PALESTINE
2023 IFRC network country plan

In support of the Palestine Red Crescent Society

- 51 National Society branches
- 4,200 National Society staff
- 5,500 National Society volunteers

People to be reached

- 10,000 Climate and environment
- 300,000 Disasters and crises
- 500,000 Health and wellbeing
- 4,000 Migration and displacement
- 12,000 Values, power and inclusion

IFRC network multiyear focus

Longer term needs
- Health services
- Risk reduction and emergency response
- Anticipatory action
- Climate change adaptation
  - Protection, gender and inclusion

Capacity development
- Humanitarian diplomacy
- Youth and volunteer development
  - Digital transformation
  - Resource mobilization

Key country data

- Population: 4.9M
- INFORM Severity rating: high
- Human Development Index rank: 106
- Population below poverty level: 29.2%

Funding Requirement CHF 78M
Appeal number MAAPS001

IFRC Country Delegation Palestine, Ramallah, Palestine
This document details IFRC network-wide figures and actions in areas agreed with the country National Society. For additional information, see last page of this plan. * National Societies which have contributed only multilaterally through the IFRC in the past two years.

**Funding requirements**

**Total 78M CHF**

- Through the IFRC
  - 5.8M CHF

- Through Participating National Societies
  - 2.2M CHF

**Host National Society**

- 70M CHF

**IFRC Breakdown**

**Longer term needs**

- **500,000 CHF**
  - Climate and environment

- **1.7M CHF**
  - Disasters and crises

- **1.5M CHF**
  - Health and wellbeing

- **350,000 CHF**
  - Migration and displacement

- **300,000 CHF**
  - Values, power and inclusion

- **1.4M CHF**
  - Enabling local actors

**Participating National Societies**

- American Red Cross*
- Bahrain Red Crescent Society*
- British Red Cross
- Canadian Red Cross
- Danish Red Cross
- French Red Cross
- German Red Cross
- Red Crescent Society of the Islamic Republic of Iran*
- Italian Red Cross
- Japanese Red Cross Society
- The Netherlands Red Cross
- Qatar Red Crescent Society
- Spanish Red Cross,
- Swedish Red Cross
- Turkish Red Crescent Society
NATIONAL SOCIETY PROFILE

The Palestine Red Crescent Society was founded in 1968 and was mandated in September 1969 to provide humanitarian and health services to Palestinians by the Palestinian National Council. As of 1996 this included the responsibility for providing emergency medical services to citizens in the occupied Palestinian territory. Since that time, the National Society has acted as auxiliary to public authorities and was admitted into the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) in 2006.

The National Society is the most established civil society body in the occupied Palestinian territories. It employs 4,000 people with a volunteer network of more than 6,000. With an annual income of CHF30 million in 2021, it has reached more than 2.1 million people through its services and long-term development programmes and continues to address both the short- and long-term needs of Palestinians and the wider diaspora through its branches.

The key priorities in its 2019–2023 Strategic Plan are to:

- Enhance disaster preparedness and readiness to respond to emergencies in occupied regions
- Continue the provision and development of health and social services in Palestine and for the diaspora
- Lobby and advocate for humanitarian needs
- Strengthen and diversify partnerships to mobilize additional support
- Focus on institutional development and increasing its capacities

Priority programmes for the National Society span emergency medical services, hospitals and health services; disaster management and psychosocial support, including investment in community activities and rehabilitation involving people of different abilities; and youth and volunteer management. The Palestine Red Crescent Society runs a fleet of 180 ambulances operated by 400 emergency medics through 48 emergency medical services stations, 33 of which are sub-stations. During the COVID-19 pandemic, this service has helped provide pre- and post-hospital care and transport for COVID-19 patients, as well as offering assistance through its 101 Information Hotline.

The Palestine Red Crescent Society has 51 branches, sub-branches, and youth and volunteer committees in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip. There are also four branches that cater to the wider Palestinian diaspora in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Egypt. The work of the Lebanon and Syria branches are reflected in the IFRC network country plans for Lebanon and Syria. Palestinians in Lebanon are supported with access to primary and secondary health care services, which otherwise would be unaffordable. The Palestine Red Crescent Society Lebanon branch provides medical services at five hospitals in Beirut, Tripoli, Saida, Bekaa-Bar Elias and Tyr, as well as community-based health and first aid (at eight refugee camps, namely Ain el Helweh, Mar Elias, Shatilla, Nar el bared, Baalbek, Burj el shamali, Albuss and Tyr). In Syria, hospitals and clinics operated by the Palestine Red Crescent Society Syria branch provide access to health care services for affected Palestinians in Damascus, Homs, Yarmouk and Latakia.

IFRC NETWORK ACTION IN 2023

Joint situational analysis

The circumstances that surround the occupied Palestinian territory continue to be highly complex, with the ongoing occupation, internal conflict among Palestinian parties, and blockade of the Gaza Strip all negatively affecting the lives of Palestinians. Addressing basic needs therefore continues to present a challenge for many people living in refugee camps, those communities at risk of house demolition, in rural villages and across the Gaza Strip.

In 2021, the Palestinian territories saw a significant increase in hostilities, at levels which had not been experienced since 2014. During 11 days of hostilities in May that year, 253 people in Gaza were killed, including 66 children, according to the UN. According to the Palestinian Ministry of Health, a further 1,948 Palestinians were injured in the area, including 610 children. During this period, the Palestine Red Crescent Society responded to 981 cases, including 82 fatalities. This represented approximately 65 per cent of total cases.
There was very little relief entering Gaza during the hostilities or immediately after the ceasefire. Movement of citizens in and out of the Gaza Strip remained tightly controlled and, while transport for the supply of goods was permitted, only a basic list of humanitarian items, such as food, animal feed and essential medical supplies, could be brought in. This situation lasted until 12 July, when restrictions on the movement of goods were eased to pre-conflict levels. This allows the entry of items that have no potential for military use, according to Israeli authorities.

Despite the easing of controls, Gaza continues to face many challenges. Electricity shortages affect homes, businesses, schools and hospitals, with electricity only available 13 hours per day. Water supplies are heavily contaminated with saltwater, fertilizers and, occasionally, sewage. As a result, many rely on desalinated water for cooking and drinking, purchased from unregulated vendors and therefore of varying quality. The unemployment rate in the area is 45 per cent and the World Food Programme estimates that 83 per cent of people consume food of low quality. There are shortages of essential medication and health services too. Cancer patients must travel to the West Bank for treatment, for example.

The occupied Palestinian territory is also exposed to many other risks and hazards. This includes natural hazards such as floods and earthquakes, an increasingly degraded environment, water scarcity and the spread of disease. Indeed, from 3 January 2020 to 14 September 2022, there were 702,591 confirmed cases of COVID-19, with 5,706 deaths reported. As of 8 August 2022, a total of 3.7M vaccine doses had been administered.

The geographical division between the Gaza Strip and West Bank complicates disaster management, as do internal Palestinian political differences and a weak civil defense due to the absence of a national force to oversee institutions, airports, borders and harbours.

Strategic priorities

Climate and environment

Climate change affects Palestine in the form of droughts, extreme heat and cold waves, flooding and sea level rise. The mean temperature has increased by an estimated 1°C over the last 100 years and there has been a decline in annual average precipitation. High temperatures have been more frequent in recent years too, including a high of 49°C reported in August 2015. The effects of these changes are felt acutely in agriculture, which accounts for 13 per cent of formal and 90 per cent of informal employment. More than 80 per cent of agriculture is also rain-fed, with increased temperatures and decreased rainfall therefore reducing crop yields, deteriorating soil quality and depleting aquifers used for irrigation. The same conditions increase demand for water, with less available pasture and water for animals, and higher rates of disease in livestock.¹

Palestine is prone to floods, particularly flash floods and riverine floods in smaller basins. In the West Bank, Bedouin communities living in temporary shelters in the Jordan Valley are particularly exposed. In addition, the separation wall prevents drainage as pipes built underneath often become blocked. In Gaza meanwhile, heavy rainfall has led overstretched infrastructure to overflow, compromising access to clean water and raising concerns over health impacts. Flood management is undermined by the shortage of fuel and electricity across Gaza because of the blockade and restrictions on imported resources.

Increased floods also lead to soil erosion and crop damage. Overall, the combined impacts of floods, erosion and subsequent land degradation decrease the available arable land for agriculture, compounding risks associated with conflict over land and resources.

Cold waves and winter storms are also recurring hazards in Palestine. In January 2022, the occupied Palestinian territories were hit by extreme weather conditions, including heavy rain floods, winds, snow,

¹ The analysis for this section has been supported by the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre: https://www.climatecentre.org/
and low temperatures. The Meteorological Office of the Ministry of Transport issued reports in February that the amount of precipitation exceeded average precipitation levels. Uncharacteristically low for the Gaza strip, temperatures approached zero at nighttime, while power outages disrupted the operation of heating systems. Similar events occurred in January 2020, while the 2015 winter storm was the strongest recorded in recent years.

In the future, in a moderate climate change scenario, the annual mean temperature in Palestine will increase by approximately 3°C by 2090. Seasonal rainfall is projected to decrease by up to 40 per cent in the north and central regions by 2050, while southern arid regions may see equally large increases in winter and spring. Extreme rainfall events are also projected to increase, especially in the south. Sea-level rise of 10 cm has already been observed in the Mediterranean Sea over the last two decades and this is expected to increase to 23 cm by 2050. Most areas in Palestine do not currently have sufficient disaster risk management planning to navigate this challenge, nor do they have enough trained volunteers or response plans.

Main actions and areas of support
The Palestine Red Crescent Society is part of the IFRC Global Climate Resilience Programme, which aims to foster an unprecedented scale-up in locally led climate-smart disaster risk reduction and adaptation efforts to prevent and reduce climate-related disaster impacts, and build community-level climate resilience. The programme aims to support 500 million people in 100 of the most climate-vulnerable countries, focusing on the least supported and marginalized communities. This holistic, multi-year programmatic approach consists of four operational pillars: (1) scaling up climate-smart disaster risk reduction, anticipatory action and preparedness; (2) reducing the public health impacts of climate change; (3) addressing climate displacement; and (4) enabling climate-resilient livelihoods and ecosystem services.

The Palestine Red Crescent Society is the first National Society in the Middle East and North Africa region to sign up for the Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organizations. In line with the charter, the National Society and its partners will adopt action mechanisms, work collectively to address climate and environmental crises, and advocate with others to do the same.

The National Society and its partners will work to ensure preparedness measures are in place in case of potential climate-related hazards. To adapt to risks related to climate and environmental crises, the organization will:

- Invest in preparedness and early action for winter storms, including contingency plans, pre-stocking necessary items and planning risk communication. This will be done with support from the IFRC, including through the Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF), and other partners
- Develop Early Action Protocols and use recent assessment results to explore potential for forecast-based financing and action
- Implement wastewater management programs in Gaza’s health facilities to manage the impacts of storms, with the support of the Netherlands Red Cross
- Provide the National’s Society youth and volunteers with knowledge, skills and tools to raise awareness and educate communities on sustainable environmental practices, including through use of the Y-Adapt training package

Furthermore, the Palestine Red Crescent Society will focus on improving its own environmental impact through the following actions:

- Investing in green energy alternatives for its health services in Gaza, building on a recent feasibility study
- Investing in green energy in its countrywide facilities, with a vision to switch all to using renewable energy
- Working towards its commitments under the Climate and Environment Charter, starting with a baseline study before developing an environmental policy, and supported by the IFRC

Disasters and crises
For real-time information on emergencies, see IFRC GO page Palestine

The major driver behind humanitarian needs in Palestine is the protracted occupation, which leads to frequent outbreaks of civil unrest. In the West Bank, the continued settlement expansion and the demolition of homes are major sources of frustration and conflict. In this area, the blockade also undermines resilience, while escalations of conflict lead to displacement, death, injury and psychosocial trauma.
In addition, Palestine is highly vulnerable to natural hazards, particularly earthquakes, floods, landslides, droughts and desertification. In recent years, there have been several severe weather events, often resulting in flooding (particularly in Gaza) or snow (particularly in the West Bank) that have triggered support from the IFRC's emergency response mechanisms. In Gaza especially, dozens of low-lying locations are at risk of flooding due to rainfall and the overflow of wastewater reservoirs and pumping stations. There are several contributing factors to this, including the precarious state of infrastructure, which has undergone minimal upgrades or repair over the last decade, despite rapid population growth, widespread damage from recurrent hostilities, and the chronic electricity deficit, which has undermined operations in existing facilities.

Main actions and areas of support

The National Society will support Palestinian communities to increase their resilience to disasters and hazards. It plans to:

- Use media platforms to raise awareness of the risks and appropriate mitigation measures
- Build up capacities of its community action committees and conduct the IFRC's enhanced Vulnerability Capacity Assessment (EVCA) in 25 communities
- Implement community initiatives and projects based on the outcomes of this assessment
- Assess safety in schools and implement school safety programmes, including first aid, health awareness, summer camps, social media campaigns and workshops on how to stay safe during disasters
- Roll out first aid and first responder training workshops

The Palestine Red Crescent Society will also address needs created by crises and disasters. It plans to:

- Provide assistance in the form of shelter, food and non-food items to those affected by crises, including those subjected to demolitions in the West Bank or who have lost their homes during hostilities. This will be done in collaboration and coordination with the Global Shelter Cluster
- Establish and strengthen the role of community support committees in targeted areas
- Deploy field hospitals or advanced medical posts where needed
- Improve warehousing facilities and repair infrastructure damaged during military conflict
- Develop both a preparedness plan of action and standard operating procedures for cash and voucher assistance based on a self-assessment and recommendations from a cash feasibility study conducted in 2021. This will include selecting a financial service provider and participation in the cash working group

The National Society will invest in its ability to respond effectively to crises. It plans to:

- Invest in a systematic multi-hazard IFRC Preparedness for Effective Response (PER) process
- Undertake preparedness activities based on strengths and gaps identified
- Review contingency planning at central and regional levels, including a sustainable way to stockpile emergency items in central warehouses and sub-centres
- Work with Government and humanitarian partners to update the role of the National Society in contingency plans for both the humanitarian and disaster sector
- Train and equip its National Disaster Response Team on the globally harmonized training curriculum, including on rapid psychosocial support to the most affected groups during emergencies
- Train staff and volunteers on water, sanitation and hygiene, public health, medical emergencies, anticipatory action, contingency planning, and the fundamental principles and rules of humanitarian assistance
- Develop and strengthen logistics, including policies and protocols, and information management systems for emergency operations centres
- Continue to engage with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee in Palestine, including the humanitarian country team and relevant clusters, by sharing data on needs and incidents, coordinating responses and promoting greater inclusion and recognition of the work of the National Society and national organizations

The Palestine Red Crescent will expand its leadership in the field of disaster law. It plans to:

- Advocate for local communities and be actively engaged in the drafting of national disaster law
- Advocate for improved coordination with local authorities and civil society
The IFRC will support the aims of the National Society by providing technical expertise, revising standard operating procedures and engaging key stakeholders.

Health and wellbeing

The national health system in Palestine faces several challenges because of the numerous constraints imposed by the occupation, the health impacts of climate change and COVID-19.

In Gaza, years of movement restrictions on people and materials, including medical resources, compounded by the internal Palestinian divide, have led to a serious deterioration in the availability and quality of health services. In the West Bank, a lack of access to quality and affordable health services because of Israeli checkpoints and settler violence is a key concern. Restrictions on the freedom of movement of patients and ambulances is also significant challenge for those seeking specialized treatment in East Jerusalem hospitals.

The leading causes of mortality in Palestine are non-communicable diseases, including ischemic heart disease, stroke and diabetes. Other than these, neonatal disorders and lower respiratory infections, as well as road and conflict injuries, are among the top 10 causes of death. Of communicable diseases, diarrhoeal disease currently represents the biggest risk of excess morbidity and mortality, especially among children, and its prevalence may increase with the protracted disruption to water and sanitation services. The risk of outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases is currently low, given a high reported vaccine coverage, except for tetanus among adults. However, this may change if vaccination programmes are disrupted for protracted periods. The risk of outbreaks of water-borne and food-borne diseases is currently high and will increase if water, sanitation and food management services are not restored, or if they are allowed to deteriorate further.

A lack of comprehensive data on historical patterns of outbreaks of infectious diseases in Palestine remains a challenge. Besides the epidemic of influenza A (H1N1) in 2009, no further epidemics had been identified until the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020. This brought about new requirements related to infection and prevention control to reduce, monitor and contain the spread of the virus.

Mental illness also represents a major medical concern, especially in children. More than 500,000 adults and children are suffering from psychosocial distress and mental disorders in occupied Palestinian territory. The National Society’s staff and volunteers also need access to mental health and psychosocial support, given the intensity of their work and their constant exposure to violence.

Palestine is exposed to the adverse health impacts of climate change too. This includes heat-related illnesses such as dehydration, rash, cramps, heat stroke, heat exhaustion and death. People over the age of 65, those with pre-existing health conditions, young children and those who are homeless or without adequate housing are at a heightened risk. In Palestine, urban heat islands could also pose significant risk amid climate change with 92.6 per cent percent of the total population living in urban areas as of 2020. Higher temperatures are expected to cause greater exposure to vector-borne diseases, especially dengue and West Nile virus. Water scarcity due to low rainfall, as well as contamination of water sources due to flooding, will also increase the diarrhoeal disease burden. More than one million cases of diarrhoea in Gaza alone were linked to temperature and low levels of rainfall from 2009 to 2020.

In 2020 and 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic put further strain on the health sector, and there remains significant concern that the virus will continue to spread across Gaza, where 1.9 million people currently live within an area of 365km². The health system’s capacity to cope with pandemics is severely impaired by financial crisis, as well as a lack of electricity and other critical shortages. For example, hospitals suffer shortages in specialized staff in intensive care units, and the laboratory infrastructure urgently requires upgrades to conform with strict biosafety standards. Laboratory staff in Gaza also suffer from gaps in training and specialized skills.

The main provider of health care in Palestine is the Ministry of Health, supported by both public and private providers, and the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) also delivers health care to Palestinian refugees. However, the sector is largely dependent on donors. One-third of the Ministry of Health’s budget is spent on purchasing services from non-state providers of health care.

Main actions and areas of support

The Palestine Red Crescent Society is a key body within Palestine’s health system. Its emergency medical services constitute an essential service to the public and represent the flagship programme of the organization’s humanitarian response. Services provided include first aid, pre-hospital care and patient transportation to advanced medical facilities. A fleet of 180 ambulances is operated by 400 emergency medics through 15 main stations and 33 sub-stations. The National Society also
provides community and primary health care services through 13 primary health centres and five hospitals, as well as multiple rehabilitation centres. The National Society established the Emergency Medical Institute in 1996, to train staff and paramedics in accordance with international standards through two of its branches. However, its network of emergency medical services requires support; as funding is reduced, the fleet requires some replacements, and there is a need for additional support due to ongoing operational costs.

The Palestine Red Crescent Society will carry out the following activities on public health:

- Continue engaging with the Ministry of Health regarding licensing, professional standardization of services, alignment of protocols, standard operating procedures guidelines, and operations, including ambulance dispatch
- Advocate for the removal of movement restrictions that limit access to health care
- Advocate for improved protection of the medical mission, including ambulances and first aid teams
- Improve cooperation and partnerships with relevant ministries, civil society and the private sector

To provide health services to the community, including primary and secondary health care, first aid and psychosocial support, the National Society will also:

- Deliver quality health services through hospitals, clinics and mobile teams
- Establish five operational community centres and free community access to health and wellness programmes
- Develop and implement an effective maintenance system for ambulances and centres, and replace 30 per cent of ambulances
- Update the community health information system and conduct a community needs assessment to inform the development of related programmes
- Develop information, education and communication materials, conduct health promotion sessions for the public, and establish community committees (reinforcing topics related to care in communities, non-communicable diseases, home-based care, healthy ageing, and maternal, newborn and child health care)
- Promote awareness and compliance of COVID-19 preventive measures and behaviour
- Train volunteers and staff to implement community-based health and first aid, and risk communication and community engagement activities, including community feedback and psychosocial support
- Roll out first aid, hygiene awareness and public health awareness sessions for 30,000 community members
- Train health care workers and volunteers in the National Society’s public health units and mobile medical units on the Mental Health Gap Action Programme
- Enhance care of staff and volunteers through psychological first aid, buddy systems and psychological support
- Provide psychosocial support through centres and work with caregivers and children on resilience

To provide health care in emergencies, the Palestine Red Crescent will:

- Provide emergency medical services, making improvements to these through investments in Gaza, digitization, tracking, defibrillators and ambulance maintenance as recommended by a recent study by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and Polish Aid
- Provide quality community-based preventive health and treatment services
- Establish much-needed policies and protocols to strengthen the emergency operations centre in coordination with the disaster management department
- Invest in a strategic stock of medical supplies, such as uniforms and personal protective equipment, and in warehouse management to ensure there are sufficient stocks for major emergencies
- Enhance the mental health and psychosocial support preparedness plan and provide holistic psychosocial support services to vulnerable groups alongside other services
- Work with the Emergency Medical Institute for enhanced provision of continued education, training and knowledge
- Play an active role in advocating for national routine immunization activities
- Work with key partners to promote effective risk communication and community engagement strategies around pandemics
The Palestine Red Crescent will also improve water, sanitation and hygiene services. It plans to:

- Assess and improve water, sanitation and hygiene facilities across all health care facilities with the support of the Netherlands Red Cross
- Engage with vulnerable groups to monitor access to water, sanitation and hygiene in health facilities and promote handwashing and other precautionary measures to reduce the transmission of water-borne diseases and COVID-19

The IFRC will support the National Society’s emergency medical services to sustain its capacity to manage escalations of violence and pandemics, while supporting its hospitals and community health activities.

**Migration and displacement**

Displacement is largely conflict-driven in Palestine, with more than 118,000 internal displacements in 2021 associated with conflict and violence. Nearly one-third of registered Palestine refugees (more than 1.5 million people) live in 58 recognized Palestine refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, as well as in Gaza and the West Bank. Thousands of Palestinians throughout the occupied Palestinian territory have also been forcibly displaced or are at risk of forced displacement. In the West Bank, displacement is primarily driven by occupation-related policies, including the inability to obtain building permits and related demolitions, residency status issues and the impact of the separation barrier. In Gaza, any escalation of conflict, such as events in May 2021 which displaced more than 100,000 people, have both short- and long-term impacts on people’s lives, livelihoods and well-being. No recent displacements are attributed to natural hazards.

Migration activities in the diaspora (Lebanon and Syria) are managed through the National Society branches present in these areas, with support from the respective IFRC country delegation. However, Palestine's National Society will continue to advocate on behalf of these diaspora branches.

**Main actions and areas of support**

The Palestine Red Crescent Society aims to continue addressing the needs of internally displaced persons and host communities. It plans to:

- Undertake assessments, visiting displaced families and their host families to understand their needs
- Provide assistance to people whose homes have been demolished in the West Bank, including shelter kits and non-food items
- Assist people fleeing their homes due to escalations of conflict, in particular those staying with host communities
- Manage a telephone hotline and a Facebook page for complaints, to continually improve support and ensure that people in need do not miss out on services

The IFRC aims to support the National Society in its work to provide shelter and other needs to people displaced by conflict and disasters.

**Values, power and inclusion**

Violence is pervasive in Palestine and affects a large proportion of the population. Violence is both resulting from the occupation and ongoing conflict, and within Palestinian families and communities. These two sources of violence are interconnected and linked to family stress and dysfunction. Certain groups are more affected than others. According to UN Women, the most common types of violence against women and girls in Palestine include domestic violence, sexual harassment, early marriage and femicide, as well as violence in public and private spheres including streets, workplaces, homes and high-density areas such as refugee camps, particularly in Gaza. According to UNICEF, children are exposed to unacceptable levels of violence on their way to and from school, during school, and in their homes. Violence against children includes harsh corporal punishment in homes and schools and child labour.

In 2017, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics estimated that there were at least 92,710 Palestinians living with at least one disability. Among female Palestinians, approximately 5.4 per cent were estimated to be living with at least one disability. In 2017, 24 per cent of females living with disabilities between the ages of six and 17, as well as 30 per cent of males, were not enrolled in education and 33 per cent of females 10 years and older were illiterate, compared with only 11 per cent of males.

According to the Palestine Central Bureau of Statistics, youth unemployment in Palestine increased to 37.7 per cent in the third quarter of 2022, from 36.4 per cent in the second quarter. In a 2021 survey, levels of unemployment among those aged 19–29 with an intermediate diploma or higher reached 53 per cent – representing about half of total youth unemployment and 27 per cent of overall unemployment. Two-thirds (66 per cent) of women are unemployed, compared with 39 per cent
of men. Meanwhile, the unemployment rate for young graduates in the West Bank is 36 per cent, compared with 74 per cent in the Gaza Strip.

Main actions and areas of support

The Palestine Red Crescent Society places special emphasis on the physical and psychological well-being of people living with disabilities. In both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, it runs rehabilitation facilities, special education schools, and other psychosocial support programs for the injured and those living with disabilities. It also recognizes that, despite the national inclusive education policy, dedicated schools and tailor-made education is still needed in the short to medium term, especially for those with complex needs. The National Society also works to include people living with disabilities in all their programmes, including as volunteers.

Young Palestinian people have long been integrated into the National Society in line with the principles of volunteering, with more than 9,500 young volunteers in the network currently. They act as agents for change in many of the awareness-raising actions planned in Palestine, including climate change, health and disaster preparedness. The IFRC network will continue to invest in renewing its youth capacities and scaling up youth-led action, alongside the Danish Red Cross and Spanish Red Cross.

To enhance protection, gender and inclusion, the National Society will:

- Build up the capacities of its community action committees, including establishing new committees, in the context of carrying out the EVCA in 25 communities – including focused assessment on topics such as gender and gender-based violence
- Train its staff, volunteers and community action committees on the knowledge, skills and tools needed to better include people living with disabilities in the work of these committees and in disaster risk management services
- Increase the use of community-based services that relate to protection, gender and inclusion
- Increase integrated health and reproductive health services for people affected by COVID-19
- Ensure all medical services, including mental health and psychosocial support services, are inclusive and supportive of people living with disabilities and special needs, and their families, during emergencies

To enhance its community engagement and accountability, the National Society will:

- Institutionalize community engagement and accountability with a targeted policy
- Roll out a feedback and response mechanism including telephone hotlines, a Facebook page, direct engagement with volunteers and suggestion boxes
- Mainstream community engagement and accountability by including relevant standards and practices in project documents, adding relevant questions and indicators into regular monitoring and carrying out learning exercises to improve approaches
- Build up the capacities of staff and volunteers in managing (and acting upon) community feedback data collection and analysis, including the need for collected data to be disaggregated, protected, categorized and ready for authorized referrals

As regards youth and education, the Palestine Red Crescent will:

- Provide knowledge, skills and tools to develop youth and volunteers’ capacities in the community, including respect of the humanitarian fundamental principles and knowledge in specialized areas, including first aid, national disaster response teams and school safety
- Develop online education and rehabilitation programmes for emergencies, in particular ensuring children living with disabilities at a range of schools have ongoing access to education
- Manage the Palestine Red Crescent School for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Deaf to accommodate the learning needs of deaf Palestinian school students
Enabling local actors

The Palestine Red Crescent Society will ensure that its development framework and organizational plan are linked to its strategy and aligned with IFRC norms. It will share its plan with partners as a basis for their support. The IFRC network commits to supporting the National Society in line with its priorities.

Main actions and areas of support

Engaged

The Palestine Red Crescent Society will engage with partners both inside and outside the IFRC network. It will engage with key humanitarian fora, including the Humanitarian Country Team, inter-cluster coordination group and specific clusters, to share quality information about the challenges facing Palestinian communities and promote effective and coordinated assistance. With IFRC support, it will also organize a high-level conference of International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement partners to raise awareness about the needs of Palestinian people and increase support to the National Society to address these needs.

The National Society will use public communications and social media to increase awareness of the communities in need of humanitarian assistance. It will build up the capacities of its communication team, on basic skills as well as digital communication, creating a network of volunteer disseminators and social media advocates on both international humanitarian law and humanitarian diplomacy.

With IFRC support, it will also create the means to deploy rapid communications in response to crises, including a standby roster of surge communication officers and stronger relationships with international media. The IFRC will also help develop compelling and goal-oriented cross-media joint campaigns, on a variety of platforms, to advance its own communications capacities.

The National Society will develop a humanitarian diplomacy strategy with IFRC support, with other Movement partners providing assistance on disseminating related messaging in the region, in capitals and in multilateral fora. Advocacy messaging will focus on ensuring access to health care and other services for all and ensuring the safety of humanitarian actors, as well as respecting humanitarian principles and the Red Cross Red Crescent emblem. The organization is planning special awareness campaigns in 20 communities for Health Day and other events on the calendar.

Accountable

To increase financial resources, the IFRC will support the Palestine Red Crescent Society to follow up on a fundraising market study and draft fundraising strategy, expand partnerships with multilaterals and international financial institutions, as well as adopting the iRaiser digital fundraising platform, with support from the Swiss Red Cross. The IFRC will support the National Society through regular skill sharing meetings among practitioners and through an annual fundraising peer review.

The IFRC will also help the Palestine Red Crescent to implement its enterprise resource planning system to create more efficient use of resources, as well as enhancing transparency and accountability. The National Society will also establish a unified system for monitoring, evaluating and strengthening the planning capabilities of its directors and teams.

The National Society will implement standards, guidance and training on integrity and accountability, including the adoption of policies on prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse and child safeguarding.

Finally, the IFRC will provide security support to the National Society to ensure that services are provided through a safe and secure structure, in line with its minimum security requirements.

Trusted

The Palestine Red Crescent Society will build the capacities of targeted branches, staff and volunteers through the Branch Organizational Capacity Assessment (BOCA)
process, and carry out additional organizational reviews of its structures and services.

It will develop a volunteer outreach plan to identify and recruit volunteers in priority areas such as data and information management and public communications, and establish online platforms and networks that allow volunteers and young people to exchange experiences and knowledge.

In addition, the National Society will enhance the capacities for youth and volunteers as regards the humanitarian fundamental principles, as well as in areas such as school safety and first aid. It will also work to develop volunteer and youth networks in communities, branches, schools and universities, coordinating their activities with its own community work committees and other local bodies. Regionally, the National Society remains an active member of the Middle East and North Africa Youth Network, with support from the IFRC through peer-to-peer exchange, mentoring and training.

The National Society plans to overhaul its systems, policies, training modules and communication strategies to enhance the capabilities of its volunteers and youth leadership and increase their participation in decision-making.

It also plans to ensure that all volunteers remain insured. This has been supported in the past by the IFRC, through the IFRC Accident Scheme. The Palestine Red Crescent Society will investigate how to refine volunteer protection and solidarity fund mechanisms.

THE IFRC NETWORK

The IFRC

The IFRC has been present in Palestine for more than 20 years. Its delegation in the country is based in Ramallah, within the Palestine Red Crescent Society headquarters. The IFRC supports the National Society on strategic and operational coordination, humanitarian diplomacy and National Society development. Through this physical presence in Palestine, the IFRC provides technical assistance to strengthen the National Society’s preparedness for effective response, as well as its capacities for planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting, information management, climate change adaptation, cash programming, emergency medical services, and risk communication and community engagement. It also supports the National Society’s resource planning system and facilitates international fundraising to fill any funding gaps. This includes supporting emergency responses to sudden crises through the DREF and Emergency Appeals, with many such operations over the last 15 years.

The IFRC also supports the National Society in a consultative and structured process towards the development of a new five-year strategy, with the current strategy coming to an end in 2023. The process involves an in-depth contextual and situational analysis, consultations with internal and external stakeholders and actors, assessment of the current strategy, and a review of progress made against set objectives. The new strategy is expected to lead the National Society through a process of change which will enhance its internal capacities and increase the overall quality and reach of its services.

IFRC membership coordination

The IFRC’s coordination involves working with member National Societies to assess their individual humanitarian context and needs, agreeing common priorities, co-developing common strategies to address issues such as obtaining greater humanitarian access, acceptance and space, mobilizing funding and other resources, clarifying consistent public messaging and monitoring progress. This also means ensuring that strategies and programmes in support of people in need incorporate clarity of humanitarian action, of links with development assistance, and of efforts to reinforce National Societies in their respective countries, including through their auxiliary role.

In line with the IFRC Middle East and North Africa Membership Coordination Framework 2021, the Palestine Red Crescent Society and the IFRC have agreed to hold regular IFRC membership coordination meetings.

Palestine is part of the global Pilot Programmatic Partnership (PPP) between the European Commission’s Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO) and the IFRC. The Palestine Red Crescent Society therefore benefits from the support of the German Red Cross, the lead EU National Society, and Italian Red Cross to advance its
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priorities related to disaster risk management, epidemic and pandemic preparedness and response, cash and voucher assistance, as well as risk communication and community engagement. The partnership responds to the realities of extended crises with longer-term predictable funding and facilitating actions and processes with greater impact. It leverages the IFRC’s global network and unique access to people and communities, and it helps to fulfil the ambitions of the European Union as the biggest donor for international aid in the world.

Multiple member National Societies have long-term partnerships with the Palestine Red Crescent Society, including an in-country presence from Danish, German, Italian, Netherlands, Qatari, Spanish, Swedish and Turkish National Societies. Several other participating National Societies offer support via the IFRC, and the Palestine Red Crescent receives additional targeted support from Canadian, Japanese, British, Egyptian and Kuwaiti National Societies, with many more supporting in the event of a crisis.

The main areas of Danish Red Cross support for the Palestine Red Crescent Society are community resilience, psychosocial support and youth. It intends to expand its health work beyond mental health and psychosocial support towards emergency medical services. Globally, its focus areas are migration, climate change, disaster and crisis, and health. It will also continue to engage in cash and forecast-based action.

The German Red Cross supports the Palestine Red Crescent programmes in both the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip and supports National Society development activities in headquarters and selected branches. The German Red Cross aims to deliver a multi-year programme to support the Palestine Red Crescent Society’s strategy, operational plans and organizational development, with a view to increasing programme quality and humanitarian impact. It has a focus on disaster risk management, including the preparedness and readiness of services to support the most vulnerable. It also leads on support for cash and voucher assistance preparedness through the PPP.
The Italian Red Cross has a longstanding cooperation with the Palestine Red Crescent Society, with support for the National Society’s health programmes that relate to emergency and development initiatives, in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. These include emergency medical services, hospital services, organizational resilience, psychosocial support and well-being, rehabilitation, and public health preparedness and response. The partnership has always had a special focus on the empowerment and inclusion of people living with disabilities, education and continuous learning opportunities, community-based activities, and exchanges between the two National Societies through a peer-to-peer approach. This includes volunteers in local branches as well as technical and medical staff. The Italian Red Cross will continue to provide assistance on emergency medical services and secondary health care, with an additional focus on reproductive and mental health, and psychosocial support programmes.

The Netherlands Red Cross supports the improvement of the water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) component of health facilities, based on the findings of a WASH assessment carried out in Gaza. It also provides assistance on further WASH assessments for all the Palestine Red Crescent Society’s facilities across 53 locations in the West Bank. Based on the outcomes of recent assessments, The Netherlands Red Cross also provides help on a digitalization plan and in adopting solar energy. It offers ongoing support to the Open Studio after-school centre in Gaza too.

The Qatar Red Crescent will continue its support on emergency medical services and specialized surgery at National Society hospitals in Al Bireh and Hebron. It will also continue its annual support for winter preparedness activities and for families during Ramadan and Eid al-Adha.

The Spanish Red Cross continues to support several of the Palestine Red Crescent Society’s departments, including disaster management, primary health care, community work, emergency medical services, information technology and information management, rehabilitation and youth. It will also work to reinforce community and institutional disaster preparedness and resilience, with interventions that include improved risk assessment and monitoring capacity, and support in enhancing the readiness of community action committees for preparedness and response. In ongoing emergency responses, its main areas of intervention include the support of the National Society’s community action committees and primary health care, including prevention and response to gender-based violence, rehabilitation and psychosocial services, and support for emergency response capacities. It will also support the development of an information management strategy and improving the use of communication tools for advocacy and humanitarian diplomacy. Additionally, it will involve other partners to provide support in areas of protection, gender and inclusion, community engagement and accountability, and youth and volunteer management.

The Swedish Red Cross provides support for emergency medical services, primary health care, community-based health and psychosocial support. It will also provide support on National Society development and branch development in the areas of protection, gender and inclusion, and community engagement and accountability. A community resilience programme will be designed, based on recent enhanced assessments and may include health, disaster preparedness and disaster risk reduction, mental health and psychosocial support. The Swedish Red Cross will continue to support the Palestine Red Crescent Society in times of crisis. Finally, it will work to mainstream a green response.

The Turkish Red Crescent continues to support on emergency medical services and hospitals in Gaza.

**Movement coordination**

The Palestine Red Crescent Society convenes coordination meetings with the IFRC and ICRC on a regular basis. During periods of escalating hostilities, it also convenes Movement Platform Meetings with the same bodies to devise action plans and agree on ways to cooperate. The latter includes coordinating support from internal and external partners, the development of guidelines for public messaging and an agreement on key messages to ensure a common Movement narrative. Security meetings are held as required. This is carried out in line with the Strengthening Movement Coordination and Cooperation (SMCC) principles, and the newly adopted Seville Agreement 2.0.

The ICRC provides ongoing financial and operational support to the National Society, coordinating with the Israeli authorities around permit and access issues, as well as collaborating on various projects in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip.
Coordination with other actors

The National Society engages with key authorities in Palestine, namely the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Social Development, the Ministry of Education, Palestinian Civil Defence, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. At the local level, its branches are in contact with local authorities. It also coordinates with the Ministry of Health and the Palestinian Civil Defence during emergencies, following national protocols. It is a member of the High Council for Civil Protection that represents all major government institutions and organizations engaged in disaster response management and which is the main coordinating body at the national level for disaster preparedness (when no crisis is ongoing) and disaster response (in times of crisis). The Palestine Red Crescent branches are part of the governorate’s emergency committee, which is coordinating disaster response management at the governorate level.

The Palestine Red Crescent Society, together with the ICRC and IFRC, regularly attends the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs country team meetings and actively engages in overviews of humanitarian needs and devising humanitarian response plans. Along with IFRC and ICRC representatives, it also regularly attends cluster meetings covering health, shelter and protection, key sub-cluster meetings, as well as Inter-Cluster Coordination Group and security meetings.

The National Society engages with several Palestinian NGOs and private sector actors such as the telecommunications firm Jawaal. Focusing on health, emergency medical services and disaster response readiness, it currently has partnerships with the World Health Organization (WHO), Muslim Aid USA and the Islamic Bank. It is a partner for service provision and humanitarian response alongside other humanitarian actors such as UNICEF and UNRWA. A remaining challenge for the Palestine Red Crescent Society in developing new partnerships is the counter-terrorism clause included in most partnership and funding agreements with UN agencies.
The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is the world's largest humanitarian network, with 192 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and around 14 million volunteers. Our volunteers are present in communities before, during and after a crisis or disaster. We work in the most hard to reach and complex settings in the world, saving lives and promoting human dignity. We support communities to become stronger and more resilient places where people can live safe and healthy lives, and have opportunities to thrive.

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