

A.6 Gaza, Palestine - 2009 - Conflict

Case study:

Shelter assessments

Full case study

Country:

Gaza, Palestine

Disaster:

Conflict – “Operation Cast Lead” the war on Gaza.

Disaster date:

December 27, 2008 to January 18, 2009,

Number of houses damaged:

60,000 shelters

Project target population:

Over 12,000 assessments were conducted and 8,947 houses were real cases.

5,039 cases were deemed to be eligible for the grant.

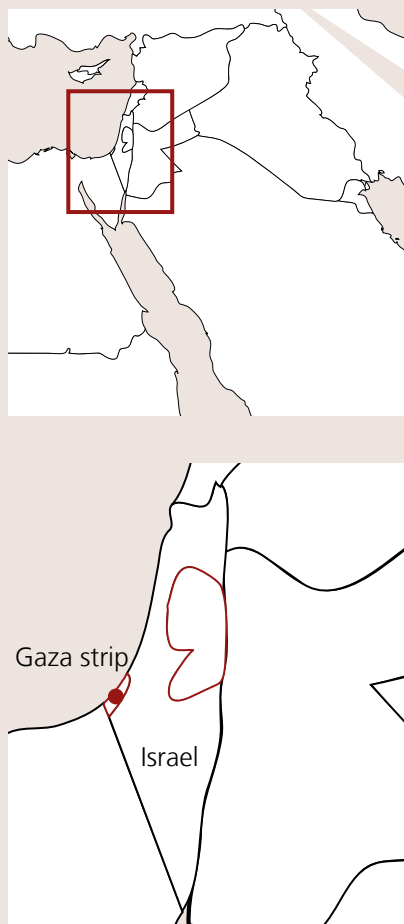
29,420 persons had applied for cash assistance.

Occupancy rate on handover:

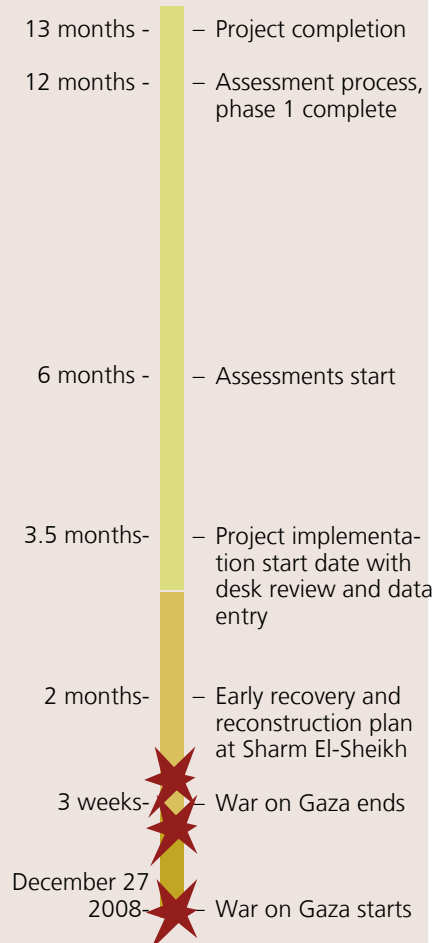
Not applicable as there is no handover

Shelter size:

Variable cost paid per shelter
- Average of 68,000USD per house paid for destroyed houses, 14,750 for damaged houses and 1,800 for minor damage to houses.



Project timeline



Summary

The organisation implementing this project advised on the allocation of grants from families whose houses had been damaged or destroyed by the invasion of Gaza. 12,000 assessments were carried out with 5,000 found to be eligible from 29,000 applications. However, the blockade on Gaza meant that materials were not available for families to rebuild their homes.

Strengths and weaknesses

- ✓ Programmes were able to adapt to the changing context.
- ✓ Detailed assessments of 12,000 houses were conducted in Gaza. There is now detailed damage assessment on the basis of which future payments can be made.
- ✓ By assessing apartments separately from the main structure of a building, those renting would also be supported by future cash payments.
- ✓ All houses were assessed, including houses occupied the poorest families.
- ✗ Because much of the support early in the response

had gone to families in collective centres and camps early, it was difficult to encourage return.

✗ No housing repairs were made as a result of this program. This was due to an Israeli blockade on construction.

- Due to lack of construction materials, the project had to be stopped after finishing the cost assessment.

- The cash component of the project that was planned, was intended for the purpose of building repair and construction. As construction could not happen, no payments could be made.



Destroyed buildings
Photo credits: CHF

Before the conflict

The Gaza strip is very densely populated. Its current population is 1.5 million with over 4000 people per square kilometre. It has a high rate of unemployment and as a result poverty is pervasive. This was exacerbated by the blockade on Gaza, which started in June 2007. This blockade prohibits many items including building materials from entering Gaza.

In 2008, over 5,000 houses were under construction through internationally supported projects. Projects in the housing estates for refugees from 1948 were not complete, and an estimated 20,000 new housing units were needed in Gaza each year to accommodate natural growth. Additionally there were refugees living in unsanitary conditions in camps.

After the conflict

For 23 days starting on 27 December 2008, the Israeli Army carried out a major military operation in the Gaza Strip which they called "Operation Cast Lead". The military incursion led to high levels of damage to shelter, public services as well as economic infrastructure. Blockades on goods, including cement, timber, steel, glass, and other construction materials were still in place one year after the military action.

The conflict damaged or destroyed 60,188 shelters of which 10% (6,000 shelters) were destroyed or required major repair. 600,000MT of rubble needed to be dealt with.

The response

The emergency response was to distribute relief items. These included plastic sheeting to cover windows and damaged walls, kitchen sets, mattresses, blankets and hygiene items. Cash was also

distributed to families, although a physical shortage of money in Gaza slowed down initial distributions.

Cash assistance was the major element of the response to the disaster. The de-facto government in Gaza handed out 4,000 Euro to each family who had their homes destroyed, and The Palestinian National Authority through the United Nations Development Programme handed out 5,000 USD to each family with a destroyed home and 3,000 USD to each family with major damage. People with less than 3,000 USD worth of damage received full compensation.

The same process was carried out for the refugees through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency. By the end of the conflict, over 50,000 people had found refuge in over 50 collective centres, many more had moved in with host families. Following the end of conflict, the number of families in collective centres rapidly fell as people moved in with host families.



Where buildings had many tenants - different apartments were assessed separately from the building
Photo credits: CHF

After the invasion, the Palestinian National Authority initiated a housing rehabilitation and reconstruction program for all residents affected by the war on the Gaza Strip. This included both those displaced and those living on their original tract of land. The funding would be issued to home owners by grants through Palestinian banks which operate in the Gaza Strip.

Families had to apply to the banks to receive an amount of money that could be dedicated to rebuilding homes, or to constructing new residences on legally owned lands.

Implementation

The organisation in this case study had a technical advisory role. The ultimate authority for allocation of grants was held by a committee. This committee included the Palestinian National Authority, the Palestinian Monetary Authority and the participating banks. The project was planned in two phases:

- Phase 1: The compensation value would be calculated which would be issued to home owners in the form of grants through Palestinian banks which operate in the Gaza Strip.
- Phase 2: To monitor the distribution of cash and serve as an advisor to the banks, authorising payments to beneficiaries. This phase did not happen as the blockade prevented construction materials from entering the Gaza strip.

The organisation reviewed approximately 29,000 grant applications and assessed the homes of 12,000 people. Assessment forms were entered into a database with linked GPS data, and an overall cost for required repairs was computed for each home.

Repair costs for each home were calculated through an agreed and transparent method. This was based upon an estimate for the cost to replace or repair each type of damaged building element (such as column, footing, slab, floor or even a whole building). During assessments, detailed information such as the volume of concrete, excavations, backfilling and steel required was recorded according to pre-agreed reference tables.

Categories of damage

- Category 4 - totally destroyed, or more than 70% of the home is damaged
- Category 3 – value of destruction greater than 5,000 USD
- Category 1 or 2 - minor damage and the value of the destruction is below 5,000 USD.

Damage was further categorised into apartment damage and damage to the common parts of a building. This was to enable tenants of multi-storey structures to qualify for assistance.

Selection of beneficiaries

Families had to apply through the banks. Eligible families included

- Non refugee Palestinian citizens in Gaza Strip whose buildings were completely destroyed or who suffered from major damage that made the house unsuitable for living in, and who had a house in category 4 and 3
- Palestinian refugees living outside the refugee camps in Gaza Strip. As of June 2010, the selection of these refugees outside the camps and the value of their grants needed to be discussed between the Palestinian National Authority and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency.

Buildings had to have been occupied before the war.



each building was visited by a team
Photo credits: CHF



Structural assessments required skilled engineers
Photo credits: CHF

Damage assessment

Three different damage assessment methods were identified. Each had corresponding forms and paperwork.

Category 1: repair is not feasible. Assessment teams must collect additional data such as area of the building, the number of floors, original drawings or photos of the building and type of finish.

Category 2: damage is too complex. A specialist team is required to assess the damage. This was most common for multi-story buildings where there was damage to slabs or structure in lower floors.

Category 3: partial damage or rehabilitation is feasible. Three categories were established: excessive, moderate or minor damage.

Staffing

To visit all of the 29,000 homes in 9 months, a team of over 160 skilled people was assembled. This is summarised below

no.	role	years experience
96	Site Engineers: Civil Engineers and Architects	≥ 5 years
9	Roving Support Engineers (Electrical and Mechanical Engineers)	≥ 7 years
16	Supervising Site Engineers (Structural Civil Engineers)	≥ 7 years
5	Chief Engineers (Civil Engineers)	≥ 10 years
10	Social Workers (Councillor training background)	≥ 5 years
8	Office Engineers (Civil, Architect, Electromechanical)	≥ 7 years
20	Graduate engineers who were paired with more experienced staff.	graduate engineers
1	Program Deputy Director (Civil Engineer)	≥ 15 years
1	Program Manager (International Expert).	

Surveyor Teams were established, each one including two site engineers with a target of assessing 3 to 5 housing units each day. Every Site Supervisor was responsible for 3 surveyor teams.

Each Chief Engineer had between 3 and 5 Site Supervisors reporting to them. This meant that they reviewed between 45 and 75 data collection sheets per day. Chief Engineers took a random sample of 5 data collection sheets from each Site Supervisor for review each day.

Finally the data was approved by the Programme Manager and Programme Deputy Director and handed to the banks.

Payment

The intention was that once the payment phase of the programme had started, the owner of each property would conduct their own reconstruction. For this, they would be paid a cash grant in installments.

However, after one year, construction still could not take place due to the blockade on construction materials into Gaza by the Israeli authorities.

NOTE: One year later, the money pledged at the Sharm el-Sheikh conference for the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip had not been handed over to the Palestinian National Authority. There needed to be a political resolution between the two different governments in Palestine and an end to the siege by Israel before the donors would hand over the pledged money.



A blockade on construction materials prevented houses from being built.
Photo credits: CHF