



PARTICIPATION OF PALESTINIAN NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN SECTOR AND NATIONAL PLANNING PROCESSES

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AND NATIONAL PLANNING PROCESSES**

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Acknowledgement



The purpose of the study is to strengthen and enhance the participation and contribution of Palestinian NGOs in sector, national planning, and policy development processes.

This includes developing a national policy agenda, as well as identifying national and sector development priorities and trends. This study will deepen our understanding of the scope of participation of the Palestinian NGO community in the national and sector planning process with the aim of both strengthening their participation and effectiveness. Partnership will improve through understanding, analyzing, and building on our past experiences.

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Executive Summary



The establishment of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Palestine dates back to the start of the 20th century. At that time, NGOs took the form of charitable organizations. The number of NGOs was limited under the Jordanian and Egyptian rule, but increased after the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967. At this stage, the Palestinian society began creating more effective mechanisms to defend its existence on their land. NGOs contributed substantially towards the steadfastness of Palestinians on the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. They implemented activities that aimed to empower Palestinians, including establishing national infrastructure in critical sectors, such as health, education, agriculture, cultural and intellectual life. These NGOs were meant to meet the immediate needs of the population, in absence of national state institutions, and mobilize members of community to challenge the occupation regime.

The establishment of the Palestinian Authority (PA) in 1994 brought a new political reality. On the one hand, his new reality changed the role played by NGOs and impacted the provision of services. Competition for funding was the main reason. On the other hand, the PA also coordinated partnerships with NGOs, particularly the one with larger resources. This change was accompanied by large discussions regarding the role of development partners in designing the agenda of public and national policies and development priorities, particularly under occupation. Successive Palestinian administrations prepared a number of national plans where non-governmental partners had been excluded. Later, the government realized the importance of including partners in the national planning processes to enhance coordination, complement roles, and better manage international aid and public funds.

This study was conducted to deepen the understanding of the NGO community's participation in the national and sector planning processes. The purpose of this study is to strengthen the contribution and participation of Palestinian NGOs in national and sector planning and in policy making processes. The study aims, specifically, to

evaluate the scope of Palestinian NGO participation in the national and sector planning processes, the quality of participation, and nature of NGO representation in these processes. This study identifies gaps in the capacity of these NGOs themselves, and their representative bodies and umbrella networks. It aims to enhance NGO contribution and integrate them into the planning processes; identify mechanisms for dialogue and partnership between the government and NGOs; submitting recommendations to improve and institutionalize participation; and enhance the participatory approach and transparency in national and sector planning processes, including monitoring and evaluation of plans based on the principles of accountability and social responsibility.

The study employed a participatory approach and used two main methods to complete the research: 1) conducting semi-structured interviews with relevant stakeholders, and 2) conducting several workshops in West Bank and Gaza Strip. In general, the study also relied on a number of steps to achieve its overall goal and sub-objectives, including a literature review, collecting relevant information, interviewing individuals from government, non-government, and international organizations. It also involved holding workshops in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, preparing and reviewing the draft of the study, and completing the final version.

Background: National Planning Processes in Palestine

A review of the methodology used in developing general plans since the inception of the Palestinian Authority until 2009 revealed that there was a lack of participation by non-government parties in the national planning process. Development of these plans, including defining funding priorities, was restricted to the efforts of the Ministry of Planning in coordination with line ministries. There were no consultations with partners outside the government. The Mid-term Development Plan 2005 – 2007 served as a relative turning point in the development of Palestinian national plans because it included bi-lateral consultations, holding a number of workshops with participation from partners within and outside the government. However, these meetings were not truly consultative and indicative of genuine partnership. Furthermore, the Mid-term Development Plan 2006 – 2008 was no different from the previous ones in terms of methodology.

The elections of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) in 2006 brought internal political tension, creating a split between the governments in Palestine: a deposed government in Gaza Strip and another government led by the Palestinian president in the West Bank. This reality impacted all domains of life, including the planning processes. The Palestinian government developed the Reform and Development Plan 2007 – 2008 which excluded ministries and government bodies in Gaza, yet defined development priorities for both the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In addition, the developed plan also excluded non-governmental partners.

In overall, up until 2009, the General National Planning Process was not linked to a clear and agreed upon planning framework in terms of structure and content. In summary, government plans were developed separately from the budget process in a central manner without sector strategies for most of the development sectors. These plans were not based on participation and did not have implementation plans; therefore, they were not subject to a monitoring and evaluation system.

The National Development Plan 2011 – 2013, “Establishment of the State and Building the Future,” brought a more developed methodology to the general planning process. The process included participation outside the government by forming teams of non-governmental partners to develop sector strategies and finalize the structure of the planning process. While this was considered significant progress, the participation of partners had still not reached the required level. It was limited to developing sector strategies and did not include the General National Plan. Nor did it cover all planning phases. The development of this plan coincided with two major events:

1) The Palestinian political division, thus absence of Gaza Strip from the process.

2) The suspension of the PLC which should ideally ratify the national policy agenda, as well as the national and sector planning, including the budget. In addition, since the establishment of the PA, there was no Planning Law to regulate the national planning processes. A National Planning Law would define powers, responsibilities, jurisdiction, and roles of different entities. The absence of this law weakened the institutionalization of the planning processes and made it in most times subject to personal interests and desires, particularly partnerships with partners outside the government.

Role of NGOs in National Planning Processes

Participation of NGOs in national planning processes was weak. In many cases, there was a complete absence of NGOs. In 2010, a positive change took place when efforts began to develop the National Development Plan 2011 – 2013. Change occurred due to the political will at government and non-government levels. However, there were some shortcomings in actualizing this determination due to two groups of factors: The first group being associated with the government and non-government organizations, while the second group is associated with the planning process itself, in terms of structure and substance.

In regard to the first group of factors, some government bodies had little interest in implementing the political will to conduct a consultative process with partners. In addition, their coordination capacity was weak and the NGO community's responsiveness to these policies varied. Some NGOs dealt with this policy in a very positive manner, while the responsiveness of other NGOs was weak, some due to little experience.

In regards to factors related to the structure and substance of the planning process, there are two major correlating factors:

- 1) The structure of the planning process and the location of NGOs in it.

Partners outside the government were absent from the national teams, which supervised the development of the General National Plan under the leadership of the Ministry of Planning. Membership and participation of NGOs were limited to sector strategy development teams. In addition, the roles of partners in all planning phases were not defined.

- 2) The content/substance of the planning process and the varying degrees of NGO participation.

Although the National Development Plan 2011 – 2013 was intended to be a national plan, roles, contributions, and responsibilities of sectors were not sufficiently clarified in order to achieve intended objectives. The responsibility of the national plan rested in the Ministry of Planning, with weak participation of partners, which is not the case in sector plans. Furthermore, there was no role for partners in defining the agenda of the public national policies.

The factors mentioned above impacted the level and type of NGO participation in the national and sector planning processes. These factors limited the participation of NGOs to the sector strategies without participation in the National Plan itself and without participation in all planning phases. It was limited to participation of few NGOs assigned by representative networks and bodies. Participation was mostly made up of the big NGOs located at the center of the West Bank, without widening the circle of participation to include grassroots NGOs and NGOs operating in other areas, including the Gaza Strip. The quality and type of participation was affected by the weak preparedness of NGOs to participate in the processes. In general, the lack of NGOs' ability to effectively participate in the process was due to both their shortcomings in technical preparations, weak technical abilities as well as limited coordination and cooperation capacity among themselves.

Recommendations

Partners compiled a group of recommendations required to enhance partnership in the national and sector planning processes. Recommendations covered five major areas:

First: Recommendations related to Development of Institutional Structure/ Infrastructure for the National Planning Process:

1. The PLC must assume its role in the national planning process by approving public policy agendas and approving the plan itself, including development priorities and trends, and financial allocations.
2. Work towards the preparation and development of the Palestinian National Planning Law and ratify it as soon as possible.
3. Establish a National Planning Council and open membership to include both government and non-government partners to lead the national planning process.
4. Form national teams for sector planning and open membership to all government and non-government partners to lead the sector strategies development processes.
5. Develop a clear and agreed upon planning framework for all partners and ensure

institutionalization of national planning processes¹. The framework shall be based on the following:

- a. The PLC shall set the legislative terms of reference for the planning process.
- b. The National Planning Council shall set the technical terms of reference for the planning process.
- c. The national teams for sector planning shall serve as the supervisory body to develop sector strategies.
- d. Ensuring the sustainability of the work of the National Planning Council, and the national teams for sector planning as well as all phases of planning.
- e. Activate the national monitoring and evaluation system at the level of General National Plan and Sector Strategies.

Second: Recommendations Related to the Development of Core Planning Processes by Participation:

1. Ensure involvement of all partners in all planning phases.
2. Adopt a hybrid planning methodology (top-down and bottom-up).
3. Build a general national plan and sector strategies as mid-term strategies (three years) based on a methodology that involves wide consultation process among all partners, and covering all regions.
4. Develop and prepare an annual document based on the General National Plan. This should be conducted under the supervision and leadership of the National Planning Council where annual development priorities are linked to the running and development portions and constitutes an implementation plan for the General National Plan and serves as a document for monitoring and evaluation of the plan.

¹The planning framework followed by the National Development Plan 2011 – 2013 might serve as a good framework to build on, provided that there will be lessons learnt.

5. Develop and prepare annual implementation plan for sector strategies, under the supervision of National Teams for sector planning to determine development priorities for each sector, provided that it is linked with the general budget process and contributes to the monitoring and evaluation process of the sector strategy on an annual basis.
6. Develop clear, specific, and agreed upon mechanisms where all partners participate by developing national indicators for the General National Plan and sector indicators for all sector strategies as part of implementation plans. This shall include building a database to track implementation of each sector's strategy separately. Further, a national database shall be developed to track implementation of the General National Plan based on periodical reports submitted by the national teams for sector planning.
7. Develop clear, specific, and agreed upon mechanisms where all partners participate, through preparation of annual monitoring and evaluation reports for sector strategies and for the General National Plan under the supervision of the National Council for Planning.

Third: Recommendations Related to Representation of NGOs:

1. Form sector coordination bodies for NGOs to enhance their contribution in the national and sector planning processes.
2. Ensure regional representation of NGOs from both West Bank or Gaza Strip
3. Ensure representation of grassroots and small NGOs.

Fourth: Recommendations related to Raising the Level of Preparedness and Readiness of NGOs:

1. Conduct internal sector consultations among NGOs themselves in order to reach a unified vision and set trends to enhance readiness to participate effectively in the national and sector planning processes.
2. Work towards preparation of technical reports to analyze the status of development sectors. Follow up and review reports for these sectors and for the National Plan in general by NGOs.

3. Strengthen partnership in the monitoring and evaluation areas by providing necessary information to track implementation of sector and national strategies and require all partners to feed the sector and national databases.

Fifth: Recommendations related to Capacity Development:

1. Introduce the structure and methodology of national and sector planning process by disseminating them to all partners.
2. Strengthen capacity in planning and policy development among all partners.
3. Focus capacity building on monitoring and evaluation.
4. Train all partners to utilize manuals created to develop strategies, include those for specific sectors.

Profile of NDC



The NGO Development Center (NDC) is an innovative Palestinian non-profit organization that empowers Palestinian NGOs to better provide vital services to Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza, especially the poor and marginalized. Conceived in partnership with leading Palestinian NGOs, unions and networks, NDC mobilizes donor funding to deliver a unique combination of direct grants and capacity building programs that enhance the effectiveness, self-reliance and sustainability of Palestinian NGOs.

NDC advocates greater NGO transparency and accountability through the adoption of professional financial and management practices, and promotes sector-wide coordination and sharing of best practice experiences within its programs and on its Masader portal (www.masader.ps).

NDC is in the unique position to serve as the management body for agencies seeking to implement programming throughout the entirety of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. NDC has over 14 years of experience in managing and monitoring funding and rendering development programs and projects, with the added value of building organizational capacities.

NDC provides a distinctive combination of direct grants to NGOs to help them perform with improved quality and better directed outcomes. NDC uses different granting schemes to allow NGOs with various capacities and magnitudes to focus on sector and themes where NGOs have a comparative advantage. Funding for the implementation of a fourth Palestinian NGO Project (PNGO IV) was directed towards the NGO sector in the form of a financing agreement with the French Development Agency (AFD) and the World Bank for a total amount of \$8 million over a period of three and a half years.

NDC's Sector Development program aims at developing the NGO Sector as a whole to become more responsive, transparent, and accountable to Palestinian communities

and the donor community by setting standards, promoting collaboration within the sector and strategic policy research and planning.

NDC serves as the program management unit responsible for channeling pooled donor funding, supporting coordinated initiatives and joint capacity building initiatives, and strengthening policy dialogue for NGOs that are working to promote and protect Human Rights/Good Governance in West Bank and Gaza Strip. A second phase of funding for the Human Rights and Good Governance (“HR/GG”) Secretariat was agreed upon in 2010 with four donors – Switzerland, Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands – for an amount of USD \$16.2 million.

Introduction



Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have played a crucial role in the everyday lives of Palestinians and in supporting the national cause. They have played an indisputably important role in supporting Palestinian steadfastness and building national infrastructure in the health, education, agriculture sectors, as well as cultural and intellectual life. NGOs have helped shape Palestinian development policies under long-term occupation. Through their participation in the political domain, NGOs have also helped resist against the Israeli occupation. The role of NGOs in Palestine has served two purposes: 1) To meet the immediate basic needs of the Palestinian population in the absence of state institutions and 2) To resist the occupation by supporting the resilience of the Palestinian people on their land and mobilize the community to challenge the policies of occupation².

The establishment of non-governmental organizations in Palestine started in the early twentieth century. However, they were limited in numbers and most were charitable in nature. They remained limited during the Jordanian and Egyptian rule of West Bank and Gaza Strip, however, proliferated when the Israeli occupation seized control over what remained of Palestine in 1967. At this point, the Palestinian people began developing mechanisms to defend its existence in an effective manner by increasingly developing and organizing voluntary services in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. During the eighties, NGOs began working in the health, education, and agriculture sectors. The increasing growth of new NGOs led by young professionals played an important role in the transition away from the role of traditional charitable organizations. Some of these NGOs established universities, hospitals, training and employment centers. Many created industrial and agricultural loan programs and others established income-generating initiatives, including food production and handcraft projects³.

² See Shalabi, Yassir (2001) International and Local Influence on Setting Vision and Roles of Palestinian NGOs, Birzeit University, Un-published thesis.

³ See Shalabi, Yassir, (2001) Census of NGOs in West Bank and Gaza Strip, Ramallah, Palestinian Economic Policies Research Institute (MAS).

The birth of the Palestinian Authority (PA) in 1994 created a new political reality, requiring a significant change in the role played by NGOs in Palestine, particularly in the development of policy planning, implementation, and evaluation of programs. The changes sparked considerable debate over the role of NGOs and the nature of their relationship to the PA. Positions ranged between supporting NGOs, to being suspicious of their role, and completely rejecting their right to exist. These positions are based on interests, including ideological and/or political considerations. This new reality created new fields of work for NGOs, such as oversight over the government and PA institutions. It also created a reduction in activity of other sectors that now fell under the jurisdiction of the newly established PA. Two different forms of relationships formed between the NGO community and the PA⁴.

The first was one of competition. The Palestinian NGO community and the PA began to compete over funding and different roles they played in Palestinian society, including fields of operation and provision of services. NGOs existed long before the creation of the Palestinian Authority and were the first recipients of other Arab and international financial aid. They held the responsibility of shaping Palestinian development policies in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Their role reduced significantly following the creation of the PA and the regulation of the NGO community's relationship with the government sector became a developmental prerequisite for NGOs operating in Palestine.

The second form of relationship consisted of coordination and partnership within various sectors- most often concerning bigger NGOs with larger resources. This relationship evolved from a mutual trust and respect from both sides and the obvious need to cooperate and coordinate with one another in certain areas and activities. The PA could not overlook the significant achievements made by the NGO community in Palestinian social and economic development. Palestinian NGOs had a strong record with donors and the local community. A number of NGOs viewed the establishment of the PA as the biggest contributing factor for the dwindling support of Palestinian NGOs and their increasingly shrinking space to influence development policy, planning, and programs. Palestinians no longer lacked national institutions, as was the case prior to the establishment of the PA.

⁴ See Shalabi, Yassir, (2001) Census of NGOs in West Bank and Gaza Strip, Ramallah, Palestinian Economic Policies Research Institute (MAS).

It is worth noting that the number of NGOs proliferated drastically after the establishment of the PA despite restrictions imposed by the Israeli occupation on the establishment of such organizations in West Bank and Gaza Strip. The number of NGOs reached 1500 in 2007, which is the latest census on NGOs in West Bank and Gaza Strip, however, the number has likely increased since. Among these organizations, only 558 were established before the PA. In 2007, charitable organizations represented the highest percentage (52%) of NGOs in West bank and Gaza Strip, followed by youth and sports clubs (19%), and the remaining (29%) consisting of development organizations, cultural centers, NGOs operating in training and re-qualification, cooperative societies, relief organizations, and legal organizations⁵.

In general, the establishment of the PA in 1994 served as a turning point for Palestinian NGOs. Several discussions took place concerning the new role these NGOs would play, marking the formation of a new relation. These discussions addressed all aspects of their work, including their relationship with the PA, their role under the PA, their role under persistent occupation, sources of funding, their relationships with local communities and other civil society organizations⁶.

During these talks, they also discussed the potential role partners in the development sector (government, NGOs, civil society, and private sector) would have in shaping the agenda for national policies and development priorities under occupation. Discussions intensified during the development process for the national plan because partners felt they reflected the government's perspective. Particular NGOs criticized the government for being the sole party shaping the agenda on national policies and development priorities. Criticism focused on the relentless occupation, highlighting the need for genuine cooperation and unification of efforts between all partners to effectively challenge the policies of occupation and the logic of the government under the given circumstances.

Since the beginning of the establishment of the PA, successive Palestinian administrations have developed a number of national plans. Majority of these plans

⁵ See Al-Malki, Majdi, Yassir Shalabi and Hassan Ladadweh (2008) Census of NGOs in West Bank and Gaza Strip (2007), Ramallah, Palestinian Economic Policies Research Institute (MAS).

⁶ See Shalabi, Yassir (2001) International and Local Influence on Setting Vision and Roles of Palestinian NGOs, Birzeit University, Un-published thesis.

excluded partners outside the government. This trend has continued and evolved and will be further explained below in the overview of the national planning processes. The government eventually became supportive of the inclusion of partners in the national planning processes, seeing the benefits of improving coordination, complementing roles, and managing international aid and public funds more effectively.

This study aims to understand the extent of the NGO community's participation in the national and sector planning processes in order to strengthen participation and its effectiveness. By understanding and building on past experience, we hope to improve partnership in the planning process, including the development of national policy agenda and the establishment of national and sector development priorities and trends.

Background Information and Objectives

The overall objective of the study is to enhance and strengthen the contribution and participation of Palestinian NGOs in sector and national planning and policy development processes. The study will accomplish the following:

1. Assess the range of participation of Palestinian NGOs in Sector and National planning processes, including the quality of their participation and varying degrees of representation in these processes.
2. Identify gaps in the capacity of the NGOs and their representative or umbrella bodies in order to boost their participation and integration in these processes.
3. Evaluate platforms of existing dialogue and participation between government bodies and NGOs; recommend mechanisms to improve and institutionalize these platforms.
4. Enhance the participatory and transparent method of development and approval processes of the Sector and National Plans to include monitoring and evaluation systems based on principles of accountability and social responsibility.

Methodology

A participatory research methodology was employed in the preparation of this study. The evaluation of the NGOs' contribution and integration into the national and sector planning process involved all mentioned stakeholders, including the government sector. In addition, international entities were included to ensure objectivity. This culminated into recommendations and suggestions approved by all stakeholders. The study utilized the following tools to achieve its objectives:

1. Thirteen conducted semi-structured interviews with individuals from several government bodies, NGOs, and international entities (see Annex No. 1: List of Interviewed Individuals and the Organizations they represent). Interviewees answered the following questions:
 - a) What is your opinion on the participation of Palestinian NGOs in the sector and national planning processes?
 - b) What is your opinion on the structure of the sector and national planning processes?
 - c) What is your opinion in the content of the sector and national planning processes?
 - d) Are you satisfied with the degree and type of Palestinian NGO participation?
 - e) From your perspective, what are the weaknesses and strengths of the participation of Palestinian NGOs in the sector and national planning processes?
 - f) What recommendations and suggestions can you make to enrich and develop participation of Palestinian NGOs in the sector and national planning processes?
2. Workshops, divided into the four major sectors (social, economic, infrastructure, and governance), approved nationally for development sectors and for management of international aid. Although the workshops addressed the sector and national planning processes as a whole, the purpose of dividing the workshops was to provide the participants with the opportunity and time to

submit feedback addressing methodology, content, and level of participation. Three workshops were conducted in the West Bank. One workshop consisted of government sector officials, non-governmental organizations, and international organizations that operate in the social sector. A second workshop was held for the infrastructure sector and a third one held for the governance and economic sectors (see Annex No. 2: List of Workshop Participants). The main objective of the workshops was to hold open discussions between partners to evaluate the participation of NGOs in the sector and national planning processes, define gaps, and identify participation strengths and weaknesses and, finally compile joint recommendations to develop and institutionalize participation.

3. A workshop conducted in the Gaza Strip, where several NGOs participated (see Annex No. 3: List of Participants in Gaza Strip Workshop). The outcome of the West Bank workshops was presented and discussed, including findings from the semi-structured interviews and the workshops themselves.
4. An initial draft developed on the outcomes of the work in West Bank and the Gaza Strip for the study. The study was based on the following consecutive steps to achieve the overall goal and sub-objectives:
 - a. Review relevant documents and literature related to NGOs and their role and relations with the PA, including those related to the sector and national planning processes, such as National Plans and Sector strategies.
 - b. Collect information on existing studies from NGOs, government organizations, and some international entities.
 - c. Conduct interviews with a number of individuals from the governmental sector, NGOs, and international organizations.
 - d. Conduct three workshops in the West Bank with participation from individuals from government organizations, NGOs, and some international organizations.
 - e. Conduct a workshop in the Gaza Strip with the participation of several NGOs to present the outcomes of the West Bank workshop, discuss, and propose suggestions. The workshop was conducted using video conferencing technology.

- f. Develop a draft report that includes all issues addressed by the study, particularly the evaluation of NGO participation in the sector and national planning processes, and recommendations and suggestions to develop these processes.
- g. Develop the final draft of the study to achieve its objectives; the study will be divided into three main sections: The first section will be a general background on national planning processes in Palestine, including the stages undergone, as well as its weaknesses and strengths. The second section will be an analysis of the role of Palestinian NGOs in the national planning processes, its effectiveness, and the factors affecting the process. The last section will consist of a set of recommendation that call for the development and improvement of NGO participation in the sector and national planning processes that aim to strengthen partnership in these processes.

General Background: National Planning Processes in Palestine

Planning processes adopted by the PA have gone through two major phases, concentrating on the degree of participation by non-governmental partners: The first phase began following the establishment of the PA in 1994 and lasted until 2009. A number of government plans were developed during this period. The second phase began in 2009 during the preparation of the National Development Plan 2011- 2013.

Although the first phase was not homogenous in terms of the methodology used to develop national plans, the planning process was centralized at the governmental level. In most cases, the process was limited to the Palestinian Ministry of Planning with occasional limited coordination with other ministries and agencies of the PA. The second phase, which included the preparation of the National Development Plan 2011 – 2013, depended on a methodology that, for the first time since the establishment of the PA, was based on wide participation of non-governmental partners in the sector and national planning processes. There were questions around the quality and depth of the participation, as well as the nature of partners' participation, including weaknesses and strengths, and mechanisms to shift towards a more advanced state of

NGO participation in sector and national planning, and means for institutionalization. Below is a review of the Palestinian planning history for both phases.

Phase One: From the Inception of the Palestinian National Authority in 1994 to 2009

A review of methodologies used to prepare plans during the first phase shows that there was an absence of non-governmental parties in the national planning process. The Emergency Investment Plan and the Rapid Impact Intervention Program were both prepared during 2003 under a stifling economic and social crisis. The Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza Strip suffered from repressive Israeli policies and practices imposed following the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa uprising in 2000 (also known as the Second Intifada). Preparation of both plans was limited to the efforts of the Ministry of Planning in coordination with line ministries to define funding priorities. There was no consultation with partners outside of the government ⁷.

Both plans were followed by the Social and Economic Re-stabilization Plan for 2004 – 2005. Similar to the previous plan, this plan aimed to stabilize the Palestinian economy from the social and economic crisis that followed the Second Intifada and encourage economic prosperity. The plan included an estimation of the funds needed to support the national budget, including humanitarian, social and development needs. Once again, preparation efforts were limited to PA ministries and institutions. It was the first plan in which the efforts of the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Planning were coordinated and the expenditures funded by donors in the national budget were incorporated. Although limited, it provided the first linkage between the national budget and spending on donor-funded projects. The 2004 budget of the PA, which was submitted for approval by the PLC in January 2003, was the first national budget that included estimates of capital expenditures which were supposed to be funded by donors in the form of projects ⁸.

⁷ See, Palestinian National Authority – Ministry of Planning (2005) Mid-Term Development Plan 2005 – 2007, Ramallah, Ministry of Planning

⁸ Ditto

The Short-term Development Plan 2006–2008 was a turning point in the development of Palestinian national budgets. Preparations for this plan involved bi-lateral consultation, as well as workshops where line ministries, public entities, representatives from the private sector, civil society, and NGOs were engaged. However, these meetings and workshops did not take the shape of true consultation and partnership. Although the process was designed to be participatory, most work to prepare the plan was, in fact, largely carried out by teams selected by the Ministry of Planning. Some of the sector plans were prepared by various line ministries. A review of the methodology used showed that this plan was the primary tool used to promote Palestinian needs in project form. This plan was used to attract funds, consult with donors, and define the relationship between donors and local partners⁹.

The Mid-term Development Plan 2006–2008 used a methodology similar to the previous one. It is worth mentioning that there is a general trend with the PA, particularly with the Ministry of Planning to develop a three-year mid-term plan on an annual basis. This means that the plan is prepared annually by deleting the ended year from the 3-year time frame and adding a new year to it. Hence, the timeframe allotted to develop the plan did not allow sufficient time to include the partners or to conduct extensive consultations with them, weakening participation levels. Accordingly, development priorities in the National Plans did not reflect a national consensus. Furthermore, the Mid-term Development Plan 2006 – 2008 was not published. Preparations for the plan coincided with the elections of the PLC, in which Hamas obtained the majority and formed the government. The new government did not consider the plan and did not incorporate it into its work¹⁰.

The results of the PLC elections at the beginning of 2006 created internal political tensions in Palestine. These tensions culminated into a major rift between the two major political movements, Fatah and Hamas, causing a division in the Palestinian political system. In result, two governments on the ground- one in the West Bank and one deposed government in the Gaza Strip. The decision was made by the Palestinian President, and the Emergency Government formed by the President in the West Bank.

⁹ Ditto

¹⁰ See: Palestinian National Authority – Ministry of Planning (un-published) Mid-Term Development Plan 2006 – 2008, Ramallah, Ministry of Planning

This division was a reflection of the general Palestinian situation, including the sector and national planning processes. The General Budget of the PA prepared by the West Bank government included expenditures from the Gaza Strip and some development projects. Funds allocated for the Gaza Strip represented more than half of the national budget.

The Palestinian government in the West Bank prepared the 2008-2010 Reform and Development Plan with the Ministry of Planning and the Ministry of Finance assuming responsibilities. The Council of Ministers reviewed and approved the documents that came out of the preparation phase. These documents formed the final plan. The preparation of this plan constituted a turning point because planning was separated from the budget. At the same time, the preparation process was not based on extensive consultation due to the restrictive timeframe allotted for its preparations. Consultation outside the government was limited to a few ministries and government institutions that conducted some partner consultations to define the projects in the plans and budgets ¹¹.

As demonstrated by this study, the Reform and Development Plan 2008- 2010 was not based on consultation with non-governmental partners. At the same time, although the plan identified development priorities for the West Bank and Gaza Strip from the perspective of the government, it was the first time since the beginning of the planning process that ministries in Gaza Strip were excluded from the preparation process. This was the most significant shortcoming that impacted the preparation process of the plan.

A review of the Ministry of Planning-led preparation of various plans in coordination with other PA bodies and ministries has been undertaken. The comments and observations regarding the method of preparation for the plan can therefore be presented. There was limited participation by select non-governmental partners that were invited by some of these ministries. Below is a summary of comments and observations submitted by the participants:

¹¹ See, Palestinian National Authority-Ministry of Planning (2008), Palestinian Reform and Development Plan 2008 – 2010, Ramallah, Ministry of Planning

1. General planning in Palestine was not paired with an approved planning framework that clearly defined infrastructure, structure, and content. However, instead of a single process, there were multiple ones. This means that there was no general framework approved and adopted by all partners, regardless of their positions, to develop Palestinian plans. Although each plan was based on previous plans, they did not follow the same framework. Having a clear, specific and approved framework does not mean having a rigid framework without room for improvements or development. On the contrary, the framework should be flexible and adjustable so that it can develop along with the planning process itself, reflecting the reality on the ground.
2. The previous plans were government plans, not national ones. All prior plans were developed under the leadership of the Ministry of Planning, with participation from other government ministries and limited participation from external partners such as NGOs or the private sector. This indicated that sector priorities and trends defined by these plan where linked with government programming. Most of these plans concentrated on the programs and projects themselves instead of development priorities with a focus on managing international aid and donor relations. The plans listed development projects that the PA wished to implement without considering the current budget.
3. The planning process was completely separated from the budget development process. For instance, the national budget was developed by the Ministry of Finance as a completely separate process without taking into consideration programs and projects outlined by the national plans developed under the leadership of the Ministry of Planning. The logic behind this planning process was that it would allow them to focus on the plans for programs and projects that were donor financed. This was due to the fact that the Ministry of Planning held two responsibilities: 1) leading the planning process on the national level, and 2) managing international aid. The plans were released in the form of a list of funds that aimed to manage international aid and negotiate with donors, favoring government institutions as opposed to other partners. The separation between

the planning process and the budget process strongly indicates that development priorities were unclear. The national plan did not reflect national priorities and focused on the regular budget rather than the development dimensions for any of the sectors or organizations. This methodology left the doors wide open for donors to markedly influence and shape Palestinian development priorities. The fact that there was a lack of well-defined development priorities by government-led Palestinian national entities in addition to inadequate popular participation by non-governmental bodies in the planning process, paved the way for foreign donors to direct funding towards their own agendas. This was carried out via the ministries as well as in direct cooperation with non-governmental partners. This was also done by directly implementing plans through international organizations and agencies.

4. Past general plans were developed in a centralized manner without sector-specific strategies. Preparations of sector strategies were restricted to few key ministries, such as the Ministries of Education, Health, and Agriculture. Consequently, this was reflected in the national plans developed by successive Palestinian administrations led by the Ministry of Planning. The plans appeared as lists of projects requiring funding, rather than a definition of development priorities based on a comprehensive understanding and analysis of the different sectors, development priorities, and unique contexts. For the most part, this lack of preparation for the sector strategies weakened partnership and consultation with partners outside the government.
5. Previous national plans did not use the participatory methodology in preparation meaning they were initially government-shaped plans as opposed to 'national' plans. Accordingly, partners were excluded from the preparation process of these plans. Even at the government level, there was a lack of genuine consultation between government bodies. Contact was limited to requesting a list of proposed development projects from various government organizations and ministries. The plans were prepared by a centralized and specialized team of individuals.

6. The general plans lacked implementation strategies just like previous plans. This made it difficult to monitor and track progress on the ground. It further made it difficult to compare actual achievements to the previously defined priorities and track funded projects that had already been implemented. The entire process was exacerbated by the lack of coordination and cooperation between partners outside the government.
7. Previous plans lacked a monitoring and evaluation system. The separation of the budget from the actual planning process, coupled with the absence of an implementation plan, had a significant impact. In cases where some plans did have a monitoring and evaluation system, the framework only existed on a theoretical level, without an actual system in place to monitor implementation. There were no monitoring and evaluation reports prepared for any of these plans nor was there originally an institutional framework or body to conduct the monitoring and evaluation.

Phase Two: Post- 2009

The National Development Plan 2011 – 2013, “Establishment of the State and Building the Future” utilized more sophisticated and advanced methodology for the general planning process. The plan was built from a completely different starting point. The national planning process began with the Council of Ministers’ decision to adopt the proposal developed by the Ministry of Planning for the national planning process for the years 2011 – 2013¹². The proposal defined the founding basis and the methodology utilized in developing it, including a defined timeframe. It included some basic observations regarding the Reform and Development Plan 2008 – 2010 as well as the following points¹³:

1. The Reform and Development Plan 2008 – 2010 is a strategy for the Palestinian government and excludes other elements of the society. It was built through a limited consultation process with PA ministries and organizations over a short

¹² Palestinian National Authority – Council of Ministers, Decision of Council of Ministers No. (F.S./O.M/13/13/04) for 2009, on Endorsement of the Methodology to Develop the General National Plan 2011 – 20113, issued in Ramallah, on 17/08/2009

¹³ See Palestinian National Authority – Ministry of Planning, proposal to develop the General National Plan 2011 – 2013, Proposal submitted to the Council of Ministers for endorsement. The proposal and the methodology which were defined for the National Planning Process for the years 2011 – 2013, as per the decision of the Council of Ministers No. (40/13/13/M.O.S.F) for the years 2009 dated 17/08/2009

period of time, because the plan had to be completed for the Paris Donors Conference held in January 2007. The consultation process excluded key remaining components of the Palestinian society, such as the private sector, civil society, NGOs, local government bodies, and other relevant organizations and institutions.

2. The plan set a broad framework for the national policy agenda, but did not define the actual policies or priorities.
3. The plan consisted of general guidelines for the four sectors, but did not provide specific policies or priorities for these sectors. This is attributed to the absence of sector-specific strategies, with the exception of some ministerial ones such as education and health.
4. Although the plan provided an opportunity to allocate resources to specific programs and linked current expenditure to development expenditure, the process existed on a theoretical level, rather than a practical one. The implementation of the budget was carried out by item, rather than by program.

During the 2007 planning process, the proposal to prepare the General National Plan for 2011 – 2013 stressed that the PA was embarking on a new stage. It adopted the methodology of the mid-term expenditure. The process produced the Reform and Development Plan 2008-2010, led by the Ministry of Planning and Administrative Development, the Ministry of Finance, and the active participation of remaining PA ministries and institutions. It stressed that the new planning methodology would link policies with the planning processes and the planning process with the budget process, merging the running expense budget and the development budget into a single, comprehensive budget based on programs rather than individual items.

This methodology achieved important results, such as:

1. Ending the separation of national development plans from the national budget.
2. Policies and priorities would guide spending and ensure transparency and accountability.
3. Linking the planning process with the budget process.

4. Preparation of a unified development and recurrent budget in accordance with national policies agenda and the mid-term spending framework. These were important steps that enabled the Palestinian government to manage its available resources and ensure efficient and effective use. Steps included establishing a working framework that directs foreign funds in alignment with national policies and priorities. The PA's ministries and organizations will build its capacity by enhancing and instilling this methodology and provide logical justification to its allocation in the national budget, and improve the process of managing public funds to serve the ultimate national and developmental interests¹⁴.

The proposal submitted by the Ministry of Planning initiated the beginning of a new general national plan for the years 2011–2013 with an enhanced and improved planning process. Its primary objective was to address the above-mentioned observations and comments. It stressed that the preparation of the 2011–2013 plan would build on the review and evaluation of the 2008-2010 plan and include a deepened and more detailed analysis. The methodology of the new plan relied on the development of sector strategies for sub-sectors (education, health, social protection, security, housing, water, administrative development, finance, agriculture, etc.) and the redefinition of priorities at the main sector level (social, economic, infrastructure, and governance) as part of the national strategy. The proposal focused in detail on the preparation of the General National Plan for the years 2011 – 2013 as follows¹⁵ :

1. Improve the Reform and Development Plan by shifting away from a strategy formed solely by the Palestinian government to a national strategy that is truly comprehensive and shaped by a broad and extensive consultation and participation process. The largest and most important portion of the consultation process will be at the level of sector strategies led by PA's ministries and institutions, in alignment with its mandate and with the support of the Ministry of Planning and Administrative Development.
2. Review and develop the national policy agenda.
3. Priorities and policies in the General Plan for 2011-2013 must be rearranged

¹⁴ See previous reference

¹⁵ See previous reference

to suit the new context created by recent Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip. This can be carried out by merging policies and interventions approved in the Reconstruction Plan of Gaza Strip prepared by the PA and presented at the Donors' Conference that took place in Sharm El-Sheikh on March 2, 2009 and strengthening the participation of government ministry staff and institutions in the Gaza Strip in preparation of this plan.

4. Develop sector strategies that lead to the development of the general national policies.
5. Analyze policies and interventions at the sector level, taking into consideration needs and priorities of various geographic areas.

The National Development Plan 2011 – 2013 managed to incorporate most of the comments and observations listed above. Development of the plan was based on extensive consultations at the sector strategy level. Thirty-two national teams were formed to develop the sector strategies with representation from all partners, including the government, civil society, and some international organizations and institutions operating in Palestine. This planning process, unlike those previously, engaged partners outside the government to define development priorities. It also helped create a more detailed national policy agenda than the general guidelines that it previously consisted of.

The National Development Plan also achieved a significant progress at the level of participation in developing sector and trans-sector strategies. The strategies were developed through the participation of all partners. National teams worked to form sector and trans-sector strategies. The national teams organized more than 240 consultation meetings, with over 2000 participants, 1300 of which represented NGO and civil society organizations. There were 143 representatives from the private sector, 45 representatives from local governance institutions, and 172 representatives from international organizations participating¹⁶.

¹⁶ See Palestinian National Authority (2011) National Development Plan 2011 – 2013 : Establishment of the State and Building the Future, Ramallah, Ministry of Planning and Administrative Development

Although there was progress in the consultation process, participation had still not reached the desired level. There were no consultations during the preparation phase prior to launching the planning process. The government did not engage the rest of the partners in designing key elements of the national planning process. As a result, the government defined the major features of the national policies agenda without engaging the partners, even though the agenda was aligned with the sector strategies. Partners were not engaged in the development of the general national plan. The direct participation of partners would have significantly enriched the National Development Plan 2011-2013 and ensured alignment between the plan and the priorities set by the sector strategies.

Overall, the development of the methodology used to draft the National Development Plan 2011 -2013 and enhance partnerships can be categorized into two main areas: Firstly, non-governmental partners were engaged in the sector and national planning process through teams formed to develop sector strategies for the first time. However, this participation did not occur in the preparation of the national plan itself but was limited to development of the sector strategies. Additionally, this participation did not cover every step of the planning phase. NGOs were not able to participate in the process that defined the public policies and guidelines that were eventually adopted in the preparation of the plan. NGOs were also excluded from the development of the methodology to prepare the plan and the proposed timeframe. Secondly, there was significant improvement in the shaping of the actual structure of the national planning process. A national team was formed and headed by the Minister of Planning and the sector strategies leads. In addition, technical teams were formed for the majority of the sector strategies. Sometimes, more than one technical team was formed to tackle sub-issues that fell under the scope of the sector strategy. While a formal structure was established, it remained incomplete because it lacked extensive partner representation in the general national team. Membership was restricted to government institutions and partners lacked clarity in their role throughout every phase of the planning process. It is important to remain attentive to two major issues that impacted the preparation of the National Development Plan 2011 – 2013 that are related to internal Palestinian political divisions. The first issue is the absence of the PLC from the planning process.

In an ideal situation and in any other context, the national planning process requires approval and endorsement by a governmental legislative body. Accordingly, the PLC should have approved the plan following its completion to include specific development priorities and financial allocations. This did not happen because of the suspension of the Legislative Council in performing its functions. The plan was instead solely approved by the Council of Ministers weakening government accountability as the representative of the people.

The absence of the PLC significantly affects the planning and budget process. Compliance with the defined priorities was low, even by the government itself. The absence of the Legislative Council- which is supposed to approve the plan, the financial allocations and distribution among sectors and priorities, as well as tracking compliance with priorities during the implementation phase- was the biggest factor leading to little unity in planning and budgeting.

The second issue is the absence of participation from the Gaza Strip in this process as a consequence of the Palestinian political division. Although the National Development Plan addressed content, developmental priorities and trends at the national level (both West Bank and Gaza Strip) and stressed the importance of implementing an effective reconstruction plan for the Gaza Strip, the trends and priorities were solely defined by West Bank-based government institutions and partners. The absence of government participation by institutions in Gaza Strip could be understood as an outcome of the embargo at play between the West Bank and Gaza Strip governments. Nevertheless, it does not explain the exclusion of Gaza based civil society organizations from partner NGOs in the West Bank. This is attributed to the weak coordination and networking capacity of civil society organizations and will be further addressed in our observations on the most recent national planning process.

It is necessary to be attentive to the fact that since the inception of the PA, the national planning process has never been regulated by law. Palestinians lack a National Planning Law that specifies jurisdictions of powers, responsibilities, and the roles of various entities. For this reason, the planning process is yet to be institutionalized and has been subject to individual interests, particularly in regards to the participation of non-governmental partners in these processes.

Thus, crucial questions in regards to this study still remain: How were NGOs positioned

in the National Planning Processes; what role did they actually play in these processes; and what factors affected the participation or lack of participation by these NGOs?

The Role of NGOs in the National Planning Processes

NGO participation in the national planning processes was weak, if not completely nonexistent for most of the time between the establishments of the PA up until 2010. This is the year in which the development process of the National Development Plan 2011 – 2013 began. The plan was created based on a previously issued decision by the Council of Ministers, declaring it necessary to create the plan in a participatory manner including extensive consultation with partners, particularly at the sector strategy level.

Although there was progress in NGO participation in the sector planning process during the development of the National Development Plan 2011 – 2013, there were a number of outstanding issues in relation to the nature of participation: Was the level participation sufficient? Was it participation or partnership? What was the quality of participation? What was the level of representation of NGOs? Was it truly representative? Moreover, how could NGO participation in sector and national planning processes elevate to a more advanced level? Finally, what mechanisms were needed to institutionalize such partnership?

To answer the above questions and better understand the integration and participation of NGOs in sector and national planning processes, attention must be paid to two basic levels: The first level is in regards to the existing political will and commitment of partners to be involved in a participatory process based on extensive consultation. The second level is related to whether this translates to on-the-ground implementation and tangible results.

In reviewing the National Development Plan 2011-2013 process, it is clear that the political will for its launch was a reflection of the government's willingness to build a unified plan in collaboration with all relevant partners, particularly at the sector strategy level. The manual developed by the Ministry of Planning entitled, "Sector Strategies Development Manual"¹⁷ is evidence of the need for such methodology,

¹⁷ To review the details of the manual, see: the Ministry of Planning and Administrative Development (2009) Sector Strategies Development Plan, Ramallah, Ministry of Planning and Administrative Development

stressing the necessity to form national teams to develop sector strategies with membership from all partners. It is possible to assess the will and desire of the NGO community through their involvement and membership in the sector committees that oversaw the development of these strategies. This is evident from their participation in the technical workshops that were organized to develop these strategies.

While partners had the political drive to improve and develop this partnership, the most critical challenge remained in regards to its implementation. These challenges are connected to two groups of factors:

1. Factors related to government and non-government organizations themselves
2. Factors related to the national planning process, in term of its nature and structure

First: Factors Related to Government and Non-Governmental Organizations

These factors include:

- The weak desire of some government entities to actualize this political will and actively consult partners during the planning process. There was disparity in the level and degree of partnership in developing several sector strategies. The difference was connected to the desire of the concerned ministry that led the drafting of the strategy to improve and enhance NGO partnership. Some of the ministries welcomed this political will and worked actively to engage non-government partners, while other ministries did not. The differences in governmental level response further illustrated the weakness in the processes' institutionalization. It also revealed that the relationships with partners depended greatly on individuals heading the ministries. Thus, it is critical to develop specific mechanisms to institutionalize the planning process and ensure genuine partnership between partners rather than remaining dependent on individual personalities.
- The weak coordination capacity of some government entities. The development of sector strategies was a new experience in itself to most ministries. Therefore, there

was a clear weakness in the coordination capacity to manage the development of sector strategies, including managing the relationships and coordination between partners to develop the strategy. In many cases, this eventually resulted in weak partnership building.

- Variation in responsiveness of NGOs with this policy also played a huge factor. The NGO community's responsiveness to the government's desire to enhance partnership in building the National Development Plan 2011 – 2013 was mostly weak and insufficient. This can be attributed to the suspicion and lack of trust between the government and NGOs which emerged after the establishment of the PA and the lack of consensus around their respective roles. This is also due to the absence of formalized coordination and consultation mechanisms between both parties. Some NGOs viewed this as a government move to exclude them from the process rather than partner with them. They viewed these rules established by the government to regulate their participation in the planning process without NGO consultation as evidence of their intentions. Participation of NGOs came late and only at the level of sector strategies.
- Weakness in the available capacity of some NGOs and their ability to participate. NGOs do not all have the same level of capacity and experience. Some NGOs have extensive experience in their field of work, including networking and coordination, while others were relatively new organizations and lacked sufficient experience. Additionally, staff sizes varied. Some had a relatively large number of employees while others a more limited number. The number of employees' affected organizational abilities to follow up on additional files, particularly in their participation in the national planning process. For NGOs with small staff sizes, this participation functioned as an added burden. Consequently, this caused variations in the level of participation of NGOs in the sector planning processes and their response to the new government policy that called for enhanced partnership during these planning processes.

Second: Factors Related to the Structure and Core of the Planning Process

There are two major correlating factors:

The first factor relates to the institutional structure of the planning process and the position of NGOs within this structure. The preparation of the National Development Plan 2011 – 2013 laid the institutional groundwork to develop the plan. This stipulated the formation of the national team led by the Minister of Planning and the membership of heads of the sector strategies, in addition to the formation of 23 different national teams for sector strategies, including member representatives from all partners. Additionally, a number of technical teams worked under the umbrella of these teams, coupled with the development of manuals and instructions related to the processes such as the manual for Development of Sector Strategies. However, this structure remained incomplete in terms of partner representation. Membership and participation of NGOs was limited to the sector strategy teams and excluded from membership in the national team. On the other hand, the roles of partners had not been articulated through every portion of the planning phase. Participation of NGOs was limited to the strategy preparation phase and absent in the preparation phase of the planning process, including the articulation of general trends of the plan and agreement on the role of partners in preparation. In addition, the role of partners did not appear in the planning phases, especially in the monitoring and evaluation sections that followed. However, the role of the government in this area was weak, if not completely absent; consequently, an implementation plan was not prepared for the national plan or the sector strategies. This limited the ability to monitor and track the implementation of these plans and the roles of partners in implementing them.

- The second factor relates to the content of the planning process and the NGO community's contribution. Although the National Development Plan 2011 – 2013 was intended to be a national plan, the roles and responsibilities of government partners to achieve the plan's objectives were not clearly defined or articulated.

Unlike the sector strategy planning process, the decision regarding the national plan belonged to the Ministry of Planning, with weak partner participation. Also, partners did not play a role in defining the agenda of the general national policies. This further led NGOs to believe that they were engaging in a government-led process, rather than one led by genuine partners in the development of Palestine.

The factors listed above, whether those related to government or non-governmental organizations, impacted responsiveness and policy compliance to enhancing partnership in building both sector and national plans. These factors include the availability of resources at both governmental and non-governmental organization as well as the structure of the planning process itself. These factors have all affected the level and type of NGO participation taking place in national and sector planning processes limiting their level of participation in national plans.

In addition, NGO participation in the planning phases were inadequate. It was limited to the sector strategy development phase, which elicited extensive feedback regarding the content of the national planning processes. The general plans, including the National Development Plan 2011 – 2013, lacked sufficient implementation procedures. Participation was limited to a specific number of NGOs assigned by the networks and the representative bodies of the organizations. For the most part, the large NGOs based in the center of the West Bank failed widen participation to include grassroots organizations or organizations operating in other areas, including the Gaza Strip. This raised important concerns regarding the representation of these NGOs in the processes. Many NGOs claimed individual participations did not effectively represent NGOs and their missions. It was unclear whether the participants were field experts, organizational representatives, or NGO representatives for a particular sector. In addition, NGO representation failed to represent all the various geographical areas.

The quality and type of participation was linked to NGOs' lack of readiness to participate in the process, both within their sectors, where NGOs were not sufficiently prepared before participating, or as individual NGOs, where there were variations in the ability of these NGOs to effectively contribute to the different sectors. There were

two major factors that contributed to the NGOs' lack of preparedness to participate in this process: inadequate technical expertise and ineffective coordination between the NGOs themselves.

On the technical level, NGOs lacked the relevant documents, sector studies and technical reports. Participation of these organizations was limited to the expertise available to the individuals who represented them in the consultation process. This was a result of the fact that the NGOs did not participate in the preparations preceding the launch of the planning process. Also, the timeframe set to draft the sector strategies was insufficient, preventing the sector teams and NGOs from preparing to assess the conditions of the different sectors and set priorities accordingly. This reflected the weak internal sector coordination amongst the NGOs themselves.

In addition, the weak internal coordination of the NGOs greatly inhibited their ability to influence the development of the strategic plans. The absence of sector-wide coordinating body led to a lack of unified vision and direction among organizations operating in the various sectors. Consequently, this reduced the NGO community's influence in building effective sector strategies and in strengthening its consultative position with the other partners. At times, the quality of the contributing partners was dependent on the capacity of the individual person representing the organization, rather than the actual capacity of the organization they represented.

In short, the methodology and mechanisms used to develop the National Development 2011 – 2013 managed to advance the degree of participation by non-governmental partners in the national planning process considerably, particularly in development of sector specific strategies. However, this progress was insufficient. While partner participation increased, it nonetheless failed to reach the level required to form genuine partnership in the planning process. True partnership requires contribution from all partners at all levels and phases of planning. This should begin at the preparatory phase where the overarching framework for the plan is established and include shaping the national policy framework, setting the timeframe for the planning process, and articulating the role of partners in the process. This must also include shaping the future vision where goals and objectives are defined, the status of the sectors is

analyzed to form strategies, including the general national plan, the implementation phase, and, finally, the monitoring and evaluation system.

In the next section, we will present the recommendations developed based on the feedback submitted by partners in interviews and workshops. This includes interventions, recommendations, the review on planning processes in Palestine and participation of NGOs. Model No. 1 outlines the framework adopted to develop the national strategy for the agriculture sector.

Model 1: Developing a Strategy for the Agriculture Sector: Common Vision

2011 – 2013

The Ministry of Agriculture began drafting the strategy of the agriculture sector with technical assistance from the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) “Common Vision”. The following was suggested during the early stage:

1. Form the sector strategy team who will lead the strategy drafting and development process
2. Develop a concept paper “Draft Common Vision to Develop the Palestinian Agriculture Sector” which aims to prepare the general framework for the strategy and serve as a term of reference that will be used in discussions and consultations with the stakeholders.
3. Identify mechanisms to follow up on the work plan and the subsequent steps to develop the strategy
4. Set the terms of reference for reports and proposed studies

The strategy team, chaired by the Minister of Agriculture, was formed and includes representatives of stakeholders and other members operating in the agriculture sector. The team conducted several meetings to approve mechanisms and a work plan as well as to supervise, review and direct work. The team was composed of representatives from the following partners:

1. The Minister of Agriculture: Head of the Team
2. Representatives from the technical department at the Ministry of Agriculture
3. Representatives from the Ministry of Planning and Administrative Development
4. Representative from the Ministry of Finance
5. Representatives from the Ministry of National Economy
6. Representative from the Ministry of Local Governance
7. Representative from the Ministry of Labor
8. Representative from the Environment Quality Control Authority

9. Representative from the Secretariat General of the Council of Ministers
10. Representative from the Private Sector
11. Two Representatives from the NGO community
12. Two Representatives from two international organizations.

In addition to the national sector, four technical teams were formed, each specialized in one of the major aspects of the agriculture sector. The teams were formed by membership and representation of different partners in it.

During the preparation of strategy, eight workshops were conducted, four of which were regional ones: north, center, and south of West Bank, one in the Gaza Strip, and four institutional workshops: government organization, civil society organization, NGOs, the private sector, donors, and international and regional organizations. The purpose of the workshops was to:

- Clarify and discuss the content of common vision with stakeholders
- Collect observations and recommendations.
- Determine urgent priority needs
- Inform participants about mechanisms of work and subsequent steps.

Output from the workshops and technical reports prepared by technical teams-specialized in sub-sectors of the agriculture sector- formed a foundation and a framework to direct the Sector strategy team, and the basis for building the national strategy for the agriculture sector.

Source: Palestinian National Authority – Ministry of Agriculture (2011) Strategy of the Agriculture Sector “Common Vision” 2011 – 2013, Ramallah, Ministry of Agriculture.

Recommendations



Based on the above analysis for the participation and engagement of NGOs in sector and national planning processes, anonymous interview and workshop participants reached consensus on the importance of partnership in planning processes in Palestine. All partners agreed that the immense challenges facing the Palestinian society under a continuing Israeli occupation requires partners to unify efforts to end the occupation and establish an independent state.

Based on the above, the partners compiled a set of recommendations that must be addressed to enhance partnership among all stakeholders in sector and national planning processes. The recommendations cover five main areas: 1) The development of the institutional structures of the national planning process 2) The development and improvement of the structure of the planning process itself, 3) The nature of representation of NGOs in this process, 4) Raising the level and degree of preparedness of NGOs to effectively participate in the national planning processes, and 5) The improvement of capabilities to improve and enhance the quality of planning. We will review the recommendations related to each area:

First: Recommendations Related to Developing the Institutional Structure of the National Planning Process

1. The PLC must fulfill its role in the national planning process. It is the PLC's responsibility to approve the public policy agenda upon which any national plan will be based upon. This includes the plan itself, the articulation of development priorities, and the allotted funds. The drive to increase accountability and transparency contributes towards strengthening the supervision of the implementation of the plan. This will also help strengthen public participation in the planning process because Members of the Council represent the population.
2. Draft and approve a Palestinian Planning Law as soon as possible. This law should provide the legal framework to organize and regulate the relationship of partners

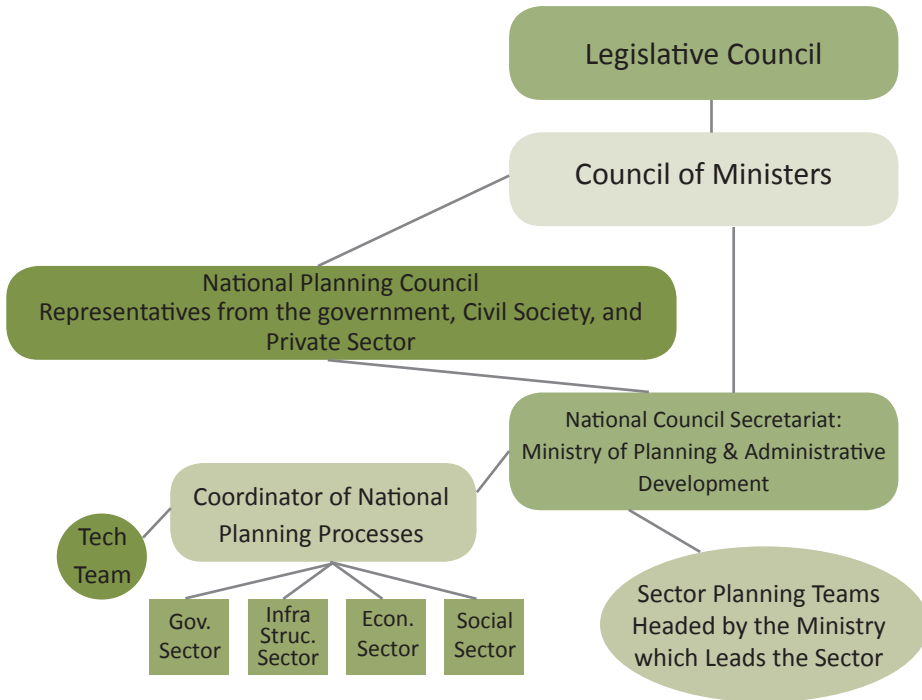
in the planning process. It should also formalize the national planning process as opposed to allowing it to continue relying on personal interests.

3. Establish a National Council for Planning composed of representatives from all parties, including governmental institutions, civil society organizations, NGOs, and the private sector, to serve as an arm for the Palestinian government. The Council shall provide leadership and supervision on the national planning process and oversee the development of the national plan. The Palestinian Ministry of Planning may chair the council and serve as its secretariat. However, technical teams shall be formed and asked to prepare the national plan and supervise the national planning process. The work of this council must be continuous and not be limited to the preparatory period of the national plan. The role of the Council shall include preparing for the planning process, shaping its development, conducting situational analyses, developing strategy, implementing strategy, and the monitoring and evaluation of implementation.
4. Form national teams for sector planning that includes representatives from government institutions, civil society organizations, private sector and, when necessary, representatives from international organizations. The responsibility of these teams includes general supervision of the strategy development process under the leadership of a ministry or government entity heading the sector that shall also serve also as a secretariat for the team. Technical teams could be formed to include members from all partners to develop sector strategies. The work of these teams shall include preparation, implementation, monitoring of these plans, and evaluation of the progress of the implementation of sector strategies. This differs from what took place for the 2011-2013 National Development Plan where teams only contributed during the strategy development phase.
5. Develop a clear national planning framework approved by all partners to ensure institutionalization of the national planning processes. The planning framework followed for the National Development Plan 2011 – 2013 could serve as a sample framework on which to build. In addition, it is necessary to benefit from the lessons learnt in developing this framework. We suggest the framework is based on the following:

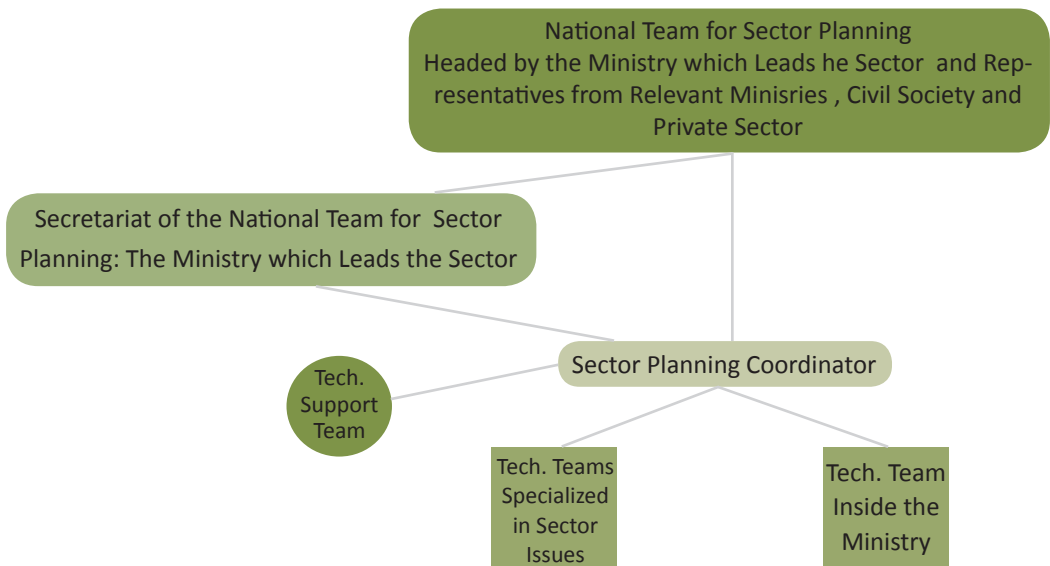
- a. The PLC shall serve as the legislative term of reference for the planning process, particularly the approval and endorsement of public policies and development of priorities articulated by the plan and its financial allocations.
- b. The National Planning Council shall serve as the technical term of reference for the planning process. It shall supervise the entire national planning process, including the development of the national plan, and act as a branch of the government. Then the council shall present the plan to the PLC for approval. The Council can be assisted by a technical team to prepare the General National Plan.
- c. The National Teams for sector planning shall serve as a supervisory entity for developing sector strategies under the leadership of a ministry or other government entity heading the sector and serve as the term of reference for these teams. Technical teams can be formed to help advise the national teams to develop sector strategies.
- d. Ensure the continuation of work of the National Planning Council and the National Teams for sector planning throughout the year. Their work shall not be limited to simply developing national or sector strategies, but shall include all planning stages, starting from the preparation phase up to the development of strategies, implementation plans, and monitoring and evaluation systems.
- e. Activate the National Monitoring and Evaluation System, where the Supreme National Council monitors and track implementation of the national plan. It shall also oversee the annual evaluation of the implementing the plan. The Directorate General for the Monitoring and Evaluation at the Ministry of Planning will be responsible for the technical areas.. The National Teams for sector planning shall supervise the implementation process for the sector strategies and oversee their annual evaluation. The Ministry or the government entity leading the sector shall have the technical responsibility for these activities.

In general, we can see the proposed structure above in the following two figures that complete one another. The first figure reflects the proposed structure/infrastructure for the national planning processes. The second figure reflects the proposed structure/infrastructure for the sector planning processes:

Proposed Structure/Infrastructure of National Planning Processes



Proposed Structure/Infrastructure for Sector Planning Processes



Second: Recommendations Related to Developing the Structure of the Planning Processes through Participation

1. Ensure participation of all partners throughout all phases of planning and not only in the strategy development phase. Real partnership in the planning process must include participation in all phases of this process, beginning with the preparatory phase to the development of a proposed agenda for national policies. It shall also include phases related to the future, analysis of the situation, preparation of all components of the strategy, then participation in implementing the strategy, each according to his role and function, including following up and monitoring implementation, and evaluating the progress. This shall apply to the two major entities in the planning process, both the National Council for Planning and the National Team for Sector Planning.
2. Adopt a planning methodology that allows the agenda for the national policies to

be developed at the beginning of each planning process by the National Council for Planning, in consultation with sector teams and partners. Then, sector strategies are developed under the supervision of the national teams for sector planning based on the proposed national policy agenda. The national policies agenda will be reviewed after the development of Sector Strategies.

3. Build the General National Plan and the Sector Strategies as a mid-term strategy, (covering a period of 3 years). The methodology shall use a participatory approach with an extensive consultation process with all partners and broaden consultation to cover all geographical areas. Consultative meetings shall be conducted in all areas of West Bank and Gaza Strip, with participation by all partners, including local communities, local councils, and grassroots organizations, to ensure the widest representation in the process and to reflect of various regional needs in sector and national plans.
4. Develop and prepare an annual document based on the General National Plan, under the supervision and leadership of the Planning National Council, which defines annual development priorities and links them to the preparation of the development portions of the national budget. This shall serve as an implementation plan for the General National Plan and a way to review and evaluate the plan.
5. Develop and prepare an annual implementation plan for sector strategies, under the supervision of National Teams for Sector Planning, and define and articulate development priorities for each sector. This shall be linked with the preparation of the national budget and contribute to the annual review and evaluation process of the Sector Strategy.
6. Develop clear, specific, and agreed upon mechanisms that allow all partners to participate in developing national indicators for the General National Plan, including sector indicators, as part of the implementation plans. This will form the basic foundation for the monitoring and evaluation system. Further, databases shall be built to serve monitoring and evaluation processes as follows:
 - a. Develop a special database to track the implementation of each sector strategy separately. The Ministry or the government organization that leads the sector,

under the supervision of the National Teams for Sector Planning, will manage the database. All partners shall commit to providing the database with information on progress for each indicator specified by the implementation plans of the strategies. However, the National Teams for sector planning shall prepare periodic (quarterly) reports that track the progress of the implementation of the strategy and submit it to the National Planning Council.

- b. Develop a national database to track implementation of the General National Plan based on the periodical reports submitted by the National Teams for Sector Planning. The Directorate General for Monitoring and Evaluation at the Ministry of Planning and Administrative Development could be the technical entity that manages the national database and is responsible for receiving sector reviews submitted by the National Teams for Sector Planning to prepare the national report and submit it to the National Planning Council. It is worth mentioning that the Council of Ministers requested that the Directorate General for Monitoring and Evaluation at the Ministry of Planning and Administrative Development coordinate the work to develop a comprehensive framework that covers its monitoring and evaluation of all ministries and government entities and tracks the progress which has been achieved in implementing the national development plan and other general plans. This includes the preparation and submission of periodic reports to the Council of Ministries for review. In addition, the Directorate General for Monitoring and Evaluation shall be responsible for the coordinating and strengthening the capacity of all government entities in implementing monitoring and evaluation procedures. Monitoring and Evaluation units are scheduled to begin their work in all ministries by the end of 2013.
7. Develop clear, specific, and agreed upon evaluation mechanisms and provide space for all partners to participate in preparations for the annual review and evaluation reports, as follows:
 - a. Conduct reviews and prepare evaluation reports for sector strategies under the supervision of National Teams for Sector Planning and the leadership of the ministry or the government bodies that head the sector. The purpose is to make necessary amendments to the sector strategies themselves if needed

and ensure that work progresses as planned on a technical level and within the implementation timeframe. This report will be one of the tools used to prepare annual implementation plans for sector strategies. However, the reports shall be submitted to the National Planning Council through the Directorate General for Monitoring and Evaluation at the Ministry of Planning and Administrative Development.

- b. Prepare a review and evaluation report for the national plan under the supervision of the Supreme Planning Council. The Directorate General of Monitoring and Evaluation at the Ministry of Planning shall focus on the technical side of the report and make amendments to the General National Plan if necessary. This will help prepare the annual implementation document for the General National Plan.

Third: Recommendations Related to NGO Representation.

1. The formation of sector coordinating bodies for NGOs. The absence of these bodies weakened NGO participation in the sector and national planning processes. The networks and umbrella bodies failed to truly represent the organizations in these processes. There was a large amount of critique from the NGOs themselves regarding the form of their representation in these processes. This recommendation will help ensure effective internal coordination between NGOs by sector. This will also improve NGO representation in the national teams for sector planning.
2. Diversify the geographic representation of NGOs in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The representation of NGOs in the National Development Plan 2011 – 2013 was largely limited to those operating in the central West Bank. NGOs working in Gaza Strip were entirely absent. Implementation of the previous recommendation, calling for the formation of sector coordinating bodies, might also help diversify the geographic representation of NGOs in the sector and national planning processes.
3. Guarantee representation of grassroots and smaller NGOs. Representation of NGOs in the National Development Plan 2011 – 2013 was made up mostly

of larger NGOs operating on the national level. Adoption of a participatory methodology in the preparation of national and sector plans and widening the circle of consultation to include all regions, might be one of the most effective ways to ensure participation of small and grassroots organizations in sector and national planning processes.

Fourth: Recommendations Related to Improving the Level of Preparedness of NGOs

1. Conduct internal sector consultation among NGOs themselves in forming a unified vision and goal. The lack of internal consultation greatly impacted the level and quality of their participation in the previous planning process. In order to enhance this participation, and strengthen the dialogue with the rest of partners, it is necessary to improve the preparedness of NGOs. As mentioned previously, this can be achieved through the sector coordination committees, consultative meetings, and internal dialogue. This will lead to an agreed upon national and sector visions within the NGO community and form the basis upon which these organizations engage with other partners.
2. Work to prepare technical reports that analyze the status of the development sector, review and track reports for these sectors and the national plan for the NGO community. Improving the capacity of the NGOs to participate and contribute to the sector and national planning processes requires NGOs to have the adequate technical preparedness. This will also enhance the oversight role that should be assumed by the NGOs. Finally, this will also strengthen the social responsibility of NGOs and other partners.
3. Strengthen partnership in the monitoring and evaluation area by providing necessary tools and information to track implementation of sector and national strategies. This requires commitment by all partners to include NGOs in the sector and national databases and ensure that monitoring of the implementation of sector strategies and tracking of the implementation of the general national plan will be carried out as needed.

Fifth: Recommendations Related to Capacity Development

1. Introduce the structure and methodology of national and sector planning processes to all partners through publication and dissemination. Organize presentations to all partners to reach a common understanding. This will ensure that planning processes will proceed smoothly and will enhance the ability of partners to participate effectively in these processes in the future.
2. Work to strengthen capacity building in planning and policy development among all partners. There is a need to build the capacity of government bodies and NGOs in the strategy development area. They should participate in developing sector and national strategies through clear and specific partnership mechanisms.
3. Focus on monitoring and evaluation capacity building, one of the most important components of strategic planning. This area is generally weak at the national level and requires the development of a comprehensive program to build the capacity of each partner in this area. This will strengthen the principles of transparency and accountability and will strengthen implementation of both sector and national strategies and improve partnership.
4. Train all partners to utilize the manuals developed for both drafting sector strategies and other strategies. Training should not be limited to governmental partners. Training of all partners on the planning process manual will strengthen partnership and ensure that partners will participate effectively throughout.

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Annexes

Annex No. 1: List of Interviewed Individuals and the Organizations They Represent

No.	NAME	NGO
1	Bashar Jumaa'	Negotiations Affairs Department (Currently), Former National Plan Coordinator 2001 – 2013 at the Ministry of Planning
2	Dr. Alam Jarrar	Palestinian Medical Relief Committees Association
3	Dr. Abdul-Rahman Al-Tamimi	Palestinian Hydrological Group
4	Fatima Wathaefi	Ministry of Women's Affairs
5	Abdullah Lahlouh	Ministry of Agriculture
6	Mahmoud Attaya	Acting Director General of Social Sector Development at the Ministry of Planning and Administrative Affairs
7	Taghrid Hinthawi	Director General of Infrastructure Sector Development at the Ministry of Planning
8	Issam Arouri	Jerusalem Center for Legal Aid
9	Daoud Al-Deek	Ministry of Social Affairs
10	Dr. Istifan Salameh	International Assistance Department at the Ministry of Planning
11	Iman Al-Shawa	Local Secretariat for Assistance Coordination
12	Dr. Azam Saleh	United Nations –Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)
13	Bader Abu Zahra	Director General for Monitoring and Evaluation at the Ministry of Planning and Administrative Development

Annex No. 2: List of Sector Workshop Participants

No.	NAME	NGO
1	Fatima Al-Jamal	Tamer Institution for Community Education
2	Burhan Al-Saadi	Private Sector Development Society and the National Commission for NGOs
3	Kifah Abu Rabi'	Education Charitable Society, Nahdat Bint Al-Reef Society
5	Abdul-Rahman Al-Tuamizi	Charitable Societies Association/ Hebron
6	Hasanin Zeidan	Rural Women Development Society
7	Issam Arouri	Jerusalem Center for Legal Aid
8	Fahoum Al-Shalabi	Ministry of Higher Education
9	Ayman Fawadlah	Ministry of Planning and Administrative Development
10	Ala El-Deen Halaykah	Palestinian Youth Association for leadership and Rights Activation-PYALARA
11	Ayman Sawalha	Ministry of Social Affairs
12	Jawad Abu Oun	Partners in Sustainable Development
13	Omar Assaf	Teacher's Creative Center
14	Iman Sirihan	Local Assistance Coordination Secretariat
15	Bashar Juama'	Negotiations Affairs Department/ Former National Plan Coordinator
16	Fatima Askoul	Ministry of Endowment (Awqaf)
17	Ghada Al-Waheedi	Ministry of Culture
18	Khalid Zakaria Jaber	Educated Forum/ National Commission for NGOs
19	Khalid Taha Nazal	Watan for Dialogue and Democracy
20	Allam Jarar	The Palestinian NGO Network
21	Kawthar Moh'd Al-Hroub	Nahdat Bint Al-Reef Society
22	Hanan Abu Ghoush	Health Work Committees Union

23	Saha Arar	Qarawt Bani Zaid Ladies Club Society
24	Sama Owaida	Women Studies Center
25	Areej Daibes	NGO Development Center (NDC)
26	Basima Bashir	NGO Development Center (NDC)
27	Yassir Shalabi	NGO Development Center (NDC)

Names of Participants in Infrastructure Workshop:

No.	NAME	NGO
1	Rihab Thahir	Ministry of Planning and Administrative Development
2	Shorouq Massad	Ministry of Planning and Administrative Development
3	Taghrid Hithnawi	Ministry of Planning and Administrative Development
4	Issa Al-Shatlah	Arab Center for Agriculture Development
5	Omar Owainah	Lands' Research Center
6	Raed Abed Rabo	The Applied Research Institute-ARIJ
7	Areej Daibes	NGO Development Center (NDC)
8	Basima Bashir	NGO Development Center (NDC)
9	Yassir Shalabi	NGO Development Center (NDC)

Names of Participants in Governance and Economic Sector Workshop:

No.	Name	NGO
1	Dhyab Zaied	Bisan Center for Research and Development
2	Iteraf Al-Rimawi	Bisan Center for Research and Development
3	Safia Muharib	Ministry of Planning and Administrative Development
4	Mahmoud Ziyada	Workers' Rights Center
5	Omar Tabakhna	Agriculture Work Committees Union
6	Nadir Huraimat	The Applied Research Institute-ARIJ
7	Qais Hantash	Ministry of Agriculture
8	Fuad Khurma	Ministry of Agriculture
9	Reem Saleh Al-Thaher	Aswat Society
10	Suzan Za'rou	Center for Defense of Liberties and Civil Rights - Hurryyat
11	Nasser Qatami	Ministry of Labor
12	Samah Nasser	Ministry of Justice
13	Udai Abu Karsh	Ministry of Justice
14	Amro Owneiah	Lands' Research Center
15	Nasser Al-Ryes	Al-Haq Institute
16	Bashar Jumaa'	Negotiations Affairs Department and Former National Plan Coordinator
17	Nasfat Al-Khafash	The National Institute for Palestinian NGOs - PNIN
18	Rola Daoud	Ministry of Information
19	Ibrahim Barghouhi	The Palestinian Center for the Independence of Judiciary and the Legal Profession - Musawa
20	Basima Adawin	European Union Representative
21	Ghassan kasabreh	NGO Development Center (NDC)
22	Areej Daibes	NGO Development Center (NDC)
23	Basima Bashir	NGO Development Center (NDC)
24	Yassir Shalabi	NGO Development Center (NDC)

Annex No. 3: List Gaza Workshop Participants

No.	Name	NGO
1	Yousif Awadllah	Health Work Committees Union
2	Riyadh Hanania	Palestinian Hydrological Group
3	Ayid Yaghi	Palestinian Medical Relief Society (PMRS)
4	Husam Al-Nouno	Gaza Psychological Health Program
5	Mohsen Abu Ramadan	Arab Center for Agriculture Development
6	Amjad Al-Shawa	Palestinian NGOs Network
7	Samir Mousa	Dameer NGO for Human Rights
8	Abdul –Karim Ashour	Palestinian Agriculture Relief Committees (PARC)
9	Ghassan kasabreh	NDC/Video Conference
10	Areej Daibes	NDC/Video Conference
11	Basima Bashir	NDC/Video Conference
12	Yassir Shalabi	NDC/Video Conference