

From Vulnerability to Empowerment:

The IPR's Mission to Strengthen Palestinian Communities



By Alice
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The Investment Programme for Resilience (IPR) was launched in 2020, building on the accomplishments and lessons learned from the twenty-year partnership between the UNDP and the government of Germany that engages through its KfW Development Bank.

Over the past eight years, the UNDP has led efforts to define transformative resilience in the State of Palestine. These efforts involved a significant number of stakeholders and resulted in the development of a framework that focuses on three key characteristics of transformative resilience: ownership and leadership, self-reliance, and cohesive identity. In the absence of Palestinian sovereignty in Area C, H2, the Seam Zones, Gaza, and East Jerusalem, the daily lives of these communities are characterized by a particularly precarious and extremely vulnerable environment. Consequently, resilience in the State of Palestine must entail enhancing the relevance and capacities of Palestinian communities and institutions to meet household and community needs in these vulnerable areas by building

on existing indigenous concepts of resilience or steadfastness, known as *sumud* in the Palestinian context.

Reinforcing resilience has become a top priority for a number of humanitarian and development actors. Strengthening the resilience of people, systems, and structures by supporting transformation processes toward peaceful, effective, and inclusive societies – while addressing fragility



Atfaluna Society. ©UNDP/PAPP - Ahed Izhiman.

and vulnerability – leads to long-term sustainable development outcomes. At its core, this endeavor requires implementing the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) nexus, connecting short-, medium-, and long-term measures, and assisting the community and national and local counterparts in making informed decisions. Strong coordination and cooperation mechanisms are essential to the success of this program because they facilitate mindful decision-making.

The IPR focuses on strengthening community resilience in marginalized areas by adopting a methodology that engages the local community, ensures the implementation of community needs-based interventions, and, as a result, strengthens local ownership. The IPR combines the rehabilitation of social- and community infrastructure with the strengthening of local entities' management capacities and with community-led social cohesion initiatives.



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In areas inaccessible to the Palestinian government, such as Area C of the West Bank and East Jerusalem, Palestinian civil society organizations and local communities have filled the service gap to ensure that the most vulnerable Palestinians' voices and needs are heard and met. While civil society organizations continue to play a significant role in supporting the resilience of the Palestinian people, their operational environment is increasingly threatened by direct and indirect pressure from Israeli authorities. Civil society and community-based organizations have taken the lead in mobilizing the community to uphold public health and safety measures, ensure household access to sources that support livelihoods in the absence of employment opportunities, support children's access to education, and ensure access to adequate healthcare among Palestinians.

Consequently, supporting socioeconomic development in accordance with a transformative resilience approach necessitates not only that we support the Palestinian government's leadership, as it heads the response, but also that we build the capacities of civil society organizations, as they are key service providers to vulnerable Palestinians. They all must be assisted as they respond to the changing socioeconomic needs, especially in light of the ongoing repercussions of COVID-19.

In the context of the IPR, resilience is addressed at the community level by emphasizing socioeconomic services and social engagement. Enhanced socioeconomic services are the result of investment into the expansion, rehabilitation, and construction of small-scale community infrastructure and of capacity-development support

for the operation and management of the targeted spaces. Concurrently, social engagement is addressed by implementing social activities that have been identified by the local community through inclusive, participatory processes. Interventions aim at increasing interactions among members of a community in order to reduce conflict and increase the likelihood that they will assist each other in the event of a shock or a crisis.

Moreover, the IPR is structured according to four guiding principles. Firstly, it is data-driven: vulnerability studies are used to inform the program's prioritization of targeted communities and are based on a multidimensional assessment of their needs. Likewise, the development of proposals is guided by data-driven decisions, and pre- and post-implementation surveys are used to evaluate the intervention's effectiveness. Secondly, the IPR is risk-aware: resilience requires a comprehensive understanding of risks, problems, and their repercussions. As a result, communities and partners are asked to consider and elaborate on the risks they face in order to shape priorities and interventions. Thirdly, it is people-centered: the active engagement of community members in project development, supported by the UNDP and its partners, is a critical factor that contributes to the future sustainability of needs-based and community-owned interventions. And fourthly, the IPR is inclusive: the inclusion of vulnerable groups, particularly women, youth, and people with disabilities, is ensured through their participation in community committees that drive the initiatives from their conception through their implementation to long-term management.



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Taking into account community resilience, the success of IPR's resilience-based programming requires flexibility from all parties to ensure that the respective approaches and interventions adapt to the emerging needs, leverage the existing resources and partners' comparative advantages, and maintain a long-term perspective.

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