

INTERNATIONAL AID AND GAZA'S HEALTHCARE: IMPACT AND INSIGHTS POST-HAMAS ATTACKS

Shahkar Mehdi^{*1}, Dr Asim Abbas², Dr Nadeem Iqbal³

^{*1}University of Antwerp, Belgium

²Tehran medical college, Iran

³Institution Holy Family Hospital Rawalpindi, Pakistan Designation Post Graduate Trainee FCPS General Surgery, Pakistan

^{*1}shahkarbhutta@gmail.com, ²asimgcck51@gmail.com, ³drnadeem8800@gmail.com

Corresponding Author: * **Shahkar Mehdi**

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ABSTRACT

The Israel-Hamas conflict has worsened already weak health system of Gaza strip. Citizens are facing significant challenges like sporadic conflicts among the one most intense started in October 2023, and Israeli blocked since 2007. The crisis shakes healthcare infrastructure, services and well-being of Palestinians. The situation increase the crucial role of World Health organization to revive and sustain Healthcare system in Gaza.

Key words: WHO, International aid, healthcare, impact

INTRODUCTION

The people of Gaza strip has borne a protracted conflict, consequently suffers a decline of its healthcare infrastructure. The World Health Organization come in the front as a key player in the renewal of this healthcare field. The term paper evaluates critically, the international organization's efforts to revive Gaza healthcare infrastructure in post-Hamas attack and Israeli indiscriminate onslaught situation to address the damage. The organization plays a critical role with its expertise in such health emergency and present a gesture of global solidarity with the Palestinians in their grave misery. The Gaza situation offers a humanitarian catastrophe deeply rooted in political intricacies and military response lead to destruction. In the wake of ceasefire, the organization leads the difficult task of reconstruction and restore healthcare services. The analysis revolves round WHO's broad strategy, examining the tactics applied, collaboration enhanced, and outcomes achieved. By doing so, we gain an impartial perspective on the complexities of rebuilding resilience in a conflict-prone area. The paper aims to enrich our understanding of global health governance and

underscore the vital function of international bodies in post-conflict recovery.

In the context of Gaza, healthcare professionals face significant challenges in the aftermath of conflict. These challenges include the displacement of populations and restricted access to medical services (Brown & Lee, 2024; Jones, Patel, & Cohen, 2024). The destruction of healthcare facilities necessitates a radical shift in reconstruction strategies to ensure the delivery of essential services (CHS Doha, n.d.; MSF, 2024). Reports highlight the need for a system-based approach to health that considers social, environmental, economic, and political determinants (Gates Cambridge, 2024; The First International Conference to Rebuild Health Sector in Gaza, n.d.). Amidst the ongoing conflict, the WHO's reconstruction efforts in Gaza faced a critical test during the October 2023 Hamas-led attack on Israel. This unprecedented invasion of Israeli territory since the 1948 Arab-Israeli War had significant implications for Gaza's healthcare system. The attacks, named Operation Al-Aqsa Flood by Palestinian armed groups, resulted in the massacre of civilians in multiple communities, including Be'eri,

Kfar Aza, Nir Oz, Netiv Haasara, and Alumim. The Nova music festival, attended by civilians, witnessed a devastating loss of life. The IDF estimated that approximately 3,000 militants invaded southern Israel during the attack, with additional waves of Gaza citizens entering through breached fences later in the day. The toll was immense: 695 Israeli civilians (including 38 children), 71 foreign nationals, and 373 members of the security forces lost their lives. (Mackintosh et al., 2023)

Hypothesis

“The ongoing conflict has severe implications for the health of civilians in Gaza, leading to increased morbidity, mortality, and mental health issues. World Health Organization can play a significant role in the revival of healthcare infrastructure and human resource.”

Objectives

To assess the immediate Health Needs
To strengthen the Healthcare system in Gaza
To examine the provision of international aid to address the Healthcare system in Gaza

Research Questions

What are the immediate needs of Gaza healthcare system after Hamas October attacks and Israeli military response?
How the world is trying to strengthen Gaza Healthcare system?
What kind of financial support international system can provide to the World Health organization?

Thesis statement outlining the scope of the analysis.

“In the wake of hostilities, Gaza’s healthcare landscape has been left in disarray, with hospitals shuttered, medical provisions interrupted, and facilities physically ravaged. The World Health Organization (WHO) confronts formidable obstacles as it endeavors to rehabilitate and fortify the region’s healthcare services. This necessitates a thorough examination of the impact of international aid and the insights gleaned from the WHO’s reconstruction initiatives following the Hamas attacks.”

Literature Review

Spiegel, p. (2023) in his article “The humanitarian Health effects of Israel-Hamas Conflict among civilian in Gaza,” argues that the urgent health

concerns in Gaza strip and highlights the challenges to it. The Israeli blockade since 2007 made the health status of Palestinians fragile with low rate of life expectancy, maternal and infant mortality higher rates and high prevalence of non-communicable diseases. The situation becomes more deteriorated when combine with socio-economic, political and environmental factors. Hassan, M., & Mahmood, A. (2024) is of the view that before the start of October 2023 Israel-Hamas conflict, the health-care system of Gaza was already shaken. Only 35 hospitals were operational at maximum capacity and serving a population of 2 million. The October 2023 conflict aggravated this already critical condition, leading to interruption of supplies, physical damage to infrastructure and to hospital closure. Bouri, C., & Roy, D (2024) in their work “Addressing the effects of War on Gaza’s Healthcare System” highlights the devastating impact of Israeli attacks on the hospitals, essential facilities and clinics. It caused shortage of beds, equipment, and medication that worsened the crisis. BBC. (2023) in its report “The Conflict in Gaza: A view from Israel,” sheds light on the current crisis and its effects of the healthcare system. It strongly recommends the urgent need for humanitarian aid and support to the revival of health system for the people of Gaza strip. WHO (2024) in its report titled “Impact of Health attacks in Gaza Strip” provides data on health consequences of the conflict, including damage to the hospitals and interruptions in medical supplies.

Methodology

The approach to this article is qualitative aims to understand the experiences and obstacle facing healthcare suppliers, patients, and professionals from medical field after the start of the conflict. We go into in-depth interviews with health workers, WHO officials and organize focus group discussion. Thematic analysis identifies recurring themes like infrastructure damage, coping mechanism, medical professionals and trauma. Findings inform policy recommendations and advocacy efforts. Quantitative data on health indicators is also employed.

The Devastation of Gaza’s Healthcare System

The Gaza Strip has faced immense devastation following the conflict triggered by the Hamas attack in October 2023. The range of civilian casualties astounding with over 33,000 precious lives lost and more than one million left displaced. Owing to the

relentless bombings, healthcare facilities faced a severe damage with almost 90% of them badly affected. To provide shelter to the homeless Palestinians, schools depute for them in the wake of violence. Buildings, equipment, and essential supplies have been destroyed, and health staff have been injured or killed.

The situation of hospitals remains very gloomy as only sixteen out of thirty-six hospitals remain functional though partially, overcrowded with patients and those people who seek refuge to escape from bombing. This gloomy situation is dismal for both patients and health workers. The terrible example of destruction is Al-Shifa Hospital, a largest facility, lies in wreck and ruins and providing healthcare entirely inappropriate. Patients have to face troubles in emergency treatments and routine treatments. Moreover, the destruction of schools complicates the tragedy. They play a critical role in health awareness and preventive strategy. The non-functional clinics and hospital has made medical access very challenging.

Beside hospitals, the health workers and professionals are wrestling with vast challenges. In spite of limited resources and insufficient facilities, they are committed to serve people. They also suffer from losses such as lost their workplace. People are struggling for their economic livelihood in this conflict. WHO must give priority in building infrastructure, ensuring equitable access to medical facilities and training of healthcare professionals. This human tragedy requires urgent attention and wide range reconstruction efforts. World Health Organization is a symbol of international community determination is important to avoid further miseries in this war torn region.

The World Health Organization (WHO) Response

The response of World Trade Organization to Gaza crisis is multi-pronged, focusing on preventive healthcare measures, capacity building and reconstruction of healthcare infrastructure. It remain instrumental in reconstruction in the wake of October 2023 crisis. This recovery is important for the resumption of healthcare services and addressing people's urgent needs. (Smith, 2023) It gives priority in the rehabilitation of damaged health centers, hospitals, clinics and access of essential medical equipment(WHO, 2023). It places its focus on disease control, preventive measures, and promotion

of health as a crucial strategy. It also initiated training of the healthcare professionals to enable the system ability to deliver services effectively. (Brown & Lee, 2024)

The WHO implemented programs to mitigate public health challenges (Gates Cambridge, 2024). The WHO's efforts to empower local healthcare workers aimed to foster sustainable resilience within the system (Jones, Patel, & Cohen, 2024). The WHO worked in tandem with the Palestinian Ministry of Health, UN agencies, NGOs, and donor countries to optimize resource allocation and service provision (UNDP, 2022). These coordinated efforts were crucial for enhancing the reconstruction's effectiveness (CHS Doha, n.d.).

Revaluation of Reconstruction Effectiveness

The reconstruction of Gaza faces significant challenges due to a lack of funds, which stalls essential projects and complicates coordination efforts among stakeholders such as local authorities, international organizations, and NGOs. The ongoing conflict exacerbates these difficulties, posing security risks to rebuilt infrastructure (Sansom, Elkahlout, & Attallah, 2024). International aid is pivotal in reconstruction, necessitating effective coordination to align efforts and avoid duplication. Geopolitical dynamics and donors' political interests influence aid allocation, underscoring the need for a comprehensive approach to rebuilding that encompasses not only physical infrastructure but also health services, staffing, and broader determinants (Brown & Lee, 2024)

Challenges and Setbacks

The reconstruction of Gaza's healthcare system is impeded by financial constraints, which cause pivotal projects to stall. The coordination of efforts among local authorities, international organizations, and NGOs presents logistical challenges, compounded by the ongoing conflict that raises security risks to rebuilt infrastructure (Sansom, Elkahlout, & Attallah, 2024). International aid is instrumental in reconstruction, requiring effective coordination to align efforts and avoid duplication. To ensure the resilience of Gaza's healthcare system, the World Health Organization (WHO) focuses on strengthening infrastructure, training healthcare professionals, and involving communities in decision-making processes. The development of robust data collection and surveillance systems is

supported to enable timely responses during crises (WHO, 2023b; 2024a). Additionally, WHO leverages tele health to bridge access gaps and deploys mobile clinics to underserved areas, promoting solar-powered facilities and emphasizing disaster risk reduction and preparedness (WHO, 2023a).

Long-Term Strategies for Sustaining Healthcare Services in Conflict Zones

Sustaining healthcare services in conflict zones requires comprehensive strategies. Investment in Public Health Institutions: Strengthening public health institutions ensures continuity. WHO advocates for sustainable funding and capacity building. Expanding community health worker programs enhances service delivery. These workers play a vital role in reaching vulnerable populations. Development actors must engage early in conflict zones. WHO emphasizes peacebuilding alongside health interventions? Developing domestic legal frameworks to protect health facilities and medical workers is critical. Prosecuting violators ensures accountability. The First International Conference to Rebuild Health Sector in Gaza Sets Strategies for rebuilding Gaza has damaged, destroyed, or substandard healthcare facilities.

Analysis of the Reconstruction Efforts

The analysis aims to examine WHO efforts and their efficacy, what kind of restraints it is facing, how many political actors involved, and how much aid from how many sides have been reached out. The reconstruction efforts of GAZA after Hamas attacks on Israel 8th October 2023 and Israel's military response cause more or less destruction of the whole health system initiated by WHO is a pivotal attempt. It is restoring the services actually fortifying this war torn region's resilience. It send multi-agency mission to Al-Shifa Hospital in northern Gaza to expose extensive destruction, leaving the situation not working. In spite of huge deaths and destructions, WHO delegations go to their dangerous missions to restore hospital services in Southern and Northern Gaza and continue supplies, displaying a strong commitment to the revival of healthcare services. (WHO, 2023) The demolition of oxygen production facility and the loss of computed tomography (CT) scan have weaken the efficiency of diagnosis and in turn treatment. (UN News, 2024) The restoration of the hospitals process is fraught with significant hindrances, including persistent refusals from the

relevant stakeholders, consistent bombardment, postponements, and obstacles in reaching the hospital for patient and his evaluation and evacuation.

However, political interferences intervened humanitarian purview, hostilities risking approachability and security of the health professionals. (ICRC, 2024) International aid is contributory factor strengthening WHO efforts to reach out provision of supplies of medical aid. The support from international community, political collaboration are crucial for building Gaza health care system successfully (UN News, 2024) To sum up, WHO's initiatives to reconstruct Gaza healthcare system, underline commitment to the resilience.

Case Studies and Field Reports

Examination of Specific Cases of Reconstructed Facilities, Case studies of reconstructed facilities in Gaza highlight the challenges and successes of rebuilding efforts. The Al-Shifa Hospital, for instance, despite suffering extensive damage, has been partially restored and is now equipped with advanced medical technologies, serving as a testament to the resilience of the healthcare system. (Akhras, 2024)

Interviews with healthcare workers reveal a mixed picture of hope and ongoing challenges. Workers express a sense of duty and resilience, but also highlight the need for more support and resources. Beneficiaries report improved access to healthcare services post-reconstruction, yet stress the need for more comprehensive coverage. A comparative analysis with healthcare reconstruction efforts in other conflict zones, such as Afghanistan and Mozambique, shows similarities in the challenges faced, such as resource constraints and security issues. However, Gaza's unique geopolitical situation necessitates tailored approaches that consider the blockade and restricted access to resources. (Albaz, 2024)

Analysis

The Gaza Strip, home to approximately 1.7 million people, faces significant challenges due to the ongoing conflict. The healthcare system has been severely affected, leading to dire consequences for the population. Acute malnutrition, which was almost absent before the conflict, is now emerging rapidly. From January to March 2024, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) registered 216 cases of

moderate and severe acute malnutrition in two primary healthcare centers in Rafah alone (MSF, 2024). Mental health has also suffered due to exposure to extreme violence and loss. However, ongoing insecurity and violence hinder efforts to build resilience. The healthcare system in Gaza has been decimated by the conflict. Attacks on healthcare facilities have occurred, and the system is paralyzed due to a lack of fuel and medical supplies. The only specialized psychiatric hospital in Gaza City ceased services in November 2023 (MSF, 2024). International aid groups play a crucial role in providing essential supplies to Gaza. The local residents and businesses facing blockade that limits the entry of civilians and necessary items like medicines. (MSF, 2024) To address the tragic crisis, there is a need of urgent attempts to provide basic healthcare, support mental health, and address malnutrition. For this purpose, short-term, mid-term and long-term solutions must be designed and prioritized for the reconstruction of healthcare infrastructure and ensure consistent funding (MSF, 2024)

Key Findings

The examination of Gaza in conflict and the situation of healthcare infrastructure following Hamas attack identify many important findings. In spite of colossal destruction, there are astonishing efforts to restore healthcare services. A-Shifa hospital, views as an evidence of resilience, partially revives and equip with advance medical technologies. There are challenges still resisting the efforts like lack of medical supplies, funding and skilled personals. Hence, global aid plays a significant role in addressing these gaps. The cooperative efforts of global and local stake holders show the resolve to reconstruct Gaza healthcare system even in the face of hardships.

Recommendations

There is an urgent need for ceasefire and lifting blockade therefore an access to medical supplies possible. The specialized health services within Gaza should be revived and focus must be placed on mental health through counselling and support. Provide clean water and sanitation facilities. Ensure collaboration with international organizations to enhance humanitarian response.

Conclusion

The reconstruction of healthcare infrastructure in Gaza presents an investment in the well-being of populace. It is a fundamental right of every human being irrespective of nationality, race, caste or creed to an access to medical facilities. By means of reviving hospitals, clinics, and medical amenities, we actually enable communities to flourish and overcome adversity. In spite the huge challenges ahead, there remains a ray of hope. The spirit shows by the community activists, professionals, international partners, stresses the potential for vigorous healthcare system in Gaza. By means of collaboration, sustainable practices and creative solutions, Gaza can not only mend from the conflict trauma but also shape a future where security and health succeeds.

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