



May 11, 2015

Dear friends, partners, volunteers and supporters!

This is our second report to you about developments in the Aid Watch Palestine initiative, and what progress we have made! It has been a difficult period but we have achieved a lot. Many of the details are included in this quarterly report.

But let me start by saying that Aid Watch Palestine is indebted to many of you for your unfailing support since we started building the idea of a Palestinian-led transparency and accountability initiative. We've only recently received a small amount of funding; most of the work is still done by volunteers, and we intend to keep that spirit alive.

Aid Watch Palestine isn't launched yet, but we have recruited a director in Ramallah and representative in Gaza and are building our profile through media and networking. We're building our analysis and strategy in response to many, many consultations with Palestinian community members and aid actors.

So all dear friends, thanks for all the support and stay tuned!

Best,

Nora

Quarterly Report: January - March 2015

Governance

Transparency and accountability are important in the aid system, and we strive to model these values in our own work as well. We are accountable in many ways, but among the most important mechanisms is the steering committee, which acts like a board of directors. The steering committee supervises the director and represents diverse community voices at the policy and strategy levels of the initiative. They also help with all kinds of work, including facilitating the progress of building a new, sensitive initiative in a highly politicized and logistically challenging place.

Earlier this year, we had several resignations among steering committee members, for various reasons, and this caused a delay and additional work. However, recognizing the importance of credible and committed leadership, the remaining members reached out and we're very pleased to have an excellent group: Basma Abu Swai (Ramallah), Hadeel Qazzaz (Canada), Jaber Qudeh

(Gaza), Siham Rashid (Jerusalem), Ibrahem Shatali (Gaza) and Amal Zakout (Gaza).

We also decided to change our fiscal sponsor to Dalia Association. The fiscal sponsor is important because they host and manage our finances and ensure that we follow good accounting and administrative practices. Dalia Association, Palestine's community foundation, provides fiscal sponsorship to other initiatives and is extremely supportive of our mission. They are partnering with Aid Watch on programmatic aspects as well.

Our donors were supportive and committed throughout these changes.

Resource Mobilisation

Donors and potential donors continued to show interest in the work of Aid Watch Palestine, but it often takes longer than expected to receive funding. We have 22,100 Euro from Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung (part of their "alternatives to aid dependence" program) and they are also directly procuring research in Gaza for us to use. Medico International has committed 10,000 Euro, about \$3000 from Dalia Association, and we received an unsolicited contribution from Joffe Charitable Trust in the UK in the amount of 2,500 GBP. Other funding is under consideration.

Finding long-term, sustainable core funding is a daunting task for any new effort, and for us it is made harder by our critical approach to aid and our desire to ensure that we remain independent and credible – despite the fact that we are part of the aid system that we hope to change.

We are especially proud and encouraged by the steady and generous support of a tremendous number of volunteers. First and foremost among them are Peace Geeks in Canada who are designing the Aid Watch website pro bono and Beyond Designs in Ramallah who are doing the programming, also pro bono. Their contributions – and that of tens of volunteer writers, editors, translators and others – is worth more than we can calculate. Through their participation (and yours!) Aid Watch Palestine takes form as an independent civil society initiative that can make a real difference.

Human Resources

In this period, Nora Lester Murad continued to work as the acting director on a voluntary basis. Heba Hayek (Gaza) and Abed Khooli (Ramallah) worked part-time. A hiring committee was formed to recruit our first, paid director and an Aid System Liaison in Gaza to start in Q2. A long list of volunteers helped with all aspects of the work including administrative work, fundraising, writing, translating and more.

Advocacy, Media and Communications

A lot of our attention in the first quarter has been on building our profile through social media, especially Facebook. This has been important for a number of reasons including funding, networking and credibility. We also use social media

for recruitment of staff and volunteers and to get input on what interests our community.

As a result of our increasing visibility, we were contacted by a diplomat doing policy research related to aid and were able, over several off-the-record exchanges, to contribute to the framing of government policy about aid.

We were interviewed by various journalists resulting in several articles critiquing aid:

NEED TO ADD IN ALL THE ARTICLES HERE

Nora Lester Murad published “Israel devastated Gaza but ‘aid’ helps keep it that way” in the *Huffington Post* http://www.huffingtonpost.com/nora-lester-murad/israel-devastated-gaza-bu_b_6925602.html

Over the coming period, when more staff in place, we can focus more on quality articles and background pieces that could be of interest to the most influential media outlets.

Research partnerships/cooperation

The core of our work is cooperating to analyse aid information and generate discussion about better approaches. In this period, despite not having staff in place, we made considerable progress networking with tens of like-minded or data-interested organisations, both Palestinian and international. Some of these will develop into partnerships; meanwhile we are identifying opportunities.

The resignation of our socio-economic research partner and our inability to get data that we have confidence in instigated new thinking about our entire approach. We initially thought that good aid data is available, just dispersed. Now we believe the data problem is much deeper. So, we decided to focus less on getting data and more on how data is being used, to raise analysis and critique.

Website

Our partners, Peace Geeks (Canada) and Beyond Designs (Ramallah), worked very hard to shape our website, which we hope to launch in May. There have been innumerable meetings to discuss functionality, content, look and feel, and to ensure that we build on rather than compete with others’ work. This also included contributions from photographers and others.

The content is, of course, most important. We can’t rely only on the website to communicate with Palestinians and aid actors. In Gaza, access to the internet is not easy, especially giving the unreliable electricity situation. However, we want the website to represent the questions, discussions and recommendations coming from our outreach, so it needs to look good, make sense, be easy to use, and it has to be fully bilingual.

Then there has been the branding of our initiative and we have managed to get a logo and colors and a general look – thanks to Peace Geeks.

Administrative

Much time this quarter was spent on logistical challenges, most of which were not resolved. For example, the search for office space, both in Gaza and Ramallah is on-going. Shared space is preferable to reduce costs of rent in Ramallah but also of fuel and generator costs in Gaza. Unfortunately the need is getting higher with the new staff starting soon and already working staff being less efficient without access to office space and resources.

One challenge was successfully addressed. We needed to change fiscal sponsors and were pleased to have approval from Dalia Association in Ramallah. Dalia has opened sub-accounts for Aid Watch Palestine and is responsible for ensuring we follow correct contracting, procurement and financial control policies. They have been helpful in other ways too – allowing us to use their meeting room, loaning us equipment, and offering advice.

Conclusion

Every start-up has difficulties, and so have we, but we are managing well. For a new effort, we're encouraged by the incredible interest in and support for the idea of aid that is accountable to Palestinians. We welcome comments on this report and suggestions to improve our work in the coming period.