



Notes of the Workshop
“Raising Awareness on Receiving International Assistance”
held in Ramallah on 17-18-19 June 2013

In close partnership with the Palestinian Civil Defense, OCHA-ESB, OCHA ROMENA, MSB (Swedish Civil Contingency Agencies) and OCHA oPt and the Access Coordination Unit organized a well-attended three day workshop in Ramallah (17-19 June) on "Raising Awareness on Receiving International Assistance". The Workshop aimed at enhancing the level of preparedness of the Palestinian response system, which is led by the Palestinian Civil Defense. It also sought to foster operational links between the national system and the Humanitarian Country Team.

The Head of the Palestinian Civil Defense, Brigadier Mohammed Issa, and the Humanitarian coordinator, James Rawley, inaugurated the workshop. They highlighted the importance of emergency preparedness and the need to better coordinate national and international response mechanisms. Subsequent sessions during the first two days were devoted to raising awareness on the role and capabilities of different national and international mechanisms to respond to a large scale disaster. During the third day, participants were organized in groups to work on a table top simulation exercise to discuss ways in which to improve and better link these mechanisms (i.e., how to request international assistance, how to receive and organize USAR teams according to the INSARAG guidelines; how to organize the emergency relief phase and coordinate different actors). The exercise was focus in three areas: request international assistance, coordinate arriving USAR teams and the transfer from emergency to humanitarian relief.

Cluster coordinators, UNRWA, UNDP and some key NGOs participated actively in the workshop, which helped ensure that the discussions promoted better operational cooperation between the national and the international system. The results of the workshop will inform the contingency planning process in the HCT and in the State of Palestine. During the workshop it was discussed that the active involvement of the Movement of the Red Crescent and Red Cross in any follow up activities would be key given its role in emergency preparedness and response in the Palestinian system.

The workshop was organized to support the implementation of Priority Five of the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA), which calls for strengthening preparedness for response at all levels. The HFA highlights the essential role that disaster preparedness can play in saving lives and livelihoods particularly when integrated into an overall disaster risk reduction approach. The High Council of Civil Defence and the Palestinian Civil Defense, which acts as its coordinator, play a critical role in achieving this priority. For its part, the international community, NGOs, the Red Crescent and Red Cross Movement and the United Nations pay a key complementary role to national actors in strengthening disaster preparedness.