



MAS

PALESTINE ECONOMIC POLICY
RESEARCH INSTITUTE (MAS)

Background Paper

Round Table (4)



Multidimensional Poverty in the Gaza Strip What Can Policies Do?

2025



MAS

**PALESTINE ECONOMIC POLICY
RESEARCH INSTITUTE (MAS)**

Tel No. +970 (2) 2987053/4

Fax No. +970 (2) 298055

info@mas.ps

www.mas.ps

Multidimensional Poverty in the Gaza Strip: What Can Policies Do?

Prepared by: Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS)

Background Paper
Roundtable (4)
2025

This paper was prepared with funding from Heinrich Boll Stiftung (Jordan and Palestine)

 **HEINRICH
BÖLL
STIFTUNG**
فلسطين والأردن

This document has been produced with the support of the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung. The views expressed herein are those of the author(s) and therefore do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung.

Contents

1. Introduction	01
2. Theoretical and Empirical Introductions to MDP	01
2.1 Global Approach to the Multidimensional Poverty Index	01
2.2 Palestine's Take on MPI	02
3. MDP Actors	03
4. Multidimensional Poverty in the Gaza Strip prior to the Devastating Aggression	04
4.1 MDP and Monetary Poverty	04
4.2 Social Indicators of MDP	05
5. A Look into MDP after October 20	05
5.1 Understanding the Damage	05
5.1.1 The Scale of Physical Destruction	06
5.1.2 Displacement and its MDP Implications	07
5.2 Financing and Priorities	08
6. Key Challenges for MDP-Combating Policy	09
6.1 Measuring amidst Devastation and Demographic Shifts	09
6.2 Financing Recovery of a 2-Year Aggression	10
6.3 MDP Alleviation and Power Relations	12
Discussion Questions	13
References	14

1. Introduction

As the 20th month of Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip unfolds, recent data has showed that the Israeli military aims have reached unprecedented destructive levels, targeting every vital sphere of the Gazan community's life. Mass physical destruction, as well as a choking siege are leaving Palestinians in the Gaza Strip with little-to-no chance of survival, as all vital socioeconomic sectors are impacted, likely leaving the entire population multidimensionally poor for years to come.

The National Strategy to Combat Multidimensional Poverty (MDP) (2023-2030) previously set a goal to reduce MDP levels in Palestine by 50%, from 24% to 12% by 2030 (MoSD, 2023). The new realities imposed by the ongoing devastating aggression in the Gaza Strip will likely create shifts in this agenda's aims, given the increase in the (already high) prevalence of MDP in the Gaza Strip. Understanding the key pillars of multidimensional poverty is essential for measuring current and future levels of MDP as well as the provision of meaningful and necessary interventions.

As such, this background paper aims to provide a brief overview of MDP in the Gaza Strip to stimulate discussion on its current reality and challenges to alleviate it in the aftermath of the aggression. It will begin by introducing MDP, then exploring MDP in Palestine, including its approach, measurement, actors, and its indicators before the current devastating aggression. After which, the background paper provides an overview of MDP amidst the aggression and offers topics of discussion on the challenges and MDP-alleviation policies in the aftermath of the aggression.

2. Theoretical and Empirical Introductions to MDP

2.1 Global Approach to the Multidimensional Poverty Index

To understand poverty and attempt to alleviate it, there are two key technicalities involved in the process, the first being how you define MDP, its dimensions and indicators, and the second includes how you identify poor people. The debate on how one measures poverty is long rooted in social and economic theory. Various theoretical attempts tackle the concept, and differ in main causes, as well as solutions, were explored in this regard.

Amartya Sen, a key scholar in forwarding a multidimensional approach, asserts that poverty does not rest entirely on the lack of money, but the inability to meet basic needs (Sen, 1992; 1993; 2002). This capability is then defined as a set of 'functions' that influence and evaluate a person's wellbeing, including being well nourished, healthy, educated, among others, and the 'freedom' or ability to pursue them. His approach is considered a rights-based approach to poverty where people are not poor because they lack sufficient resources, but because their rights, such as education and health, are not being met (Sen, 1992). Atkinson (1979; 2003) also used a similar 'counting' approach to poverty, where he focused on material deprivation. To identify which people are considered poor, Alkire-Foster (2007 & 2010) take both Sen's (1993) capability approach to deprivation, and Atkinson's (2003) counting method for measuring deprivation, and design the 'dual cut-off' method. In their design, the first cut-off determines whether an individual is deprived in a specific dimension, while the other cut-off identifies deprivation across dimensions by 'counting' each dimension where deprivation is identified.

A person then is considered multidimensionally poor if their total weight deprivation across all dimensions is less than 33%; meaning they are deprived of 33% of the 21 weighted indicators (PCBS, 2020), and severely multidimensionally poor if they are deprived of 50% of the indicators (UNDP and ESCWA, 2024). This method unpacks which dimensions largely contribute to the poverty of a specific socioeconomic group (Alkire and Foster, 2010) and provides a clear priority for individuals who have a wider deprivation. This is important to move forward in the discussion in the Gaza Strip given the scale of destruction to various infrastructures, and their essentiality in determining people's welfare deprivations according to how their specific demographic was impacted. With that, the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) came about, to include three dimensions of deprivation, with each containing 2-6 indicators. The health dimension includes nutrition and child mortality as indicators, education includes years of schooling and school attendance, and living standards includes cooking fuel, sanitation, drinking water, electricity, housing, and assets (OPHI and UNDP, 2024). Still, other measures such as the World Bank's approach to global poverty maintain that monetary poverty is the key component of poverty.¹

2.2 Palestine's Take on MPI

Palestinian literature on MDP has found said measurement inadequate in measuring Palestinian MDP. The literature cites various reasons for this conclusion claiming that Palestine is a conflict-ridden context characterized by restrictions, violence, and economic hardship, rendering poverty infrastructures different than other contexts and between regions within Palestine as well (Khawaja et al., 2021; ESCWA, 2021).

Up until 2017 Palestine used households' monthly expenditures as a measure of poverty and relied on data from the Palestine Expenditure and Consumption Survey (PECS) (MoSD, 2023). As of 2017 the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) has shifted its approach from monetary poverty to MDP with the recognition that poverty is a comprehensive structure that entails various forms of deprivation, and monetary and food provisions cannot possibly provide a cushion for households to withstand economic or social shocks (MoSD, 2023). The PECS was then readjusted in 2017 to requisite the needed data to design an MPI. With that, the Palestine MPI was launched in 2020.²

Palestine's MPI differs from the global MPI in two ways. First, in that it is a rights-based approach where the dimensions correspond to rights specified within Palestinian laws. The second one resides in the weight distribution assigned to dimensions and indicators; while weights are assigned equally in the global MPI, the Palestinian MPI assigns 20% of overall poverty to monetary poverty, and the rest to the remaining social dimensions (PCBS, 2020). The Palestinian MPI, thus, combines two concepts of wellbeing to measure deprivation, economic proxied by income under the national poverty line, and social wellbeing proxied by several indicators (Table 1). United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) also forwarded a model that contextualizes the measurements even more, by creating different indices for the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, each determined by a set of prevailing factors that impact MDP, such as the siege in the Gaza Strip, and demolitions in the West Bank (ESCWA, 2021). The

1. "Global and Regional Poverty Trends, 1990-2024," World Bank, accessed on 28/05/2025, at: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/understanding->

2. "Palestine, State of MP," National MPI Directory, OPHI, OCID, and University of Oxford, accessed on 28/05/2025, at: <https://ophi.org.uk/>

issue of implementing interventions under the MDP framework is not without problems; even after adjusting the proxy-means test to include various forms of deprivation, the database still was inefficient in identifying multidimensionally poor families. While establishing the National Social Registry (NSG) came to serve as a unified database for those working within the social protection system, the Registry did not expand its coverage to include those not previously included in the MoSD database, leading to problems with exclusivity (MAS, 2023a). Data wise, the Registry also does not aggregate for specific demographics, such as head of household by sex, thus excludes female-headed households, which are proven to face higher rates of deprivation.

Table 1: Palestine Multidimensional Poverty Index

Dimensions	Indicators
Education	School enrolment
	Class repetition
	Education attainment
	Quality of education
health	Disability
	Chronic disease
	Health insurance
	Health access
Employment	Unemployment
	Employment benefits
	Quality of work
	Youth not in education, employment or training (NEET)
Housing	Access to piped water
	Frequency of water and electricity supply
	Ventilation problems
	Overcrowding
Safety and use of assets	Theft or damage to property
	Ownership and use of assets
	Interpersonal and state violence
Personal freedom	Freedom of movement
	Control over women's income or participation in the labor market
Monetary resources	National poverty line

Source: PCBS. (2020). Multi-Dimensional Poverty Profile in Palestine, 2017. Ramallah – Palestine.

3. MDP Actors

There are several key actors involved in MDP alleviation in Palestine, including local and international organizations. On the national level, the Ministry of Social Development is considered the key governmental institution responsible for MDP, however, as MDP is intersectional, that means that other strategies of other governmental institutions overlap, such as the Ministry of Health, Ministry

of Education, Ministry of Labor, among others. The United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) remains the key provider of services that fall under MDP alleviation, as it provides health and education services, as well as some cash and in-kind assistance to Palestinian refugees, including those in Palestine (2.5 million). Other international organizations whose work focuses on specific dimensions or indicators include UNICEF, WFP, WHO, UNDP, FAO, MAP, UNFPA, MSF, ANERA,³ Save the Children, among others. Local NGOs also provide forms of non-contributory in-kind assistance, psychosocial assistance, and health services. It is crucial though, to reiterate what previous research conducted by MAS has reported; the anti-poverty institutional network is characterized by high fragmentation, lack of coordination, inefficient in targeting and poverty-alleviation (Shalabi et al., 2024; MAS, 2023b; Khalidi et al., 2025; Rafeedie, 2025).

4. Multidimensional Poverty in the Gaza Strip prior to the Devastating Aggression

To understand the gravity of the challenges that lay ahead in terms of alleviating MDP in the Gaza Strip after the aggression, it is essential to place the current and predicted MDP devastation within the overall context of wellbeing in the Gaza Strip. Despite the gap between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, MDP remains relatively high in both regions due to the occupation and its policies to weaken the Palestinian economy and livelihood (MoSD, 2023), with its prevalence almost four times higher than the West Bank (45% vs 11%) (PCBS, 2020). MDP in Palestine was 22.1% in 2017, whereas monetary poverty was 29.2%, meaning that poverty in Palestine is mainly driven by monetary poverty (MoSD, 2023).

For context-specific factors, reasons for high MDP rates in the Gaza Strip include the overarching reason of the 15-year Israeli-imposed siege, as well as the continuous aggressions that leave little-to-no room for recovery and reconstruction. The economic productive cycle has always been under stress with shackled movement of goods and individuals, high restrictions on types of products that are able to enter the Strip, and accessibility and utilization of natural resources. This has resulted in a weak economy, that has been lagging since 2007, with its contribution to the GDP persistently decreasing, resulting in high levels of unemployment, and a correspondent high level of monetary deprivation.

4.1 MDP and Monetary Poverty

According to the most recent MDP data in 2017, 67.7% of the Gazan population have income that is less than the national poverty line (NIS 2479), making them monetarily poor, while 53.9% of the Gazan population suffer from extreme monetary poverty (MoSD, 2023). Even prior to the aggression, the monetary poverty rate increased from 59% to 65% between 2021-2022, while food insecurity went up from 62.2% to 65%, and 80% of the population were reliant on humanitarian aid (OCHA oPt, 2023; UNICEF, 2022a). To dissect these deprivations and understand their underlying causes, it is important to note that monetary poverty in the Gaza Strip was the highest contributor to MPI (45%) followed by employment and housing conditions (both 11.7%), and then education (10.7). The smallest contributor to poverty is health at 4.4% (PCBS, 2020).

3. United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, World Food Program, World Health Organization, United Nations Development Program, Food and Agriculture Organization, Medical Aid for Palestinians, United Nations Population Fund, Médecins Sans Frontières, and American Near East Refugee Aid

With a weak economy characterized by shackled production, weak markets, and impeded trade, unemployment rates in the Gaza Strip reached 45% in 2022 (PCBS, 2023), thus impacting people's monetary indicators. Monetary deprivation, which stood at 53% in 2017 (PCBS, 2020), has impacted people's purchasing power, but also their accessibility to various services, thus directly affecting their deprivation in other dimensions, such as health access. This is not to limit deprivation to monetary reasons, but rather the occupation remains the key factor in increasing MDP levels.

4.2 Social Indicators of MDP

The health sector has long suffered from the 15-year siege, even prior to the aggression. In addition to the blockade on the entry of medical equipment, medication, and specific equipment, Palestinians' ability to receive healthcare has been severely limited by this blockade. Patients with chronic and rare disease and cancer rarely receive permits to be treated outside of the Strip. In 2022, 33% of patient permit applications were either denied or delayed (WHO, 2022). Education indicators show a different situation, as the education dimension contributes to 11% to MDP in the Gaza Strip (PCBS, 2020). A mere 13.87% suffer from deprivation in school enrolment according to the MPI in the Gaza Strip (Table 2). When looking at its indicators, we can see that child enrollment rates are high in Palestine, including the Gaza Strip, as well as completion rates for basic education and for secondary level education despite geographical and gender disparities (UNICEF, 2022b).⁴ However that does not indicate optimal educational conditions.

In terms of accessibility to water and electricity and frequency in use, the subsequent aggressions on the Strip have left WASH infrastructure severely weak, with the 2021 aggression causing a 30% decline in the per capita water consumption, whereas 97% of extracted water in the Gaza Strip is unsafe for human consumption (PCBS and PWA, 2023; ARIJ, 2022), which has historically raised concerns linked to spread of disease. Similarly for electricity, the gap between electricity supply and demand is 240 megawatts, and household electricity expenditure was higher than in the West Bank, relative to monthly income (Shalabi et al., 2024). Deprivation of frequent access to both electricity and water reached about 30% of the population according to 2017's MDP levels (table 2).

5. A Look into MDP after October 2023

5.1 Understanding the Damage

Countries that regularly face conflict are known to have higher percentages of people deprived in all 10 global MPI indicators, particularly when it comes to deprivations in nutrition, electricity and WASH services (OPHI and UNDP, 2024). The previous section has shown validity of this in the context of the Gaza Strip and continues to be in the case of the current aggression. As MDP is impacted by 21 indicators encompassing different spheres of society, it is natural that the destruction of this magnitude has impacted various indicators of MDP, at different levels. Since different forms of deprivation impact other forms, this could have devastating future implications.

4. "Literacy Rates for Individuals (15 years and over) in the Gaza Strip according to Gender and Age, 1995, 1997, 2000-2022," PCBS, accessed on 02/06/2025, at: https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_Rainbow/Documents/Education-1994-2022-11A3.html

5.1.1 The Scale of Physical Destruction

As of April 2025, over 70 thousand structures were damaged or destroyed given Israel's aggression on the Gaza Strip (UNOSAT, 2025). Israel has simultaneously imposed further restrictions on movement of people and goods, and conducted targeted attacks to Gaza's vital productive sectors, thus deliberately produced harsh survival conditions, with the aim of making the Gaza Strip uninhabitable (MAS, 2023c; 2023d).⁵

In terms of physical destruction, all indicators of MDP were impacted by the physical destruction, including destruction to water pipes, electricity networks, and most importantly housing units, schools and universities, health centers, and private sector establishments that provide employment. The housing sector received the largest share of destruction, with over 92% of housing units destroyed by the end of 2024 (OCHA oPt, 2025a), causing displacement of the entire population (some individuals displaced more than 10 times). Other physical destruction included deliberate attacks on the health infrastructure; 94% of all hospitals were either damaged or destroyed, and 19 out of 36 hospitals remain operating with only 12 able to provide a variety of health services as of May 2025 (WHO, 2025). Two million people are suffering from the system's inability to provide healthcare with only 2000 hospital beds remaining, with about 900 at risk of being lost (WHO, 2025). With hospitals destroyed and movement on medical equipment and medication denied, patients are left with no proper healthcare and no way out, given the refusal of patient permits. Currently, up to 12,500 patients require medical evacuations outside of the Strip (OCHA oPt, 2025b). In an ESCWA MDP simulation, the results indicate that the decrease in injuries in the Gaza Strip in 2020 and 2021 positively impacted MDP levels nationwide (ESCWA, 2022). With that in mind, it is essential to highlight the large number of injured because of the current aggression to understand the impact this would have on future levels of MDP. As of June 2025, the aggression left over 130 thousand Palestinians injured,⁶ about 25% of whom are estimated to need acute rehabilitation (WHO, 2024), while UNICEF estimates report 3000-4000 children with amputated limbs (Moor, 2025).

As for livelihood, with the destruction of nearly all productive capacities, Gaza's production declined by 84% in 2024 causing an 82% decline in the number of employed people (PCBS, 2024b). The aggression has pushed nearly all the population into unemployment, except those working in relief and vital professions. As a result, those deprived of monetary resources out of the Gaza population have nearly doubled between 2023 and 2024 (UNDP and ESCWA, 2024). The most recent Labor Force Survey has revealed that 83% of workers were not working due to the aggression, while 62.1% are working from refugee camps or shelters (PCBS, 2025a).

5. See also: Humanitarian Situation Updates – OCHA oPt, at: https://www.ochaopt.org/?_gl=1*_gtgzuz*_ga*MjYzMjgyMjMwLjE3NDg3Nzg3MTk.*

6. For more on data on the aggression: <https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/>

Table 2: Gaza Strip Poverty Metric

Category	Indicator	2016–2017 (% of deprived from population)	2023–2024 (% of deprived from population)
Housing conditions and access to services	Ventilation problems in dwelling	39.10%	80%
	Overcrowding	42.11%	80%
	Frequency of water and electricity supply	31.77%	95%
	Access to piped water	3.32%	75%
Employment	Unemployment	15.57%	80%
Safety and use of assets	Theft or damage to property	10.68%	70%
	Ownership and use of assets	1.82%	80%
	Interpersonal and State violence	63.16%	70%
Personal freedom	Freedom of movement	8.90%	60%
Health	Chronic disease	10.39%	12%
	Disability	18.97%	30%
	Health access	1.13%	70%
Education	School enrolment	13.87%	70%
Monetary resources (Social expenditure)	Monetary poverty	53.00%	90%

Source: UNDP and ESCWA. (2024). Expected Socioeconomic Impacts on the State of Palestine.

It is essential to note that UNDP and ESCWA's analysis only covers the first year of aggression, and so rates of deprivation have likely increased as the intensity of the aggression has increased in the last three months. Additionally, these results likely undermine the actual MDP deprivations that are faced given that the assumptions used to build these projections focused on access to needs rather than quality of services (UNDP and ESCWA, 2024), which have been severely impaired given the mass destruction. Relatedly, Jawad Saleh from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), also noted in an interview that concepts and indicators of MDP have nearly lost their meaning given the scale of destruction. Most important to note in the past three months is the rapid increase in food insecurity, which has likely impacted the nutrition indicators for both children and adults. It is projected that the population in Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) Phase 3 or above will increase from the previous 83% to 100%, with 76% in either Phase 4 or 5 (IPC, 2025).

5.1.2 Displacement and its MDP Implications

Understanding the relationship between forced displacement and MDP alleviation is essential. Here, forced displacement during the aggression, and in its aftermath, give the destruction of over 92% of housing units, will likely have vast impacts on the alleviation of MDP in the future. Displaced

communities are also proven to face deprivation in nearly all indicators, in comparison to non-displaced communities (Admasu et al., 2021). Some forms of deprivation related to displacement and refugee communities include food insecurity, diminished livelihood opportunities, and conflict over limited resources (Admasu et al., 2021). This is essential when understanding MDP in the Gaza Strip, particularly since emerging data from the Strip confirm these impacts, with 90% of the population are Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) level 3 or above in the food insecurity classification, meaning they are in states of either crisis, emergency, or catastrophic insecurity (IPC, 2025), even prior to the humanitarian aid blockade forced by Israel on the Strip. Recent research from Palestine has shown correlation between food insecurity and displacement in the Gaza Strip (MAS, 2025).

Other forms of deprivation related to displacement are caused by the displacement of Palestinians into shelter centers that are characterized by mass crowding, and high risk of spread of contagious disease due to already restricted access to WASH services, including sanitation-related threats from rodents, pests, solid waste, and excreta or sewage release (OCHA oPt, 2025c). In addition, nearly all the population is deprived of frequent access to water and electricity, as 89% and 80% of WASH assets and electricity networks have been destroyed or damaged, respectively (OCHA oPt, 2025c).⁷ The education sector also had its share of physical destruction with 509 schools and universities partially and totally destroyed,⁸ while remaining schools have been used to shelter the displaced population. All of Gaza's students (625 thousand) do not have access to education (PCBS, 2024a).

5.2 Financing and Priorities

According to the three scenarios that UNDP and ESCWA presented in their October 2024 report, MDP in the future will be affected by how the recovery phase is characterized. Still, no scenario shows complete alleviation of MDP in the coming years, given the amount of destruction. In the worst-case scenario, marked by continued withholding of clearance revenue and limited aid, MDP levels will continue to be extremely high. Even with receiving \$280 million in aid, poverty will remain nearly unchanged, as the aid amount cannot compensate for damage and produce long-term economic recovery (UNDP and ESCWA, 2024). Even with the restoration of all clearance revenue and the receipt of another \$500 million for recovery and humanitarian aid, poverty will improve slightly, but it will not be completely resolved given the severity of the situation (UNDO and ESCWA, 2024).

UNDP and ESCWA (2024) provide an optimized-resource allocation approach that prioritizes housing and access to services such as water and electricity, followed by restoring the health sector, then re-instating private ownership and reconstructing of homes, education, and ensuring school enrollment. Their optimal allocation model, however, de-prioritizes monetary transfers in the post-aggression conditions, asserting that focus should be infrastructure, housing, and education. In contrast, a recent analysis by MAS revealed that Palestinians in the Gaza Strip are in dire need of urgent support, with monetary and food assistance being the two most prominent needs across all age groups (Khalidi et al., 2025). Monetary needs were the top needs according

7. See more: United Nations – Unifed, “Gaza / Electricity Crisis,” accessed on: [GAZA / ELECTRICITY CRISIS | UNifed](#)

8. For more on data on the aggression: <https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/>

to respondents (71% of respondents), followed by food assistance (62%), housing assistance (31%), employment (19%), and finally medical assistance (11%). All these highlight the different rates of deprivation people are going through and showcases people's own priorities to post-aggression support in terms of MDP. People's policy priorities also reflect different degrees of deprivation; with improving the job market, limiting inflation, and instating safety and security, being the highest three priorities according to them. This reflects the necessity of community engagement and ownership of MDP relief and recovery efforts in the aftermath of the aggression.

6. Key Challenges for MDP-Combating Policy

While current efforts, as the aggression is ongoing, cannot possibly be MDP-alleviating per se, it is essential to understand how current realities can impact future MDP alleviation interventions and policies. Additionally, it is crucial that poverty-alleviation or humanitarian interventions be provided in a way that retains human dignity. Evidence emerging from the Gaza Strip reveals that this is not the case.

6.1 Measuring amidst Devastation and Demographic Shifts

It is crucial to understand the demographic shifts that can impact the possibility of delivering key aid. As the aggression is happening, provisions are, by nature, relief oriented, given that nearly the entire population is impacted by all forms of deprivation, particularly monetary deprivation, and various degrees of malnutrition. Once the aggression ceases, recovery efforts join those of relief nature, to begin gradually alleviating people's deprivation. MDP interventions could then begin to function systematically by targeting specific deprivations for specific households or communities and avoid issues of inclusivity and exclusivity.

Research has shown that when aggregating by gender, female headed households generally face higher levels of deprivation in the various dimensions of MDP (Admasu et al., 2021). This is important given the increase in female-headed households in the Gaza Strip given the martyrdom rates, and already lower levels of females out of the labor market that now need to bear the burden of providing for their families. Demographic shifts are also being observed for the children category, an already vulnerable socioeconomic group; the aggression has resulted in over 39 thousand orphans (PCBS, 2025b), and an increase in child-headed households (OCHA oPt, 2025d), which increases vulnerabilities related to schooling, health, food security, and prospects for social protection. Additionally, it is essential to account for the large increase in disabilities and what that could mean for employment policies, and labor market requirements. MDP generally provides the necessary lens to understand how different socioeconomic groups experience deprivation and how different forms of deprivation overlap, allowing for more targeted policy interventions, through the 'dual cut-off' system which allows for decomposability (Alkire and Foster, 2011). However, this calls for larger joint and coordinated efforts to compensate for the massive demographic shifts in the Gaza Strip, including constant and repetitive displacement, and the expansion of some vulnerable socioeconomic groups, such as people with disabilities. A serious reform of the MoSD's database in collaboration with international organizations is needed to allow for better disaggregation of socio-demographic data and beneficiary-targeting to overcome exclusion and coverage dilemmas through unification of data, this will likely impact poverty alleviation efforts.

Measuring multidimensional poverty, even in contexts of relative tranquility, large surveying efforts are needed on both the individual and household level to precisely calculate the levels of deprivation at those levels as well as the overall trends in deprivation nationwide. Most importantly, single-source data is a requirement to conduct MDP measurement (PCBS, 2020). In the Palestinian case, the Palestine Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) conducts the surveying and provides the data of the Consumption and Expenditure Survey (PECS) required for the MPI, with 2016\2017 data being the latest available (PCBS, 2020). Early 2023 the PCBS began surveying PECS, which was halted in the Gaza Strip because of the aggression and not resumed as a result. This survey usually takes a year until it is conducted, and all the data is collected,⁹ and thus, even in the aftermath of the aggression, no results will be provided immediately on the reality of MDP in the Gaza Strip. This will lead to resorting to projection models based on the 2017 results, which can be inaccurate given that the previous data focused on access to services, but not the quality of said services, which has been severely impacted as a result (UNDP and ESCWA, 2024). Yet this remains a trivial challenge when compared to other empirical challenges related to data collection and statistical analysis for MDP.

Concepts and definitions of various inputs required for an MDP measurement and index have severely been altered with the demographic shift. Concepts essential for surveying such as housing units, neighborhoods, households have all but changed, requiring mass restructuring and reforming of the statistical inputs required to conduct the survey, according to Jawad Saleh of PCBS. He also adds that the indicators themselves need reformulation to capture the new reality of deprivation. For example, deprivation in education used to be measured by school enrollment or quality of education, but schools have been destroyed, thus new indicators are needed. The same applies to other indicators such as monetary deprivation, given its widespread prevalence in the Gaza Strip. This further asserts the need for extensive, collaborative efforts to mitigate the wide-scale deprivation and displacement.

6.2 Financing Recovery of a 2-Year Aggression

As the aggression is still unfolding, it is still early to precisely estimate the cost of relief, recovery, and reconstruction of vital arenas for MDP alleviation. However, the World Bank, European Union, and the United Nations have presented estimates for short and long-term recovery, using their assessment of damage and losses for the first year of the aggression (World Bank, European Union and United Nations, 2025). Financially speaking, social sectors which include housing, health, social protection, and education, which make up the bulk of the calculation of deprivation, require the largest amount of financing, specifically for the housing sector (Table 3).

9. PCBS, Central Data Catalog, "Household Expenditure and Consumption Survey 2017," accessed on: <https://pcbs.gov.ps/PCBS-Metadata-en-v5.2/index>.

Table 3: Recovery Needs in the Gaza Strip

	Sector	Recovery Needs (3 yrs)	Recovery Needs (total) in \$bn
Productive Sectors	Commerce and Industry	1,060	6,900
	Agriculture	1,700	4,200
	Finance	10	42
	Total	2,770	11,142
Social Sectors	Housing Sector	3,700	15,200
	Social Protection	3,500	4,180
	Health	4,300	7,058
	Education	2,649	3,800
	Cultural Heritage	48	192
	Total	14,197	30,430
Infrastructure Sectors	Transport	724	2,900
	Water and Sanitation	664	2,700
	Energy	365	1,460
	Information and Communication Technology (ICT)	114	460
	Municipal Services	110	440
	Total	1,977	7,960
Cross-Cutting Sectors	Total	1054	3706
Total		19,998	53,238

Source: World Bank, European Union and United Nations, 2025

Considering that a sustainable approach to alleviate monetary poverty, as a key dimension of MDP, productive sectors that can employ individuals require the second largest sum on the long run, whereas the employment sector alone requires \$1.6 billion (World Bank, European Union and United Nations, 2025). These figures will likely need updating given that the aggression has not only continued after the short-term ceasefire, but has increased in intensity since, with far more devastating circumstances, particularly in terms of deprivations in the health dimension.

Another important issue to discuss in terms of financing is the decline in international aid to Palestine, and the financial crisis that some international organization, namely UNRWA, suffer from. This adds to the challenges of MDP alleviation in the future, if such funds cannot be secured, and are not organized within a unified framework of active governmental and non-governmental, local and international organizations to ensure effective interventions, as highlighted in the previous sub-section. At the national level, the PA is undergoing an ever-increasing financial crisis that has severely impacted its ability to provide social provisions under the anti-poverty framework over the past three years. With the growing number of those under poverty in the Gaza Strip, the current financial situation of the PA cannot possibly endure the additional number of poor people because of the aggression (about 2.5 million in the Gaza Strip).

6.3 MDP Alleviation and Power Relations

As for relief, recovery, and reconstruction efforts related to MDP combating in previous aggressions, the effect of the power imbalance must not be ignored. Deliberate use of starvation and thirst as weapons of aggression, mass deliberate destruction, and clear intent to annihilate the population and render the Strip uninhabitable, have all been reported since October 2023. So far, all efforts to condemn this policy in international arenas have been in vain, whereby efforts to cease human and physical destruction were to no avail, even for providing slight relief. With the USA, constantly using its veto power to avert any accountability or responsibility of the UN system towards Israel, this re-opens the debate on the existence of such power when human life is at stake. Since 2023, the US has blocked five resolutions demanding a ceasefire.

The US support has culminated in the establishment of the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF), an American foundation that serves as an Israeli military tool to ‘provide’ aid through private American contractors. In an architecture of humanitarianism, Israel designed this mechanism to maintain control of and weaponize human survival, these ‘humanitarian corridors’ have doubled as killing zones. OCHA oPt coined this distribution plan as ‘designed deprivation,’ to encapsulate this system’s control over people’s needs, claiming that it is designed with the knowledge that it cannot possibly meet them, or provide them in a dignified manner (OCHA oPt, 2025e). Whereas the Gaza government media office described the aid distribution process as a form of ‘systematic political engineering’ (Muaddi, 2025).

Evidence from the aggression, particularly the past three months, asserts the importance of considering the status quo in relation to the power imbalance in MDP alleviation in the post-aggression phase. During the aggression, but also prior, Israel ensures that it has total control over the Strip’s border, meaning that any intervention to limit the current priority deprivations, such as food insecurity and health accessibility, is inaccessible under such ‘arrangements.’ Between March and May 2025, Israel has completely banned the entry of humanitarian aid for nearly 11 weeks, before de-sieging the Strip and allowing less than a hundred trucks since then (OCHA oPt, 2025f; Abuaisha and Abu Shamala, 2025). Even within the Gaza Strip, the Israeli occupation has been banning most humanitarian teams’ movement, while severely impeding those permitted to move (OCHA oPt, 2025f). As with the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism (GRM),¹⁰ this plan is also being criticized for violating key principles of humanitarian action as it maintains Israel’s control and reinforces its blockade. Most importantly, with Israel’s decision to ban the work of the UNRWA, the leading agency in social provisions, the Agency may become completely incapable of providing educational and health services and monetary and in-kind assistance to nearly 66% of the population, thus severely impacting any attempts to alleviate various forms of deprivation. This also opens the discussion on post-aggression recovery, as various plans are being forwarded for Gaza’s recovery and reconstruction, including plans by Arab countries, Palestine, international entities, and the USA, Israel’s main ally. Each plan differs in multiple angels, but each also reflects the interests of the party that is forwarding the plan. The US plan for example calls for the complete

10. See: <https://www.maan-ctr.org/public/files/server/Publications/FactSheets/FGRM.pdf>

displacement of Gaza's Palestinian population to Egypt, while the Arab plan presents a strong opposition to disposition. Additionally, plans forwarded by Israel and the US ensure complete Israeli control over the borders of the Gaza Strip, thus complete determination over entry of goods and humanitarian aid. This brings us back to the debate on the 'Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism' that was forwarded in the aftermath of the 2014-aggression. This plan was deemed unjust as it legitimized the blockade and in turn impeded the reconstruction process, given that it gave Israel the control of borders (Abu Rokbeh, 2021).

The discussion on MDP alleviation cannot be divorced from the centrality of the discussion on the overall framework of Israel's international impunity, and the international role in sustaining Israel's destructive policies. Since the aggression, Israel has yet to face any consequences or sanctions in international arena or abide by international law, even for human rights violations and despite declaring clear intent for displacement, weaponization of various human rights such as food and water, and recent enforcement a complete 78-day siege that supports this intent. Thus, efforts to alleviate various forms of deprivations can be severely restricted in producing any significant progress should the status quo remain.

Discussion Questions

- What are the key challenges in data collection for the purpose of targeted interventions?
- How feasible is conducting the necessary surveying both currently and once the aggression halts?
- What are the current and future household priorities?
- Can the MDP network in Palestine withstand the number of newly impoverished with the ongoing UNRWA ban?
- How will issues of fragmentation and limited coordination be mitigated?
- How does the current power imbalance impact the delivery of aid in a way that respects the foundations of humanitarianism?

References

- Abu Robkeh, T. A. (2021). "Gaza Reconstruction: Toward a Self-Determined Mechanism," Al Shabaka, 10\08\2021, accessed by: <https://al-shabaka.org/policy-memos/gaza->
- Abuaisha, N., and Abu Shamala, R. (2025). "87 aid trucks enter Gaza for 1st time since Israeli border crossing closures," AA news, 22\05\2025, accessed by: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/87-aid-trucks-enter-gaza-for-1st-time-since-israeli->
- Admasu, Y., Alkire, S., Ekhatior-Mobayode, U. E., Kovesdi, F., Santamaria, J., & Scharlin-Pettee, S. (2021). A multi-country analysis of multidimensional poverty in contexts of forced displacement.
- Alkire, S. & Foster, J. (2007, revised in 2008). Counting and multidimensional poverty measurement. OPHI Working Paper 7, University of Oxford
- Alkire, S. and Santos, M.E. (2010). "Acute Multidimensional Poverty: A New Index for Developing Countries." OPHI Working Papers 38, University of Oxford.
- Alkire, S., & Foster, J. (2011). Counting and multidimensional poverty measurement. *Journal of public economics*, 95(7-8), 476-487.
- ARIJ. (2022). Monitoring Israeli violations of the right to water and sanitation and its connection to other human rights. Bethlehem – Palestine. (in Arabic).
- Atkinson, A. B. (2003). Multidimensional deprivation: contrasting social welfare and counting approaches. *The Journal of Economic Inequality*, 1(1), 51-65.
- Chaaban, J. M., Seyfert, K., Salti, N. I., & El Makkaoui, G. S. (2013). Poverty and livelihoods among UNHCR registered refugees in Lebanon. *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, 32(1), 24-49.
- ESCWA. (2021). Nowcasting Multidimensional Poverty in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Beirut: United Nations - ESCWA
- IPC. (2025). GAZA STRIP: IPC Acute Food Insecurity and Acute Malnutrition Special Snapshot | April - September 2025, 12\05\2025, accessed on: <https://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/>
- Khalidi, R., Rafeedie, A., Khatib, A., Jaouni, F., El-Kurd, M., Khan, M., Arafah, N., Abudaqqa, Z. (2025). The Political Economy of Palestinian Nationhood, Independence and Development in the Wake of War. Ramallah: Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS).
- Khawaja, M., Al-Saleh, J., Reece, N., & Conconi, A. (2021, August). Measuring multidimensional poverty in Palestine. Economic Research Forum (ERF).
- MAS. (2023a). "The Developmental Implications of Activating the National Social Registry," Round Table Series, Background Paper, no. 2. Ramallah – Palestine.
- MAS. (2023b). The Role of Unions in Strengthening Social Protection for Private Sector Workers, Policy Brief, no.1. Ramallah – Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute.
- MAS. (2023c). Gaza, beyond de-development to disposability and destruction, Gaza War Economy Brief, No.1, 18\10\2023, accessed by: <https://mas.ps/en/publications/9393.html>
- MAS. (2023d). The economic dimensions of the war on the Gaza Strip according to international humanitarian law: Making Gaza Unlivable, Gaza War Economy Brief, No.1, 18\10\2023, accessed by: <https://mas.ps/en/publications/9362.html>
- MAS. (2025). Food Insecurity Bulletin, Issue 31. Ramallah: Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute.
- Ministry of Social Development. (2023). National Strategy to Combat Multidimensional Poverty. Ramallah – Palestine.
- Moor, A. (2025). "There are more child amputees in Gaza than anywhere else in the world. What can the future hold for them?," *The Guardian*, 27\05\2025, accessed by: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/ng-interactive/2025/mar/27/gaza-palestine-children->
- Muaddi, Q. (2025). "Israel says it will soon occupy 75% of Gaza, and it's using control over aid to do it," *Mondoweiss*, 27\05\2025, accessed by: <https://mondoweiss.net/2025/05/israel->

- OCHA oPt. (2025a). Humanitarian Situation Update #263 | Gaza Strip, 11\02\2025, accessed by: <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-situation-update-263-gaza-strip>
- OCHAoPt. (2025b). Reported Impact Snapshot | Gaza Strip (28 May 2025). Accessed by: <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/reported-impact-snapshot-gaza-strip-28-may-2025>
- OCHA oPt. (2025c). Reported impact Snapshot | Gaza Strip, 03\04\2025, accessed by: https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/Gaza_Reported_Impact_Snapshot_03
- OCHA oPt. (2025d). "Humanitarian Situation Update #294 | Gaza Strip, 05\06\2025, accessed by: <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-situation-update-294-gaza-strip>
- OCHA oPt. (2025e). "OCHA official slams Gaza aid restrictions as "deprivation by design," Press Release, 28\05\2025, accessed by: <https://www.unocha.org/news/ocha-official-slams>
- OCHA oPt. (2025f). Humanitarian Situation Update #290 | Gaza Strip, 21\05\2025, accessed by: <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-situation-update-290-gaza-strip>
- OCHAoPT. (2023). Movement in and out of Gaza in 2022. Accessed by: https://www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/OCHAGAZAAM_220223.pdf
- Oruc, N. (2015). Urban IDPs and poverty: Analysis of the effect of mass forced displacement on urban poverty in Bosnia and Herzegovina. *Croatian Economic Survey*, 17(1), 47-70.
- Palestine Central Bureau of Statistics and Palestine Water Authority. (2023). "Under the theme of "ACCELERATING CHANGE", the World celebrates the World Water Day, 2023," Press Release, 22\03\2023, accessed by: <https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/post>
- Palestine Central Bureau of Statistics. (2020). Multi-Dimensional Poverty Profile in Palestine, 2017. Ramallah – Palestine.
- Palestine Central Bureau of Statistics. (2023). Main Findings of Labor Force Survey in 2022. Ramallah - Palestine.
- Palestine Central Bureau of Statistics. (2024a). "the Socio-economic and Environmental Conditions after One Year of the Ongoing Israeli Occupation Aggression against Gaza Strip and the West Bank," Press Release, 07\10\2024, accessed by: <https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/post>.
- Palestine Central Bureau of Statistics. (2024b). "Losses of Private Sector in Palestine due to the Israeli Occupation Aggression on the Gaza Strip." Press Release, 28 November, 2024, accessed by: https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/Press_En
- Palestine Central Bureau of Statistics. (2025a). Labor Force Survey during the Aggression on the Gaza Strip: Status and Realities Round I: November-December 2024. Ramallah – Palestine.
- Palestine Central Bureau of Statistics. (2025b). "H.E. Dr. Awad, highlights the Palestinian children's situation on the eve of the Palestinian Child Day," Press Release, 05 April 2025, accessed on: <https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/post.aspx?lang=en&ItemID=5965>
- Rafeedie, A. (2025). "Social Protection to Combat Mass Poverty and Fragility," in *Priorities for Palestine's Economy in the Midst of War – International Academic Symposium Proceedings*. Ramallah: Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS).
- Sen, A. (1992). *Inequality Reexamined*—Cambridge. Massachusetts: Harvard University.
- Sen, A. (1993). Capability and well-being. *The quality of life*, 30(1), 270-293.
- Shalabi, Y., Rafidi, A., Saadeh, I. (2024). *Inequality in the Palestinian Context: Between Settler Colonialism and Public Policy Failure*. Ramallah – Palestine
- Townsend, P. (1985). A Sociological Approach to the Measurement of Poverty--A Rejoinder [Poor, Relatively Speaking]. *Oxford Economic Papers*, 37(4), 659-668.
- UNDP and ESCWA. (October 2024). Gaza war: Expected socioeconomic impacts on the State of Palestine.
- UNICEF. (2022a). "Fifteen years after the blockade of the Gaza Strip," Press Release, 03 July 2022, accessed by: <https://www.unicef.org/mena/press-releases/fifteen-years-blockade->
- UNICEF. (2022b). Palestine Education Fact Sheets – Analyses for learning and equity using MICS data, accessed on: https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/2022Palestine-Education-Fact-Sheet-2022FINAL_
- UNOSAT. (2025). Gaza Strip Comprehensive Damage Assessment, accessed by: <https://unosat.org/products/4130>

- Verwimp, P. Children Returning Home after Civil War: The Consequences of Forced Displacement For Food Security, Nutrition and Poverty among Burundese Households (No. 2012-020). United Nations Development Programme, Regional Bureau for Africa.
- WHO. (2022). Gaza Health Access 2022, accessed by: <https://www.emro.who.int/images/stories/>
- WHO. (2025). "Health system at breaking point as hostilities further intensify in Gaza, WHO warns," , Press Release, 22\05\2025, accessed by: <https://www.who.int/news/item/22-05-2025-health-system-at-breaking-point-as-hostilities-further-intensify--who-warns>
- World Bank, European Union, and United Nations. (2024). Gaza Strip – Interim Damage Assessment: Summary Note – March 29, 2024.
- World Health Organization. (2024). Estimating Trauma Rehabilitation Needs in Gaza using Injury Data from Emergency Medical Teams. accessed by: <https://www.emro.who.int/images/stories/palestine/Rehab-injury-estimate-Gaza.pdf>
- Zetter, R., & Ruaudel, H. (2014). Development and protection challenges of the Syrian refugee crisis. Forced Migration Review, (47).