



## Quarterly Progress Report April- June 2015

This report, presents the main activities and development of the Aid Watch initiative, efforts at this period were invested in staffing of the main functions of AWP, and start translating some our strategy and vision into action, though the initiative is still keen to maintain its movement spirit, still an institutionalized support is needed. It has been a difficult period but we have achieved a lot. Many of the details are included in this report.

### **Governance**

During this period the steering committee met regularly, to carry out the various tasks needed to build the initiative, including follow up and supervision, and recruiting staff with clear responsibilities and scope of work.

The steering committee comprised of: Basma Abu Swai (Ramallah), Hadeel Qazzaz (Canada), Jaber Qudeh (Gaza), Siham Rashid (Jerusalem), Ibrahim Shatali (Gaza) and Amal Zakout (Gaza). All well-known civil society activists and have a long track record working with issues of development and aid, they are representing Aid Watch in different meetings and promoting it's ideology in various occasions.

Dalia Association, Palestine's community foundation, provides fiscal sponsorship for Aid Watch, among other initiatives and is extremely supportive of our mission. They are partnering with Aid Watch on programmatic aspects as well.

Volunteers continued to play major part in Aid Watch work, including 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 Aid Watch Palestine takes form as an independent civil society initiative that can make a real difference.

### **Human Resources**

In this period, Aid Watch recruited two central positions, Ayah Bashir, who started working in April 15<sup>th</sup>, as Aid System Liaison in Gaza her contract was signed directly by Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, and Mohanad Berekdar in his role as director who started working in May 11<sup>th</sup>. in addition, Heba Hayek (Gaza) and Abed Khooli (Ramallah) continued to work part-time. This was a significant

advancement of the work of Aid Watch with the enrolment of new paid staff producing more capacity to conduct work with full time employees. In late May, unfortunately, Ayah Bashir shared with us her decision to resign from her job, and submitted the work she has accomplished by that time, her resignation created a considerable set back in terms of work plan implementation and the kind of presence and partnerships in Gaza we were expecting from her to lead. We started looking for a new candidate to fill the position as soon as possible.

### **Advocacy, Media and Communications**

A lot of our attention in this period 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 among them: "Israel devastated Gaza but 'aid' helps keep it that way" in the *Huffington Post* [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/nora-lester-murad/israel-devastated-gaza-but-aid-helps-keep-it-that-way\\_b\\_6925602.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/nora-lester-murad/israel-devastated-gaza-but-aid-helps-keep-it-that-way_b_6925602.html) published by Nora Lester Murad.

At this period we initiated many conversations and meetings around Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism (GRM), in attempt to build/ join a pressure group to investigate the legitimacy and management of the mechanism, it's clear to us that it's a long term action, but we are starting from understanding the mechanism operating guidelines, and the different roles of relevant parties in it, to set later suggested steps how to tackle the issue.

### **Research partnerships/cooperation**

The core of our work is analyse aid information and generate discussion about better approaches through cooperation with various organisations and researchers, and creating new data and knowledge about aid. In this period, we decided to focus on two issues believing they will contribute to a critical discussion about aid accountability and transparency: the first, is exploring the question of How Israel is profiting from aid to Palestinians, we are aware of the complexity of the question, however, this is a part that hasn't been explored thoroughly, answering it will enrich the discussion of aid effectiveness. The second, is about aid actors' complaint systems, focusing on the openness and responsiveness of aid actors to their beneficiary's opinions, feedback and complaints. Again we are aiming to use this data to stimulate discussion and cooperate with like-minded organisations to suggest and co-create different approaches to aid.

Many organisations, researchers and activists expressed their interest in the subjects above in particular, and in the idea of Aid Watch in general, we're thinking together how each can best contribute to the development and expansion of the knowledge regarding aid, each from his own field of expertise.

During this period, we started working on the mapping study of the aid actors in Gaza, 10 organisations were interviewed, and compiled information about their roles in the reconstruction of Gaza, their opinions about the reconstruction and what potential steps can be made to improve the situation.

### **Website**

Our partners, Peace Geeks (Canada) and Beyond Designs (Ramallah), worked very hard to shape our website, which we hope to launch in the beginning of September. Allowing a testing period in August, 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.

The AWP web content is a major part of AWP's work and we have produced, edited, authored and translated related content as follows:

- Narrative stories from Gaza (English and Arabic): 9 pieces are ready for the site launch
- Aid indicators: 5 explanatory articles about aid and the situation in Gaza
- Blog articles: related guest and expert articles.
- Discussions: backgrounder information and threaded discussion on fundamental questions
- Advocacy section: action items for various concerned groups (Palestinians, aid actors and global citizens) and complaints process
- Multimedia: images acquired and movie raw material
- Resources ( up to date we have around 100 items): the following categories of resources are collected and added to the site (some important documents are being translated):
  - a. Key documents
  - b. Information portals
  - c. Aid Actors
  - d. Advocacy groups
  - e. Advocacy tools
  - f. Aid databases
  - g. News sources
  - h. Background information

- AWP general information (about): initiative brochure, rationale, principles, policies, terms of use, partners ... etc.
- Newsletters: sent to subscribers and volunteers
- Social media: AWP has both Facebook and Twitter accounts

### **Administrative**

Much time this period was spent on logistical challenges, some of which were resolved. For example, the search for a shared office space in Ramallah finally ended, and we share now a space with another organisation in Al Masyoun in Ramallah, that way we reduced the costs of rent and ongoing expenses like communication, furniture and printing, in Gaza this issue is not yet resolved, although the need is still high, especially because we are expecting a new staff member to start soon and already working staff being less efficient without access to office space and resources.

### **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. Recently we received funding from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation in the amount of USD 50,000, and USD 10,000 from sparkplug foundation as well.

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.

Sincerely yours,  
Mohanad Berekdar  
Director  
Aid Watch Palestine