

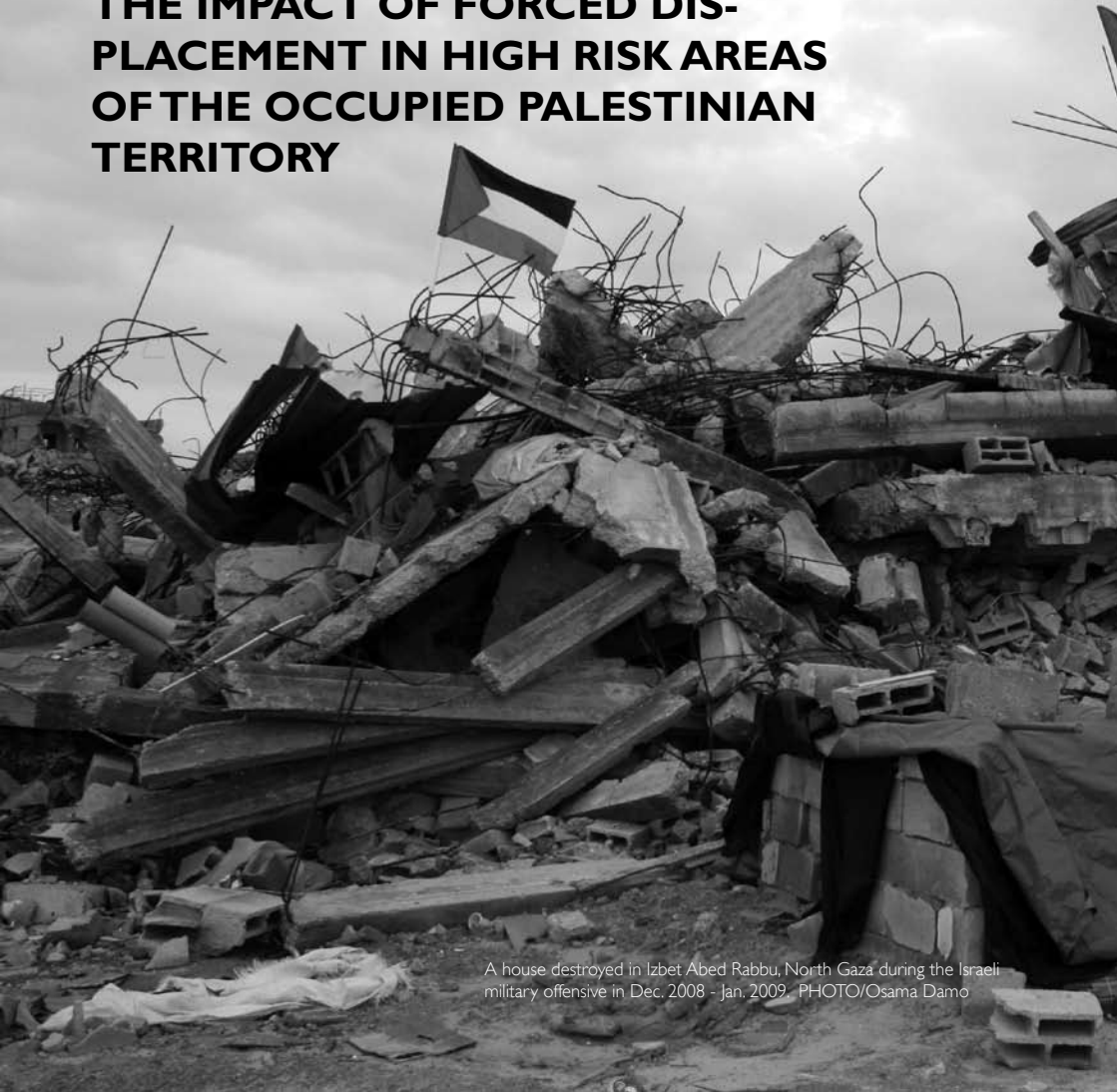


Save the Children
UK

Summary of Research Findings

October 2009

**LIFE ON THE EDGE:
THE STRUGGLE TO SURVIVE AND
THE IMPACT OF FORCED DIS-
PLACEMENT IN HIGH RISK AREAS
OF THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN
TERRITORY**



A house destroyed in Izbet Abed Rabbu, North Gaza during the Israeli military offensive in Dec. 2008 - Jan. 2009. PHOTO/Osama Damo

In June 2009, Save the Children UK completed a research study on the pressures and impacts associated with forced displacement in high risk areas¹ of the occupied Palestinian territory.

Key Findings

- Areas identified by the international community as high risk are significantly poorer, more marginalized and less protected than the general population.
- At least 49% of respondents living in or near Gaza's buffer zone or in West Bank areas under complete Israeli control (Area C) say they have changed their residence since 2000, compared with 15% among the general population in the OPT. Families that have been displaced fare significantly worse in terms of living conditions, socio-economic impacts and psychosocial well-being than they did before their displacement, regardless of the reason why they were displaced.
- In high risk areas, house demolitions and the loss of income and sources of livelihoods are common triggers for the displacement of families. In the West Bank, families in high risk areas also faced forced evictions, land confiscation threats and lack of access to essential services, making them vulnerable to displacement. In the Gaza buffer zone areas, concerns for personal security and safety have caused families to move away from their communities.
- 78% of displaced families said they wanted to return to their homes.
- International organizations are not reaching those most in need of assistance, particularly in high risk areas in the West Bank. 49% of households surveyed in high risk areas in the West Bank said that humanitarian assistance from international organizations is 'not available,' in contrast with the 12% in Gaza high risk areas who said 'not available.'
- Families who most need legal support are not getting it. The majority of families both in high risk areas and in the general population did not access legal services or support after receiving a house demolition or land confiscation order.

¹ High risk areas are those locations in the West Bank under complete Israeli control (Area C under the Oslo Accords) and locations near or adjacent to the border areas in Gaza known as the buffer zone. Approximately 61% of the West Bank is classified as Area C.

Recommendations

We are calling on the humanitarian community, development agencies, Palestinian civil society, and the Palestinian Authority to do more to advocate for and assist families living in high risk areas. We recommend that they:

- Develop a comprehensive, coordinated inter-agency response to prevent displacement and provide protection for those who have been displaced or are at-risk of displacement with a special focus on the particular needs and vulnerabilities of children.
- Develop services and strengthen livelihoods in Area C of the West Bank.
- Provide agricultural support and land rehabilitation in the Gaza buffer zone to improve the food security and general economic well-being of residents.
- Strengthen and expand the work of legal advocacy organizations.

The State of Israel should:

- Halt the demolition of Palestinian homes and land confiscation and other related policies that result in displacement.
- Clearly define a policy for the Gaza buffer zone that is in line with its international legal obligations related to the protection of civilians under occupation.



A mother from al Jiflik hugs the youngest of her nine children. Her family is forced to live apart for nine months out of the year to facilitate the children's access to schools in Tubas. PHOTO/Sara Mabger

Background

Increasing numbers of families living in high risk areas of the occupied Palestinian territory (OPT) are being forcibly displaced as a result of forced evictions, house demolitions, concerns for personal safety and security and loss of livelihood. Other related factors such as lack of access to essential services, land confiscation and movement and access restrictions also pressure families to leave their homes.

Save the Children UK has implemented the project *Prevention and protection – a programmatic response to forced displacement in the OPT*, together with its local partner MA'AN Development Center, with funding provided by the Humanitarian Aid department of the European Commission (ECHO).

As part of this project, in June 2009, Save the Children UK conducted a detailed study through Near East Consulting (NEC) of living conditions in high risk areas, focusing in particular on the pressures and impacts associated with forced displacement in both the West Bank and Gaza², excluding East Jerusalem.³ The survey included 1,057 individuals in randomly selected locations throughout the West Bank and Gaza to provide a general baseline sample. A total of 472 random interviews were also conducted in locations where people were at high risk of displacement, defined as Area C locations in the West Bank and locations near or adjacent to the Gaza buffer zone, a closed military area around the full perimeter of Gaza.

² In Gaza, includes 240 households living in the following areas near the buffer zone: North Gaza: Beit Hanoun, east of Beit Lahiya, Al Saifa, Al 'Atatrah, Eastern cemetery area; Gaza City: east of Ash Shujaiyeh, Karni Crossing area, Nahal Oz Crossing area; Middle area: Johr al Deek area, east of Bureij refugee camp, east of Maghazi refugee camp; Khan Younis: Abasan al Kabira, Abasan al Saghira, Khoza'a; Rafah: Shoka, Gaza airport surroundings, Philadelphia Corridor. In the West Bank, includes 232 households living in the following Area C locations: Tulkarm: Al Jarushiya; Qalqiliya: Habla, Beit Amin, Izbat at-Tabib; Ramallah: Beit Horon; Hebron: Ar Ramadin, Khirbet Zanuta, At Tuwani, Qawawis; Bethlehem: Al Khas, Khallet an Nu'man; Jericho: Al Jiftlik; Tubas: Tammun

³ While it is important to note that displacement risks are high and house demolitions and forced evictions are all too common in East Jerusalem, the decision to exclude the area from this study is based on the unique nature of the situation stemming from the different policy and legal issues that lead to displacement in East Jerusalem as compared to the rest of the OPT.

Profile of High Risk Areas: Living Conditions and Socio-economic Status

The research highlighted the striking vulnerabilities of families living in high risk areas with regards to their housing conditions, access to basic services, socio-economic status and their psychosocial well-being. Approximately half of the surveyed families had changed their residence since 2000.

Housing Conditions and Ownership of Land

Most families living in high risk areas in the OPT own land and rely on agriculture for their livelihood. In the West Bank, land confiscation and movement and access restrictions as a result of checkpoints and the Separation Wall have threatened their livelihoods. In Gaza, the dangers associated with accessing land located adjacent to or within the buffer zone have similarly threatened livelihoods. Housing conditions for families were poor, especially near the Gaza buffer zone where over one-third of families were either living in a partially destroyed house or next to their destroyed house.

- In the areas in or near the Gaza buffer zone, 22% of respondents were living in a partially destroyed house and 12% in a tent over the rubble of their damaged house.
- In the West Bank, 15% of respondents in high risk areas identified inadequate shelter as a reason for changing their residence either permanently or temporarily since the year 2000.
- 51% of the population in high risk areas own land, and a high percentage rely on it for their livelihoods (see below).
- 29% of high risk area respondents said that they have received land confiscation orders since 1993, compared with 9% in the rest of the OPT. In the West Bank alone, 39% of respondents said they had received land confiscation orders since 1993.
- In the West Bank, 58% of families in high risk areas own land. 50% of households in high risk areas stated that their land was located behind the Separation Wall; 68% cannot access their land as a result.
- Movement restrictions and checkpoints also restricted respondents' ability to market agricultural goods with 96% of surveyed respondents in high risk areas stating they either faced difficulty marketing goods or could not market their goods at all.

- In Gaza, 42% of families in high risk areas own land. 30% of households in high risk areas stated that their land was located within the buffer zone; 55% cannot access their land as a result.
- 88% of households surveyed in areas near the buffer zone either faced difficulty marketing goods or could not market their goods at all.

Availability of basic needs and services

Families living in high risk areas have less access to basic needs and services compared with the general population. In the West Bank, services such as education, health, and water and sanitation were less available to families than in areas near the Gaza buffer zone.

- 37% of respondents from high risk areas said they have sufficient food, compared with 70% among the general population in the OPT.
- In the West Bank, 92% of households in high risk areas said that health services were either 'not available' or 'somewhat available'⁴ compared with 34% among the general West Bank population.
- In Gaza, 65% of respondents in high risk areas said that health services were 'not available' or 'somewhat available' compared with 41% among the general Gaza population.
- 2% of households in high risk areas in the West Bank have access to sanitation services, in comparison with 61% among the general West Bank population.
- 26% in high risk areas in Gaza report access to sanitation services, compared to 60% for the rest of Gaza.
- 45% of respondents in high risk areas said that education services were 'available' and 50% responded 'somewhat available' compared with 62% and 30% respectively among the general population.

Income/ Poverty and Livelihood

Many families living in high risk areas in the West Bank and Gaza have lost their sources of livelihood since 2000 and face increasing poverty as a result. While families in Gaza have relied on the availability of humanitarian assistance and charities to cushion the impacts, these forms of assistance have been less available to marginalized families in the West Bank.

⁴ Respondents were asked to choose from the following: 'available,' 'somewhat available' or 'not available.' Somewhat available means only partially available.

- Roughly 70% of respondents in high risk areas live below the poverty line⁵ compared with 35% among the general population in the OPT.
- 34% of surveyed households in high risk areas rely on agriculture and herding activities as a first source of income, most on land that they own.
- 45% of breadwinners in high risk areas in the West Bank and Gaza have lost their job or sources of livelihood since 2000.
- In Gaza, humanitarian assistance provided by UNRWA and charities made up a significant source of income for high risk households at 52% and 27% respectively.
- In the West Bank high risk areas, humanitarian assistance is not available for most families with only 12% receiving assistance from either UNRWA or charities as a source of income.
- In the West Bank high risk areas, 10% of respondents felt they were secure economically, compared to 36% of the general West Bank population.

Security/ Protection and Psychosocial Well-Being

Lack of personal security as a result of the Israeli occupation is a major concern for families living in high risk areas in the OPT. The population in high risk areas also experience higher rates of depression than among the general population in the OPT.

- More than half of respondents living in high risk areas said that they did not feel secure in their area of residence while 29% felt only somewhat secure. The main reason cited (68%) was the policies of the Israeli occupation.
- 75% of the respondents in the high risk areas report feeling depressed compared with 56% of the general population.

Displacement Triggers

This section outlines the triggers or factors that have caused displacement among the families surveyed. Common reasons for displacement in the West Bank and Gaza include house demolition and loss of income or sources of livelihood. In the West Bank, land confiscation or eviction or-

⁵ The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) has set the poverty line at 2,200 NIS (583 USD) per month for a family of two adults and four children.

ders, and lack of available services were also significant causes of forced displacement. In Gaza, concern for personal security caused families to be displaced.

- 49% of respondents in high risk areas have either temporarily or permanently changed their residence since the year 2000.
- In the West Bank, the main reasons for displacement were Israeli orders (31%), house demolition (23%) and inadequate shelter⁶ (15%).
- In Gaza, the main factors behind displacement were house demolition (48%) and a lack of personal security (28%).
- 23% of respondents in high risk areas have had their houses threatened with demolition since 1993 compared with 8% for the rest of the OPT.
- 38% of households in high risk areas changed their place of residence following loss of their job/source of income. An additional 41% of respondents had thought about changing their residence for the same reason but could not.
- 29% of respondents in high risk areas would like to move to a new residence. In the West Bank, the main reason cited was lack of access to services (36%). In Gaza, respondents cited concerns for personal security (42%) as the primary reason.

Coping / Response Strategies

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Families, in particular in the West Bank, face worsening conditions after a displacement event regardless of the reason. Coping strategies – such as receiving assistance from organizations, reliance on social support networks, and selling property or belongings – are used more extensively in high risk areas compared with the rest of the OPT. However, in high risk areas, coping strategies are either dwindling or are not available.

- 49% of households surveyed in high risk areas in the West Bank said that assistance from international organizations is ‘not available’ whereas 12% of households in high risk areas in Gaza said that assistance was ‘not available.’
- 62% of families displaced in the West Bank said that the availability of water was worse⁷ after their displacement compared with 15%

⁶ Also includes, for example, lack of electricity, running water and sewage network in the house.

⁷ Respondents were asked to choose from the following: ‘better than before,’ ‘no change’ or ‘worse from before.’

in Gaza. In terms of health and education services, in the West Bank, 57% and 42% of respondents said access to services were worse following displacement compared with 20% and 7% in Gaza respectively.

- 40% of respondents from high risk areas in the West Bank have sent their children to work at least a few times and about 75% have reduced their standards of living in order to cope with their situation.
- Most families who have been threatened with demolition (65%) or land confiscation orders (79%) did not receive legal assistance because they did not know how to access assistance (48%) or they lost hope (46%). When legal assistance was sought and received, the Palestinian Authority provided most of the legal assistance in the West Bank (45%) while international organizations provided the most support in Gaza (38%).

Suggested response

Based on the research findings and experience from the forced displacement project funded by the Humanitarian Aid department of the European Commission, and in line with the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, Save the Children UK recommends a comprehensive, coordinated inter-agency response to forced displacement in the OPT which includes the following four components:

- **Prevention:** infrastructure and livelihoods support, health and education services, vocational training and capacity building, formation of Community Protection Committees, legal aid, psychosocial support and advocacy.
- **Emergency response:** shelter; livestock, water and food provisions, family reunification, legal aid, provision of educational and child recreational kits and mother-and-child psychosocial support; remedial education support, host family support and registration.
- **Rehabilitation:** shelter; livelihoods support, vocational and technical training, counselling and psychosocial care, remedial education support, host family support, identification of long-term solutions, and advocacy.
- **Durable solutions:** return to original location of residence, restitution, compensation, or integration.

Children in high risk communities need and deserve special attention, especially following a displacement event. Save the Children UK recommends the following child-focused response:

- **Prevention:** improvement of infrastructure related to education and health access including support for transportation to schools, child participation in Community Protection Committees, dissemination of child rights information, livelihoods programming, psychosocial support and advocacy.
- **Emergency response:** provision of educational supplies and recreational kits, psychosocial support.
- **Rehabilitation:** counselling, educational support or tutoring, safe play activities, vocational and technical training for youth, youth-focused empowerment activities.
- **Durable solutions:** participation in decision making around long-term solutions for the family or community.

In the West Bank, families experienced longer periods of displacement (more than one year) and moved further away from their communities compared with families in Gaza⁸. Although they face deteriorating socio-economic conditions and less access to services, almost half say that humanitarian assistance is not available to them.

In Gaza, although military incursions cause displacement on a large scale, families frequently move back to their communities once calm prevails. Although assistance is more available to families in Gaza, loss of livelihoods and ongoing protection concerns as a result of Israel's current buffer zone policy makes this population especially vulnerable to increased and long-term reliance on humanitarian aid.

⁸ 68% of families in high risk areas in the West Bank who changed their residence did so for more than one year compared with 38% of families in Gaza high risk areas. 23% of families in high risk areas in the West Bank who changed their residence moved to a different governorate compared with 4% of families in Gaza high risk areas. In contrast, 8% of families in high risk areas in the West Bank who changed their residence moved within the same district compared with 27% of families in Gaza high risk areas.

Impacts on Children

Education:

- In high risk areas, 45% of respondents said that education services were 'available' and 50% responded 'somewhat available' compared with 62% and 30% respectively among the general population.
- 20% of respondents in high risk areas stated that the availability of education services was 'worse' following a displacement event compared with the majority of respondents who stated there was 'no change.'
- House demolition has been identified as the most common displacement trigger for families living in high risk areas in the OPT. Following a house demolition, Save the Children's research⁹ has shown a decline in children's educational achievement and ability to study.

Poverty:

- 33% of respondents from high risk areas in the West Bank and Gaza have sent their children to work at least a few times as a means of maintaining living standards following a displacement event.

Psychosocial status:

- 75% of the respondents in the high risk areas report feeling depressed compared with 56% of the general population.
- The psychological state of parents has a major impact on the children's mental health, especially for children under 12 years¹⁰.
- Children whose houses have been demolished show a decline in their mental health, suffering classic signs of trauma, becoming withdrawn, depressed and anxious¹¹.

⁹ Save the Children UK, Broken Homes: Addressing the Impact of House Demolitions on Palestinian Children and Families, June 2009. Available at http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/en/54_8431.htm

¹⁰ See Save the Children UK 'Broken Homes' report.

¹¹ Ibid.

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