

Supporting the capacity of the Palestinian Civil Defence

Introduction

Palestine is prone to a number of risks, including man-made and natural disasters such as weather hazards and earthquakes. Since 2012, WFP developed a capacity building project in support of the Palestinian Civil Defense (PCD) as the operational arm of the government in emergencies. The project's aim is to develop emergency preparedness and response capacities using information management tools to better prepare and coordinate the emergency response, and help reduce the risk of loss of life.

Achievements

In 2014, as a first step, WFP developed and handed over an information management system to PCD. This system consists of: a smartphone app for rapid emergency data collection; an online based mapping tool for analysis and visualization; and an emergency web portal for awareness on disasters. The system was delivered along with hardware and software components needed for its usage.

This integrated, electronic based system increases PCD's coordination and emergency response capacity by collecting, analyzing and reporting information on any event or urgent needs. It allows to immediately share and receive assessment reports in a timely manner with the emergency response team, thus saving time in the coordination and decision making processes for the response, and to communicate up-to-date information to the public for awareness and safety recommendations.

Between 2014 and 2016, WFP carried out 28 training sessions including standard training, on the job training, simulation exercises, and technical assistance.

Main Photo
Credit: WFP Palestine
Caption: Manal, a PCD staff at work during an Information management simulation exercise.

These training sessions specifically targeted staff using these three tools and covered topics on mapping technologies, data collection and analysis, web and information management in emergencies through simulated emergency scenarios such as earthquakes and floods. As a result, staff acquired the capacity to produce information management products including maps, assessment forms, and reports that help PCD management in decision making processes.

In 2015, WFP also supported the PCD volunteers' network providing personal safety gear including uniforms, boots, helmets and other professional equipment such as flashlights, and spades, among others. This equipment ensures a minimum level of personal safety for these volunteers, and supports their efforts in responding to emergency interventions in case of any sudden accident, or weather hazard. Thanks to these trained volunteers, there are now more people ready to intervene to save lives or properties at the time of need.

Next Steps

In 2016, WFP has been implementing the following projects which are expected to be complete in 2017:

- Setup of three Emergency Operation Centers in Ramallah, Hebron and Qalqiliya PCD governorate centers. These are top-tier fully equipped facilities used for coordination and communication in emergency response operations, as well as in day-to-day activities of the PCD.

- Launch of an early warning system for the PCD. This system uses interactive maps and sends alerts once it has analysed or identified the risk of multiple hazards such as fires, weather events, earthquakes and droughts.