TRANSFORMATIONAL EVALUATION

FOR THE GLOBAL CRISES OF OUR TIMES

Rob D. van den Berg

Cristina Magro

Marie-Hélène Adrien

EDITORS

TRANSFORMATIONAL EVALUATION

FOR THE GLOBAL CRISES OF OUR TIMES

EDITORS

Rob D. van den Berg
Visiting Professor, King's College London
Leidschendam, the Netherlands

Cristina Magro
International Evaluation Academy, Member of the Council
Belo Horizonte, MG, Brazil

Marie-Hélène Adrien
Universalia Management Group, Senior Associate Consultant
Montreal, Canada

Evaluating Under Fragility: Lessons from the Palestinian Context

KHALED RAJAB

Abstract. Like that of other countries, the Palestinian government committed itself to realizing a number of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and has put in place a national mechanism for tracking and monitoring progress towards achieving them, including establishing institutional frameworks; engaging different stakeholders, including civil society, donors and the private sector; identifying indicators; collecting data and producing the Voluntary National Review Report. Nevertheless, the unique context of Palestine as a fragile, conflict-affected country poses a number of challenges, as it affects the ability of the national government and other societal actors to monitor achievement of the SDGs, to say nothing of actually achieving these goals. This chapter contributes to the discussion of the challenges of monitoring and evaluating SDGs in fragile contexts by focusing on the experience of Palestine. It builds on findings from literature review and interviews with relevant stakeholders, including government, civil society and international development partners that support Palestine in this effort, in particular the various United Nations agencies. It also presents and discusses key lessons from the Palestinian experience, especially for other countries under similar circumstances, including in the Middle East and North Africa.

Introduction

Five years have passed since all members of the United Nations General Assembly ratified the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its core, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Comprising 17 goals and 165 targets, the SDGs represent a partnership between the developed and developing world to address complex and interdependent challenges in today's globalized world. These goals strive to address critical challenges facing the world today, including eradicating extreme poverty, global inequality and climate change; promoting sustainable urbanization and industrial development; protecting natural ecosystems and fostering growth of peaceful, inclusive communities and governing institutions (Chaitanya Kanuri 2016). The goals provide clear guidelines and targets for all countries to adopt in accordance with their own priorities and challenges. Not all countries are equal in terms of their ability and readiness to achieve the SDGs, and many will have to address their own, often distinctive challenges, requiring flexibility and innovation in how to translate the global SDGs into realistic, locally adapted polices and interventions. Fragile states are among those that necessitate unorthodox approaches and instruments to fulfil their commitment to achieving the SDGs by 2030.

The author presented and discussed an outline of this chapter in a special panel at the IDEAS Global Assembly, October 2019, Prague, Czech Republic. The stimulating discussion during that panel indicated a need for further research on the topic of fragile states and how they address the challenges of implementing and tracking the SDGs. This chapter contributes to this discussion by presenting the experience of Palestine in tracking and monitoring the SDGs and hopes to draw the attention of the evaluation community and development practitioners to a more utilization-focused evaluation[1] that will enhance our understanding of fragile contexts and lead to relevant, effective policies and interventions.

To produce this chapter, the author relied on information from a literature review and interviews with relevant stakeholders, including the government, statistical bureau, civil society and international development partners who support Palestine in fulfilling its commitment to the SDGs.

---

[1] Utilization-focused evaluation is an approach based on the principle that an evaluation should be judged on its usefulness to its intended users (Patton and Horton 2009).

Theoretical Framework of Fragility and the SDGs

I start by offering a theoretical background on fragility and the SDGs to frame our understanding of the nature and challenges of fragility before delving deeper into Palestine's experience as a fragile state in achieving, monitoring and evaluating the SDGs.

The concepts of fragile states and failed states have been of practical interest to academics, policymakers, the evaluation community and international multilateral and unilateral organizations since they were developed (François and Sud 2006). Although there is no agreed-upon definition of a fragile state, most development agencies and practitioners apply the term to a situation in which the central government fails or is unable to perform its core functions of ensuring basic security, maintaining rule of law and justice and providing basic services and economic opportunities for its people, including the poor (Mcloughlin 2010). The literature provides various definitions of fragile state (e.g. Eizenstat, Porter and Weinstein 2005; François and Sud 2006; Newbrander 2012). Two critical elements can be distilled from the various definitions: lack of legitimacy and lack of effectiveness in providing security and services (Newbrander 2012). Other scholars link fragility with capacity deficits (Brinkerhoff 2010) and inability to protect essential civil freedoms (Eizenstat, Porter and Weinstein 2005). Hagesteijn (2008) describes fragile states as having weak institutional capacity, limited control of land and territory and inability to fulfil their mandate to provide services to and ensure the welfare of their constituents.

This inability of a government to meet citizens' expectations exacerbates problems of legitimacy and effectiveness (Brinkerhoff 2005). It has been argued that one of the defining characteristics of fragility is a weak state of legitimacy, under which fragile states 'fail to establish reciprocal state-society relations or create a binding social contract' (Mcloughlin 2010, 5). Moreover, the inability of a government to deliver core services (e.g. transport, electricity, health, education, water, sanitation) to its citizens and to provide a decent level of economic opportunity and welfare calls into question the legitimacy of that government. It also results in citizens losing trust in national institutions and withdrawing their support, jeopardizing the nation-building process (Brinkerhoff 2005; Rakodi 2001).

The connection between state fragility, legitimacy and state building is well documented in the academic and development literature (Brinkerhoff 2010; Lister 2005; Roberts 1990). The term 'state building' refers to the process of creating a functioning state and was historically used in the context of constructing Western European states (Sekhar 2010). The term

was then expanded to fragile states with the aim of helping them improve quality of life for citizens and establish policies, institutions and governance arrangements to support socioeconomic development (Brinkerhoff 2010) and citizen welfare (Roberts 1990). Brinkerhoff (2005) argues that building the state's capacity strengthens its legitimacy and prevents the risks of backsliding. Moreover, it is crucial for the international community to have a better understanding of capacity and capacity development (Brinkerhoff 2010) and concentrate on strengthening the domestic capacity of the state and not just promote democracy (François and Sud 2006). This is important particularly in the context of fragile states where organizations are being established by external interventions. Then again, transforming these organizations into legitimate institutions requires time and depends on domestic political processes (Ottaway 2002). International aid organizations should avoid bypassing the government by using other delivery mechanisms, which will damage pre-existing capacity and undermine state capacity-building efforts (François and Sud 2006).

The number of fragile states increased from 56 in 2016 to 58 in 2018, with 15 classified as extremely fragile and 43 as fragile (OECD 2018). Most of the 58 fragile countries are facing great challenges in ending extreme poverty[2]. Although the percentage of people living in extreme poverty globally has decreased significantly, from 28 per cent in 1999 to 11 per cent in 2013 (UN DESA 2017), the percentage of people living in extreme poverty is projected to rise in 40 of the 58 fragile states by 2030. Moreover, with the assumption that no action will be taken, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) estimates that the number of people living below the international poverty line in fragile situations will increase from 513.6 million in 2015 to 620 million in 2030. In other words, more than 80 per cent of the world's poorest people could be living in fragile contexts by 2030 (OECD 2018).

In 2018, Palestine[3] witnessed only slight improvements in the societal and environmental dimensions of fragility (OECD 2018), with the improvement in aggregate fragility mostly from the security dimension because the risk of violent conflict has decreased in the past few years. Despite Palestine's upward trend in the fragility framework and improvement in overall security, it still ranks second worst in the world, just after Syria, in control

---

[2] The international community defines extreme poverty as living on less than $1.90 a day, as measured in 2011 international prices (equivalent to $2.12 in 2018) (Marcio Cruz 2015).

[3] OECD used the term 'West Bank and Gaza' instead of 'Palestine'.

over territory. In addition, the political dimension has worsened because of a decrease in voice and accountability and an increase in political terror (OECD 2018).

Figure 14.1 illustrates the state-of-fragility framework, showing the West Bank and Gaza (or Palestine) among the countries that face severe fragility in various dimensions.

Figure 14.1 State-of-Fragility Framework, 2018
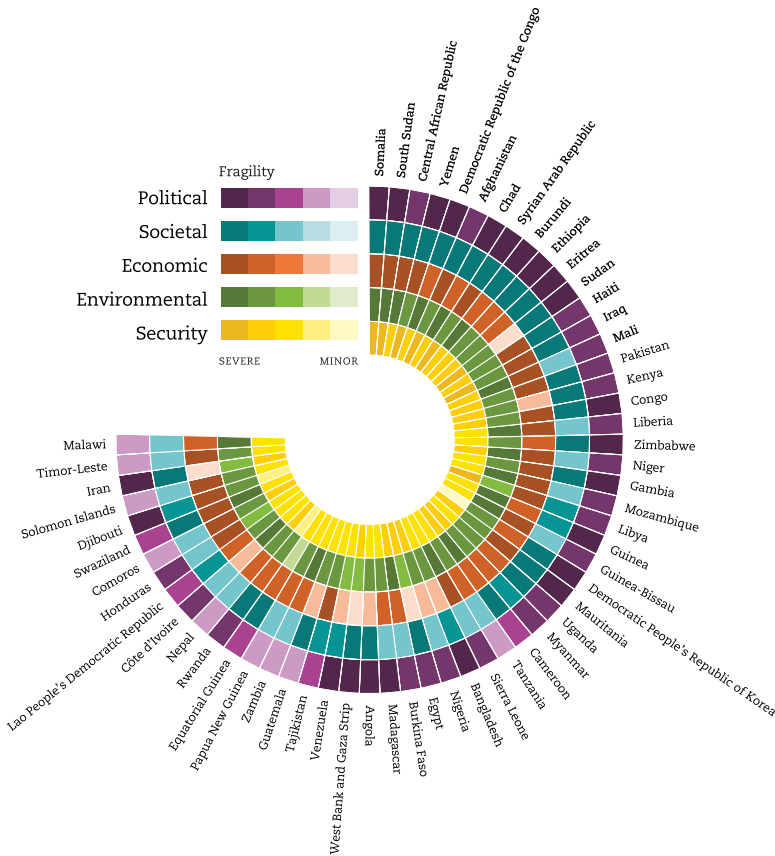
Source: OECD (2018), p. 83.

SDGs in Fragile Contexts

Despite receiving praise from many researchers and development prac-
titioners, the SDGs have not escaped criticism. For example, they were
criticized because of their similarities to the post-2015 development
agenda, which includes the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and
the post-MDG processes. SDGs are no different from the MDGs in terms
of having a donor-driven design that led to neglect of problems in develop-
ing countries and lack of consideration of real needs of recipient countries,
particularly those of marginalized populations (Miyazawa 2012) and par-
ticularly in fragile contexts.

The challenge of advancing the sustainable agenda in fragile sates
was noted in the academic and development literature. Carment (2017)
argues that, given historical evidence of the lack of progress on the MDGs
in countries affected by conflict and fragility, achieving the SDGs will be a
challenge. Countries affected by conflict and fragility often have the most
limited capacities and resources while facing the greatest political chal-
lenges. The multifaceted challenges that fragile states face require that
the decision-making process address not only technical, but also political
obstacles to development (Carius 2018).

It is crucial to focus on developing state institutions in fragile states,
which is a very long-term process, often taking decades (OECD 2014). In
the context of SDGs, fragile states should focus on long-term rather than
short-term results. For instance, working in fragile states, and with mar-
ginalized groups in more stable contexts, will take time and involves risk.
Therefore, fragile states often need to develop institutional capacity: a very
long-term process, often taking decades (Greenhill 2016).

Other researchers have noted the difficult task of measuring the SDGs
because there are many SDGs and subgoals and few real measurements
or baselines, priorities or even clarity of basic definitions of such terms as
'sustainable' and 'development' (Lempert 2017). Those with this critical view
claim that, in general, the SDGs present little change in substantive, ideo-
logical or implementation approach from the MDGs that would offset the
deficiencies of the MDGs. According to this criticism, the SDGs are still
promoting an agenda of globalization, urbanization and assimilation that
does not appear to be sustainable or in line with international law or with
social science and management science standards (Lempert 2017).

A number of authors addressed these shortcomings by accentuating
the need to align subnational indicator systems so they can be aggregated
at the national level into country-level SDG progress reporting, which will

contribute to bottom-up accountability and reporting on SDGs. National statistical and other data collection agencies should play a critical role in fostering this alignment (Thrift and Bizikova 2016).

In its attempt to integrate the SDGs into its fragility analysis and framework, the OECD signals new approaches to fragility aimed at promoting fresh thinking and new discourse on fragility and how to better track needs, aid flows and progress in achieving the SDGs in fragile situations (Grotenhuis 2016; Michel 2018). Nevertheless, the new approaches to fragility involve welcoming the inclusion of security and peace within the new SDG agenda (Grotenhuis 2016).

Although the international community widely recognizes the need for a data revolution and the importance of supporting developing countries in significantly increasing the availability of high-quality, timely, reliable data, many fragile countries have poor-quality data, which undermines their capacity to make knowledge-based decisions and report accurately about their needs and performance (Michel 2018).

Processes that build upon existing awareness of context, build national ownership, foster transparency, secure support in the face of difficult choices and build consensus over trade-offs are crucial. Conversely, unsustainable practices that are having devastating environmental and social impacts on the local level can engender tensions and local discontent. For the 2030 Agenda to move forward in fragile states, decision-making must address not only technical, but also political obstacles to development (Carius 2018).

Palestine Explained

As mentioned previously, the OECD and many international organizations consider Palestine to be a fragile state. Palestine's fragility involves various elements, including the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and blockade of the Gaza Strip and the political divide between Gaza and the West Bank. These factors limit the national government's (Palestinian Authority) control over land, borders and natural resources. The limited control over unpredictable, ever-changing situations makes monitoring and tracking achievement of the SDGs under unstable, fragile conditions challenging. Monitoring the SDGs under such conditions is not easy and requires special skills and tools that need to be considered during the monitoring and evaluation process.

The dispute over 'Palestine', the area between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea, has been one of the most complex, pressing, on-going

disputes since the beginning of the 20th century. This dispute extends beyond geography and politics to include the narrative and terminology. Therefore, a brief historical and geographical background is necessary to provide a context and backdrop for this chapter.

With a total land area of 26,323 km^2, historical Palestine lies on the western edge of the Asian continent and the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea. Syria and Lebanon bound it to the north, the Gulf of Aqaba and the Egyptian Sinai Peninsula to the south, the Mediterranean Sea to the west and Jordan to the east.

After the first World War, the leading colonial powers of Britain and France controlled the League of Nations, which divided the territories of the collapsed Ottoman Empire. The territory of 'historic Palestine' was granted to Great Britain as a mandate. After the first Arab-Israeli war and the proclamation of the state of Israel on 15 May 1948, historic Palestine was divided into three parts: the new Jewish state, which occupied 78 per cent of the territory of Palestine; the West Bank of the Jordan River and East Jerusalem, which the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan annexed; and a strip surrounding Gaza City close to the borders of Egypt that Egypt controlled (Ayyash 1981; Hajjar and Beinin 1988).

Israeli forces occupied the 22 per cent that remained under Arab sovereignty after 1948 in the Six Day War in June 1967. Although the Israelis prefer to use the biblical names of 'Judea and Samaria' to describe the southern and northern mountains of the West Bank, the international community, represented by the United Nations, refers to the West Bank and Gaza Strip as 'the Occupied Palestinian Territory-Palestine'.

On 13 September 1993, Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) signed the Oslo I Accord, officially called the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements or Declaration of Principles, which was an attempt to establish a framework that would lead to resolution of the on-going Israeli–Palestinian conflict (BBC 2001). The agreement established the Palestinian Authority in May 1994, which has since taken on some civil and security responsibilities.

According to the agreement, the West Bank was divided into three zones: Areas A, B and C (PASSIA 2012) (figure 14.2). In Area A, which comprises 17.2 per cent of the West Bank and includes the major cities and villages, the Palestinian Authority has full security and civil responsibility, but Israel retains authority over movement into and out of these areas. In Area B, which comprises 23.8 per cent of the West Bank and includes most Palestinian villages, the Palestinian Authority has civil authority and responsibility for public order, and Israel maintains a security presence and

'overriding security responsibility'. In the remaining 59 per cent of the West Bank, Area C, Israel maintains security and civil powers.

After the Palestinian Authority took over responsibility for administration after the Oslo Accords, the Palestinian Territory was divided into 16 governorates (districts): 11 in the West Bank and five in the Gaza Strip.

The following sections explain the main drivers of the fragility that characterize Palestine.

Governance

The Israeli occupation of the West Bank and blockade of the Gaza Strip are the key drivers of fragility (Dittli 2011; World Bank 2012). The sectarian division between the Fatah movement led by Mahmoud Abbas,

Figure 14.2 Map of Areas A, B and C in the West Bank

Source: PASSIA (2012).

chairman of the PLO and president of the Palestinian Authority, and the Hamas movement exacerbates this fragility. Since June 2007, the Palestinian Authority, led by President Abbas, has governed the West Bank, and Hamas has ruled the Gaza Strip (UNDP 2010). The division between Hamas and Fatah has prevented elections from being held. The last presidential election was in January 2005, and the last legislative election was in January 2006, which Hamas won. The legislative council has not met since 2007, principally because of factional strife but also because Israel has imprisoned a number of its members (CEC 2020).

The political divide between Gaza and the West Bank is used as the pretext and justification for various forms of extra-legal activities or violations of human rights norms. 'It is highly important to note the bitter consequences of the [factional] divide [and]...the damage caused to the practice of human rights and freedoms, as a result of that divide' (ICHR 2012, 20).

As described before, the Palestinian Authority has jurisdiction over approximately 38 per cent of the West Bank territory, with the rest, including borders and water resources, under Israeli control. Lacking many of the

instruments of a sovereign state, the Palestinian Authority is constrained in terms of what it can do to reduce and respond to fragility. In Hamas-run Gaza, the writ of the Palestinian Authority does not hold, and Israel controls the land and sea borders of the coastal strip except for a narrow land border with Egypt that is not always open, even for pedestrian traffic. In addition to these restrictions, Israel has imposed tight border controls and has limited access to coastal fishing areas and to farmland along its border (OCHA-OPT 2013).

Duplication of governance structures in the West Bank and in Gaza, expiry of presidential and legislative mandates and paralysis of the Palestinian Legislative Council all affect the legitimacy of the Palestinian Authority (Newton 2013), which the Palestinian Authority's limited ability to provide quality services for citizens in the West Bank and its absence from Gaza compound (World Bank 2011).

Economy

The Israeli occupation (and the imposed restrictions on access and movement), the fragmentation of economic space within the West Bank and between the West Bank and Gaza and the limited resource base due to Israeli control of 62 per cent of the territory of the West Bank are significant factors that hamper investment and undermine economic growth. Because of the Israeli restrictions, inefficiency and a lack of competitiveness characterize the Palestinian economy (World Bank 2012).

The Palestinian Authority's fiscal crisis also contributes to fragility. The inability of the Palestinian Authority to pay regular salaries to employees adds to the instability of more than 1 million Palestinians who depend directly and indirectly on government salaries (Portland Trust 2016). Moreover, the Palestinian Authority's chronic fiscal deficit has resulted in the accumulation of debt in the private sector and local banks (Flassbeck, Kaczmarczyk and Paetz 2018).

Environment

The environmental context in Palestine is extremely challenging. Some resources are severely degraded, access to others is limited or denied and certain ecosystems are on the brink of collapse. Population density and protracted conflict aggravate the situation, and the Middle East is highly vulnerable to climate change because of the risk of desertification and prolonged and recurring droughts (PNA 2012).

Under the Oslo Accords, most environmental problems are a shared responsibility between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. In practice, the Palestinian Authority's weak institutional capacity and Israel's control over water resources and most rural areas (which fall under Area C) hamper environmental management (World Bank 2009).

Dependence on Foreign Aid

The tendency of fragile states to depend on external donor aid has been growing since 2000 (OECD DAC 2012). Those states depend on official development assistance, which constitutes their largest source of finance, followed by remittances and foreign direct investment.

Palestine is considered one of the 'donor darlings' that receive half of all official development assistance directed to fragile states. With an official development assistance–to–gross domestic product ratio of 25.5 per cent, Palestine is ranked 12th among the world's most aid-dependent countries and economies (OECD 2018). This dependence has led the Palestinian economy to be structurally dependent on foreign aid (Devoir and Tartir 2009). Moreover, despite the massive amount of aid that Palestine receives, it is still unclear whether the existing coordination structure in Palestine is efficient in responding to local needs and priorities, not to mention fulfilling commitments to achieving the SDGs.

SDGs Efforts in Palestine

Having provided a detailed background of Palestine and the challenges it faces as a fragile state, we examine now the experience of Palestine in implementing and monitoring the SDGs.

Similar to other countries, and as part of its efforts to build institutions for statehood, the Palestinian government committed to working towards achieving the MDGs by aligning the priorities of government ministries and institutions to achievement of development in general, including fulfilment of the MDGs. Despite notable progress on various fronts and sectors, maintaining vulnerability to the Israeli policies that limit implementation of projects in Area C, East Jerusalem and the besieged Gaza Strip undermined achievement of the MDGs in Palestine. Israeli control over Palestinian land and resources has limited the capacity of the Palestinian Authority to advance further on the path towards building an independent Palestinian state and towards the development of Palestine that could benefit all regions and social groups (Palestinian Authority 2012).

The experience of the Palestinian government and other societal actors in implementing the MDGs was instrumental in shaping the Palestinian approach and efforts related to achievement and monitoring of the SDGs. A number of key lessons were recorded from the MDG experience[4].

- *Inclusivity and partnership.* It was clear from implementation of the MDGs that the government cannot achieve its development agenda without real, inclusive partnership with key actors, including civil society, private sector, international community and most importantly citizens. For this reason, it was deemed critical to ensure that representatives of civil society and the private sector are on the national team to mainstream SDGs in their sectors in Palestine.
- Related to the previous point, *public awareness and buy-in* of the MDGs was limited. Actions undertaken were mostly ad hoc and focused on internal (governmental) awareness raising. Actions during the MDG period focused on building awareness and commitment among main stakeholders (government, civil society, private sector), with minimal attention to raising awareness of the general public, which limited buy-in and support of citizens for fulfilling the MDGs.
- *Alignment with local and national strategies.* Effective implementation of the global development agenda, whether MDGs or SDGs, entails harmonizing local and national priorities with the global agenda. The MDGs were adopted in parallel to, and often in isolation from, preparation of sectoral and national strategies, leading to limited coordination between sectors and interventions. To avoid this, the Palestinian government prioritized localization of the global agenda by including the SDGs in the National Policy Agenda (NPA) (2017–22).
- *Unified monitoring and evaluation system.* Lack of a national systematic monitoring and evaluation mechanism hindered tracking of and reporting on achievement of the MDGs. The absence of timely, reliable data during the period limited the ability of the government to report achievement of the MDGs.

---

[4] Members of the Palestinian Authority National SDG Team shared these lessons with the author in interviews.

These lessons informed the Palestinian government's planning for and approach to implementing the SDGs and institutionalization of tracking, monitoring and reporting on the SDGs. A different, inclusive approach was followed after 2015 to lay the ground for implementation and monitoring of SDGs (PMO 2018; SAACB 2018).

Institutional Setup

Since the time of the MDGs, Palestine has made enormous efforts to increase the capacity of national institutions and state structures and to mobilize local and international partnerships to support Palestine in achieving the SDGs in line with national development priorities.

Learning from the MDG experience, the government put off its highest priorities, first strengthening partnerships with relevant stakeholders by allowing as many stakeholders as possible to engage in follow-up and implementation of the SDGs.

The Palestinian Council of Ministers issued a decree on 19 February 2016, to form the National SDG Team to lead and coordinate the national effort to implement the SDGs under the leadership of the Prime Minister's Office, a reflection of interest and commitment at the highest official level. The National SDG Team was tasked with coordinating implementation and follow-up of the SDGs among all stakeholders, including from civil society, the private sector and the international community. As previously mentioned, establishment of the National SDG Team was based on lessons learned from the MDGs to encourage partners to participate in monitoring and implementing the SDGs at all stages of the process, from prioritization to implementation and evaluation (figure 14.3). The responsibility of the national team is to determine sustainable development priorities in Palestine and integrate them into the national framework for planning and budgeting processes, in addition to leading and coordinating preparation of national reviews of progress towards the SDGs.

Twelve SDG working groups were established to support the National SDG Team. The responsibility of the working groups, which relevant governmental institutions lead in close collaboration with relevant United Nations partner agencies, is to track the progress of their specific goal. The working groups are composed of representatives from civil society, the private sector and academic institutions. Each working group is tasked with one of the SDGs, with the exception of two working groups, one of which merged SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) and one of which merged the environment-related SDGs (12, 13, 14, 15). Because SDG 17

Figure 14.3 Institutional Arrangement for Follow-Up and Implementation of the SDGs
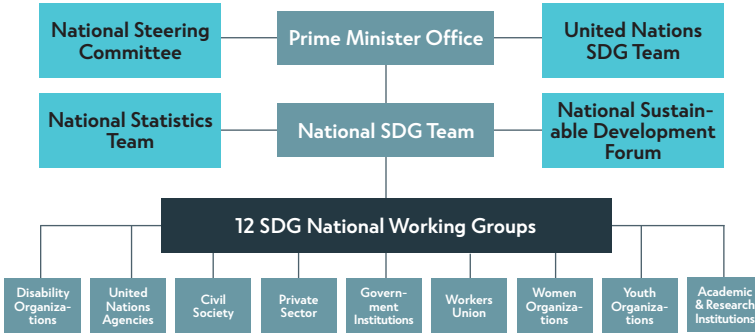
Source: PMO (2018).

(Partnerships) was seen to be a cross-cutting topic that concerns all groups, it was included in the mandate of all 12 groups. The National SDG Team designated focal points for each working group responsible for leading and coordinating national efforts to pursue and implement the SDGs. At the same time, the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Palestine identified focal points from respective United Nations agencies to support the SDG working groups (table 14.1). United Nations agencies were instrumental in supporting the government by assisting in follow-up, implementation and technical support to achievement of the SDGs.

The constitution of the National SDG Team and the associated SDG working groups offered an excellent opportunity to engage more than 300 stakeholders from various sectors in follow-up and implementation of the SDGs.

Ownership and Localization of the SDGs

As part of its efforts to achieve statehood, the Palestinian government has made serious efforts to integrate international and regional development agendas, including the SDGs, into national strategies and policies.

The launching of the 2030 Agenda coincided with preparation of the NPA 2017–22, which offered an opportunity to work towards incorporating the SDGs into the NPA from the onset of deliberations. At a sectoral level, ministries and government institutions have been asked to consider the SDGs in developing their sectoral and cross-sectoral strategies.

Table 14.1 Responsible Government Ministry and Supporting United Nations Counterpart Relevant to the Sustainable Development Goals

Goal	Lead Ministry	Counterpart Agency
1, 10	Ministry of Social Development	UNDP, UNICEF
2	Ministry of Agriculture	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
3	Ministry of Health	World Health Organization
4	Ministry of Education and Higher Education	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
5	Ministry of Women's Affairs	UN Women
6	Palestinian Water Authority	UNICEF
7	Palestinian Energy and Natural Resources Authority	UNDP
8	Ministry of Labour, Ministry of the National Economy	International Labour Organization
9	Ministry of the National Economy, Ministry of Public Works and Housing	United Nations Office for Project Services
11	Ministry of Local Government, Ministry of Public Works and Housing	UN Habitat
12–15	Environmental Quality Agency	UNDP
16	Ministry of Justice	UNDP
17	Prime Minister Office	United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process

Source: PMO (2018).

Note: UNDP = United Nations Development Programme; UNICEF = United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund.

NPA's Putting Citizens First is a national programme of action for Palestine focusing on the rights of citizens to freedom, justice, basic services, economic opportunities, safety and prosperity. A quick review of the NPA reveals that, in theory, the overall framework of the strategy is consistent with the transformational paradigm advocated in the 2030 Agenda, which is focused on marginalized and vulnerable groups and the 'leave no one behind' principle. The central focus of the NPA on citizens reflects the

government's priorities of strengthening its response to citizens and their needs while making greater efforts to raise the standard of living for the most marginalized despite the obstacles that the occupation poses. As stated in the Voluntary National Review (PMO 2018), realizing the principle of 'leave no one behind' in a country that lives under a protracted, ongoing occupation that imposes restrictions on its government and hinders its access to serve its people is a challenge.

After the broad consultation process to develop the NPA, it was apparent that, during the short term of the NPA (2017–22), Palestine will face difficulties in prioritizing all of the SDG targets because of the complex, fragile political and socioeconomic context and fiscal constraints. As a result, the NPA noted clearly that 'we must acknowledge that sustainable development cannot be achieved under Israeli occupation and without control over Area C's vast resources' (PMO 2016). It also emphasizes that sustainable development requires a holistic approach that cross-cuts a wide array of interventions, actions and priorities, all underpinned by the critical needs of the Palestinian population exacerbated by decades of Israeli military occupation.

With this understanding, and learning from the MDG experience, the Palestinian government embarked on localizing the SDGs in the Palestinian context in two steps: identifying national priorities from the SDGs and integrating priority targets into the NPA and sectoral strategies. The SDGs were therefore nationalized and integrated into national planning rather than adopted as a national agenda. Based on the comparison between the SDGs and the priorities of the NPA that the National SDG Team conducted, it was decided that, over the time frame of the NPA (2017–22), the State of Palestine would focus on 75 of the 169 interlinked targets that cover various domains and development sectors, although when considering the sectoral and cross-sectoral strategies, which focus on an additional set of targets, the total number of targets is 105. Priority targets were identified based on several factors, including the needs and priorities of the population, resource availability, the planning time frame and the specific conditions under which Palestinian institutions operate under the occupation, which limits their access to land and communities and their ability to provide services to the Palestinian people.

Data Availability and Monitoring of the SDGs

One of the key lessons learned from the MDG experience is the importance of having a national monitoring system to track and assess achievement

of the development agenda. For this purpose, the Palestinian government delegated the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) to localize and monitor the SDG indicators in cooperation with relevant ministries and national institutions and in coordination with international organizations, especially United Nations agencies concerned with these indicators (SAACB 2018).

It is highly challenging to collect the data needed to monitor SDGs in Palestine because of restrictions imposed on access of the Palestinian government to certain areas of Palestine (particularly East Jerusalem and Area C), lack of financial resources (e.g. conducting large-scale surveys, paying salaries of civil servants), and the limited capacity of some institutions and individuals.

To overcome the unavailability of data, the PCBS strengthened and institutionalized the administrative records system as a main source of data to bridge data gaps and to standardize data sources and methodologies. In addition, organizational and institutional changes were introduced to the PCBS by forming a working team on SDGs and instating an independent department for statistical control, central records and administrative data. The mandate of this department is to collect, compile, publish and document statistics from administrative records of various public and private institutions and combine these records with data from findings of surveys and censuses. In addition, the PCBS updated its data management structure to fulfil its vision of integrating data producers into the PCBS system and expanding the use of data from administrative records for statistical purposes. This made it easier to monitor SDG indicators and statistical monitoring indicators at the national level in the social, economic and environmental sectors according to the national strategic vision and goals.

To allow for measurement of SDGs, the PCBS and the National SDG Team have established a database of available indicators and source of data. One hundred nine of 244 (45 per cent) sustainable development indicators were found to be available, whereas some of the indicators are not categorized or stratified according to, for example, region, gender, or age (PMO 2018). Moreover, some of the SDG indicators were found to be irrelevant to the Palestinian context and hard to measure and achieve. For example, lack of Palestinian Authority control over water resources, coastal lines and most of its territory that is still under Israeli control limits achievement of SDG 14 (marine and coastal ecosystems) and SDG 15 (sustainable forest management). The challenges that the Palestinian Authority faces in building critical large-scale infrastructure such as airports, industrial parks and wastewater treatment because its financial resources and sovereignty

over land and natural resources are limited are making it difficult to achieve SDG 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure)[5], as well as multilateral environmental agreements on hazardous waste and other chemicals (SDG 12) and free trade and access to international market (SDG 17).

Producing the Voluntary National Review Report

One of the milestones that demonstrated the commitment of the Palestinian government to sustainable development was the National SDG Team's production of the Voluntary National Review Report in June 2018, which was presented to the international community at the United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. The goal of the Voluntary National Review was to provide detailed information about the status of Palestine's progress towards implementing and achieving the SDGs, highlight the challenges that undermine pursuit of the SDGs, enhance stakeholder engagement in the follow-up and implementation of the SDGs and support creation of a developmental roadmap for implementation of the SDGs in Palestine.

The Prime Minister's Office led the review process, which ensured high-level participation and buy-in, as well as national ownership of the report's findings and outcomes. A steering committee of senior officials and the National SDG Team, which includes representatives from 24 governmental, non-governmental and private sector organizations, supported the Prime Minister's Office's leadership of the process. The 12 SDG working groups were tasked with mapping and monitoring the targets and indicators relevant to their associated SDGs, and the PCBS provided the needed statistical data (PMO 2018).

Concluding Remarks

The goal of this chapter was to highlight the experience and progress of Palestine as an example of a fragile state pursuing and monitoring the SDGs. It covered the unique challenges that hinder Palestine's ability to achieve sustainable development. At the top of these challenges is the ongoing colonization and occupation of Palestine and the deliberate policies and

---

[5] External control over Palestine's borders and lack of an inland airport hinder the mobility of Palestinians. Two years after its construction, the Gaza airport was bombarded, forcing Palestinians to travel to Amman, Jordan, to connect to the world.

restrictions of the Israeli occupation. Related to this challenge, some of the SDG targets cannot be achieved or monitored, including those related to conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development; clean water and sanitation; the environment; trans-boundary issues; Area C; Bedouin communities and grazing land (PMO 2018).

Other obstacles to achieving the SDGs in Palestine include increasing pressure on basic services due to high natural population growth (~2.8 per cent), lack of resources to finance the development agenda due to the inability of the Palestinian people to access and control their natural resources and the sharp decline in the volume of foreign aid to Palestine in recent years, the need to strengthen national institutional capacity and coordination in following up on and implementing a sustainable development plan, and lack of data to measure progress towards achievement of many SDGs despite significant efforts made in this regard (as detailed in the previous sections).

Despite these obstacles, there is room, albeit limited, to advance the development agenda. The Palestine Voluntary National Review Report outlined follow-up mechanisms that could be useful for other countries that face similar conditions, including (PMO 2018):

- Focus on following up implementation of national sustainable development priorities to accelerate progress on implementation of the SDGs while strengthening coordination and joint work of stakeholders from different sectors to ensure efficiency of work and thus obtain the best results at the lowest costs.
- Promote community participation in follow-up and implementation of SDGs through development and application of a national strategy to strengthen partnerships with all parties and groups concerned with SDGs.
- Develop and implement a national mechanism for monitoring and reporting on implementation of SDGs and conduct an annual review in coordination and cooperation with all stakeholders.
- Cooperate and coordinate with all stakeholders to provide data on SDG indicators.
- Mobilize and develop partnerships at the regional and international levels on national sustainable development priorities.
- Raise institutional and community awareness of SDGs at the national and local levels.
- Promote participation of the media in following up implementation of SDGs.

Finally, the main underlying question that this chapter attempted to address is what and how much can be done to achieve sustainable development in a fragile state under a protracted occupation. Although I do not claim that this chapter provided complete answers to this question, I hope the case of Palestine can bring the attention of the academic and professional communities to the challenges that fragile countries face and the need for a more tailored, adapted evaluation and implementation approach that considers political, social and economic factors affecting the development agenda in these contexts.

References

Ayyash, A. I. 1981. Israeli planning policy in the occupied territories. *Journal of Palestine Studies* 11 (1): 111–123.

BBC (British Broadcasting Company). 2001. Text: 1993 Declaration of principles. Declaration of principles on interim self-government arrangements. London: BBC.

Brinkerhoff, D. W. 2005. Rebuilding governance in failed states and post-conflict societies: Core concepts and cross-cutting themes. *Public Administration and Development* 25: 3–14.

Brinkerhoff, D. W. 2010. Developing capacity in fragile states. *Public Administration and Development: The International Journal of Management Research and Practice* 30 (1): 66–78.

Carius, A. I. 2018. *A foreign policy perspective on the SDGs.* Berlin: Adelphi.

Carment, D. T. 2017. *The CIFP fragility index: New trends and categorizations: A 2017 country indicators for foreign policy report.* Ottawa: Norman Paterson School of International Affairs, Carleton University.

CEC (Central Election Commission). 2020. Central Election Commission, Palestine. http://www.elections.ps/tabid/815/language/en-US/Default.aspx

Chaitanya Kanuri, A. R. 2016. Getting started with the SDGs in cities: A guide for stakeholders. Sustainable Development Solutions Network. https://resources.unsdsn.org/getting-started-with-the-sdgs-in-cities

Devoir, J., and A. Tartir. 2009. *Tracking external donor funding to Palestinian non-governmental organizations in the West Bank and Gaza 1999–2008.* Ramallah: Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute.

Dittli, R. 2011. *Conflict sensitivity assessment: International assistance in Gaza: Aiding fragmentation or unity? A view from inside Gaza.* Basel, Switzerland: Center for Peacebuilding.

Eizenstat, S., J. Porter and J. Weinstein. 2005. Rebuilding weak states. *Foreign Affairs* January/February: 134–146.

Flassbeck, H., P. Kaczmarczyk and M. Paetz. 2018. *Macroeconomic structure, financial markets, and the financing of government activity: Lessons for Palestine.* Ramallah: Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute.

François, M., and I. Sud. 2006. Promoting stability and development in fragile and failed states. *Development Policy Review* 24: 141–160.

Greenhill, R. 2016. Where next for development effectiveness? Leaving no one behind. CAPE Conference.

Grotenhuis, R. 2016. *Nation-building as necessary effort in fragile states.* Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Hagesteijn, R. 2008. Early states and 'fragile states': Opportunities for conceptual synergy. *Social Evolution & History* 7: 1.

Hajjar, Lisa, and Joel Beinin. 1988. Palestine for beginners. *Middle East Report* 154: 17–20.

ICHR (Independent Commission for Human Rights). 2012. *The status of human rights in Palestine: Annual Report No. 18*, 18th ed., Ramallah: ICHR.

Lempert, D. 2017. Testing the global community's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) against professional standards and international law. *Consilience* 18 (2): 111–175.

Lister, S.W. 2005. Strengthening subnational administration in Afghanistan: Technical reform or state-building? *Public Administration and Development: The International Journal of Management Research and Practice* 25 (1): 39–48.

Marcio Cruz, J. F. 2015. *Ending extreme poverty and sharing prosperity: Progress and policies.* Washington, DC: World Bank.

Mcloughlin, C. 2010. *Topic guide on fragile states.* Birmingham, UK: Governance and Social Development Resource Centre.

Michel, J. 2018. Managing fragility and promoting resilience to advance peace, security, and sustainable development. Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Miyazawa, I. 2012. *What are Sustainable Development Goals?* Kanagawa, Japan: Institute for Global Environmental Strategies.

Newbrander, W. P. B. 2012. A tool for assessing management capacity at the decentralized level in a fragile state. *International Journal of Health Planning and Management* 4 (27): 276–294.

Newton, C. 2013. Interview with UN Special Rapporteur Richard Falk: Legitimacy is the agency of history. *Truthout.* https://tinyurl.com/wvj22m8t

OCHA-OPT (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Occupied Palestinian Territory). 2013. *Access restricted areas in the Gaza Strip.* Jerusalem: OCHA.

OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development). 2014. *Fragile states 2014: Domestic revenue mobilisation in fragile states.* Paris: OECD.

OECD. 2018. *States of fragility 2018.* Paris: OECD Publishing.

OECD DAC (Development Assistance Committee). 2012. *Fragile states 2013: Resource flows and trends in a shifting world.* Paris: OECD.

Ottaway, M. 2002. Rebuilding state institutions in collapsed states. *Development and Change* 33 (5): 1001–1023.

Palestinian Authority. 2012. *The national strategy to achieve the MDGs by 2015.* Ramallah: Palestinian Authority.

PASSIA (Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs). 2012. *Area C: The key to the two-state solution.* Jerusalem: PASSIA.

Patton, M., and D. Horton. 2009. *Utilization-focused evaluation for agricultural innovation.* Rome: International Labor Accreditation Cooperation.

PMO (Prime Minister's Office). 2016. State of Palestine's 2017–22 National Policy Agenda: Putting Citizens First (final draft). Ramallah: PMO.

PMO (Prime Minister's Office). 2018. *Palestinian national voluntary review on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.* Ramallah: State of Palestine.

PNA (Palestinian National Authority). 2012. *Sustainable development under Israeli occupation: Achievements and challenges.* Ramallah: PNA.

Portland Trust. 2016. *Palestinian economic bulletin.* Ramallah: Portland Trust.

Rakodi, C. 2001. Forget planning, put politics first? Priorities for urban management in developing countries. *International Journal of Applied Earth Observation and Geoinformation* 3 (3): 209–223.

Roberts, A. 1990. Prolonged military occupation: The Israeli-occupied territories since 1967. *American Journal of International Law* 84 (1): 44–103.

SAACB (State Audit and Administrative Control Bureau). 2018. *Review of the Palestinian government preparedness for the Sustainable Development Goals final report.* Ramallah: SAACB.

Sekhar, C. S. C. 2010. Fragile states: The role of social, political, and economic factors. *Journal of Developing Societies* 26 (3): 263–293.

Thrift, C., and L. Bizikova. 2016. *Bottom-up accountability for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Are subnational indicator systems aligned?* Winnipeg, Canada: International Institute for Sustainable Development.

UN DESA (United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs). 2017. *The Sustainable Development Goals report 2017.* New York: UN DESA.

UNDP (United Nations Development Programme). 2010. *Human development report 2009/10: Occupied Palestinian territory : Investing in human security for a future state.* New York: UNDP.

World Bank. 2009. *Assessment of restrictions on Palestinian water sector development.* Washington, DC: World Bank.

World Bank. 2011. *West Bank and Gaza institutional capacity.* Washington, DC: World Bank.

World Bank. 2012. *Towards economic sustainability of a future Palestinian state: Promoting private sector-led growth.* Washington, DC: World Bank.

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the enormous challenges humanity is facing. It has been facilitated by other crises as climate change, biodiversity loss, economic exploitation, and increased inequity and inequality. The UN Agenda 2030 and the Paris Agreement on climate change call for transformational change of our societies, our economies and our interaction with the environment. Evaluation is tasked to bring rigorous evidence to support transformation at all levels, from local to global. This book explores how the future of the evaluation profession can take shape in 18 chapters from authors from all over the world, from North and South, East and West, and from Indigenous and Decolonized voices to integrative perspectives for a truly sustainable future. It builds on what was discussed at the IDEAS Global Assembly in October 2019 in Prague and follows through by opening trajectories towards supporting transformation aimed at solving the global crises of our times.

By combining practical experiences with perspectives drawn from new initiatives, this book offers invaluable insights into how evaluation can be transformed to support transformational change on the global stage.

Indran A. Naidoo, Director of the Office of Independent Evaluation of IFAD

Across continents, educational systems, and historical complexities, this book builds up the language we all should speak about our field. A mandatory read for all young evaluators.

Weronika Felcis, Board member of EES and Secretary of IOCE

After reading these chapters you will have a sharper look at what is relevant when managing or doing an evaluation, and you will notice that 'business as usual' will no longer be an option.

Janett Salvador, Co-founder of ACEVAL, Former Treasurer of ReLAC

This book offers original, visionary discourse and critical perspectives on the challenges evaluation is facing in the post COVID-19 pandemic era.

Doha Abdelhamid, Member of the Egyptian Academy of Scientific Research and Technology

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT EVALUATION ASSOCIATION

IDEAS

KNOWLEDGE   CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT   NETWORKING