strip. The clearest example in this regard was the case of Al-Shifa Hospital where the Israeli forces sieged it and caused death to the premature babies and patients in the intensive care units who were living depending on oxygen supplies. Through its aggression, the Israeli army transferred the hospitals into nothing but mass graves.

Taking into consideration that women are the most affected by wars and military conflicts, occupation, then, PWWSD identified the following fields of suffering among Palestinian women in the Gaza Strip, which required immediate intervention through lobbying to end the aggression, and the genocide.



On the Psychological Level

If we were to describe the situation of women in one sentence, then it would be: “Women in the Gaza Strip Lost Hope”. The suffering of women was well noticed through the following:

Trauma and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):

Women in the Gaza Strip face traumatic experiences, such as witnessing violence, losing loved ones, or being victims of sexual violence. These traumatic events can lead to the development of PTSD, characterized by symptoms such as flashbacks, nightmares, anxiety, and emotional numbness.

GBV and Stigma:

Women in Palestine are known to be the weakest social ring and based on experience (accumulated by PWWSD), GBV usually increases during times of pressure and stress that the community passes through. For that, it is expected that violence against women during the current aggression is expected to increase. The most well-noticed form of GBV is verbal violence.



Role Changes and Responsibilities:

The disruption caused by war can lead to significant changes in women's roles and responsibilities. Women may find themselves taking on new roles as breadwinners, caregivers, or community leaders. More than a thousand women in the Gaza Strip became the breadwinners of their families during the current war as the male breadwinner of the family was killed.

Loss and Grief:

The loss of family members, friends, and communities due to war caused Palestinian women profound grief. Women struggle with feelings of sorrow, helplessness, and survivor guilt, especially as they are left to care for children and elderly family members. It was noticed that there is a high level of depression among women due to several reasons among which is that women feel helpless and hopeless. Some women reported that they feel guilty regarding their kids who were killed as they could not protect them.

Reproductive Health Challenges:

There are approximately 50 thousand pregnant women in the Gaza Strip expected to deliver during the war. There are 180 pregnant women at risk daily during delivering or having a Cesarean Section without Anesthesia, sterilization, or Analgesics. Additionally, newborn babies are subject to death due to the lack of health care.



Lack of Life Essentials

Women were affected noticeably by the lack of life essentials. The lack of food was alarming among the population of the Gaza Strip in general but women and children.



Suffering of Women in the Shelters

Women gathered in the shelters suffer a series of challenges added to those detailed above:

- Crowd: The shelters are crowded and women lack any privacy.
- There is only one shower for each 700 persons.
- There is only one toilette for each 150 persons.
- Lack of cleaning material.
- Women lack the hygiene stuff.
- Women in the shelters face GBV (mainly verbal abuse).

WOMEN IN THE WEST BANK

Since the beginning of the war in the Gaza Strip, the situation in the West Bank witnessed horrible deterioration. There are thousands of Palestinians arrested in addition to more than 260 Palestinians who were killed by the Israeli army and the Israeli settlers. There was a noticeable increase in the attacks of the settlers against Palestinian citizens including women. The Israeli forces invaded the Palestinian cities, towns, and refugee camps daily. There was heavy destruction of the infrastructure in the targeted localities and the Israeli army was back once again to use drones to shell the Palestinian targets in the West Bank. Women were the most affected by the Israeli army and settlers' attacks.

PRIORITY NEEDS

PWWSD's Gaza team, along with volunteers, swiftly conducted assessments to identify urgent needs where the following priorities were identified:

PROTECTIONS

- NFIs and hygiene support for IDPs including dignity kits for women and girls.
- Psychological first aid for affected persons as well as frontline workers.
- Mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) for affected families.

SHELTER

- Urgent need to provide services and basic SNFIs needs (Shelter Non-Food Items) for the IDPs in the collective centers such as bedding and shelter sets.
- Provision of shelter cash assistance for IDPs.

FOOD SECURITY

- Provide emergency food assistance to the most vulnerable Palestinian families and to the IDPs already seeking shelter in and outside UNRWA schools.
- Ready-to-eat food rations for IDPs in shelters, as well as people outside shelters.





RESPONSE APPROACHES

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The response of PWWSD was divided into two lines where the first was international advocacy to end the aggression and the second was to work with women in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. In the West Bank, there is a group of women from the Gaza Strip who are stuck in the West Bank. Those women arrived before the aggression to receive medical treatment in the West Bank (Jerusalem, Ramallah, and Nablus). This group included patients and their companions and were stuck and could not go back to the Gaza Strip. PWWSD targeted those women with an intervention that included:

- Providing psycho-social support and debriefing activities.
- Providing dignity kits (hygiene, clothes).
- Providing cash assistant.

PWWSD's team employed a set of strategies, based on the planning assumptions, operational capacity, and access realities, to scale up and prioritize the life-saving assistance for the period 1 November until mid of 2024.

PWWSD will focus on protection interventions, especially trauma and emergency health-care services. PWWSD will make sure that assistance is accessible to the most in need people in Gaza including delivering in the hard-to-reach areas in Gaza as much as PWWSD's capacities can. As a priority, responding to the displaced families inside emergency shelters, ensures winterization and winter-specific activities are prioritized. PWWSD is committing to putting people, gender equality, and protection at the center of the humanitarian response.

As for the international advocacy, PWWSD:

- Activated its social media websites to promote for ending the aggression and send messages
- Appeal to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the High Commissioner of Human Rights and the Human Rights Council to make use of their power to end the aggression
- Join several local and international statements to demand the end the aggression and stop the genocide.

PWWSD RESPONSE AND INTERVENTIONS

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Protection



PWWSD
RESPONSE AND
INTERVENTIONS



Food Security



Shelter





GAZA STRIP



Protections

DIGNITY KITS

100 Dignity Kits in Nuseirat Camp For 100 Women and Girls.

- The kit included (pads, diapers, wipes, wet wipes, sanitizers, shampoo, shampoo for children, soap bars, and toilet paper).

DEBRIEFING SESSIONS

Ten Debriefing Sessions were implemented for children to alleviate stress.

- The activity targeted 2500 boys and girls in 10 different shelters in the south of the Gaza Strip. PWWSD plans to conduct 10 sessions till the end of Dec. 2023. Kids loved the activity and expressed their excitement to have more fun activities.

KIDS CLUB

- The kids' club will run for 20 days till the end of Dec. 2023).

Since its beginning 3 weeks ago, 625 children engaged in fun activities to keep them busy, providing mothers with some time to unwind and reduce stress.

MOBILE FIRST AID MENTAL HEALTH CLINIC

Around 50% of Gaza's population is under the age of 18. Children and women are amongst the most vulnerable and most affected by this war, and they also make up a big portion of Gaza's displaced population currently residing in shelters. As part of our psychosocial support program, our trained psychosocial support groups have been conducting mobile support sessions. Since the beginning of Nov. 1093 people individuals (731 women and girls, 362 men and boys) have been reached in Jabaliya, Khan Younis, Rafah, and Deir Albalah. The service includes family counseling and first aid for mental health.

GAZA STRIP



Shelter

CASH ASSISTANCE

Based on a rapid assessment to identify the most vulnerable IDPs, PWWSD provided NIS 200 cash assistance to 275 families, with a total of NIS 55,000.



Food Security

FOOD KITS

122 Food kits include (2 kilos of tomatoes, 2 Kilos of Onions, 1.5 kilos of cucumber, 1.5 Kilos of lemon, .5 kilos of chili pepper, 1 kilo of sweet pepper, 1.5 kilos of Orange, 2 kilos of eggplants).

WEST BANK



Protections

SUPPORT SESSIONS FOR WOMEN FROM GAZA IN WEST BANK

- Collaborative workshops with Sharek and MSD successfully addressed mental health needs for women and girls from Gaza in Ramallah.
- Seven sessions reached 100 women, focusing on coping strategies, resilience building, grief and loss support, and self-care. The initiative equips participants with tools for stress and trauma, providing support for loss experiences and guiding them in prioritizing mental health through self-care.
- These workshops empower women and girls to navigate challenges, emphasizing self-care, communication, and community support to resist and report gender-based violence (GBV). Attendees have access to specialized resources, contributing to mental well-being and the broader GBV prevention effort.
- PWWSD plans to continue conducting such sessions in Ramallah, and Nablus.

INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

- PWWSD provided individual psychosocial support to women in the West Bank who lost one of their families, either in Gaza or in West Bank hospitals. As well as providing medicines, and other health devices such as portable ventilator machines.
- PWWSD provided mobile individual support to women in Gaza who left their babies in incubators at An-Najah National University Hospital. The PWWSD team in Nablus regularly visited babies in the hospital and followed their status with the Palestinian Ministry of Social Development.

WEST BANK



Shelter

SUPPORT SESSIONS FOR WOMEN FROM GAZA IN WEST BANK

PWWSD's Ramallah team, along with volunteers, conducted a rapid assessment to pinpoint the urgent needs of women and children from Gaza who were undergoing medical treatments in Jerusalem and West Bank hospitals, as well as laborers from Gaza who were working in 1948 Palestinian areas. A considerable number of Palestinians faced restrictions in leaving the cities of the West Bank due to the ongoing war in Gaza, prompting the PWWSD team in the West Bank to take the following actions:

- Coordinate with Istishari Arab Hospital, Retnu Hotel and An-Najah National University Hospital, to gather the needs and information about women and children who are hosted by them.
- PWWSD's team visited them and purchased toys, pajamas and clothes, as well as cash assistance and transportation.
- Mobilizing meetings with CSOs and the private sector to ensure follow-up and support as much as needed.
- Coordinate with CSOs, governorates and municipalities in Nablus and Ramallah to fulfill the needs of laborers from Gaza who were working in 1948 Palestinian areas and faced restrictions in leaving the cities of the West Bank due to the ongoing war in Gaza. Their needs include bedding and shelter set, cash assistance and some needed medicines and health care facilitations.
- PWWSD provided NIS 4762 and JD 220 as cash assistance to 23 families from the Gaza Strip who are stuck in the West Bank.



KEY CONSTRAINTS, CHALLENGES AND GAPS

- Movement and access restrictions: Safety risks and hazards disrupt the capacity of PWWSD's emergency team to mobilize.
- Information challenges: Lack of electricity/Internet hinders PWWSD's emergency team from accessing basic emergency info.
- Trauma and psychosocial distress on PWWSD's emergency team.
- Limited supplies of non-food items (NFIs), including the available dignity kits.
- The closure of borders poses challenges to the availability of food items/goods in Gaza.
- Lack of electricity and fuel causing food products to spoil.
- Lack of official government follow-up; no established strategy for fulfilling such needs.
- Fragmented Civil Society Response; Lack of unified efforts from CSOs.
- Adapting to Diverse Needs; challenges in managing diverse cases due to untrained personnel and lack of standardized procedures.



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